



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Trump's Embassy Move Proved Abbas Doesn't Want Peace

By Jonathan S. Tobin

Earlier this month, more than 10,000 Israelis turned out for demonstrations in Tel Aviv against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Their purpose was to draw attention to corruption charges lodged against the

Commentary...

The U.S. Should Not Be a Neutral Peace Mediator By Moshe Arens

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas says the United States cannot be a neutral mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, and he is right. Of course the United States, the world's leading democracy, cannot be a neutral mediator between democratic Israel and the Palestinians, be they the Palestinian Authority led by Abbas or the leaders of Hamas, both of them the very antithesis of democratic rule and the values of modern democracies.

What's more, the United States should not be a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians. It cannot and should not be neutral in a conflict between its ally Israel and those who are in conflict with Israel, just as it cannot be a neutral mediator in a dispute between democratic Japan and autocratic Russia.

When the United States attempts to mediate between Israel and the Palestinians, as President Bill Clinton did between Benjamin Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat at the Wye River plantation in 1998, and between Ehud Barak and Arafat at Camp David in 2000, it is not being true to itself and is bound to fail. How can the United States be neutral in a conflict between the leader of a democratic country and a terrorist?

Actually, there is no need for a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians. There is no substitute for direct negotiations. Yet, as has been shown time and time again, the Palestinians are not interested in carrying out direct negotiations with Israel that could lead to the end of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hamas, because it openly seeks Israel's destruction, and Abbas because he knows he does not have the authority to agree to any sort of compromise, nor the ability to enforce an agreement if it were to be reached.

Abbas, in the mistaken belief that he can bypass negotiations with Israel, is seeking international recognition through the United Nations as a substitute for reaching an agreement with Israel. The automatic majority that any anti-Israel motion at the UN enjoys provides him with the opportunity to stage dramatic spectacles there that are in the final analysis meaningless.

The UN General Assembly resolution opposing U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital is a clear demonstration that UN votes on matters concerning Israel are the result of preconceived notions held mostly by nondemocratic states, many of whom do not recognize Israel, rather than an expression of moral values held by most of the participating representatives. The co-sponsors of the resolution rejecting the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital were Turkey and Yemen. Need more be said? The "overwhelming" majority that voted in favor of the Turkish-Yemeni resolution simply illustrated the UN's composition, in which nondemocratic states have a majority, and the lack of principles that dictate the behavior of this international body.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak gave expression to the views held by many who decided to "defy" the United States at the UN. At a rally in Malaysia he said: "There are 1.6 billion Muslims and only 13 million Jews. It does not make sense if 1.6 billion lose to the Jews." Some of the Western European states that joined Malaysia, Yemen and Turkey in the UN vote might have second thoughts, seeing who their bedfellows were. If this vote is an expression of world leadership then the world is really in a bad way. Some of those who cheered the "slap in the face" the United States and Israel received at the UN must be feeling a little contrite by now.

As for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its resolution at this point seems farther away than ever. The Palestinians do not have a cohesive, coherent leadership. Their unity is demonstrated only when it comes to backing acts of terror. That is the tool that they have chosen in dealing with Israel. They believe that time is on their side and that terrorism will win the day. They are wrong. The recent UN vote has only weakened their case.

(Haaretz Dec 25)

prime minister. If Netanyahu ends up being charged with a crime it will almost certainly mean that his fourth — and third consecutive — term in office will be his last.

Or at least that's what his opponents are hoping. If Netanyahu does survive, the events of the last three weeks are making it look like the prime minister, or whoever succeeds him as head of the Likud party and the coalition that it leads, is likely to emerge as the victor in the next Israeli election.

With Palestinians expressing "rage" about President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, it appears that security and the peace process — rather than corruption or the plight of the middle class — is what will continue to determine the outcome of elections in the Jewish state. And so long as that is true, those American Jews who think that Israel should be pressured into making concessions, need to understand the impact of Trump's move — and the Palestinian reaction to it — on the Israeli public.

Trump's decision provoked some curious reactions among American Jews, the vast majority of whom are fervently opposed to his administration. For some leaders of Reform Judaism, they opposed his decision. Their position — and that of many on the Jewish left — was that nothing Trump did could possibly be good for the Jews. That may make sense to partisan Democrats, but it also puts them out of touch with the vast majority of Israelis, who embraced the president's announcement.

Yet the most important reaction to Trump came from the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its leader, Mahmoud Abbas.

No one expected the Palestinians to welcome Trump's stand. But if Abbas were sincere about pursuing a two-state solution, he would have treated Trump's carefully calibrated statement as a victory rather than a defeat.

Trump did not endorse a united Jerusalem or preclude support for two states — or even a re-partition of the city. Abbas could have used this as a jumping-off point for an effort to persuade the US to endorse a Palestinian capital in part of Jerusalem, which would have strengthened his position in negotiations that Trump hopes to restart.

But instead, Abbas doubled down on the same antisemitic denial of Jewish history that has characterized Palestinian discourse for the last century.

In a speech to an Islamic conference held in Turkey to protest Trump's statement, Abbas claimed that only Muslims and Christians had any rights to the holy places in Jerusalem. Abbas' hateful rhetoric, and the PA's resolve to use its broadcast and print media to incite violence against Israelis in the wake of Trump's speech, may be what Abbas needs to do to survive against his Hamas rivals. But it is also confirming the solid consensus of opinion in Israel across the political spectrum that views Abbas and the PA as opponents of peace, rather than potential peace partners — as Israel's critics assert.

By trying to start another intifada, and by doubling down on the notion that Israel has no rights in Jerusalem, Abbas has once again done something for Netanyahu that the prime minister could not achieve on his own. He has validated the Israeli right's belief that, as bad as it is, the status quo is preferable than replicating Ariel Sharon's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza.

While some American Jews still believe that Israel must be pressured to make territorial withdrawals for the sake of peace, Abbas' conduct has convinced most Israelis that such a policy would be insane. The fact that Netanyahu's main rivals are more or less echoing his stands demonstrates that there is very little appetite in Israel for giving up more territory under the current circumstances. It also highlights the fact that so long as the alternatives to the Likud have nothing better to offer Israelis, Likud is likely to stay in power.

What Trump did on Jerusalem gratified Israelis. But it also gave Abbas the opportunity to demonstrate to voters in the Jewish state that there is no viable alternative to Netanyahu's policies. That's something that American Jewish critics of Trump and Israel would be foolish to ignore. (Algemeiner Dec 25)

The writer is the editor-in-chief of JNS.

Should Israeli Officers Turn the Other Cheek? By Hillel Frisch

On Friday, December 13, an Israeli officer and his NCO, standing near a home in the village of Nabi Salih, were verbally assaulted by a young woman. Emboldened by their refusal to respond, she proceeded to shove, slap and kick them.

She was not only actively encouraged by girlfriends who were eagerly filming the event with their smartphones, but her mother — who, along with her elder sons, has a long history of violent protest — came out of the house to help her daughter assault and verbally abuse the officers. (If nothing else, this incident exposes once again the falsehoods spread by organizations such as “Breaking the Silence.”)

To add insult to injury, the girl’s father, Bassem al-Tamimi, accused the soldiers on Facebook — in excellent English — of entering his home, pillaging it and stealing a laptop. Al-Tamimi is a professional inciter to violence, who commands a salary for that purpose as an employee of the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of the Interior.

These events would be unthinkable in any Middle Eastern regime — or even, dare one say it, in the states that make up the European Community, which has done so much to secularize the doctrine of turning the other cheek.

Fortunately, the Israeli authorities had the sense to return to the home and arrest the young woman and her bellicose mother for assault. But this is hardly sufficient.

The young woman’s friends, all of legal age, should also be brought to court, not only for having done nothing to prevent illegal and indecent behavior but for having joined in. Even more critical is for the father to be summoned by the relevant authorities to investigate the charges that he levied against the Israeli soldiers. If those charges are proven false, he should be prosecuted for slander.

At first glance, this appears to be a relatively minor event, concerning the officers, the young woman who assaulted them and her parents and friends. However, its repercussions are far wider.

It has been long known that during times of relative calm, the willingness of Israeli youth to join fighting units declines, and the attractiveness of joining technologically related units, where they can learn skills highly valued in the marketplace, increases. The lull in violence since the last offensive in 2014 in Gaza has already produced this effect.

This recent incident, instantly disseminated via every possible new media channel, can only dampen young people’s willingness to join such units.

Israeli youth ask themselves, quite reasonably, why they should not only put their lives on the line, but tolerate such humiliation as well. As it is, many Israeli youth question why Elor Azariya, a soldier who shot a terrorist as he lay on the ground after that terrorist attempted to kill soldiers at a checkpoint in Hebron, was sentenced to a year and a half in prison.

That Israeli officers did not respond to this humiliating assault, possibly out of fear of disciplinary or legal retribution, raises doubts about the Israeli military’s resolve to stand by its rank and file. Prospective soldiers don’t want to become victims of the doctrine of turning the other cheek.

This incident also sends a dangerous signal to the many Palestinians that want to harm Israelis. Anyone viewing the two-minute video can clearly see how the numbers encouraging the assault grew as the passivity of the officers continued. It begins with two girls, a third joins in and then the mother enters the fray with two young boys. The assault also becomes increasingly brazen in the face of the officers’ passivity.

One can safely assume that the weaker the IDF looks, the greater the willingness of Palestinians to join the ranks of attackers in larger, more charged, and more dangerous scenarios.

Israel must make clear that turning the other cheek is not its doctrine. That is as poisonous in this environment as the blood libel, another import from Europe.

Israel should take its cue from its Palestinian cousins: no to the other cheek, yes to measure for measure. Those involved should pay for their actions to the fullest extent of the law. (Algemeiner Dec 25)

The writer is a professor of political studies and Middle East studies at Bar-Ilan University and a senior research associate at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

The Blue-Eyed Poster Girl of Palestinian Propaganda

By Ben-Dror Yemini

For years, she has been the poster girl of Palestinian propaganda. The jewel in the crown. The star of Pallywood, a term coined by Prof. Richard Landes to describe the Palestinians’ staged false displays for the purpose of accusing Israel of violence.

Ahed Tamimi, of course, isn’t the only one in these displays. But she’s the best. She looks just like a girl who could capture the hearts of foreign photojournalists and the Western public opinion. She has neither a hijab nor a burqa. On the contrary, she has a typical European look. A girl who looks like their girl.

For years, she has been at the center of more and more staged provocations. She always tries to get IDF soldiers to respond with violence, and she always fails. Because IDF soldiers are world champions in self-restraint.

But in a region which holds the world record for cameras per square meters, some kind of inappropriate behavior is found every few months. Not everyone is perfect. There are exceptions. Last week, soldiers were caught using unnecessary violence against a bound Palestinian. Certain organizations seize these opportunities eagerly. This is the IDF, they say. They’re lying, of course.

Not all Western newspapers, which usually love the blonde, blue-eyed girl, got caught in the trap. In recent years, different newspapers in the world—including the British Daily Mail and the American Tower—have exposed the real story of Tamimi and her parents as part of a propaganda machine in Pallywood’s service. But they were exceptions.

In the wide world, and usually in Israel too, the deception hasn’t really been revealed. After all, the photographers used her and she used them. The model of the intifada. Her pictures turned her into an Internet star: Raising a fist against soldiers, biting a soldier, leading a group of marching protestors. She became a propaganda asset. The most photographed Palestinian woman in the past five years.

And as is becoming of a star, in 2012 she was invited to a special event in her honor in Turkey, where she received an award named after Handala, a Palestinian boy created by cartoonist Naji al-Ali, symbolizing the Palestinian refugee as a victim of Israeli brutality. Granted, Turkey has destroyed 3,000 Kurdish villages, two million people have become refugees in their country and 30,000 have been killed. But there’s no cartoon named after them. Hypocrisy works overtime there. Later on, Tamimi was invited to have breakfast with the great leader, Sultan Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Ahed even got an academic paper about her, about what she represents and about the fact that she is joining other female stars of the Palestinian struggle, like Hanan Ashrawi and terrorist Leila Khaled. The same article also implies that there is sometime racist about the fact that the Western viewer has trouble identifying with other young women who are dark-skinned and wear a hijab. Tamimi’s success essentially stems from the fact that she doesn’t look like a typical Muslim or Palestinian woman. On the contrary, she generates sympathy because she looks like the daughter of the white family next door. There is of course a clear racist aspect in the ability to identify with her of all people. But that doesn’t matter, as long as she delivers the goods.

Bassem Tamimi, the star’s father, is famous for his own activities and has received the familiar “human rights activist” definition. Is that so? Tamimi is indeed a wanted guest on many anti-Israel stages around the world. But like too many of these activists, when you delve beyond the surface, you find a radical Palestinian who urges violence and helps spread blood libels against Israel.

He retweeted, for example, a tweet stating that “the Israelis’ goal, when they arrest Palestinian children, is to steal their organs.” And following that post, it was determined that “the Zionists control the global media, so we shouldn’t expect the BBC to publish this information.” So we got both a blood libel focusing on children and a repetition of theories resembling the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Pure anti-Semitism. That didn’t stop the Amnesty organization from defining him as a “prisoner of conscience.”

We mustn’t delude ourselves. In the battle between the propaganda of lies and Israel, the lies win. The somewhat exaggerated restraint of the Israeli soldiers isn’t helping either. Bassem Tamimi himself was a guest of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), one of the leading organizations in the anti-Israel campaigns on US campuses. I once mentioned that they cancelled a collaboration with Miko Peled, a former Israeli, over anti-Semitic comments, but I believe that was a one-time digression from their usual activity.

Tamimi and his likes, who support terror and are in favor of Israel’s destruction, are honored and respected. They don’t even have to pretend to be rights activists. They are guests of honor even when they oppose peace, encourage violence and provide justifications for terror. (Ynet Dec 27)

No Friend of Israel By Eldad Beck

Around two weeks ago, and mere days after U.S. President Donald Trump’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital, one of the most popular tourist attractions in Berlin was opened at the Jewish Museum. Spanning over 1,000 square feet, the “Welcome to Jerusalem” exhibition is huge and includes hundreds of displays and exhibits.

One would have expected this type of exhibit at such an important Jewish museum to emphasize Jerusalem’s unique character as the holiest city in Judaism and also possibly focus a bit on the historical narrative of Zionism and the State of Israel. Such an exhibit could also have presented, in a balanced manner of course, the different religions that coexist in the city in spite of the ongoing conflict. But regrettably, it does nothing of the sort, but rather serves to strengthen the theory of Muslim-Arab-Palestinian ownership of the city, mainly through a biased presentation of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A historical documentary about the conflict, one of the exhibit’s highlights, portrays Jews as domineering invaders. It notes the massacres and terrorist acts committed by Jewish paramilitary organizations while completely ignoring those same acts when they were carried out by Arab

organizations at the behest of Jerusalem Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini; completely ignores the Arab revolt of the 1930s and Husseini's collaboration with the Nazis; presents a fairly long segment from an interview with late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from the early years of his leadership, in which the then-PLO chief explains that the Palestinians have no choice but to take up arms; and repeats the theory according to which the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is what led to the disintegration of the peace process, as well as the proven lie that then-Opposition Leader Ariel Sharon's 2000 visit to the Temple Mount sparked the Second Intifada. In short, according to the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Jews are bad while the Arabs are victims.

Could one have really expected a different approach from a Jewish museum that, as part of its permanent exhibits, presents Israel as part of the "Diaspora" of German Jewry along with images of left-wing German Jews protesting against Israel? One of the curators of the Jerusalem display is Cilly Kugelmann, who used to be a senior executive at the Jewish Museum and whose post-Zionist views helped turn the museum into a center of activity for those who negate Israel's existence. It is important to note that the Jewish Museum does not have ties with the local Jewish community and is financed by public funds, meaning the German establishment could influence the content on display and use the museum to relay a message. In fact, that is exactly what it is doing: The Jewish Museum serves the German establishment in its conscious struggle against Israel under the guise of a supposedly Jewish body.

Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital served to reveal Germany's hypocrisy as far as concerns its ties with the Jewish state: Last week, Germany voted in favor of a U.N. resolution submitted by Turkey and Yemen that called U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital "null and void." Germany, along with the other great nations of the European Union, betrayed its alliance with the United States and Israel in order to align with the world's most unsavory regimes in negating the Jewish state's right to determine that its capital is in Jerusalem, the most sacred city to Jews.

The time has come to reveal the true face of Germany, a country that wages a relentless struggle against Israel in both EU and U.N. institutions at the same time that it claims Israel's existence and security are integral to its national interests. Germany is Europe's single largest donor to the Palestinian Authority, but it has never once thought to demand the Palestinians do something for peace in return for all the money it provides, like put an end to the violence and the anti-Semitic incitement. While this should be obvious given Germany's history, it seems it is not so crystal clear to Berlin. Germany prefers to put pressure on Israel only, by funding radical organizations that slander the Jewish state around the world.

Unfortunately, Germany is no friend of Israel. That is at least as long as its current policies remain in place. (Israel Hayom Dec 27)

What Will Yeshiva University Do About Professor Who Denounced Israel?

By Stephen M. Flatow

How should Yeshiva University (YU) respond when a prominent faculty member takes public positions — against Israel — that directly contradict what the university espouses?

Does the principle of academic freedom protect saying literally anything — even when it undermines the basic principles of an Orthodox, and avowedly Zionist, institution?

These are the some of the painful questions that YU, the flagship institution of modern Orthodoxy, needs to address, now that the associate director of its Center for Israel Studies has signed a petition denouncing the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and challenging Israel's "occupation" of the city.

When President Donald Trump made his announcement on Jerusalem, there was rejoicing in nearly the entire Jewish world. Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, the new president of YU, was so enthusiastic that he posted a video message on YouTube declaring: "We celebrate when other nations recognize Jerusalem's status as the capital of the Jewish state," adding that Trump's announcement "speaks to our hearts and sings to our souls."

But Jess Olson, an associate professor of Jewish history at YU — and the associate director of the university's Center for Israel Studies — was not singing.

Olson was part of a group of Jewish studies scholars who signed a petition announcing their "dismay" that America has "endorsed sole Jewish proprietorship over Jerusalem." There are 165 signatories on the petition. And there, at #106, is "Jess Olson, Yeshiva University."

The petitioners would prefer if part of Jerusalem would be under the Palestinian proprietorship instead. They reject Israel's liberation of eastern Jerusalem in 1967. They reject the reunification of the city. Instead, the city is in a "state of occupation," they charge. They call for "the rights of ...Palestinians to Jerusalem" and "Palestinians' legitimate stake in the future of Jerusalem."

Olson and his fellow petitioners also trotted out discredited accusations by the radical group B'Tselem, falsely claiming that Israel does not permit Palestinian Arabs to have "equal access" to Jerusalem. Their "proof" is that "Palestinians in the West Bank, unlike Jewish Israelis resident in that territory, require a special permit to visit Jerusalem's holy sites."

Apparently the petitioners believe that Israel should be the only country in the world that permits foreign citizens to cross its borders without any kind of documentation. Almost every other country requires a non-citizen to have a passport and a visa. But the minute that Israel requires a permit, the critics accuse it of "denying equal access." Outrageous.

If YU was an ordinary secular university, there would be nothing to discuss. Secular universities do not have an ideological or religious mission. Any faculty member can advocate anything he or she wants.

But Jewish colleges and universities are different. They have agendas. The mission statement of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) is "educating intellectual and spiritual leaders for Conservative Judaism." Obviously, the JTS administration hires faculty whom it expects will advance that goal. Likewise, Hebrew Union College calls itself "the center for professional leadership development of Reform Judaism." And YU's mission statement declares, "We bring wisdom to life by combining the finest, contemporary academic education with the timeless teachings of Torah."

No doubt, there are a range of views regarding Israel among YU's faculty members. Nobody is saying that every faculty member must march in political lockstep, or that dissidents should be fired. But there are parameters. YU professors who teach subjects related to Judaism have to be committed to "the timeless teachings of Torah." Is redividing Jerusalem and spreading falsehoods about Israel consistent with "the timeless teachings of Torah?"

The Coalition for Jewish Values (CJV), representing several hundred Orthodox rabbis, is now asking that question. In a letter last week to YU President Berman, CJV President Rabbi Pesach Lerner and his colleagues argued that Olson's participation in the divide-Jerusalem declaration is so far outside the Jewish community consensus that he is "harming the university's reputation in the eyes of the Jewish community." The rabbis also asked whether the YU administration is keeping tabs on "what revisionist history he may be espousing in the classroom."

Under ordinary circumstances, a university administration does not monitor what a professor teaches in his or her classroom. But if a university celebrates and advocates an undivided Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, while one of its professors (the associate director of its Center for Israel Studies, no less!) announces that he opposes US recognition and considers Jerusalem to be under "occupation" — well, that is a different story. YU must consider whether such positions are consistent with the university's mission.

Parents who send their sons or daughters to YU no doubt assume that their children will not be subjected to anti-Israel professors, as is common at other universities. Therefore, parents of YU students have the right to know if Olson is teaching his students that Jerusalem is under Israeli "occupation," or feeding them falsehoods about Israel "denying equal access." How will the university assure parents and students that none of Olson's extremist beliefs are seeping into his classroom remarks or influencing the syllabi that he designs for his courses?

So far, Berman has not responded to the CJV's letter. I hope that he will do so, and soon. YU students, their parents and the rest of the Orthodox Jewish community have a right to know the answers to the questions that the CJV has raised. (Algemeiner Dec 21)

The writer, a vice president of the Religious Zionists of America, is an attorney in New Jersey. He is the father of Alisa Flatow, who was murdered in an Iranian-sponsored Palestinian terrorist attack in 1995.

Thank You, Nikki Haley

By Sarah N. Stern

The United Nations was founded on lofty principles in the wake of the atrocities of World War II. Sadly, with two votes last week — the first in the Security Council on Monday and the second in an emergency session of the General Assembly — we witnessed just how far the institution has fallen.

The U.S. is a sovereign, democratic nation that lives by the rule of law. One of those laws, the Jerusalem Embassy Relocation Act, was passed in 1995, by a solid, bipartisan majority of 93 to 5 in the Senate and 374 to 37 in the House. A sovereign nation has the right to choose where to place its embassies. And yet, on Dec. 6, when U.S. President Donald Trump called for the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, the call was met with such hysteria in this venerable institution that one might think he had called for genocide.

These two U.N. votes, condemning Trump's recognition of Jerusalem, contradict the very foundations on which the U.N. was established. Article 2 (7) of the United Nations Charter specifically states that "nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state." This, however, did not prevent the frenzy against the U.S. for supporting its one democratic ally in the Middle East.

Before Thursday's vote in the General Assembly, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley valiantly said: "The United States will remember this day in which it was singled out for attack in this assembly. We will remember it when we are called upon to once again make the world's largest contribution to the U.N., and when other member nations ask

Washington to pay even more and to use our influence for their benefit."

There is nothing in the U.N. Charter that obligates the U.S. to be so generous with its taxpayer dollars. Nothing obligates one country out of 193 member nations to pay 22% of the U.N. budget – billions of dollars more than any other nation.

Judging from the reaction of the international community, one could mistake the world's nations for a bunch of babies. The largest tantrum came from the paragon of democracy, Turkey, whose president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, expressed hope that "the United States will be taught a lesson."

"Mr. Trump, You cannot buy Turkey's democratic will with dollars. Our decision is clear. I call upon the whole world: Don't you dare sell your democratic struggle and your will for petty dollars," Erdogan added.

Erdogan has a very loose definition of the word "democracy." The Turkish president is a thug, who arbitrarily arrests opposition politicians, journalists, academics and anyone perceived as a threat to his iron rule. He has displaced approximately 400,000 Kurds from their homes. He has accepted billions of euros from the European Union to house Syrian refugees, but none of that money has reached actual refugees. Instead, it is lining his pockets and those of his cronies as he threatens to unleash these refugees and flood the EU with them.

Seeing as 20 of the 26 General Assembly votes in 2016 were directed against Israel – a full 77% – with only three on Syria, and one each on Iran, North Korea and Crimea, it came as no surprise that on Thursday, the General Assembly rejected Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by an overwhelming majority of 128 to 9, with 35 abstentions and 21 no-shows.

The reason for this is the presence within the U.N. of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – the largest body inside the U.N. and a powerful force against Israel. It is beyond ironic that nations with the glorious human rights records of Syria, Yemen, Iran and Saudi Arabia are lecturing the United States on democracy.

Thank you, Nikki Haley for finally putting an end to the notion that nations can continue to insult the U.S. and its single democratic ally in the Middle East and then expect a free ride at the American taxpayers' expense. (Israel Hayom Dec 26)

The writer is founder and president of the Endowment for Middle East Truth, an American think tank and policy institute in Washington, D.C.

The Guillotine Cannot Replace the Ballot By Yuli Edelstein

The person who brandished the mock guillotine on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv this weekend is not fed up with the right-wing government – he is fed up with democracy. He is sick and tired of waiting for elections. He has simply had enough of the majority decision, which sometime leaves him on the losing end. He is convinced the truth is on his side, and he wants everyone to admit to that. Here and now. Without reservations. Pure and simple. Like a guillotine.

Many of those who were unperturbed by the appalling display claimed they were protesting "in the name of democracy." But the truth is they were doing the exact opposite: They were showing contempt for democracy's greatest achievement, the replacement of guillotines and violence with poll booths and agreements. Instead of never-ending wars, democracy gives us rules and mechanisms for changing governments peacefully. In other words, it allows us to live and work together despite tensions and divisions. This democratic covenant has resulted in historically unprecedented welfare and prosperity. But for some of the demonstrators this weekend, this is apparently not enough.

Democracy, to paraphrase the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, is for adults. For those who recognize the boundaries of reality, who know how to compromise, who understand there will always be a gap between what they believe and what they can accomplish. A guillotine, on the other hand, is for those who behave like children, covering their ears and shutting their eyes if things do not go the way they want. It is for those who storm angrily off the field when the opposing team scores a goal. Democracy is predicated on patience and tolerance as sources of strength; the guillotine views those values as expressions of weakness.

The guillotine is a dangerous tool and needs to be eradicated before it is too late. Before our very eyes, the vitriol and incitement prevalent on social media are becoming a threat to Israeli democracy. We must not wait for the threat to materialize before we all call together: Enough! Enough of the incitement and of the factionalism.

In the country's 70-year history, we have witnessed things far graver than a mock guillotine in the city square. Despite those things, however, we all knew that the democratic rules of the game must never, under any circumstances, be forsaken. We all know that governments can be replaced but that violence leaves irreversible damage in its wake. We must be reminded of these tenets again and again, without pause.

Anyone who holds democracy and the State of Israel dear needs to view the guillotine on Rothschild Boulevard as a clear and present danger, on a personal level. Anyone who holds these things dear must demand the guillotine be returned to the attic of history, and to preserve the people's right to determine their government on election day. (Israel Hayom Dec 25)

The writer, a Likud MK, is the Knesset speaker.

The Chutzpah of EU Intervention By Gerald M. Steinberg

It was supposed to be a routine decision. Without discussion or a vote, the Israeli cabinet was to ratify Israeli participation in the latest European Union regional framework, under the grandiose headline of "Cross-border Cooperation within the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI): Mediterranean Sea Basin Program 2014-2020."

Largely an extension of a previous mechanism for funding joint cultural and other programs, the CBC-Med program would have been formalized had no ministers raised objections. But at the last minute, on Wednesday afternoon, Culture and Sport Minister Miri Regev did just that, citing the EU's standard language excluding Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights from participation in these programs.

As a result, a debate is now required. If we want a serious debate on the topic, we must not limit it to the terms of this specific agreement, and raise questions regarding other EU terms of reference: The EU's ongoing attempt to force Israel to accept its views on borders, its widespread illegal construction in Area C, and its massive funding of NGOs that lead anti-Israel demonization campaigns.

The European Neighborhood Instrument, which provides the budget for the CBC-Med framework, has been, and continues to be, a major problem for Israel. Every year, some of the most virulently anti-Israel, anti-peace and in some cases, anti-Semitic NGOs are funded under the ENI framework.

For example, ENI houses the EU Peacebuilding Initiative (formerly Partnership for Peace), which funds propaganda groups such as the Ma'an Network, and the Popular Art Center.

In February 2016, PAC organized a ceremony in honor of "Palestinian martyrs" whose homes were demolished, featuring the "father of the martyr Baha Eleyan" as a speaker. Eleyan was one of the terrorists who murdered three people in the October 2015 attack on a Jerusalem bus. The ceremony featured a musical performance captioned "no to laying down arms."

Other ENI grantees have named schools after notorious terrorists, and bring members of Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine to speak to teenagers to "strengthen Palestinian youth and their engagement in civic and political life in Gaza."

Through other bureaucratic frameworks, the EU also channels large-scale funding to fringe Israeli groups like Breaking the Silence (which collects testimonies of IDF misdeeds against Palestinians) and B'Tselem (which documents human rights violations in the Palestinian territories), turning these groups into instruments of European policy under the pretext of "civil society." There is no other democracy in the world that is treated similarly by the EU.

Beyond highlighting EU policies that trample on Israeli sovereignty, the out-of-control NGO funding is a reminder of how seemingly positive EU regional frameworks can do serious damage. The most prominent example is the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, launched at the 1995 Barcelona conference, where Europe promised to pour billions into broken economies and brutal dictatorships from North Africa to Syria to prevent mass migration. Spoiler: They failed.

In addition, to compete with the American-led "peace process," Brussels invited Jordan and the new Palestinian Authority, then led by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, and the Israeli government jumped in under the illusion that this framework would expand the avenues for dialogue and cooperation.

Now, in weighing participation in the latest Euro-Med framework, it would be useful to recall the costs of the 1995 decision that ultimately yielded little if any benefit for Israel. Barcelona opened the door to EU manipulation of Israeli politics, through alliances with political NGOs promoting values such as democracy, human rights and development. Grantees in the late 1990s included Peace Now (€400,000) for "outreach" to Soviet immigrants that traditionally have "anti-peace views and vote Likud," the Four Mothers Movement to Leave Lebanon (€250,000), the Institute for Democracy and Leadership Training (€400,000) – also aimed at manipulating Israeli politics.

Since then, the EU's alliance with this NGO network has increased significantly. Instead of transparency in government which the EU preaches to others, the decision-making on NGO grants are carefully concealed, as if they were Europe's most sensitive military secrets. Officials repeat empty slogans, including the claim that funding goes to "projects" and not NGOs.

Perhaps the new Euro-Med framework is substantially different from the 1995 version, and there may be benefits for Israel to be considered. But there are also political costs, as Miri Regev noted. A serious consideration of Israeli interests in relations with the EU, including NGO funding, is long overdue. The questions that will be raised in the cabinet debate on whether or not to join the latest version of the EU's Mediterranean framework, and the answers that the EU provides, can lead to a more equal and healthier relationship.