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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...

It's Time to Put an End to Labeling Trump an Anti-Semite

By Jonathan S. Tobin

This July, Aaron Boone, the manager of Major League Baseball's New York Yankees, created an Internet meme when he launched into an epic and profane rant in taking issue with a call that went against his team. His abuse of an inexperienced umpire was recorded on a field microphone and then spread across the Internet to the amusement of players and fans, but to the consternation of the sport's overlords. His repeated description of his players as "f***** savages" being mistreated by incompetent officials led to a one-game suspension and a hefty fine levied on Boone by MLB—and also to the widespread sale of T-shirts emblazoned with the phrase.

Those who know the game understood that by using the term "savages," Boone was praising his team in that he meant that they are adept at being savage to opposing pitchers. But when President Donald Trump used the same word in a tweet this past weekend to describe Democratic members of Congress who were pushing for his impeachment, he didn't intend it as a compliment.

The tweet described chairman of the House Intelligence Committee Rep. Adam Schiff (D-Calif.), House Judiciary Committee chairman Jerold Nadler (D-N.Y.) and the four members of the radical left-wing "Squad"—Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.), Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.), Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) and Ayanna Pressley (D-Mass.)—as "Do Nothing Democrat Savages."

Viewed in the context of the last three years of a no-holds barred vicious debate between Trump and those Democrats who have been working not merely to oppose but to "resist" his presidency from before he even took office, the use of the term "savages" might be seen as just one more nasty epithet among many the two sides have hurled at one another. Trump's point was to claim that his foes are treating him more unfairly than President Barack Obama's opponents treated him. But his critics choose to treat his words as more evidence of his unfitness for office.

Whether or not you support impeaching Trump or believe that it is partisan hogwash, there's one element of this kerfuffle that transcends charges concerning accusations about the president's conversation with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that further degrades the country's political discourse.

Trump's critics weren't content to express outrage over the abusive description of the two men seeking to orchestrate the effort to impeach him, as well as the four leftist women who have been advocating that course long before most Americans had ever heard of Zelensky. Instead, they cited the tweet as evidence of Trump's anti-Semitism and racism.

We've gone down this road before with Democrats claiming that singling out their three leading billionaire mega-donors who are either Jewish (George Soros and Michael Bloomberg) or have Jewish origins (Tom Steyer) is anti-Semitic. That was an absurd charge. Bashing donors is just a way of attacking a position without confronting the issue at hand. Still, conspicuous political players like Soros, Bloomberg and Steyer can't be above criticism.

The same is true with attempts to depict any criticism of "the Squad"—in particular, Omar and Tlaib, who are both guilty of spewing anti-Semitism—as somehow an attack on all Muslims or "women of color." It isn't Islamophobic to point out that their support of the BDS movement and anti-Zionist is inherently bigoted against Jews and the Jewish state. Nor is racist to note that AOC and her pals are not merely the country's most conspicuous radicals not running for president, but have at times appeared to be capable of bullying more moderate Democrats, including the party's congressional leadership, into submission.

Similarly, to claim that attacks on Schiff and Nadler are inherently

anti-Semitic because the two are Jewish is patently false as well as disingenuous. Think what you like about whether or not the course they are pursuing is good for the country. But to take issue with the stands they have taken or to point out that they are the ones who are orchestrating

impeachment is entirely legitimate. That's especially true with respect to Schiff, who repeatedly embarrassed himself over the last two years by overselling Russia-collusion allegations against Trump that fizzled into nothing.

The salient point about this controversy isn't who's in the right about Ukraine or whether impeachment is warranted—or even if it's just another a partisan attempt to relitigate the 2016 presidential election.

It's that at a time when a rising tide of anti-Semitism is spreading over the globe—and Jews are facing the twin threats of white-supremacist hate from the far-right, as well as leftist anti-Zionists seeking to delegitimize both Israel and American Jews—using it as a partisan political weapon is dangerously irresponsible.

Trump's actions and statements are fair game for criticism and, like any other leader, can be held accountable by Congress and the courts. But labeling him an anti-Semite is a blatant falsehood. That's not merely because he's clearly the most pro-Israel president America has had, in addition to someone with Jewish family, and with a staff and cabinet filled with many Jews. It's also true that his administration has in some respects taken anti-Semitism more seriously than his predecessors. He has ordered civil-rights investigations into attacks on Jewish students and others on U.S. college campuses that were ignored by Obama, and Trump's Justice Department convened a summit on the subject that addressed issues not treated seriously before this.

If anti-Semitism is just one more brickbat to be tossed around with impunity in the course of a bitter and all-too-savage debate on impeachment, then those who are using it in that way are effectively saying that it's not as important as their partisan goals.

It's time for both Democrats and Republicans of good will to recognize that whatever the outcome of the impeachment battle, injecting false charges of anti-Semitism into the discussion will

not advance their cause. It will, however, materially damage the fight against hate. (JNS Oct 2)

גמר חתימה טובה

The Unbearable Cost of Unity By Gidon Ben-Zvi

Ever since Israel's snap election drew to a close on September 17 the country's chattering class has ginned up its campaign to convince Israelis that what they really want is a national unity government. To drive home their point, pundits, commentators and other members of the country's intelligentsia have drawn parallels between Israel circa 1984 and today.

This is a false equivalence. When Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir and Labor's Shimon Peres agreed to share power the Israeli economy was teetering on the verge of collapse, with inflation running rampant. Israel was also a country at war in 1984, the First Lebanon War.

Fast-forward to the here and now. Israel's economy and security are relatively stable and have been that way for some time. Despite regular skirmishes with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Israel Defense Forces aren't waging a ground war on enemy territory.

Yet Israeli's cultural, media and educational elites are bumbling citizens like a pesky used car salesman trying to unload a wreck. Why? Because in a country increasingly divided along political, religious and economic lines, even seasoned observers are intoxicated by the appeal of national unity. But their enthusiastic embrace of a grand coalition is worse than naive, it's dangerous to the wellbeing of Israeli society.

A national unity government would be a clunker for most Israelis because of the exploding cost of living here. Sure, the country's

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macroeconomic performance is impressive, especially compared to 1984. But a report released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is setting off alarm bells that most citizens have been hearing for years.

Daily life in Israel is grotesquely expensive. Food here is 19% higher than the OECD average. Meanwhile, apartment renters in Israel spend 25% of their gross adjusted disposable income on rent while homeowners paying mortgages spend 15%, a discrepancy that's among the highest in the OECD. Since 2009, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, housing prices have shot up by over 90%.

If you're raising children in Israel, good luck. Elementary school education and academic studies are 17% more expensive than a decade ago, while the average cost of preschools has risen by 14%. And Israel's floundering public healthcare system is forcing many Israelis to supplement their mandatory universal medical insurance with out-of-pocket private policies. According to the OECD, only 8% of Israelis rely solely on public health care.

Here's one more stat to consider: Israel ranked a lowly 38th on the economic freedom scale, dropping one place from 2018, according to the Economic Freedom of the World: 2019 Annual Report. In general, the higher a country's level of economic freedom is the better off its citizens are.

What you won't hear advocates for a national unity government say is that history shows that such grand coalitions hit the pause button on the implementation of seriously needed policy changes. Neither Shamir nor Peres was able to advance any major issues during their national unity government because each of them was immediately scuttled by the other.

Israel's next government will be tasked with an awesome responsibility: to develop and carry out policies that remove the disproportionately large financial burden being carried by Israel's working men and women. For millions of Israelis today a government of national paralysis is not a viable option.

The cost of prolonged stagnation is simply too high.
(Israel Hayom Oct 3)

When Anti-Semites Take Advantage of Liberal Institutions

By Ophir Dayan

Last week, during a forum of world leaders held in my school, Columbia University, Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad spoke.

The 94-year-old leader is probably the most anti-Semitic head of state. He doesn't try to hide his anti-Semitism, he doesn't just criticize Israel, he practices classic anti-Semitism, the kind that has been associated with various slurs against the Jewish people (they have long noses; they rule the world; they cause others to fight and die for them, and so forth).

Letting the Malaysian leader speak is only the latest example of the institution's problematic choice of speakers, having already let former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speak at the university about a decade ago.

The organization that I head, Students Supporting Israel (SSI), has refused to stay silent. Although we could not get Mahathir's speech canceled, we decided to generate a critical conversation so that the university won't even consider inviting someone like the Malaysian prime minister ever again.

We were told that we would lose, that he would be welcomed with great honor at the university and that his anti-Semitic agenda would not be condemned.

But we did not relent. We created a petition that got more than 3,000 signatures, we sent a letter to the university president and to the professor who was to introduce the prime minister at the event, and we demanded that both university officials condemn Mahathir.

He countered by saying that "If you can't be anti-Semitic, there's no free speech."

And we won, sort of: The professor who introduced him at the event condemned him on stage, in his face, and the talk of the campus was on the pamphlets we distributed against his invitation.

Liberal institutions like to take pride in how they protect everyone and let everyone express their voice, citing their deep moral obligation to these liberal values.

In practice, this infinite inclusivity allows the malignment of various groups, and in this case, the Jews.

We must not sit idly by when such events take place, and we must counter them and their organizers. Passivity among Jews in the face of anti-Semitism is a thing of the past.

Mahathir should not have the legitimacy to express such vitriol. Such comments require a forceful and determined response, especially when they are made by high-ranking officials.

(Israel Hayom Oct 3)

Netanyahu's Fate and the Future of Israeli Democracy

By Jonathan S. Tobin

This week a legal proceeding is taking place that may have as much if not more to do with the future of Israel's government as the stalemated negotiations to form a new governing coalition. Lawyers representing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are presenting evidence to Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit in four days of hearings that are his last chance to stop indictments on corruption charges. The prime minister's attorneys say they are presenting new evidence. Yet the expectation is that Mandelblit, who has already signaled his willingness to formally charge Netanyahu on three separate cases of alleged wrongdoing, is just going through the motions and will, in due course, decide that the prime minister will be put on trial and face jail time if convicted.

The unseemly spectacle of a prime minister called on the carpet in this fashion has been widely depicted as being more about preventing Israeli democracy from being subverted by a criminal would-be tyrant as it is about Netanyahu's fight for his freedom. However, even those who disagree strongly with the prime minister's policies should be opposed to the manner in which he may be taken down. Far from being a defense of Israeli democracy, the effort to destroy him via the legal system is actually a greater threat to the future of the Jewish state than anything the prime minister has allegedly done.

The media narrative of the three corruption charges that Netanyahu is facing is largely centered on the notion that his ability to hold onto power is a threat to the rule of law. He is widely depicted as a cynical autocrat at war with the judiciary, the media and democratic values. His administration is also seen as not so much as an expression of popular will, but of a cult of personality centered on an unaccountable inner circle dominated by his wife, Sara, and son Yair, whose behavior is as egregious as it is at odds with the good of the state.

Netanyahu's detractors want him to be labeled a felon, humiliated and marched to jail not necessarily to tarnish the legacy of the country's longest-serving prime minister—as it indeed would—but, in the terminology of politically correct culture, to “cancel” it.

The problem with this effort is that it has conflated legitimate concerns about having anyone, no matter how successful, stay in such a leadership role so long with partisan and ideological criticism of Netanyahu. Those who oppose him aren't so much convinced that he's a criminal as they are delighted that a way has been found to depose him by means other than defeating him at the ballot box.

His critics act as if Netanyahu has been caught in some act of egregious public corruption. And were that so, then the attempt to hound him from office as a criminal would be justified. But the underlying facts don't seem to support the tone of righteous indignation being thrown around in the discussion about the ominously titled Case 1000, Case 2000 and Case 4000 for which he faces possible indictment.

The first of these cases is about him accepting gifts of champagne and cigars from wealthy friends. As retired Harvard Law Professor Alan Dershowitz wrote earlier this year, there is no regulation—either in the United States or Israel—detailing the difference between what would constitute a legal gift of smaller items like champagne and cigars, and ones that would be so large as to be an illegal bribe. Prosecuting a sitting prime minister on a charge without being able to define that difference on such an inconsequential issue is not just absurd, but seems to be the product of a political agenda.

The other two charges are equally hazy.

Case 2000 involves a conversation Netanyahu had with a publisher about him getting better news coverage from hostile media if he was able to help him suppress the work of a competitor. But this supposedly criminal plot never was put into motion, in large part because Netanyahu didn't have the power to hold up his end of the potential bargain. More importantly, politicians are always seeking better media coverage. Treating such efforts as crimes would mean locking up virtually everyone in the governing class in the United States, as well as Israel.

Case 4000 is considered far more serious since it alleges that Netanyahu did regulatory favors for a hostile publisher in exchange for more sympathetic coverage. But, again, there is no law that states legislators or a government can't back measures that would help a publisher in order to be portrayed more sympathetically, although such a quid pro quo, if it were to have happened, certainly doesn't make for good optics.

What's going on here, as Dershowitz noted, is that “vague, elastic and open-ended laws” are being stretched so as to target a particular

individual, even though the “crime” in question is something that is actually normal political conduct and not some nefarious plot.

By allowing this prosecution to go forward, Mandelblit is setting a precedent that would allow police or prosecutors with an existing agenda to knock off virtually anyone and effectively legitimize the criminalization of political differences.

Israel might be better off if Netanyahu were to step down, though his achievements in his decade in office gives him a good argument for his continued tenure. Still, that decision should not be influenced by tissue-thin charges not be confused with actual corruption. The prime minister’s foes just didn’t like the fact that Israel’s voters put Netanyahu in office and kept him there for so long. But they did so because they supported policies his critics didn’t like, including efforts to reform Israel’s imperious judiciary. But that resentment with the outcomes of democratic elections should never be confused with defending democracy.

Israel’s voters should determine Netanyahu’s fate, not the attorney general. If Mandelblit really wants to defend the rule of law, then he should drop the charges, and let the prime minister’s fate be decided in an election that wouldn’t be dominated by legal proceedings that have little to do with justice or democracy. (JNS Oct 3)

Israel Takes Charge of its Own Defense By Micah Halpern

One of the ironclad principles of Israel, articulated first and best by prime minister David Ben-Gurion, is that Israel will not rely on anyone else for her defense; that first and foremost, Israel is responsible for her own security and her own destiny; that she will not pass on or subcontract through treaty or through alliance the safety of her country or of her citizens.

This is not mere rhetoric or diplomatic gamesmanship. It is a value grounded in the reality that no one can, or ever should, decide on the safety of the Jewish state – no one other than the Jewish citizens of Israel and their elected leaders. It is more than simply a question of trust. It is the knowledge that an ally will ultimately put their interests first and not yours.

It also means that never again will Israel be powerless or unable to defend herself. It is a deep and intrinsic understanding that the safety of the Jewish people is a primary priority only of the Jewish people.

All this and more has been rushing through my mind as I watch and wait for the response of the United States to Iran’s bombing of the Saudi Arabian oil infrastructure.

It was naive and simply delusional to automatically presume that the US would immediately intervene and defend Saudi oil interests. It was diplomatically childish to trust that the US would quickly strike Iran because an attack on an ally of the US is like an attack on the US. It most definitely is not. The Saudis and others held on to that unrealistic and highly impractical belief. They believed that the US would defend the honor of the Saudis, would be their diplomatic knight-in-shining-armor.

The relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia is very simple. They are allies; not friends, allies. They have common interests and common enemies. Iran is chief on that shared list. The US and Saudi Arabia do not share values, they do not share a common culture or the principles of freedom and equality. On the contrary, they are quite the opposite.

The relationship between the United States and Israel is not the same as the US/Saudi relationship. But despite the shared values and freedoms of the two countries, despite the big brother/little brother relationship, what does the behavior of the US vis à vis this attack on Saudi Arabia tell us about what Israel can expect from the United States?

Iran is watching closely and learning from the actions and the inaction of the US. Do not think for a moment that Iran has not noticed that the US has not engaged in a military response in not one but in two cases of Iranian strikes against the US or its allies.

The first case was the downing by Iran of a US drone this summer. The second case, of course, is their strike, just days ago, against Saudi Arabia’s oil infrastructure. In the third and pending case, and in the inevitable cases after that, Iranians will increase the expanse and the frequency of their targets. Next up will probably be oil fields or refineries in Bahrain, a major Shi’ite state – but controlled by Sunnis. If not there, the Iranians will target Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates.

They will continue to push the envelope until it is pushed back. And yes, eventually, an Iranian target will be Israel.

Iran will continue until their actions are met with resistance. The cyberattack that the US perpetrated against it was not understood as a real response, it was a computer response. It was an amateur’s response, not the response of a leading world power.

Saudi Arabia is watching, waiting and learning. Israel is

monitoring the situation very carefully. Every leader of Israel knows and knew what Ben-Gurion intuited. And Israeli leadership – no matter who carries that title – may use a preemptive strike against Iran to make certain that Iran knows that Israel knows the score.

One thing is for certain: Israel will not rely on the United States for her defense. Israel will not wait for the US to act. Israel has no time for that. The United States is slow to act, Israel acts with lightning speed.

You can sleep well. Israel is in good hands – her own hands.

Shanah Tovah u’mevorach to all. (Jerusalem Post Sep 29)

The writer is a political commentator and host of Thinking Out Loud on JBS TV.

The Prosecution has Made Itself into a Court By Amnon Lord

A few processes are coming together ahead of the weekend. One is the start of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s pre-indictment hearing. The second is the apparently-stalled negotiations between the Likud and Blue and White. Third, the Likud is threatening to return the mandate to form a government and allow the president to assign it to someone else.

This is a situation that demands we think about what is best for Israel, and based on that direct the various processes and make them flexible – especially the legal ones. Despite the feelings of many on the Right, and maybe some on the Left, there are some who think that the results of the do-over election were good – not to say ideal – for the national camp, because they require the Likud and Blue and White to agree on a unity government.

A government like that, as many have already realized, would be run with two people rotating as prime minister, each serving for two years. And there is no doubt that Benjamin Netanyahu should take the first rotation. It is not important that someone else will be waiting in line to serve the next two years. Anyone who is pushing for that is more interested in pushing Netanyahu out of political life than in a unity government.

In a Facebook message posted the day after the election, Professor Ruth Gabizon put down her thoughts, which sounded saner than the tangle of pressure and hysteria that characterizes most shapers of public opinion. First of all, BDS (Bibi Derangement Syndrome) in Israel must calm down. The public hasn’t decided that Netanyahu must go. The attorney general, the state attorney, and their staffs must realize, as Gabizon wrote, that “even in Netanyahu’s legal matters, the political system must operate wisely. Legally, he cannot be rejected as a leader after the election. The arrangement must be fundamentally political, and it’s good that [the political system] be free to suggest deals that will allow for stability and not necessarily demand immediate justice for Netanyahu. That is a matter that is strictly legal, and it is vital that it not be portrayed as if it would determine whether rule of law lives or dies.”

But now we have to get down to it: the prosecution in Israel has made itself into a court. Waiting for the result of the hearing is like waiting for a sentencing. The fact that this is accepted practice in this country doesn’t mean that it’s a process that meets democratic constitutional standards. Especially when in the last two elections, a very large sector of the public voted to reject law enforcement’s stance regarding the prime minister. It’s not that the public is saying Netanyahu is innocent; they are just saying that law enforcement officials must not be the ones to decide whether or not he can continue to serve as prime minister.

In Israel, a small news item on a website can be considered bribery. That is a serious ethical violation by those who are responsible for the prosecutorial process and who know that even if Netanyahu is exonerated in court, the use of a count of bribery in a case against the prime minister will mean he is finished in public life. (Israel Hayom Oct 2)

The Violence Starts at Home By Ali Adi

The death of Khair al-Din Hamdan, who was killed by police fire in the village of Kafr Kana in November 2014, resulted in a strike in the village and other locations in Israel’s Arab sector. He was deemed a shahid (“martyr”) and became a symbol of police violence against Arabs.

But the true story is that Khair al-Din was not some tortured saint. Photos show him attacking a police car, knife in hand, trying to break the windows as if he was possessed. Israelis have seen such images many times in the context of terrorist attacks.

On Thursday, a justified protest was scheduled to launch across Israel’s Arab sector. In a very short period, Israel’s Arab communities have seen an unprecedented number of murders. Since

2000, more than 1,300 Arab Israelis have lost their lives as a result of crime and violence. Arab elected officials often blame the Israeli establishment, especially the police and government, for the rise in violence, thereby deepening the Arab public's crisis of confidence in law enforcement.

But Arab society encourages violence within its ranks, especially when it takes the responsibility for seeing justice done away from the authorities and places it in the hands of families and communities. Instead of law and order remaining in the hands of the central government, Arab society sometimes prefers to "close matters" at home, or within the clan or the village. Tiny battlefields pop up one after the other around the term "honor," with young people defending their own or their family's honor. It's part of a culture and a mentality that need to be opened to discourse, not merely addressed through practical steps.

I spent 10 years working in translation and transcription of police interrogations, and I encountered endless statements expressing Arab society's attitude towards law enforcement. The revulsion at involving the police, and the faith in the custom of *sulha* ("forgiveness") as a way of ending violent conflicts, are slowly becoming the status quo. So *sulha* ceremonies become a kind of black market for justice that reflect the society's views on violence. The way they see it, violence doesn't cross any red line—it is merely part of ordinary social relations. It's allowed, and sometimes negotiations need to be held about its limits.

If we want a solution, we cannot Khair al-Din's case separately from the other cases of violence. A society that embraces its criminals must take responsibility for the consequences that embrace entails. Israel's Arab society must gather its courage and allow police to enter towns and villages, and back them up fully with both words and action. It cannot demand that the police come in and clear out illegal weapons while also attacking police, putting their safety at risk and insulting them. Arab leaders must make a fateful—but very easy—decision to turn their backs on criminals to ensure that society's upstanding members can lead better lives, or at least, live.

The writer is a political and social activist. He holds degrees in economics and film. (Israel Hayom Oct 3)

The World Bank is Ignoring the Elephant in the Room

By Lt. Col. (Res) Maurice Hirsch

In a press release accompanying a new World Bank report assessing the Palestinian Authority economy, Kanthan Shankar, the World Bank's Country Director for West Bank and Gaza, says the P.A. is having financial difficulties due to the "liquidity squeeze."

In the release, posted on the World Bank website, Shankar writes: "The outlook for the Palestinian territories is worrisome as drivers of growth are diminishing and the severe liquidity squeeze has started to affect the P.A.'s ability to fulfill its responsibilities of paying its civil servants and providing public services."

This bleak prognosis was based on a 15-page report that pointed to two major factors contributing to the P.A.'s financial crisis, but which completely ignored the elephant in the room: The P.A.'s financial crisis is a direct result of its "pay-for-slay" policy.

The P.A. squanders millions of shekels/dollars/euros a year to pay monthly salaries to terrorist prisoners and released prisoners, as well as monthly allowances to wounded terrorists and the families of dead terrorists.

According to the World Bank report, the two dominant factors underlying the P.A.'s latest financial crisis are Israel's "unilateral deductions of almost \$12 million per month from the tax revenues it collects on behalf of the P.A." and a reduction in foreign aid.

Providing no context for the Israeli deductions, in what can at best be seen as an act of willful blindness and at worst is a deliberate attempt to mislead the international community, the World Bank report never once refers directly to the Israeli law according to which Israel withholds P.A. taxes in an amount equaling that which the P.A. spends on rewarding terrorists.

The report did not explain, for example, that the P.A. budgeted hundreds of millions of shekels in 2018 alone to reward the wounded terrorists and the families of the dead terrorists, and that the P.A. admitted to paying NIS 502 million (\$144 million) in salaries to terrorist prisoners and released prisoners.

Having noted the deduction and the fact that the P.A. then refused to accept the remaining tax funds—which Israel has already attempted to pass on to the P.A.—much of the rest of the World Bank report is dedicated to explaining how the P.A. has dealt with the consequences of its own decision. The report goes to great lengths to explain the depth and effects of the crisis—but never notes that is entirely self-created.

First, were the P.A. to abandon its "pay-for-slay" policy, Israel would no longer be compelled by law to make deductions from the tax revenues.

Second, the deductions made by Israel account for only 6% of the P.A. tax revenues. Israel has transferred the remaining 94% to the P.A., but the P.A. rejected the funds.

Third, while the P.A. decided to cut the salaries of its public employees as a result of the financial crisis it has driven itself into, that decision did not apply to the P.A.'s "pay-for-slay" beneficiaries—the terrorists. As opposed to the law-abiding P.A. employees, whose salaries were cut, the monthly salaries the P.A. pays to the terrorist prisoners and released prisoners, and the monthly allowances paid to wounded terrorists and the families of the dead terrorists, remained unchanged.

The cumulative distorted impression deliberately given by the World Bank report is that Israel arbitrarily and without cause withheld funds from the P.A., and that the P.A. is merely an innocent victim.

Compounding its willful blindness (at best) or deliberate attempt to mislead the international community (at worst) the report adds that an additional causal factor of the financial crisis is the decline in foreign aid. Here, too, the report ignores the elephant in the room.

In 2018, the American Taylor Force Act conditioned hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. direct aid to the P.A. on the abolition of the P.A.'s "pay-for-slay" policy. Instead of accepting that the continued implementation of the policy of rewarding terrorists would result in the loss of all aid money from the P.A.'s most generous donor, the P.A. rejected the US condition.

Having already lost the aid, P.A. leader Mahmoud Abbas clarified that "Even if we have only a penny left it will only be spent on the families of the Martyrs and the prisoners, and only afterwards will it be spent on the rest of the people." (Official P.A. TV, July 24, 2018).

Abbas has since reiterated this statement numerous times.

Giving outright precedence to its "pay-for-slay" policy over any U.S. aid, in December 2018, then P.A. Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah waived all remaining U.S. aid that was not conditional upon the P.A. abolishing its policy.

Other countries that cut aid to the P.A. as a result of its policy of rewarding terrorists included Australia and Holland, with Sweden and Norway making similar decisions.

Incredibly, similar to its omission of any context regarding Israel's "deduction," the World Bank report fails to note that the decline in foreign aid is also a direct product of the P.A.'s "pay-for-slay" policy.

As if these critical contextual omissions were insufficient, the World Bank report ends with the recommendation that "The P.A. should work closely with development partners to identify additional external aid as without it, a fiscal and economic crisis cannot be avoided in the absence of clearance revenues in 2020."

In other words, instead of clearly identifying the P.A.'s "pay-for-slay" policy as the main obstacle and root of its financial crisis and recommending that the P.A. immediately abolish this policy, shamefully, the World Bank's recommendation is that the international community continue to fund both the P.A. and its noxious policy.

Distorted reports such as these, from ostensibly neutral and professional international bodies, entrench the bias against Israel and embolden the P.A.'s victimhood narrative. Such reports do nothing to hold the P.A. accountable for its own decisions and nothing to promote either peace or fiscal stability for the P.A. and the Palestinians.

Israel's "Deduction Law" was passed in July 2018. The law instructs the state to deduct and freeze the amount of money the P.A. pays in salaries to imprisoned terrorists and families of "martyrs" in one year from the tax money Israel collects and transfers to the P.A. in the following year. Should the P.A. stop these payments for a full year, the Israeli government would have the option of giving all or part of the frozen money to the P.A.

The law was first implemented in February 2019, shortly after the murder of Ori Ansbacher, when Israel's Security Cabinet decided to withhold NIS 502,697,000 (approximately \$138 million) from the P.A., to be deducted in 12 monthly parts. (JNS/PMW Oct 2)

The writer is the Head of Legal Strategies for Palestinian Media Watch. He served for 19 years in the IDF Military Advocate General Corps. In his last position he served as Director of the Military Prosecution in Judea and Samaria.
