

Date: Wed, 29 Aug 2007 10:43:22 -0700 (PDT)
From: Madison-Rafah Sister-City Proj
<rafahsistercity@yahoo.com>
Subject: Weekly Briefing No. 16 (August 28, 2007)

Dear Friends,

This week's briefing is the latest "News Roundup" from Jewish Voice for Peace, which contains some news and analysis about the latest maneuverings involving Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the U.S.

If you are interested in receiving the News Roundup service, sign up for the JVP e-newsletter here:
<http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/organization/jvfp/signUp.jsp?key=136>

(If you are interested in working with JVP in Madison, please contact Judith at jlaitman@tds.net or Tsela at thirdfloorcloset@sbcglobal.net).

Barb O.
MRSCP

More articles of interest

Dear Friend,
Here is your weekly JVP news roundup for August 28, 2007. Click on the highlighted links for news articles that expand on the summary here.

JVP News Roundup, August 28, 2007
[Click here for printer-friendly version](#)

The much-ballyhooed Middle East Peace Conference, which is not yet firmly scheduled, is taking shape, at least in terms of the negotiations currently underway between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. In order for the conference to have any weight at all, the Bush Administration is hoping the Israeli and Palestinian leaders can agree to a set of principles that would outline the settlement they hope to achieve.

Before even considering the principles in question, it is important to remind ourselves that a prerequisite for any progress, whether at this conference or in any other endeavor, is for the two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians to be fully represented. That means finding a way to include Hamas. This task is less daunting than it might

appear--under the government that existed before the split in early June, Hamas had agreed that Abbas could handle negotiations with Israel and that they would abide by any agreement he struck provided that agreement be validated by a referendum of the Palestinian people.

Any agreement reached by a government of only part of the Palestinian people would not survive a week, and it would surely not bring the end of this long and bloody conflict any closer. Indeed, it is more likely to presage a new surge in violence. In any case, a conference without the Palestinians being fully represented is more of an exercise in public relations than a diplomatic step. Still, any agreement of principles that Abbas and Olmert agree to is likely to have diplomatic repercussions for years to come, particularly since Abbas is insisting that the principles cover all of the outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians.

Abbas does not want to see any more temporary arrangements. The Oslo experience has soured the Palestinian public on temporary accords, so he wants the conference to come to permanent agreements on all the issues at hand. Israel is in much less of a hurry to come to a permanent arrangement. Abbas is also trying his best to keep the negotiations quiet.

A further pitfall is that Israel wants the negotiations on borders between itself and the West Bank to start with the current route of the separation wall. It is clear that Israel intends to annex the 8% of the West Bank included on the west side of the wall, and that negotiations would cover what compensation for this annexation the Palestinians would receive, compensation that would include whatever modes are arrived at to connect the West Bank and Gaza.

Abbas may be forced to accept those terms, but they will be exceedingly unpopular among the Palestinians. He quickly rejected a land swap similar in nature to what the right-wing Avigdor Lieberman had proposed to swap settlements for Arab areas in Israel. It must be recalled that the international consensus for years has been that Israel must withdraw to the pre-1967 borders, possibly with some mutually agreed upon border adjustments. Palestinians are wondering, with considerable justification, why, after they have

conceded 78% of Mandatory Palestine (Yasir Arafat did this way back in 1988).

The terms Israel and Abbas are discussing seem to be loosely based on the Clinton Parameters of 2000. They include:

Borders -- The starting point is the separation fence, without additional areas slated for the expansion of settlements. This leaves 92 percent of the area of the West Bank in Palestinian hands. The final area of the new state will be larger than the area east of the fence, but smaller than the area proposed in the Geneva Accord.

Among themselves, Israeli officials talk about the need to begin applying the principles of the Evacuation-Compensation Law on West Bank settlers. Two bills have recently been proposed on this issue, one by Colette Avital (Labor) and Avshalom Vilan (Meretz), and the other by Amir Peretz and Yuli Tamir (Labor).

Jerusalem -- According to a government official, Israel would be willing to transfer to the Palestinians at an early stage a number of neighborhoods and refugee camps outside the fence and in the area of the Seam Line. At a later stage, it would transfer more or most of the Arab neighborhoods.

The guiding principle is similar to that of the Clinton Plan: Jewish areas for Jews and Arab areas for Arabs. The "basin" of sacred sites in the Old City would be administered jointly by representatives of the three religions, each responsible for its own sites.

Refugees -- Israel would recognize Palestinian refugee suffering and accept indirectly some responsibility for the refugees from the 1948 war. Israel would also take part in an international project to rehabilitate refugees in Palestine, in areas Israel would transfer to the Palestinians and in the countries where they are now living.

This seems like another Camp David in the making. For Israel, especially given that the past seven years have seen, far and away, the greatest violence on Israeli territory since the 1948 war, these terms will seem generous, even to a fault. Much of the Israeli

body politic will oppose these terms with great fervor. That opposition is likely to extend past the right wing in Israel and into the perceived center. Yet these terms are a great distance from minimal Palestinian demands and will find little support among the Palestinians.

A recent poll by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre shows a clear majority of Palestinians (51.1%) still support a two-state solution over a one-state (30.9%). But it also shows strong opposition (61.4%) to any exchange of land, to a capital in only parts of East Jerusalem (67.2%), to Israel keeping any settlements in the West Bank (81.9%), and to any Israeli control over the area of the holy sites (93.5%). On refugees, 68.5% hold that refugees should be allowed to return to their original lands. Clearly, the two peoples are still very far apart on the issues. How much room there is for compromise is uncertain, but it cannot help that Olmert's approval ratings remain below 10% and the same JMCC poll had Abbas as the most popular of available choices, but still had more people judging him poorly than well (51.2% to 45.3%). These are not leaders who are well positioned to push through unpopular compromises. There is a general feeling that the gestures by the Olmert government have had little impact on Palestinians' faith in Abbas' course of diplomacy. In Israel, ongoing attacks are similarly undermining their willingness to trust in negotiations.

The failures of Oslo and Camp David II ushered in seven years of bloodshed and severely destabilized the region. It seems a repeat performance is being set up. While the results may differ because Abbas is not likely to be entirely blamed the way Arafat was (due to the imperative in Washington and Israel of opposing Hamas), failure will still have terrible results. If the ground for compromise is not sufficiently prepared in both Israel and Palestine, if a greater understanding of the needs and demands of the other side is not created, matters could get dramatically worse, hard as that may be to imagine today.

In Israel

Israel has long promised to remove "illegal outposts." [NOTE: These outposts are called "illegal" based on Israeli law. International law considers all settlements established on occupied

territory illegal.] It has not followed through on these promises, except for a few scattered trailer encampments from time to time. In recent weeks, the US has increased pressure on Israel for substantive gestures to the Palestinians, and new Defense Minister Ehud Barak is now responsible for complying.

Yet Israel continues to operate in a very different framework. They are negotiating with the Yesha Council (the representative body of the settlements) to dismantle some outposts while legalizing others. This is a demonstration of the kind of disproportionate sway the settlers have over the Israeli bureaucracy as well as the difficulties Israel faces in carrying out any kind of compromise with the Palestinians. Most of all, the refusal of the Defense Minister to stand up to the settlers bodes very ill for the future.

In a recent roundup, we reported on the repeated assertions by both Israel and Syria that they did not welcome war, yet each is preparing their defenses, increasing the possibility of confrontation. This was reinforced this week as the Syrian newspaper Tishrin accused Israel of preparing for war, due to US pressure to attack the Assad regime. Israeli exercises in the north, near Syria, are undeniable as are Syrian defensive buildups on their side of the border. Hysterics from the media, both the Syrian one and the way it is reported in Israel, only stoke that fire further.

Some Israelis are concerned about a poll of American foreign policy experts which showed some 14% of respondents believing that Israel was the US ally which least served US interests. The question only asks about the single "worst" ally, implying that other respondents might have believed Israel to poorly serve US interests, but not as poorly as some other countries (Russia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia got more votes than Israel). The poll is an indication that American Mideast policy is being questioned much more widely in elite intellectual circles, even while another poll, in the Financial Times, shows that Europeans' view of Israel is improving.

In the Palestinian Territories

Reports are increasing regarding Hamas' rule in Gaza and the increasing governmental oppression

there. Fatah supporters are being targeted, with accusations of torture being featured. While Hamas is maintaining law and order, their tactics seem to be very questionable. There are also incidents of serious crackdowns on freedom of the press. After Hamas harshly broke up a Fatah protest in Gaza, it appears they also targeted some journalists. In particular, the attempted arrest of an AFP reporter which was thwarted only by an act of civil disobedience raised serious alarm bells about Hamas' behavior in Gaza, and how much it mirrored the worst days of Fatah's rule.

Meanwhile, Fatah, borrowing a page from the United States, moved to enact a law that would permit monitoring of all overseas funds by the president, effectively cutting off a good chunk of Hamas' potential funding. Abbas' tactic, very much supported by the US and Israel, of working to undermine and disrupt Hamas at every turn shows no sign of letting up. Hamas has framed it as Abbas staging a war against Hamas, and this is not an unfair description. Yet even militias that are part of Fatah may soon be targeted as well. The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade issued a statement saying they would no longer abide by the cease-fire with Israel. Thus far, they have refrained from targeting civilians, but they are smarting from the loss of dozens of their fighters to an amnesty deal with Israel several weeks ago. They are calling on those who accepted that offer to renounce it. Should any of the fighters who were granted amnesty return to violence against Israel, it will seriously damage any future prospect of reaching accords that do not include mass arrests of Palestinian fighters.

Finally, and most tragically, a one-year old Palestinian baby died waiting at a checkpoint for admittance into Israel for emergency medical treatment. The baby had a heart condition and, while the cause of death was not reported, he and his father had to wait at the Erez Crossing for over 4 hours before the baby expired, even though they had a permit to enter Israel, something difficult to obtain. There are no words sufficient to describe such a needless tragedy, and sadly it is not an isolated incident. Far too many people have died waiting for medical care, including babies who were delivered while waiting for clearance at checkpoints. Incidents like this are entirely avoidable, and when they are not avoided, the hatred and anger rise. One has to ask how allowing

an infant to perish can possibly be explained away by excuses of "security concerns."

U.S. Proposes Weapons Deal With Israel, Egypt

PA police save IDF officer from angry mob

Commentary: Hamas - jumped, provoked, and pushed

'Hamis-related' charities blacklisted by U.S.

Minister blasts pro-US foreign policy

The latest on the blogs Muzzlewatch

Islamic rights group CAIR says "ADL Seeks to Hinder Legal Rights of U.S. Muslims"

Another NY rabbi calls campaign against Arab school principal Debbie Almontaser "the lowest of McCarthyite tactics."

30 U.S. members of Congress want Europeans to say NO to UN committee for Palestinian issues

ADL's Abe Foxman reverses position on genocide, sort of

"High-tech lynching" What rabbi calls campaign against Muslim principal

The Third Way

Industrial Disaster Draws Attention to Bedouin Villages

Getting Past Blame: Present Realities and How To Move Forward

The JNF Bill-A Background

It's The Settlements, Stupid!

Help Defeat Legalized Discrimination In Israel

"The Israel Lobby" in Perspective

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Date: Tue, 18 Sep 2007 21:57:33 -0700 (PDT)

From: Madison-Rafah Sister-City Proj

<rafahsistercity@yahoo.com>

Subject: Weekly Briefing No. 17 (September 19, 2007)

NOTE; The weekly briefing will be temporarily going to a bi-weekly briefing due to the time pressures of getting ready for visits from Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (Oct. 6-10) and Susie Abulhawa of Playgrounds for Palestine (October 12-13)...more on that later

This week's briefing is taken from an e-mail service called "Today in Palestine". Even with only a selection of articles, it is a bit longer than usual. If you are interested in subscribing to that service, reply to me please. (Sorry I can't get the text any larger...I changed to a more readable font.)

Thanks,
Barb O.

Today in Palestine

Tuesday, 18 September 2007

also at palestineandiraq.blogspot.com

Israeli policies target Palestinian families

Israel's practice of denying family reunification

permits and denying entry to foreign passport

holders (many but not all of whom are of

Palestinian origin) is part of a campaign of ridding

the occupied territories (including East Jerusalem)

of Palestinians and tightly controlling those it is

obliged to retain. The practice takes aim at

Palestinian families: it splits families apart, denies

Palestinian communities access to foreign and

expatriate talent, deprives the economically hard-hit

territories of foreign currency, and further isolates

the Palestinians under occupation.

<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article8988.shtml>

B'Tselem: "Stripping Palestinians of their homes contravenes Palestinians human rights"

The Israeli Center for Human Rights "B'Tselem"

has demanded the Israeli military Deputy-General

to issue orders to the Israeli police to investigate the

widespread demolition of homes in Qalqiliya and

the practices associated with these demolitions.

<http://www.imemc.org/article/50485>

It is unjust and absurd to apply economics to this hell

No people, territory or issue on earth have had more international attention devoted to them than Palestine and its people. Yet no conflict looks further from resolution, and no people further from achieving the freedom promised them. More Palestinians lack more basic freedoms today than they did 60 years ago. While an expensive and extensive peace process was in full swing, Israel managed to illegally expropriate most of the occupied West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem, install hundreds of thousands of illegal settlers, kill more Palestinian families, arrest more young men, destroy more crops, homes and businesses, build a monstrous wall deemed illegal by the international court of justice, and set forth, unchecked, a policy of aggressive expansionism in Palestine that continues until this moment.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/story/0,2171421,00.html>

OCHA warns of deterioration of humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip

A report released by the United Nations coordination Office of Humanitarian affairs Saturday warned of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, demanding that all relevant parties work on guaranteeing the regular supply of medical and food supplies to the coastal region.

<http://www.imemc.org/article/50489>

Latest World Bank report shows dire state of deteriorating Palestinian economy, growing poverty

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/09/18/africa/M-E-GEN-Palestinians-Economy.php>

and

World Bank: PA will not recover without control of Gaza Strip

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=904542&contrastID=1&subContrastID=1>

U.S. officials: Israeli border authorities harass Arab-Americans

American officials have complained recently that Israeli immigration authorities harass American citizens of Arab origin at Israeli border crossings. During meetings between senior State Department officials and their counterparts in Israel, the Americans said that in recent months there has been

a troubling increase in the number of complaints by American citizens of Palestinian and Arab origin, regarding the treatment they receive at border crossings and airports in Israel.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/904785.html>

(See also: Israeli Arabs to shun El Al Airlines over harassment and interrogations"

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=904851&contrastID=1&subContrastID=7>

Abbas faces pressure to skip Mideast conference
Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is under pressure from his Fatah faction not to attend a U.S.-led Middle East conference, aides said on Tuesday, citing uncertainty over its participants and outcome.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSL1875935220070918>

Women's organizations express deep concern over violence against women

Women's organizations, members of the Non-Governmental Organizations Network in Palestine, expressed deep concern over increasing incidents of violence against women in the Palestinian areas, and stated that over the last few months, repeated incident of killings, physical and psychological harm were reported.

<http://www.imemc.org/article/50472>

Women police: the new veiled face of order in Gaza
Susan Aqal is a tightly veiled Palestinian mother who has a baby boy. But she has abandoned traditional domestic life to interrogate suspected drug addicts, thieves and murderers in the volatile Gaza Strip.

<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jEpL0OnIilk0u4Eb7R9VyXhMS2PA>

A bankrupt Ramadan in Gaza

The situation is desperate here in Gaza, the coastal strip that is abundant with nothing except human beings. Just a couple of hours before Iftaar, the time of day after sunset when Muslims break their fast during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims around the globe shop to prepare. Gaza's crowded Khan Younis is no exception. However, though they may be thronged with people, Gaza's markets are lacking any holiday festivity or commerce.

<http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article8996.shtml>

Finkelstein Interviewed by George McLeod

Israel critic Norman Finkelstein made national headlines after his tenure was denied by DePaul University . Finkelstein, an author of five books, had received outstanding reviews from his students and peers. His dismissal sparked student protests and sit-ins, and led top academics to rally to his defence. Many questioned whether campuses had fallen victim to powerful pressure groups. In this interview with George McLeod, Norman Finkelstein discusses the Israel lobby, his writings and what makes the Israel issue unusually sensitive in the US.

<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=43&ItemID=13796>

Today in Iraq

<http://palestineandiraq.blogspot.com/2007/09/91807-meanwhile-in-iraq.html>

Headlines from the U.S.

http://palestineandiraq.blogspot.com/2007/09/91807-meanwhile-in-amreeka_18.html

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Date: Sat, 29 Sep 2007 20:09:00 -0700 (PDT)
From: Madison-Rafah Sister-City Proj
<rafahsistercity@yahoo.com>
Subject: Weekly Briefing No 18. : September 30, 2007: Gaza Seige intensifies

In this Briefing

- Israel declares all of Gaza "enemy entity": 5 articles
- Court of Appeals rejects Corrie Caterpillar Lawsuit: 1 article
- Israel to restrict Arab Christians right of re-entry: 1 article

Gaza Declared Enemy Entity

(1) Appeal from the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA):

[Recently] the Israeli cabinet declared Gaza an "enemy entity" and is threatening to further its siege on the people of Gaza. As you know, the situation in Gaza has been deteriorating for years due to dozens of military invasions, economic sanctions, and closures of border crossings. In June, the World Food Program estimated that 87% of Gazans were living below the poverty line. It is frightening to imagine what will happen if Israel now cuts the electricity, fuel, and other vital supplies and prevents funds for relief work from reaching Gaza. Israel has already closed the Erez Crossing in the north, denying patients from reaching medical care outside of Gaza. Meanwhile, the Israeli military has begun yet another ground and air invasion in central Gaza - two young men were killed today...

We know you share our concern for the safety and well-being of the 1.5 million Palestinians living in Gaza. Please take a moment to call your senators and representatives and ask them to take action against Israel's criminal collective punishment plans.

Visit www.congress.org for contact info or call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202)224-3121 and ask for your senators' and representative's office.

For more on MECA visit

<http://www.mecaforpeace.org/>

(End)

(2) Israeli Cabinet votes to cut off fuel and electricity supplies to the Gaza Strip

Date: 19 / 09 / 2007

Palestinian children during recent black-out in Gaza (MaanImages)
Bethlehem – Ma'an – The Israeli security cabinet declared the Gaza Strip an "enemy entity" on Wednesday and voted to gradually cut off fuel and electricity supplies to the poverty-stricken territory, according to Israeli press sources.

However they voted against disconnecting the Gaza Strip's water supply.

The pretext for the isolation is that it is a response to the Qassam rockets continually being fired at Israeli targets. Their aim is to use the civilian population to put pressure on Hamas to halt the rocket attacks, by cutting off vital resources gradually.

Full Article at:
<http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=25418>

(3) Arabs, Muslims slam Israel for declaring Gaza "enemy entity" (9-20-07) By Stephanie Nebehay GENEVA (Reuters) - Arab and Islamic countries on Thursday condemned Israel for declaring the Gaza Strip an "enemy entity", and accused Israeli forces of killing Palestinian civilians, detaining parliamentarians, and destroying property. In speeches to the United Nations Human Rights Council, delegates from the Middle East and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) said the humanitarian situation in the occupied territories had deteriorated and would worsen further if Israel cut fuel and electricity to Gaza's 1.5 million people.

Israel's Ambassador Itzhak Levanon denounced the 47-member state forum for "bashing" the Jewish state, while the U.S. delegation called for a "balanced and forward-looking approach". Full Article:
<http://africa.reuters.com/world/news/usnL20791378.html>

(4) Al Mezan Center for Human Rights report (9-23-07):
After declaring Gaza "Hostile Territory", Israel intensifies attacks on Gaza
The Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) escalated its aggression against the Gaza Strip where it killed

four Palestinians, including a minor who was crushed by bulldozer. Seven Palestinians were also injured, 13 homes destroyed, and some 121 dunums of cultivated lands razed by IOF over the past three days. This escalation comes in the aftermath of the Israeli security cabinet's decisions, in which it declared the Gaza Strip as "hostile territory" and approved the expansion of the military operations against it. Full report:
http://www.mezan.org/site_en/press_room/press_detail.php?id=714

See also: Press Release-20 Sep 2007 French, Italian, Swedish, Greek, Arabic
Al Mezan condemns Israel's new collective punishment measures against Gaza, calls the international community to protect civilians

(5) Not Yet Enough Hell in Gaza? Press release by Gush Shalom (9-19-07)
The starving of the Gaza inhabitants is a crime and a folly

Mistreating a million and a half people will make them the most bitter of enemies. Instead of a cruel policy of naked force, we should negotiate with all Palestinians – including Hamas

“With our own hands we are uniting a million and half people against us, in bitterness and hatred” says Gush Shalom (Israeli Peace Bloc). “The inhabitants of the Gaza Strip are completely dependent on Israel for their most basic livelihood. This complete dependence was created, consciously and deliberately, by all governments of Israel since 1967. The state of Israel cannot now just shrug off its responsibility for the fate of the inhabitants of Gaza. The people of the Gaza Strip have already been living for a long time in terrible squalor, on the very edge of starvation. Now we push them even much deeper into hell. The state of Israel is today roughly trampling International Law, in indiscriminate collective punishments of a whole civilian population. We, too, will eventually pay the price.

"This policy of force and oppression is also emptying of content the negotiations supposedly taking place with Abu Mazen and the leadership he heads, presenting him and his followers as accomplices in the terrible suffering caused to their people. There can be no peace without talking to

and negotiating with the entire Palestinian people, with all its parts including the Hamas leadership, which has explicitly expressed its willingness to discuss a cease-fire and a mutual end to attacks on both sides of the Gaza border. This is the alternative to the policy of trampling force whose main proponent is Defence Minister Barak, formally leader of the Labour Party - effectively leader of the Extreme Right in Israel". (End)

provided to the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation (HCEF) by Christian clergy in Jerusalem. Full article:
<http://www.hcef.org/index.cfm/mod/news/ID/16/SuMod/NewsView/NewsID/1849.cfm>

Court of Appeals Dismisses Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) Case Against Caterpillar
Case Filed on Behalf of Family of Activist Rachel Corrie and Four Palestinian Families Whose Homes Were Demolished By Caterpillar Bulldozers

NEW YORK- September 18 the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal of CCR's case charging Caterpillar, Inc. with aiding and abetting war crimes and other serious human rights violations on the grounds that the company provided bulldozers to Israel knowing they would be used unlawfully to demolish homes and endanger civilians ...Today's decision from a three-judge panel of the Court of Appeals found that it did not have jurisdiction to decide the case because Caterpillar's bulldozers were ultimately paid for with money from the United States. Because of the U.S. government's decision to grant military assistance to Israel, any decision regarding whether Caterpillar aided and abetted war crimes would impermissibly intrude upon the executive branch's foreign policy decisions. In today's decision, the Court did not rule on the question of whether Caterpillar aided and abetted Israeli war crimes.
Full article:

<http://www.commondreams.org/news2007/0918-08.htm>

Israel Denies Re-entry Visas to Holy Land Arab Christian Clergy (9-23-07)

The Israeli Government has rescinded its policy of granting re-entry visas to Arab Christian ministers, priests, nuns and other religious workers who wish to travel in and out of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories, according to information