



INDEPENDENT JEWISH/PALESTINIAN THINK TANK **of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

LIVING DOCUMENT April 1, 2022

A quest for justice and balance, out of concern and heartache.

This Think Tank is neither a lobby organization nor an action group for either party, but exists for the benefit of both, Israeli and Palestinians. We do not want to omit the inconvenient and lose balance and integrity. The content of this Living Document reflects predominantly factual information derived from public sources. We disclose the view of the Think Tank where we deem this desirable.

We believe that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to reach an agreement through direct negotiations between the parties to the conflict that ends the occupations following the 1967 war as much as possible while addressing Israel's security issues and fulfils the aspirations of both parties for two independent states, Israel and an independent and viable state of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Our mission:

- Information via a Living Document (LD) incl. Summary for Dutch parliamentarians.
- Enhancing (as facilitator) dialogue between Dutch and Palestinian parliamentarians/politicians and between Dutch and Israeli parliamentarians based on the special relationship the Netherlands has with both parties in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This could be complementary to the existing contacts on governmental level. The initiative has been embraced by several Dutch parliamentarians and reactions by Palestinians and Israeli are encouraging. In the meantime, a dialogue with Palestinian politicians has taken place in October 2019. Ultimately the goal is a trilateral dialogue.

Churchill: "Success is not final; failure not fatal. It is the courage to continue".

Content Living Document

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1. Israel a Jewish state and/or a state for Jews and non-Jews

Palestinians. We need to understand the historic and more so the present context of the Palestinians. Throughout the ages Palestinians have lived under foreign occupation. The Ottomans governed the territory for almost five centuries, when Jews started to immigrate at the end of the 19th century in large numbers, followed by British rule after World War I. Known during the British Mandate period as Arabs of Palestine, the community opposed the idea of a Jewish homeland and revolted from 1936 to 1939. The British crushed the revolt, which left the community leadership in disarray. In 1947 UN Resolution 181 called for Palestine to be divided into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Arabs of Palestine rejected the resolution, while the Jews proclaimed the State of Israel based on it. A civil war ensued followed by a regional one, which had disastrous consequences for the community: 700,000-800,000 Arabs were exiled or driven out. Since 1967, they have suffered from illegal occupation including violence by Jewish settlers, loss of dignity, displacement from their homes, suppression, high unemployment rates etc. Their (grand)children never experienced peace. Palestinians are being deprived of the right to self-determination.

Jews. We need to understand the historic context of the Jews, who suffered from an imprint of persecution and death for over 2,000 years, and the impact of the Diaspora experience on the Jewish people's psyche. The aftermath of the Shoah shows us transference of pathology as a consequence of what their (grand)parents went through. Nowadays Israeli Jews have a relatively 'safe haven'. The Government of Israel wishes to define Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Yet, there is a conflict between those two components. A Jewish and democratic state is characterized by tension, some of it irreconcilable, between the universal principles underlying its democratic character and the specific concerns inherent to its definition as a Jewish state. It means discriminating more than 2 million non-Jewish citizens. Some members of the Think Tank are in favour of the concept of Israel as a Jewish Home, not a Jewish state. Reality of today is that Israel defines itself as a Jewish State. Subsequently the media refer to Israel as a Jewish State, not only in Israel but also in the Netherlands. Even the head of the first major Arab party, Israel's government coalition party Ra'am, Mansour Abbas stated that this reality could not be changed, advising the Arab community in Israel to follow this pragmatic approach rather than challenge the country's identity. He stated: "Israel was born as a Jewish state ... and so it will remain." Some Arab people struggle with their identity as a national minority. Some identify as Palestinian, others as Arab Israeli, and still others as Arab or Bedouin.

Clashing narratives. The mutual exclusion of Jewish and Palestinian historical narratives needs to end. By doing so it matters less whether Jews have been living in the land for ages and that the Palestinian population was the indigenous population in the region. Understanding of and empathy for the historical narrative of the "other" is still a bridge to cross. The Israeli-Arab Joint List stated: "A people under occupation has the right to struggle. The red line is harming civilians." Many children in Israel and the Palestinian Territories suffer from PTSD. Israel can be blamed for the results of the occupation; the PA for glorifying martyrdom ('Death is sweet') and Hamas for promoting terrorist acts against innocent civilians that provoke retaliatory strikes.

2. Two-State Solution – One-State Solution

All options are up to the conflicting parties. Israel could unilaterally reverse the settlement process by dismantling illegal settlements and banning further construction everywhere behind the Green Line. Yet, the opposite is present reality. The Palestinian Authority (PA),

Arab countries and the international community support the Two-State Solution in principle. Issues need to be resolved, such as future borders, the settlements, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, security and a viable economic program.

A One-State Solution (a unitary state) is more problematic than the Two-State Solution, taking into consideration that neither party, either Israeli or Palestinian, is currently proposing it, not even the Israeli-Arab parties.. However, recent polls in the West Bank show an increasing support, albeit still a minority of the population, for becoming citizens in a single state, embracing Arabs and Israeli. Support for a Two-State solution seems to decrease.

Confederation: Yossi Beilin and Hiba Hussein, veteran peace activists, together with a team of experts are working towards a solution called Holy Land Confederation plan (HLC). It is too early for the Think Tank to comment. We need to know whether both parties show interest.

A Two-State Solution, in addition to at least partial withdrawal by Israel from the West Bank, is currently considered by the Think Tank as the most feasible option, keeping in mind a mistrust and substantial difference of culture between the two parties.

3. Occupation and annexation (applying sovereignty)

Following the 1967 Six-Day war with Arab States, Israel seized the Gaza Strip, the Golan, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Sinai Peninsula. At that time 200,000 Jews and 55,000 Palestinians inhabited Jerusalem. As of December 2020, 367,000 Palestinians (38.5%) lived in Jerusalem out of a total population of 952,000; very few of them have or seek Israeli citizenship.

In 2020 the normalization process between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco included the promise of Israel to suspend annexation of parts of the West Bank. However, these Arab states turn the other way when Israel is building thousands of additional homes in the West Bank.

On June 9, 2020, Israel's High Court of Justice ordered to nullify the controversial Regulation Law that would have retroactively legalized the status of settlements partially built on privately owned Palestinian land in the West Bank under the claim that it is unconstitutional.

It is known that many settlers live in occupied territories for financial reasons. Costs of living/housing are much lower. Some 600,000 settlers are living in 123 government-authorized settlements in apparent contravention of international and humanitarian law .

Relations between the PA and the Israeli Government seem to better under the new government but there is still no movement toward restarting negotiations over a Two-State solution. Defense Minister Gantz met with Abbas in August last year, but Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who approved the meeting, played down its significance. "This is a meeting that deals with security issues," an Israeli official commented. "There is no diplomatic process with the Palestinians, nor will there be." The number of work permits in Israel for West Bank Palestinians was raised by circa 15,000, reaching 106,000 (on top of 30,000 in Jewish settlements). The Israeli Government is focused on strengthening the position of the PA. In this context Israel approved the building of 863 Palestinian housing units in Area C (The Oslo Accords signed by the PLO and Israel in 1993 classified the West Bank into three different areas: A, B and C):

A is under the PA's administrative and security control; 18% of the West Bank

B is under the PA's administrative control and Israel's security control. 22% of the West Bank

C is under Israel's administrative and security control.) 60% of the West Bank.

Recently Israel approved the building of more than 1,300 houses for Palestinians in area C, i.e., on Palestinian land.

Israeli PM Bennett stated, as before, that he is against a Two-State Solution and that he will not freeze settlement construction, but ruled out annexation, which his predecessor PM Netanyahu never did, on the contrary. Bennett also stressed the need for improvement of economic-civilian conditions in the West Bank.

4. Palestinian refugees and their descendants

Many Palestinian refugees fled to host countries and are forced to live with minimal integration in their respective countries, be it Jordan, Syria or Lebanon. UNWRA takes responsibility for humanitarian support and education. The budget of UNWRA amounts to US\$ 1.2 billion. After so many years UNWRA could become instrumental to turn refugee camps into prosperous communities; with the support of the UN, the US, the EU and Israel this can become reality. UNWRA can become the solution to the refugee problem, instead of part of the problem. For humanitarian reasons Israel cannot turn away from the plight of refugees. The late Saeb Erekat, former Palestinian chief negotiator: "For true reconciliation between Israeli and Palestinians, Israel must recognize what is done to the Palestinian people. The Palestinian Nakba ('Catastrophe') is not just the destruction of at least 436 villages and displacement of 70% of the Palestinians, but a form of ethnic cleansing as part of a colonialist strategy".

5. Observations within Israel

"Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people." Israel's Nation State Law was passed by the Knesset on July 19, 2018 and was internationally met with wide criticism. In July 2021 the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the law was constitutional, did not negate the State's democratic character and that it does not detract from the individual rights of non-Jewish citizens, especially in light of other laws that ensure equal rights to all. Yet, some claim that it prioritizes Jewish interests above those of non-Jewish citizens and residents.

The normalization process (Abraham Accords) with Arab states needs special attention. One cannot deny the value of political normalization with Arab states. Thus far influential Sunni Arab nation Saudi Arabia has not indicated its intention to join the Abraham Accords, because of lack of Palestinian statehood.

Labor MK Emilie Moatti, head of the Knesset subcommittee on foreign affairs, initiated advancement in cooperation between Israeli and Palestinians via a number of meetings in order to examine Israel's relations with Palestinians. She will focus on sustainability, textiles, technology, agriculture and climate change, working towards cooperation. In line we find Israeli Minister Frey, who initiated the Joint Economic Committee, by organizing an ongoing dialogue between Israeli and Palestinians on the West Bank.

A remarkable decision was made by FA Minister Lapid, by appointing MK Zoabi (Meretz) as consul general to Shanghai. She is the first Arab woman to be appointed to one of Israel's top diplomatic posts.

Threats from outside:

- The instability in Syria, Hamas/Islamic Jihad, Iran and Hezbollah is a serious threat to Israel. Various sources estimate that Hezbollah's supply of rockets and missiles increased from 10,000 in 2006 to more than 130,000 in 2021.
- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched an investigation into potential war crimes in the Palestinian Territories, including the period covered by the 2014 Gaza war.

Threats from within:

- There is influence of ultra-orthodox and ultra-nationalistic ideas endangering human rights, sometimes placing Halakha (so-called Jewish law) above national law, creating a semi-theocratic state. PM Bennett: "I'm happy that there are Haredim (ultra-Orthodox), but we need to limit their political influence."

- a new disagreement arose within the present Government. Israel is prepared to take in Jewish Ukrainian refugees under the Law of Return, but seems to hesitate to take in non-Jewish refugees. The extreme rightist Interior Minister Shaked stated that it would endanger the Jewish future of the state. Israeli journalist and author Gideon Levy reacted by saying that: "The country whose ethos is based on indifference of the world that kept silent, looked away and locked its gates is doing the exact same thing in this moment of truth".

- Aggression by violent settlers, which is on the rise and much too often stays unpunished. Until now the government does not take enough action against settler extremism and does not sufficiently protect Palestinian civilians. 1,200 Incidents of settler's violence were counted between 2012 and 2021. The Israeli Minister of Defense is mobilizing military forces against settler's violence. The images of hundreds of religious Jewish activists chanting "Death to Arabs," promoting Jewish supremacy and anti-Palestinian hate, are highly disturbing. They are incited by right wing, ultranationalist members of the Knesset.

These settlers and their violent actions are condoned by the mainstream settler movement, which makes it even more dangerous and a recipe for extremism.

- Even today Palestinians are being killed by IDF forces without an obvious reason, which forced the top of the IDF to investigate.

- The former Minister of Education approved a new 500-page Civics Textbook called "Being a citizen in Israel" with no room for the Palestinian narrative. The textbook is supposed to be used in secular, religious and Arab schools in Israel. No Palestinian Israeli was involved in writing this textbook. It does not value Arabic as a language, nor the Arabic culture. Therefore, these textbooks are in dire need of reconsideration, knowing that 24% of the Israeli school children are Arabic.

- The present government coalition consists of leftists, rightists and persons belonging to the middle of the Israeli political spectrum Yesh Atid (17 seats), Yamina (7), Blue and White (8), Yisrael Beiteinu (7), Labor (7), New Hope (6), Meretz (6) and Arab Ra'am (4). The coalition has to deal with ideological differences and tensions, especially when it comes to the occupation.. Yet it is remarkable that they seem to cope, including the United Arab List (Ra'am), whose chairman Mansour Abbas committed to a coalition government after decades in which the Palestinian Israelis were ignored and felt no motivation to join a coalition. Another signal of hope is the contact between the Israeli president Herzog, the minister of Health and others with Palestinian president Abbas. This contact is in full coordination with the Israeli Government. PM Bennett opposes a Two-State Solution, a topic on which he disagrees with Foreign Affairs Minister Lapid who will take Bennett's position in the summer of 2023. Lapid: "I don't have any interest in ruling over 2 million Palestinians in Gaza or 2.9 million in Judea and Samaria" (West Bank)." I believe in two states for two peoples."

Defense Minister Gantz also visited Abbas designed to assist the Palestinian economy. In return Abbas visited Gantz in his private home. Israeli PM Bennett states that he is engaged in 'shrinking' the conflict. His FA minister Lapid was more explicit: "Our Government is not going to build anything that will prevent the possibility of a future Two-State solution". Bennett and Lapid have differences, but hold on to the coalition.

Is Israel an “Apartheid” state? Amnesty International claims it is. The Israeli-Arab minister of regional affairs, member of the far-left coalition partner Meretz, states that Israel is not an Apartheid state but sees signals of “Jewish supremacy” and find that alarming. The present government is working on equality between Arabs, Jews, Druze, and others.

6. Observations on the West Bank and Gaza

Occupation means, among many restrictions, Palestinians on the West Bank having to ask for building permits on their own land. Without a permit, many buildings are being torn down. Even a Palestinian building for testing on Covid-19. According to the UN Israel destroyed 700 buildings in the West Bank, leaving more than 800 persons without a roof over their head. Last year until November 12,000 houses, mostly for settlers, were built in the West Bank with the permission of the Israeli Government.

The 2.8 million West Bank Palestinians, 2 million in Gaza, circa 1 million with an Israeli passport living in Israel and many in other places (more than 5 million) view themselves more or less as one people, sharing culture, history and language.

We received information from the Palestinian Media Watch that the Palestinian Ministry of Education named 31 schools after people who were engaged in terrorist actions. The ideology of martyrdom is a great danger to Israeli and Palestinians. A Palestinian school girl: “Life’s ambition is to reach the level of the Martyr....” Most Palestinian parents are afraid that their children will be recruited to perform suicide operations. Textbooks including this issue on the West Bank need reconsideration, at least if the PA is truly against violence. This is doubtful, taking into consideration research carried out by the European Council reviewing the content of textbooks used in the schools of the PA in which students are taught to hate, use violence and glorify terrorism and Islamic martyrdom.

The PA needs to reconsider monthly payments to families of people who were jailed because of violence against civilians. We received information that Abdullah Barghouti who is responsible for killing 67 people, receives a monthly salary of US\$ 2,255. ‘Pay for slay’ is a practise which needs to end.

The Palestinian PM stated that the PA leadership “is committed to paying full allowances to martyrs’ and prisoners’ families”. The PA refuses to stop these payments, being 7% of the PA’s budget, thus encouraging violence. An example is raising the payments by 50% to the families of two Palestinian boys, aged 17 and 19, up to US\$ 1,806 per month. These young boys murdered a Jewish family of five, of which three children. The PA claims the payments are meant as a form of welfare. We realize that if the PA would stop these payments, the ‘man in the street’ might most probably not allow this change, which would endanger the position of the PA. The pay for slay policy remains abject. Yet at the same time the position of the Palestinian president is at stake. Nearly 80% of the population wants him to resign.

At the moment political power remains with the present establishment. The younger generation needs to become an integral part of the Palestinian political system, for they represent the future.

The unemployment rate in the West Bank and in Gaza is high, namely 26.4% in the West Bank and was over 35% for Palestinian youth in 2021. In Gaza alone the unemployment rate in 2021 was 46%. The World Bank: “If the PA was given access to economic activity in area C, which is 61% of the West Bank, revenue would increase by US\$ 2.2 billion a year for the Palestinian treasury.”

The Palestinian PM is focused on economic disengagement from Israel, with Hebron as the most flourishing economic centre. Studies in 2021 show that 25% of the West Bank population see corruption in the PA and 60% is afraid to be critical of the PA. The Palestinian Students

Forum states that critical students in the West Bank fear punishment by the Palestinian Security Service.

President Abbas approved of the founding of the Palestinian Forum for Freedom and Peace, supported by Mohammad Madani who is in charge of Palestinian relations with Israel.

Only recently Abbas revoked the diplomatic passports of prominent political rivals.

Since Israel struck a deal and agreed on normalization of diplomatic relations with different Arab states Israel agreed, as least for the time being, to take annexation plans off the table. The PA was outraged, stating: "normalization with Israel is treason".

The fact that the UAE still holds on to the Arab League Initiative (ALI) does not convince them that these developments might bring the Two-State Solution in sight. ALI is not done for, which means that the Two-State Solution is still on the table. Annexation is not really off the table and occupation is still a reality for the Palestinians. Palestinians experience the loss of the support of part of the Arab world, their Arab brothers. They feel forsaken. The Biden Administration announced in April that it was restoring aid to the PA cut by the previous U.S. Administration.

Senior PA and Israeli officials met in November 2020 in Ramallah for the first time since May 2020 in order to resume security and civil coordination and the transfer of tax money (US\$ 890 million) collected by Israel on behalf of the PA. The Gantz-Abbas meeting was a follow-up to this one. FA minister Lapid met with PA official Hussein al-Sheikh, who is close to Abbas and responsible for ties with Israel. Since February this year he is a member of the important PLO Executive Committee.

In the past 22 years the EU donated US\$ 22 billion for the Palestinians. The on-going conflict will cause increasing fatigue within the EU and its tone is becoming harsher to both conflicting parties. The Palestinian Authority is losing support from other Arab countries, which seriously weakens Palestinian ambitions. The Palestinian issue is not on top of the list of Arab countries. The Palestinian Center of Policy Survey and Research speaks of growing pessimism, frustration and despair among the Palestinian public at large.

Gaza – Hamas

A rift, to a certain degree, is noticed between the political and military wings of Hamas. The political wing seeks closer relations with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, whereas the military is seeking closer ties with Iran and Hezbollah. Hamas was declared a terrorist organization by the EU Court of Justice. Egypt warned Hamas that it will not intervene to halt retribution if Israel takes decisive action. An Egyptian diplomat visiting Gaza asked Hamas: "Where do you think your double-dealing will land you? We are trying to finalize a peace-agreement with Israel, and behind our backs you let your people fire missiles at Tel Aviv?" According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) Armed groups in Gaza violated the laws-of-war prohibition on indiscriminate attacks in May 2021 by launching thousands of unguided rockets on Israeli cities. HRW also blamed Israel for civilian casualties in Gaza. Hamas is part of a dangerous triangle – Iran, Syria and Hezbollah – which threatens Israel. Everything at the expense of the Gazans, who suffer from shortage of water, medicine, energy, building materials and food. The situation in Gaza is becoming more devastating. Apart from unemployment, mentioned above, health care is extremely bad.

Palestinian political spectrum

The PA was established in 1994 by the PLO Executive Committee as a result of the Oslo Accords. The first president, Yasser Arafat, was succeeded by Abbas, the current president.

The PLO (recognized as the official representative of the Palestinian people by the UN and Israel) assumes that the PA is a temporary entity, subordinated by the PLO and the only lawful representative of the Palestinian people as an umbrella organization. The top of the PA seems to be identical to the top of the PLO. Fatah (secular and centrist) which is the main faction within the PLO, struggles with internal friction. Yet, Fatah is the political power, essential for any dialogue.

The Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) has not convened since 2007.

Abbas established the first Palestinian High Constitutional Court by presidential decree.

The Palestine National Council (PNC) with its circa 740 members is the highest institution within the PLO; founded as 'parliament' and claiming to represent Palestinians worldwide. Since 2009 the PNC has not convened.

The PLO Executive Committee is the highest executive body of the PLO and acts as a government. In 2015 Abbas resigned as its chairman, although he remains PA President.

7. Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) & Labeling West Bank products

The Think Tank believes that boycotts will not be effective in bringing about a mutually fair and peaceful solution for the parties in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Products from the West Bank should be labeled, irrespective of the fact that matters of the sort also exist elsewhere. Recently the Belgian Government decided in favor of labeling. The EU will continue to the distinction in origin between Israel and all territories occupied by Israel in 1967. The EU opposes a boycott of Israel, and so does the Dutch Government. BDS is being used to resist the occupation and is not necessarily anti-Semitic. It is a political instrument to put pressure on the Israeli Government but is not very effective. President Biden is against BDS because he also believes that it veers too often into anti-Semitism.

8. Geopolitical relevance

The Israeli–Palestinian conflict is increasingly entangled in the tectonic shifts of the Middle East, given warfare and atrocities in the area, in particular in Iran, Syria and Yemen, including millions of displaced persons and refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. It would be a mistake to detach the Israeli–Palestinian conflict from the current geopolitical reality. Nowadays, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and other Arab states see Iran as a bigger threat than Israel. The normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab nations dramatically change the geopolitical situation, but do not bring peace between Israel and the Palestinians. At least not for the time being.

9. The United Nations

The General Assembly decisions are not binding, contrary to those taken under Chapter VII in the UN Security Council. The PA feels supported by the UN. For Israel the picture differs. The UN agreed to the admission of the Palestinian Authority to 13 UN international conventions, including the Geneva Convention. UN chief Guterres stated: "there is no alternative for a Two-State Solution". The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) both do not make much progress in trying to end at least partially this refugee crisis. As stated before, the high numbers published by UNWRA including all the refugees' descendants, make a resolution remote as long as there is no alternative solution for the refugee problem. UNWRA remains relevant according to the Dutch Government in terms of education and health care for Palestinian refugees. Yet, it should check whether the statements of the NGO UN Watch are true, namely that a number of employees incite hate and violence against Israeli Jews, while the official policy of UNWRA

proclaims zero tolerance. Last year the US Administration decided to provide UNWRA with \$ 150 million; a partial restoration of the annual funding slashed by former President Trump.

Because of the veto right of its members the UN Security Council is still rather powerless. It has censured Israel more than any other member state and has therefore lost its credibility. A new development is the recent statement of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague that it has the authority to investigate possible war crimes by Israel and the Palestinians in the Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem and Gaza. The PA requested this investigation because the Palestinian Territories have an observer status within the UN. Several states do not agree because of the absence of the element of Palestinian Statehood, which is required by international law.

Beginning of April Israel sent a message to the ICC stating that it does not have jurisdiction to open an investigation.

10. United States of America

The election of Joe Biden changed America's approach to the peace process. Biden seems to wish to reset the U.S.-Israel relationship over Palestinian rights. Israel will remain an ally but has to recognize Palestinian statehood and human rights for Palestinians. The State Department doesn't support the occupation of Palestinian land. US Ambassador Tom Nides expressed his strong opposition against the settlement growth on the West Bank and Jerusalem because it impedes a Two-State Solution. It seems that Biden is out to restore ties with the PA. The US will reopen the Palestinian representative office in Washington and the US consulate in East Jerusalem but in the latter case cannot do so without the consent of the Israeli Government. It is important that Biden will emphasize US commitment to a mutually agreed Two-State Solution and formulate parameters for a final-status agreement. Biden decided to renew financial support for UNWRA, with US\$ 150 million, admitting that UNWRA needs reforms, and the US will use her leverage to achieve that. Normalization agreements with Arab states are no substitute for Israeli-Palestinian peace. US Speaker of the House Pelosi called upon Israel, emphasizing a just, stable and enduring Two-State Solution. So did, in similar words, Secretary of State Blinken, when speaking with Israeli FA minister Lapid.

The relations between the US and Israel are not as unconditional as they were under President Trump. The plan to reopen the US Consulate General in Jerusalem, which served as a de facto embassy, to serve the Palestinian population in the West Bank including Jerusalem underlines this. Contrary to former President Trump's statement, the status of Jerusalem is not off the table. Regardless of the Israeli position. The relationship US-Israel remains strong but is under serious pressure. Not only because of the US Consulate, but especially because of the building plans for 3,000 housing units in the West Bank. The US Secretary of State did not rule out a severe US response. US Ambassador Nides stated that "he will absolutely not visit communities" in the areas which Israel refers to as Judea and Samaria.

11. The European Union

The EU insists on conditioning the relationship with Israel. This explains why the tone of the EU has become increasingly harsh towards Israel, threatening withdrawal of support in different fields if negotiations would not be successful, including an appeal for recognition of a Palestinian State and Jerusalem as the capital of two states. 442 members of the European Parliament, from 22 member states, want to see action against what they call de facto annexation of the West Bank. Israel destroyed buildings, even buildings funded by the EU. Because of the fact that the EU is the most important trading partner for Israel and the most important donor for the Palestinians, the power of the EU should not be underestimated. Having said that, the EU does seem to have an aversion to use her leverage against the policies of Israel. Moreover, the present Israeli Government might not honor the demand by

the EU to make Jerusalem the capital of two states, because of political, historical, emotional, psychological, national and religious considerations.

The European Parliament reiterated its support for the Two-State solution "on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states, with the secure State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security on the basis of the right of self-determination and full respect of international law."

Because EU decisions require a consensus of all 27 states, every EU-member state has to make its own decision.

The European Budgetary Committee voted to freeze € 15 million for the PA if the Palestinians do not remove incitement, including glorification of Jihad and martyrdom, from their school textbooks (financed by the EU) destined for 1.2 million children. The Palestinian children are being taught that Israeli serves the devil and children are encouraged to murder non-believers and die as martyrs. Only recently Germany's former Foreign Affairs (FA) minister said: "As a friend and a close ally, we need to know if Israel is not supporting a negotiated solution to this conflict anymore". Are you prepared to pay the price of perpetual occupation and conflict – a price that will continue to grow if there is no hope of self-determination on the Palestinian side? I admit that I am worried by these questions and especially by the lack of convincing answers. Israel's current settlement policy contradicts applicable international law and is not supported by us, because it impedes a Two-State solution." These statements are coming from Israel's most important ally in Europe. We hear the same voices from other allies of Israel. We need to state, again, that critical voices on Israel's policies might have little to do with anti-Semitism. The EU issued a significant plan at the beginning of October 2021 to fight anti-Semitism in Europe.

The EU promised Israel and the PA 'a special privileged partnership', that would give them increased access to European markets etc., if both parties come to a peace pact. The EU considers East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights as occupied. The fact is that Israel already receives the same economic privileges as the 27 member states of the EU. The members were even encouraged to intensify bi-lateral relationships with Israel and the EU opened doors to several agencies such as Europol. It has published guidelines on labeling goods made in Israeli settlements. Furthermore, the EU states that "All settlement activity is illegal under international law...." In addition, each member can act on its own. An example is the French Development Agency which decided to support agriculture and water networks in the main area C, saying this is an integral part of Palestinian territories and speaking out against unilateral annexation by Israel. In April 2021, Mr Sven Koopmans, a Dutch diplomat, was appointed as the EU's Special Representative (EUSR) for the Middle East Peace Process from 1 May 2021 to 28 February 2023. The present Government of Israel is working on improving the relationship with the EU overturning policies of the former government.

12. The Arab League

We believe that the Arab League Initiative (ALI), proposed in 2002, and then re-endorsed in 2007 and 2013, could be instrumental in ending the conflict. The proposal which has undergone several revisions calls for Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories occupied since 1967 with the option for mutually agreed territorial swaps and the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as capital.

The president of Egypt, Sisi, asked the Israeli Government to take ALI seriously. The Arab League is willing to recognize the State of Israel under the condition that the occupation ends. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Egypt rejected a clause in a statement by

the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (APU) that called for a stop on normalization with Israel, laying bare a growing divide between Arab governments. Most Arab states are publicly against occupation, but they seem to quietly accept it because of their dependence on the U.S. While the UAE, Morocco, Sudan and Bahrain have entered into agreements with Israel, the Saudi's stated that they will stick to the Arab Peace Initiative, including a Palestinian State. At the same time, they opened their airspace to Israeli airliners. The Israeli Government should be susceptible to the warning from Arab states which normalized the relations with Israel.

Hezbollah is arming Hamas and is in turn armed by Iran. The Arab League is fully aware of the dangerous relations between Hezbollah, Iran and Hamas. A former PM of Qatar and the Saudis stated that Israel and the Palestinians have a right to their own state, pushing for a Two-State solution.

13. The Netherlands

The Dutch Government stated: "The Netherlands makes use of its good relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority for adhering to and realization of the Two-State Solution; an independent viable Palestinian State next to a secure and internationally recognized Israel. The Netherlands invests in improvement of the relationship between Israeli and Palestinians". The Government is anti BDS but discourages relations with Israeli companies working in settlements in the West Bank. Discouragement doesn't seem to work, taking into consideration the number of important Dutch companies, doing business (in-)directly in the West Bank. The Dutch Parliament voted on December 17, 2018, to cut 7% of its funding to the PA, because the PA spent 7% of its budget on payments to Palestinians and their families, who are serving a jail sentence for violent acts.(check if this is still the case)

The former Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and Development Cooperation suspended financial support to the Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), because two of its former employees were suspected of a terrorist action and members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which is considered to be a terrorist organization by the EU and the US. Several Israeli organizations were said to have warned the Dutch representative in the Palestinian Territories in the past about possible ties between the UAWC and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Just recently the Israeli FA Minister declared six different social and human rights organizations working on the West Bank as terroristic organizations.

The Dutch Government decided to become more cautious concerning the disproportionate number of UN resolutions against Israel. "It reflects UNHCR's structural bias".

The Netherlands, as does the EU, considers Israeli settlements in the occupied territories as conflicting with international law and an obstacle for peace. It holds the view that Israel as an occupying power does not have any sovereignty over these territories and it does not consider these territories to be a part of Israel. The Think Tank feels uncomfortable about an adopted motion in the Dutch parliament about the labeling issue, stating that it discriminates Israel while matters of the sort occur also elsewhere. The question remains: is labeling right or wrong. 'Made in Israel' while products are made in the West Bank, is wrong in our view. In an effort to stimulate the Palestinian economy The Netherlands will continue its support through development programs and active dialogues.

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