



Defying oppression



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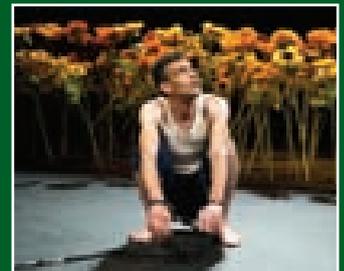
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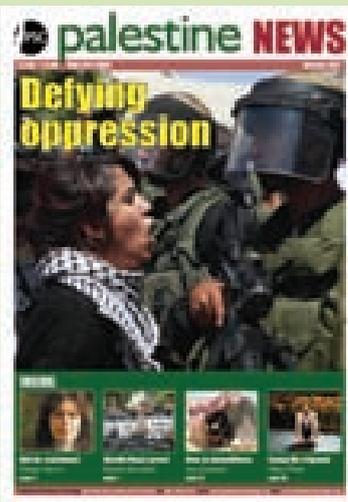
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Cover image: Naksa Day demo at Qalandiya checkpoint, 5 June 2011.

Photo: www.demotix.com

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Call to support Christian communities

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palestine NEWS

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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

Backing resistance with solidarity

By Bernard Regan

The Palestinian people have a right to self-determination and the right to a state. Palestinian refugees, like the refugees of every other country in the world, have a right to return home.

These are statements which should be incontestable. The United Nations, which has played such a thoroughly dubious role in the history of the Palestinian people, should acknowledge those rights and work towards their implementation.

When the UN General Assembly voted in 1947 by 33 votes to 13 with 10 abstentions to support the Partition Plan and thereby legitimise the creation of the state of Israel, it was not a truly representative body; most countries of the world were not members of the UN, being colonies or protectorates of the colonial powers. The UN, like the British Prime Minister Arthur Balfour and the League of Nations, decided on the fate of the Palestinian people without any acknowledgement that they formed the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the land, as they had for many centuries.

The UN General Assembly today is a different animal but its powers are limited and subordinate to those of the Security Council. Its members, in a free vote, will undoubtedly endorse the recognition of a Palestinian state. As Ghada Karmi points out (page 4), a vote in the Security Council would be something different, with the United States and the United Kingdom vetoing any such proposal. But an overwhelming General Assembly vote in favour would reflect the widespread view that the Palestinian people have suffered a grave injustice for too long and that it is time to right that wrong.

The PSC has issued a statement about the recognition call (full text on the website) which says: "The full implementation of international law, including the end of Israel's illegal occupation and the right of return of Palestinian refugees, are essential for a just solution.

"The United Nations, since 1974, has recognised the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the sole legitimate representative of all the Palestinian people in their struggle to achieve their rights. PSC supports actions in the UN that reinforce these legal principles and which uphold the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

"The PSC calls on the British and EU governments to act

positively to assist the Palestinians in achieving their legitimate aim of creating an independent state."

As *Palestine News* went to press the debate was still raging amongst Palestinians inside and outside the Occupied Territories (and most of them live outside) over the exact details of how to proceed. Our role in PSC is to act in solidarity with them when their way forward is clear.

But if there is a General Assembly vote in favour of recognising a Palestinian state, the real challenge facing the UN and states which endorse the call is what they are going to do to implement that decision. They have an obligation to make plain to the government of Israel that continuing oppression of the Palestinian people is unacceptable.

They need to pressurise the Israeli state, for example, by backing the growing campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions and by making clear that those responsible for acts like Operation "Cast

Lead" and the siege of Gaza will be treated as war criminals.

The constant prop of United States patronage, British complicity and Quartet impotency must be subject to withering scrutiny and criticism. Support for the Palestinian people is growing fast but must be built into a real international force giving solidarity to the resistance that the Palestinians have shown and continue to show. Israel's highly aggressive reactions to opposition of any kind (see pages 8-10) are proof that campaigns are having a serious impact.

Their response is also linked to the potential reconfiguration of Middle East politics following the Arab Spring; the expression, "the road to Jerusalem lies through Cairo" has a very real significance.

President Obama too must be fearful that the regional upheavals, as well as formal recognition of a Palestinian state, will challenge not only America's closest ally but all their allies responsible for oppressive regimes, such as Saudi Arabia.

The obstacles that the Palestinian people face are huge but daily they show their answer to the world's politicians by refusing to submit to the injustice inflicted on them. If governments vote at the UN to support the establishment of a Palestinian state it is in part testimony to the courage that the Palestinian people have shown. Rightly they will not accept that this is the last word on the matter. It is our job to make sure that the voice of all the Palestinian people is heard.



Women of Nabi Saleh singing Palestinian resistance songs at soldiers. Photo: Silvia Baorini, www.demotix.com

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Bid for statehood: good or bad idea?

As *Palestine News* went to press, the Palestinian Authority was pressing ahead with its bid to gain UN recognition of an independent state on the 1967 borders. The bid had gained the support of over 120 countries, including China and Russia, but faced implacable opposition from the US. Here Palestinian academic **Ghada Karmi** examines the arguments on both sides.



For months articles and debates, opinion pieces and “expert” assessments have circulated with increasing frequency as the September deadline for the UN recognition bid approaches. But is it really such a startling manoeuvre, given the fact that it’s only a return to the past?

In December, 1988, the UN General Assembly accepted the Proclamation of the State of Palestine adopted by the Palestine National Council in November of that year. At the time more than 100 countries voted to recognise the new state which resulted in “Palestine” acquiring de facto state recognition in many international fora. It gained Observer Status at the UN and PLO representatives, as they were known then, became quasi-ambassadors in

“Israel has set up a global campaign of persuasion, coercion and intimidation”

western countries and were treated as full ambassadors in several non-western ones. “Palestine” had already been a member of the Arab League and of the Islamic Conference Organisation.

So what has brought about this extraordinary reaction to something that



CARLOS LATUFF

is not new and might never happen? Perhaps one clue lies in the hysterical Israeli response to the Palestinian initiative.

In its frenetic fight against the Palestinian plan, Israel has set up a global campaign of persuasion, coercion and intimidation. The countries which intend to vote for the initiative have become the target of reproaches and threats. Israel’s uncompromising foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, has suggested that Israel revoke the Oslo Accords and even sever ties with the Palestinian Authority (PA) if the Palestinians go ahead.

Other Israeli ministers have proposed economic sanctions against the PA through suspending the transfer of tax revenues which Israel collects on the PA’s behalf, a measure that the Israeli government has used as a means of coercion and punishment several times before. Thousands of extra soldiers and police will be mobilised against potential Palestinian riots and £13 million

worth of anti-riot equipment has been purchased by the Israeli army.

What compounds this hysteria is the US attitude that echoes and encourages it. In July Rosemary diCarlo, the US deputy permanent representative at the UN, stated emphatically that the US would oppose any possible Palestinian state recognition. “Let there be no doubt,” she asserted. “Symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the UN in September will not create a Palestinian state.” Rather they would be a “unilateral” campaign which the US would never support. This chimed in with Israel’s position that a Palestinian statehood application was in essence unilateral, and therefore unacceptable, and a way of “de-legitimising” Israel. Earlier, Congress had been debating cutting off aid to the PA by way of punishment.

Most seriously, the US intends to use its veto in the Security Council to stymie the Palestinian plan. A Security Council recommendation is required for a state to be admitted to the UN General Assembly. Even though many among the American Jewish community have begun to support the Palestinian position as a way of making Israel more secure, President Obama has remained adamant in his stand with the Netanyahu government. When visiting Washington in August, Hanan Ashrawi, member of the PLO Executive Committee, found to her dismay no US official willing to heed her pleas against the use of the Security Council veto.

The case for Palestinian statehood

The proponents of statehood argue that if “Palestine” were admitted to UN membership, it would change the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem from being occupied territories to becoming an occupied state. This state could then request international help to end the occupation, as happened with Kuwait in 1990.

Palestinian representatives would have equal status with Israeli ones in international fora. Palestinians would have citizenship; their passports recognised throughout the world. Israel’s international isolation would intensify and the US would be more exposed as a dishonest broker. After all, only in July the US and Israel warmly

supported South Sudan's entry into the UN, so why not Palestine's? Most importantly, Israel's borders would be defined by law and its expansion halted. At the very least, the UN move would return the issue of Israel's colonisation to world attention.

The Palestinian leadership has opted for this UN route because of Israel's behaviour. As Mahmoud Abbas explained to the EU's representative in Ramallah in early August, it was Israel's continuing settlement building in the Palestinian territories that forced his hand.

In 2010 there were 518,974 settlers and 144 settlements in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem, an increase of 1.4% over the previous year. Of the total, nearly 200,000 live in and around Jerusalem, where hundreds more housing units are planned. Israeli colonisation has continued unabated throughout 20 years of peace negotiations. So Abbas argued that he and his colleagues had no choice but to go to the UN.

Having taken the decision, the PA leadership is pushing for diplomatic and popular support. A diplomatic drive through PA delegates is underway internationally and Palestinians under occupation are being urged to rally for the initiative.

The Arab League has endorsed the Palestinian application, and Qatar has invited a panel of lawyers to work on the legal aspects. An Arab committee will examine the details of the Palestinian application before it is submitted to the UN. These moves have revived the 2002 Arab peace plan which offered Israel full normalisation in return for its withdrawal from the 1967 territories.

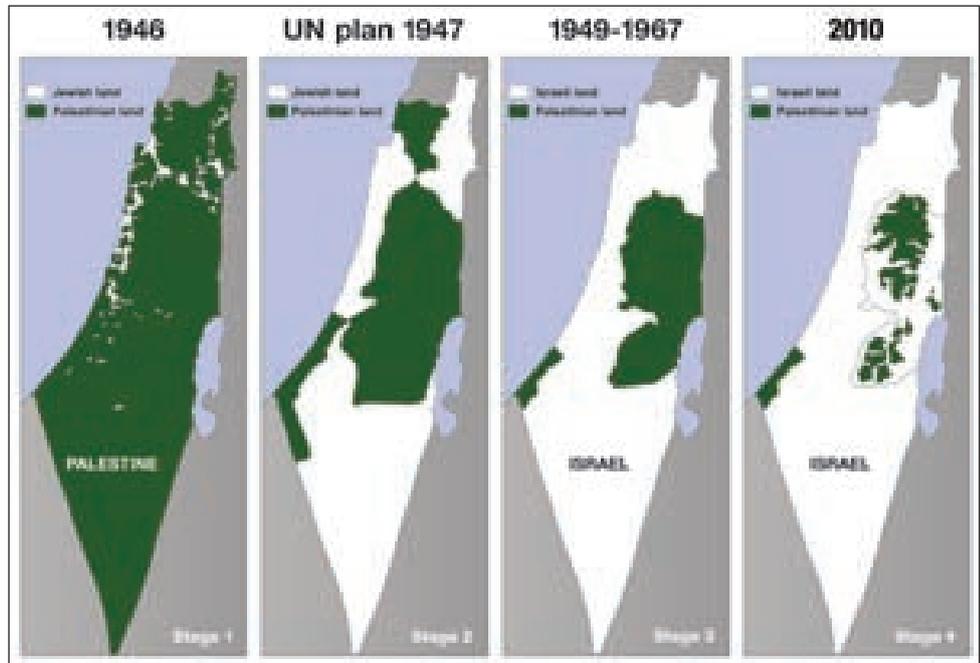
But how much support there is amongst ordinary Palestinians is unclear. Widespread disappointment with the leadership and the latter's prevarication over their decision has not helped. It is also striking that this initiative seems to have arisen only after the publication of the Palestine Papers at the end of January.

These, published by Aljazeera, revealed the extent of concessions to Israel of basic Palestinian rights by this same leadership, which by rights should have resigned en masse in consequence. The suspicion, voiced by many, arises that the imperative to stay in power was the real motive for this statehood bid and the propensity to negotiate away basic rights remains a feature of these leaders.

The case against

Many friends of the Palestinians, who want to see them gain freedom, consider the UN plan to be a positive step and Israel's opposition to it reinforces that view. But they must understand what "statehood" means in this context.

In 1922 the League of Nations accorded Palestine full independence in its entirety and the British mandate was set up to oversee this process. Thanks to British-assisted Zionist immigration into the country thereafter, by 1947 the Partition Resolution



offered the Palestinians just 45 percent of their land.

Following the 1967 Israeli occupation and colonisation of the rest of Palestine, Palestinians started to call for Israeli withdrawal and later for independence on this 22 percent of their historic homeland, which became the "two-state solution." By any standards, such a partition would be inequitable and unjust and only reflects the power imbalance with Israel. In addition, it ignores the extent of Israel's colonisation of 60 percent of the West Bank, with East Jerusalem transformed into a Jewish city.

Israel has made clear it will neither withdraw nor cease its colonisation. Equally clear is that no one is prepared to force it to do so. So what is really on offer for the Palestinians? A truncated, disconnected territory, fast diminishing and shorn of East Jerusalem. Tortuous negotiations with Israel over 20 years only resulted in further retreats in the Palestinian position.

The danger now must be that, unless the proposed state is a symbolic one on the 1967 territories as they were, more Palestinian concessions will be required, with a jigsaw of "land-swaps" and Jerusalem "neighbourhoods." Any enthusiasm for such an outcome can only be explained by a collective fantasy that denies the actual reality on the ground.

But by far the most serious issue concerns the right of return. In a two-state arrangement, the Israeli state is by definition a Jewish one, meaning that no large influx of non-Jews (i.e. the Palestinian refugees) can happen. A two-state agreement will require Palestinian acceptance of this fact.

The Palestinian leadership has been hitherto vague on this point, although insisting the right of return is sacrosanct. But the same leadership's willingness to ditch this right, as revealed in previous negotiations with Israel, makes this unconvincing. The very basis of the Palestine case is the dispossession of the Palestinian people and no solution which

does not address it with justice can last. This alone should rule out the two-state solution.

No one knows what will happen at the UN but the signs are not good. The Palestinian leadership's claim to act on behalf of the Palestinian people is manifestly false. The Palestinian president's term of office has expired, as has that of the PA itself. The prime minister was appointed by Abbas, himself not legitimate at the time, and he has been rejected repeatedly by Hamas.

"No consultations with the Palestinian people have been carried out"

Fatah's split from Hamas remains deep, despite attempts to heal the rift. To circumvent accusation of PA illegitimacy, the recent manoeuvres have been conducted under a PLO umbrella. But the Palestine National Council, which is the supreme PLO body, has not met in quorum since 1998. No consultations with the Palestinian people inside or outside the occupied territories have been carried out. In such circumstances, a major initiative like this should never have been pursued.

The impulse to halt Israel's seizure of more Palestinian land is understandable. But it cannot be done at the expense of basic rights. Partitioning Palestine was always a bad idea, unworkable and unfair. But given the power imbalance it could seem the only realistic option.

If so, then it should have been presented differently. Not as a solution to the conflict, but as an interim measure towards the only real solution: the transformation of the current state of Israel and the Palestinian territories into one state for those who live there and those who were expelled from it.

Strength through unity

By Kamel Hawwash

While the debate over the Palestinian bid for UN recognition continues to rage, the Palestinian people and their supporters had hoped that their politicians would be pursuing this highly controversial and significant initiative under a united leadership, buoyed by the reconciliation agreement signed between Hamas and Fatah in Cairo on 27 April. Alas, following much hope and anticipation of an end to the division between the two major parties, the implementation of the agreement has almost come to a standstill.

The conditions which led to the division can probably be traced back to the last elections for the Legislative Council (PLC) held on 25 January, 2006, in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem which Hamas won with 74 seats while Fatah secured 45 out of the 132 seats available.

Israel and many Western countries, including Britain, decided to boycott and isolate the new Palestinian government and to withhold aid and tax revenues. The tensions that this and external pressure on the two parties created led to hostilities between them culminating in heavy fighting in May, 2007. An estimated 300 people lost their lives and in June the Palestinians ended up with two governments, one in Gaza and one in the West Bank.

Various attempts were made to end this division quickly, led by Egypt, and an agreement was drawn up but was not ratified. The recent fall of the regime in Egypt seemed to have unlocked the deadlock and Hamas and Fatah agreed to the Egyptian formula at a ceremony attended by all Palestinian factions in Cairo. "We have turned the page from this black internal division," Mahmoud Abbas said. "We may differ, and we often do, but we still arrived at a minimum level of understanding."

The agreement was immediately met with disdain by Israel and the USA and Netanyahu, in typical arrogant style, told Abbas to choose between reconciliation with Hamas and peace with Israel. Abbas chose the former.

The agreement deals with a number of key and complicated issues: elections, PLO reform and security. The nature and

membership of the future government has been the subject of robust debate since April. There is general agreement that the new government is to be tasked with implementation of the agreement, elections and reconstruction of Gaza, following Operation Cast Lead of 2009. However, it seems that a major stumbling block in the formation of the government has been the choice of Prime Minister.

Mahmoud Abbas is insistent that current Palestinian Authority appointed Prime Minister, Salam Fayyad, should lead the new government. Fayyad is well known to the international community and has embarked on a programme of state institution building that has been acknowledged as effective. Hamas disagrees with this assessment and has put forward a number of alternative names but the Palestinian people still seem to be a long way off the full implementation of the reconciliation agreement.

As we approach the seventh anniversary of the passing away of Yasser Arafat it is difficult to imagine that he would have allowed this division to have occurred despite the clear ideological differences between the two parties. This sad state of affairs does the Palestinian cause great damage at a critical juncture of the struggle. It not only impacts on the daily lives of Palestinians but it challenges solidarity groups the world over as they work to support the Palestinian people's struggle without appearing to support one side or the other.



PA president Mahmoud Abbas meets Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal at the Cairo ceremony.

PHOTO: WWW.DEMOTIX.COM

Kamel Hawwash is Vice Chair of PSC

Samira Hassassian

PSC members and supporters will be saddened to hear of the death, after a long illness, of Samira, wife of our Palestinian Ambassador, Prof Manuel Hassassian.



Samira was a wonderful woman, full of energy, humour and kindness. In addition to all her other duties she supported our solidarity work unstintingly and with generosity.

Samira left Palestine to support her husband when he took up his post of Palestinian Delegate to the UK. She immediately made contact with groups and individuals working for Palestinian rights, bringing with her an urgent sense that something must be done.

Samira was always willing to speak at PSC events, winning hearts and minds with her eloquent and graphic descriptions of the situation facing the people of Palestine, particularly in

her beloved Bethlehem where she had been a highly esteemed university lecturer. She had the ability to bring people together to ensure that the solidarity movement in Britain grew in strength and she was particularly proud when she was able to introduce Palestinian cultural events.

All of us who met and worked with her learned much from her warmth and commitment. At two hours' notice she and her daughters hosted a PSC trade union delegation at their home in Bethlehem, giving us thoughtful and illuminating analysis as well as treating us to Palestinian hospitality. On the first PSC sponsored walk in Wales she kept our spirits up in the relentless rain, seeing it as a blessing. Her elegance and grace as a true ambassador for Palestine came to the fore during the evening social as we celebrated in the presence of the Mayor of Abergavenny.

Samira's courage, forged through a lifetime of struggling against occupation, was demonstrated throughout her illness. Her passion for Palestine, for a just solution, for a future for her family and her people, must be maintained by all of us in the solidarity movement in her honour and for Palestine.

Our sincere condolences go to Ambassador Hassassian, her two daughters and son, her grandchildren and all her family and friends.

Betty Hunter
PSC Hon. President

Pro-Israel lobby dictates to British government

By Samira Quraishy

Sheikh Raed Salah, Israeli citizen and prominent Palestinian leader of the Islamic Movement in Israel, spent the Islamic holy month of Ramadan under house arrest in the UK. He was detained by UK border police on June 28 after returning to London from Leicester where he had been talking about the current threats against the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. He was shackled and placed in an unmarked van and taken to Paddington Green Police station.

Sheikh Raed had been invited to the UK by the London based media research institute, the Middle East Monitor (MEMO), for a tour scheduled to address British parliamentarians, the media and the general public in a series of meetings and seminars. Subjects to be discussed included the Judaisation of important Islamic and Christian sites and the way forward for a just solution for Palestine.

The tour was advertised in early June, with invitations going out to parliamentarians and the media. It was picked up by pro-Israeli elements, including Andrew Gilligan of the *Daily Telegraph*; the pro-Zionist *Jewish Chronicle*; and online Islamophobic blog, Harry's Place.

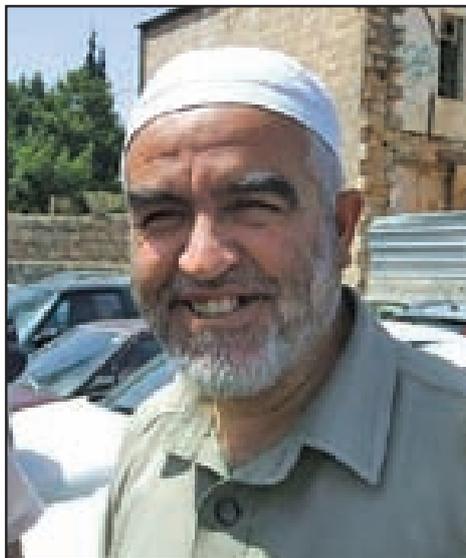
These writers launched a vitriolic smear campaign against the well respected leader with Gilligan and Robyn Rosen (of the JC) writing libellous articles regurgitating old allegations that Sheikh Raed had made anti-Semitic statements. He has always categorically denied this and has never been convicted for it. He launched legal proceedings against Gilligan and Rosen and when the *Daily Mail*, which routinely calls him a "hate preacher," repeated the allegations, the Sheikh once again referred it to his solicitor.

Likely motivations behind the arrest

Sheikh Raed has been foremost in opposing discriminatory policies within Israel; his campaigning to protect the Al Aqsa mosque and Jerusalem from Zionist entities has made him a cause for concern for the pro-Israel lobby. Moreover, his continuous calls for universal peace, justice and human rights for his people make it more difficult for the propaganda efforts of the pro-Israel

lobby and their laughable claims that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East.

So, perhaps it was not such a surprise when Michael Weiss began maligning Sheikh Raed's character in a plethora of *Daily Telegraph* blogs. Weiss, a representative of two virulent pro-Israel organisations, Just Journalism and the Henry Jackson Society, used the blogs to repeat the same allegations as Gilligan and Rosen.



Dr Hanan Chehata of MEMO commented: "Weiss's articles, which describe Sheikh Raed among other things as a 'frothing hate-cleric' and a 'vile sheikh,' and label the Islamic Movement as 'a Hamas-like gang of nutters,' are clearly not examples of serious journalism. They are nothing more than desperate attempts to smear the character of Sheikh Raed and those associated with him."

Home Office serious misjudgement

It appears that the British government was goaded by these hate-filled articles to arrest Sheikh Raed. Claims that he had illegally entered the country after the Home Secretary, Theresa May, had issued a travel ban against him seem suspect.

The Home Office justified the ban by saying that his presence in the UK was deemed non-conducive to the public good due to his "unacceptable behaviour." When questioned in front of the Home Affairs Select Committee, it became clear that

May was herself not aware of the facts behind Sheikh Raed's exclusion order as she stumbled through questions and gave incoherent answers.

The lack of clarity in her answers cast serious doubts on the reliability of the evidence that the Home Office has. This was subsequently reflected in Sheikh Raed's second bail hearing when the judge granted bail.

It is important to reiterate that neither Sheikh Raed, nor his lawyers, nor his UK hosts were informed of the apparent exclusion order before his arrival. What was interesting was to see the lack of coordination between the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the latter seemingly caught unawares of the impending arrest – perhaps another indication that the initial exclusion order was non-existent at the time of his arrival?

This has been an embarrassing affair for the British government and significantly weakens any chance the UK has of being a part of the peace process when an obvious bias continues to exist within the decision-making walls of Parliament. It is high time that the government recognises that the pro-Israel lobby's interference in British politics will have serious repercussions for its standing in the Middle East.

■ A recent "Spinwatch" report, "The Cold War on British Muslims," exposes links between pro-Israel groups such as the Henry Jackson Society and Islamophobic think tanks which have sought to demonise Palestinian organisations in the UK. It focuses on two such groups, the influential Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) and the group Policy Exchange.

<http://tinyurl.com/3vmq2dk>



Samira Quraishy is a researcher for MEMO

“We are undeterred,” say Free Gaza

Sabotage, threats, political pressure, law suits, media smear campaigns and piracy were all employed by Israel to disrupt the international attempt to send another flotilla to Gaza in July. But the organisers say they refuse to be intimidated.

More than 300 protesters representing 15 different nationalities from North America, Europe, Australia and the Middle East gathered in the East Mediterranean to join the planned flotilla of nine ships.

Alice Walker, the Pulitzer Prize winning author and civil rights activist, who was to travel on the US ship, *The Audacity of Hope*, commented: “I grew up in the South under segregation, under the state terrorism of apartheid. When I was in the West Bank and Gaza recently, it was like stepping back into that.”

Israel used all possible methods to stop the flotilla. The Swedish/Greek vessel was sabotaged in Piraeus and a few days later the Irish boat suffered the same fate in a Turkish port. Extreme pressure was put on the Greek government to prevent the other boats leaving from various ports throughout Greece.

The unconvincing excuse used by Greece was that they were acting to protect the participants – from what was not specified. The US boat attempted to leave Greek waters but was intercepted by the Greek Coastguard and ordered at gunpoint to return to harbour,

where the captain was arrested. The Canadian boat was similarly prevented from leaving.

The Turkish vessel, the *Mavi Marmara*, was due to sail again despite last year’s attack when nine activists were killed by Israeli commandos in international waters. But it was withdrawn from the flotilla following pressure from the Turkish government.

The only boat able to leave was the French vessel, the *Dignité/Karama*, which originally sailed from Corsica before stopping at the small Greek island, Kastellorizo, whose mayor strongly supports raising the siege on Gaza. On board were representatives from Canada, France, Greece, Sweden and Israel (the Israeli journalist Amira Hass) and a team from Al-Jazeera TV.



The French boat leaving for Gaza

The 16-metre boat, with 16 unarmed civilians on board, was abducted by 150 Israeli military personnel in seven commando boats and three missile ships in international waters and taken to the port of Ashdod; the passengers were later expelled from Israel. Amira Hass’ account, published in the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz*, can be read on <http://tinyurl.com/4xu6mcf>.



Jerusalem children re-enact Gaza flotilla raid.
Photo: Mahmoud Ilean, www.demotix.com

A UN report, leaked to the media in September, concludes that, while Israel used disproportionate force in its attack on the Flotilla in May 2010, the blockade of Gaza is legal.

It seems that the report produced in September 2010 by the UN Human Rights Council, which strongly condemned the attack and the deaths of nine activists on the *Mavi Marmara*, and found that “the blockade is unlawful and cannot be sustained in law” was not to the liking of some members of the UN. Hence Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed another panel, consisting of former New Zealand PM Geoffrey Palmer, outgoing Colombian President Alvaro Uribe (recipient of generous US funding, and himself accused of serious human rights violations), one Israeli and one Turk. None of the members are experts in international law, unlike the UN panel that produced the original report.

The Turkish government responded by withdrawing its ambassador to Israel and announcing it will pursue the case through the International Court of Justice.

“These actions involve thousands of people worldwide”

Ewa Jasewicz, a journalist and one of the organisers of the Free Gaza movement, said that the flotilla, like road convoys, the fly-in and indeed the whole BDS movement, is more than anything a way of bringing the plight of the Palestinians to the world's attention and of exposing Israel's apparently automatic excessive use of violence and contempt for international law.

“These actions involve thousands of people worldwide in the planning, supporting and publicising of the events, plus the governments of the nationals taking part, and provide a way of linking up with Palestinian and Israeli groups.” To those Israelis who accuse activists of seeking to “delegitimise” Israel she replies that we are, on the contrary, working for the “relegitimation” of Palestinian rights – so long neglected by the international community.

“It is only real democracy – people worldwide taking matters into their own hands – which creates the conditions for true change. These democratic movements are undeterred,” she says.

Arrested for visiting friends

By Audrey Gray

Having visited Palestine as a pilgrim seven times and served as an Ecumenical Accompanier in 2008, I was actively seeking ways to go again and support my Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters enduring the relentless and demeaning Israeli occupation.

The “Welcome to Palestine” fly-in initiative fitted the bill. It was to be a week in Bethlehem at the invitation of Palestinians. My friend Val and I were among 12 from Britain who signed up.

I was aware that scores of internationals arriving on the same day, July 8, saying we were going to Bethlehem to visit friends, would be seen as a challenge but nothing truly prepared me for the reality.

At Ben Gurion airport passport control we were told to wait with no explanation at any time in the whole process. Outrageously, we were all assumed to be trouble with no evidence presented or opportunity given to explain ourselves. At times this made me feel very “Palestinian,” having seen the rough justice they experience.

I learned later that Lufthansa and Air France had responded to an Israeli request to prevent people flying with the result that only one German made it though a group of French came on Italian airlines from Rome.

Eventually 61 internationals were led to a back room in the airport as it was made clear that we had no option but to obey without question. Val and I were told that we were “going in a coach to a hotel.” Lies of course. It was a dirty, elderly, barred, airless prison van. We were given no water for an hour and a half, no food for nine hours. Even the cockroaches were desperate to escape the temperature of over 35°C.

We were taken to Givon prison in Tel Aviv, processed as high security prisoners and at 2am put in a six-bed cell with three Frenchwomen and a Scot. The Israeli Ambassador is adamant this was a “facility” and we were “in rooms.” For five days we were locked in for 18–20 hours a day, fed through a “hole in the door” and guarded at all times. Even the light switch was outside the cell so we were woken to ask if we wanted the light turned off.

The day to day experience was of disorganisation and uncertainty. The cells were acceptable, with a hole in the ground loo, a pipe for a shower and a wash basin. Five of our six had only the clothes we stood up in, Val and I were not united with our luggage until the day after returning to Luton.

We opted to be as clean and hygienic as possible to retain our health and dignity

and to give no cause to be deemed “hooligan.” We had a small victory by establishing the cell as a “smoke free zone.” Even the guards obeyed – quite a triumph.

Eventually we saw the British Consul. I saw a lawyer and had the statutory phone call. Arranging all this seemed to cause such chaos – foolishly I had always respected Israelis for their organisation skills. How wrong can you be?

We were escorted back to the airport where we had to buy new return flights. I am pursuing a claim against Israel for the cost – without much hope. All in all not an experience to be repeated, but thanks to “the only democracy in the Middle East,” we have achieved much publicity and shown this occupation for what it is – a travesty of justice and human rights.



The prisoners of Givon – Audrey is in the centre

“Lawfare” – Israel’s latest weapon

The methods used to frustrate the Gaza flotilla are increasingly being deployed against all organisations, individuals and initiatives that support Palestinian rights.

What threats or promises were used by Israel and its supporters against Greece (see page 8) are almost unknowable. But the country was certainly in dire need of the initial £17 billion bail-out from the EU to rescue it from default that was finally approved at the beginning of July. “Greece sold its body to the banks and its soul to Israel and the United States,” commented flotilla activist Dror Feiler.

What is definitely known is that the departure of the US boat, *The Audacity of Hope*, to Gaza was first delayed by a complaint filed by Shurat Hadin. This is a Tel Aviv-based law centre that specialises in lawsuits against “terrorists.” The claim, that the vessel was not seaworthy, was soon shown to be frivolous. But they also threatened maritime insurance companies with legal consequences if they insured any of the boats involved in the flotilla. This same organisation funded frivolous litigation for the purpose of harassment and publicity against US boat participants in New York and Washington DC, which was quickly dismissed.

Shurat Hadin has some strange supporters; John Hagee, a prominent US evangelist who manages to be homophobic, Islamophobic and indeed anti-Semitic, is known to be a major financial contributor to the Centre, as well as to other rightwing Israeli organisations and to the illegal settlements (see <http://vimeo.com/10027708>).

Israel outlaws boycott

On 11 July the Knesset passed a law banning citizens from supporting any form of boycott relating to Israel or the illegal settlements. This means that an individual or organisation calling for boycott may be sued for compensation by any individual or organisation claiming it could be damaged by such a call. Actual damage does not have to be demonstrated. It also prevents the Israeli government from doing business with companies that comply with boycotts.

More than 50 Israeli NGOs immediately condemned the law, which also met with harsh criticism from American Jewish opinion across the political spectrum.

A spokesman for Adalah, an Arab-Israeli HR group, said: “Israeli organisations opposing the settlements as a matter of principle are



Israelis protest against boycott law, Jerusalem. Photo: Mahmoud Illean, www.demotix.com

in a trap: any settler can now constantly harass them, challenging them to publicly declare their position on the boycott of settlements and threatening them with heavy compensation if they support it.”

A spokesperson for the Coalition of Women for Peace said: “Many mainstream figures who object to boycotts realised that this is a core issue of basic freedom and spoke out against the bill. The voting on the bill took place soon after a widely publicised consumers’ boycott of cottage cheese after the price went up high. So people were asking: how come it is legal to boycott cottage cheese, but illegal to boycott the occupation?” (See www.coalitionofwomen.org.)

Nevertheless it is clear that organisations like Who Profits? (www.whoprofits.org), which has been supplying valuable information on the companies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, will be particularly vulnerable to prosecution.

Implications for activists abroad

In the long run this law could have beneficial effects for the BDS movement. Prosecutions will publicise the whole issue and show up, yet again, how Israel’s laws run counter to the basic tenets of international law.

It will undoubtedly further polarise opinion both in Israel and abroad: where once people could sit on the fence, now they will have either to confirm the right to boycott or be seen to be supporting Israel’s far right.

The effects on foreign nationals, companies and organisations remain to be seen. Will visitors to Israel who have declared their support for boycott of the illegal settlements be heavily fined, or even jailed? Will Israel find itself obliged to drop lucrative deals with companies that subscribe to the boycott of settlement goods but who are otherwise happy to do business with Israel? Will the Histadrut (the Israeli trade union organisation) now have to shun the TUC and individual unions that have called for the boycott and/or banning of settlement goods?

As they say, watch this space...

Proposed US law to criminalise boycott

A bill to go before Congress in the autumn (the ‘Berman bill’) would prohibit any US citizen from “furthering or supporting any boycott fostered or imposed by a foreign country against a country that is friendly to the United States.” The rest of the wording of the bill makes it clear that this refers to the boycott of Israel, which is supported by the Arab League.

Penalties would be fines of up to \$1,000,000 or imprisonment for up to 20 years, or both.

The effects on the growing BDS movement in the States could be catastrophic – but it could also trigger legal challenges and promote widespread public discussion of the underlying issues.

Supporting resilience in Gaza

By David Harrold

“Why talk of people in Gaza having mental health problems?” said Dr Ahmed Abu Tawahina of Gaza Community Mental Health programme. “Let them have jobs. Let them rebuild without fear of more destruction. Let them travel to use their education. Right now, their reactions to insane conditions are perfectly natural.”

We could only agree. Dr Tawahina expressed our own ambivalent feelings about “therapy” during our visit to Gaza last December and January.

Three of us had travelled from Hatfield, Hertfordshire, where we set up the charity Palestine Trauma Centre (UK) last year. Our aim is to support mental health workers in Gaza with professional training and supervision from practitioners in the UK. Therapists have volunteered their services and we have set up courses in various ways of dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

We were hosted by the Palestine Trauma Centre in Gaza City where our task was to evaluate and support its psycho-social work. We also looked at other mental health centres, talked to a number of NGOs and government officials and visited families in devastated areas to have direct experience of what the Centre has to cope with.

We found that the effects of Operation Cast Lead were still being felt. Many people thought a new attack was imminent. While we were there, an Israeli F16 bomber destroyed a house in the refugee camp where we stayed. One of our hosts told us how, six months ago, his brother and four friends went swimming in the sea and were shot dead from an Israeli patrol boat. Regularly, farmers are shot by Israeli snipers in the “buffer” zone that forms the border.

People are paralysed by uncertainty over whether or when these incursions will develop into full-scale war. Why rebuild a house, when it will only be destroyed again? Why plan anything, when waiting for destruction? Counteracting this general despair is an everyday issue.

With the administrative/political split between Gaza and the West Bank, there is no unified national plan for mental health services. The need for a national training institution for mental health services is acknowledged but cannot be organised. Bottom-up initiatives have a better chance of quickly co-ordinating services locally. Many small groups do this on a basic psycho-social level but they are all competing for funds and this has led to some degree of chaos.

On a social and recreational level, much is being achieved for thousands of children. Playgroups, theatre projects, beach camps,

etc, support the young and every youth worker, school teacher, theatre practitioner and psycho/social worker rightly feels part of a mental health programme for the people of Gaza. However, clinics are failing to cope with the more serious mental health disorders. Care providers have become exhausted and ongoing support is rarely available.

There is a desperate need to maintain continuity of treatment. PTC (Gaza) survives financially by taking on projects set up by organisations like INTERPAL and Save the Children. When a project ends, financial support stops, but the families’ problems continue. PTC (Gaza) is very mindful of this and will continue working unpaid.

Practitioners work on three levels. The basic level includes home-visitors and animators who work with large groups of children. The next level includes qualified medical teams and psychologists. Finally there is a psychiatric team which will intervene with serious traumatic cases.

We wanted to offer practical support for these practitioners. One of us, Dr Mohamed Altawil, was born in Gaza and is now a Research

Fellow at the University of Hertfordshire. He helped create PTC (Gaza) in 2007. During his studies for a Psychology PhD he based his work on his 2006 research into childhood trauma in Gaza. Thanks to our visit, his extra training in the UK has been passed on to the psychiatric team at PTC (Gaza).

The other qualified member of our team, Andrew Enever – a psychotherapist and PTC (UK)’s Training Co-ordinator – introduced the process known as EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing). This is known to be very effective in reducing symptoms like

flashbacks and nightmares. It is quite sophisticated and further training visits are needed.

These future visits are our main concern. This one was planned long before the momentous events in Cairo during February 2011. Going through the Rafah crossing, we were kept waiting for six hours each way. On the way out the Egyptians would not let Mohamed leave until Andrew and I made it clear we were not leaving without him. The mood changed, the computer was re-checked and we were told that “a mistake” had been made.

PTC promotes resiliency. We do not often use the term “therapy”. Families are, we hope, being empowered to sustain themselves in the insane conditions produced by the siege of Gaza.

David Harrold is Chair of the Trustees of PTC (UK)

■ For more information about the Palestine Trauma Centre, see www.ptcuk.org



Mohamed, Andrew and David visiting a family in Northern Gaza

Help the PSC to grow!

By Sara Apps

Next year the Palestine Solidarity Campaign will be marking its 30th anniversary as Britain's leading movement supporting Palestinian rights. We have much to be proud of in what we have achieved but there is so much more to do and we need everyone's help to do it.

In 1982 a small nucleus of human rights activists were so appalled by the horrific massacres of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon that they felt they could not just stand by, wringing their hands. They had to do something. They came up with the idea for the Palestine Solidarity Campaign dedicated to supporting self-determination for the Palestinians.

The Second Intifada stimulated a huge response and there are now thousands of PSC members in over 40 active and enterprising branches. We work closely with the trade union movement, faith organisations, community and human rights organisations to make Palestine the moral issue of our time. From just a few hundred members at the beginning, the PSC has grown into the world's most influential lobbying organisation on behalf of the Palestinians. Our aim is to build a mass solidarity movement and challenge and change British government policy.

The significance of the PSC can be judged by the fact that the Israeli thinktank, the Reut Institute, has repeatedly highlighted our successful role in raising awareness of Palestinian rights. It is through the creative and diverse activities of members and branches as well as the national executive and staff that we have achieved this honour.

However, despite rising membership and affiliation renewals, we are facing difficult financial times. Costs of campaigning, such as printing and postage, have all risen sharply. And the demand for our resources has also gone up – as Palestine comes



under increasing pressure, we have to respond.

Our current focus is on three areas: BDS, Jerusalem and Gaza. For every campaign we need to prepare for lobbying at local and national level as well as developing media and government strategies.

Please help by funding our key campaigns:

Boycott, divestment and sanctions

Since PSC first set up the Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign in 2001 the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign has become a vital tactic in the international solidarity movement, working with the Palestinian Boycott National Committee. We have worked to gain mainstream support in the trade union movement, culminating in the overwhelming vote last year at the Trades Union Congress, which represents over 6.5 million workers, to boycott companies which profit from Israel's illegal settlements, wall and occupation.

Action against particular companies is becoming more effective, such as Veolia, which has lost a series of contracts; Ahava, which has been forced to move from their flagship London store; and Agrexco, the

exporter of Israeli and settlement agricultural produce, which is suffering financial meltdown.

By encouraging artists such as Elvis Costello and Marc Almond to boycott Israel, the PSC has significantly raised the profile of BDS and we will continue to build support for the cultural and sporting boycott.

The greatest strength of BDS campaigning is that everyone can get involved and we have many exciting examples on Youtube and elsewhere of how branches and members have developed this. We aim to increase this activity across Britain.

Jerusalem in jeopardy – act now!

For too long the plight of Jerusalem has been lost in a myriad of different angles. PSC has launched a project aiming to bring together representatives of all faiths to raise awareness amongst their communities of the increasing assault upon the Palestinian population of Jerusalem and to initiate campaigns.

The project was launched on 29 June at a meeting in Parliament attended by faith groups, MPs and Palestinian representatives. We want to expand this project, to direct more attention onto the plight of Palestinians living in Jerusalem and to campaign for the British government to oppose Israel's illegal annexation and expulsions and to support the right of Palestinians to have a capital in Jerusalem.

End the siege on Gaza

PSC continues to be at the forefront of campaigning to end the siege on Gaza. Despite international outrage at Israel's ongoing military attacks on Gaza and on the flotilla last year, Israel continues to deny basic commodities and freedom of movement to the people of Gaza. The removal of Mubarak in Egypt may be helpful but while the 1.5 million Palestinians still live under a brutal and illegal blockade we will press for the siege finally to end and for all borders to be open.

CAMPAIGNS COST MONEY

We need financial help to maintain the effectiveness of our campaigns. We know that members and supporters are already very generous and many donate to good causes as well as to PSC, but raising money for political campaigning is essential.

The PSC is funded solely by its members, affiliates and supporters. With a small budget of around £250,000 a year, every penny goes towards building solidarity with Palestine. Now that budget is at full stretch and, in order to continue being as effective as we know we can be, we need your help!

The PSC staff, working with volunteers, not only provide ongoing resources such as factsheets, leaflets and placards for our campaigning activity, but also organise a wide range of national events. The office is vital when we need to respond to emergencies. For instance, when Israeli forces attacked the *Mavi Marmara* last year, or when bombs rained down on Gaza, the office was flooded with volunteers who helped with organising demonstrations and meetings, liaising with the media,

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Please consider donating to help our key campaigns.

Your support will help us to fund:

- Online resources and postcards for supermarket actions
- Stands, meetings and promotional materials at political and trade union conferences
- Tons of BDS literature – stickers, leaflets, fact sheets, placards
- Our quarterly magazine, *Palestine News*
- Meetings in churches, mosques, synagogues and communities
- Online advertising
- Effective media work
- Emergency and planned demonstrations
- Briefings for MPs and MEPs
- Support for convoys and flotillas to Gaza

responding to phone calls from around the world and building solidarity.

Sarah Colborne, Director of PSC, said: "It is amazing what PSC gets done, given our very modest office set-up, but that is because we – our members, our volunteers, our branches and affiliates, our executive, our patrons and our four full-time staff – are very clear about what we are trying to achieve: peace and justice for Palestine."

Please help PSC continue its vital work – donate today!

Online

Visit www.palestinecampaign.org and click on 'donate'

By phone

Call Steve on 020 7700 6192

By cheque

Please make cheques payable to 'PSC' and send to Box BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX.

Join our 100 Club

Please think about becoming a 100 Club member.

This is a group of special supporters who donate over £100 each year. 100 Club members were recently invited to a special reception at the House of Commons to celebrate 10 years of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions. Similar events will be held for members in the future.

These extra funds are a great help in planning our campaigns. Join the Club by donating £100 by Standing Order.

Racism taught in Israeli schools

Textbooks studied by Jewish children in Israel are universally racist and depict their Palestinian neighbours only as "refugees, primitive farmers and terrorists," according to a leading Israeli academic.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan, a professor of language and education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has studied Israeli school books for five years. In her account* she describes the racism that shapes the mindset of young Israelis before they do their military service.

Many people are puzzled by how young Israeli soldiers behave cruelly towards Palestinians, she told Harriet Sherwood of *The Observer*. "People ask how can these nice Jewish boys and girls become monsters once they put on a uniform? I think the major reason for that is education," she said.

She found that Palestinians are never referred to as such unless the context is terrorism. They are always called "Arabs." The books "describe them as vile and deviant and criminal, people who don't pay taxes, people who live off the state, people who don't want to develop." In hundreds of books – all authorised by the ministry of education – she never saw one photograph that depicted a Palestinian as a "normal person." There was never "a Palestinian child or doctor or teacher or engineer or modern farmer."

Her most important finding was that in the historical narrative of the events of 1948, the killing of Palestinians is depicted as something that was necessary. "It's not that the massacres are denied, they are represented in Israeli school books as something that in the



long run was good for the Jewish state."

The infamous slaughter at Deir Yassin, for instance, is described as a massacre that "initiated the massive flight of Arabs from Israel and enabled the establishment of a Jewish state with a Jewish majority... Maybe it was unfortunate, but in the long run the consequences for us were good."

She said Israeli children internalise the message that Palestinians are "people whose life is dispensable with impunity. And not only that, but people whose number has to be diminished."

Peled-Elhanan's only daughter, Smadar, was killed by a Palestinian suicide bomber in Jerusalem in 1997 when she was 13. She said at the time it strengthened her belief that, without a peaceful settlement, more children would die.

Asked if Palestinian school books are also biased, she said that they distinguish between Zionists and Jews. "They make this distinction all the time. They are against Zionists, not against Jews."

* *Palestine in Israeli School Books: Ideology and Propaganda in Education*, published by I.B. Tauris.

Summer of demolitions

By Itay Epshtain

Hours after his modest home was demolished by Israeli bulldozers, Khaled Abdallah Ali Ghazal stands astride the wreckage in the scorching desert heat and vows to hold on. “We have nowhere else to go, we will rebuild,” he says. For hundreds like him in the Jordan Valley, this is the reality of what the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions calls “the summer of demolitions.”

The Jordan Valley has always captured the imagination of travellers and pilgrims who alluded to its biblical representation as lush, fertile land. And indeed, the area enjoys abundant water as a third of the West Bank underground aquifer lies beneath it. However, the unholy reality of the Jordan Valley is one of segregation and land-and-water resource apartheid.

While illegal Jewish settlements dot the landscape with thriving date plantations and vineyards, Palestinian communities are struggling for shelter, drinking water and rudimentary healthcare and education. In Israel’s policy of colonisation, the summer of 2011 has set an all-time high in the expansion of settlements at the expense of Palestinian communities.

Running the length of the West Bank, the Jordan Valley covers almost 30% of the land with a total area of 2,400 square kilometres. Prior to the 1967 occupation, some 250,000 Palestinians lived there but, according to a recent survey by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, fewer than 65,000 remain today.

The Jordan Valley falls under total Israeli control, in accordance with the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement of 1995, known as the Oslo II Accord, classifying it as Area C. Under the Oslo Accords, powers and responsibilities related to zoning and planning in Area C should have been transferred to Palestinian control but that has not happened and Israel has made it clear that it intends illegally to annex the region and rid it of its Palestinian inhabitants.

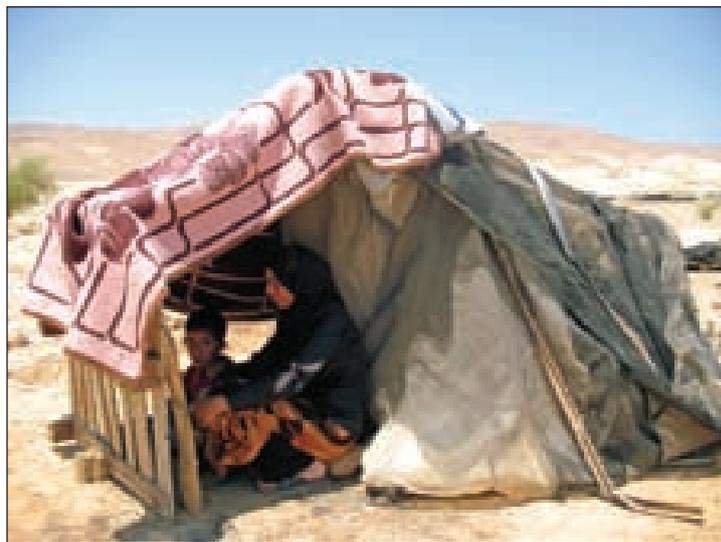
“House demolitions and forced evictions have increased fivefold”

In the last eight months, house demolitions and forced evictions have increased fivefold, in comparison with last year. A total of 184 structures, predominantly family homes, have been demolished, displacing hundreds and dispersing communities. This escalation comes after a spate of settler aggression in attempts to seize lands from Palestinian communities.

One such community is **Fasayil al-Wusta** where a large-scale demolition took place earlier this summer when 21 structures – 18 homes and three animal pens – were demolished by the Israeli Civil Administration, leaving homeless and exposed to the harsh desert environment 103 people, including 64 children. During the demolition, accompanied by the brutality of a 50-strong Border Guard force, community elder Ali Salim Abiat was injured. No provision for relocation or compensation was made to the victims of the demolitions.

Fasayil al-Wusta is home to a Palestinian-Bedouin community whose members originate from the area of Bethlehem. It is wedged between the settlements of Tomer, Yaift and Patzael, whose residents covet land cultivated by Palestinians for the expansion of their plantations. After the demolitions, the Palestinian community was dispersed, allowing the settlers to get their way.

North of Fasayil al-Wusta, lies the al-Hamra checkpoint, isolating the Jordan Valley from the rest of the West Bank. In 2006, Israel imposed a ban on Palestinians not residing at the time in the Jordan Valley from freely travelling to the area. The restrictions on access are enforced through 18 barriers, six trenches and earth mounds running



Woman and child sheltering in the remains of Fasayil al-Wusta. Photo: ICAHD

a total of 50 kilometres, plus four agricultural gates, supposedly designed to allow Palestinian communities disconnected from the water grid to transport water to their fields and homes.

The measures employed by Israel, in stark contrast to international human rights law, have resulted in thousands of dunams being rendered inaccessible to Palestinian communities who now live destitute in a once prosperous area.

Abu Saker, of **al-Jiftlik** village, describes what it takes to supply drinking water to his family: “To buy water, I drive my tractor three hours in each direction, while our well is for Jews only.” The agricultural gate, officially open three days a week for just 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the afternoon, is in practice rarely open at all while Palestinians have to queue for hours to access water, health care or education.

“To buy water, I drive my tractor three hours in each direction, while our well is for Jews only”

Such punishing policies are being applied to yet another community at the Jerusalem periphery, **Khan al Ahmar**, home to a Palestinian-Bedouin community of 1948 refugees. They face imminent displacement if the Israeli authorities go ahead with plans to demolish their homes and school in the coming weeks. Khan al Ahmar is one of 20 Bedouin communities in the area which have become victims of ethnic cleansing as Israel attempts to forge contiguity between Judaized East Jerusalem, the 40,000 strong settlement of Ma’ale Adumin in the centre of the West Bank and the settlements in the Jordan Valley.

In addition to the work done by ICAHD, the Jordan Valley Solidarity Campaign is campaigning to raise awareness about the situation in the Jordan Valley, to build an international movement to respond to the current crisis, to challenge Israel’s policy of ethnic cleansing and to support struggling Palestinian communities.

■ For more info see www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org



Fasayil almost swallowed by settlements. OCHA Jericho Closure Map, July 2010.

The Israeli authorities view the Bedouin communities like Khan al Ahmar, which together comprise more than 2,300 people, as “interfering” with the planned expansion of Ma’ale Adumim, Kfar Adumim and other settlements, and to the construction of the West Bank barrier.

The Khan al Ahmar Jahalin school, established by the community, is the only school to provide primary education to children of the Arab al-Jahalin Bedouin tribe. Built in 2009, the eco-friendly school is made of used tyres and mud bricks and provides education for over 70 students. The Israeli Supreme Court recently rejected a request by settlers of Kfar Adumim to close the school; however the case has set the clock ticking for its demolition.

For a viable Palestinian state to be established, the Jordan Valley represents an essential land reserve, agricultural hinterland and strategic economic infrastructure. Not only that, the area provides the potential state’s sole border with Jordan.

However, since its 1967 occupation, Israel has coveted the Jordan Valley both for its economic potential and for its strategic importance in forestalling a viable Palestinian state. It justifies its presence in the area as necessary for security – in his May speech to the US Congress, Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu asserted that in any final status agreement which may be reached with Palestinians, Israel would retain control over the Jordan Valley.

So in the last decades, and more so in the six years since its withdrawal from Gaza, Israel has colonised the area by establishing what it considers irreversible “facts on the ground” through settlements and military bases.

Some 25,000 of the remaining 65,000 Palestinians in the area live in Jericho, in what is essentially an open-air prison, hemmed in by checkpoints and barriers on all sides. The rest live in rural communities where their once abundant agricultural cornucopia has been deserted as nearly all water sources are reserved exclusively for the settlements.

Israel now controls over 90 percent of the Jordan valley through 36 settlements housing more than 9,000 settlers, as well as through closed military zones and declared nature reserves. Meanwhile house demolitions, forced evictions and property confiscations, exacerbated by settler violence and the economic effects of movement restrictions, have left Palestinian communities struggling to make a living.

The summer of demolitions now sees the Palestinians of the Jordan Valley living in constant fear of displacement and dispersion, while Israel secures its supremacy and control of that troubled land.

Itay Epshtain is co-director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD) www.icahd.org

■ See the ICAHD UK website, www.icahduk.org, for more information about house demolitions and download a lobby pack to help you approach your MP and MEP.

Eye on the web

● Stolen Children, Stolen Lives

This documentary by Gerry O’Sullivan interviews five named children, aged between nine and 15, who describe their arrests, detention and imprisonment by the Israeli security forces in the Hebron area in the West Bank in February 2010.



It outlines the impact on four Palestinian children such as bed wetting, nightmares, suicidal thoughts and remembering nothing about their time in prison. It describes the abuse of another, “Child A,” aged 15, who had car battery jump leads clipped on to his handcuffs and penis.

There is footage of two former Israeli soldiers, one of whom says that his experiences made him want to cry and later drove him to drugs.

<http://tinyurl.com/3sddlw5>

● Handheld Stories

Ten children aged ten to 16 took part in a workshop in Hebron in July learning how to make two to five minute films and upload them on to the web.

The result is two films available to watch on the Handheld Stories Youtube channel: one of a demonstration demanding the opening of Shuhada Street which is banned to Palestinians, and *Ibrahimi School*, showing how getting an education cannot be taken for granted for Palestinians.

The Handheld Stories project needs funds. See www.Handheldstories.com

To view the films see <http://tinyurl.com/42degke>

● Children abducted

Teenage boys playing football in the Silwan district of East Jerusalem are suddenly grabbed by a number of sinister men in plain clothes, helped by Israeli soldiers, bundled into an unmarked white van and driven away.

These shocking scenes of undercover Israeli security forces in action were filmed by a surveillance camera on July 22.

<http://tinyurl.com/3c2q8gg>

● The Israeli general’s son

“So those people who want to associate themselves with Israel, Zionism and drape themselves in the Zionist flag – the flag that has come to symbolise intolerance, hatred, racism and brutality – they can feel free to do so.

“But, they need to know this: that when the trials begin and the tribunals take their place, and when the truth and reconciliation commission begins its work and they are finally shamed into admitting they were wrong, they need to remember to go down on their knees and beg forgiveness from the people they so greatly wronged.”

These words, and a forensic analysis of Israeli lies and crimes, are by Miko Peled, grandson of a Zionist leader who signed the Israeli Declaration of Independence and son of Matti Peled, a general in the war of 1967 who later became a peace activist.

<http://tinyurl.com/3h6nll0>



Ethnic cleansing in East Jerusalem

By Eric Willoughby

The very existence of Palestinian life in East Jerusalem is at risk, under Israeli occupation, according to a recent United Nations report*, the first of a series.

More than a third (35 per cent) of East Jerusalem is now claimed for the construction of Israeli settlements and only 13 per cent is currently zoned by the Israeli authorities for Palestinian construction.

For Palestinians, building is only possible through the issue of Israeli planning permits, which are scarce, expensive and “very difficult” to obtain. Building without permits risks demolition and penalties, including imprisonment. Since 2000, around 800 structures have been demolished.

The “humanitarian impact” of the occupation pervades all aspects of everyday life, the report says. And the UN reiterates that only full implementation of Security Council Resolutions dating back to 1967 will end the “humanitarian vulnerability” of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

Areas of particular concern include:

Residence and status

Since 1967, some 14,000 East Jerusalem Palestinians have experienced revocation of their residency rights, with 4,500 revocations in 2008 alone. In 2003, Israel introduced the Nationality and Entry into Israel legislation, making family reunification in East Jerusalem (claimed as Israel) almost impossible for Palestinians.

The status of Palestinian children is of particular concern; an estimated 10,000 are unregistered as a result of the strict conditions for permanent residence which is not automatically passed down from parents. And – as with nearly all imposed papers, applications and permits – the documentation is in Hebrew, adding to the difficulties of Arabic speakers.

Planning and Housing

The Local Outline Plan, which dates from 2000, is yet to be finalised. It is designed to formalise a policy of a 70/30 Jewish/Palestinian



Celebrating Ramadan in the Old City. Photo: Mahmoud Illean, www.demotix.com



Palestinians and Israelis against demolitions in Silwan. Photo: Richard, www.demotix.com

ratio in East Jerusalem but one of the reasons for its delay has been an amendment to change the ratio to a more realistic 60/40.

The report identifies economic constraints on housing and planning in East Jerusalem. The average rent of US\$700–800 per month is unaffordable for most Palestinians. The report warns that many East Jerusalem Palestinians live in “constant fear” of eviction.

Public services

The report identifies “severely underdeveloped infrastructure” in various areas of Palestinian East Jerusalem. It cites the Shuafat Ridge neighbourhoods where there are few roads – all of poor condition – scant or no refuse collection, the “complete absence” of street lighting and no semblance of landscaping.

There are no parks, community centres, post offices or municipal schools. The report notes that – by contrast – the neighbouring 1982

5230 new settlement units

Defying worldwide outrage, the Israeli government gave permission in August for the construction of 1,600 new housing units in the Ramat Shlomo settlement block in East Jerusalem. Approval for 2,700 more units was expected to follow within days.

The announcement came days after the US said it was “deeply concerned” about the expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem after Israel approved 930 housing units in the huge Har Homa settlement.

That move was also condemned by EU foreign policy chief, Baroness Catherine Ashton, who said it damaged Israel’s prospects for peace.

“The European Union has repeatedly urged the government of Israel to immediately end all settlement activities in the West Bank, including in East Jerusalem. All settlement activities are illegal under international law,” she said.

Israeli settlement – Pisgat Ze'ev – has 14 schools, 6 health centres, modern roads with full street lighting and emergency services.

Settlements

The report describes how settler organisations are “targeting land and property to create an ‘inner layer’ of settlements within Palestinian areas in the so-called Holy Basin.”

In Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah this activity has resulted in evictions of Palestinians from long-established homes. Archaeological activity and “Open Space” initiatives are imposing further pressure on Palestinian resources and facilities.

The report describes the wall as having “severed (neighbourhoods) from their former close connections to the urban centre, with devastating social and economic consequences. The barrier also separates rural communities from the Jerusalem hinterland, resulting in impeded access for farmers and a decline in agricultural production and livelihoods.”

The wall is “effectively re-drawing the geographical boundaries” and the report warns that 2,500 Palestinians in 16 communities “face uncertain residency status, impeded access to basic services and potential displacement.”

Education

There is a “chronic shortage” of classrooms with a deficit of at least 1,000 in the 2007/8 educational year. Facilities are described as “substandard or unsuitable.” Both teachers and pupils “face difficulties” in accessing school premises; permits and ID cards cause problems and delays when using the checkpoints to pass between sectors.

Even those Palestinian children who are enrolled – by no means all – often fail to complete their education with a particularly high drop-out rate of boys in the 12–14 age group. Pre-school activity in East Jerusalem is described as “inadequate.” The main campus of East Jerusalem University is separated from the city by the wall.

The situation is regarded as particularly bad in the case of Waqf (Muslim trust) schools: “Approximately half of Waqf schools are

accommodated in rented apartments with crowded classrooms and a shortage of schoolyards and playgrounds. Due to planning constraints, certain Waqf schools have added facilities without the requisite permits. Consequently, some have been served with demolition or sealing orders for classrooms, laboratories or other facilities and fines for illegal construction.”

Health

Although healthcare resources are regarded as generally adequate for East Jerusalem Palestinians, the problems arise for Palestinians from other parts of the occupied territories. Even emergency cases are subject to full scrutiny at the checkpoints and patients are often transferred from one ambulance to another.

The situation is “especially difficult” for Gaza patients requiring access to East Jerusalem Hospital. Dr. Tawfiq Nasser is quoted as saying “the health service in Gaza has never been in worse shape” (since the 2007 blockade). If sustained, the re-opening of the Rafah Crossing will improve access for medical treatment for Gaza patients, but the 2007 closure – which blocked the route to Egyptian hospitals – caused referrals to East Jerusalem to escalate, from 382 in 2006 to 3,118 in 2008.

Parents of sick children have reported severe difficulties with the Israel Security Agency regarding permits and ID bureaucracy when attempting to accompany their children to hospital in East Jerusalem.

Strategic Priority Status

The UN's Humanitarian Country Team has now identified East Jerusalem as a Strategic Priority in the 2011 Consolidated Appeals process which is concerned with humanitarian issues in the occupied territories.

* *Special Focus – East Jerusalem Key Humanitarian Concerns.* United Nations Office for the Co-Ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Few Christians left in the Holy Land

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, launched an ecumenical appeal in July for funds to help sustain Christian communities in Israel-Palestine.

Dr Williams told the Church of England's General Synod: “I returned from a visit to the Holy Land last year with a very, very strong sense that we had to do more to express our solidarity with the Christian communities there... We know our brothers and sisters there are suffering; and we don't always ask ourselves often enough what our response needs to be.”

He hoped Christians from different traditions would give generously to build a fund to support community and work creation projects that would help sustain the most vulnerable Christian communities, especially in the West Bank.

Dr Williams said he was delighted that Anglicans and Roman Catholics, with the personal support of Pope Benedict – with whom the Archbishop had discussed the situation of the Christians in the Holy Land during his visit to Britain last September – were committed to collaborating closely to focus attention on the plight of Christians in the Holy Land and to find practical ways to make a difference.

He added that he hoped Anglicans would “consider ways of becoming better informed

and more involved with the issues – not as part of any kind of political campaign but as part of what we owe to our brothers and sisters” in the Christian communities in “the land where our Lord preached, lived and died the Gospel.”

The appeal came ahead of a two day conference on Christians in the Holy Land which Dr Williams and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Vincent Nichols, jointly hosted at Lambeth Palace.

The event brought together some 90 church leaders, politicians, activists and media types to raise what Dr Williams described as “literate, compassionate awareness” of the Christian plight and to galvanize action. They heard that Christians represented 30 percent of British Mandate Palestine in 1948, while today their share in Israel and the Palestinian Territories is estimated at 1.25 percent.

The risk, as the Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal, has put it, is that the Holy Land is becoming a “spiritual Disneyland” – full of glittering rides and attractions, but empty of its indigenous Christian population.

■ For a report on the conference, see <http://tinyurl.com/3oqorg>



Palestinian Christians celebrating the feast of St Georgios in Bethlehem. Photo: Mahmoud Ilean, www.demotix.com

Archaeological ‘proof’ claimed by Zionists

By Margaret Vernon

Archaeologists in Israel are locked into a controversy about whether the Old Testament’s depictions of the kingdoms of David and Solomon are historically accurate. This has vast political implications because, if the biblical account is taken literally, it would have relevance to Israel’s claim to biblical Zion, i.e. most of Israel/Palestine.

Many of the excavations – most notably those in the Old City of Jerusalem – lie within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and the Palestinians believe the archaeological work is essentially a way for Israel to expand its territorial claims and displace them.

In 2005 Israeli archaeologist, Eilat Mazar, claimed to have uncovered David’s palace overlooking the Kedron valley in Jerusalem. Based on its location and pottery fragments found, she insists that it was built for David in the 10th century BC, as described in the second book of Samuel.

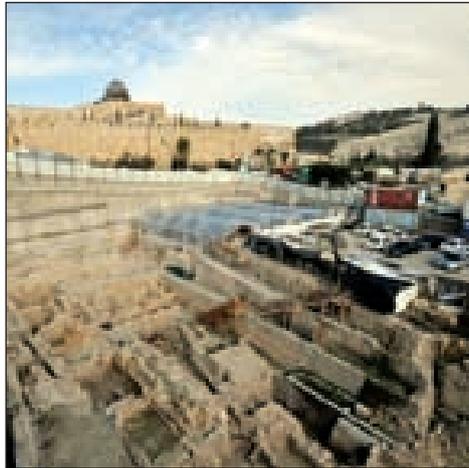
However, David Ilan, a fellow archaeologist of the Hebrew Union College, doubts that this was really King David’s palace. He believes that it was constructed a hundred years or more after David’s son, Solomon, died in 930 BC.

Mazar’s claim is even more strongly contested by Israel Finklestein, resident archaeologist at Tel Aviv University and leading proponent of the “low chronology” position that all dates of bible-oriented archaeology are at least a century too early. Finklestein insists that in David’s time Jerusalem was just a “hill-country village” and that David himself was a local leader with maybe 500 followers armed with sticks – not a general at the head of an impressive army.

Since Mazar’s bold assertion, two other archaeologists have claimed to have found clear evidence of David’s kingdom. Professor Yiguel Yadin has excavated three sites, at the old locations of Hazor and Megiddo in the north, and Gezor, east of Jerusalem. He claims these were all built by Solomon, but uses the bible to date the pottery found at the sites, a practice condemned by modern archaeology.

Furthermore, the quotation he uses from the First Book of Kings was added long after Solomon died and after Israel had split into two parts; Judah in the south and Israel in the north. Finklestein asserts that these “cities” were probably built a century later by a different ruler.

More recently, Yosef Garfinkle, a professor at the Hebrew University has



Archaeological excavations near Temple Mount. Photo: www.demotix.com

started excavating ruins of the fortified city of Khirbet Qeiyafa near the Elah Valley, southwest of Jerusalem, where David was supposed to have fought Goliath. Garfinkle claims this was the biblical city of Sarraim, a Judaeen border town. However, only 5% has been excavated so far and some archaeologists are sceptical about the reliability of the carbon dating of pottery shards and olive pits claimed to have been at the site during David’s time.

“What inspires us is to uncover the Bible... and that’s indelibly linked with sovereignty in Israel”

Finklestein and his colleagues say that the whole area under investigation was probably in reality a patchwork of disparate powers: Philistines in the south, Moabites in the east, Israelites toward the north, and (possibly) a Judaeen shepherd named David in the relatively modest town of Jerusalem. He points out that the Old Testament was written over a period of 600 years and that “the reality presented in the story is a later reality... [that] of their own time, the Assyrian Empire.”

Many excavations taking place in East Jerusalem, where Palestinians are being evicted and replaced by settlers, are funded by the City of David Foundation. Its Director of International Development, Doran Spielman, admits: “When we raise money for a dig, what inspires us is to uncover

the Bible... and that’s indelibly linked with sovereignty in Israel.”

Daniel Polisar, president of the Shalem Centre, the Israeli research institute that has also helped fund Eilat Mazar’s excavation work, explained why so much effort is being expended on trying to support the claim of a “Kingdom of Israel” stretching from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River: “You take David and his kingdom out of the book, and you have a different book. The narrative is no longer a historical work, but a work of fiction. And then the rest of the bible is just a propagandistic effort to create something that never was. And if you can’t find the evidence for it, then it probably didn’t happen. That’s why the stakes are so high.”

One point that seems to have escaped the various warring factions of Israeli archaeologists is this: even if the Old Testament were proved to be an accurate, historical account of what happened nearly 3000 years ago, it can hardly be used to justify Israel’s colonisation and ethnic cleansing today.

Israel has been strongly criticised for its methods – both for failing to protect all the historic buildings of the Islamic period uncovered during the excavations and for failing to abide by the guidelines agreed to with UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee, especially in relation to work being carried out around the al-Aqsa mosque.

In July UNESCO called on Israel immediately to stop all archaeological work in the Old City of Jerusalem and said it wanted to visit the sites in order to ensure the work has been suspended. Israel replied that no such visit would be allowed.

Margaret Vernon is a member of York PSC

■ This article is based on information from the December 2010 issue of the *National Geographic* magazine.



Jerusalemites unite to protest against ethnic cleansing in Sheikh Jarrah. Photo: [Mahmoud Ilean, www.demotix.com](http://www.demotix.com)

Islamophobia, Israel and the far right

By Hilary Wise

Some people have tried to dismiss the murderous rampage of Norwegian Anders Breivik as the work of a crazy loner with a white supremacist agenda and a visceral hatred of Muslims, mixed with Christian fundamentalism. But an examination of his 1500-page “manifesto” and his sources of inspiration suggest he is in fact an extreme symptom of a disturbing trend in European politics.

The English Defence League, whom Breivik cites admiringly, are like him champions of Israel and its policies of colonisation and ethnic cleansing. The EDL website reiterates all the old Zionist myths surrounding the establishment of Israel: Palestinians were mere nomads in the region, in 1948 “most Palestinians left the area at the behest of Arab leaders,” etc, etc.

Israel finds the embrace of such a clearly fascist organisation somewhat embarrassing. (Activists demonstrating to ban settlement-produced Ahava cosmetics will remember Zionists asking the EDL to please remove themselves from their counter-demonstration in Covent Garden.) But there is a kind of internal logic to that support. The website says that “many EDL members support Israel may be [sic] because this country is surrounded by genocidal Islamists and Muslims intent on exterminating it,” i.e. the EDL subscribes to Zionist writer Bat Ye’or’s “Eurabia” conspiracy theory, according to which both Europe and Israel are threatened by a demographic tsunami of fanatical Muslims bent on imposing sharia law and wiping out “Western Christian civilisation.”

Such ideas are to be found, in a slightly more sophisticated form, in the writings of *Daily Mail* columnist Melanie Phillips whom Breivik quoted often and at length. Well known for her venomous diatribes against any criticism of Israel, she calls people who work for Palestinian rights “fellow-travellers of Islamo-fascism and genocidal Judaeophobia.”

“Over the last decade Europe has seen the rise of ultra-right groups and parties”

What appealed to Breivik especially was her stance on immigration, which she condemns as a deliberate policy “to destroy for ever what it means to be culturally British and to put another ‘multicultural’ identity in its place.” Unfortunately Phillips shot herself in the foot when she tried to distance herself from Breivik, complaining that those noting his admiration for her ideas were exploiting “this apparently heaven-sent opportunity to take down those who fight for life, liberty and western civilisation against those who would destroy it.” The very war in which Breivik and the EDL also think they are engaged, Mel!

Her writings could also be dismissed as crazy racist rants, far removed from the mainstream of European thinking. But over the last decade Europe has seen the rise of ultra-right groups and parties, including Italy’s National Alliance and Northern League parties, Austria’s Freedom Party and the Danish People’s Party; in France, Marine Le Pen of the National Front is seen as a serious contender for the Presidency. Breivik and the biased or simply lazy elements of the mass media in this country are at the two ends of an unbroken continuum that is rapidly contracting. It is a trend that

Israel is all too keen to promote and exploit.

From the outset Israel has tried to brand all “Arabs” – including Palestinians – as violent, shiftless, untrustworthy, etc, and now seeks to explain the continuing emigration of Christian Palestinians as the result of persecution by Muslim Palestinians – apparently nothing to do with what they suffer at the hands of Israel. With the Christians out of the equation it would be much easier to present the occupation and the oppression of Palestinians as a religious conflict between Muslims and Jews – the latter of course enjoying huge support from Christian fundamentalists.

No surprise, then, that Israel and its supporters leap at any chance to brand any form of resistance on the part of Palestinians as terrorism and to label activists for Palestinian rights as supporters of terrorism. That our government reacted to the presence in the UK of a respected human rights activist like Sheikh Raed Salah by arresting him (page 7) is just another straw in a disturbing wind of change.



Perfidy – another war crime

An undercover Israeli agent disguised as a Palestinian woman was caught on camera in May. A photostory in the *New York Times* showed the agent being loaded into an Israeli police vehicle after “helping detain a Palestinian protester” at a Nakba demonstration.

At around the same time the Electronic Intifada published an exclusive interview with independent journalist, Jon Elmer, who described how undercover Israeli forces disguised as Palestinians arrested demonstrators during a Nakba protest at the Qalandiya checkpoint.

The use of undercover Israeli forces dressed as Palestinian civilians – known as “mustarrabeen” in Arabic and “mistaravim” in Hebrew – in arrest and extrajudicial execution operations has long been practiced by the Israeli army in the occupied territories.

Last October, the Electronic Intifada reported that such an undercover unit was used to repress a protest in Umm al-Fahm, a Palestinian village in Israel. Haneen Zoabi, a Palestinian member of the Israeli Knesset, was hit in the back and neck by rubber bullets as she fled the area when police opened fire. She later said she believed she had been specifically targeted by police snipers after they identified her.

The laws of warfare prohibit perfidy. Combatants feigning civilian status come within this classification. Both the soldiers and their commanders may bear individual responsibility for war crimes since injuring or killing a person while breaching the prohibition on perfidy is a war crime under international criminal law.

Rebuilding a family home

By Anna Seifert

Take a person who feels passionately about human rights for Palestinian people, multiply by 18 similar minded volunteers from the UK, add the commitment by the Amos Trust for a Just Peace for Palestine and the experience of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, and finally entrust a Palestinian NGO, the Holy Land Trust, to coordinate the project of rebuilding a demolished family home and you get a powerful action for peace and non-violent resistance to occupation.

The building site was in the village of Al Walaja, near Bethlehem. A report by UNWRA states that in 1948 the village lost 70 % of its land and its inhabitants became refugees. Some of these families are still in camps today, others have built new homes on their agricultural land east of the Green Line.

More of the villagers' land was annexed by Israel following the 1967 war and again in the 1970s for the enlargement of the Gilo and Har Gilo settlements. Today house demolitions and pending demolition orders cause much ongoing hardship and uncertainty for the families.

Before leaving home the volunteers raised some £25,000 for the rebuilding costs. In Bethlehem we travelled each morning from our hostel to the building site past newly constructed housing units in a settlement and earth clearing work for a further extension of the Wall. When finished, it will encircle the village.

The house we came to rebuild is for a family whose home was demolished seven years ago, forcing them to live in Deisha refugee camp.

Our building site was a busy and happy place. From day one people who had been strangers became an effective and cheerful team. With members from the refugee family and their future neighbours, we assisted three experienced Palestinian builders.

We shifted stones and sand, buckets of water and concrete, metal supports and wooden planks. On some days our energy was boosted by young international volunteers from the Holy Land Trust and Ecumenical Accompaniers from the Bethlehem team.

Word spread about our project and there was hardly a day without visitors. Mayors and governors arrived, Moustafa Barghouti came from Ramallah and spoke about his vision for Palestine. An article about us was printed in the al Quds newspaper.

Neighbours brought cakes and shared tea and stories with us. We especially valued visits by the family for whom we were rebuilding the house. It was good to see the children spontaneously adopt the building site as a playground as if at last they were free to play and explore, no longer constrained by life in a refugee camp. Every day there was much mutual appreciation between us and our Palestinian friends; a steady flow of "thank yous" were received and returned in equal measure.

Two days before our flight home the outer and inner walls were finished and together with the family we planted 20 olive trees. After a joyful farewell party with the entire building team it

was time to face the difficult "goodbyes." With tears of both joy and sadness we took leave from Marwan, our trusted translator, coordinator and companion. He called our relationship "special," meaning we were "connected with our hearts." In many ways this is true for the whole experience of our time in Palestine.

Three weeks after our return to the UK we were shocked to hear that the Israeli authorities had placed a 72 hour demolition order on "our" house. A Palestinian lawyer was granted a delay and our

"Every day there was much mutual appreciation between us and our Palestinian friends"

group, supported by the Amos Trust, got busy writing letters to our MPs and the FCO and contacted the UK Ambassador to Israel.

Subsequently, dozens of trees have been uprooted in Al Walaja as the IDF resumed preparatory work for building the Wall. Meanwhile a tunnel is being built to connect one family to the village, at an expense to the Israeli and/or US taxpayer of NIS 3 million (£500,000).

A hearing about the route of the Wall is scheduled for the Israeli Supreme Court on 27 September. Our advocacy continues.

■ Anna Seifert served as an Ecumenical Accompanier in 2004 and 2008/09. www.eappi.org



Anna in the foreground, with rebuilding team

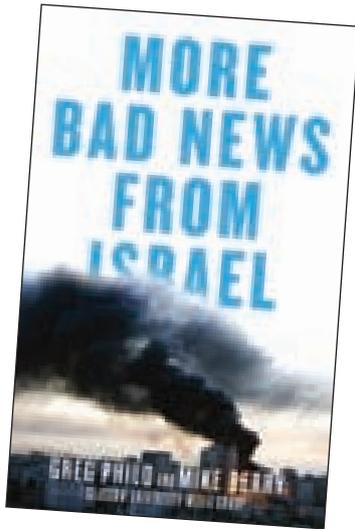
More Bad News from Israel

By Greg Philo and Mike Berry
Pluto Press

It has been clear to those concerned with Israel and Palestine that during the past ten years or so British broadcasting coverage of the region has deteriorated disastrously in favour of Israel.

Those like me with long experience of the region and its conflicts noticed this deterioration by observation during the early 2000s, the time of the Second Intifada. We noted the failure of BBC and ITN mainstream bulletins to set the Palestinian experience and the Israeli attacks in proper explanatory context; the refusal properly to lay out cause and effect, to give adequate voice to Palestinians; the spurious attempts at making equivalent the occupier and the occupied, the attacker and the attacked.

Many others began also to notice this deleterious trend and luckily two of them were from the experienced Glasgow University research team of Greg Philo and Mike Berry. They put scientific bones under the flesh of our impressions, through use of careful



textual analysis and the response to this distorted coverage by focus groups of the largely young and well educated.

These groups' replies, in the first edition of this excellent book, *Bad News from Israel* (2004), showed that the BBC was so misinforming its viewers and listeners that they had a totally distorted view of the Palestine/Israel impasse and its causes.

Despite an independent Impartiality Commission set up in 2005 reporting that the Philo-Berry findings had a valid foundation, the BBC, as this second edition shows, has become worse.

Perhaps most glaring is the slanted coverage of the Israeli blitzkrieg on Gaza in late 2008/early 2009. Philo-Berry show that the BBC devoted a massively disproportionate amount of coverage to reporting the Israeli version of events, and Israel's reasonings for it, and barely explained the Palestinian position. Serious Palestinian commentators were noticeable by their absence from mainstream coverage whereas the Israeli Ambassador to Britain appeared so often one could have been forgiven for thinking he was on a BBC contract.

The very fact that it was the Israelis, not Hamas, who breached the four-month Gaza ceasefire, in November, 2008, went virtually unreported – the BBC certainly had not made it clear to the focus groups questioned for this book.

There is damning and detailed evidence in this highly readable book. In fact the case against the BBC is so watertight that the BBC is both unwilling and unable to make any sensible response to it. The BBC's response, in fact, is to try to smear complainants, writing them off as *parti-pris* obsessives.

Tim Llewellyn,
BBC Middle East Correspondent,
1976–80 and 1987–92

Union supports jailed women

The National Union of Teachers passed a motion at their annual conference in support of the women and children who have been jailed by the occupying Israeli government forces. It was proposed by Kiri Tunks from the East London NUT and seconded by Susannah Billeter from Devon NUT.

Christine Blower, General Secretary of the NUT, said: "The treatment of all women and children prisoners is a matter of international importance. They are often the silent victims who are left to battle with the consequences of conflict and war both in and outside of prison.

"The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as someone under the age of 18. It is unacceptable for children and young people to face trials in military courts, often without legal representation.

"War and conflict rob children of their education as well as their freedom.

"It is imperative that teaching unions both in the UK and globally work together to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to receive a full education.

"Conflicts... are never of children's making. They must not be made to pay the price. They must be allowed a childhood."

The conference also decisively condemned the Histadrut, the Israeli equivalent of the TUC, and called on international trade unions to sever all links with it due to its historic and current complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian rights. The conference heard that the Histadrut has always played a key role in perpetuating Israel's occupation, colonisation and system of racial discrimination.

Students back Palestine

After nine years of refusing even to discuss Palestine at its annual conference and of refusing to condemn Israel's campaigns of mass murder such as Operation Cast Lead or the attack on the *Mavi Marmara*, the National Union of Students finally changed tack.

At its National Executive Council meeting in May it recognised that Israel's "continuing oppression of the Palestinians" had been compared by South African trade unions and activists to the apartheid regime.

The conference passed a motion which resolved to demand freedom for Palestine, an end to occupation and the right to return for all refugees; to encourage unions to twin with universities in Palestine; send an NUS delegation on future convoys to the Gaza strip, and to build links with students at educational institutions in Gaza. (For full text see PSC website.)

To add to this the University of London Union Senate, the largest student union in Europe, has passed a full BDS policy. Both these moves have come about in part because of the support and encouragement of Student PSC.



BBC campaign victory

By Amena Saleem

Earlier this year, the BBC ruled that its Panorama programme *Death in the Med*, about the deadly Israeli attack on the vessel taking aid to Gaza in 2010, had breached the organisation's own guidelines on accuracy and impartiality in three instances. This constitutes a major victory in the campaign for fair reporting on Palestine and Israel.

However, the arduous and arbitrary nature of the complaints process, in which the BBC acts as judge and jury on complaints about its own programmes, highlighted the urgent need to replace this impenetrable system with a modern, independent approach to tackling grievances about BBC broadcasts.

Nearly 1,500 people complained about *Death in the Med*'s twisting of the truth after it was aired in August 2010.

Eight months later, following a campaign led by PSC, the BBC's Editorial Standards Committee (ESC) issued its final verdict, upholding the three most serious complaints. They were that Panorama had failed to research the autopsy findings and made no use of them in the final broadcast, even though "the manner in which nine of the passengers were killed is fundamental because of what it might say about the motivation of the IDF."

The programme completely failed to give viewers any insight into the serious mistreatment of passengers and failed to mention that many of the injured did not receive treatment for hours.

Moreover, the ESC found the programme "was not clear and precise in its presentation of the full extent of the aid on board," a huge omission when much of the programme was given over to questioning the humanitarian motives of the flotilla.

However, the programme overall was judged not to have breached guidelines on accuracy and impartiality and a further 48 points of complaint were rejected.

Despite this, it was obvious that if the original broadcast had included the omissions highlighted by the ESC, then *Death in the Med* would have been a very different programme, one in which the naked aggression of the Israeli commandos would have been made clear to viewers, as would the humanitarian aims of the flotilla.

Instead, by ignoring the facts, presenter Jane Corbin was allowed to portray heavily-armed Israeli soldiers as being in fear of their lives from civilian passengers using broom handles and chair legs to defend themselves. Embedded with a unit of



Jane Corbin in *Death in the Med*

Israeli marines during filming, she doggedly pursued the idea that the flotilla was not on a humanitarian mission to Gaza, but out to "attack Israel."

The programme was later posted on the website of the Israeli Defence Force.

"If the broadcast had included the omissions highlighted by the ESC, then *Death in the Med* would have been a very different programme"

The BBC Trust issued a grudging apology for the three instances where Panorama was judged to have gone wrong while in the same statement describing *Death in the Med* as "an original, insightful and well-researched piece of journalism."

And rather than accepting that mistakes had been made from which editors and producers could learn in the future, the Trust contended that "it is unlikely that a current affairs programme such as this, covering such a contentious issue, would be found to be entirely flawless if it were subjected to the level of deconstruction and analysis that *Death in the Med* has undergone."

A more appropriate response would have been to assure licence-fee payers that the

BBC is committed to making programmes that are well enough researched to withstand even the most detailed analysis, and that it acknowledged that *Death in the Med* had fallen far short of this.

The sense of arrogance conveyed by the BBC's attitude that its coverage of Israel's occupation is in no need of improvement and its apparent contempt for viewers who complain about pro-Israeli bias was reinforced in June by Helen Boaden, the BBC's head of news.

Speaking at a conference in London, Boaden questioned whether it was right that the BBC should have faced "such a level of scrutiny" over *Death in the Med*.

In answer to her own question, she said: "It's just a fact of life that emails mean, these days, viewers can complain much easier and faster than they could in the past.

"This allows access to lobby groups, individuals with an obsessive interest, those with the time and resources to pursue their agenda, or those for whom impartiality means putting across their point of view."

The notion that anyone might have a legitimate complaint against the BBC's coverage and that those with a detailed knowledge of the issues would be more likely to notice flawed reporting, was not considered.

Boaden's attitude is prevalent at the BBC and only the appointment of an independent adjudicator to examine complaints against its coverage will force it to admit its mistakes and learn from its transgressions. The complaints process is currently being looked at by a review panel. For the sake of fair reporting of the Palestinian struggle, let's hope it comes to the same conclusion.

In Brief

UK BACKS PROTEST

Alistair Burt, the Foreign Office Minister for the Middle East, attended a meeting with community organisers and the wives of political prisoners, Bassem and Naji Tamimi, in the village of Nabi Saleh in June.

During the meeting, the minister said: "From what I have seen the IDF have acted extremely strongly against peaceful protesters including chasing children and, in one instance, striking a woman. We entirely defend people's rights to peacefully protest and the role of the international community in helping protect this. Ultimately it is in the interest of Israel and villages such as Nabi Saleh to address the issues I've seen here."

The Tamimis have been recognised as human rights defenders by the EU. They were arrested earlier this year and jailed based on the coerced confessions of teenagers dragged from their beds in the middle of the night by Israeli soldiers. The main "evidence" against them is the testimony of a 14 year-old who was beaten up on his arrest, denied legal counsel, denied his right to have his parents present during his questioning and instead of being told by his interrogators of his right to remain silent, was told that "it is better you tell the truth."

Burt was taken to the water spring which personally belongs to Bashir Tamimi, the head of the Nabi Saleh village council, but was taken over by settlers from nearby Halamish, with the help of the IDF, in December 2009. The settlers erected a shed over it and drove away Palestinians by force – at times throwing stones or pointing guns at them.

The villagers had already endured decades of continuous land grab and expulsion but the spring takeover was the last straw. They began a protest campaign of weekly demonstrations with a particularly high level of participation by women which have been met with unmitigated brutality by the IDF. See www.popularstruggle.org

WATER CISTERNS DESTROYED

Reuters reported in July on the demolition of at least three water cisterns in the desert beyond Bethlehem since last November, seriously damaging the livelihoods of Palestinian goat herding communities in the area.

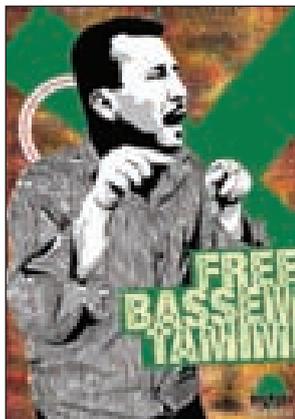
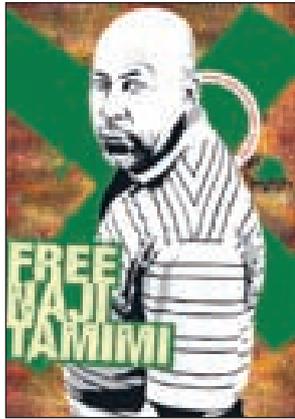
One shepherd, Falah Hedawa, 64, told the reporter: "Maybe they are doing this to make us leave. We will not leave."

As part of its sharp acceleration in demolitions in Area C (see page 14 for the impact on the Jordan Valley), Israel demolished 20 rainwater collection cisterns in the West Bank in the first half of this year, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

More Palestinians lost their homes in Area C over this period than in the whole of 2009 or 2010, OCHA says. A total of 342 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished.

Many of the water cisterns had been restored by NGOs to help the Bedouin. In the process archaeological evidence was found of Christian communities pre-dating the 7th century spread of Islam.

DanChurchAid, a Danish NGO that has financed the project, says five of the cisterns it worked on have been demolished this



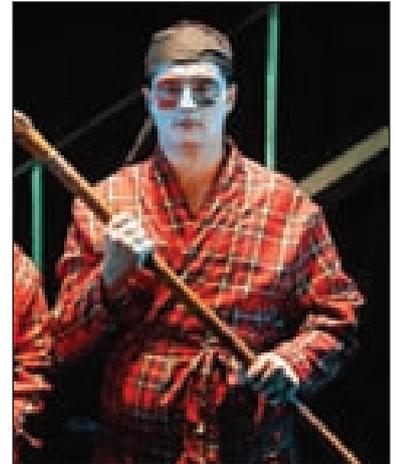
year, three by Israeli forces and two by Jewish settlers.

"I find it extremely concerning. The whole Horn of Africa and the Middle East are facing major droughts," Mads Lindegarde, regional representative of DanChurchAid, told Reuters. "To destroy ancient water cisterns and water resources in general is madness, but particularly in a situation where people are suffering from an extreme lack of water."

FREEDOM THEATRE TARGETED

This summer the people of Jenin have been outraged by a series of abductions of members of the Jenin Freedom Theatre. The IDF abducted Adnan Nagnaghiye, the location manager, Bilal Saadi, head of the board, and Rami Hwayel, an actor rehearsing for the theatre's production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

Jacob Cough, the general manager of the theatre said: "We won't stop with the theatre's work, even with harassment from the army. We will still stand against all kinds of injustice."



Rami Hwayel

CRIMES AGAINST BABIES

Some 10 per cent of pregnant Palestinian women were forced to endure labour or childbirth at a checkpoint between 2000 and 2007, resulting in the death of at least 35 babies and five women, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health. The data was at the centre of a new research abstract published in July in the leading medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The abstract's author, Halla Shoabi, is a lawyer at the University of Michigan. She believes there may be grounds for Israel to be prosecuted for crimes against humanity for obstructing women as they try to reach medical care during labour.

The Fourth Geneva Convention states that "expectant mothers shall be the object of particular protection and respect." Yet, in 2009, the Committee Against Torture said it was "seriously concerned" by the "undue delays and denial of entry" at Israeli checkpoints of those seeking urgent medical care.

Shoabi's analysis will investigate a claim against Israel based on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, Article 7 (1) (k), which prohibits "inhumane acts... intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health."

Individual testimonies lodged with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights indicate inhumane treatment, great suffering and the loss of life as a result of checkpoint delays. A testimony given in August 2003 reported the birth and death of a baby girl at a checkpoint in northern West Bank. The mother was prevented from reaching an ambulance on the other side. The baby died after the father was forced to cut the umbilical cord with a stone.

APARTHEID LAWS HIT LANGUAGE

A bill has been submitted to the Knesset which would see Arabic dropped as an official language of Israel, making Hebrew the state's only official language. If passed, it would be a major discrimination

against the 20% of Israel's population who are Arab. The *Ha'aretz* newspaper reported in August that the bill also states that Jewish law will be a source of inspiration to the legislature and the courts.

SPLASHING IN THE SEA

Tentatively at first, then with growing delight the group of Palestinian women and girls entered the sea, smiling, splashing and then joining hands, getting knocked over by the waves, throwing back their heads and ultimately laughing with joy.



The women, most of whom had never seen the sea before, had come from the West Bank and been smuggled into Israel and then to the beach at Tel Aviv by a dozen Israeli women. Both groups risked prosecution which was part of the point: to protest against what they all consider unjust laws.

"What we are doing here will not change the situation," said Hanna Rubinstein, from Haifa. "But it is one more activity to oppose the occupation. One day in the future, people will ask, like they did of the Germans: 'Did you know?' And I will be able to say, 'I knew. And I acted.'"

The Palestinian women travelled in disguise – which meant removing clothes rather than covering up – in Israeli cars driven by middle-aged Jewish women. As they passed army checkpoints, everyone just waved.

The sea visits began a year ago, the idea of Ilana Hammerman, a writer, translator and editor, who had been in the West Bank when a girl told her she was desperate to get out, even for a day. Ms Hammerman, 66, decided to smuggle her to the beach. The resulting trip, described in an article she wrote for *Ha'aretz*, led to the creation of a group called We Will Not Obey.

In a newspaper ad, the group declared: "We cannot assent to the legality of the Law of Entry into Israel, which allows every Israeli and every Jew to move freely in all regions between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River while depriving Palestinians of this same right.

"They and we, all ordinary citizens, took this step with a clear and resolute mind. In this way we were privileged to experience one of the most beautiful and exciting days of our lives, to meet and befriend our brave Palestinian neighbours, and together with them, to be free women, if only for one day."

The police have questioned 28 Israeli women; their cases are pending. So far, none of the Palestinian women and girls have been caught or questioned by the police.

CEMEX IN THE SETTLEMENTS

ReadyMix Industries, a subsidiary of the Mexican multinational building materials company, Cemex, owns plants in Israeli settlements including Mevo Horon, the Atarot industrial zone and the Mishor Edomim industrial zone, all in the West Bank, and Katzerin in the Golan Heights.

Who Profits?, a project of the Israeli Coalition of Women for Peace who conducted the research, says ReadyMix also provides concrete elements for the construction of Israel's wall, military checkpoints and the Jerusalem light railway.

Through ReadyMix, Cemex also owns 50 percent of Yatir quarry which lies next to the settlement of Teneh Omarim in the south Hebron hills. In May, researcher Dror Etkes documented how a Volvo truck loaded with construction material left Yatir quarry, whose

resources belong to Palestinians, and entered Israel via Meitar checkpoint. According to Etkes, trucks transport construction material from the quarry into Israel several times per day.

The Israeli mining activities in Yatir quarry are contrary to international law. Article 55 of The Hague Regulations explicitly stipulates on quarrying that it "forbids wasteful or negligent destruction of the capital value, whether by excessive cutting or mining or other abusive exploitation, contrary to the rules of good husbandry." UN General Assembly Resolution 1803, passed in 1962, states that permanent sovereignty over natural wealth and resources is a "basic constituent of the right to self-determination."

Cemex boasts on its website that they act "in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the law, our Code of Ethics and our corporate policies. At Cemex, we must comply with all applicable laws and policies, without exception. The importance of this principle cannot be overstated."

HIVES OF PEACE

By Sally Haywill

Which country has the most gentle bees? I think you would be hard pressed to find more gentle bees than the ones I saw in Abu Dis in the Occupied Palestine Territories in February, when I was very fortunate to be offered a meeting with members of the Jerusalem Bee-keepers Co-operative.

I was driven to a hilltop house surrounded by a beautiful small orchard of orange and lemon trees under which were some two dozen hives. The bees were so gentle their keeper didn't bother wearing gloves!

We sat in the sunshine to discuss bees, refreshed with Arabic tea, huge pancake like bread and great dollops of the bee-keeper's delicious honey. Given the uniquely awful daily lives they suffer under the occupation, I was interested to note that the bee-keepers' problems appeared to be very similar to our own – lack of forage and disease.



But the reasons for their lack of forage are very different. In the past, they would move the bees down to the heat of Jericho in the bitterly cold Jerusalem winter and back to the relative cool of Jerusalem in the summer. But they are no longer allowed to do this by the Israeli government.

Families in Abu Dis used to cultivate nearby fields but the Israeli government has seized most of this land to create the huge settlement of Ma'ale Adumin and, on another hilltop, to build a massive rubbish tip. They have also diverted water from Palestinian land and cut down swathes of olive orchards. The resultant barren, dry Palestinian lands are in stark contrast to the lush slopes, newly planted with healthy trees, surrounding Ma'ale Adumin.

A group of bee-keepers from East London are hoping to support the efforts of the Jerusalem Bee-keepers. If you would like to know more, contact me at shaywill@blueyonder.co.uk.

My tour of the OPTs was organised by the Camden Abu Dis Friendship Association (CADFA). Contact them at camdenabudis@btinternet.com

● STRIKE FOR WORKERS' RIGHTS

A group of Palestinians working at Salit Quarry, an Israeli-managed mine at Mishor Adumim, the industrial zone of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement, went on strike in June demanding a collective bargaining agreement.



Though there are an estimated 300,000 Palestinians working in Israeli settlements, this organised strike is the first of its kind. The workers want regular, monthly, documented pay slips – so far denied them – reasonable salaries and safe, healthy working conditions.

The men are represented by the Workers' Advice Centre (WAC), founded in the late 1990s shortly after the signing of the Oslo accords. The men contacted WAC in 2007 after one man died due to exhaustion and the unsafe working environment.

Other workers were getting sick too, inhaling dust and sand from the quarry. Vehicles were not insured and there was no bathroom or cold water on the work site. Since they started working together, WAC and the workers have achieved a number of small victories, including the formation of a Workers Committee, the first of its kind in a West Bank settlement, and there are now bathrooms, cold water and a proper, shaded work site.

● SEWAGE DUMPING

Sewage and wastewater from the settlement of Ariel, the largest in the West Bank, was deliberately directed on to the adjacent Palestinian village of Bruqin in May, contaminating its farmland and groundwater in an area of several kilometres.

Ariel is constructed on hilltops and its wastewater is frequently directed away from it onto the land of nearby Palestinian villages. Israeli settlements and military encampments control 70% of the West Bank's water, leaving the Palestinian population with little water to drink, and downstream of Israeli settlers' wastewater runoffs.

Palestinians have accused a number of Israeli settlements of purposely directing wastewater and raw sewage onto their farmland and homes, in an attempt to contaminate the property and render it uninhabitable.

● HOLIDAYS IN SETTLEMENTS

Israel has launched a tourism campaign designed to attract visitors to settlements in the occupied West Bank to increase support for retaining the territory in case of the formation of an independent Palestinian state, AP reported.

The campaign is targeting the majority of Israelis, who polls show are ready to cede most or all the area in return for peace.

"They want people to think it's normal there, that it's legitimate to travel there," said Hagit Ofran, of the Israeli settlement watchdog group Peace Now. "They want people to think that those areas are part of Israel."

● NEGEV VILLAGERS GO TO COURT

The Israeli Supreme Court ruled in June on an appeal filed five years ago on behalf of 128 Israeli Bedouin families living in six unrecognised villages in the Negev who asked to be connected to the area's water distribution network, Jillian Kestler-D'Amours reported on Al-Jazeera.

The court ruled that three villages – Gatamat, Umm el-Hieran and Tel Arad – must be provided with an unspecified "minimum access

to water" but rejected in part the claims of three other villages – al-Atrash, Tel al-Maleh, and Tla' Rashid – since it stated that these villages already had reasonable access to water.

While the court stated that the right to water is a constitutional right for all Israeli citizens, "because it stems directly from the constitutional right to life and the right to dignity and equality," it failed to specify what constitutes a fair minimum of water for the villages.

Further, its ultimate conclusion dangerously adopted the official Israeli position that the Bedouins of the unrecognised Negev villages should be moved into government-planned townships.

Nearly half of the Bedouin population in the Negev – approximately 80,000 people – lives in 45 unrecognised villages. Despite being Israeli citizens, the state views the residents as illegal squatters and does not provide them with basic services or infrastructure, including electricity, water, sewage systems, roads, schools or hospitals.

Seven government-planned, Bedouin towns exist in the Negev, including the largest, Rahat, which holds over 50,000 residents. These towns are the poorest in the country and lack basic services, including schools, complete sewage systems, banks, libraries and employment opportunities. They are largely seen as dormitory towns and, most importantly, they fail to take into account the Bedouin way of life which is agricultural and deeply rooted in the land.

"The court took for granted that these people are land squatters when in fact, they are not," said Sawsan Zaher, a lawyer with Adalah, The Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, which represented the villagers. "[It] does not take into consideration that the Bedouins are living on their own lands, many of them before 1948, and many of them were moved onto the lands that they are living [on now] by an order by the [Israeli] military commander."

● PAY FOR DESTRUCTION

A first draft of a law that will require Palestinians whose homes are destroyed by Israeli forces to pay the Israeli government for the demolition costs was passed by a committee of the Israeli Knesset in June. The bill will now go to the full Knesset for a final reading where it is expected to pass due to the current makeup of the parliament.

Since 1967, Israeli forces have demolished 24,813 Palestinian homes, 90% of them for "administrative" reasons – because they either lacked a permit or were in an area designated for expansion by the Israeli military. The remaining 10% have been "punitive" demolitions of the homes of Palestinians accused of attacking Israel, or of their families.

Many Palestinian homeowners, mainly in Jerusalem, are already forced to pay for the destruction of their homes. And now the Israeli Bedouin residents of the unrecognised village of Al-Araqib in the Negev, whose homes have been destroyed more than 20 times and who were evicted yet again on 25 July, have been landed with a fine of 1.8 million shekels (about £320,000), to cover the cost of the demolitions. Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Deputy Middle East and North Africa Director, said: "This lawsuit beggars belief. The Israeli authorities cannot reasonably expect the Bedouin villagers to fund the repeated destruction of their own homes and livelihoods."



Home demolition in Hebron. Photo: anticap.wordpress.com

Great ideas, great progress

Could each branch raise £500 a year to contribute to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign's national budget? That was the idea discussed at a well-attended and stimulating branch forum in London in June.

Within just a few weeks the campaign received a terrific boost with the full £500 being contributed by **Brent and Harrow** branch and **West London** who reported that theirs came largely from donations collected outside mosques.

Local organiser Salim Alam said: "Just before and during Ramadan we had a very generous response from the mosques where we were leafleting on the 'Boycott Israeli Dates' campaign, after Friday prayers. The worshippers really seemed to appreciate our work and were keen to enter into a dialogue on the issues."



Pledges for the full amount have been received from **Southampton, Lambeth and Wandsworth, Milton Keynes and Portsmouth and South Downs** branches. Other branches have made donations: **Aberystwyth** (£100), **Reading** (£250), **Leicester** (£100), **South East London** (£300), **Norwich** (£250) and **Cambridge** (£100), with many having pledged to raise more in the future. Some branches such as **Manchester** and **Liverpool** have set up standing orders to donate regular monthly amounts, as **Oxford** and **Brighton & Hove** have been doing for the past few years.

Ramadan dates campaign

The campaign to persuade people not to buy Israeli dates to break their fast during Ramadan really took off this year with many branches reporting significant success. Some got the imam to mention the campaign during Friday prayers and worshippers were often extremely generous with donations after the service.

West Surrey wrote to wholesalers and local shops; **Brent** leafleted most of the mosques and visited shops with Boycott Israeli Goods cards. A supporter organised for the card to be translated into Arabic and it will also be translated into Urdu and Somali.

West Midlands conducted their campaign in three parts, firstly contacting wholesalers, then shops, then buyers. They say: "When urging people not to buy Israeli dates it is essential to ensure that alternatives are available, in particular, Palestinian dates."

Lambeth and Wandsworth found the new flyer that lists brands especially useful on their stalls.

Rochdale got excellent coverage in their local paper in May for their Boycott Israeli Goods campaign (right).



Brilliant ideas

PSC members are an imaginative lot and continue to come up with brilliant ideas to draw attention to the plight of the Palestinians. One of the best recently was dreamed up by **Bristol** branch at an event in the main shopping centre to mark the Nakba in May and at subsequent summer fairs.

Wanting to engage people on the theme of house keys, members asked them to write what 'home' meant to them on large card keys. Samiha, whose idea it was, says: "By doing so they related to what 'home' meant to the Palestinians. This technique of 'social engagement' is a trigger for dialogue, questioning and reflection. By the end of the afternoon more than fifty keys were on display – certainly much more effective than just handing out fliers!"



The keys made an eye-catching display on stalls at summer fairs and hundreds have been collected. The first batch was recycled to form part of an art exhibition about Palestine.

Lambeth and Wandsworth members helped organise and publicise a live link from the Gopher Hole in Shoreditch, London, to the one day TEDxRamallah event. TED is a non-profit organisation devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. The annual TED Conference invites the world's leading thinkers and doers to speak and makes their talks available for free while TEDGlobal is held each year in Oxford.

TEDxRamallah took place in three places: Convention Palace in Bethlehem (moved there from Ramallah because of building work), Sunflower Theatre in Beirut, and a venue in Amman. The speeches can be seen at www.tedxramallah.com under Palestine Stories. **Lambeth and Wandsworth** now have a website <http://lwpsc.org.uk> with live feeds from their Facebook page and Twitter link.

Activists from PSC and Friends of Palestine groups in **Halifax, Liverpool, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Rochdale, Formby/Southport** and **York** got together in June in Halifax to plan co-ordinated future events.

Ideas that emerged included an International Women's Day event, possibly inviting women from abroad to participate, and a Sports Day, organised by **Sheffield** PSC with the support of the larger group. It was agreed that this would attract young people who could be introduced to the issue of how Palestinian youths

live under occupation, many of whom are prevented from enjoying sporting activities with no space even to play football.

Jumping for the children

Musheir al-Farra of **Sheffield** branch took his life in his hands to undertake a sponsored parachute jump in aid of the first Children's Mobile Library in the Gaza Strip. By July the event had raised £5200 and rising.

Thanking his "very good comrades" who made the effort to watch him jump, "especially Flis who arranged the outing," Musheir added: "It was great to see the Palestinian flag flying in Langar airport. One day, hopefully in our life time, we will see it flying representing the democratic non-sectarian state of Palestine; until this is achieved, we will carry on."



Many branches held stalls at summer fairs. **Richmond and Kingston** sold over £1,000 of Palestinian produce at Richmond May Fair (below) but the success was marred by the fair organiser's "flustered and irrational response to an aggressive complaint by three Zionists about our presence at the fair. She came demanding that the Veolia banners be taken down. When this was declined she went off and has subsequently tried to ban us from returning next year. This is being appealed."



Brent ran stalls at Glastonbury and Kilburn festivals and helped most nights at the performances by Mark Thomas of his Extreme Rambling show in the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn.

Meetings, talks, visits

A huge variety of events has been held over recent months. **Oxford** supported the visit of four children and two youth leaders from Al Amari camp in Ramallah, organised in July by the Oxford Ramallah Friendship Organisation (ORFA). See www.oxford-ramallah.org. The kids met others from the West Bank and a group from Gaza at a ceilidh, and had their first experience of the sea, as well as doing some video training. One highlight was a reception in Oxford Town Hall by the Lord Mayor, Elise Benjamin, the first Jewish Lord Mayor of Oxford, whose warm welcome to the Palestinian kids met with a warm response from them.



West Surrey hosted Zaytoon farmers and a talk by Susan Lourenco of Machsom Watch at public meetings in Guildford. **Cambridge** branch gave a talk in June with visuals to Year Ten pupils at Comberton Village College on Palestinian refugees as part of their Citizenship Day on refugees.

Several branches have had meetings on the events of the Arab Spring. **West Midlands** will be working with the newly-formed British-Arab Federation of the West Midlands and **Oxford** heard a talk by Abed Al-Tikriti on Palestinians and the Arab Spring. He said the new mood of optimism was affecting Palestinians.

Photo exhibition in Ely

A photographic exhibition by the Israeli women's organisation Machsom (Checkpoint) Watch, entitled *Occupation Body and Soul*, featuring over 100 photographs, will be on at Ely Cathedral for two weeks from 17 September daily 10am-5pm (Sundays from 12pm).



Track your MP

With our annual lobby of Parliament coming up in November (see back cover), find out what your MP has been doing in your name via www.theyworkforyou.com. You can read debates they've taken part in, track how they've voted, find out what's coming up in Parliament and contact them directly.

Veolia update

In another victory in the Veolia campaign, Ealing Council in West London failed to select Veolia for a tender for its domestic refuse, street cleaning and parks maintenance contract worth about £300m in total over 15 years. This is even more significant since Veolia had the previous parks maintenance contract.

West London members worked with others to write to and meet councillors and council officials and submitted detailed factual and legal analysis. They are now focussing on the West London Waste Authority (WLWA), formed of the boroughs of **Ealing, Hounslow, Hillingdon, Richmond, Harrow and Brent**, which is asking companies to tender for a £485 million domestic waste contract.

Veolia is on the shortlist for this contract so the branch had a meeting with WLWA officials, taking leading international human rights lawyer, Daniel Machover, along to put their case which was taken very seriously by the officials.

They are appealing to as many residents of the six boroughs as possible to sign a letter they will send to the WLWA to show the level of opposition to Veolia. If you are a resident, send your a) name b) postcode c) borough you live in to nernier@googlemail.com (a member who is collating the signatories).

West Midlands has also launched a major campaign to persuade Birmingham City Council to cancel its existing waste management contract with Veolia. They will be getting advice from Phil Shiner of Public Interest Lawyers on how to address the two standard responses: firstly from Veolia who say they are not Veolia, i.e. the Veolia subsidiary which runs waste management is a separate entity from the company which is building the Jerusalem Light Railway into the West Bank; and from councillors who say that what happens in Palestine is irrelevant to the legality of the contract and that it would be illegal to award or cancel contracts or de-list companies on the basis of the issues we are raising.

Never a bystander

London's Arcola theatre hosted an extraordinary production this summer. *On The Record* gave the true-life stories of six journalists from different parts of the world, all facing ostracism, persecution and in some cases death, as they reveal the truth about the oppressive regime in their different countries. **Kika Markham**, who played the Israeli journalist, Amira Hass, spoke to *Palestine News* about that experience and about her own political commitment.

“It was wonderful to play someone I totally agree with,” she said. “That doesn’t happen very often and when it does it’s a gift.” (Other parts, on stage, TV and film, have ranged from the Queen to the lead in *Homebody Kabul*, a play about the war in Afghanistan written for her by Tony Kushner).

The empathy that informs Kika’s whole performance may stem in part from her background: “I too come from a secular, left-wing Jewish family. Some of my relatives suffered from Nazi persecution so I was aware of all that from an early age. I was brought up according to anarchist principles and Amira’s parents were communists – she was bullied for that at school.”

To prepare for the part, Kika read all she could of Amira’s own writings and watched interviews and documentaries she appeared in: “You get the impression of quite a private person, tough but reticent, concerned with stating the facts, not with her personal image at all.”

“One of the most remarkable things about her parents was that they absolutely refused to be housed in a Palestinian home”

She felt that a key influence on Amira’s life and work was her mother, Hannah: “During the war her mother joined the partisans in Yugoslavia but was captured and taken to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Somehow, she survived the camp. But she always remembered arriving there after ten days in



Kika Markham as Amira Hass

the train from Yugoslavia, with many sick and dying. As they got off the train she saw these well-dressed German women just looking at the prisoners, without emotion. Amira says that her absolute dread of being a bystander came from that experience of her mother’s. It made her determined to report the occupation in Palestine “from the inside,” living first in Gaza, more recently in Ramallah.

“For me, one of the most remarkable things about her parents was that, when they went to live in Israel, they absolutely refused to be housed in a Palestinian home,” said Kika.

In the play, Amira has a lot to say about the language used in the Israeli media in order, she says, to “disportray the reality.” The IDF’s very violent incursions in the Occupied Territories are just “operations,” people are “detained,” not kidnapped or abducted. Kika commented: “Her own language is very direct and strong (the writers, Christine Bacon and Noah Birksted-Breen, were very careful to use only her own

words). She talks, for example, about the occupation of the Palestinians being like ‘ongoing rape.’”

Although Amira is well known and respected outside Israel she has a bleak view of her ability to actually change anything – a bleakness that comes across very clearly towards the end of the play in the scene where she receives the 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award: “What I write reaches only those who want to know,” she says. “And yet,” said Kika, “she persists in ‘putting questions to power,’ as she puts it. What tenacity!”

Is Kika herself optimistic about the future of Palestine? “When you see what is fed to young Israelis through the media and in their textbooks [see page 13], the demonisation and dehumanisation of Palestinians – it’s like the Nazis dehumanising the Jews; no wonder young soldiers behave as they do in the Occupied Territories. But with all that’s happening in the world – the Arab spring, the tent protests in Israel, the financial crisis in the West that must make us rethink how we spend our money – I dare to be hopeful things may improve for the Palestinians.”

Kika’s own political commitment includes support for Cageprisoners which campaigns to raise awareness of the plight of the prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. “And of course I go on the demos against the war and against the cuts. But I’m most closely involved in the Palestinian issue which is a case of such blatant, ongoing injustice. I’ve been sympathetic to the cause since the seventies.”

Although Kika would never compare herself to the campaigning journalists in the play, she too has suffered for her political beliefs. “In the eighties Corin and I were both blacklisted and that was a difficult time. We were somehow considered dangerous people! But in recent years I’ve been asked to play a very wide range of parts, some that I’ve felt in sympathy with, like Michelle Bachelet the former President of Chile – and of course Amira Hass; but also, oddly enough, some real establishment figures like the Queen, and Mrs Thatcher in the BBC’s adaptation of Alan Hollinghurst’s novel, *The Line of Beauty*.”

So far, Kika has not been able to meet Amira Hass. “But I’m hoping to go to the Occupied Territories this autumn to help with the olive harvest. So perhaps I can meet Amira then...”

Kika Markham is a Patron of PSC, as was her late husband, Corin Redgrave. Watch out for Kika in *Call The Midwife*, a series about a nun working as a midwife in the East End in the fifties, to be shown on BBC One in 2012.

Rambler extraordinaire

Alternative comedian **Mark Thomas** has been travelling around Britain with *Extreme Rambling: Walking the Wall*, his two-hour gig on hiking the length of the Apartheid Wall. He talked to *Palestine News* about his experiences and the audience response.

You might think Israel's multiple violations of international law in the occupied territories – the ethnic cleansing, the house demolitions, the daily humiliations – would be too grim a topic for stand-up comedy, even when the performer is renowned for tackling the starkest political issues.

So, why Palestine? "I knew that this is one of the screaming moral issues of our age – and I needed to educate myself. So I thought I'd go and see for myself. And of course there was an element of devilment, subversion. The Wall is anything but a tourist destination – so that's how I decided to treat it. And that's what it will become, sooner or later. The Wall will come down, but bits will be left standing, just to show people what it was like in 'the bad old days' – like the Berlin Wall."

“The Wall is anything but a tourist destination – so that's how I decided to treat it”

The emotional energy Thomas radiates on stage flows directly from his material. "When you're in the occupied territories you witness things that make you feel shock, rage, joy – maybe all within



the space of a few minutes," he says. It's his ability to take the audience on this emotional rollercoaster from incredulity to outrage that makes what could have been a long political rant into a genuine journey of discovery.

Much of the humour stems from presenting himself and his wary cameraman, Phil, as innocents abroad, blithely going where saner folk might fear to tread. Many of the situations he stumbles across appeal to his finely honed sense of the absurd – sometimes bordering on the grotesque: like the man in the village of Anata whose house has been cut in half by the Wall – making him liable for prosecution for "illegal entry into Israel" as he moves from room to room.

The most shocking aspect of his trip? "Settlers stoning Palestinian children – what could be more outrageous than that?" And the most surprising? "The sheer beauty of the landscape, hillsides full of wild flowers. I wasn't expecting that..."

But you're left in no doubt as to his underlying purpose: "It's a pro-justice issue – it's as simple as that. And it's one that people must engage with. If I have a message it is: Get involved! There's a tendency to fudge these issues because of the fear of being labelled anti-semitic, but we have to get past that."

Mark faced very little heckling or accusations of bias, perhaps because he starts his show with a reminder of the number of Israelis killed at the beginning of the Second Intifada and tries to understand the impact that had on the Israeli psyche.

His approach to the occupiers is also surprisingly non-judgmental: "The soldiers are mostly frightened kids – even though they are the same guys who will go and raid homes and shoot people." Even the Zionist estate agent who wants to build the Israeli state from the sea to the Euphrates gets off lightly. "Maybe it's due to my upbringing: I was taught to 'hate the sin, not the sinner.'"

Does he personally participate in the boycott? "Absolutely. My family will tell you I'm an obsessive reader of labels. Alongside that it's important to encourage people to buy Palestinian goods – hence my support for Zaytoun on the tour. It's a way into the issues."

And what has been the main audience response to the show? "Mostly people saying: 'I'd no idea...'"

■ A film based on Mark's journey is in preparation, and his book of the trip, *Extreme Rambling*, was published this spring by Ebury Press.

■ Mark is taking part in a London to Paris cycle challenge for the charity IMET 2000 which trains doctors and nurses in the poorest parts of the world and does amazing work in the occupied territories. To sponsor him go to www.justgiving.com/Mark-Thomas8

Israel Philharmonic disrupted

The BBC had to take the broadcast on Radio 3 of the Proms performance by the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra off the air after around 40 protesters from PSC, BRICUP, Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods and the Boycott Israel Network disrupted the concert by chanting and singing.

Some protesters formed themselves into an impromptu choir called Beethovians for Boycotting Israel (BBI). When the IPO struck up Webern's *Passacaglia* the BBI stood up and sang "Ode to Boycott," to the tune of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy."

"Israel, end your occupation, there's no peace on stolen land. We'll sing out for liberation 'til you hear and understand."

During the second piece, Bruch's Violin Concerto, and in Albeniz's *Iberia* after the interval, BBI duos and trios joined in with synchronised slogan shouting, including "The siege of Gaza – is out of tune – with international law" and "The IPO – are instrumental – in an illegal occupation."

Their performance was only curtailed when they were removed by Albert Hall security staff. To see them in action, go to: <http://tinyurl.com/42aske5> and <http://tinyurl.com/3vxbjf4>

Triumph at the Young Vic

In *the Penal Colony*, based on a short story by Kafka, was the centrepiece of Shubbak, a London-wide Festival of Contemporary Arab Culture, in July.

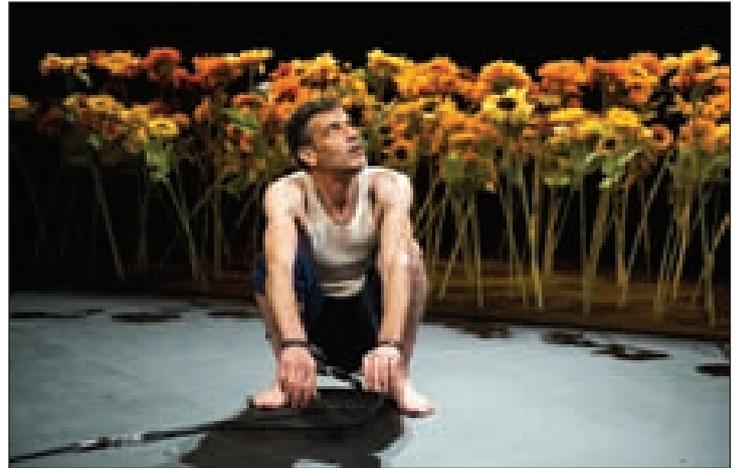
The production, adapted by the director, Amir Nizar Zuabi, and performed by the ShiberHur ("Inch of Freedom") theatre company from Haifa, was harrowing in a very literal sense.

The Prisoner, unaware of his crime, is strapped into an elaborate machine that slowly tortures him to death. Glass needles repeatedly inscribe on his naked body the reason for his execution. The Executioner explains the process – not with relish but with pride and dedication – to a mysterious Visitor who has come to observe the process.

The crime in this case was rudeness to an army officer – hence the inscription "Honour your superiors" that will be harrowed into the Prisoner's flesh.

The Visitor is repelled by the torture and moved by the Prisoner's plight but he fails to intervene. At the end of the play, when it transpires that the current regime is coming to an end, the Executioner takes the Prisoner's place and straps himself into the machine. The extreme dramatic tension was sustained by three brilliant actors, Taher Najib, Amer Hlehel and Makram Houry, who are familiar to many here through films such as *Paradise Now* and *Lemon Tree*.

In the Q&A session that followed one of the performances, Amir Nizar Zuabi refused to be drawn on any parallels with the situation in Palestine – "You see what you see" – except to say that the cycle of the oppressor becoming oppressed is a clear message. But to anyone aware of what is happening in the Occupied Territories the symbolism is inescapable. The bureaucratic and legalistic nature of Israel's persecution of Palestinians, the ingenuity of the penalties (such as obliging people to pay for the demolition of their own homes) and arrest and incarceration without charge or trial must surely have been in the director's mind. And is the Visitor all those



Taher Najib as *The Prisoner*

institutions and individuals in the international community who shudder at the injustices perpetrated by Israel but fail to act?

Zuabi spoke of the challenges his company faces, financially ("we do not take Israeli money – it comes with conditions"), practically (touring in the West Bank where movement is restricted) and artistically.

The company is busy building new audiences, constantly on the move and without a real home base, every member of the company multi-tasking to keep the show on the road. The Young Vic is planning a collaboration next year with ShiberHur, based on the theme of Abrahamic sacrifice, as part of a festival involving eight London theatres. To do this they need support. See www.shiberhur.org and www.youngvic.org.

Weeds Don't Perish: Memoirs of a Defiant Old Woman

By Hanna Braun

Published by Garnet Publishing

Zionists who shout "traitor!" at Hanna Braun during protests outside the Ahava store don't know the half of it. She knows the history of Israel's creation and its dispossession of the Palestinians from the inside out: she lived it. Encompassing major world events over eight decades, her journey from child immigrant to passionate campaigner makes this memoir's interweaving of personal and political events unique.

Arriving in Haifa in 1937, aged ten, having left relatives and friends in Germany who perished, Hanna witnessed the Arab revolt against the British mandate and the growth of Jewish settlements stealing Palestinian land.

She portrays pre-Nakba Palestine from a young person's viewpoint, refracted through adult knowledge. Her experience illustrates youthful vulnerability to extreme ideologies; banned paramilitary activities seem exciting to unaware teenagers, be they the KKK, Hitler Youth or the Haganah. Hanna characterises herself and companions with the Leninist phrase "useful idiots" – like colonialists everywhere, heedless of the plight of indigenous peoples they supplant.

This insider status makes her well-placed to expose Zionism's cynicism, e.g. the scuppering by Ben Gurion of plans to rescue refugees from Nazism: "So much for our humanity!" In the era of Jewish terrorism, the attack on British HQ at the King David Hotel and the 1947 UN partition plan, it was 1948's Deir Yassin massacre,



after which, as Menahem Begin said, Zionists "moved through the land like a knife through butter," which began her awakening to the now-familiar cruelty of expulsions and violence against Palestinians.

Through the 1956 Suez crisis, the Six Day war, the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, her outrage and commitment to anti-Zionism grew. Meeting Palestinian students enabled her to make the connection with South African apartheid and recognise Israel as a colonial, racist state.

Integral to her teaching career was combating racism and the ignorance on which it thrives. After working in Zimbabwe she co-founded Coventry's PSC branch. Palestinian

resilience inspired her on many visits, firstly with Women for Socialism in 1989.

She joined the ISM in the second intifada, confronting soldiers and dismantling roadblocks in the same spirit with which she had rebuffed the sexually predatory Moshe Dayan and battled injustice for decades. In Czechoslovakia, an exhibition about children killed by Hitler's "crazed racial classifications" strengthened Hanna's conviction that all people deserve respect. At Theresienstadt, where her grandmother died, she saw how inmates were "treated like Gazans" are now by an increasingly fascist Israel.

The life chronicled here shows that it is the values and identity we choose, not those we're given, which matter. In her optimism, her renunciation of Israeli citizenship and dedicated activism to free Palestine, Hanna Braun chooses loyalty to universal human rights over ethnic or national chauvinism. The world needs more traitors like this.

Frankie Green

Greenwashing apartheid

Stop the JNF has released a new e-book: *Greenwashing Apartheid: The Jewish National Fund's Environmental Cover Up*. The fourth volume in a series, it contains detailed evidence proving that the JNF is not an environmental organisation but rather an instrument of ethnic cleansing and complicit in war crimes.

It is available free to download from <http://jnfebook.net/JNFBookVol4.pdf>



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See <http://tinyurl.com/4xgqh8c>

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