



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 5/20
Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen
1.-15. März

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1. Benny Gantz soll Israels nächste Regierung bilden

Benny Gantz, Chef des Mitte-Links-Bündnisses Blau-Weiß, soll die nächste Regierung in Jerusalem zusammenstellen. Die Likud-Partei unter dem Vorsitz des bisherigen Ministerpräsidenten Benjamin Netanyahu hatte zwar bei der dritten Wahl binnen eines Jahres einen kleinen Vorsprung vor Blau-Weiß, sie verfehlte allerdings die nötige Regierungsmehrheit. Am Ende sprachen sich 61 der insgesamt 120 Knesset-Abgeordneten für Gantz aus, darunter die Parlamentarier_innen der arabisch-antizionistischen Vereinten Liste, aber auch die Abgeordneten von Yisrael Beitenu, der ultrarechten Partei von Ex-Verteidigungsminister Avigdor Liberman. Fraglich ist, ob es Gantz gelingen wird, eine regierungsfähige Koalition zusammenzustellen, denn er lehnt es ab, die Vereinte Liste an der Regierung teilhaben zu lassen. Netanyahu hatte Blau-Weiß mit dem Appell, gemeinsam die Corona-Krise zu konfrontieren, zu einer Großen Koalition mit dem Likud eingeladen. "Angesichts der weltweiten und nationalen Notlage müssen wir unsere Kräfte vereinen und eine starke und stabile Regierung bilden, die einen Haushalt verabschieden und schwere Entscheidungen treffen kann." Gantz lehnt bisher jedoch wegen der Korruptionsanklage gegen Netanyahu ein Zusammengehen mit ihm ab. Die Generalstaatsanwaltschaft wirft Netanyahu Betrug und Untreue sowie Bestechlichkeit vor. Es geht um den Verdacht der Beeinflussung von Medien, um mögli-

che krumme Deals mit Unternehmen und die Entgegennahme teurer Geschenke befreundeter Geschäftsleute im Gegenzug für politische Gefälligkeiten. Netanyahu weist alle Vorwürfe zurück.

Kahol Lavan, don't join Netanyahu in a unity government

(...) As in the last two elections, the political stalemate again raises the possibility of negotiating a national unity coalition. This idea must be rejected outright. The stalemate that has dragged Israel into elections three times in a single year isn't a fluke. It is the result of Netanyahu's unprecedented legal situation, and the understanding shared by most Knesset members that it is intolerable for a person accused of a crime to head Israel's government. Therefore, this is a moment of truth for Benny Gantz and for each and every member of Kahol Lavan and Labor-Gesher-Meretz, who have publicly committed again and again, campaign after campaign, that they will not take part in a government that includes defendant Netanyahu. (...) Netanyahu and his natural allies are trying to present the election as a referendum on his innocence. This shows a gross misunderstanding of democracy. A person's innocence isn't decided in the polling booths. Only the courts have the authority to rule if Netanyahu is innocent or guilty. However, it can't be denied that by voting for him, Netanyahu's supporters demonstrated a distrust in the rule of law and its enforcement in Israel. Nevertheless, forming a unity government led by a

criminal defendant isn't the way to rehabilitate the trust of half of the public in the justice system. If anything, it will guarantee the distrust of the other half in the political system. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 04.03.20

Netanyahu must reach out to Arab parties

Raising the electoral threshold, so they say, caused a boomerang effect. If the intention was to make it harder for the Arab parties to enter parliament, in essence they came together as the Joint Arab List and were greeted by an unprecedented fusing of the Arab public. (...) the Arab public has moved to a pragmatic and sectoral voting pattern, similar to that of the ultra-Orthodox parties. (...) There is a theoretical possibility for some form of integration of Arab lawmakers in the realm of the coalition – and not necessarily as an integral part of the government. As much as that sounds strange or unacceptable, one can even imagine a significant step in this direction to be taken especially now, and especially with the Likud. Fact: An investment program of NIS 15 billion (\$4.3 billion) in infrastructure in Arab towns was implemented during the Netanyahu government, whose members were also New Right leader Naftali Bennett (...) and Yisrael Beytenu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman (...). During the campaign, Netanyahu (...) intends to continue investing resources, especially amending and changing the so-called Kaminitz law, which allows the state to enforce home demolition orders. Amending this law together with the Joint Arab List could be the basis for a pragmatic union, despite the ideological distance. Both sides need to show responsibility. Joint Arab List chief Ayman Odeh can prove that he is not waiting forever for the day when there is a clear majority for the ideological left in Israel to turn his party, a sectoral party, into an active partner in the decision-making process. It would be a shame for him, as well, to waste the electoral achievement.

Jalal Bana, IHY, 04.03.20

The big winner in Israel's elections is the Joint List

(...) it seems like the big winner of this round is Israel's third-biggest party – the Joint List. (...) they spiked to 15 – an unprecedented number for an Arab party. This was the result of an all-out campaign intended to break the popular ban on participating in the general election and to locate people who usually do not vote and get them out to do so.

Members of all four parties – secular, nationalist and religious – took to the streets, held rallies and

brought people to the polling stations. (...) one of the main reasons the Joint List campaign worked so effectively was the attention it received from Benjamin Netanyahu and his Likud Party. (...) It is also worth revisiting how we got into the situation in which all four Arab parties are running on one list. In 2014, the Knesset raised the electoral threshold from 2% to 3.25%. Back then, the move was perceived as an attempt by the Right to keep some of the small Arab parties out of the Knesset. But it came back like a boomerang. Slamming and hitting the Arab parties did not benefit Netanyahu and the Right. It benefited the Arab parties, and they became bigger and stronger. (...) They should be counted, and their voice should be heard. Rejecting the Arab parties does not work. (...) Arabs should be seen as equal citizens and be treated as equal citizens. For too long - and definitely over the past 15 months of political mudslinging - Israeli-Arabs have been demonized and portrayed as a fifth column and as if they are not equal citizens in this country. (...) This is time to rethink the approach to the Arab citizens of Israel. Joining hands in combating violence, poverty and in advancing welfare in their community is a shared interest for all of us, Jews and Arabs, and it can be done without undermining the character of the country. It is time to bring about that change.

Editorial, JPO, 05.03.20

For a unity government, despite it all

(...) Nothing has changed: Netanyahu has no government and Kahol Lavan Chairman Benny Gantz has no bloc. (...) it's (...) impossible to ignore the fact that half of the nation chose Netanyahu through a democratic process by voting for Likud or other parties loyal to him. Without a genuine willingness to hold a fourth election, with all the concomitant risks, there is no escaping a unity government. (...) this is the only reasonable solution. It won't gladden either side, and Kahol Lavan will have to make a concession on a matter of principle that will be a hard sell to its voters. Yet it's important to remember that the alternative (...) is a fundamentalist government of the right and the ultra-Orthodox. That would be even worse. (...) A unity government must prevent insane measures such as ousting the attorney general, as well as further damage to the justice system in the form of a law enabling the Knesset to override the High Court of Justice. Such a government can and should reach a cease-fire with Hamas in the Gaza Strip (...). Moreover, such a government would return the settler right to its natural proportions. And

despite all the cultural disputes and hatred, it would express the positions of most Israelis on issues that aren't Netanyahu that, in the current frenzied atmosphere, have been forgotten by everyone. (...) If Gantz and Lieberman don't retreat from their racist promises not to form a coalition that includes the Joint List (...) then they're wasting everyone's time. The only reasonable options are a unity government or a fourth election, whose result in the best case would be another dead end, and in the horrifying case, a narrow right-wing government.
Ravit Hecht, HAA, 06.03.20

On politics and pretenses

(...) Recognizing the moment as the point of no return in terms of their own political futures, Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman and Blue & White head Benny Gantz reached an understanding - if not an actual agreement - on their strategic objectives going forward. The two party leaders must stop reacting to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's agenda or find themselves fading away over the next election cycles. They must create a coalition supported one way or another by the Joint List alliance of Israel's Arab parties. There is no other viable option. The Joint List will live on regardless of who the next prime minister is, but neither Gantz nor Lieberman may last without the support of the Joint List. The ultimate target for both Israel Beytenu and Blue & White is a unity government with Likud minus its current leader, but to reach that target they must carry out a complicated political maneuver that requires manipulation and political agility. They must replace the Knesset speaker, enlist 59 Knesset members to recommend Gantz to President Reuven Rivlin to be the next premier, pass a law blocking Netanyahu from the Prime Minister's Office because of his criminal indictment, have that law upheld by the Supreme Court, form a minority coalition that can last for a while and only then extend an invitation for Likud minus its leader to join. Will they succeed? I doubt it. (...) Netanyahu is the only unifying factor the center-left parties still have. (...) The Blue & White party made a massive mistake in following the advice of campaigners who told them they would stand to gain votes from the right-wing if they shunned the Arabs. Now that the party has internalized the importance of Arab support, they are still unable to overcome the opposition of two among their number, namely former Netanyahu aides Gideon Hauser and Yoaz Hendel, who are persistent in their opposition to any political attachment to the Joint List. (...) At this time in Israel's history, it would

be unlikely for Joint List to be part of a cabinet that launches raids on Gaza, but the seeds of cooperation between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel have been sown and Netanyahu's racist campaign should perhaps be given the credit for that.

Nahum Barnea, YED, 09.03.20

More Israelis want Netanyahu out of office than in

If you thought the past election campaign was ugly, prepare yourself for something even worse. (...) no matter how the prime minister tries to mangle the math, Netanyahu lost last week's elections. (...) Worryingly, Netanyahu has refused to accept that the majority of the electorate clearly voted to turf him out of office. Last week he shockingly stated that he won the elections because his right-wing bloc has 58 seats in the Knesset to the center-left's 47 seats, totally ignoring the record 15 seats won by the Joint List. This refusal to count the votes of the Arab minority (...) marked another sad chapter in Netanyahu's delegitimization of Israel's Arab population. It's as though the prime minister were saying we allow Arab-Isrealis to go through the motions of voting, but their ballot papers have no actual weight; Jewish votes are the only ones that matter. The fact is the right-wing bloc lost last week's elections by 58 mandates to 62. More Israelis want Netanyahu out of office than in. But that won't stop Netanyahu and the Likud from claiming that Blue and White is stealing the elections if Benny Gantz goes ahead and seeks to form a minority government, relying on parliamentary support from the Joint List. (...) These are not normal times. The country has been through three elections in the space of less than a year, and each time Netanyahu has failed to command a majority. (...) Were he to resign as the Likud's leader, the Likud and Blue and White would have little problem in forming a large, stable coalition, which is definitely more to Gantz's tastes than trying to run a minority coalition reliant on the Joint List's votes. The two parties together would even be strong enough to chop the haredi parties down to size and remove their disproportionate influence on society. Israeli politics would enter a new era, and the political debate would move on from "yes Bibi/no Bibi." This though, is not going to happen. Netanyahu, as is clear to all, is never going to step down voluntarily while the Jerusalem District Court awaits him. Which is why, although legislation targeting individuals generally do not make for good laws, there is much merit in Ahmad Tibi's proposal to table a law pre-

venting a Knesset member facing criminal charges from forming a government, and thus end Netanyahu's attempts to stay in office. (...)
Jeff Barak, JPO, 09.03.20

The absence of the Left

(...) In light of the results, Gantz announced his intention to form a coalition (...). But the cracks are growing. First, were Yoaz Hendel and Tzvi Hauser of Blue and White, who originally came from the right-wing Telem party and ruled out the option of sitting in a government supported by the Joint List. Then, Labor-Gesher-Meretz's Orly Levy-Abecassis announced that she, too, does not see herself committed to supporting a government endorsed by the Joint List. (...) The partners of Blue and White in this bloc are Labor-Gesher-Meretz, which has left-wing Meretz, center-left Labor and center-right Gesher; and Yisrael Beytenu, which is anything but a center-left party. Blue and White itself is a continuation of those who tried to challenge Netanyahu in the past decade – a centrist party which tried to pretend to be a softer version of Likud. But, in the bottom line, many of its members represent the same ideas as the Likud – they support partial annexation of the West Bank as well as the US peace plan. Even when it comes to the integration of Arabs, they stress that they want “a Jewish majority.” This is not a center-left party. (...) Even if Gantz will eventually succeed in forming a coalition (...) What will be its agenda on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? (...) The Center-Left should present the public with new ideas, that will be presented in contrast to the Right. (...) If the Left wants to prove to the public that the two-state solution is feasible, it needs to work at it. One way would be to establish contacts throughout the Arab world and to show the public that a different future is possible. A left-wing party could integrate Arab members into leading positions, and challenge the Joint List, which declared that it won't sit in any government. (...) This is not a call to support the Left. This is a call to support the country. (...) For the sake of Israeli democracy, we need a real debate about ideas, values and plans. Then, the public can decide whether its want the ideology of the Right or the Left.

Editorial, JPO, 11.03.20

The Arab Party and the Elections – a Fresh Opportunity

No doubt the biggest winner of Israel's March elections is the United Arab List, with a record 15 Members of Knesset (...). The growth of the Arab List is a

source of concern for fear-mongers among us who warn of the impending doom if the Arabs should, God forbid, grow further. (...) The reason for some to be concerned about the Arab List's strength is that all too often, party MK's have expressed opinions (...) harshly criticizing Israel and its governments over policies on the Palestinian question (...). The fact that the Arab parties have traditionally held on to nationalist positions put them in direct confrontation with mainstream Jewish and Zionist parties and voters. (...) But over the years, a confrontation also arose between the Arab parties and their natural constituents. Arab citizens of Israel, while identifying with the plight of the Palestinian people and often expressing support for their demand of statehood and self-determination, nevertheless put their own daily lives first. Their needs for a higher standard of living, better infrastructures in their towns and villages, a better quality of education and access to health clinics were always more important to Arab voters who felt increasing frustration with their elected officials who seemed to put their national agenda before the needs of their voters. (...) The time has now come for everyone to change course and outlook on the Arab participation in Israel's politics. First and foremost, it is time for mainstream Zionist parties to change their position on the Arab party and to recognize that while some Arab MK's do express views that are untenable for most Israelis, there is no reason to ostracize the entire Arab population of Israel for it. Expression of radical ideas, within the limitations of legitimate democratic discourse, must be allowed, and when it goes beyond what is acceptable it should be punished in accordance with the law. (...) For their part, Arab citizens too have an important role to play and must come to the realization that with their new-found power in the Knesset come responsibilities. (...) The stunning results of the March elections are an opportunity for Israeli society to further improve and hone its democratic character. Arab society needs to be embraced by mainstream Israel as part and parcel of our country with full rights as well as obligations. (...)

Ofer Bavly, TOI, 10.03.20

Orly Levy stabbed Israel's left-wing in the back

Impudence, sheer opportunism, cowardice and treason. There is no word strong enough to describe the act perpetrated last week by Labor-Gesher-Meretz's No. 2 Orly Levy, when she announced she would not support a narrow government supported externally by the Joint List - a predominantly Arab party. (...) From the very beginning, Meretz saw

Levy as a foreigner in its ranks. (...) Meretz and Labor almost definitely suffered the loss of votes over this partnership with Geshet, as Levy is seen as a representative of the right. It is not just the betrayal when her party was needed the most, it is also the complete contradiction between the things she said on the eve of the elections and her statement (...) in which she announced she was no longer bound to the partnership with Meretz. (...) The internet does not forget, and you can see her exact words during her interviews prior to the elections in videos published on social media. What makes Levy even more treacherous is not only the fact that she betrayed Peretz, who carried her on his back all through the elections, but that she betrayed those who voted Labor-Geshet-Meretz and had no fears over a government supported by the Arabs. (...)

Sima Kadmon, YED, 15.03.20

2. Korruptionsprozess wegen Corona verschoben

Der für Mitte März geplante Beginn des Korruptionsprozesses gegen Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu wird frühestens in zwei Monaten beginnen. Offizieller Grund ist die Coronavirus-Pandemie. Wegen der Ausbreitung des Virus und der Anordnung an die Gerichte, sich auf dringende Angelegenheiten zu beschränken, soll die erste Anhörung auf den 24. Mai verschoben werden. Netanyahu steht wegen Bestechlichkeit, Betrugs und Untreue unter Anklage. Er streitet alle Vorwürfe ab und sieht sich als Opfer einer „Hexenjagd“ durch Polizei, Staatsanwaltschaft und die Medien. Oppositionsparteien planen ein Gesetzesvorhaben, das eine erneute Regierung unter Netanjahu verhindern soll. Der Oberste Gerichtshof in Jerusalem wies unterdessen eine Petition gegen eine mögliche Regierungsbildung durch Netanyahu zurück. Bürgerrechtler_innen forderten, dass der rechtskonservative Regierungschef wegen der Korruptionsanklage gegen ihn nicht mit der Aufgabe zur Regierungsbildung beauftragt werden kann. Das Gericht begründete die Entscheidung damit, dass die Petition verfrüht sei. Letztendlich beauftragte Staatspräsident Reuven Rivlin Netanjahus Herausforderer Benny Gantz mit der Regierungsbildung.

Netanyahu's indictments were the fuel to his victory

(...) Any politician in any democratic country would find it hard to impossible to win three elections in a

row. (...) Statistically speaking, one can assume that without the corruption charges against him, Netanyahu would have already lost last year. (...) In a democracy, a leader who betrays the people is punished by the people, and severely. (...) However, case 1000 - in which Netanyahu is accused of unlawfully receiving gifts from Hollywood mogul Arnon Milchan and Australian businessman James Packer - in the eyes of the public; reeks of bribery and criminal, or inappropriate, conduct at the very least; but this one received the least coverage and almost faded into obscurity. (...) According to the exit poll results - about half of the general public and about 57 percent of the Jewish public - refuse to see the criminal charges against Netanyahu as a barrier on his way to another tenure. Ultimately, the charges and indictments against Netanyahu have only emboldened hesitant and undecided supporters to vote for Likud under his leadership. It is quite possible that their vote would have been different had the premier been subjected to the moral judgment of the people.

Sever Plocker, YED, 03.03.20

Drop the personalized law

(...) The sanctimonious among us will continue to argue that the differences between Kahol Lavan and Likud are microscopic and that this lack of clarity was the main reason for Kahol Lavan's relative failure. But to voters the differences are significant. They don't do textual comparisons of the parties' platforms (...). The voters look at the overall picture and place themselves to its right or its left. Given this situation, the leaders of the bloc that opposes Benjamin Netanyahu must exercise daring and common sense (...): Benny Gantz, prove your mettle and use your majority, the 62 lawmakers who don't want Netanyahu. Some of them add that they must pass a law barring anyone who has been charged with bribery from being prime minister. But passing such legislation without the establishment of an alternative government will lead Israel into a fourth election, which will be clouded by that personalized law. (...) a new government must be formed before this law is passed. (...) Putting together a government will be a convoluted and complicated process, but it's doable. (...) To launch the process properly, all the parties to which the 62 MKs belong must recommend Gantz as their candidate for prime minister. (...)

Uzi Baram, HAA, 09.03.20

Personal legislation violates the rule of law

The proposed law seeking to prevent a specific individual – PM Netanyahu – from fulfilling a specific role utterly violates the spirit of the law (...) such a law, if enacted, is hardly devoid of problems. Proper legislation (...) does not favor one individual over another but rather advances a general aim that is worthy in and of itself. It looks to the future rather than concentrating on the present; it is oblivious to current events, serving, above all, the interests of the public, and not just parts thereof. "Person-tailored legislation", meant to promote a specific individual or prevent that individual from fulfilling a certain role, fundamentally violates the rule of law. Often it also violates the basic principles of the separation of power, as well as the "royal" principle of equality before the law – a cornerstone in any lawful regime worthy of the name. (...) a new law is never formulated in a personal manner but is always general. This general formulation conceals – for those unaware of the political background – the law's personal dimension. (...) A law, by nature, is intended to direct future behavior and to guide the citizenry towards the path they must take and the actions they should perform or avoid. When the law applies legal consequences (...) to actions performed in the past, the individual has no ability to turn back the clock and behave in a manner that will not turn him into a criminal or violate his rights. However, in this case, theory is one thing and reality another. Although the court has often expressed its reservations with respect to retroactive legislation, it has generally avoided disqualifying it. In the rare cases when such laws were disqualified, the court based its decision on the principle of equality. Yet even in such cases, and despite its "activist" image, the High Court of Justice does so sparingly. If the proposed law is legislated with regard to Netanyahu, it is likely that the chances for its disqualification are very low.

Aviad Hacoen, IHY, 09.03.20

Barring Netanyahu would violate fundamental rights

The law now being considered in Israel that would prohibit a prime minister under indictment from forming a government would violate core principles of legislation. (...) laws must be generally applicable to all citizens, and their prohibitions must be limited to future conduct of which they have received adequate notice. (...) prohibitions against bills of attainder and ex post facto laws are important structural limitations on the powers of legislatures to pass laws in a democratic society committed to the rule of law.

Were legislatures empowered to enact bills of attainder, they could assume the role of prosecutors and judges and decide not only what conduct should be prohibited, but also which people should be prohibited from engaging in such conduct. If ex post facto laws were permitted, such laws would empower the legislature to prohibit conduct that was legal at the time it occurred, but prohibited only when committed by a targeted individual whose identity is already known. (...) No honest person will deny that this law is aimed specifically at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It is designed to prevent him from trying to form a government following the recent election in which his party received the most votes and seats. It would change the law retroactively. (...) equally important, it would eliminate the presumption of innocence. (...) an indictment is no more than an accusation. It is very different from a conviction, which is based on a careful weighing of all the evidence and requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt. (...) Imagine the reaction of those who voted for Netanyahu if he were to be precluded from trying to form a government based on a mere accusation, which then turned out, after a trial, to be unfounded. An acquittal would not give back to these citizens the years of his prime ministership of which they were deprived by an indictment that ended in an acquittal. It would undo the results of an election based on a one-sided presentation and a standard of evidence far lower than that required for a conviction. (...)

Alan Dershowitz, JPO, 11.03.20

3. Geheimdienst jagt Coronavirus

Mit massiven Maßnahmen versucht Israel, die Ausbreitung des Coronavirus zu unterbinden. Als eins der ersten Länder weltweit stoppte es den Einreiseverkehr für Tourist_innen. Neuerdings ordnete die Regierung den Einsatz von Überwachungstechnologien an, die sonst zur Terrorbekämpfung dienen. Dabei geht es vor allem um die Handyüberwachung von mit dem Virus infizierten Bürger_innen. Ziel ist festzustellen, mit wem die betroffenen Männer und Frauen Kontakt unterhielten. Außerdem solle überprüft werden, ob Infizierte gegen die Heimquarantäne verstoßen. Der inländische Geheimdienst Shin Beth sei autorisiert, rund um die Uhr den Aufenthaltsort der Handynutzer_innen in Israel zu orten. Laut Aussage von Nadav Argaman, dem Chef des Geheimdienstes, soll sich nur eine sehr kleine Gruppe von Agent_innen mit der Aufgabe

beschäftigen. Die gesammelten Informationen sollen zudem nicht dauerhaft in der Datenbank des Shin Beth aufbewahrt werden.

Coronavirus and Israel's tourism industry: Loss and hope – comment

(...) I've seen airlines go bankrupt and cease flying, stranding passengers halfway around the world. But I've never seen the damage that has fallen upon El Al, Arkia and Israir with no end in sight. (...) Corona is different. It's burrowed deep into our consciousness. (...) This quarantine concept has thrown us for a loop and sent the tourism industry into a tailspin that could take months to recover from. El Al will survive; no government will let it fail. For the state, it represents a pipeline to the outside world. To some countries, such as South Africa, it is the only airline operating. Yes, the government will (...) demand deeper cuts in personnel, both salary-wise and number-wise. Yes, there's a lot of fat still existing at El Al, and this may force it to cut to the bone. If the government had any sense, it would let Arkia and Israir merge, allowing them to compete effectively with the low-cost carriers in the future. (...) Some tourism sites will go out of business or deeper in debt. Most will survive. Masada still will be Masada. If the situation prevails into the summer, you'll see tour guides give up their profession, unwilling to continue waiting. (...) We know the virus has the potential for death. Despite that result being incredibly unlikely for most of us, we're gripped by the fear of it. We won't fly, won't go to conferences and won't stay at a hotel. (...) Airlines will survive, travel agencies will thrive, and hopefully as the days grow longer, so will our understanding of the risks.

Mark Feldman, JPO, 08.03.20

Israel's coronavirus policies are too extreme

(...) Israel's current policy is more extreme than that of most developed nations, including those that have been harder hit by the disease. (...) Restricting travel by Israelis to major European countries and requiring people returning from these countries to self-quarantine has already caused enormous economic damage, particularly to tourism and airlines. (...) The main message that the Health Ministry is conveying is negative: what not to do and how to guarantee the isolation of the suspects. The Health Ministry is currently focusing on containing the coronavirus outbreak, using all means possible to keep the virus out of the country by refusing entry or isolating anyone coming from a country where the disease has appeared. According to this approach,

any price is worth paying if it can save us from the "catastrophe" that would follow if we let the virus enter. Is there an alternative approach to fighting the disease right now? Yes. It's called mitigation. It involves using less drastic methods that are likely to yield similar results regarding the damage caused by the virus but that significantly reduce the negative social and economic consequences of containment. This approach recognizes that because the free countries of the world don't operate according to the centralized and totalitarian Chinese model, they can't be closed to all traffic except in the case of a widespread existential danger, a danger not posed by COVID-19. Free countries must first do everything possible to isolate the sources of infection without taking drastic measures. (...) tightening the restrictions on entry and exit should be avoided. Testing for the virus should be increased significantly, starting with the people in home quarantine and continuing to the general population. (...) In addition, all available information about the virus and how to live with it should be shared with the public. Every effort should be made to avoid closing schools, workplaces and places of entertainment. All means possible should be used to prepare for a possible increase in the number of people needing respiratory intensive care. The coronavirus, too, shall pass, and until it does the damage should be minimized as far as is possible. (...)

Prof. Zvi Bentwich, HAA, 10.03.20

Italy, the perfect petri dish for a coronavirus catastrophe

Ever since Italy was struck (...) experts and pundits (...) have been pondering how the disease could spread so quickly in a prosperous western democracy with an advanced public health system. (...) One factor at work could be demographics. The Covid-19 epidemic is especially dangerous for elderly people and those who have pre-existing medical conditions, and Italy happens to have Europe's oldest population, with 23 percent of the population over the age of 65 and a median age of 47.3. (...) the disease somehow reached Italy and was allowed to spread undetected for weeks in the north of the country, because of a lack of testing and the attribution of some serious cases to "regular" seasonal flu. (...) With an economy that can be thrown into recession by any minor disruption, and a government with little breathing space to spend more money, it is not surprising that Italy's leaders hesitated to quickly impose the draconian, but necessary, measures required to contain the virus. The

rest of the damage was done by Italy's notoriously slow bureaucracy and litigious interest groups. It took days of public and acrimonious debate just to decide to close soccer stadiums to the public, and for the last weeks the country has been playing catch-up with the virus, unable to get ahead of the epidemic. Although Italy's public health system is ranked as one of the best in the world, years of spending cuts have rendered it fragile and incapable of facing a major crisis. (...) there's another disastrous factor to add to the toxic brew (...): Italy's ruling political class does not seem up to the task. (...) Around the globe, we would do better to consider how many of the factors that must have played a role in Italy's crisis also plague other countries, including our own. (...)

Ariel David, HAA, 13.03.20

Coronavirus: Israel's counterterrorism policies on virus containment

Israel, like the rest of the world, is having to adapt quickly to a new and challenging reality in the age of COVID-19. The measures that have been in force until now (...) are stringent – some would say draconian (...). It now seems that to fight this invisible enemy, the government has approved the use of covert, invisible means.(...) the prime minister said that he had been given the green light by the Justice Ministry to use intelligence tracking tools to digitally monitor coronavirus patients without their permission. (...) the new steps immediately raised concerns regarding privacy and human right issues. (...) Israel – which generally relies on carrying on as usual and social cohesion in emergency situations – is adapting very quickly to the regulations, closing all education frameworks, places of entertainment, restaurants and gyms, and people are working from home whenever possible (...). Doubtless, citizens will also get used to the idea of the new surveillance systems – particularly as they are not overt and visible. We are all now used to having closed-circuit cameras in most public places, and trust that these will be used to prevent and solve crimes. Furthermore, anyone connected to the Internet and social media knows that today there is no such thing as personal privacy. We already have no idea which organizations, government or corporate, have access to our moves. Nonetheless, we must make sure that these new measures do not cross a red-line. The use of artificial intelligence, facial recognition and digital tracking is a mixed blessing. These means can prevent the spread of the disease and save lives, but they can also be used to monitor who

meets with whom, as well as when and where, in cases that are not related to public health issues. The technology is hidden from our eyes, but there must be transparency regarding the data collected: Who is collecting it, who is storing it, who is accessing it and for how long? (...) It must be ensured that these emergency measures, too, will end when the coronavirus crisis is over.

Editorial, JPO, 15.03.20

Israel needs war-time leadership to fight coronavirus

Recent days have made it clear that Israel is at war. (...) To win this war, we must enlist all the experience gained from decades of battling terror and ensure all government agencies work in harmony and are coordinating their response. Despite the urgent need to deal with this growing crisis, the government has failed to ensure this takes place. (...) something in the Health Ministry has gone wrong. Instead of a steady hand at the top, there is uncertainty, contradictory recommendations and a sense of helplessness. Hospitals have shifted into panic mode as leaders of the healthcare establishment express doubts over the ability to treat large numbers of patients at the same time. With some health workers already benched due to fears of contamination, a shortage of vital medical equipment (...), there is little cause to wonder why the medical establishment is so concerned. (...) Many incidents that demonstrate the need for a centralized response have already been reported and only the defense establishment – with its manpower and resources - has the capability to manage the crisis. (...) Israel is in a state of emergency and must respond accordingly. (...) In order to give the population the best chance at surviving the coronavirus without letting our elderly community and our frailer citizens die, the crisis must be managed by a central body that is experienced, able to mitigate some of the pressure on hospitals, can ensure the future stability of the economy and when possible allow us to return to a normal routine. Before that can happen, Defense Minister Naftali Bennett must do more than show up at an occasional photo-op or press conference or post an occasional statement on social media about plans to set up a military field hospital to treat the expected number of sick. He must assume full responsibility for the crisis and begin to manage it. Even so, there is no indication that Bennett will be given the reins. Not only does he show no interest in taking them, but the prime minister- who appears on our television screens every

night to talk too much - does not seem to want to let them go.

Sarit Rosenblum, YED, 15.03.20

4. Medienquerschnitt

PURIM

Pure altruism, does it exist?

There are those who give to receive, plain and simple. They are not generous at all. This is how they make friends or a career. Gifts with strings attached. (...) No one can just give and never receive. (...) It is important to ask for our needs but also be concerned about needs of others. (...) there are those who give to make a good impression. On the recipient, on bystanders, and/or on the Creator, even. (...) And then there are saintly people who give because it gives them a good warm feeling. Sometimes because it erases a guilt feeling. But there can also be the motive to feel good about oneself. Or even to get rid of a request to give: Here, take it! (...) Or after having taken too much from others, to still guilt feelings or claims, return a little of it to the world. (...) To give to receive a good feeling. And then there are also people who give because that's what needs to happen. They want a better world and that's one way to create one. (...) And there are many people who give because that's what they learned, were trained to do in life. They feel driven by responsibility. (...) And lastly, there are people who are not possessive or they don't feel that they are deserving of anything, so they give away all they ever get. So the question is, is it possible to give from oneself as a conscious decision without wanting anything in return, to do good to others or the world in general? But then, why would one give? What would be one's motive to give if one would give 100% altruistically? Or is there always (...) selfish motive under any veneer of saintliness? Well, pure altruism exists and this is how it works. Giving because it's a proper expression of who one is. (...) We should be thankful to cynical people who questioned altruism. They showed that most forms of "generosity" are not "it."

Moshe-Mordechai von Zuiden, TOI, 12.03.20

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

Veröffentlicht im: März 2020

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