

# Palestine Focus

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Editorial:

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## U.S. Talks with PLO

### Diplomatic Victory for Intifada

The decision by the U.S. government to open a diplomatic dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization is an historic development and a positive step toward peace. For the first time, the United States is willing to talk officially with the representative of the Palestinian people; this step underscores the fact that all former attempts to find substitutes have failed. Although not yet willing to admit it, the United States had to deal with the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

What changed was not a new PLO willingness to address U.S. concerns—such moves had already been taken at the Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers and even earlier; the new ingredient was the intifada, the year-long Palestinian uprising.

Expressing their determination with stones and popular committees, Palestinians living under Israeli occupation sent a message throughout the world: The occupation must end! Through the strength of the intifada, the PLO was able to voice the aspirations of the Palestinian people at the PNC meeting: On November 15, 1988, the independent Palestinian state was declared. While the United States is not yet prepared to address these aspirations, the decision to open the dialogue clarified the fundamental fact: If there is to be any move toward peace, the PLO must be included as an equal partner in negotiations.

U.S. policy had long been isolated from the international consensus, and after Secretary of State Shultz's visa denial to Chairman Arafat, the United States found itself without support even from European and other traditional allies. With American public opinion increasingly demanding real moves toward peace, the Reagan administration was compelled to move to break the deadlock.

Although the United States continues to be the main supporter of Israel, the decision to meet with the PLO represents a significant and pragmatic step. The Reagan administration could make such a move because U.S. strategic



Rev. Jesse Jackson and emcee Camellia Odeh at the Chicago PSC "Live Aid Palestine" concert. See page 2 for more on this and other intifada anniversary events.

Photo: Mahmood Nadia

interests are not completely identical with those of Washington's "strategic asset." From the U.S. point of view, the Palestinian intifada is a destabilizing event in a critical region of the world. The example of a people rising up to demand change is unsettling, not only to Israel, but to many of its neighboring Arab regimes, most of which are closely allied to the United States. Left unchecked, the uprising could spread to surrounding Arab countries. At the

increased since the dialogue opened.

In the short time since it began, the diplomatic dialogue has weathered several threats. The bombing of Pan American flight 103 may have been engineered by someone seeking to sabotage the process, but Chairman Arafat vigorously denounced the attack and the United States did not use the opportunity to break off relations. Attacks

same time the United States is less committed to Israeli occupation and expansion than is Israel itself, although the idea of a genuinely independent Palestinian state is still regarded as a threat.

Washington hoped that by simply opening the dialogue, the uprising would end without obliging the United States to make further substantive concessions. By pressuring the PLO into agreeing to its demands, the U.S. government hoped that the PLO would be severely split. These goals have not been achieved: The PLO has maintained its hard-won unity, and the uprising shows no indication of coming to a halt. As the PLO chairman said in Geneva, the intifada is something "neither Arafat nor anyone for that matter can stop." In fact, the determination of Palestinians to fight to occupation has only

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## Interview with Ibrahim Abu-Lughod

# The Dialogue Begins as the Intifada Continues

Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod is chair of the Department of Political Science at Northwestern University, a member of the Palestine National Council, and a leading Palestinian intellectual. Prof. Abu-Lughod was interviewed for Palestine Focus by Rabab Hadi in January 1989 in New York.

Dr. Abu-Lughod characterized the PNC program as a "breakthrough which is both realistic and consistent with the thrust of Palestinian policy over the past 15 years." The PNC decisions, he said, "opened the possibility for greater international support" by clearly declaring independence and by "anchoring itself in international legitimacy." The declaration of independence "told the world what kind of a society we project for ourselves ... consistent with our culture, a Palestinian Arab state for all Palestinians." That state "accepts international law and wants to live in peace with its neighbors.... It is a logical culmination of the Palestinian struggle over the past two decades."

PF: Would you clarify the issues concern-

ing accepting UN Security Council resolution 242?

AL: We fought resolution 242 since it was adopted by the Security Council, and our position was correct. We did not shift our position or suddenly see that resolution 242 now contains things we did not see before. Prior to July 1988, resolution 242 literally did not address itself to us because it explicitly relates to territories and to modes of political existence of institutions within those territories. Theoretically, we were not responsible for the occupied Palestinian territories, i.e. the West Bank and Gaza, which resolution 242 addressed. King Hussein presumably was responsible for the West Bank.

When King Hussein, in fact, abdicated, it became our responsibility to address ourselves to resolution 242. If you accept that, then clearly 242 is also the basis for the international conference. So the shift is important; it is a sudden shift. But it is a sudden shift because objectively the situation has changed.

But the second reason why we changed is clearly the pressure of our people under

occupation. Our people are struggling to remove the occupation which is not going to remove itself. All occupations in the end have to be negotiated out. Our people said that we want this occupation to be terminated. It has to be negotiated. Israel must negotiate that with the PLO, because the PLO is our representative.

That constitutes another form of pressure for the PLO as the responsible agency for the West Bank and Gaza and, therefore, its readiness to negotiate an end to the occu-

pation. These are significant changes, and the fact that we were able to achieve a consensus in the PNC—not unanimity—indicates not only a maturity but an understanding on the part of all groups in the Council that our priorities are different from the past. The most important priority for us today is to bring about independence in the territory which is today occupied. All parties attach a tremendous importance to liberating the West Bank and Gaza from

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# Palestinian Women in Prison

By Dr. Shelly Sella

The role of Palestinian women in the intifada (uprising) has often been overlooked. They are active participants in demonstrations against the occupation; they organize community-based relief services for the populace; and they ensure that life continues for a people under siege.

Israeli women have also been active in the many groups, some new, some already existent, that have been working to end the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Two groups consist of women only: Women in Black and Women's Organization for Women Political Prisoners. Women in Black organizes weekly vigils in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem to protest the occupation. Women's Organization for Women Political Prisoners was started in May 1988 as an outgrowth of a seminar in Israel on feminism and the intifada. Currently comprising 40 women, its goals are to offer humanitarian aid for the prisoners and their families and to raise public awareness about their existence and conditions.

Since December 9, 1987, over ten thousand Palestinians have been detained under administrative detention orders. A legacy of the British Mandate over Palestine, updated by the Israelis for use in the occupied territories and over Israeli Palestinians, this body of laws grants any Israeli commander the right to issue an administrative detention order for a six-month period which may be renewed indefinitely. No charges are made, and the accused is not allowed recourse to legal defense.

For the first time since 1985, when administrative detention was reintroduced in the occupied territories, women are being detained under these orders. Currently, five Palestinian women are detained in Israeli jails, a clear violation of Article 76 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 "Related to the Protection of Civilians in Times of War," which states that detainees from an occupied territory "must be detained

in the occupied country" (i.e., in the West Bank or Gaza).

Administrative detention has historically been used by the Israeli authorities to detain politically active Palestinians in an attempt to squash the development of any political leadership. The five women detainees have all been members of women's groups in the occupied territories. Their activities have included teaching literacy classes to women, running kindergartens, and organizing sewing collectives.

In addition to these five women, 28 other Palestinian women and two Israeli Jewish women are in Israeli jails for uprising-related political offenses. Ranging in age from 15 to 65, the Palestinian women are either "suspected without charge" or awaiting trial for participating in demonstrations, stone throwing, or incitement. The two Jewish women, editors of a closed leftist newspaper, *Hanitzotz*, are victims of Israel's crackdown on the media. They have been accused of membership in a faction of the PLO.

The burden of interrogation, detention, and imprisonment—never a benign ordeal in any case—is exacerbated for women. It is not unusual for them to have small children and, as a result, family members must either take over childcare for them or the children must accompany their mother into jail. Furthermore, women have systematically been denied gynecological and/or prenatal care. More recently, there have been several reports of sexual abuse and

harassment during interrogations.

**Naila 'Ayesh Zakut**

The experience of Naila 'Ayesh Zakut, aged 28, is but one example of a woman political prisoner in Israel. She is currently in detention, the second time in two years. Naila was first arrested on February 19, 1987, and interrogated about her activities in Bulgaria, where she had trained as a laboratory technician. Naila was pregnant at the time of this interrogation, and, after several days of beatings under questions, she began to bleed. She was denied medical attention and subsequently miscarried.

Naila was charged with membership in the Democratic Front for the Liberation of

Palestine, a PLO faction. In her hearing before the military court, Naila asserted that her confession had been extracted under torture. A separate hearing to determine whether her confession was illegally obtained or not was ordered but it has yet to come to trial.

After her release on bail on March 23, 1987, Naila returned to her home in Gaza where she was employed by the Save the Children Foundation in a project for women and was active in a committee for the families of expelled Palestinians.

In February 1988, two weeks before the birth of her son, Naila's husband was arrested, interrogated, and subsequently expelled to Lebanon. Later, on October 5, Naila was arrested for the second time and taken to Hasharon Prison in Israel. She was charged with distributing leaflets for the Democratic Front and placed under a six-month administrative detention order.

Through the intervention of the Women's Organization for Women Political Prisoners, the Israeli Civil Rights League, and local media coverage, the prison authorities allowed Naila's 11-month-old son to join her in prison. An appeal against her detention was dismissed, so Naila and her son will serve out the six-month detention order, provided that it is not extended.

For further information, contact the Women's Organization for Women Political Prisoners, P. O. Box 31811, Tel Aviv 61318, Israel. Donations to support their work may be sent to Bank Hapoalim, Branch 532, Account No. 260643, 30 Even G'virol Street, Tel Aviv 64078, Israel. □



Palestinian woman demonstrates Dec. 1st in front of the United Nations in New York.

Photo: Judy Janda/Impact Visuals

*Shelly Sella, M.D., studied medicine in Israel from 1982 to 1986. In her recent trip to Israel in July 1988, she met with members from the Women's Organization for Women Political Prisoners. She is active in Kolaynu (New Jewish Agenda) in Santa Cruz, California.*

## FOCUS ON ACTION

By Steve Goldfield

The Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) held very successful events in December across the United States to mark the anniversary of the Palestinian uprising and the declaration of an independent Palestinian state. The events raised funds for medical relief in the West Bank and Gaza.

Rev. Jesse Jackson welcomed the nearly 2,000 people who attended the Chicago event, which featured performer Gil Scott Heron. Among those who spoke were Congressman Charles Hayes, Mayor Bobby Thompson of North Chicago, Chicago Aldermen Chuy Garcia and Timothy Evans, Themba Ntinga of the African National Congress (ANC), and Arnaldo Ramos of the FMLN (El Salvador).

In Washington, 700 people packed the hall to hear Roy Brown, Rumisanko, the DC new song group, PAM singers, Alicia Partnoy, and the Al Watan dabke group. In San Francisco 500 enthusiastically celebrated with the Dance Brigade, a women's dance troupe which presented a piece based on Beirut 1982, Altazor with Chilean musician Rafael Manriquez, and Al Awda, a Palestinian ensemble.

In New York, there were two events. Shafiq Al-Hout, PLO representative in Lebanon, was the main speaker on November 30. About 350 people also heard Sheila Ryan of the Middle East Peace Network, Alicia Sampson of the International Jewish Peace Union, and Neo Mnumzana, chief representative of the ANC to the United Nations. A vigil and march was held on December 9. Speakers included Judy Janda of the PSC; Mimi Berman of New Jewish Agenda; Harold Mendlowitz, president of Local 1202, Amalgamated Transit Union (Greyhound); Rosemary

Mealy, National Alliance of Third World Journalists; Rob Jones, American Committee on Africa; Jaime Veve, Puerto Rican Committee Against Repression; and Samira Ayoub of the Palestinian Women's Association. A large vigil was also held on Christmas Eve at St. Patrick's Cathedral; thousands of cards were distributed about the Palestinian uprising and the holiday season.

A candlelight vigil and rally was also held in Seattle by the PSC along with the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Palestine Human Rights Campaign, and National Lawyers Guild. Nearly 300 people attended. In Tucson, a week of education about Palestinian culture culminated at a Palestinian dinner with dabke dancing and 200 people in attendance.

The Philadelphia PSC held a medical aid benefit and vigil. In Sacramento, the featured speaker represented the Popular Committees for Health Services of the West Bank and Gaza. Other participants included the CAMDI singers, dabke dancers of the Association of Palestinians for Return, and PSC National Director Ginny Kraus.

Houston PSC held a concert featuring Filipino, jazz, reggae, and Latino bands, dabke dancing, and poetry from South Africa. In Austin, "Building Bridges from Palestine to Latin America" was cosponsored by PSC and Chicanos against Military Intervention in Latin America (CAMILA) to jointly mark the 78th anniversary of the Mexican revolution and the first anniversary of the Palestinian uprising. The Ballet Folklorico de la Rosa Linda performed. Speakers included Isolda Ortega and Reuben Solis of CAMILA, Syndi Stewart of PSC, Professor Barbara Harlowe of the University of Texas, and Edgard Rivera. Patricia Salas and Antonio Diaz of CAMILA emceed.

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A December 27, 1988 *New York Times* editorial told the story: "In the early morning hours of Jan. 26, 1987, seven [Palestinian] immigrants living in Los Angeles were arrested at gunpoint in their homes. The immigration service then treated the seven, and another immigrant arrested later, just as harshly in custody. They were detained under maximum security for two weeks in prison. They were even handcuffed during meetings with their lawyers. Who

were these dangerous troublemakers? The Immigration Service claimed they had to be deported because they belonged to an organization that advocates subversive activities."

In a major victory in the case of the Los Angeles 8, U.S. District Judge Stephen Wilson ruled in December that major provisions of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act are unconstitutional because they violate the First Amendment to the Constitution. Wilson, appointed to the bench by President Ronald Reagan, according to the *Times*, "found that aliens, once admitted to the United States, have free-speech rights which generally take precedence over the government's right to control immigration." Judge Wilson concluded his opinion, "In this case the government is trying to stifle certain ideas from entering our society from certain aliens through its immigration power. Our society, however, was built on the premise that only through the free flow of ideas can our nation grow and prosper." Judge Wilson also threw out provisions of a 1987 statute, the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, which, according to the Los Angeles legal newspaper, the *Recorder*, "gave aliens the same First Amendment rights as citizens when it came to deportation proceedings, but it included several exceptions, such as the denial of First Amendment rights to members of the PLO." The judge invalidated the exception regarding PLO members.

Judge Wilson's decision has profound implications for all immigrants and visa applicants. The government is expected to appeal his decision to the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, a major victory has been won for Palestinian rights and for all civil-liberties advocates. In the context of the new relations between the U.S. government and the PLO, Judge Wilson's decision is another sign of a thaw in the American attitude toward Palestinian rights. To support continued legal initiatives to maintain this important decision, funds may be sent to Committee for Justice, P. O. Box 4631, Los Angeles, CA 90051.

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The Palestinian people and supporters of Palestinian rights lost two great champions of justice and solidarity in

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# Children of Occupation

By Howard Levine

**“W**e were in Jabalya camp, meeting with a family who told us about a visit paid to them by the Israeli soldiers one night. The soldiers burst in and beat their 14-year-old son, then they beat the women of the house. Finally, they beat and shot the father.

“As we were leaving this home, the soldiers started coming up the street at us. A group of local children ran out and started throwing stones at the soldiers to protect us. The soldiers fired tear gas at the children and went after them with their clubs, but they all escaped. They were great. Our delegation was pulled to safety by some women who grabbed us and gave us refuge in their homes.”

Courage, challenge, pain. In many ways, the above scene witnessed by Middle East Children's Alliance Director Barbara Lubin during her trip in October 1988 sums up the crucial role of children and youth in the intifada, the Palestinian uprising, at once champions and victims. The heroic “children of the stones,” for more than a year of unbelievable determination, have battled rifle with rock, captured the imagination of the world, and forever altered the international political landscape.

In other ways, their resistance masks the true suffering of the children of occupation, romanticizes it without showing the terrible cost. Only when you visit the hospitals and see the young boys and girls having their stomachs removed after they've been shot with rubber bullets, talk to the mothers who have lost their babies to tear gas, observed children with nothing to do but stand around on the street because their schools have been closed and there are no recreational facilities, felt the anguish of children as they speak of watching their mothers and fathers being beaten and shot: only then can you understand that there is an ugly war being fought in the occupied land. And it is a war being waged against the children, too.

## Statistics Reveal Scope

A simple look at the statistics reveals the scope of the suffering. According to the Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights, at least 106, or *one-quarter*, of all the Palestinians killed during the intifada have been 18 years old or younger. Many are much younger.

Countless thousands more have been injured. “While I was there in August,” says Eugene “Gus” Newport, former mayor of Berkeley, California, and president of the Board of Directors of the Middle East Children's Alliance, “there was not a single family that I talked to whose lives had not been touched by violence.

“Everybody has lost someone,” he says, “and the young people are the hardest hit.”

Newport tells the story of one seven-month-old baby he met who had one eye put out by a rubber bullet. “Her mother was holding her in her arms when an Israeli soldier fired a round of rubber bullets. One ricocheted and hit this child in the eye. The soldier walked up and pulled that bullet out of this child's eye. He wrote up in his report, ‘This child was hit in the eye with a Palestinian stone.’

“How long, how long, how long are we going to stand here and permit this kind of thing to happen?”

The Middle East Children's Alliance has documented at least 77 cases of death, stillbirth, or children born with birth defects directly linked to tear-gas exposure. Most of this tear gas is manufactured by Federal Labs in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania. Though Federal Labs announced in May that it was suspending shipments of tear gas to Israel after a protest at the lab gates organized by the Palestine Solidarity Committee, Lubin reports that the tear gas shot at them in October also bore the Federal Labs stamp.

Lubin also reports that, despite warnings on the tear-gas canisters themselves and orders issued by Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin not to use the tear gas in enclosed areas, the soldiers are still firing them into homes and hospitals.

Fully 75 percent of the estimated 27,000 Palestinians jailed—and often tortured—since the beginning of the intifada are children and youth. An Israeli organization, In Defense of Children Under Occupation, regularly documents the abuse of children in prison. Lubin says she talked to many children who were forced to undress and do bizarre and sometimes perverse acts in front of the Israeli soldiers after they had been arrested.

## Outbreaks of Disease

Since the beginning of the intifada, there has also been a dramatic increase in the number and kinds of diseases children are being afflicted with. A public-health nurse with the Popular Committee for Health Services says that many of

the new diseases are directly related to the curfews and the frequent cutoff of water, food, and electricity that many Palestinian villages and camps face. She said, for example, that the PCHS treated one hundred children for scabies in one West Bank area after it had been under curfew for fifteen days.

The nurse also reported increasing instances of malnutrition, dysentery, and diarrhea among the children in the camps and villages. “Each of these outbreaks,” she says, “is caused directly by the curfews and because there is no fresh water or food in the camps.

“In addition, it is impossible for health workers to get into the camps during the curfews and often very difficult just afterward,” she says.

Most disturbing of all, she reports, was that the PCHS is finding the return of polio to the occupied territories. Eradicated prior to the intifada, the PCHS has treated over a dozen cases in the last few months, she says. The other popular committees and United Nations Relief Works Administration (UNRWA) clinics are treating new cases of polio as well.

In areas where there are farms, the nurse reports, they are starting to see cases of children suffering from diseases that are normally associated only with cows or sheep. But the poor living and hygienic conditions coupled with the lack of access to quality medical care on a regular basis, she says, has introduced these illnesses to children.

There are several other factors contributing to the decline of health services in the area as well. One is the fact that the United States, the largest contributor to UNRWA, has cut back its contributions to the relief agency. Thus UNRWA resources, stretched thin even at the best of times, are even more scarce just when they are needed most.

Many of the popular medical committees have stepped in and picked up much of the slack, but they must operate with far greater caution than the UNRWA clinics, since the popular committees are, after all, outlawed. These committees also suffer from a shortage of resources and a more fragile delivery system. Nevertheless, these committees are beginning to build the medical infrastructure that will be



Boy sits on the rooftop of his home in Jalazoun, West Bank. Two weeks after this photograph was taken, his house was blown up by the Israeli military because his brothers participated in the intifada. On the hill in the distant background, on the right, a Jewish settlement overlooks Jalazoun.

Photo: Adam Kufeld

necessary when Palestinian independence and a separate state are achieved.

Even the UNRWA clinics are not safe from harassment, another reason why health care has deteriorated. Israeli Defense Forces have recently made it a common practice to burst into clinics and hospitals to pull patients from sickbeds and take them away for interrogation. As a result, the nurse says, many Palestinians who need care do not go to the clinics or hospitals to get it, and their wounds are not properly treated. Such neglect usually leads to infections, bones failing to knit properly, or diseases that cannot be controlled and spread to others.

Barbara Lubin reports that while she was in Jabalya in October, an UNRWA nurse was dragged from the clinic and beaten because she tried to prevent the Israeli soldiers from taking patients away.

## Closed Schools

Most Palestinian children in the occupied territories have lost at least one year of school because of shutdowns by the

Israeli government last February. Some schools have been open sporadically and selectively since then, but most Palestinians have been without formal schooling for nearly twelve months. Louis Weber, a leader of the French National Teachers Union described it as “repression against Palestinian children and teenagers” in an interview in *L'Humanite*.

Some children have gone to the “popular schools” established by local committees, but most have not. The advantages of the popular schools are that they are able to teach Palestinian history, forbidden in the regular schools, where every mention of Palestine is excised from textbooks. The popular schools are also free from the extreme discipline of the Israeli-governed schools; such freedom creates a more hospitable learning environment. The Israeli government had hoped that by closing the schools, they would break the back of the intifada.

But the popular schools are only open for a few hours a day in only a few areas and operate without essential supplies. The schools, too, are outlawed and exist underground.

All universities on the West Bank have been completely closed since November 1987. “At the time of the final exams,” Weber reports, “many students were arrested and were physically prevented from taking them.

“This repression was doubled also by denying the teachers two months wages, although they only get 60 to 70 percent of what Israeli teachers get in the first place.”

Without the government-run schools, without the universities, and without widespread popular schools, the Palestinian children are being deprived of the most important tool in the construction of a new state: an education.

## Rejecting All Authority

Perhaps the most worrisome problem of all is the psychological damage done to the children. Studies are just beginning to document what is happening to the children, but the initial results are frightening. Already an entire generation has grown up knowing nothing but the repression of occupation. What we are learning is that children's hearts—both Israeli and Palestinian—which should be full of laughter and love, are already hardened, full of hatred and fear. There is tremendous concern among relief workers, psychologists, and the mothers of the children themselves that if there is no breakthrough for peace soon, a terrible war among these children is coming.

“What many of the members of the women's committees told us they are worried about,” says Lubin, “is that their children, through the intifada, have learned to reject not only Israeli authority, but all authority.

“Their schools are closed so they have no daily routine. Their parents are arrested or working, and there are no recreation centers for them to play in, so they are left on their own, on the streets, with nothing to do. Many are becoming wild, uncontrollable.

“Children have a right to an education and a right to play,” says Lubin, a former president of the Berkeley, California, Board of Education. “The United Nations Charter guarantees it, and simple humanity demands it.

“Those rights are being denied under occupation, and it has many Palestinians worried about what will become of their society if the children continue to be alone and out of control.”

The Palestinian children are being denied not just a state but their lives, denied common experiences most of us took for granted growing up. One 17-year-old woman told Lubin that she “dreads getting up in the morning because there is nothing to do. All I do is wait and wait until it is time to go to sleep again. I want to go to school, to have a family, to work. My whole life is passing me by.”

In addition, there are the psychological effects of watching mothers and fathers, grandmothers, baby sisters and brothers beaten and shot or dragged out of their homes and

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**P**alestine, the land of the three monotheistic faiths, is where the Palestinian Arab people was born, on which it grew, developed, and excelled. The Palestinian people was never separated from or diminished in its integral bonds with Palestine. Thus the Palestinian Arab people ensured for itself an everlasting union between itself, its land, and its history.

Resolute throughout that history, the Palestinian Arab people forged its national identity, rising even to unimagined levels in its defense, as invasion, the design of others and the appeal special to Palestine's ancient and luminous place on that eminence where powers and civilizations are joined. ... All this intervened thereby to deprive the people of its political independence. Yet the undying connection between Palestine and its people secured for the land its character, and for the people its national genius.

Nourished by an unfolding series of civilizations and cultures, inspired by a heritage rich in variety and kind, the Palestinian Arab people added to its stature by consolidating a union between itself and its patrimonial land. The call went out from temple, church, and mosque that to praise the Creator, to celebrate compassion and peace was indeed the message of Palestine. And, generation after generation, the Palestinian Arab people gave of itself unsparingly in the valiant battle for liberation and homeland. For what has been the unbroken chain of our people's rebellions but the heroic embodiment of our will for national independence? And so the people was sustained in the struggle to stay and to prevail.

When in the court of modern times a new order of values was declared with norms and values fair for all, it was the Palestinian Arab people that was excluded from the destiny of all other peoples by a hostile array of local and foreign powers. Yet again unaided justice was revealed as insufficient to drive the world's history along its preferred course.

And it was the Palestinian people, already wounded in its body, that was submitted to yet another type of occupation over which floated the falsehood that "Palestine was a land without a people." This notion was foisted upon some in the world, whereas in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations (1919) and in the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the community of nations had recognized that all the Arab territories, including Palestine, of the former Ottoman provinces were to have granted to them their free-

# Declaration of Palestine National Council

## Palestine National Council

### Algiers, November 1988

dom as provisionally independent nations.

Despite the historical injustice inflicted on the Palestinian Arab people resulting in their dispersion and depriving them of their right to self-determination, following upon U.N. General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish, it is this Resolution that still provides those conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence.

By stages, the occupation of Palestine and parts of other Arab territories by Israeli forces, the willed dispossession and expulsion from their ancestral homes of the majority of Palestine's civilian inhabitants, was achieved by organized terror; those Palestinians who remained, as a vestige subjugated in its homeland, were persecuted and forced to endure the destruction of their national life.

Thus were principles of international legitimacy violated. Thus were the Charter of the United Nations and its Resolutions disfigured, for they had recognized the Palestinian Arab people's national rights, including the right of return, the right to independence, the right to sovereignty over territory and homeland.

In Palestine and on its perimeters, in exile distant and near, the Palestinian Arab people never faltered and never abandoned its belief in its rights of return and independence. Occupation, massacres, and dispersion achieved no gain in the unabated Palestinian consciousness of self and political identity, as Palestinians went forward with their destiny, undeterred and unbowed. And from out of the long years of trial in ever-mounting struggle, the Palestinian political identity emerged further consolidated and confirmed. And the collective Palestinian national will forged for itself a political embodiment, the Palestine Liberation Organization, its sole legitimate representative, recognized by the world community as a whole, as well as by related regional and international institutions. Standing on the very rock of conviction in the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, and on the ground of Arab national consensus, and of international legitimacy, the PLO led the campaigns of its great people, molded into unity and powerful resolve, one and indivisible in its triumphs, even as it suffered massacres and

confinement within and without its home. And so Palestinian resistance was clarified and raised into the forefront of Arab and world awareness as the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people achieved unique prominence among the world's liberation movements in the modern era.

The massive national uprising, the "intifada," now intensifying in cumulative scope and power in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as the unflinching resistance of the refugee camps outside the homeland, have elevated consciousness of the Palestinian truth and right into still higher realms of comprehension and actuality. Now at last the curtain has been dropped on a whole epoch of prevarication and negation. The intifada has set siege to the mind of official Israel, which has for too long relied exclusively upon myth and terror to deny the Palestinian existence altogether. Because of the intifada and its irreversible revolutionary impulse, the history of Palestine has therefore arrived at a decisive juncture.

Whereas the Palestinian people reaffirms most definitely its inalienable rights in the land of its patrimony:

Now by virtue of natural, historical and legal rights, and the sacrifices of successive generations who gave of themselves;

In pursuance of Resolutions adopted by Arab Summit Conferences and relying on the authority bestowed by international legitimacy as embodied in the Resolutions of the United Nations Organization since 1947;

And in exercise by the Palestinian Arab people of its rights to self-determination, political independence, and sovereignty over its territory;

The Palestine National Council, in the name of God, and in the name of the Palestinian Arab people, hereby proclaims the establishment of the State of Palestine on our Palestinian territory with its capital Jerusalem (Al-Quds Ash Sharif).

The State of Palestine is the state of Palestinians wherever they may be. The state is for them to enjoy in it their collective national and cultural identity, theirs to pursue in it a complete equality of rights. In it will be safeguarded their political and religious convictions and their human dignity by means of a parliamentary democratic

## Ibrahim Abu-Lughod...

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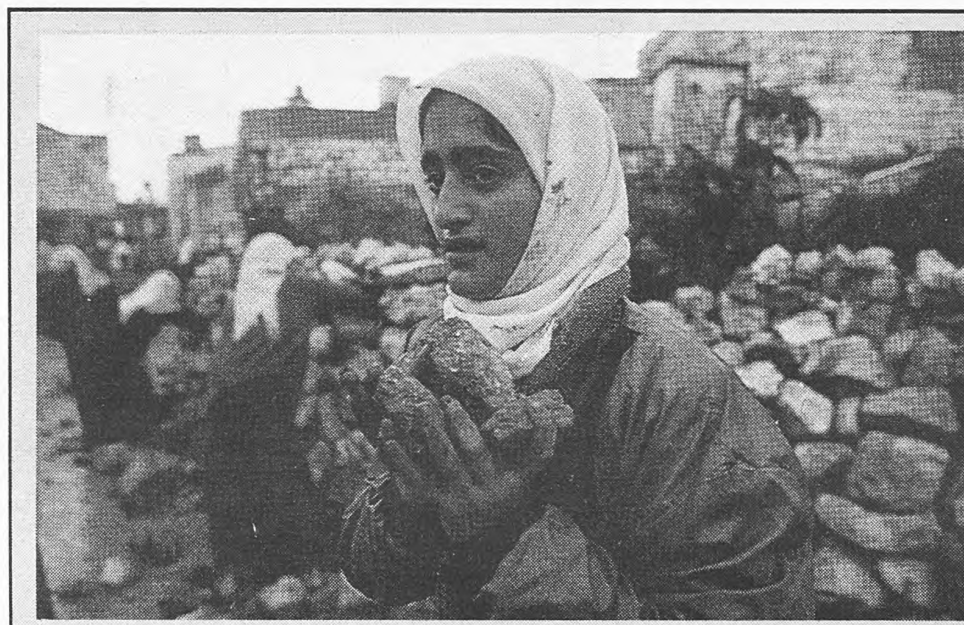
Israel's occupation. Therefore, although some disagreed about the acceptance of 242, they did not let that stand in the way of endorsing the whole political activity.

**PF:** How are the declaration of independence and the political program related to the Palestinian uprising, the intifada?

**AL:** The intifada is, of course, a crucial event in Palestinian history. The intifada has demonstrated the Palestinian commitment to struggle by all legitimate means to bring about the end of the occupation. The fact that Israel has been so far defeated in its efforts to contain the intifada has shown to the Israelis that there are different ways that are equally effective to terminate the occupation.

What the Palestinians have done in the intifada is literally to render the occupation obsolete. The Israelis may be present physically in the West Bank and Gaza, but they cannot compel the Palestinian people to collaborate in implementing the occupation. The occupation can never succeed if the people under occupation do not collaborate with it. Historically, no colonized population has ever achieved greater military power than the occupier. Yet the occupied, the colonized, triumphs by virtue of escalating the cost of the occupation; that is how they do it. What the intifada has done is to escalate the cost and reduce the benefits of the occupation to the occupier.

The intifada also constitutes a major crisis in American policy. It has a power of contagion elsewhere. It has exposed Israel's weakness. Israel cannot defeat it because it is not a military confrontation. Israel wins military confrontations. This is the genius of the intifada. You simply disengage. You do not attack. You do not provoke. The use of stones is symbolic, but fundamentally it is the noncooperation, disengagement, the alternative society that we have created that makes the intifada very effective.



Palestinian women play a significant role in the intifada.

Photo: Feinblatt/Washington Report

If you are an Israeli, you stay there to do what? People are not working for you. They do not go to Israel to work. They do not clean up your garbage, but they clean up for themselves. They cooperate with each other. So you cannot exploit them; you cannot extract raw materials from them. You can confiscate their land and eject them. OK, you can do that. But if you are going to keep them there, if they are going to stay on the land, they are not going to cooperate with you. What are you to do? It is a brilliant idea.

Then you discover that the Egyptians can do that. The Iraqis can do that. Anybody can do it. So it is very important to bring it to an end. But you cannot bring it to an end with a half-assed solution. You have to give the people what they want, and what they are demanding is not excessive.

The demands are where the Palestinian genius translated itself into the program we issued in the National Council, which is consistent with the intifada. It is a decent pro-

gram; it does not demand the world. It is modest; it is possible, and we are not saying we want everything beyond imagination. All we want is independence. Every people in the world achieved their independence, why not we? It is a brilliant formulation to a brilliant kind of activity, the intifada, and that is what is so great about it. That is why we have received the kind of support we have. Even people who in the past did not support us only because we are radical, now that we accept a modest program they support us.

**PF:** Why did the U.S. government start dialogue with the PLO?

**AL:** The most important reason the United States entered into the dialogue is because it has failed to destroy the PLO. They have tried, using Israel, to bring about the total collapse of the PLO since 1982. They tried through the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The United States openly invited the Arab states to take care of the PLO. The U.S. government hoped to destroy the PLO's political vitality in order to achieve an outcome consistent with Camp David or what Mr. Shultz called the improvement of the quality of life under occupation but within Israel's orbit. Consistent with the Jordanian option, every initiative offered in the past always bypassed the Palestinians and bypassed the PLO. All these initiatives failed for the United States. Therefore, if it wanted to succeed, it was incumbent upon it to alter its course.

# inian Independence

onal Council  
ber 15, 1988



*PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat and Palestinian leader Dr. George Habash celebrate the newly declared independent Palestinian state.*

*Photo: Jerusalem*

system of governance, itself based on freedom of expression and the freedom to form parties. The rights of minorities will duly be respected by the majority. Governance will be based on principles of social justice, equality and nondiscrimination in public rights on grounds of race, religion, color, or sex under the aegis of a constitution which ensures the rule of law and an independent judiciary. Thus shall these principles allow no departure from Palestine's age-old spiritual and civilizational heritage of tolerance and relig-

The State of Palestine proclaims its commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It proclaims its commitment as well to the principles and policies of the Nonaligned Movement.

It further announces itself to be a peace-loving state, adhering to the principles of peaceful coexistence. It will join with all states and peoples in order to assure a permanent peace based upon justice and the respect of rights so

ious coexistence.

The State of Palestine is an Arab state, an integral and indivisible part of the Arab nation, at one with that nation in heritage and civilization, with it also in its aspiration for liberation, progress, democracy, and unity. The State of Palestine affirms its obligation to abide by the Charter of the League of Arab States, whereby the coordination of the Arab states with each other shall be strengthened. It calls upon Arab compatriots to consolidate and enhance the emergency in reality of our state, to mobilize potential, and to intensify efforts whose goal is to end the Israeli occupation.

that humanity's potential for well-being may be assured, an earnest competition for excellence be maintained, and confidence in the future will eliminate fear for those who are just and for whom justice is the only recourse.

In the context of its struggle for peace in the land of love and peace, the State of Palestine calls upon the United Nations to take on special responsibility for the Palestinian Arab people and its homeland. It calls upon all peace- and freedom-loving peoples and states to assist it in the attainment of its objectives, to provide it with security, to alleviate the tragedy of its people, and to help it terminate Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

The State of Palestine herewith declares that it believes in the settlement of regional and international disputes by peaceful means, in accordance with the U.N. Charter and resolutions. Without prejudice to its natural right to defend its territorial integrity and independence, it therefore rejects the threat or use of force, violence, and terrorism against its territorial integrity, or political independence, as it also rejects their use against the territorial integrity of other states.

Therefore, on this day unlike all others, November 15, 1988, as we stand at the threshold of a new dawn, in all honor and modesty we humbly bow to the sacred spirits of our fallen ones, Palestinian and Arab, by the purity of whose sacrifice for the homeland our sky has been illuminated and our land given life. Our hearts are lifted up and irradiated by the light emanating from the much blessed intifada, from those who have endured and have fought the fight of the camps, of dispersion, of exile, from those who have borne the standard of freedom, our children, our aged, our young people, our prisoners, detainees, and wounded, all those whose ties to our sacred soil are confirmed in camp, village, and town. We render special tribute to the brave Palestinian women, guardians of sustenance and life, keepers of our people's perennial flame. To the souls of our sainted martyrs, to our entire Palestinian Arab people, to all free and honorable peoples everywhere, we pledge that our struggle shall be continued until the occupation ends, and the foundation of our sovereignty and independence shall be fortified accordingly.

Therefore, we call upon our great people to rally to the banner of Palestine, to cherish and defend it, so that it may forever be the symbol of our freedom and dignity in that homeland, which is a homeland for the free, now and always.

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

"Say: 'O God, Master of the Kingdom,

Thou givest the Kingdom to whom Thou wilt, and seizest the Kingdom from whom Thou wilt, Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt; in Thy hand is the good; Thou art powerful over everything."

Sadaqa Allahu Al-Azim □

The intifada's contribution is to have posed a serious challenge to U.S. hegemony in the Arab world. The intifada has first demonstrated visibly to the United States that the Palestinians will not submit in place, and that there is no way a solution can be imposed on them. Second, the intifada has unmasked Israel and, therefore, it became much more difficult to justify Israel's oppression there or to defend Israel. Third, the intifada has created serious troubles for America's interests in the Arab world. The regimes that collaborate with the United States exercised a great deal of pressure on the United States, not because they are able to apply pressure directly, but because their very survival is very important to the United States.

In that sense the intifada was the crucial catalyst for the transformation of U.S. policy. But the intifada was also important for its political program as it emanated from the PNC, so the PNC itself is also a response to the intifada's political pressure. The demand of the intifada is for a very specific, very clear, very explicit program of political action that promises to end the occupation.

It is the responsibility of the PLO, obviously, to translate these demands into concrete form and thereby bring about an end to the occupation. The political program adopted in Algiers and the further clarification of that program by Mr. Arafat in Geneva is consistent with the intifada. The United States used that as a pretext to begin the dialogue.

Now the dialogue has begun, but there is not much substance yet. I personally think that over the next three to six months, the United States will make more demands on the Palestinians to dilute their political program. This struggle we have obviously to enter over the next phase. How much pressure will the United States exercise in this dialogue—even before we get to the international conference—to get us to agree to its formulations and how much will our assessment of the situation lead us to believe that we must push a political program that is independent of this pressure? We'll have to wait and see.

**PF:** How do you assess U.S. public opinion vis a vis the intifada?

**AL:** Public opinion, in general, is supportive of the Palestinian right to self-determination. American public opinion has been, since 1982, much more advanced than the government's position in terms of understanding the correct solution to the conflict. Since 1982 it has been clear in all public-opinion polls that American people accept the idea that the PLO represents the Palestinian people and accept an international peace conference as the only way to bring peace. Peace in the Middle East will not take place if the Palestinian question is not resolved by means of a state.

The intifada intensified these beliefs and highlighted to the American people that Israel is the principal obstacle to peace: its policy of repression, its policy of confiscation of land, its policy of shootings, etc. All these policies have demonstrated visibly that it is Israel that is at fault, not the Palestinians. In all that, the American people are way ahead of the government. Thus when Mr. Shultz reversed the policy and initiated a dialogue with the PLO, there was tremendous support and satisfaction. Shultz's policy of denying the visa to Arafat did not garner that kind of support.

There is a very fundamental gap between the position of the American people and the position of the U.S. administration. The intifada has helped accelerate greater public support for the Palestinians, but the trend was already evident and support for the Palestinians was already increasing. Many things brought about this change, but the most important reason is the Palestinian struggle itself, whether the intifada or before the intifada, the activities of the PLO, the struggle of our people under occupation. It is the actual struggle of the Palestinians that has brought the full issue of Palestine back to the American arena.

**PF:** Where do you see the issue of U.S. aid to Israel fitting in?

**AL:** We must continue to show the relationship between Israel's continuing occupation of our land and suppression of our people and the support they get from the U.S. government. We must assume that as we talk about peace and coexistence, as we push our peace program, challenging U.S. aid is part of our work.

When we ask the U.S. government to cease its financial and military assistance to Israel, these have nothing to do with the standard of living of the Israeli Jew. They have to do with the destructive capacity of Israel toward the Palestinians. Therefore, we ought to explicitly call for the cessation of American military support for Israel. I have no objection whatsoever if the United States wants to give all its economic assistance for hospitals, for anything important for human welfare, but it must cease its military support because any support that it gives to Israel is support to continue its occupation and that must stop. We must explain our position to American Jews, and they will understand the issue exactly in the same language.

We should not even think of dropping this issue because it is the crucial issue. The government is aware of that. Again, the intifada is very important. Israel's occupation of our areas is made possible economically by the taxes our people have been paying, which do not pay for all the occupation—they pay for about half and the other half comes from the U.S. government. So the occupation has been cost free to Israel.

Our people now are no longer subsidizing the occupation; at least a good deal of their taxes are no longer being paid. So the U.S. government now has the "privilege" of increasing aid to Israel, that is, making up for the deficit, or of withholding its payments for the occupation. If the U.S. government is serious about an international peace conference, if it is serious about making peace in the Middle East, if it is serious about the coexistence of the two peoples, all it will have to do is to say: "I will not pay for the occupation." That is all it has to do, and Israel will be at the conference table. □

## U.S./PLO Talks ...

Continued from Page 1

against Libya in the last days of the Reagan administration were perhaps intended to send a signal that the United States is prepared to revive its belligerent attitude toward the Arab world at any time; the attacks could be the stick that accompanies the carrot represented by the dialogue.

To be sure, the United States has not abandoned its goals of maintaining dominance in the Middle East, undermining the PLO, and reviving the role of Jordan's King Hussein as the U.S.-designated representative for negotiations on behalf of the Palestinians. However, the U.S. government has entered a process which could result in genuine peace, whether our government is willing or not. As the intifada continues, more contradictions will emerge, more rifts between Israel and the United States, and prospects for peace could improve. For these reasons, the decision is historic. Palestinians and their supporters around the world can claim the dialogue as a victory.

Following this step, pressure on the United States and Israel to join the United Nations-sponsored international peace conference leading to a Palestinian state continues to mount. More than seventy governments have already recog-

nized the new Palestinian state, and the UN General Assembly voted to change the PLO's UN status to that of a non-member state (such as Switzerland) from its previous observer status. The United States will find it increasingly difficult to return to its previous intransigence when even such European allies as France and the Netherlands begin their own diplomatic dialogues and upgrade relations with the PLO. The process has started, and its momentum continues to build.

### Israel's Position

With Israel's foremost ally taking tentative steps to break the deadlock, Israel stands even more isolated in the world community than ever before. Responding to the U.S. decision, Israel's post-election political maneuvering came to a sudden halt in a national unity government based on rejectionism. The Likud-Labor coalition was built on three "No's": No withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza; no independent Palestinian state; and no negotiations with the PLO. Forced to respond with some kind of "peace proposal," Israeli leaders have only been able to come up with new versions of the Camp David agreement: elections and "autonomy" in exchange for an end to the intifada. At the same time, a clear message of intransigence was broadcast with stepped-up repression in the occupied territories. The result: sharp rises in the death toll, imprisonments, and expulsions.

Despite the immediate hard-line response, tough realities face the Israeli government. Notably, the uprising has disrupted the Israeli economy through strikes, boycotts, and a falloff in tourism, contributing to a major economic crisis. Exports to the occupied territories dropped by \$300 million, while Israel's growth rate in 1988 dropped to 1 percent from 5 percent in 1987. Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics also reported that Israelis worked more hours "because they were forced to do some of the work previously performed by Palestinian laborers," according to the *New York Times* of December 30, 1988. Clouds of economic chaos loom over Israel, particularly if the deficit-ridden United States does not increase support for Israel's failing economy.

Aside from the severity of the economic crisis, there are other pressures for change. Opinion polls show that 55 percent of Israelis support negotiations with the PLO. American Jews, already alarmed by the "Who is a Jew" debate, have responded favorably to the U.S. initiative. Israeli peace activists, defying laws to prevent such meetings, have arranged several face-to-face meetings with PLO representatives.

Many Israelis recognize that the status quo cannot last. An Israeli military commander, comparing the current uprising to early attempts at resistance, told *Yediot Ahronot* that "we are speaking about a popular movement in

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## Children ...

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arrested right in front of their eyes. "Can you imagine," asks Lubin, "soldiers breaking into your house and punching your mother? It makes me want to vomit just thinking about it."

When there finally is peace and a homeland, there is much rebuilding to be done, not only of houses, schools, and shops, but of lives and families as well.

Aberrant behavior is beginning to show up in young Israelis as well. Muslim girls, for example, report that Israeli soldiers come into their homes and expose themselves before the religious girls. Such acts are new signs of emotional stress.

Growing instances of spouse and child abuse and rising drug and alcohol abuse in Israeli homes suggest that the psychological pressure of the occupation is taking its toll on Israeli society as well. Young Israeli children are increasingly right-wing and show many of the same signs of rejection of all authority as the young Palestinians.

"No child," says Barbara Lubin, "can grow up learning to hate, grow up in fear, grow up without education and without playing and be a normal, healthy adult. The sooner we recognize that and do something about it, the sooner we will have a safer, saner, and more humane world."

For the sake of all the children of the region, the occupation must end and there must be states where both Palestinian and Israeli children can live in peace, security, and democracy with full human rights.

### Little Change for the Children

In one year, the children of the stones have done more to advance the cause of Palestinian statehood and peace in the Middle East than had been accomplished by adults in the previous twenty years. But they have paid, and continue to pay, a very high price for their actions. Though events in the arena of international diplomacy suggest that much is changing very quickly, for the lives of

these children not much has changed at all. It is up to leaders not to let this opportunity slip away. Nor can we forsake them in their time of need. For, quite literally, their future—and ours—depends on it. □

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## Tikkun Conference ...

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reflected in the list of speakers and in the topics of discussion. To be Jewish and critical of Israel had a strictly enforced prerequisite: devotion to Israel.

As Palestinians, who have actively worked with Jews for many years, the absence of many of our friends in the Jewish community was immediately conspicuous. They have argued for years that Israel does not speak for all Jews. While we understand the need to focus on a major constituency within the American Jewish community and we were impressed by the tremendous changes we witnessed, nonetheless we felt that the reality of the debate was somewhat blurred by the absence of the anti-Zionist perspective.

Our own Palestinian voices, with their quite particular messages, were surprisingly, and often warmly, welcomed. Had some of these Jewish voices who have long been critics of Zionism been added, would they have been equally welcomed and well-received?

David Gordis, former executive director of the American Jewish Committee strongly argued that devotion to Israel should be the primary motivation for Jewish Middle East peace work. His views resonated with those of Henry Siegman, who felt that already

existing organized Jewish institutions, such as the American Jewish Congress and the reform religious movement, should be revived due to their popular base in the Jewish community. Both Gordis and Siegman thought that the most pressing call of the conference, i.e., organized alternative voices, was the most contentious.

Furthermore, Gordis argued against American Jewish lobbying of the U.S. Congress regarding Israel. His comment that "American Jews are not diplomats for Israel" drew a wave of protest from the crowd, which clearly wanted to practice full democratic rights not only as Jews, but also as U.S. citizens.

Another issue, cutting military aid to Israel, or even specifically that portion of aid which subsidizes the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, has traditionally been the Achilles heel of Jewish community activism on the Middle East. The conference was ambivalent on this issue.

Janet Aviad of Peace Now pleaded explicitly with American Jews not to move in that direction. On the other hand, former Likud Central Committee member Moshe Amirav stressed that "the relationship between the Jews in America and Israel should not be any more money. Money is something we do not need. What we need is peace."

The convening of 2,100 Jews served an enormous educational and emotional purpose, the true extent of which can only be measured in the future. Incredible changes are transforming the American Jewish community regarding Israel and the Palestinians. While little immediate action was agreed upon at the conference and the new agenda is yet to be formulated, a wealth of feelings and issues were raised. One general area of agreement was the impossibility of return-

ing to old patterns. As Letty Pogrebin put it, "Silence is never an act of neutrality. It leaves the distinct impression that everything is OK."

As Palestinians, we were impressed by the great distances many of the familiar personalities and organizations who were present had travelled since the intifada began. We hope that Palestinian Americans and other activists can join the progressive Jewish constituency on common ground to contribute to peace and justice in the Middle East. □

*Yasmin Adib and Rabab Hadi attended the Tikkun Conference, along with Judy Janda, on behalf of the Palestine Solidarity Committee.*

## Action ...

Continued from Page 2

December 1988: Mfanafuthi "Johnny" Makatini, the ANC's director of international affairs, and John George, Alameda County supervisor and cochair of the Bay Area Free South Africa Movement. Johnny Makatini was good friend of the Palestinian people and the PLO; in an interview in 1983, Makatini told *Palestine Focus*, "Nothing is going to deter the struggles in both Palestine and in South Africa and Namibia." John George was one of the very few elected officials who spoke out for Palestinian rights; he was an endorser of the Jabalya initiative, Measure J, in the November 1988 Berkeley election. As a participant in an Oakland, California, memorial said, both men would prefer to be honored by continuing their work. The work of each is a monument of the movement for peace and justice.

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Sane/Freeze, the largest peace organization in the United States which resulted from a recent merger of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy and the Nuclear Freeze Campaign, passed its first resolution on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict at its 2nd congress in Atlanta, Georgia, in December. The resolution, passed by a huge majority, reads: "Be it resolved that Sane/Freeze call upon the U.S. government to: 1) support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and a state of their own in the West Bank and Gaza alongside Israel, with peace and security for both states; 2) recognize the PLO as the chosen representative of the Palestinians; and 3) support the convening of an international peace conference with the participation of the PLO, Israel, the neighboring Arab states, the United States, and the Soviet Union." Sane/Freeze's resolution is evidence that the peace movement has begun to move on Palestinian rights. □

### "INTIFADA" Images of Palestinian Uprising

A photo exhibit of the  
Palestinian quest for freedom  
and independence

**Photographs by:** George Azar,  
Neal Cassidy, Judy Janda,  
Adam Kufeld and  
Barbara Lubin

**Text by:** Hilton Obenzinger

A project of the Palestine  
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**W**ho is a Jew? The question reverberated during the recent Israeli governmental crisis when certain orthodox parties demanded alterations in the Law of Return. The changes would have stipulated that all converts applying for automatic Israeli citizenship would only be accepted if converted according to orthodox practice. While only affecting a few individuals, the move was seen by the vast majority of American Jews as delegitimizing the Reform and Conservative branches of the religion, not to mention unaffiliated Jews.

A storm broke loose, unprecedented in its furor, with delegations of American Jews banging on the doors of Israeli politicians to demand a halt to the blackmail by the orthodox parties. If only American Jews would respond with similar vigor to protest the atrocities of the occupation—killing and maiming Palestinian children, for instance—or to demand that the Israeli government negotiate with the PLO! Nonetheless, the controversy aroused American Jews as never before, breaking years of silent acceptance of Israeli policies.

Many Americans were truly perplexed by the spectacle. How could a question of utmost religious importance be decided by a parliamentary vote? In fact, the debate flows from the Zionist character of the Israeli state. Israel defines itself as a Jewish state, not simply a state with a majority of Jews or just the state of all the Jews; there is no separation of synagogue and state. "Who is a Jew" becomes a critical question because the answer defines who can participate in the Zionist project. It is not simply a religious question, but one involving political power. In a country where rights and privileges are afforded one ethnic or religious group over any others, "Who is a Jew" becomes critical.

Because Zionist ideology defines Jews throughout the world as a single nationality and not just a religious or ethnic community, the entire structure of the Israeli state rests on defining the differences between religion, nationality, and citizenship. For example, a Brooklyn-born Jew can move to Israel, become a citizen virtually overnight, and move into a segregated settlement in the West Bank

## GETTING IT ALL IN Focus

By Hilton Obenzinger

reserved for the "Jewish nationality."

By no means are Israeli citizens who happen to be Palestinians allowed the right to colonize the West Bank (even if they wanted to do such a thing). But certain contradictions and inconsistencies have emerged from the beginnings of the Israeli state: The Zionist movement defines Jewishness in terms of nationalism, while orthodox adherents of the religion define Jewish identity in terms of religious law and practices. The Zionists sought to make Jews a "normal" nation; the orthodox sought to maintain the uniqueness of a religious community "chosen" for an exemplary way of life.

Several years ago, Israeli author Akiva Orr published *The unJewish State: The Politics of Jewish Identity in Israel* (Ithaca Press, London), which should help anyone interested in understanding this complicated question. Akiva Orr traces the debates in the Knesset since the founding of the state, drawing upon the actual words of David Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Menahem Begin, and other Israeli leaders. According to Orr, while the founders of the state were secular, even atheists, there emerged a consistent pattern of acquiescing to orthodox demands. Agreements were reached even before the state was declared, for example, which gave the orthodox rabbinate control of marriage and divorce.

After the state was established, a long debate ensued over whether or not there should be a constitution. The secular Zionist parties thought it only natural to have a consti-

tion. After all, now Jews would be a nation like others, and a constitution was part of the formalization of statehood. However, pro-Zionist orthodox parties objected. Since the new state was declared a "Jewish" state, they reasoned, the "constitution" of the Jews was the Torah; to write a secular constitution would either be superfluous or blasphemous. After acrimonious debate, the constitution was shelved, and Israel's legal structure was founded instead on certain "basic" laws.

*The unJewish State* traces other landmark debates, such as the 1958 case of a Polish Jew who survived the Nazi concentration camps. After the war, he converted to Catholicism, became a monk, moved to a monastery in Israel and applied for automatic Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return as a member of the Jewish nationality. After tortuous debate in the Supreme Court and Knesset, he was denied citizenship on the basis of being a Jew, and an amendment was added to the law stipulating that someone was eligible if they did not convert to another faith.

Twists and turns, absurdities and bizarre logic abound in the attempt to meld nationalism with religion, and Akiva Orr's book opens up the whole can of worms.

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*Middle East Report* has been publishing excellent in-depth articles on the intifada throughout this past, historic year. Now the magazine has issued *Palestine for Beginners*, a four-page primer, originally published in the September-October 1988 issue, which presents the conflict clearly and concisely and assumes little or no prior knowledge of the Middle East.

Filled with photographs and historical maps, the primer should help anyone just becoming aware of the conflict to understand some of the basic issues. Excellent for mass distribution, bulk orders cost 15 cents each for 50 to 999, and 12 cents each for more than 1,000. (And, while you're at it, subscriptions to *Middle East Report* cost only \$20 a year.) Send your orders to *Middle East Report*, Rm. 518, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. □

## U.S./PLO Talks ...

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which, for every name erased, one or two more appear to replace it." Shlomo Gazit, former head of military intelligence and of the military occupation government, told *Hadashot*, "This time, Israel has no answer to the problem.... The intifada came to a population repressed for over 21 years and returned to its national pride. They, boys and girls, without weapons or tanks, have challenged Israel and the IDF. They live today with a feeling of tremendous victory. They return to themselves their national pride." Or, as Aryeh Shalev, military commander of the West Bank from 1974 to 1976, told the same newspaper, "The uprising is a form of war of attrition, by wide strata in the population, against Israeli rule.... It doesn't seem that Israel is capable of eliminating the uprising in the near future by using legally permissible military force alone."

Such pragmatic assessments could prevail and force the Israeli government toward a new course, particularly as the combined factors of economic problems, international pressure and increased isolation, and Jewish peace forces come to play. Yet the danger is great; for as Israel perceives that it is more and more isolated, it may turn to yet further

violence, moving considerably beyond the "legally permissible military force" it already deploys against the Palestinians toward wholesale violence and mass expulsions.

### American Public Opinion

Polls show that 70 percent of American public opinion supports the U.S.-PLO dialogue. Sentiment in favor of peace has grown considerably during the first year of the intifada; the broad support for the decision only emphasizes how inadequately the Reagan administration's Middle East policy reflected the popular desires for peace and Palestinian rights until now. Coming after political gains for Palestinian rights during the intifada, where debate reached trade unions, ballot initiatives, and the Democratic National Convention, the opening of the dialogue decisively shifted the debate and lifted the ban on discussing the PLO and the possibilities of a Palestinian state among elected officials, churches, the media, and community leaders.

Now the peace movement, given unprecedented opportunities, faces enormous challenges. Our program needs to activate an ever-growing constituency for peace to demand further steps.

The U.S. government has implicitly recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people; that recognition must be made explicit. Just as the United States demanded that the PLO recognize Israel, the U.S. government must acknowledge the right of a Palestinian state to exist.

The time is ripe to pressure our government to support the UN proposal for an international peace conference that would involve all parties to the conflict, including the PLO. This conference would negotiate a comprehensive peace agreement to address issues such as the creation of the independent Palestinian state, the right of return of refugees, and the evacuation of Israeli troops from all territories occupied in the 1967 war, including the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the Syrian Golan Heights.

The peace movement has a responsibility to educate people about the legitimate Palestinian resistance to the Israeli military occupation of their new state. Israel will continue to brand such resistance as "terrorism," and the United States may still use acts of resistance as an excuse to back off. Our job is to make the price so high in terms of loss of public support that the Bush administration is unable to withdraw from the dialogue. The new administration cannot police the legitimate resistance of the Palestinian people; the only acceptable role for the U.S. government is to help make peace.

The peace movement also needs to target Israeli policy as never before. Now that the PLO has made important commitments and concessions, the observation Edward Said made in the *Nation* is particularly apt: "Why is Israel not asked whether it is willing to coexist with a Palestinian state, or negotiate, or accept 242, or renounce violence, or recognize the PLO, or accept demilitariza-

tion, or allay Palestinian fears, or stop killing civilians, or end the occupation, or answer any questions at all?" All of these questions must be directed at the Israeli government and at Israel's supporters in the United States. Is achieving peace a reciprocal process, or are all concessions to be made by the Palestinians, while Israel is allowed to maintain its intransigent stance?

We must insist that the yardstick of peace be applied equally to Israel. In this regard, public opinion has a critical role to play in pressuring our government to use the powerful leverage of more than \$3 billion a year in U.S. aid to Israel to force it to the negotiating table. U.S. aid must not be used to violate human rights in the West Bank and Gaza.

U.S. aid to Israel is an increasingly important battleground for the peace movement. U.S. aid normally shields Israeli citizens from paying the economic consequences of a highly militarized society. An extra \$1 billion or more in costs to fight the uprising cannot simply be absorbed without aggravating the already severe economic crisis facing Israel. Are American taxpayers going to be asked to bail out Israel once again, even though the Likud-Labor government rejects all moves toward peace? U.S. aid provides important leverage in pressuring Israel to the peace process; public opinion must push the Bush administration and Congress to apply that pressure.

The U.S. peace movement can significantly influence the Palestinian/Israeli peace process at a time when U.S. public opinion has expectations of a just peace as never before. It is time to step up our own dialogue with our government, to make our voices heard, to ensure that the first tentative gestures toward peace become a bold and decisive initiative. □

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*Palestine Focus* is the national newspaper of the Palestine Solidarity Committee (formerly November 29th Committee for Palestine). 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 Palestine Solidarity Committee's 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 Palestine Solidarity Committee. Letters, opinions, and other contributions are welcome.

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# Palestinian Reflections on the Tikkun Conference

By Yasmin Adib and Rabab Hadi

*"This year, in the land of milk and honey, the milk turned sour for all of us. It had to be protested, first, at the family dinner table. But when that got no results, outside the house.... Some spoke out at first sight of Israeli soldiers breaking bones and bloodying heads and burying Palestinians alive. Some protested the gradual erosion of democratic principles, the over 300 deaths, the double standard for human rights and civil liberties, the censorship, detentions, demolitions and deportations. But still many American Jews did nothing."*—Letty Cottin Pogrebin, founding editor of *Ms Magazine*

They came from all over the United States with a lot on their minds. Over 2,100 American Jews from 37 states gathered in New York City to discuss ways of "Reconstructing the Progressive Tradition of American Jewish Intellectuals."

For us, two Palestinian women active in Palestine solidarity work, it was all new. Where could we fit into a conference whose express purpose was to raise alternative voices in the Jewish community and to revive the progressive Jewish liberal tradition? Would we be received cordially or in a hostile manner? Were American Jews still at the stage of soul searching at the family dinner table?

Mainly, we came to learn and to observe, and we were gratified by what we saw. We had not expected such major shifts in the Jewish community, although we were aware of the many voices that started speaking out against the Israeli atrocities during the intifada.

The conference was sponsored by *Tikkun*, a 2-1/2-year-old magazine with a circulation of 40,000, which aims at providing a forum for alternative Jewish voices on a wide range of topics. Organized by editor Michael Lerner and publisher Nan Fink, the conference was surprised and ignited by the fact that the United States opened a dialogue with the PLO only three days earlier, an event which added to the conference's intensity and high attendance.

## Palestinian/American Jewish Roundtable

Therefore, the central underlying issue throughout the conference was how to relate to Israel and the Palestinians in view of these new developments. This theme was most evident at the "Palestinian/American Jewish Roundtable" which was scheduled prior to the official opening of the conference. The session was introduced by Michael Lerner as "a milestone in the process of reconciliation between the children of Isaac and the children of Ishmael."

The panelists—Edward Said and Ibrahim Abu Lughod, members of the Palestine National Council; Letty Pogrebin and Michael Walzer, coeditor of *Dissent*—displayed a microcosm of the common grounds and rifts between the two communities. All supported the peace process. All were in favor of the U.S. dialogue with the PLO, and all stressed the importance of bringing Israel to the negotiating table. Walzer and Pogrebin joined the Palestinians in their support for a Palestinian state. But the two sides differed in their reasons for adopting such stands, their vision of the reconciliation process, as well as their understanding of the conflict's history.

Noting their own historical oppression, Edward Said called on American Jews to recognize the unequal relationship between Israel and the Palestinians as oppressor and

oppressed as a prelude to reconciliation and atonement. In contrast, Walzer and Michael Lerner insisted on parallel agendas, tasks and suffering of the two peoples. Ibrahim Abu Lughod, on the other hand, called for symmetry in U.S. demands on the PLO and Israel regarding the renunciation of terrorism and acceptance of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. Dr. Abu Lughod further called on the majority of Israeli

ing will require a long time to play itself out, well beyond the length of a three-day conference.

This was most clear at the "Rethinking Zionism After the Intifada" session. Panelists presented various definitions and approaches toward Zionism's history and development. All tended to agree with author Jerome Segal that Zionism was a "morally defensible position for Jewish

tic, scoffed at the notion of an Israel at risk as "nonsense." Speaking at the "Israel Plenary," Eban asked, to the applause of the audience, "How is Palestine to become a threat with Israel on one side and Jordan on the other?"

The Executive Director of the American Jewish Congress, Henry Siegman, offered a different reason for ending the Israeli occupation. Siegman said that the cost was even more fundamental, and that the "essential threat to Israel today comes from within, not from without." More than threatening the survival of the state, he warned that "maintaining the occupation raises questions of the future of Judaism in Israel, and in the diaspora."

Letty Cottin Pogrebin ridiculed Israeli insistence to negotiate with Palestinians unaffiliated with the PLO. She considered it "patently absurd to think that Israel should choose its own interlocutors any more than the U.S. can choose the Soviet representatives in Geneva and managers can choose union leaders in collective bargaining." Pogrebin added that "anyone can sign a check, but not everyone has money in the bank."

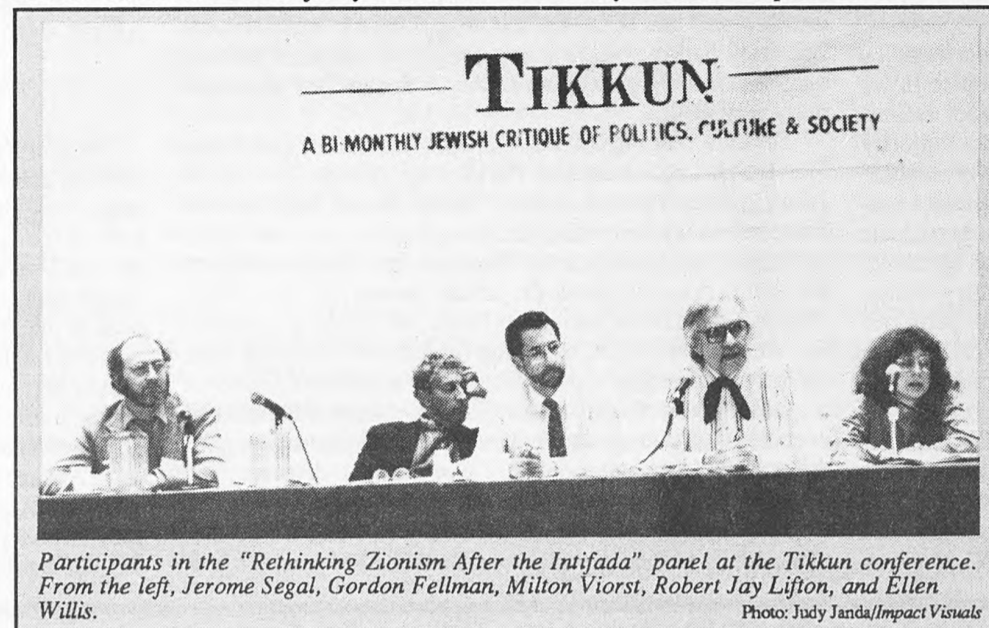
Israeli speakers repeatedly called on American Jews to support their protest activities. Janet Aviad of Peace Now pointed out the shortcomings of American Jewish hesitancy to criticize Israel publicly. She declared that Israelis were overwhelmed and amazed by the world Jewish power that was mustered, "a total war" mobilizing orthodox, conservative and reform rabbis, lay people and the organized establishment, over "Who is a Jew" which she described as a "technical, procedural issue" opposed by most Israelis. Aviad exclaimed: "The highest level of delegations came, and it seemed like a barrage in which every cannon was rolled out into the field and fired. No expenses were spared, no time was spared, and everyone came."

Aviad confronted the audience with the provocative question: "When will you unleash the power you have and the forces you have proven to have had on the 'Who is a Jew' issue? You won a victory... Is 'Who is a Jew' more important than 'What is a Jewish state?'... According to what values does this state function, make policies, battles, make peace?... On this issue, the American Jewish community has been painfully silent, ambiguous, usually hesitant."

Abba Eban echoed Aviad's concerns. He expressed his opposition to American Jews becoming "the Jews of silence ... keep your pockets open but your mouths shut." He questioned the logic of American Jewish unity around Israel where there is no such Israeli unity.

Most of the other speakers agreed with Eban and Aviad. As Letty Pogrebin put it, "Until now, people dedicated to Israel's survival had largely chosen to ignore what kind of an Israel this survivor would be. To survive as a society that is repressive, violent, nondemocratic, racist, classist, sexist, and militaristic was OK, but not to be exclusive. Not to keep us out. Not to invalidate our Jewishness." She quipped that the turmoil over "Who is a Jew" was "the Jewish diaspora's intifada." She put the question in its proper perspective: "I deplore the proposed amendment as much as anyone, but I see it as just another measure of the rabbinical power which has strongly been oppressing Israeli women unchallenged."

The organizers of the conference, while redefining Jewish liberal values, upheld the tradition of excluding non-Zionist and anti-Zionist Jews from that definition. This was



Participants in the "Rethinking Zionism After the Intifada" panel at the Tikkun conference. From the left, Jerome Segal, Gordon Fellman, Milton Viorst, Robert Jay Lifton, and Ellen Willis. Photo: Judy Janda/Impact Visuals

Knesset members "to sign a peace program as unclear, as ambiguous, as the one we have signed in Algiers."

Michael Lerner's remarks drew criticism from the floor by Elissa Sampson of the International Jewish Peace Union (IJPU), and Hilda Silverman of the American-Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (AICIPP). Sampson objected to Lerner's violation of his role as a chair, which should have entailed posing the same questions to the two sides. Lerner, for example, challenged Said regarding the "faction-ridden" PLO, but failed to even ask the Jewish panelists about the power struggle among the many parties in the Israeli Knesset. For that matter, Lerner posed no questions to the Jewish panelists.

Silverman was further dismayed by Walzer and Lerner's rejection of Edward Said's call on Jewish intellectuals to join with Noam Chomsky, and others, in bearing witness to the present and in testifying to Israeli abuses of Palestinian human rights.

We were also disturbed by Lerner's constant reference to a "demilitarized" Palestinian state. One of us got up the courage to stand and challenge this notion. Should not there be a demilitarized Middle East instead? If the Palestinians are asked to disarm, why doesn't the progressive Jewish community call on Israel to do likewise? And which side, anyway, has the most destructive weapons? Wouldn't it be appropriate, for the sake of symmetry, to put this demand to both?

Lerner's patronizing response was that his concern for not prolonging the misery of Palestinian refugees drove him to adopt such a position. He would have done well to follow Letty Pogrebin's example and admit that, although they would like the PLO to adopt stands to their own personal liking, "that would be the height ofchutzpah."

## The Conference

The awesome agenda covered a broad range of topics, all of which entailed painful soul searching. As Letty Pogrebin put it, the Jewish community has a "very full plate: erosion of the democratic ethic, the Jewish ethic, what's happened to Israel in the last 12 months, changing opinion here in the U.S., redefining what it means to be a friend of Israel." Evidently, the soul search-

presence in the Middle East" which has run off course.

According to Milton Viorst, author of *Sands of Sorrow*, Zionism was "definitively transformed after the Six-Day War from a concept of community-homeland for the Jewish people to a concept of territory-sovereignty over land and domination over a hostile population of 1-1/2 million people." Viorst felt that the revelation that "Jewish nationalism was like any other nationalism," has come as a shock for Jews, since it portrayed a "Napoleonic nationalism not associated with small countries."

The panelists, however, shared the belief that Jewish values could restore Zionism to its earlier community notions, so that, as Gordon Fellman, co-chair of the National Mid-East Task Force of New Jewish Agenda, described it, Israel could be "a light unto the nations, not a mirror unto the nations."

Jerome Segal captured the essence of this argument by posing the question: "Is there a Jewish way of exercising state power?" He responded positively: "It involves a distinctly different way of dealing with the 'other.'"

All panelists injected a sense of urgency because they felt that the Israeli leadership, along with the organized Jewish establishment in the U.S., were leading Israeli fatally away from those Jewish values. Milton Viorst believed that "the intifada will be Zionism's first defeat," and that Zionism "will lead to its own destruction to the applause of the organized American Jewish community."

General agreement reigned among the speakers: the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza must end. However, wide variations existed regarding the nature of that end, including support for an independent Palestinian state, a demilitarized Palestinian state, limited autonomy over parts of the territories, a "Paleo-Judeo" entity, and confederation with Jordan. While all began from a concern for Israel's security, they felt, as Michael Walzer, that the risks of denying the authenticity of the intifada and the Palestinian popular movement as represented by the PLO, and "refusing negotiations and maintaining the occupation, are far greater for Israel than the risks of withdrawal and co-existence with an independent Palestine."

Abba Eban, the former foreign minister and a leading figure in the Israeli body poli-