



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...

The Trump Assassination Attempt Resonates in Israel

By Avi Abelow

In the wake of the failed assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump, the Israeli government's Sunday cabinet meeting was dedicated to dangerous incitement by public officials against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that many fear could lead to similar assassination attempts against the prime minister. Trump narrowly survived, some may say even miraculously, the attempt on his life. The harrowing event has underscored the volatile nature of the current U.S. election season. Amidst this turmoil, concerns deepen not just for America but for the global community at large.

The reaction from certain sectors of the media has only added to the confusion and concern. Rather than accurately reporting the assassination attempt, some outlets downplayed it as a mere "incident" or initially described it as Trump falling. This blatant misrepresentation, together with a deliberate lack of coverage of the outright incitement against Trump by media personalities, highlights a disturbing trend in which media bias undermines truth and fuels polarization.

Looking ahead, the prospect of further attempts on Trump's life looms. The freedom with which messages of "don't miss next time" are being broadcast is both ominous and portentous for those of any controversial political views anywhere in the world. The desperation to prevent Trump's re-election could potentially escalate into more violent acts, with concerns now extending to possible attempts on President Joe Biden—an absurd narrative given that there is no need for any violence against Biden to stop him from being reelected; he is doing a good enough job of hurting his chances himself.

Senior Israeli journalist Amit Segal has drawn parallels between the assassination attempt on Trump and the prevalent incitement here in Israeli politics. Public figures have openly called for drastic measures against Netanyahu, who they publicly call a "traitor" and an "enemy of the nation." They describe "waiting for him with a hanging noose" and even include suggestions of military coups and preparations for civil war.

Shockingly, these calls to action have mainly gone unchecked by the legal system, revealing a selective approach to justice in which incitement against Netanyahu is ignored or dismissed as inconsequential.

Segal's criticism of the justice system resonates deeply. He condemns the system's failure to address illegal and dangerous incitement against Netanyahu, pointing out the apparent political bias that dictates when legal action is pursued. This selective enforcement not only undermines the rule of law but also perpetuates a cycle of political manipulation through judicial means.

This absurdity reached new heights in a recent incident involving Inon Magal, a prominent Israeli media personality known for his right-wing views. Magal published satirical posts on X, swapping the names in inciting statements against Netanyahu with that of the state prosecutor, ostensibly to test the consistency of legal responses, even adding the word "checking" to ensure that his satire would be seen as such. Despite the clear intent of satire, the justice system's response, together with the media, has been swift and severe, calling for Magal's prosecution while turning a blind eye to more serious incitement against Netanyahu from the political left.

This glaring double standard highlights the systemic corruption within Israel's justice system, where political affiliations seem to dictate the course of legal action rather than principles of justice and fairness. It underscores a dire need for comprehensive reform to restore integrity and impartiality to the judicial process.

More than ever, people are waking up to how political the Israeli justice system is today, necessitating proper and comprehensive judicial reform as soon as possible. The impact of selective litigation, the politicization of justice, the free reign of incitement along political lines and its translation into dangerous, violent action is cautionary for

all of us. It should be impacting our policies at home in Israel—swiftly.

The intertwining issues of incitement, assassination attempts and the manipulation of the legal system for political gain paint a bleak picture of

contemporary politics. Whether in the United States or Israel, the erosion of trust in institutions meant to uphold justice threatens not only individual leaders but the very foundations of democratic governance. As we navigate these turbulent times, it is becoming increasingly clear that genuine reform is essential to safeguarding democratic principles and ensuring accountability across all levels of governance. (JNS Jul 18)

Benny Gantz's Stab at Statesmanship Backfires By Ruthie Blum

Following the attempted assassination on Saturday of presumptive Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump at a rally in Pennsylvania, the Israeli Cabinet devoted its weekly meeting on Sunday morning to incitement.

During the ministerial gathering, Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs presented a compilation of video clips featuring prominent Israelis threatening not only Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his family, but all "Bibistim" (the derogatory term for the premier's supporters), with various forms of violence and even death.

The two-hour discussion that ensued focused on the fact that calls to kill members of the coalition have been voiced repeatedly with impunity. Netanyahu referred to the "silence of senior figures [from whom] we have not heard condemnations."

Several hours later, National Unity Party leader Benny Gantz issued a lengthy tweet to answer and counter the claim. He began by quoting assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin "of blessed memory," who said that "violence is the erosion of the foundation of democracy. It must be condemned, denounced and isolated. This is not the way of the State of Israel."

Gantz went on, "As true as this statement was then, it is equally true today. In these times, when we have returned to the discourse of Oct. 6 on steroids, it must be clearly stated: There is no place for hatred and violence in a democratic state, in any form or manner, from any side of the political spectrum." Violence, he continued, "is a danger to any democratic society, and we must not be indifferent to it, regardless of the direction, no matter how significant the disagreements. We must not engage in physical or verbal violence against protesters, politicians or the prime minister."

Trying to pre-empt criticism from both supporters and detractors, he wrote, "I know what the reactions to this post will be. Some will say, 'They, not we, are running the poison machine.' Others will say, 'In our camp, it has never happened and never will.' Some will say, 'You're serving Netanyahu' and others will say, 'You're incapable of condemning the Kaplanists [anti-government demonstrators on Tel Aviv's Kaplan Street].'" He then offered the following advice: "It's time to wake up and for each person to first look at himself, his camp, his environment. This applies to the prime minister, as well, who must act to stop the incitement spread online on his behalf."

Yes, he insisted, "We must unite in the call of all party leaders against any form of incitement or violence. The event in the United States, regardless of the circumstances, should also raise red flags for us. We simply need to condemn and denounce violence and violent people and manage our disagreements firmly, but without incitement and crossing red lines. From any side, and under any circumstances."

Apparently, Gantz thought it was relatively safe to condemn all violence, including incitement directed at Netanyahu—especially since he made sure to stress that it emanates equally from the prime minister's camp. After all, what reasonable Israeli couldn't be on board with that? Furthermore, the demand that the right engage in collective soul-searching after Rabin's murder—and breast-beating on the part of many Israelis whose vociferous opposition to the Oslo Accords made them feel guilty for the climate that led to his death—was the going zeitgeist in the country for years.

So Gantz's admonition wasn't novel. Other than in its general nature, that is, which means that it was also aimed at the left.

Oops. Talk about crossing a red line.

To get an idea of the outrage that Gantz's feeble stab at societal unity (by not letting Bibi off the hook) elicited, a review of some choice comments on his post is in order.

"Gantz is a tireless poll tracker, listening to his advisers who think that with these empty words he'll be able to win a few more votes from the soft right," argued one disgruntled follower. "And he doesn't understand that he's actually a Netanyahu collaborator helping to normalize the paranoid dictator." Another grunted, "What a repulsive potted plant. There is no symmetry, and we don't have the privilege of impotent leadership. Stay home, enjoy your budgetary pension and leave us in peace, you cheap populist."

Gantz, spewed another, "is a manufactured oppositionist whose role is to strengthen the regime. He's essentially an organic part of the fascist-theocratic coup and fulfills his role as someone who regulates and limits resistance."

Someone else chimed in, "Gantz is a complete zero, unworthy of leading anything. Since his entry into politics, Israel's situation has only worsened in every parameter."

Among the numerous insults was this: "He's a lapdog of the tyrant [Netanyahu], just like [President Isaac] Herzog."

"So true!" replied one venomous X user. "From Gantz, you can always hear only supposedly statesmanlike remarks that address both sides, as if they're on a par with each other. Not a word about police violence and the Kahanist mob against protesters, and he will never say a word about the constant abuse by the army and settlers in Palestinian villages in the territories. The man is a Netanyahu clone without a backbone."

The above is only a sampling of the more than 900 comments on Gantz's post. He should have known better than to expect sympathy from the very elites who consider it their duty to oust Netanyahu by any means. For them, violence is legitimate if it achieves the goal of eliminating their nemesis. Gantz also wants Bibi out of the way, but he's hoping to realize this dream at the ballot box.

He imagined that quitting the emergency unity government, and along with it the War Cabinet, would remove the "stain" of the Netanyahu-led coalition and pave his way to the premiership. Perhaps now he knows that he can forget about counting on the left to help that happen. (JNS Jul 15)

Understanding the Importance of J.D. Vance

By Jonathan S. Tobin.

If there's one political story that never gets as much attention as it deserves, it's the choice of a vice-presidential nominee. And it could turn out that former President Donald Trump's decision to pick Sen. J.D. Vance (R-Ohio) as his running mate may have an impact on American politics and policies for many years to come.

This is why the loud and angry debate about Vance, his background, political philosophy, foreign-policy views and journey from "Never Trump" critic to ardent supporter of the 45th president goes far beyond the usual analysis of such a nomination.

It's true that very few people vote based on who is on the bottom of the ticket. The vice presidency is also a position without formal power, even if it is only a heartbeat from the presidency. But eight out of America's last 22 presidents were vice presidents first.

Four of them rose to the role as a result of the death of the president (Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson); one due to the resignation of the president (Gerald Ford); and three won on their own after serving time as the second banana (Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush and Joe Biden).

Such a promotion is by no means guaranteed for Vance. If Biden mounts a miraculous comeback in November and the Republicans lose, he may only become someone who is the answer to a trivia question, along with Tim Kaine, Paul Ryan, Sarah Palin, John Edwards and Joe Lieberman, rather than a future president.

But more than is typical of those who are tapped as running mates, Vance is set up for bigger things.

Most vice presidents—including those, like the elder George Bush and Biden, who eventually won the presidency—were picked because they were thought to give the ticket some marginal political advantage or represented a compromise between the nominee and factions of his party that hadn't supported him.

Vance was not chosen because he "balances" the ticket in any way. He shares Trump's views on major issues and is considered among the most articulate advocates for those views. That makes him

a credible successor to Trump as leader of a Republican Party that has undergone a remarkable transformation in the last eight years.

Just as important, he could be in a stronger position to succeed to the presidency than most veep nominees simply because Trump is limited to a single term. Which means that, assuming Trump wins, and perhaps even if he doesn't, Vance will, at the very least, enter the 2028 presidential race as one of the frontrunners.

This is precisely why the arguments about him matter.

At its heart, the debate about Vance concerns a political philosophy that has come to be known as national conservatism. The core of the polemic is a willingness to rethink what it means to be both a conservative and a political leader in the 21st century.

It rejects a lot of conventional wisdom about economics and foreign policy that was largely accepted by most Republicans two decades ago when George W. Bush was president. And that means it is rooted in pushback against the political establishment and the credentialed elites who have largely controlled not only the party and the government, but big business and mainstream culture, as well.

It may be ironic that this sea change in conservative thinking is led by a man like Trump who was born into wealth and whose lifestyle and behavior largely epitomize what it means to be rich, influential and have an outsized footprint in pop culture. Nevertheless, the so-called MAGA (from the Trump slogan "Make America Great Again") movement, is a conscious attempt to change the orientation of Republican politics from a concern about what's good for Wall Street to one that takes into account the needs of the working class.

That's shocking for those who led the GOP only a few years ago. Though they welcomed the votes of Americans from lower economic strata, they had little direct interest in their welfare or what mattered to them. And, though they were reluctant to admit it publicly, they shared the sneering contempt for the working class that was expressed by Democrats like President Barack Obama, when he disparaged those who "clung to guns or religion," or were, as Hillary Clinton memorably put it, "deplorables."

Establishment GOP leaders and pundits supported economic policies and international trade agreements that essentially impoverished many Americans by hollowing out the country's manufacturing base and outsourcing jobs abroad. They also ardently opposed worker-friendly policies that might soften the blow.

In addition, they also dismissed the impact of illegal immigration on the working class, something that was very much in sync with the desires of big business, which welcomed the influx of people who would depress wages for workers.

They did so in the name of the free market and the sort of doctrinaire economic liberalism that was very much at the center of the conservative agenda of iconic figures like President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

The above was, in essence, the definition of conservatism that ruled the GOP until the advent of Trump. And it was popular not just with Wall Street, but also with college-educated voters, a demographic slice of the electorate that was reliably Republican. Liberal economics and global trade made a lot of Americans wealthier and reduced the costs of many consumer items.

But it also left many Americans behind, destroyed communities and robbed the United States of the manufacturing capacity to produce the arms that traditional conservative foreign-policy hawks required to fund both American wars and new causes like Ukraine's fight against Russia.

Trump was no ideologue. But his instincts were populist and among the issues on which he had really strong beliefs when he entered politics in 2015 were trade and illegal immigration. Speaking to those issues resonated with lower-income voters whom Republicans had failed to win over in the past and who were more likely to vote for the Democrats.

On foreign policy, Trump also was a critic of the post 9/11 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that began during the presidency of George W. Bush. But Trump was willing to start discussing the NATO alliance in the same way he talked about trade agreements like NAFTA, by questioning whether it was outdated or if it was fair to ask American taxpayers to pay for the defense of wealthy European countries that were spending very little on their own militaries.

All that was anathema to the Republicans who dominated their party under Reagan and the Bushes, and then nominated John McCain and Mitt Romney in failed bids to defeat Obama. They

viewed the sort of populist common-good conservatism that was oriented more to working class concerns and needs as “socialism.”

And since most of them were guided by the anti-Communist assumptions about the world that were embraced by conservatives during the Cold War, they viewed any reluctance to exercise American power abroad as akin to the way Democrats had often sought to appease the Soviet Union or as a betrayal of the obligation to fight Islamist terror after 9/11. In this way, they came to label any second thoughts about disasters like the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, let alone a sacred cow like NATO, as “isolationism” and a betrayal of the legacy of Reagan.

But now positions that were seen as heresy to conservatives are applause lines at Republican conventions. To liberals and conservatives who oppose this shift, this is evidence that the GOP has simply surrendered to the Trump populist cult.

But while the devotion to Trump—reinforced by the attempt to assassinate him and his pose of defiance after being wounded—goes far beyond the good feelings evoked by most politicians among their supporters, there’s more to it than that. Trump’s success lies in his ability to tap into the resentments of working-class voters and simultaneously to a desire to create a political movement that embodies traditional conservative values of liberty and patriotism. But the “populist” aspect of this shift scares some people.

The word “populist” has always scared Jews. The populist movement in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries began as an agrarian splinter party and then, to a large extent, took over the Democratic Party in the 1890s under the banner of three-time loser William Jennings Bryan.

That form of populism embraced some nonsensical economic theories like “bimetallism” and the desire of poor farmers to have their debts canceled. But because it looked to bankers and capitalists as the root of all evil, it was also connected to antisemitism, a sentiment that some populist leaders like Georgia’s Tom Watson—who helped whip up the hatred behind the infamous lynching of Leo Frank, an Atlanta Jew who was falsely accused of murder—exploited.

That same fear of populist sentiment was never far below the surface throughout the 20th century, with demagogic radio preachers like Father Coughlin, who mixed in antisemitism and pseudo-fascism with his advocacy for workers’ rights. The appeal of such figures and their ability to foment hate reinforced the notion that uneducated people who have been displaced by modern economic developments are not so much to be helped by society as feared.

But the antisemitism that was so much a part of American populism in the past is noticeably absent in a MAGA world that is, with only a few exceptions, reflexively pro-Israel and philosemitic. While Jews are disproportionately members of the credentialed elites who benefited from the current system, neither the rhetoric nor the substance of this critique of the old GOP establishment is linked to attacks on Israel as is now common on the left.

To speak now of the problems engendered by the globalist policies championed by the elites who flock to Davos, Switzerland for the World Economic Forum, is not a dog whistle to extremists. It is a rallying cry to resist corrupt forces that are genuinely harming Americans and empowering antisemites.

Vance’s rise is based on his ability to explain the complaints of Americans who were left behind by decisions made by both Republican and Democratic presidents. He first became known because of his bestselling memoir *Hillbilly Elegy*, which placed his own experiences in the context of the socioeconomic challenges faced by poor whites living in Appalachia and the rust belt.

The enthusiastic reception it received from the chattering classes was rooted in their eagerness for an explanation for why this demographic group was open to voting for Trump, though he wasn’t mentioned in the book. But some on the left hated it, because it correctly sought to shift the focus from the alleged racism of poor whites to the struggles of the working class, regardless of their color or ethnicity.

Vance’s own life story was an inspiring rags-to-riches tale. He survived a difficult childhood with a mother who was an addict, to go on to service in the Marines, then college and Yale Law School, and a successful career as a venture capitalist before winning an Ohio Senate seat in 2022.

In 2016, Vance was a strong critic of Trump but, like a lot of other conservatives, he changed his mind about him. That was due to his performance as president and he way the left and the D.C.

establishment demonstrated that they would do virtually anything to destroy someone who was neither part of their elite clique nor one of the “experts” in the governing class.

This is now put forward by his critics as a sign of his insincerity and ruthless ambition. Though, as is true for anyone in politics, ambition may have played some role in his conversion (interestingly, he underwent a religious conversion during this same period, becoming a Catholic in 2017), it seems primarily rooted in a recognition that the policies of those who purported to lead the conservative movement were not actually conservative. If they were, they wouldn’t be indifferent to the way global economics and illegal immigration destroys lives and communities and undermines traditional American values.

Nor would he, as the Bush-era Republicans did, stand by and allow the collapse of the manufacturing sector and the enrichment of China that undermined America’s national security.

More to the point, and unlike other leading politicians, Trump seemed to get it. Imperfect and inconsistent though he may be, he cared about those who were hurt by globalist policies and his economic, trade and foreign-policy positions were essentially sensible. And he was opposed to the woke ideological policies that sought to divert Americans from the real economic problems faced by working people to divisive fake concerns about racism.

At 39 (he turns 40 on Aug. 2) and with less than 2 years’ service in the Senate, Vance has yet to be tested on the national stage. But he is an articulate spokesman for a movement that is putting forth a version of conservatism that is more in tune with the needs of ordinary voters.

It is also in stark opposition to the leftist ideology and its woke catechism of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) that has taken over our education system, culture, the media and, thanks to Biden, the federal bureaucracy, which is in desperate need of reform. This leftist orthodoxy is the animating force behind the current surge in antisemitism. And far from abetting Jew hatred, the new conservative populism is the only force that stands a chance of resisting and rolling it back.

Vance’s opposition to continuing the funding of an endless war in Ukraine which is eating up resources that might better be spent on aiding Israel, stopping Iran and deterring China is disqualifying for some on the right who are still obsessed with Russia. They wrongly believe that putting so much of our resources into Ukraine will magically strengthen Israel and Taiwan. But his critics have no answer to his arguments about the need for America to pick and choose its fights carefully in an era when its capacity to produce arms is no longer unlimited.

Assuming Trump wins in November, we don’t know how Vance will fare in the second slot, as there will be plenty of opportunities for him to stumble or to displease the president. But what makes him both interesting and dangerous to the D.C. establishment is that he provides the intellectual muscle for a new conservative vision for the country.

It isn’t the same conservatism of Reagan and Thatcher, and that’s hard for an older generation of Republicans to absorb. But the challenges America, Israel and the world must now deal with are not the same as those that faced the West in the 1980s, when the “evil empire” in Moscow still threatened the world with Communism.

Yet with his nomination, Vance is now poised to ensure that this turn toward national conservatism is no passing phase that will be erased by a comeback of Never-Trump Bush-era Republicans who still dream of taking the GOP back from the “deplorable.” If he succeeds, the decision to tap him for the vice presidency may turn out to be among the most consequential of Trump’s decisions.

(JNS Jul 17)

A Potemkin Façade is not a Solution By Leonard Grunstein

Gaza was not occupied by Israel, as a matter of law or fact, on Oct. 7, 2023 when genocidal Hamas terrorists invaded Israel and committed rapes, kidnappings, sadistic murders and other atrocities.

Israel fully withdrew from Gaza in 2005, including any military presence and all Israeli residents. Moreover, the records of the United Nations reflect that any occupation of Gaza ended in 1994. Thereafter, the Palestinian Authority era began, as acknowledged and agreed to by the P.A.—including in a 2010 U.N.-sponsored agreement. President George W. Bush provided Israel with several

substantive assurances as an inducement for Israel to proceed with withdrawing from Gaza. The agreement is summarized in President Bush's letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, dated April 14, 2014. It includes four critical provisions:

- Palestinians must undertake an immediate cessation of armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere, and all official Palestinian institutions must end incitement against Israel.
- The Palestinian leadership must act decisively against terror, including sustained, targeted and effective operations to stop terrorism and dismantle terrorist capabilities and infrastructure.
- The U.S. reaffirms its commitment to Israel's security, including secure, defensible borders, and to preserve and strengthen Israel's capability to deter and defend itself by itself against any threat or possible combination of threats.
- Israel retains its right to defend itself against terrorism, including proactively against terrorist organizations. Existing arrangements regarding control of airspace, territorial waters and land passages of Gaza are to continue.

The Bush-Sharon letter was, in effect, ratified by a near unanimous (95-3, with two absent) Senate resolution, dated June 24, 2004. Thus, it is arguably not just a binding executive agreement, but also U.S. law. While Bush and Sharon were well-meaning and had the best of intentions and Sharon, the stark reality of the bad faith and ulterior motives of the P.A. and Hamas, as well as Hamas's genocidal program, sabotaged their agreement. Hamas defeated P.A. chief Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah Party in the 2006 P.A. elections. Abbas maneuvered to retain power and a civil war ensued with Hamas seizing control of Gaza in 2007.

Hamas established Gaza as an armed camp in violation of the Oslo Accords and regularly attacked Israel. Now, there is the ongoing war triggered by the Oct. 7 massacre.

Hamas is a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and it is illegal to provide it with material support or resources (18 USC 2339). Its avowed goal, enshrined in its Charter, is to destroy Israel. It also espouses antisemitic and genocidal doctrines directed against Jews. Clearly, Hamas's atrocities cannot be justified or excused. Its baseless pretext of "occupation" is just another canard.

The foundational definition of the term "occupation" under international law is embodied in the Hague Convention. It provides that a territory is only considered occupied when it is actually placed under the authority of a hostile army. As a threshold matter, the military forces of the conquered territory must have surrendered, been defeated or withdrawn. It also requires (1) a military presence in the occupied territory and (2) exercising governmental authority over the area conquered to the exclusion of the established civil government. Unless all of these criteria are satisfied, there is no occupation, as a matter of law. Merely having the potential to invade and control a territory that is not coupled with an actual presence and effective control is insufficient.

Gaza was part of the original area referred to as the Palestine Mandate. It was conquered by Egypt in the 1948 Israel-Arab war, which Egypt and other Arab nations started in an attempt to prevent the re-emergence of the modern Jewish state of Israel. Gaza was conquered by Israel in the 1967 defensive war. Israel administered the territory until governmental authority was transferred to the P.A. in 1994 under the Gaza-Jericho Agreement.

Under the Oslo II Agreement and the 2005 Disengagement Agreement, Israel obtained certain rights to patrol Gaza's coastal waters and air space, which do not constitute effective governmental control over Gaza. This was intended to enable Israel to interdict illegal weapons deliveries to Gaza, which are expressly prohibited under those agreements. Reflecting on these circumstances in 2008, the Israeli Supreme Court in the Al-Bassiouni case held there was no occupation by Israel of Gaza under international law. The European Court of Human Rights in 2015 ruled that control of the airspace above territory and the adjacent sea is insufficient to constitute an occupation under international law, noting that occupation is inconceivable without "boots on the ground."

Peace should have been achieved when Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. As the wise Charles Krauthammer wrote, "Israel evacuated Gaza completely. It declared the border between Israel and Gaza an international frontier. Gaza became the first independent Palestinian territory in history. Yet Gazans continued the war. ... Why? Because occupation was a mere excuse to persuade gullible and historically ignorant Westerners to support the Arab cause against Israel. The issue

is, and has always been, Israel's existence. That is what is at stake."

History and experience dictate that an immediate and full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza is not the answer. Fundamental changes must first occur in Gaza and the P.A., including fully honoring the Oslo Accords, ending "pay to slay" and totally demilitarizing Gaza. Until then, there is every reason for Israel to demur, so as not to reward terrorism. Creating nothing more than another Potemkin façade of peace masking another dysfunctional terror state is not a solution. A phased withdrawal plan based on the satisfaction of essential conditions over time makes more sense. Enough with the illusions of peace. Israel, the U.S. and the world need real peace. (JNS July 16)

The UN's Illegal Occupation of Jerusalem By Colin L. Leci

June 5, 2024, marked the 57th anniversary of the U.N.'s occupation of Government House in Jerusalem.

Before the termination of the British Mandate in 1948, the Government House complex, deliberately erected by the British in the 1930s on the commanding heights of the southern Jerusalem ridge overlooking the Old City, was a symbol of British rule.

Between 1949 and 1967 this area complex was acknowledged as a no-man's-land per the Israel-Jordan armistice of April 1949. On June 5, 1967, at 10:45 am, the Jordanian army opened fire on Jewish Jerusalem despite then-Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's attempt through the offices of the U.N. to persuade Jordan not to become involved in the hostilities.

The Jordanians subsequently captured Jebel Mukhaber and by 2:10 pm had seized Government House. In the battle to retake the complex from this illegal occupation, the IDF lost 21 soldiers—testified to by the memorial plaque on the Hass Promenade.

Having pushed out the Jordanians at great cost in lives, the Israeli government procrastinated—as shown in documents found in the State Archives—as to what should happen to the complex. The government failed to show its mettle and disregarded that the complex had been the prestigious headquarters of the Mandate. It should have been incorporated into Jerusalem to serve as the official residence of the president of Israel like the White House in Washington, the Élysée Palace in Paris or the Kremlin in Moscow.

Unfortunately, the Israeli government retained the galut mentality of cowering before the nations of the world instead of exhibiting self-confidence and pride. Were they afraid of offending the King of Jordan or the defeated Arab states? Or were they kowtowing to the "great" powers?

The U.N. was immediately permitted to reoccupy the complex without negotiations, lease or any other quasi-legal conditions.

Over the past 57 years, the U.N. has made substantial modifications to both the internal and exterior structures of Government House, illegally extending its boundaries by seizing adjacent land. All this took place under the watchful eyes of the government and the Jerusalem Municipality, both of which did nothing to restrain the U.N. through national or local planning legislation—for 57 years, they acted unilaterally.

Additionally, the U.N. does not pay Jerusalem municipal taxes or reimburse the suppliers of vital infrastructure utilities like electricity, water and telephone communications. It also occupies the adjacent Antenna Hill to the southeast.

Given that Israel has signed peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt and the U.N.'s force in Lebanon UNIFIL has not ensured that Security Council Resolution 1701 that restricts Hezbollah activities in Lebanon is enforced, there can be no reasonable grounds for the U.N. and its agencies to occupy Government House. They can move lock, stock and barrel to northern Israel where they will be on the spot.

Furthermore, the Housing Minister recently declared that the UNWRA complex in Ma'alot Dafna is illegal and is taking steps such as fines and requiring the payment of retroactive rent.

Given the attitude of the U.N., its secretary-general and its staff—as well as the General Assembly and Security Council—towards Israel and the Jewish people, we must stand firm against the U.N. and openly show our supreme sovereignty by regaining full control over the Government House complex and adjacent areas.

I call upon Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to restore our dignity and self-respect by ejecting the U.N. from Government House and designating the complex the official legal residence of the president of Israel. (JNS Jul 16)