

A Farewell to Peace

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After the international community has not been able to influence Israel to change the course of its policy, the strategic option to end the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians through diplomatic means is no longer valid. The result is the continuation of serious crises which may evolve in more bloodshed even after minor incidents.

Despite regular protests Israel continues its settlement policy, thus severely obstructing a two-state solution. But also the idea of a joint Jewish-Arab state which has been encouraged in some European peace groups for a long time, does not find a broad consensus.

So what remains is a state of Israel from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River, as the leader of the coalition party Naftali Bennet claims. With his insistence on Israel as a "Jewish" state, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tries to incorporate all Jews of the world into his political intentions and has managed to exploit them for his ideological purposes.

As usual in spring I spent two months in Israel and in the West-Bank and returned more disillusioned than ever before. The hopelessness on both the Palestinian side and the peace groups in Israel had never been intensely felt as today. No one expects any political support of European governments (not to mention the US), even though there is good financial support, provided also by the German government as well as by many NGOs and churches. But this cannot replace a political solution. Already today one can recognize the danger that Palestinians are pushed into a petitioners' role.

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When I asked why the Europeans want to rhetorically polish their image, but politically fail to do so, the answers were obvious: On the one hand the West would like to secure its strategic interests in the region. Secondly, Israel seems, among the disturbances in the Arab neighborhood, the only component of stability. Third, particularly in Berlin, the anxiety of accusations of being anti-Semitic is manifest.

But do these arguments outweigh demands for a peaceful solution? Isn't it more than evident that the failure of international policy towards Israel is helping anti-Jewish prejudices to spread forward? Aren't the true friends of Israel those who want to preserve the country from a global isolation and moral self-destruction? How else can we explain that Israel's unpopularity is only exceeded by states like Iran, Pakistan, and North Korea?



Photography by Ulrich Nitschke

While the majority of the Israelis is lingering in the dark and does not want to know in which direction its state is heading, the settlers are

firmly seated in the saddle. They control, not only the Palestinian West Bank and East Jerusalem, but have successfully infiltrated the institutions of the state. While they push their agenda forward with the support of the Knesset and the military echelon, the secular Israelis serve them as "donkeys of the Messiah": Remaining silent, they facilitate the nationalist and religious endeavors of the extremists to victory.

During my talks I frequently heard from Palestinians the word "Sumud"— meaning "stand firm," "hold out." Despite the wounds the occupation has left on the daily life of the Palestinians, they remain outwardly strong and morally superior to the Israelis. They also know that they have the sympathy of the Western world. Maybe they are nourished by the belief that after they survived the Crusaders, the Ottomans, and the British, one day they will outlive the Israelis too – a sad thought that is shared already by many Israelis: "Soon we will no longer exist." Is this in the interest of Europe?
