



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*

Commentary...

A Familiar Illusion By Nadav Shragai

The peddlers of illusions who leaped with joy over Jibril Rajoub's alleged willingness to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Western Wall got a chilling wake-up call over the weekend.

Rajoub, who will vie for leadership of the Palestinian Authority once Mahmoud Abbas resigns, essentially rescinded his comment, clarifying that he strictly meant "Jewish religious oversight" at the Western Wall.

Mahmoud al-Habash, Abbas' adviser on religious affairs, drove the point home further over the weekend, in case any naive souls still remain among us. "The Wall is Muslim Waqf, part of Al-Aqsa mosque ... and belongs only to Muslims. They alone will have sovereignty over it," al-Habash elucidated. And the Palestinians? They won't give up "even one millimeter of the Wall or the sprawling plaza at its feet."

At best, if we are to accept Rajoub's own clarification, all we have here is Muslim willingness to tolerate our presence at the Western Wall and Jerusalem in general -- not as a sovereign entity or nation, but as a religion protected under Islam. This is precisely what was offered to us by the British Mandate during the "Western Wall tensions" of 1929: permission to use the Western Wall alley, or present-day plaza, sans recognition of our rights and sovereignty there. It is not for this that we founded a state.

At worst, and sadly more realistically, the Palestinians would happily boot us from the Western Wall plaza if they only could -- they openly admit it -- and rebuild the Mughrabi Quarter (or Moroccan Quarter), which we removed in 1967, around it. The residents of the Mughrabi Quarter, for those who have forgotten, desecrated the Wall by using it as a bathroom, with donkeys, other beasts and even people defecating at the site, and Jews were even charged a protection tariff for permission to pray there.

Everyone knows the nature of the Palestinian-Muslim discourse about the Wall. Rajoub's approach might have seemed new, but we can now see it as typical Palestinian deceit and double-speak: a smokescreen spoken in Hebrew for the benefit of naive Israelis, and candor spoken in Arabic for the Palestinian audience.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who emphasized the Jewish bond to the Western Wall during his recent visit, essentially prodded Rajoub into speaking out on the matter, similar to the backlash from Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to the Wall in 2012, when he said Jewish history is clearly etched into the city's stones. Then, too, the remarks elicited a hailstorm of Palestinian denial and slander. The Palestinians, Turks, the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, occasionally the Jordanians and even religious figures from Egypt, see the Wall as part of the Al-Aqsa compound -- the place where Muhammad tethered his miraculous winged steed, Buraq, after his overnight journey from Mecca to Jerusalem.

In the past, the Muslims themselves said Buraq was actually tethered to either the Eastern Wall or Southern Wall. Only when Jews began praying there regularly, the "tethering spot" drifted to the Western Wall. Nowadays, the PA vows that Arab homes will eventually be built over the Western Wall plaza, because the Jewish presence there is a "sinful defilement." (Israel Hayom Jun 12)

The Salvation of Israel's Academia By Haim Shine

What if a philosophy lecturer, seeking to demonstrate the principle of logical syllogism, said the following to his students: "The Left hates Israel. Person A is a leftist. Therefore: A hates Israel."

I have no doubt that in such a scenario, the champions of academic freedom would have been outraged. "How dare a lecturer take advantage of the academic platform to malign an entire group?" they would have demanded. No one would have bothered making impassioned speeches in the media about the lecturer's freedom of academic expression or decrying the attempt to dictate what the lecturer can or cannot discuss in class. In

Israel, it seems, freedom of expression is preserved for the mechanisms of the Left.

The ethical code created by Professor Asa Kasher may be the final attempt to prevent the public from completely losing faith in Israeli academia because of its clear political

bias. A small but noisy and militant group must not be allowed, under the respectable cloak of academic freedom of expression, to indoctrinate and re-educate students. The Jewish spiritual world and the ancient Greeks taught us that only genuine debate and free exchanges of ideas can ensure the truth. The cynical use of academia to promote radical political positions is the antithesis of what academia should represent. There is no true academia without integrity and decency. Unfortunately, lecturers and courses of study in Israel have become political agents. The fact is that most of the people railing against the ethical code are lecturers who identify with the Left.

The majority of institutions of higher education in Israel are controlled by the Left. In order to further an academic career, lecturers must align with the spirit of the academic establishment. Like-minded academics bring along their like-minded friends, because two heads are better than one. In recent years, some Israeli academics have contributed immensely to the increasing boycotts against Israel, including academic boycotts. Liberal arts and social science lecturers have internalized that in order to get their articles published in foreign journals or be invited to academic conferences they have to paint Israel in a negative light.

Lecturers have been using the academic platform to air their personal opinions, regardless of the subject being taught. Some of the conferences and discussions held at Israeli universities over the years may as well have been held in Palestinian institutions of higher learning, and the more radical ones at that. Academics have disparaged Israeli soldiers, making them out to be cruel occupiers and perpetrators of apartheid. One lecturer went as far as to forbid uniformed soldiers from entering his class.

Under a cloak of sophistication and fancy titles, academic departments have served as hotbeds of post-Zionism and one-dimensional thinking. University clinics work in the service of radical leftist associations, but never for right-wing associations. Things must change before the malediction completely takes over. It is my hope that the ethical code will promote a new and in-depth public discussion on the relationship between academic freedom of expression and freedom of sermonizing and incitement, between a wealth of opinions and a world as narrow as an ant's. (Israel Hayom Jun 12)

The PA-North Korean Connection By Yoram Ettinger

A thorough examination of the track record of the Palestinian Authority, the PLO, Fatah (all three headed by Mahmoud Abbas) and Hamas is a prerequisite for a realistic assessment of the nature of the proposed Palestinian state and its potential impact upon vital U.S. interests in the Middle East.

North Korea has scrutinized these terror organizations since Fatah's inception, in 1959, and has identified the significant, long-term, geo-political synergies between them and Pyongyang. Hence, the systematic and elaborate geo-strategic cooperation, since 1966, between one of the most repressive, terroristic and anti-U.S. regimes in the world and the Palestinian terror organizations, which have been systematically anti-American, role models of international and intra-Arab terrorism, subversion and treachery. Similarly to North Korea, they forged alliances with the USSR and the ruthless East European communist regimes, collaborated with Iran's ayatollahs, fomenting egregious systems of hate-education, incitement and repression.

Furthermore, Pyongyang is aware of the Palestinian trail of anti-Jewish and (mostly) intra-Arab terrorism during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, their collaboration with the Nazis, and their 1951 murder of Jordan's King Abdullah, while the monarch prayed in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque.

It's also no surprise that a ruthless totalitarian like Kim Jong Un, who would never submit to the judgment of the ballot box, would support Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, now in his 12th year of

what was to be a four-year term.

North Korea considers its ties with the Palestinians compatible with its paramount strategic goal: the erosion of the U.S. power projection in the Korean Peninsula, the Middle East and throughout the globe. Therefore, Pyongyang has attempted to destabilize pro-U.S. regimes while forging cooperation with regimes that are rivals of -- or hostile to -- the U.S. and its allies, such as Israel.

North Korea has supported terror organizations -- which have targeted the U.S. and its allies -- providing them with training, military supplies, communications technologies, and expertise on the construction of tunnels and fortifications.

North Korea has considered Iran and Syria its senior partners in the Middle East, but has also provided the Palestinian terror machine critical assistance.

Moreover, Pyongyang has leveraged the unique Palestinian "terror startup" -- developed ever since the 1960s -- when Arafat and Abbas established PLO camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan and Yemen, training anti-Western terrorists from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Latin America.

The Palestinians have participated in the North Korean semi-proxy terrorist network, stretching from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela, through South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Western Sahara, Europe, Syria and Iran all the way to Sri Lanka and Japan.

While Israel's security control of the mountain ridges of Judea and Samaria precludes substantial North Korean military assistance to the Palestinian Authority, such assistance has been extended to Hamas in Gaza. Thirty-five tons of arms destined for Gaza via Teheran -- including rocket-propelled grenades, missiles and rocket launchers, missile tubes, surface-to-air missile launchers and spare parts -- were seized when a North Korean cargo plane made an emergency landing in Bangkok. In addition, during 2009, five North Korean vessels were interdicted while carrying weapons intended for Iran, Hamas or Hezbollah. Recently, Palestinian terrorists in Gaza received North Korean shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles and anti-tank missiles.

North Korea has been implicated in notorious cases of Palestinian terrorism, such as the 1972 attack (in conjunction with the Japanese Red Army) on Lod Airport, murdering 26 persons, most of them Christian pilgrims from Puerto Rico. In 2010, a U.S. federal judge ordered North Korea to pay \$378 million in compensation to the families of the victims.

According to Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the North Korean Workers' Party, the Palestinian Embassy to North Korea (one of only 24 embassies in the country) issued a statement expressing Abbas' praise of the current and previous tyrants for "devoting [themselves] to freedom and people's happiness." Such praise reflects Abbas' own track record of hate-education, terrorism and violation of civil liberties, providing more evidence of the nature of the proposed Palestinian state. (Israel Hayom Jun 12)

How to Send the Wrong Message to Palestinians By Bassam Tawil

US President Donald J. Trump's waiver delaying the relocation of the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem accomplishes two things.

First, it disappoints many Israelis for failing to fulfill his pre-election promise. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it has sent precisely the wrong message to the Palestinians. What the Palestinians and other Arabs heard in this message is that the US president folds under pressure and threats.

This message of weakness and retreat harms not only Trump's credibility, but also that of the US by making it appear a country that caves under threats of violence.

In general, it is Trump's presentation of power that garners respect among many Palestinians and Arabs. The Arabs admire and respect such figures because they have been ruled for decades by ruthless tyrants and dictators such as Saddam Hussein. But the Arabs also respect leaders who keep their promises, even if they disagree with and oppose those promises.

Trump's decision to delay the relocation of the US embassy came after repeated threats by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and some Arabs that such a move would "plunge the entire region into violence and bloodshed." These threats began during Trump's election campaign and escalated after he entered the White House.

President Donald Trump's decision to delay the relocation of the US embassy in Israel (pictured) from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem came after repeated threats by the Palestinian Authority that such a move would "plunge the entire region into violence and bloodshed." (Image source: Krokodyl/Wikimedia Commons)

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and his cohorts in Ramallah spearheaded the campaign of threats and intimidation. They even

went as far as threatening to revoke their recognition of Israel's right to exist if Trump dared to fulfill his promise.

Last January, Abbas was quoted as saying that the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem would prompt the Palestinians to withdraw their recognition of Israel.

"I wrote a letter to President Trump urging him to refrain from such a move. I made it clear to him that such a move would not only deprive the US of playing any legitimate role in solving the conflict, but would also destroy the two-state solution."

Abbas's mufti, Sheikh Mohammed Hussein, warned Trump that transferring the embassy to Jerusalem would be seen as an "aggression not only against the Palestinians, but against all Arabs and Muslims as well." PLO Secretary-General Saeb Erekat joined the chorus of threats by warning Trump that moving the embassy to Jerusalem would "plunge the Middle East into violence and chaos."

The Palestinian threats were accompanied by threats from some Arab governments and Islamic clerics. They too warned Trump that the transfer of the embassy to Jerusalem would trigger a wave of violence and jeopardize US interests in the Middle East. The former mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah, said that moving the embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem would "constitute a grave escalation and threaten US interests in the region." Another leading Egyptian Islamic cleric, Sheikh Ibrahim Reda, warned that such a move would "trigger a wave of tensions in the region and constitute an aggression against Arabs and Muslims."

Such threats on the part of Palestinians are nothing new. In fact, Mahmoud Abbas and his colleagues issue similar "warnings" whenever they do not get what they want. This is one of their favored tactics against Israel.

For example, the Palestinians used to warn that Israel's construction of the security barrier in the West Bank would result in violence and anarchy. In reality, however, the security barrier has led to exactly opposite; it has halted suicide bombings against Israel, and saved the lives not only of Jews, but also Arabs who were killed in the wave of terrorism waged by the Palestinians during the Second Intifada.

"Palestinians warn" is one of the most popular results on Google Search.

More recently, for example, the Palestinians "warned" Israel against introducing a new curriculum for Arab schools in Jerusalem by claiming this would lead to the "Judaization" and "Israelization" of Jerusalem.

Last month, the Palestinians came out with another "warning" -- this time, that if Israel does not comply with the demands of Palestinian prisoners who went on hunger strike, there would be a "new intifada."

After 40 days of the hunger strike, the prisoners backtracked and ended their fast -- although most of their demands were not met by Israel.

All this is added to the daily threats Abbas and many Palestinians have been making for the past two years regarding visits by Jews to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Hardly a day passes without another threat being issued by the Palestinians about these visits.

The Palestinians work hard to convince the world that routine and peaceful tours of Jewish groups and individuals to the Temple Mount are part of an Israeli "conspiracy" to destroy the Aqsa Mosque and "defile" Islamic religious sites. They have also been warning that the visits would trigger a "religious war" between Jews and Muslims and lead to a "big explosion" and an "earthquake" in the Middle East.

True, the Palestinian incitement over the Temple Mount visits has resulted in a wave of knife and car ramming attacks against Israelis, but no "religious war" has erupted and the Arab and Islamic countries do not seem overly concerned about Jewish visits to the Temple Mount.

These visits, by the way, have been taking place since 1967. The visits were suspended temporarily during the Second Intifada for security reasons, and were resumed about two years ago. It is also worth noting that Christian tourists also continue to tour the holy site -- something that does not seem to bother Abbas and his PA friends.

Israel, for its part, has learned to live with the incessant Palestinian threats and warnings. But the international community continues to take these threats seriously, ignoring the fact that by doing so they are constantly sending the wrong message to the Palestinians. Surrendering to threats of violence only emboldens the extremists and paves the way for more violence and bloodshed.

How moving the US embassy to Jerusalem "destroys" the so-called two-state solution is rather a mystery.

If and when the US embassy is moved from Tel Aviv, it will be set up in the western part of the city and not in East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians are demanding as their future capital. Only one thing can be inferred from this -- that the Palestinians also see the western part of Jerusalem too as part of their future capital.

The Palestinian and Arab threats of violence and chaos in the region sound laughable given the current state of affairs in many Arab countries,

including Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Libya, where Muslims have been slaughtering each other -- and Christians -- for the past six years.

The turmoil in the Arab world -- including the recent tensions surrounding Qatar -- is completely unrelated to US policies in particular, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general. Despite the myopia of Arab leaders and Islamic clerics, blood is already spilled at a rather alarming rate in the Arab countries.

The killings in Syria, Iraq and Libya will continue, regardless of whether Trump moves the US embassy to Jerusalem or not.

A further point ought to be of extreme interest to the US: When the Palestinians and Arabs talk about the possibility that such a move would "harm" US interests in the region and "trigger violence and bloodshed," they are actually threatening to launch terror attacks against American nationals and interests.

That is why Trump's recent decision not to move the embassy to Jerusalem is being understood in the Arab world as a surrender to terrorism.

From the Arab world's point of view, it shows the US as cowering under the threat of violence.

Does anyone seriously believe that the leaders of the Arab and Islamic countries really care whether the embassy is located in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv? Don't these leaders have enough to worry about, such as the Iranian threat to undermine the stability of their regimes and the threat of Islamic terrorism?

Does anyone seriously believe that the Arab and Muslim masses, who have to deal with massive unemployment, dictatorships and terrorism, really care whether the US embassy moves from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

The Palestinians were hoping that the Arab and Muslim masses would erupt over the Jewish visits to the Temple Mount, but most Arabs and Muslims remain indifferent. In fact, the Arabs and Muslims do not really care about the Palestinians; they have long turned their backs on their Palestinian brothers, who are today almost entirely dependent on American and European funding.

Moving the US embassy to Jerusalem will not lead to more anarchy. Christians in Egypt and Iraq are not being killed because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Syrians are not being systematically slaughtered because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Islamic State terror group is not butchering innocent civilians in the Arab world and some Western countries because it is upset with Jewish visits to the Temple Mount or settlement construction.

Palestinians and Arabs heaved a sigh of relief upon learning of Trump's decision to delay the transfer of the embassy to Jerusalem. They are now rubbing their hands in satisfaction and saying to themselves that threats of violence work because even someone like Trump will succumb.

In the eyes of many Arabs and Muslims, Trump is no longer the strong leader they feared a few months ago. Rather, he has proven to them that he too is susceptible to blackmail and intimidation. And when Trump caves, US credibility suffers. Had Trump gone ahead and fulfilled his promise to move the embassy, he would have earned the respect of many Arabs and Muslims, who would have looked to him as a proper leader.

Consider what happened when Trump recently ordered a missile attack on Syria, in response to the regime's continued killing of innocent civilians, including the use of poison gas. Many Arabs and Muslims took to social media to heap praise on Trump for displaying courage. If and when Trump honors his promises, he will earn even more respect in the Arab and Islamic countries. (Gatestone Institute Jun 13)

The writer is a Muslim based in the Middle East.

Palestinians Test US Secretary of State Tillerson By Aaron Lerner
"They [the PA] have changed their policy, at least I have been informed they have changed that policy, and they are, their intent is to cease the payments to the family members of those who have committed murder or violence against others. So, it is - we've been very clear with them that this is simply not acceptable to us. It is certainly not acceptable to the American people." - US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson at Senate Foreign Relations Committee 13 June 13, 2017

Note the phrase "at least I have been informed."

Since this testimony, Palestinian officials have made every effort to make it clear that Mr. Tillerson is misinformed.

So there are two possibilities now for Tillerson:

#1. The traditional State Department "three monkey" approach towards the Palestinians (hear no evil, see no evil...).

#2. Publicly express his profound disappointment that Mahmoud Abbas mislead him. And making it clear that since, as Tillerson noted at the hearing, "we've been very clear with them [the PA] that this is simply not acceptable to us," that there will be consequences.

Let's be clear about this.

The money to terrorists is the expression of the fundamental position

that Palestinians have not only an inherent right to murder Israelis (which is why Abbas insists all murderers be freed) but that those who murder Israelis do so for the benefit of the Palestinian collective regardless of how gruesome the act.

The ball is now in Tillerson's court.

How he reacts now will signal the Palestinians if he is indeed the patsy that they make him out to be. (IMRA Jun 14)

Untying the Gordian Knot of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Dore Gold

Last July, the Middle East Quartet was groping to find an explanation for why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict had not yet been resolved.

Israel, which had gone through an escalation of knifing attacks on its citizens rightfully stressed in its briefings the twin problems of continuing Palestinian violence and the state-sponsored incitement that promoted it. The Palestinians and their allies focused on their favorite topic -- Israeli settlements -- even though the original Oslo Agreements, in 1993 and 1995, did not require a freeze on settlements, and reserved them for final-status negotiations instead.

However, there was a critical factor in elongating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that was not touched by the Quartet. This past Sunday Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for dismantling UNRWA (the UN Relief and Works Agency). He charged that the very existence of UNRWA "perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem rather than solves it."

For years, Israeli officials have noted that UNRWA has provided a breeding ground for the growth of terrorist activity against Israel; indeed some of the greatest Hamas masterminds, like Ibrahim Maqadma and Salah Shehade, were graduates of UNRWA schools. In 2014, UNRWA used its schools for storing rockets. UNRWA building supplies were found to have been used by Hamas for tunnel construction. This month, a Hamas tunnel was discovered under two UNRWA schools.

UNRWA's role in perpetuating the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is less well known, despite the fact that its origins date back to UNRWA's founding in 1949. Unlike the millions of refugees after the Second World War, who were resettled in the countries in which they now resided and became citizens, the Palestinian-Arab refugees from the 1948 Arab-Israeli war maintained their refugee status.

The refugee problem eventually melted away in Europe and on the Indian Subcontinent, but the Palestinian refugee problem only got worse. UNRWA's own data puts the number of Palestinian refugees in 1948 at 750,000; today, according to UNRWA, the number of refugees has mushroomed to roughly five million. Successful refugee programs, like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), have led to a diminution of the refugee problem in different parts of the world. UNRWA had the exact opposite effect.

The heart of UNRWA's problem is definitional.

UNRWA established official eligibility criteria for its services; they included those who lost their home and livelihood in the 1948 war. Unlike other UN refugee agencies, however, UNRWA added "the descendants of Palestine refugee males." UNHCR carried no such provision for passing on refugee status to the next generation, but with UNRWA, there was no cut-off. UNRWA has now reached the fourth generation of refugees.

Refugee status has continued from generation to generation in perpetuity.

This helps explain several odd features of the Palestinian refugee problem.

There are 58 Palestinian refugee camps in the Middle East. With the implementation of the Oslo Accords in the 1990s, 26 of these camps fell under Palestinian control. Yet there was no any indication that a single Palestinian camp was about to be closed. It was clear that the Palestinian Authority wanted these camps to be retained despite the advent of Palestinian self-government. Even the new Palestinian city in the West Bank, Rawabi, was built not for refugees, but rather for upper middle class Palestinians who could afford it.

The only explanation for this behavior was that the Palestinian leadership wanted to keep their grievance with Israel alive. In other words, they wanted to perpetuate the conflict.

The problem of UNRWA is well known among experts on the Arab-Israel conflict.

Nevertheless, the effect of letting this issue fester for generations deserves greater consideration. More than any other issue, leaving the refugee problem intact for the future undermines any possibility of reaching reconciliation between the parties. You cannot resolve a conflict and perpetuate it at the same time.

Until now, international diplomats have overlooked the Palestinian refugee issue, preferring to deal first with other dimensions of the conflict.

But the Palestinians' preparedness to finally resolve this issue is probably the best litmus test of their intentions – of whether they are ready to end the conflict once and for all. If a new peace initiative is to start, it should include at the outset a program to dismantle the refugee camps and promote a massive international effort for the construction of new housing. This initiative should begin in the West Bank but also should include Jordan, which hosts the largest Palestinian refugee population in the world.

Dismantling UNRWA is critical in this effort. It is the international caretaker of the problematic definition of refugee status for the Palestinians, which has allowed this problem to expand continually.

No international convention contains so expansive a definition of refugees. It is astounding that the international community keeps demanding concessions from Israel yet to date has not done anything about the deleterious effects of allowing UNRWA's definition of Palestinian refugees to persist. (Jerusalem Post Jun 13)

How Israel Can Use the Western Trend Toward Greater Sovereignty

By Manfred Gerstenfeld

The tide in several Western countries is gradually turning toward asserting more sovereignty. If Israel's leaders study and understand this development it can open up important perspectives for policy making.

Some expressions of the trend are major. US President Donald Trump emphasizes sovereignty issues – sometimes in a brutal way. "America First" is a sovereignty message, as is implementing more stringent border controls by excluding undesirable and illegal immigrants. During his election campaign, Trump stated that people with antisemitic opinions should not be allowed to immigrate to the US. Major American Jewish organizations have however failed to promote this idea since Trump's election to office.

In the UK the majority vote for Brexit was based on the same desire for sovereignty. Many of those who voted to leave the European Union were largely motivated by their opposition to the EU's free movement of citizens of member countries. It seems that Eastern European immigrants worried Brexit supporters more than Muslims. After the three terrorist attacks this year by Muslims in London and Manchester, UK citizens may well regret that previous governments were not more selective in their entry policies.

In the past the UK did not join two EU sovereignty-reducing programs: the euro common currency and the Schengen Area which abolished internal border controls.

In practice, the Schengen group poorly protected their external borders.

Czech President Milos Zeman proposed that his country should hold a referendum on EU and NATO membership. He is in favor of staying in both organizations, but felt that citizens of his country should have an opportunity to express themselves on the issue.

Beyond this, there are also smaller movements to abandon EU membership. In the Netherlands, for instance, almost a quarter of parliamentarians belong to parties that want to leave the EU.

Sovereignty was also demonstrated in the refusal of some EU members to accept Syrian and other refugees that Brussels wanted to impose on them. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban was the first and most vocal opponent. In the final round of the French presidential elections Marine Le Pen, who wants to reestablish French border controls, received a third of the votes. A study by the leading Italian investment bank Mediobanca showed that it would be advantageous for Italy to leave the euro and reestablish the lira.

There have also been smaller expressions of sovereignty, which were less publicized internationally. In March of this year, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte refused to allow the plane of a Turkish minister – Turkey is a NATO ally – to fly to Rotterdam. The minister had intended to appeal to Dutch Turks with dual nationality to vote in a Turkish referendum to support greater power for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Peter Altmaier, the head of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's office, said that in view of derogatory remarks against Germany from leading Turkish politicians Germany was considering prohibiting their entry.

From time to time the Netherlands bans entry of radical Islamic preachers or "hate imams" as they are commonly known in the country. In October 2016, for the first time, Belgium expelled a Muslim hate preacher.

This fact was even more remarkable because this imam held not only Moroccan but also Dutch nationality. At the beginning of May 2017, Denmark refused entry to six hate preachers, five Muslims and one Evangelical Christian. This was based on new legislation passed in 2016.

Israel has been suffering from foreign interference in its affairs and large-scale incitement against it. Part of this is anti-Semitic, such as the activities of boycott promoters who exclusively target Israel. That is in line with the antisemitism definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. The discriminatory targeting of Israel was for instance explained in remarks by Curtis Marez, the president of the

American Studies Association (ASA). He did not dispute that countries including some of those in Israel's region have comparable or worse human rights records than Israel. Instead he said, "One has to start somewhere."

In Israel, too, there have recently been some examples of assertion of sovereignty. Earlier this year the Knesset accepted a law barring entry to foreign boycott activists. One has to see how this law is applied in practice.

It should be extended to various other anti-Israel hate mongers.

Just one example of such hate mongers: The ADL published in 2013 a list of the 10 most anti-Israel organizations in the US. The rhetoric some of these groups employ includes comparisons of Israeli leaders to Nazis, or describing the Gaza Strip as the new Auschwitz, calling for the dismantlement of the State of Israel, or expressing support for terrorist groups that seek Israel's destruction.

Another example of exercising sovereignty was Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to receive German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel due to the fact that the latter met with the anti-IDF organization Breaking the Silence. Netanyahu's office has stated that he will not meet foreign visitors "who on diplomatic trips to Israel meet with groups that slander IDF soldiers as war criminals."

Time is on Israel's side in moves to assert sovereignty.

Terrorist attacks like the three this year in the UK will lead to increased restrictions on who is allowed entry into democratic countries. What Israel needs is a systematic focus on the issue of how to better assert sovereignty. Simultaneously it must develop public diplomacy to rally support for moves expressing greater sovereignty. (Jerusalem Post Jun 13)

The Joint Effort to End Hamas By Moshe Elad

A deep rift divided the Palestinian people in June 2007, with Hamas' violent takeover of the Gaza Strip.

Since then, Fatah has ruled the West Bank under Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, while Hamas rules over Gaza under Khaled Mashaal and Ismail Haniyeh. A staggering 28 attempts have been made to reconcile between the parties, by Egypt, Turkey, Qatar and even some European countries, but they all failed.

There will be no reconciliation. Now Abbas believes the way to restore his control over Gaza is through political and economic leverage.

Is limiting the electricity supply likely to cause a humanitarian disaster? First of all, a distinction must be made between a real disaster and the atmosphere, or feeling, of disaster. Hamas leaders are experts at creating the atmosphere of crisis -- a feeling that disaster is imminent.

If the electricity restrictions continue, Hamas will use pictures of elderly men who died of natural causes to claim that Gazans are dying of oxygen deprivation. Pictures of premature babies in incubators will carry the claim that the infants stopped breathing because of cuts in "Israeli electricity." The Palestinians have never been shy about using explicit images to frighten the world. While it's true that living conditions in Gaza are increasingly difficult, mainly after military conflicts, they have never hesitated to fabricate a false reality to derive media gains, and sometimes even profit diplomatically.

Israel can't help wondering how the Gaza population has not yet risen up against their oppressors, considering the unemployment, water and electricity shortages and erratic food supply. Well, history teaches us that in Arab Muslim society there are no uprising against rulers, even if they are the worst of the worst, because then the rebels will be accused of helping the enemy. Like a battered woman, the people return to Gaza City, Rafah and Khan Younis crying and bruised, singing songs of praise to Haniyeh and his ilk.

The Palestinian Authority is hoping for escalation. The cat is out of the bag and it is now obvious that the "electricity war" is just another battle in the decades-long war between Fatah and Hamas over Palestinian leadership. Common Israel and PA interests against a single enemy -- Hamas -- have resulted in the past in security coordination, and now, in economic cooperation. The security coordination allows Abbas to move freely in Ramallah without fear of a Hamas attack. Abbas believes that the economic cooperation, starting with the cut to Gaza's electricity supply but who knows how far it will go, will make the lives of Gazans intolerable, leading to a violent clash led by Hamas. Abbas believes that in response, Israel will implement the so-called Lieberman doctrine, ensuring that the next war with Hamas will be the last because "we can't afford to fight Hamas every three years."

Abbas doesn't care if his return to Gaza is expedited by Israeli fire, as long as he returns. Hamas wants to gain capital. Let us just hope that Israel isn't forced to foot the bill, as usual. (Israel Hayom Jun 14)