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1. Knesset verabschiedet zentrale Klausel der umstrittenen Justizreform

Ungeachtet der massiven Proteste, die seit Beginn des Jahres die Schlagzeilen in Israel bestimmen, treibt die Regierung in Jerusalem den Umbau der Justiz voran. Auch ein Protestzug von Tel Aviv nach Jerusalem, dem sich am Ende mehrere zehntausend Menschen anschlossen, zeigte keine Wirkung auf die in Teilen rechtsradikale Koalition. Mit ihrer Mehrheit in der Knesset änderte sie ein Grundgesetz so, dass dem Obersten Gericht die Möglichkeit genommen wurde, Entscheidungen der Regierung und einzelner Minister als unangemessen zu bewerten. Abgeordnete der Opposition boykottierten die Abstimmung und legten anschließend Berufung gegen die Gesetzesänderung beim Obersten Gericht ein. Kritiker_innen der Gesetzesänderung befürchten ein Anwachsen von Korruption und die willkürliche Besetzung wichtiger Posten. In Israels Geschichte wurde bisher noch nie ein Grundgesetz gerichtlich gekippt. Sollte dies nun geschehen und die Regierung die Entscheidung nicht akzeptieren, droht dem Land eine Staatskrise. Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu warnte davor, "Neuland" zu betreten, sollte sich das Oberste Gericht gegen das Gesetz zur Schwächung der Justiz stellen. Eine Entscheidung ist nicht vor September zu erwarten. Der breite Protest in der Bevölkerung dauert indes an und der Gewerkschaftsdachverband sowie führende Wirtschaftskräfte im Land erwägen einen

Generalstreik. Die Polizei geht zum Teil mit harter Hand gegen Demonstrant_innen vor.

Israeli Protesters Want a Legal Rebellion. There Is No Such Thing

(...) A "rebellion," by definition, is an illegal act. (...) directed against the authorities, their laws or their conduct. For example, a rebellion against a government planning to pass evil and despicable laws. (...) most of the protesters' acts are already illegal: assembly, blocking roads, using a loudspeaker after 11 P.M., throwing garbage in the public domain, insulting civil service employees and police horses, scribbling slogans on walls (...). The same is true of strikes. (...) But in the final analysis, the legitimacy of a rebellion and of all the criminal behavior it involves is measured by the rationale behind its existence. And it's hard to find a more just rationale for a civil uprising than attempting to nip a dictatorship in the bud. (...) there was no need to wait for the reasonableness standard in order to foment a rebellion. The present government lost its legitimacy the moment it was formed. (...) And irony of ironies, this time, this rebellion is completely legal. Because democracy's fight for survival (...) is definitely a legal war.

B. Michael, HAA, 04.07.23

Keep Israel's Occupation Out of the Anti-coup Protests

(...) The current protest in Israel isn't against the occupation or even against the establishment of an

apartheid state, which is happening before our eyes. That's aggravating to many supporters of the protest who believe that it's ignoring a despicable, plundering, abusive Israel. But the leaders of the protest, Shikma Bressler and her colleagues, are correct in excluding the occupation – as a banner – from the protests against the regime coup. If you want to attract most of the public to the protest, there is no alternative to uniting around a limited common denominator on which a large number of people will agree. Bressler and her colleagues (...) have been trying to stop the coup. The means at their disposal, when it comes to preventing the Knesset from passing the Levin-Rothman bills, are meager because the legislation is an expression of a 64-MK coalition of dark forces that have joined together. (...) The success of efforts to eliminate the courts' reasonableness standard would turn creeping annexation into something much harsher, and influence the policies of cabinet ministers who are pressing for immediate annexation and the establishment of "Jewish supremacy." (...) all of the liberal democratic countries that have gone down the path of eradicating their judicial systems have become battered democracies controlled by a government-allied judiciary and a rigged media. We cannot ignore the political truth. Meretz and the Labor Party have collapsed from within because public opinion has rejected their positions on the occupation. The standing of the purest left-wing, which despises the occupation, won't change even if it holds its own demonstrations across the country on behalf of the population under occupation. (...)

Uzi Baram, HAA, 06.07.23

Israel is betting against itself

A foreigner arriving in Israel these days would most likely be baffled by what's going on: A prosperous country, a villa that stands out in the Middle East jungle had woken up one day and decided to self-destruct from within without any real reason. This is clearly evident in the economic indicators: the rising deficit and declining tax revenues; dramatic decline in foreign investments in the high-tech industry; a brain drain; a depreciation in the shekel. (...) Israel's standing has worsened in all theaters, with a clear and present danger of escalation and possible war. (...) Diplomatically, things are just as bad: Israel is facing increased isolation and estrangement in foreign capitals and Arab states, and most worryingly – there is the cold shoulder from Washington, with potentially far-reaching ramifications. But the most obvious indication of our collective madness is the

social schism: the polarization; the fragmentation and the animosity felt everywhere at all times. (...) In normal times, when faced with such crises, Israelis drop everything and work together to solve them. (...) there is no escaping the feeling that Israel is betting against itself. Israel, a state that has always known how to unite in the face of any threat or challenge and to find a common denominator to replace the divisions, is now acting in a manner that runs against its very interests. It is threatening its own existence. (...) Israel of 2023 is searching for leadership that can restore its sanity, its confidence, its unity, its hope, its inner and external strength. A leadership that would sew back what unraveled and build bridges rather than set barriers. A leadership that will save it from itself.

Yoav Limor, IHY, 11.07.23

Whataboutery warfare: Radicals are reshaping Israel's political landscape

Whataboutery politics is a term that (...) refers to the strategic, almost knee-jerk reaction of diverting attention away from an inconvenient topic by pointing at another, arguably related issue (...). Radical factions from every corner of our political spectrum have adopted this tool with zeal. (...) By bringing up another issue, it creates cognitive dissonance, forcing the listener to grapple with two disparate points at once. This disruption is intended to cloud judgment and obscures the original topic. (...) in contemporary Israel, radicals, fringe political groups, and pundits have transformed whataboutery into a weapon. In an age of instantaneous, real-time communication and information overload, these radicals exploit the cognitive dissonance caused by whataboutery and manipulate narratives to their advantage. They hijack a narrative, twist it, and let the ensuing chaos spread rapidly, especially with the support of controversy-favoring social media algorithms, resulting in a constant internal conflict. (...) We must insist on staying on point during debates and discussions. (...) no issue can invalidate or diminish the significance of another. Moreover, we must challenge our bias and avoid the trap of binary thinking. Problems aren't neatly boxed into right or wrong, and solutions aren't always polar opposites. Life is more complex, and so should be our understanding of it. Lastly, we must remember the power of an informed citizenry. An electorate that understands how narratives can be hijacked is less likely to fall for manipulative tactics. (...) In a world where communication is instant and information is abun-

dant, it's easy to get lost in the whirlwind of whataboutery politics and radical spins.

Peter Lerner, TOI, 12.07.23

Police violence at protests proves Ben-Gvir's influence

(...) I was one of those civilians scuffled by the police. (...) Finding closer access to the Knesset blocked by a police barricade, the demo backtracked toward the Supreme Court, waving flags, blowing whistles, banging drums, and chanting "Democracy!" None of this particularly perturbed innocent passersby and drivers as the police managed to divert traffic and keep things under control.

(...) The situation became a little less merry when the procession arrived back opposite the Supreme Court, crossed the intersection, and began holding up traffic on busy Yitzhak Rabin Boulevard. (...) a line of riot police started pushing back the rest of the reluctantly retreating protesters. I, apparently, was not backtracking fast enough, so a muscular young policeman gave me an overzealous shove – and there I was – flat on my back. I was not hurt, though somewhat embarrassed to find myself lying on the sidewalk. At this juncture, I should note that I am an 83-year-old, and did not present a credible threat to public safety. (...) National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir would probably issue a commendation to the policeman, if he ever got to hear about the incident. Brave Ben-Gvir has complained that the failure of the justice system to indict more protesters is "disgraceful." (...)

Avi Hoffman, JPO, 13.07.23

Israel's Refusenik Pilots Got Their Pro-Democracy Argument Wrong

(...) in the absence of faith in the democratic process, every soldier has a duty to evaluate the morality of the orders he received, and selective refusal becomes an option. (...) the overhaul will transfer responsibility from the state to individual soldiers and increase their responsibility for the morality of their actions. But the pilots now threatening to stop serving aren't willing to take this responsibility upon themselves. They prefer not to "open their eyes" and see the nature of their missions. They are very aware of their ability to exercise their judgment and refuse to carry out a strike that would kill innocent people (...). Nevertheless, they would prefer to simply resign from service. But the pilots aren't giving sufficient weight to the possibility that if state institutions engage in unbalanced decision-making processes, this will enable doubt to be cast on the justice of decisions to employ military force. That would

then encourage reservists and the social groups from which they come to embark on protests like those that characterized the 1982 Lebanon War. The choice to resign from service may be legitimate, but it won't contribute to democracy, even if democracy is temporarily spared right now thanks to the army's bayonets. At most, the pilots' resignations will encourage diversification of the air force's social makeup and an increased reliance on pilots in the standing army – both steps that would reduce such moral dilemmas in the future. (...)

Yagil Levy, HAA, 17.07.23

Are feelings of racial bias behind support of judicial overhaul?

Every major political change, every revolution, requires a grand narrative or myth that simplifies and clarifies who is against whom. (...) in the eyes of many, the judicial system is represented by a group of Ashkenazi elite with privileged rights, and the planned changes within the system are supposed to be part of a broader change in the unequal power structure that has dominated Israeli society for a long time. (...) For too many years, the pain of many has not received its rightful place in Israel's public discourse. People who suffered in transit camps, were abandoned in development towns, or were denied employment because they were not part of the ruling party did not have the opportunity to tell their stories or feel that they had a legitimate role in the project called Israel. (...) in Israel, the important and heartbreaking stories of many individuals have become a tool for manipulation by those seeking to dismantle and undermine the legal system in Israel. (...) The discrimination against Jews who come from Arab and Islamic countries is not a myth or mere story, but a painful and bleeding truth. However, this wound has become a central tool in the reform of the judicial system. In other words, regardless of whether the changes within it are necessary or not, it is important to ask which narrative is being mobilized for the conflict and how it is being reinforced and amplified. (...) When people share their painful experiences from decades ago and see it as a good reason for reform in the judicial system, it is evident that we need new myths.

Dr. Gilad Sharvit, YED, 17.07.23

Israeli reservists call for unity and political

(...) We will never let Israel fall to disunity or fraternal hatred, as it fell almost 2,000 years ago. Regardless of our disagreements, we must remember that there is no "us" and "them" – everything in Israel belongs

to all of us: the army, the police, the judiciary. It is our collective duty to address the issues that need fixing – together. (...) we must do everything to preserve that sense of shared destiny. (...) not to show up for reserve duty (...) could jeopardize our responsibility for our shared future. (...) Not showing up will harm Israel's security, harm by those people who have contributed most to keep us safe. But it will also (...) show that we are no longer dedicated to keep on fighting – not against our enemies, but for the future of our country. It will imply that some people are throwing in the towel; that we are giving up. That is both sad and dangerous for us as a people. We need all Zionist Israelis serving in the reserves – and demonstrating in the streets. (...) those who did not serve in the army – including senior ministers in the current government – have no right to criticize reservists who are protesting. (...) The Likud Party, once a symbol of strength and right-wing ideologies, has lost its way and must rebuild itself. It is no longer just about Netanyahu and his trial; the entire party is plagued by a fixation on trivial matters at the expense of the nation's true needs. (...) its weaknesses and decay prevent effective leadership and meaningful action on addressing Israel's fundamental challenges, such as governance in the Arab sector and integration of the ultra-Orthodox. (...) Israel needs a new national, liberal right-wing party, a Zionist Right – exactly the opposite of what the Likud and this government have become (...) a party that brings together the national liberal secular and the National-Religious (...), who are liberal on questions of church and state, yet conservative on questions of security and defense. (...) Reservists represent this very ethos. (...) We need a transformation of the political landscape of our country. (...)

Yoaz Hendel, JPO, 18.07.23

This Isn't Reasonableness, It's Madness

The government officially approved the start of a civil war. The final abolition of the courts' power to overturn government decisions it deems unreasonable confirmed that the idea that it's possible to defend Israeli democracy through debate, dialogue and consultation, or even through public pressure impressive in both its scope and its seriousness, has no validity. (...) A government that looks like a gang of lawbreakers and acts like a biker gang from hell isn't a decent government in disguise. (...) This is a government that set a goal of demolishing reasonableness through its actions, and it's no accident that it made abolishing the reasonableness doctrine the

first item in its crusade and claimed a monopoly on defining reasonableness, logic and common sense. It stripped the public of the legal safety net the Supreme Court had given it, and in the process, it is also destroying the country's security and economy. From now on, there will be one law for everyone, and it will be enforced non-selectively – the law of the mafia. Institutionalized looting of the taxpayers' money will be legalized, detentions without trial will replace the laws of evidence, militias will roam the streets as representatives of the law, and fear of external enemies will be replaced by fear of the government. That's the norm in Russia, Hungary, Turkey, Egypt and many other countries to which Israel once had the chutzpah to declare itself superior. (...) This is the stage at which the protests must turn into aggressive but nonviolent civil disobedience. (...) When citizens withdraw their money from the banks, factory owners close their factories, school principals strike and health services are reduced to emergency care – that is, when the government can no longer run its citizens' lives – even the newly minted dictatorship will understand that it has lost its ability to govern.

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 25.07.23

Israel needs national unity now

(...) The Jewish people's one- and-only state is facing imminent existential danger. A combination of unprecedented external and internal threats have brought Israel to the brink. The external threat has three dimensions. Over the last year, Iran has amassed enough nuclear material for several nuclear weapons, according to the United Nations, and soon could pose a direct threat to Israel's security. Hezbollah is turning into one of the most dangerous and powerful terrorist organizations in the world. It has acquired the capability to attack Haifa, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem. The Palestinian Authority's legitimacy is being undermined by Hamas and other radical forces. Consequently, the West Bank is heading toward chaos and violence. (...) the three dimensions of the external threat are creating a new regional reality. The danger of a multi-front war is greater than it has been for decades. But Israel also faces an unprecedented internal threat comprising three dimensions. The judicial reform (...) heightening the tension, is perceived by the Right as essential and by the Left as an assault on Israel's liberal democracy. The coalition's dependence on ultra-Orthodox and ultra-Nationalist parties hinders Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from implementing his moderate-conservative worldview. And the internal

fissure alienates Israel's tribes from one another and accelerates the discord between them. (...) Israel is in jeopardy. (...) As Jews, we must learn from our tragic history. There is only one way to overcome this multi-dimensional existential crisis: national unity. Just as Israelis joined hands on the eve of the 1967 war, they must join hands now. (...) We should not wait for violence to break out. (...) Only national unity can prepare the nation for a supreme national test it may soon encounter. (...) Hence, as the president of the World Jewish Congress, I call upon Netanyahu, Lapid, and Gantz to rise to the historic challenge. (...) There is only one choice. (...)

Ronald S. Lauder, YED, 27.07.23

2. Heftigste Militäroperation im Westjordanland seit 20 Jahren

Zerstörte Straßen, zerbombte Häuser, ausgebrannte Autos, kaputte Strom- und Wasserleitungen blieben zurück, als das israelische Militär nach einer zweitägigen Operation – die heftigste seit der Zweiten Intifada vor gut 20 Jahren – aus Jenin wieder abzog. Die Stadt gilt als Hochburg terroristischer Gruppen. Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu verkündete, dass Jenin „kein sicherer Rückzugsort für Extremisten“ sei und es zu weiteren Militäreinsätzen dieser Art kommen könnte. Auf palästinensischer Seite gab es zwölf Tote und über 100 Verletzte. Ein israelischer Soldat kam bei den Kämpfen ums Leben. Die Sicherheitslage in Israel und im Westjordanland ist seit Monaten stark angespannt. Für zusätzliche Provokation sorgte der israelische Minister für Nationale Sicherheit, Itamar Ben-Gvir, als er erneut den Tempelberg besuchte. Vor dem Hintergrund der andauernden Gewalt kam Palästinenserpräsident Mahmud Abbas mit dem politischen Chef der Hamas Ismail Haniyeh zusammen, um einen erneuten Versuch zur innerpalästinensischen Versöhnung zu unternehmen. Der Konflikt zwischen der PLO und der den Gazastreifen kontrollierenden islamistischen Hamas dauert bereits seit 17 Jahren an. Abbas beharrte im Verlauf der Gespräche darauf, dass die PLO die alleinige Vertreterin des palästinensischen Volkes sei. Haniyeh forderte zum wiederholten Mal dazu auf, die Sicherheitskooperation mit Israel zu beenden.

IDF offensive in Jenin provides temporary fix only

It is very doubtful that the IDF counter-terrorism offensive on Jenin (...) will provide a much-needed

response to the uptick in violence in the northern West Bank and would likely only act as a temporary fix. (...) without the Palestinian Authority stepping in to assume responsibility, Israel may find itself launching another operation, before too long. That is the crux of the problem for security forces, which is growing daily. The PA is absent in the area. It cannot and will not be responsible for events in it, allowing Iran and its proxies to step in to fill the vacuum. (...) Iran has provided funding to the Palestinian terror groups since the establishment of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and later the Hamas terror organizations. Tehran has known how to pad those groups with cash and often provide training for their members, in order to bolster attacks against Israel. But in recent months there has been a shift. (...) Signs on the ground have been evident in the past few months indicating Iranian involvement in terror strikes meant to destabilize the West Bank. (...) the Palestinian arena around us has become Iran's favored playground. As long as the PA remains absent in Jenin, Nablus, and the like and while Israel avoids taking control of those areas permanently, there may be no long-term solution to the security challenges there.

Avi Issacharoff, YED, 03.07.23

Jenin's Children Will Never Forget

(...) One-time Israeli soldier Dubi Kurdi didn't turn the camp into Jerusalem's Teddy Stadium with his bulldozer this time, as he bragged about the previous round in 2002. More than 500 homes were not destroyed, as they had been then, in Operation Defensive Shield, and the body count was also relatively low. But the (...) children are already Arna's grandchildren and great-grandchildren. When Juliano Mer-Khamis' wonderful film "Arna's Children," about the children in the camp whom his mother raised in her theater project, was released, its maker was still alive. Juliano was murdered, but his movie remains. It must be shown before and after every Israeli military "operation" in the Jenin camp, before and after the unbearable deluge of praise that a legion of generals and analysts shower on the action, which is always different from, more surgical and successful than, all its predecessors. (...) The Jenin camp is a refugee camp, whose residents were forced to flee their homes this week without knowing when or if they would return, momentary refugees for the third or fourth time. (...) Here Arna's children grew up and became freedom fighters, "terrorists" in the parlance of Israeli propaganda, and here Arna's grandchildren and great-

grandchildren will now grow up into the same future, the same fate.

Gideon Levy, HAA, 06.07.23

Making sense of the Jenin raid

Israel's military operation in Jenin has ended and the IDF has withdrawn from the Palestinian town. You can see some of the results here and weapons caches in mosques here. Evidence of Iranian-sponsored terror organizations living in the middle of the civilian Palestinian population can be seen here. (...) Abbas hasn't had control of Judea and Samaria for a long time. Israel knows it and Iran knows it. The battle in these areas is over who will control what when Abbas passes. Two things can help turn the tide in Israel's favor and benefit Palestinians who want security, economic advancement and peaceful coexistence—if not peace. First, a strong statement of support for Israel's right to self-defense by the United States. Second, Palestinian parents standing up for themselves and their children by refusing to be used as human shields or fodder for Palestinian terrorist organizations. (...) after Jenin 2023, Israel will do what it must do to protect its citizens, but the job would be done better if the Palestinians themselves decide to protect their children and build a better future.

Shoshana Bryen, IHY, 09.07.23

Netanyahu Is Annexing Israel to the Settler State

(...) The guidelines of the current government and the coalition agreements between its parties promise to promote the “application of sovereignty in Judea and Samaria” by virtue of the “natural right of the people of Israel to the Land of Israel.” (...) It would have been more accurate to write that Judea and Samaria will apply its sovereignty to Israel, not vice versa. Instead of Tel Aviv annexing Yitzhar, Yitzhar will annex Tel Aviv. (...). It is clear who is up and who is down, who are citizens and who are subjects, who waits at the checkpoint and who breezes through. In the occupation state, the courts are part of the government machine, and the High Court of Justice acts as a decoration committee, whose job it is to whitewash the oppression with pretty language. (...) And if the High Court is dispensable, then so is B'Tselem. In Occupationstan, the government views human rights organizations as terrorist organizations, and persecutes them accordingly. Detention without trial, known as administrative detention, is widely used, and it is permissible to demolish homes, deny work permits and restrict the movement of suspects and members of their families. (...) From Netanyahu's perspective,

the reverse annexation of Israel to Judea and Samaria has another important advantage: the silence of “the world.” The Biden administration, the European Union, the United Nations and Amnesty International will not hasten to protect Tel Aviv as they did Khan al-Ahmar. International law does not prohibit national suicide, or the dismantling of a state's democratic mechanisms in favor of a religious autocracy. (...) Western capitals (...) won't halt the train of the Bibi-ist coup.

Aluf Benn, HAA, 13.07.23

What will happen to Israel if the Palestinian Authority falls?

The Palestinian Authority is in trouble (...). Its failure to lead the Palestinians and come to a compromise with Israel has made it wildly unpopular and has left many Palestinians to turn to radical groups instead. In no way is the PA an ideal partner for Israel and Netanyahu's attempt to salvage it has surprised many. But those who understand what is fomenting in the West Bank know that if the PA collapses, something much worse will likely take its place. The fall of Abbas and his failed government would open the door for Hamas and other Iranian-backed terror groups waiting to swoop in and take over. The recent IDF operation in Jenin exposed how weak the PA has become and the dangers that await Israel if Iranian faction groups take its place. (...) The best the PA can do is stay out of Israel's way when the IDF needs to intervene and conduct counterterror operations, to prevent incoming attacks. This has led to many Palestinians labeling Abbas and Fatah leaders as collaborators with Israel. (...) Israel's attempts at saving the PA will likely lead nowhere. (...) Instead, the PA is now seeking to revive a formation of a national unity government consisting of several factions, including Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. (...) It is unnerving to think of what would happen if Israel loses its source of security coordination in the West Bank. (...)

Zina Rakhamilova, JPO, 18.07.23

3. Biden warnt vor Entmachtung der Justiz

Der Umbau der israelischen Justiz belastet auch die Beziehungen zwischen Jerusalem und Washington. US-Präsident Joe Biden warnte den israelischen Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu vor einer vorschnellen Entmachtung der Justiz und rief dazu auf, die Gespräche mit der Opposition fortzusetzen. An der finanziellen Unterstützung für Israels Vertei-

digungsapparat will Washington dennoch festhalten. Die USA zahlen jährlich knapp 3,5 Milliarden Euro unter anderem für Luftabwehranlagen und Militärtechnik. Israels Staatspräsident Isaak Herzog bedankte sich im Verlauf seiner Reise in die USA für die Hilfe der vergangenen Jahrzehnte. In seiner Rede vor dem US-Kongress räumte Herzog Meinungsverschiedenheiten ein. Das Weiße Haus hatte das jüngste Votum der Knesset als „bedauerlich“ bezeichnet.

Netanyahu is caught between Biden's hammer and the right-wing bloc's anvil

(...) the relationship with the United States is (...) at stake. (...) Joe Biden sent a message to Netanyahu to put a stop to the legislation immediately. (...) Technically, Netanyahu does have the option to stop, but stopping at this stage could lead to the government's breakup. It will also be a severe blow to the right-wing bloc, which has been carrying its disappointment for several months now because the government it chose is not exactly governing. (...) the coalition is moving so fast toward passing the law to limit the reasonableness clause, making Netanyahu's option of pressing the emergency brake detrimental for the government, and could even lead to its breakup. Perhaps even the entire right-wing bloc could be impacted. (...) Netanyahu has navigated himself and his coalition to a crossroads with two destructive options. If he passes the legislation, the public-state-security price will be calamitous. If he stops the legislation, he will pay a great political price. It is reasonable to assume that, in an attempt to escape this maze, he might try to moderate, even unilaterally, the wording of the reasonableness clause law, in hopes that the protests will weaken. However, the horses have already left the barn, and it is highly doubtful that a change in the wording will appease those who see the legislative process as equivalent to the death of the state.

Moran Azulay, YED, 19.07.23

Biden extends invitation to Netanyahu: Restoring normalcy to US-Israel relations

At long last, US President Joe Biden (...) will finally have a face-to-face meeting with the Israeli prime minister, something routine and badly needed to restore normalcy to this critical relationship. The lack of a meeting (...) is bad for Israel because the world needs to see that the US has the Jewish state's back, and it is bad for the US because the world needs to see that the White House does not treat

the elected leaders of longtime allies worse than autocrats. (...) the two leaders have much to discuss, from Iran and the Palestinian Authority to relations with Saudi Arabia and judicial reform. Biden's decision to invite Netanyahu likely stems from the realization that continuing to keep Netanyahu at arm's length causes more harm than good. (...) If Biden has reservations about Netanyahu and his government's policies, he should express those objections directly. That's how partners in a "special relationship" deal with one another – they engage rather than snub each other. (...) Part of Biden's decision to reach out to Netanyahu was likely based on the understanding that working with the prime minister would yield better results than ignoring him. After all, Netanyahu is the prime minister (...). If Biden truly wants to influence Israeli policy, Netanyahu is the man he needs to deal with.

Editorial, JPO, 19.07.23

For Israel's Sake, Listen to What Biden Said

(...) Biden fears, rightly, that under this government, "one of the most extreme" in Israel's history, as he termed it, the relationship between Jerusalem and Washington will suffer irreversible damage. When a U.S. president intervenes in an almost unprecedented fashion in Israel's internal affairs, this has major significance that must be understood. (...) Biden had given Netanyahu a clear message that the judicial coup must be halted immediately. (...) Netanyahu's culture of distorting the truth is well known, and that is how we should understand his bureau's decision to focus on the possibility that the two leaders will meet. That's certainly preferable to telling Israelis that Biden expressed deep concern over "continued settlement growth" and spoke at length about the need "to maintain the viability of a two-state solution." (...) Netanyahu would be wise to grasp what Biden said. Otherwise, Israel will lose its most important strategic partner, and its national resilience and security will be dealt a mortal blow.

Editorial, HAA, 21.07.23

Biden's meddling made compromise all but impossible

(...) Israel is satisfied with the US reaction to the passage of the bill (...) since the White House statement lacked any threats of a possible crisis in relations; it only said the measure was "unfortunate." If Israel manages to ensure that this level of friction doesn't escalate, this could bode well for the scope of the damage future judicial bills could inflict on the relations. (...) the US has been meddling in Israeli

legislative affairs and in a domestic crisis that has no bearing on its foreign policy. (...) Biden's backing of that camp (...) was the backwind that emboldened the Opposition and made compromise all but impossible. Why should Yair Lapid or Benny Gantz make concessions if the US president says the bill should not go forward? (...) Everyone agrees that the geopolitical situation in the Middle East is complex. The region is undergoing a major shift as China makes forays and Iran is expanding its reach by adding more members to its rogue club. Tehran is moving forward toward nuclearization and there is still no formula – diplomatic or military – that could halt its progress. Israel might find itself in a multi-theater war that would be triggered by Hezbollah. It is time Biden and his people shift gears by putting these pressing issues on the front burner rather than focus on Israel's legislative agenda.

Shirit Avitan Cohen, IHY, 25.07.23

How Biden should address Israel's judiciary crisis

(...) In Washington, the run-up to the vote brought much hand-wringing about the health of Israeli democracy. President Joe Biden twice sounded the White House alarm bells in less than a week. (...) It is rare for an American president to so openly involve himself in the internal affairs of a friendly state (...). It would be easy but entirely pointless for Biden to keep invoking democratic values in chiding Netanyahu. The Israeli leader has demonstrated immunity to such finger-wagging. (...) Nor can Biden realistically threaten punitive measures, such as withholding military assistance (...). American assistance to Israel has never been predicated on democratic values but aimed initially to protect it from predatory neighbors, and latterly on protecting its neighborhood. (...) any weakening of the US-Israeli military alliance would strengthen the regime in Tehran. (...)

Bobby Ghosh, JPO, 30.07.23

Biden and Netanyahu need a deal

(...) the US. America is on the eve of the 2024 presidential race, with politically beaten President Joe Biden fighting for survival. He (...) needs an impressive foreign policy accomplishment. (...) such an accomplishment could come in the form of the establishment of ties between Riyadh and Jerusalem, potentially transforming the Middle East. Biden said (...) that some progress has been made and a deal could be in the offing. (...) Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman (...) responded favorably, so long as

Israel makes a gesture toward the Palestinians, such as a settlement moratorium or issuing more permits for Palestinian construction on Area C. But such a gesture cannot be taken by the Israeli government in its current makeup. (...) Why did the Coalition choose to pass this part of the reform rather than the measures dealing with the appointment of justices and the override clause that can nullify court decisions? The answer was given by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments, from which it appears that he wanted that bill enacted so that Shas leader Aryeh Deri could return to the cabinet, after having been disqualified on reasonableness grounds. (...) By having the bill passed and bringing him back, he could serve as a counterweight to Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, paving the way for the gesture for the Palestinians. If Smotrich or Ben-Gvir threaten to leave the Coalition, they would be replaced by Benny Gantz and the State Party – a maneuver that is already in the works. (...) The Saudis will get the weapons and guarantees they have long asked for, but the big winner will be Israel: Not only will it finally see an end to the conflict with the Sunni world, but will get access to the massive Saudi economy, and from there to the markets in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Israel's diplomatic, economic, and strategic standing will improve manyfold. (...) Netanyahu would be able to deliver a historic deal by every measure and perhaps even bring about an end to the current turbulence rocking Israel.

Michael Oren, IHY, 31.07.23

4. Medienquerschnitt

Keine Kritik an Budapests LGBTQ-Gesetze

Israel's silence on Hungary's anti-LGBTQ laws raises Western concerns

(...) Israel had declined to join dozens of European and other Western countries in signing on to a declaration led by the United States condemning the anti-LGBTQ laws currently being enacted in Hungary. The only European Union member state to abstain from the condemnation was Poland. (...) Israel views Hungary as one of its closest allies in the EU (...). While Israel may not want to rock the boat when it comes to its relations with allies in the EU, the lack of condemnation from a country that regularly – and rightly – touts its status as the most LGBTQ-friendly place in the Middle East seems to

be the latest in a string of eyebrow-raising diplomatic decisions. (...) choosing to remain silent as Hungary passes laws against the LGBTQ community is an unflattering look for a country that is already being criticized for policies and legislation perceived as being at odds with Western norms.

In the latest version of the Economist Democracy Index, one of the most influential indices in the world, Hungary was positioned in the 56th spot out of 167 countries and was labeled a “flawed democracy.” (...) If Israel wishes to keep its current ranking in the respectable 29th place – one slot, it should be noted, above the US – the government ought to consider which relationships it prioritizes and what domestic agenda it promotes. And as it continues to push forward the judicial reform legislation (...) and walk between the raindrops of global geopolitics, the government would do well to heed the counsel of kindred democracies and of its most avid supporters if it wishes to fall on the right side of history.

Editorial, JPO, 18.07.23

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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