

# Palestine Focus

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50¢

## Editorial

### U.S. Intervention and the Peace Movement's Response

The Reagan administration's attacks on Libya drew almost universal condemnation from the American peace and social justice movement. An unusually broad range of groups sponsored, endorsed, organized, and participated in protests in dozens of cities across the United States. The barriers which had previously isolated the Middle East from the concerns of the mainstream peace movement have been effectively breached. In the face of Reagan's jingoistic campaign, this is remarkable.

There can be no avoiding the linkage between Central America, southern Africa, nuclear weapons, reductions in domestic social spending, and U.S. aggression in the Middle East after Reagan's coordinated broadside offensive. With Jonas Savimbi's red-carpet visit to Washington, the Nicaraguan contra aid campaign, the rejection of the Soviet test-ban offer, and the air raid on Libya, Reagan served notice to the world—and the U.S. peace movement—that he is no longer satisfied with strong rhetoric and wants to secure his place in history as the president who restored American gunboat diplomacy to its pre-Vietnam prominence.

In recent months a significant and timely cross-fertilization has begun to emerge in the peace movement through multi-issue protests. What had been predominantly single-focus organizations and coalitions increasingly began to address a range of issues and to participate in joint activities, including protests of U.S. attacks on Libya.

Many peace activists are discussing longer-range plans to coordinate broad responses to future emergencies. Reagan's initiatives have provoked a necessary response which needs to grow and consolidate.

As we go to press, the war propaganda machinery are grinding away at Syria. As usual, the threats are in the guise of "self-defense": Seth Carus of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Israel's registered lobby in Washington, told a Senate committee, "If there is a danger of an Arab attack, Israel will be forced to strike first." History shows that no Arab state has ever attacked Israeli territory; Israel has always been "forced to strike first." Israeli and U.S. disclaimers that the allies have no intention of attacking Syria are far from reassuring, and the next emergency could be upon us sooner rather than later.

Reagan purposely avoids or distorts the central issues in every regional conflict. In Central America, he praises the Salvadoran and Guatemalan dictatorships as "budding democracies" and attacks the Nicaraguan government as "repressive" and ignores its dedication to the welfare of the Nicaraguan people. In the Middle East, Reagan tries to bury the centrally

important issue of Palestinian rights under the rhetoric of "terrorism." Reagan avoids the real issues; the peace movement cannot afford to do so.



June 14, 1986 anti-Apartheid demonstration in New York's Central Park.

Historically, the peace movement has been reluctant to approach the difficult issue of Israeli negation of Palestinian rights. Some opposed U.S. intervention in Libya but seemed unable to directly confront the issues of U.S. support for Israel and U.S. opposition to Palestinian rights. To continue to ignore the central political problem in the Middle East, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict, would be to give Ronald Reagan a blank check to do whatever he pleases in the name of fighting "terrorism."

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## Interview with Themba Ntinga, African National Congress

### "The Palestinian Question Does Not Threaten: It Enhances the Movement"

*Themba Ntinga is a member of the African National Congress of South Africa United Nations Mission. Mr. Ntinga, born near Soweto in 1952, joined the multiracial Experimental Theatre Workshop in 1971; he worked as a professional actor from 1975 to 1976. In 1977 he toured the United States in the play "Survivor." Unable to return to South Africa, Mr. Ntinga studied journalism at Columbia University and joined the African National Congress UN delegation. During the recent national speaking tour on "Israel and South Africa: The Apartheid Connection?" sponsored by the ANC and the November 29th Committee for Palestine, he spoke in San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Salt Lake City, Eugene, Portland, and Seattle along with representatives of the November 29th Committee for Palestine.*

**PF:** What is the importance of the issue of Israel to the anti-Apartheid movement?

**Ntinga:** It is long overdue that the relationship between Israel and South Africa be addressed profoundly. This tour is very timely and very productive, educationally. In San Diego, for example, young Jewish

students who consider themselves part of Israel, who have to blindly defend Israel at all costs, were already questioning the stance of the Zionists.

They had to defend the Zionist position on the alliance between racist South Africa and the state of Israel. Apartheid has been declared a crime against humanity. The only other system which has been declared a crime against humanity was Nazism. Even for students who defend the state of Israel, the affinity between the state of Israel and South Africa becomes difficult to justify and even to comprehend, so they start questioning their attitudes toward the Palestinians and state of Israel and in a healthy way. They have never had a forum of this nature. The one plus with the South Africa issue is that it tends to make people question quite a lot of things.

**PF:** How is the fact of raising this issue by you and the ANC viewed by people in this country?

**Ntinga:** We need to do followup. We are in a very favorable position. People are unanimous worldwide that Apartheid is a crime against humanity. People are unanimous worldwide against racist South Africa,

which is a totally different issue than Israel and the PLO.

Before, President Reagan and the FBI and CIA could get away with dubbing the ANC as a terrorist organization. These questions we would have to deal with six or seven or eight years ago, but it is no longer an issue. People are clear about what the African National Congress is. People know about the Freedom Charter of the ANC. It's a respected organization throughout the world, not a terrorist organization.

Anybody who says that the ANC is a

terrorist organization is ridiculed. But the pro-Israel lobby in this country and the insecurity of the people of the United States lend credence to this administration calling the PLO a terrorist organization. Only the United States, a member of the Security Council, would go and bomb a sovereign nation like Libya. It is the United States who will go and mine the harbors of Nicaragua. The Security Council of the United Nations was set up to resolve differ-

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# Lebanon: An Update

By Kathryn Silver and Douglas Franks

There are two major sources of Lebanon's seemingly insoluble problems today: the refusal of Amin Gemayel and his Phalangist Party to participate in diplomatic efforts to reach a just and lasting settlement of Lebanon's internal conflict and the massive destabilization caused by the continuing Israeli occupation of south Lebanon and the presence there of Israel's surrogate, the South Lebanon Army.

Phalangist refusal to negotiate was most recently demonstrated in its rejection of the Syrian-sponsored peace accord signed on December 28, 1985. And since Gemayel and the Phalangists have the full backing and support of the Israeli government and military, Israel's actions in the south and Gemayel's intractability are closely linked.

The December peace accord represents the latest attempt to initiate political reform in Lebanon, reduce sectarianism, and to draft a new constitution. In addition, the accord addressed the pressing problem of lawlessness which threatens the daily lives and security of the Lebanese people. In calling for redistribution of power and fair representation of all Lebanon's communities, the accord posed a serious challenge to the government of Amin Gemayel.

The leaders of Lebanon's three most powerful and influential political bodies signed the accord: Walid Jumblatt of the Druze-based Progressive Socialist Party; Nabih Berri of the Shi'ite-based Amal Movement; and Elie Hobeika, who at the time was head of the Lebanese Forces (the extreme right-wing Phalangist Party militia). The accord was also endorsed by a wide array of other political, social and military organizations in Lebanon.

Since most of Gemayel's strength derives from direct Israeli material and logistical support as well as U.S. government support, the scale is unduly weighted against those who are in favor of the aims of the accord. Indeed, history has shown that Lebanon's

rightwing leaders can endure opposition only with outside help. Therefore, Syria was the natural ally and counterweight to broker the accord.

Syria is the only regional power with the political inclination and clout, not to mention military might, to seriously challenge Gemayel and his allies. The Syrian government expected that successful implementation of the accord would have elevated its standing as a regional power, the only one capable of bringing even a respite from Lebanon's civil war.

## Lebanon's Nationalist Alliance

With the exception of Hobeika, the supporters of the peace accord constitute a nationalist alliance, tactically bound together by three main issues: opposition to Amin Gemayel's presidency and perpetual Maronite rule; the wish for fair representa-

The implications of the accord, however, go beyond the mere balancing of power to the ultimate aim of eliminating sectarianism and replacing it with a system of secularism and democracy. On this issue the delicate unity of the nationalist alliance breaks down. Religious-based groups of the alliance do not want to eliminate sectarianism entirely, especially Amal and Hizbollah. Antisectarian groups on the other hand are striving for a secular "melting pot" and have thus been targets of violent attacks by extreme religious fundamentalists. For example, three Lebanese Communist Party leaders were assassinated and other members kidnapped in early March.

Deep divisions within Amal provide further evidence of conflict between the religious and antisectarian trends of the nationalist alliance. Two principal points of contention are the devastating attacks led by

south Lebanon following Israel's partial withdrawal in June 1985. These topics were hotly debated at Amal's April 4th conference in Beirut. The fact that several key Amal leaders boycotted the conference dramatizes the depth of the divisions.

## Rightwing Rivalries

The most unlikely signatory to the accord is Elie Hobeika, key personality behind the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacres. Hobeika's endorsement of the peace accord must be seen in light of the bitter rivalries within the Phalangist Party itself. Alliances struck by Phalangists have historically been tactical and short-range, usually aimed at the defeat of a political rival.

Throughout the postinvasion period, the rightwing Maronite camp has experienced a complex series of reversals. A deep rift between the Phalangist Party's political and military wings pitted Samir Geagea, former head of the Lebanese Forces, against Amin Gemayel. In 1985 Elie Hobeika seized control of the Lebanese Forces (military wing of the Phalangist Party) from Geagea and spent most of the year asserting his presence through military campaigns against Gemayel loyalists. The partial Israeli withdrawal further weakened the Phalangists and aggravated the internal split.

Hobeika joined the tripartite peace initiative in hopes of shoring up his political footing and removing Gemayel from power altogether. Gemayel's Israeli and U.S. allies did not want any Syrian-sponsored anti-Phalangist pact to succeed. They pressured Geagea to patch up relations with Gemayel so that united they could overcome Hobeika. They succeeded and one week after signing the accord, Hobeika's men were contained and he himself fled the country.

Amin Gemayel, along with Samir Geagea, has emerged from his victory over

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South Lebanon Army General Lahad with Israeli troops in south Lebanon.

tion of their traditionally underrepresented communities; and rejection of Israeli intervention in Lebanese politics and continued occupation of the south.

Amal against the Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut throughout 1985, intensifying in the summer of 1986, and Amal's sometimes conciliatory policies toward the Israelis in

## FOCUS On Action

By Steve Goldfield

The joint African National Congress/November 29th Committee for Palestine national tour—Israel and South Africa: The Apartheid Connection?—was successfully completed in May. Speakers from the two organizations addressed audiences and gave radio and print interviews in twenty cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and West of the United States. Often the events sparked lively debates in local newspapers and occasional protests by pro-Israel groups. Anti-Apartheid groups endorsed most events.

November 29th Committee for Palestine chapters also mobilized for the June 14 (New York and Oakland) and June 16 (Chicago) rallies commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Soweto rebellion in South Africa. In New York, where the press estimated ninety thousand people attended, thousands of copies of the *Palestine Focus* special feature on Israel and South Africa were distributed.

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The San Francisco Board of Supervisors by an eight to two vote approved a ten-year contract with Zim American-Israeli Shipping Company, thus ignoring San Francisco's anti-Apartheid ordinance barring contracts with firms doing business in South Africa. Zim not only carries South African goods to the United States and other countries; the line has a joint firm, Zimcorn Lines, with South Africa's Unicorn Shipping Lines. The City gave Zim a substantial discount in fees for Zim's use of the port facilities.

Zim at first denied it was doing business with South Africa but after being presented with evidence to the

contrary declined to comment. The local media and city officials ignored the case against Zim and instead attacked the two courageous supervisors who opposed the contract, Willie Kennedy and Harry Britt. But proponents of a more effective boycott against South African goods have promised to pursue the matter further.

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The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists held a national convention in Atlanta in May with over one thousand delegates from all over the United States. Bay Area delegates presented a resolution calling for an extension of boycotts of South African goods to include South African products flowing through Israel and with Israeli labels. Though the resolution was not passed in that form, the convention did pass a resolution calling for a boycott of South African goods arriving through other countries.

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Six congressmen, John Conyers, George Crockett, Mervyn Dymally, Walter Fauntroy, Charles Hayes, and Parren Mitchell, signed May 1 letters to Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Secretary of State George Shultz to protest the deportation of Palestinian community leaders Dr. Azmi al-Shuabi, Hassan Abd al-Jawad, and Ali Abdallah Mohammad Abu Hilal from the West Bank and Gaza. The letter to Shultz stated: "We strongly believe that deportations and administrative detention practices must be stopped. We ask that you issue a public statement expressing concern over Israel's renewal of this deportation policy, which our government has repeatedly criticized as a violation of international law. We ask further that you use your good offices to persuade Israel to end the renewal of this policy, which was suspended in 1979." The letters also protested the later deportations of four more Palestinians in February.

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As noted in Hilton Obenzinger's column in the last issue of *Palestine Focus*, Haagen-Dazs ice cream founder and board chairman Reuben Mattus is an unrepentant financial backer of the Jewish Defense League (JDL).

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee has launched a nationwide consumer protest against Haagen-Dazs, primarily by sending postcards to Haagen-Dazs and its new owner, the Pillsbury Corporation. The cards call on Mattus to issue a public apology for financing the JDL, a group listed by the FBI as a domestic terrorist organization. You can get cards from local chapters or national offices of the ADC or of November 29th Committee for Palestine. The ADC address is 1731 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20009. Or write your own messages to: Reuben Mattus, Chairman, Haagen-Dazs Co., Inc., Glen Pointe Center East, Teaneck, NJ 07666 and Jack Stafford, President, The Pillsbury Company, Pillsbury Center, M/S 4026, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

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*Palestine Focus* editorial board member Hilton Obenzinger participated in two debates including defenders of Zionism and Israel in Los Angeles, California and Portland, Oregon. In Los Angeles he spoke at Moorpark College where he faced Jack Salem, former president of Volunteers for Israel and a board member of the Anti-Defamation League, and David Horowitz. In Portland, Obenzinger and Adnan Hameedah, member of November 29th, debated a different David Horowitz, a professor at Portland State University (PSU), and Levi Taylor of the PSU Jewish Student Union. Obenzinger's factual and historical approach effectively reached many in the overflow crowds of two hundred in Los Angeles and four hundred and fifty in Portland.

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The Arab-American University Graduates has announced its nineteenth annual convention with the theme, "Whither the Arab World?" It will be held in Boston, November 13 through 15, 1986. The call for papers notes that "the Arab world is entering an acute period rife with political uncertainty, pending economic setbacks, and increased social fragmentation. There has been a steady erosion in the overall position of the Arab world since the signing of the Camp David Accord and the beginning of

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# Debate the Middle East in 1986 Elections

By James Zogby

After five major wars in less than forty years, the Middle East remains a time bomb waiting to explode. It is clearly the most dangerous and unstable region in the world.

Central to the conflict that continues to rage in the Middle East, and at the heart of the instability, is the seventy-year-old denial to the Palestinians of their rights to self-determination in Palestine.

Today the Palestinians live either

- as third-class "citizens" of the Jewish state of Israel;
- under a harsh Israeli military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza;
- in exile in refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria; or
- dispersed throughout the world, stateless and denied the right to return to the homes of their birth.

The right of the Palestinians to self-determination is the central issue in the Middle East conflict. This is so because there can be no lasting settlement which ignores or violates the basic rights of the Palestinians. Further, the Palestinians insist that there can be no lasting peace short of a settlement negotiated by their chosen leaders—a settlement which must include their right to establish a state of their own.

***The United States has isolated itself and accepted the narrow Israeli view that the Palestinians have no right to self-determination and that the PLO is unfit to participate in any negotiations.***

The vast majority of the nations of the world have come to recognize the legitimacy of these Palestinian rights and their centrality to the resolution of the Middle East conflict. Thus, during the past decade, the U.N. General Assembly and other world bodies have repeatedly endorsed resolutions supporting the rights of the Palestinians to be represented in all negotiations by their leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and their right to establish an independent state.

The repeated U.S. use of its veto in the U.N. Security Council, the United States' unconditional one-sided support for Israel, and the refusal of the United States to recognize the Palestinians' right to self-determination have become the major obstacles to the resolution of the Middle East conflict.

## **U.S. Embraces Israeli View and Endangers U.S. Citizens**

Instead of joining the world consensus on the Middle East and working for a just and lasting peace, the United States has isolated itself and accepted the narrow Israeli view that the Palestinians have no right to self-determination and that the PLO is unfit to participate in any negotiations.

Instead of pursuing a real peace settlement, Israel—with U.S. support—has proposed a concept called "Palestinian autonomy," a Bantustan-type formation under Israeli military rule. And Israel wants to hand pick the Palestinian "representatives" with whom it will negotiate such a "settlement."

Far from playing a mediating role, the United States has gone to extraordinary lengths to support the Israeli view. As a result, especially in recent years, the United States has plunged headlong into the Middle East conflict.

In the Reagan years alone, for example, the United States has given almost \$20 billion in grants to sustain the Israeli military and its occupation of Arab lands. In a period of devastating budget cuts, Israel has received almost \$8 million per day every day.

During this same period, U.S. armed forces are stationed in the Sinai; regularly carrying on war games in the Egyptian desert; conducting joint exercises in Israel; establishing a Rapid Deployment Force near the Arabian Gulf; and carrying out threatening maneuvers in the Mediterranean off the coast of Libya.

The U.S.-Israel joint strategic accord, signed in 1981, established unprecedented state-to-state relations, especially in the areas of military and trade cooperation. The more recent U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement, passed by Congress, opens the U.S. market to Israeli firms, free of any restrictions.

This virtual marriage of the United States and Israel during the Reagan administration has caused the United States to be viewed with greater mistrust than ever before by the Arab world and has even further isolated U.S. Middle East policy from the world community.

A glaring example was the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The world community denounced Israeli violation of Lebanese sovereignty and condemned the sustained, barbaric Israeli war on Lebanon's people. According to official Lebanese police figures, over 19,500 Lebanese and Palestinians died during this Israeli war. U.N. votes to condemn Israel's action were nearly unanimous. But what was the U.S. response?

- to increase Israeli aid by \$325 million;
- to help Israel impose its terms for ending the conflict;
- to send in U.S. Marines, which in effect replaced Israeli occupation forces, allowing them to withdraw from Lebanon; and
- to grant Israel an additional \$1.5 billion in U.S. aid in 1985—an amount equal to that which Israel spent in occupying Lebanon for two years.

As a result of this virtual identification of U.S. and Israeli policy, U.S. government facilities and U.S. citizens traveling abroad are in danger in the Middle East. We are seen as willing and eager supporters of a ruthless military regime that denies the most basic of human rights, not only of those who live under its direct rule, but of those in neighboring states as well.

## **"Let Us Do It"**

So powerful is the Israel lobby that progressive members of Congress express fear that should they speak out against Israeli practices or for Palestinian rights, they will be targeted for almost certain defeat. Thus, many progressives are silent on Middle East issues.

Not only has Israel become aware of its "sacred cow" status in the United States. The administration has become aware of this as well. In 1981, Ya'akov Meridor, a member of Menahem Begin's cabinet, proposed the following:

We shall say to the Americans: Don't compete with us in Taiwan, don't compete with us in South Africa, don't compete with us in the Caribbean area, or in other areas in which we can sell weapons directly.... Let us do it. Sell the ammunition and the equipment using an accredited representative. Israel will be your accredited representative.

The Meridor Plan not only became Israeli government policy, but it was written into the U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation of 1981.

## **New Victims of U.S. Silence on Mideast**

The historical victims of the silence on Middle East issues have been the Palestinians, but today new victims can be added. Israel has aided many regimes after the U.S. Congress cut off aid because of human-rights abuses. Among the many examples are Somoza's Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, and Guatemala. And Israel today acts as a conduit between the United States and South Africa, bringing both advanced U.S. technology into South Africa and South African products into the United States, free from rebuke in the United States.

Israel's ability to frustrate U.S. and international sanctions against South Africa illustrates a larger point. The U.S. support for Israel and the blind spot for Israel reinforced by a powerful lobby in Washington actually undercut victories won by progressives in other areas of U.S. foreign policy.

And there are other ways that this silence has had a negative impact on U.S. policies, both domestic and foreign. For example, in 1980 the Reagan administration rode into Washington on an antiterrorism campaign. Human rights as a concern in U.S. foreign policy was to be replaced by a concern about terrorism.

It was a difficult pill for progressives to swallow—but the Reagan administration knew the Middle East weakness. Playing on the pro-Israel blind spot and the general antipathy for all things Arab, "Arab bashing" became the chosen way to build the antiterrorism campaign.

While Begin and Sharon of Israel were blown up into gutsy folk heroes, Arafat and Qadhafi were reduced to one-dimensional characters: "terrorists." Doublespeak and big-lie campaigns were used to establish the new line as unquestioned truth. While liberals, and even some progressives, failed to question the assumptions of the campaign, other objectives were being met.

One outstanding example took place in 1981 when the Reagan administration reported that a "Libyan hit squad"



April 1986 National Rainbow Coalition Convention.

had entered the United States to assassinate the president. A shocked and believing public acquiesced in administration assurances that "we have sound intelligence reports" and "we have their names."

Meanwhile, as troops marched into Washington to protect the commander-in-chief, dark-skinned Arabs and Hispanics entering the United States were harassed and searched.

## **As Reagan "Unleashes" FBI and CIA, Liberals Look Away**

In the third week of the campaign, the real purpose of the entire episode was revealed—and slipped by liberals unnoted. President Reagan issued an executive order which, in effect, dismantled all earlier reforms of the Carter administration to control abuses by the CIA and FBI. Reagan's order, which was issued without a peep, once again "unleashed" the CIA and FBI and allowed them to become involved in domestic surveillance activities.

One might imagine the skepticism from liberals and progressives if the alleged hit squad had been "Cuban" and the source of the intelligence had been the CIA. But an allegation based on Israeli intelligence of a hit squad comprised of Libyan terrorists went unquestioned.

(It should be noted that the *New Statesman* recently obtained a list of the suspected terrorists compiled from the intelligence reports on which the entire hoax was based. The first name on the list was Nabih Berri, the head of the Lebanese Amal movement. The second and third names, respectively, were the speaker of the Lebanese parliament and the head of the Muslim community in southern Lebanon. *All are Shi'ites, and all have a special hatred for Libya's Qadhafi, whom they hold responsible for the death of their religious leader.* The story, in retrospect, is even more preposterous than when it first appeared.)

Other more recent uses of this same blind spot have enabled the Reagan administration to

- rewrite U.S. extradition law, removing the vitally important "political exception" clause;
- issue State Department legal opinions which justify the violation of territorial integrity of sovereign nations in the name of "self-defense" against "potential terrorist threats," and
- justify increased aid to the Nicaraguan contras on the grounds that the PLO and the Sandinistas have a long-term friendship and relationship.

## **Linkages Too Great to Ignore**

Continued silence on these matters cannot serve our common struggle as progressives for a just world peace. The "spillover" from the Middle East into Central America and South Africa should move us to develop a consistent and principled approach to our work for world peace.

If it was once acceptable for a candidate or a political group to be progressive on all the issues except the Middle East, this can no longer be the case today. The connections are too clear—the "linkages" too great—to ignore.

How can we claim a victory over Somoza one day and turn a blind eye the next day to his new source of weapons?

How can we claim to support human rights in Central America and yet ignore the Israeli role in training, supplying, and even, in some cases, running the repressive intelligence arms of governments in Honduras and Guatemala?

How can we ignore that the watchtowers and surveillance posts that surround Soweto are Israeli-constructed—modeled after the towers in use in the Galilee, the West Bank, and Gaza?

In the end, how can we claim to support human rights and self-determination when we deny to the Palestinians what we support for the South Africans, the Namibians,

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## Election...

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and the Zimbabweans, and when the crimes of Apartheid against Black Africans are so similar to those imposed by Israelis on the indigenous Palestinian Arabs in Palestine?

### The Challenge for 1986

This year there are 435 Congressional races and 34 Senate races being decided throughout the United States. If this election holds true to form, not one of those running

***The Middle East—the most costly, dangerous, and deadly region of the world for U.S. foreign policy—is also the least debated issue in U.S. politics.***

will be challenged as to his or her stand on the issue of Palestinian rights.

The Middle East—the most costly, dangerous, and deadly region of the world for U.S. foreign policy—is also the least debated issue in U.S. politics. Polls show most U.S. citizens want a just settlement and support Palestinian rights to statehood. Polls also show that most citizens think that \$8 million per day is too much foreign aid for anybody.

But politicians will not raise these issues, and this year the pro-Israel political action committees will spend about \$8 million to ensure that they do not. In fact, politicians will not even raise these issues unless they are challenged to do so by an organized, determined, and principled campaign to correct U.S. Middle East policy.

This year, progressives can take a first step in this direction by insisting that the Middle East be included in all discussions of U.S. foreign policy.

Politicians, organizations, and coalitions ought to be held responsible for their positions on

- The continued denial of Palestinian rights to self-determination;
- the continued violation of Palestinian human rights in the occupied territories; and
- the extent to which U.S. support for Israel makes possible Israeli collaboration with South Africa and repressive regimes in Central America.

The beneficiaries of such a principled approach to our human rights and peace work will not only be the Palestinians and Israelis, but the peoples of South Africa and Central America and, in the end, the people of the United States as well. □

*James Zogby is president of the Washington-based Middle East Associates.*

# Higher Educa

By John Masterson

Education of Palestinians has flourished under the occupation of the Israeli Army," according to apologists for the Israeli occupation. The wide gap between this myth and the reality is most striking in the case of higher education in Palestine. I began to understand this more vividly as each day passed during an investigative tour of the Palestinian campuses which I took last summer, under the auspices of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign.

Since the beginning of the occupation, five four-year institutions, a two-year polytechnic, and several community colleges have started in the West Bank and Gaza. Prior to the Israeli presence, Palestinians left home to pursue a college degree. At that time, there were no restrictions placed on their leaving and returning, so outside institutions filled the need. Moreover, the determination to remain steadfast on the land gives an additional and very strong reason for developing local universities.

Indeed, it is not the creation of these institutions that is remarkable. It is the fact that they have survived and expanded despite active sabotage by the Israeli occupation authorities to virtually every aspect of normal academic functioning.

Palestinian universities resemble their American counterparts in many ways: the breadth of their academic programs, the quality of their faculties and the use of up-to-date technology. Students graduate with degrees in Arts, Science, Business and Economics, and Engineering for the most part. Bir Zeit University offers a masters degree in Education. 150 of 300 faculty at Bir Zeit hold doctorates; the figures at Bethlehem and Al-Najah are similar. While there is political activity on American campuses, protest at the Palestinian university is an act of survival, a form of resistance to one's own oppression. Bir Zeit Assistant Dean Salim Tamari, at a meeting in Jerusalem the day we arrived, characterized the students as "the seeds of Palestinian identity" and the universities as "the embryos for the survival of the Palestinian national movement."

### Student Daily Life: Harassment, Imprisonment, Brutality

We spoke also that day with several members of the Bir Zeit University student government, including its president, Marwan Barghouti. He had just been released from 40 days in Israeli prison, which he spoke of in matter-of-fact terms that quite surprised me. But then, he was first arrested at the age of seventeen and had already spent four years in prison.

As the president of the Bir Zeit University student government, he has been harassed, detained, and questioned numerous times, frequently spending periods of varying length in prison. All of this has occurred without his ever having been charged with a specific crime or

seeing any evidence that he has violated any regulation. His treatment is the norm in student arrests, not the exception.

We sat with Marwan in Jerusalem because he had been forbidden by army order to enter the campus of which he was the principal student leader, a common fate of such figures at Palestinian universities. His current 40-day detention was for violation of that order.

Student leaders are not the only ones to suffer under the internationally illegal detention laws. A very conservative estimate made for us by faculty at Bethlehem University from data collected over a period of years gives a figure of 50 percent as the portion of the Palestinian student body which has spent some time in Israeli prisons.

And imprisonment is not the only problem facing Palestinian students daily. Humiliation appears to be a common purpose of the Israeli attacks on the campuses. In a raid two years ago at Bir Zeit, students were forced to run in front of military vehicles in their nightclothes shouting the names of vegetables. The majority, who refused to do so, were beaten. More serious consequences of these raids have been crippling and death. During a raid at Bir Zeit on November 21, 1984, an engineering student, Sharaf Tibi, was shot by soldiers using rifles with telescopic sights. He died en route to the hospital. The army had refused to let the ambulance pass for over half an hour.

The Israeli army has not been the sole cause of death and injury on the Palestinian campus. Factions of the Israeli settler movement have frequently entered the campuses with weapons. The most serious of these incidents occurred on July 26, 1983 when three members of a settler



Students at Palestinian book exhibit at An-Najah University

terrorist underground movement fired machine guns and threw hand grenades into a crowd of students leaving classes at the Islamic University in Hebron. Three students were killed and over thirty injured. While it was the first such murder of Palestinians for which the Israeli perpetrators were put on trial, the killers were generally treated as heroes (even by Knesset members). They have been allowed to spend holidays with their families, and most have been released from prison.

The frequent closures of the universities and the numer-

## Beyond the Barbed Wire

# Two Views of Settlement

By Stan West

### 1. The Old Man and the Tent

Tears of anger flowed down the wrinkled face of an 85-year-old man as the two-story house he had lived in for fifty years was completely leveled in less than thirty minutes.

Salman Salem Arab, 85, and his two sons, Mahfouz and Muhanad, sat in a makeshift Red Cross tent on the spot where their modest hilltop home once stood. All their remaining possessions—a gas lantern, an old trunk, and a prayer rug—dotted the entrance of the tattered green tent. A sign documenting the old man's humiliating experience greeted interested strangers near the tent's tiny entrance.

Bulldozer tracks covered the field where the family's three thousand olive trees once sprouted. "They just uprooted our trees like they uproot so many Palestinians in this area near Bethlehem," Mahfouz told me.

"I cried all day when the old man's home was bulldozed," a neighbor told an Israeli reporter.

The family told Western reporters in January that their furniture and clothes were tossed in the dirt while armed men, who claimed they were police, razed their home. The Arab family claimed their house was illegally bulldozed by a contractor hired by Avraham Shauli, a wealthy Iranian from Los Angeles. Shauli could not be reached for comment.

While he kindled a clumsy fire—his only form of heat—the old man explained how the lack of money has hampered their legal fight for the land. Currently, the family is appealing an eviction notice.

According to the *Jerusalem Post*, the bulldozing resulted from a dispute with Shauli over ownership of the 46-dunum (13 acre) property on the southeast edge of Gilo, a primarily Jewish settlement between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The *Post* reported that the house was allegedly bought by Shauli from the original owners—whose name was not given—after the 1967 war.

Mahfouz Arab told a different story. "The contractor came busting in here by force, waving a

handgun in my father's face and threatening both of us as he systematically destroyed our house. It was done without any legal basis—without even Jerusalem municipality's approval or permit. We put up a tent after they had bulldozed our family home, and they came back and bulldozed our first tent," he said.

Mahfouz pointed to a ridge not far from his tent where new Jewish settlements called "absorption centers" have recently been built on confiscated Palestinian land. These centers are a temporary refuge for newcomers and help them become oriented to Israel.

As he picked up a handful of dirt, Mahfouz explained, "Our land is like our children. It's part of our soul. This land is like the blood running through our veins."

Rubbing his worry beads together, 85-year-old Salman described his ordeal as "typical" of increasing property disputes involving wealthy Arabs, Iranians, and Israeli government officials in "illegal land scams." The old man claims the property was entrusted to him by the original owner, whose whereabouts are unknown. Salman says he has paid agricultural and municipal

taxes over the years, a point which is confirmed by the *Post*.

Valued at millions of dollars, the land has been a source of dispute for nearly seven years. In the *Post* article, Shauli's lawyer claims that during the proceedings the family was offered tens of thousands of dollars—enough to buy an apartment in the area—as compensation.

Eitan Giva, the Arab family's lawyer, denies his client was offered money but instead says a house was offered to the family, who did not move because the previous ownership was not registered. According to Giva, Shauli had the right to destroy the house because of a verdict issued in April 1984 granting him ownership of the house. Shauli had a permit to build there and thus the right to destroy existing structures, according to Giva.

But the municipal adviser for Arab Affairs in nearby Jerusalem, Amir Heshin, denied Shauli's claim to the land. "First, the judgment that gave Shauli the right to evict was only in the name of one son, Mahfouz. This means that the order only affected one room of the house. Second, the right to develop the land has not yet been given conclusively to Shauli," he said.

Heshin said that the municipality had been unaware that a demolition was going to take place. "Nobody had applied for a permit. Even after the demolition took place nobody informed the municipality," Heshin continued.

# Education under Occupation

ous military orders banning scores of students from their own campuses are a less severe threat to the physical safety of the students but more detrimental to their education. In the last two years Al-Najah has suffered a closure of four months followed by another of two months, causing the cancellation of an entire term and the rescheduling of graduation for many students. Bir Zeit, Al-Najah, and Bethlehem have all been frequently closed.

Just prior to the closure of Al-Najah, Bir Zeit was closed for one week. The military raided the campus at midnight and forced Vice President Gabi Baramki to open the campus, on the pretext of finding "illegal" literature at a book fair on campus. However, no university official was allowed to accompany the army when they claimed to have found such literature. Dr. Baramki told us there had been no such literature as the students are well aware of the consequences. In short, it had been planted. At the same time, 53 students were arrested; 8 were held indefinitely at Fara'a prison, though none of them had been charged with a crime or infraction of military orders.

## Professional Life of the Faculty: Degrading and Frustrating

The students are not the only ones to suffer under the Israeli occupation. "When they close the university," Dr. Simon Kuttab told us as we sat before him in a classroom at Bir Zeit, "they do not even let me in my lab. Whatever organisms or animals are in the lab die. All experiments must be restarted when the university is allowed to open." Professor Kuttab is an environmental scientist on the Bir Zeit faculty. He shared with us the frustrations felt by all Palestinian scientists doing research in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

For Dr. Ahmad Bekar, a professor of psychology, the problems are different but just as frustrating. Four times a year he must leave his home and go to Jordan to reapply for entry into his own country. He suffers the humiliation of being stripped naked and searched each time he is forced to cross the Allenby bridge, the only entry point from Jordan to the West Bank. Although born and raised in the West Bank, he has been declared a foreigner in his own land by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Several years ago, an Israeli military order demanded that all "foreigners" must sign a loyalty oath condemning the PLO. Al-Najah lost over thirty of its faculty at the time including its Palestinian vice president and president. When virtually all faculty refused to sign, international pressure and exposure forced the cancellation of the oath.

Even when the universities are open, a constant attack on professional activities continues in many forms. One of these is censorship, according to Professor Adnan Musallem of Bethlehem University. Over fifteen hundred books are specifically banned by name with no rational policy guidelines to explain why; the list is added to regularly, though no master list exists. In 1982, Israeli faculty found one such list in Arabic

containing over three thousand books. The vast majority of them are Arabic texts. As a scholar of eastern cultures, Musallem has a great interest in poetry. "Almost all significant Palestinian poets are banned" he told us. The Arabic poet Kabani, for example, writes on "love and the simple life." All of his works are banned because the Israelis say he once wrote something about Fatah, one of the organizations making up the PLO. Writing about this censorship, Israeli former Deputy Mayor Meron Benvenisti of Jerusalem stated: "It may be that only 3 to 4 percent of imported titles are censored, but the titles censored represent 100 percent of all works which express, instill, or foster Palestinian-Arab national feelings and national heritage.

In addition to all of this, Palestinian professors suffer the same serious forms of repression as do their students: imprisonment without trial, brutalization in prison, frequent house and town arrest, and deportation. Dr. Hanna Nasir, president of Bir Zeit University was deported without charge twelve years ago. Mysteriously taken from his home after midnight on the 21st of November, 1974, he was read a deportation order, blindfolded and handcuffed and then driven to the Lebanese border and dropped there to walk to Beirut. Since that time fifteen hundred other community leaders have suffered the same fate. But the tribulations of the universities do not end here.

## Stifling Growth: The Use of Military Orders

It is the seemingly less harmful but perhaps more insidious and institutionally damaging use of permits and military orders which may pose the most serious threat to the continuation of quality education in the occupied territories.

No program can be started, no facility can be expanded, no building can be built without a permit from the military commander in the area. In most cases, permit requests are either denied or never responded to. Any action taken by Palestinians without the necessary papers usually results in a swift and destructive response from the Israeli military. Sitting in his office in Nablus, Dr. Sa'eb Erakat, the director of Public Relations at Al-Najah University, related to us several examples of how the Israelis are using permits to stifle Palestinian education. With \$11,000 in cement waiting to be poured into the foundations of a medical school for which he thought the university had a

## Protest at the Palestinian university is an act of survival, a form of resistance to one's own oppression.

permit, an Israeli army unit appeared to tell him that no such permit existed. The dilemma of what to do with the cement was dismissed by the military governor with the flippant response: "Dump it!"

Our visit to the Polytechnic College in Hebron only added to the evidence of the internationally illegal use of permits to deny basic rights. Enrollment at the Polytechnic is bursting the seams of the present facilities in the center of the city. Permits to build on land the college already owns have been ignored for years. Four days after students and faculty carried chairs to a rented building to meet the student overflow, the Polytechnic was raided by the Israeli army and closed for 75 days. As

## What is remarkable is the fact that the universities have survived and expanded despite active sabotage by the Israeli occupation authorities.

frequently happens in these cases, college administrators were arrested. The acting director of the college related to me the gruesome events of the four days he spent in a 1 by 2 meter cell with no facilities for normal bodily function.

A sunny afternoon meeting with faculty at Bethlehem University provided some new twists to the permit ploy. Dr. Camille Sansour, rector of the university, put it this way: "We are even expected to participate in Israeli propaganda." Two years had elapsed since Sansour had requested a permit to build a very badly needed classroom building. He had patiently met all the Israeli demands for modification of his request but no permit came. Eventually it was indicated to him that if he would publicly congratulate Israeli civil administrator Milson and support an "autonomy" plan of the Israelis for the occupied territories which was uniformly condemned by Palestinians, he would receive his permit. He refused. They still have no building.

What I have related here are a representative few of the many actions taken by the Israeli occupying forces to stifle the growth of Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Gaza. Any one of these incidents, if it occurred in this country, or in Israel, would be the subject of headlines in national newspapers and would result in the serious censure of the offending authority. In the case of Palestinians, this constant repression is ignored by the press in both the U.S. and Israel. Compounding the felony, the Israelis then take credit for their "positive developmental" role in the education of this "backward" people. But then, the "benevolence" and "civilizing influence" of settler regimes have always remained among their most enduring myths. □



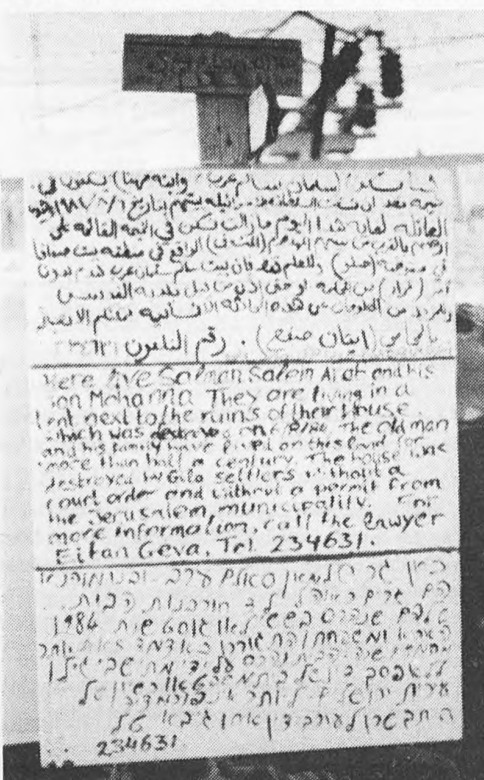
Salman Arab in front of his tent.

For 85-year-old Salman Salem Arab, time is running out. "If I die before our land is reclaimed, please bury me here on my land."

## 2. The Settler and His Bible

For Israeli settlers, life in the West Bank is the fulfillment of a dream, the return to a homeland they believe was always theirs.

Just 21 miles from the heart of Jerusalem lives Joseph Friedman, a 34-year-old publisher and spokesman for a Jewish settlement called Beit El near Ramallah. He says this settlement is located in a Biblical area called Ben Yamin. "This is and always has been our land," Friedman told reporters in



The Arab family protests demolition of their home in three languages.

January. "We call it Ben Yamin just like it was called in the Bible."

This 600-dunum (125-acre) site was originally owned by residents of the Palestinian cities of el-Bireh and Ramallah who lost their appeal for the prime hilltop land in 1978 when the Supreme Court cited "security reasons," according to Ibrahim Matar, an economist and expert on the effects of the Israeli occupation who writes for the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.

But Friedman, who hails from Queens, New York, said, "There was nothing here but barren hills when the first Jewish settlers came eight years ago." Friedman moved to Beit El three years ago after selling his house in nearby Jerusalem. He moved to the West Bank eight years ago from Queens, he says, "for both religious and economic reasons."

Unlike most Jewish settlements that are multistory concrete condominiums, the estimated one hundred and twenty-five families at Beit El live in small but cozy suburban-type ranch houses. The yellowing front lawns adorned with clotheslines give these dwellings a working-class look. The residents explain that most of the people who live here are white-collar workers who commute to Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Barbed-wire fencing surrounds one side of the encampment. Many of the settlers here patrol the area with M-16s and Uzis strapped to their backs. An Israeli army

base, replete with a firing range, lines the jagged boundary only a few hundred meters from where children play.

People here seem very suspicious of strangers. A sense of controlled fear emanates from settlers who seem a bit uneasy with their Palestinian neighbors. Friedman, an affable, robust man with a New York accent, talks about his uneasiness with the Arab "instigators" who haunt the perimeter of the settlement.

Despite it all, Friedman says, the pioneering life of Jewish settlers is worth the risks. He talked patriotically of the occupied West Bank and Israel and how it is the "homeland of all Jews." In fact, he says, "Orthodox Jews make up 100 percent of Beit El."

Just a mile from Beit El settlement camp is Jalazone refugee camp where an estimated 4,800 Palestinians live. Many residents of this poverty-stricken camp once lived on the site of Beit El.

Friedman, who admits he has never been inside a camp, voices the feelings of many Israeli settlers who dismiss the Palestinians. "Give me a break. Israel didn't cause the problem that put these people in the refugee camps." When asked how he feels about the Palestinians, he replied, "There are no Palestinians. They don't exist." □

Stan West writes for Pacific News Service.

# Themba Ntinga...

Continued from page 1

ences peacefully. But the attitude of the United States is that of a bully.

It is also a tradition in the United States of trying to tell another people what they should do. The PLO is an authentic organization of the Palestinian people; the United Nations has decreed that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the organization of the Palestinian people.

**PF:** By raising this issue of Israel's role in South Africa, are you not taking a certain risk of losing public support in the United States?

**Ntinga:** No, not at all. It's going to enhance the struggle for the peoples of Palestine and South Africa and the anti-Apartheid movement here. It is not a favor which the United States people are doing for us in supporting us. It's mutual. It brings us to solidarity with the Hormel workers in Austin (Minnesota), to the fact the unemployment rate is going up, the steel industry in the United States going to the dogs because steel is imported from South Africa. It ties all these things together, it educates. Universities are supposed to be educational institutions not brainwashing institutions. So questions like the Palestinians and Apartheid are not going to threaten the movement, they enhance the movement.

**PF:** Has there been any pressure on the ANC or yourself to cease your support for the Palestinian movement?

**Ntinga:** The Zionists dare not say or do anything to the African National Congress because Zionism cannot be defended, so they try to victimize individuals, as Professor Fred Dube has been. But as a collective, you know they dare not. But the victimization of Fred Dube, who is a member of the ANC, by the Zionists has not gone unnoticed by the African National Congress.

**PF:** Is an awareness of Israel's role in South Africa and the similarities between Zionism

and Apartheid part of the politicization of the South African people?

**Ntinga:** Yes, I think the Israelis are very stupid strategists. They did not need to align themselves and to be so visible with the Bantustans and the homeland policies of the South African racist regime, because there they exposed themselves. A person who was not aware is aware now because the Bantustan and homeland policies of the racist regime are the cornerstone of the dispossession of the South African people.

Whether or not a person is learned or politically sophisticated, he knows for a fact that I am being dispossessed because of these policies. For Israel to go ahead and

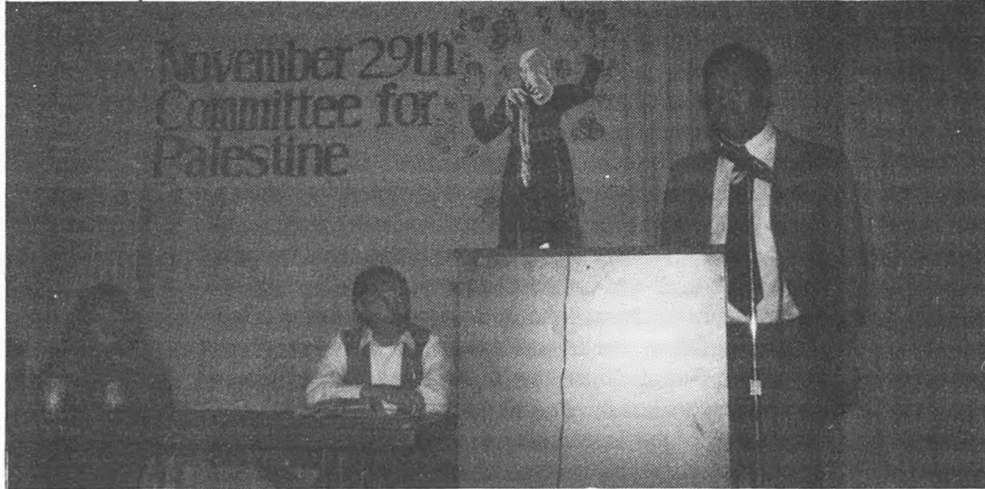
Apartheid, it is stretched to such limits that we are out to kill white people. That is not the issue; that is not the point. We in South Africa are fighting for a nonracial society just as the people of Palestine have repeatedly said they are not anti-Jewish people. There is a difference between Zionists and the Jewish person. In the ANC in South Africa and all over the world, people are not judged according to race. To do so is in most cases to try and justify the oppression of the peoples.

**PF:** Lately, Israel had been making official declarations that it condemns Apartheid. What about this contradiction of the Israeli government supposedly condemning Apartheid

bombers, what is the point of servicing the submarines of the racist South Africans by Israel, and then to say that they condemn South Africa? What nonsense is that? Who do they think they are kidding?

**PF:** Are people around the world becoming more aware of the significant link between Israel and South Africa?

**Ntinga:** Yes, Israel and South Africa are pariah states. Israel and South Africa are defended by the United States, Britain and France through their triple-alliance-veto power in the Security Council, but basically the world has isolated Israel. That is why the United States has to prop up the Israeli state with four billion dollars annually. Some of them would say, we have to maintain Apartheid in South Africa because when Apartheid goes, the next target of the peoples in the world is going to be Israel.



ANC representative Themba Ntinga at San Francisco forum.

visibly align itself to the extent of being visible in these Bantustans opens the eyes of the people of South Africa to Israel. Ariel Sharon going to northern Namibia, Israelis advising, giving blessings to racists, these are things people see. They start saying what is going on, what exactly is this Israel?

**B**ecause Zionism is so indefensible and Apartheid is so indefensible they try to say that when people are questioning Zionism, they are anti-Semitic, anti-Jewish. When people are questioning

heid but actually being a staunch ally of South Africa?

**Ntinga:** About three weeks ago, the South African Catholic Bishops Conference sent a delegation to Lusaka to talk to the African National Congress. And the ANC told them that it is not enough to condemn Apartheid. The South African Catholic Bishops Conference has to do something about the dismantlement of the Apartheid system. For the Israelis to say that they condemn Apartheid and yet they are sweethearts with military ties with South Africa is nonsense. Period! What is the point of giving the South Africans gunboats, spare parts for their fighter

# Peace Movement's Response...

Continued from page 1

The Palestinian people are not responsible for the atmosphere of hysterical fear and hatred which has been whipped up against them—and all Arabs—in the United States. Their aspirations and leadership are legitimate, and they deserve the attention and support of the American peace movement. There is political violence in the Middle East, but Reagan is blind to the principal source of that violence: Israel. Palestinians have extreme grievances, but Reagan's way of dealing with Palestinians is a classic "blame-the-victim" approach which defines the Palestinians as less than human.

South African psychologist Professor Fred Dube, in explaining the "logic" of racism, points out that the first step is to define "malevolent others," who are labeled so that the identity of individuals is replaced with the label. Dube explains, "Once you say PLO, the first thing everybody says is 'terrorist.' What you have done—and all racists do it—is to create in their minds ... the

idea that their victims are not individuals but a lump of something."

Palestinians are fighting for democratic and national rights. But the state of Israel, which they most directly confront, does not only block the self-determination and independence of a nation and its people: Israel has an international partnership with the United States.

Israel, one of the first to sign on to the Star Wars program, seeks to dominate the Middle East with conventional and nuclear weapons and threatens its neighbors and the entire world with nuclear conflagration. Israel is South Africa's principal ally and an important supplier to the Nicaraguan contras and the military dictatorships in El Salvador and Guatemala. As presidential hopeful Jack Kemp put it, "Aid to Israel is in the national defense orbit. It is security assistance, not only for Israel, but for the United States.... I view it in almost the same framework as a naval base."

The problem of Israeli aggression is thus not just a Palestinian and Arab concern. Israel is one of the most effective instruments of precisely that aggressive U.S. policy which promises war and destruction. Unwavering U.S. support for Israel is one of the cornerstones of U.S. international strategy: We ignore it at our own peril.

**S**ometimes peace activists hesitate to criticize Israel because of their concern about historic Jewish persecution or because they fear being labeled "anti-Semitic." But such concern is misplaced when it shields Israeli racism and ag-

Indeed, the movement for peace and social justice is only as strong as its weakest component. If significant opposition to U.S. policy in the Middle East is not organized, Reagan has shown that he is calculating enough to begin his aggression there and then widen it as necessary. Consider that the two raids on Libya each preceded congressional votes on aid to the contras by a single day.

The vicious U.S. attacks on Libya and the imminent danger of further U.S. intervention in the Middle East require the strongest possible response. Only a peace movement with a comprehensive understanding of

## Reagan tries to bury the centrally important issue of Palestinian rights under the rhetoric of "terrorism."

gression from criticism. Anyone genuinely concerned about Israeli Jews cannot fail to criticize Israel as the Israeli peace movement desperately and consistently urges us to do.

U.S. intervention in all regions of the world—including the Middle East—has a chance to halt the march toward war. □

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*Palestine Focus* is the national newspaper of the November 29th Committee for Palestine (formerly November 29th Coalition). The newspaper is an activist vehicle tied to an activist movement, yet aimed at a general audience with little background knowledge. We report on activities, not only of our committee, but of other groups; and we provide consistent commentary and analysis of events in the Middle East.

The November 29th Committee for Palestine takes its name from the date declared by the United Nations as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Our task is to spark and support consistent, far-reaching, and effective activity which brings the issue of Palestine before the American people and builds a growing and deepening base of understanding. Our committee organizes to stop U.S. intervention in the Middle East and to cut off U.S. aid to Israel. We educate Americans on the need to support the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to oppose Israeli policies of discrimination which deny the Palestinian people their rights.

Signed articles are not necessarily the opinion of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. Letters, opinions, and other contributions are welcome.

**Editorial Board:** Randa Baramki, Douglas Franks, Steve Goldfield, Riyad Khoury, Hilton Obenzinger

**Contributing Editors:** Jeanne Butterfield, John Masterson

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Nat Hentoff, writing in the May 13, 1986 *Village Voice*, uncovered a March 27, 1986 memorandum of the American Jewish Committee's Israel & Middle East Affairs division regarding the recent Public Broadcasting Corporation's production of "Flashpoint: Israel and the Palestinians." We've noted in earlier issues of *Palestine Focus*, that, as part of "Flashpoint's" op-ed style of showing a balanced view of a controversial issue, the program included two Israeli films along with an edited version of the highly regarded movie "Occupied Palestine," produced by Jewish-American filmmaker David Koff. As the April 9th airing approached, there was increasing controversy about the program, which eventually led two major stations, WNET in New York, and WETA in Washington, D.C., to cancel the showing.

At the time, experienced observers surmised that the heavy hand of the pro-Israel lobby was at work. The AJC memo confirms these suspicions. Attacking "Occupied Palestine" as a "pure PLO propaganda piece," the memo urged AJC area offices to "appeal to your local PBS station not to air 'Flashpoint' on the grounds of its poor quality, inaccuracy, misrepresentation and propaganda content."

"Not to air"? It sounds frighteningly like censorship. Fortunately, there are people in the media—many of them Jewish—who stood their ground in regard to free speech. As it turned out, 275 out of 308 stations ran the program.

Of course, this is hardly the first instance of the pro-Israel lobby seeking to prevent Americans from inquiring about the truth of the Middle East conflict. Eastern Airlines, for example, recently announced that it had succumbed to pressure from the American Jewish Congress and will no longer make the magazine *South* available to its passengers as part of its in-flight library. What's the offense? The AJ Congress complained that the publication, which calls itself "The Third World Magazine," was "devoted almost exclusively to maligning Israel and the United States."

And not only should we be kept pure from offending publications handed out free on airlines, thou shalt not read such stuff even when it's your own. Take, for example, the case of Rema Simon who was reading the book *Palestine Is, But Not In Jordan* by Mohammed Hallaj and Sheila Ryan while waiting to take off on a Delta airlines flight from Ft. Lauderdale. The pamphlet rebuts the widely touted Zionist argument that there already is a Palestinian state, namely Jordan, and Palestinians should be happy enough with King Hussein. Ms. Simon was approached by security people and removed from the plane to be questioned. The offense? People sitting next to her felt "concerned" about what she was reading. Ac-

ording to Ms. Simon's affidavit, the man "took the book from my hand, leafed through it, and gave it back to me." The man then said: "If you could put it away when you get back on the flight, this is a sensitive subject at airports." Then he allowed her back on the plane. A small incident, perhaps, but a chilling reminder of just how fragile the Bill of Rights has become in the Reagan era. Next time I sit on a plane with someone reading a right-wing fundamentalist tract calling for support of Israel so as to hasten Jesus' return by way of Armageddon, I think I'll ask security to remove that person for inciting genocide. Genocide makes me very uncomfortable.

Incidentally, *Palestine Is, But Not In Jordan* is excellent. For a copy, send \$3.50 to the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 556 Trapelo Road, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.

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## Getting It All In FOCUS

British journalist Alan Hart, author of *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker* (Sidgwick and Jackson, London) recently completed a U.S. speaking tour to promote his book, which, as expected, received far too little attention from the usual reviewers. Now an audio cassette of one of his talks is available. Hart's highly individual views are based on years of journalistic inquiry and deserve to be heard. He says, basically, that the Palestinian people seek peace and an independent state and this should not be regarded as "terrorism," especially considering the massive violence conducted by the Israeli government. An audio cassette is also available of a lecture former Congressman Paul Findley gave at U.C. Berkeley earlier this year. Author of *They Dare To Speak Out*, Findley "dares" to speak about the Israeli lobby and its powerful influence on members of government and on the media in general when the subject of Israel and the Palestinians is involved. These cassettes are available for \$12.27 each, postage-paid, from Seven Cities Productions, P.O. Box 27312, Oakland, California 94602.

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While we still do have some semblance of freedom of speech, audio cassettes can be a very pleasant and effective way to get informed. In addition to the Alan Hart and Paul Findley tapes, the Pacifica Radio Archive has excellent tapes on the Middle East available (along with many other topics) culled from programs produced at Pacifica

radio stations (KPFA-Los Angeles, WBAI-New York, KPFT-Houston, and WPFW-Washington, D.C.). Calling itself "free speech radio," these Pacifica radio programs include a lecture by Palestinian-American Professor Edward Said on "The Idea of Palestine"; interviews with Israeli lawyer Felicia Langer and PLO representative Ilan Halevi, who is a Sephardic Jew; a talk by Noam Chomsky on the relationship between the U.S. and Israel; and a program produced by Nadia Yaqub based on interviews with survivors of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Write to Pacifica Radio Archive Educational Services, 5316 Venice Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90019 for the entire catalog.

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For those seeking to prevent the flow of information on Palestinian rights, the United Nations is perhaps the number one target. Certainly, the rightwing Heritage Foundation has been frothing at the mouth since it released a December 17, 1985 report on "The PLO's Valuable Ally: The United Nations." Declaring that the UN "routinely distributes pro-PLO papers and booklets to journalists, academics, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs) throughout the world," the Heritage Foundation seeks to cut back the United States' financial commitment to the world body even more than the Reagan administration already has.

The materials the UN "routinely distributes" include a pamphlet entitled "The United Nations and The Question of Palestine," which reviews the history of the UN's handling of the conflict. Here one may find a survey of all the UN resolutions concerning Palestinian rights (not just certain ones, like 242 and 338, which the Reagan administration harps on to the exclusion of all others), including the resolution calling for an international peace conference for a comprehensive solution based on Palestinian self-determination. Another pamphlet, "Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories," prepared by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, presents a short, fact-filled survey of Israeli policies of land confiscation, economic strangulation, and repression against the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza.

Of course, such material grates the Heritage Foundation. But whose heritage are they defending, anyway? Surely, not the heritage of free speech and the pursuit of justice. The fact is that the United Nations presents an accurate sense of world opinion which seeks adequate information on Palestinian rights along with actions for peace. These pamphlets, as well as many other reports on Palestinian rights, are available free from the UN. Write for the catalog of materials to Public Information Officer, Telma Abascal, Division for Palestinian Rights, Room 3650, United Nations, New York 10017. □

## Lebanon...

Continued from page 2

Hobeika with renewed popularity and support from the Maronite community. But while he has reasserted his dominance for the time being, signs of serious rifts between Gemayel and Geagea have surfaced once again.

### Israel and South Lebanon

In the heat of these bitter clashes between rightwing rivals and an upsurge of fighting between groups in the nationalist alliance and Lebanese Forces units in the south dur-

## Gemayel and the Phalangists have the full backing and support of the Israeli government and military.

ing the peak of peace accord negotiations, Israel was not idly sitting by. Fully aware of the implications of the peace accord, Israel increased its tactics of destabilization and intimidation. Throughout November and December 1985, for example, low Israeli overflights and mock air raids occurred almost daily.

But Israeli activities in the south during

those months were nothing new. They simply underscored the fact that Israel has never really withdrawn from Lebanon and still occupies parts of the south and does not hesitate to attack Lebanon whenever it deems necessary. Although the South Lebanon Army (SLA) performs broad functions on behalf of the Israelis on a day-to-day basis, Israeli troops routinely violate Lebanese territory in and north of the SLA-controlled "security zone."

Beginning in April 1985, the Israelis, assisted by the SLA, began a campaign of systematic depopulation and mass expulsions from villages in the region by shelling, sniping and continually harassing the inhabitants. There were also a number of Israeli raids on villages during which the residents were expelled. One of the more glaring examples of these occurred December 31st when Israeli troops and SLA militiamen entered the small village of Kounin and ordered the villagers at gunpoint to leave immediately.

The main purpose of the mass population transfers seems to be to create a zone free of "hostile elements," i.e., the nationalistic, mostly Shi'ite population which has so fiercely resisted Israeli occupation and SLA collaboration, and to install in their place a "friendly" Christian population drawn from villages in south Lebanon mainly under control of the Lebanese Forces.

Since April 1985 thousands of people from towns bordering the "security zone" (actually a populous agricultural region largely inhabited by Shi'ite Muslims) have been forced to leave. Three-quarters of Kfar Roummane's eight thousand inhabitants were forced out after many were killed by SLA snipers. Similar stories abound in Marjeyoun, Jezzine, Yater, Kafra, Kfar Houna and dozens of other towns and villages.

People inside the "zone" are subjected to severe restrictions; their movements in and out of the region are monitored. There have also been reports of torture and other abuses of people arrested by the SLA troops, then taken to interrogation centers at Khiam and Bint Jbail.

Several major incidents in recent months include the March 6th Israeli sweep into south Lebanon following the ambush of an Israeli patrol north of the "security zone" and the capture of two Israeli soldiers. Villages in the vicinity were terrorized by Israeli helicopter gunships and ground troops. People were subjected to

## Lebanon's rightwing leaders can endure opposition only with outside help.

mass arrests, punishments, and expulsions before the Israelis pulled back. The attack took place despite the fact that the two Israeli soldiers had been whisked off to northern Lebanon right after their capture.

On March 24th, 23 people were killed or injured when heavy Israeli artillery shelled a popular marketplace in Nabatiyeh where hundreds of shoppers were gathered. The same day a column of Israeli tanks supported by helicopters entered Lebanese territory outside the "zone." Three days later and again on April 7th, Israeli warplanes bombed Ain al-Hilweh Palestinian refugee camp near Sidon.

Gripped between Israel's aggression on the one hand and the Lebanese government's intransigence on the other, the people of Lebanon are left with no other choice but to oppose and resist both Israeli and Phalangist denial of their freedom and human rights however they can. To that end, a boycott against Gemayel has been initiated by government opposition leaders.

Given Gemayel's outside alliances, however, the boycott is unlikely to succeed without direct Syrian involvement. But with Israel threatening to attack Syria—and lay waste to parts of Lebanon in the process—and with the United States—freshly emboldened by its recent raid on Libya—pointing fingers at Syria, Lebanon's nationalists must depend more than ever on unifying themselves. Gemayel's ouster hinges on whether or not they can overcome their differences and end the sectarianism and infighting that have long plagued Lebanese politics. Amal's continuous military campaign against the Palestinians in Lebanon is especially damaging in this regard.

One optimistic note is that the resurgence of religious trends in Lebanon following Amal's rise to prominence appears to be on the decline. The people of Lebanon, exhausted by civil war and invasion, cannot be satisfied with circumstances that only generate more of the same. The deprivation and hardship they have suffered may well rekindle their belief in the sheer necessity of secularism and unity. Certainly there is no other way to promote domestic peace and to repel the Israeli threat to the south. □

*Kathryn Silver lived and worked in Lebanon from 1980 to 1983. She is currently an activist on Middle East issues in the Boston area.*



Hilton Obenzinger/Palestine Focus

# The Problems of Oriental Jews in Israel

By MK Charlie Bitton

*Between 1908 and 1910, ten thousand Yemeni Jews, encouraged by Labor Zionist representatives, came to Palestine, where they were put to work as agricultural workers. Because of the Labor Zionists' unwillingness to employ non-Jews in the colonial project, the Yemeni Jews provided a pool of cheap labor for jobs European Jews were unwilling to take. Since that time, "Oriental" Jews still play similar roles in Israeli society, generally relegated to the lower sectors of the Jewish economic spectrum as part of an ethnic division of labor, with European Jews maintaining dominance of the upper levels of economic life. Oriental Jews face ongoing discrimination in all areas of life that poses one of the most volatile problems within Israeli Jewish society. The Likud and other right-wing parties have demagogically taken advantage of the frustration faced by Oriental Jews, whipping up anti-Arab sentiment in particular.*

*Charlie Bitton is a progressive activist within the Oriental Jewish community. Bitton helped found the Israeli Black Panthers in the early 1970s. Often, the efforts of progressives within this community get little notice in the American press because of the efforts of the Likud and other Israeli rightists to play up Oriental Jewish fears. This article was originally produced for delegates to the United Nations NGO Conference on the Question of Palestine in September 1985.*

*Note: The Oriental Jewish community, which consists of Jews from Arab countries, India, Ethiopia, Bukhara, and southern Europe, is actually diverse. Often they are called Sephardim, which, more accurately, means those Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492. We follow Mr. Bitton's usage of the English equivalent of Edot Mizrah, the People of the Orient, to be as all-inclusive as possible.*

Almost 62 percent of all the Jews in the state of Israel are Oriental Jews (Sephardim, originally from Arab countries, North Africa, South Europe, and partly born in the country). Two-thirds of these Jews are living in slums and underdeveloped towns. At this time only 14 percent of the total students in Israel are Oriental Jews, whereas more than 90 percent of Jewish prisoners are Oriental Jews. Most Oriental Jews live in slums and in great need, more than half of them living below the standard of living. Seventy-two percent of those who receive social aid are Oriental Jews.

I can bring more and more examples to

prove the discrimination faced by Oriental Jews, a discrimination which is also clear in social relationships. There are Jews who come from the USA and Western Europe who refuse to live together in the same block or locality with Oriental Jews, or even to send their children to schools where Oriental Jewish children form the majority.

This situation of social and economic discrimination, which intensified in the course of the economic problems in Israel, brought together a group of young Oriental Jews to form the Black Panther organization in 1970. This organization adopted a motto for itself, to bring the cry of discrimination against Oriental Jews and their problems to the public and to lead a just daily struggle of Oriental Jews. The Black Panthers organized hundreds of demonstrations in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and other places in Israel, faced physical encounters with the police force, organized sit-down strikes in government offices, and other activities to become a prominent organization in the public life in Israel. Israeli authorities did everything to liquidate the organization, to divide it, and to bring conflict in the organization, but without success. The organization still exists and is active up to this day.

In 1977 there was a change in the Israeli government. Until then, authority was in the hands of the Marakh (the Labor Alignment). During their rule, Oriental Jews suffered from discrimination. They cannot forget that, when they brought them from Iraq or Morocco and before they gave them tents, they sprayed them with DDT because they are black and dirty Jews. Even after the rightwing Likud came to power there was no change in their situation. And today, when the national unity government is in power, the social and economic discrimination still goes on.

In 1977, after long discussions, the central committee of the Black Panthers reached the conclusion that they cannot lead a struggle against social and economic discrimination without connecting it with the political struggle. A government, most of whose budget goes towards war, towards capturing other lands and countries, and for the arms race, definitely has no interest or even intention of solving the problems of Oriental Jews. Therefore, when the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) was established in 1977, the Black Panthers immediately joined and participated in establishing the platform of the Front.

The platform gives a program of how to eliminate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and how to reach a just peace on the only basis, which is the withdrawal of Israel from all territories occupied since June 1967; the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza strip and East Jerusalem, beside the state of Israel; the recognition of the PLO as the only representative of the Palestinian people, and only the PLO has the right to represent the Palestinian people. The program also calls for a just solution for the Palestinian refugees according to the resolutions of the UN. As well, we added to the peace program a call for an international committee for peace in the Middle East under the supervision of the UN and with the participation of all parties to the conflict, including the PLO, Israel, the rest of the Arab countries, as well as the USA and USSR.

The Front's program also includes the protection of workers' rights; the struggle for national equality for the Palestinian population in Israel; the struggle against the discrimination of Oriental Jews; the struggle against fascism and for the protection of the democratic freedoms; and the struggle for equal rights for women.

The Democratic Front for Peace and Equality is the only front of its type. In all its organizations and activities, Jews and Palestinians are working together, and it presents an example of how Jews and Palestinians can live and struggle together for the same goal. On the basis of the common platform, several organizations work to-

gether, such as the Black Panthers, the Israeli Communist Party, the Nazareth Democratic Front, which holds municipal authority in Nazareth, heads of Arab local councils, the Initiative Druze Committee, the National Arab Student Union, the Democra-

tic Women's Movement, and Jewish and Arab personalities.

In 1977, Charlie Bitton, the chairman of the Black Panthers, was elected to be a Member of the Knesset on the list of the Democratic Front, and he remains a Member of the Knesset. Charlie Bitton especially expresses the case of Oriental Jews and poor classes.

The Black Panthers also lead a struggle against settlements in the occupied territories under the motto, "Money for slums and not for settlements." Last year, racial instigation was intensified against the Palestinian population. This racial poison was spread amongst Oriental Jews so that they would forget their horrible situation and direct their hatred against Palestinians. We need to mention in particular the fascist Meir Kahane and his bandits. He calls for deportation of Palestinians from their homeland with the help of thousands of dollars which he receives from fascist organizations in the USA. The Black Panther organization leads a bitter struggle against Kahane and his bandits, and they faced him several times in the Knesset and in public. The Black Panther organization sees this struggle as a decisive one, and we are convinced that it is for the interest of both peoples in Israel to eliminate fascism in Israel.

It is not allowed to have racism among Oriental Jews. We will not forget the glorious history when we lived in friendship and



Israeli children of Beit Sha'an development town.

Jean Moler/MERIP Reports

understanding with Arabs in Arab countries. Our future is only in understanding and in union with the Palestinians. □

## Focus on Action...

Continued from page 2

the Iran-Iraq war... By posing the question 'Whither the Arab World?' we seek to critically examine Arab reality and prospect cognizant of the tremendous promise and creative potential in the Arab world."

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The November 29th Committee for Palestine has added new chapters in the last year in the following cities: Cincinnati, Ann Arbor, Baton Rouge, Youngstown, Houston, Salt Lake City, and Eugene/Corvallis. As an example of how active these new chapters are, the Ann Arbor chapter sponsored John Masterson, speaking on "Palestinians Under Occupation," and an exhibit of Naji El-Ali's political cartoons in March and in April demonstrated on the anniversary of the Israeli massacre of the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin and against the U.S. attack on

Libya, presented a radio show, and sponsored an event on the African National Congress/November 29th Committee for Palestine national tour on Israel and South Africa. These are only the major activities of the chapter; a full list would fill this column.

Many cities held events commemorating the nineteenth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the fourth anniversary of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon on June 5 and 6. The New York event was particularly impressive; it featured Paul Saba, director of the Middle East Philanthropic Fund; Mamazane Xulu, chair of the Women's Section of the African National Congress; Oscar Oramas Oliva, Cuban ambassador to the United Nations; Naseer Aruri, editor of *Middle East Monitor*; Sheila Ryan, cofounder of Claremont Research Center; and Dr. Enrico Melson, who served as a physician at Gaza Hospital in Beirut during the 1982 invasion. Melson is also a member of the National Advisory Board of the November 29th Committee for Palestine, which was a cosponsor of the event.

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The United Nations held its third annual symposium for nongovernmental organizations (NGO) in New York in June. Berkeley Mayor Gus Newport and Arab League Ambassador Clovis Maksoud were among those who addressed the meeting. Delegates approved a major emphasis on marking the twentieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in June 1987. The following organizations were elected to the North American NGO Coordinating Committee: American Friends Service Committee, America-Israel Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Canadian Arab Federation, Najda: Women Concerned About the Middle East, National Conference of Black Lawyers, Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation, November 29th Committee for Palestine, Palestine Human Rights Campaign, Presbyterian church, United Methodists, and United States Peace Council. □