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1. Streit am Versöhnungstag

Yom Kippur, der höchste jüdische Feiertag, ist auch Tag der Versöhnung. In diesem Jahr jedoch kam es bei einem öffentlichen Gebet zu heftigen Auseinandersetzungen. Die radikale orthodoxe Organisation Rosch Yehudi forderte bei dem Gebet auf dem Tel Aviver Dizengoff-Platz eine Trennung von Männern und Frauen, obschon der Oberste Gerichtshof in Jerusalem wie auch die Stadtverwaltung von Tel Aviv zuvor dagegen entschieden hatten. Die Organisator_innen versuchten, Barrieren zwischen Männern und Frauen aufzubauen, was Demonstrant_innen verhinderten. Auf beiden Seiten kam es zu polizeilichen Festnahmen. Die heftigen Auseinandersetzungen spiegeln die gesellschaftliche Spaltung hinsichtlich der von der Regierung vorangetriebenen Gesetzreformen. Dabei geht es um den Umbau der Justiz wie auch die Rolle der Religion im öffentlichen Raum und Frauenrechte.

Where is the sane majority?

(...) the past year has been challenging. When harsh slogans are used against various sectors of our nation, the rift deepens. (...) When it comes to the Dizengoff service, each side was preoccupied with its own truth, and each side provoked the other. The request to remove the separation between male and female worshippers that has always been there, and the fact that organizers created a makeshift barrier anyway, in defiance of a Supreme Court ruling. A

protest in the middle of prayer. So much noise, it is too much to bear. And it is only a minority that fuels hatred instead of engaging in healthy and good debate that would advance us as a society. (...) May the voice of sanity get louder in the new year and drown out the noise. There are disputes, and there always will be, but there is also healthy and respectful discourse that will surely make Israel a peaceful place to live.

Yael Ron Jacobi, IHY, 26.09.23

Anarchy on Yom Kippur

A democracy can only flourish and survive in a society that acquiesces and is prepared to play the game by the rules. (...) On Yom Kippur we saw an example of civil disobedience that can only be described as anarchy. (...) "Rosh Yehudi" approached the Tel Aviv municipality with its plans to hold gender-segregated services at Dizengoff Square on Yom Kippur. Its request was turned down (...). Not prepared to accept the refusal, it turned to the Tel Aviv District Court, which rejected its petition. An appeal was then launched through Israel's Supreme Court, which also ruled that gender segregation on public land was not permitted. However, "Rosh Yehudi" refused to comply with the decisions of both the Tel Aviv municipality and Israel's courts and went ahead with its plans. The police failed to intervene (...), and the resulting chaos at Dizengoff Square, in which residents who objected to gender segregation were involved, resulted in worshippers having to

retreat to a nearby synagogue. (...) In any functioning democracy, their behavior would be viewed as being in contempt of court and would have resulted in imprisonment, fines or a seizure of assets. Of course, none of that will happen. Rather than criticizing "Rosh Yehudi" for not abiding by the courts' rulings, Israel's prime minister took advantage of the opportunity to sow further discord (...).
Michael Boyden, TOI, 26.09.23

I came to Dizengoff to pray; what I saw gave me hope

(...) instead of a meditative prayer, an opportunity to reflect inward, a moment to look back on the year, G-d had other plans for the evening. (...) an old man screaming at a teenage girl (...) an old man and a kippah-wearing man yelling at each other. (...) Every rabbi I've spoken to has advised me to act with tolerance and compassion. Every single one of them clings to the belief that all of Israel is one family. This year, on Yom Kippur, I saw a global family act on those values. I saw a small group of Jews, enveloped by shame and guilt, spewing their pain outward to anyone who would listen. I saw their hate met with love, I saw aggression met with compromise, and I saw a very, very bright future for the Jewish people. (...)
Idan Hovav, YED, 27.09.23

I still don't know why I was shamed on Yom Kippur

(...) on Dizengoff Square on Yom Kippur Eve (...) there was no protest against the reform. (...) Simply, a prayer bringing together several hundred people who had come together peacefully to celebrate the beginning of the holiest festival in Judaism. (...) What a disappointment (...) to see (...) people shouting "Bousha" at women, men, and elderly individuals. Their epithets were directed at the leaders of the Rosh Yehudi community, yet I saw them shouting at simple faithful who had come in peace, and it wasn't these leaders who were in tears, but ordinary men and women who had come together to pray, sing, confess, or perhaps just to be present among others. What a dismay to hear all these people vehemently complain about a simple prayer which, in their opinion, illegally and disrespectfully occupies Dizengoff Square, while they consider it legitimate to block the Ayalon Highway every week, sometimes violently. Is this what they believe democracy, for which they are fighting, is all about? (...) Was this really the place and time to shout their hatred at a vast majority of people who only intend-

ed to experience a moment of harmony in these times of division? (...) I can pray alongside a woman, but I cannot pray alongside a human being whose heart is filled with baseless hatred.

Adrien Boukobza, IHY, 27.09.23

Yom Kippur violence: Disunity is the biggest threat to Israel

(...) the spectacle in Dizengoff Square on Yom Kippur evoked a deep sense of sadness (...). Here stood the Children of Israel, on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar (...) fighting among themselves in a frightful demonstration that what divides them is clouding their thinking. (...) Why, one must ask, did a prayer service that has taken place annually, without incident since the onset of the coronavirus, turn so ugly this year? Why was there no uproar last year, or the year before, when a partition was rolled out for the prayers? (...) It is the fear among the ardently secular that their way of life is endangered. It is the belief among the ardently religious that vaunted liberal values – "live and let live" – apply to everyone but them. (...) There was a time when this type of prayer service, just like refraining from eating hametz on Passover in a hospital, did not necessitate state intervention; when it did not require legislation; when it could all be managed with common sense, mutual respect, and basic decency. (...) A collapse of mutual respect emerged on Yom Kippur in Dizengoff Square. In Israel, circa 2023, everything is considered a "slippery slope," everything is a matter of principle over which it is impossible to compromise. Why? Because of the feeling that if one compromises, there is no limit to what may follow next. Instead of mutual respect, Israel is today a land of mutual suspicion, where every action – even the most innocent – is seen as presaging greater malevolence lurking just around the corner.
Editorial, JPO, 27.09.23

The state of our brokenness

(...) Yom Kippur (...) is about spiritual optimism: the power of penitence to evoke forgiveness. (...) This year, in Tel Aviv, Yom Kippur turned into Tisha B'Av, an intimation of destruction. This Yom Kippur was also the 50th anniversary of that Yom Kippur. Unlike any other of Israel's wars, Yom Kippur 1973 continues to haunt us. It is the war that never ended, that still grips us in that stunned moment when we came face to face with our collective mortality (...). The message 50 years ago was that we had become complacent, arrogant, self-satisfied. What is the message of this year's Yom Kippur? Over the last

year, something elemental has been desecrated in our shared Israeliness, and Yom Kippur has forced us to face ourselves. (...) The scenes of Jews shutting down Jewish prayer in a Jewish state are unbearable. (...) Rosh Yehudi, the extremist Orthodox group (...) regards Tel Aviv as the next fortress to conquer — after the hilltops of Samaria, after the mixed Arab-Jewish towns of Lod and Acre where small communities of militant Orthodox Jews have “settled,” often exacerbating tensions between Arabs and Jews. (...) Netanyahu has escalated his hateful rhetoric: it is now “the left” against “the Jews.” Not only have leftists forgotten how to be Jews, they aren’t really Jews at all. No Israeli leader has done more to turn Jew against Jew. Doing so on Yom Kippur is the culminating moment of his career as inciter-in-chief. (...)

Yossi Klein Halevi, TOI, 27.09.23

Even with differing opinions, we should still respect others

(...) It is crucial to highlight that the court did not issue a directive explicitly prohibiting separate prayers; rather, it contended that the Tel Aviv Municipality had the authority to make such a demand. (...) Here, the glaring contradictions within this self-proclaimed enlightened group are on full display once again. Isn’t this a display of hypocrisy and sanctimony from those who passionately advocate for freedom, liberalism, and tolerance every Saturday evening? Those who fervently caution against a “tyrannical regime,” “censorship,” and “suppression of freedom of expression?” Moreover, these very individuals who warmly embraced separate prayers for Muslim men and women during Ramadan in Tel Aviv, and who championed provocative marches in Jerusalem in the name of freedom and liberalism, now appear shocked, appalled, and dismayed at the notion of separated prayer on Yom Kippur. The hypocrisy and self-righteousness of these Tel Aviv “liberals” are facets of a broader tragi-comic narrative. The events of Yom Kippur have exposed the profound divide between Tel Aviv and the rest of the country, as well as between Tel Aviv and Judaism itself. It appears that in contemporary Tel Aviv, any viewpoint or movement can find a platform for self-expression and association, no matter how peculiar, extreme, or unconventional it may be — except for those that bear the scent of Judaism (...). Sadly, the pledge to relegate Judaism from the city’s public sphere is met with indifference from the entire progressive camp. (...) It appears that in Tel Aviv, there is hardly a trace left of the deeply-rooted Jewish

tradition within the public sphere. Moreover, it seems that some in the city have lost touch with their Jewish identity. This is not solely about ignorance or a lack of knowledge regarding matters of Judaism and tradition; it pertains primarily to fundamental and ingrained Jewish conduct.

Omer Dostri, JPO, 28.09.23

It’s Israel’s Civil War, Not the Segregation

Yom Kippur was frightening this year. It reminded me of the Yom Kippur War, 50 years ago. Then, we were on the brink of destruction due to an external threat; now, the threat is internal. Then, it was a failure by Prime Minister Golda Meir; now, it is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who ignited the civil war that threatens Israel’s very existence. (...) On Yom Kippur last year, sex-segregated services in Tel Aviv’s Dizengoff Square passed without incident. Secular people accepted them with understanding. This proves that this year’s outburst was not against the symptom, but rather the disease: the government coup, which seeks to turn Israel into a racist, extremist, nondemocratic halakha state that discriminates against women, minorities and LGBTQ people and hungers for a war of Gog and Magog. In such a country, liberal secular Jews would have no place. (...) It is this depressing realization that caused the awakening. For years, the moderate secular majority accepted the growing religionization and the settlers’ domination of the agenda with gritted teeth. This time, the understanding sunk in that if we cannot stop this process we will have to leave or be forced to flee. After all, demography is working against us, so waiting isn’t an option. We must act now. (...) The question now is who will win this civil war. Will it be the benighted rabbis and the brutal settlers, who want to establish a benighted halakha state — the kind that makes a “martyr” out of the Dawabshe family’s murderer and whose finance minister wants to “erase” Hawara? Or will it be the moderate, democratic, liberal secular majority, which works hard, pays taxes, serves in the army and is also the true Jew? (...)

Nehemia Shtrasler, HAA, 29.09.23

2. Annäherung zwischen Jerusalem und Riad

Das mögliche Annäherungsabkommen zwischen Israel und Saudi-Arabien war wiederholtes Thema bei den Gesprächen von Israels Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu im Verlauf seiner Reise in die Vereinigten Staaten. Sollte es zu einem Abkommen über die Normalisierung der Beziehungen kommen,

würde das weitreichende Folgen für den gesamten Nahen Osten nach sich ziehen. Zu den Forderungen der Führung in Riad gehört die Lieferungen moderner US-Waffensysteme und die zivile Nutzung von Atomenergie. In Jerusalem befürchtet man, dass zivile Nutzung rasch zu einem militärischen Atomforschungsprogramm führen könnte. Zwar ist Israel selbst seit Jahrzehnten Atommacht, würde aber die militärische Überlegenheit einbüßen, sollten auch Saudi-Arabien und Iran in den Besitz einer Atom-bombe gelangen. Ein bilaterales Normalisierungsabkommen würde Israel zudem möglicherweise dazu zwingen, Zugeständnisse an die Palästinenser_innen zu machen, was angesichts der derzeitigen Regierungskonstellation schwer vorstellbar ist.

Will Israel listen to Saudi Arabia this time?

(...) The Saudis have made it clear to the Americans that there won't be normalization with Israel without resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but Israel has preferred to ignore this (...) Israel, like the United States, is misreading the Saudi declarations, and doesn't really think that the Saudis mean everything they say. (...) Some of the American officials told Israel that their impression is that the Saudis aren't insisting on the Palestinian issue, but President Joe Biden emphasized to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu the importance to the Saudis of a solution to the Palestinian question. (...) Biden even declared that there is progress towards the two-state solution. (...) While Netanyahu and Biden are trying to sketch a map towards normalization, a solution to the Palestinian question, and the end of the conflict, the Saudis are distributing their official updated map in which "Palestine" is written instead of "Israel." (...) Another Saudi (and no less problematic) obstacle that has been placed in front of the Israeli prime minister on his way to normalization is the enrichment of uranium on Saudi soil. (...) If Netanyahu had listened to what the Saudis told him 10 years ago and would have carried out the required steps – and, in terms of the composition of the Knesset and the government, it was much easier during his time than today – and he knows exactly to what I'm referring to – he would be proud today of the most significant achievement by an Israeli leader since Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin and even both of them together, and, as noted by bin Salman in his interview with Fox News, this would really have been seen as a major historical achievement.

Majdi Halabi, IHY, 22.09.23

Netanyahu can't deliver on Saudi Arabia; history has passed him by

(...) Unlike other prime ministers who secured awesome military victories (David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol), signed long-lasting peace accords (Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin), or even orchestrated daring unilateral withdrawals (Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon), Netanyahu has remained bereft of a signature achievement of that scale. Political longevity has been his primary calling card.

Now he seems determined to finally complete a historic resume, with growing signs of a potential US-brokered peace deal with Saudi Arabia. Under normal circumstances, it would be a monumental triumph, wished for and lauded by even his most long-time, ardent political opponents. But these are not normal times. His government's assault on Israel's democratic foundations and the unprecedented domestic crisis to which he has plunged the nation have deprived him of the ability to marshal through such a breakthrough. He doesn't have the political capital, public support or moral authority for it anymore. Unfortunately, his legacy will not be about bringing Jews and Arabs together but rather about tearing the Jews themselves apart. (...)in Netanyahu's current coalition, he doesn't appear to have the votes to pay even minor lip service. His radical partners, even in his own Likud Party, can't consider any concessions to Palestinians, let alone entertain the concept of statehood. (...) Netanyahu has lost the support of larger Israel. The judicial overhaul he has pushed forward has struck such a deep nerve in Israeli society that even those who would naturally support peacemaking can no longer trust the messenger. (...) Netanyahu broke something that may not come back, at least not under his watch. Therefore, sadly, history has passed him by. (...) As long as there is no peace within, and Israel's foundation as a Jewish and democratic state remains in the balance, Netanyahu can't make peace with anyone else.

Aron Heller, TOI, 23.09.23

U.S.-Saudi Arabia-Israel Deal Could Be Saving Grace for Netanyahu and Win for Apartheid

At the lowest point of his career, Netanyahu now faces the chance of a lifetime. (...) it fell into his lap as a golden gift from Washington and Riyadh. However, he cannot act on it. Nor can he thwart it. (...) Nothing will expiate his errors and sins, but Netanyahu now has a last opportunity to make a partial amendment. (...) The Saudi deal is a rotten deal with a rotten regime. (...) If the deal is signed, the

Palestinians will again be cast aside bleeding, abandoned to their fates, alone and helpless. Apartheid will vanquish them. (...) But refraining from signing the deal out of worries about the Palestinians is ridiculous – their situation is desperate, with or without a Saudi agreement, and apartheid will win regardless of a deal. Netanyahu must bring it about at any price; yes, whatever it costs, if he wants to leave any legacy behind. Israel always knows how to say no when there's an option of a diplomatic agreement, just like it always knows how to say yes when it comes to using military force. (...) a deal with Saudi Arabia, which will influence a host of other Arab and Muslim states, will advance the acceptance of Israel into this neighborhood. Twenty-one years ago, Israel replied with an arrogant “no” to the Saudi peace initiative, which was much more comprehensive and just than the current one. Now, the Saudis are offering normalization at a dirt-cheap price, which cannot be refused. (...) Israel must say yes to any diplomatic agreement. History has taught us that this is always preferable to the alternative of war. (...)

Gideon Levy, HAA, 24.09.23

Netanyahu must not let his coalition interfere with Saudi normalization

(...) An internal crisis, stemming from the ongoing judicial reform, threatens to cast a shadow over Israel's credibility on the global stage, giving rise to uncertainties in the minds of potential partners. Another potential obstacle lies within Netanyahu's own coalition, where certain far-right partners may obstruct a deal with Riyadh. At the same time, it is paramount that we prioritize our national interest, seeking relations with Saudi Arabia not at any cost, but as an integral part of our broader foreign policy objectives. (...) It is important to recognize that Saudi Arabia has its own set of demands, including a deep concern for the Palestinian issue, regional stability, and its desire for increased US support. (...) In the event that some within the coalition choose to stand in the way, Netanyahu must demonstrate unwavering commitment to our national interest, even if it means considering new coalition partners to facilitate the realization of a Saudi deal. (...) While the security implications of such decisions must be carefully weighed, it is imperative that politics do not obstruct policies aimed at the long-term success of our nation. (...) At the end of the day, we expect our leaders to act in accordance with the national interest and not be swayed by narrow political considerations. (...) a plurality of Israelis support

a Saudi deal, even if it would entail concessions to the Palestinians. A plurality would also support Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid or Benny Gantz's National Unity party joining the coalition if Netanyahu's far-right partners bolt due to a deal. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 26.09.23

Palestinian piece of Saudi-Israel deal is Israel's last chance to prevent bi-national state

(...) The negotiations between the United States, Saudi Arabia and Israel, which include a significant 'package' for the Palestinians, (...) open a golden opportunity for change in the regional and bilateral arena. (...) it would be a mistake to treat the package as a necessity imposed on Israel in exchange for normalizing relations with Saudi Arabia. Instead, this package should be viewed as a platform for renewing the consensual framework for resolving the conflict. (...) one should not be satisfied with a package that helps preserve the territorial feasibility of a permanent settlement (...), but by gradually creating a reality of separation and establishment of a Palestinian state. (...) Hamas in Gaza should be one of the primary beneficiaries of the package; Ignoring it will push it into the hands of Iran, which will encourage it and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad to sabotage the implementation of any agreement. (...) Ending the division in the Palestinian leadership and territories, (...) by establishing a joint government for Fatah and Hamas, will allow both the successful implementation of the package and the renewal of the negotiations later. (...) The American administration under President Biden is the only one that has the responsibility and ability to lead the negotiations under these principles. (...) Achieving the agreement according to these principles will lead to a regional balance of power that is better for Israel, Saudi Arabia and the United States and pave the way for an agreement with the Palestinians and then with the rest of the Arab world. (...)

Shaul Arieli, JPO, 27.09.23

Netanyahu's Israel Looks to Autocratic Saudi Arabia for Legitimacy

(...) Reaching a peace agreement with any Arab country, all the more so with a major Arab power, is always a diplomatic achievement of tremendous strategic value to Israel. But in the case of Saudi Arabia, more value is being ascribed to normalization than the hard reality justifies. (...) An agreement with Saudi Arabia would not mark the start of a new era but the end of a process. Without the path-breaking peace agreements with Egypt, Jordan and

even the hated Oslo Accords, Saudi Arabia would not have proposed the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 or put the offer of normalization on the table a generation later. The kingdom is not making history – it is following history's path. We should not allow ourselves to become a prisoner of illusions. No peace agreement has ever succeeded in paving the way for comprehensive peace with the "Arab world" or "Muslim world," and there is no reason to believe one with the Saudis will achieve that dream either. None of them have brought an end to the historic, national and moral struggle between Israel and the Palestinians, which will continue even if thousands of Israeli tourists vacation in Riyadh. (...) The leader whom Israel hopes will provide this recognition is responsible for murdering a journalist, the leader of a country whose criminal justice system this year alone has executed more than 100 people, whose human rights under his rule have become all but invisible and whose legal system is controlled by him alone – without a judicial appointments committee, parliament or free press. Saudi Arabia is a country that has realized the dreams of Netanyahu, Simcha Rothman and Yariv Levin – in short, a sister country. So maybe Saudi Arabia is really the country that will give Netanyahu's Israel its legitimacy. (...) Israel does not need to be holier than the American or European popes, who see Saudi Arabia and many other autocratic countries as strategic partners. (...) Israel should (...) see the normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia, if it comes to fruition – not as a gift from heaven to a corrupt leader who will market it as if he were acquitted by a court of law, not as the victory of the Zionist spirit over Palestinian nationalism and certainly not as an antiseptic to cleanse war crimes.

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 27.09.23

Mohammed bin Salman: The ascending architect of Middle Eastern dynamics

(...) Saudi Arabia has expressed significant interest in acquiring technological knowledge from Israel, and tech experts visit the kingdom even without foreign passports. Simultaneously, MBS took several surprising steps: He granted driving licenses to women (...), expanded job opportunities for women across all economic sectors, and reintroduced cinemas and large entertainment venues after forty years for the kingdom's younger generation, where 70% of the residents are under the age of 30. (...) Saudi Ambassador to Jordan Nayef al-Sudairi, who was appointed as the ambassador to the West Bank territories a month ago, arrived in Ramallah for a

meeting with Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas. Experts speculate that the ambassador, who is close to bin Salman, was tasked with having an in-depth conversation with Abbas and his senior advisers to understand their demands from Israel. Saudi Arabia has made clear its support for the establishment of a Palestinian state but has not made this a condition for negotiations with Israel. (...) Saudi Arabia, often referred to as the "cradle of Islam," continues to prohibit the consumption of pork and all types of alcohol. However, the voices of the Ulama – the Council of Senior Scholars, have almost completely quieted, and the number of young people attending mosques is decreasing. Many prefer to lay down a prayer rug in their office or on the street.

Smadar Perry, YED, 29.09.23

3. Netanyahu in den USA

US-Präsident Joe Biden hat sich bei einem Treffen mit dem israelischen Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu erneut sehr besorgt über den Justizumbau in Israel geäußert. Netanyahu hingegen gab sich im Verlauf seiner Reise in die Vereinigten Staaten nonchalant und betonte die seit „über 40 Jahren“ andauernde Freundschaft der beiden Männer. Tatsächlich musste der israelische Premierminister ungewohnt lange nach seinem Wahlsieg auf die Einladung warten. Zu groß war der Unmut Bidens über die in Teilen extremistische rechtsreligiöse Regierungskoalition in Jerusalem. Erst im Juli hatten die Parlamentarier_innen der Koalitionsparteien in der Knesset ein Gesetz zur Schwächung des Obersten Gerichts durchgesetzt, obschon die USA im Vorfeld massive Kritik daran geübt hatten. Größere Übereinstimmung der Positionen von Biden und Netanyahu bestand hingegen in Bezug auf das iranische Atomforschungsprogramm wie auch hinsichtlich der Anstrengungen in Richtung einer Normalisierung der bilateralen Beziehungen zwischen Israel und Saudi-Arabien.

Netanyahu-Biden Meeting: A Unique Opportunity for Israeli Media to Get Answers

Joe Biden did the right thing when he ignored the manifestos of thousands of respected intellectuals who begged him not to meet with the leader of Israel's judicial overhaul. We should thank the U.S. president for his willingness to spend a whole hour with the man accused of bribery, fraud and breach of trust who formed a government with neofascist

parties. (...) To deserve the title "friend of Israel" (...), the leader of the free world has to tell Israelis what he really thinks about the exploits of Netanyahu and his government. He has to face the reporters at the end of the meeting and present the administration's opinions on every issue preoccupying it, including Israeli democracy's descent toward the abyss of totalitarianism. (...)
Akiva Eldar, HAA, 19.09.23

Prime Minister Netanyahu's trip to the US

I am ashamed by the shallowness and kindergarten behavior of "over 3,500 academics, writers and artists that urged Biden and the UN chief to snub Netanyahu" during his coming visit to the US, as reported by the Times of Israel. (...) Prime Minister Netanyahu (...) will spend a week in the US to attend to essentially three subjects that are of vital interest to all Israelis (...). Netanyahu will be in the Silicon Valley, California, to secure new investments in the Israeli high-tech industry. (...) Prime Minister Netanyahu will then (...) meet in New York with US officials, including president Biden, to advance Israel's interests in the present negotiations between the US and Saudi Arabia. (...) And then, there is Iran. The Biden administration is not interested and will do anything to avoid now a confrontation with Iran: there are general elections in the US in 2024, and the least that the Democratic party needs now is a military confrontation with Iran just before the elections. Israel should avoid becoming a partisan item in the fight between Democrats and Republicans for the control of Congress and the Executive branch (...). And here comes the suicidal petition to the UN of the "3,500 academic, writers and artists" to snub the Prime Minister of Israel. Are they out of their mind? (...)

Jaime Kardontchik, TOI, 16.09.23

Netanyahu's challenge: Make the US visit a success

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (...) scored a spectacular own goal when, on board the plane at Ben-Gurion International Airport, he compared his opponents with supporters of Iran and the PLO. (...) By choosing to dedicate his address in this manner, Netanyahu has only intensified the protest he can expect to face wherever he goes now. (...) US President Joe Biden refused to invite Netanyahu to the White House, deciding to make do with a side-bar meeting on the fringes of the UN General Assembly; numerous leaders suddenly 'came across difficulties' in scheduling time to meet with him (...) even senior

Jewish leaders made it clear that they would attend out of respect for the State, but would say in no uncertain terms precisely what they think about the processes that Israel and its government are currently undergoing. Netanyahu will have to draw on the full range of his rhetorical and political skills to successfully surmount those obstacles and to make lemonade out of the lemons he is being given. This is important not because of his own personal and political reasons, but for reasons of national importance: the long list of burning issues, some of which are really of crucial importance, which do require being afforded full attention. The list of those important topics is of course topped by Iran, who else? (...) The second most important issue is Saudi Arabia. The US is keen to reach an agreement and (...) Israel must ensure that its national interests are not compromised and that it is awarded a significant compensation package – both in security and economic terms (...). Israel also aspires to see greater US involvement in the effort to deter Hezbollah's activity along Israel's northern border and to prompt the Palestinian Authority (PA) into more vigorous action against the terrorist cells operating in Judea and Samaria. Here too, Netanyahu will have to face a US counter-demand – to grant greater capabilities to the PA and to rein in the more radical elements in his government who are involved in a constant effort to pour oil on the fire (and establish settlements) on an almost daily basis. (...)

Yoav Limor, IHY, 20.09.23

Netanyahu's week in the US will be remembered as one of his worst visits

(...) For close to nine months, Biden refused to invite him for an official visit to the White House, allegedly because of the judicial reform/upheaval initiated by Justice Minister Yariv Levin soon after the new government was formed, which threatens to weaken the Supreme Court, and other aspects of the democratic system. (...) Netanyahu had placed high hopes on Biden taking the opportunity of his coming to the US to address the UN General Assembly in New York, to invite him to the White House. (...) The impression one got in real time was that the meeting (...) was not what Netanyahu had been hoping for, and that the circumstances and physical conditions were much more modest and less ceremonial than what he had been used to in previous meetings with US presidents in the Oval Office. (...) when Netanyahu stood on the podium (...) the word peace was used profusely, and even though it was articulate, as most of Netanyahu's

speeches in English are, it was not very informative, and seemed to focus on not saying anything that might anger anyone, or involve any sort of Israeli commitments, especially since at this point Netanyahu simply does not have any sort of consensus within his coalition with regards to the conditions for a viable agreement with Saudi Arabia, and according to reports the top echelons of the Israeli army and intelligence services, have not yet had their say. (...) Nevertheless, Netanyahu apparently feels that under the circumstances, his speech was a success and not something to be despondent about. The fact that Biden mentioned that Netanyahu will be invited to the White House towards the end of 2023 must have had the same effect.

Susan Hattis Rolef, JPO, 26.9.23

4. Medienquerschnitt

Vom Mörder zum "Gerechten"

Amiram Ben-Uliel is a murderer and must be roundly condemned

(...) Ben-Uliel was convicted of three counts of murder, as well as attempted murder and arson. (...) he was sentenced to three life terms for murder and another 27 for the other charges. His appeals were rejected by the High Court of Justice in 2022 and he has been in jail since. Over the past week, thousands of people have contributed more than NIS 1.2 million to a crowdfunding campaign aimed at improving Ben-Uliel's prison conditions and ultimately securing his release; among the donors are a slew of right-wing figures, including prominent rabbis. (...) Yair Netanyahu, the prime minister's son, shared a post in support. National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir (...) is also helping improve his prison conditions, according to Ben-Gvir's wife. MK Limor Son Har-Melech (...) attended a conference in support of Ben-Uliel and spoke in his defense. "I know he is innocent," she said. "(...) He is a holy, righteous man, really." She told those in attendance that she had visited him in prison. Have we lost the plot entirely? Amiram Ben-Uliel murdered three innocent people, including a one-year-old child, and left a four-year-old in critical condition. He confessed to the crime multiple times, reenacted it for police, and was convicted following a lengthy trial. (...) The fact that coalition lawmakers and at least one influential government minister are endeavoring to undermine due process in order to ease the prison conditions of a convicted murderer and potentially secure his

release should give all Israelis pause. If the judiciary were sufficiently weakened, such a campaign could ultimately inspire the government to override the court's verdict and set a convicted murderer free. That is a horrifying prospect, but not an entirely outlandish one given the stated aims of some government figures pushing the most extreme version of judicial reform. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 24.09.23

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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