



APN Board Book December 2016

This Board Book features a sampling of APN's work in 2016 regarding the following objectives: Standing Up Against the New Political Order; Taking Our Case to the United Nations; Mobilizing Action to Preserve Two-State Solution; Preserving Israel's Democratic Character, Defending Jewish Values and the U.S. Constitution; as well as a sampling of APN's regular publications.

I. Standing Up Against the New Political Order

As we observe Washington's new political landscape, we acknowledge that advancing an Israeli-Palestinian peace agenda, based on a two-state solution, will be difficult. Americans who support Israeli-Palestinian peace are anxiously wondering about the fate of our mission under President-elect Donald Trump.

Candidate Trump did not clearly indicate his foreign policy agenda, which was sparse and ambiguous, often confused. What will President Trump's foreign policy be? What will his Middle East Policy be? For us, these questions are not something to passively ponder. They are a call to action, a moment to recommit to what we hold so dearly: A secure Israel, a Jewish state that is a strong democracy, which lives side by side, in peace, with a sovereign Palestinian state.

Today, American Jewish groups and prominent Jewish individuals are facing a critical test: do they stand with American Jews and with Jewish values – the same values that have long animated Americans' support for progressive policies in both the U.S. and Israel – or do they stand with the extremists and anti-Semites with whom they find common ground in support of the reactionary agenda of Israel's own anti-democratic far right.

In this moment of uncertainty, we must do our utmost to turn recent developments into an opportunity for advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace and standing up for our Jewish values, both at home and in Israel.

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Illiberal Support for Israel: Antithetical to Jewish Values & Israel's Interests

By Lara Friedman 11/18/16

In the beginning, "pro-Israel" meant something clear and uncomplicated: supporting Israel's miraculous establishment as the homeland of the Jewish people, on the heels of the horrors of the Holocaust, and defending Israel's very right to exist and thrive, in the face of violent rejection of that young country by its neighbors.

After the 1967 War, the definition of "pro-Israel" began evolving. It gradually came to mean – for much of the American Jewish establishment – defending Israel from all criticism and pressure, even if this meant in effect supporting policies designed to cement Israeli control over the lands Israel conquered in 1967, and even if it meant turning a blind eye, especially in recent years, to an escalation in illiberal policies targeting Israeli civil society itself. And it came to mean demanding that American political leaders and elected officials adopt this same approach to "pro-Israel," or risk finding themselves labeled "anti-Israel" or "anti-Semitic."

A direct line exists between this "pro-Israel" illiberal orthodoxy and the positioning of too many in the Jewish establishment today.

America is witnessing the dawning of a dangerous new political order, encompassing the President-elect, his top advisors and surrogates, and his vocal "alt-right" supporters. This new political order is unabashedly extremist and illiberal in coloration: anti-democratic, anti-immigrant, racist, Islamophobic, misogynist and often anti-Semitic – characteristics that are antithetical to Jewish values and to the safety and security of every vulnerable minority in the United States, including Jews. In the face of this new political order, many Jewish establishment organizations and their leaders are remaining silent or standing up in support. Why? Because they believe this new political order is aligned (for its own reasons) with the same "pro-Israel" illiberal orthodoxy that they endorse.

Make no mistake: for too many in the right-wing Jewish establishment, "pro-Israel" has developed into an illiberal ideology in its own right. That ideology – sympathetic to a worldview that prioritizes land over peace, settlements over security, and permanent control of the West Bank over democratic norms – has more in common with American racists and proto-fascists than with Jewish or American values. There is little distance to travel, politically, from defending racist reactionaries in Israel and making common cause with their American equivalents.

Growing up in the post-Holocaust era, many of us are taught that Jews, in every country, are the canaries in the coal mine. We are taught that demanding zero tolerance for anti-Semitism is not just about what is good for the Jews. Rather, it is about never forgetting – and never allowing the world to forget – what anti-Semitism augurs. Likewise, we are taught that we must never stop fighting for all manner of civil rights, because coded into our DNA, as Jews, is the sure knowledge that if such rights are not protected for all, they are protected for none.

The credibility of a large part of the American Jewish establishment is now collapsing under the weight of these contradictions. As synagogue congregations and rabbis across the country are struggling with how to respond to the hatred unleashed by the results of last week's elections, too many Jewish organizations and leaders are choosing to ignore the lessons of thousands of years of Jewish history. In doing so, they are desecrating the memory of every Jew who has suffered at the hands of anti-Semites. They are betraying Israel's Declaration of Independence and the Jewish values expressed within it. And they are complicit in the growth of a political movement that today endangers the safety and survival of vulnerable people – including Jews – everywhere.

The American Jewish and Israeli pro-peace Left – the embodiment of what it means to be genuinely "pro-Israel" – has long said that supporting Israel means opposing settlements and the occupation. Perhaps now people will begin to realize that this was never merely a slogan. Jewish values are incompatible with occupation. Defending human rights and civil rights is incompatible with normalizing settlements. Supporting civil liberties is incompatible with delegitimizing non-violent activism against Israeli policies.

And as we are witnessing today, compromising core Jewish values in order to absolve Israel of responsibility for bad policies comes at a high cost, both for Israel and for American Jews.

Most American Jews see the truth. That is why polls consistently show that most American Jews don't support settlements and the occupation, just as most American Jews are no doubt appalled by the new political order taking shape and are outraged at the positioning of some Jewish leaders today.

To be clear: some Jewish leaders, from across the spectrum of Jewish organizations holding different political views and carrying different missions, have taken a stand against this new political order. For this they deserve credit and support. But nobody in the Jewish establishment can be permitted to make common cause, in all of our names and for the sake of a vision of Israel's future that we reject, with the enemies of everything we hold dear. We must fight for our Jewish and American values and apply them consistently, both with the respect to what is happening in the United States and what is happening in Israel. The silence of too many in the right-wing Jewish establishment today underscores how, for American Jews, the two are inextricably linked.

[Press Release: APN Condemns Appointment of Bannon, Calls Out Jewish Groups for Failure to Stand Against Anti-Semitism & Hate-Mongering](#)

11/17/16

APN today released the following statement in connection with the appointment of Steve Bannon to the Trump White House, and in connection to the wave of anti-Semitic acts and other hateful rhetoric and aggression targeting vulnerable groups in America:

Americans for Peace Now (APN) – America's veteran Jewish, Zionist, pro-peace organization – unequivocally condemns the appointment of Steve Bannon as senior advisor and chief strategist in the White House. Bannon is unfit to serve in the White House or in any part of the government of this great nation. This judgment is not about political or policy disagreements. It is about basic American and Jewish values. It is about the poisonous racism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other vile hate-

mongering that grew alongside and in support of the campaign of President-elect Donald Trump. It is about the failure of President-elect Trump and his surrogates to meaningfully reject and condemn this trend and its adherents; indeed, it is about the President-elect appearing to actively court and encourage them. The naming of Bannon as a top advisor in the Trump White House – an act celebrated by the “alt-right” as a clear victory for their odious agenda – is the personification of this phenomenon.

APN likewise condemns, vehemently and unequivocally, the decision by some Jewish groups and prominent individuals to ignore, tolerate, whitewash, and even justify anti-Semitism and hate-mongering – both now, with the Bannon appointment, and over the course of the Trump campaign. Their decision to do so reflects a dangerous perversion of the very concept of what it means to be “pro-Israel.” Their failure to speak out today is the culmination of years of efforts to transform support for Israel into an extremist ideology of its own – an ideology that prioritizes fealty to hardline, pro-settlement, anti-peace Israeli positions over all else, including over defending core Jewish values, like tolerance and respect for human rights and human dignity, and even over standing up to the scourge of anti-Semitism that has plagued our people for generations.

No one should forget that many of these same groups have not hesitated to exploit accusations of “anti-Semitism” to demonize and delegitimize those of us who, like APN, refuse to sacrifice our Jewish and American values, or our commitment to Israel as a secure, democratic, Jewish state, at the altar of the “Greater Israel” enterprise. The failure of these same groups to take a stand against the very real anti-Semitism and racist extremism stalking our nation today discloses both the degree to which their concern about anti-Semitism has been co-opted by their hardline ideology, and the extent to which this ideology is anathema to the interests and values of Jewish Americans and of Israel.

Today, American Jewish groups and prominent Jewish individuals are facing a critical test: do they stand with American Jews and with Jewish values – the same values that have long animated Americans’ support for progressive policies in both the U.S. and Israel – or do they stand with the extremists and anti-Semites with whom they find common ground in support of the reactionary agenda of Israel’s own anti-democratic far right. So far, they are failing this test.

We urge President-elect Trump to cancel his appointment of Bannon. We urge him, too, to finally denounce and reject the abhorrent actions and views of the hate-mongers who are acting, publicly and proudly, in his name. And we urge Jewish organizations and prominent Jewish individuals to stand with American Jews by speaking out against the appointment of Bannon and against the wave of hate that is sweeping our great nation targeting many vulnerable groups, including Jews.

[Press Release: With Trump’s Election, We Recommit to Israeli-Palestinian Peace](#)

11/09/16

As Israelis and Palestinians struggle to make sense of this week’s presidential election results, so are we, Americans who support Israeli-Palestinian peace, anxiously wondering about the fate of our mission under President-elect Donald Trump.

The American people have spoken. We at APN obviously acknowledge the results. We doubt, however, that by electing Trump, the people have spoken about their desired foreign policy priorities. Candidate

Trump did not clearly indicate such priorities. His foreign policy agenda was sparse and ambiguous, often confused. What will President Trump's foreign policy be? What will his Middle East Policy be?

For us, these questions are not something to passively ponder. They are a call to action, a moment to recommit to what we hold so dearly: A secure Israel, a Jewish state that is a strong democracy, which lives side by side, in peace, with a sovereign Palestinian state.

As we observe Washington's new political landscape, we acknowledge that advancing an Israeli-Palestinian peace agenda, based on a two-state solution, will be difficult.

We also know that we always work with all national elected officials – regardless of their party affiliation or worldview – to bring about the peace and security that Israelis and Palestinians need and deserve, a two-state solution that has long been and continues to be one of America's chief national security objectives.

Change can bring about opportunities. We must do our utmost to turn this development into an opportunity for advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace.



[Look on AIPAC's Works, American Jews](#)

By Lara Friedman 3/22/2016

For more than a decade I have been invited regularly to speak on Capitol Hill, on campuses, in synagogues, on policy panels, to foreign diplomats and to the media. On these occasions I speak, as an advocate for Israel and Israeli-Palestinian peace, about the issues on the ground in Israel-Palestine and their connection to U.S. foreign policy. And on these occasions I talk openly and critically about AIPAC, just as for years my organization has publicly challenged AIPAC's legislative agenda at every turn.

I talk about AIPAC not because I hold any personal animus against the organization and its supporters, or because I believe in some right-wing conspiracy. I know there are good people working at and supporting AIPAC. And I know from experience - most recently with the successful Iran nuclear deal - that AIPAC is by no means omnipotent.

I also know, however, that for decades AIPAC has been actively promoting a Middle East agenda that is anathema to the values of most American Jews, to the real interests of Israel, and to peace. And I know well, from personal experience working in Washington and around the country, the enormous power AIPAC brings to bear on American Jews, members of Congress, and the U.S. political system to see its agenda enacted. That is why I cannot talk about U.S. policy and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without talking about AIPAC.

When I first mention AIPAC, regardless of venue, a ripple of disquiet and excitement inevitably goes through my audience. People are visibly discomfited and thrilled that I am talking openly about the organization-that-shall-not-be-named, addressing the elephant in the room.

But why not talk openly? Until a few years ago, AIPAC bragged on its website and literature that it was the most powerful foreign policy lobby in Washington. And AIPAC's advocacy record is not secret: Since the 1990s, AIPAC has worked tirelessly to challenge peace efforts, undermine U.S.-led peace initiatives, and shore up support for right-wing Israeli leaders and their policies - culminating in its lobbying over the past year to legitimize settlements.

This is the background to the brouhaha over presidential candidate Donald Trump's speech this week at AIPAC's policy conference - brouhaha that misses the bigger point. The issue isn't Trump. And it's not about AIPAC giving him a platform. The issue is AIPAC.

AIPAC doesn't simply prioritize above all else devotion to right-wing views on Israel. AIPAC takes all other priorities off the table. It embodies a worldview hostile toward the Palestinians, antagonistic to peacemaking, and sympathetic to policies and positions that are antithetical to a two-state solution. This worldview, by necessity, ignores or even denigrates the Jewish values held dear by most American Jews - values that animate our views not only on Israel-Palestine, but on immigration, healthcare, and the full gamut of social issues at play in every election.

Based on this worldview, it should surprise no one that the AIPAC crowd warmly embraced Trump. The crowd was doing what AIPAC has trained its supporters to do: view the candidate strictly through the lens of what AIPAC defines as acceptably "pro-Israel." And through this lens, Trump looked great. He dutifully pandered to the crowd with the tired - but required - clichés of unconditional support for Israel and unquestioning approval of the anti-peace policies of the most right-wing government in Israel's history. He framed the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the compulsory, binary terms - a good side and a bad side - and made he is on the good side, which is not the side of the U.S. or Israel, but of AIPAC and the Israeli right.

Like most people I know, I felt sick watching Trump at AIPAC. Not for what he said - his speech was entirely predictable - and not for the fact that AIPAC gave him a platform. I felt sick because I was watching the natural culmination of decades in which AIPAC has successfully defined the terms of the "acceptable" narrative about Israel in U.S. politics and campaigns.

I was seeing what happens when year after year, AIPAC is permitted to manipulate the still-potent existential fears of American Jews and lie to them about what it means to be pro-Israel. Trump's triumphant reception at AIPAC is what happens when American Jews have drunk the AIPAC Kool-Aid for decades and convinced themselves that their progressive Jewish values can and must be disconnected from their support for Israel, and that when their values conflict with Israeli policies - as has been more and more the case since a series of right-wing governments have held power in Israel - blind support for Israel, as defined by AIPAC, trumps all.

Yesterday was a *shonda* - a disgrace - for American Jewry. But the problem isn't Trump. The problem is, and has long been, AIPAC and the raft of American Jewish groups that follow its lead. If any good can come of the disgraceful display of American Jews boisterously applauding Donald Trump as candidate for president, it is that our community may finally recognize, talk openly about, and reject what AIPAC has wrought.

II. Taking Our Case to the United Nations

On October 14, 2016, Lara Friedman, director of policy and government relations at APN, spoke before the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) at a special session organized to examine the issue of "Illegal Israeli Settlements: An Obstacle to Peace and a Threat to the Two-State Solution."

Speaking in advance of the meeting, APN President and CEO Debra DeLee stated:

Israeli settlement policies is an issue on which APN and our Israeli sister organization, Shalom Achshav, are justifiably recognized as the leading experts, both in terms of knowing and in terms of explaining the facts about settlements and their implications for peace and the two-state solution. And the facts point to a clear conclusion: the Israeli government's policy of prioritizing settlements threatens the vital interests of Israel – its people and its national future. This Security Council meeting is a welcome opportunity to highlight the damage settlements are doing to Israel and the quest for peace.

APN also remained the most prominent, uncompromising voice creating political space for and urging the Obama Administration to support consequential action in the United Nations Security Council in support of the two-state solution.

[\[Action Alert\] Thank the Obama Administration for standing up for Israel at UNESCO](#)

by APN 10/23/16

Last week, UNESCO's Executive Board ratified a shocking resolution that refers to the Holy Basin in Jerusalem's Old City only by its Muslim title, the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary), does not mention the Temple Mount, the way Jews refer to the site, mentions the Western Wall Plaza in quotation marks while using its Muslim name, Al-Buraq Plaza without quotation marks, and uses other inflammatory language. By so doing, UNESCO ignored the Jewish – and Christian – ties to Jerusalem.



[Click here to thank President Obama and his administration for rejecting the anti-Israel bias of UNESCO's resolution.](#)

We also applaud the actions of Mexico's ambassador to UNESCO. We were dismayed to hear that the Mexican diplomat, Andrés Roemer, was fired for taking the unusual step of walking out of the vote because he disagreed with his government's decision to support the resolution.

[Write to President Obama today and let him know you appreciate that the US is standing up for Israel.](#)

HAARETZ.com

[My UN speech reflected love for Israel, truth about settlements](#)



Americans for Peace Now responds: With the 50th anniversary of the occupation upon us, the hope for a two-state solution is dying. If there was ever a time to speak the truth about the settlements, it's now.

By Lara Friedman | Oct. 21, 2016 | 3:50 PM

Last Friday, the UN Security Council held a meeting organized under the title "Illegal Israeli Settlements: A Threat to Peace and the Two-State Solution." Americans for Peace Now proudly took part in that event, offering testimony grounded in love for Israel and expressing an unwavering commitment to Israel's security and its survival as a democracy and a state rooted in the Jewish values expressed in its Declaration of Independence. Of course, that testimony also dealt with the settlements, explaining why they are detrimental to the cause of Israeli-Palestinian peace and therefore to Israel's national security interests.

Many people, both inside and outside Israel, were happy to see a pro-Israel, pro-two-state organization delivering a nuanced, fact-based presentation at this event. Others were less enthused, most notably Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, who accused APN of participating in "diplomatic terror" against Israel. Likewise, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took to social media to call APN's arguments "deluded." And now, in this newspaper, the former head of the Union of Reform Judaism, Rabbi Eric Yoffie, criticized APN's testimony as a "mistake" – not for the facts it conveyed or its tone, but for the timing and location of its delivery.

We participated in this event because we felt it was critically important – for Israel – to lay out the facts about Israeli settlements. These are facts that Netanyahu and other advocates for the settlement movement understandably prefer remain hidden because they contradict the official *hasbara* that seeks to convince Israel's citizens and the world that this government still supports the two-state solution and that its policies are consonant with this aspiration.

It is thus no surprise that our participation angered and worried some people. For those who do not support the two-state solution, those who want to see the settlement enterprise continue on its current course to make permanent Israel's control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, those who do not care whether Israel remains a democracy, any focus on the facts of settlements and occupation is by definition threatening.

It is likewise no surprise that our participation upset other people. For years we have heard variations on a familiar argument: No consequential action to protest settlements is ever permissible. One version says: If you publicly criticize Israel, including over its settlements policies, the anti-Semites win. Another says: If you boycott settlements, even as you fight boycotts of Israel proper, Israel haters and the BDS movement win.

And this latest iteration says: If you challenge Israeli settlement policies at the Security Council, even in a meeting framed in terms that recognize Israel and endorse the aspiration for Israel to continue to exist in peace and security in the context of a two-state solution, Israel's enemies win.

APN rejects these arguments.

To those who suggest that speaking about settlements at the most important international organization in existence is akin to terror, we say: Cynically crying "terror" to try to delegitimize every form of meaningful nonviolent protest against Israeli policy, including the mere act of speaking the truth in a public forum, desecrates the memory of victims of actual terror. It abuses the pain their families feel every day and insults people everywhere who live in the shadow of the threat of real terror.

To those who argue that it is "deluded" to focus on settlements when there are many other things that make peace difficult to achieve, including some Palestinian actions, we say: Deluded is to consistently deny the damage Israeli settlement policies are doing to the prospects for peace. Deluded is to believe that seeking to delegitimize those who insist on the facts renders those facts less true or less important.

And deluded is to demand that people ignore the facts about Israeli settlement policies while acquiescing to facts on the ground deliberately designed to destroy the viability of the two-state solution.

And to those who suggest that now is not the time, or that the United Nations is not the place, to speak the truth about settlements, we say: You are grievously mistaken. The 50th anniversary of the occupation is nearly upon us. The hope for a two-state solution is dying. If there was ever a time to speak the truth about settlements and occupation – in every possible forum for consequential action – that time is now. We know that speaking the truth this way, and indeed, calling for action on settlements – like calling for settlement boycotts or a Security Council resolution – makes some people, including some supporters of the two-state solution, deeply uncomfortable. We also know that for nearly five decades, more “comfortable” forms of protest have failed to change Israeli settlement policies.

Now, with the fate of the two-state solution – and of Israel – hanging in the balance, we are cognizant of the words of Martin Luther King Jr. in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” There he called out, with regret, the person “who is more devoted to ‘order’ than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action.’”

APN makes no apologies. We know that our actions – last week at the United Nations and every day working to promote peace and security for Israel, and working to support our brave colleagues in the Israeli Peace Now movement – serve the real interests of Israel. We are proud to have spoken at the Security Council, and we will continue to speak out, wherever and whenever we believe it can make a difference, until Israeli policies cease to prioritize settlements over peace, security, democracy and Israel’s place in the community of nations.

[APN Denounces UNESCO Resolution; Urges UN Agencies to Avoid One-Sided Language on Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#)

by [APN](#) 10/19/16

Washington, DC – Americans for Peace Now (APN) denounces a resolution adopted last week by the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and ratified this week by the body’s Executive Board.

APN agrees with critics of the language used by UNESCO’s resolution, which refers to the Holy Basin in Jerusalem’s Old City only by its Muslim title, the Haram al-Sharif (the Nobel Sanctuary), does not mention the Temple Mount, the way Jews refer to the site, mentions the Western Wall Plaza in quotation marks while using its Muslim name, Al-Buraq Plaza, without quotation marks, and uses other inflammatory language.

APN therefore welcomes comments by outgoing United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, and by UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova, who over the weekend distanced themselves from UNESCO's resolution on Jerusalem's holy sites. Both Secretary General Ban and Director General Bokova rejected the one-sided reference, and noted that the biased formulation of the resolution does not serve the cause of peace.

APN welcomes their comments, calls on UNESCO to appropriately amend its resolution, and urges United Nations agencies, when referring to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to avoid exclusionary and inflammatory language. Such language, particularly in reference to religious narratives, does not serve efforts to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace.

[Briefing call with APN's Lara Friedman and Israeli Legal Expert Michael Sfar on UNSC Session on Israeli Settlements](#)



In the October 14, 2016 briefing call with APN's Lara Friedman and Israeli Legal Expert Michael Sfar on the UNSC Session on Israeli Settlements, they discussed the threat to Israel's security and the two-state solution posed by settlements, the dangers of unilateral withdrawal, and the possibility of further action at the UN.

Listen to the recording [here](#).

[Statement by Lara Friedman, Americans for Peace Now Delivered at the United Nations Security Council – October 14, 2016](#)

You can view the full recordings of the [testimonies](#) and the post-meeting [press conference](#) online.

Distinguished members of the Security Council,

As a representative of Americans for Peace Now – an organization that is committed to Israel's existence and its future – it is not easy for me to speak before this body today.

It is not easy because while this forum will focus in large part on human rights violations by Israel, there are states represented here whose own human rights records are abysmal.

There are even states in this forum that still do not recognize the existence of Israel, 70 years after that nation's birth and despite its membership in the UN's General Assembly.

It is also not easy for me to speak here today because of the deteriorating political climate in Israel as far as democracy is concerned. For some time now we have been witnessing an ugly campaign against

courageous Israeli human rights and civil society NGOs – carried out by reactionary groups in Israel and by the Israeli government itself. Campaigns that target the legitimacy of NGOs like our Israeli sister organization, Shalom Achshav – Peace Now.

These groups are being targeted because their work reveals facts that some prefer to hide – facts that challenge the official Israeli government narrative.

Yet, I am here today because this institution is too important to boycott or ignore. The Security Council is the most important international body in existence today.

It would be irresponsible to miss an opportunity to argue our cause in front of it. It would be unpardonable to allow ourselves to be silenced by the cynicism of some of this body's member states, whose hatred of Israel may blind them to Israel's legitimate needs and fears. And it would be inexcusable to allow ourselves to be silenced by the disapproval of some who today equate speaking unpleasant truths about Israeli policies with national betrayal.

I am here today because the cause that we work for every day is too important to allow anyone to silence us.

Since 1978, our Israeli sister organization, Peace Now, has worked every day to represent and empower an Israeli public that wants peace with the Palestinians. They stand with the countless Israelis who are pushing their government to make peace and end the occupation. They give voice and energy to Israelis – who are fighting to hold their government accountable for policies that undermine the chances of peace – foremost among them, policies that are behind the establishment and expansion of settlements in the occupied territories.

And since 1981, the organization I represent – Americans for Peace Now – has worked every day to represent and empower an American public, Jewish and non-Jewish, that supports Peace Now in its work for Israeli-Palestinian peace. We stand with the countless number of Americans who want their government and the international community to support and press both sides to reach an agreement that will end the occupation and lead to peace and security for both peoples. And we give voice and energy to Americans who believe it is important for the U.S. and international community to hold both Israeli and Palestinian leaders accountable for policies that undermine peace – including Israeli settlement policies.

Above and beyond all of that, I come here today because I know the facts – facts about trends and developments that we and our colleagues in Peace Now have been documenting for more than two decades. Facts that disclose both the intent and impact of the Israeli government's settlement policies. Facts that are alarming.

The Palestinian people have lived under Israeli military occupation for nearly 50 years. That is a fact. This occupation involves increasingly harsh violations of Palestinian rights, as individuals and as a collective. That, too, is a fact. And the settlement policies of the Israeli government are unilaterally expanding and entrenching this occupation.

Here is another fact: This occupation is a threat to Israel's security and to Israel's very existence. Israel has the military capability to address any of its external security threats, which indeed exist. It has no effective or moral answer to the security challenges imposed by perpetual occupation, as chillingly

embodied by the ongoing wave of attacks against Israelis, in many cases by Palestinian children effectively committing suicide by Israeli soldier.

If these policies are not rolled back, they will destroy the possibility of ever reaching a political agreement between Israel and Palestine.

If these policies do not end, they will lead inevitably to permanent occupation, and with it, the end of Israel as a democracy and as a state grounded in the Jewish values so proudly expressed in Israel's Declaration of Independence. Values that are already being undermined today by Israel's settlement policies.

Those who hope for a better future for Israelis and Palestinians should indeed be alarmed.

For the most part, the world pays attention to settlement policies only when they are in the headlines – meaning when plans are advanced and approved, or when the Israeli government publishes tenders for new construction.

On such occasions, when members of the international community take a stand against settlements, their objections are generally rebuffed by Israeli officials, and the issue fades away. And even when pressure seems to have an effect, when an Israeli government professes its intention to heed international opinion to some degree – like with the so-called 2010 settlement “moratorium,” or with the current pressure on Israel to remove the illegal outpost of Amona – supposed “concessions” on settlements consistently prove counter-productive.

The numbers – and these are official Israeli numbers – tell the story.

Twenty-three years ago, in 1993, Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles, also known as the Oslo Accords. Back then, the settler population in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, was around 116,000.¹ At the end of 2015, that number was nearly 390,000.² Looking just at East Jerusalem, in 1993 the Jewish Israeli population was approximately 146,000.³ Today it is over 210,000.⁴

This population explosion could not have occurred without Israeli government support and encouragement, including, most obviously, the approval and construction of new housing. And that is exactly what happened.

During this same period, 1993 to today, over 50,000⁵ settlement units were built in the West Bank, and plus thousands more in East Jerusalem. What about settlement construction just under Prime Minister Netanyahu? 2016 figures are still not complete, but looking at 2009 to 2015 – which included the so-

¹ Exact number: 116,300; Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) – cited here: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>.

² Exact number: 385,900; Source: ICBS, cited here: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/population>.

³ Exact number: 146,800; Source: Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Statistical Yearbooks, cited here: http://www.btselem.org/download/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf.

⁴ Exact number: 211,960; Source: (a) Data from “The Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem, 2016” published by the Jerusalem Institute of Israel Studies, figures as of December 31, 2014, with the caveat that: (b) part of Ma’alotDaphna is located beyond the Green Line. Consequently the figures for Ma’alot Daphna are based on the best estimated of Daniel Seidemann in accordance to the proportion of the geographical size settlement neighborhood beyond the 1967 border; (c) Based on secondary sources deriving from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics and other governmental sources as adjusted by Daniel Seidemann.

⁵ Exact number: 50,883; Source: ICBS, cited here: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/construction> (through end of 2015, plus ICBS through mid-2016)

called “moratorium” – more than 11,000⁶ settlement units were established in the West Bank with the approval of Israeli authorities. And in 2015 alone, we are talking about almost 2000⁷ new units in West Bank settlements.

But this is only part of the story of how settlements have kept on expanding. The rest of the story is this: there is an entire machine of Israeli policies, active and passive, that is constantly working to support the expansion and entrenchment of settlements. Let me give you some examples.

We all have heard the government of Israel claim, when a settlement plan hits the headlines, that whatever is being reported shouldn't be controversial – either because it's just a minor bureaucratic step, or because the real approval happened long ago and this latest step is just a formality. We've even heard the government claim it should be getting credit for exercising restraint for holding off against settler demands to approve many more new plans.

But hidden behind these claims is the fact that there is always a huge bank of approved plans already “in the pipeline” – meaning that even when new approvals stop, construction continues. Peace Now estimates that this settlement pipeline today holds around 30,000 units⁸, ready for construction at any time.

Also hidden behind these claims is the fact that according to Israeli policy, construction in the vast majority of settlements—112 out of 126 settlements – can go ahead on an estimated 20,000 of these units in the pipeline without any further action by the government⁹, and based only on the internal decisions of settler authorities.

Hidden, too, is the fact that illegal settlement construction – construction undertaken without necessary official Israeli government approval – has become an integral part of the settlement enterprise. In fact, over the past 6 years Peace Now estimates that illegal construction accounted for 15%¹⁰ of total settlement growth.

This illegal activity is not just tolerated by the government of Israel – it is actively encouraged – through failure to enforce the rule of law; through the granting of retroactive approvals; through provision of funding; and through political endorsements.

We have all also heard Israeli government spokespeople claim that Israel is not establishing new settlements or expanding settlements beyond their current areas. But hidden behind that claim is the fact that just between 2009 and 2015, under Netanyahu, the government of Israel authorized or worked to give legal authorization to at least 26¹¹ 12 settlement sites established by settlers in contravention of Israeli law – often referred to as illegal outposts. These sites are thus being transformed into new official

⁶ Exact number: 11,342; Source: ICBS, cited here: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/construction>.

⁷ Exact number: 1,874; Source: ICBS, cited here: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/settlements-watch/settlements-data/construction>.

⁸ Source: Peace Now annual report on settlements, February 2016, page 4, <https://settlementwatcheastjerusalem.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/2015-in-settlements.pdf>

⁹ Source: Peace Now annual report on settlements, February 2016, page 4, <https://settlementwatcheastjerusalem.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/2015-in-settlements.pdf>

¹⁰ Source: Peace Now – Hagit Ofra (conversation October 13, 2016)

¹¹ Source: Peace Now annual report on settlements, February 2016, page 4, <https://settlementwatcheastjerusalem.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/2015-in-settlements.pdf>

¹² <http://peacenow.org.il/en/netanyahu-established-20-new-settlements>

settlements, or into new and often remote “neighborhoods” of existing settlements, dramatically expanding the footprint of those settlements.

And in tandem with all of these policies supporting non-stop new construction in settlements, the government of Israel has implemented a range of related policies that further expand and deepen the settlements enterprise.

Policies like investing, financially and politically, in industrial zones, touristic facilities, and archaeological sites in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. And policies like building a vast network of roads, tunnels and highways that operate as the arteries of the settlement project – tying settlements to each other and linking them directly and seamlessly into Israel.

Finally, there is one additional key policy – invisible to most people – that has further enabled the entrenchment of Israel’s settlement enterprise and that underscores the fundamental rights violations it involves. This is the policy according to which Israeli law follows Israeli citizens who enter or live in the Occupied Territories. This means that Israeli settlers live under Israeli law – no different than if they were living inside Israel – while Palestinians live under military law.

This policy has created a dangerous and ugly political reality in the occupied territories – a reality in which two populations live on the same land, under different legal systems, separate and entirely unequal, with the governing authority serving one population at the expense of the other.

One population is comprised of privileged Israeli citizens, enjoying the benefits of a prosperous, powerful state, with their rights guaranteed by a democratic government accountable to their votes. The other population is comprised of disenfranchised Palestinians, living under foreign military occupation explicitly designed to protect and promote the interests not of Palestinian residents of the territories, but of Israeli settlers.

Defenders of Israel’s settlement policies offer various arguments to justify settlements and their expansion, notwithstanding the fact that according to international law, all settlements are illegal and a violation of Palestinian rights. I want to focus here on two of their main arguments.

The first is the argument that the controversy over settlements is overblown, since the built- up area of settlements comprises only around 1% of the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem). This argument is at best ignorant, and at worst deliberately disingenuous.

Because since 1967, Israel has taken control of around 50%¹³ of the land of the West Bank. And almost all of that land has been given to the settlers or used for their benefit. Israel has given almost 10%¹⁴ of the West Bank to settlers – by including it in the “municipal area” of settlements. And it has given almost 34%¹⁵ of the West Bank to settlers – by placing it under the jurisdiction of the Settlement “Regional Councils.”

¹³ Source: Report by Meron Benvenisti, “Land alienation in the West Bank : a legal and spatial analysis” 1985, cited here: <http://www.nytimes.com/1985/04/01/world/israel-said-to-seize-control-over-52-of-west-bank-land.html>

¹⁴ Source: Btselem Report: http://www.btselem.org/download/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf, page 12.

¹⁵ Source: Btselem Report: http://www.btselem.org/download/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf, page 12.

In addition, Israel has taken hundreds of kilometers¹⁶ of the West Bank to build infrastructure to serve the settlements, including the network of roads I mentioned earlier. Roads that crisscross the entire West Bank, dividing Palestinian cities and towns from each other, and imposing various barriers to Palestinian movement and access, all for the benefit of the settlements.

Israel has used various means to do this, included by declaring much of the West Bank to be "state land,"¹⁷ taking over additional land for security purposes,^{18 19} and making it nearly impossible for Palestinians to register claims of ownership to their own land.²⁰

The same pattern holds in East Jerusalem – where since 1967, Israel has expropriated around 35%²¹ of the land and used it almost entirely for settlements.

But the reach of the settlements goes even further, because according to Peace Now's analysis of official Israeli government data, almost one-third²² of land that is included as part of the settlements in the West Bank is actually located on privately owned Palestinian land.

The bottom line here is this: while the built-up area of settlements is small, the settlers' control on the ground is huge, and the impact of settlements on the Palestinian population is far-reaching.

The second argument used by defenders of settlements is that most construction today is taking place inside the so-called "settlement blocs." These are the loosely-defined, ever-expanding areas that the same defenders of settlements say "everybody knows" Israel will keep even under a peace agreement – and therefore, they insist, construction in such areas shouldn't be treated as controversial.

This argument has been gaining currency of late, including with pressure on the United States government to change its policy and cease opposing construction in the blocs. This defense of settlements is at best confused, and at worst intentionally misleading.

Because if there are ever again serious negotiations over settlements and territory, the hardest issue to resolve is not going to be the fate of small and isolated settlements – settlements that nobody believes can stay in place under a peace agreement. No, the hardest issue is going to be the fate of the "settlement blocs": which ones and how many Israel will want to keep; how much territory they take up; how they can be connected to Israel without destroying the contiguity and viability of a Palestinian state with a capital in East Jerusalem; and how and where Israel will find adequate land to use for "land swaps" to offset these blocs.

¹⁶ Source: https://www.btselem.org/download/200408_forbidden_roads_eng.pdf, starting on page 5.

¹⁷ Source: http://www.btselem.org/download/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf, also note that there have been new "state land" declarations since that report was published, for example: <https://peacenow.org/entry.php?id=17315>, <https://peacenow.org/entry.php?id=16464>, and <http://peacenow.org.il/en/unprecedented-land-confiscation-of-4000-dunams-near-bethlehem>

¹⁸ Source: http://www.btselem.org/download/201007_by_hook_and_by_crook_eng.pdf

¹⁹ For more on seizures for military purposes, see: <http://peacenow.org.il/en/kiryat-arba-seizuer>

²⁰ For more on private ownership issue: https://www.btselem.org/download/201203_under_the_guise_of_legality_eng.pdf

²¹ Source: Danny Seidemann,

http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/04/26/redeeming_jerusalem_by_truth_not_hollow_slogans

²² <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/14/world/middleeast/14israel.html>

And notably, these “blocs” don’t just include settlements. If you take a radius from the center of a “bloc” like Gush Etzion, Givat Ze’ev, or Ariel, a large percentage of the population – in many cases a majority – is Palestinian.

This is why continued expansion of these “blocs” is equally – if not more – harmful to the two-state solution than construction in isolated settlements. The bottom line here is this: Given the facts on the ground today, reaching agreement on these blocs will be difficult. Further expansion of the settlements in these blocs, further growth of the blocs themselves, and the creation of new blocs – all things that are happening now – threaten to make a peace agreement impossible.²³

This is just a small sampling of the Israeli government’s settlement policies – policies that for the most part don’t make headlines and often fly under the radar of the international community. They are implemented continuously, creating facts on the ground that violate Palestinian rights, incrementally and exponentially making a political solution more difficult to reach, and endangering the viability of the two-state solution.

Those of us who follow the settlement enterprise and its trajectory over time are in an unparalleled position to judge both the intentions and the outcome of Israeli settlement policies. Looking at the scope, pace and location of settlement expansion, recognizing the vast political, economic, and security resources invested in the settlements enterprise, leads to an inescapable conclusion: these policies reflect a deliberate strategy designed to prevent the emergence of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state.

This is the grim reality today. Speaking as someone who cares deeply about Israel, I say to you today: I do not give up hope. Nor do I forget that the two-state solution is not a goal in itself. Rather, it is a political compromise to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is a solution that has consistently been embraced by majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians and their political leaderships. And it is the only solution that offers Israelis and Palestinians alike the hope for a normal life – a better life – for their children and their children’s children.

But with every day that passes, Israeli settlement policies further cement a one-state reality on the ground, making the two-state solution harder to imagine, let alone achieve.

Whether a peace agreement is possible at this time or any time soon can be debated endlessly. What cannot be debated is the fact that Israel is a vibrant democracy that has achieved great things in its short existence, and that has the potential for a great future. And what cannot be debated, likewise, is that the settlement policies of the Israeli government are undermining that democracy, distorting the noble Jewish values articulated in its Declaration of Independence, harming Israel’s relations with the world, violating the rights of the Palestinians, and killing the chances of ever achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace in the future.

That is why I come before you today – someone who proudly and unapologetically cares about Israel and defends its existence. Someone who, along with my organization Americans for Peace Now and our American and Israeli friends and supporters, cares about Israel too much to stop challenging its self-defeating settlement policies.

²³ For background on settlement blocs, see: <https://archive.peacenow.org/entries/archive4900>

And that is why, on behalf of Americans for Peace Now, I urge you here today to finally take action in the Security Council to send a clear message to Israel that the international community stands by the two-state solution and unambiguously rejects policies that undermine it – including Israeli settlement policies.

Thank you.

[APN's Lara Friedman to Address the United Nations Security Council on Settlements](#)

by [APN](#) 10/13/16

Americans for Peace Now (APN) today announced that its director of policy and government relations, Lara Friedman, will be speaking October 14, 2016 before the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) at a special session organized to examine the issue of "Illegal Israeli Settlements: An Obstacle to Peace and a Threat to the Two-State Solution."

APN President and CEO Debra DeLee commented:

"We are extremely proud that Americans for Peace Now has been invited to address the Security Council on the issue of Israeli settlement policies. This is an issue on which APN and our Israeli sister organization, Shalom Achshav, are justifiably recognized as the leading experts, both in terms of knowing and in terms of explaining the facts about settlements and their implications for peace and the two-state solution. And the facts point to a clear conclusion: the Israeli government's policy of prioritizing settlements threatens the vital interests of Israel – its people and its national future. This Security Council meeting is a welcome opportunity to highlight the damage settlements are doing to Israel and the quest for peace."

Ms. Friedman's statement will be available online by APN after 10am tomorrow, available [here](#). Ms. Friedman will also be participating in a press conference following the UNSC meeting.

The New York Times

[Israel's Unsung Protector: Obama](#)

By Lara Friedman 4/10/16

WASHINGTON — With the Obama administration in its final year, several officials have said that the president has grown so frustrated with trying to revive Middle East peace talks [that he may lay down his own outline](#) for an Israeli-Palestinian two-state peace agreement, in the form of a resolution in the [United Nations Security Council](#).



If that happens, count on two reactions: [Israel's](#) prime minister, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), will oppose it, and a chorus of American politicians and commentators will suggest that it would be unprecedented — even unthinkable — for an American president to support a Security Council resolution that Israel opposed, rather than veto it.

Last spring, when similar reports circulated, Senator John McCain of Arizona said that such an action would “[contradict American policy for the last at least 10 presidents of the United States.](#)” The Republican chairman and ranking Democrat of the House Foreign Affairs Committee joined in a letter protesting that “for decades the U.S. has used its U.N. Security Council veto to protect Israel from undue pressure at the world body.” A bipartisan group of senators agreed, seeking assurances that the policy would not change.

Remarkably, the assumption beneath those protests — that [President Obama](#) would be committing an unprecedented betrayal of the American-Israeli relationship if he did not block every Security Council resolution that challenged the actions or positions of Israel's government — has gone unchallenged.

Yet it flies in the face of truth. Over seven years, Mr. Obama has not permitted passage of any Security Council resolution specifically critical of Israel. But a careful examination of the record shows that, since 1967, every other American president allowed, or even had America vote for, Security Council resolutions taking Israel to task for actions and policies toward the [Palestinians](#) and other Arab neighbors.

During Lyndon B. Johnson's administration, the Security Council adopted at least seven such resolutions; in Richard M. Nixon's, at least 15; in Gerald R. Ford's, two; in Jimmy Carter's, 14.

The number peaked at 21 in Ronald Reagan's administration, [when the United States voted](#) in 1981 to [condemn Israel's air attack on an Iraqi nuclear reactor](#), a strike intended to thwart Iraq's nuclear ambitions. That resolution also called on Israel to place its own nuclear sites under international safeguards. [The Israeli cabinet responded](#) that “with profound regret, we note that the United States, our friend and ally” had “lent its hand to the grave wrong done to Israel.”

Other resolutions passed during the Reagan administration criticized Israel's annexation of the Golan Heights, its military activities in Lebanon, its operations against the Palestine Liberation Organization in Tunisia, and its activities in the occupied territories. A recurring theme in several unchallenged resolutions asserted that the Fourth [Geneva Convention](#), adopted in 1949, applied in the occupied territories, and explicitly included Jerusalem in that category. The convention states that an occupying power “shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies.” In effect, the United States permitted resolutions saying that all Israeli settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem violated international law.

Under President George H. W. Bush, the council adopted nine resolutions critical of Israel, including a condemnation of Israeli security forces after more than 20 Palestinians died and 150 other civilians were wounded at the holy site in Jerusalem known to Israelis as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif. Israel's ambassador to the United Nations denounced the resolution as “one-sided,” saying it “completely disregards the attack against Jewish worshipers on the holiday of the Sukkot at the Western Wall” and rejecting United Nations involvement in “any matter relating to Jerusalem.”

Other resolutions that the first Bush administration allowed to pass criticized Israel's deportation of Palestinians and its kidnapping of a Lebanese religious leader.

The number of such resolutions fell to just three during Bill Clinton's presidency, which was characterized by promising Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts, and then rose to six under George W. Bush, whose term in office saw increased violence with the outbreak of the second intifada. In May 2004, one such resolution, also deemed "one-sided" by Israel, condemned Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes in Gaza. Another, in March 2002, called for a cease-fire and a withdrawal by Israeli forces from Palestinian cities they had re-entered to stem the uprising; Israel protested that the resolution lacked "a similar call for an end to terrorism in all its forms and in particular suicide bombings."

President Obama, in contrast with his predecessors, has completely shielded Israel from such resolutions. This fact is all the more striking given that his presidency has overlapped with governments that have been among the most right-wing in Israel's history — governments that have continually and openly defied American-led peace efforts and American policy opposing settlement expansion.

The rationale behind Mr. Obama's United Nations policy was hinted at in 2011, when the United States vetoed a draft resolution related to Israeli settlements. In remarks explaining her vote, Susan E. Rice, then the United States ambassador to the United Nations, [made clear](#) that the administration objected to the resolution not over its substance, but over concerns that it could poison efforts to foster peace negotiations. In other words, the administration hoped that vetoing the resolution would encourage the Netanyahu government to engage more constructively in peace efforts.

But that didn't happen. Mr. Netanyahu's policies, words and actions — especially continued settlement expansion and new land confiscations — proved that Mr. Obama's tactic had been ineffective, perhaps even counterproductive.

Supporters of an Israeli-Palestinian peace, however, have reason to hope that Mr. Obama, having achieved nothing by shielding Israel, is now ready to embrace constructive Security Council action related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The two-state solution is the only path to preserving Israel's security and its character as a Jewish state and a democracy, while delivering freedom, dignity and sovereignty to the Palestinians. We can hope that President Obama may now recognize that preserving this solution for the future is the most important legacy he can leave in this arena. But to accomplish that, he must be willing to resist, rather than court, the anti-peace bullies in Israel and the United States; he must be willing to stand up for American interests in obtaining a Middle East peace, and to stand with America's allies in the Security Council in supporting a two-state solution.

If he does that, President Obama will not be betraying Israel. He will be Israel's true friend. And he will walk in the footsteps of all eight other presidents since 1967, Democrat and Republican alike.

III. Mobilizing Action to Preserve Two-State Solution

In September, APN launched a major initiative to mobilize action focused on several threats to the two-state solution: the demolition of Sussy, the fate of Amona, the approval of a new settlement nicknamed "E-2", and new settlement activity in Hebron. We created a new section of our website that highlights these burning issues – and others as they arise – and provides information on context, the U.S. official position, media coverage, and most importantly, actions that our supporters can take. This campaign allows APN to take ownership of activism around the key settlement issues of the moment.

Working with Peace Now, APN systematically highlighted Israeli settlement and land seizure policies, including Netanyahu's ceaseless actions to promote a pro-settlement, one-state agenda. APN condemned and publicized settlement construction and expansion in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem and pressed the Obama Administration and other stakeholders to take action. APN was a lone voice refuting, with carefully reasoned and factual arguments, the narrative – increasingly adopted by "pragmatic" analysts – that the U.S. should cease opposing settlement construction in areas that "everybody knows" Israel will keep under any future peace agreement. APN also spoke out, clearly and loudly, against terrorism – both Palestinian and Israeli – and against incitement.

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

[Is the JFNA legitimizing settlements?](#)

By Lara Friedman 11/1/26

Last week, [Jewish Federations of North American](#) (JFNA), an organization representing federations across the United States, [opened the door](#), as a matter of formal policy, to taking Americans to visit Israeli settlements. These are the areas located east of the 1949 Armistice line separating Israel and the occupied territories (aka “the Green Line”) in which Israel has been actively settling its citizens since 1967. This decision, upending longstanding JFNA policy, doesn’t come in a vacuum. Rather, it comes in the context of a campaign to legitimize settlements in the eyes of American law and in the minds of American Jews — contrary to consistent US law and policy since 1967 rejecting the legitimacy of both settlements and the occupation, and contrary to the vital interests of Israel.

Make no mistake: settlements are the bricks-and-mortar expression of an ideology that prioritizes land over peace, and values the expansion of Israel’s borders over Israel’s democracy, over its security, and over good relations with the world. Generations of Israeli generals and security experts have concluded that a peace agreement with the Palestinians is vital to Israel’s security, and that such an agreement will have to be based on the Green Line, with limited border modifications agreed to by both sides. Continued Israeli settlement expansion and obfuscation of the Green Line threaten the achievement of such an agreement and undermine Israel’s security.

Exploiting concerns about boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against Israel, the ongoing settlements legitimization campaign promotes the view that treating settlements as different from sovereign Israel is anti-Israel and even anti-Semitic. Already this campaign has produced legislation in Congress and in state legislatures across the country (both introduced and adopted) effectively erasing the Green Line and legislating American support for settlements. JFNA’s decision to open the door to bringing visitors into the settlements for “fact-finding” missions appears to fit neatly within this trend.

Does that mean, perforce, that JFNA’s decision is a win for the settlements? That depends, entirely, on JFNA itself. Because the onus is now on JFNA to demonstrate that this politically fraught policy shift is truly about “fact-finding” and is consistent with support for a two-state solution, rather than a step intended to legitimize settlements. What JFNA must do to achieve this is clear.

First, it must release the exact details of its policy, and in parallel must publicly articulate its rejection of the erasure of the Green Line and of any conflation of Israel and the settlements.

Second, it must make clear, as a matter of principle and of policy, that it differentiates between Israel and the occupied territories — including making clear that its new policy regarding visiting settlements does not mean that, in the name of supporting Israel, it will be directing funds to projects across the Green Line.

And third, JFNA must adopt a parallel policy of giving equal time and visibility on its fact-finding visits in the occupied territories to Israeli and international organizations working to end the occupation —

organizations with experience and expertise on the issues, and connections to Palestinians impacted by settlements on the ground.

Thus, if JFNA is going to bring Americans to visit the settlement of Ariel, it must program equal time for them to see the facts on the ground with, for example, [Peace Now](#) — which can help these visitors understand how Israeli governments have incentivized Israelis to move to settlements, teach them about Ariel's impact on security, infrastructure, and movement and access for Palestinians in the area, and introduce them to Palestinians living in Ariel's shadow. If JFNA visitors are going to come and sit with settlers in Hebron, JFNA must ensure they spend equal time with, for example, [Breaking the Silence](#) — which can educate them about what the Hebron settlements involve in terms of Israeli security arrangements, and introduce them to Palestinians whose lives are shaped by settlers and the soldiers who protect them.

Likewise, if JFNA is going to bring people to visit settlements anywhere near the beleaguered Palestinian village of Sussya, it must ensure they spend equal time with, for example, [B'Tselem](#) — which can explain how it is possible that Israel is planning to demolish virtually an entire Palestinian village, and introduce them to Palestinians living under an Israeli military regime that makes it nearly impossible for them to build legally on their own land.

And if JFNA is going to take people to visit settlers in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan, it must make sure they are given equal time to hear from, for example, renowned Jerusalem expert [Danny Seidemann](#) — who can help them understand how Israeli government policies, past and present, are gradually transforming this densely-populated Palestinian neighborhood into a settler-dominated Jewish-biblical theme park.

JFNA's decision — on the eve of the [50th](#) anniversary of the occupation — to formally open the door to taking visitors to settlements understandably sets off alarm bells. The burden to demonstrate that this move is not just the latest step in the continuing campaign to legitimize settlements falls squarely on the JFNA. Should JFNA fail to do so, then supporters of peace and the two-state solution must demand that this new JFNA policy be reversed.

[APN Condemns New Israeli Settlement Plan](#)

by [Lara Friedman](#) 10/05/16

Today Americans for Peace Now joined its Israeli sister organization, Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), in condemning the Israeli government's announced plan to establish a new West Bank settlement in the Shiloh Valley (full details on the announcement are [here](#)).

APN President and CEO Debra DeLee commented:

"This new plan appears to be a direct pay-off to settlers from the illegal outpost of Amona, who brazenly violated Israeli law by stealing and building on Palestinian private land. Prime Minister Netanyahu and his government worked for years to try to "legalize" these illegal actions, but ultimately were unable to find any means to do so. They are now looking to turn this rare win for the rule of law into a new defeat for the two-state solution, by exploiting the removal of this illegal outpost as a pretext to establish a new "legal" settlement, situated in the heart of the West Bank.

"In doing so, the Netanyahu government is sending a message to settlers that it is an eager partner and collaborator in activities that are illegal under Israeli law. And it is sending settlers a message that where such activities cannot be retroactively legalized – as the Netanyahu government had done repeatedly – they will be rewarded with new settlement in other places. At the same time, the Netanyahu government is sending a message to the Palestinians and the world that its rhetorical commitment to peace and a two-state solution is at best a cynical political cover for an agenda that seeks to expand and consolidate permanent Israeli control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and which is being implemented every day.

"Establishment of this new settlement violates longstanding Israeli commitments and contradicts any meaningful commitment to peace and a two-state outcome. This decision by the government to reward settler law-breaking imposes a high political price on Israel's law-abiding citizens, who want and deserve peace and security but are seeing their interests, over and over, sacrificed at the altar of the settlements and the Greater Israel agenda.

"We condemn the Netanyahu Government's plan to establish a new settlement in the Shiloh Valley. We urge the Obama Administration to reject this plan and to make clear to the Netanyahu Government that there will be consequences if it proceeds with this and other plans that undermine the viability of the two-state outcome."

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Bibi, Settlements & the "Ethnic Cleansing Canard"

By Lara Friedman 9/12/16

It seems there is no line Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won't cross to defend settlements. Israeli law says settlers can't steal Israeli-recognized Palestinian private land for their own purposes? Netanyahu leaves no principle of rule of law unchallenged in the [effort to "legalize"](#) the settlers' actions. The boycott-divestment-sanctions (BDS) movement challenges Israel's legitimacy? Netanyahu jumps on the chance to exploit the BDS threat to legitimize settlements, accusing anyone who differentiates between Israel and settlements of embracing BDS (and [accusing Israel's closest allies](#) of adopting policies similar to those of the Nazis). The Palestinians – and virtually the entire world – argue that settlements are an obstacle to peace and will need to be removed? Last week, Netanyahu releases a video accusing them of supporting [ethnic cleansing](#).

Let's make one thing perfectly clear: the idea that Jews may not live in a given place, for no reason other than because they are Jewish, is abhorrent. But that isn't what objecting to settlements is about, and Netanyahu knows it. The demand for the removal of Israeli settlements from the West Bank has nothing to do with where Jews, as Jews, can or cannot live. It has to do with whether Israel will be a permanent occupier or will accept a two-state solution.

And let's make another thing clear: Defending settlements by appealing to Jewish historical trauma at the hands of the Nazis — which is what Jews think of when we hear the words "ethnic cleansing" or

worse yet, the Nazi term often invoked Netanyahu and the settlers, "[Judenrein](#)" — is morally despicable, politically inflammatory and factually misleading.

A reminder: The Israeli population of the West Bank in June 1967 was zero. Since 1967, that population has grown to hundreds of thousands of Israelis — not out of any natural forces but out of a combination of political-religious ideology and Israeli government policies, both seeking to displace Palestinians and take control over as much of the land as possible.

Some will no doubt retort, "But there were Jews living in the West Bank prior to 1948!" Yes, indeed, a very small number of Jews lived in a very small number of places in the West Bank prior to 1948. But is this really the hook on which defenders of Israel want to hang their hats? Setting aside for a moment the fact that this demand in no way justifies Israel the implantation of Israeli settlers all across the West Bank – there is an even more fundamental problem: this demand for a Jewish "right of return" to pre-1948 Jewish property in the West Bank and East Jerusalem clearly legitimizes a parallel Palestinian demand for a "right of return" to property they owned in Israel before 1948. Are people sure they want to go there?

Then, there is the final argument, a favorite of Netanyahu: "But there are Arabs living inside Israel!" This is absolutely true. Arab citizens live alongside and (in theory, if not always in practice) as equals to Israel's Jewish citizens. This diversity and equality within Israel — a key facet of Israeli democracy — is something for which Israelis and supporters of Israel justifiably feel pride. And it stands in stark contrast to the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem — a situation that can only be a source of shame and outrage.

For nearly 50 years, Israeli settlers have acted, and been treated by Israel, as a super-class. They are afforded not only the rights of Israeli citizens but granted the special privileges of a favored minority to which Israeli politicians pander.

The Palestinians, in contrast, have for nearly 50 years lived under Israeli military rule — a separate and unequal legal system in which they enjoy few rights and virtually every aspect of their lives is controlled by Israeli authorities who are in no way accountable to them, but who are accountable to the settlers. It is a situation in which for 50 years Israel has systematically abused its power to take land, monopolize [resources](#), and displace Palestinians in the service of a strategy — often expressed unambiguously and without apology — to make the occupation permanent.

The presence of Jews in the West Bank will not be secured by Israel exploiting its power as an occupier to implant settlements and force the Palestinians — and the world — to accept them as a *fait accompli*. A Jewish presence in these areas — the heartland of biblical Jewish history — will be secured only by removing the settlements as a necessary step to achieving a two-state solution.

One day, when there is peace and a Palestinian state established alongside Israel, we can all hope that Palestine will be welcoming to people of all faiths. If it is not, we can work to change that. Until then, the settlements are and will remain an obstacle to peace – not because their inhabitants are Jewish, but because that was what the settlements were always intended to be.



Action Alert: Urge America's Jewish organizations to repudiate Netanyahu's "ethnic cleansing" comments

by APN 09/12/16



Last week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released a video statement in which he claimed that evacuating Israeli settlements from the West Bank in the context of a future Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement is tantamount to "ethnic cleansing." This statement, trivializing crimes against humanity and genocide, should outrage anyone who cares about international affairs and who cares about Israel.

Applying terminology borrowed from the darkest days of European history to a scenario in which Israeli settlements would be withdrawn to allow for a peace accord between Israelis and Palestinians, reached by the sovereign governments of both peoples, is abhorrent. It merits the US Jewish community's rejection and repudiation.

Every U.S. President since 1967, both Republican and Democrat, has accepted that settlements would be removed as part of a peace agreement. Menachem Begin, who evacuated all of Israel's settlements in Sinai as a part of a peace agreement, and Ariel Sharon, who unilaterally removed all the settlements from the Gaza Strip and a handful in the northern West Bank, made a sovereign decision to do so out of national security considerations. Controversial as these moves may have been at the time, they were not "ethnic cleansing."

American Jewish organizations must condemn Prime Minister Netanyahu's outrageous comments for what they are: Cheap demagoguery, which exploits and minimizes horrible tragedies that Jews and others have suffered throughout history.

We call upon America's Jewish organizations, particularly those who focus on fighting bigotry and hatred in the public sphere, to repudiate Netanyahu's comments.

[Click here to urge the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the American Jewish Committee, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, the Union for Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, the Orthodox Union, and the Wiesenthal Center to reject Prime Minister Netanyahu's offensive comments.](#)

Contact the State Department's press office and urge a stronger response on Hebron and Amona

by APN 09/06/16

The Israeli government is in the process of establishing – by stealth –the first new settlement complex (28 units, providing housing for some 100 settlers, or a 10% increase in the settler population in the

area) in Hebron in more than a decade. It is doing so by taking properties seized years ago by the Israeli government for military use and handing them over to the settlers. This action directly contravenes Israeli law, which prohibits seizing lands for military needs and then using them for the purpose of settlements. It also contradicts the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants and constitutes a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. In addition, allocating these properties to the settlers based on the argument that they belonged to Jews before 1948 in essence constitutes implementation of a "right of return" for Jews, at the expense of protected Palestinian tenants – even as Palestinians are denied any parallel "right of return" to properties they left or were expelled from before 1948.

On August 24th, State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner said that if reports about what is happening in Hebron are true, "*...it would represent a deeply concerning step of settlement expansions...*"

At the same time, the Israeli government is moving ahead with plans to "relocate" the illegal outpost of Amona. It plans to move the settlers off the privately-owned Palestinian land where the outpost it currently located – land that after years of trying, the Government was forced to admit it could find no "legal" way to expropriate and give to the settlers – and on to a nearby plot of privately-owned Palestinian land that it has now found a pretext to seize. In short, this case involves Israel taking new land from the Palestinians for the sole benefit of settlers. And it involves Israel acting not to punish and deter settler law-breaking, but instead rewarding and incentivizing such illegal actions. And it contributes to the growth of the settlement foothold deep in the West Bank, via the direct support and collusion of the Israeli government.



On August 11th, the Director of the State Department's Press Office, Elizabeth Trudeau, said that the State Department was "*deeply concerned by reports that the Israeli Government has begun the process to take over privately owned Palestinian land to relocate the illegal Israeli outpost of Amona.*"

Take Action Today!

Contact the State Department's press office and urge a much stronger public response to what is happening today in Hebron and Amona than just "deep concern." These Israeli actions are outrages and should be met with a clear and public demand that Israel cease and desist.

Click [here](#) to write to them (via the State Department's web form). A sample message – that you can copy/paste/customize – is below.



[Be sure to copy and paste your message into an email and share it with us, too.](#)

Sample Message:

Subject Line: For the Press Office/Spokesman: Developments in Hebron & Amona are more than “deeply concerning”

Message: I am writing to urge those speaking in the name of the State Department to take a much stronger public stance regarding what is happening today in the West Bank with respect to the illegal outpost of Amona and new settlement developments in Hebron.

During the August 11th press conference, Director of the State Department’s Press Office, Elizabeth Trudeau, said that the State Department was *“deeply concerned by reports that the Israeli Government has begun the process to take over privately owned Palestinian land to relocate the illegal Israeli outpost of Amona.”*

During the August 24th press conference, State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner said that if reports about what is happening in Hebron are true, *“...it would represent a deeply concerning step of settlement expansions...”*

I agree that these plans are “deeply concerning” – but I urge you to learn more about what is going on. When you do, I think you will realize that this public reaction to the plans from the State Department does not go nearly far enough.

What the Israeli government is planning to do in Hebron is, in fact, an outrage that must be directly challenged. Israel’s plan directly contravenes Israel’s own law, which prohibits seizing lands for military needs and then using them for the purpose of settlements. It contradicts the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, and constitutes a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. And, by suggesting that handing these properties to settlers is ok because they may have belonged to Jews before 1948, this effort in essence constitutes implementation of a “right of return” for Jews, at the expense of the protected Palestinians tenants, and even as Palestinians are denied any parallel “right of return” to properties they left or were expelled from before 1948.

What is happening with respect to Amona is equally outrageous and must not be permitted to stand. It involves Israel seizing new land from the Palestinians, unabashedly for the sole benefit of settlers. It involves Israel acting not to punish and deter settler law-breaking, but instead rewarding and incentivizing illegal settler actions. And it involves the expansion of the settlement presence deep in the West Bank heartland, through the direct support and collusion of the Israeli government.

The U.S. is increasing its military support for Israel, recognizing the rising threats Israel faces in the region. At the same time, the U.S. has to increase pressure on Israel – including with much tougher statements from you and your colleagues – to stop these Hebron and Amona plan and other settlement projects, recognizing the rising threat they pose to peace and the two-state solution.

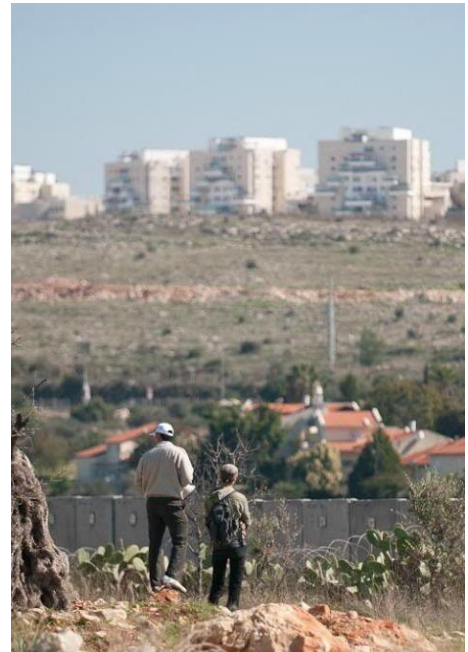


[Sign our Petition: Tell Israel - Stop the land grabs, stop the settlement expansion.](#)

by APN 09/06/16

Nearly 50 years into the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the current Israeli government continues to exploit a wide range of tactics, laws, and regulations to take control of more Palestinian land and hand it over to the settlers. Here are just the latest examples:

- In Sussy, located in the south Hebron hills, Israel is seeking to raze Palestinian homes to make way for more settlement.
- Northeast of Ramallah, near the settlement of Ofra, Israel is working to take over more Palestinian-owned land to give to settler law-breakers from the outpost of Amona.
- South of Bethlehem, the Netanyahu government is actively seeking to seize land in order to implement an extraordinarily dangerous and destructive new settlement plan which activists have dubbed "E-2," involving thousands of new units.
- In the heart of Hebron, the Israeli government is in the process of establishing – by stealth – a new settlement complex: 28 housing units for some 100 settlers, or a 10% increase in the settler population in the area. This is the first new settlement construction in Hebron in more than a decade. The government's method, this time, is taking properties seized years ago by the Israeli government for military use and handing them over to the settlers – in direct contravention of Israeli law.



With actions like these, the Israeli government is telling the Palestinians that it is not interested in peace or a two-state solution. It is telling the world that it places greater value on land than on peace, that it prioritizes settlements over security, and that it is more concerned with ensuring permanent control over "Greater Israel" than in ensuring Israel's relations and reputation with nations around the world, including the United States.

With no immediate possibility of re-starting peace talks on the horizon, it is critical that world leaders stand firm against Israeli government efforts to further expand and entrench the occupation – the very possibility of the two-state outcome hangs in the balance.

Sign our petition today (to be sent to addressees and released as an open letter). Join us in calling on the heads of state of the U.S., UK, France, and Germany -- as well as top officials in the European Commission and the UN, and other world leaders -- to individually and collectively stand up to the Netanyahu government's plans to confiscate or transfer West Bank land for new settlement activity.

[Take action NOW.](#)

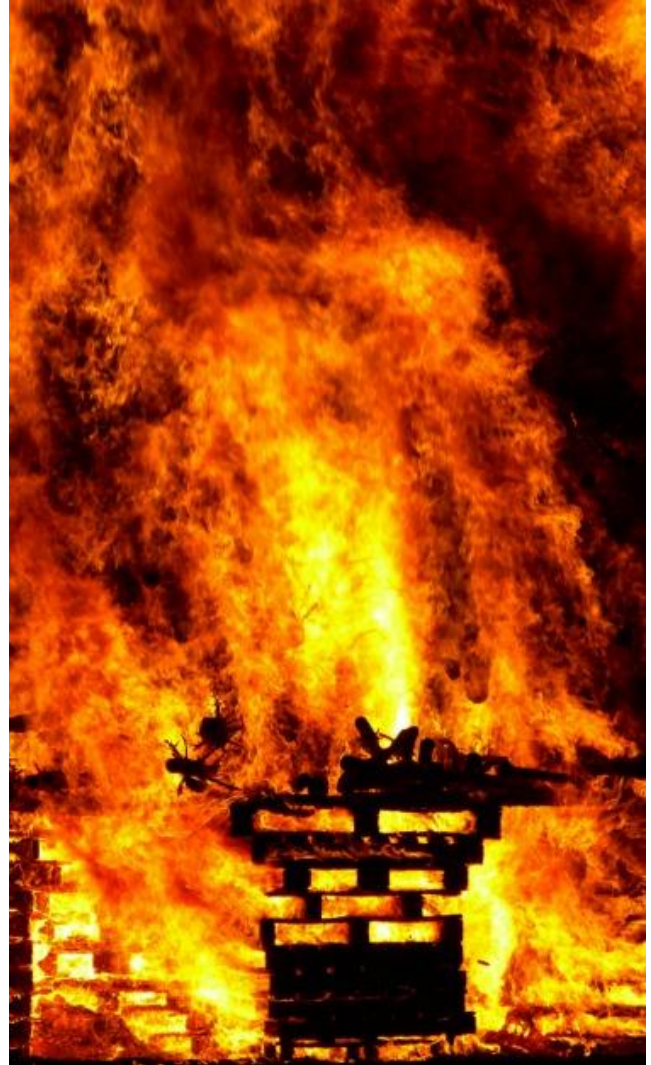
(Burning Issues Home Page) [Fanning the Flames of Conflict](#)

The policies and actions of the current Israeli government are actively fanning the flames of violence, further entrenching and expanding occupation, and killing the two-state solution. Some of the most recent and ongoing outrages are:

Expanding the settlers' hold in Hebron: The Israeli government is in the process of establishing – by stealth – the first new settlement complex (28 units, providing housing for some 100 settlers, or a 10% increase in the settler population in the area) in Hebron in more than a decade. It is doing so by taking properties seized years ago by the Israeli government for military use and handing them over to the settlers. This action directly contravenes Israeli law, which prohibits seizing lands for military needs and then using them for the purpose of settlements. It also contradicts the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, and constitutes a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. In addition, allocating these properties to the settlers based on the argument that they belonged to Jews before 1948 in essence constitutes implementation of a “right of return” for Jews, at the expense of protected Palestinians tenants – even as Palestinians are denied any parallel “right of return” to properties they left or were expelled from before 1948. [Click here to learn more about this new Hebron development and to find out how you can take action.](#)

Planned demolition of the village of Sussya: The campaign to save the Palestinian village of Sussya, which has involved extraordinary efforts by human rights activists both inside and outside Israel, has reached a decisive moment. The Israeli government is poised to make a final decision on whether to raze almost half of the village, located in Area C on land long-coveted by settlers. International pressure succeeded in convincing the Israeli government to delay the decision, originally due in early August, until October, but the threat to destroy almost half of the village remains, as does the threat to destroy individual homes before a final decision is made later this year. [Click here to learn more about Sussya and to find out how you can take action.](#)

Planned re-location of Amona: Amona is the largest illegal outpost in the West Bank, home to some fifty families, located near the settlement of Ofra, northeast of Ramallah. Built on some 100 acres of land registered as privately-owned by Palestinians, the outpost was built without permits from the Israeli government, but with the direct and indirect support of Israeli authorities. In 2006, following a decision of the Israeli High Court of Justice, nine structures in the outpost were demolished, but in the years since, the outpost has grown and flourished. Now, the High Court is forcing the Israeli government to



take action once again to remove the illegal construction – but rather than simply removing the outpost, the Israeli government has decided to re-locate it – to another area of privately-owned Palestinian land. [Click here to learn more about Amona and to find out how you can take action.](#)

Planned new settlement of Givat Eitam, aka E-2: The Netanyahu government is actively promoting an extraordinarily dangerous and destructive new settlement plan which activists have dubbed “E-2” – a name that reflects the fact that the plan is as dangerous and destructive to the two-state solution as the infamous E-1 project (against which the international community has formed a united front). The E-2 project, which the settlers call Givat Eitam, involves thousands of new units to be built south of Bethlehem, near the settlement of Efrat. Documents recently released by the government in connection with a lawsuit brought by Peace Now show that the Netanyahu government is actively moving ahead with this plan at this time, including working to seize new land on which it can build necessary infrastructure to implement the project (a new major road). [Click here to learn more about E-2 and to find out how you can take action.](#)

(Issue Page) [Expanding the Settlers’ Hold in Hebron](#)

by APN 09/02/16

The Israeli government is in the process of establishing – by stealth –the first new settlement complex (28 units, providing housing for some 100 settlers, or a 10% increase in the settler population in the area) in Hebron in more than a decade. This action directly contravenes Israeli law, which prohibits seizing lands for military needs and then using them for the purpose of settlements. It also contradicts the principle of distinction between civilians and combatants, and constitutes a clear violation of International Humanitarian Law. In addition, allocating these properties to the settlers based on the argument that they belonged to Jews before 1948 in essence constitutes implementation of a “right of return” for Jews, at the expense of protected Palestinians tenants – even as Palestinians are denied any parallel “right of return” to properties they left or were expelled from before 1948. The Israeli Peace Now movement uncovered this story and is leading the effort to pressure the Israeli government to cancel these plans.

TAKE ACTION

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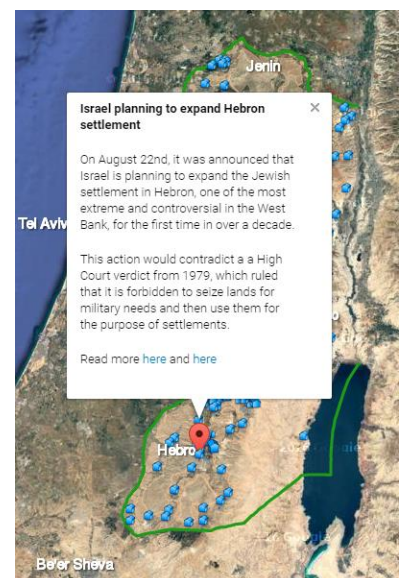
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LEARN MORE

[APN Briefing Call with Peace Now Settlement Watch Director Hagit](#)

[Ofran](#) (August 25, 2016)

Peace Now’s August 23, 2016 report: [Establishing a New Settlement in Hebron - More Information Revealed](#)



Peace Now's August 22, 2016 report: [Settlers' Residence Being Prepared in a Hebron Military Compound](#)

[View this & other settlement-related developments on APN's Map App](#)

US OFFICIAL REACTION

Haaretz 8/24: [U.S. 'Deeply Concerned' About Plans to Advance Construction for Jewish Settlers in Hebron](#)

[State Department Press briefing](#) 8/23: "...if these reports are true, it would appear to be an effort to expand civilian Israeli settlement in the city of Hebron, and that would represent a deeply concerning step of settlement expansions..."

IN THE MEDIA

Arutz Sheva (settler media outlet) 8/24: [Peace Now 'slanders' activists over Hebron construction](#)

Maan News 8/23: [Peace Now: New settlement will add 100 more Israeli settlers in Hebron](#)

Haaretz 8/22: [For First Time in Decade, Israel Plans to Expand Jewish Settlement in Hebron](#)

Times of Israel 8/22: [Israel said planning to build several Jewish homes in Hebron](#)

Associated Press 8/22: [Israel Takes Steps Toward New Settlement in Volatile City](#)

(Issue Page) [Planned demolition of the village of Sussyia](#)

by [APN](#) 09/06/16

The campaign to save the Palestinian village of Sussyia, which has involved extraordinary efforts by human rights activists both inside and outside Israel, has reached a decisive moment. The Israeli government is poised to make a final decision on whether to raze almost half of the village, located in Area C on land long-coveted by settlers. International pressure succeeded in convincing the Israeli government to delay the decision, originally due in early August, until later this fall, but the threat to destroy almost half of the village remains, as does the threat to destroy individual homes before a final decision is made later this year.

TAKE ACTION

[Write to Secretary of State John Kerry & to Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer](#)

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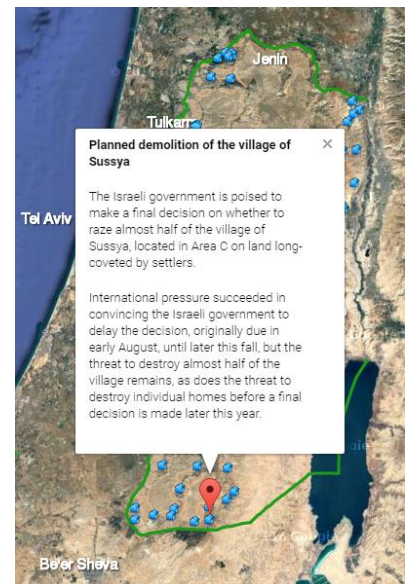
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[APN Briefing Call](#) with Peace Now Settlement Watch Director Hagit Ofra (August 25, 2016)

Backgrounder from Rabbis for Human Rights: [The struggle against the forced displacement of Sussyia to Area A](#)



Backgrounder from Btselem: [Khirbet Susiya – a village under threat of demolition](#)
[View this & other settlement-related developments on APN's Map App](#)

US OFFICIAL REACTION

[State Department press briefing 7/16/16](#): "...we strongly urge the Israeli authorities to refrain from carrying out any demolitions in the village. Demolition of this Palestinian village or of parts of it, and evictions of Palestinians from their homes would be harmful and provocative..."

IN THE MEDIA

The Washington Post 8/28/16: [Israel wants to bulldoze this ramshackle village, but Europe is providing life support](#)

Jerusalem Post 8/19/16: [In disputed Sussiya, old Ottoman law still casts a shadow over the land](#)

Times of Israel 7/26/15: [1881 document suggests Palestinian ownership of Susya](#)

David Shulman in New York Review of Books 6/28/12: [‘I Am an Illegal Alien on My Own Land’](#)

Moriel Rothman oped in the Daily Beast 6/20/12: [Why Susya is "Illegal"](#)

(Issue Page) [Planned "relocation" of the illegal outpost of Amona](#)

by [APN](#) 09/02/16

Amona is the largest illegal outpost in the West Bank, home to some fifty families, located near the settlement of Ofra, northeast of Ramallah. Built on some 100 acres of land registered as privately-owned by Palestinians, the outpost was built without permits from the Israeli government, but with the direct and indirect support of Israeli authorities. In 2006, following a decision of the Israeli High Court of Justice, nine structures in the outpost were demolished – but in the years since, the outpost has grown and flourished. Now, the High Court is forcing the Israeli government to take action once again to remove the illegal construction – but rather than simply removing the outpost, the Israeli government has decided to re-locate it – to another area of privately-owned Palestinian land.

TAKE ACTION

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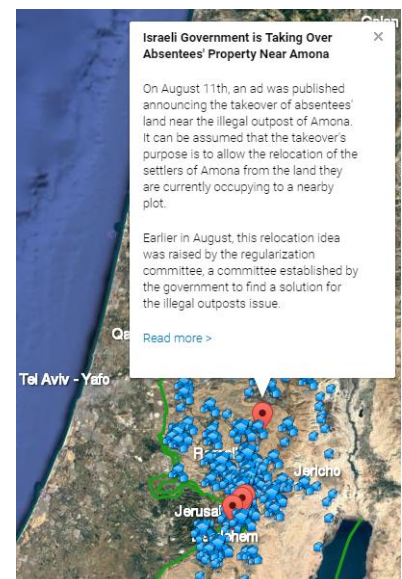
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[APN Q&A on Amona](#)

[APN Briefing Call](#) with Peace Now Settlement Watch Director Hagit Ofra (August 25, 2016)

APN to Obama 8/11/16: [Act to Reverse Israeli Government Taking Over Palestinian Land for West Bank Settlement](#)

Peace Now Report, August 2016: [The Legal Opinion Submitted to the](#)



[Attorney General on Amona: A Crossing of a Red Line](#)

APN report 8/8: [Peace Now Settlement Watch: AG Mandelblit Considers Relocating Amona to Lands Owned by Absentees](#) (with translation of AG's opinion)

Peace Now report 8/11/16: [The Israeli Government is Taking Over Absentees' Property Near Amona](#)

Comprehensive report on the original battle over Amona and the destruction of 9 units there: [APN Settlements in Focus 2/17/06](#) and [APN Settlements in Focus 7/29/05](#)

[View this & other settlement-related developments on APN's Map App](#)

US OFFICIAL REACTION

[State Department Briefing 8/11/16](#): " We're deeply concerned by reports that the Israeli Government has begun the process to take over privately owned Palestinian land to relocate the illegal Israeli outpost of Amona. This would represent an unprecedented and troubling step that's inconsistent with prior Israeli legal opinions and counter to longstanding Israeli policy to not seize private Palestinian land for Israeli settlements. If this moves ahead, it would effectively create a new settlement or significantly expand the footprint of an existing settlement deep in the West Bank. This is a continuation of a process that has seen some 32 outposts that are illegal under Israeli law being legalized in recent years."

IN THE MEDIA

i24News 8/12: [Peace Now protests Israeli government intention to seize private Palestinian land for illegal outpost](#)

AFP 8/12: [NGO says Israel seeking settlement move to Palestinian land](#)

Jerusalem Post 8/11: [Israel starts to seize 'abandoned' Palestinian property for Amona relocation](#)

(Issue Page) [Planned new settlement of Givat Eitam, aka E-2](#)

by [APN](#) 09/02/16

The Netanyahu government is actively promoting an extraordinarily dangerous and destructive new settlement plan which activists have dubbed "E-2" – a name that reflects the fact that the plan is as dangerous and destructive to the two-state solution as the infamous E-1 project (against which the international community has formed a united front). The E-2 project, which the settlers call Givat Eitam, involves thousands of new units to be built south of Bethlehem, near the settlement of Efrat. Documents recently released by the government in connection with a lawsuit brought by Peace Now show that the Netanyahu government is actively moving ahead with this plan at this time, including working to seize new land on which it can build necessary infrastructure to implement the project (a new major road).

TAKE ACTION

[Write Letters to the Editor](#)

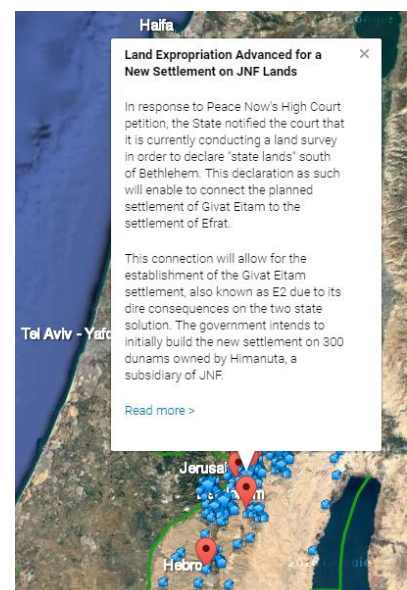
[Get the word out: Tweet About E-2](#)

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[APN Briefing Call](#) with Peace Now Settlement Watch Director Hagit Ofran(August 25, 2016)

Peace Now report 1/13/16: [High Court Rejects Nahla Landowners' Petition Removes Legal Obstacle to Establish a Settlement in E2](#)

Peace Now report January 2015: [The new settlement in a-Nahla – a significant threat to the two-state solution](#)

September 2014 report by Peace Now, Kerem Navot, and Combatants for Peace: [The New Settlement in E2 \(Nahla\) - A Significant Threat to the Two States Solution](#)

[View this & other settlement-related developments on APN's Map App](#)

US OFFICIAL REACTION

[State Department briefing 8/16/16](#): " *We're concerned because these plans, if carried out, would have the effect of isolating Bethlehem from the southern West Bank, and that's fundamentally...fundamentally incompatible with the pursuit of a two-state solution.*"

IN THE MEDIA

Jerusalem Post 8/17: ['Gush Etzion settlement bloc to grow to half-a-million people'](#)

Haaretz 8/14: [Israel Lays Groundwork for Possible Settlement Expansion Southeast of Jerusalem](#)

Jerusalem Post 8/14: [Road needed to build 2,500 new settler homes in Efrat](#)

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL

Netanyahu's Mixed Messages on Temple Mount Incitement

By Lara Friedman 8/26/16

In 2009, Israel arrested the head of the northern branch of Israel's Islamic Movement for incitement, for saying that Israel "seeks to build a synagogue on Al-Aqsa Mosque." Since then – and especially over the past two years, as unrest has rocked Jerusalem – Netanyahu has regularly argued that Palestinian Authority incitement over the Temple Mount is a chief cause of violence, and has called Palestinian officials' statements about Israel's intentions on the Temple Mount "gross lies."

Earlier this month, on August 14-15, Jews observed the fast day of Tisha B'Av, commemorating various catastrophes that have befallen the Jewish people, including the destruction of the first and second temples. Israel's Deputy Defense Minister, Eli Ben-Dahan, marked this solemn occasion by telling a crowd gathered for a march around the Old City: "*We aren't embarrassed to say it: We want to rebuild the Temple on the Temple Mount.*"

To be clear: if Ben Dahan were a private individual expressing his personal views, there would no issue. It is as much the right of religious Jews to aspire to rebuild the Temple as it is the right of Muslims to hold the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock sacred. But Ben Dahan is not merely a private

individual. He is a highly-visible member of the Israeli government. As such, his words are rank incitement, stoking Palestinian fears and anger over Israeli intentions vis-à-vis the Temple Mount. They are no less incitement than Palestinian claims that Israel is digging under the al Aqsa Mosque, and Muslim claims that Jews have no religious or historic claims to the Temple Mount.

So why hasn't Netanyahu publicly reprimanded Ben Dahan for his incitement? Indeed, why hasn't Netanyahu rebuked other Israeli public officials for spreading similar "gross lies" about Israeli intentions on the Mount? Like Housing Minister Uri Ariel (Jewish Home), who has repeatedly made approving remarks about building the Temple (including in [November 2014](#), [July 2013](#), and [January 2013](#); and in [May 2012](#), when Ariel and then-Knesset member Michael Ben Ari were filmed with other activists praying on the Temple Mount, contrary to Israeli law, and singing, "*We will build the holy temple*").

Netanyahu likewise said nothing earlier this summer, when [Israel's chief rabbi](#) – a government employee – urged rebuilding the Temple. Nor did Netanyahu speak up in November 2015, when it came to light that his controversial nominee for chief of public diplomacy, [Ran Baratz](#), had written approvingly of the desire to build the third Temple (Baratz was subsequently appointed Netanyahu's media advisor).

Netanyahu held his silence, too, in November 2014, when then-Knesset member [Moshe Feiglin](#), during a filmed tour of the Temple Mount, pointed to the Dome of the Rock and described it as "*the place where the 3rd temple will stand, soon, with G-d's help.*" Nor was Netanyahu moved to say anything in July 2012, when then-Knesset member [Zevulun Orlev](#) published an article calling for building the third Temple and, to do so, removing the al-Aqsa Mosque and Dome of the Rock.

Netanyahu's consistent silence is even more troubling when you follow the advice of Vice President Joe Biden: "*Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value.*" As reported extensively in the Israeli media (in [2012](#), [2013](#), [November 2015](#), and [December 2015](#)), successive Netanyahu-led governments and their members have supported and cooperated with Israeli organizations devoted to the goal of rebuilding of the Temple, most notably, [the Temple Institute](#).

Netanyahu's failure to publicly reject the statements of Ben Dahan, Ariel, and the others – and his governments' support for the Temple Institute and its ilk – can, in the most generous interpretation, be viewed as evidence of Netanyahu's political cowardice, opportunism, and hypocrisy. Viewed through a lens colored by anger and mistrust, they appear to bolster Palestinians' worst fears regarding Israel's true intentions on the Temple Mount.

In December 2015, [Netanyahu](#) told fellow Likud members in a private meeting (audio of which was leaked) that if Israel wanted to destroy Al-Aqsa "*it would not require a great effort... but it goes against everything we stand for.*" This casual statement gets to the heart of the matter.

Palestinians don't need Netanyahu to remind them that Israel has the power to destroy al-Aqsa – they know and fear this, viscerally. Palestinians likewise have very compelling reasons to doubt Netanyahu when he says it won't happen – because Netanyahu's silence when members of his own government speak out in support of rebuilding the Temple, along with his governments' quiet support for groups working to achieve this goal, sends a very different message.



Take Action on Sussy

by APN 08/24/16



APN's Stephanie Breitsman delivering activist emails to the state department!

The campaign to save the Palestinian village of Sussy, which has involved extraordinary efforts by human rights activists both inside and outside Israel, has reached a decisive movement.

The Israeli government is poised to make a final decision on whether to raze the village, located in Area C on land long-coveted by settlers. International pressure succeeded in convincing the Israeli government to delay the decision, originally due in early August, until November, but the threat to destroy the village remains, as does the threat to destroy individual homes before a final decision is made November 15th.

Now is the time to take action and add your voice to those of so many other activists working to save Sussy. We know the Israeli government and leaders around the world are listening. Take action now.

[Click here to send your message to Secretary of State John Kerry.](#)

[Click here to send your message to Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer.](#)

It's not too late for you to act - keep those emails coming!

Briefing call Thursday, August 25 with the world's leading experts on West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements, Daniel Seidemann and Hagit Ofran

by APN 08/22/16

In the past few weeks, it seems like every day brings more alarming news regarding Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Some of this activity poses a direct threat to the viability of a two-state solution.

In the coming weeks, we will urge you to take action to oppose these dangerous developments.

This week, we are inviting you to a Thursday briefing call on this issue with with two of the world's leading experts



on West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements: **Hagit Ofran**, the director of Peace Now's Settlement Watch project, and **Daniel Seidemann**, the founder and director of Terrestrial Jerusalem.

[Listen here.](#)

In addition, [we ask you to join the campaign to save the Palestinian village of Sussya](#), by sending letters to [Secretary of State John Kerry](#) and to [Israel's ambassador to Washington, Ron Dermer](#).

[APN to Obama: Act to Reverse Israeli Government Taking Over Palestinian Land for West Bank Settlement](#)

by [APN 08/11/16](#)

Washington, DC – Americans for Peace Now (APN) joins its Israeli sister organization, Shalom Achshav (Peace Now) in strongly condemning the Israeli government's decision to take over West Bank Palestinian absentee land east of the Palestinian city of Ramallah, apparently in order to relocate Israeli settlers who have been evacuated from the illegal outpost of Amona.

APN calls on the Obama administration to weigh in and reverse the Israeli government's decision to rebuild Amona, a West Bank outpost built in violation of Israeli law, without official government authorization, on land privately owned by Palestinians. Rebuilding the outpost, which was removed ten years ago amidst severe violent resistance by the settlers, sends a terrible message about the Israeli government's respect for the rule of law and for efforts to achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The takeover was announced today in an ad in the Palestinian newspaper *al-Quds*, on behalf of the Israeli Government's Custodian of Absentee Property.

Commenting on the unusual move, Peace Now today stated: *"This is the crossing of a red line and a reversal of previous policies, including Likud governments' policies, according to which private lands cannot be used for the purpose of settlement. There is no dispute that Absentees' lands are private property and using them for the purpose of settlement will be considered illegal by legal advisers in Israel and abroad. In order to compensate a small group of settlers who stole private Palestinian lands, the Israeli government itself is now stealing private lands as well. The government's willingness to politically compensate the settlers of Amona is leading to devastating consequences on the ground and to the distortion of Israel's moral and legal systems."*

They Say, We Say – New Entries July 2016

They Say:

Israelis and Palestinians can buy property in East Jerusalem. Why is that a problem – unless you are in favor of discrimination against Jews?

We Say:

The fact is that to the extent that a real estate market exists in East Jerusalem, it exists to facilitate the transfer of property from Palestinians to Israelis. With respect to purchasing property, any Israeli – and, in fact, any Jew from anywhere in the world – can legally buy property in Jerusalem, including East Jerusalem. And as it happens, entire organizations, backed by massive and entirely non-transparent private foreign funding (kept secret through the active protection of Israeli courts) exist for the purpose of making such purchases. They do so with a publicly-stated political agenda of working to push out the Palestinians, establish Jewish hegemony in these areas, and thereby make impossible a two-state peace agreement and undermine any Palestinians claims in the city. And they do so with the active and tacit support of Israeli municipal and governmental authorities.

On the other hand, the Palestinian side of the real estate market – the potential buyers – is artificially limited. Palestinians who do not have legal residency in Jerusalem (i.e., Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians living abroad – including Palestinians who might have been born in or have parents born in East or West Jerusalem) are barred from living in the city. Palestinian West Bankers cannot, for all intents and purposes, purchase land in Jerusalem, and they are entirely prohibited from doing so on State controlled lands (which accounts for most of the city). Those who do own land in the Jerusalem may not access it freely, since as non-residents they have no legal right to enter or stay in the city without a special permit from Israel.

Palestinians who do have legal residency in East Jerusalem are a marginalized, underserved collective of around 350,000 people. While these Palestinians technically have the right to purchase property anywhere in the city, in reality there are very few instances of Palestinians purchasing property in Jewish West Jerusalem – reflecting both the fact that their lives and communities are in the Palestinian part of the city, and the fact that Israelis do not want to sell to them. Underscoring this fact is the case Nof Zion, a settlement project in Jabel Mukabber. When that project was failing financially (for lack of Israeli buyers), a wealthy Palestinian sought to purchase the development from the creditor, offering a price higher than any Israeli bidder. His effort was thwarted by an organized and very public campaign to block the sale for the declared purpose of keeping the property in Jewish Israeli hands. The property was subsequently sold to a Jewish Israeli businessman and is now a large Jewish-populated settlement. And even in this example, small symbols can sometimes disclose large truths: in Jabel Mukabber, sidewalks line the road only in the area bordering the settlement; when the road enters the built-up Palestinian areas, the sidewalks disappear.

They Say:

Why shouldn't Palestinians be able to sell property in East Jerusalem to Jews if they want to? Again, what is the problem – unless you are in favor of discrimination against Jews?

We Say:

First, there is the issue of property transactions in East Jerusalem. Palestinians in East Jerusalem face obstacles and dangers if they want to buy or sell property to each other, especially in settler-targeted areas. Palestinians have learned over the years that merely seeking to register property transactions can

bring on scrutiny by Israel's Interior Ministry, toward the goal of taking away property or residency rights.

Selling to Israelis/Jews, on the other hand, is both easy and facilitated by the Israeli government. This facilitation includes not just the transaction itself but cooperation by the government agencies and officials who often work hand-in-hand with settlers to help them find and target "vulnerable" properties – e.g., properties where owners can be threatened with the choice of either selling to settlers or having the property taken or demolished on various grounds (absentee, illegal construction, etc). This cooperation extends further to providing forces to secure settlers taking over and moving into properties, providing compensatory arrangements to sweeten the deal for Palestinians who sell (such as permits to building elsewhere or travel permits), and paying for permanent security to enable settlers to live safely within these areas.

In addition, the deliberate failure of Israeli authorities over the past 49 years to grant building permits to Palestinians, and more broadly the Israeli government's unwillingness to provide proper planning and development opportunities within the Palestinian sector, distorts the real estate "market" in East Jerusalem in a manner geared to incentivize the transfer of property from Palestinians to Israelis/Jews. The value of property is linked to the ability of the owner or purchaser to develop and use it. But Palestinians in East Jerusalem can rarely get permits from Israeli authorities to build – especially in areas targeted by settlers. This includes withholding of permits needed for renovations, expansion of existing properties, and construction of new homes, not to mention new residential projects. As a result, the value of property on the (virtually non-existent) Palestinian market is artificially capped, even assuming a transaction between Palestinians was possible. And when Palestinians build (or expand, or do maintenance) without permits, they face a very real threat of fines and demolitions, particularly if they do so in areas coveted by the settlers.

On the other hand, once a property is in the hands of the settlers, the Jerusalem Municipality and state agencies provide active support in that property's development, treating the settlers as partners in a government-endorsed project of establishing and expanding the Jewish presence in the targeted area. Settlers generally have no issues getting permits to renovate, expand, develop (as seen in the various settler developments in these areas, including Shepherds Hotel, Nof Tzion, Ras al Amud, etc). And when settlers build without permits, Israeli authorities find excuses to avoid taking action against them. The most glaring example of this phenomenon is "Beit Yonatan" – a seven-story settler structure built illegally in Silwan in 2002, against which Israeli authorities have failed to take meaningful action for more than a decade, despite the Supreme Court having ruled that the settlers must vacate and that Israeli authorities must seal the illegal building. Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat has refused to honor that verdict, flouting binding instructions from Israel's Attorney General and going so far as to fire a Municipal Legal Adviser who insisted he respect the rule of law.

They Say:

Arabs can live anywhere in Jerusalem; Jews should be able to build and live anywhere in the city as well.

We Say:

The debate over settlements in East Jerusalem has nothing to do with equal access to housing. There is nothing "equal" about the way that Israel has dealt with land, residency issues, and investment in East

Jerusalem since 1967. Rather, Israeli policies in East Jerusalem since 1967 have openly favored Israelis of the city over Palestinians, and have openly sought to expand the number of Israeli residents of East Jerusalem at the expense of the existing Palestinian population.

The truth is, very few Palestinians live in West Jerusalem, and, aside from those living in the large Israeli-government backed settlements, very few Israelis live in East Jerusalem in areas that are an integral part of urban or suburban East Jerusalem. Those settlements were built for the express purpose of drawing Israelis into the part of the city that Israel conquered in 1967. They are built on the 35% of that area which Israel expropriated for the purpose of such construction. Notably, no comparable housing projects have been built by Israel for Palestinians in either East or West Jerusalem since 1967.

In addition, a small number of Israelis have taken up residence in enclaves in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem - like Silwan, Ras al Amud, and Sheikh Jarrah. Their openly declared purpose is to displace the local Palestinian population and establish Jewish hegemony in these areas. Many of these efforts are based on the implementation of a Jewish "right of return" to properties that were owned by Jews before 1948. No comparable Palestinian efforts exist in Jewish neighborhoods of West Jerusalem, and no comparable Palestinian "right of return" has been recognized with respect to properties that were owned by Palestinians in West Jerusalem prior to 1948.

The bottom line is this: Israelis and Palestinians don't especially want to live together in Jerusalem. The reasons for this are clear, including a preference to live within one's own community and near where one works, where one's children go to school, and where one worships. Settlements in East Jerusalem have never been about promoting coexistence or establishing equal housing for Israelis and Palestinians in all areas of the city. They are and have always been about creating facts on the ground in order to prejudice any future peace negotiations related to Jerusalem and, potentially, to block a future Palestinian capital in the city. If this effort succeeds, it will mean that the two-state solution is lost, and with it, Israel's ability to survive as a Jewish state and a democracy.

They Say:

Israel should annex Area C, which came under full Israeli control under the Oslo agreement. Hardly any Palestinians live there and that is where most of the settlers are. Doing so will allow Israel to provide better security for Israelis and recognizes the fact that these are areas that Israel will never give up, even if someday there is a Palestinian leader capable of making peace.

We Say:

Israeli annexation of Area C – 60% of the West Bank – would be a death blow to the two-state solution. Certainly, in negotiations Israel has sought and will seek to retain some of this area – i.e., the parts where there are the most settlers. However, the key word here is: "negotiations."

To be clear: the Oslo Agreement did not grant Israel permanent control over Area C. The designation of this area as coming under full Israeli control was intended to be temporary, pending a permanent status agreement. The fact that such an agreement has not been reached – and the fact that Israel has abused its power and control over the area in the intervening years to massively increase settlements – does not give Israel any legal claim to permanent control over this area.

Moreover, legal status aside, negotiations up to this point have established clearly that Israel's ability to retain control over any settlements under a future peace agreement will come only via mutually agreed-on land swaps, involving land of equal size and quality. There is no possibility of land swaps that could compensate for all of Area C; nor is there any possibility that Palestinians would ever agree to such a massive annexation of land – an annexation that would render a future Palestinian state politically and economically non-contiguous and non-viable.

In short, annexing Area C would, in effect, be a move by Israel to rip up the Oslo Agreement and to state that it prefers permanent conflict and occupation to negotiations and a future two-state agreement. In doing so, Israel would be openly prioritizing settlements over security and Greater Israel over Israel's standing in the international community. It would also be a definitive step down the road toward condemning Israel to a future as a pariah state.

They Say:

There is no Palestinian partner for peace, so Israel can and should act unilaterally to preserve its own interests – namely, security and normalization of the situation for Israelis living in parts of the West Bank that everyone knows Israel will never give up. Doing so can actually promote peace by showing the Arabs that Israel does not want to hold onto the entire West Bank forever.

We Say:

When Israeli-Palestinian efforts are at an impasse and immediate-term hopes for progress toward any agreement are fading, the appeal of new ideas becomes understandable. No doubt this is why, at such times, discussion of Israeli unilateral options comes up—generally in terms of unilateral “withdrawals” from the West Bank. However, it is essential to distinguish between ideas that are genuinely consistent with peace and the two-state solution, and ideas that simply perpetuate the avoidance and denial that have been the hallmark of successive Israeli governments' policies vis-à-vis the occupation.

For example, unilateral “withdrawals” that leave Israeli settlers and soldiers behind, while marketed as a step toward peace, practically speaking are no different than continued occupation. Unilateral “withdrawals” that are cover for settlement expansion in the areas of the West Bank from which Israel decides not to “withdraw” (e.g. the area west of Israel's separation barrier, plus or minus a little, amounting to at least 10% of the West Bank), are not simply continued occupation, but are potentially lethal to the two-state solution. Such settlement expansion, under the cover of “withdrawals,” would take any mutually acceptable land swap option off the table, rendering a future agreement on borders and territory impossible (Israeli land reserves are sufficient for a swap equivalent to at most 2-3% of the West Bank, along the lines laid out in the Geneva Accord). Moreover, this brand of unilateralism would prevent the establishment of a viable Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem or any contiguity between East Jerusalem and the West Bank—and no legitimate Palestinian leadership will ever sign an agreement that doesn't include both.

Similarly, plans to unilaterally divide Jerusalem – to rid the city of unwanted Palestinian residents ostensibly to make the city more Jewish and more secure – will have the opposite of the intended effect. As Jerusalem expert [Danny Seidemann](#) writes:

These proposals make a bad security situation worse. Security in Jerusalem is a function not of the number of Israeli security forces on the city's streets and borders or the number of its Palestinian residents per se. Insecurity in Jerusalem today stems from Palestinian rage, fueled by despair, deriving from permanent occupation, sharpened by fears that Israel seeks to change the status quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif. Israeli statements, policies, and actions—like proposing cutting 200,000 Palestinians off from their own city—only intensify and lend credence to those fears.

As for "saving" Jewish Jerusalem, Israeli governments and settlers have been working for years to establish—through housing, parks, archeological sites, and tourist facilities—a Jewish pseudo-Biblical domain in the most volatile areas of East Jerusalem (and, indeed, of the planet), that is, the Old City and its visual basin, including the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif, all at the expense of equities that Muslims and Christians hold in the city. Suggestions to further cut off Palestinians from these areas only exacerbate this dangerous trend, which is transforming the Israeli-Palestinian political conflict, resolvable by the two-state solution, into a zero-sum religious battle.

In short, while many unilateral plans are marketed as steps toward peace, the devil is in the details – and in the details, a common characteristic of unilateral plans is that, if implemented, they risk depriving Israel of any possibility of a two-state solution, taking the country further down a suicidal path which ends with Israel ceasing to be a democracy and a Jewish state.

[\[Action Alert\] Tell President Obama and Secretary Kerry: Take action in the United Nations Security Council](#)

by [APN 07/10/16](#)

Last Wednesday, the Israeli government announced plans for hundreds of new homes in Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. In response, the U.S. Department of State issued a sharply-worded statement pointing out how destructive these new settlement plans are.

State Department Spokesperson John Kirby said, "*...this report would be the latest step in what seems to be a systematic process of land seizures, settlement expansions and legalizations of outposts that is fundamentally undermining the prospects for a two-state solution...*"

He went on to state, unequivocally: "*We oppose steps like these, which we believe are counterproductive to the cause of peace. In general, we're deeply concerned about settlement construction and expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.*"

[Click here to thank President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry for their unwavering stance opposing settlements and urge them to support action in the United Nations Security Council to advance the two-state solution.](#)



Now is the time for real leadership that can revive and re-accredit the two-state solution as President Obama enters his final months in office. And he can do this - he can lay the groundwork for a two-state agreement in the future by supporting an Israeli-Palestinian two-state resolution in the United Nations Security Council.

Such a resolution would restore U.S. leadership in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. It would preserve the now-foundering two-state outcome. And it would be a gift to the next president, leaving her or him constructive options for consequential actions in the Israeli-Palestinian arena, in place of the ever-worsening, politically stalemated status quo there is today.

[Click here to thank President Obama and Secretary Kerry for their consistent opposition to settlements, and ask them to pursue a UN Security Council resolution laying out parameters for a two-state agreement.](#)

[Tell President Obama: Take the Two-State Solution to the UN Security Council](#)

by APN 04/13/16



For years right-wing critics – Israeli and American, inside and outside Congress – have maligned President Obama for supposedly failing to sufficiently defend and support Israel. In particular, they have warned that if President Obama were to allow the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to pass a resolution criticizing objectionable Israeli policies, or a resolution weighing in on the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it would be an unprecedented betrayal of Israel – a betrayal that a true friend of Israel would never consider, let alone permit.

Now, the truth is finally out – in [this op-ed](#) in the New York Times, by APN Director of Policy & Government Relations Lara Friedman. And the truth is: **President Obama is the only president since 1967 who has shielded Israel 100% from critical resolutions in the UNSC.**

[Tell President Obama: enough.](#)

As a true friend of Israel, it is time for President Obama to stop shielding Israel in the UNSC, just as his predecessors in the Oval Office – **Republican and Democrat alike** – did numerous times over the past 48 years.

It is time for President Obama to allow – and even better, to actively **lead and support** – action in the UNSC to preserve and support the achievement of a two-state solution in the near future.

[Tell President Obama you want him to support constructive action for two states in the UNSC.](#)

Over the past year, President Obama has achieved historic foreign policy victories on Cuba and Iran, Now, in his final months in office, **another historic foreign policy achievement is within reach:** passage of a resolution in the UNSC laying out the parameters of a two-state solution, and, with greater clarity than ever before, laying the groundwork for the achievement of such a solution.

Such a resolution would represent a critically important legacy for President Obama. It would renew U.S. leadership in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. It would preserve the now-foundering two-state outcome. And it would be a gift to the next president, leaving her or him constructive options for consequential bilateral and multilateral policies and actions in the Israeli-Palestinian arena, in place of the ever-worsening, politically stalemated status quo there is today.

[Tell President Obama: Stand up for peace and two states.](#)

Tell President Obama that initiating or backing a two-state Israeli-Palestinian resolution in the United Nations Security Council is the real pro-Israel, pro-peace policy.

President Obama needs to hear from you today!

Debra DeLee
President & CEO
Americans for Peace Now

PS: APN has long held a position in support of harnessing international institutions such as the UN to advance the two-state solution. [Click here](#) to see more resources from APN on this issue.

[**Two States: The Only Solution – a briefing call with Daniel Kurtzer Wednesday, March 2, at 2:30 pm EST**](#)

by [APN](#) 02/23/16

As many question not only the viability but also the desirability of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one of the world's leading experts on the conflict and on efforts to resolve it discussed the state of the two-state solution.

Dan Kurtzer, is the former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Egypt and currently the S. Daniel Abraham Professor of Middle East policy studies at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

We suggest reading Ambassador Kurtzer's [recent Brookings essay](#) on the two-state solution.

[Listen here.](#)

[Tell Congress: Pro-Settlements is NOT Pro-Israel](#)

by APN 02/08/16

There are bills pending in both the House and Senate that seek to reverse almost 5 decades of U.S. policy with respect to Israeli settlements.

[Contact your House member tell her/him: pro-settlements is NOT pro-Israel!](#)



All three of these bills – H. Res. 567, S. Res. 346, and S. 2474 – purport to be about countering BDS against Israel. In reality, all three are really about erasing the distinction between Israel and the occupied territories and legislate U.S. protection and support for Israeli settlements.

[Your Senators need to hear from you today! Tell them: Conflating Israel with settlements is reckless and dangerous, for both the U.S. and Israel.](#)

These bills did not emerge from a vacuum. They are part of a broader effort – supported by AIPAC and other groups – to exploit legitimate concerns about growing grassroots support for the BDS movement in order to change U.S. policy on settlements.

For more info on H. Res. 567 and S. Res. 346, see [here](#) and [here](#).
For more info on S. 2474, see [here](#).

IV. Preserving Israel's Democratic Character, Defending Jewish Values and the U.S. Constitution

APN took a leading role challenging anti-democratic legislation and other initiatives aimed at intimidating and silencing progressive voices in Israel, including fighting the so-called NGO Transparency law, which was passed by the Knesset in July, and the Museum of Tolerance, which is being constructed on a historic Muslim cemetery in Jerusalem. APN was also the leading voice rejecting and fighting legislation in the United States that exploits concerns about BDS to conflate settlements and Israel, or to undermine rights guaranteed under the U.S Constitution.

Governor Brown should veto flawed BDS law

By APN Board Members Steven J. Kaplan and Sanford Weiner in the LA Jewish Journal, 9/12/16

Since March, the California legislature has struggled to draft a bill aimed at thwarting BDS - the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. As readers of these pages know, BDS is a movement that promotes South Africa-style boycott and divestment strategies to oppose Israel and its policies. For many of its supporters, BDS is a way to challenge the very legitimacy of the Jewish state.

After a torturous path of amendment and revision, the State legislature now has in AB 2844 something it thinks it can live with. But the revised bill, however well-intentioned, remains seriously flawed. Governor Brown should veto it.

Earlier versions of the bill would have created a list of companies that participate in BDS – defined to include boycotts targeting Israel or settlements – and prohibited companies on the list from becoming state contractors (a blacklist). After being cautioned by its own legal counsel that economic boycotts qualify as protected free speech under the First Amendment, the legislature abandoned its original scheme and converted AB 2844 into a generic anti-discrimination law.

The new law requires state contractors to certify, under penalty of perjury, that they comply with California's anti-discrimination laws, including the Fair Employment and Housing Act and the Unruh Act. The bill does not mention BDS, but it cautions that any policy maintained by state contractors "against a Sovereign nation or peoples, including but not limited to the nation and people of Israel," may not be used to discriminate in violation of those laws.

If this sounds a little confusing, it is. It is not clear whether AB 2844 prohibits any conduct that is not already illegal under California law, because state contractors are already required to certify that they comply with anti-discrimination laws. And the formal findings and analyses that accompany the bill do not explain what, if anything, the new bill would add to existing rules.

The bill does send a symbolic message that California opposes BDS. And AB 2844 avoids the pitfalls of many anti-BDS bills and regulations recently adopted in other states, which unconstitutionally penalize participation in BDS, and which will almost certainly face credible legal challenges.

Nevertheless AB 2844 is unsound. The bill's lack of precision creates a serious risk that courts will give it unexpected interpretations, and it could become a victim of the law of unintended consequences. On top of all that, it is unfair to put contractors at risk of perjury – with potential criminal sanctions – by requiring them to sign a certification for such a confounding statute.

The legislative history of waffling and revision on the proposal will likely subject the legislature to embarrassment and ridicule for pandering to anti-BDS, pro-settlement forces in the Jewish community. After learning that it could not prohibit state contractors from exercising their constitutional right to participate in BDS, it looks like the legislature scrambled to come up with something, anything, to

please these groups. And yet, in a backhanded way, the bill legitimizes BDS. It states, in effect, that it is perfectly fine to support BDS, so long as you don't discriminate in the process. And although some claim that BDS is by its very nature anti-Semitic, if there is one point of clarity in AB 2844, it is that BDS is not intrinsically discriminatory against Jews or others.

Finally, there lurks beneath the bill a difficult and complex question about what it means to have a policy against "the nation and people of Israel." There are many strong supporters of the State of Israel, including our organization Americans for Peace Now, who oppose the extreme positions of BDS, but who support a boycott of economic activities that further Israel's dangerous settlement policies in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Does the "the nation and people of Israel" in AB 2844 include settlements that the United States government has long declared illegitimate and that are clearly illegal under international law?

Whether state government should get involved in foreign policy issues is always a difficult question. That state government needs to be particularly sensitive when entering the thicket of the Israel-Palestine conflict should be self-evident. The fact is, there is no pressing BDS problem that warrants this amount of legislative attention. Nobody is claiming that hordes of state contractors are boycotting Israel, let alone using BDS as a pretext to discriminate against women, the disabled, racial minorities or Jews.

The California experience shows that efforts to defeat BDS legislatively will, ineluctably, run into serious constitutional hurdles and likely will result in ineffective if not counterproductive laws. Here, AB 2844 will give exposure to the BDS movement, but it's just not clear what else it will do – and it's not clear as of now whether that exposure will harm the movement. The BDS controversy is best left to those who can educate, persuade and influence. This is an issue for public discourse, not confusing and muddled legislation.

They Say, We Say – New Entries July 2016

They Say:

All BDS – whether targeted at Israel or at settlements – is anti-Israel, anti-Semitic, and unacceptable.

We Say:

It is ironic that some BDS supporters and BDS opponents share this same view that settlements and Israel are one and the same. For those who truly care about Israel and its future, this deliberate conflation of Israel and the settlements is outrageous. It in effect argues that those who care about Israel (or Palestine, or both) face a binary choice – support both Israel and the settlements, or oppose both. This is tantamount to arguing that no avenue for meaningful pro-Israel activism against the occupation and settlements exists. Such an approach is not only wrong, but a terrible mistake. It only feeds activism targeting Israel, bolstering those BDS activists who tell the world that settlements and Israel are one and the same. They are wrong, and activism targeting not Israel but, instead, the settlements and occupation, is indisputably pro-Israel and pro-peace. It is also the best answer to the BDS movement, demonstrating to activists that there is an avenue to oppose settlements and the occupation that is not anti-Israel (for more, see our other entries on BDS, including [here](#)).

They Say:

The only way to fight BDS is to attack its proponents and supporters – to call them out as anti-Israel and anti-Semitic, to name and shame – and to pass laws banning boycotts and other economic pressure against Israel.

We Say:

Some BDS supporters are certainly motivated by anti-Semitic or anti-Israel agendas. Many more are motivated by legitimate frustration over Israeli policies and actions. Legislative initiatives that treat all BDS supporters as members of the first category are just as misguided and counterproductive as BDS efforts that target all Israelis for the pro-settlement policies of their government. At the same time, efforts to outlaw BDS, even if well-intentioned, represent an unacceptable effort to limit free speech and peaceful political protest – violating our own Constitution as well as the spirit of the American ideal of the free exchange of ideas. As longtime ADL leader [Abraham Foxman](#) wrote in 2015:

"Legislation that bars BDS activity by private groups, whether corporations or universities, strikes at the heart of First Amendment-protected free speech, will be challenged in the courts and is likely to be struck down. A decision by a private body to boycott Israel, as despicable as it may be, is protected by our Constitution."

They are likewise misguided, ineffective, and counterproductive. They play into the stereotype promoted by some BDS supporters of Israel and its supporters as aggressive violators of civil and human rights. Indeed, as Foxman also noted,

"in light of such legislation, BDS campaigners would undoubtedly portray themselves as victims of efforts to stifle their free expression which would likely win them more sympathy and support from students — even those who are not inclined to be hostile to Israel."

There is a smarter approach to the challenge of BDS against Israel. This is one that does not conflict with constitutionally-protected rights, will not fuel a pro-BDS narrative, has a real chance of convincing a lot of people –those who are frustrated with Israeli policies but are neither anti-Israel nor anti-Semitic – to adopt a better kind of activism. APN supports such an approach, which includes:

Recognizing and rejecting pro-settlement, anti-peace policies that feed the growing support for BDS today, and working publicly and concretely to oppose and change them.

Rejecting efforts to conflate Israel and the settlements and instead recognizing the legitimacy and potential value of activism and boycotts that squarely target settlements and the occupation.

Ceasing efforts to limit free speech. BDS supporters, regardless of their motivations, are entitled to their views and to their legal, non-violent forms of protest, just as opponents of BDS are entitled to challenge and criticize them in ways that do not trample on the First Amendment rights of any party.

Engaging the public and challenging BDS on its merits – through statements and other public messaging – in order to demonstrate why BDS against Israel is a misguided, counterproductive tactic in the fight to end the occupation, and to illustrate how activism focused on settlements and the occupied territories is a better way to achieve that goal.

They Say:

There's nothing unconstitutional about banning BDS.

We Say:

Legislation (seen thus far) seeking to shame, punish and bar BDS through various avenues runs afoul of constitutionally-protected rights and constitutional doctrine and practice in one or more of the following ways:

Free Speech: The U.S. Constitution (Amendment I and Amendment XIV) bars Congress or any state from "abridging the freedom of speech." The Supreme Court (most notably in NAACP v. Claiborne Hardware Co. 458 U.S. 886 (1982)) ruled clearly that economic boycott is protected free speech.

Unconstitutional-conditions: According to the unconstitutional-conditions doctrine, as articulated clearly by the Supreme Court (in Perry v. Sindermann 408 U.S. 593 (1972)):

*"For at least a quarter-century, this Court has made clear that, even though a person has no 'right' to a valuable governmental benefit, and even though the government may deny him the benefit for any number of reasons, there are some reasons upon which the government may not rely. It **may not deny a benefit to a person on a basis that infringes his constitutionally protected interest, especially his interest in freedom of speech.** For if the government could deny a benefit to a person because of his constitutionally protected speech or associations, his exercise of those freedoms would in effect be penalized and inhibited. This would allow the government to 'produce a result which [it] could not command directly.' Speiser v. Randall, 357 U. S. 513, 357 U. S. 526. Such interference with constitutional rights is impermissible."* [emphasis added]

Vagueness: The "void for vagueness" or "overbroad" doctrine holds that a law is unenforceable if its terms are so vague or overbroad that the average citizen could not be certain what conduct is or is not permitted. The EO clearly falls into this category, with language that is *prima facie* vague and overbroad (e.g., "any activity," "promote others," "coercing political action," "affected state entities").

Chilling Effect: Chilling effect is defined as follows: "*In constitutional law, the inhibition or discouragement of the legitimate exercise of a constitutional right, especially one protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, by the potential or threatened prosecution under, or application of, a law or sanction.*" As articulated by Justice Brennan in his dissent on Walker v. City of Birmingham 388 U.S. 307 (1967): "*We have molded both substantive rights and procedural remedies in the face of varied conflicting interests to conform to our overriding duty to insulate all individuals from the 'chilling effect' upon exercise of First Amendment freedoms generated by vagueness, overbreadth and unbridled discretion to limit their exercise.*"



A shrine to tolerance shows grave insensitivity

By Ori Nir 9/29/16

The opinion piece by Rabbi Abraham Cooper (“Museum of Tolerance not being built atop Muslim cemetery,” Sept. 23) takes issue with my assertion that the Wiesenthal Center is knowingly building its Museum of Tolerance at the site of a historic Muslim cemetery and that bones of people buried there have been dug up to make room for the museum (“American Jewish progressives must act to defend their values in Israel,” Sept. 16).

My assertion is based on facts. These facts have been discussed in Israeli courts and in the Israeli public arena, and are included in Israel’s Supreme Court ruling. The heart of this ruling was not the question of whether there were skeletons buried where the museum now stands, but the manner in which the bones in the “Purple Zone” would be handled.

The Wiesenthal Center never refuted the presence of human bones in the “Purple Zone,” which it depicted in court as “the heart” of the museum’s construction site.

Yes, the Wiesenthal Center won in court. One of the chief reasons was that the petitions against the project by representatives of Israel’s Muslim community were filed late in the game, after building permits had already been issued.

In its ruling, the court criticized the Wiesenthal Center for not showing more flexibility and for insisting on building where bones were found. The court also pointed to the irony of the Wiesenthal Center constructing a shrine to tolerance while being so insensitive to the sentiments of others.

Judge Edna Arbel wrote: “It is difficult not to wonder how the standard bearers of tolerance failed to grant proper consideration to the value of tolerance between peoples and among individuals, while weighing other considerations and interests, important as those may be. The case in question is the test of tolerance, tolerance in the sense of showing consideration for others, for their sentiments and their hurt, tolerance that safeguards human dignity and strengthens the existence of a democratic society.”

Arbel makes the same point I made in my article — that legalities notwithstanding, insisting on building an institution that celebrates tolerance where you know there are old graves is ethically repugnant. Furthermore, it weakens rather than strengthens the values of tolerance and democracy in Israeli society.



[American Jewish progressives must act to defend their values in Israel](#)

By Ori Nir 9/15/16

On a trip to Israel last month, I visited a friend who runs a small store in downtown Jerusalem, my hometown. Outside, on the street, there were dozens of young American Birthright tourists. "Business must be hopping, with all these Birthrighters," I said. "Not quite," my friend replied. "Their parents send them here with pocket money, but stay home in the U.S., with their credit cards."

To my dismay, he said that as he saw it, American Jews don't care enough about Israel's future. They see Israel as a Jewish Disneyland of sorts, a place where they go for its history, but they don't do enough to secure Israel's future as a liberal democracy. This is not an unusual view among Israelis.

Albeit blunt, over-generalizing and overstated, my Israeli storeowner friend has a point. Sure, American Jews don't vote in Israel. They don't serve in the IDF and don't pay taxes. They don't have as much of a stake and as much of a say in Israel's future as Israeli citizens do. But they definitely could do more to advance peace, reconciliation and tolerance in Israel, particularly when upsetting things are being done in Israel in their name.

Here is a case in point, which should concern all American Jews, right, left, Reform, Orthodox, affiliated and unaffiliated.



Walking from my friend's store in downtown Jerusalem to fetch our car from an underground parking lot, my 16-year-old daughter noticed a colossal concrete structure under construction. "Oh, that's the Museum of Tolerance," I told her. An American Jewish organization, the Wiesenthal Center, is building a museum, in the name of tolerance, smack on Jerusalem's historic Muslim cemetery. Yes, I'm serious. Bones had been dug up and moved to allow for this monstrosity to rise, over the protest of Israel's Muslim community and of many Israeli Jews.

My daughter couldn't believe it. "Doesn't this bother American Jews?" she asked. "I mean, it's kind of done in their name."

Good question.

American Jews had a chance to act to stop this travesty, to demand that the Wiesenthal Center choose an alternative site rather than practice "tolerance" while offending Muslims. Thirty-five percent of

Jerusalem residents and 17 percent of Israel's citizens are Muslims. Unfortunately, aside from several organizations — mine among them — American Jews did not act.

Today, large signs on and around its concrete walls say that the Museum of Tolerance will open to the public in March 2017. It's a done deal.

What can be done? Boycotting the museum will be ineffective. It certainly won't advance tolerance. Instead, why not stand with those who do work to promote peace and reconciliation? So many Israelis, Jews and Arabs, routinely seek peace and pursue it, practice tolerance, acceptance and peaceful coexistence. Their work is facilitated by dozens of civil society organizations that champion these values and work on the ground to advance them. Israeli organizations that work for peace and tolerance abound.

Americans and others who care have a broad choice of organizations and initiatives to support, whether financially or morally. Regardless of your preferred scenario for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and whether you support the current Israeli government's policies, it's hard to argue that real tolerance and open-mindedness are not an Israeli national security interest.

American Jewish organizations — federations, human and civil rights groups, religious movements and individual synagogues — could get involved to advance such values by partnering with Israeli organizations who espouse a tolerant, peace-seeking agenda.

Even the Wiesenthal Center could do its part and somewhat make up for being so ethically obtuse.

They Say, We Say – New Entries July 2016

They Say:

Why does the Left oppose Israel's 2016 NGO Transparency law? Transparency is a good thing – unless you have something to hide.

We Say:

Transparency is indeed a good thing. However, Israel's NGO law (passed in July 2016) is not about transparency – it is about demonizing progressive NGOs. The fact is, transparency regarding NGOs and their funding has long existed in Israel. Indeed, enhanced transparency for NGOs receiving foreign government funding has been in effect for years, by virtue of a 2011 law. According to that law, all non-profit organizations receiving funding from foreign governments must disclose all such funding in their quarterly reports to the government's registrar and must post this information publicly. The NGOs in question do, in fact, publish these details on their websites, fully available to the public.

If transparency was truly the issue in question, then the 2016 "transparency" law would have been written to require disclosure not only with respect to foreign government funding (which goes almost entirely to progressive civil society NGOs and other NGOs working on peace and human rights) but also with respect to foreign individuals (who provide massive amounts of funding for right-wing NGOs). Instead, the bill permits right-wing NGOs to continue to maintain secrecy with respect to their funders,

while NGOs on the left, which are already transparent about their donors, are publicly branded, in effect, as agents of foreign governments.

They Say:

The government of Israel is right to do everything it can to highlight foreign funding of Israeli NGOs. There is nothing discriminatory about an effort to make the funding of such NGOs completely transparent.

We Say:

Israel's 2016 NGO "transparency" law is, in fact, explicitly discriminatory – by design and with intent. Its authors openly stated that they wished to target progressive groups that they dislike. By focusing solely on foreign government funding, and ignoring funding from foreign individuals, the law is structured to only affect progressive groups, since right-wing groups – whose agendas align comfortably with that of the right-wing government under which it was passed – do not receive funding from foreign governments. These same groups, however, receive large amounts of funding from foreign individuals and entities, including foundations and non-governmental foreign organizations.

And while funds coming from foreign governments are already public – subject to scrutiny and transparency both on the donor's end and on the recipient's end – private funds are not. Such funds could come from shady sources, from criminals, or, indeed, from individuals who seek to engage in "blatant interference ... in Israel's domestic affairs by means of money." One such foreign donor who uses money to interfere in Israel's domestic affairs and advance a far-right agenda is US gambling mogul Sheldon Adelson. The Adelson-owned free daily paper, Israel Hayom, has earned the nickname "Bibi-ton" for its consistent parroting and promotion of Netanyahu's agenda; it is estimated that the publication loses roughly \$3 million each month.

In the past (November 2011), when Knesset members submitted a bill that sought to limit foreign government funding for Israeli NGOs, the government's own legal advisor, Yehuda Weinstein, wrote that limiting the law to foreign government funding and excluding private foreign funding is discriminatory. It "raises concern of harming the equality principle," Weinstein wrote then to Prime Minister Netanyahu.

They Say:

The U.S. has a law regulating NGOs that receive foreign funding, known as the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). Israel's 2016 "NGO transparency" law is no different.

We Say:

Israel's 2016 NGO law is nothing like FARA.

First, FARA applies to all foreign funding – governmental and private – of U.S. persons or organizations, ensuring transparency about any foreign donor's efforts to sway U.S. policy. In contrast, Israel's 2016 NGO law applies only to funding from foreign governments – funding that is already transparent under

a law passed by the Knesset in 2011. According to that law, non-profit organizations receiving funding from foreign governments must disclose all such funding in their quarterly reports to the government's registrar and must post this information publicly.

Second, FARA makes no presumption that simply by receiving foreign funding, an American NGO ipso facto is a foreign agent and must register and report as such. FARA applies only in cases where the recipient of the foreign funding is actually acting as an agent of the foreign donor. Indeed, the phrase "in the interests of such foreign principal" appears eight times in the statute. In contrast, under Israel's 2016 NGO law, merely receiving major funding from a foreign government automatically brands any Israeli NGO a foreign agent.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has also tried to argue the 2016 NGO law is no different from U.S. laws governing witnesses testifying before Congress. As with the comparison to FARA, this is false. There are no "laws" governing such matters; there are House rules and Senate rules, adopted by the respective bodies to govern procedural matters within each body. House rules* do require individuals testifying before any committee to disclose foreign government funding relevant to the issues on which they are testifying.

*Text of these rules are [here](#), see XI(2)(g)(5)(A); [Senate rules](#) include no such requirement.

They Say:

An Israeli organization that accepts foreign government funding is an agent of that government and should be named and shamed as such – especially when these organizations are actively working against Israel's interests, and especially when they are doing it abroad. The government of Israel is right to do whatever it can to silence such groups.

We Say:

The NGOs targeted and demonized under Israel's 2016 NGO law are not agents of foreign governments. They are Israeli-founded and Israeli-run organizations, many of which have existed for decades. They have with well-established agendas and programs defined by their own missions and goals, not by the interests of their foreign donors.

The notion that accepting foreign government funding transforms these Israeli-founded, Israeli-led, Israeli-staffed NGOs into agents of a foreign government's agenda is absurd. It is akin to suggesting that if, hypothetically, France were to give funding to Planned Parenthood to carry on with its decades-old mission, Planned Parenthood would suddenly become an agent of the EU (and be forced to register as such under FARA). Israel's Navy receives submarines from the government of Germany. This does not make Israeli officers – or the IDF – an agent of Germany. Equally absurd is arguing that Peace Now – established in 1978 by a group of 348 Israeli reserve officers and soldiers, and which has been challenging Israel's settlement enterprise ever since – serves interests that are not genuinely Israeli but rather are implanted by foreign governments.

The irony about trying to portray these groups as "foreign agents" is that Jews around the world have throughout history been at the forefront of defending core values like human rights and democracy.

The even greater irony is that for decades, Israelis from across the political spectrum, including the right wing, have pointed to Israel's vibrant civil society as proof that Israel is a healthy democracy.

As for the actions and positions of these targeted groups, make no mistake: These Israeli organizations represent and serve Israel's true interests, both at home and abroad. Israeli human rights organizations serve as watchdogs for the benefit of Israeli society. Israeli civil rights groups are guardians of Israeli democracy. Israeli peace organizations advance peace for the benefit of Israel. The fact that these goals do not correspond with a given Israeli government's agenda does not mean that these NGOs are illegitimate. Like any healthy democracy, Israel needs strong civil society groups that advance human rights, civil rights, peace and equality, particularly at times of heightened terrorism and threat, when such important values don't enjoy the kind of popular backing that they deserve.

They Say:

The Israeli Knesset was democratically elected. There is nothing anti-democratic about this body adopting a law that merely compels Israeli NGOs getting foreign government funds to be more transparent.

We Say:

A key attribute of democracy is "rule of law"; a conspicuous feature of authoritarian societies is "rule by law" and "tyranny of the majority." In the first case, laws apply equally for everyone and protect everyone's rights equally, regardless of whether they support the government in power. In the second case, laws are manufactured to promote the interests and the views of those in power, at the expense of the rights of those who are not. The 2016 NGO law is a textbook example of the latter case, exemplifying an anti-democratic move – by a democratically-elected government – to pass laws designed to quash political dissent and opposition. It is part of a wave of efforts taking place under governments led by Benjamin Netanyahu to silence progressive Israeli organizations, to intimidate them, to demean and degrade them, and to diminish their influence. Clearly, the objective – of the 2016 NGO Transparency law and similar efforts – is to enhance the hegemony of the government's narrative by silencing dissent – an objective that in its very essence is anti-democratic.

They Say:

The Left and other anti-Israel forces are hysterical about this bill for no reason – just as an excuse to attack Israel and hurt its reputation.

We Say:

Israel's 2016 NGO law is dangerous because it is intended to harm organizations that do critically important work in the service of Israeli society, Israel's national security, and Israel's ethical, moral standing. Indeed, this law seeks to undermine the institutions that form the bedrock of Israel's democracy. Unless it is overturned by the courts, this law will harm not only the NGOs that it targets, and not only their important goals, but also Israel's international image and reputation. It will put Israel

on the list of notorious, anti-democratic regimes that limit the freedom of their countries' civil societies, inviting even more of the international pressure that the bill allegedly wants to prevent.



[Why I Do Call Israel Out On The Occupation](#)

By Martin I. Bresler, 7/14/2016

David Bernstein has written an articulate defense of those who, like him, refuse to denounce the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, or in some extreme cases even admit that an occupation exists. ("[Why I Don't Call Israel Out on the Occupation](#)," Opinion, July 8) He argues that simply calling for an immediate end to the Occupation does not recognize the complexity of the situation and will not bring peace and security to Israel.

Sadly, however, my friend David has missed the mark. The occupation can be denounced without calling for immediate withdrawal.

The occupation is evil. It is immoral. It is un-Jewish. When I carried my JNF blue "pushka" on the streets of Brooklyn as a child, when I literally leapt for joy as I listened to the announcement of results of the UN vote in 1947, when I worked, together with David Bernstein at the American Jewish Committee and now at the JCPA, and as chair of Americans for Peace Now, for the safety and the security of the State of Israel I did not dream of a Jewish nation that would be the oppressor of another people.

Occupation is oppression by definition. There can be no illusions about that. No matter how "benign," it dehumanizes the souls of the oppressed and it twists the souls of the oppressor. As my colleague, Lara Friedman, said recently, it is "an infection that is making the entire body sick."

I am concerned about the impact on the oppressed, a concern David shares, but I am as much if not more concerned with the dangers the occupation poses to Israel's society and to its place in the world.

The occupation invites antagonism toward and pressure upon Israel. It is an excuse for and feeds anti-Semitism. Because of its inherent evil it disgraces Israel in the eyes of many who are otherwise disposed to warmly support her.

Ending the occupation is necessary for the sake of Israel's future as a liberal, humane, democratic society. To remain silent, is to be complicit, to be an enabler. It is unacceptable.

That there are security considerations in ending the occupation is obvious.

Of course Israel must concern itself with threats to itself and to its people. And of course even total withdrawal will not bring Israel peace and security. But the choice is not between continued occupation and immediate unilateral withdrawal. There are many measures Israel should take to begin the end of

the occupation and those measures are within Israel's power to take without compromising its security. Failure to call out for them is a failure of leadership at best.

Let me suggest a few of such measures:

1. Israel can announce to the Palestinians and to the world — and indeed to itself — that it recognizes that the occupation must be ended at some point, that it will do so as soon as the security situation permits and that until that time it will administer the West Bank for the benefit of its Palestinian inhabitants and its own safety.
2. Israel can unilaterally end land confiscations and incursions and retroactive legalization of rogue outposts and settlement expansions.
3. Israel can reverse inequitable water allocations that allow for swimming pools in settlements but not for showers in Palestinian villages.
4. Israel can announce an end to any and all construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements. (We can quibble over whether that could apply to the so-called settlement blocks).
5. Israel can at the same time end the impediments to Palestinian construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It can use its power of retroactive legalization to legitimize the tens of thousands of homes the Palestinians have constructed without the permits denied to them by Israel.
6. Israel can provide compensation arrangements to encourage its settler population to resettle within the green line.

The leaders of our community need to call Israel out on the occupation. So what if it will not automatically bring peace and security. It will make peace and security more likely, not less. It will demonstrate Israel's dedication to peaceful co-existence, a dedication now widely doubted. The occupation must end for the sake of the Palestinians suffering under it, for Israel's sake as the occupation continues to eat away at the morality and decency of its society, and for the sake of all Jews — such as myself — who still hold the Zionist dream of a Jewish, democratic state.

[APN condemns new anti-democratic Israeli law](#)

by [APN](#) 07/12/16

Israel's Peace Now Movement to Challenge New NGO Law before Israel's Supreme Court

Washington, DC -- Americans for Peace Now (APN) joins its Israeli sister organization, Peace Now (Shalom Achshav) in strongly condemning the new NGO Law, adopted last night by the Knesset, as a blatant violation of freedom of expression. APN supports Peace Now's intention to challenge the new law before Israel's Supreme Court.

As Peace Now points out, this law is tailored specifically to target only peace and human rights organizations. It intends to divert the Israeli public discourse away from the occupation, and to silence opposition to the government's policies.

Peace Now points out that while the law will de-legitimize progressive organizations, pro-settler NGOs who receive millions of dollars in foreign donations without any transparency will remain unaffected.

Unfortunately, this is only one of many pending laws leading to a severe deterioration in Israel's democracy.

Peace Now last night vowed to continue to fight this ugly wave of anti-democratic measures in Israel's court of public opinion, and to challenge the NGO Law's validity before the Supreme Court.

For more on this new law, see [here](#).

For background on the NGO bill and APN's opposition to it, click [here](#).

Don't Give Up On Israel!

By Alana Suskin 3/2/16



Last week, I received an email from Tikkun Magazine crowing, "Major American Jewish Leader Changes his Mind About Israel." Rabbi David Gordis, who has served in an astonishing number of major American Jewish institutions, reflected on his years of love and advocacy for Israel, and on the rightward trend in Israeli policies. He wrote, "sadly, after a life and career devoted to Jewish community and Israel, I conclude that in every important way: Israel has failed to realize its promise for me. A noble experiment, but a failure."

My heart sank. Many of us engaged in advocacy for Israel no doubt share Rabbi Gordis' discontent with the trajectory of public affairs in Israel. Clearly there is reason to be troubled. Extremism has become embedded throughout every level of Israeli society. The occupation, and the racism that has grown from it, are alarming.

But, while I am sympathetic to your feelings of near-despair, Rabbi Gordis, I beseech you: don't give up; Israel can't afford to lose you.

It's not only that the Jewish people have longed for our return to the land for 2,000 years. Throughout the thousands of years of texts that elevate the land of Israel as a sacred aspiration, the struggle about what that means has always been there. To live in the land does not – and must not – be to give in to injustice to others.

To the contrary, Jewish views of the land have always contained the requirement to do so with justice. The 13th century commentator Ramban notes that the land is conditional upon Israel's acting justly; we have a duty to live in the land with justice – to have one law for all (Leviticus 24:22, among other places) Jew and non-Jew.

We thus have an obligation not only to consider the land sacred, but also to work for Israel's justice, for her highest ideals. To say Israel is "a noble experiment, but a failure," is extremely shocking.

Such a response is giving in to the despair that Rabbi Nachman famously warned against, the despair that is the opposite of faith in God. If "Israel" means "he who wrestles with God and men" (Genesis 32:29), surely we, the children of Israel, are obligated to wrestle with people for justice in Israel.

And how can we give up on our Israeli brothers and sisters who have kept their hearts and hands in the fight to elevate Israeli society and end the occupation? They dedicate their time, their resources and their hearts, and vote with their feet by continuing to live in Israel, a country that is currently engaged in a war for its soul. They deserve our help – how can we leave them to struggle alone? Rabbi Gordis, you are not alone. Not in your despair, and not in your love. There are thousands of Israelis, and yes, Americans, too, who are still determined to bring the vision of Israel as a nation of righteousness to pass. We are not giving up. Not when extremists try to muzzle us with bills; not when fear makes American Jews afraid to face the reality of occupation; not when we are vilified or attacked and not when we are mocked and ignored. Because ultimately, we will succeed, and Israel will stand in friendship with her neighbors and the world. But we need you. We need everyone to rise above the fear; we need every voice to be heard.

Find strength in our ancestors, who over a history of struggle dating back thousands of years didn't give up. Be inspired by courageous Israelis who are going out and protesting and struggling every day to change their own society and to end to occupation and injustice. Draw energy from fellow American Jews who love Israel and are working every day for an Israel that embodies the values we all share.

V. Regular APN Publications

APN was the go-to resource for information on settlements, BDS, violence in Jerusalem, threats to Israeli democracy, and other issues related to Israel-Palestine. APN produced and disseminated timely, regular resources to a constantly growing audience of activists, policy makers, and opinion shapers. These resources included APN-authored op-eds, explainers and policy analyses; congressional updates; briefing calls with experts; and more.

Legislative Round-up

[APN Legislative Round-Up: November 18, 2016 \(Lame Duck\)](#)

by [Lara Friedman](#) 11/18/16

[1. Bills & Resolutions](#)

[2. Letters](#)

[3. Hearings](#)

[4. On the Record](#)

Highlights this week:

[Feinstein \(D-CA\)](#) 11/18: Feinstein Welcomes Israel's Decision to Delay Action on Susiya [including series of correspondence between Feinstein and PM Netanyahu]: *"Today I'm releasing correspondence with Prime Minister Netanyahu in the hope that he will carefully consider Susiya's fate. I fear that a decision to demolish the village and remove families from their own land will be judged as utterly inconsistent with Israel's core values. If Israel retains a desire to be a Jewish, democratic state, it must treat Palestinians with the same dignity and human rights as Israel's citizens."*

[Feinstein \(D-CA\)](#) 11/16: Feinstein on Israeli Bill to Legalize West Bank Settlements: *"I strongly believe the only way to preserve Israel as a Jewish, democratic state is the establishment of an independent Palestinian state by its side. I'm afraid any hope for two independent states would be lost if this legislation passes. My concerns are compounded by recent calls from some in the Netanyahu government to abandon the two-state solution completely. To preserve the possibility of peace, the Netanyahu government must reject this legislation that forever legalizes West Bank settlements and take steps to demonstrate its commitment to a two-state solution."*

[Leahy \(D-VT\)](#) 11/16: Quoted in the New York Times, on pending Israeli legislation to legalize illegal settler outposts across the West Bank: *"One of the most effective ways that ISIS and other terrorist groups have attracted recruits is by tarring the United States with Israel's expanding occupation of the West Bank... This legislation to retroactively legalize illegal settlements will be welcomed by those murderous groups as further evidence that America's closest ally in the region is bent on destroying a peaceful solution, including the possibility of a Palestinian state."*

And finally, some shameless plugs:

Times of Israel 11/18: [Illiberal Support for Israel: Antithetical to Jewish Values & Israel's Interests](#)
Lara Friedman's [Statement before the UNSC](#) 10/13; follow-up [article in Haaretz](#) defending APN's appearance at the UNSC

1. Bills & Resolutions & Letters

(WE <HEART> SETTLEMENTS & WILL PROTECT THEM!) HR 6298: [As predicted in the last edition of the Round-Up] Introduced 11/14 by Roskam (R-IL) and Vargas (D-CA), *"Protecting Israel Against Economic Discrimination Act of 2016."* Referred to House Financial Services. This is the House version of [S. 3465](#), introduced by Portman (R-OH) and Senators Cardin (D-MD) just before Congress went into its pre-election recess. Like the Senate version, and as with all the other efforts these two congressmen (and their senate counterparts) have promoted on this issue (exhaustively reported on in previous

Round-Ups – for a summary of their efforts in 2015, see [here](#)), this new measure has virtually nothing to do with BDS against Israel but is entirely about protecting and legitimizing Israeli settlements. This bill seeks to do so by fundamentally changing [U.S. law](#) to, in effect, make it illegal to comply with any boycott of settlements linked to action by the UN or any other body. The legislation is explicitly designed to undermine/derail action by the UN to identify companies linked to settlements (UN action that has zero to do with BDS targeting Israel). The (totally unsurprising) introduction of this bill proves that even after the 2016 elections, there is at least one thing on which bipartisan cooperation is still possible in Congress. The fact that this one thing is antithetical to the genuine interests of Israel and the U.S. national security interests related to Israel? Hard to see that as good news. [And don't say we haven't been warning you about this – every freakin' day – for the past two years.] Roskam press release is [here](#).

(EXTEND IRAN SANCTIONS ACT) [HR 6297](#): Introduced 11/14 by Royce (R-CA) and having 10 bipartisan cosponsors, the "*Iran Sanctions Extension Act*." Brought to the floor for consideration under Suspension of the Rules 11/15, passed by a vote of [419-1](#). NOTE: This was a "clean" extension of ISA, which means that it was basically uncontroversial and could move quickly and in a bipartisan manner. HFAC post (before the vote) is [here](#); HFAC press release after the vote is [here](#). Floor consideration of the bill is [here](#). On 11/17, Senate Majority Leader McConnell (R-KY) [stated](#) on the Senate floor that he expected the Senate to pass the measure overwhelmingly this session. A huge number of members issued statements applauding passage of HR 6297 (and claiming credit for it, and claiming with their vote to be single-handedly saving the U.S. from an Iranian nuclear attack). The Round-Up is not going to even try to include links to every one of those statements. If you are curious about a member, odds are they said something, but you can just check their website yourself to see.

(BLOCKING BOEING SALES TO IRAN) [HR 5711](#): Introduced 7/11 by Huizenga (R-MI) and Sherman (D-CA), "*To prohibit the Secretary of the Treasury from authorizing certain transactions by a U.S. financial institution in connection with the export or re-export of a commercial passenger aircraft to the Islamic Republic of Iran*." Marked up 7/13 by Financial Services Committee and reported out by a vote of [33-21](#) (party-line except for Sherman, D-CA and Vargas, D-CA). Financial Services Committee press release is [here](#). Passed by the House 11/17 by a party-line vote of [243-174](#) (8 Democrats voted in favor, zero Republicans voted against). Floor consideration of the bill is [here](#). Floor consideration of the resolution bringing HR 5711 to the floor is [here](#).

(BLOCKING U.S. COMMERCIAL DEALINGS WITH IRAN) [HR 5715](#): Introduced 7/11 by Roskam (R-IL) and 10 cosponsors (only Democrat is Sherman, D-CA), the "*No Ex-Im Assistance for Terrorism Act*." Marked up 7/13 by Financial Services Committee and reported out by a vote of [32-21](#) (party-line except for Sherman, D-CA and Vargas, D-CA). Financial Services Committee press release is [here](#). Reported out of committee on 11/14 and placed on the House Calendar.

(NO \$\$\$ FOR JCPOA IMPLEMENTATION) [H J Res 99](#): (Not previously reported) Introduced 9/28 by King (R-IA), "*Making continuing appropriations for fiscal year 2017, and for other purposes*." Includes the following provision: "*Sec. 121. None of the funds made available by this joint resolution may be used to fund the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action regarding Iran and submitted to the Congress on July 19, 2015, or any side deals to the nuclear agreement (including all related materials and annexes) between the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran*." Referred to House Budget Committee.

(TO STOP THE SLAUGHTER IN SYRIA) HR 5732: Introduced 7/12 by Engel (D-NY) and having 17 cosponsors, "*To halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, encourage a negotiated political settlement, and hold Syrian human rights abusers accountable for their crimes.*" Marked up 7/14 by HFAC and reported out. Engel-Royce press release is [here](#). Passed by the House 11/15 by a voice vote. Floor consideration is [here](#).

(MORE US-ISRAEL COOPERATION ON CYBERSECURITY) HR 5843: Introduced 7/14 by Langevin (D-RI) and Ratcliffe (R-TX), "*To establish a grant program at the Department of Homeland Security to promote cooperative research and development between the United States and Israel on cybersecurity.*" Referred to the House Committee on Homeland Security. Press release [here](#). Reported out of committee 11/15 with a [report](#); placed on the House Calendar.

(MORE US-ISRAEL COOPERATION ON CYBERSECURITY) HR 5877: Introduced 7/14 by Ratcliffe (R-TX) and Langevin (D-RI) "*To amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and the United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014 to promote cooperative homeland security research and antiterrorism programs relating to cybersecurity, and for other purposes.*" Press release [here](#). Reported out of Homeland Security Committee 11/15 with a [report](#); discharged by the Foreign Affairs Committee 11/15; placed on the House Calendar.

(FIGHTING ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE) S.3478: Introduced 11/17 by Rubio (R-FL) and Kaine (D-VA), the "*Combating European Anti-Semitism Act*" [pdf of text is [here](#)]. Referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Kaine/Rubio press release [here](#). This legislation demonstrates that yes, there is another issue on which, even post-election, members of Congress can work together in a bipartisan fashion. Great news! What about anti-Semitism in the U.S.? Don't hold your breath. Other than that small issue, this is excellent legislation. And it provides a great model for the introduction of anti-Islamophobia legislation down the road, especially the finding calling out as unacceptable "Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, the State of Israel, or even for acts committed by non-Jews." But again, don't hold your breath. [NOTE: This bill is the Senate version of [HR 6208](#), a bipartisan measure introduced back on 9/28 (press release is [here](#)).]

(HONORING SHIMON PERES) H. Res. 928: Introduced 11/17 by Cicilline (D-RI) and 47 cosponsors, "*Honoring the life of Shimon Peres.*" Referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

2. Letters

(US ROLE IN YEMEN) Lieu letter: On 11/2, Rep. Lieu (D-CA) sent a letter to Secretaries Ash Carter and John Kerry seeking clarity regarding a recent statement made by a senior U.S. Administration official about U.S. support of the Saudi-led military coalition in Yemen. The official stated that U.S. support of the Coalition does not include "target selection and review." Lieu press release is [here](#).

(NOT SATISFIED WITH ANSWERS ABOUT \$\$ TO IRAN) Pompeo-Rubio Follow-Up letter: On 10/28, Rep. Pompeo (R-KS) and Sen. Rubio (R-FL) sent a follow-up letter to Attorney General Loretta Lynch, condemning the [AG's response](#) to their 10/7 letter for failing to give them the answers they wanted, and again demanding answers. Press release is [here](#).

(SYRIA CRISIS) [Kinzinger et al letter](#): On 10/28, Rep. Kinzinger (R-IL) and 5 House colleagues sent a letter to President Obama urging the Administration to take action in Syria. Press release is [here](#).

(CUT TIES TO UNESCO) [Rubio-Kirk et al letter](#): On 10/26, Senators Rubio (R-FL), Kirk (R-IL), Perdue (R-GA), and Isakson (R-GA) sent a letter to President Obama urging him "to suspend ties with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) following its adoption today of another shameful, anti-Israel resolution denying any connection between Jews, Christians and holy sites in Jerusalem, such as the Temple Mount and Western Wall." [Since the U.S. has already cut off all funding to UNESCO for the sin of admitting the Palestinians – something UNESCO had no power to prevent – it is not clear what "suspend ties" would consist of, except perhaps U.S. diplomats at the UN putting their fingers in the ears and chanting "I can't hear you" over and over.] Press release is [here](#).

(NO LIFTING IRAN SANCTIONS!) [Ayotte/Rubio et al letter](#): On 10/25, Sens. Ayotte (R-NH) and Rubio (R-FL) and 13 colleagues sent a letter "*pressing Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew to answer questions regarding the Obama Administration prematurely lifting sanctions against an Iranian bank the Treasury Department once described as the 'financial linchpin of Iran's missile procurement network,' and the Obama Administration making it easier for Iran to conduct U.S. dollar transactions and international business.*"

(SLAMMING UNESCO) [Ros-Lehtinen/Cruz Letters](#): On [10/11](#) and [10/25](#), Rep. Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Sen. Cruz (R-TX) led two separate letter to UNESCO members opposing resolutions in UNESCO dealing with Jerusalem. The two also apparently sent a separate the US Ambassadors to the UN and to UNRWA "urging them to use the full voice, vote, and influence of the United States to defeat the measure" – apparently forgetting that since the U.S. effectively pulled out of UNRWA to punish it for admitting the Palestinians as a member, as required by a law that Congress refuses to change, the U.S. effectively gave up all influence in that body.

(IRAN-YEMEN CONNECTION) [Ayotte letter](#): On 10/21, Sen. Ayotte (R-NH) sent a letter to Director of National Intelligence Clapper "regarding recent missile attacks on the USS Mason and Iran's potential material and financial support for the Houthi rebels reportedly responsible for the attacks. In the letter, the Senate Armed Services Committee member expresses concern that the \$1.7 billion cash ransom payment the Obama administration provided to Iran may have directly or indirectly facilitated or funded the attack against a U.S. Navy vessel."

(SLAMMING UNESCO) [Roskam/Lieu Letter](#): On 10/21, Reps. Roskam (R-IL) and Lieu (D-CA) sent a letter to the head of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), urging him to condemn the recent UNESCO resolution on Jerusalem. Press release is [here](#).

(SLAMMING UNESCO) [Roskam letter](#): On 10/14, Rep. Roskam (R-IL) sent a letter to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urging him to denounce UNESCO's recent resolution on Jerusalem.

(SLAMMING UNESCO) [Kirk-Rubio letter](#): On 10/13, Senators Kirk (R-IL) and Rubio (R-FL) urged the Obama Administration "to oppose and condemn another attempt by the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to attack the State of Israel. The proposed UNESCO measure seeks to deny Jewish and Christian ties to holy sites in Jerusalem." [A shame that since the US has basically pulled out of UNESCO already, we don't have much influence there...] Press release is [here](#).

(YEMEN WAR CRIMES) Lieu letter: On 10/13, Rep. Lieu (D-CA) sent a letter to Secretary John Kerry "in light of troubling [news](#) that State Department lawyers knew the U.S. could be liable for war crimes in Yemen." Press release is [here](#).

(NO LICENSES TO SELL PLANES TO IRAN) Perdue et al letter: On 10/13, Senators Perdue (R-GA), Isakson (R-GA), Cornyn (R-TX), Cruz (R-TX), and Rubio (R-FL) sent a letter to Acting Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Adam Szubin, demanding "answers about its decision to approve licenses for the sale of nearly 200 commercial aircraft to Iran Air, an airline the U.S. government sanctioned years ago for transporting rockets and missiles on behalf of Iranian entities known to support terror and regional instability like the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)." Press release is [here](#).

(STILL DEMANDING ANSWERS ON \$\$\$ TO IRAN) Gardner et al letter: On 10/12, Sens. Gardner (R-CO), Cruz (R-TX), Ayotte (R-NH), and 15 colleague sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Carter and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General Dunford "regarding the Obama Administration's \$1.7 billion secret ransom payment to Iran. In the letter, Senator Gardner and his colleagues express concern that the Obama Administration did not notify top U.S. military officials of the secret payment and the fact that Iran is using these funds to bolster its military." Press release is [here](#).

(STILL DEMANDING ANSWERS ON \$\$\$ TO IRAN) Lankford-Inhofe letter: On 10/12, Senators Lankford (R-OK) and Inhofe (R-OK) sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Carter and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Dunford regarding their recent testimony before a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing about the Obama administration's \$1.7 billion cash payment to Iran, and the fact that top military officials were not notified before the payment was made. Press release is [here](#).

(SLAMMING UNESCO) Cruz/Ros-Lehtinen et al letter: On 10/11, Sen. Cruz (R-TX) and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) led a bipartisan, bicameral letter to members of the Executive Board of UNESCO "urging opposition to an item in UNESCO's provisional agenda, a resolution that would diminish the historic and verified Jewish and Christian ties to the Old City of Jerusalem in an effort to delegitimize Israel. Thirty-nine of Sen. Cruz's and Rep. Ros-Lehtinen's colleagues in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives joined them in sending the letter." Press release is [here](#).

(STILL DEMANDING ANSWERS ON \$\$\$ TO IRAN) Isakson-Perdue letter: On 10/11, Sens. Isakson (R-GA) and Perdue (R-GA) sent a letter to Secretary of Defense Carter and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dunford, regarding their recent testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. As noted in the [press release](#), "the senators raise serious concerns regarding the administration's \$1.7 billion cash ransom payment to the Islamic Republic of Iran, which is designated by the State Department as a state sponsor of terrorism."

(NO WTO FOR IRAN) Roskam et al letter: On 10/7, Reps. Roskam (R-IL), Reichert (R-WA), Vargas (D-CA), and Meng (D-NY) wrote to U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman urging him to oppose Iran's efforts to join the World Trade Organization. Press release is [here](#).

(STILL DEMANDING ANSWERS ON \$\$\$ TO IRAN) Pompeo-Rubio letter: On 10/7, Rep. Pompeo (R-KS) and Sen. Rubio (R-FL) sent a letter to Attorney General Loretta Lynch demanding answers to a list of questions "surrounding the Treasury Department's assertion that it had 'received the appropriate approvals from the Department of Justice' for its \$1.3 billion payment to Iran." Press release is [here](#).

3. Hearings

[11/17](#): The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission held a hearing entitled, "**Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen.**" Witnesses were: James Jeffrey (WINEP); Philip Solondz (Oxfam USA); Michael Bowers (Mercy Corps); Krista Zimmerman (Save the Children); and Sunjeev Bery (Amnesty International USA). Video is [here](#). Press release from Rep. Lieu (D-CA) is [here](#).

4. On the Record

[Feinstein \(D-CA\)](#) 11/18: Feinstein Welcomes Israel's Decision to Delay Action on Susiya [including series of correspondence between Feinstein and PM Netanyahu]

[Larsen \(D-WA\)](#) 11/17: Larsen Blasts "No U.S. Financing for Iran Act" as Job Destroyer ("*This bill is the first step of this new administration and this Republican Congress to destroy manufacturing and manufacturing jobs in this country...By prohibiting the Department of the Treasury from authorizing transactions of commercial aircraft to the Republic of Iran, H.R. 5711 writes a check to our competitors in Europe.*")

[Huizenga \(R-MI\)](#) 11/17: House passes Huizenga legislation to protect taxpayers, block U.S. financing for Iran aircraft

[Roskam \(R-IL\)](#) 11/17: Congress Blocks Boeing Iran Financing

[Hensarling \(R-TX\)](#) 11/17: House Votes to Block U.S. Financing for Iran Aircraft Sales

[Cramer \(R-ND\)](#) 11/17: House Votes Hold Iran and Syria Accountable for Illegal Actions

[McCarthy \(R-CA\)](#) 11/17: American Taxpayers Shouldn't Subsidize Sales to Terrorist Supporters

[Feinstein \(D-CA\)](#) 11/16: Feinstein Opposes Israeli Bill to Legalize West Bank Settlements

[Gohmert \(R-TX\)](#) 11/16: Standard rant, including urging Trump to scrap the JCPOA & calling for the Muslim Brotherhood and CAIR to be designated as terrorist organizations

[Pittinger \(R-NC\)](#) 11/17: 'Beyond Me' how Obama okay with providing new airplanes for terrorists

[Rothfus \(R-PA\)](#) 11/17: Rothfus Supports Bill to Prohibit Export of U.S. Aircraft to Iran

[Loudermilk \(R-GA\)](#) 11/17: Congress Begins Rolling Back Disastrous Iran Deal

[Hartzler \(R-MO\)](#) 11/16: Hartzler votes to keep Iran in check

[Smith \(R-NJ\)](#) 11/16: No U.S. Financing for Iran

[Lee \(D-CA\)](#) 11/15: Honoring the extraordinary life of [longtime APN Board Member] Stanley Sheinbaum

[Ryan \(R-WI\)](#) 11/15: Statement Ahead of Vote on Bipartisan Syria Sanctions

[Johnson \(R-OH\)](#) 11/15: As part of a colloquy entitled "National Bible Week," speaking on how the U.S. commitment to Israel is grounded in the Bible

[Royce \(R-CA\)](#) 11/15: House passes two sanctions bills, sending foreign policy message on Iran and Syria

[Kinzinger \(R-IL\)](#) 11/15: Floor statement in strong support of [H.R. 5732](#), the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act of 2016

[Engel \(D-NY\)](#) 11/15: Engel & Royce Syria Sanctions Bill Passes House

[Engel \(D-NY\)](#) 11/15: Floor Remarks on Syria Sanctions Bill

[Wasserman-Schultz \(D-FL\)](#) 11/15: Statement on the Passage of the Iran Sanctions Extension Act

[Neugebauer \(R-TX\)](#) 11/15: Honoring the Life of Taylor Force

[Hensarling \(R-TX\)](#) 11/10: House Voting to Prevent Sale and Export of U.S. Aircraft to Iran

***AND THE WINNER OF THE BEST PRESS RELEASE HEADLINE OF THE WEEK GOES TO...[Fischer \(R-NE\)](#)
11/3: Fischer Celebrates First Shipment of NE Beef to Israel***

[Lieu \(D-CA\)](#) 11/1: Congressman Lieu Statement on U.S. Call for an End To Airstrikes in Yemen

[Ros-Lehtinen \(R-FL\)](#) 10/28: United States Rejoining UN Human Rights Council Legitimizes Its Detrimental Agenda, Human Rights Abusers

[Hoyer \(D-MD\)](#) 10/26: Statement on UNESCO Resolution to Deny Importance of Jerusalem to Jewish & Christian Faiths

[Cruz \(R-TX\)](#) 10/26: Sen. Cruz Admonishes UNESCO's Vote to Expunge Jerusalem's Jewish Identity

[Cruz \(R-TX\)](#) 10/14: Sen. Cruz Op-Ed in The Washington Times: 'America's Missed UNESCO Opportunity [blaming the Obama Admin for failing to rally support against the UNESCO resolution, notwithstanding the fact that the U.S. has already effectively dropped out of UNESCO]

[Israel \(D-NY\), et al](#) 10/20: Jewish Members of Congress Denounce UNESCO resolution denying Jewish and Christian ties to Jerusalem

[Wasserman-Schultz \(D-FL\)](#) 10/18: Statement on UNESCO Vote on the Temple Mount and Jerusalem

[Lieu \(D-CA\)](#) 10/18: Congressman Lieu Statement on Saudi-Led Coalition's Admission of Intentional Air Strike on a Funeral in Yemen

[Ayotte \(R-NH\)](#) 10/18: Following Ransom Payment to Tehran, Iran Unjustly Sentences U.S. Citizens Siamak & Baquer Namazi

[Royce \(R-CA\)](#) 10/18: Chairman Royce Statement on Unjust Conviction of Iranian-Americans

[Lieu \(D-CA\)](#) 10/18: Congressman Lieu Statement on UNESCO Jerusalem Resolution

[McCain \(R-AZ\)](#) 10/17: Statement on Video Released by Iranian Hard-Liners

[Zeldin \(R-NY\)](#) 10/17: Standing With Our Greatest Ally Israel

[Lamborn \(R-CO\)](#) 10/14: It's Time to Shut the Doors of UNESCO

[Gillibrand \(D-NY\)](#) 10/14: Gillibrand Statement On UNESCO Board

[Rubio \(R-FL\)](#) 10/13: Rubio: Latest Anti-Israel Effort a Reminder of Why Americans Distrust the U.N. So Much

[Cruz \(R-TX\)](#) 10/13: Sen. Cruz Issues Statement on UNESCO's Anti-Israel Vote

[Sasse \(R-NE\)](#) 10/13: Sasse Condemns UNESCO's Anti-Israel Resolution

[Hastings \(D-FL\)](#) 10/13: Statement on Anti-Semitic UNESCO Resolution Ignoring Jewish Ties to Jerusalem

[Royce \(R-CA\) and Young \(R-IN\)](#) 10/13: Oped in the Hill: To Keep America Safe, U.S. Sanctions Programs Must be Bolstered

[Kirk \(R-IL\)](#) 10/13: Kirk Statement on Iran-Backed Houthi Rebels' Attempted Missile Attacks Against U.S. Navy Ship

[Lamborn \(R-CO\)](#) 10/12: Congressman Lamborn Stands with Israel against UNESCO resolution seeking to deny Jewish and Christian ties to Jerusalem, the Temple Mount and other significant sites.

[Kirk \(R-IL\)](#) 10/11: Kirk Statement on Administration's Latest Unilateral Concessions to Iran's Terror Regime

[Ayotte \(R-NH\)](#) 10/11: Treasury Department Announcement Will Help Enrich World's Worst State Sponsor of Terrorism

[Hoyer \(D-MD\)](#) 10/10: Statement on the Terrorist Attack in Jerusalem

[Hoyer \(D-MD\)](#) 10/7: Statement on Violence in Syria

[Speaker Ryan's blog](#) 10/7: The Obama administration has gone ballistic to appease Iran

[Blumenthal \(D-CT\)](#) 10/6: Blumenthal Announces New Bill to Hold State Sponsors of Terrorism Accountable

[Blumenthal \(D-CT\)](#) 10/5: Blumenthal Leads Senators in Calling for Clean Reauthorization of Iran Sanctions Act as Expiration Looms (letter from Blumenthal and colleagues to Majority Leader McConnell [here](#)).

[Zeldin \(R-NY\)](#) 10/4: Rep. Lee Zeldin Returns from Presidential Delegation Visit to Israel for Funeral Service of Former Israeli President and Prime Minister Shimon Peres

[Pompeo \(R-KS\)](#) 10/3: Pompeo Says Secretary of State Kerry is Ignoring the Evil Actions of Hezbollah

[Pittinger \(R-NC\)](#) 9/30: Congressman Pittenger on President Obama's Secret Deal to Lift Sanctions on Iranian Ballistic Missiles

[Ryan \(R-WI\)](#) 9/30: Statement on Secret Ransom Agreements with Iran

They Say, We Say – New Entries

They Say:

It is religious discrimination to say that Jews can't pray on the Temple Mount, but Muslims can. The Temple Mount is the holiest site to Jews and must be open for Jewish prayer. If the Muslims can't stand to share it with Jews at the same time, then the site should be split to permit Jewish prayer and Muslim prayer at different times, like at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

We Say:

The Jewish attachment and claim to the Temple Mount goes to the core of Jewish history, identity, and religious belief. The fact that at present Jews are not permitted to pray at the site is a source of pain to some and bafflement to others. However, the fact of the matter is that successive Israeli governments since 1967 have decided that, for the sake of Israel's own vital national security, Israel must maintain the status quo at the site, according to which the Temple Mount (which Muslims call the Noble Sanctuary – Haram al Sharif) remains a site of worship for Muslims alone, and a site that non-Muslims may visit. This position has long been supported by most mainstream Orthodox Jewish authorities, who for more than 1000 years have held, based on ancient Jewish law, that Jews may not ascend the Temple Mount. It has also long enjoyed the support of the political, security, and religious mainstreams of Israel, who recognize that tinkering with the status quo would have grave security repercussions for Israel. This view is bolstered by decades of experience wherein Israeli actions in and around the Temple Mount have led to bloodshed.

Those who today are agitating for a change in the Temple Mount status quo disregard both the religious and national security arguments against such a change. Some may do so out of devout religious motivations. However, others do so – openly and proudly – for the sake of clear political agenda of challenging Muslim claims to the site, replacing Muslim control (gradually or immediately) with Jewish hegemony, and undermining any two-state peace agreement. In fact, some of them openly seek and welcome the possibility of a zero-sum religious war over the site.

In the future, in the context of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement and the normalization of Israel's relations with the Muslim world, it is possible that there may be an opportunity to adopt a new, mutually agreed-on status quo that could include Jewish prayer at the site. Until then, efforts to unilaterally impose a new status quo are dangerous – fueling Muslim fears about Israeli intentions at the site. Such fears are fueled by public statements by Israeli Temple Mount activists, including Members of the Knesset and government officials, who regularly proclaim their desire (and plans) to replace the al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock with a newly-built Third Temple.

They Say:

Israel was right to reject the Arab Peace Initiative (API) when it was introduced in 2002. The Arabs presented Israel with a take-it-or-leave-it proposal that was completely unacceptable. Maybe today the API can be useful, but only if the Arabs recognize that the most important thing for everyone is normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab world. Only after that can there be any chance of moving ahead toward an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

We Say:

Israel's decision to initially ignore and subsequently reject the API was a mistake. By reacting to the API in this manner, Israel wasted a strategic opportunity to show the region and the world that it truly wants peace. More importantly, Israel squandered a promising chance to make progress both toward peace with the Palestinians and normalization with other Arab states. Whether such peace and normalization could have, ultimately, come out of the API is not known; what is known is that Israel chose not to even explore the option.

This does not mean that Israel was required to accept every word of the API without reservation. It does mean Israel could have reacted positively and constructively to the initiative – seeking actively to engage Arab backers of the API and to promote Israeli-Palestinian negotiations directly linked to the implementation of the API. Doing so could have built Israeli popular support for peace by offering much bigger dividends for Israel, most notably by opening the door to resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict and to normalization of Israel's relations in the region. It could also have given Palestinian leaders desperately needed regional cover in negotiating difficult compromises over core issues like the future of Jerusalem and refugees.

Today, the API remains on the table, even if Arab support for it is far less certain. If Israel is serious about peace, its leaders can still shift gears and sincerely consider the API. However, the notion that Israel can cherry-pick the API – that it can “pocket” normalization, which the Arab League clearly offered as a fruit of peace with the Palestinians, without first making peace with the Palestinians – is a delusion. Until such time as Israel is prepared to be serious about ending the occupation and achieving a two-state agreement with the Palestinians, relations between Israel and Arab countries will remain, at best, abnormal and below the radar.

They Say:

Israel should stop worrying about the Palestinians and focus on the Arab world. Sunni Arab leaders and Israel share real interests here: a common enemy in Iran and shared worries about ISIS and al Qaeda and the spread of Islamic extremism. Israel can leverage these shared interests to build a new relationship with these leaders, completely disconnected from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We Say:

First, Israel needs to worry about the Palestinians. Top Israeli security officials are on the record stating that Israel's greatest threat today does not come from Iran or any outside source, but rather from the continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Resolving this threat requires Israel to once and for all get serious and negotiate a two-state agreement with the Palestinians that ends the occupation.

Certainly, Israel and Sunni states have shared concerns about Iran and other threats in the region. And it is generally accepted that Israel and many of these states have engaged in longstanding, quiet security coordination that reflects these shared threats and concerns. While such coordination may, indeed, continue and expand in the face of Iran's new regional profile, the fact remains that until Israel is prepared to be serious about ending the occupation and achieving a two-state agreement with the Palestinians, relations between Israel and Arab countries will remain, at best, limited to relations that exist below the radar.

Hard Questions, Tough Answers

November 14, 2016 - Trump and the Middle East

by [APN 11/14/16](#)



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This week, Alpher discusses if it's possible that the Middle East contributed to Trump's election victory; contradictions in Trump's Middle East policy positions; whether Trump's demand that countries like Japan and South Korea and NATO members pay their own way in defense matters could also affect Israel; are Trump's first public policy statements since being elected that he welcomes the challenge of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict empty bluster or a serious commitment; whether Trump's Republican, evangelical and militia-minded constituency committed to Israel's security from a religious-ideological standpoint; if Middle East leaders, following the lead of Russia's Putin and China's Xi, were correct in their assumptions that Trump's electoral victory will reduce US pressures on their regimes regarding human rights issues; and how much of this is pure speculation .

Q. Everything we can say at this point about a Trump administration and the Middle East is tentative and speculative. So where do we start?

A. Let's begin by asking where, if at all, the Middle East contributed to Trump's election victory. Granted, this US election was decided primarily on the basis of personalities, wildly unconventional and at times conspiratorial tactics, and domestic issues. But even some of the latter have a Middle East dimension.

For example, there can be no doubt that Trump's xenophobic campaign not only focused on immigrants from Mexico, but also drew sustenance from popular fear concerning waves of Muslim migrants from the Greater Middle East. And it was nourished by Islamist-inspired terrorism, particularly in places like the Boston Marathon in 2014, Orlando and San Bernardino earlier in 2016 and even violent attacks by Muslim immigrants in Manhattan and Minnesota as late as this September.

Then too, Trump appears to have benefited by portraying the Iran nuclear deal and US-led campaign against ISIS in Iraq and Syria as dangerous failures. He contrasted these with seemingly successful exercises in power projection by Russia's President Putin and suggested the US should both emulate Putin and join forces with him. Trump even portrayed Syria's President Bashar Assad as "much tougher and much smarter" than Hillary Clinton and rejected the notion that Assad should be removed as a tenet of American Middle East policy.

Interestingly, regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict and the two-state solution Trump proved less adept at scoring points with the electorate because he so obviously contradicted himself, e.g., he'll be evenhanded but he'll move the US embassy to Jerusalem; he'll be "neutral" but he won't exert pressure on Israel and will condone more settlements.

Q. Aren't there additional contradictions in Trump's Middle East policy positions?

A. The most glaring one concerns Russia, Iran and Syria. Trump wants to work with Russia against ISIS and in support of Assad. But he also wants to weaken or renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA. Yet Iran is an ally of Assad and is working with Russia to support him militarily. And Russia is a signatory to the Iran nuclear deal. Thus, the moment Trump takes even a relatively minor step against Iran, like refusing to renew executive orders for sanctions waivers, his entire "strategy" for the Levant could be in trouble.

Q. Couldn't Trump's demand that countries like Japan and South Korea and NATO members pay their own way in defense matters also affect Israel?

A. Absolutely. This is my personal near-term worst case scenario regarding President Trump.

Even if he is not really serious about the idea, all it might take is one more careless declaration to the effect that the allies must defend themselves by themselves for, say, Japan or South Korea to move to go nuclear. In Japan's case, it's basically a matter of turning a screwdriver to transform itself into a nuclear power. We could then witness nuclear escalation in the Far East which could be catching elsewhere.

Moving a little closer to home, suppose Russia's Putin interprets Trump's admonition to NATO countries to prepare to defend themselves as a green light to send a band of Russian-speaking "Estonian

patriots" into defenseless Estonia? The resultant tensions will be felt all along the NATO-Russia border, as far east as Ukraine, Georgia and Turkey and possibly in the Levant as well. Moreover, Trump's victory is likely to empower additional far-right politicians in Europe such as France's Marine Le Pen. They campaign on platforms of dismantling the European Union, Israel's biggest trading partner. Some of these leaders barely conceal their anti-Semitism and could be inspired by Trump's appointment of people like Steve Bannon to articulate their views more openly. This is regional destabilization in Israel's front yard.

Still closer to home, imagine Trump seeking to reopen the Iran nuclear deal, the JCPOA, in a manner that enrages Iran and seemingly invites it to renew its drive for nuclear weapons. How will Saudi Arabia, which allegedly can "buy a bomb" from Pakistan, react? How will Israel, which has never openly acknowledged a military nuclear potential, react? We could quickly witness nuclear escalation and destabilization in the Middle East as well--Israel's back yard.

Extending this set of scenarios, if Trump is serious about America's allies paying their own way, suppose he goes one step further and announces a rapid scaling down of the financial aspect of US defense support for Israel. He'll say something like, "I love Israel, but what works for NATO and Japan has to be applied to Israel as well. They're rich; they have a nuclear potential. They have to carry their own weight." What steps might the government of Israel feel obliged to take to bolster its deterrent image lest Trump's move be misunderstood by, say, Iran and ISIS as weakening Israel? How would this affect security in the region?

Q. One of Trump's first public policy statements since being elected is that he welcomes the challenge of ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Empty bluster or a serious commitment?

A. I'm skeptical. See above, Trump's campaign contradictions on the issue. If he thinks this will be merely a matter of closing the "ultimate deal" between two particularly ornery customers, thereby ending "the war that never ends", he has a lot to learn.

Certainly the dominant messianic right-wingers in PM Netanyahu's government seem to believe that Trump's election is good news for the settlements and bad news for the two-state solution they reject. On Sunday they backed a new legislative initiative that would enable the government to bypass High Court orders that it dismantle an "illegal" West Bank outpost, Amona, built on private Palestinian land near Ramallah. They seem to believe a Trump administration will condone Israel negating its own land laws in the Palestinian territories--a major step toward totally colonial rule there. Meanwhile, among his own Likud ministers, only Netanyahu appears to fear an Obama administration reaction in the form of a UN Security Council resolution on the two-state solution in the coming two months.

Q. But isn't Trump's Republican, evangelical and militia-minded constituency committed to Israel's security from a religious-ideological standpoint?

A. Yes, at the declarative level. But as we have seen, some potential policy directions appear to contradict this commitment.

Here it helps to compare Trump to Obama. The Obama administration has for eight years been seriously committed to Israel's security. Yet at the same time, Obama appeared determined to disengage from the Middle East to the extent of avoiding any heavy new US military commitment. That carefully calibrated degree of disengagement, coupled with Obama's commitment to an Israeli-Palestinian two-state solution, already prompted Netanyahu in recent years to seek closer Israeli ties with major powers like Russia, China and India. And in turn, those countries' concerns regarding Islamic extremism prompted them to pay little more than lip-service to the Palestinian issue.

Meanwhile, Obama remained heavily engaged in Europe and the Far East and lightly and selectively engaged in the Middle East. Now, in contrast, if Trump proves really serious about disengaging militarily in Europe and the Middle East, and if he effectively appoints Russia his proxy in the Levant, Netanyahu's paranoid need for doubtful new friends could grow, to the overall detriment of Israel's security.

Q. Some Middle East leaders, following the lead of Russia's Putin and China's Xi, openly celebrated Trump's electoral victory on the assumption that this will reduce US pressures on their regimes regarding human rights issues.

A. Indeed, one of the safer assumptions regarding Trump's impending presidency is that it reinforces a broader global trend toward autocratic governments and regimes, away from globalization and away from liberalism. Here Netanyahu should feel he is in good company in the Middle East, along with Turkey's Erdogan and Egypt's Sisi, not to mention Putin next door in Syria. But Netanyahu would be well advised to bear in mind that autocratic rule, particularly in Europe, tends to go hand-in-hand with anti-Semitism. And anti-Semitism quickly becomes anti-Zionism.

Q. Isn't all this just speculation?

A. At the end of the day, yes, albeit informed speculation. From Israel's standpoint, indeed in the eyes of the entire international community, Trump's world is a radically new world. Watch Trump's early appointments for clues where he might be heading. Right now he looks particularly dangerous for the Middle East.

And don't forget, Obama is around for two more months. As we suggested last week, it is precisely Trump's victory coupled with eight years of aggravation from Netanyahu that might now bring Obama to the UN Security Council with a major new initiative on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. That would saddle Trump with an important Middle East legacy.



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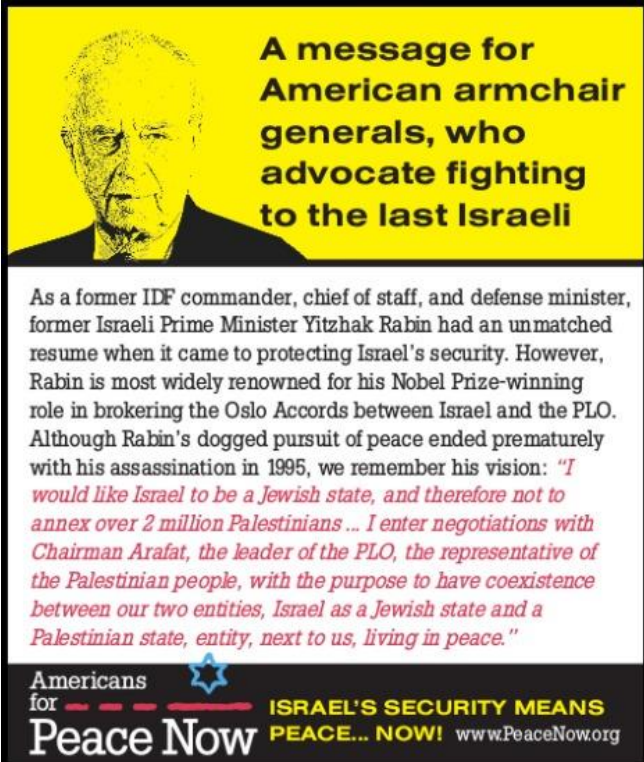
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Yigal Amir, the Jewish terrorist who assassinated Rabin, did succeed in setting back Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, but must not be rewarded with his ultimate goal: the death of Rabin's vision of an Israel that is both Jewish and a democracy, living in peace with its neighbors. You can't help but wonder what Israel's relations with the Palestinians, and indeed the world, would have looked like today if Rabin had been able to fulfill his vision. It is incumbent upon us to not only wonder and imagine, but to act to make Rabin's vision a reality.

Help us keep Rabin's vision alive, help us keep the hope for peace alive. [Your contribution](#) will help us show our fellow American Jews that Israel's top security community rejects the belligerent, hardline policies of Benjamin Netanyahu and his government. Help us show that capable, responsible security chiefs walk in Rabin's path, fighting for peace.



A message for American armchair generals, who advocate fighting to the last Israeli

As a former IDF commander, chief of staff, and defense minister, former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had an unmatched resume when it came to protecting Israel's security. However, Rabin is most widely renowned for his Nobel Prize-winning role in brokering the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO. Although Rabin's dogged pursuit of peace ended prematurely with his assassination in 1995, we remember his vision: *"I would like Israel to be a Jewish state, and therefore not to annex over 2 million Palestinians ... I enter negotiations with Chairman Arafat, the leader of the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people, with the purpose to have coexistence between our two entities, Israel as a Jewish state and a Palestinian state, entity, next to us, living in peace."*

Americans for  **ISRAEL'S SECURITY MEANS PEACE... NOW!** www.PeaceNow.org



**A message for
American armchair
generals, who
advocate fighting
to the last Israeli**



Major General (res.) Gadi Shamni, a former military secretary to Israeli Prime Ministers Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert and former military attaché to the U.S., is known primarily for having served as the top commander of IDF forces in the West Bank. This experience has allowed him a uniquely credible perspective on the occupation and the urgent need for peace between Israel and the Palestinians:

"We have elevated the occupation to an art form. We are the world champions of occupation . . . And I'm asking, is this what we want to be? Every step we take should stem from one strategic goal — separation from the Palestinians."

Americans for  **ISRAEL'S SECURITY MEANS PEACE... NOW!** www.PeaceNow.org
Peace Now

**A message for
American armchair
generals, who
advocate fighting
to the last Israeli**



Ezer Weizman, former Israeli President and Defense Minister, was best known as the founder of Israel's Air Force. He was also renowned for his valuable contribution to the 1978 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt. Weizman transformed from fierce military commander to committed peacemaker, emphasizing the necessity of negotiations to ensure Israel's security. This experience also shaped his views on peace with the Palestinians: *"It must be recalled that, when one talks about the final status of the Palestinian issue, one is also talking about the permanent status of the state of Israel . . . we need not receive everything and they will not receive everything. In the final resort, we will find ourselves drawing a map with borders on which will be determined what is ours and what is theirs."*

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**A message for
American armchair
generals, who
advocate fighting
to the last Israeli**



Tzipi Livni, current Member of Knesset and a former Mossad agent, is known worldwide as one of the most influential women in Israeli politics and the only woman to have held eight different cabinet positions, including foreign minister. Livni is also renowned as one of the most prominent political figures to advocate for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, maintaining that it is the only means of ensuring the safety and security of Israel: *"We need to decide between two completely different visions — a Jewish democratic state or Jews living in the entire land of Israel... Making an agreement with the Palestinians is not weakness but represents the interest of the state of Israel and the entire Jewish people."*

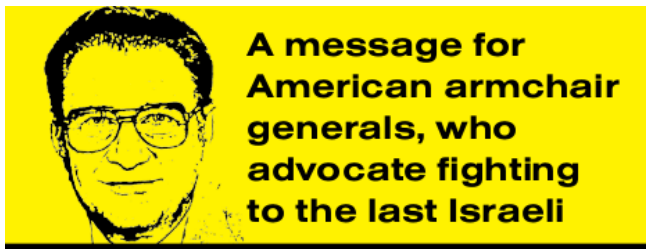
Americans for  **ISRAEL'S SECURITY MEANS PEACE... NOW!** www.PeaceNow.org
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**To those religious
zealots, who
advocate
fighting to the
last Israeli**



When it comes to Israel and Judaism, few are more authoritative than Rabbi Michael Melchior, a former Israeli cabinet minister, Member of Knesset, Orthodox scholar, and activist. Melchior serves both as Rabbi to the Jerusalem community of Talpiot and as Chief Rabbi of Norway, and his authority is reflected in his challenge to zealots who reject any sacrifice of land for Israeli-Palestinian peace: *"I believe that those who have created priorities where love of the land supersedes love of man and of peace are distorting the Torah . . . I have often challenged my rabbinical colleagues to show me one single source from the Jewish Bookshelf, the Bible, the Talmud, the Rambam, the Shulchan Aruch, or the immense traditional rabbinical literature, which rules that you cannot give up land in order to obtain peace. They have never been able to do so."*

Americans for  **ISRAEL'S SECURITY MEANS PEACE... NOW!** www.PeaceNow.org
Peace Now



Maj. General Shlomo Gazit has lived the full Israeli experience. He moved to Palestine as a young boy, joined the Haganah while in high school, fought in the 1948 War, and as the first administrator of the occupied territories after 1967, he was the architect of Israel's rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As head of military intelligence, Gazit helped lead the planning of Operation Entebbe, in which 102 Israeli hostages were rescued. Having spent his entire life defending Israel, Gazit's words carry an added weight: *"I consider the continuation of our occupation rule . . . an existential danger. As I see it, this situation is threatening the main achievement to which I contributed 70 years ago: the establishment of a sovereign and democratic Jewish state. If we don't separate as soon as possible from the Palestinian population on the ground, Jewish and democratic Israel will be unable to survive."*



Meir Dagan, a general and former chief of the Mossad, recently died after 48 years in Israel's security establishment. He was known for his hard-nosed counterterrorism methods and epitomized the tough Israeli. Last year, speaking at a rally, he wept as he lamented the diplomatic do-nothing attitude of PM Netanyahu. *"It is no coincidence that the overwhelming majority of former Israeli security chiefs — chiefs of staff, heads of Shin Bet and Mossad — concur that we must exhaust every possibility to reach a political settlement"* with the Palestinians, he said. *"We know the price of war. We experienced pain of losing commanders and brothers-in-arms. I feel this pain every day anew We, who won wars, know that our struggle would only be successfully completed when we put the wars behind us."*



"Deluded" - Because we dared.

by [APN](#) 10/19/16



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu loves to use social media as a tool to settle accounts with those who dare to challenge his policies, often in demagoguery that panders to the online mob both in content and style.

On Sukkot Eve, it was us, Americans for Peace Now, who were the target of Netanyahu's bluster. Why? Because we dared to highlight his West Bank settlement policy at a special United Nations Security Council session.

At the gathering, APN's Lara Friedman delivered a measured, fact-based analysis of the damage that West Bank settlements inflict on Israel's national security. We are proud of Lara's performance at the security Council and gratified to have been given the opportunity to share with the world our deep concerns about the direction in which Netanyahu's policies are leading our Jewish homeland.

Netanyahu, in a misleading Facebook post, falsely accused us of alleging that the settlements are the cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We never make this argument.

And while lobbing false accusations, Netanyahu had the chutzpah of accusing us of taking part in a "slander campaign" against Israel, just because we demonstrated how his ongoing settlement-construction campaign damages Israel and jeopardizes its character as a Jewish state and a democracy. In a facebook post this weekend, he called groups such as ours "deluded."

His attack on us and on the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, which shared the UN podium with us, was so vile that it prompted the State Department spokesperson to commend APN and B'Tselem for their work and to send a reminder to Netanyahu that "we believe that a free and unfettered civil society is a critical component of democracy. As we have said many times, we believe it is important that governments protect the freedoms of expression, and create an atmosphere where all voices can be heard."

Your [support for APN](#) will show Netanyahu that you care about peace and about Israel's future, that you value the truth over propaganda, and that you reject his cheap demagoguery and intimidation. [Your support](#) will help us continue to challenge Netanyahu's destructive policies.

[Would've. Could've. Should've.](#)

by [APN](#) 09/16/16



WORDS MATTER **ACTIONS MATTER MORE**



Aviva Meyer

I WOULD

What would have happened if the 1967 war had ended differently? Can you imagine the unimaginable, and think the unthinkable? What if the attacking Arab nations had conquered Israel and placed the country under a military occupation? And what if Israel's allies would not have rushed to its rescue? Do you think it would have taken

Jews twenty years to rise up against a foreign Arab occupation, as the Palestinians did against Israel's occupation? Would Jews not have resisted this occupation right from the start, using all means at their disposal— including violence? Would American friends of Israel stand idly by? Would they not have supported their brethren's actions?

I reject violence and terrorism, and we are all justifiably outraged when faced with these acts. Such acts are heinous and inexcusable. Unfortunately, that's what oppressed people do. Ehud Barak, Israel's most decorated general, made this point years ago when he said that, if he were a Palestinian, he would have joined a terrorist group.

I want to think I would have acted ethically and humanely, that I would have practiced nonviolence. But do we really know what we would have done had we been in our neighbors' shoes?

The Palestinians have made many mistakes. But Israelis have made them too, and their biggest mistake has been a refusal to empathize with the other side. Israel is known as a "start-up" nation. Let's help start up a state for their neighbors' stateless nation— for the sake of Israelis and Palestinians. This is what I would do.

IT COULD

The damaging effects of the occupation are an everyday reality. Yet, the damage extends well beyond the Green Line

that separates Israel from the territory it occupies. This damage has not only been inflicted upon the Palestinians, but upon Israeli society as well.

In the West Bank, we see Israeli settlements being built on private Palestinian land, illegal outposts being retroactively legalized, wildly disproportionate allocation of water to Israelis and Palestinians, and settlers' "Price Tag" attacks to which authorities often turn a blind eye.

In Israel, we see legislation aimed at silencing progressive NGOs, intimidation and threats targeting "leftists" and Arabs, the increasing popularity of extreme right-wing sentiments and the politicians who espouse them, and the lack of any action towards achieving peace with the Palestinians.

Of course, you could choose to ignore all of this. Or you could be like the renowned author Amos Oz. He saw the need for a grassroots movement that would push Israel to do what it takes for peace. He understood what Israel could become, and he helped found Peace Now (*Shalom Achshav*) to help ensure a peaceful future for Israel and to preserve the Zionist dream.

IT SHOULD

You should believe in hope. I know that I do, even as I know that the peace process is currently non-existent. Should you wallow in despair? No, the time for peace will come. Instead, we should be talking to all who will listen (and even those who

won't) and telling them just that: our time will come. One day, Israel's political establishment will catch-up to its security establishment. The politicians will understand the prescient warnings about the danger to the two-state solution and Israel's future. They will realize the need for action.

The fact is that many in Israel belong to the country's enormous political center—people who reject extremism and seek real solutions. Those in the

middle need to provide better answers, mobilize more effectively and to vocalize more loudly. But it isn't only up to them. We need to do this as well.

The Palestinians and the international community also need to sacrifice for peace—enough is enough. We all need a "Dayenu moment." As I mentioned before, Israel's own security officials have already arrived at this moment—what is everyone else waiting for? Occupation and extremism will bring neither peace nor security. What are you waiting for?

How should we keep hope alive? Our tradition teaches that we are *assirei tikvah*—prisoners of hope. My battered dream is better than no dream at all. I am reconciled to the reality that this process takes time. We all should understand that short-term disappointment must not lead to surrender.

WHAT MUST YOU TELL YOUR GRANDCHILDREN



"Hineni, here I am. Hunger, disease, civil rights, animal rights, the environment . . . here I am. Doing nothing is not an option. Send me." This is what you must tell your grandchildren: Here I am. I'm not going to sit idly by when people are starving, when the status quo doesn't suffice, when injustice prevails, when wrongs must become rights. Send me.

And this is what has indeed happened. American Jews have been a disproportionate part of world-wide movements to feed, to educate, to clothe, and to cure.

The cause of Israel and its continued existence as a Jewish, democratic state is no less important. Help make Israel the best that it can be, *Hineni*. Here I am to

lend support to the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state with security for Israel. The Israeli occupation is only intensifying, and security officials continue to stress the extent to which this makes Israelis less safe.

You made a difference in so many other issues by giving, writing, going, learning, and demanding. The need for a two-state solution is no less important. Moderate Israelis must find a way to unite with moderate Palestinians to figure out how to separate. There are enough of both in the political and ideological middle. All of us in the middle need to be more visible. Because when it comes to Israel, I want you to tell your grandchildren how you helped Israel be the best that it can be.

Taming the Settlements

by APN 07/28/16

Early this week, the Washington Post ran a piece titled, "In the settlement of Kiryat Arba, the demand is to expand." If you just read the title, you might think it was about the continuing growth of Israel's settlements. If you only read the first few paragraphs, you might think that it was about the shocking murder of Hallel Ariel and the cynical use of her death to promote settlement growth.

But read to the end and you find that Kiryat Arba – one of the most iconic and radical of the ideological settlements, the settlement home to Baruch Goldstein (y"sh), who murdered Muslim worshipers at the Ibrahimi Mosque/Tomb of the Patriarchs in 1994 – is shrinking. Settlers there are given to lament that "political considerations and outside pressure means nothing changes."



Who is helping lead the charge to bring this "outside pressure"? Peace Now.



So it is no surprise that in the same article, **when the Washington Post wanted to learn the facts about Israeli settlements from an authoritative source, they turned to Peace Now's Hagit Ofran.**

Acknowledged as the foremost expert on settlements, Hagit has helped build awareness of the threat that they pose to Israel's viability as a secure, Jewish, democratic state. It is through her efforts, and those of others at Peace Now, that money for settlements and plans for their expansion – which Netanyahu and his government would like to keep under wraps – are revealed. It is through their efforts that documentation is produced allowing the U.S., the international community, and countless organizations around the world to fully understand, track, and condemn settlement expansion in the West Bank.

In fact, you might call Hagit “the Settlement Whisperer” – **her expertise and unflagging determination has done more to expose and tame the settlements than otherwise would be the case.**



Despite claims of population growth by the proponents of the “Greater Israel” project, and despite the Netanyahu government pouring money into shoring up and expanding settlements, an examination of the numbers actually proves that the Israeli settlement enterprise in the West Bank has failed. There are few Israelis willing to move outside of the Green Line these days, and despite all the governmental incentives and efforts over the last 49 years, only four percent of Israelis are settlers.

As it turns out, “outside pressure” and “political considerations” work.

And it's not only the settlements themselves – pressuring businesses that are active in the West Bank has also worked. Despite government-provided incentives for companies to help entrench Israel's hold on the West Bank, several high-profile companies have recently decamped back to within the Green Line. Not only that, but twenty to thirty percent of Israeli companies from a list of them compiled 20 years ago are no longer there.

The trend is clear: **Israelis do not want an economy that is anchored in the occupation.**

Even as we recognize the difficulty of the struggle for peace, we must not forget that we are having an effect on the ground. It's because of the efforts of Peace Now and Americans for Peace Now – and

[because of your support](#) – that we have slowed the tide, and through which we will eventually turn that tide.

APN and Peace Now will continue to be at the forefront of efforts to oppose the settlement enterprise that threatens Israel's future. Help support Hagit Ofran and all of Peace Now's efforts to make sure that Netanyahu's policies are revealed and brought to a halt.

We cannot do it without your help. **Please make a [generous, tax deductible gift](#) to support our work.**

[Don't Let Them Silence Peace Now](#)

by [APN](#) 07/12/16

Last night, Netanyahu's [right wing government pushed a law](#) through the Knesset to silence dissent. Although it was touted to the public as a matter of transparency, the reality is that this law is aimed at Peace Now and other progressive groups.

Never mind that all non-profit organizations receiving funding from foreign governments must already disclose all such funding. Never mind that NGOs on the left, which are already transparent about their donors, are publicly branded, in effect, as agents of foreign governments. Never mind that right-wing groups – whose agendas align comfortably with that of the current Israeli government and who receive millions of dollars in donations from foreign individuals and entities – are able to keep their donors secret.



When Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked says that this law will diminish “blatant interference...in Israel's domestic affairs by means of money,” she is explicitly excluding the influence of foreign donors –such as US gambling mogul Sheldon Adelson - who use money to interfere in Israel's domestic affairs and advance a far-right agenda.

This law, a gross violation of Israel's freedom of expression, that specifically targets only peace and human rights organizations, is intended to divert the Israeli public discourse away from the occupation and silence opposition to the government's policies. It is a direct attack on Israeli democracy and human rights and an explicit attempt to silence organizations that promote and protect these rights.

But Peace Now and its pro-peace, pro-democracy, pro-human rights allies in Israel refuse to be silenced.

Peace Now is already working on a petition to the Supreme Court that would challenge the legitimacy of this law. It is urgent that we raise funds to launch a sustained effort to battle this dishonest legislation.

[Don't let Netanyahu and his extremist political allies silence Peace Now.](#)

[Help Peace Now redouble its efforts by donating today!](#)

Sincerely,
Debra DeLee
President and CEO
Americans for Peace Now

P.S. While Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu strongly supported the passage of this law, which adds no transparency to those receiving private donations and attempts to delegitimize Israeli organizations which abide by current transparency laws, he himself is currently –again– under investigation for allegations that he illegally received funds from foreign businessmen during his current tenure as prime minister. No wonder he doesn't want private donations under too much scrutiny!

[Read more on the NGO bill and what it means for progressive Israeli groups.](#)
[Read APN's Press Release here.](#)

[Do This Not That](#)

6/30/16

DO THIS NOT THAT

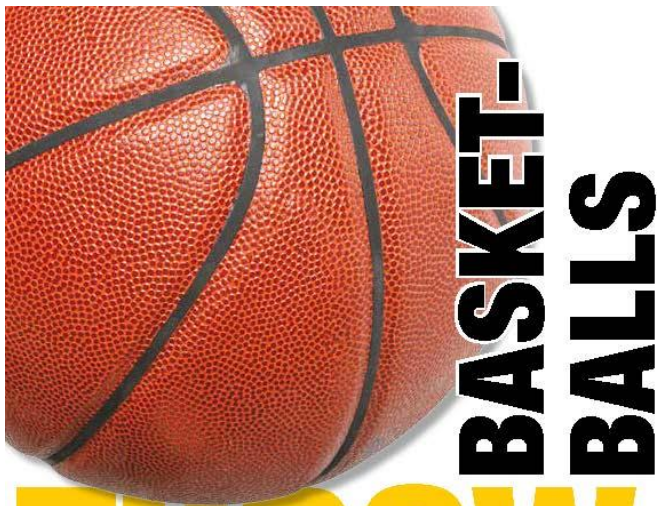
Sensible Suggestions for the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict

Americans for Peace Now

Americans for Peace Now

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Contact Americans for Peace Now (APN) at 2100 M Street, NW, Suite 619, Washington, D.C. 20037 for financial information and a full description of its programs.



BASKETBALLS

NOT STONES



In the West Bank, Palestinian children and teenagers throw stones at Israelis on a daily basis.

These stones are not only launched at armored vehicles, but also at cars driven by unsuspecting civilians. As we have seen, these stones can kill. Israeli settlers throw stones at Palestinians as well. But now, both groups have the opportunity to put their hand-eye coordination to much better use. Through PeacePlayers International — Middle East, a locally led charity that unites and educates Jewish and



THROW

BUILD TRUST



In October 2015, in response to escalating violence, Jews and Arabs formed a human chain of 700 people to protest senseless attacks on Israelis.

Just a few weeks later, Israeli Jews and Israeli-Palestinians stood together at an intersection in Northern Israel to say "Arabs and Jews want to stop the killing and the hatred." These examples of trust between Jews and Arabs must be multiplied if peace is ever to be achieved. Living next to each other requires trust on both sides. Building settlements on land in the West Bank considered by Palestinians to be theirs creates just the opposite: hatred, distrust and more violence. The occupation is a central problem for both peoples now. Settlement construction is the embodiment of that issue. Let's build trust instead.

NOT

SETTLEMENTS



SEEDS

SOW

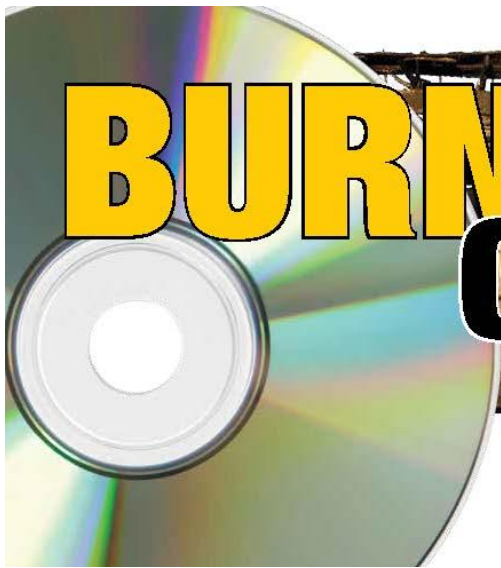


NOT DESTRUCTION

Israel used to be known for its reforestation programs that were one of the foundations of its state-building project. Now, however, Israel is equally responsible for the uprooting of over 1 million Palestinian-owned olive trees.

The trees, many of which are ancient, are often bulldozed because the land has been confiscated by the Israeli military authority for various reasons — usually under the pretext of security, but often for a variety of arbitrary reasons. This practice only further disenfranchises Palestinians by severely damaging their economic livelihood. It's time for Israel to return to the ways of its founders by helping "make the desert bloom."





BURN CDS



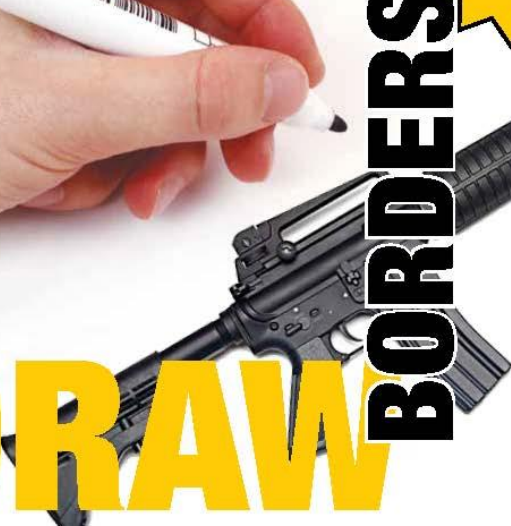
David Broza, the Israeli superstar singer-composer, recently made an album and documentary, "East Jerusalem West Jerusalem," that is now available from APN on CD and DVD. Co-written with a Palestinian friend, the songs hold out hope that making music together can change people's hearts and minds.

In the West Bank, we have seen hundreds of "Price Tag" arson attacks committed by Israeli settler extremists against Palestinian houses and mosques, with authorities often failing to effectively investigate in the aftermath. Through Broza's music, let's help ignite a spark of hope instead of fueling the flames of hatred and violence.

NOT HOUSES



DRAW BORDERS



NOT BLOOD

Israeli author David Grossman has said, "No people can live in a country without borders. It threatens one's identity. It's impossible to know where you begin and end or where you and your neighbor begin."

Since 1967, Israel has lived without defined borders to its East. The West Bank, which used to be defined by the Green Line, now appears on official maps as part of Israel. But this is a falsehood, as the Palestinians who live there know full well. They are not Israeli citizens, they can't vote to change things, and their daily struggles are part of why many choose the path of violence. To define its borders and begin to end the cycle of bloodshed, Israel needs a peace agreement with the Palestinians. To do that, it must agree to cede territory in West Bank along with mutually agreed-upon land swaps. To commit to that, Israel needs a new government capable of making better choices than permanently living "by the sword" — the scenario to which Netanyahu has condemned his country's future.



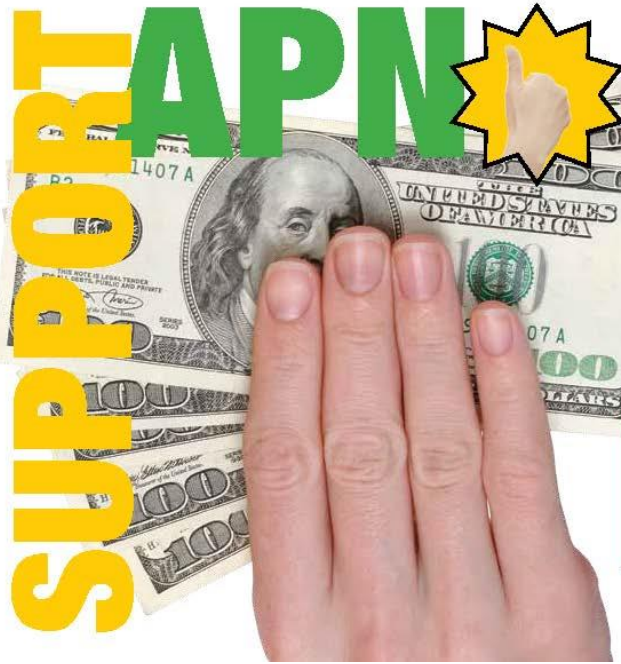
EAT FALAFEL

NO H CROW



Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has had to "eat crow" on a number of occasions over the past year. He was forced to walk back his statement before Israel's election that no Palestinian state would be established on his watch, as well as his election day comments about "the Arabs voting in droves." He had to backtrack again when he stated that the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem gave Hitler the idea for the Nazi regime's extermination of European Jewry. Instead of trying to paint Palestinians as Nazis and appeal to the lowest common denominator for political gains, Netanyahu should explore the shared interests and desires of both Arabs and Jews. He can begin by sitting down with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas for a falafel sandwich — a Middle Eastern standard that both peoples love and cherish.





Shalom Achshav is the Israeli Peace Now movement. It was established in 1978, when 348 senior reserve army officers and combat soldiers came together to urge their government to sign a peace agreement with Egypt.

It:

- Tracks and reports on settlements in the West Bank.
- Files legal petitions to stop settlement expansion that violates Israeli law.
- Rallies Israelis to speak out in support of peace.
- Reaches out to young Israelis in order to educate and empower them to act on issues related to peace.

Americans for Peace Now was established in 1981 to mobilize support for *Shalom Achshav*.

It:

- Provides financial support for the programs of Peace Now in Israel.
- Mobilizes activists around the country to impact U.S. policy.
- Delivers a pro-peace, pro-Israel message to policy makers in Washington.
- Presents the media with reliable information and clearly articulated opinions.
- Dispatches speakers to campuses and congregations around the country.

**DON'T
WAIT**



[Tough Questions, Expert Answers: The Temple Mount heats up again](#)

by [APN](#) 05/01/16



I am proud to introduce *Tough Questions, Expert Answers*, a new APN publication series which tackles seminal issues pertaining to the conflict. In a world where soundbites dominate, it is critical to take the time to understand the issues that can change the world- for better or for worse.



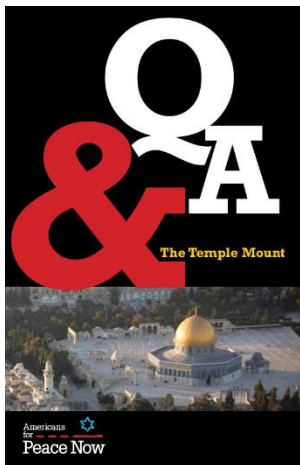
The first edition in the series is a Q&A on the Temple Mount. With tensions growing by the day over the world's most contested religious site, this timely explainer by Jerusalem expert Danny Seidemann is a must read. As Danny correctly states, "the battle over the Status Quo at the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif has increasingly become a proxy for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict writ large."

An attorney and world-renowned Jerusalem expert, Daniel Seidemann is the director of Terrestrial Jerusalem, a Jerusalem-based organization he founded. I strongly recommend Danny's cogent analysis and clear explanation of the current turmoil surrounding the Haram al Sharif/ Temple Mount.

For more background [click here](#) to read our essential resource page "Hard Truths About Jerusalem," which also includes links to briefing calls with Daniel Seidemann about Jerusalem.

B'shalom,
Debra DeLee
President and CEO
Americans for Peace Now

P.S. Programs like this are made possible through [your tax deductible contribution](#) to Americans for Peace Now. Please [donate](#) so that we can continue to provide you with valuable information and analysis.



Q. APN: Since things heated up again in and around the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif, there has been a lot of talk about the "Status Quo." Why is this the case?

A. Danny Seidemann (DS): At the core of the current turmoil on and surrounding the Haram al Sharif/ Temple Mount are accusations and counteraccusations by the sides that each has changed, or seeks to change, the Status Quo. These accusations and counter-accusations find traction in part due to the lack of clarity and consensus over the definition of the Status Quo. They also find ready audiences on all sides due to the reality that the Status Quo has, indeed, undergone significant changes over the past 48 years, at times with the stakeholders not conscious of the changes, and at other times willfully denying them.

Q. APN: The term "Status Quo" implies a situation that is unchanging, but you say there have been changes in the Status Quo over the past 48 years. Can you explain what you mean?

A. DS: The Status Quo on the Temple Mount/Haram al Sharif is not and has never been static. Rather, various elements have changed over time due to changed circumstances, like the erosion of Israeli-Jordanian coordination and increasing political and religious attempts to challenge the foundations of the Status Quo.

[Click here to read all of Tough Questions, Expert Answers!](#)

Yossi Alpher: PASSOVER - 40 years of wandering to nearly 50 years of occupation

by APN 04/14/16



These are not easy or happy times in the Middle East. If the past year is anything to go by, things are only getting harder for Israelis and Palestinians. We are collectively sliding slowly down a slippery slope toward some sort of ugly, violent, and tribal one-state reality. Just look at the recent Pew Survey's finding that roughly half of Israeli Jews look approvingly on the notion of expelling Arabs from the country. Look at the extensive incitement on Palestinian Authority media, the wave of knife attacks and the dismal socio-economic state of the Gaza Strip. How are we—Israelis and American Jews—going to deal with this reality in the years to come? Where do Shalom Achshav (Peace Now in Israel) and Americans for Peace Now fit in? —Yossi Alpher

My latest book, *No End of Conflict: Rethinking Israel-Palestine* reflects this somber mood. One of the key points I make in the book is that the American Jewish community will increasingly feel the impact of the negative direction Israeli-Palestinian relations are taking. In other words, **American Jews have to come to terms with some unpleasant Israeli realities.** *No End of Conflict* lays out a variety of scenarios for possible developments in the coming decade that fall well short of the two-state solution we would all like to see. These include limited unilateral withdrawal, a ceasefire with Gaza and a UN Security Council resolution mandating a Palestinian state, but also creeping annexation and full-scale Arab revolt in the West Bank. The book concludes:



Certainly, one key factor pervades all the scenarios: internal discord, violence, and repression inside expanded Israel cannot be confined to that small country; these phenomena will affect the region and, indeed, the international scene. **This means that Israel's problem is also the region's problem, Europe's problem, America's problem, and American Jewry's problem.** It means that Israel's West Bank policies over nearly fifty years add up to a strategic mistake worthy of being listed in Barbara Tuchman's 1984 *The March of Folly* alongside the Trojan War and the US war in Vietnam. . . . And it

APN's 1984 *The March of Folly* alongside the Trojan War and the US war in Vietnam. . . . And it

means that Israel's current phantom well-being—a booming economy, ties with Arab neighbors, strong political and economic counteroffensives against international boycott campaigns that seem to display more noise than substance—will soon inevitably be crumbling at the edges.

If this assessment is valid, all these regional, international, and Jewish actors must begin to consider how they are going to adapt to a future increasingly likely to be characterized by the absence of a solution and a creeping apartheid reality in Israel-Palestine. How can they prevent destabilizing spillover effects on the region, particularly among Jordan's ethnic Palestinian majority? **How will the American Jewish mainstream define its underlying values when confronted by a nondemocratic Israel?** And if this assessment is in fact valid, the relevant think tanks and research institutes in Israel and everywhere else must consider altering their agendas. . . . They should begin to look at the modalities of Israel's future behavior under extreme duress and adversity, along with the strategic ramifications for Israel itself of its increasingly negative regional and international status as the length of the occupation approaches fifty years. Will partial measures to lower the profile of the conflict still be viable? How will Israeli chaos interact with Arab chaos?

This is a bleak picture, but not a hopeless one. There is a lot that Israelis and American Jews can do under these circumstances to seek a Zionist, Jewish and democratic Israel that does not rule over Palestinians. This is where *Shalom Achshav* and Americans for Peace Now (APN) enter the picture. **Virtually alone in Israel, Shalom Achshav is documenting West Bank settlement construction, the "sanitizing" of illegal (under Israeli law!) outposts and the theft of private Palestinian lands that, together, nurture Israel's creeping annexation.**

Shalom Achshav challenges these affronts to Zionism in the courts, sounds the alarm at attempts in the Knesset to silence dissent and pluralistic debate, and stands up to every one-sided ministerial move that favors the settlements over the needs of the vast majority of Israelis. Their data and maps are widely considered the most accurate public resource on West Bank settlements outside of classified government data. When diplomats need settlement data, they come to Peace Now. **When the New York Times and Wall Street Journal want to run infographics on the settlements, they contact Peace Now, and when Israeli politicians approach this issue, Peace Now is their primary resource.** When Labor party leader Isaac Herzog recently presented his plan for an Israeli pullout from parts of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, his maps were based on the research and field work of *Shalom Achshav*. Some reactions to his plan, including APN's, were not positive (to say the least) but that, notwithstanding, does not take away how people, governments, diplomats, pundits, and media all rely on the steadfast work of *Shalom Achshav* whether you agree with them or not.

By supporting *Shalom Achshav*, APN makes sure that neither politicians nor the public—in Israel and beyond—settle for the disastrous status quo.

This picture is not hopeless. Times can change. Historically, the vicissitudes of Israel- Arab relations have been in near-constant flux due to unpredictable external developments like the 1977 Sadat peace initiative, the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, but also the current Arab upheavals and Iranian and Islamist threats that have nourished Israelis' hawkish frame of mind.

As *No End of Conflict* documents in detail, neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian political system is presently or imminently capable of moving toward the actual emergence of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. This reality cannot be rationalized or whitewashed with facile slogans to the effect that

'the outlines of peace are obvious, the leaders just have to get to the table' (roughly paraphrasing statements in recent years by leading American and European policymakers).

It is APN that reminds the administration and Congress every day that the Israeli policies they tolerate are moving Israel down that slippery slope toward a disaster that can and must be averted.

We need to prevent a hyper-messianic faction of Israelis from destroying the fabric of Israel, turning it into a conflicted and violent bi-national entity and, as a disastrous by-product, orphaning the Diaspora. Let me dwell for a moment on this last point: the majority liberal American Jewish community has to begin asking itself what the current direction Israel is taking is liable to mean for its children and grandchildren. If Israel's creation in 1948 was a dramatically positive turning point for world Jewry, what does the slippery slope mean? If Israel turns away from democratic and pluralistic Zionism, how do American Jews respond?

To stop the slippery slope—even to slow it down until better times—**nothing could be more important than supporting APN. Please do so with [a tax-deductible contribution](#).**

Chag Sameach,



Yossi Alpher

P.S. Jews will soon, at their Seders, be retelling the Passover story—the redemption and exodus from Egypt. For 40 years in the desert, the ancient Israelites wandered until a new generation was able to enter "The Promised Land." From 40 years of wandering to nearly 50 years of occupation, we are still waiting for this "much-too-promised-land" to truly find peace and security for all its inhabitants. 50 years of occupation and 50 years of settlements, and the story told will be that we wandered far from the true ideals of Zionism and the true ideals of Justice.

[On Purim 2016: "Not in every hour does a miracle happen."](#)

by [APN](#) 03/20/16



"A person is obligated to get drunk on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between 'blessed is Mordecai' and 'cursed is Haman'."

Americans for Peace Now

Purim 2016 / 5776



Rabbi Aryeh Cohen

Purim is upon us. Most Jews who celebrate Purim remember it as the story of the evil Haman who bribed the buffoonish King Ahaseurus to kill all the Jews in the Persian kingdom as a result of his rivalry with the Jewish courtier Mordecai. The Jews managed to depose Haman, and convinced Ahaseurus to let them fight back and slaughter those who would have stood against them.



The key to understanding the story is a statement by a fourth century Babylonian rabbi who lived centuries after the story might have happened, in the place that it was supposed to have happened—Persia. That rabbi, Rava, added one observance to those listed in the Esther scroll itself (feasting, exchanging gifts, supporting the poor and reading the story): “A person is obligated to get drunk on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between ‘blessed is Mordecai’ and ‘cursed is Haman’.” This is a very specific obligation. There is a specific goal here.

Significantly, Rava’s statement in the Babylonian Talmud is attached to a story of a Rabbinic murder:

Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira
made a Purim feast together.
They got drunk, Rabbah rose
and slaughtered Rabbi Zeira.
On the morrow,
when the wine had left him,
Rabbah asked for mercy
on Rabbi Zeira, and [God] revived him.
A year later,
Rabbah said to Rabbi Zeira,
“The gentleman should come
and we will do the Purim feast together.”
Rabbi Zeira said to Rabbah,
“Not in every hour
does a miracle happen.”

Aside from proving that rabbis are not fools (“not in every hour does a miracle happen”), this story points to the dark heart of Rava’s understanding of Purim. The fact that the Jews fought back and slaughtered the Persians was not a “happy ever after” ending to the story. It was but a pause in the cycle of violence that was enabled by the continuing reign of King Ahaseurus who gave power to the faction with the greatest sway and the most money. Under Ahaseurus’ reign (which is our unredeemed world) there is no final act of violence which brings peace. As the great Rabbi Aharon Shmuel Tamera wrote in the early twentieth century: “Even if in the present moment it was to defend themselves from the evil ones, however, by [the use of violence,] violence spreads in the world...”

On Purim, 22 years ago in 1994, a Jewish doctor, charged with healing, walked into the mosque at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, slaughtered 29 innocent, defenseless Palestinians at prayer and injured more than 120 others. He used his army-issued submachine gun and only stopped shooting when the gun jammed. This abomination was an exception only in its body count and cold hearted brutality. Most (though hardly all) of the quotidian violence of the occupation does not result from this level of criminal savagery. Most (though hardly all) of the victims of the occupation are not murdered. The ongoing

abuses of the occupation take the form of humiliations, deprivation of travel, theft of land, imprisonment, and yes, killing by soldiers, and murder by civilians.

The murder and mayhem is, as anyone who reads the news knows, not onesided, and there is no monopoly on brutality. However, the occupation is singular in its bureaucratic ability to deploy violence banally, in an offhanded manner, as part of the orders of the day: the violence of home demolitions, land appropriations, denial of access to medical care, tear gas, and use of excessive force at demonstrations. Sadly, the necessary defensive violence of the Six Day War has, as Rabbi Tameres predicted over a century ago, turned into the violence of oppression, and occupation.

The only way out is to stop supporting the occupation. To stop supporting those institutions who provide the Israeli government with the means to continue the occupation. To demand that the mainstream American Jewish institutions remove funding from all parts of the occupation: from direct and indirect support of settlements, to support for tours that bring Americans to show solidarity with the settlements, to support for delegations to Israel that are used as propaganda for the ongoing project of the occupation and settlement.

Instead, we must support those who are fighting the occupation. Who are fighting against the expansion of settlements and for the dismantling of the settlement project. [We must support those like Americans for Peace Now](#) and its Israeli sister organization, Peace Now (Shalom Achshav), who are working to stop the violence of the occupation. Not because it destroys any chance of an Israeli democracy—though it does that. Not because it undermines the essential Jewish values which should undergird the State of Israel— though it does that, too. Rather, because it propagates evil, injustice, and violence on a daily basis in obvious and hidden ways. Unless we do all we can to stop the occupation we will never be able to say, “Our hands have not spilt this blood.”

Your [tax deductible contribution](#) to Americans for Peace Now helps support Peace Now’s essential programs.

L’shalom,
Rabbi Aryeh Cohen



Press Releases

[APN Mourns the Death of Shimon Peres](#)

by [Ori Nir](#) 09/27/16

Americans for Peace Now (APN) mourns the death of Shimon Peres, the former president and prime minister of the State of Israel, an icon of Israel's founding generation, a visionary of peace and security for Israel, a dedicated leader who led Israel through wars and in the quest for peace.



APN's President and CEO Debra DeLee said: "Shimon Peres has been a fixture in Israeli public life since the inception of the Jewish state. He held almost every possible senior position in government, and left his mark on every aspect of Israeli public life – security, foreign relations, the economy, technology, culture and the arts. He was a renaissance man, with unmatched intellectual curiosity and a passion for advancing peace and security for Israel. Peres' understanding of Israeli national security extended from military might to the arts, from technology to transportation and social justice.

"As the sister-organization of Israel's preeminent peace movement, Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), APN salutes President Peres for his indefatigable efforts to advance peace between Israel and its neighbors and for his invaluable contribution to Israel's security.

"Shimon Peres' memory and legacy are a blessing to anyone who cares about Israel and its well being as a democracy that is guided by progressive values."

[Press Release: APN to Support New Israeli Initiative for Referendum on the Occupation](#)

by [Ori Nir](#) 09/05/16



Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), Israel's preeminent peace movement, in cooperation with other Israeli civil society organizations, today launched a new initiative demanding a referendum on the future of Israel's rule over the West Bank and on peace with the Palestinians.

Americans for Peace Now, the U.S. sister organization of Shalom Achshav, supports the initiative. APN calls on all Americans who care about Israel's future to support the call for a referendum on the occupation, which is now entering its fiftieth year.

The referendum initiative, anchored in a new organization, Decision at 50, will collect signatures of Israeli citizens, demanding a voice in deciding on the future of the Occupied Territories – a decision until now dictated by the settlers and their allies, through establishing facts on the ground, with an immense impact on the national security and wellbeing of the state of Israel.

Decision at 50 is the result of cooperation between several Israeli organizations, led by Peace Now and Blue White Future. Many prominent Israeli public figures have joined the initiative, including current and former Knesset members, former security officials, as well as prominent academics, entertainers and writers.

In conjunction with the launching of the initiative, leaders of Decision at 50 today sent a letter to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, asking for a meeting to explain the rationale for the referendum and to lay out the details of the legislation required by the Knesset to put the referendum initiative in motion.

The letter to Netanyahu notes that in the five decades since Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, Israeli governments have established expansive and expensive facts on the ground in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the form of settlements and related infrastructure that siphoned billions of taxpayer shekels.

This de-facto settlement agenda, as well as other practices expanding and deepening the occupation, were taken without any clear policy decision on the future of the Occupied Territories – neither annexation nor separation. "After fifty years, the time has come for us to make a decision in this matter and to clarify, to ourselves and to the world, where Israel is heading and what character we want it to have in the coming years," the letter says.

The letter continues with an appeal to Netanyahu, demanding that "the government of Israel, headed by you, will initiate a referendum to decide whether Israel ought to strive for there to be two states between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, in borders agreed upon by both peoples, or should Israel strive for there be one state on the entire territory."

Americans for Peace Now, the sister organization of Israel's Peace Now movement, strongly supports the initiative and will act to advance it. APN's Chair of the Board, James Klutznick said: "This campaign should motivate not only Israelis to have a serious discussion on the future of their rule over the Occupied Territories, but should also stimulate a discussion among us, Americans who care about Israel's future. As we reach the fifty-year mark of the occupation, we have an opportunity to assert our vision of a future Israel as a true democracy, a Jewish state that proudly fulfills the letter and the spirit of its Declaration of Independence. Let's embrace that vision of Israel: A nation that rids itself of the political, moral and national security albatross that is the occupation."



[APN on the JCPOA at One Year: A Clear Win for Both the U.S. & Israel](#)

by [Lara Friedman](#) 07/15/16

This week, on the first anniversary of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Americans for Peace Now (APN) celebrated the achievement of this historic deal – a deal that has already proven itself by radically rolling back and limiting Iran’s nuclear program.

APN President and CEO Debra DeLee commented:



“We reiterate today our thanks and congratulations to President Obama and his P5+1 partners – France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Russia, and China – on this historic agreement and its ongoing implementation. A year on, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) has proven itself a clear win for the American people, for U.S. leadership, for U.S. national security and, we believe, for Israel. Already this agreement has dramatically and verifiably rolled back Iran’s nuclear program, stringently limited Iran’s ongoing and future nuclear activities, and taken off the table what pre-JCPOA was the looming threat of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon in the foreseeable future. The implementation of the JCPOA also ensures that, where in the past the U.S. and international community had very limited means to monitor Iran’s activities, today, should Iran decide to break the terms of the deal and try to ‘sneak out’ to a nuclear weapon, there is a far greater chance such an effort would be detected and the U.S. and its allies would be in a far stronger position to respond effectively.”

“It is precisely for these reasons that APN and our supporters across the U.S. for years worked in support of a diplomatic solution to the challenge posed by Iran’s nuclear program. The achievement and implementation of the JCPOA demonstrates that when there is resolute political will, diplomacy can work – and can walk the world back from the brink of war. As we have noted previously, the JCPOA is a deal grounded not on trust and goodwill but on far-reaching limitations on Iranian activities and intrusive verification mechanisms. Implementation of this agreement – key elements of which will continue to be in force for decades – is today making Israel, the region and the world more secure.”

“The JCPOA represents an extraordinary success for diplomacy – a success achieved despite enormous obstacles, including those deliberately erected by naysayers and war-mongers in Iran, the U.S., and Israel. Unsurprisingly, naysayers, regime-change advocates, and war-mongers continue to try to undermine the agreement, despite its clear dividends for U.S. and Israeli interests. While serious issues of concern related to Iran are not addressed by the JCPOA, including Iran’s role in supporting terrorism in the region and its human rights abuses at home, efforts to exploit these concerns to torpedo the JCPOA post-facto must not be allowed to succeed.”

Go [HERE](#) for APN’s resource page that includes links to statements from President Obama and others, and recommended analyses and news commentary on the one-year anniversary.



Press Release: APN Condemns Recent Palestinian Terror Attacks; Only Political Agreement would End Violence

by Ori Nir 07/01/16

Americans for Peace Now (APN) joins its sister organization, Israel's Peace Now movement, in strongly condemning the recent deadly terrorist attacks against Israelis in the West Bank and in pointing out that ultimately, the only way to end such violence is ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by achieving a two-state solution.

This imperative was further underscored in today's report by the international Middle East Quartet, the body that brings together the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations to advance Israeli-Palestinian peace.

APN's President and CEO Debra DeLee said: "Yesterday, a 13-year-old Israeli girl, Hallel Ariel, was stabbed to death in her sleep at her family's home in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba near Hebron. The attacker, 17-year-old Muhammad Tarayre of the neighboring village of Bani Naim jumped the fence into Kiryat Arba, fatally stabbed the girl, stabbed a security guard, and was then shot dead. Later in the day, two Israelis were injured in a stabbing attack in Netanya, inside Israel. Today, an Israeli father of ten, Michael Mark, was shot dead and his wife Hava was severely injured near Hebron. Two of the couple's ten children were injured in the drive-by terror attack. The gunmen escaped.

"These shocking and heinous terrorist attacks, targeting civilians, are inexcusable. Nothing justifies murdering a teen in her bed or shooting a family in its car. We send our condolences to the Ariel and Mark families, and wish a full recovery to those who were injured.

"These attacks are antithetical to the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but they must not serve as a reason or as an excuse for measures that would further jeopardize the two-state solution.

"The only way to curtail and ultimately stop the violence is a political agreement that would end the occupation and separate Israel from a newly established Palestine, a sovereign independent state, living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security."

APN Condemns Killing of Hallel Ariel

by APN 06/30/16

A 13-year-old Israeli girl, Hallel Ariel, was stabbed to death in her sleep at her family's home in the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba near Hebron. The attacker, 17-year-old Muhammad Tarayre of the neighboring village of Bani Naim jumped the fence into Kiryat Arba, fatally stabbed the girl, stabbed a security guard, and was then shot dead.

Americans for Peace Now (APN), the sister-organization of the Israeli peace movement Peace Now, strongly condemns this terrorist attack. Attacks such as this are completely unjustifiable, and are antithetical to the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Press Release: APN Alarmed over Avigdor Lieberman's Imminent Appointment as Israel's Defense Minister

by Ori Nir 05/19/16

Americans for Peace Now (APN) today sounded the alarm over the imminent appointment of Israeli serial provocateur and extremist firebrand Avigdor Lieberman as Israel's new Minister of Defense. APN's President and CEO Debra DeLee commented:

"Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is today once again showing the world that he puts politics and personal political survival above the national security of Israel and its people.

"Avigdor Lieberman has a long and ugly track record of irresponsible, reckless, and deliberately inflammatory rhetoric and actions. As foreign minister in Netanyahu's previous government, he caused severe damage to Israel's foreign interests, creating crises in Israel's relations with regional and global allies.

"As defense minister, Lieberman will be responsible for Israel's most important national security assets – its military and its intelligence agencies. A politician who has been described many times as a 'pyromaniac' will now, in effect, be second in command in Israel, with a decisive vote over issues like whether to start a new war in Gaza or Lebanon, or whether to bomb Iran. This is the same man who was described in April 2016 in an official Likud statement as, 'a man who has never led even one soldier to the battlefield, who has never taken a military decision, who has not sat through one Cabinet meeting from beginning to end...'

"Moreover, this hate-monger who lives in a settlement located deep inside the West Bank, will also become for all intents and purposes the absolute ruler of the West Bank and Gaza, which remain under the overarching authority of the Defense Ministry's 'Civil Administration.' Every plan for settlements, every regulation pertaining to the daily lives of Palestinians – all will come under his authority.

"Longtime Likud MK Benny Begin hit the nail on the head yesterday, when he called this appointment 'delusional' and said it 'reflects a lack of responsibility towards the security forces and toward Israeli citizens.'

"As the American sister organization of Israel's Peace Now movement, a movement started by Israeli officers and soldiers, APN is particularly concerned at the prospect of tainted relations between Israeli politicians and the military, and at the prospect of Israeli politicians abusing the IDF in the service of an irresponsible political agenda that jeopardizes a future two-state settlement between Israelis and Palestinians and endangers Israel's security."

APN Condemns Terrorist Attack on Jerusalem Bus

by APN 04/18/16

Washington, DC – Americans for Peace Now (APN) unequivocally condemns today's bombing of a bus in Jerusalem, in which 21 people have reportedly been wounded, two of them severely.

APN stands with our brothers and sisters in Israel. We reiterate that attacks such as this are completely unjustifiable, and they are antithetical to the pursuit of a just, peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

[APN Outraged at Violent Escalation in Israel](#)

by [APN](#) 03/08/16

Washington, DC – Americans for Peace Now (APN) is outraged and heartbroken at the spiraling violence in Israel today, a day in which Israelis were shaken by three terrorist attacks. In one of these attacks, in Jaffa, a young American tourist was murdered and his wife severely injured.

APN strongly condemns these attacks. We stand with our brothers and sisters in Israel, who are facing a horrible wave of terrorism.

This terrible escalation takes place as Vice President Biden visits Israel to discuss Israel's security challenges. It is a reminder that Israel's security threats are not limited to tanks, fighter planes and missiles across its borders, but are also attributed to the festering occupation, its ongoing rule over millions of disenfranchised, oppressed, angry Palestinians who can't see hope of a better future.

Peace Parsha



[#SukkahStrong](#)

By [APN](#) Intern Naomi Tamura 10/13/16



Every Shabbat, Jews around the world ask God to “spread over us a *sukkat shalom* – a sukkah of Your peace.” We express our hope for the protection of our dignity and our rights, and to live in a just and peaceful world with our neighbors. As the Jewish festival of Sukkot begins just days after Yom Kippur, Jewish communities come together to celebrate, among other things, the freedom of the people of Israel – and to build their individual and communal sukkahs as physical representations of this peace and protection that we seek. Unfortunately, there are other homes being built that only serve to prevent both peace and freedom.

Three years ago, I lived on Kibbutz Ein-Dor in the north of Israel as part of my gap year program. There, I and 37 others helped build a sukkah (pictured). Although it was little more than a simple, open-roofed structure with only one permanent wall, we rejoiced in our sukkah's vulnerability. Our collective efforts to hang pictures of our families, lace colorful streamers around the few tree branches that served as our roof, and stake PVC piping into the ground as the sukkah's base all brought us closer together as a community. Yet, it was the way that we ate, sang,

joked, and dreamed together that allowed us to understand the true meaning of community filled with members who are at peace with one another.

This Sunday evening, as we prepare to celebrate Sukkot in a new year, we should be reminded of the connections between the sukkah and peace. The openness of the sukkah not only reminds us to share our homes with others, but asks us to open our hearts and minds towards building inclusivity and tolerance. In doing so, the sukkah becomes a communal structure sustained only by the shared commitment and vigilance of all its guests.

Peace, too, is vulnerable and requires these collective efforts in order to endure. Without continuous patience, care, and respect for others in the community, intolerance and hatred can eradicate prospects for peace. Thus, the meaning and usefulness of the sukkah extends beyond its physical structure: the ways in which members of our communities choose to relate to and see one another inside the sukkah bring the idea of peace and tolerance to fruition.



The fragility of the sukkah, our home during Sukkot, should remind us that homes are a sacred space that we rely on. A home isn't just a building, but more – it's a place where we feel safe, even when it's nothing more than a shack. Yet, as we have seen in the West Bank, homes can also be used as pawns by which to claim land and assert power.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Israeli occupation of the West Bank, this Sukkot in particular demands that we condemn the building of homes that bring Israel further away from peace. Just last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu approved almost 100 new housing units in the Shiloh Valley,

contributing to Israel's ongoing illegal settlement expansion. Furthermore, Netanyahu's government is in the process of creating the first new settlement in the volatile city of Hebron in nearly a decade, and has moved ahead with plans to demolish the Palestinian village of Susya.

These settlement expansions and demolitions not only serve as a tool for the government to exert its power and control over the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but also work to undermine the interests of Israelis whose only wish is for peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. Netanyahu is sending them, and the world, a message that his commitment to a two-state solution is, at best, rhetorical and, at worst, nothing more than a cover for strengthening settlements and the occupation.

So as we build and rejoice in our temporary homes this Sukkot, we must recognize that the peace we as Jews have the potential to create is not confined to the space bound by the sukkah itself. We must extend our *sukkat shalom* over Israel by joining with others in our community to denounce the threat that settlement expansion poses to the two-state solution and Israel's future. May this year's sukkot strengthen our partnerships, community, and potential for collective action towards peace and security for all.