

Politics – January 2012

Fearful people always find reasons to confirm their worst fears.

Peace is hard to achieve; but its achievement is worth every effort, every dime, every sleepless night of coffee and deliberations.

~Raphael Cohen-Almagor

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Light Side – Life of Medics

This was a busy month in Israel, full of events and controversies. Women protested against their exclusion for public sphere by ultra-religious, Haredi groups, who believe that women's honour and dignity is reserved for the home. Then, in turn, we witnessed Haredi people protesting against the way they are presented by the secular people, still the majority in Israel.



Yair Lapid, the popular TV presenter, and the son of the former Minister of Justice Tomy Lapid, formally announced his entry into politics. It is too early to say whether he will make a difference. Taking votes from Kadima and Labour will not undermine the Likud seniority in the political map. Whether Lapid's new party will be able to garner support among Likud supporters remains to be seen.

Kadima will hold its primaries in two-months time. Shaul Mofaz is challenging Tzipi Livni's leadership. Mofaz needs to work tremendously hard to win.

Noam Shalit, father of Gilad Shalit, announced that he intends to compete in the Labour primaries. He feels that his political experience bringing about the release of his son from Hamas captivity equips him well to engage officially in all matters pertaining to Israeli politics.

In the USA, Mitt Romney is taking broad strides toward capturing the Republican Party presidential nomination.

On the personal front, I spent much of this month at home recuperating from surgery. NHS has provided very good care, I am pleased to say.

Iran Religious Summit

It is better to talk than to shoot. War should be the last resort after exhausting all other avenues. Here is an idea: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is the Supreme leader of Iran who is calling the shots. He is a religious authority. He should meet Israeli Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious authorities, all committed to peace, in order to avert humanitarian disaster.

In July 2009, three Americans, Shane Bauer, Joshua Fattal and Sarah Shourd, were hiking the Kurdish region along the Iran-Iraq border. They unwittingly passed the border and were imprisoned in Iran for spying. In April 2010, retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu pleaded for Iran to release the American hikers. Pressing for the hikers' release were also Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, archbishop emeritus of the Archdiocese of Washington; the Right Rev. John Bryson Chane, an Episcopal bishop and interim dean of Washington National Cathedral; and my good friend William Miller, a former U.S. ambassador who helped bring home many Americans during the 1979 Tehran hostage crisis.

See http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/iran-frees-american-hikers-after-two-years/2011/09/21/gIQAFZYAmK_story.html



Thus it is possible to talk to Iran and reach positive results if the speakers enjoy religious standing and authority. Israel should invest in setting a meeting between Israeli religious leaders of different denominations and the Iranian religious leaders to discuss mutual avenues to promote humanitarian causes dear to the respective nations. Religious authorities understand one another as they speak in similar terms, with similar vocabulary. They are better equipped than politicians and military commanders to convey sensitive messages. This avenue of a religious summit should be exhausted before unleashing violence.

Israelis and Palestinians on the Present Situation

A December 2011 poll conducted jointly by the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah showed an increase in support for the **Clinton permanent settlement framework** on both sides. 58% of Israelis and 50% of Palestinians support a permanent settlement package along the Clinton parameters; 39% of Israelis and 49% of Palestinians oppose such a settlement. These results mark a significant increase in both sides' willingness to compromise compared to recent years.

At the same time, both Palestinians and Israelis perceive the other side as opposing such a settlement: 61% of the Palestinians and 53% of the Israelis think so. About two thirds on both sides do not believe that it is possible to reach a final status settlement these days and see the chances for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state next to the state of Israel in the near future as slim.

78% of Palestinians support Abbas's conditions of an acceptable term of reference or a freeze on settlement construction for returning to negotiations, while 69% of Israelis think that Israel should not accept these conditions.

The Clinton parameters for a Palestinian-Israeli permanent settlement were presented by President Clinton on December 23, 2000, following the collapse of the July 2000 Camp David summit. **The Geneva Initiative**, along similar lines, was made public around the end of 2003. These parameters address the most fundamental issues which underlie the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: (1) Final borders and territorial exchange; (2) Refugees; (3) Jerusalem; (4) A demilitarized Palestinian state; (5) Security arrangements; and (6) End of conflict.

(1) Final Borders and Territorial Exchange

Among Palestinians 63% support or strongly support and 36% oppose or strongly oppose an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with the exception of some settlement areas in less than 3% of the West Bank that would be swapped with an equal amount of territory from Israel in accordance with a map that was presented to the Palestinian respondents. The map was identical to that presented to respondents in December 2010, when support for this compromise, with its map, stood at 49% and opposition at 50% - an increase in support of 14 percentage points.

Among Israelis 51% support and 44% oppose a Palestinian state in the entirety of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip except for several large blocks of settlements in 3% of the West Bank which will be annexed to Israel. Israel will evacuate all other settlements, and the Palestinians will receive in return territory of similar size along the Gaza Strip. In December 2010, 49% of the Israelis supported this component while 43% opposed it.

(2) Refugees

Among Palestinians 45% support and 53% oppose a refugee settlement in which both sides agree that the solution will be based on UN resolutions 194 and 242. The refugees would be given five choices for permanent residency. These are: the Palestinian state and

the Israeli areas transferred to the Palestinian state in the territorial exchange mentioned above; no restrictions would be imposed on refugee return to these two areas. Residency in the other three areas (in host countries, third countries, and Israel) would be subject to the decision of these states. As a basis for its decision Israel will consider the average number of refugees admitted to third countries like Australia, Canada, Europe, and others. All refugees would be entitled to compensation for their “refugeehood” and loss of property. In December 2010, 41% agreed with an identical compromise while 57% opposed it.

Among Israelis 42% support such an arrangement and 51% oppose it. In December 2010, 36% supported it and 52% opposed.

(3) Jerusalem

In the Palestinian public 40% support and 59% oppose a Jerusalem compromise in which East Jerusalem would become the capital of the Palestinian state with Arab neighborhoods coming under Palestinian sovereignty and Jewish neighborhoods coming under Israeli sovereignty. The Old City (including al Haram al Sharif) would come under Palestinian sovereignty with the exception of the Jewish Quarter and the Wailing Wall that would come under Israeli sovereignty. In December 2010, an identical compromise obtained 36% support and 63% opposition.

Among Israelis, 38% agree and 60% disagree to the arrangement in which the Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem including the old city and the Temple Mount will come under Palestinian sovereignty, the Jewish neighborhoods including the Jewish quarter and the Wailing Wall will come under Israeli sovereignty, East Jerusalem will become the capital of the Palestinian state and West Jerusalem the capital of Israel. In December 2010, similarly, 38% supported this arrangement and 58% opposed it.

(4) Demilitarized Palestinian State

Among Palestinians 32% support and 67% oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian state that would have no army, but would have a strong security force and would have a multinational force deployed in it to ensure its security and safety. Israel and Palestine would be committed to end all forms of violence directed against each other. A similar compromise received in December 2010, 24% support, and opposition reached 74%.

This item receives the lowest level of support by Palestinians, as in previous polls, although the current level of support is the highest since 2003. Unlike the refugees and Jerusalem components, this issue has not received due attention in public discourse, as it should, since it may become a major stumbling block in the efforts to reach a settlement.

Among Israelis 67% support and 33% oppose this arrangement compared to 62% support and 34% opposition obtained in December 2010.

(5) Security Arrangements

In the Palestinian public 50% support and 49% oppose a compromise whereby the Palestinian state would have sovereignty over its land, water, and airspace, but Israel would have the right to use the Palestinian airspace for training purposes, and would maintain two early warning stations in the West Bank for 15 years. A multinational force

would remain in the Palestinian state and in its border crossings for an indefinite period of time. The task of the multinational force would be to monitor the implementation of the agreement, and to monitor territorial borders and coast of the Palestinian state including the presence at its international crossings. This is a significant increase in support compared to December 2010, when 38% of the Palestinians supported this parameter while 61% opposed it.

In the Israeli public 63% support and 33% oppose this arrangement compared to 52% who supported it and 39% who opposed it in December 2010 – a similar increase in support as among Palestinians.

(6) End of Conflict

In the Palestinian public 63% support and 35% oppose a compromise on ending the conflict that would state that when the permanent status agreement is fully implemented, it will mean the end of the conflict and no further claims will be made by either side. The parties will recognize Palestine and Israel as the homelands of their respective peoples. In December 2010 58% supported and 41% opposed this item.

In the Israeli public 70% support and 27% oppose this component in the final status framework. In December 2010, similarly, 68% of the Israelis supported it while 25% opposed it.

Expectations regarding the recognition by the UN of the Palestinian state

- 52% of Palestinians think that a state of Palestine will become a UN member in 2012, while 42% do not believe so. Among Israelis, 44% think this will happen while 49% do not believe so.
- Palestinians were asked how they think Palestinians can force Israel to withdraw from the territories, if the UN recognizes the Palestinian state, and Israelis what they think Palestinians will do. 47% of Israelis think the Palestinians will resume the Intifada including armed confrontations, while 25% think they will start non-violent resistance such as peaceful demonstrations, and 17% think they will return to negotiations with the Israeli government. Palestinians however are split among these three options: 31% think peaceful non-violent resistance can force Israelis to withdraw; 30% think that armed attacks on army and settlers and 32% think that negotiations with Israeli can bring it to withdraw.

Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities

· 47% of Israelis support the bombing of Iran's nuclear facilities, 41% oppose it. 56% believe that the majority of the Israeli public supports such a strike, 25% think that a majority opposes it.

· Palestinians are split in their evaluation whether Israel will actually carry out a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities: 48% think it will strike, and 48% do not think so.

· 76% of Israelis think that if Israel were to carry out a military strike against Iran, Hamas and Islamic Jihad would retaliate by carrying out a military strike against Israel; 18% do not think so. 48% of Palestinians support such retaliation by Hamas and Islamic Jihad and 46% oppose it.

Conflict management and threat perceptions

Palestinians and Israelis support their government's position with regard to return to negotiations. 78% of Palestinians support Abbas's conditions for an acceptable term of reference or a freeze on settlement construction for returning to negotiations, while 20% oppose this policy. 69% of Israelis support Netanyahu's position that Israel should not accept these conditions; 29% oppose this position.

Given the stalemate in the negotiations and the admittance of the Palestinians to UNESCO as a member state, 54% of the Israelis and 38% of the Palestinians think that armed attacks will not stop or even increase and the two sides will not return to negotiations. 37% of the Israelis and 28% of the Palestinians believe that negotiations will continue but some armed attacks will continue as well. Only 5% of Israelis and 27% of Palestinians believe negotiations will continue and armed confrontations will stop.

Among Israelis, 50% are worried and 48% are not worried that they or their family may be harmed by Arabs in their daily life, compared to 58% who are worried and 42% who are not worried in September 2011. Among Palestinians 70% fear that their security and safety and that of their family are not assured compared to 73% in September.

The level of threat on both sides regarding the aspirations of the other side in the long run is very high. 60% of Palestinians think that Israel's goals are to extend its borders to cover all the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea and expel its Arab citizens, and 22% think the goals are to annex the West Bank while denying political rights to the Palestinians. The modal category among Israelis is that the Palestinians' aspirations in the long run are to conquer the State of Israel and destroy much of the Jewish population in Israel (45%); 22% think the goals of the Palestinians are to conquer the State of Israel. Only 17% of the Palestinians think Israel's aspirations in the long run are to withdraw from part or all of the territories occupied in 1967; and 29% of Israelis think the aspirations of the Palestinians are to regain some or all of the territories conquered in 1967.

Source: <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2011/p42ejoint.html#attitueds1>

Two State Solution

I am calling for a two-state solution. This is the only possible solution to end the hostilities and to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All other "solutions" would yield violence, the end of Israel as a Jewish-democratic state, or the destruction of Israel as we know it today. The Israeli temple and what it symbolizes – Jewish sovereign community leading independent life of a free nation – was destroyed twice. We are now living the third temple. If we won't learn from our mistakes, history might repeat itself. The writings on the wall are loud and clear.

On February 22, 2012 I am invited to present my ideas at Reading University. I'd be happy to deliver more talks upon invitation. This issue is far too important to be left to the terrorists, the zealots, and the builders.

Demography

According to the Israeli and Palestinian Central Bureaus of Statistics, in 2015 the number of Jews and Palestinians between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea will reach parity. From 2016 onwards, the Palestinians will have the majority.

Today, there are 5.6 million Palestinians and 5.8 million Jews;
There are 2.6 million Palestinians in the West Bank, and 1.6 million in the Gaza Strip.

In 2015, there will be 6.3 million Palestinians and 6.3 million Jews;
In 2020, 7.2 million Palestinians and 6.8 million Jews.

In the world there are presently 11.2 million Palestinians: 4.23 million in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; 4.99 in Arab countries; 1.37 million in Israel, and 636,000 in other countries.

It is an Israeli interest to establish peace with the Palestinians. The occupation cannot last forever. An apartheid State should not be established. Israel should retain its Jewish and democratic character. The only way to achieve both ends is a two state solution.

Source: <http://heskem.org.il/media-view.asp?id=2892&meid=97>

UN: Gaza Blockade – Collective Punishment

UN releases annual report on humanitarian conditions in Palestinian territories, asserting that food, sanitation and economic straits are dire due to Israeli occupation. The report paints a grim picture about the situation: food insecurity, isolation, violence and failing health and education services – all courtesy of the Israeli occupation. The number of civilian casualties rose in 2011 by more than 30% in Gaza and the West Bank compared to 2010.

"Serious protection and human rights issues, limited access to essential services and entrenched levels of food insecurity continue to characterize the day-to-day lives of many Palestinians," the report stated.

"Israeli authorities continued to impose a blockade on Gaza, amounting to collective punishment of the population and affecting every aspect of life in the Gaza Strip".

The report maintains that the policies that restrict the Gazans' access to areas with viable agriculture and fishing prospects constrain their livelihoods. Moreover, restrictions on the movement of goods and people into Gaza compromise the region's health, education and sanitation services.

The UN also addressed the situation in East Jerusalem, arguing that the Palestinian population there is growing isolated from the rest of the West Bank. Furthermore, the residents of Area C – which makes up 60% of the West Bank and is under Israeli control – have been facing escalating rates of home demolitions, settler violence and restricted travel.

"The threat to lives and livelihoods became too great for many, coping strategies were overwhelmed and an increasing number of Palestinians were displaced from their homes and their land".

"Progress in the peace process is desperately needed – the coping strategies of Palestinian communities are being eroded with each year that passes," the report said.

Israeli Ambassador to the UN Ron Prosor slammed the Security Council for "wasting time on an issue that does not pose a humanitarian crisis." He noted that while Gaza saw a 28% growth in its Gross Domestic Product, 4 million Somalis are starving and people in Haiti, Sudan and Afghanistan don't have access to water.

Source: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4177710,00.html>

Israel Concerned Over Syrian Non-Conventional Weapons

Israel is worried that the deepening instability in Syria could lead to thousands of chemical and biological weapons falling into the hands of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorists.

Former Israeli Defense Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, said he fears the Lebanese-based militia could get its hands on weapons pile stockpiled in Syria: "We are talking in terms of thousands of missiles that might move to Hezbollah and might endanger the whole Middle East".

Source:

<http://www.theisraelproject.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=ewJXKcOUJlIaG&b=7712195&ct=11589329¬oc=1&tr=y&auid=10160665#.TxhvMYG0J8E>

Palestine in 1896

This is a short video filmed in Jerusalem in 1896.

<http://andrewsullivan.thedailybeast.com/2012/01/peace-in-palestine.html>

Book Review of Ahron Bregman, "Israel's Wars" (London: Routledge, 2010), Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 24, No. 11 (2011), pp. 161-165.

This is the third edition of this book, first published in 2000. This interesting and readable book provides detailed accounts of the Israeli Independence War, the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War and the two Lebanon wars. The book offers far less detailed accounts of the Sinai 1956 War, and the 1968-1970 War of Attrition. Bregman also analyses the 1987-1993 Intifada, and the so-called Al-Aqsa intifada (2000-2005) although both cannot be called wars in conventional terms. Bregman's distinctive insights relate to the Liberty affair during the Six Day War, and the significant role of the Egyptian double agent in the Yom Kippur War.



The Israeli Independence War

Bregman explains that the war started after the UN partition resolution of November 29, 1947. The initial phase was characterized by Arab attacks on Jewish convoys and street fighting in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and in the Old City of Jerusalem. In this first phase, the Jewish Haganah was stronger than the Arab opposition. It comprised 45,000 men and women. In addition, the two smaller paramilitary organizations – Irgun and Lehi – contributed some 3,000 fighters. The Arab force was comparatively smaller, and it lacked central coordination, facts that Bregman highlights. However, merely counting troops would not suffice. Bregman fails to mention that many of the new immigrants came from the ruins of Europe, marred and scarred by the Nazi machinery utilized with all its might to destroy them. Many did not have a common language, and did not speak the local language, Hebrew. These people, who survived the Holocaust, were immediately thrown into yet another war.

Sinai 1956 War

From its inception in May 1948, Israel had to face hostile neighbours that refused to come to terms with its very existence. The second major war broke out mere eight years after the Independence War. Bregman dedicates only six pages to this war. This is a major weakness of the book. Readers are advised to read other sources to understand the reasons for this war, its complexities and outcomes. Bregman's analysis is very deficient.

The Six Day War

Bregman's analysis of the Six Day War is solid. He explains the events leading to the war and its conduct. Israel certainly did not want this war. It was imposed on it by the Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was carried away by his own hostile rhetoric and started a snowball process where one move led to another (entering troops into Sinai; ordering the UN peace-keeping force to leave; closing the Straits of Tiran, which constituted a clear casus belli from Israel's standpoint), bringing about the escalation that pushed Israel to launch a pre-emptive strike on June 5, 1967. That pre-emptive strike largely decided the outcome of the war.

Bregman sheds light on a side episode that took place on June 8, 1967. On that day, Israel launched an attack on the American spy ship *Liberty*. As a result, 34 US sailors died and 171 wounded. From the recordings of the conversation over the radio system of the Israeli pilots during the attack, it is revealed that the Israeli commanders did know of the air attack on the ship, and before the navy moved in to launch the final knockout, that *Liberty* was an American vessel (p. 89). According to Bregman, Israel wished to prevent

the US from following the events closely as it was mobilizing forces in the Galilee in order to seize the Golan Heights.

War of Attrition

This war, which Bregman calls, with some justification, "The forgotten war" is quite neglected in the book. He does not forget the war but his 9-page short analysis leaves the reader with many question marks. This was a nagging war, with no glorious battles, no celebrations and photo-op, just a constant drip of more casualties with no ends in sight. Between March 1969 to August 1970, 138 Israeli soldiers were killed and 375 wounded. A total of 400 Israelis were killed and more than 2,000 wounded between the end of the 1967 war and August 1970, the day of the ceasefire between Israel and Egypt (p. 101). The scale of the Egyptian losses is believed to be much weightier; some claim it to be around 10,000 dead or wounded.

Yom Kippur War

The next war took place in 1973. Bregman describes President Anwar el-Sadat's peace initiative of 1971, which was utterly rejected with no proper consideration by Prime Minister Golda Meir. Israel clarified to Sadat that the key to reach a compromise is by force. Sadat shifted to a militant position and began to prepare his army for war. Bregman gives much weight to the role played by Ashraf Marwan, son-in-law of Gamal Abdel Nasser, a man with good connections in all the right places. Israel hired his services without realizing that he was a double agent. Marwan fooled the Israelis and helped to create one of the major deceptions in modern warfare.

Israel's wrong conception was that Egypt would wage war on Israel only after it had obtained advanced fighter-bombers and Scuds (p. 114). The conception was built upon Marwan's analysis. In truth, however, Sadat realized that Moscow was unlikely to provide him with those weapons. Furthermore, Marwan embarked on a successful disinformation campaign. He told Israel that Sadat will attempt to attack on May 15, 1973. The Israeli leaders took his warning seriously. On April 19, Israel mobilized its reserve forces. It dispersed them on August 12. This futile mobilization cost Israel a fortune - \$45 million dollars and it had critical implications. When Sadat mobilized forces in early October, the recent false mobilization that exhausted vital resources was fresh in the government ministers' minds, and they hesitated to call up the reserves again, fearing another costly false alarm. The wrong conception, together with misplaced self-confidence and fear of criticism, brought about a successful Egyptian campaign at the start of hostilities. Israel even ignored an explicit warning of its neighbour, King Hussein, who on September 25, 1973 flew to Israel to meet Golda Meir to tell her that the Syrian army was preparing for war (p. 119). Thus, on the eve of the 1973 Yom Kippur (October 6) 450 Israeli troops had to face the entire Egyptian army (p. 126). Mobilization of reserves started only the same day at around 10 a.m. Bregman critically writes that the "initial success of Egypt and Syria was partly due to the foolishness and ineptitude of Israel's leadership" (p. 131). The Israeli Defence Force (IDF) lost 2,569 men, with 7,251 wounded and 314 taken prisoners.

The Lebanon War

On June 3, 1982, an Abu Nidal Group (a terror organization opposed to the PLO) terrorist shot and maimed Shlomo Argov, the Israeli Ambassador to London. This was the trigger to a long, unnecessary war that divided Israeli society for many years. Operation Peace for Galilee was intended by Prime Minister Begin to last no more than 48 hours,

aimed to destroy the PLO in a radius of 40 kilometres north of the Israeli border. Bregman argues that Defence Minister Ariel Sharon had different plans in mind. Sharon aimed at reaching the gates of Beirut and to engage with the Syrian military force in Lebanon. Those aims were not known to the Israeli cabinet that authorized the operation (p. 170). The siege of Beirut led to the PLO departure from Lebanon. Arafat and his men were forced to move to Tunis. Many in Israel also rejoiced on August 23, 1982, when its ally the Maronite Christian leader Bashir Gemayel was elected President of Lebanon. For the first time in Israel's short history, the IDF was inside an Arab capital, holding strategic positions inside Beirut. These perceived achievements, however, soon crumbled. On September 14, President Gemayel was assassinated. On September 16-18, 1982, Christian Phalangists militia, headed by Elie Hobeika, massacred some 1,700 refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps under the watch of Israeli battalions. Many citizens in Israel were shocked and appalled. A movement called Soldiers against Silence was established, calling for the removal from office of Ariel Sharon and for an immediate end to the war (p. 176). The war was very costly: Between June 5, 1982, and May 31, 1985, 1,216 soldiers died. In 1985, Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon, with the exception of a security zone extending eight miles into south Lebanon to protect Israeli civilians from terror attacks. Only on May 24, 2000, when Prime Minister Ehud Barak was in power, did Israel withdraw completely from Lebanon, ending a 22-year military presence there.

The Second Lebanon War

The Second Lebanon War, known also as the **Israel-Hezbollah War**, was the second war of choice. On July 12, 2006, the Hezbollah terrorist organization attacked two Israeli Defense Forces' armoured Hummer jeeps patrolling along the border with gunfire and explosives, in the midst of massive shelling attacks on Israel's north. Three soldiers were killed in the attack and two were taken hostage. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) began heavy artillery and tank fire. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert convened the government on July 12, 2006 to decide Israel's reaction. The government agreed that the attack had created a completely new situation on the northern border, and that Israel must take steps that will "exact a price", and restore its deterrence. The Israeli-Hezbollah War had started after one rushed and short governmental meeting, without realizing the full implications of the decision. The war ended on August 14, 2006 when the UN Security Council Resolution (no. 1701) went into force. As was the case in the 1982 Lebanon War, during the war voices of protest were heard in Israel, mainly from reserve service soldiers, journalists, and distinguished writers. After the war, thousands of people demanded the establishment of a national inquiry committee to investigate the war's events and called for the resignation of the war architects: Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Minister of Defence Amir Peretz, and Chief of Staff Dan Halutz. Later Halutz and Olmert resigned their respective offices, while Peretz lost in the internal Labour elections to Ehud Barak and was ousted from the Ministry of Defence.

The Palestinian Uprising and Terror Attacks

Bregman dedicates two chapters to the Palestinian intifada of 1987-1993, and to the so-called Al-Aqsa intifada of 2000-2005. I write "so-called" because the latter awakening was largely dictated from above, by the PLO leadership that also equipped its people with weapons to shoot Israelis. Whereas the 1987-1993 intifada was a popular uprising of people throwing stones in the main, the latter was an orchestrated terror campaign mobilized from above.

Conclusion

Israel's Wars is a concise, useful resource for students and other interested people who wish to understand the causes and conduct of some of the Israeli wars from 1948 until now. Bregman's clear language and ability to focus on the most important factors leading to the wars makes the book accessible to the general public. Its Index and Select Bibliography are certainly valuable though the latter requires an update. Some of the book's chapters (1, 3, 4, 5 and 8) are recommended for any course on the Arab-Israeli conflict. For the fourth edition, it is recommended to treat the 1956 War and the War of Attrition as comprehensively as the other wars are treated. The book requires a further edition as, unfortunately, Israel waged another limited war, this time on Gaza in December 2008-January 2009 (operation "Cast Lead"). While Israel is justified to protect its citizens from terror, the out-of-proportion attack on civilians was staggering and has subjected Israel to continued criticism. No doubt, Bregman has his own thoughts about this operation. I hope he will update this most important book for the benefit of more readers interested in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Front Line seeking nominations for human rights defenders award

Front Line is seeking nominations for the 2012 Front Line Defenders Award, which honours the work of human rights defenders at risk. The deadline for nominations is 30 January 2012.

The 15,000-Euro (US\$19,400) award focuses international attention on the work of a human rights defender or a group of human rights defenders who, through non-violent work, are courageously making an outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of the human rights of others, often at great personal risk to themselves.

http://www.ifex.org/international/2012/01/04/front_line_human_rights_defender_award/

Index Freedom of Expression Awards

The 12th annual Index Freedom of Expression Awards will be held on 28 March. They will honour those who, often at great personal risk, have given voice to issues and stories from around the globe that would otherwise have passed unnoticed.

The awards recognise:

- High quality work that promotes and defends free expression
- Work that took place or was created during 2011 and reflects current issues

Index on Censorship 40th Anniversary award

A special award in celebration of our 40th anniversary, recognising an organisation or individual who has done outstanding work in defence of free expression

Journalism award

This award recognises journalism of dogged determination and bravery

Innovation award

This award recognises the use of computer or internet technology to foster debate, argument or dissent. Nominations can also include those who enhance online freedom through the use of new technologies

Arts award

Recognising visual and creative arts that support or promote freedom of expression, or artists facing censorship for their work

Advocacy award

Awarded to campaigners who have fought repression, or have struggled to change political climates and perceptions

Send your nominations to [awards\[at\]indexoncensorship.org](mailto:awards[at]indexoncensorship.org) or post them in the comment section below by Wednesday 25th January 2012.

<http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2012/01/index-freedom-of-expression-awards-2012/>

Movie of the Month - Sarah's Key (2011)

This is a story about a key that affected the lives of two families across two generations. It startled them, moved them and changed them forever, bringing darkness, destruction and death but also light, redemption and life.



Sarah's Key is based on a novel written by Tatiana de Rosnay (<http://www.amazon.com/Sarahs-Key-Tatiana-Rosnay/dp/0312370849>). The novel was rejected time and again by many publishers until one accepted it. The book became a best seller, was translated to dozens of languages, and made into this film.

Sarah and her little brother Michele are playing in their bedroom. They are joyful and happy. Their mother is in the living room. This is a normal episode that takes place in many homes. The period, however, is anything but normal. It is Paris, July 1942. The serenity is interfered by loud knocks on the door. "Open the Door. Police". The mother hesitates. Sarah (Mélusine Mayance), a curious ten-year girl, steps out the bedroom to see what is going on. Her mother opens the door. Two French officers enter the living room and order the mother to pack some essential things and to come with them. They have a

list of all occupants of the home. They ask where the father and the little child, Michele, are. The mother, who understands that this cannot be good, says she does not know. Sarah quietly withdraws to her bedroom. She tells Michele that they need to play a game. She asks him to hide in the closet, gives him some water, asks him to be very quiet and promises him she will return, soon. Both Michele and Sarah know that Sarah takes her promises very seriously. Michele quietly enters the closet. Sarah closes the door behind him and takes the key with her.

Sarah and her mother are taken away. Soon the father joins them and with thousands of other Jews they are taken to the notorious Vel' D'Hiv (<http://www.massviolence.org/the-vel-d-hiv-round-up>). Sarah is determined to return home to rescue Michele. She promised him. She holds the closet key close to heart. This is the key to her future.

Sixty seven years later, Sarah's story intertwines with that of Julia Jarmond (Kristin Scott Thomas), an American journalist in Paris who takes upon herself to investigate the Jewish roundup and discovers that she and Sarah have something in common. In her research, Julia stumbles onto a trail of family secrets and, as a devoted journalist, she is determined to unveil the truth no matter how painful the truth might be. Sarah's key would change her life, and the life of Sarah's child who knew little about his mother's identity and past.



Mélusine Mayance and Kristin Scott Thomas are credible, sensitive and incredible. This is nothing unusual for Scott Thomas. It is the first time that Mayance comes to my attention. She has a great future.

Sarah's Key is the best movie I have seen this year.

Monthly Poems

A Game of Chess

Played in Washington and Tehran



The pieces on the chessboard
 The powerful and even the pawns
 Neither white nor black
 Make a move.

Frozen.

Frozen by a dark fear
 That a weakness
 Would be discovered
 And the stalemate

Broken.



William Miller and Rafi Cohen-Almagor at a poetry reading, Wilson Center

William Miller

A Calendar of Sonnets: January

O Winter! frozen pulse and heart of fire,
 What loss is theirs who from thy kingdom turn
 Dismayed, and think thy snow a sculptured urn
 Of death! Far sooner in midsummer tire
 The streams than under ice. June could not hire

Her roses to forego the strength they learn
 In sleeping on thy breast. No fires can burn
 The bridges thou dost lay where men desire
 In vain to build.

O Heart, when Love's sun goes
 To northward, and the sounds of singing cease,
 Keep warm by inner fires, and rest in peace.
 Sleep on content, as sleeps the patient rose.
 Walk boldly on the white untrodden snows,
 The winter is the winter's own release.



Helen Hunt Jackson

[Beautiful Time-Lapse Video Takes You Around the World in 6,237 Photos](#)

This stunning time-lapse video puts you in the passenger seat of one man's almost year-long adventure across 17 countries.

<http://mashable.com/2012/01/13/time-lapse-video-around-the-world/>

Light Side - Life of Medics

1. A man comes into the ER and yells . . .'
 My wife's going to have her baby in the cab.'
 I grabbed my stuff, rushed out to the cab, lifted the lady's dress and began to take off her underwear.
 Suddenly I noticed that there were several cabs - - - and I was in the wrong one.

Submitted by Dr. Mark MacDonald ,
 San Francisco



2. While acquainting myself with a new elderly patient, I asked, 'How long have you been bedridden?'

After a look of complete confusion she answered . . .

'Why, not for about twenty years - when my husband was alive.'

Submitted by Dr. Steven Swanson-
Corvallis, OR

3. A nurse was on duty in the Emergency Room when a young woman with purple hair styled into a punk rocker Mohawk, sporting a variety of tattoos, and wearing strange clothing, entered ... It was quickly determined that the patient had acute appendicitis, so she was scheduled for immediate surgery... When she was completely disrobed on the operating Table, the staff noticed that her pubic hair had been dyed green and above it there was a Tattoo that read ...'Keep off the grass.'

Once the surgery was completed, the surgeon wrote a short note on the patient's dressing, which said 'Sorry ... Had to mow the lawn.'

Submitted by RN no name

Peace and love.

Yours as ever,

Rafi

My last communications are available on <http://almagor.blogspot.com/>

Earlier posts at my home page: <http://hcc.haifa.ac.il/~rca/>

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