



haringey justice for palestinians

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“Palestine is the barometer of Western integrity”

Don't call me a Palestinian of the Palestinian Territories because it is called Palestine.
 Don't give me a fraction of my homeland and call it a solution.
 Don't give me oppression and call it peace.
 Don't give me a Bantustan and call it a home.
 Don't give me a prison and call it freedom.
 Don't draw the borders of my existence according to your whims and interests and call it a state.
 My Palestine is the home that is mine since the dawn of history till the end of history.

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Reports

From London/UK

1. G4S exploitation of asylum-seekers: Documentary pulled by BBC

Remember G4S's involvement in the prison system in Israel; now it's asylum-seekers who are being exploited.

The Asylum Market

Documentary on G4S: just pulled by BBC despite exposing the scandalous exploitation of asylum-seekers and their accommodation needs - please forward widely

<https://vimeo.com/201062637>

Brand new documentary film was supposed to have aired on BBC1 yesterday and got pulled by the BBC under pressure from G4S lawyers. The producers of this short, investigative documentary have taken the highly unusual step of releasing the entire film independently a) because crucial elements of the asylum accommodation issue are being overlooked by the mainstream media & parliamentary inquiries b) in direct recognition of those who had the courage to speak out, despite a culture of intimidation being created around the reporting of appalling conditions.

The team who made it have decided to make the film viewable for 48 hours to raise the issues to hopefully help influence the current parliamentary investigation into G4S. Feel free to circulate the link to whoever you think would benefit from seeing the film.

Source: <https://vimeo.com/201062637> 01.02.2017

2. Sign The Letter to London Politicians On Palestinian Child Prisoners

We are asking you to join us in launching a co-ordinated London wide campaign to highlight the plight of Palestinian child prisoners. Under Israeli military detention, Palestinian children are routinely:

- Taken from their homes at night and at gunpoint.
- Blindfolded, bound and shackled.
- Interrogated without a lawyer and with no audio-visual recording.
- Held in solitary confinement.
- Forced to sign confessions.

We need your support to make sure that each London MP, MEP and Assembly member is made aware of the issue, takes notice of our voices and signs the letter telling the UK government to break its silence and take action.

You can see the full text of the letter and sign it by using the following link: <https://goo.gl/forms/yhWsTsYUwkuLLJbu1>
Letter On The Plight Of Palestinian Child Prisoners: To London MPs, MEPs and London Assembly Members

The key demand in the letter is:

To require the UK Government to make a public statement that it will take immediate, effective and meaningful action-including through international bodies-to ensure all the following requirements are implemented by the Israeli government without delay:

1. Children must not be prosecuted in military courts that lack basic and fundamental due process guarantees;
2. Detention must only be used as a measure of last resort;
3. Children must not be arrested at night;
4. Children must not be subjected to any form of physical violence;
5. Children must have access to legal representation and parents prior to and during interrogations;
6. All interrogations of children must be audio-visually recorded;
7. Any statement made as a result of torture or ill-treatment must be excluded as evidence in any proceeding; and
8. All credible allegations of torture and ill-treatment must be thoroughly and impartially investigated in accordance with international standards, and perpetrators brought promptly to justice.

[Note all these requirements are those set out by Defense for Children International Palestine]

You can see the full text of the letter and sign it by using the following link: <https://goo.gl/forms/yhWsTsYUwkuLLJbu1>

Thank you for your support and please share this e-mail by forwarding to others. The more signatories we have the more pressure we bring to bear.

London Palestine Solidarity Campaign Branches.

(email londonchildprisonerscampaign@gmail.com if you have questions or want more information. But please note that to sign the letter you need to use the links above)

3. In welcoming Netanyahu to Downing Street, May showed contempt for international law

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with his British counterpart Theresa May in London on Monday, despite rumours of tension between the two countries over Britain's role in drafting and backing a UN Security Council resolution calling for an end to illegal settlement-building in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Netanyahu showed his keenness to meet with May by turning up early; he was left waiting awkwardly outside the door of Number 10.

The visit took place amidst an escalation in Israel's annexation of Palestinian land, illegal settlement building and the passing of the controversial "Legalisation Bill". The bill seeks, retroactively, to "legalise" Jewish outposts built on privately-owned Palestinian land. It has now passed its final committee stage and requires just one more round of votes for it to become law. Netanyahu actually flew straight back to Israel in order to vote in favour of the bill. Furthermore, as he spoke to Theresa May about the Iranian threat to peace, his army and air force were attacking the Gaza Strip; three Palestinians were injured in the air strikes, reported *Al-Jazeera*.

Israeli settlements and the annexation of Palestinian land are not only illegal under international law, but also condemned by the British government. "The announcement of further settlement units in the West Bank is a part of a growing trend which we condemn," said Minister for the Middle East Tobias Ellwood on behalf of the British Foreign Office last week. "We have consistently been clear that settlements are illegal under international law, and not conducive to peace. This spike in settlement activity undermines trust and makes a two state solution – with an Israel that is safe from terrorism and a Palestinian state that is viable and sovereign – much harder to achieve."

This view was echoed by UN envoy for the Middle East peace process Nikolay Mladenov, who also expressed his concern about the bill. "It will enable the continued use of privately owned Palestinian land for Israeli settlements," explained the Bulgarian diplomat. "If adopted into law, it will have far-reaching legal consequences for Israel and greatly diminish the prospects for Arab-Israeli peace." The bill has also been denounced by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. Opposing the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, she said that announcements about new "housing units" are "a very worrying trend."

The UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Michael Lynk, has called on the Security Council and General Assembly to take effective diplomatic and political measures to ensure that Israel complies with Security Council Resolution 2334, which affirms that all Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory constitute a flagrant violation of international law. "If Israel understands that the international community will take no meaningful steps to enforce the Council's resolution," he warned, "it will continue to intensify its settlement project undeterred."

Netanyahu's visit to Downing Street faced crowds of pro-Palestine protesters against Britain's staunch support for the Zionist state. The protest was organised by a number of British organisations, including Friends of Al-Aqsa, the Muslim Association of Britain, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Palestinian Forum in Britain, Stop the War Coalition and War on Want. According to Dr Hafez Al-Karmi, the Chairman of the Palestinian Forum of Britain, the British government should not welcome a war criminal like Netanyahu, it should arrest him. "The visit flew in the face of public opinion. More than 100,000 British citizens signed a petition urging the government to hold him to account for his crimes." By welcoming the Israeli prime minister, Al-Karmi argued, Theresa May's government implies that it approves of its criminal policies against the Palestinians. "This encourages him in his continued expansion of settlements; the Judaisation of Jerusalem; the displacement of Palestinians; and the siege on Gaza."

Netanyahu's visit to Britain sent a disturbing message to the Palestinian community in Britain, added the forum's chair, as well as British Arabs and Muslims who see their government taking a clearly biased position in favour of the state responsible for a brutal military occupation. On a domestic level, the meeting between May and Netanyahu went ahead despite the recent scandal involving an Israeli diplomat who was caught on camera suggesting that he "take down" Foreign Office Minister Sir Alan Duncan MP. The expose by *Al-Jazeera's* series "The Lobby" looked at how Israeli embassy officials and the pro-Israel lobby in Britain has been undermining and influencing British democracy and working to drum up support for the occupying power.

"Theresa May should not be meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu until he acts upon his responsibilities in accordance with human rights and international law," said Zaher Birawi, the Chair of EuroPal Forum. "It is shameful that the British government's policy towards the Palestinian issue is influenced by the wishes of the pro-Israel lobby. History will judge this as a blemish on Britain's record; one of the oldest democracies in the world should not be protecting war criminals by amending laws to make sure that they are not brought to justice." Israel has been occupying Palestine for almost 70 years, driving Palestinians from their homes in what has been called an ongoing act of ethnic cleansing. Millions of Palestinians live in refugee camps around the Middle East and the wider diaspora as Israel expands through annexation and settlement building.

The Zionist state has imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip since 2006, controlling the flow of goods and people and essentially keeping Palestinians in an open prison. Israel stands accused of numerous war crimes and crimes against humanity in its serial military offensives against civilians in Gaza. Thousands of Palestinian men, women and children have been killed, wounded and rendered homeless by the Israeli army and air force, while its navy attacks defenceless fishermen as it imposes an illegal and impractical limit on where they can cast their nets. The infrastructure and economy of the enclave have been shattered during the siege. One campaigner for Palestinian rights insisted that Britain is siding with the oppressor and aligning itself with Israel's human rights violations by inviting Benjamin Netanyahu. "Britain should not pander to the pro-Israel lobby," said Shabbir Lakha at Monday's protest in London. "Instead, it should do everything in its power to pressure Israel into acting in accordance with international law so that the rights of the Palestinian people are met."

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Lakha was just one of many people who demonstrated their opposition to Britain's unequivocal support for Israel's rogue regime and demanded meaningful action to hold it accountable for its violations of international laws and conventions. In welcoming the Israeli prime minister to Downing Street, Theresa May has shown us clearly that she holds such laws in contempt.

Source: MEMO/EuroPal Forum, 07.02.2017

4. British panel asks Europe to deal with Hamas as political party

The British organization Forward Thinking affirmed on Friday that putting the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, on the European list of terrorist organizations constitutes an impediment to development, relief, reconstruction in Gaza, and reconciliation among the Palestinian factions.

This came during a symposium in the British Parliament which discussed the report prepared by the organization. The report is the outcome of a workshop held in Paris in 2016 about the humanitarian needs in Palestine, especially in Gaza, and how to help meet them as well as the role of western politicians in ending the Palestinians' suffering which is partially caused by the internal division.

The report stressed that the European governments must accept Hamas's existence in the Palestinian political system because this "will achieve favourable conditions to solve the existing problems." It added that Europe should push the PA president, Mahmoud Abbas, toward reconciliation by removing Hamas from the list of terrorism and supporting the Palestinian elections regardless of their results.

The symposium was attended by a group of British parliamentarians and politicians and a group of large charities that have relief and development projects in Palestine in general and Gaza in particular as well as representatives of the embassies of Jordan and Tunisia, activists and other interested parties.

It also witnessed the participation of Palestinian figures of various Palestinian factions, official representatives of a number of European countries and their consulates in Jerusalem, and the French official in charge of the French government's initiative which led to convening the Paris conference in 2016.

Source: Palestine Information Centre/EuroPal Forum, 03.02.2017

5. As Netanyahu and May Chat, a Large Nest of Israeli Spies in London Exposed

[As Netanyahu and May Chat, a Large Nest of Israeli Spies in London Exposed - Craig Murray](#)

6. Lyn Brown MP's contribution to Debate on Illegal Settlements

A relatively brief, but hard-hitting intervention today:

'...I now call the hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), who is not required to stand. I know that she was interested in speaking from a sedentary position.

2.48 pm

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab)

I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker, but I will stand.

According to the United Nations, a quarter of households in the occupied territories have insecure access to food, and an estimated 1 million are in need of health and nutrition assistance. The UN estimates that, overall, 2 million people in the occupied territories will need some form of humanitarian help in 2017. It summarises the situation as

“a systematic denial of Palestinian rights”,

and

“a man-made humanitarian crisis that has gone on for far too long”.

The Government have confirmed that in the past year, 1,010 Palestinian homes and other buildings have been destroyed, dismantled or confiscated in area C and east Jerusalem—the highest figure in east Jerusalem since 2000—leaving 1,476 people, including 696 children, displaced and vulnerable. I am sure we all agree that those figures are very disturbing, and speak to the pain and trauma of many families. As well as dismantling Palestinian homes, the Israeli authorities demolished 274 “humanitarian structures”: tents, shelters, and buildings housing the homeless. The UN said that that situation was unprecedented; it is unprecedented, but it is also intolerable and inhumane.

This disregard for human rights does not just apply in Gaza and the west bank. Recently, I asked a series of parliamentary questions about the Bedouin communities in Israel, and in particular the village of Umm al-Hiran near Hura. It appears that a forced demolition is taking place at this village—something condemned as

“a blatant and ugly episode of discrimination mirroring Israel's unlawful settlements.”

As we have heard, the Israeli Parliament passed a law that legalised 4,000 Israeli settlement buildings, in direct contravention both of international law and previous decisions of the Israeli courts. The Minister knows that the new US President has expressed strong support for Israel, even going so far as to suggest that UN resolution 2334—a clear and straightforward reaffirmation of international principles—would not have been passed if it had been put forward after his inauguration.

Does the Minister think that Israel's recent acceleration of its illegal settlement policies is in any way linked to the change of US President? Is there now geopolitical cover for settlement expansion, provided by the US? If so, what can the Minister do about it?

To date, the Government's response has been to express concern. They have “expressed concern” for a long time about the continuing settlement policy. In answer to my questions about the forced demolition of Bedouin homes, they were

“concerned by recent reports of violence”,

and just this week they expressed their official “concern” about the land regularisation Bill that passed through the Israeli Parliament.'

From Europe/America

1. Moscow offers stage for Palestinian talks

Moscow recently hosted its second intra-Palestinian meeting, where high-ranking members of numerous Palestinian political organizations, including Fatah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, directly engaged in conversation. In contrast to the first negotiations of the kind, which were held six years ago, the dialogue has become more inclusive, involving a dozen groups. Although the Jan. 15-16 talks brought together Russian Foreign Ministry officials and enabled the parties to meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, Russia emphasized the unofficial and purely [intra-Palestinian status](#) of the meeting, noting Russia was only involved as the host.

The event was organized by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Foundation for the Support of Islamic Culture, Science and Education. The venue and date for the talks raised some questions. Foreign observers wondered why Palestinians would hold talks among their own factions in Moscow, especially when [another meeting](#) had just been [held in Paris](#) a few days before. Other factors in this process include the Beirut intra-Palestinian meeting that also took place a few days before the Moscow event; UN Security Council [Resolution 2334](#), which addresses the illegality of Israeli settlements; and, naturally, US President Donald Trump's statements about moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Obviously, Trump's rise to presidency and the subsequent changes expected in US Middle East policy acted as catalysts for this diplomatic flurry, which will have little true influence on the peace settlement. Trump's Islamophobia and his seemingly pro-Israeli stance do not augur well for Palestine, but then, they're not a safe bet for the Jews, either. Palestinians feel the need to

demonstrate their ability to constructively interact with the international community and their genuine desire to resume negotiations. At the same time, they appear to be seeking more active support from other powerful extra-regional players — above all, Moscow, which has been playing a greater role in the region. Moreover, Russia has close ties with various factions within the Palestinian leadership.

Moscow, in turn, seeks to extend its role as a mediator in the Middle East beyond the Syrian agenda. Testifying to this were the first intra-Palestinian meeting, the 2015 intra-Syrian consultations and Syria-related cooperation with [Turkey and Iran](#). Thus, the Kremlin's courtesy is developing into a clear alternative to America's straightforward approach, which is typified by irksome lecturing. The Moscow talks produced a Jan. 17 joint statement that Palestine should soon see the formation of a national unity government. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' consultations with the parties' officials would determine the particular structure of this government. Russia's leading Orientalist, Vitaly Naumkin, who moderated the meeting, believes that under a positive scenario the government could be established by this summer, followed by elections for the Palestinian National Council. Palestinian diasporas worldwide, as well as residents of the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem, would be able to cast their ballots.

The participants think these steps could help overcome disunity among Palestine's political establishment and society. The moves could also help resolve the conflict, because the Israelis would be deprived of their argument concerning the absence of a Palestinian representative to talk with, which they perennially use to justify their reluctance to conduct bilateral talks. Hamas' inclusion in a new government is a very sensitive issue, an Achilles' heel of the plan. Paradoxically, many countries still regard Hamas, **the party that won the democratic elections held at the West's insistence**, as a terrorist group. The political process is very likely to reach a deadlock if, as projected, Tel Aviv and several members of the world political community insist on politically isolating a government that includes Hamas members, even though Hamas has significantly softened its stance over the past decade. The ball, however, is now in Israel's court. Admittedly, the Palestinians may be counting on the mediation of Moscow, given its [growing influence](#) in the region. The Palestinians are counting on Moscow's assistance in several other matters as well. One issue is Israel's continued settlement building and the "Judaization" of East Jerusalem. Second, Palestinians are concerned with Trump's inflammatory promise to [move the US Embassy](#) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Both Russian and Palestinian experts see that proposal as inflicting catastrophic damage to the entire peace process.

Finally, the talks also focused on the [Middle East Quartet](#), which the Palestinian attendees unanimously considered discredited. The issues discussed, as well as the assessments made, were predictable. As for the final communique, Moscow regarded it as "the best possible." Such moderation makes one think again about the best strategy for the Palestinians in the current international situation, on the one hand, and about how to modify the international community's approach to a settlement, on the other. Today, the Quartet's inefficiency, as well as the gradually declining interest of the world community in the endless and hopeless Israeli-Palestinian conflict, are apparent. Some actors will probably keep paying tribute to the Quartet's symbolic role in the region from time to time and will be full of good intentions. But now, the more marked right-wing bias in the West presupposes the diminishing involvement of Europe and the United States in the Middle East. In the medium and short term, Israel will benefit from and be fully content with the current situation. Nevertheless, Russian experts say that in general this approach is disastrous for Israel as it will end up in a stalemate.

Until now, nothing has prevented Tel Aviv from relishing the situation. The growing role of regional powers, whose attitude toward the seemingly unchangeable conflict has become ever-more ambivalent, does not seem to affect the Israeli stance, either. Though support for the Palestinians remains sine qua non for any Arab politician at the emotional level, many of them are faced with much more acute issues at the pragmatic level. Moreover, Arab and Israeli leaders share some similar concerns, such as security issues and religious radicalization. In this case, it is vital to back up the Palestinians. To address the matter, Palestinian political elites should restore public trust, which they lost after their failed attempts in the past to reconcile with each other. The unity government will be the first step to reach this objective. If Israel impedes its progress, it will be necessary to start all over again.

If global and regional political actors — even if some opt out — manage to sacrifice short-term self-interest for the sake of enhancing a strategy that will allow for a new regional balance of power, it will be possible to come to grips with the problem. However, the developments in the Middle East over recent years demonstrate that, increasingly, tactics beat strategy.

Source: [Vasily Kuznetsov, Al Monitor, 31.01.2017](#)

2. Over 250 European organisations issued a statement marking 100 years of continued injustice towards the Palestinian people

Over 250 European organisations, faith groups, political parties and trade unions [issued a statement](#) demanding justice and accountability from the EU and European states, as 2017 marks:

- 100 years since the Balfour Declaration, in which the British government unilaterally promised the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine
- 70 years since the 1947 UN Partition Plan, in which Jewish settlers were granted 55% of Palestine while owning a mere 6% of the land, in breach of the Palestinian right to self-determination, triggering in the 1947-9 Nakba – the expulsion of over 750,000 indigenous Palestinian into a forced precarious and dangerous exile
- 50 years since the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the Syrian Golan, and the subsequent construction of Jewish-only settlements – considered illegal under international law and a war crime under the Geneva Conventions by all nations with the sole exception of Israel

The aforementioned anniversaries remind us of the responsibility of the colonial powers in creating the disastrous situation which continues until today, in violation of the rights of the Palestinian people, international law and UN resolutions.

100 years since the Balfour declaration, Israel continues to expand its colonial project in the Palestinian homeland. As a consequence, over seven million Palestinians remain in exile and are denied their legally sanctioned right of return, while others continue to be uprooted on a daily basis. Britain and other European states not only continue to evade their fundamental responsibility for the colonisation of Palestine, but remain actively complicit in Israel's ongoing violations of international law and its human rights abuses.

Justice cannot be achieved without recognition of the historical facts! The signatories to the statement called upon the EU and its member states to *cease all complicity with Israel's continued settlement activity* and demanded an *immediate end to the*

blockade of the Gaza Strip, freedom of movement for Palestinians, equality for all citizens of Israel, respect for the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, and to take binding measures vis-à-vis the State of Israel, including the suspension of the EU Association Agreement with Israel, as long as it continues to violate international and human rights law.

In addition, the more than 250 signatories pledged to intensify their actions in order to pressure the EU and European states to end their complicity with Israeli violations of Palestinian rights. Read the full statement [here](#)
Source: ECC Palestine /EuroPal Forum, 07.02.2017

3. European officials accuse Israel of systematic killings in Gaza

The European-Palestinian relations council welcomed a resolution made by a The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly accusing Israel of engaging in systematic unlawful killings of Palestinian civilians in Gaza Strip over the past several years, and of exacerbating a humanitarian crisis in the blockaded Palestinian enclave.

The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, also known as PACE, voted on Tuesday in favour of a resolution, based on a report on the humanitarian situation in the besieged enclave, which charges Israel with excessive and intentional force without justification against Palestinian civilians in Gaza. The report states that "Cases of the deliberate fatal shooting of individuals who posed no imminent danger to life amounts to an appalling pattern of apparently systematic unlawful killings". It was presented on January 4 to the assembly and made up of 324 parliamentarians from 47 countries.

The council said that the report called on European Union countries to exert efforts for opening an official investigation at the International Criminal Court in case of the existence of reasonable evidence. The council asked the international community and states of the European Union to embark on hard work to hold war criminals accountable as well as ending the Israeli siege on Gaza.

Source: Palestine Information Centre/ EuroPal Forum, 27.01.2017

4. Two-state solution is dying,' say Euro MPs

Members of the European Parliament said on Wednesday that the situation in the Middle East is "disappointing" and the two-state solution is "dying" due to ongoing Israeli settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territories, Anadolu has reported. Elmar Brok MEP, of the European People's Party Group, visited the Palestinian territories last month. "Hopes for the two-state solution in the Middle East have started to diminish," he said. He made his comments during a meeting of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs held in Brussels to discuss the results of the visit made by a number of MEPs to occupied Palestine. Brok warned of "new apartheid" in the Middle East in the light of the growing Palestinian population.

"The Palestinian Authority does not have real control of the Gaza Strip," he explained. "Nor is it able to impose its sovereignty over the others parts of its land." The German MEP noted that the PA has already started to lose hope of having an independent state based on the two-state solution. According to Gilles Pargneaux MEP, who also took part in the visit to the Palestinian territories, "The two-state solution is gradually dying and fading due to Israel's continuous settlement policy."

Nevertheless, he stressed, the two-state solution remains the only solution that the EU has adopted as a means to reach a sustainable peace in the Middle East.

Source: MEMO/EuroPal Forum, 03.02.2017

5. EU Petition

[Federica Mogherini: EU should suspend economic relations until Israel respects international law](#)

6. Netanyahu arrives to Trump White House in turmoil

WASHINGTON — Israeli Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), who has long hoped to work with a Republican US president, finds himself arriving to a Trump White House in open crisis, with the resignation of Trump's national security adviser, [Michael Flynn](#), the night of Feb. 13. Netanyahu's acting national security adviser, Yaakov Nagel, had met with Flynn earlier that day to prepare the agenda for the [Feb. 15 meeting](#) between Trump and Netanyahu, Israeli Channel 2's Udi Segal told Al-Monitor. After they wrapped up their talks, they hugged and said they would see each other the next day. Two hours later, Flynn was out, Segal said. The Israeli delegation was stunned.

The White House, for its part, said Iran would be a key part of the conversation on Feb. 15, and reiterated that Trump wanted to advance Middle East peace, but would not seek to dictate the terms. "We're looking at the two sides to come together to make peace together and we'll be there to help them," a senior administration official, speaking not for attribution, told the White House press pool Feb. 13. "A two-state solution that doesn't bring peace is not a goal that anybody wants to achieve," the official said. "Peace is the goal, whether it comes in the form of a two-state solution if that's what the parties want or something else, if that's what the parties want, we're going to help them." "We're not going to dictate what the terms of peace will be," the official continued, "President Trump has very much indicated that he wants to achieve peace."

Netanyahu is arriving at a White House "in utter turmoil," former US Ambassador to Israel Daniel Shapiro wrote in a series of tweets Feb. 14. "Flynn gone. Vicious staff infighting. More heads likely to roll." "Precious planning hours spent with Flynn [are] now out the window," Shapiro wrote. There are "major unanswered questions on Russia ... and still important business to be done on Iran, [the] Palestinians, Syria and security coop[eration]. But who in the [White House] can focus on it with the fires burning?" Despite the turmoil in the West Wing, Netanyahu sees clear advantages in getting to influence the Trump administration early and before it has formulated several of its policies, said David Makovsky, a former State Department Middle East peace adviser now with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "For Netanyahu it is important that he is coming early, before policies are kind of set in concrete," Makovsky said on a call with journalists organized by the Washington Institute on Feb. 14. "Things are very much in flux here in Washington."

For Netanyahu, "This will be a chance to influence thinking here before there are policy reviews, so it's the best time for him," Makovsky said. "It's also a time when media expectations are bound to be low, because no one is expecting them to come out with any announcement at this early phase of this administration. So you have the advantages from Netanyahu's perspective on trying to influence thinking in Washington, and no pressure on the Washington side for any deliverables. So it's kind of a sweet spot." In terms of what thinking Netanyahu will try to influence, at the top of the list will be Iran, said Makovsky. But rather than urging that the Iran nuclear deal be scrapped outright, "It's clear the US is in the enforcement school," Makovsky said. "Israeli national security officials ... are also much more focused on enforcement." "For Netanyahu ... 80 to 90% of their concerns about the nuclear deal are more about what comes after the sunset provisions fade out" after 10 to 15 years, Makovsky said. Netanyahu is likely to press Trump on how the United States and Israel can prepare to work together on these things.

The second cluster of issues Netanyahu will want to discuss with Trump concerns Russia "and how do you drive a wedge between Russia and Iran in Syria," Makovsky said. "Israel has internalized this idea that Trump is a dealmaker and wants to do a deal with Russia ... to fight [the Islamic State]. ... Israel wants to know what that deal is and how it affects them." "Clearly, from [the Israeli] point of view, what they want out of a [US-Russian] deal is to drive a wedge between Moscow and Tehran," Makovsky said. "Is there a way to keep Iran and Hezbollah away" from [Syria's border with Israel](#), he added. "So this is something [where] Israel is trying to put its points across early. ... They want to know what the deal is and how it affects Israel." Netanyahu may also raise the "strategic convergence" between Israel and the more pragmatic Sunni states, driven by a shared sense of threats such as IS and Iran, Makovsky said. "How do you somehow use this under-the-table convergence to have some more overt, over-the-table cooperation. I think that is going to be a key question," he said. "And Netanyahu will try to link this very much to the Palestinian issue ... and say, well, maybe if we do what he calls the outside-in, versus the inside-out approach, of getting regional players to be supportive, this would give Palestinians political cover to make concessions that they could not make in a bilateral context."

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, at a meeting with an American [Middle East](#) Institute delegation this month, had very warm words for Israel, said Gerald Feierstein, the former principal deputy assistant secretary of state for Near East Affairs. "One of the things that was very much present in the meeting with Sisi — he had very warm words about Israel and about the Israeli policy and [said] the Israelis are the only ones that understood us," Feierstein told Al-Monitor.

Source: [Laura Rozen, Al Monitor, 14.02.2017](#)

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/netanyahu-visit-trump-white-house-turmoil-flynn.html#ixzz4YySRSM9I>

7. Trump has not killed the two-state solution; it died long ago

The new US administration led by Donald Trump announced on Wednesday that ending the Israel-Palestine conflict through a two-state solution is no longer a strategic choice. One of Trump's aides [told reporters](#), "A two-state solution that doesn't bring peace is not a goal that anybody wants to achieve." The White House official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "If I ask five people what a two-state solution is I get eight different answers... Peace is the goal, whether it comes in the form of a two-state solution, if that's what the parties [Israel and the Palestinians] want, or something else." According to the [Jerusalem Post](#), ahead of Wednesday's meeting between Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said that the US president is to reinforce his desire to reach a "comprehensive agreement that would end the Israeli- Palestinian conflict," without any indication that the two-state proposal is, indeed, the solution.

This shows US disinterest in such a solution, which the Palestinians are hoping for, in order to establish an independent state on the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel in 1967 with East Jerusalem as its capital. This is what most of the international community also wants, or so we have been led to believe. Trump has made a dramatic shift from a position held by the US for decades. His immediate predecessor, President Barack Obama, saw two states as the only way out for the conflict. For the Israelis, though, pushing this solution to one side has been deep-rooted in their psyche since Israel was created in historic Palestine in 1948. Its abandonment was trailed openly by Israeli officials in the run up to Netanyahu's visit to the US this week.

Read: [Trump drops 'two-state' commitment](#)

Both Netanyahu and his Public Security Minister [Gilad Erdan](#) have now claimed that "settlements are not an obstacle to peace"; the prime minister's comment came in response to Trump asking him to "pull back on settlements for a little bit." The US president knows as well as anyone else that settlements are the main issue, because they take ever more of the land earmarked for the State of Palestine; in fact, they are integral to Israel's colonisation of Palestine. Hence, they undermine the two-state solution, which is what they are intended to do. The evidence that the "two-state solution" has been an elaborate charade to buy time for Israel to steal more Palestinian land has been obvious for years; many Israeli politicians have made it clear that it is not on their agenda at all. Erdan, for example, was merely echoing his previous remarks about the two-state solution. At an [International Institute for Counter-Terrorism conference](#) in 2014 he suggested that, "To continue talking about Palestinian statehood with the same determination and the same confidence as 15, 20 years ago is irresponsible."

His cabinet colleague, Culture Minister Miri Regev, insisted that there is a chance for only one state between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan, calling for Israel to weigh its options regarding the Palestinians, from "citizenship to autonomy," the [Times of Israel](#) reported. The newspaper also pointed out that Equality Minister Gila Gamliel called on the Israeli government to adopt a 2012 report that recommended legalising illegal (even under Israeli law) West Bank settlement outposts. So did Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, who also called on Netanyahu to tell Trump "no" to a Palestinian state. The "legalisation" bill passed through the Knesset last week. Netanyahu actually pledged not to establish a Palestinian state on his watch during the 2015 election campaign. He told voters that if they re-elected him as prime minister, a Palestinian state would not be created, reported [Haaretz](#) at the time. "I think that anyone who moves to establish a Palestinian state and evacuate territory gives territory away to radical Islamist attacks against Israel," he claimed.

[Haaretz](#) also noted that when Netanyahu formed his current government, he chose an official who is against the establishment of a Palestinian state to be in charge of talks with the Palestinian Authority. "We are all against a Palestinian state, there is no question about it," the official in question told a Likud meeting in 2012. For the main coalition ally in Netanyahu's government, Jewish Home's Naftali Bennett, it would be a "disaster for the next 200 years" if a Palestinian state was established. "There is not going to be a Palestinian state within the tiny land of Israel," he told [The Guardian](#) four years ago. "It is just not going to happen." In 2013, Israel's Transportation Minister Israel Katz was reported by [JPost](#) as saying: "I am opposed to a Palestinian state... It is unacceptable, mainly because of our rights to this land... In my eyes, the right diplomatic solution is an autonomous Palestinian entity, but with Jordanian civilian and political affiliation."

Read: [Netanyahu asks Trump to recognize Israeli sovereignty over Golan Heights](#)

The top Israeli diplomat at the UN, Danny Danon, has told [Israeli National Radio](#) that he does not believe in the two-state solution at all. "Enough with the two-state-solution. Land-for-peace is over. We do not want a Palestinian State. We need to apply Israeli sovereignty over all Jewish communities in the West Bank." Despite all of this evidence, [Barack Obama said](#) in May 2015: "I continue to believe that a two-state solution is absolutely vital for not only peace between Israelis and Palestinians, but for the long-term security of Israel as a democratic and Jewish state." However, even he acknowledged that Israel's government "contains some folks who don't necessarily believe in that premise."

Why do Palestinian Authority officials continue to believe in the two-state solution? For a start, it has been drummed into them for decades that they have to accept whatever solution is imposed on them by the international community. In their hearts, though, surely even they must know that it is becoming increasingly unlikely that a state will be established that they can call their own. They have, after all, seen US presidents, European prime ministers and UN secretaries-general come and go, and not one of them has been able – or willing – to fulfil their promises to the Palestinians. We shouldn't be surprised, therefore, at what Donald Trump said in his press conference with Netanyahu. The US president hasn't killed the two-state solution; it died long ago, if, indeed, it was ever a real possibility at all.

Source: MEMO, 16.02.2017

From Palestine/Israel

1. Could former PM's tweets bring down Netanyahu?

Billboards started popping up across [metropolitan Tel Aviv](#) last September, calling on former Prime Minister Ehud Barak to "run [for office]" because "Netanyahu is destroying our country." This raised the inevitable question: Was this the opening salvo of Barak's [big comeback](#)? The answer became clearer over the weeks to follow, when the former prime minister emerged as the sharpest, most pointed critic of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, both publicly and in the media, but especially on Twitter. And he did it as if it was the most natural thing in the world for him.

In 2012, while serving as defence minister in Netanyahu's government, Barak announced that he was [retiring from political life](#). But since then, every so often he would test the waters to see if the time was ripe for his return. He did this by sending out trial balloons, mostly in the form of in-depth interviews in which he attacked Netanyahu's passivity. He also held periodic meetings with Labour Party activists, as a means to examine the atmosphere within the party. Yet all of these efforts were met with public apathy at best. Barak's home was the Labour Party until he abandoned it in January 2011. As long as the party was able to prove that it could get along just fine without him, the door through which he might return was sealed to him hermetically. "Abandonment" was code word used for one of the most traumatic events in the history of the Labour Party. Barak split the ranks by seceding and creating his own Atzmaut faction. At the time, this move allowed him to continue to serve as defence minister in Netanyahu's government, even though a large group of Labour Party members demanded that the party quit the government over the diplomatic stalemate. Barak's cynical move left the Labour Party with just eight seats, while Barak and four other Labor Party defectors remained in Netanyahu's coalition, where they served as ministers and received other honours.

But the Labour Party has been [crashing in the polls](#) over the last few months, and Barak correctly identified the overwhelming sense of despondency and helplessness. This opened the crack he was looking for, through which he is now trying to re-enter. In addition, all the [criminal investigations](#) surrounding Netanyahu are now shaking his seat. The way Barak sees it, all those elements combined offer him, at the age of 75, a public and political chance to make a breakthrough and return to centre stage. Barak is also relying on the public's short memory. Using now every available platform to assert that Netanyahu is a "walking disaster," he is hoping that the public won't remember that he was the one who kept Netanyahu politically alive by remaining in his Cabinet for four years. That the public won't remember that thanks to him, Netanyahu was able to dissolve the diplomatic process. It was he who served Netanyahu as an intimate partner instead of fulfilling the will of the voter after 2009 by serving the people from the opposition, as Barak initially promised he would do.

[Barak's participation](#) on Jan. 29 at a conference of Labor Party activists from the "party's centre" was the first time he showed up at any Labour forum ever since he abandoned the party. The participants were a group of veteran activists who represent the more hawkish views of the centre-left. They have little real influence on the party as a whole. Nevertheless, it seems that Barak has no plans to stop with them. It would be safe to assume that we will soon be hearing about other party events in which he plans to participate.

The aggressive but detailed [speech Barak delivered against Netanyahu](#) and the right-wing camp indeed created headlines. At the same time, it demonstrated that he is still the best when it comes to presenting the centre-left's political agenda. "Living among each other [Jews and Palestinians] is a certain recipe for generations of bloodshed. Look at Belfast, Bosnia and Johannesburg," he said, explaining the risks inherent in the right's plans for creeping annexation. Labour Party Chairman [Isaac Herzog](#) was correct, as far as he is concerned, in refusing to leave the stage to Barak. He called on Barak to rejoin the party instead of just tweeting about it, and he even brought up the "abandonment," saying, "The party's DNA hasn't really changed since the day you abandoned us, leaving us with just eight seats, but today we are a big party, with 24 representatives sitting in the Israeli Knesset."

The message was clear. Barak is making a big mistake if he expects the party to embrace him with open arms like it did in 2007, when he returned after a lengthy retirement following his election defeat in 2001. What Herzog's speech reflected was the huge gap between a certain willingness (mainly among parts of the media) to give Barak a stage and the fact that the public doesn't miss Barak. More so, his possible return to politics as a candidate for the premier's seat just isn't feasible. True, there is a lot of appeal and force in [Barak's tweets](#). They strike right at Netanyahu's soft underbelly. No one in the current political arena is as intimately familiar with all of Netanyahu's flaws and weaknesses as Barak is. "The charm is worn out. Suspicions against [Netanyahu] are disconcerting. The 'whiner from Balfour Street [the prime minister's residence]' is pounding away with his pleas for attention. The Regularization Law [legalizing illegal settlements] will lead us to The Hague [International Criminal Court]. The [Mexico comment](#) is befitting the wise men of Chelm. It has nothing to do with Bolsheviks and fake news. It is all smoke and mirrors, and the mirrors are reflecting your image," he tweeted on Jan. 30. And so, Barak sounds like someone intimately familiar with Netanyahu. He knows that his tweets undermine Netanyahu, so he makes sure to keep tweeting on an almost daily basis. And everything he tweets wins the attention of the mainstream media.

Still, despite the media hubbub that Barak has managed to create over the past few months, he still faces a political and public dead end. His Atzmaut Party didn't run in 2013, after the polls all showed that it would not pass the electoral threshold, and politics in 2017 is very different from anything that he might know. Powerful new players in his own camp have since entered the ring, led by Yesh Atid Chair [Yair Lapid](#). Lapid is also running for prime minister and will not concede that slot to anyone. But even before Barak starts fighting with Lapid over the vote in his own camp, he will need a party platform. That is why he is trying once again to take over a party that he abandoned and left bleeding. Even assuming that he rejoins Labour and that there is someone to propose his candidacy, Barak will find that the party's entire inner structure has changed. Shelly Yachimovich, [Amir Peretz](#) and Isaac Herzog have their own independent power bases in its institutions, while another potential candidate, former Minister [Avi Gabai](#), is hard at work building up the infrastructure he will need to compete to be the party's next leader.

Primaries in the Labour Party will be held this July. The chances that Barak will be there among the candidates are slim at best. What is true, however, is that Barak is helping to stir up the public in a campaign to bring down the Netanyahu government.

Source: [Mazal Mualem, Al Monitor, 31.01.2017](#)

Mazal Mualem is a columnist for Al-Monitor's Israel Pulse and formerly the senior political correspondent for Maariv and Haaretz. She also presents a weekly TV show covering social issues on the Knesset channel. On Twitter: [@mazalm3](#)

2. Netanyahu, master of 'alternative facts'

The brilliant newspeak term "alternative facts" that [Kellyanne Conway](#) coined in a Jan. 22 interview on NBC's "Meet the Press" rocketed George Orwell's classic dystopian novel "1984" to the top of Amazon's [best-seller list](#). What, after all, did US President Donald Trump's counselor say? She found her own way, albeit strangely, to explain the gap between what White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said regarding the number of people who attended her boss' inauguration and the facts and photos of the event reported by the media.

In Israel, contradictions between media reports and versions of events told by those in power are routine stories: The same person says one thing and within a second says the exact opposite. That person is none other than the honourable Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — the premier himself, not a spokesman or an adviser. Netanyahu not only lets loose alternative facts using mere words, he creates them even before the ink has dried on press releases issued by his office. Take, for example, his emotional Dec. 16 appeal to the squatters of the illegal Amona outpost in the West Bank.

"My heart is with you. We are living in a difficult time, for you, your families and the entire people of Israel," the prime minister said, trying to [ingratiate himself](#) with the group of land thieves who constructed their outpost on private Palestinian land. To compensate the Jewish lords of the land for their distress, the prime minister promised them a handsome bonus, telling them that he had instructed that the [demolition of all illegal housing](#) be expedited in all parts of Israel.

"I am not willing for there to be discrimination in the enforcement of building laws between Israeli citizens, between Jews and Arabs, one person and another," he said. "I will fight for there to be one law for all, and the same enforcement for all, something that has not been the case — until now — for decades." A declaration is one thing, and a deed is another. The alternative facts soon followed. Netanyahu proved determined to exchange his "one law for all" pledge with one law for Jews and another for Arabs.

After brief consideration, the prime minister decided to bring the so-called [Regularization law](#), legalizing unauthorized settlements, to the Knesset for final approval. That same law is designed to enable the expropriation of private Palestinian land and hand it over to Jews. The law paves the way for retroactively legalizing illegal construction of more than 2,000 housing units in Jewish settlements on Palestinian land in the part of the West Bank designated Area C, under full Israeli military and administrative control.

One law for all? Here is the alternative fact, or more simply — the truth — reported Dec. 27 by Haaretz: Based on data from the civil administration — the Israeli military unit charged with running civilian affairs in the occupied territories — only [53 of the 1,253 building permit requests](#) in Area C submitted by Palestinians over the past three years were approved by Israel. These are not requests to build on private, stolen lands, but on "state lands." Another fact: The number of Palestinian structures razed by Israel over that same period in Area C is 18 times greater than the number it granted permission to build. What about the "same enforcement for all"? Here as well, the alternative fact was quick to follow: On Jan. 10, Israel [demolished 11 illegally built homes](#) in the Israeli Arab town of Qalansuwa. "I am not deterred by the criticism, and as I instructed, we are continuing to implement equal enforcement in Israel," the prime minister boasted on his [Facebook page](#). On Jan. 18, bulldozers were sent to destroy the homes of Bedouins in the Negev Desert village of Umm al-Hiran in southern Israel to make way for a Jewish neighbourhood. During the operation, a local resident, Yakoub Moussa Abu al-Qian, drove his car into a group of police, killing one named Erez Levi. Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan was quick to announce the "fact" that Qian and his family were supporters of the [Islamic State's ideology](#).

How can one talk about one law for all when the state admits that the Amona settlers invaded other people's land, and remain there, whereas the residents of Qalansuwa built their homes on their own land, and the Bedouins settled on state lands decades ago? The same enforcement for all? In the case of Amona, lengthy negotiations were required to appease the squatters and to reach a compromise to their satisfaction. On the other hand, the Netanyahu government did not offer the Qalansuwa and Umm al-Hiran evacuees an iota of the compensation it offered the Jewish settlers. How about a bit of "my heart is with you" for the evacuees of Qalansuwa and Umm al-Hiran? According to the alternative facts espoused by Netanyahu and his friends on the racist right, at best, Arabs fuel violence; at worst, they fuel fires. To them, the wave of wildfires that swept through Israel in November was "[pyro-terrorism](#)."

How did Netanyahu explain that police found no evidence that the suspect arsonists had been motivated by nationalist sentiment? "The fact that you [can't prove it](#), doesn't mean that it wasn't so," the prime minister declared at a Knesset plenary. "It's still under investigation." So from now on, it can be said that a person is guilty until proven innocent. Netanyahu ignores that such verdicts can be applied to him as well. For instance, we could say that even if the police fail to prove that Netanyahu is guilty of criminal offenses, it does not mean he never committed such offenses. That is still [under investigation](#). Netanyahu does not spare the public his alternative facts even on issues related to the Holocaust. On Jan. 17, he wrote on his Facebook page that Polish President Andrzej Duda, who visited Israel in mid January, had laid a [stone from the Warsaw Ghetto](#) on the tombstone of his brother, Yoni Netanyahu, who was killed in the 1976 Israeli raid to free hostages from Palestinian hijackers in Entebbe, Uganda. Several days later, Haaretz columnist Michael Handelzalts revealed that there are [no stones available](#) from

the Warsaw Ghetto and that Duda had placed a stone from the Polish capital on the grave. As the late Ezer Weizman, Israel's seventh president, told me years ago when he left the Likud Party to join the Israeli peace camp, "Our problem is that we left the ghetto, but the ghetto hasn't left us."

Source: [Akiva Eldar, Al Monitor, 31.01.2017](#)

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/01/israel-benjamin-netanyahu-amona-settlement-bedouin-arabs.html#ixzz4YVI8BTIB>

3. Could submarine scandal blow up in Netanyahu's face?

The media may be focused on the pricey cigars and bottles of champagne that the Netanyahu family allegedly amassed from its benefactors over the years, but the police investigation into the submarine procurement scandal is gaining momentum. The scandal, which [Al-Monitor](#) reported on at the end of October, is about to become a huge international imbroglio.

Recently, Knesset member [Erel Margalit](#) also dived into this quagmire. As a contender for leader of the Labour Party, he hopes to take over from Benjamin Netanyahu one day and become Israel's next prime minister. Margalit is a multi-millionaire who made his money in the high-tech and cyber industry; his extensive contacts in that industry reach around the world. Several months ago, Margalit launched his own, private investigation into the submarine affair. For that, he traversed Europe, using his own sources. He returned home with a detailed report, which he submitted to Deputy Commissioner Roni Rittman, the commander of Lahav 433, the police unit tasked with investigating national crimes and corruption. "I took advantage of my contacts, I set my sources into action and I met with many people across Europe," Margalit told Al-Monitor. "I believe that this is the biggest corruption scandal in all of Israel's history."

What set this scandal into motion is an agreement that Israel signed with the German ThyssenKrupp corporation to procure three additional submarines for its fleet, even though the Israeli navy has no need for any more submarines. It was later found that Israel also ordered four heavy corvette-class warships to protect its natural gas platforms in the Mediterranean, without issuing an international tender beforehand. The climax came when it became clear that the attorney for these deals was [David Shimron](#), a relative and close confidant of Netanyahu. Unnamed players caused the removal of the original middleman in these dealings (Shaika Barkat) with the German shipbuilder, and brought in a shady new middleman from the outside. This led to a new splurge of procurements and other business dealings with the German shipbuilder, with Netanyahu's personal attorney reaping a profit and benefiting from all of them. The big question is whether Netanyahu was in any way involved. Did he know about his personal attorney's role, and/or did he help him rescind the original tender? Now that Margalit has submitted his own report, the investigation is shifting to a whole new phase. "At some point," Margalit told Al-Monitor, "these business dealings stopped being the normal kind of interactions between one government and another, as they should have been, and became a corrupt series of exchanges."

Margalit claims that a subsidiary of the German corporation paid off senior Israeli naval officers for years. This remarkable information was revealed in internal examinations conducted by the corporation itself. The payments appeared as "[useful expenses](#)," which Margalit says is a code word for "bribes." According to Margalit, the information first appeared in an audit report by a major accounting firm, but the report was shelved and never released. He claims that the findings cover just the tip of an enormous iceberg of corruption, which is only now being revealed. The question is whether just a few retired Israeli officers should be concerned about its findings, or whether the corruption reaches to the highest echelons of power. Margalit has firm opinions about this, too.

"You can find the same pattern of behavior in the way that this corporation interacts with other countries," Margalit said. "They made special payments like this in their dealings with India and with South Africa, too, where the payments reached all the way to the [top of the pyramid](#), to President Jacob Zuma. If it reached the highest echelons of power there, I believe that it will reach the highest echelons in Israel as well." In Israel, the investigation has been handed over to the police's financial crimes investigation unit. Its investigators have been working around the clock, collecting testimonies from former Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon and the various directors general of the Defence Ministry during the relevant time frame. Senior naval officers have also been subpoenaed to submit their testimonies. According to several reports, Ya'alon testified that Netanyahu was entangled in this scandal, too. He told the police that Netanyahu played an active role in efforts to rescind the international tender to procure four heavy corvette-class warships to protect [Israel's natural gas platforms](#). The question is whether the investigators will be able to prove this allegation.

Over the course of the probe, a series of ancillary scandals, no less intriguing and titillating than the original, keep popping up. So, for instance, Margalit's report provides new details about a [cyberbreach](#) that affected the German shipbuilder's computers two years ago. Margalit, who is considered one of the founding fathers of Israel's cyber and high-tech industries, now claims that "a country with high cyber capabilities was behind the hack. Enormous amounts of information was taken from the German corporation." He claims that the hackers intentionally inserted a computer worm into ThyssenKrupp's computers to obtain classified information. According to Margalit, it is very likely that the information stolen from the corporation includes secrets involving the submarines that Israel has ordered — submarines considered by Israel as its utmost strategic weapon.

Margalit also attempted to prove an "Iranian connection" to the German corporation. Data that he presented after his own investigation support the claim that the Iranians have their own interests in ThyssenKrupp, extending far beyond their [5% controlling interest](#) in the corporation. "This issue must be investigated fully," Margalit said. Although Netanyahu is not yet implicated directly in this scandal, legal sources have no doubt that the impact of the whole affair can be devastating. If a link to the prime minister is found, or if it is discovered that he knew about the activities of his personal attorney and family member Shimron, Netanyahu's political career would come to an abrupt end. While we are not quite there yet, it cannot be discounted that this is the direction that the investigation is heading.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit is expected to announce that the current probe of the submarine procurement scandal will soon receive an official upgrade to full-fledged "investigation." It is no longer possible to ignore the fact that Mickey Ganor, the intermediary "dropped" into these questionable dealings by unnamed factors; Brig. Gen. Avriel Bar-Yosef, a senior Israeli naval officer and the deputy head of the National Security Council, who brought Ganor in and is considered the "brains" behind the whole affair; and Netanyahu himself all live in the same neighborhood in the town of Caesarea. Police investigators are now considering whether they should pay a visit there, too.

Source: [Ben Caspit, Al Monitor, 02.02.2017](#)

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/israel-germany-iran-benjamin-netanyahu-submarine-idf.html#ixzz4YVQMJHER>

4. PA warns of danger if Israel annexes West Bank settlement

RAMALLAH, West Bank — The Israeli government delayed voting on a bill to annex the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem, which was scheduled for Jan. 22. The government's decision comes after advisers of US President Donald Trump sent letters to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, asking him not to take any unilateral decisions before meeting with Trump, [Haaretz reported](#) Jan. 22. The two leaders are [scheduled to meet](#) Feb. 15.

[Ma'ale Adumim](#), one of the largest settlements in the West Bank, was erected in 1979 on a total area of 48 acres of land in the towns of Bethany and Abu Dis, east of Jerusalem. It is separated from the city of Jerusalem by 12 square kilometers (about 4.5 square miles) of land, known as the [E1 zone](#) and classified by Israel as state land that is part of Area C under the administrative control of Israel. In 2005, Israel had halted construction in the [E1 zone](#) because of [international criticism](#), but it still plans to [build neighborhoods](#) for settlers in this area in the future and annex it to Jerusalem.

If Israel were to annex [Ma'ale Adumim](#), it would put a bullet in the establishment of the State of Palestine. According to Khalil Tafakji, the director of the maps and survey department at the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem, the annexation would achieve strategic goals for Israel and prevent the establishment of the Palestinian state. Tafakji told Al-Monitor, "Annexing Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem means the northern West Bank would be completely separated from the south, as the area [Ma'ale Adumim] stretches from the east of the city of Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley at a depth of 35 kilometers [22 miles] and a width of 20 kilometers [12.5 miles]. This would also prevent East Jerusalem from becoming the capital of the Palestinian state, which would disrupt the demographic balance in Jerusalem in Israel's favour." The Israeli government had scheduled a session to vote on the [bill to annex Ma'ale Adumim](#) to Jerusalem around the same time news emerged about the possibility of [moving the US Embassy](#) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem mentioned by Trump only a few days before his inauguration Jan. 20.

Such talks raised the ire of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which warned Israel and the international community about the seriousness of such steps. On Jan. 19, spokesman for the Palestinian presidency [Nabil Abu Rudeina](#) said in a press release, "Annexing Ma'ale Adumim will lead to devastating results. We will consider this a serious escalation that will end any peaceful course of action. This step will introduce a new stage that no one will be able to control. If Israel were to cross its limits in this regard, then all limits will disappear." The Palestinian statements warn Israel and the international community of the danger of this Israeli step, which could open the door for several options for the Palestinians. The Palestinians may not only resort to international diplomatic work, but could also threaten to turn the popular uprising into an armed one in the event that the international community fails to put pressure on Israel to back down.

However, the Palestinians did not wait long before taking action. On Jan. 20, a group of activists from the popular resistance and foreign supporters of the Palestinian cause [rallied in the park](#) in Ma'ale Adumim, where they [pitched a tent](#) to protest against the Israeli government's intention to annex the settlement and the E1 zone to Jerusalem. The Israeli police cracked down on the protesters and forced them to clear the area. Even so, this protest might as well be a prelude to further escalation by the [popular resistance](#). Abbas Zaki, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, told Al-Monitor, "The Palestinians could employ several alternatives to respond to Israel's intention to annex Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem. They could either resort to the International Criminal Court or the UN Security Council, which issued [Resolution 2334](#) condemning the settlements. The Palestinians could also demand to impose sanctions on Israel, request the suspension of Israel from the United Nations or call on the PLO to withdraw its recognition of the State of Israel — and thus returning to square one in the relationship with Israel." Zaki said that the Palestinian street "will go to the fullest extent of escalation, because such Israeli action would prove that everything else is over," in reference to the peace process that was established in virtue of the [Oslo Accord](#) signed between the PLO and Israel on Sept. 13, 1993.

For his part, Walid Assaf, the chairman of the PA Commission Against the Wall and Settlements and member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, told Al-Monitor, "Annexing Ma'ale Adumim would deal a fatal blow to the political process, after which no political negotiation could ever be conducted with Israel." He said, "We have plenty of options to choose from in order to respond to Israel, whether on the international diplomatic level or by resisting the occupation in all means necessary. The second intifada in 2000 and the popular uprising in October 2015 were the result of Israel messing with Jerusalem." Assaf added, "Without an open political horizon, Palestinian individuals, parties and organizations could take any action they find necessary and an intifada or a new uprising could break out once again." Political analyst and political science professor at Al-Quds University Abdul Majid Sweilem told Al-Monitor, "If Israel annexes [Ma'ale Adumim](#), it would pave the way to annexing all settlements in the West Bank to Israel and imposing a one-sided de facto. For the PA, this would represent a dead end for the political process and the two-state solution."

He noted, "The PA will no longer be obliged to recognize Israel or abide by the Oslo Accord. In this case, it would resort to diplomatic means within the framework of international law and the UN." Sweilem also said that the Palestinian leadership cannot control the outbreak of an uprising as only the people can take such a decision, and consequently, annexing Ma'ale Adumim and imposing a fait accompli by Israel would make it difficult to predict the reaction of the people — which Israel has previously failed to tame and control. Although the PA claims to have all its options open, it prefers to avoid a field confrontation with Israel by allowing an armed intifada to erupt. The PA is rather leaning toward diplomatic and political action in international institutions and organizations that it has joined, as well as pleading its case once again before the international community to put pressure on Israel.

Source: [Ahmad Melhem](#), Al Monitor, 03.02.2017

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/israel-annex-west-bank-settlement-warnings-palestine.html#ixzz4YszwaagR>

5. Israel shells Gaza after alleged rocket attack

Israeli artillery of the IOF on Monday morning have shelled sites for the Hamas resistance movement in Gaza, claiming that it is in response to a rocket fired from Gaza towards the Negev desert. According to the Gaza based PIC, Israeli helicopters were also seen flying over the area. Local sources affirmed that no injuries were reported in the shelling.

The Israeli attack came shortly after Israeli media sources reported that a Code Red siren was heard in the Ashkelon region near the northern border of Gaza after being allegedly hit with a rocket.

Source: Palestine News Network /EuroPal Forum, 06.02.2017

6. Israeli occupation bans 500 kinds of raw materials to Gaza

Israeli occupation authorities banned the entry of more than 500 industrial and commercial materials into the Gaza Strip, the popular committee to lift Gaza siege said on Wednesday. The committee explained that the Israeli occupation claimed that such materials are of "double usage". The committee pointed out that Israeli occupation restrained entering raw materials that are needed for different industries to prevent and possible progress in this field which increase the workers suffering and factories owners.

The statement mentioned that cement and other materials used for building are still not allowed to Gaza, which prevent the reconstruction of homes destroyed in 2014 offensive against Gaza.

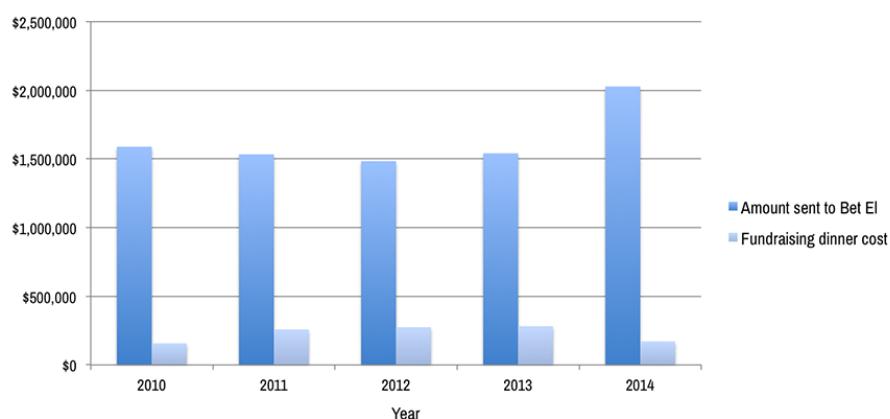
The committee confirmed that the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip since 2007 is a stark violation of the international law and human rights conventions. It demanded the international community to move seriously to change this reality and to put an end for this unjust condition.

Source: Alray/EuroPal Forum, 02.02.2017

7. Trump nominee's support for Israeli settlement draws scrutiny

US President Donald Trump's pick to serve as envoy to [Israel](#) is coming under intense scrutiny for his ties to West Bank settlements as the White House and the Israeli government continue to clash over the issue. David Friedman's Feb. 16 [nomination hearing](#) before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee comes one day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holds his first official meeting with Trump. Netanyahu is under pressure from his right flank to pronounce the [death of the two-state solution](#). Meanwhile, Trump last week told an Israeli newspaper that he wants to [revive the peace talks](#) with the Palestinians and that settlement growth isn't helpful. Friedman is stepping into that diplomatic minefield with his own history of [derogatory comments](#) toward peace activists that have made him a prime target for left-leaning American Jews. Senate Democrats, however, are also busy poring over his [financial disclosure form](#), which Al-Monitor is making public for the first time. The form's most interesting feature is Friedman's role as president of the American Friends of Bet El Yeshiva, a West Bank outpost of 1,300 families a stone's throw from Ramallah. The hilltop settlement was first established in 1977 near the biblical Bethel, where Jacob dreamed of a stairway to heaven.

Friedman, the son of an Orthodox rabbi, has called Bet El a "critical component in our collective battle for the safety, security and unity of the State of Israel" and poured millions into [developing the township](#). Plaques with his name and those of family members adorn buildings throughout the town. For his critics, that commitment is exactly what precludes Friedman from making a good ambassador. "It's troubling that you have the ambassador-designate [be] someone who has raised millions of dollars to further this settlement enterprise that is a huge obstacle to Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state," said Dan Kalik, the chief of staff for J Street, one of the groups leading the unprecedented push to reject a nominee for ambassador to Israel. "He's far outside the mainstream of the American politics on this, and I think he's far to the right of the current Israeli government, which has a stated policy [of support] for a two-state solution." The disclosure form obtained from the Office of Government Ethics merely lists Friedman as the president of American Friends of Bet El Yeshiva, with no description of the nonprofit's purpose. Separate tax filings with the federal Internal Revenue Service simply describe its mission as aiding "the students, faculty and administration of Bet El Yeshiva." The nonprofit's main annual expense, according to its IRS filings, is its annual fundraising dinner for Bet El. In 2014, [American Friends of Bet El Yeshiva](#) spent \$171,000 for the dinner and sent \$2 million to Israel under the rubric of "general support for school."



Support from American Friends of Bet El Yeshiva (Source: IRS filings)

Other records, however, indicate that the nonprofit has a broad understanding of just what exactly that means. [Tax filings](#) with the state of New York, where the nonprofit is registered, clarify that "aid to students encompasses supplying them with books, housing, and to provide for their religious and moral convictions." Those records suggest that Friedman's nonprofit is deeply involved in supporting the Israeli settler movement beyond merely helping students with their religious studies. A website for the dinner, a \$500-per-couple affair touted as "the largest and most prestigious New York dinner of any Israel organization," confirms that impression with a long list of causes that stand to benefit from the glitzy fundraiser: from the settlement's Israel Defense Forces preparatory academy, to a family tourism operator, to a 120,000-circulation newspaper.

Together those organizations make up the Bet El Institutions, which share in the proceeds from the dinner. The American Friends of Bet El Yeshiva did not respond to a request for comment. "Bet El Institutions is the largest provider of livelihood to the town's residents and the reason for the influx of most of the town's young couples," reads the [website for the dinner](#), which is registered to Bet El Institutions' director of development, Baruch Gordon. "Creating these 'facts on the ground' in the face of the international community's desire to uproot us is perhaps our most significant accomplishment."

Gordon has called Friedman "a [pioneer philanthropist](#) and builder of Jewish institutions and housing projects in Judea and Samaria," Israelis' preferred term for the West Bank. Gordon did not respond to a request for comment. The Bet El Institutions website goes on to describe the recent establishment of "online educational content and campus-based programs" to push back against what it calls the "distressing state of Jewish identity amongst Diaspora young adults, the acceptance of a 'two-state solution' within the mainstream American Jewish community and the anti-Israel atmosphere taking hold on many North American university campuses."

"Our exciting new initiative inspires and trains students with the tools to successfully delegitimize the notion of a 'two-state solution' and to engage the most politically active — and often the most hostile — students on their campuses," the website states. "While the people and students at Bet El carry the burden of defending Israel's frontlines, register for our dinner to show them and the world unwavering support for the return of the Jewish People to all parts of their ancient homeland."

Source: [Julian Pecquet](#) *Al Monitor*, 13.02.2017

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/trump-nominee-israel-ambassador-support-settlement-scrutiny.html#ixzz4YyMag1M5>

8. Jewish lawmakers rip Trump over two-state walkback

Jewish lawmakers in Congress ripped into President Donald Trump on Feb. 15 for abandoning the United States' longstanding [commitment to a Palestinian state](#), warning that doing so would have dire consequences for Israel. Trump floated other options to the decadeslong conflict at a White House news conference with Israeli [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#). The US president wasn't advocating for an alternative course of action, indicating instead that he was keeping an open mind on the issue. "I'm looking at two-state and one-state," [Trump said](#). "I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one that both parties like. I can live with either one." Still, the comments drew angry rebukes from Jewish Democrats who warned that Trump's comments put Israel's democratic future — and historic bipartisan US support for the Jewish state — at risk. The Israeli right wing is increasingly vocal in its desire to annex all of the West Bank, where Arabs substantially outnumber Jews. Rep. Nita Lowey, D-N.Y., the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, called Trump's comments "shameful" and "short-sighted." Last year, she spearheaded a letter to then-President Barack Obama signed by 394 House members — 90% of the entire chamber — [reaffirming Congress' support](#) for a two-state solution. "A two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians is the only means to ensure Israel's long-term security and enable Palestinian aspirations for their own state," she said in a statement Feb. 15. "That is why presidents from both parties, the vast majorities of the House and Senate, and the American people have consistently supported this objective, and why President Trump must as well."

The top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs committee, Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., agreed on the substance. "The alternatives to a two-state solution would mean that Israel would have to choose between its commitment to democracy and the solemn obligation to be a homeland for the Jewish people," he said in a statement. "The parties must come back to the negotiating table to find a mutually agreed-upon solution." The top Democrat on the committee's Middle East panel, Rep. Ted Deutch, D-Fla., shared similar thoughts. "The goal of this process must continue to be two states for two peoples [living side by side](#) in peace and security — a Jewish democratic state of Israel and a demilitarized Palestinian state," he said in a statement. Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., told *Al-Monitor* that Trump "doesn't really understand the issues." Earlier in the day Nadler tweeted out an [April 2015 letter](#) from Netanyahu in which the prime minister wrote him that he remained "committed to a sustainable two-state solution."

"Certain things are very clear. You have to have a two-state solution, because you're going to get no other solution," Nadler said. "A one-state solution just means you're going to try to impose your will on the Palestinians, and that's a formula for war eventually, or you have a binational state, which has never worked in the Middle East, which is never going to work, and the dream of Zionism for 2,000 years for a Jewish state goes up in smoke." Nadler said the Trump administration [doesn't have](#) any experienced Middle East negotiators on its team and appears to be wasting time by considering a multitude of options that will eventually get whittled down to the usual choices. Others, however, suggested that merely broaching alternative paths forward was counterproductive. "By casually and flippantly suggesting the United States may pursue a two-state, one-state, or some other path to ending this conflict, President Trump makes the pursuit of a solution more difficult, and ultimately puts the long-term security of Israel at risk," Rep. Brad Schneider, D-Ill., said in a statement.

Rep. Brad Sherman, D-Calif., a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said his fellow Jewish colleagues' comments should send a clear message to Israel that toying with the notion of a one-state solution carries a cost. "The people of Israel need to decide whether they want to have one friend in the world, or one-half of one friend in the world," he told *Al-Monitor*. "Support in the United States for a one-state solution does not exist in the left 50% of the United States. And certainly there's no support for an Israel that is Jewish and ... not democratic."

**Editor's note: This article has been updated since its initial publication.*

Source: [Julian Pecquet](#), *Al Monitor*, 15.02.2017

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/02/jewish-lawmakers-rip-trump-over-two-state-walkback.html#ixzz4YyWvfvakt>

Media Group, Haringey Justice for Palestinians