



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

the troops under his command to "break the bones" of those Palestinians committing violence.

Arguments about Rabin's record are beside the point. Those who, like "The Squad" and their fellow travelers on the

Commentary...

The Left Wants No Part of Liberal Israel By Jonathan S. Tobin

In the world of politics, celebrity and name recognition is priceless, so in that sense, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) is among the richest members of Congress. In two years, the freshman went from being an unknown to being one of the most consequential members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

It's true that as a newcomer, her influence on Capitol Hill with respect to advancing or blocking legislation is minimal. But in an era when Beltway gridlock has made the passage of landmark bills rare, AOC (as she is commonly known) has a different kind of influence that in many respects is far more consequential. That is why pro-Israel Democrats who hoped to make common cause with her were dealt a devastating blow this past week.

By accepting and then rejecting an invitation to appear at a virtual event hosted by Americans for Peace Now that honored the memory of Yitzhak Rabin, AOC sent a loud message to Jews who hoped that the increasingly influential activist wing of their party could be persuaded to line up with the Israeli left. If, as many claim, Ocasio-Cortez represents the future of the Democratic Party, then that is a future in which it will be aligned with the BDS movement and opposed even to Israelis who cling to forlorn hopes for a two-state solution.

AOC came into the House as just the most prominent member of "The Squad." The quartet of four young radicals who burst onto the scene in 2018 is composed of Ocasio-Cortez, and Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) and Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.). While they have all managed to seize far more attention than would normally be possible for House backbenchers, AOC has become a pop-culture icon with a national following.

Establishment Democrats may still try to dismiss her significance. But the results of the 2020 primaries illustrated that AOC is a political powerhouse whose endorsements proved decisive in key races. It was her intervention on behalf of aging incumbent Sen. Edward Markey (D-Mass.), who had co-sponsored a radical "Green New Deal" program with the congresswoman that galvanized his campaign and easily fended off a challenge from the seemingly more popular and better-funded Rep. Joseph Kennedy III. AOC also helped make the difference in ensuring the primary defeat of Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), the chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee, as well as one of the most stalwart defenders of the state of Israel in the House.

With respect to Israel, liberal Democrats assumed that AOC was willing to stake out a different position than her buddies. Omar and Tlaib are the only members of Congress who support the anti-Semitic BDS movement. They had hoped to take AOC with them on a tour of "Palestine" that was canceled by the Israeli government's refusal to grant them entry. Yet Ocasio-Cortez had never explicitly endorsed BDS. But the kerfuffle over the Rabin commemoration makes it clear that her sympathies are very much in sync with that of the anti-Israel movement.

Americans for Peace Now once represented a growing demographic of Jews who sympathized with Israelis who backed the peace process with the Palestinians. In the last decade, it has been supplanted by J Street, as well as by groups like Jewish Voices for Peace and IfNotNow, which brazenly oppose Zionism. Nevertheless, for the first time in a very long time, Peace Now made news last week.

AOC initially accepted the group's invitation to help honor Rabin. However, once that became known, she received an avalanche of criticism from her allies on the intersectional left and immediately backed down. She later claimed that her hosts had misrepresented the nature of the event and withdrew from it.

To the party's activist base, anything associated with Israel—even a program dedicated to the memory of a man who was assassinated by a right-wing extremist because of his efforts to make peace—is beyond the pale.

BDS supporters smear Rabin, who received a Nobel Peace Prize for signing the Oslo Accords in 1993, as a war criminal because of his service during Israel's 1948 War of Independence and as Minister of Defense during the First Intifada, when he is supposed to have urged

left, believe in intersectional canards about the Palestinian war on the Jewish state being morally equivalent to the struggle for civil rights in the United States see all Israelis as alike. If they think the one Jewish state on the planet has a right to exist or defend itself, in the eyes of the BDS movement, they are evil oppressors exercising "white privilege" over "indigenous people," even if they are persons of color who are indigenous to the land of Israel.

AOC is someone who, as we have repeatedly seen these last two years, doesn't blink an eye about defying House Speaker Nancy Pelosi or Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden. That she thought it necessary to acquiesce to the demands of a Twitter mob—led in this instance by an anti-Zionist writer for the far-left Jewish Currents publication—speaks volumes not only about her ideology, but about the disciplined nature of the intersectional left when it comes to policing its adherents with respect to Israel. Her overt snub of liberal Jews sends a loud message that there is no place for them in the party base if they are not willing to renounce support for Israel's right to exist.

This is yet another wake-up call for Jewish Democrats who may think Biden's defeat of AOC ally Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), ensured that their party is going to remain solidly in the pro-Israel camp. AOC and her allies can no longer be dismissed as noisy non-entities. Unless and until they are explicitly repudiated by Biden, rather than appeased and coddled, they can be forgiven for thinking the future of the Democratic Party belongs to them. (JNS Sep 30)

Amy Coney Barrett, Jewish Liberals and the US Constitution

By Ruthie Blum



The apoplexy on the part of Democrats in general and Jewish liberals in particular to the appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the U.S. Supreme Court was to be expected. Anything that President Donald Trump does drives them crazy.

But the fact that he decided to fill the seat vacated by the Sept. 18 death of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg before the fast-approaching election has been more than they can tolerate. How dare the president exercise his right to do so, they have been moaning, when his days in office are numbered?

Or so they have been praying. Literally.

Indeed, when news of Ginsburg's death on the eve of Rosh Hashanah reached many Reform and Conservative congregants (the Orthodox don't tune into electronic devices on Friday night, and certainly not during the Jewish New Year), their rabbis devoted the following morning's services to her legacy.

RBG, as she came to be called, had been their heroine. She was not only the first Jewish woman to sit on the Supreme Court and the second woman after Sandra Day O'Connor. She was a warrior for all left-wing causes, whose opinions on and off the bench gained her the adoration of liberals far and wide, including in Israel, which has one of the Western world's most politically interventionist Supreme Court.

Yes, for Jews who worship at the altar of abortion and gun control, RBG was practically a religious figure. Barrett, on the other hand, is a conservative Catholic whose womanhood and professional accomplishments carry no weight in feminist circles.

Her personal life and politics are not the main thorns in the side of the left, however. No, the real problem is one that her detractors are doing everything in their power to obfuscate: that she believes in the separation of powers—restricting the purview of the Supreme Court to interpreting the law rather than forging it.

During her speech at the White House on Saturday—with her husband and seven children in attendance—she was clear on this matter.

"A judge must apply the law as written," she said. "Judges are not policymakers, and they must be resolute in setting aside any policy views they might hold."

This is as it should be and why Barrett made a point of expressing her love of the U.S. Constitution, which she vows to uphold if confirmed by the Senate. It was the judicial philosophy of

her mentor, the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia.

A true class act, Barrett spared no praise for RBG.

“The flag of the United States is still flying at half-staff, in memory of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, to mark the end of a great American life,” said Barrett. “Justice Ginsburg began her career at a time when women were not welcome in the legal profession. But she not only broke glass ceilings; she smashed them. For that, she has won the admiration of women across the country, and indeed, all over the world. She was a woman of enormous talent and consequence, and her life of public service serves as an example to us all.”

As if signaling to those who doubt her sincerity, Barrett went on: “Particularly poignant to me was [Ginsburg’s] long and deep friendship with ... Scalia. ... Justices Scalia and Ginsburg disagreed fiercely in print without rancor in person. ... These two great Americans demonstrated that arguments, even about matters of great consequence, need not destroy affection.”

She concluded by stating that she strives to behave similarly in her own personal and professional relationships. But that is easier said than done, given the vitriolic cultural climate that has poisoned all discourse.

Her Jewish naysayers are especially noteworthy on this score.

Take Jewish Women International CEO Meredith Jacobs, for example, who claimed that “Barrett has proven that she will not defend equality or fairness. Her appointment is a direct threat to reproductive freedom, survivors of sexual assault, civil rights, health-care access, racial justice, voting rights, gun safety and legal protections for marginalized groups.”

Then there’s Jewish Democratic Council of America executive director Halie Soifer, who stated that Barrett “stands in opposition to everything the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg fought for throughout her career and threatens to reverse decades of progress with regard to access to affordable health care, equality, separation of church and state and reproductive rights.”

Another such declaration was issued by National Council of Jewish Women CEO Sheila Katz.

“Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a trailblazer who fundamentally shifted our nation toward equality, deserves a justice in her seat who will fulfill and advance her legacy—not one who would take us backwards,” she said. “In the middle of an election, NCJW’s network of 180,000 advocates across the country is dedicated to ensuring the seat stays open for the next president to fill.”

The above reactions constitute open calls for left-wing judicial activism. Trump’s hurry to appoint Barrett—a move to counteract the encroachment of the bench on the legislature—was warranted.

The brouhaha, while unavoidable, is pointless. In the first place, Barrett is likely to be confirmed by the Senate. Secondly, if the Democrats smear her too badly during the hearings, they might be punished for it at the ballot box by many of the so-called “suburban housewives.”

Third, most Jews vote Democrat, regardless of the issues. So even if Trump had found a Ginsburg clone for the court, it wouldn’t have done him any good with the bulk of the tribe. (JNS Sep 29)

Nobody is Ignoring the Palestinians By Stephen M. Flatow

The common refrain heard from media pundits and left-wing critics of the Gulf kingdoms’ recognition of Israel is that it ignores the Palestinian Arabs. Here is how New York Times’ correspondent Michael Crowley began his article following the recent signing ceremony: “Israel and two Arab nations signed agreements at the White House on Tuesday to normalize their relations, a step toward a realignment of the Middle East but one that failed to address the future of the Palestinians.”

This attitude is one-part spite, one-part ignorance and one-part cynicism.

Spite because critics of Israel just can’t stand when anything happens that Israel is happy about. So, they have to almost reflexively pour cold water on it.

Ignorance because some younger critics of Israel probably are genuinely unaware that Israel long ago “addressed the future of the Palestinians”—and implemented the best available solution.

And cynicism because most of the critics are completely aware of what Israel has done. They just don’t want to acknowledge it because it doesn’t suit their agenda.

The reason the newest agreements don’t “address the future of the Palestinians” is because Israel already fully addressed them twice—in 1995 and 2004. That’s when Israel ended its occupation of the Palestinian Arabs in Judea and Samaria, and the Gaza Strip,

respectively. That’s when not one, but two, de facto Palestinian states were established.

When Yitzhak Rabin became prime minister in 1992, he faced a dilemma. On the one hand, he recognized that establishing a full-fledged Palestinian state in Judea-Samaria-Gaza would pose a grave threat to Israel’s existence. Israel would be just nine miles wide in its middle, living next to a state run by terrorists and dictators.

But on the other hand, Rabin didn’t want Israel to continue ruling over the Palestinian Arabs who reside in those territories. So he and his aides came up with the Oslo accords. Those agreements ended Israel’s occupation of the Palestinians and gave them something very close to statehood, but without endangering Israel’s existence.

So it was that in 1995, Rabin withdrew Israel’s forces from the cities in Judea and Samaria, where 98 percent of the Palestinian Arabs reside. The Palestinian Authority took over. In 2004, Ariel Sharon took it a step further and withdrew from all of Gaza. Hamas eventually became the ruler there.

Ever since, daily life in those territories has closely resembled what it would be like if they were officially called the “States of Palestine.”

There is no Israeli governor or military administration. There are no Israeli troops stationed there. The only time Israeli soldiers enter P.A. areas is when they are chasing terrorists.

Schools are run by Palestinian principals and teachers. Courts have Palestinian judges. When elections are held, the candidates and the voters are all Palestinians. Both the P.A. and Gaza have police and security forces the size of armies. And Islam is the official religion of both regimes, according to both the P.A.’s “Constitution of Palestine” and the Hamas Charter.

There is just one thing that Israel has not permitted, and it is in this respect that the Palestinian Authority and Gaza are not quite states; they are not allowed to become a threat to Israel’s existence. Meaning that they can’t import tanks, planes, Iranian “volunteers” or North Korean missiles.

As such, Israel imposes a partial blockade on Gaza, preventing weapons and materials that can be used to make weapons (or terror tunnels) from entering. And Israel has set up a small number of checkpoints along its border with the P.A. areas. But Israel is not occupying the Palestinian Arabs. It is not ruling over them. It is not running their lives.

Naturally, Israel is not offering them citizenship. Why should it? The Palestinian Arabs are ruled by their own regimes, and they can vote there, if and when their leaders let them vote. That’s why the tired old clichés about the “demographic time bomb,” about Israel having to choose between territory and democracy, about the supposed threat of “apartheid,” are all complete nonsense.

There is no occupation. There is no apartheid. There is no demographic danger. Israel has addressed the Palestinian Arab problem to the best of its ability. It gives Israel security and gives the Palestinian Arabs self-rule in two entities that are close to statehood in every respect except those that would endanger Israel’s existence. It’s not a perfect solution. But in this imperfect world of ours, it’s the best solution available. (JNS Sep 29)

The No. 1 lesson of the Intifada: Initiate and Control

By Yoav Limor

As strange as it might sound, Israeli society has repressed the memory of the Second Intifada. Despite the heavy price it exacted, there is no day of commemoration or memorial site for it, and it is rarely mentioned. Five or six years of terrorist bloodshed, which left deep scars on Israeli society and shaped its relations with the Palestinians for decades to come, have vanished as if they never existed.

The reasons are mostly psychological, obviously, but we should nevertheless address the lessons learned from the events that began 20 years ago after then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited the Temple Mount. The date itself was random—PLO leader Yasser Arafat wanted a bloody battle, and if Sharon hadn’t gone to the Mount, Arafat would have found another excuse.

Arafat was looking for a “war of liberation.” He rejected the (generous) proposals made to him at Camp David and sought a state for his people that would be built on a foundation of fire and blood. He believed that a few days or weeks of fighting in which Israel sustained casualties would prompt it to make additional concessions. But there was one critical thing that Arafat failed to take into account: a few months earlier, Israel had withdrawn from the security zone in southern Lebanon. The Arab world saw that withdrawal as a panicked retreat. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah compared Israeli

society to a spider web and used the eruption of violence in Judea and Samaria to kidnap three IDF soldiers on Mount Dov.

Israel could not, and did not want to, give in again and responded mercilessly to the Palestinian attacks. Every event ended in a resounding victory for the IDF. Instead of changing tactics, Arafat kept his back against the wall. He spurned every attempt to relaunch the peace process and raised the stakes of the violence. He started with shooting attacks, and even allowed members of Fatah's Tanzim branch to take part in them, and then let the worst Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists out of P.A. prisons.

The flood of veteran terrorists into the field was felt immediately. The number of terrorist attacks, particularly suicide bombings, spiked, as did the number of Israelis wounded and killed. Ehud Barak lost the prime ministership to Ariel Sharon, who adopted a brave and coolheaded policy when he decided to let Israel rack up credit at home and abroad before giving the green light for an operation that would wipe out terrorist infrastructure in the West Bank.

There were two main events along the way to that operation. The first was the suicide bombing at the Dolphinarium nightclub in Tel Aviv in June 2001 (21 people killed), which caused the Bush administration to lose faith in Arafat and basically cut him off, and the second was the suicide bombing at the Park Hotel in Netanya on the eve of Passover in 2002 (30 people killed). After the seder night bombing, Israel launched "Operation Defensive Shield." Along the way, the 9/11 attacks hit New York, and terrorism lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the world. Rather than understanding that, the Palestinians dug in. They are still paying the price for that.

When Israel retook control of "Area A," security forces gained the freedom to operate throughout Judea and Samaria, but mostly, it restored Israel's self-confidence. Since then, it has depended mainly on itself. This is particularly noticeable when compared to what is taking place in the Gaza Strip, where there are heavy restrictions on IDF activity, especially since the 2005 disengagement, which was also a belated response to the wave of terrorism that started in Sept. 2000.

Still, Israel opted—and has opted ever since—not to cancel the Oslo Accords. Moreover, despite the lack of political contact with the Palestinian Authority, the two sides' security apparatuses have been cooperating for 15 years, often intimately, saving the lives of many people on both sides. They even worked together against major challenges like an intifada consisting of "lone wolf" stabbing attacks. P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas, who in the meantime has turned out not to be a peace partner, is leading Palestinians down a path different from that of his predecessor, one which opposes the Israeli "occupation" through mostly non-violent means.

It is unclear how long Israel will continue to enjoy quiet in Judea and Samaria (and Gaza). The Palestinian problem is here to stay. Israel has made a lot of progress since 2000, but the Palestinians are stuck far behind. They have lost on every front: diplomatic, security, economic and social. If they aren't given some prospect, at some point, they might rouse themselves and look for a violent way out.

So Israel would do well to implement the main lesson of the Second Intifada: take the initiative. Control events rather than being dragged into them; mark a target and go after it. Since the Second Intifada, Israeli society has proven that it is willing to pay the price needed for that to happen. It will do the same in the future if it needs to, and truth be told, in the present if the leadership gives it a clear way to fight the battle against COVID. (Israel Hayom Sep 29)

The Embassy Issue Reveals the Contradictions in the EU's Jerusalem Policy By Neville Teller

When politicians say of any problem that their position is "clear," you can be pretty certain that it is anything but. Clarity on the issue of Jerusalem, its status and its future, has been claimed recently by both the UN and the EU. In fact the positions of both organizations on the matter are as clear as mud. Worse than that, although they claim to be identical, they are in fact poles apart.

The claim on behalf of the UN was made by Nickolay Mladenov, its special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, in a session of the UN Security Council considering US President Donald Trump's decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem. The UN's position, he announced, was clear. "Jerusalem is a final status issue for which a comprehensive, just and lasting solution must be achieved through negotiations between the two parties, and on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and mutual agreements." That formula has been repeated several times since, most recently by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in February 2020.

In other words, the UN holds that the exact status of Jerusalem in international law is as yet undetermined. Yet, the Security Council, in

its Resolution 2334 passed in 2016, had determined that the status of Jerusalem was at it had been on 4 June 1967 – that is, on the day before the Six Day War commenced – referring three times to "Palestinian territories including East Jerusalem."

So the UN's "clear" position is that it asserts that East Jerusalem is part of Palestinian territories, but in the same breath maintains that Jerusalem is a final status issue to be determined through negotiation. It recognizes no changes to the pre-Six Day War boundaries, except that it does not recognize that West Jerusalem at least was part of Israel at the time. Its position defies logic.

The EU also believes that its stance on Jerusalem is crystal clear. As recently as February 2020 it issued a statement, prefaced by the words: "The European Union has a clear and united position on Jerusalem." What is that position? "The EU remains firmly committed to the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as capital of both the State of Israel and the future State of Palestine."

That is as ambiguous a clarity as it is possible to achieve. Does the EU believe in an undivided capital shared between Israel and an as-yet-unestablished state of Palestine, administered jointly? Or does it subscribe to a divided Jerusalem with West Jerusalem the capital of Israel, and East Jerusalem, which has a large Arab population that extends into its hinterland, serving as the capital of a new sovereign Palestine?

What of the status of the Old City? The EU has nothing to say on that. Before the Six Day War it was occupied by Jordan, which instituted a program of "Islamization" in 1953, prohibiting Christians from owning or purchasing land near holy sites, and removing educational institutions from Christian control, while Jordanian troops desecrated Jewish synagogues and holy sites including the Western Wall, the holiest of all. Does the EU endorse a return to that situation?

The EU condemned Trump's recognition of the city as Israel's capital, taking no account of his statement: "We are not taking a position on any final status issues, including the specific boundaries of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem... Those questions are up to the parties involved." Nor has the EU taken on board what Trump said at the unveiling of his peace plan – namely that it envisages a Palestinian capital in eastern Jerusalem to be called Al Quds, where the US will "proudly" open an embassy.

Because the EU's position on Jerusalem is so obscure, it cannot endorse the idea of any national embassy being sited there – not even in West Jerusalem, which it cannot bring itself to acknowledge as lying within sovereign Israel. This is why the EU voiced "serious concern and regret" when Serbia and Kosovo announced September 4, 2020, that they intended to locate their Israel embassies in Jerusalem. These intentions were incorporated in a signing ceremony in the White House brokered by Trump, when Serbia and Kosovo agreed to normalize their relations and pursue economic cooperation.

In a statement three days later, the EU spokesperson objected, implying that breaking with the EU's common position on Jerusalem could undermine the prospects of Serbia and Kosovo becoming EU members.

The European Leadership Network (ELNET) expressed deep concern over the EU's stance. In its statement ELNET said it "strongly believes it is high time the EU updates its position on Jerusalem and recognizes Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem... Objecting to European embassies in any part of Jerusalem completely defies reality. Jerusalem has been Israel's capital city since Israel's inception."

The ELNET statement urges the EU to abandon "entirely anachronistic UN stipulations." It is referring to the 1947 UN General Assembly resolution 181 (II): "The City of Jerusalem shall be established as a corpus separatum under a special international regime and shall be administered by the United Nations."

Astonishingly, this resolution has never been countermanded. It is undoubtedly dead in the water. It has never been proposed by any party in the many attempts at settling the Israel-Palestine dispute. Yet incongruously, the UN as a whole – like the EU – still clings to the concept of an internationalized Jerusalem administered by the UN, turning a blind eye to the Security Council's support for the incompatible objective of "a viable state of Palestine in the West Bank, including east Jerusalem."

Clarity is the last word that either the UN or the EU can legitimately apply to their stated views on Jerusalem, while their objections to any nation locating its embassy at least in West Jerusalem have no basis in logic. Arab states are lining up to normalize their relations with Israel. It is time for both the UN and the EU to have a radical rethink about Jerusalem. (Jerusalem Post Sep 29)

An update on current political events in Israel

By Walter Bingham

We have just entered the year 5781 of the Jewish calendar. Unlike some faiths, we do not celebrate with fireworks, elaborate parties or excessive alcohol. We pray for forgiveness of our sins against God, and hope that during the 10 days of repentance between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, God will hear our prayers, forgive our sins and seal us in all the good books.

It must be stressed that this applies only to transgressions against God. Any wrongdoing against our fellow man can only be forgiven by the person who was wronged. Only if he or she forgives, will God forgive as well. It is an antisemitic libel that Jews can do wrong to non-Jews all year long, and then be forgiven on Yom Kippur.

Today I want to mention a number of current events that for me are significant.

I can do no better than begin by quoting from an article by David Isaac on World Israel News: "Israel's Supreme Court appears to be on a mission to erase any doubts within the Israeli public that it has been corrupted by politics."

That has been evident in very many of the court's judgments about disputes between Palestinian Arabs and their Jewish neighbors, as well as in legal disagreements with the decisions of our legislators in the Knesset.

We hear almost every week of indictments or judgments that have political undertones. Only this month there was the case of Mitzpe Kramim, a Jewish settlement on a hilltop in Samaria that was established in 1999 with government approval, and today houses some 40 families. Now the Supreme Court ordered its evacuation because it is claimed to be on Arab land.

I argue that there is confusion on which law Arab claims are based. The law of the Ottoman Empire that ruled this land 130 years ago? Surely that cannot apply in our state. Or is it on the basis of Jordanian law?

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Recall that when Jordan illegally occupied the so-called West Bank between 1948 and 1967, it illegally distributed parcels of land to Arabs. This was in contravention of the 1948 British departure in favor of a Jewish state, which meant the land became Jewish state land and that the old Ottoman law, illegal Jordanian law and British law became void. I believe that therefore there can be no legitimate Arab claim to our land.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wrote, "I regret the mistaken High Court of Justice decision on the evacuation of Mitzpe Kramin. I have instructed Prime Minister's Office Director General Ronen Peretz to meet with representatives of the community. We will exhaust all processes in order to leave the residents in their place and we are convinced that we will succeed."

Of course, Israel does not exercise ethnic cleansing, so taking a pragmatic view, the existing Arab villages and their cultivated land will remain in their hands, or they are free to sell to the state should they so wish.

Illegal expansion of the Arab villages, however, must be halted. Additionally, any uncultivated land belongs to the state and must be made legally available for Jewish settlement, regardless of its location.

"It is unbelievable" said a Regavim spokesman "that Arab construction is allowed to run wild in the area, including in Area C," which is under full Israeli control, "with the authorities slow to act or tolerating it, yet at the same time the authorities show zero tolerance to Jewish construction or settlement expansion."

The High Court showed that the judgments are not blind but politically motivated. Our judges have demonstrated the truth of the Midrash, the ancient rabbinic interpretation of scripture by our sages. In Midrash Tanhuma, Metzora, Siman 1, Rabbi Eleazar said, "Anyone who becomes merciful upon the cruel one will end by being cruel to the merciful."

The court prevented a lawful military order to destroy the home of the terrorist who murdered IDF Sgt. Amit Ben-Yigal. The reason was that it would hurt the family who, so they said, had no part in the murder. I wonder how they know. As I understand it, this argument could be applied to remove that deterrent in every case where the murderer lives with his family.

There are also numerous recent cases when it seemed that according to our courts, personal sidearms carried by licensed Jewish civilians were for decoration only.

In too many cases, their discharge for self-defense, even when aiming high, has been interpreted as unjustified and the holder was brought before the court and found guilty, while the Arab who threatened him was looked upon as the victim, even though he was not targeted. Only video evidence could ever change the verdict. Another

example of biased judgment.

Caroline Glick noted that according to a poll by Globes news last November, 72% of Israelis believe police and state prosecutors engage in selective law enforcement. It would not be difficult to list a lot more cases.

Then there are the many documented instances where the High court assumed the powers of the legislature and overturned laws that were legally legislated by the Knesset. It is high time for the wings of the High Court to be clipped.

Our scientists, like those in a host of laboratories around the world, are working furiously to find an effective vaccine that will halt the COVID-19 pandemic. Israel is not alone in trying to balance the economy with efforts to achieve the goal of reduced morbidity.

While it is imperative to allow the economy to function even in a reduced form, it is not easy to achieve that goal without inconvenient restrictions to the population.

Our government has appointed an eminent public health expert, former Health Ministry director general Prof. Ronni Gamzu, to oversee, advise, and suggest methods to help arrest the speed of transmission of COVID-19, particularly within Arab and Jewish neighborhoods where large religious communal activities are prevalent.

You would think that once appointed, members of the cabinet, who have no medical knowledge, would want to follow the advice of their appointee.

But this is Israel, where every minister, and we have dozens, has his own opinion and believes that it his right to express it publicly. The result is what we experience today in the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yet it is a constitutional convention in parliamentary systems that members of the cabinet must publicly support all governmental decisions made in cabinet, even if they do not privately agree with them. That is known as Cabinet collective responsibility, but apparently not in Israel.

Netanyahu needs the support of the religious parties. Already the ultra-Orthodox rebel former minister Ya'acov Litzman resigned in protest of a probable total lockdown over the complete High Holy Day period, as the restrictions that affect his community, the yeshivot, the Jewish educational study centers and synagogue services. We already see repercussions from the religious parties. Even Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi David Lau has protested.

Directives are changed literally by the hour, as happened last week when the lockdown of designated localities was quickly changed to night curfew.

That too has been countermanded and on Wednesday as I prepared this article, there was still uncertainty about the situation during the upcoming Yom Kippur and Sukkot period.

One Knesset member from the left-wing Meretz Party put it like this: "Netanyahu gives them [the ultra-Orthodox] whatever they desire, and in return they keep him out of jail," referring to the PM's forthcoming trial.

Restrictions hurt, but the alternative would be having to live with this virus and suffering the resulting mass deaths until a safe vaccine can be found, and there is no telling when that will be.

Amazingly, while all this was going on, our prime minister deserted the heavily listing ship of state in favor of a photo opportunity with the US president at the signing of the UAE-Israel peace treaty. It seems that Netanyahu cares more for his relationship with Donald Trump than he does for the health of the nation. Admittedly, he kept in contact, but that's not quite the same.

Then there is the Serbia-Kosovo peace treaty, which had an effect on Israel. Briefly, the Serbian province of Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence in February 2008, and since then the two countries have been at war.

Trump brought their two current leaders together to sign a peace treaty. Serbia did so reluctantly. Up until now, Israel did not recognize Kosovo, because that would set a precedent for recognition of an independent State of Palestine, but since we always do what Trump says, Israel has now recognized Kosovo.

There is a prize, however. Quite apart from the shelving of sovereignty, Serbia, which was preparing to establish an embassy here, has now retracted that plan because of Israel's recognition of Kosovo, which will open an embassy in Jerusalem. The diplomatic world has nooks and crannies that are not easy to negotiate.

The writer is host of Walter's World on Israel National Radio (Arutz 7) and The Walter Bingham File on Israel Newstalk Radio, both of which are in English. (Jerusalem Post Sep 26)