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palestine NEWS

A Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) publication. PSC does not necessarily agree with all opinions expressed in the magazine.
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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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

The futility of force

Hilary Wise suggests Israel can never win by military means, in either Lebanon or Palestine

As the Israeli cabinet sits back and surveys the wreckage of Lebanon – the thousand fresh graves, the bombed-out apartment blocks and power stations, the crater-ridden roads and smashed bridges, the oil slick now polluting the coast of the eastern Mediterranean – what are they thinking? That they are now more secure? That they have struck a blow for western-style democracy? That they have demonstrated the efficacy of Israeli state-of-the-art weaponry?

By any standards, the whole exercise has been a complete failure. When the initial confrontation over two Israeli prisoners could have been solved, as in the past, by a discreet exchange, Israel opted instead for a massive show of force. As Chief of Staff Halutz boasted: “We shall set Lebanon back twenty years”.

No doubt the political crisis in Lebanon over the departure of Syrian forces, which had caused a polarisation of public opinion, led Israel to hope for an anti-Hizbullah backlash after a few days of intensive bombing. This didn't happen. The Lebanese closed ranks, affirmed their national unity, and stated they did not wish to disarm Hizbullah fighters, but rather absorb them into the Lebanese army. In a recent poll, 80% of Lebanese Christians said they supported Hizbullah; the figure was even higher among the Muslim population.



An Israeli soldier heads for home

Hassan Nasrallah, formerly a marginal and shadowy figure, is now a hero of mythic proportions throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds. The success of Hizbullah in not only withstanding one of the most powerful armies on earth, but in inflicting heavy losses on it, has made the inertia of Arab rulers appear even more craven than usual. Hizbullah was also the only organisation in the region to demonstrate real support for the Palestinians, as the IDF attempted to bludgeon them into submission.

One can only guess at the longterm effects of all this on the peoples of the region, who have been watching the daily carnage in Lebanon and Palestine on alJazeera and alArabiyya and then taking to the streets in their thousands, despite the best efforts of their governments.

Israel should have learnt from its experience in Palestine. There they hoped to turn the people against their democratically elected leadership by starvation, abduction and the bombing of civilians. Support for Hamas has in fact increased, and the formation of a government of national unity is under way. Unfortunately, the US ensured

western acquiescence of Israel's inhuman strategies in the Occupied Territories, thus emboldening Olmert to further excesses.

However, despite its attempts to claim victimhood, Israel has been shown up as the bullyboy of the Middle East. Its public political discourse has been about as subtle as that of George Bush. They are the good guys, in the front line against those 'hordes of evil, fascist Muslims' who threaten to overwhelm the West. The virulent, racist language they use has precedents: colonising powers have always justified violence against those they seek to dispossess by dehumanising them and representing them as an existential threat. But the rhetoric is sounding ever more hollow.

Public opinion has been expressed in huge demonstrations around the world, calling on Israel to desist, both in Lebanon and Palestine. Large numbers of British MPs have expressed their shame at the silence of our government and demanded that Parliament be recalled. The NGOs in the region and the UN – however impotent that body may be – have been heavily critical of Israel's actions.

“Support for Hamas has in fact increased, and the formation of a government of national unity is under way”

Israel has lost both the military campaign and the propaganda war. Will its leaders re-think their policies, and opt for the negotiating table rather than the guided missiles? Probably not, as they did not learn from the humiliation inflicted on them by Hizbullah during their first occupation of Lebanon. Israel may well continue its uncontrolled militarism until a conflict of truly global proportions is unleashed – unless Western governments, pressured by their electorates, make it clear that Israel must seek a resolution through peaceful means. At this crucial moment in the history of the Middle East – and in our history too – we must do our utmost to ensure that this happens.

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Children bear the brunt

While the world media were focused on Lebanon, the relentless attacks on Gaza and the West Bank have been continuing

Who now remembers the family of seven killed by an Israeli shell and the dozens wounded, while picnicking on a beach in Gaza, on 9 June?

What has happened to the eight Palestinian ministers and dozens of MPs, all democratically elected, kidnapped by Israel on 27 June?

Over 200 residents of the Gaza Strip have been killed, including 40 children, since Israel launched its "Summer Rains" offensive on 25 June. Nearly 900 have been injured, including 272 children. Roads, bridges, schools, ministries – and vital power and water supplies – have all been destroyed in the name of Israel's 'security'. The 'rain' has consisted of over twelve thousand shells, to date, pounding the most densely populated place on earth.

Very little news coverage was given to Israel's bombing of Gaza's sole power station on 28 June. Without power, the hospitals ceased to function: incubators, dialysis machines, defibrillators, cardiac monitors, sterilising equipment, X-rays and scans, were put out of action, plus the refrigeration needed for blood banks, saline banks and a whole range of pharmaceuticals. Even morgue storage, in temperatures topping 40 degrees, became impossible. In both hospitals and homes, without electricity, water cannot be purified, pumped, nor sewage disposed of. It will take months to get the system up and working again – always assuming the IDF allow this. Diseases in small children are increasing due to their contact with streetwaste, coupled with a lack of clean water, according to UNICEF special representative Dan Rohrmann.

Said John Ging, UNRWA operations director in Gaza, on 13 August: "I perfectly understand that the world attention is



One victim of the Rafah bombings

focused on Lebanon at the moment, but I really implore people to remain conscious of what's going on here. Every day, it's worse. For the people here, the major problem in terms of their outlook is: when is it going to end? The mood is one of desperation, frustration and anger, and it's getting worse and worse."

It has been increasingly difficult for UN staff to get into Gaza, due to Israeli restrictions, just as movement has been impeded between Jerusalem, where most UN organisations have their headquarters, and the rest of the West Bank, where aid is also badly needed. The United Nations has continued to raise those concerns with the Israeli authorities, with little sign of improvement to date.



Children play on wreckage of bridge in Gaza

In one Israeli incursion alone, on 3 August, Israeli tanks ploughed into Rafah claiming the lives of 17 Palestinians, including five children (one, a three-day-old baby) and wounding 50, half of them children. Thousands from the Rafah district were forced to flee their homes under Israeli fire, taking refuge in UNRWA schools and tents.

When Israeli forces withdrew and residents were able to return, they found bulldozed homes, razed crops and the infrastructure supplying water, electricity and telephones destroyed.

Even before the 'Summer Rains' offensive, Gaza had been suffering from prolonged attacks, sealed borders and stringent sanctions, which meant that all public service workers had not been paid since February.

In the month preceding the major onslaught, 44 people were killed, 30 of whom were civilians, including 11 children and 2 pregnant women; these were mostly 'collateral damage' in Israel's continuing campaign of 'targeted killings' of Hamas leaders.

The rest of the Occupied Territories have been suffering too, as Israel takes more and more land for the illegal 'separation wall', enlarges its settlements, and terrorises the general population with incursions and shelling. On 18 July the IDF went on a three-day rampage in Nablus, which left five Palestinians dead, including two civilians, and 68 wounded civilians, including 27 children and 3 journalists. They also destroyed the Palestinian governmental compound in the city.

The reason given for this unrelenting, daily assault on largely unarmed civilians? The return of one soldier captured by Palestinian resistance fighters. Noone mentions that the day before their capture, the IDF had kidnapped two Palestinian civilians, a doctor and his brother, from their home in Gaza.

As in Lebanon, a deal could have been done to exchange prisoners, but Israel seized on this excuse to reduce the Palestinian population to total submission.

Said Husam Zomlot, Political Counselor of the Palestinian Delegation in London: "After Israel's defeat in Lebanon, and the internal crisis resulting from that, we are very much afraid that they will seek to export that crisis and restore their image of military superiority by redoubling their attacks on us."

in Gaza and Lebanon

The bombing and invasion of Lebanon

On 12 July Hizbullah fighters kidnapped two Israeli soldiers near the border with Israel. They demanded an exchange for Lebanese prisoners, held since the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, 1982 — 2000. (Several thousand Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners remain in Israeli jails, many held under ‘administrative detention’, i.e. without charge or trial.) Over the years a number of such deals had been done.

However, within hours Israel was bombing bridges in central Lebanon and “Hizbullah posts” in southern Lebanon. Amnesty International’s press release of the next day stated that “some 40 Lebanese civilians have reportedly been killed... Among the Lebanese victims were a family of ten, including eight children, who were killed in Dweir village, near Nabatiyeh, and a family of seven, including a seven-month-old baby, who were killed in Baflay village near Tyre. More than 60 other civilians were injured in these or other attacks.”

And so it went on, with daily, apparently indiscriminate bombing of the airport, roads, bridges, apartment blocks, churches, mosques, schools, electricity networks, fuel depots and even convoys of refugees who had been told to leave their homes.

Among the first casualties were four UN workers, from Austria,



The southern suburbs of Beirut



Israeli children write messages on shells bound for Lebanon...

Canada, China and Finland, who had taken shelter in a bunker under their observation post after it was earlier shelled 14 times by Israeli artillery. The shelling continued despite their repeated warnings to the IDF, over a period of hours, that the shells were falling ever closer.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said he was “shocked” at the “apparently deliberate targeting” of the post.

Even the terrible massacre at Qana on 30 July, in which 29 innocent civilians died, did not spur western governments to rein in Israel’s frenzied attacks. (The horrific scenes of dead children being pulled from the wreckage were deemed too upsetting – or too damaging to Israel – for our TV screens; but they were seen by viewers across the Middle East.)

When a ceasefire was finally called, after five weeks of slaughter and destruction, during which time Britain

joined the US and Israel in prevaricating in order to let the IDF ‘finish the job’, Israel immediately broke the truce to attack Shi’a fighters on the Lebanese/Syrian border. They gave the reason that they had to stop arms being brought into

Lebanon – despite the fact that Israel is free to import hi-tech weaponry of every description — mostly from the US.

In the aftermath, there are many questions to be asked: What are US and Israeli longterm objectives in the region? How can Lebanon and Gaza be helped to rebuild their shattered infrastructure? How can Israel be obliged to make restitution for the damage — and to face up to its war crimes?

The ceasefire looks increasingly fragile, as Israel continues its attacks on Lebanese territory. “The



...a victim of the Qana massacre

disarmament of Hezbollah is our main objective. As long as it is not disarmed, we will defend ourselves against their being rearmed,” said Miri Eisin, a senior Israeli government official. “To do so, we’re going to stop all of the routes that allow the supplies to arrive to Hezbollah — sea, air and land.”

If this really is a decision to blockade Lebanon as the Occupied Territories are being blockaded, the future of the region is bleak indeed.

Worldwide protests

Israel's blitz on Lebanon produces a tidal wave of revulsion

Letters with multiple signatories from the arts, academics, trade unions, church leaders, the medical and architectural professions and charities, poured into the national press demanding an immediate unconditional ceasefire.

London's Mayor Ken Livingstone co-signed a letter with Betty Hunter and others published in the Guardian. 300 British Jews took a whole page in the Times to register their protest at Israel's actions. MPs demanded a recall of Parliament. Film festival organisers turned away Israeli sponsors. The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope both called for an immediate unconditional ceasefire and Archbishop John Sentanu fasted and prayed in a tent in York Cathedral, openly expressing his bewilderment at Tony Blair's refusal to call for a ceasefire.

Liverpool dockworkers issued a call for solidarity: 'We know that the Blair government, including even the T&G-sponsored Foreign Secretary, has given Israel a blank cheque to continue this war, while the UN Secretary General calls for an immediate ceasefire and Israeli bombs kill UN observers at their post in Lebanon.'

In the US hundreds of protesters gathered in front of Senator Dianne Feinstein's office in San Francisco on Thursday, 27 July. The rally turned into a march through downtown San Francisco to the offices of the San Francisco Chronicle to protest the newspaper's biased coverage. In full view of downtown afternoon rush hour commuters, hundreds of protesters demanded an end to Israel's war on Lebanon and Palestine. On 29 July, 1,500 New Yorkers marched across the Brooklyn Bridge to Manhattan's City Hall

for a rally endorsed by a dozen national organisations.

In the Netherlands, on 16 August protesters staged a "die-in" at Schiphol Plaza, the main entrance of Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, to demand an end to the transit of US arms through the Netherlands to Israel. The protest was supported by political parties and community organisations.

In Ireland, candlelit vigils, "die-ins", demonstrations with music and poetry were seen alongside fiery political speeches and heartfelt pleas for justice and for peace.

In Australia, rallies of between 10,000 and 20,000 were held in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne. Montreal saw gatherings of 15,000 protesters including the leader of Parti Quebecois and the Green Party chief. Major protests were seen in Belgium, Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Sweden, Norway, Syria, and Turkey. (See Electronic Intifada website: <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article5175.shtml> for reports and pictures. For reports on UK events see pages 21 - 25).

At governmental level, Ireland's Foreign Affairs Committee passed a unanimous motion calling for: an immediate ceasefire, for Ireland to press for the suspension of Israel's

trade privileges under Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association agreement and for Israel to compensate Lebanon and the UN for its military activities and killing of civilians.

Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan president, recalled his country's ambassador to Israel to show his "indignation" over the military offensive in Lebanon. In a televised speech he called the

Israeli attacks "genocide".

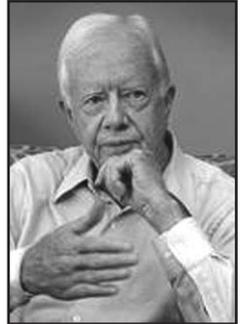
In an interview former US President Jimmy Carter bitterly criticised the present administration for "supporting and encouraging Israel in its unjustified attack on Lebanon".

He said: "I don't think that Israel has any legal or moral justification for their massive bombing of the entire nation of Lebanon. What happened is that Israel is holding almost 10,000 prisoners, so when the militants in Lebanon or in Gaza take one or two soldiers, Israel looks upon this as a justification for an attack on the civilian population of Lebanon and Gaza. I do not think that's justified."

A number of human rights organisations, including Israel-based B'tselem, have condemned Israel's actions as war crimes.

Human Rights Watch claimed Israel indiscriminately targeted Lebanese civilians; its report also detailed the use of cluster bombs, phosphorus and depleted uranium 'bunker busters', in densely populated areas.

Amnesty International called the investigation carried out by the IDF into the air-missile attack on Qana, which killed 29 people, including many children, 'a whitewash' and stressed the need for the urgent dispatch of the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC).



Jimmy Carter: critical of US and Israel



Dublin die-in

PAULA GERAGHTY



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Thanks from Palestine

Voices for peace in Israel...

Although the majority of the population (85 per cent, according to a poll taken in early August) backed the Israeli government during the attacks on Lebanon, many voices were raised against an operation that was seen not only as barbaric but also as harmful to Israel's longterm interests.

Dissent took the form of some of the largest demos Israel has seen for years. About 5000 gathered for a rally in Tel Aviv on 5 August, where placards demanded "End the Occupation!", "39 Years are enough!", "Just Peace = Security", "Ceasefire Now!"

Participants included organisations like Gush Shalom, Women's Coalition for Peace, Ta'ayush, Anarchists Against Walls, the Israel Palestinian Forum of Bereaved Families and supporters of political parties such as Hadash, Balad and the United Arab List.

Veteran peace campaigner Uri Avnery called PM Olmert 'a war junkie' and called on the Israeli government to exchange prisoners and start real peace negotiations.

Naomi Hazan, a dissident voice of the Meretz party, said: "We have come here...to call for an immediate ceasefire, to protest the destruction and mourn the killings – not only in Lebanon; let's not forget the blood that was shed this morning in Rafah!"

In the Israeli press, the leftwing Ha'aretz carried numerous editorials over the summer condemning both the incursions and bombings of Gaza and the war on Lebanon. Deeply critical articles by writers like Gideon Levy, Adam Keller, Tanya Reinhart and Amira Hass were widely published, in Israel and abroad.

Referring to Israel's 'Operation Summer Rains' in Gaza, Gideon Levy wrote: "It is not legitimate to cut off 750,000 people from electricity. It is not legitimate to call on 20,000 people to run from their homes and turn their towns into ghost towns. It is not legitimate to penetrate Syria's airspace. It is not legitimate to kidnap half a government and a quarter of a parliament.

"A state that takes such steps is no longer distinguishable from a terror organization. The harsher the steps, the more monstrous and stupid they become, the more the moral underpinnings for them are removed

and the stronger the impression that the Israeli government has lost its nerve."

The Israeli Committee for a Middle East Free from Atomic, Biological and Chemical Weapons issued a report on 5 August, detailing Israel's purchase of bunker-busting bombs from the US: "These bombs contain depleted uranium – a carcinogenic substance that spreads in the form of a toxic and radioactive dust, which enters the lungs and bones and is especially harmful to babies and young children. We call on the Government of Israel not to make use of these bombs." Ongoing UN and NGO investigations have yet to report on their use in Lebanon.

In the course of the war Israeli artillery officer Corporal 'Umri Zaid refused to bomb Lebanese villages. He said that

... and recriminations

Meanwhile, Israel is undergoing a severe internal political crisis, as a result of the military fiasco and the adverse publicity caused by so many civilian deaths and wanton destruction – not to mention the deaths of Israeli soldiers and civilians at home.

Chief of Staff Dan Halutz is in the front line, as the general responsible for the overall conduct of the war. There have been many calls for his resignation, and for an enquiry into just what went wrong.

His personal standing reached rock-bottom when it emerged that he had sold his entire share portfolio on learning of the capture of the two Israeli soldiers in Lebanon. The stock market promptly fell by 4%.

Defence Minister Amir Peretz is even more in the firing line. It looks as if he will be turned into the scapegoat for the military disaster, by Olmert and the generals.

Olmert himself looks unlikely to survive; his status in the polls has plummeted to an all-time low – and he was already under investigation for a case involving a property in Jerusalem.

A flurry of further scandals has not helped. Justice Minister Haim Ramon was indicted on 23 August over claims he forcibly kissed a female soldier. The week before, another senior member



DUDU BACHAR

Demo in Tel Aviv

he wasn't ready to serve in an army that is shelling civilians in their villages and cities. He left his brigade and headed for home. A fellow officer announced that he will be taken to court.



Farewell to Olmert?

of Mr Olmert's Kadima Party, Tzachi Hanegbi, was indicted on charges of fraud, bribery and perjury. To add to the general atmosphere of incompetence and sleaze, a major scandal has blown up concerning allegations of sexual harassment by President Mosheh Katsav. Police conducting the inquiry seized computers and documents during a raid on his Jerusalem home at the end of August.

Many predict early elections, which would probably be the end of the line for Olmert and Kadima. Far-right Benjamin Netanyahu, riding high in the polls, is being backed as Israel's next PM.

On the wider scene, it seems clear that Olmert's 'convergence' plan – i.e. cosmetic withdrawal from some minor outposts in the West Bank, prior to annexation of the major settlement blocs – is no longer an option.

The power of the lobby

Naseer Aruri explains the workings of some pro-Israel organisations in the US

The Israel lobby in the US is a loose network of organizations, foremost of which are the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), with an annual budget of \$19.5 million, a staff of 130, and 60,000 members, and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations – 51 organizations claiming to represent America's 6.1 million Jews. The Zionist Organization of America has also emerged as an extreme right wing group that works in alliance with conservative Republicans in Congress, together with the Christian right, to lobby Congress against support for what used to be called the "peace process."

Former Congressman Mervin Dymally, of the Black Caucus described AIPAC thus:

"[It is] absolutely the most influential of all pressure groups...The Committee's leadership is always ready to challenge any criticism of Israel.... The fact is that if I were a member of the Knesset, I would enjoy more freedom to criticize Israel than I do now as a member of the U.S. Congress."¹

AIPAC's annual conference has become an event that the top US politicians feel compelled to lobby in order to secure an invitation to attend. For example, the program for the April, 2002 AIPAC meeting describes an invitation-only President's cabinet brunch: "In an elegant brunch session at the St. Regis Hotel, former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz gives an insider's view of the Pentagon's efforts in the war on terrorism."² Wolfowitz is but one of many officials in the national security elite with strong ties to the Israel lobby. Their advocacy, from high positions

in the defense establishment, of extending Bush's "war on terrorism" to Iraq and other Arab/Islamic countries testifies to the extent to which the Israeli lobby has moved away, since the early 1990s, from trying to influence public policy to actually making it.

"If I were a member of the Knesset, I would enjoy more freedom to criticize Israel than I do now, as a member of the US Congress."

The Jewish community has been rather proud of its socio-economic status, its influence in corporate America, in Hollywood, the media, and in politics, among other spheres. J. J. Goldberg commented rather proudly on Jewish power thus:

"From the Vatican to the Kremlin, from the White House to Capitol Hill, the world's movers and shakers view American Jewry as a force to be reckoned with. At home, the Jewish community is sought out as an ally.... by political parties, labor unions, churches, and interest groups as diverse as the civil rights movement and the Christian Coalition. The New York offices of the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League have become obligatory stops for presidents and prime ministers..."³

The price of such power, for the Jewish community, has been a steady drift away from a liberal-left position on domestic and foreign policy issues towards a more conservative posture between the center and the right. The Cold War brought them closer to Nixon and Kissinger and later to Reagan, who considered Israel a "unique

strategic asset". Their enhanced socio-economic status has brought them closer to the Republican Party in domestic politics than they ever were; hence their politics and socio-economic status have been reconciled.

During the early 1970s the major Jewish organizations threw their weight behind the efforts of Senator Henry Jackson who used the issue of Soviet Jewry to challenge the Soviet Union and intensify the Cold War. The famous Jackson amendments were drafted by two young men, one of whom was Richard Perle, a neo-conservative and key player in George W. Bush's first administration. Perle was also a principal advocate of expanding the "war on terrorism" to include Iraq, Somalia and others.

Israel has emerged as an important surrogate for the United States, particularly in situations in which the US government is prohibited by US law from intervening, such as in Guatemala. Israel prepared computerized lists of Guatemalan revolutionaries and dissidents who were then targeted by Guatemala's death squads, many of whom were trained to assassinate and torture in the notorious School of the Americas.

The shift to the right on the part of the lobby and the community is also seen in domestic politics, with the institutional structure of an affluent Jewish community moving away from reformist positions previously supported. For example, election finance reform would have a negative impact on the political fortunes of the Jewish community, in that reforms would clip the wings of the Political Action Committees (PACs), which allocate funds to candidates of choice. According to the Washington-based Center for Responsive Politics, which monitors campaign financing, pro-Israel PACs have contributed \$41.3 million to federal candidates and political party committees between 1989 and 2002, two-thirds of whom were Democrats. Their major top recipient was Senator Carl Levin, Democrat from Michigan (\$564,858) followed by Senator Thomas Harkins, Democrat from Iowa (\$423,895), and Senator Arlen Specter, Republican from Pennsylvania (\$366,123).

PACs are thus utilized to bribe and punish. In 1982 Paul Findly, an Illinois Republican Congressman, lost his seat due to his advocacy of an even-handed US Middle East policy. Two years later, another casualty of these PACs was

Senator Charles Percy, the Illinois Republican who chaired the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who was apparently considered insufficiently loyal to Israel.

The AIPAC-controlled PACs are able to operate as a single unit, despite legislation that restricts each PAC to the amount of \$10,000 contribution in a single election cycle. By establishing more than a hundred PACS in the names of its officers and members,

“Israel has emerged as an important surrogate for the United States, in situations in which the US government is prohibited from intervening by US law”

AIPAC is able to meet the technical requirements of the law, while in fact it creates an informal umbrella that enable the PACs to manipulate the law and effectively operate as a single unit. Martha Ezzard expressed it this way:

“One of the rituals in Washington for neophyte candidates is to stop by the AIPAC office on First Street and recite a litany of loyalties to Israel. A million dollar-a-year lobbying group with a board of influential Jewish leaders, AIPAC then unlocks the doors to thousands of dollars in campaign contributions to candidates.”⁴

Elections can thus be bought by the highest bidders, and the whole process smacks of bribery and corruption, particularly when sitting senators, who are not even running for re-election, are handed out cash. Moreover the public is not privy to essential information about who these PACs are, what they stand for and whom they are trying to buy, unless they wish to go out of their way and examine the records of the Federal Election Commission.

The first Bush was certainly taught a lesson that he was not supposed to ever forget, when he restated US policy regarding east Jerusalem as occupied territory in the spring of 1991. His problems with Israel and AIPAC deepened after he refused to allow the use of any part of the \$10 billion loan guarantees, which Israel was supposedly using to settle Soviet Jewish immigrants, for building or expanding settlements. When pro-Israel lobbyists converged on Washington to try to overturn his position, he complained publicly using language that leaders of the Jewish community considered offensive.

The incident ignited a letter writing campaign, which flooded the White House with mail. He complained that “there are 1000 lobbyists up on the Hill today lobbying Congress for loan guarantees for Israel, and I’m one lonely little guy down here asking Congress to delay its consideration of loan guarantees for 120 days.” He was rejected in the 1992 elections by even a higher percentage of Jewish voters than in 1988. He was the last US

president to challenge the lobby.

Although the younger Bush received a similarly negligible percentage of the Jewish vote in 2000, he has, to date, gone farther than any previous President in endorsing Israeli policies, giving a clear green light to the governments of Sharon and Olmert, accused of having committed war crimes against civilians. He appointed a number of people with neo-conservative Zionist views to high positions in the national security apparatus, such as Condoleezza Rice, Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Perle and Douglas Feith (Deputy Under-Secretary of Defense for Policy).

Now that Bush has mobilized the American people to support his ‘war on terror’, important sectors of the Jewish community in America have become a vital component of the conservative coalition advocating a re-assertionist foreign policy. A changed Republican Party now reflects the growing power of the Christian right, which supports Israel on scriptural interpretations, and the neo-conservatives, many of whom were appointed by Bush to sensitive positions in the nationalist security establishment.

Stephen Steinlight, former director of national affairs at the American Jewish Committee (AJC) described this phenomenon aptly in an essay for the Center for Immigration Studies this way:

“Unless and until the triumph of campaign finance reform is complete... the great material wealth of the Jewish community will continue to give it significant advantages. We will continue to court and be courted by key figures in Congress. That power is exerted within the political system from the



local to national levels through soft money, and especially the provision of out-of-state funds to candidates sympathetic to Israel... For perhaps another generation... the Jewish community is thus in a position to divide and conquer and enter into selective coalitions that support our agendas.”⁵

The presence of a hefty number

“One of the rituals in Washington for neophyte candidates is to stop by the AIPAC office to recite a litany of loyalties to Israel”

of conservative Congressional Republicans in the annual AIPAC conferences since the beginning of this century is indicative of a determination by the Republican Party to tap the enormous resources of the American Jewish community. No longer would the Democratic Party’s monopoly of these resources go unchallenged. The chorus of “support Israel” in its “war against terror,” is growing by leaps and bounds in Congress on a bipartisan basis, as if to reward Israel for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

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¹ Robert Pear and Richard Berke. “Pro-Israel Group Quite might as it Rallies Supporters in Congress,” *New York Times*, 7 July, 1987

² *Ibid.*

³ J. J. Goldberg. *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1996. p. 4

⁴ Martha Ezzard, “Few Question Congress’ Blind Support for Sharon,” *Atlanta Constitution Journal*, May 12, 2002

⁵ The Jewish Stake in America’s Changing Demography: <http://www.cis.org/articles/2001/back1301.html>

Pro-Israel advocacy in the UK

Abe Hayeem takes a look at BICOM, a major PR lobby group

When the US academics John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt published their article on the US/Israel lobby in the London Review of Books in March 2006, it created a stir world-wide. It showed the “unmatched power of the Israel Lobby” exerted by AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, combined with influential Christian evangelicals and ‘neo-cons’ in the Bush administration.

Here in the UK, the British Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) is the key PR group lobbying for Israel. Its objective, as it states in its website (www.bicom.org.uk) is “over time, to bring about a significant shift in opinion in favour of Israel amongst the general public, opinion-formers and the Jewish community.”

BICOM has close links with the Israeli Embassy and the Jewish Board of Deputies, and it networks with all organisations engaged in “pro-Israel advocacy”, which include the Jewish Leadership Council, the Union of Jewish Students and all three major political ‘Friends of Israel’ groups.

Just as AIPAC has managed to influence US foreign policy on the Middle East by convincing Americans that US and Israeli interests are essentially identical, BICOM works on the general principle that its aims are “based on shared values between Israel and Britain.” The pro-Israel lobby seems already to have achieved its aims of unconditional backing for Israel, reaching the highest echelons of government with seemingly little or no effort.

For example, PM Tony Blair stated in 2004: “Britain and Israel have shared values in our commitment to liberty, democracy and the rule of law and we share common aims – our search for genuine security and stability and our determination never to give in to the terrorists who attack innocent civilians.”

Tony Blair has worked closely with George Bush Jr., making it easier for Israel to enjoy immunity to international law. Blair’s determined prior opposition to the ceasefire in



Neil Lazarus of ‘Awesome seminars’

the war on Lebanon made it clear he shares Israel’s targeting and branding of Hizbollah’s resistance as part of the global war on terror. UK Government policy has similarly been totally ineffective in achieving justice for Palestine, or in publicly challenging Israel on any issue.

Yet the Jewish Chronicle of 22 June 2006 splashed out the news that BICOM, the key PR arm of the pro-Israel lobby, was to launch a new drive backed by millions of pounds in funds by its main donor, BICOM’s billionaire chairman, Norwegian Poju Zabludowicz, and many luminaries in the financial world, who are also big donors to the main political parties.

Stung by claims that they are not doing enough to improve Israel’s image and that it has been losing the propaganda war, British Jewish organisations are to campaign afresh. BICOM chief executive Daniel Shek, former Israeli Foreign Ministry diplomat, told the Jewish Chronicle: “There’s a growing feeling that something more fundamental is being challenged by Israel’s enemies and detractors in this country, which goes to the heart of Israel’s legitimacy.”

Yet these indications of Israel as a victim of poor image-projection belie the large network that exists to provide uncritical support and advocacy for Israel, in Jewish

schools, synagogues, the Jewish press, the Union of Jewish Students, and “Friends of Israel” in Parliament. The Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy attached to Tel Aviv University aims to sell the branding of Israel abroad. Also there are “awesome seminars” (see www.awesome-seminars.com – “Where Learning and Laughter Meet”) with Neil Lazarus, who has helped train a new generation of Israeli diplomats as well as Jewish community and student leadership world-wide in the “5 Rules of Effective Israel Activism”. In parallel, “Christian Friends of Israel” and “Anglicans for Israel” echo the US Christian Evangelicals’ support for Israel.

The UK and US lobbies have created a climate in which anyone who calls attention to their power is deemed anti-Semitic, a device designed to stifle discussion by intimidation, using hate mail and virulent abusive language. Deluges of letters are received by the media with accusations of bias from the pro-Israel lobby in response to any letter, action or petition calling for a boycott or any criticism of Israel.

Synagogues are actively being helped by BICOM to organise ‘training sessions’ for members to learn how to ‘help put Israel’s case’ in the media – a euphemism for advanced propaganda training and an exercise in ensuring that many real, if unpalatable, facts of the Israeli Occupation are ignored, distorted or dismissed.

BICOM can devise all the million pound ‘Advocacy Programmes’ in the world and beseech Jewish communities to collude with them in these – to no avail.

The claims that Israel is a victim of unfair ‘demonisation’ ring hollow. It cannot act as a violent state, breaking international law with utter contempt for Palestinian human rights, and then demand respect and respectability.



Poju Zabludowicz

Abe Hayeem is a founding member of Architects & Planners for Justice in Palestine

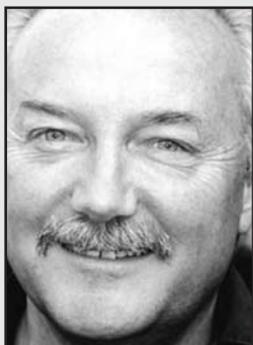
Media Watch

MEDIA CATCH-UP

If you missed Jon Snow's hard-hitting interview with the deputy Israeli Ambassador on Channel 4 news, on 4 July, you can still see it on www.channel4.com/news/special-reports/special-reports-storypage.jsp?id=2702. In relation to the Israeli blockade of Gaza, and the high-level bombardment, Jon Snow accused Israel of "collective punishment" of "defenceless civilians", and, referring to the bombing of the power station in Gaza, which reduced homes and hospitals to darkness, he asked a flustered Zvi Ravner: "Is this not an act of terror?", and drove home the question several times. Needless to say, Jon Snow received an avalanche of hate-mail, much coming from the US.



George Galloway was on top form when he gave a Sky News presenter a nine-minute verbal rollicking, when she voiced the Murdoch line of Hizbullah being simply a bunch of Muslim terrorists. Not to be missed: http://news.sky.com/skynews/video/videoplayer/0,,31200-galloway_060806,00.html



Let's hope the BBC will be prepared to screen unbiased documentaries on Lebanon. 'Lens on Lebanon' is a grassroots documentary initiative formed during the recent devastating Israeli bombardment. Filmmakers, journalists, and activists from Lebanon, Europe, and North America, have pooled resources to deliver film and video equipment into communities in south Lebanon and other areas transformed by the conflict, and to bring out documentary evidence as well as photo narratives, and video diaries of daily life.

The goal has been to give digital cameras and mini digital video recorders not to outside professionals but to local people living through this period, and thereby to focus not only on the repercussions of dramatic events such as the Qana massacre, but on the ongoing realities of daily survival. The material collected will help to fill out the picture both for the lay public and the professional media.

Most important of all, it will also enable the victims of this conflict to document war crimes, providing an invaluable resource for future advocacy.

See the website: www.lensonlebanon.org for ideas of how to help in this important documentary project.

Bad faith, hate and the war on charity

Interpal, one of the largest Palestinian aid organisations in Britain, has seen off several attempts to remove its charitable status. The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Daily Telegraph and the Jerusalem Post have all been forced to issue apologies and disclaimers. Now the BBC has become involved, airing Faith, Hate and Charity, a 'Panorama' film by John Ware, triggering further investigation by the Charity Commission.

Several PSC members wrote to the programme-makers asking why the BBC had chosen to undermine a charity providing aid to Palestinian refugees by putting its charitable status at risk. Defending its stance, the BBC accused Interpal of helping 'to build support for Hamas, an organisation which the European Union regards as terrorist.'

They stated that 'the film was commissioned and scheduled for transmission a long time before the current upsurge of violence in the Middle East...but we decided it was inappropriate to change our transmission plans.' Leaving aside the under-statement: 'upsurge in violence' and who was responsible for it, BBC-watchers will recall programmes deemed 'pro-Palestinian' being jettisoned or relegated to the red-eye slot at the eleventh hour as the broadcaster yielded to pro-Israel

lobbying. The BBC has a record of ditching programmes deemed too sensitive – for example, re-scheduling a documentary about the seventeenth century Bristol Channel storm surge just after the New Year's Day tsunami. Unfortunately, such fine sensitivity does not extend to the Middle East in the wake of massacres such as the one at Qana.

Members of PSC's media group have also asked when the BBC is going to investigate the charitable status of the Jewish National Fund, set up in 1905 by the World Zionist Congress to purchase land in Palestine exclusively for Jews. Far from being a charitable agency, the JNF promotes discrimination against Palestinians inside Israel, in occupied Palestine and the diaspora, appropriating Palestinian land, blocking the right of return of refugees and expunging evidence of 'ethnically cleansed' villages from the landscape. For example, the JNF Charitable Trust, while enjoying charitable status in the UK, has been instrumental in developing the 'British Park', a recreational area established on the ruins of the Palestinian villages of Ajur and Zakariya, destroyed in 1948 and from which their inhabitants were expelled. So far, this point remains unanswered.

For more details see www.interpal.org

Eye on the web

'Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land'

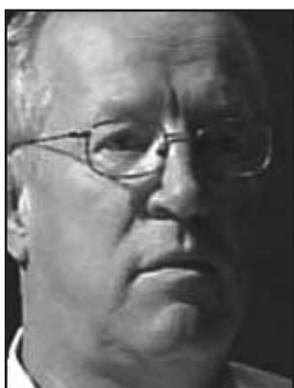
At last we have an excellent, carefully reasoned, comprehensive and clearly documented film about the Israeli occupation. It covers the key events and issues from 1967 onwards: the violence of the military occupation, the illegality of the Wall and the settlements, and the ultimate aim of annexation. But above all it demonstrates exactly how the facts are suppressed and distorted in the media.

Stalwarts like Noam Chomsky, Robert Fisk, Hanan Ashrawi and a variety of US and Palestinian journalists and campaigners describe the mechanisms at work, from the PR organisations that both feed and intimidate journalists to the huge corporations controlling the media outlets.

The result is that the central fact of the occupation is rarely even mentioned, Israeli violence is always presented as self-defence, the old myth of the 'generous offer' of Camp David, turned down by a greedy and unreasonable Arafat, is constantly re-played, and only Israeli deaths are deemed worthy of interest or compassion. The film contrasts the presentation of one incident, in which the IDF were responsible for the deaths of six small children, on the BBC and on US TV. Orla Guerin interviews the bereaved families, shows the heart-rending funeral, and attempts to question an



Hanan Ashrawi



Robert Fisk



Noam Chomsky

Israeli officer. On the US programme, it is almost as if the children — an anonymous statistic — are responsible for their own deaths.

Fisk speaks of the fear instilled into US journalists, who are obliged to toe a 100% pro-Israeli line, and contrasts this with the relative freedom enjoyed by the media in Israel. As he says, you could be sacked in the US for publishing the kind of criticism that appears in an Israeli paper like Ha'aretz. The language prescribed by the US media is particularly telling. A CNN dictat decreed that settlements like Gilo should henceforth be called 'neighbourhoods' — an anodyne, even cosy way of referring to fortified colonies.

Among the Israeli voices are courageous peace activists and an army refusenik now working for the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, who we see at work rebuilding a Palestinian home.

A British viewer might be tempted to feel that the media here are far freer than in the US — but there are many parallels and chilling moments of recognition. One wonders if we are already well on the way to this kind of censorship.

For activists, this is an excellent campaigning tool, crammed with quotable quotes, clear arguments and

unforgettable, if harrowing clips of the IDF at work in the Occupied Territories.

You can view the film on:
<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-6604775898578139565&q=palestine+p> (1hr 20 mins).
 Send the link to all your friends.

Daring to speak

For a flavour of the extreme vilification directed towards Jews who dare be critical of Israel, take a look at the infamous 'Shit-list' website (= 'Self-Hating and/or Israel-Threatening') which lists the names of about 8000 Jews worldwide: www.masada2000.org/shit-list.html. The list includes all the Jewish contributors to this magazine, some of whom merit several ranting paragraphs, while among the most unlikely candidates for this torrent of abuse are Woody Allen, Daniel Barenboim and Henry Kissinger.

The degree of accuracy of the website's version of history may be judged by just one of the geographical 'facts' supplied: they inform us that Mecca is "1,300 miles away due east" from Jerusalem.

Cybersoldiers for Israel

This summer the Israeli Government has been making strenuous efforts to counter what it perceives to be negative bias and a tide of pro-Arab propaganda. The Foreign Ministry has ordered trainee diplomats to track websites and chatrooms so that networks of US and European groups with hundreds of thousands of Jewish activists can place pro-Israel messages.

Nearly 5,000 members of the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) have been sent special "megaphone" software that alerts them to anti-Israeli chatrooms or internet polls so they can post contrary viewpoints. A student team in Jerusalem trawls the web in different languages to flag relevant sites. One of the team, Doron Barkat, said: "When I see internet polls for or against Israel I send out a mailing list to vote for Israel," he said. "After 15 minutes we can get 400 votes for Israel."

Israel's Foreign Ministry is also in contact with international Jewish and Christian fundamentalist groups, distributing internet information packs.

Amir Gissin, the Israeli Foreign Ministry's PR director, said: "The internet's become a leading tool for news, shaping the world view of millions. Our problem is the foreign media shows Lebanese suffering, but not Israeli. We're bypassing that filter by distributing pictures showing how northern Israelis suffer from Katyusha rocket attacks."

No 'safe haven' in the UK

Daniel Machover warns of Israel's attempts to get British law changed, in order to avoid prosecution in the UK for war crimes

Occupying armies and the military and civilian legal systems of an occupying power have a legal duty to bring to account suspected 'war criminals'. In a very few cases that has happened in Israel, but the vast majority of alleged crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) – killings, punitive house demolitions and torture – are not even investigated as such, being either ignored or sanctioned as being legal in Israeli court rulings, despite international legal opinion to the contrary. In these circumstances a climate of impunity has taken hold.

One of the few ways to combat impunity is the practical application of the duty of 'universal jurisdiction' over war crimes. This is why victims from the OPT and their lawyers (e.g. the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza) have sought legal remedies abroad.

Under the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949, Britain has a duty to "search for persons alleged to have committed or to have ordered to be committed...grave breaches, and shall bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts." This duty of universal jurisdiction was introduced into British law by the 1957 Geneva Conventions Act (GCA).

A magistrate may issue an arrest warrant if s/he considers that:-

1. There are reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence under the act has been committed
2. There is evidence which could be received by a court in England and Wales which (if uncontradicted) could establish the elements of the alleged offence
3. S/he has jurisdiction to issue the warrant

On 10 September 2005, after a hearing in which he received a large amount of evidence, Senior District Judge

Timothy Workman sitting at Bow Street Magistrates' Court issued a warrant for the arrest of (Israeli) Major General Doron Almog under the GCA, in relation to the extensive destruction of Palestinian houses in Rafah City (Gaza) on 10 January 2002.

We know UK courts are able to deliver justice for victims of crimes committed abroad, as the Afghan warlord Faryadi Zardad, a British resident, was arrested and convicted in July 2005 of involvement in acts of torture in Afghanistan.

The Palestinian victims applied to court for an arrest warrant but unfortunately the police failed to execute the warrant and Almog escaped from the UK after having been tipped off.

"To even consider changing the law is hypocritical, disrespectful of British justice and sends entirely the wrong message to the Israeli authorities and suspected war criminals across the world"

Following Almog's escape, the then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, apologised to his Israeli counterpart at the time and Tony Blair was reported to be embarrassed by the episode when it was raised with him by Ariel Sharon.

The Israeli government has since met at least twice with Home Office officials to lobby for urgent changes to UK law to prevent any chance of future arrests or prosecutions of Israelis in the UK. One change under consideration would prevent individuals from applying to the Magistrates' Court for an arrest warrant to be issued, at least in 'international cases'.

To change the status quo at the behest



of the Israeli government will make it easier for any war crimes suspects to evade justice in the UK. For British politicians to apologise for the judicial decision of 10 September 2005 or even consider changing the law as the Israelis have requested is hypocritical, disrespectful of British justice and sends entirely the wrong message to the Israeli authorities and suspected war criminals across the world.

There is no reason to change the law, which exists to ensure that suspected war criminals are arrested in cases of urgency or when the police have failed to act. Obviously, in most situations, the police decide whether to arrest a suspect. However, informed citizens in possession of compelling admissible evidence of war crimes need to retain the right to obtain an arrest warrant from a judge to ensure that a suspect faces justice.

In fact, no one has ever suggested before now that this is a flawed system or one which lacks adequate safeguards or undermines the rights of suspects. No evidence has been produced to show that anyone has been wrongly arrested under this current procedure, nor that the warrant issued against Doron Almog was unlawful.

Please ask your local MP to add their name to EDM NUMBER 1577 (118 signatories as of July 2006), which calls on the Government to uphold Britain's duty and right to arrest and prosecute alleged war crimes suspects if they arrive here or reside in the UK, and to fund the police and immigration authorities adequately to enable such arrests to be made, so that this country cannot be regarded as a 'safe haven' for such persons.

Please also write to the Home Secretary asking the Government to publicly recommit itself to implementing international criminal law, and to confirm that it will:

- (a) make it clear that, where evidence is available, no suspected war criminal is exempt from British justice (subject only to rules on diplomatic immunity, which in no way protect former or current military leaders)
- (b) cooperate with other jurisdictions to seek out and prosecute war criminals, as is our obligation as a High Contracting Party to the Geneva Conventions
- (c) not submit to pressure from the Israeli Government to change UK law and practice.

Daniel Machover is a Human Rights lawyer, a Partner at Hickman & Rose Solicitors.

Three lives, three paths

Hanna Braun, Ruth Tenne and Rosamine Hayeem have all made a difficult journey: from being convinced Zionist Israelis, with relatives who perished in the Holocaust, they now campaign actively for Palestinian human rights. Here they talk to PN about the experiences that changed their views.

The immediate families of all three women were secular: for them Israel was essentially a solution to centuries of persecution — and a great socialist experiment.

Hanna Braun,

an energetic grandmother of 79, spent her early childhood in Germany, in the thirties. Her affluent, and (they thought) perfectly integrated family felt themselves to be no different from their non-Jewish neighbours. “We always had a Christmas tree and Easter eggs, and I had a very strict Catholic nanny,” says Hanna. But when Hitler came to power they were quickly made very aware of their Jewish roots. “Within a couple of years former good friends had stopped playing with us and would no longer invite us to their homes nor visit ours.” The family got out just in time.

Hanna’s father decided on Palestine because he was assured of a job as an electrical engineer helping to install a modern telephone system, under the British. She remembers: “We arrived at the port of Haifa on a beautifully clear and sunny morning in October 1937, in the midst of the second bitter Palestinian uprising, euphemistically termed “disturbances”. At the time, the prevailing slogan was “Hebrew work for Hebrew workers” — i.e. a boycott of any dealings



Hanna Braun

with, or employment of, Palestinian Arabs.”

Paradoxically, relations improved during the early years of the war, and young Hanna made Palestinian as well as Jewish friends. Nevertheless, she did not question the official line of the Jewish right to the land: “One of the many nationalistic songs we used to sing speaks of “a dunum here and a dunum there”, celebrating as courageous acts of ‘pioneers’ what was in reality a land-grab.”

Hanna was in the Hagana in 1948 during the ‘War of Independence’ — i.e. the Nakba (Catastrophe), for the Palestinians — and happened to be posted near the village of Deir Yassin, where a massacre triggered the flight from many other Arab villages. “I remember a colleague rushing in and saying ‘They are butchering everyone in Deir Yassin’, and we were horrified, as we knew it was just a peaceful little village. We explained it later as the work of the Stern Gang — ‘extremists’, not civilised fighters like us.” When she returned to Haifa she found that all her Arab neighbours had been driven out.

Another pivotal experience was her job teaching Hebrew to new Jewish immigrants, from Turkey, India and the Arab world. Contrary to the official line, that they had been maltreated and expelled from their home countries, Hanna found that many had been lured with hopes of better economic conditions: “They were put into primitive camps and then drafted into the army (being perfectly aware that they were getting very different treatment from European immigrants). And as they were often immediately made into Israeli

citizens, their original nationality became invalid and they could no longer return.”

Hanna and her husband were by now questioning much of the received Zionist wisdom, and became vocally dissident. As a result they were ostracised, their mail was intercepted, and they finally left to live in the UK in 1958.

Here she read widely — often works difficult to obtain in Israel, such as Rosemary Sayigh’s seminal *The Palestinians - from Peasants to Revolutionaries* and the unexpurgated version of founding father Herzl’s works (where he talks explicitly about the need to ethnically cleanse the Arab population of Palestine), and befriended Palestinians at Birmingham University. “Then Israel’s invasion and occupation of Lebanon in 1982 was the last straw: from being a non-Zionist I became a campaigning anti-Zionist.”

When Hanna returns to the region, it is to monitor what is being done in the Occupied Territories, and to Palestinians living in Israel. On one trip she made contact with the family of a girl who, at the age of 14, had shouted and flourished a knife at a group of Israeli soldiers outside the AlAqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Noone was hurt but the girl was given a seven year jail sentence for ‘attempted murder’. Hanna joined in the campaign, involving the British press, and the girl was released after one year.

Unlike Hanna, **Ruth Tenne** was born and brought up in Israel, in a kibbutz near Haifa that her parents, committed secular socialists from Eastern Europe, had helped to found. They had virtually no contact with the three neighbouring Palestinian villages — “But I do remember their lovely orchards and olive groves.” The existence of these ancient villages



Ruth on protest march

with their carefully tended land of course contradicted the official line that 'all this was desert and swamp' before the kibbutzim made it bloom, but the anomaly did not strike the young pioneer at the time. "After 1948 our kibbutz took over some of the village lands and farmed them in a much more mechanised way.

"I feel in retrospect that I was indoctrinated on the kibbutz; we had four hours a week of Bible teaching, all about our inherited right to the land, and there was a lot of brainwashing too in our military training."

Even when Ruth was acting as a teaching assistant at the University of Haifa while studying for her MSc, her only contact with Palestinians was with a few students who had made it to the university. "I remember arguing that they should not be penalised because their Hebrew was not as good as that of the Jewish students. To no avail..."

At the time of the Suez invasion of 1956 she was conscripted into the army, in the communications section of the Air Force. "Most of the aircraft attacking Egypt came from the base I was attached to. There was a lot of rhetoric flying around, but I just didn't understand the purpose and logic of this sudden military adventure."

In the '67 war she was part of the civil defence force. "We were all terrified; we had no idea we had so much high-tech weaponry, and even nuclear weapons. We were amazed when it was over virtually in a matter of hours, having crushed the Egyptian air force in a pre-emptive dawn strike." She describes herself at the time as "a dedicated socialist Zionist".

It was not until Ruth came to study at LSE in London in 1969 that she really began to question the basic premises of Zionism. Discussions with non-Zionist Jewish friends and colleagues, some of whom were members of the Matzpen (Compass) movement, along with access to more varied sources of information, made her gradually move away from an unquestioning support for the Israeli state.

But the key turning point for Ruth, as for Hanna, came with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. "I was shocked and outraged and remember writing my first letter to the Guardian (published under an assumed name). I felt I had lost my homeland forever."

Her campaigning has mainly taken

"Israel's invasion and occupation of Lebanon in 1982 was the last straw"

the form of writing: letters, reviews, articles – all aimed at challenging the official Israeli version of history and contemporary events. Since these invariably trigger a good deal of hate mail, it is only relatively recently that she has taken to using her own name. "Now that there are organisations like Jews for Justice for Palestinians

one feels less isolated, more able to speak out. We write especially to the Jewish press – it's so important to try and re-educate the Jewish community. Of course we always get abusive, vitriolic responses."

Ruth's political stance has put a severe strain on relations with her family back in Israel. As a well-known academic the elder of her two brothers benefits from US awards and grants for research, and is feted on his trips to America. "He simply puts his head in the sand", says Ruth. "He doesn't go to the Occupied Territories and doesn't want to know what's going on there. We used to correspond by email, but he told me not to mention 'politics' to him again in my letters. So, sadly, we lost touch last year."

Rosamine

Hayeem's family, like Ruth's, had fled from the pogroms of Eastern Europe. She herself was born in Rhodesia and spent her early life between that country and South Africa: "Jewish communities there were ultra-Zionist, and my immediate family were instrumental in bringing out European Jews to escape the Holocaust. There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing to Israel, where we had lots of relatives."

Like many Jewish South Africans, Rosamine campaigned against Apartheid, until she was expelled. On arrival in Israel, in 1959, she found that "Jews from Europe and southern Africa were well treated – the chosen of the chosen, you might say. I was welcomed with open arms and given a grant towards a flat."

She quickly learned Hebrew and became a teacher of English language and literature, but soon began to

question some of the attitudes she encountered. "We were starting a literary discussion group in Tel Aviv and I was happy to include some highly educated Palestinians who were interested. After the first meeting, however, my colleagues made it clear that having 'Arabs' in the group was unacceptable. I was utterly shocked, as I thought I had left discrimination behind in South Africa. I left the group."

Nevertheless, from initial doubts to rejection was a long road. "Teachers in my Hebrew classes were full of the euphoria of the recent 'liberation', and of the danger from 'hostile Arabs'. I heard of no massacres, no expulsions of the indigenous population. The story was that the Palestinians had been told to stay, but they'd just run away."

It was only when she came to England with her husband Abe, in 1965, that she began to learn more of what had really happened in 1948.

When they helped to set up the organisation 'Jews against Apartheid', they discovered all the political, military and economic connections between Israel and the Apartheid regime. "But even the most progressive and leftwing of our members refused to condemn Israel for this support, or to make comparisons. When we spoke up we were considered traitors.

"There is such a weight of opinion against you in the community that you start to have doubts yourself. But it's consoling to think that wonderful people like Amira Hass, Ilan Pappé, or Gideon Levy, who writes for Ha'aretz, themselves began life as Zionists and remained ignorant for a long time."

After the 1967 war, when the settlement of the Occupied Territories began, Rosamine realised that "this was conquest and annexation, not self defence". Like Ruth and Hanna, she found the 1982 invasion of Lebanon the antithesis of everything Israel was supposed to stand for.

Due to their vocal campaigning work Rosamine and Abe have lost once close friends, and even family members have shunned them. "At best, Zionist friends and relatives consider us to be misguided eccentrics," she says.

So has it been it worth it? "It's a very painful journey. In the Jewish community there's a tribal attitude of 'You're either with us or against us'. But once you break away, there's a fantastic sense of release. It's like escaping from a religious sect or cult – at last you have the freedom to develop, to think for yourself."



Rosamine Hayeem

In Brief

● Israeli **SETTLEMENT ACTIVITIES** continue, despite recent Quartet expressions of concern. According to a report by the Israeli NGO Peace Now, approximately 3,000 residential units are currently under construction in the West Bank, while a police station is being built on Palestinian land between Jerusalem and Ma-ale Adumim.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE WALL also continues, despite the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, delivered over two years ago, and backed by a UN Resolution.

● **BOMB WARNINGS:** UNICEF has begun a campaign in Lebanon to inform the families returning to their homes of the dangers of unexploded ordnance. It is mounting an advertising campaign to warn parents to keep their children away from strange, shiny objects in the rubble. UNICEF spokesperson, Wivina Belmonte, said: "We are starting to do TV and radio spots, handing out leaflets to people who are crossing the border from Syria into Lebanon going back into areas that have been bombed and shelled, where there are pieces of debris that are still of great danger to people". A similar campaign by UNICEF is under way in Gaza. Michael Bociurkiw said. "Kids are typically exposed to violence, for example shelling, gunfire and unexploded ordnance, when they go to and from school. Many times schools are hit during the school year." He said the agency was also very concerned about "invisible injuries" — the trauma inflicted on children — and is counselling them, their parents and other care givers.

● **IDF GENERAL: TROOPS CAN STEAL FROM LEBANESE STORES:** "If our fighters deep in Lebanese territory are left without food or water, I believe they can break into local Lebanese stores to solve that problem," said Brigadier General Avi Mizrahi, the head of the Israel Defence Forces logistics branch (Ha'aretz 14 August).

* Did they leave the owner a reassuring note: 'You have just been robbed by the most moral army in the world' ?

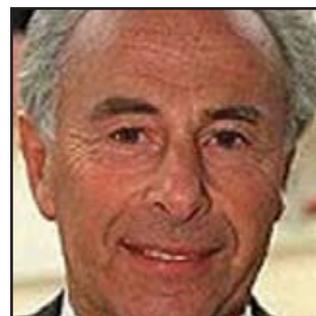


JONAS JONZON MAANIMAGES.NET

Demonstration against building of the Wall near Jerusalem, July 2006

● In all the furore over cash for peerages, one rather obvious aspect of **LORD LEVY'S** varied and distinguished career was curiously overlooked. He is one of the staunchest supporters of Israel, having been on the board of several organisations which raise large sums of money for that country, where he has a home and a variety of business interests. His son Daniel, who is an Israeli citizen, has served as an assistant to the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and to former Minister Yossi Beilin. Most recently, Lord Levy met senior Israeli ministers dozens of times in the run-up to the Lebanese conflict.

Lord Levy has a right to fundraise and lobby for Israel. But one must question the judgement of a Prime Minister who appoints such a person as their Middle East Special Envoy and personal advisor on the affairs of the region. Even if the advice were completely unbiased, it will not be seen to be so by the governments and people of the Middle East.



Lord Levy

● **PALESTINIANS SEND AID TO LEBANON:** In early August dozens of lorries laden with flour, sugar and medical supplies left Ramallah for Lebanon, travelling via Jordan and Syria. One of the organisers said:

"We know this is only a drop in the ocean — but a very important drop, as it symbolises our moral and practical support for our brothers and sisters in Lebanon." \$300,000 dollars was raised, by companies and individuals — some at a huge concert in Ramallah where songs made famous by Marcel Khalifa and Fairouz during the first Intifada were sung.

The lorries, covered in balloons the colours of the Palestinian and Lebanese flags were given a great send-off by crowds of children, sending their love and good wishes to the children of Lebanon.



MUSHIR ABDELRAHMAN MAANIMAGES.NET

With love from Palestine, 6 August 2006

ISRAEL'S ATTACK ON LEBANON PLANNED YEARS

AGO: "Of all of Israel's wars since 1948, this was the one for which Israel was most prepared," said Gerald Steinberg, professor of political science at Israel's Bar-Ilan University. "In a sense, the preparation began in May 2000, immediately after the Israeli withdrawal... By 2004, the military campaign... that we're seeing now had already been blocked out and, in the last year or two, it's been simulated and rehearsed across the board."

The New Statesman reported on 4 August 2006 that Israel planned the invasion before the kidnappings and informed the Americans, who then informed Britain: "Blair knew the attack on Lebanon was coming but he didn't try to stop it, because he didn't want to," said John Kampfner. "He has made this country an accomplice, destroying what remained of our influence abroad while putting us all at greater risk of attack... This has been a case not of turning a blind eye and failing to halt the onslaught, but of providing active support."

Dr John Pike, head of the Washington-based military think tank Global Security, said he believed there was an agreement between Israel and the US that Iranian nuclear plants should eventually – probably next year – be bombed. Naturally, Iran would then order Hizbullah to attack Israel. Thus, Dr Pike claimed, the US and Israel agreed that Hizbullah had to be disarmed and that as soon as a pretext became available, Israel should use force.

TELEPHONE TERROR: In early August Israel introduced a new terror tactic: families in Gaza get a phone call from the Israeli Shin Bet (domestic intelligence agency) at any time of the day or night warning them that their homes will be bombed within 20 minutes. There is naturally a mad panic to round up the family, grab a few belongings and run. Much of the time this is just a hoax – Shin Bet's bit of fun. Eventually the family ventures back. But sometimes the F-16s do come over and carry out Israel's best-known form of collective punishment.



Children search the rubble of their home in Rafah after F-16 bombing, August 2006

END OF THE PA? In mid-August Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh surprised many by saying that Palestinian leaders ought to seriously study dismantling the Palestinian Authority, which he suggested was becoming a national liability. Haniyeh argued that there was no point "in deceiving ourselves and in giving the world an erroneous impression that there is a Palestinian national government, when the Israeli occupation army is killing every shred of authority and abducting ministers and lawmakers and forcing officials to go underground." The tacit call to dissolve the PA was supported by the Tunis-based Fatah chief Farouk Qaddumi, who argued that there was no point in maintaining an "Authority that has no authority."

ISRAEL HAS BEEN DENYING ENTRY TO SCORES OF INTERNATIONALS AND TO PALESTINIANS HOLDING FOREIGN PASSPORTS.

According to the daily paper Maariv: "the IDF will declare the Judea and Samaria [the West Bank] closed to foreign nationals. Denying entry to... activists has been defined as prevention of political subversion and involvement of members of the movement in acts of terrorism, and limitation of friction with Jewish settlers." Birmingham MP Lynne Jones was one of those barred entry when she attempted to visit the West Bank this summer.

Several thousand American and European nationals of Palestinian origin, and foreigners married to Palestinians, have already been denied entry. Many have therefore lost their families, jobs and homes; many more are unable to visit their families in the Occupied Territories.



MAUREEN CLARE MURPHY ELECTRONICINTIFADA.NET

22 July saw the 60th anniversary of the bombing of the **KING DAVID HOTEL** in Jerusalem, by members of the Irgun gang, classified as a terrorist organisation by the British authorities. The hotel was the HQ of both Palestine's civil administration and the British army in Palestine. The terrorists used 350 kilograms of TNT and gelignite to blow up the civilian and the military headquarters in the south wing, killing 91 people and injuring about 45.

The attack was ordered by Menachem Begin, the head of the Irgun, who later became Prime Minister of Israel. Right-wing Israelis including Benjamin Netanyahu attended an anniversary celebration of the bombing, which was organised by the Menachem Begin Centre. The British Ambassador in Tel Aviv and the Consul-General in Jerusalem complained, saying "We do not think that it is right for an act of terrorism, which led to the loss of many lives, to be commemorated."



King David Hotel, Jerusalem, July 1946

Kidnapping, abduction, imprisonment

Betty Hunter asks: Who does it better than Israel?

According to Israel and its allies, the US and UK governments, the attacks on Gaza and Lebanon were launched to rescue kidnapped soldiers on active duty. After many years of discreet prisoner exchanges, it is clear that these latest incidents have simply been used as a pretext to wage war.

Israel's attempt to use the accusation of kidnapping to gain a vestige of moral high ground for these pre-planned attacks is laughable. Twenty years ago Israeli agents lured Mordechai Vanunu to Italy, bundled him into a crate and flew him to Israel where he was imprisoned for 18 years. And his crime? To warn the world of Israel's development of nuclear weapons. France and the UK did nothing to obtain the release of Vanunu — but did aid and abet Israel in its illegal acquisition of nuclear weapons.

On 14 March this year the Israeli army launched an assault on the prison in Jericho in order to abduct Palestinian political prisoners it has been desperate to seize ever since the siege of Arafat's headquarters in 2002. Three people were killed, many were injured, 200 were detained and six high profile political prisoners were taken to Israeli prisons. All of this was allowed to happen by the British government who withdrew their monitors, assigned by international agreement to prevent the prisoners being taken by Israel. Ahmad Saadat and his four PFLP co-detainees continue to be held in Israeli prisons although no charges have been laid because of lack of evidence.

Marwan Barghouti is yet another political leader abducted by Israel and held without even family visits. Every Palestinian family has experienced the abduction and imprisonment of family members. Currently there are 10,000 Palestinian prisoners of whom about 800 are 'administrative detainees' (i.e. they are held without charge or trial). 450 children are currently in Israeli prisons.

It is routine for people to be taken from their homes by the military, just as a doctor and his son were taken from their home in Gaza the day before Hamas captured an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit. As recently as Friday 25 August Israeli forces took seven Palestinians from the Jenin District and on 26 August they invaded the Gaza Strip near Rafah to arrest four members of the Abu Shamalia family from their home. All were taken to unknown locations. Under Israeli law, any detainee suspected



Aziz Duweik, Speaker of the Legislative Council

of "security" offences can be denied access to a lawyer for 21 days; Amnesty International has reported that it is during this 'incommunicado' period that torture is likely to take place.

The latest spectacular show of contempt for international law and the democratic process is the mass abduction of members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Where else could half the cabinet of a properly elected government be abducted by a neighbouring country, with scarcely a murmur from the world community? It is a supreme irony that the US and British governments claim they are bringing democracy to the Middle East when virtually the sole example of truly democratic elections in the region has been rewarded by crushing sanctions.

On 29 June, Israeli forces arrested the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, Khalid Abu Arafat, and seven other ministers. In all, Israeli forces have imprisoned 31 Palestinian Legislative Council members, including the Speaker, Dr. Aziz Duweik

and the Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Nasser Addin Al Sha'er. At the same time Israeli forces have arrested many members of local governments, including Qalqilia's Mayor and Deputy Mayor, during the past months.

An Israeli military court has extended Khalid Abu Arafat's prison sentence seven times, yet he has still not been charged with any crime. On 17 August the military court extended the detention of the Speaker of the Palestinian parliament. Dr Duweik, who had earlier been hospitalized with chest pains after his arrest, and whose hands and feet were manacled, shouted to the television cameras; "I am the elected representative of the people." He refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the court.

Current Palestinian Government spokesperson Dr. Ghazi Hamad has strongly denounced the arrests, highlighting the latest example, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Dr. Nasser Addin Al Sha'er. Israeli soldiers besieged his Ramallah home at dawn and shouted via megaphone that he was to "surrender."

Dr. Hamad said, "The kidnapping comes as part of the continuing Israeli policy to undermine and demolish our political system and spoil the elected Palestinian government. They concentrate their efforts against the Palestinian people and their government through military escalations, thug-like activities and daily killings, massacres, arrests, and abductions. All of this continues unabated, as Israel is still allowed to act as if it is above the law. It wants to put the Palestinian National Authority in a weak position because they do not want there to be an independent Palestinian government."

Israel uses the excuse that these people are all members of a 'terrorist organisation'. Leaving aside the undeniable right of an occupied people to resist occupation, one could ask what clearer examples there can be of state terrorism than Israel's decades of violent and flagrant abuse of every aspect of international law.

South African support for Palestine

On 6 June, in a letter of support to the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), Ontario, Willie Madisha, President of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) wrote:

Brother Sid Ryan,

On behalf of over 1,2 million South African workers organized under the banner of COSATU I greet you in the name of worker internationalism. It is this solidarity, since the formation of the very first union and across space and time, often in the face of harsh repression, that provided vital moral succour and allowed workers to strengthen their resolve against oppression and exploitation.

In this spirit and with great pride, I congratulate CUPE Ontario for their historic resolution on May 27th in support of the Palestinian people – those living under occupation and those millions of Palestinian refugees living in the Diaspora. We fully support your resolution.

As someone who lived in apartheid South Africa and who has visited Palestine I say with confidence that Israel is an apartheid state. In fact, I believe that the worst atrocities committed by the erstwhile apartheid regime in South Africa pale in comparison to some committed against the Palestinians.

The latest outrage by the apartheid Israeli regime – the construction of the hideous Apartheid Wall condemned by the International Court of Justice – extends the occupation of Palestinian lands, disrupts the already precarious economic, social, health and educational wellbeing of an entire people and entrenches the Bantustanisation of Palestine.

When the governments of the world turn a blind eye to these injustices; when they are seduced by apartheid Israel's justification of brutality through the pretext of 'security'; when they silence criticism of state terror through the canard of 'anti-semitism' – then it is time for the global workers movement to stand firm and principled against



Willie Madisha

hypocrisy and double standards. We cannot remain silent any longer. It is time to stand in word and in deed with the peoples of the Middle East and heed their call to support the struggle against occupation.

There will be no peace in this region and in the world, without justice.

Despite the action of some Western governments and big business, workers and democrats of the world, including the citizens of Canada, heeded our call when we struggled against apartheid. Boycotts, disinvestments and sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa hastened our march to democracy. Why should it be different for Palestinians? In the face of an intransigent, arrogant, racist and brutal Israeli state, this strategy of isolation – particularly since the vast majority of Palestinians support it – should be applied to Israel as well. It is a peaceful option.

South African workers will never forget the support given by the Israeli state to the apartheid South African regime. In the same way we will never

forget the thousands of acts of solidarity of ordinary citizens around the world who sustained our struggle through the boycott weapon.

COSATU supports the demand that Apartheid Israel must respect and implement all resolutions passed by the United Nations; that the right of return of Palestinian refugees must not be compromised; that Israel respects the democratically elected government of Palestine; and that Palestinian taxes collected by Israel must be returned to the elected representatives of Palestine unconditionally.

Those supporting the ideology of Zionism and the pro-Israeli lobby will muster their substantial resources against you. Despite these pressures, we ask you not to doubt for a single moment the correctness of your just stand. We salute the courage and vision of CUPE Ontario's leadership and members in unanimously passing resolution 50. Your unwavering resolve inspires us, we who lived through decades of apartheid oppression, as it will undoubtedly inspire and endear you to millions of Palestinian and other freedom loving people throughout the world.

In Solidarity

Willie Madisha

President, Congress of South African Trade Unions

A month later, in a heavily attended press conference on 10 July at Cosatu House in Braamfontein, Johannesburg, responding to the beginning of the murderous Israeli campaign in Gaza, the Palestine Solidarity Committee of South Africa [PSC] demanded an immediate end to the killing of Palestinians.

“What we see there is real genocide,” said Madisha.

PSC members called for the release of all detained Palestinian ministers and legislators and all political prisoners, for an end to the sanctions imposed on the Palestinian people and for the immediate recall the South African ambassador from Tel Aviv .

Members criticized the South African government for its support of Israel, citing a 15-20% rise in South Africa-Israel trade in the last two years, and the lack of prosecution of South Africans fighting in the IDF. Panelists repeatedly recalled the support of the international community in fighting South African apartheid with boycotts and diplomatic isolation and demanded that South Africa answer the similar plea by Palestinian civil society to fight the ongoing apartheid, racism, and genocide in Palestine.

Academic and cultural boycott

Steven and Hilary Rose report on progress – and intimidation

Even before Israel launched its brutal attacks, first on Gaza and then on the Lebanon, the academic and cultural boycott movement was growing. At its final conference at the end of May, before it merged with the AUT to form the new University and College Union, NATFHE voted on a boycott. This reminded NATFHE members of their motion of solidarity last year for the AUT's boycott resolution and invited them 'to consider their own responsibility for ensuring equity and non-discrimination in contacts with Israeli educational institutions or individuals, and to consider the appropriateness of a boycott of those that do not publicly dissociate themselves from such policies.'

The moment the resolution appeared on the Conference agenda, NATFHE's head office was subject to a torrent of threatening and abusive emails, both from Israeli universities and the organised Israel lobby. This attempt by the Israel lobby to bully a British higher education trade union and its members was not new. Because their university system is seen as central to Israel's cultural and economic links with the West, any criticism touches a raw nerve. Thus pro-boycott AUT members had earlier been similarly swamped by hate mail, one of BRICUP's committee receiving a death threat serious enough for their university to increase security. NATFHE had learnt from this experience and publicly exposed the bullying of the Israel lobby and insisted on its right to determine its own policy. Encouraged by a letter of support from PACBI (the Palestinian Campaign for an Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), the motion was passed by 70% in favour. To save their faces the anti-

boycotters seized on the small number of abstentions, but the support for the boycott was, to their fury, clear.

Within days of the conference the merger with AUT occurred and these issues will be fought out again. In the meantime, and somewhat ruefully, the anti-boycotters reflected publicly that their campaign of intimidation had backfired. A few weeks later the Jewish Board of Deputies called a special invitation-only meeting to consider how to counter the boycotters and to respond to the increasing number of vocally 'anti-Israeli Jews' in Britain. The very intensity of the frantic attempts to derail the boycott, and the bluster of the Israel lobby, is indicative of a basic and increasing insecurity about the long-term viability of Israel's policies.

“The very intensity of the frantic attempts to derail the boycott is indicative of an increasing insecurity about the long-term viability of Israel’s policies”

The scale and violence of Israel's aggression first against Gaza and then the Lebanon have shocked even its international allies, and the boycott movement has expanded. Individual and very public acts of boycott have become more common, as when Professor Richard Seaford, of Exeter, refused to review a book for a journal published by Bar-Ilan university, on the grounds that he had, 'along with many other British academics, signed the academic boycott of Israel, in the face of the brutal and illegal expansionism, and the slow-motion ethnic cleansing, being practised by your government.' Media studies professor at the University of East London and Israeli citizen Haim Bresheeth similarly very publicly refused to attend a conference in Israel.

Greek, Canadian and of course

South African trades unions and associations have responded to the calls of PACBI and BRICUP. The South Africans have been particularly outspoken in their denunciation of Israel's policies (see page 19). An academic boycott call is currently being made in Ireland, where the Services, Industrial Professional and Technical Union, representing over 200,000 workers called for sanctions, as has the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

Internationally, academics, musicians, lawyers, writers and artists are also quietly voting with their feet, refusing invitations, 'forgetting' to renew institutional contacts, all contributing to the growing recognition by Israelis themselves that theirs is becoming a pariah state, and that unless they work actively to help change their government's policies, then their own isolation — not just that of their government — will only increase. Unquestionably the academic and cultural boycott of Israel is on the agenda, as an integral part of the campaigns for Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions (BDS). BDS is a long and non violent struggle for a just peace in Israel/Palestine, involving solidarity campaigns, trade unions, political parties and eventually governments and the UN. But the decision to support BDS in whatever way we can now, is ultimately a matter for the conscience of the individual. Over the coming months, it will be BRICUP's task to expand and develop the boycott, organising meetings in universities and colleges across the country, encouraging our fellow academics to resist the bullyboy tactics of the Israel lobby and stand up in solidarity with our Palestinian colleagues and their students.

British Committee for the Universities of Palestine: info@bricup.org.uk.
For the full text of PACBI's call for boycott and sanctions, and for worldwide responses see www.pacbi.org

Church divestment grows

On 1 August, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, Bishop Riah Abu El Assal wrote an impassioned letter about the death and destruction in Lebanon and Palestine. He spoke of a recent visit to Gaza and said: 'I have seen the Caterpillar bulldozers and the orchards of oranges uprooted by them. I saw an apartment building where forty families were given forty minutes to leave before it was demolished into a pile of rubble ... We must find an end to this madness'.

Bishop Riah has been consistent in his call to the churches in the USA and Europe to take a lead on divestment from companies profiting from this madness. Slowly, the churches are responding and although attempts have been made to spin their response either as anti-semitic or as responding to argument and going into reverse, the fact is that the divestment movement is growing.

In the USA the Presbyterian Church overwhelmingly voted to set as church policy that 'financial investments of the Presbyterian Church (USA) as they pertain to Israel, Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, be invested in only peaceful pursuits'. They also affirmed the ongoing 'engagement process' of the Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee, who are in discussion with five multinationals – Caterpillar Inc, Citigroup, ITT Industries, Motorola and United Technologies. The decision was presented by the Zionism

News Network as a reversal of the previous year's decision, whereas those present saw it as the next stage of that decision, which was to look at existing investment policy, make recommendations for investment in respect of Israel and Palestine and take the process forward through engagement (with divestment as a possible end result).

A Christian group has also been involved in raising the issue of the use of Caterpillar bulldozers in violent occupation activities at the corporation's AGM, by encouraging members to buy a share, to attend and be vocal. This is building year on year at the AGM, in support also of the Corrie family's attempt to hold Caterpillar Inc accountable for the death of Rachel.

In the UK, the Methodist Church's governing body, the Methodist Conference, overwhelmingly passed a resolution expressing 'deep concerns over continued settlement and road development in the West Bank' and reminding Israel of its illegality. It called for a halt to settlement and road building activity, and to the 'immediate total demolition' of the apartheid wall, and asked its Ethical Investment Advisory



Archbishop Riah of Jerusalem

Committee to look at investment policy, beginning with engagement and leading ultimately to selective divestment if appropriate. PSC member and Methodist Lay Preacher, Stephen Leah was present and he was encouraged at the Conference gathering by the strength of feeling of delegates on behalf of the Palestinian people, and the response to that concern.

In the Church of England, the gulf remains between its main body, General Synod, which has voted for divestment from Caterpillar, and its financial advisors (and their inhouse ethical policy group) who maintain that there is no case for divestment, because Caterpillar are not currently selling D9 bulldozers. They will not answer the question of whether spare parts are sold or licensed on an ongoing basis, and Anglican campaigners Stephen Sizer and Garth Hewitt remain convinced that this is the key flaw to their argument, especially as we can all see D9s leading the invasion of northern Gaza. Clearly these are weapons of war being used in contravention of all international laws and norms.

In all these actions the presence of US Jewish and UK Jewish and Muslim groups as part of the campaign for divestment has been most important. The scare tactics of the pro-Israeli lobby — that criticism of Israel's policy amounts to a breach in interfaith relations — are disarmed by the realisation that people of all backgrounds find the violent policies of occupation abhorrent.

Sue Plater, Associate Director of the Amos Trust

Summer festivals shun Israel

The governing body of the **Greek film industry** has withdrawn all Greek films from the Haifa film festival this coming autumn. The cultural event had lost all meaning in the current situation, they wrote, and 'artists cannot remain inactive in the face of such distressing developments.'

In August the **Edinburgh Festival** cancelled sponsorship from the Israeli Embassy in London and returned its cheque, after protests from members of the public, writers and artists, supported by the artistic director of the festival who said he had almost had his bottom teeth knocked out by the butt of an Israeli rifle whilst visiting

the Occupied Territories. The **Irish Film Institute**, which had received sponsorship from Israel as part of its Gay and Lesbian Film festival, also decided very publicly to drop the sponsorship.

The documentary film festival in **Lussas, France** was to have devoted a special place to Israeli cinema. However, due to the war in Lebanon, the festival's directors decided to cancel the screening of some of the Israeli films that had been invited for screening. Festival directors explained that it had been decided to create an alternative program consisting of Lebanese and Palestinian films that would present the

face of opposition to the war.

The 2006 **Locarno International Film Festival** has dropped the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a festival sponsor because of that country's unremitting bombardment of civilian targets in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip.

Filmmakers and invited guests signed a letter stating: "We simply cannot, from an ethical standpoint, attend or screen our films in any program or event that refuses to recognize the direness of situations such as the present one and does not stand for human dignity in the face of barbarity perpetuated against any peoples."

The logo of Israel's Foreign Affairs Ministry was subsequently removed from the festival Web site, press release and brochure.

A summer of action

This summer saw PSC supporters right across the country organising to protest against Israeli actions in Gaza and Lebanon

On 20 May, despite heavy rain, 10,000 people commemorated Nakba Day in central London, calling for recognition of Palestinian Human Rights and an end to the Israeli Occupation. The demonstration was organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign with the Palestinian Forum in Britain, Association of Palestinian Communities, Palestinian Return Centre, British Muslim Initiative, Friends of Al-Aqsa and Stop the War Coalition.

After the bombing of the power plant in Gaza, hundreds of supporters sent Margaret Beckett candles to forward to the people of Gaza. On 22 July, within nine days of Israel's first attack on Lebanon, PSC organised an emergency demo with CND, BMI, MAB and STW, with 25,000 people marching to Hyde Park.

On the morning of **Sunday 30 July** came news of Israel's second Qana massacre in Lebanon. In the afternoon thousands gathered in brilliant sunshine in Trafalgar Square for a unique outpouring of grief, anger and solidarity. 'Voices for Lebanon and Palestine', was conceived and directed by Michael Kustow, organised by PSC and supported by the Lebanese Muslim League, Lebanese Welfare Community, the British Muslim Initiative and Palestinian organisations.

Michael Kustow said: "This rich programme, assembled with great urgency, brings together graphic reportage, bitter satire, and the poetry of hope. Though the world seems to be imploding, we can still raise our voices to celebrate life and oppose killing".

Ex-Python Terry Jones wrote a



National demo for Gaza and Lebanon

piece especially to be performed in Trafalgar Square by Maxine Peake, and Michael Kustow compiled and directed a performance using the words of Harold Pinter, Robert Fisk, Amira Hass, Adrian Mitchell, Daniel Barenboim, Terry Jones, Lebanese artist Zena el Khalil and Palestine's leading poet Mahmoud Darwish, as well as a poem Michael had written especially for the event.

These writings, including Pinter's deeply bitter and satirical new poems,

were brilliantly performed by Simon Callow, Alexei Sayle, Maxine Peake, Andy De La Tour, Sam West, Bill Paterson, Henry Goodman, Corin Redgrave and Kika Markham. Kika read a poem by Samar Alami composed inside the prison where she remains wrongfully incarcerated as a political prisoner. Introducing Corin Redgrave, Betty Hunter paid tribute to his personal courage in taking the stage while recovering from serious illness. Corin read from an article in which Robert Fisk quoted Fayrouz' song,

*'In Beirut...
From the soul of her people she
makes wine,
From their sweat, she makes bread
and jasmine.
So how did it come to taste of smoke
and fire?'*

Veteran peace campaigner Bruce Kent accused the British Government of complicity in war crimes: 'Tony Blair shouldn't be here, he should be at the Hague,' he said. Former MP Tony Benn told the crowd, "As we talk, women and children are being killed in Lebanon by bombs sold and given by the US and passed through British airports with the support of the British Government... What we are witnessing is a war crime committed by Israel with the support of the American and the British."

Other speakers included John Austin MP, Murad Qureshi of the London Assembly, Revd Richard Carter (St

Martin in the Fields), and Hugh Lanning (Assistant General Secretary PCS union).

Palestinian singer, Shadia Mansour, received a rapturous reception for her singing of 'Onadeekom' by Towfik Zayyad and was called back to the stage to perform again before the event could close. The audience joined the chorus, 'I call on you to stand together. As I kiss the ground you walk on, under the soles of your feet I can hear peace.'



Alexei Sayle in Trafalgar Square

Throughout the country demonstrations and meetings in support of both Palestine and Lebanon were called at short notice – particularly for the **Day of Action on 22 July**. They were well attended and well received by the public, and many new links were forged with the Lebanese community and Palestine solidarity groups.

On **5 August** people from all over the country responded to the call from PSC, STW, LWC, BMI and CND, gathering at Hyde Park and marching to Parliament Square to demand British government support for an immediate ceasefire.

The tremendous turnout of 100,000 people heard speaker after speaker highlight the shameful position of the government. Many demanded that boycott and sanctions be imposed on Israel.

As well as the large demonstrations



York, 22 July

and rallies in London, protests were held in, among other places: **Manchester, Sheffield, Oxford, Exeter, Newcastle, Derby, Hull, Durham, Preston, and York.**

Outraged by the indiscriminate killing of civilians in Gaza and Lebanon, and the pro-war stance taken by the government, activists in **Derby South** gathered outside Margaret Beckett's constituency surgery on 22 July. After two hours of chanting: "UK silence, UK shame – Beckett silence, Beckett shame," she finally appeared. An angry protester demanded to know why she and Blair took orders from Bush and dismissed the will of the British people, which she of course denied.

In **Manchester**, about 2,000 people marched from the BBC to Albert Square outside Manchester Town Hall. Speakers called for maximum support for the people of the Lebanon and Palestine. One of the highlights of the event was when an Israeli woman took the platform to condemn the Israeli aggression,

saying they did not have a mandate from the people of Israel to destroy another country and that the Israeli left and peace movement were appalled at the Israeli aggression.

A large protest was also held outside **Sheffield Town Hall** in August, called by a coalition of anti-war groups and trade unions, against "the barbarism of the Israeli state towards the Lebanese and Palestinian people and against any threatened attack on Iran and Syria." And **Oxford** members held regular Sunday vigils with the Lebanese community and peace groups, including prominent leaders of various faith groups such as Pax Christi. A 'die-in' with coffins was organised by local Palestinians and Lebanese.

Meanwhile in **Exeter** a demonstration against Israel's actions in Lebanon and Gaza was also arranged for 22 July, attracting about 250 people at short notice. A petition with the hundreds of signatures collected was sent to local MP Ben Bradshaw.

York PSC held a demonstration outside York Minster while members of the general Synod were arriving for a service. The demonstration was to thank the Synod for voting to divest from Caterpillar but at the same time to highlight the fact that Ethical Investment Advisory Board has still to act on the Synod's decision.

Richmond hosted a big meeting on 20 July with Stephen Sizer, a specialist in Christian Zionism, putting the arguments for the church to disinvest from companies profiting from the Occupation. They also held a successful stall at the recent Kingston Green Fair, attracting new members and raising over £300 including the sale of about 60 bottles of Zaytoun Olive Oil.

Palestine at the Festivals

Bucks and Berks branch were busy this summer with stalls at the UNISON Trade Union Conference and also the TUC Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival, where PSC Patron Tony Benn chatted to stallholders and visitors. Bucks/Berks were also present at the WOMAD music festival, where they were overwhelmed by a never-ending stream of visitors wanting to know more about the ME situation, and to get involved.

Reading's Waterfest Festival provided an opportunity for the branch's Wadi Fuqeen Group to raise much needed funds which have been forwarded to help run a childrens activity programme during the summer in the village and an adjoining refugee camp.

Local residents invited one of the star attractions of this year's Billingham International Festival to perform in **Durham City**, on Thursday 20 July. The Kalaa Popular Dance Troupe, a group of 29 Palestinian dancers and musicians from Nazareth, staged their display in the open-air Market Place at 10.30am, 12noon and 2pm.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bob Wynn, attended the midday performance, after which the band received a Civic Reception in Durham Town Hall. The visit was sponsored by Durham County Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Northern TUC, the GMB union and Durham County UNISON Branch.

Durham Palestine Solidarity Campaign spokesman Vin McIntyre said: "We are delighted to welcome Kalaa to Durham to celebrate the positives of Palestinian culture at such a difficult time. It is very important for the Palestinians that they keep alive their cultural traditions whilst enduring the hardships imposed by Israeli military occupation."

"It's also important for the people



Kalaa dance troupe in Durham

of Durham to see something of Palestinian life other than Israeli military operations – checkpoints, dying children, demolished houses and uprooted olive trees."

All the members of the group come from Nazareth, and developed their own elaborate choreographed dances that embody both folklore and contemporary culture. Formed in 1997, Kalaa has established itself as a leading Palestinian folk dance group and has recently performed in Jordan and France.

At the annual August Bank Holiday Greenbelt Festival at

► **Cheltenham**, where PSC formed part of the Rediscovering Palestine team, local organiser Joanne Moston reported tremendous interest in the ME seminars held in the big marquees. Palestinian General Delegate Manuel Hassassian got a very warm reception when he spoke of the current plight of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Northern branches grow

Up to 300 people rallied in **York**, 100 people protested in **Hull**, more in **Preston**, and over 500 people assembled to voice their anger in **Newcastle upon Tyne** on 22 July. A massive black banner tied round the Monument read "Israel out of West Bank, Gaza and Lebanon!" There was a wide range of speakers, and the PSC signed up many new contacts and now plans to help build a new PSC branch in Sunderland

Another new branch was officially launched in July, called **Halifax Friends of Palestine**, when 120 people gathered to hear Bruce Kent and Musheir El Farrah speak. The Muslim community and the Church were strongly represented. The Halifax branch is already running a regular weekly stall, and joined the new Bradford branch for a local rally.

On 8 July PSC had a big presence at **Durham's Miners' Gala**, Britain's biggest trade union gathering. Lots of cash was raised for Medical Aid for Palestinians by selling Arabic coffee, PSC had two large merchandise and information stalls and the Durham Palestine Educational Trust charity generated a lot of interest and useful extra funds.

The **Conwy Peace Group** organised a meeting to disseminate information on Palestine, attended by the Mayor of Llandudno. Cllr Phillip Evans gave a talk about Palestine – its people, culture, history and the present occupation. Other speakers included Peter Reilly, born in Haifa, and Nahida Yasin, a Palestinian refugee in this country. The meeting was well attended by people from many organisations in the area.

Backing the sports boycott

The Boycott and Divestment campaign knocked the Israeli cricket team for six in Scotland this summer. After protests



A guest at the Miners' Gala

against a planned match in **Glasgow** were organised, the match was moved, then postponed, and then cancelled altogether. The Israelis' following match against Greece was also cancelled, after first being moved on 'security grounds'. Other matches had to be played behind closed doors at an RAF airfield.

Taking inspiration from the successes in Scotland, PSC members wrote to the **Arsenal** marketing team, cautioning them not to accept any more blood money from their Israeli sponsorship; leafleting actions at the Emirates Stadium have started, and more effective ways of informing fans are being considered for the start of the new season.

Despite protests from the Israeli football Association, UEFA ruled that **Liverpool's** away match against Maccabi Haifa cannot be played in

Israel, and transferred the tie to Kiev on 22 August. At the home tie, on 9 August, a group of protesters organised by the Liverpool Friends of Palestine, Mersey and Liverpool TUC and Stop the War, made their feelings known and received good publicity in the local press.

At the end of July, there were lively protests in **Eastbourne** against the Davis Cup Tennis match between Great Britain and Israel, which enabled activists to hand out information to maybe a slightly different cross-section of the public.

Hackney PSC spent an evening making big placards to wear for the Boycott Day of Action in June, and then a large contingent of members did "a marathon of action" inside and outside most of the big supermarkets in Hackney and the Angel, Islington. They collected trolley loads of Israeli goods and left them with prominent Boycott notices all over them inside the stores.

Falkirk strengthens ties with Palestine

Falkirk's links with the Palestinians of Jayyous have been officially recognised. The Antonine Friendship Scroll, designed by local artist Susan French and signed by members of the public as well as MPs, councillors and clergy, was unveiled by Falkirk FC chairman Campbell Christie at a special ceremony.

The purpose of the link is to provide humanitarian support and to raise public awareness of the situation. Current projects include collecting schoolbooks and computer software to be taken to Palestine by Edinburgh Direct Aid next year.

The Antonine Wall is being used as a symbol because of the wall Israel is building on Palestinian land. Abdul-Latif, a spokesman for the people of Jayyous, passed on greetings to supporters of the Antonine-Jayyous Friendship Link.

He said: "Times in Jayyous are hard. The land is annexed, trees uprooted, the gates and roads are closed, the salaries have been cut for months, people die because there is no medicine, students don't get to universities, there is a critical shortage of basic food and services. Why? On whom should the sanctions be? Jayyous people sing for freedom and peace and say no to occupation, no to humiliation."



Peace Cyclists battle the weather and the Alps!

Sunday 20 August, and the men and women taking part in the Peace Cycle were already 15 days into their incredible journey from London to Jerusalem.

Having cycled through France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland, they faced their biggest natural challenge — the mighty Alps! The weather added another challenge. As they began to climb the daunting mountain range, they faced monsoon-like conditions — torrential rain and ferocious winds, making the physical task even more difficult.

In symbolic solidarity with the people in Palestine, the Peace Cyclists are enduring pain, exhaustion and cold, miles from home. But despite the Alps and the weather, they are in good spirits and working well as a caring and unified team.

There has been a 'hard core' of about 25 cyclists who are going all the way to Jerusalem, with local cyclists joining them for stretches of the route.

They will fly from Rome to Damascus, then take to their bikes again, travelling via Amman, crossing the Allenby Bridge, then touring all the main towns of the West Bank before heading for Jerusalem on 16 September. They hope to be joined by Palestinian cyclists and Israeli peace activists on the last stage of their journey.

You can follow the blogspots of some of the cyclists via the website: www.thepeacecycle.org.

If you would like to arrange phone interviews with the cyclists at any point please contact TPC Press Officer Claire Ranyard (07801 263322) or Laura Abraham, the founder of the Peace Cycle (07941056616).

Fighting the arms trade

The arms manufacturers EDO MBM have been the focus of a campaign by Brighton anti-war activists since August 2004.

The local company is a subsidiary of US arms giant EDO Corp, which manufactures unmanned combat drones as well as components of laser-guided bombs and the helicopter-borne Hellfire missile. These have been widely used in Iraq, most notoriously in the bombing of Fallujah, and also, by Israel, in Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It was a Hellfire missile that destroyed the ambulance leaving Qana on 23 July.



Rooftop protest at arms factory

Said Sarah Johnson, press spokeswoman for the campaign: "Israel continues to kill civilians in the West Bank and Gaza with weaponry armed with components made in Brighton. EDO MBM are profiting from murder, we will not tolerate their presence in Brighton."

The campaigners have staged many protests at the factory, chaining themselves to barrels of cement, and holding 'days of rage' demos at the gates.

In the most recent protest (23 August) they occupied the roof of the factory (pictured).

EDO have tried to silence the campaign through court actions, but a High Court Judge threw out most of their proposed injunctions as too draconian, commenting that "freedom of expression is a right jealously guarded in English law".

For more information about the campaign see www.smashedo.org.uk.

Airport protests

News broke in mid-July that **Prestwick** airport, near Glasgow, was being used as a staging post for major shipments of 5,000lb 'bunker-busting' bombs from America to Israel, for use in their recent attacks on Lebanon. (The same airport has also been used by the CIA for 'rendition' flights carrying 'terrorist suspects'.)

The Government's agreement to the bomb flights was strongly criticised by the Liberal Democrats. "In light of the disproportionate military attacks, the Government should take steps to suspend all arms transfers to Israel, whether directly from or through the UK," said Michael Moore, the party's foreign affairs spokesman.

After angry demonstrations outside the airport the flights were switched to **Mildenhall**, in Cambridgeshire. Protesters there on 1 August displayed placards saying "Stop State Terrorism", and "Stop Murderous Cargo Flights". Said one CND activist: "We are objecting to Britain playing any part in the worsening humanitarian disaster in the Middle East."

Local Liberal Democrat MP, David Howarth, said: "I condemn this use of RAF Mildenhall. The Government should not be allowing the country to be used and abused by the Bush administration." A poll taken by a local paper found that more than 70 per cent of its readers were against the arms flights stopping over in the region.

'Jericho Five' trial

On 28 and 29 September five activists will face the British justice system in Marylebone Magistrates Court, for taking part in an emergency protest opposite Downing Street. The five, Mike Cushman, Wilf Dixon, Betty Hunter, Akil Sha'er and Ruth Tenne, were demonstrating on 14 March against British complicity in Israel's attack on Jericho prison, which resulted in the deaths, injuries and abduction of Palestinian prisoners by the IDF.

The case will challenge the compatibility of the new Serious Organised Crimes and Police Act and the right to protest within one kilometer of Parliament, without giving 24 hours' notice.

Support welcome!

'Derailing' an illegal tramline

Connex is building a tramline connecting annexed East Jerusalem with illegal settlements in the West Bank. This is against the Fourth Geneva Convention, will be for use only by Jewish Israelis and settlers, and will make a viable Palestinian State impossible.

Connex run the "Luas", Dublin's light-rail system, very like the one they are building in the Occupied Territories. Representatives from Israel had been in negotiations to have Israeli engineers and drivers trained on the Dublin Luas.

Recently, however, Connex has been forced to cancel the proposed training deal with its Israeli counterpart, following pressure from Irish trade union representatives, in turn responding

to overtures from the Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC).

An IPSC spokesperson said: "We urge solidarity campaigns, in countries where Connex operates, to contact the relevant unions and determine whether any support or assistance is being given to the Israeli tramline. Clearly, the Israeli drivers and engineers must get training from somewhere, and soon, if they are to operate this line in occupied East Jerusalem. This campaign thus has great potential. If human rights groups and

PSC merchandise

Remember: PSC badges, T-shirts, publications can be ordered from the office: 0207 7006192.

You can also order:

• **The Iron Wall**
60-min documentary on DVD, made by the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC), which shows how the building of the illegal wall and settlements across the Occupied territories has shattered Palestinian lives. £14 (incl. P&P)

• **Sprinting Gazelle**
Magical CD by top Palestinian singer Reem Kelani CD. £14 (incl. P&P)

• **Visit Palestine**
78-min documentary film by Katie Barlow, in which the inhabitants of Jenin talk to activist Caioimhe Butterly about their lives, and their will to survive. DVD: £14 (incl. P&P)



Palestinian solidarity campaigns can ensure that no country will train Israeli engineers and drivers, then perhaps we can help to "derail" this criminal project entirely."

For more info information on the illegal tramline see www.waronwant.org/download.php?id=443

Online Petition – sign now!

• **Want to protest to our government about their complicity in Israeli war crimes?**
Sign the petition at <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/petition.asp?PetitionID=2>

New improved Boycott website!!

**BOYCOTT
ISRAELI
GOODS**



For information about the
**WHY?
WHAT?
WHEN?
HOW?**
of the boycott campaign see
www.bigcampaign.org

PSC supporter Anna de Casparis died in July after a long illness. We remember Anna's lifelong commitment to a more just world, through her political activism and trade union work. Anna maintained a keen interest in the situation in Palestine, despite her illness. PSC wishes to thank Anna's family and friends who have generously raised £1000 in donations, in her memory.

PSC Patron receives accolades from the Palestinian people

In a moving service in June led by Bishop Riah Abu El Assal, Garth Hewitt was installed as an Honorary Canon of St George's Episcopal (Anglican) Cathedral in Jerusalem – with a responsibility to speak up for the whole Diocese, which extends through Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. Two weeks later, in Ramallah, he received a citation of appreciation from the House of Poetry, thanking him for speaking up for the Palestinian people 'in their struggle towards freedom and justice' and for his role in sending their 'sieged voices' to all people in the world through his songs on his 'free guitar'.



Helen Morgan

We were deeply saddened to hear of the death of Helen Morgan, Secretary of the Rediscovering Palestine network.

Helen's interest in Palestine grew following her first visit in 2000, and she became very actively involved in Rediscovering Palestine, Hope for the Wadi, Save Wadi Fuqeen and ICAHD UK, of which she was a founder member. She was one of the main organisers of RP's presence at the annual, highly successful Greenbelt festivals at Cheltenham (pictured).

Helen faced a number of personal trials, not least the cancer from which she finally died, with straightforward courage and openness. Her funeral was held in St Peter's church, Petersfield, on 17 August. The church was packed, not just with family and friends, but also with representatives of many organisations related to Palestine, some of whom joined in the tributes to Helen. One of the messages was from a family in Wadi Fuqeen with whom she stayed, and who were her guests in the UK. Helen was buried with her favourite hand-embroidered Palestinian gown.

Every click counts!

Strange but true! A Palestinian charity beat over 1,400 other charities in fundraising.

The Durham Palestine Educational Trust (DPET) helps talented Palestinian graduates to take one-year Masters degrees at Durham University. Generously, the university waives their tuition fees but the charity still needs £20,000 a year for two scholarships. So

fundraising is a constant challenge.

Since August 2005, DPET has received £580 from the internet search engine everyclick.com at no cost to its supporters. This is because everyclick gives 50% of its turnover to charities and distributes that each month according to the use of its system by each charity's supporters.

Like other search engines, such

as Google, everyclick earns money through sponsored links or adverts and when people use it to buy things on the internet. Amazingly, DPET ranks 7th among the 1,500 charities listed on everyclick.

So please: to go to <http://www.everyclick.com> and check it out. It's easy to register as a charity supporter and, if you don't have another preferred charity, DPET would be very grateful for your support.

For more information about the Trust, go to www.dpet.org.uk.

Survival of an ancient tradition

Shelagh Weir looks at the significance of embroidery among Palestinian women

Until the mid twentieth century most Palestinians were farmers and traders who lived in over eight hundred villages scattered throughout the coastal plain and the hills to the north and east. It is hard to imagine this rural society now. The villages of mud-walled, thatched houses among the wheat fields and citrus groves on the coast, and the stone-built villages surrounded by terraces of olive trees on the hillsides west of Jerusalem, have mostly disappeared. During the hostilities surrounding the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, their inhabitants fled in terror or were driven from their homes by Zionist forces, and were never able to return. The Israelis razed over 350 Arab villages in the territory which became their state, and only prickly pear hedges on the plain, and graveyards, ruins and a few standing buildings in the hills, now testify to their former existence. It is easier to imagine the past in the central hills of Palestine which have been under Israeli military occupation since the Six Day War of 1967, although this West Bank landscape has also been transformed. Villages have survived, but have greatly expanded due to natural increase and the influx of refugees. They are also overlooked by fortified Jewish settlements on neighbouring hilltops. And they are separated from their lands and one another by Israeli-controlled highways and the new Wall.

When one considers the hard-working

lives of the peasants, and their otherwise simple material culture, it is a cause of wonder that a beautiful textile art flourished in the villages of Palestine in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. Women embellished their ceremonial dresses and headveils

“Each area of Palestine had its own distinctive styles of embroidery, and women took immense pride in the patterns and techniques of their own villages”

with lustrous floss silk embroidery, intricate cord work, and taffeta and satin patchwork in brilliant colours and a variety of patterns. This spectacular example of human creativity was driven by women's desire to display their village identities and social status. Girls prepared their first decorated garments for their weddings, when their trousseaus proclaimed the wealth and generosity of their families, and their own transition to womanhood. And they flaunted them thereafter on all special occasions – at weddings, circumcision ceremonies, religious festivals, and when they visited town markets or attended the large annual celebrations at religious shrines. Each area of Palestine had its own distinctive styles of embroidery, and women took immense pride in the patterns and techniques of



Embroidery today helps the family budget...

their own villages.

The hardships and dislocations of the past six decades have profoundly affected every aspect of Palestinian life and culture. The art and language of embroidery has nevertheless persisted, partly under the stimulation of income-generating projects by Palestinian and other welfare associations which commission embroidered cushions and garments, and partly because women themselves desired to continue their traditions, albeit in greatly changed forms. Embroidered dresses also took on nationalistic significance, and were worn by dance troupes and on demonstrations by urban girls who wore jeans and T-shirts in everyday life. Although the worsening economic situation of the Palestinians under Israeli occupation has made embroidery difficult to afford during the early twenty-first century, and many women of village origin now wear western fashions or variations of unadorned 'Islamic' dress, many living in the West Bank and Gaza strip, or in Jordan, were still making and wearing embroidered garments in the late 1990s, although the fabrics used, and embroidery motifs and colours, were very different from earlier fashions. Some elements of dress and embroidery also still self-consciously signified women's origins, not only for those still living in their natal homes, but also among refugees who fled their villages decades earlier, and even among their daughters who have lived all their lives in exile. Such is the human desire for identity and homeland.



Women from Ramallah, 1987 From 'Palestinian Costume' by Shelagh Weir, 1989

Shelagh Weir's new book, *Embroidery of Palestine*, will be published by British Museum Press in Autumn 2006. For special offer to PN readers see inside back cover.

Monitoring the occupation

Checkpoint Watch: Testimonies from Occupied Palestine, Yehudit Keshet; Zed books, March 2006

As a young teenager I used to read harrowing books about the Holocaust, crying myself to sleep and haunted by tormenting nightmares. My grandparents perished at the hands of the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto and quite often I imagined myself as a Holocaust survivor tortured by the Nazis. Reading Yehudit Keshet's book, the old nightmares started hounding me once again.

Checkpoint Watch was established by the author together with a small group of Israeli women in 2001, with the stated goals of monitoring the behaviour of Israeli soldiers at checkpoints on the Green Line border and inside the West Bank, as well as ensuring the protection of human and civil rights of Palestinians who pass through the checkpoints and reporting back their findings to the general public and policy-makers.

According to B'Tselem — the Israeli information centre for human rights — there are nearly 50 permanently staffed checkpoints, seven manned control towers and more than 600 barriers around Palestinian villages. These blockading measures turn the whole of the West Bank into ghettoized enclaves manned by an army which, through an integrated curfew-closure-checkpoints system and Apartheid-style pass regulations enforce the occupation and sustain Israel's supremacy over the Palestinians. Although security has been cited by Israel as the reason for these measures the policy of passage permits began in 1991, long before suicide bombing became a reality.

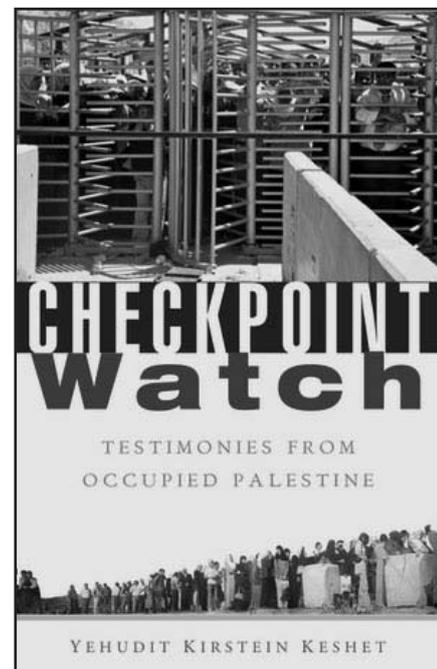
A report by the Israeli Physicians for Human Rights (2003) observes that "freedom of movement and health are inseparable." This is borne out by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society's report which shows that between September 2000 and October 20003, 83 Palestinian patients died at checkpoints due to denial of access, 57 women were forced to give birth at the checkpoints (over 30 of these cases resulted in the death of the infant);

25 medical personnel were killed and 425 injured; 121 ambulances were damaged and 991 cases were denied medical access.

Paradoxically, the inhuman abuse of Palestinians' rights finds expression through the human testimonies of those middle-aged Israeli women who have made it their duty to monitor the checkpoints 365 days a year, courageously confronting the might of armed soldiers. These young conscripts are however seen by Israeli society as victims rather than perpetrators. They join the army on leaving school, wrenched away from the safety of family and friends. Many of the soldiers have in fact become traumatized by the watchdog role forced upon them, which leads some to taking drugs and being pushed over the edge. The testimonies of Watchers, whose number expanded to 500 in December 2004, suggest that a significant number of soldiers have lost their sense of humanity, treating the Palestinians as a herd of creatures who "do not feel anything" and claiming that "punishment does not humiliate them".

“Between September 2000 and October 20003, 83 Palestinian patients died at checkpoints due to denial of access, 57 women were forced to give birth at the checkpoints, 25 medical personnel were killed and 425 injured”

Though Israeli newspapers do report on checkpoint abuses they usually regard them as aberrant acts committed by soldiers who are emotionally disturbed, or by members of minority groups and newcomer immigrants. Newspaper correspondents tend to perpetuate the entrenched myth that the Israeli army is the most humane in the world and morally preserves the highly human values of the Israeli nation. The CPW, on the other hand, is portrayed by the media as a self-styled human rights group of "elderly women cut off from harsh reality in an ivory tower and associated with an allegedly radical fringe group Women in Black" (p.138).



The dissonance between the more radical "feminist-radical" agenda of CPW's founders and the mainstream members, whose main concern is with the safety of the Israel state and the wellbeing and morals of its soldiers, continues to create an undercurrent tension between Watchers. Yet, as Yehudit Keshet rightfully contends: "there is no comparison between the lot of oppressors and the lot of oppressed." While condemning suicide bombing as inhuman crimes, Keshet maintains that "Palestinian militias taking arms against invading, ruthless, enemy with superior military power is, surely, legitimate resistance...." (p.121). Such pronouncements are regarded as outrageous and indefensible by the Israeli public, but testimonies from the resistance movement of the Warsaw Ghetto reveal a similar conviction: "there is no other way out, all that remains to us is to fight even if we are capable of putting up a fight that will only resemble real fighting it will be better than the positive acceptance of slaughter." (Reuben Ainsztein: *The Warsaw Ghetto Revolt*, The Holocaust Library, New York, 1979 p.36)

The Palestinians may not face the wholesale slaughter of the Holocaust but the brutal and unrelenting occupation amounts to a slow-grinding ethnic cleansing that stifles their soul and their national aspirations.

Have they no right to resort to militant methods of resistance? Judging by the stark testimonies of Checkpoints Watchers, as highlighted by Keshet's insightful examination of Israel's mechanism of oppression, the apparent answer is a resounding yes.

Glass walls in Israel

Blood and Religion: The Unmasking of the Jewish and Democratic State

Jonathan Cook; Pluto Press, 2006

The Divided Self: Israel and the Jewish Psyche Today, David J. Goldberg; I.B. Tauris, 2006

The central theme of Jonathan Cook's short book is how the Israeli state has dealt with its Palestinian citizenry and how the existence of this substantial minority population has shaped Israeli policies. Cook, who lives in Nazareth and has reported on the politics of Palestine for many years, has produced not just a compelling account of the circumstances under which the 1.3 million Palestinians with Israeli citizenship live, but has shown how the experience of being the discriminator within its own borders has helped define Israeli state actions and public consciousness.

Drawing a parallel with the apartheid wall in the West Bank, Cook talks of a "glass wall" in Israeli society, separating Palestinian Israelis from the institutions of Israeli power and affluence. In one remarkable case, pungently recounted, this glass wall is no metaphor. When Israeli security forces shot 13 unarmed Palestinians dead during demonstrations inside Israel in October 2000, a commission of inquiry was established to look into the circumstances of these deaths, chaired by Justice Theodor Or. Or instructed court officials to build a glass partition in the court room between the Palestinian Israeli families of those who had been killed and the rest of the courtroom, which included the perpetrators of the killings (Justice Or sat on the side of the partition with the perpetrators, not the families of the dead). Pictures from the hearings did not show up the glass partition, so it looked as if the families were incorporated into the inquiry, even though they were marginalised from proceedings.

The Or Commission's report led to no charges being brought against any of the police officers who killed the 13 Palestinians, but it did condemn three prominent Palestinian Israeli politicians for supposedly "inciting" the demonstrators on the marches upon

which the police opened fire.

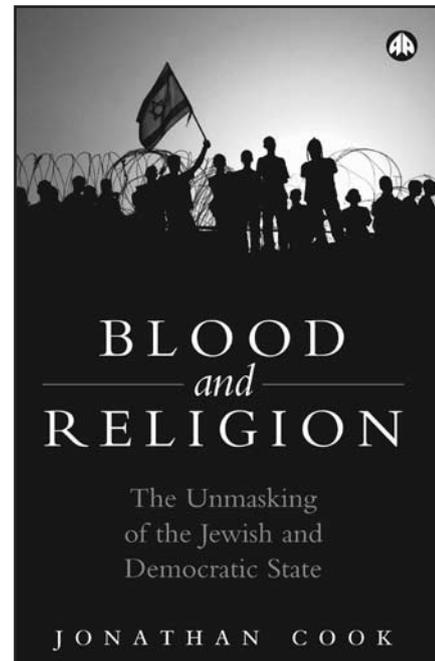
Cook argues that the failure to come to terms with the fact that a fifth of the population of Israel is Palestinian has led to Israel's failure to devise a constitution and to endemic racism: the quotes from Israeli state officials that pepper the book are particularly striking. He also suggests that it has led to the widespread discussion of the "demographic threat" — the fear that within a few years there will be a minority of Jews between the Mediterranean and the River Jordan ruling over a majority of Arabs. This has led to heightened discrimination, in order to diminish Palestinian population growth. For example, child benefits to Israeli families whose members had not served in the armed forces (meaning Palestinians, who do not serve) were cut by 24% in 2002, in comparison to a cut of only 4% for Jewish Israelis.

Israeli leaders thus have twin imperatives: to limit Palestinian population growth, and to remove them from being directly under Israeli rule — Ariel Sharon's Gaza disengagement is the key example here.

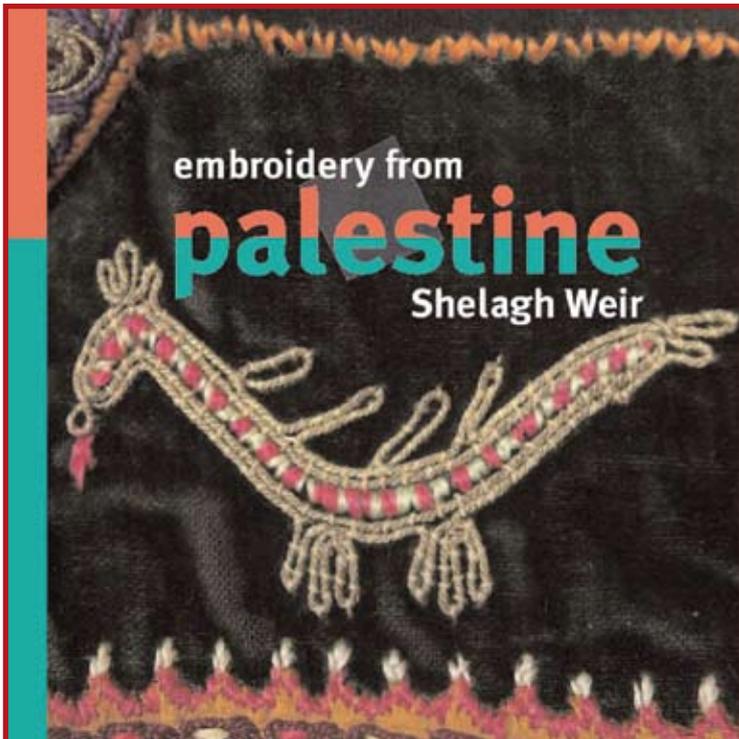
“Diaspora Jews — far from being the “human dust”, blown hither and thither by the vagaries of world politics — have flourished and taken on a valuable universalist and cosmopolitan identity”

Nevertheless, the policy of many Israeli leaders in the 80s and 90s was not to disengage from Palestinian-majority areas but to encircle them with settlements. Cook claims that the change in Israeli politics over the past five years in favour of disengagement is due to the realisation on the part of Israeli leaders that Israel could not be both 'democratic' and Jewish if it continued to rule over all of historic Palestine.

David Goldberg's book shows how Israeli nationalism has been both a corrupting force and an irrelevance for many Jews, particularly in the diaspora. The book is at its strongest in its account of how diaspora Jews



— far from being the “human dust”, blown hither and thither by the vagaries of world politics, as one noted Zionist writer presented them in the 1930s — have flourished and taken on a valuable universalist and cosmopolitan identity. The book is thus oriented at least in part against those who portray Israel as having a crucial role in the lives and imaginations of diaspora Jews. It is less encouraging, for those with an understanding of Palestinian history, to read the recycled standard myths of how Israelis have fought repeated wars for the survival of their state against obstinate and irrational enemies. Those demonstrable untruths are supplemented with a number of odd errors. Goldberg seems to have invented a threatening quote from Yasser Arafat's famous first speech to the UN General Assembly in 1974; Arafat said nothing remotely resembling what Goldberg attributes to him, so the problem cannot have been a poor translation. Other flaws include the judgement that the first decade of occupation after 1967 passed “with relative tranquillity”. If these shortcomings are overlooked, the book is nonetheless worth reading, if only for questioning the notion that the Jewish diaspora is somehow inextricably bound in value and well-being to the Israeli state.



The perfect gift for anyone with an interest in Palestinian history and culture...

Readers of Palestine News can now receive 15% off Embroidery from Palestine, to be published this November (RRP £10.99 - special price £9.34). Call Customer Services on 020 7637 1292, freephone in the UK 0800 085 0864, or visit www.britishmuseum.co.uk. Please quote RO32 to receive the offer, which ends 31 December 2006.

Trees for Life



Planting Peace in Palestine

Olive Co-operative's Trees For Life – Planting Peace in Palestine programme, in partnership with the Palestine Fair Trade Association and Zaytoun, offers the opportunity to sponsor the planting of olive trees in Palestine.

The new trees will offset the destruction wrought in Palestinian olive groves by the Israeli army and settlers. According to the Applied Research Institute Jerusalem, over 500,000 olive trees have been destroyed since 2000. Each new tree sponsored represents a long-term source of income for Palestinian families, who have been harvesting olive oil, fruit and wood for generations.

The trees will be distributed in Palestine by the PFTA to farmers who follow fair trade guidelines and who will benefit from future purchases of Palestinian olive oil.

£20 will sponsor five trees.

Sponsorship online and by phone is available from **Olive Co-operative, www.olivecoop.com, +44 (0)161 273 1970.**

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