



haringey justice for palestinians

Newsletter 61: March - April 2017

“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. Diyar Woman's Football

The Liverpool Twinning group are organising a visit. THEY NEED YOUR SUPPORT & LOTS OF DOSH TO PULL OFF THE VISIT OF THE DIYAR WOMEN'S FOOTBALL TEAM (Bethlehem) To Play Against UK Women's Teams In June 2017
 Matches in Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, London, Bath, Bristol

DONATE via Just Giving or PayPal
<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/liverpool-Friends-of-Diyar-2017>
<https://www.paypal.me/womensfootballtour>

"Football is more than a game. It's about social inclusion, identity, pride for one's country. It's about putting Palestine on the world map."

Source: Britain Palestine Twinning Network

2. Campaign Against Anti-Semitism targets Palestinian student

[Fake Zionist 'charity' Campaign Against Anti-Semitism targets vulnerable female Palestinian student](#)

Source: Change.org

3. No Royal visit to Israel during Balfour Centenary

[Sir Christopher Geidt, Private Secretary to Queen Elizabeth II: Please do not advise Royal Visit to Israel in Balfour Centenary Year](#)

Source: Avaaz.com

4. Petition Malaka Shwaikh - Exeter Student

Petition from PSC Sheffield, where Malaka lives.

[Support Malaka Shwaikh – sign our petition | Freedom Justice Return](#)

Source: www.sheffieldpsc.or.uk

5. Take Action: The Chair of PSC deported from Israel

Last week, the Israeli Knesset passed a law to ban entry to foreigners who advocate the non-violent boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement.

On Sunday night, the first victim of this new law was PSC chair **Hugh Lanning, who was detained overnight and deported from Israel** on Monday morning. We believe that he is now permanently barred from the country. In the past Hugh has been able to travel many times to visit Israel and Occupied Palestine. Israel has always denied the rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland, and now it is banning those who support Palestinian rights, including the right to return. By introducing this law, **Israel is violating fundamental freedoms essential to a democracy- the right to free speech, to criticise government policies and human rights violations, the right to advocate non-violent actions to address human rights abuses, the right of free movement and travel.** A democratic country does not behave in the way Israel is behaving.

As supporters of the BDS call, this law could effect all of us. If Israel believes that by introducing these draconian undemocratic laws it will intimidate its critics into silence it is mistaken. **We will not stop raising our voices to highlight the systematic violation of Palestinian human rights** in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel itself.

Please [write to your MP](#) asking this to write to the Foreign office to condemn the deportation of Hugh Lanning and the passing of this repressive law.

Source: Palestine Solidarity Campaign, 16.03.2017

6. From Balfour to Nakba - Week of Action 12 to 18th May 2017

From Balfour to Nakba is to be an educational week of activities to raise awareness of the centenary of the Balfour Declaration and the Nakba in 1948. The general theme is to highlight British responsibility, from the Balfour Declaration to the Nakba, until today. This is also a great opportunity to start publicising the National event to mark the centenary of the Balfour Declaration taking place in central London on Saturday 4th November 2017.

Source: Palestine Solidarity Campaign, 14.03.2017

7. Israel-funded "infiltrators" behind London campus "provocation"

An [Israeli soldier's controversial appearance](#) at University College London (UCL) involved provocations by groups funded from Israel, a journalist for Israeli state media is alleging. Jerry Lewis, an Israel Radio [correspondent](#) for 36 years, said in January that the October incident was an example of pro-Israel "infiltrators" coming onto campuses and endangering Jewish students in the UK. Lewis said the infiltrators were "interfering" in student affairs and provoking unrest "to make sure they can justify the funding they get from Israel."

Despite this, UCL's management is moving to discipline five students involved in protests against soldier [Hen Mazzig](#) last October. UCL's Friends of Israel society had organized the meeting with Mazzig, who at the time [described himself](#) as an Israeli army reservist. A recent [UCL investigation into the incident](#) found that the student union had initially declined Mazzig the required permission, due to procedural errors in the society's booking. The society failed to disclose information on Mazzig, claiming there would be no media interest and that no room security would be needed. Against union rules, the group began advertising Mazzig's talk before a decision had been reached. As a result, the report says, the society breached student union regulations. But after an appeal to university management, lodged on "advice from the UK Lawyers for Israel," UCL's vice provost overruled the union's initial decision. Student protesters with Palestinian flags then [disrupted the event on the night](#). Police were called, but there were no arrests.

Flawed investigation

According to [a post on a prominent pro-Israel blog](#), “twenty or so [pro-Israel] veterans” came to the supposedly student society event. Video evidence shows that these “veterans” abused student protesters as “vermin” and “scum.” Another one [declared](#) his wish for Palestine to be free “from Arabs.” One [told](#) a student protester – a person of colour – to “get out of our country.” Yet instead of taking action against such abuse, UCL officials fuelled headlines about “violent” protesters by emphasizing that they did not “condone acts of intimidation or violence under any circumstances.” The investigation’s report, published in January, found that although there had been “a hostile and tense atmosphere, with verbal hostility and flag waving” from both protesters and pro-Israel activists, there had been “no physical violence or damage to property.” The report says that despite the protests, the event went ahead but “in a highly disruptive and intimidatory atmosphere and in an abbreviated form.” Five student protesters have now been referred to a disciplinary panel, a move which could lead to expulsion or other harm to their futures.

Video evidence

The report claims that the investigation found no evidence that any pro-Israel individuals “had attended the protest in an attempt to disrupt and/or inflame the protesters.” Asked by The Electronic Intifada why Jerry Lewis’ comments about pro-Israel “infiltrators” had been omitted from his report, Professor Geraint Rees, who conducted the investigation, would only repeat – despite the mountain of video evidence – that he had been “unable to identify any pro-Israel individuals from outside UCL who had attended the protest.” Rees then declined to answer further questions. A university press officer did not reply when asked why Lewis’ allegations had not been included in the report.

But copious video evidence clearly shows the presence of members of outside pro-Israel groups, including [several](#) videos [filmed](#) by such groups. These were the anti-Palestinian “veterans” who abused students in racist terms. The videos corroborate Lewis’ January allegation that Israel-funded “infiltrators” were there. Lewis is a [former vice president](#) of the [Board of Deputies of British Jews](#) – the same pro-Israel group that led a furious backlash against the student protesters.

Pressure on UCL

The day after the protest, Board of Deputies president Jonathan Arkush spoke to UCL provost Michael Arthur to express “the community’s profound anger at the anti-Israel protest.” [According to the Board of Deputies](#), Arkush demanded a statement condemning the protest and an “assurance that protesters identified as members of UCL will face disciplinary action once the evidence has been reviewed.” The Board said that UCL’s provost “immediately agreed” to all its demands.

In an email to The Electronic Intifada, a UCL spokesperson denied that there had been a rush to judgment, and contested the Board of Deputies statement. The spokesperson said the provost had actually said that “if the investigation showed that any student protesters from UCL had contravened the student code of conduct” they could be disciplined. A Board of Deputies spokesperson back-pedalled on the group’s original statement, writing to The Electronic Intifada that “the phrase ‘once the evidence has been reviewed’ implies that only those protesters guilty of intimidation would be disciplined.”

But the original statement said nothing about “intimidation,” only criticizing “protesters” for being “anti-Israel.” Emails seen by The Electronic Intifada show that Rees stated before publication of his report that the investigation was already aware of Lewis’ allegations about Israel-backed infiltrators. A UCL student who took part in the protest told The Electronic Intifada that Lewis’ allegations rang true. In one video, [posted online by the London Student](#) newspaper, pro-Israel activist [Simon Cobbs](#) can be seen tussling with a student protester. Pro-Israel activist [Elliot Miller](#) then shoves both of them into Liora Cadranell, president of the Friends of Israel Society.

[Another video](#) of the same incident shows that Miller then pointed at the protester he’d shoved and screamed, “this man needs to be arrested! He just hit a girl!” It is in this context that student protesters are now being threatened with potential expulsion. Geraint Rees’ investigation concluded that several allegations of assault on the night “have either been withdrawn or are not currently being pursued” by police. The report identified one individual “pushing and shoving” security officers and making “comments to protesters that Islam was a violent religion.”

Based [on a video](#) of him screaming that Islam is “a violent religion,” this appears to be a reference to Elliot Miller. Asked why this was not considered to be evidence of pro-Israel activists coming to the protest from off-campus and engaging in provocations, both Professor Geraint Rees and the university spokesperson did not reply.

Putting Jewish students “at risk”

One UCL student [told](#) The Electronic Intifada in October that “most of those supporting Israel were not students.” Speaking at a Board of Deputies meeting in January, Lewis offered backing for this observation, saying that these groups “have got nothing to do with students” and are “interfering with what’s going on at campus and putting our Jewish students at risk.” Lewis asked its president Jonathan Arkush to “to intervene with those groups, one of which I know is funded from Israel.” “I was told while I was in Israel they’re doing these things to make sure they can justify the funding they get from Israel, to try and make a point,” Lewis added.

Although the event was hosted by the Friends of Israel student society, many of the non-student participants were affiliated with pro-Israel groups, including [Sussex Friends of Israel](#) and the [Pinsker Centre](#), a small Israeli-funded group set up by former students. Mazzig himself [previously worked](#) for [StandWithUs](#), an [Israeli government funded group](#). Jerry Lewis did not reply to an email from The Electronic Intifada asking which of these groups his criticisms were directed towards.

Ties to Israel

[Elliot Miller](#) and [Simon Cobbs](#), filmed pushing the student protester, are involved in the Pinsker Centre and Sussex Friends of Israel respectively. Sussex Friends of Israel, a small, [aggressive](#) group based in Brighton, has ties to the Israeli government.

In January, Al Jazeera’s documentary *The Lobby* [revealed](#) that it was one of the groups linked to the [Israeli embassy’s disgraced](#) senior political officer [Shai Masot](#). Masot claimed to an undercover reporter – who had been posing as a pro-Israel activist – that he had built several ostensibly grassroots pro-Israel groups in the UK. In an exchange with The Electronic Intifada on Twitter, Sussex Friends of Israel [denied](#) that Masot had arranged embassy funding for them. “What’s that got to do with you?” the group [replied](#) when asked the identity of its embassy contact. Sussex Friends of Israel did not reply to an email asking about Jerry Lewis’ allegations.

Another pro-Israel activist [present](#) that night was [Adam Schapira](#), who co-founded the Pinsker Centre with Elliot Miller. Al Jazeera's undercover footage [showed Schapira](#) admitting that "the Israeli embassy in the UK gives money" to student groups it views as sympathetic. The documentary [also stated](#) that Schapira received money from Israel to establish the Pinsker Centre. The Al Jazeera documentary [showed undercover footage](#) of Miller saying he once worked for the Israeli foreign ministry. Schapira and Miller did not reply to requests for comment.

Raising the temperature

At its January meeting, Board of Deputies president Jonathan Arkush displayed discomfort in his response to Lewis' allegations of infiltrators. "Jerry, I'm not sure if those remarks were actually particularly helpful," Arkush said. But he conceded he was "not in favour of outside groups raising the temperature for no reason." But that's exactly what Arkush's own organization did with its immediate demands for disciplinary against what it [labelled](#) a "hate-filled mob" made up of people who support "the worst kind of extremism in the Middle East."

At February's Board of Deputies meeting, Lewis reiterated his claims. He urged the organization to "take note of" statements made by some of those present "on our side." He added that he was "being very guarded what I say this time." In the February meeting, Lewis criticized the board for omitting that "things were not quite as they appeared to be" from the minutes of the last meeting. Arkush then cut Lewis off: "You're just repeating what you said on the last occasion." Arkush appeared uncomfortable answering questions about the incident. As Lewis was called up by a vice president, Arkush can be heard on the video whispering, "No, no!"

As one of the UK's leading pro-Israel groups, it is no wonder that the Board of Deputies is reluctant for light to be shed on the disruptive activities of Israel-backed groups on UK campuses.

Source: [Electronic Intifada / EuroPal Forum, 21.03.2017](#)

8. Action: Write to your MP about Israel's boycott ban

Short link : <http://europalforum.org.uk/en/post/2316>

9. Reply by Jackie Walker to Jonathan Hoffmann and Chomsky conference.

[Jewish anti Zionist Jackie Walker utterly destroys pro Zionist Jonathan Hoffman](#)



Jewish anti Zionist Jackie Walker utterly destroys pro Zionist Jonathan Hof...

Jonathan Hoffman aggressively questions Jackie about the skewed IHRA definition of anti-Semitism which is being ...

From Europe/America

1. UN Report Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People & the Question of Apartheid

In March 2017, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA) released a report heavily criticizing Israel (not a UNESCWA member state) for its "[apartheid system](#)" with regards to Israel's relations with its Palestinian ethnic minority and neighbouring states. The report was authored by Richard Falk, a former U.N. human rights investigator for the Palestinian territories, and Virginia Tilley, professor of political science at Southern Illinois University.

UN report concludes : "on the basis of overwhelming evidence, that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid, and urges swift action to oppose and end it."

[Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid: Palestine and the Israeli Occupation, Issue No. 1](#)
E/ESCWA/ECRI/2017/1

Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid: Palestine and the Israeli Occupation, Issue No. 1

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March 2017

This report examines, based on key instruments of international law, whether Israel has established an apartheid regime that oppresses and dominates the Palestinian people as a whole. Having established that the crime of apartheid has universal application, that the question of the status of the Palestinians as a people is settled in law, and that the crime of apartheid

should be considered at the level of the State, the report sets out to demonstrate how Israel has imposed such a system on the Palestinians in order to maintain the domination of one racial group over others.

A history of war, annexation and expulsions, as well as a series of practices, has left the Palestinian people fragmented into four distinct population groups, three of them (citizens of Israel, residents of East Jerusalem and the populace under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza) living under direct Israeli rule and the remainder, refugees and involuntary exiles, living beyond. This fragmentation, coupled with the application of discrete bodies of law to those groups, lie at the heart of the apartheid regime. They serve to enfeeble opposition to it and to veil its very existence. This report concludes, on the basis of overwhelming evidence, that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid, and urges swift action to oppose and end it.

[Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid: Palestine and the Israeli Occupation, Issue No. 1: Executive Summary](#)

Ali Abunimah on UN Report "Israeli Practices towards the Palestinian People and the Question of Apartheid"

[Landmark UN report backs Israel boycott](#)

Landmark UN report backs Israel boycott

Study finds "beyond reasonable doubt" that Israel is guilty of practicing apartheid.

Full Report [Apartheid in Israel UN 2017 report](#)



Apartheid in Israel UN 2017 report

2. [FSOI tells European Parliament – Do not covertly adopt IHRA \(mis\)definition](#)

FSOI tells European Parliament – Do not covertly adopt IHRA (mis)definition

European Parliament asked to adopt IHRA definition of antisemitism. Not on LIBE agenda, but is likely to be put ...

3. [FIFA delay on Israeli settlement decision fuels concern](#)

Short link : <http://europalforum.org.uk/en/post/2310>

From Palestine/Israel

1. [Stand with the women of Palestine](#)

On the 8th March, around the world, people are marking International Women's Day.

The history of women's resistance in Palestine is a long one. In 1929 a [Women's Conference](#) was held in Jerusalem in protest of the Zionist colonisation program, which was followed by a delegation of women who went to the British High Commissioner and called for the revocation of the Balfour Declaration.

This year marks the centenary of the Balfour Declaration, and joining the protests of the Palestinian women in the 1920s, we are [calling for an apology](#) from the British Government for the Balfour Declaration and the colonial policy of Britain between 1917-1948 which has led to mass displacement of the Palestinian people.

In recent years, many Palestinian women have lost their lives to Israel's brutal occupation. In 2016, twelve Palestinian women and girls were killed including 23-year-old [Maram Abu Ismail](#) who was five months pregnant when she was shot fifteen times by Israeli forces. Women of the world stand together in solidarity for many reasons today – let's make Palestinian self-determination one of them.

Source: Palestine Solidarity Campaign, 08.03.2017[Sign the Petition](#)

2. [Why former defence minister is leaving Israel's ruling party](#)

Two polls released March 10 gave a party headed by former Defence Minister Moshe Ya'alon a disappointing [four to six seats](#). It is hardly the result that Ya'alon was hoping for, but anyone rushing to write him off is doing so prematurely. On March 13, Ya'alon announced that he was finally leaving Likud. Over the next few weeks, he is expected to [launch his own right-wing party](#), along with a list of supporters. The party will advocate respect for the Supreme Court and the Israel Defence Forces' rules of engagement. He will also present a diplomatic, security and civil agenda to serve as an alternative to that of Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud. Quite a few people on the right, including in Likud, will follow Ya'alon as soon as the party is established and begins an organized campaign. The consequences of this should be seen in future polls.

Leaving Likud and forming an independent party could turn out to be the best thing to ever happen to Ya'alon. He can now count himself among a respectable and rather large group of ministers who have quit Likud or Netanyahu's office to launch independent political careers. Some of them now hold senior portfolios in the government and positions of power opposite Netanyahu. In fact, almost all the more-important and prestigious portfolios in Netanyahu's government are not in Likud hands. Yisrael Beitenu Chairman and Defence Minister Avigdor Liberman had been director general of the Prime Minister's Office during Netanyahu's first term (1996-99) before quitting and forming his own party. Though he now heads a small party with just six Knesset seats, he is the most senior minister in the government and is a steady political threat to Netanyahu while advocating for an independent diplomatic agenda. For instance, on March 13, in response to reports of relaunching negotiations with the Palestinians, Liberman once again released his plan for an [exchange of territories and populations](#) as the only way to reach an agreement.

The chairman of Kulanu, Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon, was the most popular minister from Likud until 2013, when he quit after a fight with Netanyahu and formed his own right wing-oriented party focused on social issues. It won 10 seats in the 2015 elections, after which Kahlon demanded and received an expanded Finance Ministry, because, like Liberman, he knows how to keep Netanyahu on a "short leash." He also represents an independent agenda on socioeconomic issues near and dear to him, fighting regularly with the prime minister in his efforts to advance them. Two other ministers and members of this group are the leaders of HaBayit HaYehudi — Education Minister Naftali Bennett and Justice Minister [Ayelet Shaked](#). They both worked alongside Netanyahu when he was head of the opposition (2006-07), and they both ended up quarrelling with Netanyahu's wife, Sara. In each case, they picked up and left, slamming the door behind them. Sometime later, they returned to the political arena with their own base. Although they are backed by a party with only eight seats, they both advocate for the settlements from within the government, wage power struggles with Netanyahu and reap some successes, as they did with the [Regularization Law](#), which legalized unauthorized settlements. An effort to weaken the Supreme Court, a platform closely identified with their party, was a source of one of Shaked's [major victories](#) against the legal establishment when she managed to have new, supposedly conservative justices appointed to the court.

Liberman, Kahlon, Bennett and Shaked are all members of the prestigious Security Cabinet. As such, it is hard to avoid comparing them to senior Likud Cabinet members, who see themselves one day competing for leadership of Likud and the Prime Minister's Office, but who are still forced to operate in [Netanyahu's shadow](#). This group includes Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan and former Minister Gideon Saar, who is expected to return to politics and compete for a place on Likud's Knesset list after a lengthy break from politics. In the event that Netanyahu is forced to resign, Saar will join the two current ministers in competing to lead Likud. Netanyahu has been considerably weakened by the criminal investigations against him, but no one in Likud dares [challenge him](#) by offering an official, alternative party leadership. This is an anomalous situation in a party that was famous until just a few years ago for its impassioned and turbulent leadership fights. It was not this limited during the days of Moshe Arens, Yitzhak Shamir and David Levy, in the 1980s and 1990s. For years, Netanyahu himself posed a leadership alternative to the late Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, offering a diplomatic and security agenda that challenged Sharon's plan for disengagement from Gaza.

Likud has a reputation as a party that does not depose its leaders even if they lose an election. All the more so, they are unlikely to dispatch a serving prime minister. Nevertheless, there is plenty of room to manoeuvre in the gap between deposing a party chief and remaining submissive or passive. The problem is that Netanyahu's potential heirs do not take advantage of that space. Erdan, Katz and Saar are members of an emasculated generation. They long for and prepare themselves for the day after the Netanyahu era, but they do it warily, only in their innermost chambers, without proposing alternative leadership possibilities or new agendas on diplomatic, security and economic issues. Not one of them has announced that he will run against Netanyahu at some point in the future. The three of them have, however, had more than enough of Netanyahu, who has never given them an opportunity to grow. Time and again, he has kept them from top ministerial posts, even though they rank high on the Likud Knesset list. As an example of this, Netanyahu still refuses to relinquish the Foreign Ministry and give it to one of them. His main concern is that someone might use it to foster a new leadership alternative within Likud.

Then there is Ya'alon. Leaving Likud to form his own party has given him public and political stature as someone who did not succumb to Netanyahu's emasculating power or abandon his values and worldview. Ya'alon resigned from the government after he was removed from the Defense Ministry, which was given to Liberman in May 2016. Soon, Ya'alon will be returning to the public eye with his own political base. Even as head of a small party, Ya'alon will have considerable bargaining power. He could be the person who breaks the balance of power between the two main blocs by joining a government headed by Yesh Atid Chairman Yair Lapid. Whether Netanyahu survives his investigations and continues to lead Likud in the next elections or whether someone else heads the party, the cost that Ya'alon will demand to join a coalition will be very steep, even if he does only have six seats.

Source: [Mazal Mualem, Al Monitor, 15.03.2015](#)

Read more: <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2017/03/israel-moshe-yaalon-netanyahu-liberman-bennett-likud-party.html#ixzz4ba0SN3yX>

3. Who will Abbas meet first: Putin or Trump?

The [invitation extended](#) by US President Donald Trump to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas took Israel by complete surprise. It was made March 10 during a [phone call](#) in the evening hours at Trump's initiative. According to a Palestinian source who spoke with Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity, Trump was courteous and attentive, sounding out Abbas on how he views the future of talks with Israel and whether he thinks an agreement can be reached. Abbas answered in the affirmative, and the two arranged to meet in the Oval Office, according to the source.

When the Palestinian president put down the phone at the end of the call, "Team Trump" breathed a sigh of relief. If all goes as planned and the meeting takes place in May, the tempestuous president will get to know Abbas personally and, to the extent possible, see through the diabolical image of him that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has painted over the years. That does not mean that Abbas' associates are sanguine. The attitude toward the new president is, as President Ronald Reagan said of the Soviets, "trust but verify." But the restrained and calculated diplomacy (and some Palestinians would proudly add "clever") adopted by the Palestinian Authority (PA) has yielded [impressive results](#) far beyond expectations. For example, Trump has already laid down the law to Netanyahu on [Israeli settlements](#) in the West Bank ([asking Netanyahu](#) not to build any new settlements), all thanks to the backstage diplomacy conducted by the Palestinians.

As reported first by Al-Monitor, the initiative to invite the Palestinian president to the White House was hatched in February at a [meeting in PA headquarters](#) in the West Bank city of Ramallah between Abbas and CIA Director [Mike Pompeo](#). A solid personal relationship forged with Majid Faraj, the head of the Palestinian Security Services, was a contributing factor. The Pompeo-Abbas meeting was held at the same time as Trump and Netanyahu were sitting down to talk at the White House. The Palestinians understood that they must get Trump and Abbas together as soon as possible before the US president has time to formulate a misguided policy based on what he has heard from Netanyahu and from pro-Israel Trump administration figures. Following the joint Feb. 15 Trump-Netanyahu White House [press conference](#), the Palestinians set themselves three goals. The first, to reinforce the two-state principle as an inviolable condition without which no diplomatic process is possible; second, to debunk what they define as “dissemination of incitement” in the new administration by Netanyahu against Abbas and the Palestinians; and third, which has already been achieved, to open a communications channel with the White House after it had seemed for long weeks that Trump was oblivious to the Palestinians.

“I don’t know what worried us more,” said the Palestinian source. “Whether it was Trump talking offhandedly about one state and two states as if the issue wasn’t a cardinal one, or the fact that he swallowed hook, line and sinker Netanyahu’s oft-repeated mantra that the PA incites against Israel and teaches its children to hate Israel from an early age.” The speed with which Pompeo arranged a White House invitation surprised the Palestinians. Trump’s call came less than a month after Pompeo’s visit to PA headquarters and even before the March arrival in the region of presidential envoy (representative for international negotiations) [Jason Greenblatt](#). The proffered invitation put Team Trump into overdrive to prepare the Palestinian president for a meeting that could rightly be defined as “crucial.”

The PA’s top officials still don’t know what to make of Greenblatt, who is tasked with getting a diplomatic process back on track. This is an observant, Orthodox Jew, who studied at the Har Etzion yeshiva in the settlement of Elon Shvut in the West Bank, and is considered a fervent supporter of Israeli settlements there. Is there a chance of his understanding the difficulties Abbas faces and the despair of the Palestinians? Will he be able to convey the facts to Trump in an objective manner without adopting a staunch, one-sided pro-Israel approach? These are substantive questions that the Palestinians have about many of those [Trump has named](#) to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For now, the Palestinians have decided to treat Greenblatt as they do Trump’s Jewish son-in-law, Jared Kushner. In other words, to set aside their concerns and focus on convincing the president that Abbas wishes to reach a fitting diplomatic arrangement with Israel.

The Palestinian source says that for now, Trump does not intend to present Abbas with any type of plan, only to discuss the principles and course for renewing negotiations with Israel — in other words, to get to know Abbas personally and hear his positions. “Everyone understands that Trump intends to bring other sides into the negotiations, especially Egypt and Jordan, and indirectly Saudi Arabia, too,” the source said. As for Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Palestinians will seek to learn from Trump how he sees Russia’s role in a comprehensive regional move. The Palestinians are hoping that the White House meeting takes place before Abbas’ scheduled [Kremlin meeting](#) in May. At this stage, Team Trump is recommending that Abbas insist on resuming negotiations with Israel where they left off in the past and not start from scratch. But given that Trump is intent on obliterating every vestige of the Obama administration, this might not be so simple.

Source: [Shlomi Eldar](#), *Al Monitor*, 14.03.2017

4. What will Hamas charter change mean for Israel?

In the coming weeks, Hamas is due to unveil the draft of a revised charter that softens the movement’s positions on the conflict with Israel. Talking to the London-based newspaper [Asharq al-Awsat](#), Hamas sources said that the salient changes to the document include recognition of the 1967 borders and replacement of the term “Jews,” described as enemies, with the term “occupiers.” The draft will probably also include an announcement about severing ties with the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas’ original charter underscores the affinity between the movement and the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, known for its rejection of any diplomatic process with Israel. Nonetheless, the new charter, like the original document, will not include recognition of the State of Israel and will rule out any concession on the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes.

Should the charter’s expected amendment, especially its recognition of the borders delineating Israel until the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, result in a shift in Israeli policies toward the organization? It depends on whom one asks.

Former Mossad chief Efraim Halevy, a proponent of [dialogue with Hamas](#), said in May 2016 that the organization’s leadership knows it has no chance of annihilating Israel. In his view, there is no reason to fear Iran’s influence on Hamas, because it has cut itself off from Tehran and aspires to establish contact with Israel. In September 2016, Halevy predicted that in any case, once a solid majority of Palestinians understand that their prospects of getting a state of their own have dissipated, and that negotiations between Israel and the current Palestinian leadership are nothing but a sham, their only recourse will be to [adopt Hamas’ way](#).

Nimrod Novick, a former adviser to Prime Minister Shimon Peres and currently a research fellow at the Israel Policy Forum, told Al-Monitor, “Saying unequivocally that [today’s Hamas](#) is the same Hamas of a few years ago and the same Hamas of 10 or 20 years from now is far-reaching and pretentious and ignores changes the organization has already undergone.” Novick, also a board member of the Commanders for Israel’s Security, added that Hamas has made it quite clear that it would abide by the wishes of the people. According to Novick’s sources, the new Hamas charter will reaffirm the movement’s commitment to back any arrangement between Israel and the Palestinian leadership — as long as it is put to a referendum and wins the support of the majority of Palestinians.

Novick bemoans that former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert refused to give Hamas an opportunity to prove its intentions after receiving [verbal and written messages](#) from the movement in 2009 about establishing a dialogue. The organization reportedly conveyed its willingness to open a dialogue with Israel, through a third party, regarding a long-term agreement on coexistence (not a “peace” agreement or an “end to the conflict”). At the time, the Israeli public paid little attention to the messages, even though it included “an effort to achieve a settlement of the core issues” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, apart from the most volatile core issues, that is, Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees. Novick noted that since that missed opportunity, Hamas has become less powerful and less united. He therefore advises that Israel beware of opening any channels of communication with the organization without making significant progress in negotiations with the current Palestinian leadership.

Mati Steinberg, a Jerusalem-based Middle East scholar who served as adviser on Palestinian affairs to Shin Bet chiefs, takes the opposite tack. He argues that not only is there no point in talking to Hamas, but such a move would inflict severe, long-

term damage to Israel's strategic interests. He believes the new Hamas charter will also include a temporary, or possibly even long-term, "hudna" (cease-fire or truce).

"Hamas assumes that Israeli willingness to make do with a hudna with Hamas, replacing a permanent arrangement with the [current Palestinian leadership], would once and for all obliterate the paradigm of an agreement with the [current Palestinian leadership] on territorial division with Israel and install Hamas rule over the West Bank," Steinberg said. "All those who prattle about a [regional initiative](#) on Israeli-Palestinian peace need to know that it is based on the Arab Peace Initiative, which Hamas has rejected out of hand."

Steinberg foresees that Hamas will continue to reject the Arab Peace Initiative. Therefore, opting for a partial and temporary arrangement with Hamas will weaken the Palestinians' position and render the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative redundant. Steinberg asserted, "Absent an Arab initiative, there will be no regional context for resolving the conflict with the Palestinians." Steinberg therefore proposes a comprehensive view of the Hamas problem in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and of the Palestinian issue and the regional context. Hamas, he said, will not "dirty its hands" with a diplomatic process, but will be forced to accept a regional arrangement to avoid isolation in the Arab and international arena. Such a regional scenario depends, to a large extent, on Israel's willingness to reach a permanent arrangement that ends its occupation of the West Bank and eases its siege of Gaza, Steinberg said.

A senior Foreign Ministry official who dealt for years with policy planning believes that anyone who thinks negotiating with Hamas is possible is delusional for the simple reason that Hamas is unwilling to talk to Israel. "They have not crossed that Rubicon," said the official, who spoke with Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity. "If you ask me personally, if they want to talk to us directly about a diplomatic arrangement, as the Egyptians did at the time, they're more than welcome." Nonetheless, he said, from a public diplomacy perspective, Israel would do well to present a positive approach while at the same time taking immediate steps to minimize the risks of violence and to stabilize long-term relations with Gaza. "I, myself, am operating in that direction," he said.

On the political right, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, there is no perceptible interest in the [changes underway in Hamas](#). The prevailing opinions on the right run the gamut from "There's no such thing as a Palestinian people" to "First, they have to recognize Israel as the state of the Jewish people." As noted, Hamas' draft charter makes [no reference to recognition](#) of the State of Israel much less recognition of the state of the Jewish people, which had been one of Netanyahu's preconditions for relaunching talks with the Palestinians. What a relief. The children of Israel can continue to be frightened with the bogeymen out to wipe them off the face of the earth.

Source: [Akiva Eldar](#), Al Monitor, 14.03.2017

5. PCHR: Six legal memos on Israeli war crimes filed with the ICC

Short link : <http://europalforum.org.uk/en/post/2303>

6. Owners of destroyed facilities in Gaza fed up with donors' promises

Short link : <http://europalforum.org.uk/en/post/2281>

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