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1. Trumps Erklärung zu den Golanhöhen

In seltener Übereinstimmung freuten sich der Likud, Blau-Weiß und die Arbeitspartei über die Ankündigung von US-Präsident Donald Trump, Israels Souveränität auf den Golanhöhen anzuerkennen. Trump mache Geschichte, so twitterte Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel habe keinen besseren Freund als den US-Präsidenten. „Danke Präsident Trump. Danke Amerika!“ Benny Gantz, Chef des neuen Mittebündnisses Blau-Weiß, zog einen Bogen vom Umzug der US-Botschaft nach Jerusalem vor knapp einem Jahr zur angekündigten Anerkennung der Golanhöhen als israelisches Gebiet. Beides seien Schritte, die Trump „als wahren Freund des Staates Israel einen Platz in der Geschichte sichern“. Auch Arbeitsparteivorsitzender Avi Gabbay begrüßte Trumps Ankündigung und erinnerte daran, dass die ersten Siedlungen am Golan bereits 1967 unter der Regierung der Arbeitspartei errichtet wurden. Trump kam mit seiner veränderten Position der Bitte Netanyahus nach, die Golanhöhen als israelisches Gebiet anzuerkennen. Handlungsbedarf bestand nur insofern, dass man sich in Jerusalem die pro-israelische Haltung des Weißen Hauses, solange Trump dort Chef ist, zu Nutzen machen wollte. Frühere US-Präsidenten betrachteten die Golanhöhen als von Israel besetztes syrisches Gebiet. Diese Position gilt international unverändert. Der Alleingang der USA ist als politisches Signal zu werten. De facto ändert sich aktuell nichts dadurch. Die

letzten Friedensverhandlungen, bei denen stets die Rückgabe der 1967 von Israel eroberten Golanhöhen an Syrien zur Debatte stand, liegen mehr als acht Jahre zurück. Das Arabische Menschenrechtszentrum auf den Golanhöhen Al-Marsad verurteilte Trumps Schritt, der „im Widerspruch zu Fakten, Logik und internationalem Recht“ stehe sowie „die Stabilität im Nahen Osten bedroht“. Unklar sei, „warum die USA ihre bisherigen Vorgaben ändert“. Der von Trump gewählte Zeitpunkt könnte sich fatal auf seinen seit langem angekündigten „Jahrhundertepan“ für einen Nahostfrieden auswirken, den er gleich im Anschluss an Israels Parlamentswahlen Anfang April kundtun will. Trumps Gesandte in der Region setzten darauf, die arabischen Nachbarstaaten mit ins Boot zu bekommen. Die Arabische Liga reagierte frustriert über den unilateralen Vorstoß von Trump. Generalsekretär Ahmed Aboul Gheit forderte den US-Präsidenten dazu auf, „diese fehlerhafte Situation zu überdenken“. Eine Anerkennung der israelischen Souveränität auf den Golanhöhen werde „ernste Folgen für die Position der USA im arabisch-israelischen Konflikt“ haben.

On the Golan, Iran talks, Israel walks

(...) Israel has gained the upper hand in this conflict. Tehran has been forced to withdraw its forces from southern Syria and is struggling to realize its aspiration of building an active anti-Israel front on Syrian soil (...). Hezbollah's efforts to establish a foothold

on the Golan have also been fruitless. (...) The Assad regime's lack of international legitimacy, due to his atrocities and particularly his weakness and willingness to bow to Iran and Hezbollah, have led the American administration to change its policies pertaining to Israel's status on the Golan. (...) Others in the international community will follow in the wake created by the Trump administration – similar to the American president's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Israel must be uncompromising as it continues countering Iran and Hezbollah's presence in Syria, whether through diplomatic means or warning shots fired via the media. First and foremost, however, it must strike the head of the snake every time it rears its head. Thanks to Assad, the Golan Heights will remain safely in Israel's hands.

Eyal Zisser, IHY, 17.03.19

Recognize the Golan

(...) After the international community spent over five decades being in denial, Trump is changing the equation and recognizing what has long been clear to all: Israel is not giving up the Golan Heights, which is vital to our security. There have been some murmurs that this is not the right time to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights, because it is so close to our upcoming election. While this is a valid concern, and Netanyahu is likely to get a boost from the decision, it is far overshadowed by how overdue and undeniable such a move is (...) In the subsequent decades, several prime ministers, including Netanyahu, have taken part in negotiations to give up the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria. However, we now know, after years of civil war in Syria, what a massive mistake that would have been. If we had given up the Golan Heights, we would have Iran, our greatest and most powerful enemy, on the banks of the Sea of Galilee, threatening us from the high ground overlooking much of Israel's North. The Golan Heights are absolutely necessary for Israel's long-term national security, and recognizing it is the right thing for all of Israel's allies, not just the US, to do. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 21.03.19

The Golan Heights first

(...) That Netanyahu and Gantz were both delighted is no surprise; the annexation of the Golan and the settlements established there enjoy widespread support in Israel. (...) despite the quiet and the internal consensus that sees the Golan as an inseparable part of Israel, this is occupied territory that

Israel retains in violation of both international law and the principle at the basis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 — that the acquisition of territory by war is unacceptable. Israel accepted this principle (...). Trump's announcement and the applause that greeted it in Jerusalem send the troubling message that Israel is no longer interested in a peace agreement. It's true that Syria, having fallen apart, is now weak and will settle for diplomatic censure, and in any case the chance of resuming negotiations in the north is near zero. But Trump gave Syria and its allies a renewed pretext for possible military action. In the near term, the U.S. green light to annexing the Golan will deepen the Israeli delusion that U.S. approval is sufficient to revise the world map and contribute to erasing the 1967 lines as the relevant reference points for solving the Israeli-Arab conflict. The U.S. recognition will inevitably increase pressure from the right to annex Area C of the West Bank (...), intensifying the occupation and the bloody conflict with the Palestinians. Editorial, HAA, 24.03.19

Think about it: Trump's recognition of Israel's sovereignty in the Golan

Before boarding the plane on his return to Israel last Monday from Washington, where several hours earlier President Donald Trump had officially recognized Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights, Prime Minister Netanyahu told the press: "I am returning from a historic visit. This is something that will be remembered for generations. We have historical roots in the Golan Heights. (...)" Like most Israelis, I was at first elated by Trump's gesture (though not so much by its timing). However, after a few sentimental minutes, I came back to earth and to the realization that Trump's gesture is meaningless in practical terms, since it is contrary to International Law and contrary to dozens of UN Security Council resolutions concerning the Golan. (...) Netanyahu must be perfectly aware of the fact that while Israel has legitimate security concerns connected with a possible return of Syria to the Golan Heights – and is thus justified in refusing to even consider giving up control of the territory at the moment given the current political reality in Syria and the region – it is the rules of international law that count. Unlike the case of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whose legal status since 1949 is not absolutely clear, in the case of the Golan Heights the legal status is clear – it is an occupied territory that belongs to Syria. The fact that all members of the EU (including Netanyahu's new East and Central European allies) and all the

members of the Security Council (except for the US) declared Trump's move to be contrary to international law and numerous Security Council resolutions, points to the very shaky basis of the "historic event." (...) Netanyahu's total contempt for international law and the United Nations undermines the whole legal basis of Israel's existence. (...) Incidentally, it is no accident that until three years ago, Israel never declared its sovereignty over the Golan Heights, but rather that "the law, adjudication and administration of the state shall apply to the Golan Heights." It was Netanyahu who first declared it in an April 2016 political speech. There is a need to bring Israel's foreign policy back down to Earth. There is also an urgent need to bring about the rehabilitation of the Foreign Ministry and turn it into an effective policy-supporting body and watchdog that can ensure that Israel's foreign policy remains on solid ground. However, what the ministry requires more than anything else is a full-time minister. (...) It should be noted that it was not Netanyahu who began the degeneration of the Foreign Ministry. (...) The fact that the Knesset has a single Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, in which foreign affairs are secondary to security, well reflects this reality. (...) While Netanyahu is not to be blamed for the basic maladies, he is certainly responsible for aggravating the situation. (...) I do not know whether a properly functioning foreign minister with a full-time independent ministry would be able to stand up to Netanyahu and at least require him to conduct proper consultations before allying Israel to uncouth and frequently nasty regimes – or encouraging the American president to embark on all sorts of dramatic gestures that might serve his own personal political interests but do not tally with international law and could have grave long-term consequences. In the final reckoning, it will probably not be Netanyahu who will have to contend with the long-term consequences of his foreign policy and destruction of the Foreign Ministry in the last four years, but rather whoever replaces him – whether from within his Likud or from the current opposition.

Sussan Hattis Rolef, JPO, 31.03.19

2. Wahlkampf mit Hackern und umstrittenem Parfüm

Wenige Wochen vor Israels Parlamentswahlen muss sich gemäß Entscheid des Obersten Gerichtshofs der rechtsradikale Kandidat Michael Ben-Ari aus dem Wahlkampf zurückziehen, während der linke Antizionist Ofer Cassif wieder ins Rennen ein-

steigt. Cassif ist Professor für Politische Wissenschaften, lehrte bislang an der Hebräischen Universität Jerusalem und tritt als einziger jüdischer Politiker in der Wahlliste der antizionistisch-arabischen Vereinten Liste an. Der Oberste Gerichtshof urteilte gegen die Entscheidung des überwiegend von Politikern gestellten Zentralen Wahlkomitees, das Cassif zuvor disqualifiziert hatte, Ben-Ari hingegen für kosher erklärte. Das Urteil ist eine weitere Niederlage für Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu, der bereits eine Koalition mit den Rechtsradikalen ins Auge fasste. Netanyahu führt einen zunehmend aggressiven Wahlkampf gegen seinen Hauptkonkurrenten Benny Gantz vom Mittebündnis Blau-Weiß. Dabei konzentriert er sich auf Berichte über iranische Hacker, die empfindliche Informationen von Gantz' Smartphone in den Händen haben sollen. Gantz kontert mit den Enthüllungen in der U-Boot-Affäre. Netanyahu steht erneut im Verdacht, sich und Vertraute an dem Handel mit dem deutschen Unternehmen Thyssenkrupp bereichert zu haben. Schlagzeilen machte zudem der Wahlspot von Justizministerin Ayelet Shaked, der offenbar als Parodie gemeint war. „Für mich riecht es nach Demokratie“, flüstert Shaked mit laszivem Blick in die Kamera, während sie sich mit einem fiktiven Parfüm namens „Faschismus“ besprüht. Allerdings zielen ihre Botschaften im Wahlkampfvideo: „juristische Revolution“ und die „Reduzierung von (politischem) Aktivismus“ nicht gerade auf eine Stärkung von Demokratie und Rechtsstaat ab. Die Vorstellung, sie könne es doch ernst gemeint haben mit dem „Faschismus“, der für sie „nach Demokratie riecht“, wird umso mehr gestützt, da Shaked's Partei „Die Neue Rechte“ auf Wahlplakaten mit der aparten 39-Jährigen den „Sieg über den Obersten Gerichtshof“ verspricht.

An Iranian hacking that could become an assault on Israeli democracy

The Iranian hacking of a smartphone (...) seems like the realization of concerns about foreign intervention in Israel's election campaign, sparked by the Russian intervention in the U.S. campaign in which Donald Trump was elected president. (...) Netanyahu said Gantz would have no choice but to withdraw. This is a baseless demand. (...) The public has no idea what information the Iranians or Israeli security agencies may have, and, no less serious, who else has this information, who may exploit it and to what end. (...) The possibility that the Iranians have sensitive information about Gantz is worrisome (...). No less worrying is the possibility that some information

on Gantz's phone will leak from security agencies to Netanyahu's campaign team. Since the beginning of the campaign, Likud and Netanyahu have been trying to tarnish Gantz in a variety of ways, including by spreading false information. Using the contents of a phone hacked by an enemy state is a serious escalation. Such information should only be in the hands of state security agencies, but all these, including the Mossad, the Shin Bet, the National Security Council, Military Intelligence and the National Cyber Directorate are subordinate to Netanyahu. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 17.03.19

Act on the hack

The report that Blue and White leader and former IDF chief of staff Benny Gantz's phone was hacked raises many questions. Who broke into his phone? (...) neither Gantz nor the Shin Bet denied that Iran was behind the hack (...) there is certainly still reason for concern. This is comparable to the hacking of Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign chairman John Podesta's emails, and their release to the public shortly before the US election. The American intelligence community found that the Russian government was behind the hack, and sent the materials to Wikileaks, which posted the emails online. That hack was not a matter of national security (...). But it did threaten the US, and the Gantz hack threatens Israel, in that they are cases of adversaries seeking to intervene in our internal government processes, undermine our democratic elections and destabilize us. (...) this latest scandal has brought to light how little is done to protect the digital footprints of those who are privy to top-secret information, especially when it comes to their phones. That is a scandal in itself – that despite knowing there is a threat, some of the most obvious steps are not being taken to protect our leaders. The next phone to be hacked could have sensitive information of a national or personal nature in it, and the impact could be even greater. Let this Gantz hack, which seems mostly harmless at this point, sound the alarm so that greater security measures are taken, for the good of the entire State of Israel.

Editorial, JPO, 17.03.19

An Iranian hacking that could become an assault on Israeli democracy

The Iranian hacking of a smartphone belonging to (...) Benny Gantz (...) seems like the realization of concerns about foreign intervention in Israel's election campaign, sparked by the Russian intervention

in the U.S. campaign in which Donald Trump was elected president. (...) The public has no idea what information the Iranians or Israeli security agencies may have, and, no less serious, who else has this information, who may exploit it and to what end. (...) The possibility that the Iranians have sensitive information about Gantz is worrisome (...). No less worrying is the possibility that some information on Gantz's phone will leak from security agencies to Netanyahu's campaign team. Since the beginning of the campaign, Likud and Netanyahu have been trying to tarnish Gantz in a variety of ways, including by spreading false information. Using the contents of a phone hacked by an enemy state is a serious escalation. Such information should only be in the hands of state security agencies, but all these, including the Mossad, the Shin Bet, the National Security Council, Military Intelligence and the National Cyber Directorate are subordinate to Netanyahu. (...) Given that Israel has a prime minister lacking inhibition, and to assuage concerns about election interference, election committee chief Hanan Melcer must find a way to oversee this dangerous incident, go through the chain of events and ensure that it's not exploited for a grave assault on the democratic process.

Editorial, HAA, 17.03.19

Gantz, Gaza and a very inconvenient hack

(...) the Iranians had managed to hack Gantz's cell phone. (...) who else did the Iranians hack? (...) who in Israel knew about the Iranian hacking and how? (...) what material was on the phone - was it problematic, confidential, defense or personal information? All of these questions were left unanswered after the news (...) Netanyahu implemented stage two of the telephone story. The Iranians were not only squeezing Gantz - they also supported him, the prime minister claimed. Gantz was actually their candidate for premier. Netanyahu's remarks raise some interesting questions: If the Iranians and Gantz are brothers, why would they need to hack his phone? (...)

Nahum Barnea, YED, 18.03.19

This ugly election campaign

These elections are turning into the most confusing, ugliest and counterproductive ones in Israel's history. The country's citizens (...) are now being inundated at a whirlwind pace by a medley of purposeful disinformation, salacious rumors, outright prevarications and personal innuendos packaged in abusive language and hateful discourse. (...) The country

entered the electoral season highly divided socially, ideologically and normatively. (...) Hardly a day goes by without accusations of disloyalty, infidelity and even treason directed at political rivals. These are sprinkled with heaps of misleading evidence, false information, blatant lies and (...) circulated through the conventional media, social networks, specially-created private studios, clips, Instagram, jingles, tweets, inanimate bots as well as by the traditional and still unusually effective use of the word of mouth. (...) A growing number of Israelis (...) have simply tuned out the verbal clutter (...). In the process, they weaken the notion of an informed citizenry so central to vibrant democracies. Others are actively running away — planning vacations far from their polling stations or booking long weekends abroad in order to completely turn off the fetid electoral buzz. They are reinforcing a model of the absent citizen. (...) Another, small but important, group is bent on fighting the deteriorating currents pervading the public sphere. (...) These citizens (...) are also calling out those who are crossing the line between criticism and incitement and between disagreement and unbridled provocation. (...) Where most political parties and leading candidates may be on the brink of losing it in the heat of the campaign, citizens can still insist on abiding by what until recently were the consensual rules of game. They have the power to do so: they now hold the winning card — the ballot.

Naomi Chazan, TOI, 18.03.19

The court's double standard

The Supreme Court's ruling (...) hampers the right to freedom of expression, the life's blood of any democracy. Disqualifying a candidate from the Right, while approving candidates from the Left, also severely damages the public's trust in the fairness of the legal process. (...) The judges' power stems from the citizens who designated them as their arbiters. But the public didn't ask them to determine the nature of our political discourse nor to shield gentle souls from harsh words. Israeli democracy is strong and vibrant and if it can handle the extremists from the Left it can certainly handle Michael Ben-Ari. (...) A democracy has to permit the expression of harsh, even extreme sentiments. The more we allow free discourse, the less violence we will encounter on the fringes. (...) The Jewish nation is a nation of texts, and some of these texts are severe and extreme. We've never been afraid of contending with harsh expressions and we never silenced opinions in places of Torah study. Prohibiting the opinions (...) of

political rivals is a denial of our people's own polemical traditions. But things are worse than they seem. This ruling is based on a double-standard and unequal application of the law. How is Ben-Ari disqualified while Balad and Ofer Cassif are approved, when their views fundamentally negate Israel as a Jewish a democratic state?! (...)

Dror Eydar, IHY, 18.03.19

The right wing vs. the court

As expected, the Supreme Court's decision (...) sparked an all-out attack on the court by the right. (...) Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked didn't make do with vague threats; she quickly issued a plan "to complete the judicial revolution in my next term." She proposed, first and foremost, making the cabinet and the Knesset (...) responsible for appointing Supreme Court justices, rather than by the Judicial Appointments Committee. Her proposal — which would turn the selection of justices from a professional matter into a political one and thereby sabotage the principle of separation of powers (...) — goes against the global trend toward strengthening the professional foundation of judicial appointments, at the expense of the political side. (...) Shaked proposed an override clause that would make it possible for a legislative majority to overturn High Court rulings, thereby impeding the protection of human rights and minority rights. In her view, the judicial system in general and the High Court of Justice in particular are also undermining Israel's security by "handcuffing" the army. She also promised to make the legal advice given to cabinet ministers conditional: If the legal opinions they receive don't jibe with the ministers' "legal scholarship," they will have the option of hiring their own legal advisors, at the public's expense, who will be willing to defend any improper act. Also in her sights are the legal advisers of the government ministries: She wants to make them personal appointees, who are dedicated to the cabinet minister rather than to the rule of law. Like others on the right, Shaked, associates vox populi with the will of the coalition majority, and democracy with unrestricted majority rule. The election of a right-wing government to an additional four-year term will eliminate the separation of powers and erode the rule of law in Israel.

Editorial, HAA, 19.03.19

Israel's Supreme Court is left-handed

(...) The Supreme Court has traditionally been lenient in its interpretation of Basic Law: The Knesset, which prohibits anti-democratic and racist candi-

dates from participating in elections. That is, until this week, when it decided to apply a double standard: It disqualified far-right candidate Michael Ben Ari while letting radical-left candidates run. (...) the Supreme Court, which is required by law to make a final ruling on any disqualification, has consistently refused to ban Arab parties and candidates from running despite their express support for Israel's enemies and endorsement of terrorism against Israel. (...) the court approved the candidacy of those who signed manifests calling for negating Israel's character as a Jewish democracy and those that proudly had their picture taken with convicted, jailed terrorists. Thus, it is clear that the Supreme Court went out of its way to find a creative interpretation to the basic law, choosing to ignore its literal and explicit prohibitions, and until this week, we could at least take comfort knowing that it applied this standard across the board, letting controversial candidates from both sides run. But on Sunday, the court applied a much more stringent standard to Ben Ari's candidacy, while letting the Arab party Balad and Hadash candidate Ofer Cassif run. This double standard clearly underscores the damage that can be done by a legal system that ignores the law. The damage begins with a "wide" interpretation of the law, albeit in a consistent manner and across the board, but then it gets worse when interpretation becomes selective and only applies to the Right. The decision will not hurt Ben Ari or his would-be voters and won't even hurt the court in any real sense. The real victims are Israelis by and large who may no longer believe that they can get a fair shake in court. (...)

Aharon Garber, IHY, 19.03.19

I never thought Israel was democratic

(...) what our justice minister apparently doesn't know, (...) is that Mussolini, the founder of fascism, who became its omnipotent leader, actually defined his regime as a true democracy. Of course, it wasn't a hesitant, divided parliamentary democracy like those of Britain and France, but a centralized, masculine democracy that knew how to elect and glorify the governing authority that headed it. Fascism wasn't anti-democratic, but anti-liberal. It repeatedly claimed that it expressed the authentic will of the people against the old elites and the loathed left-wing parties. Of course, it ultimately abolished political pluralism, which unnecessarily divides the nation, and turned the separation of powers into a meaningless caricature of itself. It also seized every opportunity to show contempt for the courts. (...) I

never thought Israel was democratic. A democratic system of government, in my opinion, is one that gives political expression to the will of the majority, but at the same time presumes to act in an egalitarian fashion for the sake of all its citizens, irrespective of their religion, ethnic origin or gender. (...) The absence of the democratic principle in Israel has bothered me throughout my adult life. But despite this, the liberalism that exists here, for all its weaknesses, has always been more precious to me. I am increasingly afraid that in an age of national populism, this liberalism will lose its power, and the worldview of Shaked and her political and intellectual supporters will triumph.

Shlomo Sand, HAA, 27.03.19

3. Eskalation im Gazastreifen abgewandt

Durch Vermittlung des ägyptischen Geheimdienstes zwischen Israel und der islamistischen Führung der Hamas im Gazastreifen konnte eine weitere Eskalation verhindert werden. Auslöser für die erneute Anspannung war eine auf das Zentrum Israels abgeschossene Langstreckenrakete, die sieben Menschen verletzte. Die Luftwaffe reagierte mit gezielten Bombardierungen auf Gebäude, ohne dabei Menschen zu verletzen. Am Jahrestag der Proteste in der Grenzregion waren mehr als 40.000 Palästinenser zum Großen Marsch der Rückkehr gekommen. Zum ersten Mal schickte die Hamas Tausende Ordnungshüter in grell-orangefarbenen Westen in den Einsatz, die verhindern sollten, dass die Demonstrant_innen zu dicht an die Grenze vorrücken und Autoreifen in Brand stecken. Israels Soldaten waren instruiert mit besonderer Vorsicht vorzugehen, um Todesfälle zu verhindern. Die Organisatoren des Großen Marschs der Rückkehr, mit dem Palästinenser aus dem Gazastreifen das Rückkehrrecht der Flüchtlinge in Teile des heutigen Israels fordern, hatten zuvor den „Eine-Millionen-Marsch“ angekündigt. Bei den Demonstrationen waren in den vergangenen zwölf Monaten laut Bericht der WHO insgesamt 266 Palästinenser erschossen worden. Ein UN-Untersuchungsbericht hält fest, dass die Soldaten gegen internationale Menschenrechte verstoßen hätten. Bei einigen dieser Verstöße könne es sich um Kriegsverbrechen handeln. Berichten zufolge sind sich Israel und die Hamas grundsätzlich über einen Waffenstillstand einig geworden. Israel soll Erleichterungen im Grenzverkehr zugestimmt haben, einer Erweiterung der Fischereizone sowie dem Transfer von Hilfsgeldern aus Katar in Höhe von 40 Millionen US-Dollar monatlich, die in Projekte

für die Stromerzeugung und Müllverarbeitung sowie die Errichtung von Entsalzungsanlagen zur Erzeugung von Frischwasser fließen sollen. Die Hamas verpflichtete sich umgekehrt, für Ruhe in der Grenzregion zu sorgen und auch Angriffe der mit Brandsätzen bestückten Heliumballons zu unterbinden.

Gazans want to live

In recent days, we have been witness to unprecedented demonstrations against the cost of living in the Gaza Strip. (...) Their goal is simple: to improve the economic situation. (...) the residents of Gaza have broken through the barrier of fear that has prevailed in Gaza since Hamas expelled the Palestinian Authority and took control there. (...) PA President Mahmoud Abbas is rubbing his hands together with glee. (...). Abbas has imposed an economic blockade on them and refuses to allow for the transfer of salary payments. Hamas, in the meantime, continues to oppress and take advantage of them. (...) Hamas' usual tactic in such a situation is to incite the population against Israel, in order to direct the fire at us rather than it. It is therefore likely that Hamas will try to bring about a deterioration in the situation on the border in order to deflect attention toward Israel. Israel would be wise not to intervene in Gaza's internal affairs at this time, in order not to provide Hamas with an excuse. Gaza is now a powder keg, and no one knows exactly when things will explode. In this current situation, past desires to transform Gaza into Singapore and establish a port and airport in the enclave can only be described as preposterous. Proceed with caution.

Edy Cohen, IHY, 19.03.19

The missiles will wake up Tel Aviv

(...) The attack on Tel Aviv will force the government to respond strongly against Hamas' actions. (...) Tel Aviv's sin is that it is a partner in the debasement of democracy, expressed in the retreat of its residents from their obligation to take an active part in the political debate that shapes the country's military policy. The residents of Tel Aviv are not just indifferent to the distress of the residents of Gaza – which drives the firing of rockets at Israel – but also to Israel's failure of strategic thinking about the way to address this distress. The few protest rallies held in the city drew very little attention. Loud calls to challenge the primitive military thinking are not heard from the political center of the middle class, the group that is the key to political change, against the idea that the strength of the rocketing depends on the strength of the Israeli response. According to this

logic, if Hamas fails to enforce discipline on its own forces and those of other organizations, or fires out of pressure on its rule, it must be attacked in response, and in doing so to weaken it even more. Maybe it is also the right thing to eliminate its military leadership and starve its officials, in the spirit of the doctrine of the leaders of Kahol Lavan. Amateur psychologists on the radio give more intelligent advice to parents of unruly children than Israel's military experts have to offer on how to deal with the rockets from Gaza. Thus, it is possible that an attack on Tel Aviv, one that would threaten its daily routine and economic activity, would actually bring about, alongside the calls to strike Gaza even harder, new and critical thinking. Such thinking develops when the cost of the accepted policy rises, as experience teaches about the peace agreement with Egypt and the Oslo Accords. Israel's policy in Gaza has a low, tolerable cost for now: Almost no lives lost; only localized, incidental damage to the daily routine of the residents near Gaza, far from the center of the country; and a marginal economic cost. This cost will climb if Tel Aviv is hit. Only then will the voices be heard that challenge the policy of force, and ask how Israel can strengthen Palestinian sovereignty in the Gaza Strip and enable economic development there, whether as part of a general reconciliation with the Palestinian Authority or as a focused empowerment of Hamas rule. So it is possible that the optimism growing on the right as a result of the attack on Tel Aviv is excessive.

Yagil Levy, HAA, 18.03.19

Israel will turn a blind eye to rocket mishaps if it signals Hamas distress

(...) thousands of Gazans take to the streets to demonstrate against Hamas. These are not spontaneous and isolated demonstrations, but rather the institutionalized organization of a popular uprising under the slogan "We want to live." The protest is driven, for the first time, by an ordered leadership composed of journalists, academics and online media stars. The fear ceiling has been smashed. Despite the violent response by the Hamas security forces, the demonstrators took to the streets (...). And there were thousands of protesters. (...) In such a situation, it is no wonder that Israel was willing to accept Hamas' claim that a "mishap" led to the firing of two Fajr missiles at Tel Aviv (...). Israel is ready to absorb many more "mishaps" of this kind as long as the popular uprising against the Hamas regime continues and even gains momentum. Anyone who tells savvy Gaza sources that the rocket fire was

down to a "mishap" will be met with laughter. As far as they are concerned, it was no such thing. Everything is directed by Hamas to create a distraction from the internal protests in the Strip. The goal was to divert attention to the confrontation with Israel. It is likely therefore, that there will be more and more such "mishaps" as the protests gather steam. (...) in the winter it is more difficult to conduct military operations within a densely populated civilian area. Therefore, Israel will swallow any story or excuse to delay a confrontation with Hamas until a time when the weather conditions are more suitable (...). Moreover, Israel has no interest in interfering with welcome internal opposition to the Hamas rule that is brewing in the Gaza Strip. The chances of this opposition being able to topple Hamas are low, but in the meantime, its strength is eroding. (...) Hamas intended to drag Israel into some kind of response that would distract domestic public opinion from the internal battles breaking out on the streets of Gaza. Netanyahu was right to choose a measured response and not rushing to convene his security cabinet, thus avoiding any political pressure to deliver a severe blow to Hamas' military wing. (...) Israel – quite rightly – is letting these internal events to develop. Wiping out Hamas can always come later.

Alex Fishman, YED, 18.03.19

Gazans are fed up with fearing Hamas

(...) Palestinians, especially Gazans who live under Hamas rule, have good reasons to revolt and need no role models for this (...). The protests in the Gaza Strip and occasionally in the West Bank are points of rage that accumulate along the time line and recall what occurred in the years that preceded the Arab Spring. (...) Similar to what happened in Egypt and Tunisia, the organizers of the demonstrations in the Gaza Strip announced that (...) all they want is liberty, justice and a life of dignity rather than oppression, corruption and exclusion. Like their brethren in neighboring Arab countries, they want to be able to live as human beings and as full citizens, not as slaves. (...) The use of live fire by Hamas police officers in the Gaza Strip, as in its use in Egypt and in Tunisia, marks the moment when the citizens begin to realize that the ruling authority doesn't see them as human beings or as family, but as objects that can be killed or exploited as cannon fodder at the border fence with Israel. This is a decisive moment emotionally, in which the weapon of resistance loses its sacredness in the eyes of the masses. (...) When the government loses the main weapons with

which it controls the population — fear and shame — the norms of obedience are upended. The government that intimidated and hurt the masses is made to fear them. (...) The protesters are no longer willing to submissively accept (...) Hamas' practice of portraying the youth as revolutionaries when they serve its political agenda, and of portraying them as traitors and collaborators with foreign agendas when these same youth demand a life of dignity. Thus it appears that the economic situation is not the only thing driving the Gazans' uprising, but also, and primarily, a sense of humiliation and the recognition that wealth and opportunity and a monopoly on political decision-making are in the hands of a small and corrupt group. This is a revolution of the hungry who will no longer be satisfied with crumbs, who are no longer willing to make do with knocking politely on the ruler's door. Now the question is whether the Iz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades will take the side of the masses, as the armies in Tunisia and Egypt did, and show the Hamas political wing the door, or whether they will choose to stand by the present corrupt and hesitant Hamas leadership as it continues to usher Gaza toward a fierce and bloody civil war.

Ronit Marzan, HAA, 21.03.19

Gaza protests

(...) Hamas was the target of the youths' frustration, not someone else. (...) The large turnout caught Hamas leaders by surprise, especially after they noticed that protesters were chanting slogans denouncing Hamas and were holding them responsible for the high cost of living, new taxes and soaring unemployment in Gaza. (...) the people in Gaza are not friends of Israel, they recognize that Hamas is the true villain, responsible for their miserable living conditions. (...) Hamas is clearly nervous about the protests. Its leaders are well aware of what happened to Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, and a slew of other leaders throughout the Middle East in recent years. In recent days, videos have leaked out of Gaza showing Hamas militiamen with batons going house to house searching for the demonstrators. These images serve as a reminder to the world what type of regime controls Gaza – one that is repressive, violent and ignorant when it comes to basic human rights. (...) Countries which can potentially play a positive role, including Qatar and Egypt, already hold a great deal of sway and influence over Hamas and the Gaza Strip. For Israel it might be enough to simply declare that its fight is not with the people of Gaza, but rather with

the ruthless and murderous Hamas rulers. This would be similar to the distinction that Israel makes between the Iranian people and the repressive ayatollahs who control the country. (...) there is a younger generation in the Strip that simply wants to live a higher-quality life. They deserve it.
Editorial, JPO, 23.03.19

Qatar's break with Hamas shakes up Mideast politics

(...) the wealthy Gulf state of Qatar announced that it was putting a halt to its financing of the terrorist group Hamas, which has a tenuous hold on the Gaza Strip. (...) Qatar will no longer finance the Gaza Strip's monthly electricity bill, because of Hamas's foot-dragging on several large, needed projects, including a long-delayed high-voltage power line from Israel that could double Gaza's supply of electrical power. While Qatar has long played a controversial and highly-criticized role in Gaza, its new tough approach to Hamas (...) represents a rupture that could irreparably damage the terrorist group's credibility on the street, which until now has been the source of its power. (...) Qatar had hoped its commitment to more than 110 projects and its construction of 4,800 apartments, roads and hospitals would lead to a more stable Gaza Strip and an improved quality of life for the Palestinians who live there. However, as is evidenced by the rising tensions along the Israel-Gaza border, Hamas has stuck to its terrorist roots and failed to effectively govern and implement the many projects and opportunities presented by both Israel and Qatar. The escalating conflict stems in large part from Hamas's refusal to honor the commitments made in November. Violations include nighttime demonstrations on the border and the launching of incendiary balloons, which are now also carrying bombs. (...) Qatar took action. The timing (...) is propitious (...). Even within Gaza, Hamas is not popular because of its refusal and inability to provide for the Palestinians who live there. (...) Qatar's move can thus deepen the public split with the group, further isolate it in Palestinian politics, and bring about the end of whatever legitimacy it once held. The message is, what Palestinians in Gaza want and need – jobs and improvements in quality of life – can in fact be provided without the help of Hamas, which has predicated its authority solely on confrontation. (...) By pulling its purse strings, Qatar is sending a message to Hamas's leadership that the group has betrayed the trust of the Palestinian people and has been an obstacle to their progress. (...)

Jack Rosen, JPO, 23.03.19

Sinwar's knockout victory over Netanyahu

(...) Five years have passed since 2014's Operation Protective Edge. Five years in which our "Mr. Security" has not done a single thing to match the achievements of the military operation on the political Level. Instead, he has let Hamas' leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar do whatever he pleases. For when Sinwar wants peace, there is peace, and when he wants war, there is war. Everyone in Gaza must surely be familiar with Netanyahu's drill by now: We bomb them, they rocket us, and the prime minister agrees to a cease-fire. For years - and especially in the past year - residents of the south have been living through a never-ending nightmare of uncertainty. No one in Netanyahu's government cares for them. (...) The residents of southern Israel have learned from bitter experience. They too know that "Mr. Security" has nothing to offer. And what is worse is that he has no desire to resolve the situation in Gaza. (...) The only good thing that can be said about Netanyahu's handling of the Gaza mess is that he doesn't let the show drag on for too long, and quickly ceases fire. He knows that there no clear end to this movie and therefore prefers to shout "cut" after the first scene. When Netanyahu signed the 2011 deal for the release IDF soldier Gilad Shalit from Hamas captivity, he probably did not predict that one of the prisoners he freed for the hostage - Yahya Sinwar - would become the bitterest of rivals and lay bare his inability to protect his country. Sinwar brought a new kind of leadership to Gaza and turned Hamas into an organization that calls the shots. On the other side, Netanyahu has lead Israel to a policy of retaliation and instead of initiation. As of now, in the battle between Netanyahu and Sinwar, the latter has won by a knockout. (...)

Tali Ben Ovadia, YED, 28.03.19

4. Medienquerschnitt

Neue Enthüllungen in Verbindung mit der Akte 3000

Reopen the investigation into the submarine affair

(...) Avichai Mendelblit declared that he had not found any suspicion of criminal wrongdoing in the case. He was proven wrong. The submarine affair could be one of the worst cases of corruption in the

country's history. (...) The newly revealed facts suggest a purported business connection between the prime minister and ThyssenKrupp (...) In addition (...) it was reported that Amos Gilad, the former head of the Defense Ministry's diplomatic-security division, testified to the police that Netanyahu was the one who gave Germany approval to sell advanced submarines to Egypt, contrary to the prime minister's past claims that Germany never sought his approval. The change in state's witness Ganor's testimony is expected to result in the reopening of Case 3000. The reopening of the case also requires an investigation of Netanyahu and the new reports concerning the stock transactions. This dark cloud must not be allowed to hover over this serious case in which the security interests of Israeli citizens were compromised for financial greed.

Editorial, HAA, 20.03.19

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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Verantwortlich:

Dr. Paul Pasch,

Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Redaktion:

Susanne Knaul

Judith Stelmach

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il