

SELECTIONS FROM THE PRESS

This section includes articles and news items, mainly from Israeli but also from international press sources, that provide insightful or illuminating perspectives on events, developments, or trends in Israel and the occupied territories not readily available in the mainstream U.S. media.

ILAN PAPPÉ, "IN UPPER NAZARETH," *LONDON REVIEW OF BOOKS*, 10 SEPTEMBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

Officially, no Palestinians live in the "Jewish" city of Upper Nazareth. The city's elegant website appears only in Hebrew and in Russian. When I was there recently, I called a spokesperson to ask about numbers but he wouldn't give me a straight answer. "I am standing in front of a house with 'There is no power but in God' written in Quranic Arabic over the door," I said. "And I know there are two Palestinians on your city council." "We still do not have enough information about the numbers," was the reply.

In fact, according to the Arab Association for Human Rights, 20 percent of the city's population is Palestinian. Most of them moved from the crowded city of old Nazareth at the bottom of the hill and from the villages surrounding it. Some of them had to pay as much as \$500,000 [approx. \$760,000] for a house, three times the market value. The people selling up are Russian immigrants gravitating toward Tel Aviv. There are no Palestinian schools or kindergartens, so the roads between Nazareth and Upper Nazareth are overcrowded in rush hour. But the non-existent 20 percent are represented on the council and, Israel being Israel, the two Palestinian councilors are in a weird coalition with the ultra-right-wing party of Avigdor Lieberman. The mayor needed their support in order to defeat the Labor party. They demanded, and received, a promise that an Arab school would be built in Upper Nazareth. The mayor is nonetheless committed to the "Judaization"—i.e., the de-Arabization—of his city, and Lieberman declared in August that stopping the immigration of Arabs into Nazareth, as he calls it, is a national priority.

The city was built in the 1950s. David Ben-Gurion was outraged by the presence of so many Arabs in the Galilee when he toured the region in 1953, a few days before he retired for a year and half from his premiership. He appointed the director general of the Ministry of Defense, Shimon

Peres, to "Judaize" the Galilee using emergency regulations that allowed the army to confiscate land from the Palestinians. Upper Nazareth opened in 1957, and senior army officers were billeted there.

The area covered by Upper Nazareth has quadrupled since its creation. Each expansion was on land expropriated from Arabs. Its 50,000 inhabitants live in a dynamic urban space that keeps expanding and developing. The 70,000 Palestinians of old Nazareth live in a city half the size that is not allowed to expand by a single square meter; indeed, one of its western hilltops was recently requisitioned for Upper Nazareth.

The villages around Nazareth were first targeted by Yitzhak Rabin's 1976 plan of Judaization, Yehud Ha-Galil. In greater Nazareth, the main tactic was to disrupt the natural geographical continuity between Palestinian villages by driving Jewish wedges between them. The Jews came, but the Palestinians did not leave, so a second wave of Judaization began in 2001, under Peres and Ariel Sharon. This wasn't very successful either; Jews preferred to live in Tel Aviv.

The present attempt is motivated by the failure of the previous policies to make the Galilee in general, and Nazareth in particular, Jewish. People and economies move in mysterious ways: well-off Palestinians began buying houses in the citadel that was built to evict them. Benjamin Netanyahu regards this as a grave threat to Israel's national security. Local politicians are even blunter. "If we lose the Jewish majority in the Galilee this is the end of the Jewish state," Motti Dotan, a member of the Labor party, said recently. "I would like to imagine a Galilee without Arabs: no thefts, no crimes . . . we will have normal life." . . .

Now ecologists, industrialists, and academics have been drafted in. The Jewish National Fund is behind the initiative, along with the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. The aim of diminishing the Palestinian presence in the Galilee is also fully endorsed by the prestigious union of

Israeli wine producers, which has adopted a plan prepared by leading academics from the Israel Institute of Technology. Published in 2003, the plan calls for the Jewish "take-over" of the Galilee. "It is either them or us," it begins. "The land problems in the Galilee proved that any territory not taken by Zionist elements is going to be coveted by non-Zionists."

The gist of what they propose is to seize strategically important land by force and hold onto it until Jews settle on it. The director general of AMPA, an electrical manufacturer, recently said that his company now not only makes refrigerators but is also actively supporting the "Judaization of the Galilee" by building new communities in the area for AMPA's veterans. "We are not ashamed to say that our plans have a Zionist element."

The Palestinian village of 'Ayn Mahil, east of Nazareth and adjacent to Upper Nazareth, is now accessible only by one road, and it goes through a Jewish religious neighborhood in Upper Nazareth: on the Day of Atonement, the people of 'Ayn Mahil cannot leave or enter their village. They will soon be encircled by a new town called Shacharit. . . . Ten thousand ultra-Orthodox Jews will be settled there and the hope is that they will rectify the "unfavorable" demographic balance, as well as cut 'Ayn Mahil off from the greater Nazareth area. The village's ancient olive groves have been uprooted in preparation for the building work. A new road network will ensure that other villages are separated from each other and from Nazareth. . . .

J. J. GOLDBERG, "THE ZIONIST MELTING POT BOILS OVER," *THE JEWISH DAILY FORWARD*, 2 SEPTEMBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

The 1 September opening of Israel's new school year was fairly uneventful as Israeli school years go. . . . Compared to the storms of recent years, the back-to-school flare-ups this fall seemed at first glance to be little more than—well, child's play.

On closer examination, though, this year's disruptions are worrying. They could be the harbingers of something far more serious than traditional salary and tuition disputes—namely, a mounting reluctance among various groups of Israelis to live and learn alongside one another.

That, at least, was how most Israelis interpreted a late-summer drama in Petah Tikva, Tel Aviv's largest satellite suburb.

In mid-August, a handful of privately run Orthodox schools refused to enroll several dozen Ethiopian immigrant children assigned to them, despite government threats to cut funding and revoke their licenses. The showdown ended when the schools yielded, hours before school opened, but not before parents threatened to shut down the entire city school system if state-run schools were forced to absorb the extra Ethiopians. Compromise has not ended bitterness and suspicion on both sides.

. . . [I]n the western foothills of Jerusalem, parents and educators in the town of Beit Shemesh were at loggerheads over a different group of newcomers, namely Orthodox Jews. Faced with a steady influx of Haredi, or ultra-Orthodox, families fleeing overcrowding in Jerusalem, the mayor decided in August to assign four classrooms for Haredi use in the city's most prestigious secular school, the School for Languages and Cultures. Parents responded by picketing city hall [and] demanding that the mayor resign. . . . The mayor replied that if the school refused to house the Haredi classes, this would be its last year.

Opening-day tensions ran high in Israeli Arab schools, too. Community leaders were up in arms over a decision by the education minister, Gideon Sa'ar of Likud, to ban the use in Arab schools of the word "Nakba," Arabic for "catastrophe," to describe the creation of Israel and the mass displacement of Arabs that followed. Arab Israeli educators said their curriculum included both the Arab and Jewish "narratives" of Israel's birth, but that removing the Arab version would deny their community its identity. Sa'ar, for his part, declared to the cabinet on 30 August that "the creation of the state of Israel cannot be referred to as a tragedy." He vowed that Israel's Arab school system "will revise its studies."

Tensions began last spring when Sa'ar introduced a new Israeli heritage program for use in all public schools, both Jewish and Arab, teaching about Israel's anthem, its flag, and the Jewish religious calendar. Arab educators said they would consider civil disobedience if their curriculum is forcibly "Judaized," in the words of one Arab community official. This dispute, unlike the others, had not been resolved by opening day.

Whatever the immediate issues, though, the underlying cause of conflict is the same: demographic change. A study of Israel's school population, released on 30 August by

the respected Taub Center for Social Policy Studies, showed that of the country's 1.6 million schoolchildren, fully 48 percent attend schools that do not embrace or teach the state's founding Zionist ethos, including 28 percent in Arab schools and 20 percent in Haredi schools. The combined total was 39 percent back in the year 2000. . . .

By contrast, the state's mainstream secular schools account for only 39 percent of students, down from 46 percent in 2000. Enrollment in state religious schools, which follow a modern Orthodox curriculum, has remained steady at roughly 15 percent. In absolute numbers, the secular student population has dropped 3 percent over the past decade, while Haredi students have increased by 51 percent. . . . In Beit Shemesh and elsewhere, secular, mainstream Israelis are awaking to find they're no longer the mainstream. . . .

The dispute in Petah Tikva reflects a different problem, at least superficially. Integration of Ethiopian immigrants, always a challenge due to cultural and racial differences, has become far more complicated in recent years. The current wave of Ethiopian newcomers. . . . comes with little or no grasp of Jewish culture and tradition. . . . Most know little or no Hebrew, and many are illiterate. . . . Enrolling the newest immigrants is unfair to immigrants and schools alike, administrators say. . . . Whatever the challenges, Education Ministry officials charge that the recalcitrant schools have balked repeatedly in the past on various pretexts. The real reason, the officials say, is simple racism.

Disputes in Arab schools are different in nature, mainly because neither side even pretends to seek a melding of values and identities. The question those schools pose to the society is how to imagine coexistence without integration.

For all their differences, though, the September brush fires are all reflections of a single, stark crisis: The Jewish state is inexorably turning into something its founders never intended, something that may not even be sustainable, and nobody has a clue what to do about it.

ABE HAYEEM, "THE DARK SIDE OF TEL AVIV,"
GUARDIAN, 13 OCTOBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

The centenary of Tel Aviv, a city said to date from 1909, has provided a useful opportunity to present the face of Israel as a hip country built by Jewish pioneers

on empty sands. Its vibrant cosmopolitan flavor, its commercial center, its Mediterranean beaches, its liberal society and culture, are seen as signifying a truly commendable Zionist enterprise. According to the blurb on the centenary celebrations, "several dozen families gathered on the sand dunes on the beach outside Yafo to allocate plots of land for a new neighborhood they called Ahuzat Bayit, later known as Tel Aviv."

After the horrors of the Gaza onslaught and unending blockade, and the evidence of war crimes committed by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) early this year, . . . no effort has been spared by the Israeli embassy and its propaganda machines to deflect the attention of the world to Israel's marvelous technical and medical discoveries, and to use Tel Aviv to present its upbeat image. Hence Tel Aviv festivities were organized in New York, Vienna, Copenhagen, and Paris. . . .

In London this week, the Israeli embassy team[ed]up with EasyJet to promote its new flights to Tel Aviv with a series of events around London to provide "a sweet taste of Israel's 24-hour city" as a "celebration of Israeli culture, which includes the valuable contribution from many minorities in Israel, such as Christians, Muslims, and Druze."

While there is much on the surface that makes Tel Aviv enticing, this picture must not be allowed to mask the dark underlying history of ethnic cleansing and land expropriation on which Tel Aviv was built, and that still continues today, even in Jaffa. . . . In fact, the whole myth of Tel Aviv being built on empty sand dunes has been taken apart by various Israeli scholars, but none of this will feature in the promotional events.

As Yonathan Mendel says in his article "Fantasising Israel" in the *London Review of Books*:

[Tel Aviv] didn't just emerge from the sand in 1909, as the Zionist myth tells us. Al-Sumayil, Salame, Sheikh Munis, Abu Kabir, Al-Manshiyeh: these are the names of some of the villages that made room for it and the names are still used today. . . .

The Israeli organization Zochrot has published maps of Tel Aviv showing where Arab localities existed, particularly in Jaffa and its suburbs to the south, and in smaller villages east and north of the city, but which have been erased from maps of the region and its posted signs.

Initially, Tel Aviv in its infancy was an adjunct of Jaffa, which Mendel says

was probably the most prosperous and cosmopolitan of all Palestinian cities, with a port, an industry (Jaffa oranges), an international school system and a lively cultural life. In 1949, after Jaffa had been almost completely emptied of its Palestinian inhabitants . . . the Israeli government decided to unite the two cities in one metropolis, to be called "Tel Aviv-Jaffa." In doing this, Ben-Gurion not only created a new Tel Aviv that was "part of" biblical Jaffa, he erased the Palestinian city.

The city was subject to intensive shelling in 1948, when more than 60,000 of its residents were forced to leave—mostly fleeing to Gaza. Seventy-five percent of the city was bulldozed, leaving only 4,000 Palestinians in the now run-down 'Ajami and Jabaliya neighborhoods, which in fact today are the subject of intended clearance by the Amidar corporation, [which has] imposed fines on the residents for "illegally" improving their houses. . . .

What will be built in their place is luxurious real estate at fantastic prices beyond the reach of the existing inhabitants. Jaffa today has been turned into a picturesque artists' colony, in the houses expropriated from their Palestinian owners. . . .

This supposed "mixed city" of Tel Aviv/Yafo (even the name Jaffa is not used) has only 4.2 percent Palestinian residents, compared with the 20 percent of Israel's wider population—hardly an indication of the city's vaunted "diversity." In fact, as the author and architect Sharon Rotbard has pointed out, Jaffa existed before 1909 as mainly Arab, but in fact a mixed city, with many Palestinian Jews in suburbs established in 1887 and 1905. The new Tel Aviv was established by white European Jews, and thus, as Gabriel Ash says, the centennial "is legitimizing colonialism through the commemoration of the arrival of white Europeans to the orient." . . .

GAL BECKERMAN, "PALESTINIAN-LED MOVEMENT TO BOYCOTT ISRAEL IS GAINING SUPPORT," *THE JEWISH DAILY FORWARD*, 16 SEPTEMBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

Uzbekistan-born diamond mogul Lev Leviev announced late in August that his company, Africa-Israel, was drowning in debt of more than \$5.5 billion that it could not repay. Over the next two days, shares in

the company's stock plummeted by more than one-third. . . .

Watching Leviev's precipitous downfall from the sidelines were pro-Palestinian activists. And they were cheering. Though certainly not the cause of his financial collapse, for the past two years, these activists have singled out Leviev as one of their high-profile villains for his large contributions to West Bank settlements. And they have been effective gadflies. Several of the company's major shareholders have divested their holdings from Africa-Israel after receiving complaints from clients. And at least two charities have declared publicly [that] they will not accept Leviev's contributions.

The pro-Palestinian activists are affiliated with the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, an international coalition with the goal of isolating and discomfiting Israel just as South Africa's apartheid regime was targeted in the 1980s.

Initiated by Palestinian groups in 2005 but strengthened by a network that takes in dozens of leftist organizations in Europe and the United States, the global BDS movement claims a number of recent successes. Especially in the wake of the Gaza incursion of last winter, groups associated with the boycott have now felt spurred to expand their efforts into even the sensitive realm of academic and cultural boycotts of Israel. As Omar Barghouti, one of the Palestinian leaders of the BDS movement, told the *Forward*, "Our South Africa moment has finally arrived."

Some major Jewish groups acknowledge BDS as a possible threat. "There are clearly a number of episodes building up here that would allow advocates of a boycott to say that slowly, slowly we are achieving what we want, which is the South Africanization of Israel," said American Jewish Committee [AJC] spokesman Ben Cohen. . . .

The BDS movement is highly decentralized, with each group in the coalition allowed to choose its own targets as it sees fit. It has no articulated political vision, such as a one- or two-state solution to the conflict. The principles that guide the movement—as set out in a call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions issued in June 2005 by a wide group of Palestinian civil society organizations—demand instead that Israel adhere to international and human rights law. The amorphous structure and broad goals appear to be responsible

for much of the group's appeal. But some who watch this movement closely contend that, in the end, even a "targeted" boycott is ultimately aimed at all of Israel.

The actual monetary impact of the movement is often unclear. But for activists seeking as much to affect Israel's image in the public's mind, money is not always the bottom line. The campaign against Leviev is a good example. It was initiated by Adalah-NY, one of the handful of American groups in the BDS movement's network. It was Adalah's activists who chose to focus on Leviev's construction projects in the West Bank and on contributions he has made to the Land Redemption Fund, which gives money for settlement development. Adalah-NY protesters first picketed the opening two years ago of Leviev's diamond retail store, yelling at actress Susan Sarandon as she entered the Madison Avenue shop. Since then, the group has taken every opportunity to point out his connections to the West Bank settlements.

Lately, the fruits of this focus on Leviev have been piling up. On 11 September, TIAA-CREF the giant pension fund, announced that it had divested from Africa-Israel last March after 59 of the company's investors accused it of being "a company which violates human rights and international law." UNICEF and OXFAM denied Leviev's public claims to have given them generous contributions and added that they would not accept contributions from him because of his financial support for West Bank settlements. Also, in the past few weeks, a couple of Africa-Israel's largest investors have sold their stock in Leviev's company after receiving pressure from their clients. . . .

Leviev's trouble is just one of many recent signs of the movement's higher profile. There was the protest joined by several celebrities in mid-September at the Toronto International Film Festival of the festival's official cultural partnership with the city of Tel Aviv in celebration of the latter's 100th anniversary. A few days earlier, Neve Gordon, a professor at Ben-Gurion University, wrote a controversial opinion piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, endorsing the BDS movement as the "only way to counter the apartheid trend in Israel." This past June, the French company Veolia Environnement SA abandoned its multibillion-dollar project to build a light rail train system in Jerusalem after pressure mounted in France from

BDS-affiliated groups. The activists counted it as one more victory. . . .

The exclusive focus on rights rather than on a political prescription for the conflict brings together both those who want to target Israel's existence as a whole and those—mostly American activists—who stick to the more narrow issue of the occupation and settlement activity.

As far as Barghouti [one of the leaders of the movement] is concerned, BDS is a "comprehensive boycott of Israel, including all its products, academic and cultural institutions, etc." But he understands "the tactical needs of our partners to carry out a selective boycott of settlement products, say, or military suppliers of the Israeli occupation army as the easiest way to rally support around a black-and-white violation of international law and basic human rights."

Cohen, the AJC spokesman, views this tactic as a transparent deception. "If you probe these groups a little deeper, you'll find that really this is entirely ideologically motivated. They are just a bunch of radical groups that want to see the state of Israel eliminated," he said. ". . . I think that many people who might be troubled by Israel's presence in the West Bank are going to run a mile when they see what the real agenda of these groups are."

The activist group Code Pink: Women for Peace recently turned its attention to this type of targeted boycott, focusing on the cosmetics company Ahava. Based in the kibbutz Mitzpe Shalem, a settlement in the West Bank, Ahava was a convenient target for the group. After picketing stores that sold Ahava products . . . the Code Pink activists looked on with satisfaction as the company's spokeswoman, "Sex and the City" star Kristin Davis, was dropped as an ambassador for OXFAM. The group gave its reasons in a statement, saying that it "remains opposed to settlement trade, in which Ahava is engaged."

Nancy Kricorian, Code Pink's New York City coordinator and the organizer of its Ahava campaign, dubbed *Stolen Beauty*, said that this push against the cosmetics company was effective precisely because it was tightly focused on a settlement operation. And yet, it also fell squarely within the guidelines of the BDS movement's principles and objectives and was even cited by Barghouti as a successful model because it sullied Ahava's name publicly. . . .

AMIRA HASS, "WHY STOP WITH ELBIT?"
HA'ARETZ, 9 SEPTEMBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

The question is not why Norway divested from the defense electronics giant Elbit Systems, but why only now, and why only from that company? . . .

From the outset, instead of rebuking the Norwegian ambassador, the Foreign Ministry and Defense Minister Ehud Barak should have actually praised the citizens of Norway. Through their government pension fund, which invests oil revenues in 8,000 companies around the world for the sake of Norway's future generations, those citizens continue to be active partners in Israeli construction in the West Bank.

Africa-Israel . . . , Israeli banks that give mortgages to settlers, a Mexican company that has plants in the settlements and is a partner in mining in occupied territory, Israeli firms whose plants are in the occupied West Bank—these are just some of the over 40 Israeli and international companies that are involved in solidifying Israel's occupation, and in which Norway invests, according to data from the "Who Profits" project, run by the Coalition of Women for Peace.

The Norwegian Finance Ministry's Council on Ethics, which recommended that the pension fund pull its investment from Elbit, also explained why it would divest from that company but not, say, from the U.S. company Caterpillar. Elbit, it said, developed equipment used specifically in the construction of the separation barrier, while the equipment sold by Caterpillar to the Israel Defense Forces has legitimate uses as well, and the company should not be held responsible for it being employed in another, possibly illegal, way (namely, the wholesale destruction of Palestinian homes).

The council extended this conclusion to other companies involved in building the separation barrier that also benefited from Norwegian investment. In this way, it corresponds indirectly with left-wing Norwegian activists, and with Palestinian and Israeli anti-occupation activists, providing a basis for their suspicions that the fund's ethics guidelines have been violated. Those guidelines forbid investment in companies that "contribute to serious or systematic human-rights violations" and are in blatant contradiction to the will or pretense of moving Israel and the Palestinians toward a just agreement.

And still, it seems that the Foreign Ministry and Barak know full well why they were so quick to issue a rebuke, and are once again trying to sow fear, forcing Norway to lower the bar it has set for itself and other countries, and blocking in advance the logical path the recommendations have paved. This is the first time a nation has adopted—actively and not just with words—the opinion of the International Court of Justice [ICJ] in the Hague about the separation barrier, 87 percent of which is built on occupied land, in contravention of international law.

If building the barrier is in itself illegal, it follows that so are the settlements, roads, and factories serving the occupation. The Norwegian foreign minister also noted that the ICJ had ruled that it is the obligation of countries signatory to the Fourth Geneva Convention to prevent that charter's violation. . . .

AMIRA HASS, "WHY IS ISRAEL LIMITING MOVEMENT OF [A] PALESTINIAN-CANADIAN BUSINESSMAN?" **HA'ARETZ, 19 AUGUST 2009 (EXCERPTS).**

Muhammad Sabawi, 65, could have played a leading role in all the stories about the economic revival in the West Bank's cities. His goal of "strengthening the economy of Palestine by utilizing its own capabilities" sounds like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's vision of "economic peace." In recent months, however, the Palestinian-Canadian businessman has been considering reducing his business activity here, after Israel started limiting his freedom of movement and that of his son and business partner, Khalid. . . .

For 15 years, Sabawi entered and left the country with no problems, as a senior partner in an insurance company and as chairman of a construction company. But in April, he was denied entry at Ben-Gurion International Airport. "Next time enter by way of the Allenby Bridge," said the Interior Ministry official, after the coordinator for economic affairs at the Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank convinced authorities not to put the Canadian citizen on a plane back to Istanbul.

He wasted seven hours at the airport, left the country, and returned on 2 June via the Allenby Bridge, without looking at what was written in his passport. It was only

a few days later, on his way to a meeting with Israeli business people, that he realized his visa was valid “only for Palestinian Authority territory.” When he arrived at the Hizma checkpoint northeast of Jerusalem, driving a car with Israeli license plates, the soldier there leafed through his passport and told a surprised Sabawi that he had to turn back.

Sabawi purchased \$500,000 in products and services from an Israeli software company. His company cars are Israeli. Many of his company’s suppliers—machinery, raw materials, etc.—are Israeli, both the importers and the manufacturers. Many Israelis have shown an interest in the subsidiary headed by his son, which develops advanced green technology for heating and cooling homes through use of the ground temperature, but the Sabawis, both Canadian citizens, are barred from meeting with them. . . .

Sabawi had to transfer his insurance company’s Gaza headquarters to Ramallah because after the 2005 disengagement Israel made it almost impossible for foreign nationals to enter Gaza. That year, he and other Palestinian and Arab business people established UCI, a Ramallah-based construction and investment company, with \$40 million in capital. . . .

They are currently completing construction of a residential subdivision in northern Ramallah, three kilometers from Birzeit University. The neighborhood has 62 semi-detached homes, a sports center, pool, a playground, and a commercial center. . . .

This is all on the condition that they can stay in the country. Khalid, 25, is an engineer specializing in energy. He joined his father in Ramallah two and a half years ago and heads their subsidiary MENA Geothermal. He expresses a mix of enthusiasm, pride, frustration, and concern. MENA is the only company of its kind in the Middle East and North Africa, including Israel. His green technology specialization requires Khalid to travel frequently, so the tourist visas he received every time he arrived over the past few years didn’t bother him.

In January, however, everything got more complicated. That month, he returned from an international conference in Abu Dhabi on future sources of energy. He and a manager at the company, another Palestinian Canadian, came to the Shaykh Husayn crossing between Jordan and Israel. They were denied entrance to Israel. . . .

Khalid Sabawi sought to bring Canadian engineers to his “green” company in the West Bank, and they turned to the Israeli embassy in Canada to request work visas. They reported being told that that was within the purview of the Palestinian Authority [PA]. The PA, of course, said it was within Israel’s authority. Israel, however, grants almost no work visas to foreigners working in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, generally preferring to renew their tourist visas instead.

Khalid Sabawi and his manager were forced to return to Amman at night. His father called everywhere, until he reached the Civil Administration in the West Bank. He was promised the travelers could return via the Allenby Bridge. They tried a week later, but were turned away. . . . After a month and a half of efforts and the Civil Administration’s intervention, the younger Sabawi managed to return.

In April, he got a one-week visa. On other occasions, he received a visa for a month. On 29 June, he returned via the Allenby crossing from a Sharm al-Shaykh convention on renewable energy. He was again turned away—after waiting at the crossing for eight hours. After more telephone calls, promises, and other efforts, he returned the next day, but his passport was stamped with a visa limiting his visit to a month and only to Palestinian Authority territory. Last week on another visit, he received the same visa, forcing him to cancel a meeting with an Israeli investor interested in a partnership.

ANSHEL PFEFFER, “THE IDF HAS BECOME ISRAEL’S DIPLOMATIC CHANNEL TO THE WEST,” *HA’ARETZ*, 30 OCTOBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

Regular visitors to Tel Aviv’s northern beaches were surprised this week to find Tel Baruch beach strictly off-limits, guarded by makeshift barbed-wire fences and joint patrols by Israel Defense Forces [IDF] soldiers and burly American men—and a few women—in desert camouflage.

The biennial Juniper Cobra exercise, aimed at improving coordination between American and Israeli missile defense systems, has become almost routine for the two armies since its inception in 2001, but this time there were a number of marked differences. Not only was this the largest joint Israeli-American military exercise in

history, it was also the largest exercise of its kind by U.S. forces. . . .

The exercise has major strategic significance not only for Israel, but also for the world as a whole. While Israel is developing a multilayered missile defense system, whose long-range Arrow missile component is operational while the others are on schedule in terms of development, the U.S. X-band radar system deployed in the Negev has tripled Israel's ability to detect missiles fired from the east (in other words, from Iran's direction).

The X-band system—the first and only permanent deployment of U.S. troops in Israel—together with the additional systems demonstrated during Juniper Cobra, which the U.S. would provide Israel on short notice in an emergency situation, greatly enhances the defensive shield over the country. On the diplomatic level, the promise of emergency deployment could serve to reassure Israel that it need not act hastily. . . .

Give and Take

There was, however, a slightly less positive undertone . . . implying that just as this defense can be extended to America's allies, it can also be withdrawn. The entire setup, including the X-band radar system, which in a few weeks will celebrate its one-year anniversary on Israeli soil, can be disassembled within a few hours, moved overland and then loaded onto C-17 transport aircraft and redeployed anywhere in the world.

But no one, at least in the U.S. military, is currently talking about reducing Washington's security commitment to Israel. Although relations between the countries' leaders are at a low, their armed forces have never been closer. IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi never tires of telling guests that he speaks with the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Adm. Michael Mullen, at least once a week on the secure line between their offices.

As Israel appears to be increasingly isolated diplomatically, the relationship between Western and Israeli military leaders is beginning to resemble a convenient back channel for the exchange of information on Syria as well as on Iran, Hizballah, and Islamist threats. During Ashkenazi's three-day stay in Germany this week, the official press releases emphasized mainly the visits

by Israel's no. 1 soldier to Holocaust-related sites. . . . But the truly pressing matters on Ashkenazi's agenda were far from historical. In just three weeks, he has met with the chiefs of staff of the five largest armies in NATO—the United States, Britain, Canada, France, and now Germany.

"The army chiefs are a very useful diplomatic channel," one IDF General Staff officer says. The content of Ashkenazi's meetings with Germany's chief of staff, Gen. Wolfgang Schneiderhan, was of course not made public. But at a time when the major Western countries are engaged in a frustrating dialogue with Iran over the future of its nuclear program, there is little doubt over what could have been of joint interest to the two generals. Israel, in particular, has a clear interest in conveying its viewpoint to the senior military advisors of these nations' leaders.

But the military relationship between Israel and Germany goes much deeper than just dealing with the current Iranian problem. German shipyards are building two Dolphin class submarines for the Israeli Navy, which according to foreign reports are capable of launching ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads. The German government is funding one-third of the costs of the new submarines. The three Dolphins previously delivered to Israel were funded fully by Germany. . . .

The military know-how goes both ways. This week a new deal for the purchase of Israel Aerospace Industries Heron unmanned aerial vehicles by the Luftwaffe was announced. The deal is believed to be worth \$90 million at present, with additional orders in the pipeline. The Heron system, consisting of drones and command and control cabins, will be shipped immediately to Afghanistan. . . .

Officially, Israel has no involvement in the fighting in Afghanistan. The last thing the Western armies struggling to gain the confidence of the local Muslim population need right now is to be linked to the "Zionist entity." But the new German unmanned aerial vehicles will join similar Israeli-designed drones—used by Canada, Spain, and the United States—in the sky, while on the ground will be combat vehicles covered in armor plating designed on Kibbutz Sasa, in the Upper Galilee.

But cooperation with Israel goes further than just the supply of hardware. Many

of the forces facing threats from suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) operate according to doctrines adapted from those developed by the IDF when facing Hizballah and armed Palestinian organizations.

Furthermore, in recent months, the similarity of the threat facing the IDF and its Western counterparts has grown. Analyses by the forensic laboratory of the IDF Ground Forces' technological logistics directorate show a distinct technological advance in the IEDs used against the IDF near the border with the Gaza Strip. . . . [F]rom information supplied by the British and U.S. armies, it seems that the devices in Gaza are almost identical to those used by the Taliban in Afghanistan, including the recent incorporation of tungsten.

The new materials and expertise almost certainly came from bomb experts smuggled into Gaza through tunnels under the Egyptian border. Since the end of Operation Cast Lead more than 10 months ago, Hamas has virtually ceased carrying out operations against the IDF. All of the attempted attacks have been traced to Islamic Jihad groups that flout Hamas's authority. Like the Taliban, these groups are now being funded and trained by al-Qa'ida. . . .

AKIVA ELDAR, "DON'T BLAME BOGIE ALONE,"
***HA'ARETZ*, 24 AUGUST 2009 (EXCERPTS).**

Rather than demand an apology, the Israeli peace camp needs to send Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon a large bouquet of flowers. The videotaped appearance of the vice premier before a group of Feiglinites [a far right-leaning segment of Likud] last week [16 August] is worth its weight in gold. His statements are straight-from-the-source, first-hand proof of the decisive role the senior military echelon has played in thwarting the peace process.

When he was chief of the General Staff, Ya'alon bragged of how he would often say in closed forums that "every time the politicians bring us the dove of peace, we as an army need to clean up after it." . . . Ya'alon thus confirms the chilling description offered by Prof. Shlomo Ben-Ami of how the Israel Defense Forces' [IDF] top brass helped stoke the fires in the territories. . . .

Ben-Ami wrote of how goods that were specifically earmarked for the Palestinian population were held up at checkpoints;

how bulldozers tore up greenhouses, gardens, and orchards under the pretext of security; and how Palestinian rage mounted until it reached an unprecedented boiling point. He stated that the policy of collective punishment and the imposition of economic hardships—which did nothing to serve the nonmilitary echelon's efforts to forge a cease-fire—were the courses of action dictated by the military echelon, which at that point in time totally ignored the directives and aims of the political leadership.

Ya'alon would later label that policy as one that would be "seared into the minds" of the Palestinians. He claimed that the only way to deal with them was to teach them that violence does not pay. In order to drill this into their heads, he was not averse to starving children, liquidating moderate political leaders, erecting checkpoints, imposing closures, and humiliating the populace.

Now it is clear that lurking behind the strategy advanced by Ya'alon and his fellow "cleaners"—one that threw the Oslo accords into the dustbin of history—was a pure, right-wing ideology. "From my standpoint," Ya'alon declared during his recent appearance before the lunatic fringe forum of the Likud, "Jews should live in all of the Land of Israel forever." . . .

When these kinds of officers reach the highest positions in the army, it is no wonder that the Palestinian peace camp is fighting for its life against Hamas. When peace activists are viewed by a former chief of staff as "viruses," nobody will stand in the way of the hilltop thugs in the territories controlled by the IDF. (At least one-third of the outposts were built during the period in which Ya'alon served as GOC [General Officer Commanding] of Central Command, the military element that is considered the "sovereign" of the territories.) And yet, Bogie and his ilk are not the ones who bear the primary guilt. Indeed, as the Jewish saying goes, one should not blame an individual who is operating within a broken system.

During the 16 years that have elapsed since the signing of the Oslo accords, Israel has yet to produce one political leader that is ready to risk confrontation with the most extremist of settlers, including those inhabiting the illegal outposts. Even Yitzhak Rabin could not summon the

courage to evacuate the settlers of Hebron following the massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

Not only is the political echelon fearful of presenting a map which demarcates the state's permanent borders, but it also has abdicated its responsibility for determining the final route of the separation fence to the High Court of Justice, thus leaving a number of gaps throughout the barrier. To this day, senior army officers do not know whether the prime minister is really committed to freezing construction in settlements, or whether the politicians are once again winking one eye at the Americans while winking the other at the Yesha Council.

A chief of staff, like any other citizen, has political opinions. The late Rafael Eitan compared Arabs to drugged-up cockroaches, and Ehud Barak agreed to relinquish parts of Jerusalem. The problem starts when IDF officers enter a vacuum that the political echelon has left behind in the territories for the last 42 years. In this abandoned area a dangerous trend arises, whereby the political echelon allows the military leadership to dictate policy. Or, in Ya'alon's words, the army cleans up after the politicians. . . .

GIDEON LEVY, "IT'S ALL KOSHER FOR KASHER," *HA'ARETZ*, 5 OCTOBER 2009 (EXCERPTS).

Whoever said that intellectuals are keeping silent? Who claimed that academia is ensconced in an ivory tower? And who dared to think that Israel lacks a moral voice? One day, when historians take the time to examine Israel's brutal offensive in Gaza, otherwise known as "Cast Lead," they will settle a score with political leaders and officers who were responsible for committing war crimes. They will delve deep and denounce the enablers of this nation, the whitewashers and apologists, those who let the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] win at any cost, even if it was the heaviest moral cost possible.

The main target on their list will be Mr. Ethics, Prof. Asa Kasher, the Israel Prize-winning philosopher and author of the IDF's Code of Conduct. Kasher glossed over every transgression during this war. He's the one responsible for that toxic "IDF spirit"—which holds that when it comes

to protecting soldiers, anything goes for the IDF. This flimsy fig leaf of a man bears as much moral responsibility as the political leaders who made the decisions and the soldiers who carried out their orders. He's the philosopher who removed the reins, the intellectual who whitewashed everything. It is thanks to him and those of his ilk that Israelis can feel so self-righteous. When the world said in near unison, "War crimes," Kasher said, "We are the most moral army in the world, no one is better than us." . . .

He wasn't always like this. He now says in every possible forum, "If it comes down to a choice between a neighbor and an IDF soldier, the preference is the soldier," and "The lives of our soldiers is of more interest to me than the dignity and well-being of the Palestinians." He has also said that there is no justification for endangering the lives of soldiers in order to prevent the killing of civilians living "next to a terrorist." But he once thought and wrote differently. As a radical activist at the height of the first Lebanon war, Kasher, who is also one of the founders of the soldiers' refusal movement *Yesh Gvul*, courageously appeared at a news conference with Nathan Zach, Dan Miron, and Yeshayahu Leibowitz. Kasher . . . wrote in a letter to *Haaretz*: "Against the backdrop of news reports on thousands of noncombatant Lebanese and Palestinians who were harmed during Israel's military operations, and given the complete justification of these instances given by the prime minister, it is every decent man's duty to express unreserved opposition to the prime minister's treatment of innocent civilians who are caught in the middle of a war he initiated."

What has changed since then? Kasher has changed. Every decent man continues to believe that unnecessary killing of civilians is a criminal act. The war in Gaza was no less cruel than the war in Lebanon. Universal ethics remain today what they were then. Only Kasher's ethics have radically changed. . . .

In recent days, the United Nations' Goldstone report has been denounced as "anti-Semitic propaganda," and white phosphorus bombs have become "legitimate weapons." Why? Kasher heard from an IDF colonel that when a phosphorus bomb fell near him, nothing happened to him. And what about the 200 children who were

killed? They were of “legal adult age—15 to 18 years—and they took an active part in the war.” What about the killing of Dr. Izzeddin Abu al-Aish’s daughters? He is responsible for their deaths. The bombing of hospitals? This, too, is permitted. Kasher knows that terrorists were hiding in their basements.

The IDF spokesman’s office could not have phrased it any better. The Foreign Ministry’s spin doctors could not have deceived any better. This is how Kasher has whitewashed the assassinations and resultant killing of innocent civilians. . . .

This is the man who symbolizes our morality and this is how we behave. . . .