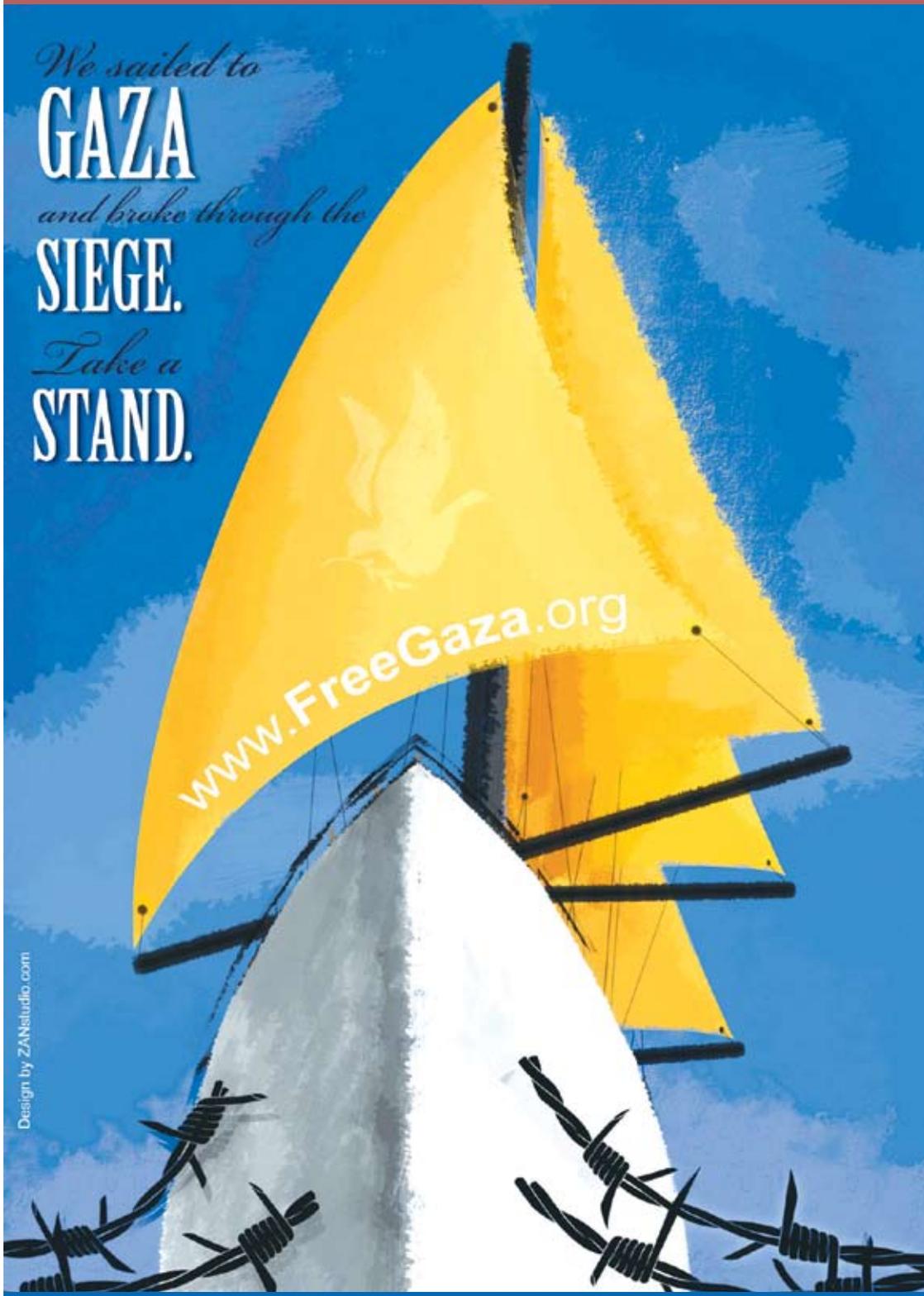




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ENVIRONMENT SPECIAL –



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palestine NEWS

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

- Campaigning against the oppression and dispossession suffered by the Palestinian people
- Supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and their struggle to achieve these rights including the Right of Return in line with UN resolution 194
- Promoting Palestinian civil society in the interests of democratic rights and social justice
- Opposing Israel's occupation and its aggression against neighbouring states
- Opposing anti-semitism and racism, including the apartheid and Zionist nature of the Israeli state

Beware of 'generous offers'

Bernard Regan foresees only phony 'progress' in the so-called Peace Process

The Government of Israel is meant to be engaging in a "Peace Process" with the Palestinian Authority, yet the reality belies the claim. Over 500 Palestinians have been killed since January 2008; the Knesset has authorized the continued building of the Wall, declared illegal by the International Court of Justice; over 1000 new buildings are being constructed in the settlements, which include approximately 2,600 housing units; the annexation of the Jordan Valley continues; the inhuman collective punishment of the people of Gaza continues.

It is clear the Palestinian people lack an authentic and sincere "partner for peace". The disgraced Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has been forced to resign and been replaced by another Kadima Party leader, the Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. The truth is that this Government has a limited shelf life and like that of Ehud Barak, hounded out of office by the belligerent Ariel Sharon in the year 2000, will be completely impotent to deliver any meaningful progress in the talks. Livni will be looking over her shoulder at the "next Sharon" – most likely at Benjamin Netanyahu, a former Prime Minister and member of the hawkish Likud Party.

Livni has made her position clear: "I support negotiations, but a final agreement has to explicitly reflect Israel's interests. We can't allow time constraints to rush us into making grave mistakes in trying to bridge gaps that are too big in a way that will bring about a clash, nor can we compromise on critical issues only for the sake of results. This is not how I operate in negotiations."

This is a clear statement that nothing should be expected from the current discussions. Livni is in fact a prisoner of her coalition

partners (the Labour, Shas and Gil parties) – perhaps especially the ultra-nationalist and conservative minority Shas party. If Kadima can't keep their coalition together – and the noises coming from Livni's leadership opponent Shaul Mofaz inside Kadima itself indicate that this is unlikely – then an election will undoubtedly result in them being thrown out of office. The Palestinians are therefore at the mercy of a weak and transient Government, much as they were in 2001, when Sharon's election defeat of Barak brought all discussions to a halt.

Of course US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will continue to put a brave face on it, but her actions have perhaps more to do with the United States domestic policy and the fortunes of the Republican Party candidate, John McCain, in the forthcoming Presidential elections than a serious commitment to work through the task of the negotiations. Whilst it's true that neither Barak Obama nor John McCain show any evidence of supporting any different approach to the question, let alone supporting the Palestinians' call for justice, a development of any kind will be hailed by the Bush/McCain camp as a major breakthrough, in order to bolster the Republican ticket.

Whilst Rice told reporters that she saw settlements as "unhelpful" to the peace process, this will put no pressure on Livni and company, since President Bush gave Sharon the green light to go ahead with the settlement expansion programme back in April 2004.

The release of 198 Palestinian prisoners is being presented as a positive sign; however, it must be remembered that almost 11,000 Palestinians are being held in Israeli prisons or detention camps, out of which around 9,000 are identified as political prisoners, including 326 minors, 94 women and 47 Palestinian parliamentarians.

This move, like other possible initiatives, must be treated with caution. In most, if not all, cases they are likely to be political "no-cost" moves from the Israeli Government viewpoint. They are designed to set the scene so that the blame for any failed outcome can be laid at the door of the Palestinians. As with the Barak negotiations, the ground is being prepared for the re-telling of the story – this time perhaps as "Livni's generous offer", or the Palestinians' last chance.

The position taken by the Palestinian leadership in the coming months will be critical. Current discussions among Palestinian communities at home and worldwide about alternative strategies to adopt, as Israel's actions make a genuine two-state solution virtually impossible, deserve serious attention (see page 4).

Unfortunately, time is running out in Palestine, not only because there is no prospect for peace or any vision for ending the occupation, but because the Israeli destruction is now touching the deepest layers of the landscape. Palestine will never be again what it was, given the sheer destruction above the surface; now it transpires that deeper layers, such as water resources and land quality, are also being irreparably damaged (see pages 5-7).

Never has the need for international solidarity been greater. Actions like the historic breaking of the siege of Gaza are helping to change the tide of public opinion. Now is the time to speak out in support of the Palestinian cause, in every forum and venue available to us.

"As with the Barak negotiations, the ground is being prepared for the re-telling of the story – this time perhaps as 'Livni's generous offer', or the Palestinians' last chance"

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Regaining the initiative

Kamel Hawwash reports on a radical new proposal

On the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba, prospects for an end to the injustice that befell the Palestinian people in 1948 appear to be as distant as they have ever been. With a lame-duck but also pro-Israeli American President, an Israeli Prime Minister facing corruption charges, a divided Palestinian people, Gaza under an immoral siege and a failing peace process, a group of Palestinians have been exploring strategic options for ending the occupation. I was privileged to be invited to join the group.

The group, now named the Palestine Strategy Study Group (PSSG), first met at the Dead Sea in January of this year, sadly not on the Palestinian but the Jordanian side, to enable as many of those that agreed to take part to meet as possible. Some who wished to take part were prohibited from travelling by the Israeli Authorities. The workshop and subsequent meetings provided a rare opportunity for Palestinians from a variety of political backgrounds, from Palestine and the Diaspora, to take stock and to consider a possible way forward. Each was there in a personal capacity. The discussions were facilitated by the Oxford Research Group, a London-based think-tank. Funding for this particular initiative came from the EU.

The outcome of our discussions is a report entitled 'Regaining the Initiative: Palestinian Strategic Options for Ending the Occupation'*, which had its first public airing in Ramallah on 25 August.

The PSSG contends that Israel is not a serious negotiating partner and that it will not come to a negotiated settlement that is acceptable to Palestinians, because it perceives that there are other alternatives to a negotiated settlement:

- to prolong the negotiations indefinitely by pretending that 'progress has been made' and that suspensions are temporary
- a pseudo-provisional 'two state agreement' with a strengthened but severely constrained PA

- a unilateral separation dictated by Israel
- control of the occupied territories by Egypt and Jordan

For the Palestinians none of the above would be acceptable, as they would fail to meet our national aspirations and would in fact undermine our national identity and rights.

The basis of the negotiations with Israel since 1991 have been UN Resolutions which call for an end to the occupation of the West bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in 1967, and an implementation of Resolution 194 regarding the refugees' right to return and compensation.

“The central aim will be to maximise the cost of continuing occupation for Israel, and to make the whole prospect of unilateral separation unworkable”

The PSSG suggest that “if Israel refuses to negotiate seriously for a genuine two-state outcome, Palestinians can and will block all four alternatives by switching to an alternative strategy made up of a combination of four linked reorientations to be undertaken singly or together”. Those are:

- ➔ “First, the definitive closing down of the 1991 negotiation option, so long abused by Israel
- ➔ Second, the reconstitution of the Palestinian Authority so that it will not serve future Israeli interests by legitimising indefinite occupation and protecting Israel from bearing its full burden of the costs of occupation (it may in fact become a Palestinian Resistance Authority)
- ➔ Third, the elevation of 'smart' resistance over negotiation as the main means of implementation for Palestinians, together with a reassertion of national unity through reform of the PLO, the empowerment of Palestinians, and the orchestrated eliciting of regional and international third party support. The central aim will be to maximise the cost

of continuing occupation for Israel, and to make the whole prospect of unilateral separation unworkable

- ➔ Fourth, the shift from a two state outcome to a (bi-national or unitary democratic) single state outcome as the Palestinians' preferred strategic goal. This reopens a challenge to the existence of the State of Israel in its present form, but in an entirely new and more effective way than was the case before 1988.”

Since its publication the report has generated a number of articles both in the Arab and English media. The discussion has ranged from welcoming it as a timely initiative to dismissing it as yet another initiative that is not very different to others. Much of the discussion generated has been about the potential shift from a two state to a one state solution to the Palestinian problem. This is an important issue but should not be seen as the most significant outcome from this initiative.

I believe that one of the most important outcomes is the very fact that a forum has been established where a group of Palestinians have been able to analyse the current situation and to look for ways in which Palestinians can regain the initiative, rather than continuing along the path of the current sterile negotiations. We can identify and implement strategies that will raise the cost of the occupation and therefore put pressure on Israel to negotiate seriously. Israel's policy of indefinite negotiations and the creation of 'facts on the ground' will backfire, as serious discussions are now taking place about a single state in some form as the choice of Palestinians.

I believe that the work of the PSSG should be ongoing and that the report should receive greater dissemination, both inside and outside Palestine. The PSSG is considering holding further meetings to help achieve this, including ones in the UK.

Kamel Hawwash is a British Palestinian academic and is Vice Chair of PSC, Chair of the Britain Palestine Twinning Network and the Midlands Palestinian Community Association. He can be contacted at kamelhawwash@yahoo.co.uk.

* For the full text of the report see: www.palestinestrategygroup.ps.

Israel, Palestine and the environment

Megan Clay-Jones investigates some environmental issues

“We shall build you, beloved country...and beautify you...We shall cover you with a robe of concrete and cement”. The words of Natan Alterman’s patriotic song of the thirties echo the Israeli national obsession with urban development at all costs. Yitzhak Shamir, who as Prime Minister had overseen the formation of a Ministry of the Environment, said in an interview in 1997: “They talk about clean air and natural resources, and that’s all very important. But on the other side there is development [...] Ultimately, in the name of development, I am willing to sacrifice anything.”¹

And indeed, although the claim of ‘making the desert bloom’ has been made repeatedly – often as actual justification for the colonisation of Palestine – the reality has proved to be very different. The early Zionist settlers who rose to positions of power were largely immigrants from Eastern Europe, of professional and mercantile backgrounds, essentially urban in experience and outlook. Succeeding Israeli governments have pursued policies of expansionism and urbanisation that have taken precedence over sustainability and conservation. Intensive industrialisation and agricultural production have meant years of over-extraction of precious water resources and serious pollution of the land, sea and rivers. Since 1967, when Israel occupied and began to colonise the West Bank and Gaza, the whole of historic Palestine has been affected.

Waste as a weapon

Entering the Gaza Strip from the Erez crossing in Israel, the visitor is assailed by the stench of raw sewage: huge lakes of untreated effluent sit amid what was once Gaza’s centre of light industry and major source of employment, now bombed and shelled into a wasteland by the Israeli army and airforce. The siege imposed on the Gaza Strip since Hamas’ victory in the 2006 elections has meant that the facilities for treating sewage are completely inadequate for the 1.4 million inhabitants. Today only one-sixth of Gaza’s daily sewage – estimated at up to 120 million litres a day – is fully treated. The rest either flows into the sea or builds up behind high walls of earth, threatening the adjacent homes.² The Strip’s water supply is polluted, fish caught inshore are not safe to eat and children can no longer swim safely from Gaza’s beaches.

In March 2007 one of the earth dikes gave way, and a tidal wave of sewage engulfed Umm al-Naser, a village of 3000 people. Five were drowned. Amal Abu Safra, mother of two year-old Jamal said: “I can’t swim, and I started swallowing sewage.” She held her son above the waste water until she could do so no longer. “I wanted to go under instead of him. But then he disappeared.”



Illegal hilltop settlements dominate the landscape

Since then, the situation has worsened. A UN report (30 April 2008) stated: “This sewage cannot be treated due to lack of a steady supply of electricity within the Gaza Strip, Israel’s restrictions on fuel imports and prohibitions on the import of necessary spare parts”.

In the West Bank the situation is only marginally better. The military occupation, with its hundreds of roadblocks, checkpoints, curfews and military incursions, has had a severe effect on attempts to develop the basic infrastructure, including municipal water supplies and waste disposal. The massive bulldozers used by the Israeli army to destroy Palestinian homes in acts of collective punishment are equipped with horizontal blades that rip up underground water mains.

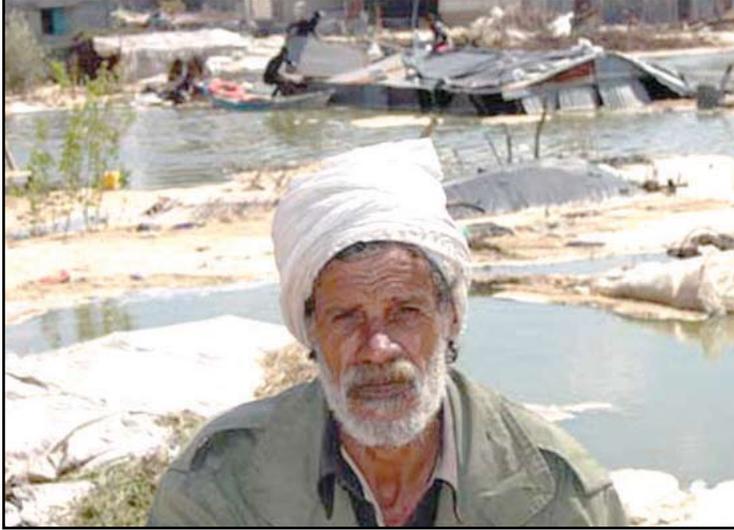
In 1994 researchers found that waterborne diseases, in particular diarrhoeal illnesses, were second only to respiratory diseases in causing mortality and morbidity among children, who make up 50% of the Palestinian population.³

In addition, the illegal Israeli settlements, typically located on hilltops, dump untreated sewage and wastewater into the valleys, polluting Palestinian water sources and agricultural land. A 2004 report by Friends of the Earth Middle East found that only 6% of Israeli settlements adequately treated their sewage. Although the settlers account for 10% of the population in the West Bank they produce 25% of sewage pollution, contaminating the underground water aquifer that serves both Israel and the West Bank. According to a 2005 BBC News report, the Israeli Ministry of the Environment,

responsible for environmental violations in Israeli settlements, took steps against only 14 of more than 60 colonies illegally discharging sewage.⁴

“It is claimed that love of the land is one of the basic pillars of Zionism. What is being done to Palestine looks more and more like rape and pillage”

On 19 April 2008 Redress released video footage (see www.tinyurl.com/5twuu2) of the settlers of the ultra-orthodox settlement of Beitar Illit piping wastewater and sewage onto the farmlands of the Palestinian village of Wadi Fuqeen. Sewage is released at least twice a month and runs through purpose-built pipelines, poisoning crops, contaminating the water table and posing a serious health risk to the villagers. Efforts to prevent this by the Palestinians of Wadi Fuqeen and Israeli peace activists have come to nothing.



A survivor of the sewage flood in Gaza

Water: inequality and pollution

The World Health Organisation suggests that 100 litres per person per day is a minimum requirement for every human being on the planet. The average Israeli enjoys a domestic supply of 280 litres per day, while a Palestinian on the West Bank gets on average only 60 litres. The problem is less one of availability of water, since the large aquifer underlying the West Bank is replenished by annual rainfall, than one of decades of overpumping by the Israeli water authorities, using deep wells that affect the longterm quality of the water and lead to the traditional, shallower wells used by Palestinians drying up. Since the West Bank was occupied in 1967 the Israeli authorities have prevented Palestinians sinking any new wells, while allowing the illegal settlements a water supply that provides them with swimming pools and lawn-sprinklers. Some Palestinian communities are reduced to buying back what is rightfully their own water from the adjacent settlement.

The situation is particularly acute in the Jordan Valley, where the illegal settlements virtually monopolise the available water, effectively depriving the indigenous Palestinians of their livelihood (see www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org).

In Gaza, not only is the municipal water contaminated, so that those who can afford it buy drinking water; powercuts mean people have to carry all water up several flights of stairs to their flats.

The politics of dumping

Even by the mid-nineties Israel was still burying 94% of its trash. Disposal of hazardous waste was also neglected and for thirty years was either added to ordinary landfills or joined the sewage system. The long-term effects of unaccountable dumping are still debated, and construction crews increasingly stumble upon toxic quagmires buried underground.⁶

Hundreds of sites for the disposal of trash are located in the Occupied Territories, including dozens that are unauthorised. There are 246 sites in the West Bank north of Jerusalem alone. All the sites used by the Palestinians and the settlers are also used by Israel, and most of the sites have few if any environmental safeguards. These open dumpsites threaten public health and the environment, especially in the locations where open-air burning of solid wastes is the only available

technique to reduce the volume and odour. The Shomron Municipal Environmental Association, an Israeli governmental body established by settlements in the northern part of the West Bank, acknowledges that "sites are improperly maintained, generating odours and smoke which are a nuisance to neighbouring residents as well as posing a threat to groundwater quality."⁷

Dumpsites used by Palestinian villages have been closed by the Israeli military if they are located near a Jewish settlement. The largest landfill of al-Bireh, near Ramallah, was closed and restrictions imposed on finding an alternative. The resulting build-up of garbage in residential areas threatened the health of nearly 100,000 people.⁸

Unregulated dumping of Israeli waste in the West Bank is done through private contractors, who rent land from a Palestinian owner and then use it to dump solid waste, regardless of location or environmental impact. In April 2005 Israeli journalists revealed that with "tacit government approval but no official permit" settlers had been making a profit by selling their trash-transport services to Israeli cities.⁹

The disposal sites of the Palestinian population of the West Bank have often been blocked off or closed by the Israeli military presence and by the segregated road system, which means that even dangerous waste, such as hospital waste, cannot be disposed of correctly.

Industrial zones and toxic waste

As part of Israel's economic colonisation of the West Bank, vast industrial complexes are being created, contrary to international law. These provide an industrial base for the illegal settlements, and are an attractive option for industries considered toxic or undesirable in Israel. It has been estimated that there are over 200 such factories inside the West Bank, including: aluminium, leather tanning, textile dyeing, batteries, fibreglass, plastics, and other chemical industries of which the Palestinians receive the poisons but see no financial return.¹⁰ Government incentives include tax exemption, exportation opportunities and the promise of cheap labour.

Abu Thaher, deputy director-general of the Palestinian Authority's Environmental Awareness Directorate confirmed: "A number of Israeli companies have relocated to the West bank to avoid strict environmental laws governing the disposal of waste, particularly hazardous waste in Israel."¹¹

The industrial zone of Barkan, in the western part of Salfit, north of Ramallah and near the settlement of Ariel (population 20,000), is one of the largest industrial zones; in 2005 it already encompassed 80 factories and generated 810,00 cubic meters of wastewater per year.¹² This flows into a nearby watercourse and pollutes the agricultural lands of three Palestinian villages. Recently the building of 27 new factories was announced.

In the nearby village of Bruqin, the liquid waste that runs down from the industrial sites spoils crops and trees and is a health hazard to the villagers, being connected to the rise of cancers in the local population. Additionally, about 50 truckloads of waste a day are unloaded at the nearby rubbish dumps. Bassem Abu Mahdi, director of primary health services in Salfit, said: "Increasing numbers of people have been diagnosed with cancer, amoebic dysentery, diarrhoea and other related diseases."¹³

The industrial zones are designed to serve the needs of the industry markets of Israel, whether by carrying out the most environmentally harmful production in Palestine or by the use of cheap labour. Additionally, manufacturing goods in the West Bank allows Israeli industry access to attractive Arab markets. Unfortunately, support and investment by the World Bank lends a spurious legitimacy to the apartheid nature of these industrial zones and to the expropriation of the land.

In addition to the industries implanted by Israel, there are literally thousands of stone quarries in the West Bank, supplying 80% of the material needs of Israel's construction sector, including settlement construction.¹⁴ In the 'seam zone' especially, between the pre-1967 Green Line and the illegal Wall, Palestinian farmland is simply

dynamited for stone to be used in the settlements. Many of the quarries are located near to Palestinian residential areas, with disregard for the noise and air pollution they cause.

Neglect within Israel

Israel itself is not immune to pollution and environmental disasters. The Yarkon river, which flows from the West Bank down to Tel Aviv, became heavily polluted after a few decades of Israeli rule. But this only came to public notice when a bridge over it collapsed in 1997 and many surviving the initial accident died later of acute respiratory diseases caused by industrial and agricultural pollutants.

The Sea of Galilee is at a dangerous all-time low and on the Red Sea the uncontrolled expansion of Eilat has led to the destruction of most of the adjacent coral reef.

Across Israel thousands of brownfield sites have been rated too contaminated for development.¹⁵ Overpumping of water along the coastal plain means that the water table has dropped and the void is being filled by seawater, and increasingly by wastewater. Already by the mid-1950's Tel Aviv's wells had become too salty for drinking. By the 1990's the seawater had encroached 1.5 kilometres inland and 16% of Israel's Coastal Aquifer wells were too polluted even for agriculture.¹⁶

Even after a central sewage system serviced cities and towns, the untreated waste was still dumped into the closest stream or river, contaminating groundwater, killing fish and causing permanent damage to rivers. By 1967 practically all the streams south of the Galilee were utilised as sewage conduits. However, the majority of Arab villages in Israel are not even connected to the sewage system and have to rely on cesspits, despite paying taxes as Israeli citizens. The cesspits often leak or overflow, further polluting ground-water and nearby wells. The situation is particularly bad for the 'unrecognised' villages – communities that pay municipal taxes but do not receive services such as mains water or sewerage in return. This is just one aspect of the asymmetry of the resources allocated to Israelis of Palestinian origin, as opposed to Jewish citizens. At the bottom of the heap are the Bedouins of the Negev Desert, whose traditional grazing grounds have been either expropriated by the Israeli government or polluted by the highly toxic waste from the industrial zone of Beer Sheva.¹⁷

The green façade

Israel seeks to project a 'green' image to the world, and there is indeed a National Master Plan for Parks and Nature Reserves, which has set aside large areas for parks and forests, that cannot be built on. In fact these have purposes beyond the ecological and recreational. Many have been established on sites of some of the hundreds of Palestinian villages razed to the ground after 1948, so that their inhabitants could not return to their homes. (The parks never bear the names of these villages.) Secondly, an area may be set aside as a 'nature reserve' (often doubling as a military zone) in order to limit the expansion of a Palestinian community; this is one of the commonest reasons given for not granting planning permission – permission much more rarely withheld from Jewish communities within Israel. The use of what S E Cohen calls 'a tactic of land control' is widespread in both Israel and the Occupied Territories: "Israel is seeking to block Palestinian expansion on the one hand, and increase Israeli settlement on the other. The planting of forests by the JNF [Jewish National Fund] creates a reserve for future Israeli building."¹⁸

Nowhere is this plainer than in the projected 'Green Belt' round Jerusalem, especially to the East, where high-rise settlements, not forests, dominate the landscape, and where Palestinian villages are being squeezed or bulldozed out of existence.

The trees that are planted are largely pines. Foreign to Palestine and water-hungry, with flammable resin, they create inhospitable sterile environments for most native undergrowth and wildlife.

The slow-growing native olive tree, of great symbolic as well as economic significance, has suffered badly at the hands of the



Bulldozing a Palestinian olive grove, as an Israeli soldier looks on

colonisers. In the Occupied Territories, the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights reports that since 1967 Israeli authorities have uprooted or destroyed more than one and half million trees, 70% of which were olive trees, the staple crop of rural communities.¹⁹

Who loves the land?

Palestine under Turkish rule was a largely agricultural region, producing fruit and vegetables, with olive oil and its associated industries taking pride of place. The few centuries-old ports and cities were centres of trade and pilgrimage. The rolling hills and coastal plains were dotted with villages built of the local honey-coloured stone: a landscape that had changed only slowly over the centuries – until 1948.

Today's visitor to the West Bank is struck by the multi-lane highways that, contrary to international law, cut deep into the Occupied Territories to link settlement to settlement and paralyse the growth and movement of Palestinian communities. The settlements themselves stand fortress-like on the hilltops or sprawl across acres of what was once arable and grazing land, scarring the ancient landscape. Perhaps the worst eyesore is the illegal apartheid wall, 400 miles long, eight meters high and complete with watchtowers, parallel military roads and electronic sensors. Condemned by the International Court of Justice and the UN but now nearly complete, it effectively annexes the fertile land and water resources of what many Palestinians once hoped could have been a viable and independent state.

It is claimed repeatedly that love of the land is one of the basic pillars of Zionism. What is being done to Palestine looks more and more like rape and pillage.

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Rescuing the past

Gill Swain reports on the preservation of Palestine's heritage

While their rural landscape comes under unremitting onslaught from the Israeli authorities and settlers, Palestinians are fighting hard to preserve their architectural and cultural heritage — and achieving significant successes.

The ancient city of Hebron, built by the Canaanites 5,500 years ago, is a particularly interesting case of Palestinians linking conservation projects to their battle to withstand the encroachment of settlers.

As a result of the Israeli colonisation of the old city and the expulsion and terrorisation of the civilians, the population plummeted from 10,000 in 1952 to 400 in 1996. That year the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee was established by Yasser Arafat with international support, to renovate and revitalise the area and rescue it from the clutches of the 500 extremist settlers whose aim was — and still is — to take it over.

In the face of constant physical attacks and measures such as an Israeli ban on the use of tractors, which forced contractors to move construction materials with pack animals, the HRC has renovated over 640 buildings, built new infrastructure, rehabilitated some commercial activity, started health and social schemes and attracted a diverse range of Palestinians to move into the city. The population now stands at around 5,000.

The HRC plans not only to set up recreational parks for children and families, but also to create tourist attractions. A recent initiative, announced last year, was a grant of \$4.5 million from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) to renovate 25 buildings around a strategic square adjacent to two of the Israeli settlements, which will send a vital symbolic as well as practical message about the Palestinians' determination to survive.



Youngster learning a craft in the village of Al-Taybeh

To conserve and develop

Also in the West Bank, the Ramallah-based Centre for Architectural Conservation — Riwaq — has completed a massive inventory of 51,000 structures as part of the National Registry of Historic Buildings. Hundreds of university students from Bir Zeit University, Al Najah University in Nablus, the Islamic University in Gaza and the Polytechnic in Hebron, plus scores of architects and archeologists

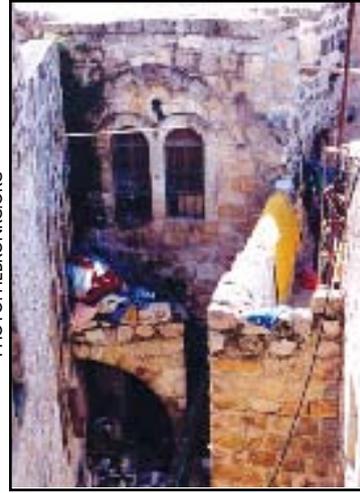


PHOTO: HEBRONFC.ORG



Before and after: Renovation in the Old City of Hebron

spent 12 years collecting detailed descriptions of buildings and creating digital maps, to provide an accurate map archive of all of Palestine's historic sites.

Riwaq also carries out "job creation through conservation" projects, again largely funded by SIDA, which have provided tens of thousands of work days on over 50 conservation initiatives. Ancient crafts, such as stone carving and plasterwork, are revived and young people trained in the skills of their forefathers. Many projects are designed to rehabilitate derelict buildings for a whole variety of public, cultural and touristic activities, while others work with private individuals to preserve and renovate their homes — and sometimes to help solve complex problems of ownership.

In addition, Riwaq's Community Outreach Unit has organised many summer camps for children ranging in age from 8-13, which include field trips to historic centres and archaeological sites.

All of these schemes combine job creation with education while consolidating Palestinian control over their unique heritage and giving them an increased stake in their future as well as a much-needed sense of pride.



Attention to detail is the hallmark of Riwaq's work

The importance of memory

Within Israel, a small group of dedicated scholars and activists are seeking to teach an often ignorant Israeli public about the Nakba of 1948: the hundreds of villages destroyed and the hundreds of thousands made homeless. The activities of Zochrot ("Remembering") include exhibitions and film screenings showing pre-Nakba Palestine, public lectures, workshops, guided tours and the collection and publication of testimonies, by both Palestinians and Israelis.

For example, they have fought (unsuccessfully so far) to have a commemorative plaque placed in the so-called 'Canada Park' area, the site of three Palestinian villages razed to the ground after the 1967 occupation. It seems the Israeli authorities are happy to acknowledge Roman, Byzantine and Turkish sites — but nothing that refers to the Palestinian population. But Zochrot are undeterred; as their website puts it: "Acknowledging the past is the first step in taking responsibility for its consequences. This must include equal rights for all the peoples of this land, including the right of Palestinians to return to their homes."

For more information see www.riwaq.org and www.zochrot.org

In the name of 'development'

Isabelle Humphries documents the ongoing Nakba in one of the oldest cities of Palestine

The 1948 expulsion of 90% of the 70,000 Palestinians of Jaffa destroyed one of the most economically thriving and developed urban societies in the region. Sixty years later Israel continues to evict Palestinians remaining in Jaffa — but this time it is targeting one of the weakest, most poverty-stricken Arab neighbourhoods in the country.

In March 2008 the Jaffa Popular Committee Against Housing Demolition called for people to commemorate Land Day in the heart of Jaffa. Land Day recalls the killing of six Palestinians in the Galilee in 1976, during protests over land confiscation. Every year since then Palestinians have gathered on this day to demonstrate against ongoing land confiscation. Today around 500 families of the Ajami neighbourhood of the city — the vast majority Arab - are threatened by evictions or home demolitions, in the latest stage of a policy which has been followed for decades.

'Mixed' cities: segregation and dispossession

The coastal city of Jaffa, with its port and close proximity to Jerusalem, was an important settlement for many centuries, and famous the world over for its orange exports. But after the Nakba, and decades of demolition and impoverishment, one of the most important cities of historic Palestine is unrecognisable — crumbling in the shadow of Tel Aviv.

While the vast majority of urban Palestinians were exiled outside the new state, in the aftermath of the May 1948 occupation of Jaffa, as in other cities such as Haifa, Lydda and Acre, a small number of Palestinians remained and were forced into one neighbourhood. Under Israeli military rule (1948-1966) such neighbourhoods served effectively as ghettos. In Jaffa 4000 Palestinians — a mixture of original inhabitants and refugees from surrounding villages — were gathered in the southern Ajami neighbourhood, while their houses in other parts of the city or surrounding villages were occupied or destroyed. In June 1948 Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary: "Jaffa will be a Jewish city. War is war." Less than a year later he reported to the Israeli parliament that 45,000 new Jewish immigrants had been settled in the 'abandoned' homes of the city.¹

In 2008, around a million Arab citizens live in Israel, largely segregated from the Jewish community in overcrowded villages and neighbourhoods with significantly less municipal funding, services and



Luxury apartments in the Old City of Jaffa



PHOTO: ISABELLE HUMPHRIES

'Peres Center for Peace' encroaches on the old Palestinian cemetery

employment opportunities than Jewish areas.² Jaffa is one of the so-called 'mixed' cities of Israel, but a simple walk around its neighbourhoods shows the lack of 'mixing' — the rundown and overcrowded streets are in stark contrast with downtown Tel Aviv. Ajami is the lowest income neighbourhood of all 60 of Tel Aviv/Jaffa neighbourhoods.

So how has the Israeli government managed to stay within their own legal system and still concentrate so many demolition orders in one neighbourhood? Sami Shehadah, member of the Jaffa Popular Committee explained: "Between the 1960s and the late 1980s municipal authorities placed a total freeze on all permits for new building or renovations, with the intention of demolishing the whole area for redevelopment. Unfortunately for the Arab residents crowded

into the Ajami neighbourhood, 80% of these houses were built pre-1948 and without any renovations the ceilings would quite literally fall in on their heads. With a freeze on allocation of permits for renovations they had no choice, for the safety of the families, but to go ahead without permission from Israeli authorities."

In this way Israeli authorities can claim that these families have contravened the law and thus a demolition order is issued. With no resources to rent or purchase new property, not only are people forced to move into overcrowded homes with relatives, they are

even asked to foot the bill for demolition.

The vacated land is then used for new development — property way out of price range for the residents of Ajami. Close to the heart of the Israeli business capital of Tel Aviv yet out of the hustle and bustle of the city, and with a sea view, new properties are seen as a prime location and thus sell at the top end of Israeli housing prices.

A look at the Judaization of Jaffa's Old City illustrates something of what Israeli policy makers have in mind for the Ajami neighbourhood. The heart of the Old City today has been totally renovated, with Palestinian residents long gone. Spotless pedestrian walkways weave between buildings that once served as Palestinian homes, shops and factories and now have been transformed into expensive restaurants, galleries and gift shops for foreign and Israeli tourists.

Walking around Jaffa the local Palestinian guide points out new exclusive building developments built upon the sites of

"Not only are people forced to move into overcrowded homes with relatives, they are even asked to foot the bill for demolition"

The treasures of Gaza

Jawdat Khoudary first became interested in Gaza's history when the workmen he employed, as Gaza's biggest building contractor, started to turn up some mysterious artefacts. He paid them and the local fisherman for every ancient object they found, and over the past twenty years has built up a large personal collection. This forms the basis of Gaza's first purpose-built archaeological museum, funded by Jawdat, in a beautiful, air-conditioned space overlooking the Mediterranean.

The world is used to thinking of Gaza as something akin to a large concentration camp, crammed with refugees and subject to regular onslaughts by the IDF. Few people are aware of its rich history, going



The museum's restaurant is made ready for visitors

back over five thousand years. But alabaster vessels from Egypt, Greek glassware, the elaborately carved capitals of Roman columns and Byzantine and Ottoman remains in abundance attest to the importance of the region, as an



Schoolchildren discover Gaza's distant past

oasis, a port and the bridge between Africa and the Near East. One prized item is a child's toy cart, from the Philistine period (1600BC - 1200BC).

Many treasures have long since been plundered, and are to be found in museums around the world. One of the most spectacular is the hoard of gold Canaanite jewellery, excavated during the British Mandate by Sir Flinders Petrie and now on display in the British Museum. Many more, removed by Israeli soldiers and archaeologists, are to be seen in the Israel Museum. (General Dayan's own personal collection was sold to the Museum for \$1m on his death.)

Jawdat says that "The idea is to show our deep roots from many cultures in Gaza," and that his long-term ambition is to look "carefully after the history and heritage of Gaza, to protect it for the next generations".

9 recently demolished homes and buildings. Eviction orders are issued by Amidar — the housing company owned and operated by the Israeli government. Amidar claims to offer subsidised and rent-controlled housing in Israel, but the fact that its major stock holders are the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund — two Jewish institutions openly mandated to support the Jewish population only — shows that it is not simply financial gain that authorities are pursuing. Since 1948 Palestinian representatives have been excluded from all stages of the urban planning process. Ben-Gurion's hope that "Jaffa will be a Jewish city" remains the guiding principle.

Grassroots resistance

Any community organisation which sets out to challenge such policy inevitably faces an uphill task, but the Popular Committee Against Housing Demolition has a clear programme. Shehadah explains that a primary task is to raise awareness amongst families themselves

that their problem is a collective one. Because of their economic situation many cannot even afford to consult lawyers on the issue — a second issue the committee is trying to address, to be able to offer free legal aid.

In addition, through events like the Land Day demonstration the committee is trying to raise awareness of the issue amongst the wider Arab public, politicians and also the Israeli and international community. Shehadah notes that several Tel Aviv Jewish community activists have become involved in the work of the committee.

The situation in Jaffa cannot be seen in isolation from broader policy towards Palestinians inside Israel, (nor in the West Bank and Gaza). Israel is openly pursuing projects to develop Jewish towns in areas heavily populated by Palestinian citizens such as the Galilee and the Negev, where Arabs are notably absent from planning committees.³ What is happening in the Ajami neighbourhood is not simply a case of entrepreneur developers trying to make a profit, but representative of a policy of dispossession across historic Palestine.

- See the Arab Association for Human Rights (HRA): arabhra.org — for report on Jaffa and interview with the director Mohammed Zeidan.
- Listen online to interviews with women who recall the Nakba and still live in Jaffa today in Rosemary Sayigh's 'Voices' archive:
Umm Nakleh Saqar: http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/Israel/um_nakleh.html
The Andraos sisters: http://almashriq.hiof.no/palestine/300/301/voices/Israel/andraos_sisters.html

Isabelle Humphries is completing doctoral research on internally displaced Palestinian refugees. She can be contacted at isabellebh2004@yahoo.co.uk.

¹ Tom Segev, 1948: The First Israelis, (New York: Owl, 1986) pp.75-76

² For more information on the situation for Palestinians inside Israel see Jonathan Cook, Blood and Religion: The Unmasking of the Jewish and Democratic State, (London: Pluto, 2006)

³ See Adalah: the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel: <http://www.adalah.org/eng/jnf.php>

Obama, Israel and the shadow of Apartheid

Ali Abunimah explains some of the pressures on the presidential candidate

Earlier this year Barack Obama was forced to distance himself from the views of his pastor, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, and to condemn “a view that sees the conflicts in the Middle East as rooted primarily in the actions of stalwart allies like Israel, instead of emanating from the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam.”

It might seem odd for Obama to mention Israel and “radical Islam” in a speech which was actually focused on US race relations. But for months, even before most Americans had heard of Wright, prominent pro-Israel activists were hounding Obama over Wright’s views on Israel and his ties to Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. In January, Abraham Foxman, National Director of the pro-Zionist Anti-Defamation League (ADL), labelled Wright “a black racist”. adding in the same breath, “Certainly he has very strong anti-Israel views”. Criticism of Israel, one suspects, is Wright’s truly unforgivable crime.

In his early political life in Chicago Barack Obama showed himself to be well-informed about the Middle East and expressed nuanced views conveying an understanding that justice and fairness, not blinkered support for Israel, are the keys to peace and the right way to combat extremism. Yet for months he has had to fight the charge that he is less rabidly pro-Israel than other candidates — which now means adhering to the same simplistic formulas and unconditional support for Israeli policies that have helped to escalate conflict and worsen America’s standing in the Middle East.

Obama stressed that his appeal to Jewish voters also stems from his desire “to rebuild what I consider to be a historic relationship between the African American community and the Jewish community”. However he has not addressed, to a national audience, why that relationship might have frayed. In a little-noticed comment, reported on 25 February by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Obama tried to contextualise Wright’s critical views of Israel. Wright, Obama explained, “was very active in the South Africa divestment movement and you will recall that there was a tension that arose between the African American and the Jewish communities during that period when we were dealing with Apartheid in South Africa, because Israel and South Africa had a relationship at that time. And that cause – that was a source of tension.”

During the Apartheid years, Israel supplied South Africa with hundreds of millions of dollars of weaponry despite an international embargo. Even the water cannons that South African forces used to attack anti-Apartheid demonstrators in the townships were manufactured at Kibbutz Beit Alfa in northern Israel. Until the late 1980s, South Africa often relied on Israel to lobby Western governments not to impose sanctions.

In 1987, Jesse Jackson, then the world’s most prominent African American politician, angered some Jewish American leaders for insisting that “Whoever is doing business with South Africa is wrong, but Israel is ... subsidised by America, which includes black Americans’ tax money, and then it subsidises South Africa”.

As a presidential candidate, Jackson raised the same concerns in a high profile meeting with the Israeli ambassador, as did a delegation of black civil rights and religious leaders, including the nephew of Martin Luther King Jr, on a visit to Israel. For many African Americans, it was intolerable hypocrisy that so many Jewish leaders who staunchly supported Civil Rights and the



anti-Apartheid movement would be tolerant of Israel’s support for the South African regime.

Thus, Reverend Wright, who has sought a broader understanding of the Middle East than one that blames Islam and Arabs for all the region’s problems or endorses unconditional support for Israel, stood in the mainstream of African American opinion, not on some extremist fringe. But, as they have done with other communities, hard-line pro-Israel activists have too often tried to tar any African American critic of Israel with the brush of anti-Semitism.

Unfortunately, the price of admission to the political mainstream is to abandon any foreign policy goals that diverge from those of the pro-Israel, anti-Palestinian lobby. Certainly, every

aspect of Obama’s visit to Palestine-Israel this July seemed designed to further appease pro-Israel groups. Typically for an American aspirant to high office, he visited the Israeli Holocaust memorial and the Western Wall. He met the full spectrum of Israeli Jewish (though not Israeli Arab) political leaders. He travelled to the Israeli Jewish town of Sderot which, until the ceasefire in June, frequently experienced rockets from the Gaza Strip. At every step, Obama warmly professed his support for Israel and condemned Palestinian violence.

Other than a cursory 45-minute visit to occupied Ramallah to meet with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians got little. Obama missed the opportunity to visit Palestinian refugee camps, schools and even shopping malls to witness first-hand the devastation caused by the Israeli army and settlers, or to see how Palestinians cope under what many call Apartheid.

Obama said nothing about Israel’s relentless expansion of

“During the Apartheid years, Israel supplied South Africa with hundreds of millions of dollars of weaponry despite an international embargo.”

Understanding Livni

Uri Avnery comments on the new leader of the Kadima party

In order to understand Tzipi Livni, one has to go back to Jabotinsky. His many enemies have often called him a Fascist, but that is inaccurate. He was born in the 19th century, and was a nationalist in the 19th century mould.

Jabotinsky wanted, of course, all of Palestine to become a Jewish state. When he founded his party in the 1920s, he named it according to this vision: the demand was for a "revision" of the British decision to separate the land west of the Jordan river from the land east of the river, today's Kingdom of Jordan, then called Transjordan. In her youth, Tzipi sang Jabotinsky's most famous song: "Two banks has the Jordan - this one belongs to us and that one, too."

But Jabotinsky was also a real liberal, and a real democrat. He entered the political arena for the first time when he formulated the "Helsingfors (Helsinki) Plan", which demanded human and national rights for the Jews and the other minorities in Czarist Russia.

A person educated according to these values is faced today with a tough dilemma.

Years ago, the Revisionists used to tell this joke: rewarding David Ben-Gurion for founding the state, God promised to grant him one wish. Ben-Gurion asked that every Israeli should be honest, wise and a Labor Party member. "That's too much even for me to grant," God replied, "but every Israeli can choose two of the three." So a Labor member can be wise but not honest, a Labor member can be honest but not wise, and somebody who is wise and honest cannot be a Labor member.

Something like this is now happening to the Revisionists themselves. They ask for three things: a Jewish State, a state that

encompasses all of historic Palestine and a democratic state. That is too much even for God. So a Revisionist must choose two of the three: a Jewish and democratic state in only a part of the country, a Jewish state in all the country that will not be democratic, or a democratic state in all the country that will not be Jewish. This dilemma has not changed over the last 41 years.

Tzipi Livni, an honest to goodness Revisionist, has announced her choice: a Jewish and democratic state that will not encompass the whole of the country. (We leave open here the question of whether a "Jewish" state can be democratic.)

In up-to-date Hebrew, we differentiate between "national" and "nationalistic" attitudes. A national view recognizes the importance of the national dimension in today's human society, and therefore respects and recognizes the nationalism of other peoples, too. A nationalistic view says "we and no others", my nation über alles.

It seems that Tzipi, like her hero Jabotinsky, adheres to the national view. Hence her emphasis on "two nation-states for two peoples". She speaks about a Jewish nation-state and is ready to sacrifice Greater Israel on this altar.

That may not be an ideal basis for peace (what would be the status of Israel's Arab citizens in this Jewish nation-state?) but it is realistic. If she has the power to implement her ideas, she can make peace. If



The full text of Uri Avnery's article can be found on www.gush-shalom.org

colonies on occupied land. Nor did he follow the courageous lead of former President Jimmy Carter and meet with the democratically elected Hamas leaders, even though Israel negotiated a ceasefire with them. That such steps are inconceivable shows how off-balance is the US debate on Palestine.

Many people I talk to still hope that, if elected, Obama would display an even-handedness absent in the campaign. The reality is that the political pressures evident in a campaign do not magically disappear once the campaign is over. Nor is all change necessarily for the better.

One risk is that a President Obama or President McCain would just bring back the Clinton-era approach, which led to a doubling of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, an upsurge in violence and the failed 2000 Camp David summit, where Clinton tried to pressure Arafat into accepting a bantustan. A depressing feature of Obama's visit was the prominent advisory role for Dennis Ross, the official in charge of the peace process under Clinton, and the founder of an AIPAC-sponsored pro-Israel think-tank.

Whoever is elected will face a rapidly changing situation in Palestine-Israel. A number of shifts are taking place simultaneously. First, the consensus supporting the two-state solution is disintegrating as Israeli colonies have rendered it unachievable. Second, the traditional

Palestinian national leadership is being eclipsed by new movements, including Hamas. And, as western and Arab governments become more craven in the face of Israeli human rights violations, a Palestinian-led

campaign modeled on the anti-Apartheid strategy of boycott, divestment and sanctions is building global civil society support. Finally, the demographic shift in Palestine-Israel toward an absolute Palestinian majority in all of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip will be complete in the next three to five years.

Making peace in this new reality will take leaders ready to listen and talk to all sides in the conflict and to consider alternatives to the moribund two-state solution, such as power-sharing, confederation or a single democratic state. It will require, above all, the courage, imagination and political will to challenge the status quo of Israeli

domination and Palestinian dispossession that has led to ever more violence with each passing year.

Co-founder of The Electronic Intifada, Ali Abunimah is author of One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse (Metropolitan Books, 2006).

The material in this article was first published in the Electronic Intifada: electronicintifada.net.

“For many African Americans, it was intolerable hypocrisy that so many Jewish leaders who staunchly supported Civil Rights and the anti-Apartheid movement would be tolerant of Israel’s support for the South African regime”

In Brief

A LESSON IN THEFT

Israel has announced it intends to 'confiscate' the Cliff Hotel in Abu Dis, East Jerusalem. The illegal Wall now surrounds the hotel, isolating it from the rest of Abu Dis to the east.

The legal veneer for the theft of Palestinian property is provided by the so-called Absentee Law, originally created to transfer the property of Palestinian refugees expelled during the Nakba to the control of the Ministry of Finance. The three owners of the hotel actually live only a few hundred yards away, on the other side of the Wall. But with their West Bank IDs, they are considered to be residing in 'enemy territory' and thus absentee owners whose property can be expropriated..

This is not the first time Israel has attempted to seize the building. In 1996, it was occupied by military forces for 'security reasons', but was returned to the owners after international pressure.

In 2003, five rooms and a well were demolished to clear space for the Wall and an access road. The property was further wrecked when Occupation forces used it as both a work site and dumping ground. Now, the Wall completely surrounds the property, with a gate that allows military access. The location of the hotel land, on a high point overlooking Abu Dis, will be transformed into a military surveillance and control point.



The Wall at Abu Dis

MYSTERY MANOEUVRES

On 28 May and 12 June joint manoeuvres took place between the Greek and Israeli air forces, under the code-name "Glorious Spartan 08", around the Greek island of Crete, using NATO and US facilities at the Suda Bay base. During large-scale training exercises that were, officially, secret, 130 flights were realised by Greek planes and another 130 by Israeli fighter jets.

Coming at a time of heightened tension and sabre-rattling by the US over Iran, it was feared that the manoeuvres could be part of the preparation for a pre-emptive strike. The Communist Parties of both Greece and Israel denounced the exercises as a "very dangerous escalation" and "a direct threat to peace and stability in the region... They aim at the promotion of the 'New Middle East' project and at the further expansion of NATO all over the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Central Asia." In their press release they said: "We call upon the working class and the peace-loving people of our countries to mobilize, to prevent a possible adventurism against Iran with the participation of our countries."



PHOTO: STOPTHEWALL.ORG

Young Palestinian protesters flee tear gas at Nilin

PROTEST: THE HUMAN COST

A young Palestinian who was shot in the foot by an Israeli soldier has petitioned Israel's High Court, demanding that the soldier and his commander be charged with "aggravated abuse".

Ashraf Abu Rahmeh, aged 27, was demonstrating against the construction of the Wall near the the West Bank village of Nilin, on 7 July.

He was arrested and an Israeli soldier fired a rubber-coated metal bullet at his foot at close range as the protester was held, handcuffed and blind-folded, by the soldier's commander. The incident was videoed by a girl from the village, and the footage shown on Israeli TV. The officer, Lt-Col Omri Burberg was "reassigned" after the incident and both he and the soldier were indicted on the limited charge of "improper conduct" – a minor offence which does not result in a criminal record.

The lawyers representing Ashraf pointed out that if the officer had been "caught smoking a joint" he would have suffered the worse penalty of a prison sentence and dishonourable discharge. They added: "This case proves once again that the military judicial system views harming innocent citizens as a public image problem and not as a moral issue."

They are demanding that the two be charged with "abuse of a detainee under aggravated circumstances," punishable by up to seven years in prison.

The Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem said: "It [The Army] disgraces the values which it pretends to uphold."

During another protest against the construction of the Wall at Nilin on 29 July, Israeli troops shot dead a ten year-old Palestinian boy. Ahmad Mousa was hit in the chest by a live bullet and died on his way to hospital.

A week later a 17 year-old Palestinian youth from the same village died after Israeli soldiers shot him in the head at point blank range with two rubber coated steel bullets, as he attended the funeral of the younger boy. Nine other Palestinians were wounded.

During six years of protests against the Wall, the Israeli army have killed 11 demonstrators, 7 of them children, and thousands have been injured.

A report, Justice for All, released in early August by the Israeli human rights group Yesh Din, revealed that only six percent of probes into offences allegedly committed by Israeli soldiers and settlers against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank have led to

Eye on the web

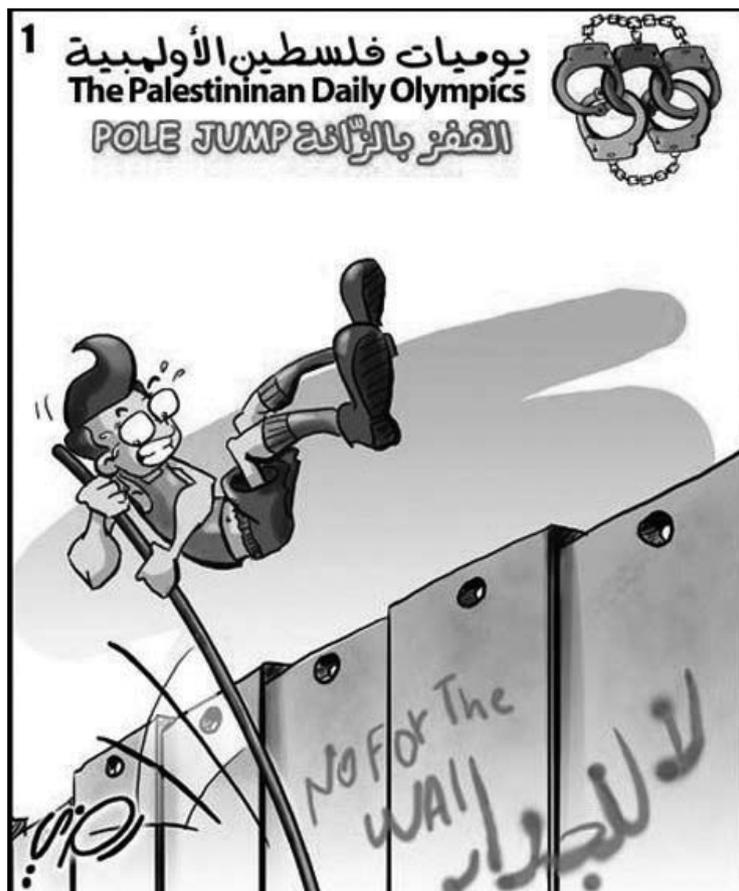
• Dr Derek Summerfield and Dr David Halpin are just two of the doctors who are deeply concerned about health and human rights in the OPTs, and about the systematic complicity of the Israeli Medical Association in the occupation and in the use of torture as an instrument of state policy (see Summer issue of PN).

Derek says: "The 'normal' channels having long since been shown to be blocked, we have called for a boycott of the IMA and its suspension from the World Medical Association". With this in view, a website has been set up: **boycottima.org**, to collect and disseminate information — and, hopefully, to shame the Israeli medical establishment into action.

• For a blogspot specialising in clips showing the situation in Gaza and the West Bank see **palestinevideo.blogspot.com**. Includes British journalist (and sister of Cherie Blair) Lauren Booth reporting on the situation in Gaza, after her epic boat trip.

• For clips of anti-Apartheid-Wall protests, as well as day by day updates on the campaign see **www.stophthewall.org**. Includes video of the shooting of the youth at Nilin (see page 13).

• The website **www.ifamericansknew.org** styles itself: "What every American needs to know about Israel/Palestine". It documents the issues from an (informed) US point of view: no great revelations here, but the basic facts and figures are graphically presented.



13 indictments. "In many instances the paperwork is either 'lost' or the police or military personnel involved in the investigations claim they are 'unable to identify the perpetrator,'" said Yesh Din's research director, Lior Yavne

An earlier report released in mid-July by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) stated that two Palestinian civilians were killed, and 29 injured by the Israeli army in the West Bank during the first week of July alone.

● BACK TO SCHOOL

In late August, as one million Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip prepared to return to school, UN agencies and the Palestinian Ministry of Education held a press conference to highlight the problems facing schoolchildren in the OPTs.

Filippo Grandi, the deputy-commissioner of UNRWA, speaking under a banner declaring 'Unite for Education' (pictured) said: "We should celebrate — in spite of all the hardships — going back to school." At the same time he noted that 76 Palestinian children had been killed so far this year, a 50 percent rise on last year.



SHABTAI GOLD/IRIN

UN officials and Lamis El-Alami, Palestinian Minister of Education, said the Israeli-imposed system of roadblocks, walls and checkpoints was impeding Palestinian movement in the West Bank, while the situation was even worse in the Gaza Strip.

Last year exam results and class attendance were down, especially in Gaza, and both UNRWA and UNICEF have been running remedial summer programmes, which have allowed many of the failing students to catch up.

UNICEF's Patricia McPhillips said: "Education is a lifeline, a much needed semblance of normalcy," adding that children's lives in the OPTs were "framed by conflict, occupation and the fast growing poverty around them".

There are problems specific to East Jerusalem, where, according to the Minister for Education, a central problem is the lack of a clear governing body for schools. Israel does not allow the PA to function in Jerusalem and has been accused by human rights NGOs of discriminating against the Palestinian population there since the illegal annexation of the Old City in 1967. She also said that the movement restrictions meant many teachers from the West Bank could not travel to East Jerusalem.

● 'SILENCE BEGETS COMPLICITY'

Nobel Peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu accused the West of complicity in Palestinian suffering by its silence, suggesting it did not want to criticise Israel because of the Holocaust.

Tutu spoke after delivering a report to the United Nations about Israel's shelling of the town of Beit Hanun in Gaza in November 2006, in which 19 Palestinians died, all but one from the same family.

Settler violence on the rise

On 6 August, a gang of Jewish settlers attacked a 14-year old boy, Hamza Abu Khetar in the old city centre, and threw him from the roof of a four-storey building. Luckily for him, a lower roof broke his fall and he escaped with a broken ankle and severe bruising.

Later in the day the same gang disrupted a Palestinian wedding party being held at a house near the illegal Jewish settlement of Jabara, outside the city. They started throwing stones at the guests, chanting: "Muhammad is a pig" and taunting two disabled children, according to the groom's father.

The next day a car full of senior British diplomats on a fact-finding mission was attacked by a settler during their visit to the ancient city, where about 700 Jewish settlers live under massive Israeli army and police protection, disrupting the lives of the 180,000 Palestinian inhabitants.

The diplomats were being given a tour by Breaking the Silence, an organisation led by former Israeli soldiers who have served in the city and who have become angered by the violence of the settlers (see www.shovrimshatika.org).

The diplomats, who were travelling in an armoured car, were trying to leave the city through the large settlement of Kiryat Arba, close to the city centre, when a settler's car pulled in front of them, blocking their way.

A settler then jumped out and started kicking the vehicle. The British diplomats reversed and tried to leave the scene, but the settler jumped in his car and again pulled in front of them and started thumping and kicking the vehicle. Another group of settlers refused to open the gates to Kiryat Arba to prevent the British vehicle from entering.

Israeli human rights groups who monitor Hebron warn that settler violence has been increasing in recent weeks, partly as a result of the chaos within the Israeli government and partly because one of the Israeli human rights groups, B'Tselem, has distributed around 100 video cameras to Palestinians to document the violence (see

He strongly criticised the international community for failing to speak out against the suffering in Gaza: "This silence begets complicity," he told the UN Human Rights Council.

Tutu later told a news conference: "I think the West, quite rightly, is feeling contrite, penitent, for its awful connivance with the Holocaust.

"The penance is being paid by the Palestinians. I just hope again that ordinary citizens in the West will wake up and say: 'We refuse to be part of this'," he said.

● DANGEROUS GAMES

Israel's involvement in the Georgian debacle got little coverage in our media. But the Israeli daily Haaretz (11 August 2008) carried a piece that made it clear that there had been a long history of training, arming and support of the Georgian forces by the Israeli military.

In the early stages of the conflict, visiting Georgian minister Temur Yakobashvili was quoted as saying: "Israel should be proud of its military which trained Georgian soldiers," and even suggested that "a small group of Georgian soldiers were able to wipe out an entire Russian military division, thanks to the Israeli training".

But when Russia retaliated with massive force and reasserted its dominance in the region, Israel beat a hasty diplomatic retreat, much to Georgia's chagrin.

Presumably Israel was acting as a US proxy in Georgia, to avoid too direct an American challenge in Russia's sphere of influence. Nothing new here: in the 1970s and 1980s, Israel helped South Africa's apartheid regime fight Soviet-backed resistance in Namibia



PHOTO: ISM

Swedish victim of settler violence in Hebron

Summer issue of *Palestine News*).

Assaf Peled of B'Tselem said that, in Hebron, three of the cameras had been broken by settlers – sometimes after they had been confiscated by Israeli soldiers.

and Angola, at the behest of Washington, and trained the US-backed death squads fighting left-wing movements in Central America.

However, this looks like a dangerous game: not only did Israel's military backing fail in Georgia; Israel risks provoking Russia into retaliating by stepping up its military assistance to Israel's adversaries in the region, including Iran...

● VANUNU 'IN POOR HEALTH'

On 23 September Mordechai Vanunu's prison sentence was reduced from six to three months due to "ailing health" and "lack of claims his actions jeopardized Israel's security".

In April 2007 Vanunu was convicted by the Jerusalem Magistrates Court of 15 violations of an IDF military order, prohibiting him from talking to foreign journalists and leaving Israel. He is no stranger to Israeli jails: in 1986 he was sentenced to 18 years for revealing the truth about Israel's nuclear programme. Most of his sentence was served in solitary confinement.

Vanunu, unrepentant, told reporters: "When I'll be free to talk and move about I'll be able to speak with you. I want the court to authorise my freedom of movement and expression."



The ships of

Israel's siege of Gaza was broken in a highly successful action this summer by the Free Gaza Movement. Two wooden boats, the SS Free Gaza and SS Liberty, carrying 46 activists from 17 countries, sailed from Larnaca in Cyprus to Gaza, where they arrived on 23 August, to be greeted by thousands of cheering Gazans.

Israel's blockade of Gaza have so far caused the deaths of over 200 people who have been unable to leave for medical treatment (see *Summer issue of PN*). Hundreds of students have been refused exit visas to study abroad and shortages of food and fuel have rendered 80% of the population reliant on international food aid.

During their five-day stay the activists delivered medical supplies to a local hospital and 200 hearing aids to the Atfaluna school for the deaf; many of the children there are victims of the sonic booms of Israeli military overflights. Some of the activists visited Rafah refugee camp, bereaved families and the relatives of political prisoners.

After meeting political and community leaders, they returned to Larnaca with seven Palestinians in urgent need of medical treatment, including 16 year-old Saed Mosleh (pictured), whose leg was blown off by an Israeli tank shell three years ago. He hopes to get a prosthesis fitted in Cyprus. His father Khaled said: "This is a miracle from God."

To make room for the Palestinian patients, four of the activists,



Saed Mosleh — the chance of a new life

PHOTO: FATHI JAOUADI

including Tony Blair's sister-in-law, journalist Lauren Booth, stayed behind. They tried to get home via both Israel and Egypt but were refused exit as the authorities accused them of entering Gaza illegally. At the time of going to press three of them were still trapped, sharing the experience of the 1.5 million



Dr Akram Nasser of Al-Awda hospital with some of the medical supplies

Palestinians effectively imprisoned in the 40x10 kilometre territory.

The only Israeli on board, Professor Jeff Halper, head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, was also detained when he tried to return home through the Eretz crossing. He was accused of violating a ban on Israelis entering Gaza and spent two days at Sderot police station.

Jeff, who last visited the strip in 2000, said Gazans were eager to speak Hebrew with him: "I would do a telephone interview for the media in Hebrew and, by the end, there would be a dozen Palestinians around me who all wanted to speak to me and tell me about their friends in Tel Aviv," he said. "It was very moving. They would say, 'We're the same, why is there all this conflict between us?'" During his stay Jeff received honorary Palestinian citizenship, with a symbolic passport.

Psychological warfare

When planning the trip, the Free Gaza Movement expected to be prevented from landing, which would draw international media attention to the reality of Israel's continuing blockade, despite their claimed "disengagement" from Gaza in 2005.

After three weeks of psychological warfare, threats and verbal and physical intimidation, however, the Israeli Foreign Ministry decided not to stop the boats – hoping no doubt to reduce the media coverage. But the Movement says that the result is that they have now set a precedent for a regular ferry service between Larnaca and Gaza.

The only Palestinian on the trip with an Occupied Territories ID was Gaza-born Musheir El-Farra, chair of Sheffield PSC. He told Palestine News that the trip was incredibly emotional and symbolic as well as seriously frightening at times: "None of us expected to get into Gaza at all. It was a real historic experience," he said.

The intimidation began with threatening phone calls to team members' families, including to Lauren Booth's husband and children who live in France. "Her eldest daughter was told her mummy would be blown up at sea," said Musheir. "Several others got calls from mobile phones in Israel saying: 'We hope you can swim because you will need to.' The Israeli press was very hostile too, calling us the 'hate ship' and likening us to Hitler's Nazi regime."

Musheir said that while they prepared the boats in Cyprus, the activists had an exchange of letters with the Israeli Foreign Ministry. "We invited the Minister, Tzipi Livni [tipped to become the next Prime Minister], to come and see the devastation in Gaza, and got a reply from the ministry saying they acknowledged our 'humanitarian mission' and



Thousands of Gazans are in Israeli jails

hope

would ensure our hearing aids got distributed. "We told them we were not on a humanitarian but a human rights mission and they replied that, since we did not accept their offer, we had 'proved you are a terrorist organisation' and they were going to 'deal with you accordingly.' Then two days before departure the Cypriot port authorities received a map showing that Israel had declared the entire Gaza territorial waters a 'closed military zone' and they planned to carry out military exercises.

"It was extremely worrying and intimidating. We held a meeting and announced that if anyone wanted to pull out, we would understand. But Sister Ann Montgomery, an 81-year-old nun from the US, said: 'When I joined, I was thinking of the people of Gaza, not of myself,' and the vote to go was unanimous. It was such a historic moment of sheer determination. They had tried everything to intimidate us and it didn't work."

The inside story

Musheir said: "The Cypriot authorities were brilliant. They refused to bow to pressure from Israel and said that, as we had the right papers, we were free to go. We slept on the boats to guard them from being sabotaged and the next morning we all wept and hugged each other before we set sail."

The 240 mile trip in 20-metre fishing boats was "a real physical nightmare" compounded by acute fear as they were shadowed by two Israeli navy vessels, said Musheir. But just as they were entering Gazan waters, they heard the Israeli Foreign Minister had given permission to enter. "Suddenly our exhaustion and seasickness were transformed to jubilation and we were jumping, hugging, kissing, crying and singing. I lost it completely and started shouting my head off: 'Gaza, we are coming!'"

"For me, it was not just a human rights issue but a deeply personal one. Last year my beloved mother, Leila, was told she had severe internal bleeding and was dying in the hospital in which I was born. She died on 19 July and I could not get permission from the Israelis to be at her side."

Musheir stood for hours at the rail of the Free Gaza, scanning the horizon for land. "When Gaza started to appear, I was ecstatic and the scenes of jubilation in the harbour were extraordinary. About 20 boats loaded with dozens of cheering people came out to meet us. People were singing, chanting, jumping in the water. It seemed like



One of the damaged fishing boats



A jubilant welcome

half the population of Gaza came to welcome us and there was a wonderful feeling of freedom for everyone. We had proved that sheer determination can challenge even a massive power like Israel."

Musheir said: "It is such a simple thing to go to the place you were born and to leave again without suffering the humiliation of asking permission from an occupying force, but it was the first time in my 47 years of life that I had done it." He was at last able to visit his mother's grave: "I found myself saying out loud: 'Mother, I am here *despite* the Israelis and *without* their permission.' I felt great about it."

In the following days six activists, including Andrew Muncie from Scotland, went out with fishermen on unarmed boats in Palestinian waters, which are supposed to extend 20 nautical miles, and were fired on by Israeli Navy vessels about seven miles out.

Just the beginning

Angela Godfrey-Goldstein of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, who was one of the Movement's support crew, told Palestine News: "We scored a major success in exposing Israel's lies about Gaza and forcing them to comply with international law. They cannot keep flouting it for ever. The next boat will be full of lawyers and if the Israelis stop it, that will prove there is a blockade."

An Israeli government spokesman, Aryeh Mekel, declared the voyage would not set a precedent. "If anyone expects a regular flow of ships going back and forth, this is not going to happen," he said. But that is precisely what the activists plan, with the first boat leaving on 26 September.

Sheffield-based organiser Hilary Smith said: "The longer term plans for the Free Gaza Movement are to buy a better boat that will enable us to make the crossing all year round, and to establish a sustainable ferry service between Cyprus and the port of Gaza."

Musheir said that the trip also sent a strong message to the people of Gaza that the world had not abandoned them. "We told them that millions would join us if they could. Yet the power of the mission was not the size of the boats or the number of people in them but that we challenged the legitimacy of the occupation.

"I am proud of each and every one of the people in the Free Gaza Movement. In the hearts and minds of Palestinians everywhere, they will live for ever."

Gill Swain

If you would like to volunteer to make the crossing, or make a much-needed contribution, or simply follow the progress of the next boat trips, see www.FreeGaza.org

A summer of activism – in the UK and Palestine

Forging links — formal and informal — with Palestine and providing practical support for communities and institutions there can be one of the most rewarding forms of campaigning. Top of the list, clearly, was the dramatic breakthrough in Gaza (see pages 16-17). **Sheffield PSC** was particularly closely involved as its chair, Musheir El-Farra, was among the activists on board the boats. He and his wife, Wesam, hosted a Palestinian banquet before he set off and other fundraising activities included a basketball tournament. Members gave Musheir an official send-off and held two vigils in Sheffield city centre, drawing attention to the ongoing impact of the siege.

Hundreds of Edinburgh Festival-goers added their support when over 200 members of **Scottish PSC** took to the streets with their demand to End the Siege of Gaza. Speakers included Linda Willis who had recently returned from the Rafah border (between Egypt and Gaza) where she and her partner, Khalil Al Niss, had been trying to deliver a vanload of 1.5 tonnes of medicines to desperately needy Gazans.

The Egyptian authorities repeatedly refused entry for the supplies and the Israeli authorities declared that there was “no way the van would ever cross”. After nearly a month of waiting and countless meetings and form-filling, Khalil was forced to take the vital supplies away again and head for home. Read more at www.scottishpsc.org.uk.

In **Glasgow**, too, shoppers in the city centre were given a very eye-catching reminder of the brutal siege, while **Brighton and Hove** continued their support with their monthly stall at the local Fair Trade and Farmers’ Market, where produce from Gaza, including embroidery and pottery from Atfaluna, Gaza’s School for the Deaf, is on sale, as well as Zaytoun olive oil, olives and za’tar.

Links with the West Bank

Many groups have also been active this summer, visiting the West Bank, receiving visitors, and fund-raising. Tessa Grafen and Lauren Carter from **Oxford** report that when they mentioned they were going to Palestine their friends’ responses ranged from “Where is that?” to “You’re going to get shot!” But once in Ramallah, they found that “They were the most fun, friendly and resilient people we have ever met and the whole group want to return.”

Fourteen members of the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Association (ORFA) visited the Al-Amari camp in the city. They donated two video



Princes Street, Edinburgh



Glasgow city centre

cameras to the community centre and gave video training workshops to women and young people.

The group were shocked when they were prevented from visiting the Dead Sea by an Israeli soldier only because “you are with Palestinians.” When they asked why the Palestinians weren’t allowed they were told “because it’s the rule,” and “because Palestinians steal things at the weekends.” For further information see: www.oxford-ramallah.org.

Members of **Leicester** branch and Leicester Friends of Bethlehem visited Palestine to continue working on a formal link between the two cities. Visits were made to the Ghirass Centre and to the Lajee Centre in Aida refugee camp to strengthen relationships already formed when Bethlehemites came to Leicester.

Bristol enjoys a rewarding link with the Permaculture Farm in



Oxford activists take a break near Jericho

Marda. A number of members will be visiting during the olive harvest and will be taking laptops, money and books donated during a recent appeal.

An informal link has been agreed between the village of Bil'in and **Liverpool** Friends of Palestine in conjunction with Merseyside Jews for Justice and Peace. The launch public meeting with Bil'in activists Iyad Bornat and George Rishmawi as guest speakers, raised £325. A small delegation will visit the village in November, to assess how linking can best serve the cause.

The **Brighton** Tubas Friendship and Solidarity group held a public meeting about ethnic cleansing when the audience heard eyewitness accounts from the April delegation to Tubas and the Jordan Valley and the latest news on four villages threatened with demolition.

Another delegation from the branch plans a visit in October. Meanwhile some Palestinians came the other way — such as Fathy Khdirat, coordinator of the **Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign** (see their website, www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org, for latest news of the communities under threat).

A highlight of **Birmingham's** autumn programme was the visit by Professor As'ad Abdul Rahman. As an Executive Member of the PLO and Minister of Palestinian Expatriates and Diaspora, as well as a distinguished academic and writer, he was well placed to give an incisive analysis of the internal politics of Israel and Palestine and how these influence the Palestinian cause.

Bucks and Berks PSC continued to run their fund-raising stalls through its twinning group, 'Friends of Wadi Fuqeen', in support of the small village near Bethlehem, increasingly cut off by the Wall and settlements. For more information about Wadi Fuqeen and a variety of twinning initiatives see www.twinningwithpalestine.net.

BIG is for Boycott

With the relaunch of the PSC's BIG — Boycott Israeli Goods — Campaign (see page 21), many branches like **Lambeth and Wandsworth** have been contacting local supermarkets and publicizing the issue locally.

Israeli dates are now in most supermarkets and **Bristol** branch has produced a flier to distribute — see www.inminds.co.uk/boycott-israeli-dates.php. New members can join the automatic emailing system for news, discussions, minutes, and a daily news service.

Scottish PSC is organizing a number of meetings and a conference later this year involving trade unionists to discuss trade union solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinians' own call for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Another approach to boycott was taken in **Liverpool**, where



Dear Tigers... Say NO to Caterpillar!

members wrote to Paul McCartney appealing to him either to cancel his planned concert in Israel or use the opportunity to highlight Israeli injustices to the Palestinians.

Members of **Brighton and Hove** used a simple but very effective way to get the boycott message across when they held a "protest shop" in Waitrose, in which they loaded their trolleys with Israeli goods, then explained very politely to the manager why they were not going to buy them.

The **Leicester Campaign to End the Sponsorship Deal** between Leicester Tigers Rugby Club and Caterpillar (a company deeply involved in the physical destruction of Palestinian land and homes), kicked off with a public meeting and leafleting of the Welford Road Ground. The deal means that one of England's best rugby teams have the Caterpillar logo emblazoned across their strip.

Working at the macro end of the BDS campaign, both **York PSC** and **Liverpool** Friends of Palestine Euro-Group are researching EU aspects of the Palestine/Israel situation and writing letters to MEPs and Commissioners. Liverpool members met ex-MEP Terence Wynn, who had co-chaired the EU group investigating the use of EU funding by the Palestinians, and contacted their own Lib Dem MEP, Chris Davies, who has arranged meetings for them in Brussels in October with a range of top officials.

They hope to publish a report of their visit and make it available through PSC. They have linked up with the newly-formed PSC working group on the EU Trading Agreement with Israel and will be available to speak about EU issues to other groups.

A high priority for **Birmingham** this autumn is to form alliances with local student groups and to involve them in the BIG campaign; a special focus there will be opposition to the expansion of the EU-Israel agreement.

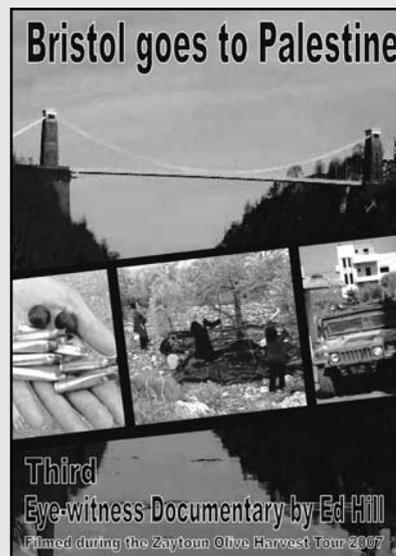
Speaking out for Palestine

Holocaust survivor Hedy Epstein will be on a speaking tour in the UK and Ireland from October 6 to 20 and will be appearing at several PSC events.

Hedy, aged 84 was in Cyprus with the Free Gaza Movement but on medical advice did not sail to Gaza. She escaped from Germany to England in 1939 on the children's transport and never saw her family

'Bristol goes to Palestine'

Ed Hill's third eye-witness film from the West Bank tells the story of ten people from the Bristol area who went to Palestine to help with the olive harvest during the autumn of 2007. It recounts their experiences, from the hospitality of the local farmers to the injustices of the Israeli occupation throughout the West Bank. Powerful interviews with Palestinian legal workers, international peace activists, and Israeli human rights campaigners reveal the truth of what is happening in Palestine — so often concealed by our politicians and mainstream media. Excellent campaigning material! Go to www.BristolComputers4Palestine.co.uk for more information.



again. After the war she worked for human rights causes and got involved in the fight for justice for Palestine in 2003.

Edinburgh Scottish PSC and Scottish Jews for a Just Peace will be her first hosts on October 6, followed by **Glasgow** on October 7 and Edinburgh again on October 8.

Later in the month Hedy will be speaking in **Bristol, Liverpool, Lambeth** and **Wandsworth** and **Sheffield**. For details, see her website: www.hedypstein.com.



Liverpool at the Arabic Arts Festival

Reaching out

York PSC, has, as usual, been tremendously active in extending their local network. Apart from their weekly stall in the city centre – a crucial way of spreading the message and a vital source of income – they have also staffed PSC stalls at the national Methodist Conference (see page 21), the Leeds Methodist District Synod, for which they provided a speaker, and also at a regional Labour Party Conference.

York PSC members have also given talks and organised film showings (e.g. The Iron Wall) to various community groups, including the national Methodist Peace Fellowship, a local Catholic Church and local Peace and Justice Groups.

Central to their work is the lobbying and education of prominent local people including MPs, MEPs, Council leaders, Trade Unions, Church leaders and local actors. They find it very effective to send them copies of Palestine News to inform them of the work of PSC and the situation in Palestine.

York have so far collected around 1000 signatures for the 'York Declaration' petition, which calls on the international community to act urgently to end the appalling injustice suffered by the Palestinian people (see www.yorkpsc.org uk for details) – to be submitted to the European Union.

Liverpool also reached new audiences with their stall at the local Arabic Arts Festival (pictured), as well as providing 'A Taste of Palestine' at the Al Ghazali Centre, with food, music and poetry (broadcast on Radio Merseyside) and taking part in the CND Peace Festival in July.

Not all hard graft...

Camden PSC plan to laugh for the cause on October 26, when they have secured comic actor Alexei Sayle as compere of their third annual **Palestine Solidarity Festival**. Poet Adrian Mitchell reading poetry and Ghada Karmi speaking as a 1948 refugee from Jerusalem, plus music, a photographic exhibition and Palestinian cuisine should make this an unmissable experience.

In one of the wettest summers on record, six comrades from the **Newcastle-Upon-Tyne** branch bravely packed their Wellington boots and trudged off to represent PSC at the Glastonbury Festival.



Rachel Corrie – remembered in Rafah

This summer the people of Rafah in Gaza launched an appeal and raised \$6000 in support of an annual football tournament, in memory of the American human rights worker crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer in 2003. It is supported by the people of Rachel's home town of Olympia, Washington.

Play took place during Ramadan on a dusty pitch cleared of rubble for the occasion. Fresh sand was spread before each match, as some of the young players went barefoot.

Organiser Khaled Nasrallah said: "This tournament provides a place for all people – especially the heavily affected youth population in Rafah – to participate as Palestinians. It is truly a place to re-establish community."

For photos and results go to palestinereview.org.
To contribute contact John_Harvery@Comcast.net.

Making a tremendous sacrifice for the cause, they volunteered to work behind one of the many bars managed by the Workers Beer Company, an organization which raises funds for grass roots political and charitable organisations.

In return for five hours hard slog a day they received wages which they donated to PSC, plus free camping, food and beer and entry to the festival. The experience gave them a sense of empowerment, they say, and next year they hope to return with even more volunteers from PSC. Form an orderly queue!



Here for the beer — and Palestine

Boycott takes off

In the third week of September PSC supporters all around the country, in more than 20 towns, exercised their imaginations to create eye-catching Boycott Israeli Goods (BIG) demonstrations. Activists dressed as Jaffa oranges, avocados, bunches of herbs and dates, and in York a highly visible — and vocal — motorcade circulated between supermarkets.

All this was part of the **Week of BIG Action** which marks the current relaunch of PSC's Boycott Divestment and Sanctions campaign. In the month of Ramadan, and also looking forward to Christmas, the slogans are 'Boycott Israeli dates', and – given that many dates in the supermarkets are illegally exported by Israel from its illegal West Bank settlements – 'Ban Israeli Settlement Produce'.

Letters of protest have been dispatched to supermarket HQs and local branches, the national and local press, and to relevant government departments: the Foreign Office, Berr (Dept for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform) and Defra (Environment, Food & Rural Affairs). A letter to the latter says 'If the settlements are illegal under international law, as stated by the Foreign Secretary, then it must be illegal for Israel to export produce from the settlements, *whatever label they are exported under* and the Defra statement on its website should make this clear'.



The ground is prepared for the Veolia tramway

ANNE PAQUIER, ACTIVISTILLS.ORG

Other action areas include: complicit firms (such as Agrexco and Veolia), the EU, academic boycott, divestment from shares and pension funds, and work with students, trade unions and faith groups, all of which will grow through the year.

Following the outrageous decision by the EU to propose an upgrading of its Association Agreement with Israel, with extra funding to cover academic contacts and cultural links, protests to MEPs and MPs and deputations to Brussels are being urgently stepped up. The enhanced benefits are proposed even though Israel is already blatantly contravening the human rights conditions attached to its current Agreement.

Because of Veolia Transport's participation in building the Jerusalem tramway, the whole of the Veolia group is implicated in facilitating Israel's violations of Articles 49 and 53 of the 4th Geneva Convention, which amount to war crimes. Under British regulatory laws, this means Veolia could, potentially, be excluded from projects in Britain. A good many local PSC branches are busy collecting information on local Veolia transport and waste projects, to assess the scope for such challenges.

News of progress on the whole Relaunch Campaign is available on www.bigcampaign.org, and will be discussed alongside plans for the rest of the year at the 2nd PSC BDS workshop in **York** on **22/23 November**. Phone PSC, write to PSC Admin, or email Steve Sibley at psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org if you would like details of the workshop.

Zoe Mars



Tourists in Holborn get involved with a Jaffa orange

Methodists support Palestine

Many will remember the decision of the 2006 Methodist Conference, meeting in Edinburgh, to institute an ethical investment policy towards companies that profit from the Occupation. The Conference that year asked the Church's "Joint Advisory Committee on the Ethics of Investment" to identify the key concerns that would inform such a policy, one which would begin with "constructive engagement" but which could lead to "selective disinvestment". In other words, if the Church had a problem with a company's activities in Palestine, they would first discuss it with them, but if their concerns were ignored, the Church would disinvest.

In 2007 several Ethics Committee members visited Palestine on a fact-finding mission and reported to Conference on some of the specific concerns – issues that include "contracts for the supply of materials or other activities related to the construction of the separation barrier" and the "manufacture of goods/produce within Israeli administered areas of the Occupied Territories or the sale of such items".

Last year, as well as confirming this ethical investment policy, similar to those of other Churches, such as the US Presbyterian Church, the Conference passed a motion unanimously, calling on Israel to desist from its illegal practices of settlement, Apartheid Wall construction and house demolitions in the Occupied Territories.

At Scarborough this year's Conference, strongly supported by the nearby York PSC branch, again unanimously adopted a motion which

this time focused on the situation in Gaza. They called on Israel to end its blockade, and on the UK and the EU to "exert even greater pressure on the Government of Israel to open its crossings into Gaza."

Stephen Leah

The full text of the Motion can be read at www.methodistconference.org.uk.

Congratulations to More 4

News on their investigative journalism! On 12 July they carried a long report on 'The politics of shopping', showing how British supermarkets are selling goods produced in the illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories labelled as "West Bank" products. Misleadingly, for many consumers the label implies that these goods were produced by Palestinian farmers. Moreover, the report shows that a packing shed in the West Bank is using crates clearly labelled 'Produce of Israel'. Caroline Lucas, now leader of the Green Party, speaks out strongly and the FCO is put on the spot. View on <http://tinyurl.com/69debs>.

The art of lobbying

This year's lobby of Parliament, on 19 November, is taking place at a critical time. An increasing number of MPs are expressing their concerns over British government policy on Palestine. But many are still not familiar with even the basic facts on key issues like the Wall, the growth of settlements, the number of civilian deaths and political prisoners held without trial, and so on. So it is important to go armed with plenty of information in the form of maps and fact sheets – available in advance or on the day.

As this year's lobby is taking place at the end of the 2007-2008 parliamentary session, we will be asking MPs to support the existing parliamentary Early Day Motions on Palestine – open statements to the government that MPs sign to voice their concerns. EDMs are only active for the current parliamentary year they are tabled, but it will be important to raise with MPs the question of support for new EDMs on Palestine, which will undoubtedly be tabled at the beginning of the 2008-2009 session in December.

Some of the key EDMs that have been tabled in this parliamentary session are listed below. (You can check on the full text of the current EDMs, and the MPs who have signed up, at <http://edmi.parliament.uk>.)

- An EDM tabled by Richard Burden MP marked the 60th anniversary of the Nakba, regretting “that 60 years after 1948 there are still over four million UN-registered Palestinian refugees, in addition to those who were unable to register with the UN, who have yet to have their rights upheld ... and have yet to receive acknowledgment of the injustice that they suffered”.
- The horrific humanitarian disaster in Gaza has generated a number of EDMs, including one by Andy Love MP, who called the Israeli government's measures “wholly unacceptable and tantamount to collective punishment and a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention”. At the beginning of March, Richard Burden MP expressed his revulsion at the “mounting death toll in Gaza caused by Israeli military strikes” which killed 108 Palestinians in the six days between 27 February and 3 March.

PSC at the party conferences

The PSC organised successful fringe meetings at both the Labour Party conference and the Green conference this autumn. At the Green Party conference, the meeting, chaired by Caroline Lucas MEP, now leader of the Green Party, stimulated a very lively debate. Joseph Healy, chair of the Green Party International Committee spoke of the parallels between Ireland and Palestine and the need to negotiate a just and peaceful solution. Sarah Colborne, PSC chair, referred to Israel's environmental destruction in Palestine and welcomed Caroline Lucas' strong stance in the European Parliament. A special PSC fact sheet detailing how the Israeli occupation is creating environmental destruction in Palestine was warmly received.

The PSC banner and huge flag were present at the demonstration on 20 September, organised by CND, Stop the War Coalition and BMI, at the start of Labour Party conference. A packed fringe meeting was also held with Richard Burden MP, Gerald Kaufman MP, Prof Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian General Delegate and Ismail Patel from Friends of Al Aqsa all speaking to Labour Party delegates. Hugh Lanning, Deputy General Secretary of the PCS union, chaired the meeting.

- Jeremy Corbyn MP raised Israel's extrajudicial killing operations, which have killed at least 612 Palestinians since September 2000, and called for action to ensure Israel ceases these killings “which have become symbolic of its disregard for international law in Articles 6 and 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”. Richard Burden MP also tabled an EDM on Israeli settlements, noting that despite their illegality, “the Israeli settler population in the West Bank has grown steadily by around 5.5 per cent each year to a total of 450,000”.

Other issues raised via EDMs are the denial of the right to education of students trapped in Gaza, tabled by Brian Iddon, and the continuing imprisonment of Mordechai Vanunu, tabled by John Barrett, while Phyllis Starkey's Motion criticised Israel's continuing detention without trial of Palestinian Legislative Council members.

MPs should also be encouraged to attend some of the many briefing meetings which take place in Parliament, when visiting Palestinians report directly on the situation as they experience it. One such meeting took place earlier this summer with journalist Mohammed Omer.

Following his briefing on the Gaza Strip, as Colin Breed MP pointed out in his EDM, “Mohammed Omer attempted to re-enter the Occupied Territories via the Allenby Bridge and was interrogated at the crossing, strip-searched at gunpoint and beaten for four hours resulting in hospitalisation after he lost consciousness”. Such personal encounters really drive home the reality of the Occupation.

Of course nothing beats the direct experience of visiting Palestine. Your MP should be encouraged to take part in a parliamentary delegation to the region – or simply visit in a personal capacity.



MPs Sarah Teather and Clare Short at the press conference of the Free Gaza campaign in August.

In the European Parliament

The work carried out by local groups and individuals in building links with their MEPs is really paying off, in terms of increasing the support for Palestine at a European level.

On 4 September, the European Parliament passed a resolution, with a majority of 416 votes to 136 and 61 abstentions, calling for “a substantial release of Palestinian prisoners”, and pointing out that this, “as well as the immediate release of the 48 imprisoned members of the Palestinian Legislative Council including Marwan Barghouti, could serve as a positive step to establish the climate of mutual trust needed to make progress in the peace negotiations”. It also criticised the conditions prisoners are kept in by Israel.

In addition, the motion called for human rights to be taken into consideration in the context of upgrading relations between the EU and Israel, and to consider linking those relations to Israel's respect for international law.

Sarah Colborne

• campus watch

UK Students active for Palestine

Students on campuses across the country are planning for an active year, building solidarity with the Palestinians. There are exciting opportunities for real progress in the student movement this year, prompted by recent national successes. The NUS last year gave its support to a Palestinian for the very first time when it backed Khaled Al Mudallal, a Palestinian student trapped in Gaza and now back studying in Bradford, after a strong campaign on his behalf by UK students.

Gisha, an Israeli organisation aimed at protecting Palestinian freedom of movement, reported earlier this summer: "There are hundreds of students in the Gaza Strip who were accepted by universities abroad and have valid visas. Israel issues a comprehensive ban on students from Gaza going abroad, as part of its policy of collective punishment toward Gaza residents, thereby impinging on the right to education of hundreds of talented young people who want to study, develop and create a better future in our region."

Khaled is spearheading a campaign to raise awareness among students here in Britain about the plight of these students. A 'Let Palestinians Study' speaker tour is taking place in campuses across the country in October and November. Also, campaigners are aiming to use the United Nations Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people at the end of November, as well as PSC's national lobby of Parliament, to change students' perceptions about the occupation of Palestine and help build a dynamic solidarity movement among students. See www.letpalsstudy.org.uk for more details.

Available campaigning materials include a new PSC Right to Education briefing, a student newsletter, Let Palestinians Study petitions and more. To get involved in PSC's student activities, or to get in touch with active students in your local area, email students@palestinecampaign.org.

SPECIAL STUDENT OFFER:

For a limited period, students joining PSC will receive a free kefiyah scarf and DVD. Please contact the PSC office for more details.

Scant Israeli support for Palestinian rights

Earlier this year four Israeli academics wrote to 9000 of their colleagues asking them to sign a petition in support of academic freedom for Palestinian staff and students. In their covering letter they wrote: "As academics and citizens of the State of Israel, whatever our political opinions may be, we see ourselves as having a duty to fight for the academic freedom of our Palestinian colleagues."

The petition read:

We, past and present members of academic staff of Israeli universities, express great concern regarding the ongoing deterioration of the system of higher education in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. We protest against the policy of our government which is causing restrictions of freedom of movement, study and instruction, and we call upon the government to allow students and lecturers free access to all the campuses in the Territories, and to allow lecturers and students who hold foreign passports to teach and study without being threatened with withdrawal of residence visas. To leave the situation as it is will cause serious harm to freedom of movement, study and instruction – harm to the foundation of academic freedom, to which we are committed.

(For more details see [//academic-access.weebly.com](http://academic-access.weebly.com))

Of the 9000 staff emailed only 407 signed the petition.

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel

(www.pacbi.org) commented:

"The vast majority of the Israeli academic community are oblivious to the oppression of the Palestinian people — both inside Israel and in the occupied territory — and have never fought to oppose the practices and policies of their state. In fact, they duly serve in the reserve forces of the occupation army and as such are either perpetrators of or silent witnesses to the daily brutality of the occupation. They also do not hesitate to partner in their academic research with the security-military establishment that is the chief architect and executor of the occupation and other forms of oppression of the Palestinian people."



Omar Qassis, held in 'administrative detention'

In the West Bank, Birzeit University continue to campaign on behalf of hundreds of students imprisoned by the Israeli regime because they are politically active (see [//right2edu.birzeit.edu](http://right2edu.birzeit.edu)).

Spotlight on Bar-Ilan

The Israeli University of Bar-Ilan, recently 'grey-listed' by the British university union, the UCU (see Summer issue of PN), due to its ties with the "Academic College of Judea and Samaria" in the illegal settlement of Ariel in the West Bank, has again been the centre of controversy.

Bricup – the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine – has recently taken up the case of Manachem Klein, a Senior Lecturer in the University's Department of Political Science and generally considered to be one of the top specialists in the history and status of Jerusalem (see his book, 'Jerusalem the contested city', 2001). Klein has repeatedly been sidelined by his university.

He said: "In Bar Ilan University there is a centre for Jerusalem Studies but I have never been invited to lecture there. The ruling authorities are willing to accept a leftist only if he or she does not express his or her views in public or give TV interviews."

Dr. Klein has recently been refused promotion precisely because he does speak out (see Bricup's current newsletter online – www.bricup.org.uk – for details).

Perhaps Klein will follow the lead of other Israeli academics who have found it impossible to work freely in their own country, such as the late Tanya Reinhart who left for the US, and PSC Patron Ilan Pappé, now teaching in the University of Exeter.

The reality of the Occupation — and settler ‘hospitality’

In June, PSC’s second trade union delegation to Palestine visited the Occupied Territories and Israel, to find out about the occupation. They all returned fully committed to working for justice for the Palestinians.

“Throughout the week we visited refugee camps, trade unionists, human rights organisations and campaigners working for the rights of Palestinians inside both the OPTs and in Israel. What I saw are a people who are being systematically displaced, in some cases by force, and in others through economic starvation. I was struck by the fact that while Palestinians blamed Israel and Zionism for their situation, none that I met expressed any anti-Semitic views.

My overwhelming feeling at the end of the delegation was anger. Anger at what the Israeli government is doing to a people I found to be compassionate, friendly and extremely generous. These people are not terrorists, they are not fundamentalists, they are mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers – and they are desperate to be allowed to live in peace.”

John McGhee FBU

“The most harrowing account of treatment at a checkpoint was from a lecturer taking his class through a checkpoint. The young soldiers may have been bored; they decided that the lecturer had to strip before they would let him cross. They did not take him to a private room, he was told to remove his clothing in the presence of his students, some of whom were young girls. He refused to do so, saying he would rather not cross. He was then held at gunpoint and told he could not return until he removed his clothing. So he stripped while the soldiers jeered and mocked him. His students faced with this embarrassing incident all turned their backs to enable their teacher to hold some little bit of dignity.

Freedom of movement and the right to dignity are rights I cherish; Palestinians should have those rights too.”

**Karen Mitchell,
Thompson’s Solicitors**

“After a legal campaign in Jayyous, a new plan to reroute the ‘separation barrier’ has just been released which would return about a quarter of the farmers’ land – but remove the gates completely, leaving no access at all to the other 1500 acres of land. This land would be annexed and deemed Israeli state property in three years’ time. In other words, stolen.

The day before our visit the European Union voted unanimously to upgrade its relations with Israel, with the UK a key supporter. Meeting the Palestinian farmers, I feel ashamed to be British and party to such hypocrisy and callous disregard. When crimes like these receive support rather than condemnation it undermines peace, security and justice for us all.”

Dave Chappell, FBU



Members of the delegation with Palestinian firefighters in Ramallah

“In Hebron, suddenly, from different directions, settlers arrive in cars and surround us: one is identified as a much convicted extremist. This is hugely intimidating: they have guns, mobile phones and video cameras. We film them filming us. They hurl verbal abuse and try to harass us off of our path. We try to walk on. More settlers and police arrive. We ask why we cannot walk here but the police tell us to leave. We walk back to our minibus escorted by police and followed by settlers’ cars.

Palestinians cannot drive or walk on the street where we

were; if they still live on the street they have to come and go through the backs of their houses. The Israeli High Court has declared the road to be a free and public road on which anyone could walk, but the reality is that settlers control it. This means that we — an Israeli army officer and UK passport holders there with the agreement of the army — are thrown out.”

**David Thompson,
Thompson’s Solicitors**



A Jayyous farmer on land already dynamited by the IDF

“A crime as extensive and vile as the one being inflicted on occupied Palestine by the Israeli government is not possible unless the US has agreed it can happen; and international lawlessness, or the view that there is one law for us, another for the rest, is at the bottom of it.”

**Lawrence Lumsden,
Thompson’s Solicitors**



PHOTO: NASSER SHYOUKHI

Settlers in Hebron harass Palestinians – and visitors – with impunity

“We saw shocking images in the refugee camps in Bethlehem and Nablus, where thousands of families are packed together in conditions totally unsuited for human occupation. As a firefighter I could only imagine the horror of a property fire in these conditions. As a firefighter I also watched aghast as a fire engine, responding to an emergency call, was stopped and delayed at

one of the checkpoints. When I met firefighters in Nablus the following day they shrugged their shoulders and told me this is not uncommon, nor is it uncommon for one of these vehicles to be detained for up to an hour. Slightly less common, although no less real, were the bullet holes in the fire engines — and those in the firefighters — received when attempting to deliver water to the local hospital.”

Kevin Brown FBU

“I know the figures for Israeli settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. There are some 282,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and 200,000 in annexed East Jerusalem — and increasing year on year. But these are merely facts and figures. Here, staring me in the face, was the day to day reality of Israeli settlers harassing and intimidating Palestinians from their homes. There are 600 settlers amongst 30,000 Palestinians in the Old City and standing on the roof of a Palestinian home the evidence stared us in the face — dozens of Israeli flags fluttering on the rooftops of Palestinian homes. It was staggering.”

Mandy Turner, UCU

A full report of the visit can be seen on www.palestinecampaign.org or obtained from the PSC office.

Palestine at the TUC

Over 100 delegates attended the PSC fringe meeting at the TUC in Brighton on 9 September.

Fathi Naser, Legal Adviser to the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions reaffirmed that the PGFTU supported the idea of targeted boycotts, to expose the nature of the occupation by focusing for example “(on) companies directly involved in building settlements and the apartheid wall”. This view, expressed on a number of occasions to British trade unionists who have visited the PGFTU headquarters in Nablus, coupled with the call for an end to the arms trade, represents a basis on which to develop solidarity work with trade unionists in Britain.

Professor Manuel Hassassian, the Palestine Delegate to the UK, said that, given the demise of Olmert and the vulnerability of the Knesset coalition, the current negotiations looked set for difficulties, with no available ‘partner for peace’.

The meeting heard powerful calls for solidarity from **Tony Woodley**, Joint general Secretary of UNITE (2 million members), who pledged his union’s commitment to strive for justice for the Palestinian people. Also on the platform was **Christine Blower**, Acting General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers, who talked about the work of the NUT in supporting the educational initiatives of Jocelyn Hurndall (a NUT member), in memory of her son Tom who was murdered by the Israeli army.



From R to L: Tony Woodley, Joint General Secretary of UNITE, Hugh Lanning of the PCSU and Professor Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian Delegate to the UK

John McGhee (Fire Brigades Union) and **Linda Newman** (University and College Union) gave powerful personal testimonies resulting from their participation in PSC organised trade union delegations (see above). Both expressed their resolve to work inside their unions and the wider movement to win support for the Palestinian cause.

Keith Sonnett, Deputy General Secretary of UNISON and **Owen Tudor** (TUC) spoke about a range of ongoing Palestine-related initiatives which the trade union movement is committed to.

Hugh Lanning, Deputy General Secretary of the Public and Commercial Services Union and a PSC Executive member, who chaired the meeting, drew attention to the recent Histadrut/PGFTU agreement, which committed the Histadrut to returning the money (estimated at £2million) that they have owed the PGFTU since the mid-1990s. He called for intensified solidarity with the Palestinian people and encouraged everyone who was present to get their unions nationally and locally to affiliate to the PSC and to join as individuals.

In memoriam

The death of Mahmoud Darwish on 9 August brought forth an astounding outpouring of grief and heartfelt tributes from every corner of the Arab world. These stemmed not just from recognition of his work, judged by many as some of the greatest in the Arabic language, but as also from a recognition of his role as a fearless speaker of truth to power, in a world where corrupt power often appears to reign supreme.

Darwish was born in 1942 in the village of al-Birweh in the Galilee, which was razed to the ground by the Israelis in 1948. Although he had Israeli citizenship, and joined the Israeli Communist party in his youth, the regime could not tolerate for long this outspoken young writer. He was put under house arrest and his poetry was banned.

Darwish later worked in Cairo, Beirut and Paris, remaining in



PHOTO: ISABELLE HUMPHRIES

Mahmoud Darwish could not be buried in his home village in Galilee, but amid the ruins his picture was hung on cactuses, symbols of patience and endurance, and his poems were read aloud in a symbolic funeral service.

Lebanon during the years of civil war, when he wrote one of his best known poems, "Ahmad al-Za'tar", about the fall of Tall al-Za'tar refugee camp. Like many of his poems, this was set to music, in this case by both Marcel Khalifeh and Ziyad Rahbani.

Darwish eventually returned to Palestine in 1996. His relationship with the Palestinian leadership was turbulent, and he was deeply critical of the Oslo 'Peace Process' and subsequent Accords. His famous poem, "In

Praise of the High Shadow", speaks of the cowardice and empty rhetoric of all Arab rulers.

Darwish became a cultural icon in the Middle East, filling football stadiums with his public poetry readings. But he refused to 'play to the gallery' and pander to popular taste, remaining to the end an intensely private and independent man.

The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti wrote in his tribute to Darwish: "This man's poetry has changed the language of Arabic writing and shifted readers' conceptions of resistance poetry. The drums receded to give way to the harp and the flute. Single-coloured khaki poems full of slogans gave way to rainbow-intertwined shades."

- Darwish published around 30 collections of poetry and prose, which have been translated into 35 languages. He was founder and editor of the prestigious literary review *Al Karmel* and in 2000 he published "Jidariyya" (Mural) a book consisting of one long poem about his near-death experience in 1997, subsequently the inspiration for a play (see page 27).

In 1997 a documentary was produced about him by French TV directed by the French director Simone Bitton.

Visit mahmouddarwish.com/english for more about his life and work – and to hear him reading his poetry.



PHOTO: HAITHAM MOUSSAWI

Murdered Houses

"In one minute the lifetime of a house is ended. When a house is killed, it is a serial killing, even if the house is empty: a mass grave of all the things once used to give a home to Meaning, or, in times of war, to a marginal poem.

A slaughtered house is the severing of things from what they meant, from the feelings they inspired. It's the duty of tragedy to change the gaze of eloquence and to reflect upon the life of Things, for in everything there's a being that suffers: a memory of fingers, a memory of a smell, a memory of a picture.

Houses are murdered just as their inhabitants are killed and the memories of things are slaughtered: stones, wood, glass, iron, mortar — scattered like human limbs. Cotton silk, linen, exercise books, books — torn apart like the unsaid words of people who did not have the time to say them. Dishes broken, spoons, toys, old records, pipes, doorknobs, the refrigerator, the washing machine, pots, jars of olives and pickles, cars — all broken, like their owners. The two whites — sugar and salt — are trod upon along with matchboxes, medicines, birth control pills, steroids, strings of garlic and onions, dried okra, tomatoes, rice and lentils — all are trod upon as are their owners.

Land-deeds and marriage certificates torn apart with birth papers, water and electricity bills, identity cards, passports, love letters — torn apart like the hearts of their owners.

Photographs are swept away with combs, make-up, brushes, shoes, lingerie, sheets, towels, swept away like family secrets betrayed to others and to devastation. All these things are the memories of people deprived of things, and the memory of things deprived of people Everything ends in one minute. Things die like we do, but they are not buried with us. "

Much of Darwish's work, both poetry and prose, was directly inspired by the sufferings of the Palestinian people. In this piece of poetic prose he reflects on the horror of house demolitions – the form of collective punishment most favoured by the Israeli regime.

Palestine comes to Edinburgh

A moving new production by the Palestinian National Theatre, based on a work by the revered poet Mahmoud Darwish, led an impressive Palestinian contribution to Edinburgh's various cultural festivals this year.

Set in a hospital ward where the poet hovers between life and death reflecting on his life, 'Jidariyya' was doubly poignant as it opened the day after the funeral of Mr Darwish, who died on August 9 (see page).

Adapted by Khalifa Natour, the play was performed in Arabic with English supertitles, with Makram J. Khoury in the lead role. Stunning visual imagery, including silhouetted figures of refugees trudging up a hill with their suitcases, episodes of live music, song and the background thumping of a beating heart completed the effects.

Darwish was born in a village in Galilee which was razed to the ground when he was a child; Jidariyya is a cry against his own personal obliteration as well as that of his culture.

Hailed by critics as a "poetic and uplifting production, beautifully acted", its very inclusion in the programme of the main Edinburgh Festival was a tremendous endorsement of the work

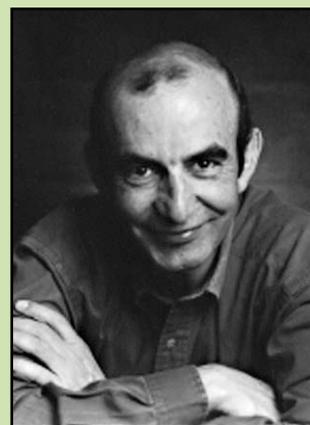
of the tiny Palestine National Theatre, which aims to show the world that there is more to modern Palestine than conflict and dispossession.

Jidariyya's director, Amir Nizar Zuabi, recently told *The Scotsman* newspaper: "The title 'the National Palestinian Theatre' is much bigger than what it really is. It's a rundown place, has hardly any finance, and, of course, theatre needs a very strong infrastructure.

"But at the same time, a lot of the theatre scene in Palestine, which is really just me and six other people, can turn that into an advantage. The theatre is very new, there isn't a strict tradition, so there's this freedom to do whatever you want. I can't imagine Jidariyya done anywhere with that big theatre structure you get in most places, because it's too wacky."

Founded in 1984, the PNT's main offices are in East Jerusalem but it has also set up a mobile programme which takes theatre to the people all over the West Bank, especially to the young and to those who live in remote or disadvantaged areas. Always actively searching out new ideas, talents and modes of self-expression, PNT has run an International Puppet Festival, organizes workshops and supports

Human rights lawyer Raja Shehadeh also gave a lecture at the Book Festival about his book "Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape," which describes, through a series of six walks taken over 26 years, the destruction of his beloved native landscape and how this mirrors Israel's attempts to undermine Palestinian identity and culture.



Raja Shehadeh

The judges of the Orwell Prize, Britain's most prestigious award for political writing (named after George Orwell) awarded in April, praised Shehadeh for the "lyrical beauty, rich detail and understated power" of his writing (see the Summer issue of *Palestine News*).

Speaking after his sell-out lecture, Shehadeh told *Palestine News* that the award had made a huge difference to him. "As a Palestinian, you start from a very low point as your image is of a terrorist and your writing is assumed to be propaganda. Winning this prize, which recognises political writing as an art form, was a wonderful endorsement for me."

Shehadeh has been coming to Edinburgh for 14 years, combining attending the festival with walking in the Highlands, and told us he has detected a significant increase in audiences' understanding of the Palestinian issue.

"This year's festivals also reflect the increased cultural activity in Palestine and its quality," he said. "If there wasn't a play like Jidariyya worthy of showing, no amount of understanding would have helped. You have to have something good enough, and it's quite astonishing how much culture is taking place in Palestine now."



Amir Nizar Zuabi's production of Darwish's 'Jidariyya'.

Occupied Space 2008

Two years ago PSC held a highly successful exhibition/sale in Mayfair, which showcased the work of both established and up-and-coming Palestinian artists, and enabled top British and international artists to show their solidarity with the Palestinian cause.

Inspired by that success, PSC have organised another exhibition, again featuring work by internationally renowned artists – such as Antony Gormley, Maggi Hambling, Mona Hatoum and Nja Mahdouai – alongside work by Palestinian artists across the generations, such as Sliman Mansour, Nabil Anani, Rula Halawani, whose work reflects the difficult situations they have experienced. Curator Nicola Gray said: “The response from artists wishing to donate their work has been resoundingly generous and positive.”

Funds raised from sales at the exhibition will go to the artists in Palestine and towards supporting PSC’s campaigning work.

The exhibition will be the first major event to take place in the Mosaic Rooms at the A M Qattan Foundation’s new



Rima Mozzayen: *Untitled*

London base, a beautifully renovated multi-purpose cultural venue in west London (Tower House, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SN).

The exhibition will open on Friday, 31 October and run until Saturday, 15 November. For further details, related events and opening times, see www.occupiedspace.org.uk.

the work of many artistic groups – all despite numerous random closures by the Israeli authorities.

Another event which attracted enormous interest was the haunting installation in the Edinburgh Art Festival, “Return of the Soul: the Nakba Project,” by Scottish artist Jane Frere, consisting of thousands of small wax figures in limbo, accompanied by eyewitness statements.

Jane spent eight months living with families in refugee camps in the West Bank, Lebanon and Jordan and setting up workshops where she trained young Palestinian artists in anatomy and costume research in order to teach them accurately to create individual figures representing their actual relatives who fled their homes in the Nakba.

She said: “Alongside this I wanted to have genuine, authoritative, and personal accounts of what happened to them in the fateful days of 1948. I also wanted to hear their voices whispering their witness around the installation.”



An installation in Jane Frere’s ‘Return of the soul’

When it was first shown in Jerusalem, the project moved many to tears. “It was genuinely shocking,” said Jane. “For the Palestinians, it represents a gaping wound that has not yet healed.” (An interview with Jane at the Jerusalem exhibition can be seen on tinyurl.com/68u5a6.)

Another small gallery showed the

Triumph at the Proms

Conductor Daniel Barenboim’s West-Eastern Diwan Orchestra, which he created in 2002 with his friend the late Edward Said, bringing together young Arab and Israeli musicians, drew loud cheers and five star reviews for their performance at this year’s BBC Proms concerts.

The prom was part of the orchestra’s annual tour and critic Hugo Shirley said the “obvious friendship” between members from different sides of the political divide was moving in itself but that the closeness between them and their conductor “made for music-making of the highest quality too.”

Barenboim has faced fierce hostility in Israel which intensified this year when he accepted honorary Palestinian citizenship in recognition of his work to promote musical education for young Palestinians, then announced that he would not be taking part in Israel’s festivities to mark 60 years since its foundation.

At the end of the concert, Barenboim briefly addressed the audience, telling them he was not interested in talking about what was wrong with the Middle East. Instead, he gestured to the young musicians and described them as “what’s right with the Middle East,” which drew the loudest cheer of the evening.

Active Stills/ICAHD photographic exhibition, Jerusalem Dispossessed, a series of powerful images of the destruction of Palestinians’ homes. Meanwhile the Edinburgh Fringe Festival hosted an award-winning solo play about a Palestinian actor, Yasser Mansour, as he prepares to go on stage to play Shakespeare’s Shylock.

Brilliantly acted by William El-Gardi, the play ranged over the past, present and future of Palestine and particularly Yasser Arafat’s attempts to give it nationhood. There were also Yasser’s agonised struggles to persuade his English girlfriend to embrace his country and his mother to understand why her son would play a Jew.

Over at the Edinburgh International Book Festival, Raja Shehadeh, author of Palestinian Walks, joined Professor Ilan Pappé and Jane Frere in a panel session discussing the issues raised by the artist’s Nakba Project.

Gill Swain

Palestinian voices

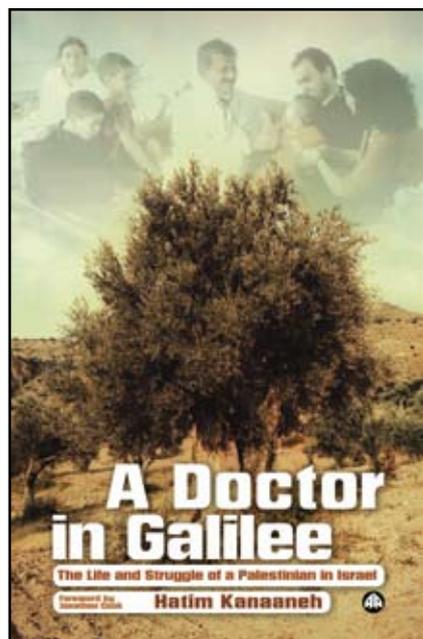
A Doctor in Galilee: The Life and Struggle of a Palestinian in Israel

Hatim Kanaaneh
Pluto Press, 2008

It is remarkable how little one hears from the 20% of Israel's citizens who are Arabs, perhaps with reason. The author, who could not get into an Israeli medical school and had to study in the USA, was at one point the only qualified Arab public health physician in Israel. He describes how, when he applied for the loan which the Jewish Agency offered returning students, he was asked to be an informer in return.

In Galilee many of his patients had lost their villages and lands in 1948, a dispossession that now framed their lives. He describes how skin infections on the faces of dirt-poor children "mocked me and my Harvard medical degrees" as he passed in his car. In 1976 only one Palestinian village in Galilee had sewage disposal, and half were without electricity. Kanaaneh also took up the plight of small communities of Bedouins in Galilee, called "unrecognised villages" by the state and targeted for elimination: no water, sewage disposal, electricity, roads, clinics, refuse collection or schools.

Kanaaneh found that Israel took the existence of Israeli Arabs into account only in the negative sense, as an obstacle to be overcome. There was little possibility of official approval for any public health



project in his area, unless it also served broader Israeli goals – like encouraging the expansion of Jewish communities in Galilee. He writes that "the whole fiasco of sanitation in Arab communities is a damning confirmation of apartheid in this country". It was lack of sanitation that explained why so many children failed to gain immunity to polio following vaccination: the vaccine did not implant in

the intestinal wall because of chronic diarrhoea.

Yet he was a government employee (though with his phone tapped by the Ministry) and he worried whether he was a sort of Uncle Tom. Individual Jewish doctors might sympathise with the plight of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, but they did not question Israeli policies and would not speak out against the Occupation. His public health duties were to both Jews and Arabs, constituencies with differing senses of entitlement; he reminded me of my time as a

government medical officer in still-colonial Rhodesia: White patients were generally far less ill than my Black patients, but tended to expect a disproportionate amount of my time.

Eventually, in 1981, he founded the Galilee Society to promote public health initiatives, subsequently subject to a Ministry of Health witch-hunt because its findings exposed the myth of equality between Jews and Arabs in the "only democracy in the Middle East". Awarded the "Ordre National De Merit" by Mitterand in France in 1993, the indefatigable Kanaaneh went on to found the first rehabilitation centre for Arab children in rural Galilee. The book also comes with plaudits from Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Ultimately, the question Kanaaneh begs is: what is "health" in the context of social injustice and hostile state systems?

Derek Summerfield

Bethlehem speaks: voices from the little town cry out

Garth Hewitt
SPCK, 2008

With his latest book Garth Hewitt allows the inhabitants of Bethlehem, a town under siege, to speak directly of their experiences, hopes and fears. The latter are numerous, as Israel continues to steal the land around Bethlehem for its illegal settlements, and to choke the economic and social life of the town with the wall and military checkpoints that surround it. Now 94% of the population is confined to 13% of the municipality, in what can only be called a ghetto. Increasingly, the largely Christian population is leaving for a better life elsewhere. As one witness puts it: "It is because Israel wants the conflict to look as if it is between Jew and Muslim, in which case it believes the West and Christians will come down on the side of the Israelis."

The sixteen voices are largely those of prominent local Christians such as Canon Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel and well known from his speaking tours of the UK, Zoughbi Zoughbi, director of the Conflict Resolution Centre in Bethlehem and Fouad Dagher, vicar of an Anglican church in Galilee. The latter speaks of the situation for Palestinians like himself, whose family survived the original Nakba of 1948 and who is now an Israeli citizen: "People have no jobs because when it comes to work we are not the first priority; we are the last priority."

Not all speak from a specifically Christian perspective. Jad Isaac, Director of the Applied Research Institute, Jerusalem, gives some chilling facts and figures about the changing landscape, economy and demography of Bethlehem. Of the wall built between Bethlehem and Jerusalem he says: "It is like separating twins... The Israeli plan for the next two years is to build a wall of settlements which goes parallel to the existing wall, totally severing any relationship between Bethlehem and Jerusalem."

Perhaps the most compelling voice is that of Jonathan Kuttub, a lawyer and human rights activist, who argues strongly against the notion that "what applies to the rest of the world does not apply here" – what he calls "the paradigm of uniqueness". He shows that the Israeli system of 'hafrada', loosely translated as 'separation', is in fact much worse than Apartheid: "Even the smallest, tiniest joke of a bantustan in South Africa was larger than the entire West Bank."

Garth himself introduces each speaker, and reflects on his own

"There was little possibility of official approval for any public health project in his area, unless it also served broader Israeli goals"

experiences, as Director of the Amos Trust, Canon of St George's Cathedral in Jerusalem and frequent visitor to Palestine.

The book ends with a variety of resource material produced by the Amos Trust, ranging from prayers, poems and meditations with a Bethlehem theme to 'alternative' carols and suggestions for practical action.

Fans of Garth as singer/songwriter will be delighted to know that he has brought out another collection of songs, 'Bethlehem, Palestine', rousing and moving by turns, and including old favourites such as 'They've cancelled Christmas in Bethlehem' and 'Candle of hope'. Together with the book, what could make a more thought-provoking gift this Christmas?

Hilary Wise

Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation

Saree Makdisi

WW Norton, 2008

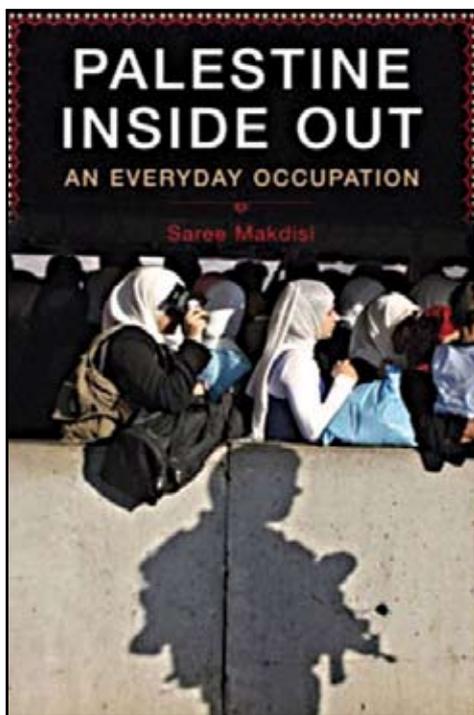
Saree Makdisi has written an accessible, and very well written, book on the Alice-in-Wonderland everyday goes-on under Israeli occupation, using his own observations and interviews with Palestinians, woven into the great mass of published material available from so many official sources.

Makdisi has used the tremendous work in recent years of UN-OCHA, the UN's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, South African lawyer John Dugard, the former UN envoy Alvaro de Soto, the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, Amnesty, the World Bank, and so many others, to tell the facts of this well known story, but with fresh eyes, and the imagination and breadth of a professor of English literature.

He writes of lives "subject to an ever-changing and unpredictable web of curfews, checkpoints, roadblocks, ditches, walls, fences, closures, whose very randomness helps keep Palestinians off-balance." He quotes Regis Debray in a report to President Jacques Chirac in 2007, on "a land carved up by military force, where the Israeli settlements are no longer shapes on a Palestinian background – instead the Palestinian areas appear as shapes on a solidly-infrastructured Israeli background."

The eight pages of excellent maps from UN-OCHA and the Foundation for Middle East Peace tell the story visually.

Makdisi, like the careful academic he is, goes on from the story told in facts and colour to his analysis and explanations. Israel, he writes, keeps up the pressure on the Palestinians, as it has for four decades, not just to maintain control but, "quite simply, because it encourages Palestinians to leave." He writes that up to October 2006 foreign consulates had received 50,000 applications from Palestinians to leave for good. Since then that trend has doubtless increased as the political crisis has deepened.



He writes well about Israel's demographic "problem" with many interesting citations from Israeli leaders over the years, concluding, "how can it keep the land that it wants, without the people that come with it; and how can it continue to claim to be the Jewish state, when half the people over whom it rules are not Jewish?"

In the final 30 pages of his book Makdisi comes to the point which readers of his columns in the Los Angeles Times will be familiar with: the end of the two-state solution. He quotes Debray's conclusion to his report, "The two state solution is already an empty phrase, belonging to the realm of 'might-have-been.'" OCHA too, in a major report in 2007 on the humanitarian impact of settlements, concluded that no matter how many tunnels and bridges might be built linking the fractured West Bank enclaves, they could "never achieve a sustainable economy" or "provide the basis for a two-state solution."

Makdisi traces how, in 2007, as the national unity government imploded under US/Israeli pressure, the proposition of a single democratic state began to gain ground in academic and other circles, notably with Adalah (Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel) publishing *The Democratic Constitution*. De Soto meanwhile was writing: "Given that a Palestinian state requires both a real government and continuous territory, and that the basis for both is being steadily undermined by Israel's own policies, Palestinians and Israeli Arabs as well as some Jews on the far left in Israel believe the only long-term way to end the conflict will be to abandon the idea of dividing the land and instead simply insist on the civil political and national rights of the two peoples, in one state." This is certainly the intellectual position of many influential Palestinians in the diaspora, though Makdisi may have overstated its support inside the OPT.

The comparisons with South Africa's civil rights struggle have, as Makdisi notes, struck fear into Israel's leaders: "If the day comes when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights (also for the Palestinians in the Territories), then, as soon as that happens, the State of Israel is finished," Ehud Olmert told Haaretz.

Before anything so dramatic happens, however, Palestinians can expect the violence of the occupation to continue for the foreseeable future, with more thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails, more children getting a worse education and health care, more acute poverty and hunger, and a steady exodus of Palestinians from the OPT as well as from the shameful half-century old camps in Lebanon in particular.

Makdisi ends sounding somewhat like his uncle, Edward Said: Israelis and Palestinians, he says, "must decide between remaining locked in a deadly struggle that neither side is in a position to win – or taking the path of peace and reconciliation. For Jewish Israelis, that would mean giving up on a dream of a state that was meant to Jewish but never really was; for Palestinians, it would mean giving up on the dream of a sovereign Palestinian state, for which they have yearned for so long."

Such conclusions will not make Makdisi popular. However, these realities, so well laid out in this book, are not the products of dreams, but of power relations.

“Makdisi traces how, as the national unity government imploded under US/Israeli pressure, the proposition of a single democratic state began to gain ground”

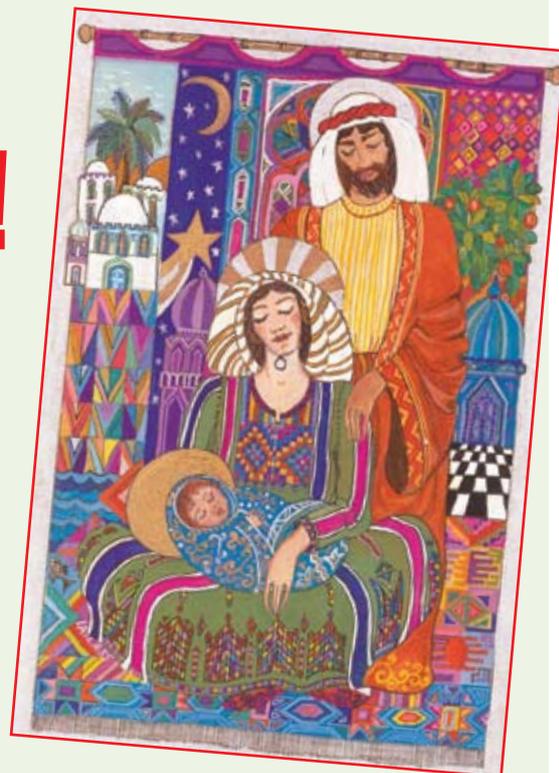
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