



# Israeli peace plan



IMAGE: CARLOS LATUFF

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- 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

# Is it the end of the PA?

By Gill Swain

The Palestinian Authority will be disbanded if there is no Israeli movement toward renewing peace talks after Israel's elections, President Mahmoud Abbas has warned. If that happens, he will hand full responsibility for the occupied territories to the Israeli government.

His warning is a measure of the frustration and despair that Palestinians feel at the lack of progress in talks – stalemated since September 2010. And why should the PA not be disbanded? Many Palestinians feel that its main function is to administer the occupation and thus suppress them on behalf of the Israelis. And the international aid which Palestinians increasingly need to keep from starvation is channelled through it, thus relieving Israel of much of the cost of continuing its 45-year long military occupation.

The PA is likely to be further judged on what use it makes of its new non-member observer status at the UN, overwhelmingly approved by a vote of 138 in favour to nine against, with 41 abstentions (including the UK) in November. Will it now pursue Israel in the International Court of Justice, for instance?

What is clear, as Mustafa Barghouti wrote in the *Christian Science Monitor*, is that the two state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict is dying, if not already dead.

Probably the final nail in its coffin was Israel immediately taking revenge for the Palestinians' success at the UN by putting out tenders for thousands of new settlement units in the sensitive E1 corridor in the West Bank – the most aggressive activity in the area in years.

The planned construction will cut Bethlehem and Ramallah off from East Jerusalem and virtually slice the West Bank in half making a contiguous Palestinian state unworkable. Barghouti, member of the Palestinian Parliament and secretary general of the Palestinian National Initiative, wrote: "Israel argues that we can make do with connecting tunnels and elevated roadways, as if that is tolerable."

The Obama administration has proved itself totally supine to Israel. All members of the UN Security Council condemned the settlement construction – except for the US. And on the very day of Israel's announcement, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton enjoyed an evening out with Israeli Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman – just before he resigned to face corruption charges in an Israeli court.

European nations have made increasingly forthright statements condemning Israel and several supported Palestine's UN upgrade. Indeed the potential for Israel to become seriously isolated was brought out clearly by the UN vote but, as Barghouti says: "Europe must go beyond issuing statements, dressing down Israeli ambassadors or threatening to recall European ambassadors to Israel. Resolute action from the Europeans is long overdue."

Barghouti believes that the UN vote means Palestinians are "not as helpless as we once were." But, he writes: "Palestinians of my generation are at wits' end. I have lived my entire adult life under Israeli occupation. When I ran in 2005 to be president of the Palestinian Authority, I was detained and arrested four times by the Israelis. Three times I was injured while participating in peaceful marches against the closure of Jerusalem to most of the Palestinian population.

"My response, and that of thousands of Palestinians, has been active nonviolent resistance to highlight for the world the injustices we face. The UN bid was nothing but the mildest possible form of peaceful diplomatic resistance. During the last few weeks in both Gaza and the West Bank, the Israeli government, with what amounts to the implicit support of the United States, has sent one message: It understands and respects only the language of force and violence.

"What is the lesson being drawn by Palestinians? Israel has largely rejected or ignored diplomacy, has violently suppressed nonviolent resistance, but has made minor concessions to violence (as seen in the ceasefire agreement with Hamas over the recent conflict in Gaza). Many Palestinians drew the same conclusions in 2000 when Israel withdrew from Lebanon.

"Of course, a peaceful solution will be one that guarantees security for both Israel and the Palestinians. And the best Palestinian option for long-term peace and a two-state solution remains nonviolence. This approach should include an international campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) intended to prove to Israelis that subjugation of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem has real consequences.

"I have repeatedly warned of the window closing on the two-state solution. With its latest settlement actions Israel has effectively announced that its government has no interest in the two-state solution. Palestinians of my generation – and many younger Palestinians – will be re-evaluating our options.

"We simply will not accept being permanently relegated to isolated territories and subjected to a system that Archbishop Desmond Tutu and many other moral and legal authorities acknowledge to be apartheid.

"Our struggle is rapidly changing. Calls for a 'one-state solution' – one democratic state with equal rights for all Israelis and Palestinians, regardless of religion or ethnicity – will only increase in the months ahead. One person, one vote will be the new rallying cry for many Palestinians."

The right to self-determination is enshrined in international law but the potential for Palestinians to choose to live in a separate state from Israel is being killed off by degrees every day. What is left is an apartheid state much worse, say many South African observers, than theirs ever was. We in the PSC must forge ahead with renewed vigour in the coming year to force the world to face this reality.

## 2012 figures

<i>West Bank</i>	
Killed by Israeli forces:	9
Injured:	3,032
<i>Gaza Strip</i>	
Killed by Israeli forces:	246
Injured:	1,753
<i>Israeli casualties</i>	
Killed by Palestinian fire from Gaza:	7
Injured:	251
<i>Settler-related incidents</i>	
Palestinians injured by settlers:	164
Settlers injured by Palestinians:	49
Palestinian-owned structures demolished:	598
Of which residences:	191
People displaced:	886
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# Gaza slaughter – what were Israel’s real aims?

There was a sense of sickening déjà vu about Israel’s latest large-scale assault on the people of Gaza, Operation “Pillar of Defence,” in November.

In many ways it resembled the infamous Operation Cast Lead of four years ago, when Israel killed over 1400 Palestinians – the same timing of the attacks, a few months before an election, the same justification (Palestinian rocketfire), the same mainstream media response (largely echoing Israel’s justification), the same western government inertia. And the same outrage and outpouring of support for the people of Gaza from ordinary people worldwide.

Here, **Hilary Wise** examines what lay behind this latest murderous assault on the imprisoned people of Gaza.

**A**s in Operation Cast Lead, Israel claimed its targets were military and that the IDF had done its best to spare civilians and civilian infrastructure. But yet again the majority of the dead were civilians – 103 of the 158 killed, according to UN figures, of whom at least 30 were children (12 of them under age 10), and 13 women.

Among the structures destroyed or badly damaged were police headquarters, government offices, a mosque, clinics, over 60 schools, electricity generators, water mains, sewage pipes, the sports stadium and the paralympic training centre. According to the UN, 450 homes were completely destroyed and 8000 damaged.

And the Israeli Interior Minister Eli Yishai gave the lie to the claim of humanitarian concern when he announced on November 17 that the “goal of the operation is to send Gaza back to the Middle Ages.” As with most of Israel’s activities throughout the Occupied Territories, their entire justification rests on the claim that they need to defend themselves. True to form, the BBC reported that the Israeli bombing “follows a wave of rocket attacks against Israel from the territory.” The wider context tells a very different story.

In the first ten months of 2012 only one Israeli had been killed by the much publicised rockets. In the same period, 78 Palestinians were killed in Gaza alone. On 8 November a 13-year-old boy, Ahmad Abu Daqqa, was shot dead by an Israeli soldier while



Homes demolished by a single Israeli bomb

playing football outside his house in the southeast Gaza Strip. Over the following days, seven more Gazans were killed; five of them civilians, including three children. Hamas responded with rockets that killed no-one. On 13 November a truce was agreed between the two sides.

Only a day later Israel assassinated the Hamas military commander, Ahmed Al-Jaabari, in a missile attack, thus killing the man who was in the midst of negotiating a long term ceasefire.

## “The worst enemy of Zionism is peace”

The Israeli intermediary, Gershon Baskin, who helped negotiate the release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, has revealed that he was engaged in these negotiations and that Al-Jabaari was about to respond to the draft of a permanent ceasefire agreement.<sup>1</sup>

Writing with evident frustration in the *New York Times*, Baskin said: “I believe that Israel made a grave and irresponsible strategic error by deciding to kill Mr Jaabari.” He said that Jaabari “wasn’t just interested in a long-term ceasefire; he was also the person responsible for enforcing previous ceasefire understandings brokered by the Egyptian intelligence agency. Mr. Jaabari enforced those cease-fires only after confirming that Israel was prepared to stop its attacks on Gaza.”

So it seems clear that Israel was determined to provoke an armed response from Gaza. And indeed, Hamas did retaliate with 12-pound and 90-pound rockets – to which Israel responded with 500-pound and 2,000-pound bombs.

As Dr Eyad Sarraj, the psychiatrist who established the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme put it, succinctly: “The worst enemy of Zionism is peace. This is why Israel killed Jaabari.”

## The real aims

If Israel did not want a ceasefire and cessation of rockets, then what were its motives?

Some claim Operation Pillar of Defence was a crude show of military muscle to gain popularity with an electorate that recent Israeli polls have shown to be unashamedly racist and unconcerned about Palestinian loss of life.<sup>2</sup>

There was also the undoubted desire to test Israel’s new Iron Dome anti-missile system, funded by the US at a cost of some \$275 million so far. With an attack on Iran being high on Netanyahu’s agenda, it was imperative to see if the system would work against an Iranian counter-attack. In the event, Israel claimed the system was 90–95% successful. So the Iron Dome can now be marketed as fully road-tested, joining the array of high-tech weaponry tested on Palestinians that is the backbone of Israel’s economy.

Another motive behind the assault may have been to step up the psychological warfare against Palestinians beyond Gaza. Since Hamas won the 2006 elections the Israelis have been keen to demonstrate to West Bank Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority (PA) what they can expect if they show any sign of armed resistance. The ongoing siege, with regular incursions picking off a few people every week or two, interspersed with devastating land, sea and air attacks, has been sending just that message.

In order to prop up the whole Zionist project the leaders also need to reinforce the message which is delivered to Israelis



PHOTO: ANINE PAQ, ACTIVESTILLS

**Gazan women mourning the death of four-year-old Mahmoud Raed Sadallah, killed by an Israeli air strike, 16 November.**

from childhood: you are under constant threat from bloodthirsty neighbours whose main aim in life is to annihilate you and the only language they understand is brute force (Ehud Barak likes to describe Israel as “a villa in the jungle”). The education system and the Israeli media ensure that only the most independent-minded citizens acquire a different world view. Exercising control through fear has the additional advantage of distracting the population from issues like unemployment and the soaring cost of living which have led to huge street demonstrations in Israel.

## What was the result?

Most analysts agree that, despite the deaths and destruction, Hamas emerged strengthened from the confrontation. It claimed a kind of military victory because a land invasion was averted and rockets from Gaza penetrated much deeper into Israeli territory than ever before. In the ceasefire agreement brokered by Egypt, the Israelis promised to end targeted assassinations and to ease restrictions on the movement of people and goods in and out of Gaza.

## “Hamas emerged strengthened from the confrontation”

Moreover, Hamas leaders, much more at ease now in a Middle East where moderate Islamist governments are taking shape, have appeared more confident and statesmanlike.

The standing of Gaza’s *de facto* prime minister, Ismail Haniya, had already been given a boost in October by a visit by Qatar’s ruler who pledged £250 million to help re-build Gaza following the devastation of Cast Lead – a visit considered by some to be a snub to the PA in Ramallah.

Khaled Meshaal, the Hamas leader who has lived in exile for over 40 years, was at last able to visit Gaza where he was given a hero’s welcome. Reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, so vehemently opposed by Israel, has been brokered by Egypt and Qatar and appears more likely to bear fruit this time. (Meshaal endorsed the bid at the UN for Palestinian statehood and has agreed in principle

to the pre-’67 border for a Palestinian state – the official PA position.)

Meanwhile Netanyahu was seen at home as weak and not carrying through on his threats against Hamas. His Likud party slumped dramatically in the polls after his climb-down, while the popularity of other far-right parties rose.

## Israel’s miscalculations

Israel can no longer rely on a fully compliant puppet regime in Egypt. President Morsi has adhered to the peace treaty with Israel, so far. But massacres on the scale of Cast Lead could trigger reactions from the Egyptian public that Morsi would be unable to contain; indeed, support for such barbaric acts was one of the nails in former President Mubarak’s coffin. Morsi underlined the change in Egypt’s position by sending his prime minister to Gaza during the hostilities – the first time this had happened in 42 years.

Even Israel’s staunchest allies saw that a massive assault on Gaza could ignite a much more widespread conflict. West Bank Palestinians show increasing signs of dissatisfaction with the PA, thousands of Jordanians have been taking to the streets in protest against their own regime, and Hizbollah are still the dominant military and political force in Lebanon. So when Israel appeared to be assembling tanks and troops for a land invasion, Barak Obama was on the phone and Hillary Clinton was on a plane to Tel Aviv; even our own William Hague warned: “A ground invasion of Gaza would lose Israel a lot of international support and sympathy.”

The Middle East is in a state of turmoil whose consequences are unforeseeable and Israel’s western allies are facing profound economic crises. In the recent UN debate and vote on Palestinian statehood, nothing could have been clearer than Israel’s growing isolation on the international scene.

True friends of Israel must convince them that now is the time to take genuine steps towards a peaceful and just solution – not to retreat further into paranoia, militarism and mass murder.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://tinyurl.com/cp7p2w6> for a televised interview with Baskin.

<sup>2</sup> See *Ha’aretz*: ‘Israel without shame or guilt’: <http://tinyurl.com/8lboxre4>.

# Three wishes for Christmas

Just before Christmas comedian and writer Alexei Sayle delivered over 900 Christmas cards collected by PSC to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The cards asked the government to act on the FCO's own report on the plight of Palestinian children in Israeli jails.

The independent report by a team of distinguished UK lawyers (Children in Military Custody) found that Israel's treatment of Palestinian child prisoners was in breach of Article 76 of the 4th Geneva Convention and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It made 40 recommendations.

The FCO promised to take up the report's findings with the government of Israel. Six months later, not one of the recommendations has been implemented.

The PSC's "3 Christmas Wishes" campaign targeted Middle East Minister, Alastair Burt. The wishes were:

- An end to Israel's night time raids and shackling of Palestinian children
- Lawyers, parents and video cameras in all interrogations of Palestinian children
- An end to transferring children to



prisons inside Israel.

Alexei said: "These children urgently need our help and support; I'd like people to contact their MP and demand immediate action from our government."

A petition on Palestinian child prisoners containing nearly 5000 signatures was also delivered to Downing Street on UN Human Rights Day by Sir Geoffrey Bindman QC, Baroness Jenny Tonge, Haya Al Farra of the Palestinian Mission and Betty Hunter, Hon. President PSC.

NB: Don't miss Alexei's stand-up show at the Soho Theatre, from 21 January!

■ [www.childreninmilitarycustody.org](http://www.childreninmilitarycustody.org)

# Art building links

From an 18-metre long collage to a concrete volleyball fashioned from material chipped from the Wall, the opening exhibition of the new P21 Gallery in London is full of surprises.

The gallery is an independent, non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting contemporary Middle Eastern and Arab identities with a focus on Palestine. Its mission is to build cultural links between the countries of the Middle East and a Western European audience.

In addition to showing modern art works, it will screen films, documentaries and videos and run workshops, conferences, seminars and performances. The gallery houses a reference library, meeting rooms and a cafe and is designed to provide an



artistic hub for the Arab diaspora in the UK.

The opening exhibition, entitled Refraction, features paintings, films, photographs, sculptures and multi-media works by 15 leading contemporary artists. It will run until March.

■ P21 Gallery, 21 Chalton St, London NW1 1JD. 020 7121 6190. [www.p21.org.uk](http://www.p21.org.uk)

# Olive harvest attacked

Palestinian farmers trying to harvest their olives in the autumn were again subjected to violence and vandalism from Israeli settlers without any protection from the Israeli occupation forces.

The Israeli NGO, Yesh Din, documented 17 incidents involving the vandalising of some 500 trees, attacks on harvesters and the theft of crops by settlers in just the first two weeks of the harvest. A long-term study by the organisation showed that of 162 cases of agricultural violence against Palestinian communities monitored since 2005, only one investigation resulted in a prosecution.

Yesh Din wrote to GOC Central Command, General Nitzan Alon, and to the Legal Advisor for the West Bank, Colonel Doron Ben Barak, demanding that the army allocate the necessary resources to protect Palestinian olive harvesters.

The letter said: "If the violent actions of settlers who reside in the West Bank against Palestinians are not curbed, we will consider the authorities – including the army... responsible on account of their negligence for any damage incurred, and we will advise communities that seek our advice to claim their damages from these authorities."

## Olive tree facts

- Nearly half (48%) of the agricultural land in the OPT is planted with 8 million olive trees.
- The olive oil industry supports approximately 80,000 families.
- Over 7,500 olive trees belonging to Palestinians were damaged or destroyed by Israeli settlers between January and mid-October 2012.
- The number of Barrier gates increased to 73 in 2012 but the majority (52) are closed year round except for the olive harvest period and only then for limited hours.
- In 2011, 42% of applications for permits to access olive groves behind the Barrier submitted prior to the harvest season were rejected.
- In the Gaza Strip, 7,300 dunums of land along the perimeter fence with Israel that were previously planted with olive trees have been levelled during Israeli military operations.

UNOCHA-OPT

# Boy shot dead on his birthday

**M**uhammad Salaymah celebrated his 17th birthday at school in Hebron on 12 December. Later his mother sent him out to buy a cake for a family party. At a checkpoint he was shot dead by Israeli border guard Nofar Mizrahi, aged 19.

An Israeli investigation said Muhammad had threatened an IDF soldier with a toy gun. His family say he had no such weapon.

Several days after the shooting, the IDF released a 54 second video taken from a CCTV camera high above the checkpoint. It is grainy and dark and there is an unexplained cut in it at 0.24. It is impossible to see whether Muhammad had a toy gun, nor is there any recording of what the border guard or soldiers said to the teenager.

What it shows is the boy throwing a punch at a soldier and then grappling with him. There appears to be nothing premeditated about it. It looks like a boy provoked into losing his temper and lashing out. The other two on duty cluster round, then Muhammad breaks away.

And it is at that point – when the slim, unarmed 17 year old is surrounded by three heavily armed and flak-jacketed personnel who could easily restrain him – that you see the flashes from one or more guns as three bullets are pumped into his body and he falls to the ground.

The video bears little relation to the account given by Nofar Mizrahi who said that Muhammad took a pistol out of his pocket, grabbed one of the soldiers and put the gun to his head. Without hesitation, she shot him while he was still holding the soldier, she said.

On the day after the killing (before the video was released) an Israeli blogger, Noam R, commented that Mizrahi was not the only one to blame...

**“The story of the Border Police officer sounds strange, to say the least”**

“I don’t know what happened at the checkpoint and I don’t intend to judge any of the people involved. I can just say that the story of the Border Police officer sounds strange, to say the least. Luckily,



**Muhammad Salaymah at his school birthday party**

the checkpoints in Hebron are monitored by Israeli security cameras and I am sure that if her story is true, the IDF will release the video showing a 17-year-old teen taking out a toy gun and holding it to the head of a soldier while the Border Police officer managed to shoot his body – not his head – no less than three times despite the fact that, according to her version, Muhammad’s body was hidden behind the captive soldier.

“The full name of the Border Police officer and her picture – standing smiling in full army vest – was published yesterday in the media. Today, her name is censored and her picture is blurred. It’s too late, of course. By now social media is full of calls for revenge and the PR trick by Israel could cost the young girl and her family dearly. With all



**Border policewoman Nofar Mizrahi**

those calls to put her on trial for war crimes, she may have to think twice before going on vacation to Europe.

“There is no doubt that it was N who pulled the trigger and shot the bullets that took the life of Muhammad Salaymah. But it’s not she alone who is responsible for his death. The fact that the lives of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the Hebron area are being run by kids in uniform is the real crime.

“Officer N has a commander and her commander has a commander and so on, all the way up to the prime minister, and every single one of them bears the responsibility for the death of a teen who celebrated his 17th birthday yesterday.

“The occupation has made us blind to the suffering of life under oppression, under daily humiliations at the checkpoints. The price which is becoming clear today – the one which the family of Muhammad has paid and that N will carry with her all her life – is not something we can bear much longer.

“When the policies of Netanyahu and Lieberman lead to another Intifada, it will be too late. When a young boy is shot at a checkpoint on his way to buy a cake for his birthday, it is already too late. This occupation must end.”

## Shoot the messenger

**W**hile on their way to cover the incident, Reuters correspondents Yousri Al Jamal and Ma’amoun

Wazwaz were stopped by an IDF foot patrol. Their car was clearly marked ‘TV’ and they were both wearing blue flak jackets with ‘Press’ emblazoned on the front, Reuters reported.

The soldiers forced them out of the car, punched them and struck them with the butts of their guns, the cameramen said. They forced them to strip down to their underwear, made them kneel on the road with their hands behind their heads and accused them of working for the Israeli human rights NGO, B’Tselem.

One of the soldiers then dropped a tear gas canister between the men and the IDF patrol ran away. Jamal and Wazwaz tried to drive away but the car had filled with choking gas and they had to get out. Wazwaz was overcome by fumes and was taken to hospital.

# Sharing ideas builds strength

**By Mick Whelan, General Secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers' union**

**A**s a trade union, ASLEF stands in solidarity with workers and unionists around the world. We affiliate to PSC because we know that Palestinian workers struggle every day to get work permits, to get past checkpoints, to find work and to negotiate acceptable wages and working conditions.



At ASLEF's annual conference in May we had the privilege of welcoming His Excellency Professor Manuel Hassassian, the Palestinian Ambassador to the UK, as one of our guest speakers. He spoke passionately about how there can be no military solution to the Middle East and failure to agree a solution only contributes to the growth of extremism.

Our conference delegates found it both extremely informative and moving to hear a first-hand account of the situation in Palestine. We would like to encourage local PSC branches to develop links with our local union branches and to organise talks and presentations wherever possible. Building links and relationships at a local level is important. It helps to raise awareness and encourages people to demonstrate their solidarity with workers in Palestine.

**“It is tragic to see the building of railways as a sinister strategy for occupying a territory”**

A recent ASLEF journal article, written by Hugh Lanning, Chair of PSC, explains how the new Jerusalem Light Rail system is being used to link illegal Israeli settlements and shows that the settlers have no intention of leaving. It is tragic to see the building of railways as a sinister strategy for occupying a territory. As train drivers, we are used to asserting the many social and environmental benefits of developing good railway links, not condemning them!

Raising awareness is not just about educating people. It is also about sharing ideas for ways to support the people of Palestine. At ASLEF we do what we can to raise awareness among our members and show our solidarity. We publish articles in our Journal, we send delegates to PSC Trade Union Conferences and we have representatives who attend PSC's Trade Union Advisory Committee meetings.

I spoke at PSC's fringe meeting at the TUC conference and we contributed to the cost of PSC's fringe meeting at the Labour Party Conference. We also promote PSC's campaigns and events via our website. Earlier in the year we wrote to the Cooperative Group, congratulating them on their decision to stop selling products from illegal Israeli settlements. We will be encouraging our members to attend PSC's AGM in January and, if possible, to visit Palestine on one of the PSC delegations.

While we recognise that there is still a long way to go to reach a peaceful solution for Palestine, it is good to acknowledge progress. There was a noticeably positive shift in attitudes towards Palestine at the Labour Party conference this year, which we hope will lead to a more progressive policy for the region. We congratulate PSC for your efforts and successes and also for creating links with trade unions such as ours.

## Women of Palestine: Speaking Up

**By Annie O'Gara**

**F**ive young Palestinian women made a speaking tour of the North of England in the spring and inspired all who heard them. Now there is an illustrated booklet available which records the women's personal stories and analyses of what is happening to Palestinians.

The tour was organised by representatives of Northern PSC groups and of the Sheffield Gaza Women's Scholarship Fund. The speakers, Kholoud Ersheid, Zaynab al Shalalfeh, Maha Rezaq, Kholoud al Ajarma and Sameeha Elwan, came from Gaza, Nazareth, Hebron and Aida Refugee Camp, Bethlehem. Everyone who met them was impressed by their command of their material, their passion and ability to touch an audience. They were an inspiration and a delight to be with.

We were able to produce the commemorative booklet, "Speaking Up," thanks to a grant from the Irene Bruegel trust. They are available for £5, including postage. All funds will go towards planning another project.

■ To order a copy, contact: paul.wimpeney@gmail.com



# Children of Beit Ummar

By Victoria Brittain

**H**amda and her husband, Ahmed Abu Hashim, have one son in jail for the fifth time, another recently released, a third who was used as a human shield and also held by Israeli Defence Forces twice but is a star at school. Their fourth son, 13 year old Hamza, who has dropped out of school, was once held for three days and lives in fear since his father has more than once been told by the IDF that they are next coming for him.

For the couple's nine year old youngest son and two little daughters aged eight and five, these prison episodes are the normal pattern of family life. Their father has been in Israeli prisons seven times and has also been arrested by the Palestinian Authority.

The Abu Hashim family's extreme experience stems partly from the location of their village, Beit Ummar, in the occupied West Bank between Bethlehem and Hebron. The Israeli settlement of Karmi Zur – built less than 20 years ago – stole 65% of the village's land, starting on the football pitch where Ahmed used to play as a youth on land belonging to his uncle. Israel's supreme court ruled in 2006 that farmers whose land



Beit Ummar Land Day protest, 2012.  
Photo: Hazem Bader



Ahmed and Hamda abu Hashim

was confiscated by the settlement should be allowed access to it with permits from Israeli authorities but no permits have ever been issued.

The village is also less than three kilometres from the major settlement bloc of Gush Etzion with 20,000 inhabitants spread over 20 communities. Gush Etzion advertises itself as “a crucial security buffer for the capital... just a short 10 minute drive from Jerusalem through the new tunnels road.”

That “tunnels road” for the settlers is Route 60, once the Palestinians' main communication link between Nablus in the north and Hebron in the south of the West Bank. Today access to much of Route 60 is closed to Palestinians by the Wall or by tunnels which take them below it on secondary roads. For the settlers, Route 60 has been rerouted around some Palestinian villages. All this is a key part of the vast and on-going Israeli road-building programme which has redrawn the maps of the occupied West Bank, fragmenting it so that any two state solution has long ago disappeared from reality.

Ahmed is the long-standing head of the village's nine-man resistance committee, which started in 2004. Every week they demonstrate – always with a theme such as Remembering Rachel Corrie, Support

for Palestinian prisoners, or the anniversary of the Hebron mosque massacre. The demonstrators are usually only a few dozen from the 17,000 inhabitants of Beit Ummar with a handful of foreigners and Israelis, sometimes joined by Dr Mustafa Barghouti from Ramallah. “Many people are afraid, some of course are collaborators, some just think it's better to keep out of sight of the soldiers and settlers – usually a dozen or so are arrested each week,” Ahmed said.

**“The soldiers have one pressure card to play against me – my family”**

However, when he was arrested there were many more at the weekly demonstrations, and when his boys were arrested the village turned out in the early morning dark to throw stones at the jeeps, dogs and soldiers taking the boys away. Ahmed said: “The soldiers have one pressure card to play against me – my family.”

Hamda explained: “They want to crush me, taking my boys, so I will stop my husband resisting... and sometimes I do



**Ahmed trying to stop Hamza being taken**

feel I've reached my limit and I tell him so... but you know, all these years since I married in 1988, I've been in love with him..."

The toll on her health can be measured in the large box of daily pills she takes for high blood pressure and heart problems. "Breakfast is seven pills." She said she had paid the price with her health: "Everything that happened is held in my body."

The toll on her emotions is even greater. To illustrate it, she told the story of her 19 year old son Yusuf's fourth night arrest, in painstaking detail, and with tears. "Fifteen soldiers were on him like bees. They tied his hands, threw him down on his face, kicking and beating him before my eyes. I could hear him call 'Mummy, Mummy,' as they took him away. I pushed aside a soldier so that I could see him and they pulled him up by his hair so that I saw him. And then they crushed his head with a boot... they wanted me to see clearly. I will never, never forget this scene."



**Hamda on the night of Yusuf's arrest**

For the year Yusuf was in prison, she was never able to see him. All she had were the memories and nightmares of that melee

of dogs and soldiers, rubber bullets and teargas – all filmed by a female soldier.

An IDF special commando unit wearing special clothes, she remembered, ordered everyone out of the house, including a baby, although it was bitterly cold. Hamda herself was kicked and a rib broken, her husband and sister in law injured. "All the family were attacked; one boy has a scar on his back from something on the top of a gun."

Yusuf had known the IDF were monitoring him and he slept away at his uncle's house for some nights and in different houses. But that night he came home because he wanted to eat his mother's bread in the morning. He brought her flour and woke her up saying: "Please do get up and make bread for me." With the bread set and the family sleeping, the IDF arrived at 2.00am, breaking the front door and swarming onto the roof with ladders.

Dozens of such violent night-time arrests of boys in Beit Ummar (as in many other places in the West Bank) have been documented by Defence for Children International. Some of the children were as young as 12, others 14 or 15. Usually the charge is stone throwing – only sometimes true. "The boys do take pleasure in stone throwing against soldiers who harass us, against settlers who take our land, against the PA officials who put people in prison," said Ahmed. Yusuf was accused of setting fire to a jeep, possession of weapons and heading a group called Abu Jihad. An Israeli lawyer successfully proved the first two charges false, but Yusuf was convicted for the third.

In August, vineyards on the edge of the village hang with huge purple grapes; ancient fig and olive trees are laden with fruit. Beit Ummar has famously fertile fruit farms. Two days before Hamda and Ahmed told these stories, settlers from Karmi Zur had destroyed a large greenhouse belonging to a number of village families. They came,

accompanied by soldiers, in the heat of the middle of the day and broke down one side. Another will be up soon, and some people want to build new houses in the fields near it. People have new demolition orders on houses inside the village and older demolition orders renewed – there is even an order on the substantially fenced village well. "The more they do all this, the more people decide to resist and stay on our land," said Ahmed.

The violent arrests of children, detailed by parents like Hamda and Ahmed, were echoed in a recent report by former Israeli soldiers from the group, Breaking the Silence, which aims to show the moral price Israeli society pays for young soldiers' dominating of the Palestinian population on a daily basis.

In testimonies from the period 2005 to 2011 in the Occupied West Bank, 30 soldiers described patterns of arbitrary violence, not only during arrests. There was systematic provoking of children, cruelty ranging from preventing children from reaching school on an exam day, depriving arrested children of food, water and toilet facilities, tying shackles so tight that hands turned blue, beatings, making a military show of strength in a village so that it simply shut itself down.

One Israeli soldier talked of seeing "a nine year old begging for his life," another seeing a scene "like a Vietnam war movie" with a soldier yelling at a child in Hebrew, making him kneel in the street and frightening him so much that he peed in his pants in front of his whole village; people being "beaten to a pulp," and a scene where "they really had a ball with those Palestinians – swearing, humiliating them, pulling their hair, ears, kicking or slapping them around... these things were a norm."

In Beit Ummar the impact of the treatment meted out to their youth by the settlers and the IDF has left Hamda's children agitated and nervous, she said. And as for her, "it is harder every time it happens."



**Yusuf recovering from an injury**

# BDS news

## ANC votes for BDS

The ruling African National Congress voted at its annual conference in December to support the Palestinian BDS campaign. The ANC declared it was “unapologetic in its view that the Palestinians are the victims and the oppressed in the conflict with Israel.”

In another resolution referring to violent anti-African protests in Tel Aviv in June, the conference declared: “The ANC abhors the recent Israeli state-sponsored xenophobic attacks and deportation of Africans and requests that this matter should be escalated to the African Union.”

BDS activists succeeded in getting South Africa’s Trade and Industry Minister, Rob Davies, to introduce legislation to force importers to label goods from Israel if they have been manufactured in the occupied territories. The move is being opposed in a high court action brought by the South African Zionist Federation.



*Graffiti during Israeli Apartheid Week, Johannesburg*

## Danes campaign against G4S

Danish campaigners against G4S, a company with Danish roots, took to the streets of Copenhagen in September and wrote letters to 100 municipalities urging them to boycott the company. During a week of action, campaigners teamed up with unionists from the scaffolding industry in a symbolic action outside G4S’ headquarters. There was also a 15km bike ride protest from the Danish Parliament to the G4S headquarters.

Amnesty International, Danish Church Aid and the Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims in Denmark have already ended their contracts with G4S, as has Merkur, a bank with an ethical profile which cited the company’s connection to the occupation of Palestine.

## Norway acts on tax

Norwegian People’s Aid and the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees are celebrating the decision by the Norwegian Ministry of Finance to exclude Karmel-instituttet from the list of organisations that the Norwegian public may get tax deductions for funding because it provides financial support to Israeli settlements.

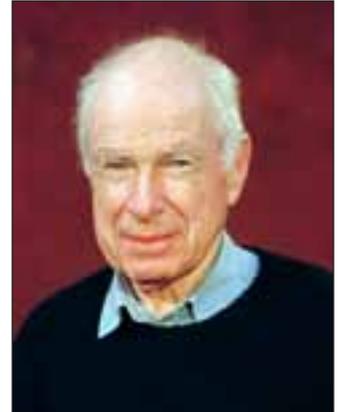
In a press release the ministry said their intention was to ensure that the system of tax deductions does not benefit organisations that actively support or contribute to acts that are in contravention of international law.

The Karmel-instituttet supports the settlement of Alonei Shilo where around half of the houses are paid for by funds collected

from Norwegian citizens. Alonei Shilo does not even have an official permit from the Israeli government and so is illegal under Israeli as well as international law.

## Peter Brook cancels

The renowned theatre director Peter Brook cancelled the appearance of his Bouffes du Nord theatre company at the Cameri Theatre’s International Festival for Plays in Tel Aviv in December. Cameri gives performances in the settlements, including in Ariel. Officials in the Cameri expressed anger at the cancellation which came suddenly after Paris-based Brook’s company had confirmed its attendance and the sale of tickets had already begun.



## Veolia dumped!

Just before Christmas there were two pieces of great news in the Dump Veolia campaign – the giant environmental services company pulled out of bidding for the North London Waste Authority’s £4.7bn waste services and fuel use contract, and it ended its sponsorship of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition.

Campaigners, led by the No 2 Veolia Action Group (No2VAG) spent two years vociferously protesting against Veolia being one of the bidders for the giant NLWA contract which involved seven London boroughs. Veolia Environment was one of the last two bidders when it dropped out. No2VAG spokesperson Caroline Day said her group was “absolutely delighted.”

The sudden announcement that Veolia Environment would not be renewing its sponsorship of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition “after four successful years,” came in November and followed a campaign involving regular demonstrations outside the Natural History Museum where the exhibition of winners was held, extended correspondence with the directors of the Museum and other regional museums due to host the exhibition, and a petition started by Jews for Justice for Palestinians.

Veolia has also been dumped in North Wales and Canterbury. Conwy County Peace Group claimed victory when the company was dropped from the shortlist of bidders for the £600–800 million, 25-year contract for building an incinerator to serve North Wales. And Veolia failed to win the eight-year £40 million contract with Canterbury City Council after a campaign which gained 1,000 signatures in just the first few weeks.

In the US the Quaker Friends Fiduciary Corporation (FFC), representing over 300 Quaker meetings, schools, organisations, trusts and endowments, became the first U.S. national fund to divest from Veolia Environment and Hewlett Packard (which provides information technology consulting services to the Israeli Navy).

*And, finally...* Veolia has been nominated as the Worst Company of the Year in the infamous Public Eye Awards which will be presented at the World Economic Forum in Davos in late January.

The nomination was submitted by United Civilians for Peace consisting of ICCO, Cordaid, Oxfam Novib and IKV Pax Christi, and endorsed by 56 organisations from round the world. There is a jury award and a people’s award. The people’s award goes to the company that attracts most votes. Check it out at [www.publiceye.ch/en](http://www.publiceye.ch/en).

# The growing power of Regavim

By Rona Moran and Miryam Wijler

*Whether in Area C of the West Bank, in the Negev, the Galilee or the “mixed cities” of Israel, the rightist group Regavim has one clear goal: the selective implementation of planning and construction laws, encouraging the state to demolish Palestinian homes or public buildings.*

*Rona Moran and Miryam Wijler decided to find out about it after they had read “an outrageous” op-ed by the right-wing journalist Karni Eldad about Dahamash – an “unrecognised” village in the Ramle-Lod area – which related the status of Jewish settlements and outposts in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to that of unrecognised villages within the 1948 borders.*

*Deciding to write a response, they consulted Arafat Ismail, chairman of the Dahamash village committee. He told them that Eldad’s article was actually a reproduction of arguments that Regavim had presented to various planning committees against recognising the village.*

*Here, Moran and Wijler take up the story...*

Though this was our first encounter with the association, it has been almost ubiquitous ever since – from the halls of the High Court of Justice down to the village of Al Zarnoug (where Regavim conducted a tour that was interrupted by Knesset Member Talab Al-Sana), from the Knesset committees to the planning commission meetings. They seem to be gaining power and racking up achievements, so we thought we should get to know them in a bit more depth.

Regavim’s website is a good starting point. Its home page presents the association’s main goal – promoting a Jewish and Zionist agenda for the State of Israel on issues of land and environment or, as they put it, “safeguarding the lands of the Nation.”

Such statements are familiar from the agenda of Gush Emunim (a Jewish organisation dedicated to settling in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 1967), not to mention the fundamental tenets of the Zionist movement since its inception. However, we see Regavim as part of a new phase in the evolution of the national-religious right in Israel, which has traditionally sought to expand Jewish control and ownership of lands in historic Palestine by settling Jewish Israelis on lands in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

This movement enjoys the full support of the state and all its institutions in the pursuit of its mission. Regavim employs a complementary strategy that focuses on “enforcement.” It exerts pressure on the authorities to escalate processes of dispossession by blocking any opportunities for development for Palestinians.

Regavim wishes to “influence all governing systems of the State, make them act in light of Zionism’s ground principles and fulfil



**Palestinian boy with demonstrators holding the names of unrecognised villages**

them in actual fact, to preserve the lands of the Jewish People... preventing their takeover by foreign elements.”

Betzal’el Smotrich, activities director of the association, presents Regavim as a mirror image of human rights organisations in Israel. The guiding rationale of those organisations is action towards policy change and the righting of specific “wrongs” through a combination of legal resources, research, lobbying and campaigning. Regavim has adopted these practices, and at times even some of their rhetoric, in order to promote a lands policy that is based on absolute preference in allotting lands to Jews.

## Regavim’s activities

Regavim does not deal with settling the land with Jewish Israelis but rather with the expulsion of the Palestinian population on both sides of the Green Line. The association is active in Area C of the West Bank, in the Negev, the Galilee and the “mixed cities.” In all of these arenas, Regavim has one clear goal: the brutal and selective implementation of planning and construction laws, encouraging the state to demolish Palestinian homes or public buildings. The demolition orders issued lately for the entire Palestinian village of Susya in the South Hebron Hills are the fruit of its labours (see *Palestine News*, Summer 2012).

In recent years, since the dismantling of the settlements in the Gaza Strip, the extreme right in Israel has embarked on a campaign of settling the “mixed cities” of Israel (cities with sizable Arab and Jewish populations) by forming “Torah clusters” (*Garinim Toraniim*) in Jaffa and Acre as well as Lod. At the same time, Jewish nationalist shows of force have escalated within Arab localities.

Regavim is a characteristic expression of this wider campaign. It takes a considerable amount of cruelty to encourage the state to tighten even *further* the veritable noose of planning restrictions around the neck of Palestinian communities within the Green Line. Palestinian citizens of Israel own a very small percentage of the lands they had owned before 1948, most of their localities do not have master zoning plans and the local and regional planning committees are staffed exclusively by Jewish Israelis.

The situation in the Negev is even worse: there the state doesn’t



**Over 200 pro-Israel activists, new immigrants and tourists took part in a two day “fact-finding” bus tour of the Negev sponsored by Regavim in October, stopping in the Bedouin villages of Lakiya and Hura. The event was addressed by Yuli Edelstein, Israeli minister of public diplomacy and Diaspora affairs, while Jeff Daube, director of the Zionist Organisation of America, served as the master of ceremonies. Ari Briggs, Regavim’s Australian-born international director (pictured addressing the crowd), spoke of “illegal Bedouin settlements” and said: “We’d like to do more of these trips to show people how the government isn’t protecting the Jewish people’s greatest asset, which is the national lands of the state of Israel.”**

even recognise the Bedouins’ claim to any land while promoting a plan (the Praver Plan) that is expected to result in the uprooting of 30,000 people and the erasure of their villages. The State of Israel has left this population in a legal limbo that makes it impossible to live: people cannot build on their land, cannot purchase land belonging to the Jewish National Fund, will not be accepted as members of Jewish communities due to screening committees, and most Jewish Israeli towns’ residents will not rent or sell them apartments. All that is left, for people who will not choose to emigrate, would be illegal construction. The state prefers that its Palestinian subjects be “criminals.”

Regavim’s activity is based first and foremost on the work of coordinators on the ground who systematically document construction in Palestinian communities. This documentation serves the association in lobbying planning committees, local authorities, the Civil Administration in the occupied territories, and others. They have a single demand: to force these institutions to place sanctions on Palestinians.

In some cases, the association appeals to court in order to force the implementation of standing demolition orders, or to produce a planning policy that is as Zionist as possible. Regavim promotes existing transfer plans such as its efforts to influence the Praver Committee recommendations to take a harder line against the Bedouin community.

In April 2009, Regavim sued the Abu Basma Regional Council in the Negev where the number of inhabitants in all known localities in the council’s area is about 45,000 but in fact the council’s area covers another 35,000 citizens who live in unrecognised villages. The council ranks last in the socio-economic scale of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics and the council is not providing inhabitants of the unrecognised villages with the most basic services: connection to the water supply grid, regular garbage collection, sanitation infrastructure. Access roads are not paved and the council’s welfare services are collapsing.

Here, of all places, is where the Regavim association suddenly discovered an urgent need to intervene “for the sake of the council’s

inhabitants.” In its petition, the association demands the demolition of eight structures, which it describes as “villas” whose owners it describes as “real estate barons.” For Regavim, then, they have no qualms about using whatever means necessary to “protect the nation’s lands.” To that end, they encourage the state to beat to a pulp its most oppressed population.

### Warmly welcomed by the state

Regavim presents a “nicer,” or at least more diplomatic, face of a trend that began within the settler community following the disengagement from Gaza. The failure of the resistance to the disengagement brought about the creation of another movement – “Komemiyut” (independence), whose goal is “enhancing Jewish uprightness as a central national idea in the State of Israel, reinforcing Jewish settlement and thwarting intentions to expel Jews.”

Among the rabbis of this movement is Dov Lior, rabbi of Kiryat Arba (the largest Jewish settlement in Hebron) and one of the leaders who expressed public support for the book *Torat Hamelech* (“The King’s Torah” which set out when it was OK for a Jew to kill a non-Jew). Another is Rabbi Haim Yerucham Smotrich, of Beit Yatir (Jewish settlement in the South Hebron Hills), father of Betzal’el Smotrich, one of Regavim’s leaders, operations director of the association and an active member of Komemiyut.

Though Regavim adopted the channels of legal action used by human rights organisations, it did not adopt the liberal ideology upon which legal activism is based. A closer look at the ideology of the association’s leaders and of their ties with other right-wing organisations reveals that their choice of the legal path is instrumental and tactical only.

In an interview, Betzal’el Smotrich explains: “I see the State of Israel as the beginning of our redemption and as an important phase on the way to complete salvation. But unlike many who adhere to state norms, I do not consider myself a slave of the system nor a fifth wheel on the regime’s wagon. I believe we are perfectly entitled to quarrel with the present coachman and take the reins into our own hands by means available to us.”

He spoke of the warm welcome which Regavim feels from the state apparatus – “on the ground and in many departments of the



**Ovad Arad, director of the West Bank section of Regavim (pictured with one of the association’s aerial maps), drives unannounced into Palestinian towns and villages, takes photos and has coffee with families without telling them the real reason he is there, according to Jillian Kestler-D’Amours in an article for IPS in July. A resident of the Israeli settlement Mero Horon, Arad records construction by Palestinians in Area C.**



**Haj Khalel Nawaja'a in his soon to be demolished poultry shed, Susya**

Ministry of Interior, the Israel Land Administration, the Ministry of Justice etc, Regavim is regarded as a positive element whose aim is to help them meet the pressure exerted by the left."

In an article published in Komemiyut's publication, Regavim's director, Rabbi Yehuda Eliyahu, outlines an ideal Jewish state – one that lacks any liberal values whatsoever. He resents the court's ruling by the High Court of Justice demanding that the Israel Land Administration administer Jewish National Fund lands according to the principle of equality, allotting some of them to Arabs as well.

Compared to other new, ideologically related right-wing movements such as Im Tirtzu, Regavim has so far remained relatively anonymous among leftist activists, except for the lawyers who run into its representatives in the courtroom. Both Regavim and Im Tirtzu represent the values of the ideological right with an easy-to-digest package for the Israeli mainstream.

But while Im Tirtzu is basically an advocacy organisation, Regavim urges the state rather than the public to manifest its neo-Zionist vision in practice. An adequate response to this campaign will not come from small, focused victories in court, important though they may be, but rather in the public arena and through political struggle.

**Rona Moran and Miryam Wijler are activists in the Hithabrut-Tarabut Movement, an Arab-Jewish movement for social and political change. This article was first published by +972, translated by Tal Haran on 4 Sept 2012.**

■ <http://972mag.com/rightist-groups-creeping-state-influence-on-both-sides-of-green-line/55149>

## Mavi Marmara trial threatens Israeli impunity

**By Sarah Colborne**

I travelled to Istanbul in November to give evidence, alongside hundreds of other witnesses, on Israel's attack on the *Mavi Marmara* on 31 May 2010. Four senior Israeli commanders are being tried as "fugitive suspects" – former IDF Chief of General Staff, General Gabi Ashkenazi; Naval Forces commander, Vice Admiral Eliezer Marom; Israel's military intelligence chief, Major General Amos Yadlin, and Air Forces Intelligence head, Brigadier General Avishai Levi.

The initial Israeli response was to try and block the trial. In May 2012, according to the Israeli news site, Arutz Sheva, "Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said he was expecting foreign diplomatic pressure on Turkey to stop the trial that he said could have 'wide-ranging implications for NATO and US forces,' which frequently board ships suspected of terror activity."

Once that tactic failed, the focus shifted on trying to dismiss the trial. Israel's Foreign Ministry announced that it "clearly falls under the category of a Show Trial; an act which has nothing to do with either law or justice," and that the case "does not qualify under any facet or foundation of a lawful judicial system and is merely a propaganda display."

Israel's concerns about this trial are well-founded. If it results in international arrest warrants being issued, it will have a major

impact on the freedom of movement of senior Israeli generals.

Nine humanitarian activists died when Israeli armed forces attacked the *Mavi Marmara* and other ships in the Freedom Flotilla in international waters: Furkan Dogan, Cevdet Kiliçlar, Ibrahim Bilgen, Necdet Yildirim, Fahri Yaldiz, Ali Haydar Bengi, Cengiz Akyüz, Çetin Topçuoglu, Cengiz Songür. More than 50 passengers were injured, including Ugur Süleyman Söylemez who is still in a coma.

After an investigation by Turkey's Chief Public Prosecutor's Office, charges were filed at the Istanbul 7th High Criminal Court in May against the top Israeli commanders who planned and carried out the operation. As the investigation proceeds, other civilians and military officers will be brought to trial. The charges include voluntary manslaughter, attempted murder, intentional injury, masterminding of murder by the use of weapons, qualified robbery, seizing a sea vehicle by the use of force, causing damage to property, illegal

deprivation of freedom and masterminding torture.

In the courtroom the father of Furkan Dogan, at 19 the youngest passenger killed, spoke of hearing shots whilst watching the livestream feed from the ship. He could get no information about his son until he had to identify him at the morgue and saw two bullet holes in his face. A *Mavi Marmara* passenger, Nur Fitri, talked about failing to feel Cevdet Kiliçlar's pulse and then realising that the red hole through his forehead was a bullet hole.

A statement by IHH, the Turkish NGO which owns the *Mavi Marmara*, said: "The crime committed onboard the *Mavi Marmara* was not only committed against the passengers of the ship but against the common conscience of the world, against all the people with a conscience who were represented on the ship. Israeli commanders violated the rights of the entire humanity. In line with the principles of justice, the responsible parties of the attack should be given a fair trial before the eyes of the world and they should be punished accordingly."



**The accused – Ashkenazi, Levi, Marom and Yadlin**

# The High Court of Injustice

Dubbed 'leftist' by hawks in Israel, the High Court of Justice actually reinforces colonial policies, writes **Ben White**.

In September, Israel's High Court of Justice ruled against a petition brought by female students from the Gaza Strip and thereby upheld the state's refusal to allow them to study in the West Bank.

The women, four of whom were registered for a Master's in gender studies and one aiming to pursue a law degree, brought a case that challenged an Israel-imposed ban that has been in place since 2000. In 12 years, only three Gaza residents have been allowed to study at West Bank universities (and only because they had received US government scholarships).

According to Israeli NGO Gisha, who, along with Gaza Strip-based Al-Mezan Centre for Human Rights, represented the petitioners, the "majority decision accepted the state's position that allowing the students to reach their studies would undermine the 'separation' policy" that is "based on substantial political and security considerations." Thus, "the court approved restrictions on civilian travel between Gaza and the West Bank, even where no individual security claims are raised."

The restrictions on Palestinian students are one part of a "separation policy" which is a significant but still under-appreciated dimension of Israel's approach towards the Gaza Strip. But this case serves to highlight another aspect of Israel's denial of Palestinian rights: the role of Israel's Supreme Court. Often portrayed as a bastion of "liberalism" and subjected to absurd attacks by Israel's far-right, the court has in fact been complicit with numerous aspects of Israel's discriminatory and colonial policies.

In just the first nine months of 2012, the High Court "sanction[ed] looting" by authorising "Israel to exploit the West Bank's natural resources for its own economic needs," rejected a petition against the Nakba Law, and ruled that it is not mandatory to investigate every complaint of torture at the hands of the security service "out of consideration for Shin Bet's work."

In January, the court even upheld the "Citizenship Law," used to ban Israeli citizens from living legally with a Palestinian spouse from the Occupied Territories, on the grounds of avoiding "national suicide."

No wonder then that observers like veteran *Ha'aretz* analyst Zvi Bar'el conclude that since 1967, "most High Court decisions ratified the negation of Palestinian rights," proffering "legal legitimacy to military activities" even if they "brought about damage to life and property."

The liberal Israeli newspaper's publisher, Amos Schocken, has also been harsh in his criticism of the court's record, saying that it "permitted the settlement project and effectively collaborated with the Gush Emunim [religious settlers] ideology."

Thus, despite the fact that the existence and rulings of the court are cited by Israel's advocates as proof positive of the country's democratic and progressive credentials, the reality is very different, as Israeli journalist Noam Sheizaf once explained: "In short, the High Court has never been a venue to challenge the occupation, but

quite the opposite – it is one of the branches that institutionalised it, by setting rules and providing a legal cover for colonial policies, for political persecution and for oppression.

"One can only conclude that in the context of the West Bank, the High Court has been and still is a fundamental element in the construction and maintenance of what is, in essence, apartheid."

At an Israel Bar Association conference in August, Member of Knesset, Ahmed Tibi, put it bluntly: "The High Court authorised targeted killings, deportation, land confiscation, settlements, fences. Why is it then that the court has a leftist image?"

One answer to Tibi's question might be that the "leftist image" is a relative one, a reflection of the Israeli political spectrum where even the "centrists" and "peaceniks" are still supporters of ethno-religious privilege and war crimes.

But more than that, we find in the court's image the personal and political investment of liberal Zionists in Israel and internationally, the kind that condemn the settlers on West Bank hilltops even as they live in the neighbourhoods and village land of Palestinians expelled in 1948. Self-regarding hypocrites, in other words.

Reflecting on the Court, Amira Hass observed that justices "don't even seem to worry about their names being associated with names of other jurists who preceded them and like them accepted the reasonableness of the means and the justice of slavery [and] racial segregation."

In Israel's Supreme Court, we find worthy inheritors of the tradition of "benevolent," angst-ridden colonialism. Read Justice E Rubinstein's opinion<sup>1</sup> in the case of the Gaza students, where he wrings his hands at just how "painful" and "tragic" the whole business is – before accepting the state's "separation policy."

*This article was first published by Al Jazeera 1 October 2012.*

<sup>1</sup> [www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/LegalDocuments/students2012/HCJ495\\_12rulingEnglish.pdf](http://www.gisha.org/UserFiles/File/LegalDocuments/students2012/HCJ495_12rulingEnglish.pdf)



**Loujain, 18, would-be law student**



**Amal Ashour, 18, pictured at home in Gaza City in October, had planned to study English literature at a university in the West Bank through a US scholarship programme but was informed that the scholarship was no longer available for Gaza students. Under Israeli pressure, US officials had quietly cancelled the programme – launched with great fanfare by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during a visit to the region two years previously – finishing a scheme that American diplomats regarded as key to providing educational opportunities for students from Gaza.**

# First lady of the *furaaqiyyaat*

Acclaimed Palestinian singer, **Reem Kelani**, talks to *PN* about her life and work

To most of her fans, Reem Kelani is above all an extraordinary performer with the gift of forging an immediate and warm rapport with audiences of every age and background. At a recent gig at the Tabernacle in West London she had the audience singing along, sometimes joining her on stage, and giving her a standing ovation at the end.

Her repertoire, like Reem herself, is unclassifiable: a rich mixture of traditional songs from different parts of the Middle East, laced with jazz, flamenco and Turkish ballads and linked with a host of personal memories and political asides.

She is a great builder of bridges – between genres, between countries, between the cultural and the political. So it is no accident that Reem's current magnum opus – so far nine years in the making – is a double CD with a book in both Arabic and English, devoted to the work of the great Egyptian composer and revolutionary, Sayyid Darwish.

The Arab Spring hit Cairo when Reem was there researching material for the album. Typically, she made a beeline for Tahrir ('Liberation') Square and spent days sitting among the protesters in their makeshift tents, swapping revolutionary songs. "Tahrir was the perfect performance space for Darwish's songs," she says.<sup>1</sup>

His famous anthem 'Bilaadi, bilaadi' ('My country, my country'), often heard in London demos, was originally composed for the 1919 revolt against the British occupation of Egypt, and has since been revived in both Egypt and Palestine as a song of rebellion and resistance.

**“A village wedding near Nazareth proved to be a seminal moment”**

Those who are familiar with Reem's CD *Sprinting Gazelle*, songs she collected from many Palestinian communities including refugee camps, will know that her Palestinian repertoire is rich in *furaaqiyyaat*



Reem with her jazz rhythm section, at the Ealing Summer Festival.  
Photo: Paul Hughes-Smith.

– songs of separation and farewell. Some of these she discovered on her first trip to her parents' native Palestine at the age of nine.

A village wedding near Nazareth proved to be a seminal moment for the young Reem who was born in Manchester and brought up in Kuwait. "It was totally unlike the posh hotel weddings of Kuwait. 'Big mammas' were sitting singing traditional songs with no formality, no separation between singer and listener. I knew this was what I wanted to do, this was the atmosphere I wanted to recreate."

She has since gathered *furaaqiyyaat* from other Arab countries, like the Tunisian song for migrant workers, 'Babour zammar' ('The ship sounded its horn'). She was invited to Tunisia last April as a guest of the annual Forum of Creative Arab Women, then again in December, to a conference in Sousse. She was deeply touched with the warmth of her reception, and to find pro-Palestinian banners and flags in the main

streets of Tunis. "There was a big sit-in the day I arrived, of students demanding that their government outlaw the 'normalisation' of relations with Israel," she said. "I was overwhelmed."

Reem's passionate political commitment and her rejection of cultural boundaries must be due in large part to the influence of her father: "When I was born he was working as a volunteer doctor supporting the Algerian revolution – a very idealistic guy! We left for Kuwait when I was two, but my father made sure I grew up perfectly bilingual in English and Arabic." A writer and researcher as well as a physician, with wide intellectual interests and cosmopolitan tastes, he introduced his young daughter to all kinds of music, including jazz and blues. "I grew up singing Gershwin and Berlin," she says.

On the relationship between the cultural and the political Reem says: "The Palestinian struggle is one of *hawiyya*

# The great book robbery

Some 70,000 books, in addition to many rare manuscripts, personal papers, photographs and works of art, were taken from Palestinian homes and libraries by Zionist forces and civilians during the 1948 Nakba – 30,000 from West Jerusalem alone. Most of the valuable books ended up Israel's National Library. Many have been sold or simply vanished.

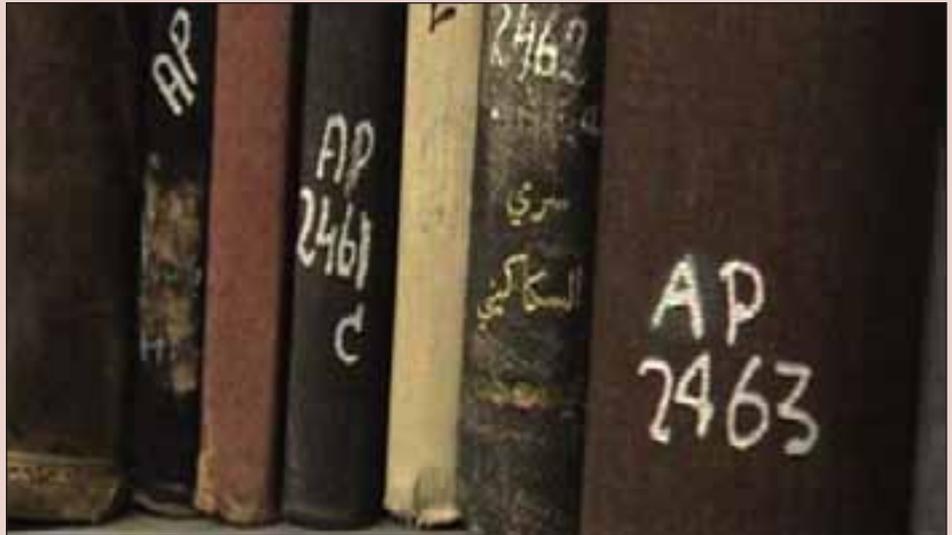
Dr Gish Amit, now a lecturer at the Politics and Government Department at Ben-Gurion University, discovered archives documenting this “book collection operation” – or systematic looting – and wrote his doctoral thesis on it in 2010: “Institutionalized Looting – The Story of Palestinian Books in the National Library in Jerusalem.”

Amit says that when he was looking through the archive of the Jewish National and University library, “one day I discovered the first documents regarding the collecting of the Palestinian libraries left behind during the 1948 war. It took me a few more weeks – and dozens of documents – to realise that there was a story to tell. A story that hasn't yet been told and one that might enrich our knowledge about the Palestinian culture and its erasure.”



About six thousand of these books are now on the shelves of Israel's National Library, indexed under ‘AP’ – Abandoned Property.

A poignant 48-minute documentary film has been made about the looting,



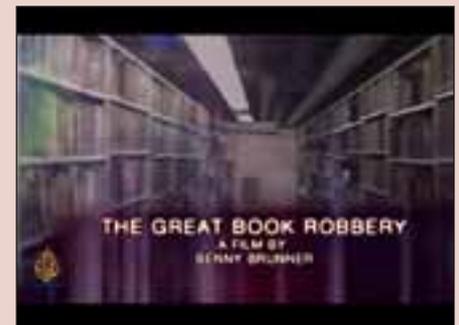
some of it shot clandestinely in the library. It bears witness to the extraordinarily rich cultural cosmopolitan life in the region before 1948. Ghada Karmi, whose family was driven out in 1948, is one of those interviewed visiting her old family home in Jerusalem (although she was not allowed to enter). Her father's huge collection of books was lost, including his own massive chef d'oeuvre in the making, an English-Arabic dictionary.

One speaker suggests handing the books and manuscripts over to the universities on the West Bank. Another of those interviewed, Ilan Pappé, an expert in the ethnic cleansing of 1948, suggests there should be a museum of the Nakba in which such important historical material could be displayed. He sees this seizure and retention of so many valuable books and documents as part of the Israeli attempt to destroy Palestinian cultural identity and to present them as a backward, primitive people.

The National Library refused to cooperate with the makers of the film and

the “Custodian of Absentee Property,” supposedly responsible for the books, did not respond to requests for interviews. However, a spokesperson has previously stated that the library is only managing the books on behalf of the abandoned property department of the Israeli ministry of finance.

■ The film can be viewed on <http://tinyurl.com/bnpx9xp>, or it is available on DVD: <http://thegreatbookrobbery.org/buy-dvd>



[identity] as much as anything else. And our cultural identity is something the Israelis want to suppress or expropriate. We are the Other for the Israelis, but at the same time it's as if they want to be us. But the true flourishing of Jewish culture was actually in the diaspora – just think of what they produced in Iraq and Spain and elsewhere. In Palestine they are just producing a pastiche culture.”

**“You can't allow yourself to be turned into Palestinian wallpaper”**

Like many Palestinian artists, Reem has had plenty of “normalisation” offers from Israeli musicians, some of them highly lucrative. “For instance, an Israeli American concert pianist offered me a wonderful package touring with him in LA and Israel but we found he'd just gone through a list of Palestinian musicians without knowing anything about them or their music. I think it's to make themselves feel less guilty and to look better in the eyes of the world. But you can't allow yourself to be turned into Palestinian wallpaper.”

Reem has promised that the Darwish album will see the light of day in 2013 – *in sha'allah!* In the meantime she has contributed to an album produced by the “Anti-Capitalist Roadshow,” a collective of singers and songwriters, including

the famous Peggy Seeger and Leon Rosselson, who challenge the current political system through their music.<sup>2</sup> Here Reem sings ‘Babour zammar’ and joins Rosselson in his powerful ‘Song of the Olive Tree.’

■ For more information and a flavour of Reem's performances, see [www.reemkelani.com](http://www.reemkelani.com).

<sup>1</sup> Reem's inspiring Radio 4 programme, ‘Songs for Tahrir’, can be heard on [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b019fxjf](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b019fxjf)

<sup>2</sup> For details of the performers and the lyrics see [www.redmagic.co.uk/anticap/index\\_files/Page565.htm](http://www.redmagic.co.uk/anticap/index_files/Page565.htm)

# Archaeology in the service of colonialism

The Silwan district of East Jerusalem – usually called the “City of David” by the Israeli media – has become the focal point of the Israeli policy of “Judaisation” and the forced transfer of Palestinians. Situated just outside the Old City wall, it is the site of the earliest remains of ancient Jerusalem, dated to the second and first millennia BC.

**Mahmoud Hawari**, visiting professor of archaeology at Birzeit University and Research Associate at Oxford University, explains how biblical archaeology, combined with a vigorous colonial enterprise, have been deliberately used to establish Jewish settlement in Silwan. Such tactics are part of Israel’s ongoing policy of appropriating Palestinian cultural heritage, annexing as much land as possible and rendering a viable Palestinian state impossible.



**B**iblical archaeology emerged during the late 19th century when European scholars sought to recover the historical roots of Christendom and to verify the narratives of the Bible. It was based on standard histories of ancient Israel and biblical traditions and it became part of a wide complex scholarly network which Edward Said defined as “Orientalist discourse.” This biblical discourse has ignored and silenced the history of ancient Palestine in favour of an ancient Israel conceived and presented as a taproot of Western civilisation.

Biblical archaeology has played a significant role in this process. Its goal has been to establish a link between the modern state of Israel and the “Israelite” period. As a result, the pluralistic nature of Palestine’s past virtually vanished from public awareness and with it the Arab past, traditions and cultural heritage.

In a country in which the vast majority of Jewish inhabitants are immigrants, archaeology in Israel has played a significant role in producing a cohesive national imagination and myths. The first generation of Israeli archaeologists set out to produce evidence of ancient Israelite and Jewish presence in the so called “Land of Israel,” thereby providing the very foundations of the modern nation’s origin myth.

## “Major Jewish settlements are built around archaeological sites”

After 1967, Israel sought to emphasise the Jewish character of archaeological and historical sites in the West Bank. Accordingly, many archaeological, historical and holy sites in Palestine, which are an integral part of Palestinian cultural heritage, have been appropriated as being “biblical” or “Jewish.” Major Jewish settlements are built around archaeological sites to which Israel makes exclusive historical claims, as in Shilo, Beit El, Qyriat Arba’, and around Jerusalem.

In 2010 Israel declared the Tomb of the Patriarchs/Haram al-Ibrahimi (Mosque of Ibrahim) in Hebron and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem to be part of its Jewish heritage. In reality, these two sites are not exclusively Jewish but belong to a group of holy shrines that were intertwined with the religious and social life of the

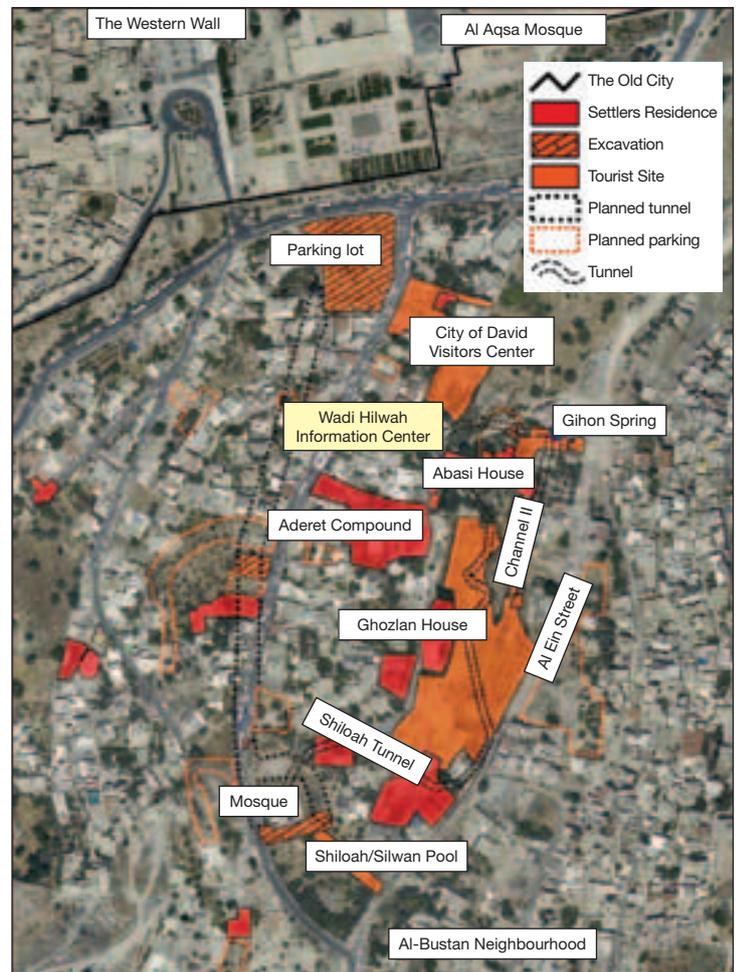
indigenous inhabitants of Palestine – Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.

## East Jerusalem: political context

Efforts to substantiate these territorial and historical claims through material evidence provided by archaeology have been vigorously encouraged by the state of Israel. Archaeological institutions initiated large scale excavations in and around the Old City of Jerusalem to reveal principally the city’s biblical history and to promote its “Jewish character.”

At the same time Israel embarked on policies and measures such as racially discriminatory planning laws and municipal ordinances which assisted Jewish expansion and hindered Palestinian development, culminating in 1980 with the declaration that the city is a “complete and united capital of Israel.”

Such policies have caused a severe shortage in housing for the Palestinian population as almost no building plans have been approved. Although these measures are aimed at driving Palestinians out of the city, in practice they have compelled them



Plan of excavations and tourist areas in Silwan. Image: Wadi Hilweh Information Centre

to build without permits, turning many into criminals who have to pay heavy fines and have been issued with house demolition orders. Israel's actions have clearly violated numerous United Nations resolutions and have been condemned by the international community which has called upon Israel, as an Occupying Power, to refrain from altering the status of Jerusalem.

### Silwan: facts on the ground

In recent years Silwan has come to be at the centre of confrontation between its 55,000 Palestinian residents and some 500 Jewish settlers who are backed by the state. In the past decade alone, the Israeli authorities have ordered the demolition of numerous houses, making more than 300 people homeless. One law that has been particularly employed is the 1950 Absentee Property Law by which the State of Israel assumes ownership of land and other properties left behind by Palestinians who fled during the 1948 and 1967 wars.

In 1991 Israel transferred all Palestinian Absentee Property holdings in Silwan to the Jewish National Fund (JNF) which then leased the land to the extreme right-wing Jewish settler organisation, Elad. Acting as a proxy or quasi-governmental body, Elad has since succeeded in seizing about 55% of Silwan's properties through unscrupulous methods. In 1992 an Israeli governmental inquiry found that it and other settler groups in East Jerusalem have used threats, false affidavits and forged documents and have misused the Absentee Property Law to seize Palestinian properties.

Extensive archaeological excavations in and around Silwan were initiated by Elad and carried out by the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) and universities, funded largely by American extreme right-wing Zionist and ultra-orthodox wealthy sponsors including the notorious billionaire, Irving Moskowitz, who made a fortune from gambling operations in the US.

All these excavations are defined as "salvage" works which are normally authorised by the IAA to rescue and document finds before future construction. However, construction in this area is completely prohibited by the municipality and therefore it is not clear under which stipulation these excavations are conducted.

Often excavations are carried out under private houses without the residents' consent, at times causing damage to houses and roads. Excavations are concealed from local Palestinian residents by heavy security measures including fences, surveillance cameras and armed guards. These are conducted in a hostile atmosphere to the Palestinian residents who have no protection from the settlers.

Various other housing and development schemes are planned by the settlers. A major plan has been drawn, backed by the municipality, to eradicate the entire Palestinian neighbourhood of al-Bustan, with its 88 homes and nearly 1000 people, in order to turn it into a "green zone" to be named "the King's Valley National Park." Residents have been issued with demolition orders for having built homes without a licence although the land is privately owned and some of the houses were built before 1967. The plan was postponed amid international pressure but has recently been revived by the Mayor of Jerusalem.

Elad continued to tighten its grip on Silwan when it assumed full authority over archaeological activities. Thus it was granted responsibility for the management of "the City of David National Park," a biblical tourist theme park situated in the heart of Wadi Hilweh neighbourhood. This move was met with some opposition in Israel, including from the IAA, and the Elad takeover was frozen after an appeal to the High Court. However, it was renewed in 2002 as a



"City of David" tourist centre, May 2012. Photo: Mahmoud Illean, Demotix.

result of political wrangling of the right wing and religious parties. This time the IAA lifted its opposition.

The settlers' tourist centre and guided tours provide a biased and distorted historical narrative of the place. The main emphasis is given to the so-called the "First Temple Period" (supposedly from the times of David and Solomon) despite scanty archaeological finds, and to the "renewal" of the Jewish presence today. The earlier Bronze Age (Canaanite) city, which existed for more than a millennium before, is mentioned only in passing. The period from the destruction of Jerusalem in the 1st century CE, including the Arab-Islamic eras, until the 19th century, is hardly mentioned while Silwan's contemporary Palestinian residents have been entirely excluded from the story.

Even the neighbourhood's street names have been converted into Jewish ones; for instance Wadi Hilweh Street has been changed to Ma'alot "Ir David." Thus tourists are only informed of the history of the "City of David," ignoring the diverse, multi-faceted history of the site.

The archaeological excavations and their interpretation have sparked criticism in Israel and elsewhere, particularly regarding the lack of independent oversight in the approval process, in the standard of excavation work and in the outrageous bias in the interpretation and presentation of archaeological data. Among the critics is Emek Shaveh, an alternative archaeology organisation which warns of the misuse of archaeology "to disenfranchise and displace the people of Silwan."

## "Archaeology must not favour one ethnic or religious group over another"

Archaeology in Israel to a large extent continues to be dominated by the biblical discourse which seeks to connect the Israeli present to the Jewish past to the exclusion of the indigenous Palestinians. In such an archaeological tradition, the earlier and later periods are deemed unimportant and therefore little data is collected.

Archaeology, being a scientific discipline, must not favour one ethnic or religious group or period over another. It must acknowledge the multi-ethnic, multi-faceted and intertwined nature of Palestine's diverse cultural heritage as a cradle for civilisations.

■ For further information see: [www.silwanic.net](http://www.silwanic.net); [www.al-maqdese.org/english](http://www.al-maqdese.org/english); [www.alt-arch.org/settlers.php#history](http://www.alt-arch.org/settlers.php#history)

# “I remember: the number of bodies, the way they were killed... the children...”

September 2012 marked the 30th anniversary of the massacres that Lebanese Phalangist militia units – working with full, round-the-clock operational support of the Israeli military – committed against unarmed Palestinians in the two refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in West Beirut.

The Israeli military had surrounded the camps and taken over the whole of West Beirut on September 15 in direct contravention of a US negotiated ceasefire between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Under the terms of the ceasefire, the PLO agreed that all its fighters and staff would leave Beirut, which they had done by September 1, because it had the full guarantee of the US government for the safety of unarmed Palestinian civilians left behind.

One survivor, **Nabil Ahmed**, who was aged 19 in 1982, recalls that terrible time.

**N**abil's grandparents were farmers from Suhmatah, a village near Acre in northern Palestine. Driven from their homes in 1948, the family escaped to Lebanon.

They fled from one refugee camp to another trying to escape the violence of the Lebanese Phalange or relentless shelling by the Israelis. Shatila camp was a little safer at the time and the family moved there in 1980.

“During most of the Israeli assault on Beirut in 1982, our family stayed in Shatila camp. When the Israeli army came very close to the camp, we would flee to other parts of the city, but after a short time – by the end of August – we returned along with 10,000 others like us, even though many houses had been destroyed.

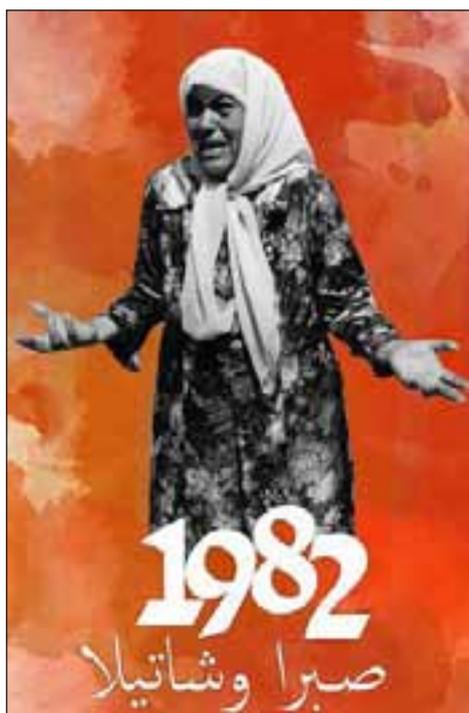
We found that the bombing had damaged our house. Conditions were primitive – no running water, no electricity – but there was no other place to go.

Rumours spread that the Israeli army was making frequent visits to the camp entrance. I watched as soldiers blew up sandbags and landmines that had been placed by Palestinians trying to defend themselves. They were clearing a path.

The Palestinians in the camps were very afraid. They were women, children and students, and since the PLO evacuation at the end of August, no one was left to protect them.

Early on September 15, I heard Israeli warplanes flying at a low level. Israeli tanks entered West Beirut and surrounded the camps, stopping people from going out.

By early afternoon on September 16, the camp was being bombed; people said the Phalangists were just outside the entrance. My family, some neighbours and I stayed in a shelter until the bombing stopped. Soon after we came out, a woman came running to us screaming, ‘Go away! The Phalange



have gotten into the camps – they’re killing anyone they see!’

That evening my oldest sister and her husband, a cousin, and I escaped to Sabra camp. Dodging snipers’ bullets, we made our way to a hospital where my aunt worked. I went to the roof and saw Israeli planes illuminating the camps with flares. I heard shots, but no screams. The next night, Friday, I watched the light from the planes, but I also heard a new sound. Bulldozers were at work.

On Saturday morning I met a relative, who said: ‘They brought one of your brothers to Gaza Hospital – he was injured.’ Then I began to search for my wounded brother, Munir (who was 12 years old).

He had been wounded on Thursday evening. After I had left the shelter Phalange militiamen had discovered it and ordered everyone outside.

## “I saw Israeli planes illuminating the camps with flares”

When they had rounded up everybody they could find, the Phalangists put all the males age 14 and over against a wall and shot them. ‘Twenty-five men, in front of the wall outside of my house,’ Munir recalls. ‘My uncle and cousin, people I was with a few minutes before, were killed.’

The militiamen led the women and children, about a hundred in all, to a large garage. Our 13-year-old brother, Mufid, escaped from the garage. The Phalangists shot him in the back but he managed to get to a Palestinian hospital where he was treated. After that, Phalangists entered the hospital and asked, ‘Who is Palestinian here?’ When he responded, they took him away. Two days later his body was found beside the hospital; he had been killed with a hatchet.

Once inside the garage, the Phalange began harassing their captives. One asked my 15-year-old sister whether her earrings were gold or zinc. She replied: ‘Zinc.’ The militiamen cursed her, beat her, and then shot her in the head in front of everyone.

Munir stayed close to our mother. The Phalangists shot many more in the garage but not all died instantly. The militiamen announced that Red Cross workers were coming to take the injured for treatment and asked those still alive to raise their hands. These people were shot again.

Although Munir had been shot in the leg, he did not raise his hand. He hoped he would be mistaken for dead; everyone around him was dead. The militia took the jewelry from the dead women.

Throughout the night Munir remained, motionless among the dead, close to our mother’s body. At one point, militiamen walked around with flashlights shooting anyone who stirred. Munir was hit again, in his arm. The militiamen returned again in the morning and shot Munir a third time. He was protecting his head with his hand; the bullet severed a finger.



The Phalangists brought sheets and covered the bodies, Munir heard them say, 'Let's go and bring the bulldozers and destroy the houses on top of the bodies.'

After they left, Munir escaped and went back to the original shelter, passing bodies on the street. One of them was our uncle, Abu Zuheir. Finding the shelter still empty, he went on to a neighbour's house. There two militiamen found him. One made a move to stab him, but the other intervened. 'Are you Lebanese or Palestinian?' he asked.

Munir said he was Lebanese. When he saw them hesitate, he begged: 'Please, you killed my brothers, you killed my sisters, you killed my family, my uncle, his family, please don't do this.'

'If you were Palestinian, we would have knifed you,' was the response. The militiamen ordered Munir to stay in a corner. When he was sure they were gone, he found some Palestinians who took him by car to Gaza Hospital."

(Nabil learned Munir was in hospital and, after many difficulties, he and a friend finally managed to get there.)

"When we arrived, Munir was not there. My friend and I decided to go to the Red Cross. There we found several hundred people who had escaped from Sabra and Shatila.

## "I found the bodies of the friends I was with – 25 young men"

I again tried to enter the camp and again failed; the Israelis still surrounded it. Then the Israelis withdrew and the Lebanese Army replaced them. But the Phalange had placed explosives under bodies so that

anyone who moved them would be blown up.

When I finally entered the camp, I saw bodies everywhere. I found the bodies of the friends I was with just before I left the camp a few days before – 25 young men. When I came to the garage where my family had been held, the building was being bulldozed on top of them.

Before I entered the camp, I had believed my family was alive and hoped to meet them there. After I entered the camp and saw all the dead, I still hoped to at least find their bodies.

The Red Cross had designated an area where people could come to identify some of the bodies. It was filled with corpses – more than 200 of them. There were bones, the bodies changed colour, they got dark, black – you couldn't identify them.

For two days I searched without success for my family and relatives. Then the bodies that had not been identified were buried in a mass grave because of the sickening smell. The weather was very hot.

I never learned just where my family's bodies were. I searched, found parts, pulled a head, a hand, out of the tangle of corpses. I found hair – someone's hair came out when I tried to pull a body from the heap. After all, there were more than 100 people and the garage had been bulldozed on top of them.

I remember: the number of bodies, the way they were killed... the children. After they've been four or five days under the rubble you cannot identify anybody, the bodies dissolve. But even though I could not identify my family, I knew they were somewhere in that place. I found lots of parts of bodies, but not what I was searching for.

My youngest sister, Iman, was six years old, Fadia was eight, Aida was 15. My brother Mufid was 13, Mouin was 11. And my mother, Zehra. My uncle, Abu Zuheir, and his family were 11 people – the youngest was a few months old and the oldest was my age. All 11 of them were killed there. And our neighbours also.

Between September 16 and 18, 1982, more than 3,000 Palestinian and Lebanese men, women, and children living in the Sabra and Shatila camps were massacred. However, the Lebanese government claimed that only 800 were killed.

Days later, I did find Munir. In October 1983, a year after the massacre, Munir and I left Lebanon; for many years now, we have both lived in the United States."

■ This interview was published, alongside one with Ellen Siegel, a Jewish American nurse who worked in the UN-run Gaza Hospital in Sabra camp during the massacre, by Just World Books in September, 2012. <http://justworldbooks.com>



# In Brief

## ARTS SCHOLARSHIP

The Caspian Arts Foundation, a London-based non-profit organisation, has awarded its inaugural education scholarship prize to Bisan Abu-Eisheh, a graduate of the International Academy of Art in Palestine.

The Foundation was established last year by Nina Mahdavi, who worked in investment funds management, and is designed to enable a Middle Eastern student to do postgraduate study at the University of the Arts, London. A charity auction held in October at Christie's Dubai raised more than \$180,000 for the scholarships.



## FIFA BOSS FEELING HEAT

World football boss, FIFA President Sepp Blatter, promised in an interview with the BBC World Service in December that FIFA would help rebuild the Palestine Stadium in Gaza City that was destroyed in Israel's latest onslaught.



**Palestinians inspect the debris of the Palestine Sports Stadium in Gaza City, destroyed by Israeli bombing on November 22.**

Blatter told the World Football programme: "It's not a question of money here, it's really a question of the heart and soul of football." He noted that the recent attack was the second since 2008.

"I'm very much touched because I think: let people play football because football is connecting people and football is giving hope. So therefore to destroy something which has been done for football hurts me personally. My immediate reaction was to send them [Palestinians] a letter saying 'we will rebuild that.'"

Interviewer James Montague then said there was a "big issue" over Israel hosting the Under-21 UEFA championship and he thought that "many people would see putting the two next to each other – football stadiums being bombed in Gaza and then... being allowed to host a tournament don't quite fit together."

Blatter's vague reply seemed to indicate he was feeling the pressure. "Listen, football is also hope, and I'm sure the basic element, basic essence of our game is to bring people together. I'm sure until next year, the situation will be clarified there, I'm sure, and football is stronger, stronger than all other movements in the world.

"We cannot be a guarantee for peace but what we can do is to prepare a better future and we will try to do it, and I'm sure UEFA will try to do it also when they play the Under-21 in Israel, so I'm sure... My opinion there will be a very good solution to play there and to make any movements' help or whatever toward the Palestine population."

Blatter's final comment may have been a reference to the severe restrictions Israel places on the movement of Palestinians, which would make it all but impossible for Palestinians to attend matches.

## POLISH MINISTER SNUBS ISRAELI ENVOY

Poland's under-secretary of state, Jerzy Pomianowski, refused to meet Israel's ambassador in Warsaw, Zvi Rav-Ner, in December after the Israeli Civil Administration destroyed Palestinian water cisterns which had been repaired by a Polish volunteer organisation. This is the first time such a diplomatic incident has occurred between the two nations.

When the destruction of the West Bank water cisterns was first publicised in Poland in February, Rav-Ner apologised to Pomianowski and promised that it would not happen again so long as the volunteers obtained a permit for their activities.

The Polish Foreign Ministry did not understand why the volunteer group, Polish Humanitarian Action, would need a building permit to rehabilitate a water cistern and PHA, relying on international law, refused to get one. Recently some additional water tanks that were repaired with funds from the Polish Finance Ministry were destroyed in the Palestinian village of Tiran.

Substantial criticism of Israel has been voiced in parts of the Polish media recently, not just about the destruction of the water cisterns but also about Israel's evictions of Palestinians living near Jewish settlements.

## THE PEACE CYCLE 2013

The Peace Cycle 2013 will take place 5–16 May offering an exceptional opportunity to see the sights, learn the history, meet the people and discover the truth about Palestine while enjoying a unique bike ride.

Cycling so that they cause no harm to the environment and can feel as close to the land as possible, the Peace Cycle will visit Nazareth, Jenin, Al-Fara, Nablus, Qalqilya, Bil'in, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Hebron and Jerusalem. Cycling makes participants particularly visible and they will be met by ordinary people as they pass through towns and villages.

Where possible, cyclists will stay with people in their homes so that they really get to know them while at the same time contributing financially to a struggling economy. They will also raise funds to support the International Middle East Media Centre: [www.imemc.org](http://www.imemc.org).

To get a Cyclist Information Pack, email [thepeacecycle@aol.com](mailto:thepeacecycle@aol.com).



## HOW ISRAEL TOOK OVER PALESTINIAN MEDIA

The IDF took control of media outlets during its November bombardment of Gaza in an attempt to prevent the Palestinians transmitting their version of events or using the airwaves to encourage resistance.

Israeli airstrikes on two buildings housing radio and television facilities knocked these stations off the air. Then the IDF began broadcasting messages over the now unused frequencies which worked much better for them than transmitting on different frequencies or channels and trying to convince Palestinians to tune in.

Television is the most important news source for Palestinians. Al Aqsa and Al Quds TV are the two main Gaza stations. Both are satellite stations and use an uplink to get their programming from the Gaza Strip up to two satellites. The IDF transmitted its own programming to the Aqsa and Quds transponders on these satellites.

The IDF broadcast warnings to Palestinians to stay away from Hamas facilities or to leave certain neighbourhoods which were about to be bombed and urged people to rise up against Hamas.

## IT'S APARTHEID, SAY SA CHURCH LEADERS

A delegation of South African church leaders spent a week visiting Bethlehem and Jerusalem in December and on their return released a joint statement including these extracts:

"Being South African, it felt like walking into another apartheid ambush. We witnessed violations of international law on so many levels – the multiple Israeli house demolitions, the discriminatory Israeli legal system... the Israeli Apartheid Wall and its associated regime of restrictions on movement and access for Palestinians, the imprisonment of a large percentage of Palestinians (including children)... separate pavements for Israelis and Palestinians."

"We did not expect the extent to which Israel violates international law to oppress the Palestinian people. Our exposure to the Palestinian East Jerusalem and the Israeli-Occupied West Bank was overwhelming, one which traumatised us..."



**Bishop Zipho Siwa**

The delegation included the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, Bishop Zipho Siwa; the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa and President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches Southern Africa, Reverend Jerry Pillay; the Secretary General of the Evangelical Alliance of South Africa, Reverend Moss Nthla; and the Deputy Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dominee Braam Haanekom and eight others.

The delegation ended their statement supporting, amongst other things, "responsible" tourism to the Holy Land as well as the Palestinian people's 2005 call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel.

## EU CONSIDERS BARRING VIOLENT SETTLERS

The European Union is considering barring a list of known violent Israeli settlers from entering member states, a Western diplomat told the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* in November.

In January, a report by EU consuls in East Jerusalem and Ramallah recommended that the EU compile a blacklist of violent settlers. "If settler violence is not dealt with preventively, it will increasingly obstruct efforts by both parties for solving the conflict," the document obtained by *Ha'aretz* said.

Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor had not seen the document, but called the proposal to ban violent settlers as "inflammatory," given that Israel has not itself defined the settlers as violent.

Settlers in the West Bank routinely assault Palestinians and destroy their property and have committed several murders but prosecutions are extremely rare.

## BALLOON OVER LIVERPOOL

As part of the Liverpool 2012 Biennial exhibition, a hot-air balloon fashioned in the colours of the Palestinian flag with "Palestinian Embassy" written across it was flown over the city. The event in September was a Living Art performance called "Palestinian Embassy."

The performance was brought to Liverpool from Oslo by the producers, Public Art Norway, in cooperation with Fritt Ord (Freedom of Expression), UNISON and the Palestinian Embassy. The Norwegian group won the bid for international applied art at the

Biennial City States competition and Liverpool was chosen to host the activity as a hub for minorities which has shown overwhelming support for the Palestinian cause.

Politicians and academics boarded the balloon in Sefton Park for discussions on topics concerning the Palestinian people's diplomatic and democratic conditions. Mohamed Masharqa, Cultural Attaché to the Palestinian Mission UK, said it was a joyous occasion which was a result of "joint cooperation of those intellectuals from Norway, Palestine and Liverpool who showed support and expressed sympathy for the international status of the Palestinian people."



## SIRAJ CENTRE COMMENDED

The Siraj Centre, which has worked hard to develop Palestine as a destination for experiential travel, responsible tourism and human connection, has been rewarded by being Highly Commended in the Best Engagement with People and Cultures category of the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2012.

Siraj's vision is to invite international visitors to immerse themselves in Palestinian hospitality and the country's cultural heritage by staying in ordinary Palestinian homes during their visit. The awards were given out at the World Travel Market in London by Justin Francis, managing director of responsibletravel.com, organisers of the awards, and Amanda Wills, md of the sponsors, Virgin Holidays.

Michael Awad, executive director of the Siraj Centre, said: "It's a great success for the Siraj Centre and for Palestine in general as this will help to create more awareness about experiential tourism in Palestine."

## BILLBOARDS WITH IMPACT

A new billboard designed to appeal to people not particularly informed about Palestine – or even sympathetic – loomed for a month over a busy section of the US-50 highway, southwest of Sacramento.

The coalition, [freepalestinemovement.org](http://freepalestinemovement.org), which erected the sign is collecting donations to take the advertising campaign across the US. They say that appealing to the uninformed is deliberate as "there is no point trying to win people who already sympathise with us."



## A FORTUNE TO MOVE

Jewish settlers offered \$15 million to a Palestinian farmer from the town of Khader, south of Bethlehem, to sell 18 dunums of his agricultural land located within Efrat settlement, according to a report by the Ahlul Bayt News Agency.

The farmer, Ibrahim Suleiman Sabih, 44, said he had received an offer from an Israeli official responsible for "Absentee land in Israel" initially of \$10 million which was later raised to \$15 million. He added that the settlers offered to swap his land for some outside the boundaries of the settlement and also offered him money. He stressed his rejection of all the offers.

Sabih said that the settlers, protected by Israeli occupation authorities, constructed housing units on his land and pumped wastewater on its trees in an attempt to force him to leave.

# The happiest days of your life...?

On an olive harvest trip with Zaytoun in October, **Jenny Kassman** was invited to visit Awarta Basic School and get a glimpse of what childhood means for its pupils.

It is thanks to Awarta Basic School that its pupils can dream about their futures. Suffering material hardship and living under the constant threat of attack, they don't need to be chivvied in the morning to set off for school on time. But for those pupils who live outside the village, just getting there presents another obstacle as Israeli soldiers invariably interrogate them (and their teachers) or make them stand for long periods at the army checkpoint on the way. As well as harassment from the IDF, the children and their families are frequently subjected to attacks by extremist colonists from the fundamentalist settlement of Itamar which was built illegally on land belonging to residents of Awarta.

When I visited the school in the West Bank, near Nablus, the boys' headmaster, Mahmoud Al-Sawi, described how the settlers carry guns with official approval and, like many others in the West Bank, frequently destroy crops, burn down olive groves and attack – sometimes killing – Palestinian farmers.<sup>1</sup> In 2011, two farmers from Awarta were killed on their land by settlers from Itamar.

The boys I met were keen to talk about assaults on their family members, about how settlers had damaged Palestinian graves in the village cemetery or how they broke into houses. One pupil, Salim, related a typical occurrence: "The settlers broke into our house when we were out. When we returned, we found they had broken the fridge and they had mixed up the sugar, salt and spices."

When settlers kill or injure Palestinians, there are no IDF raids on the settlement and it is very rare indeed for an arrest to be made. But when a settler family was murdered in Itamar in 2011, the IDF went on a rampage through Awarta, putting the village under curfew for five days, rounding up hundreds of residents in house-to-house raids and collecting forced DNA samples.

Amjad told me: "The army didn't wait for us to open the door. They broke it down and then broke everything in our house. Then they destroyed the fruit and olive trees growing near the house." Wasef added: "When the army arrived, they broke down the front door and then told us that we had to leave. They slept there while we had to stay with relatives."

The head teacher told me that Israeli soldiers had broken into the school at night the previous year, smashing windows and ransacking the building searching for weapons (they found none). Settlers had paid night visits, breaking windows and doors.

Clearly Mahmoud and his staff face a formidable challenge. The fathers of half the boys at the school are unemployed; many others earn low wages as labourers or struggle to earn a living from the land. Economic and social deprivation, combined with continued



*Class of six-year-olds learning English*

harassment, intimidation and violence by settlers and the IDF, understandably impact on the children's behaviour, their emotional development and ability to learn.

He described to me the high levels of anxiety and hyperactivity, resulting in a greatly reduced ability to concentrate, in his young pupils who are growing up in an environment which effectively is denying them a childhood. At the same time, like all Palestinian schoolchildren from the age of six, seated three to a double desk and in classes of between 30 and 42 pupils, they study a rigorous curriculum of nine subjects (Arabic, Maths, Science, English, Geography, History, Arts, Religion and PE), each with its own subject teacher.

**“Growing up in an environment which is denying them a childhood”**

Mahmoud believes it is essential for the school to provide support to pupils and their families. A quarter of his pupils are unable to pay the 40 ILS-per-year fees (about £6.50) so he approaches wealthy Palestinians to request donations, not only to cover fees, but also to provide basic facilities and equipment. The cash-strapped Palestinian Authority can only supply books; upkeep of the buildings and the purchase of equipment depend on donations or financial help from the local authority.

The pupils and their families also need moral and emotional support. The school, which has 464 pupils, is not eligible to have a counsellor supplied by the PA so it is Mahmoud and his staff whom pupils approach when their fathers, older brothers and sometimes

## • campus news

### NUS takes a stand

**A**fter five years of sitting on the fence, the NUS for the first time sided with peace and justice by voting unanimously in November to condemn and call for an immediate end to the siege on Gaza.

The highly significant breakthrough came after years of campaigning within the NUS to shift its position. Aaron Kiely, NUS Black Students' Officer who proposed the Emergency Motion entitled "Israel's assault on Gaza must end," called it a "a massive step forward" for the union which represents seven million students in the UK.

"I am proud that the British student movement is united in fiercely condemning Israel's murderous assault on Gaza," he said. "We must build on this decision and continue to show our solidarity with the Palestinian people until this siege is lifted, the occupation ended and justice is achieved."

Two months earlier the National Executive Committee of the NUS passed a wide ranging resolution on Israel-Palestine. Its 14 points included support for "self-determination for the Palestinian and Jewish peoples through two states for two peoples" and the "right of Palestinians living in Israel to equality alongside other Israeli citizens."

Much of the resolution and the accompanying statement of beliefs recognised how contentious the issue is on some



campuses. It included the resolve to "ensure the safety of our members as a fundamental priority," to give training and support to officers on "dealing with conflict on campus" and to "reaffirm NUS's strong opposition to Islamophobia, antisemitism and all forms of racism and discrimination."

### UCU sued for discussing boycott

**T**he director of Academic Friends of Israel is suing his own union in an employment tribunal. Ronnie Fraser accuses the 120,000-member University and College Union of "institutional anti-Semitism" after its congress passed motions calling for members to discuss the Palestinian call to boycott Israeli universities.

The issue of a potential academic boycott of Israel has been debated in the union for years. Several motions have been passed that "encourage members to consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions" and to circulate the text of the Palestinian BDS's 2004 call to boycott Israeli academic institutions. But the union has never taken measures to implement such a boycott.

The case had a three week hearing in London in November but judgement is not expected until March or April. Sue Blackwell, a UCU activist, told the Electronic Intifada she thought Fraser would lose because "there is not a shred of evidence" to support his claims. Even so, "he will have caused UCU a huge headache in terms of money and resources," she said.

(cont. from p24)

sisters and mothers are arrested or injured or killed in settler attacks. For that reason, Mahmoud's office door is always open during school hours and during my visit I saw a steady stream of boys, teachers and parents going in.

Mahmoud is insistent that the education the boys receive should be of the highest standard despite the cramped classrooms equipped only with chalk and a blackboard. I was lucky enough to attend a 45-minute English lesson with 33 six-year-olds bursting with enthusiasm at the activities and games organised by their creative, warm and lively teacher.

Despite the shabby building, teachers did their best to create an attractive environment: classrooms and corridors were decorated with paperchains, hand-made posters, paintings and examples of children's work. In the classroom serving as a library – a new initiative – there were packs of colourful books, which teachers



School head Mahmoud Al-Sawi

could take to their classes or for use by pupils in the room.

Mahmoud went on to describe his latest project: to find donors to fund equipment for extra-curricular activities, particularly sports, which would take place in the cramped concrete playground, before and after the school day, "For children to learn well, they must love coming to school," he told us.

### "School... needs to be a place removed from the nightmare they are living"

The head, who is a model of warmth, empathy and understanding, is not fazed by the many difficulties he faces. He told us, "For my pupils, school is not just a place to learn. It needs to be a place removed from the nightmare they are living. Somewhere they can experience the joy and fun of being a child, where they can express themselves, develop their abilities and learn to feel positive about themselves and the future.

"At the same time we have to teach them how to deal with the situation faced by all Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Despite their very young age, they know as well as we do that the Israeli government and the settlers want to take our lands and drive us out of Palestine. Our pupils need to trust that this will never happen: we will not leave our country and, as teachers, we must endeavour to instil in them a sense of permanence and security so that they can look forward to adulthood and aspire to make their dreams come true."

**Jenny Kassman is a member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and a signatory of Jews for Justice for Palestinians**

<sup>1</sup> For more on this subject, see UN reports at [www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)

# Action, not words

**A**round 200 PSC members from around the country gathered at the Houses of Parliament for a successful day of lobbying their MPs in November.

The focus of the lobby was to insist that our elected representatives demand that the government ends the UK's *de facto* support for the occupation and settlements, that it pressures Israel into ending the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their land and that it upholds the rights of Palestinian prisoners.

Emphasis was put on pressuring the government to take steps to force Israel to comply with international law – action, not words.

Mousa abu Maria from the Palestine Solidarity Project in Beit Ommar, Talal Dwikat, the Mayor of Jenin, and Jeff Halper from the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, were on hand during the day to help brief lobbyists and addressed the 30th anniversary rally in a committee room at the House of Commons in the evening.



## Gaza protests

Israel's renewed onslaught on Gaza in November sparked immediate and widespread actions across the country culminating in a national demonstration in London which was attended by some 15,000 protesters.

In **Bristol**, Palestine campaigners joined with anti-war protesters and socialist groups to hold a vigil which swelled to about 300 people by the end of the week and a spontaneous march set off to protest against media bias outside the BBC. The following day around 100 people marched round the Broadmead shopping centre demonstrating outside shops that support Israel or stock Israeli products including Tesco, Sainsburys, Wilkinson, M&S, Starbucks and McDonalds. Vigils continued throughout the following week culminating in another feisty boycott march round Broadmead.



**Hereford** PSC held a vigil in Hereford High Town to remember those killed in the conflict. They lit candles and read out the names and ages of 170 Palestinians and three Israelis and remembered two others whose names they did not know.

**Portsmouth and South Downs** PSC, supported by socialist groups, the Green party, trade union representatives and mosque worshippers, convened a protest in the Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, to show solidarity with the people in Gaza and to call on Israel to stop the bombing which was attended by about

100 people while **Cambridge** and **Exeter**, amongst many others, organised lively protests in their city centres.

**Milton Keynes** branch collected over 100 signatures for the PSC petition in two hours on a stall in the city centre while **Norwich** branch held a highly successful rally in the middle of the city shared with Stop the War, the University of East Anglia and the Green party. They had ten speakers and an audience of about 100.

**Aberystwyth** Students Friends of Palestine, assisted by Aber PSC, held a candle-lit vigil for Gaza in which over 40 people stood for over an hour by the Clock Tower in pouring rain while members of Cor Gobaith sang peace songs.

## UEFA Under-21 Championship Campaign

**F**ourteen Premier League footballers have joined international players in signing a statement condemning the fact that Israel is hosting the UEFA 2013 Under-21 tournament despite its attack on Gaza and imprisonment of Palestinian footballers. This is a significant development in the campaign and activists can make great use of it.

### What you can do:

- Write to the players thanking them for their brave stand (club addresses available from PSC)
- Ask them to talk to their fellow players about supporting the statement
- Write to your local fanzine
- Tell your local newspaper about the footballer's support
- Contact your local radio station
- Leaflet matches about the campaign

The players are:

**Abou Diaby**, Arsenal

**Eden Hazard**, Chelsea

**Demba Ba**, **Papiss Cissé**, **Cheikh Tioté**, **Sylvain Marveaux**, Newcastle United

**Samba Diakité**, **Armand Traoré**, Queens Park Rangers

**Pape Diop**, West Ham United

**Nathan Ellington**, Ipswich Town

**Mamady Sidibé**, Stoke City

**Leon Best**, Blackburn Rovers

**Pascal Chimbonda**, Doncaster Rovers

## Celebrating culture

In **Sheffield** the Yorkshire Palestine Cultural Exchange organised a multi-faceted and successful Palestine Culture Week featuring films in the fourth Cinema Palestino season, exhibitions of photography, embroidery and poster art, workshops in dabke dancing and cookery, a literature evening with Dina Matar and Selma Debbagh, chaired by Marina Lewycka, and a very special “be inspired to sing” workshop conducted by Reem Kelani, jointly organised by the Sheffield Socialist Choir.



**Milton Keynes** branch held its first ever “Palfest” event in Stony Stratford in September which was very well attended. Music was provided by the London-based band, Raast, who performed two sets of traditional and contemporary music in Arabic, English and French. The music was accompanied by some energetic traditional dancing from the audience, led by members of the PSC committee.



There was a poetry reading, an exhibition of photographs of Palestinian life, a display of kites made by children in the West Bank, Palestinian food and drink to sample and goods to buy. One organiser said: “A wonderful time was had by both organisers and attendees and this will hopefully be the first of many future Palfests.”

**Portsmouth and South Downs** held two folk concerts and hosted a presentation by Gaza journalist Harry Fear while **Norwich** branch had a public meeting with speaker Ian Chamberlain who had recently returned from spending three months in Hebron working for the EAPPI programme.

Memories of the popular Abu Bakr who died tragically young were shared on a sponsored walk organised in tribute to him by **Bradford** branch to raise money for their Abu Bakr Scholarship in Gaza. Around 30 people completed the walk in Bingley St Ives in

September. The weather was beautiful, the walkers enthusiastic and the picnic beside the lake shared amongst friends. Around £1000 was raised and they are hoping to make this an annual event.



## Starting a new PSC branch

**C**ardiff – proud Welsh capital – had a wonderful PSC until a few years ago when it was wound down due to ill health, writes **Uma Sims**. But it was never forgotten and the stalwarts who ran it still support Palestine, albeit in a slightly different way. They are the inimitable Cor Cochion – Red Choir – who sing for Palestine every Tuesday, whatever the weather, outside Cardiff market.

Campaigning in the interim period was co-ordinated by the Wales Palestine Network. Headed by the erudite and intelligent Elizabeth Morley, they continue to write incisive letters to those in the halls of power and to our allegedly unbiased media.

To consolidate these good works and to provide a local focus for Palestine, Cardiff PSC was re-born after a meeting



**Uma Sims with Remi Kenazi**

with Betty Hunter in early 2012. We agreed to gauge the level of interest by showing a film – *Budrus* – at the city’s Chapter Arts Centre. This meeting was attended by about 35 people and a small group of them expressed their commitment to being more involved.

This led to our next meeting, with the most enormous agenda ever seen – there was just so much to be done. Since that first meeting in early June, we’ve had some fantastic guest speakers at subsequent events: film-maker Harry Fear, Newcastle PSC’s John Snowden and Jane Harries from EAPPI.

But it hasn’t been plain sailing. PSC head office was incredibly supportive but I think we needed even more hand-holding. Then there was the mailing list for local PSC members. I may or may not have signed the Official Secrets Act to access this. Once accessed, I discovered the emails were often dud ones – that was just the members who had an email address, as so many did not. Even when people’s emails were current I came up against the odd “supporters” who objected to being on our mailing list. Despite being fully paid up members of national PSC, they weren’t interested in local events. Go figure...

We’re here to stay though, so here’s to many more events, supporters, street stalls, guest speakers and demonstrations. But ultimately here’s to freedom and justice for Palestine.

■ Find us at [www.cardiffpsc.weebly.com](http://www.cardiffpsc.weebly.com)  
facebook/cardiffpsc

## Campaign success – Trevino ditched

**T**he *Guardian* newspaper ditched Joshua Trevino as a contributor after a vigorous campaign protesting about his incitement of the IDF to kill Palestine solidarity activists on the Gaza flotilla.

Trevino, an American conservative political commentator, former US army officer and speech writer in the George W Bush administration, posted a tweet on 25 June, 2011, saying: “Dear IDF: If you end up shooting any Americans on the new Gaza flotilla – well, most Americans are cool with that. Including me.”

Complaints flooded in to the *Guardian* after it hired Trevino as an online commentator. The *Guardian* Reader’s Editor wrote that the publication was subjected to an “extremely powerful campaign on the web” attacking Trevino’s role, “led chiefly by the Electronic Intifada website and heavily supported by the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and its members.”

Trevino issued a statement saying that “any reading of my tweet... that holds that I applauded, encouraged, or welcomed the death of fellow human beings, is wrong, and out of step with my life and record.” Soon afterwards the *Guardian* ditched Trevino though it claimed the reason was that he had not disclosed business interests in Malaysia while writing about a related subject.

# An artist with an AK 40



PHOTO: MALCOLM CROWTHERS

**P**alestinian artist Laila Shawa with her exhibit "Where Souls Dwell" at the Institute for Contemporary Art's recent "Aka Peace" exhibition. 23 artists were given decommissioned AK-40s to transform

into works of art. Laila commented: "While cleaning my gun, I found lumps of congealed blood in the barrel, which made my decision even more compelling. I turned it into a jewelled object that can only be useless!!!" She added: "The

butterflies in this work represent the souls of those who were killed by this gun."

■ For a short video of Laila at the exhibition see <http://tinyurl.com/9yfhbzu>.

## What it means to be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian peoplehood

By Dina Matar  
Published by I.B.Taurus

**D**ina Matar's book is a must for anyone wishing to understand the extraordinary diversity of the Palestinian experience. In fact it can be read as a direct, grassroots account of all of Palestinian history from the 1930s. Israelis in particular should read it to grasp the Palestinians' profound attachment to the land. This attachment pervades the stories, not just of the older generation, but of their children and grandchildren for whom Palestine has become a lost paradise, an almost mythical place of tradition, beauty and social harmony.

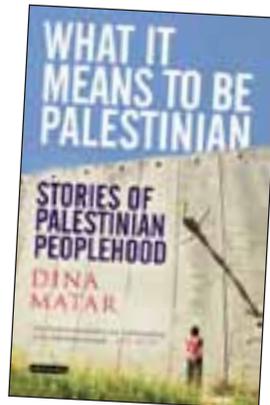
**"Israelis in particular should read it to grasp the Palestinians' profound attachment to the land"**

The author spent three years interviewing Palestinians from every kind of background:

refugees now living in camps in Syria, Jordan, Gaza or Lebanon; Bedouin, Palestinian citizens of Israel, West Bankers, former prisoners and Palestinians who have rebuilt their lives abroad but for whom Palestine is still both a vivid memory and a goal.

Matar has organised this rich kaleidoscope of stories into five approximate periods, from pre-Nakba times through the First Intifada. Each section is framed by a wonderfully lucid introduction which outlines the main events the interviewees experienced, from the Nakba itself through the multiple disruptions and uprootings of the Jordanian and Lebanese civil wars and the Israeli invasions and occupations of the West Bank and Lebanon. The Epilogue brings the account up to the present day.

The earliest memories are of communities where religion and ethnicity were not dominant factors in relationships. Salah Salah, from a village near Tiberias, talks of



his shock at the arrival of armed immigrant "outsider Jews," so different from their Arab Jewish neighbours of long standing. Everyone from that generation speaks of their total unpreparedness, the shock and disbelief that accompanied Partition and the ensuing massacres and expulsions. Abu Ma'an remembers how at the age of three he had to flee with his family from the idyllic village of al-Walajah, near Beit Jala, to live in a ragged tent in the snow in Jordan.

Possibly the most poignant stories are from "present absentees" like Mohammed Ali Taha, living in Israel within sight of their village but forbidden from returning to live there.

The spread of nationalist feeling in the Fifties and Sixties – linked to the pan-Arabism of the time – inspired some of the interviewees to join burgeoning political organisations or to become freedom fighters. Mohammad Neguib Mahmoud, a refugee in Lebanon, recalls joining the armed resistance as a teenager: "It was a magical feeling. Everybody loves a *fedayee*. The girls, the boys and the elderly adore you... If you told someone you wanted to marry their daughter they would give her to you without asking."

For 13-year old Salah Mohammed, born in a Syrian refugee camp, the glamour of training as a freedom fighter was brutally dispelled when he found himself in the thick

## Britain in Palestine: The Story of British Rule in Palestine, 1917–48

by Karl Sabbagh

Skyscraper Publications

Karl Sabbagh's *Britain in Palestine* provides a succinct history of the British occupation of Palestine which lasted just over 30 years. The book was based on the rich variety of material gathered for an exhibition at London's School of Oriental and African Studies curated by Anne Lineen in the autumn of 2012.

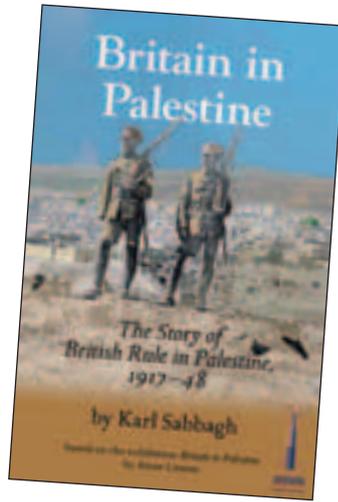
British ambitions towards Palestine and the Arab world were intimately connected to their imperialist domination of India and East Africa. The Suez Canal was a vital artery for both trading and military reasons. Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Persia (Iran) were then, as they are now, vital sources of oil and controlling Palestine meant that a pipeline to the Mediterranean Sea could be built.

To achieve their goal of defeating Germany's ally, the Ottoman Empire, the British set out to co-opt hereditary Arab rulers eager for their own advancement whilst accommodating the desire of the French to control Lebanon and Syria. The legacy of this chicanery can still be seen today in the region.

The book sets the Balfour Declaration in context – an agreement designed as much to deliver British objectives as to satisfy the aspirations of the Zionists who represented a minority of world Jewish political opinion. British rule over Palestine was straightforward colonialism wrapped up in the camouflage of paternalistic benevolence.

If the charade fooled others in the world and perhaps the British at home, it certainly didn't mystify the Palestinians who, like other colonised peoples, were forced to pay taxes to fund their own suppression. They consistently resisted all attempts to colonise their lands. Colonial rule was maintained through laws imposed from Whitehall backed up by the gun. Those who fought against it – as in Ireland, India, Kenya and elsewhere, were suppressed with absolute brutality.

Human shields, collective punishment, torture and house demolitions were tools used by the British to suppress the Palestinian revolt which began in 1936 and was finally quashed in 1939.



Sabbagh's book confirms the point that it was in reality the British who created Israel by denying the Palestinians the right to self-determination, carrying out numerous acts of bloody repression and then disarming them. The Zionists would not have been able to achieve anything were it not for their imperialist godfather. With British imperialism's decline from the 30s accelerating through the Second World War, the US gradually took on the role of patron. One imperialist power was replaced by another.

**“The British created Israel by denying the Palestinians the right to self-determination”**

The book is a very useful introduction to the topic and should encourage the reader to go on and read further on a subject about which too little is said – the full extent of British responsibility for what has happened to the Palestinians.

Available from Skyscraper Publications for £7.50 inc p&p.  
Enquiries to [skyscraper.books@btinternet.com](mailto:skyscraper.books@btinternet.com)

**Bernard Regan**



of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Wounded, interrogated and then released to the Red Cross, he later joined Fatah and was to spend six years in a Syrian jail.

Born in a Gaza refugee camp, Zuhdi Hamoudeh al-'Adawi joined the PFLP but at the age of 16 was informed on and sentenced to life imprisonment. Despite the harsh conditions, he studied, learnt Hebrew and even managed to paint clandestinely on torn up sheets and pillowcases. Released in a prisoner exchange, he is able to say: "I did not feel I had wasted ten years of my life... [The Israelis] thought we would come out as rotten tomatoes, but we came out as apples."

A recurring theme is the role of women, the bedrock of Palestinian survival; they kept alive memories and traditions and assumed new and heavy responsibilities when their husbands and sons were killed, maimed or jailed. Many, like Na'ila Zayyad of Nazareth, became politically active. She remembers protesting at the age of 12 when her father, a Communist activist, was jailed, and reading in secret political

books banned by the Israeli authorities. Her husband Tawfik, elected to the Knesset in 1973, became mayor of Nazareth and was arrested and jailed many times.

Another nationalist leader working under occupation, Bassam al-Shak'a, became Mayor of Nablus, renowned as a centre of resistance to the occupation. As a small child in the 1930s he remembers those who fought the British and the growing Zionist



**Bassam al-Shak'a**

threat: "The *mujahideen* would come to our house as it was near the cemetery where they would hide and I would give them water to drink." Four of his predecessors were deported or assassinated with car bombs; he survived an assassination attempt in which he lost both his legs, but remains politically active.

The best known woman activist to be interviewed is probably Laila Khaled, born in Haifa in 1944 but educated in Lebanon, one of 12 siblings brought up single-handedly by an indomitable mother. She joined the PFLP as a student and trained as a freedom fighter in Jordan. She recalls being inspired by the Algerian revolution against the French and by young Palestinian women who had given their lives for the cause.

She did not hesitate when asked to take part in the hijacking of a plane travelling from New York to Tel Aviv and then of an El Al flight from Amsterdam in 1970. Today she lives in Jordan and is a member of the Palestine National Council.

**Hilary Wise**

# Poet packs a political punch

Tweets went viral and gigs were packed out during performance poet Remi Kenazi's winter tour of the UK, Ireland and Belgium. An American Palestinian based in New York, this amazing wordsmith grabs his audience with both hands and makes them look at difficult issues because underlying the passion and the powerful delivery is serious political analysis. He tackles issues like the meaning of "terrorism," the IDF's collusion in settler violence, media bias and Holocaust exploitation.

This is Remi's second tour in the UK and he plans to be back next summer. He has also toured widely in the US and Canada and brings the encouraging message that in North America more and more people – particularly the young – are speaking out on Palestine, organising, and adopting BDS.

His new book of poems + CD, *Poetic Injustice: writings on resistance and Palestine*, can be bought online. Check out his website [www.Poeticinjustice.net](http://www.Poeticinjustice.net) and follow him on Twitter @Remroum to find out more. Above all, take a look at the performance of one of his most recent poems "Normalize this!" which blasts the touchy-feely, if-only-we-have-enough-joint-Israeli-Palestinian-projects-the-problem-will-be-solved approach: <http://tinyurl.com/axmewwv>



## In your eyes a sandstorm: ways of being Palestinian

By Arthur Neslen

University of California Press

“The Palestinian people have captured news headlines for over forty years but the world has heard surprisingly few of their voices.” These are the opening words of the introduction to Arthur Neslen's new book which sets out to redress the balance.

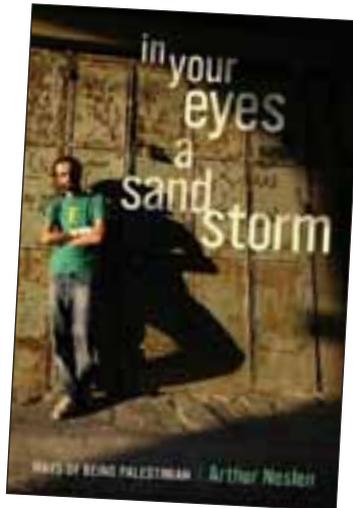
Neslen, the son of left wing, anti-Zionist Jewish parents (his mother, Diana Neslen, is a well-known PSC and JfJfP activist) began writing about Palestine in the 1990s and wrote his first book, "Occupied Minds," about Israeli Jewish identity.

Wanting to address the issue of identity for Palestinians, he realised that "mainstream politicians, shell-shocked victims and fiery guerrillas have occupied the limelight" but almost nothing is heard from ordinary Palestinians, partly because of media bias which he saw from the inside when he worked in BBC radio.

For "In your eyes a sandstorm," – a reference to a poem by Tawfiq Ziad – Neslen interviewed scores of Palestinians of all ages and from all walks of life between November 2007 and June 2009 with the aim of finding compelling accounts that shed new light on the Palestinian experience. He uses 50 of the interviews in this book, arranging them in chapters which loosely represent the generations shaped by key events – the revolt of 1936, the Nakba, the 67 war, the Palestinian revolution, the first intifada, the Oslo accords, the second intifada and the "disengaged" generation – those completely separated from Israeli Jews and the Oslo dream and increasingly from Palestinian political parties.

Beginning with the youngest – a sister and brother aged 12 and 15 – and working backwards through time and the generations to a 94-year-old living as a refugee in Jordan, the opening chapter is enough to break your heart.

Asked what he wants to be when he grows up, Abud, 15, who lives in Jenin refugee camp, replies: "I saw many people dying in the camp and because of that I want to fight and die a shahid (martyr)."



He names five people he has seen die. "I saw a guy who the Israeli soldiers had killed and his brain was outside his head... I couldn't sleep that night.

"I want to die because so many other people have died. I don't have a future." His sister, Bisan, 12, named after the village in what is now Israel where the family originated, has also seen several people being killed. She imagines a Palestine where children can play "in peace and freedom and the Jews are dying and not one of them is living here in Palestine."

Reading the words of these traumatised children, you ask yourself: how can this be allowed to continue? What kind of future are Israel and its powerful international backers, shaping for the region?

Providing succinct and lucid chapter introductions sketching in the history of the major events that provide his chapter headings, plus a commentary which contextualises the interviews, Neslen presents a compelling kaleidoscope of farmers and fighters, models and musicians, drug dealers and policemen, widows of martyrs, a gay man, a female soldier in the Israeli army, politicians, students and artists.

There are some well-known people, including lawyer Diana Buttu, Leila Khaled, one-time aeroplane hijacker, and some political leaders from both Hamas and Fatah, but the majority are the unheard voices of Palestine.

The book ends with 94-year-old Abdullah, a Bedouin born in Bisan, after which the girl was named, who was driven out of Palestine to Jordan in 1967. He tells Neslen: "If I had a chance to go back, I'd return tomorrow without thinking, directly. The place you are born is too precious. It's something you can't give up. After all this time, all that I wish for is just to stay one night in my village."

This book is a vivid and fascinating collection of stories of the lives of real people coping with the cruellest of circumstances. If you want to know who the Palestinians are, read it. But be prepared to feel upset and even angrier than you are already.

Your New Year Resolution:

# JOIN the 100 CLUB!

Make an annual donation of £100 (or more!) and join the PSC 100 Club

The 100 Club makes a real difference. Having a reliable income helps us plan ahead and better support the wonderful work of our fabulous members!

To join the 100 Club, email: [psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org](mailto:psc.admin@palestinecampaign.org)



PSC Honorary President, Betty Hunter, handing in a 5,000 signature petition on child prisoners to 10 Downing Street

## Buy direct – and help Miyaser earn a living



Miyaser Hathelen is a skillful craftswoman of traditional Palestinian embroidery who makes beautiful dresses, cushion covers, table cloths, bags and wall hangings.

She is a widow with seven children whose humble house in Umm Al Khier has been demolished twice by the Israeli authorities while they relentlessly build in the nearby Carmel settlement.



Visit [ummalkhier.wordpress.com](http://ummalkhier.wordpress.com) to read about Miyaser's life. Buy her products to help her family survive.

# Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

### Join PSC / make a donation

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PSC Conference

## Lessons from Gaza: transforming public support into political action on Palestine

**Saturday 13 April**  
**Brunei Gallery, SOAS,**  
**London**

Join us at this critical conference to discuss how to increase political pressure to break the siege on Gaza and to develop the campaign for Palestinian rights.

Keynote speakers will examine:

- How regional developments are impacting on Palestine
- How Gaza is surviving under siege and resisting occupation
- Challenges and opportunities for solidarity

For more details:

[www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)

## Help build solidarity! Recruit new members in 2013!

Cut out the membership form overleaf and hand it to a friend

Or give them this *Palestine News* – free with membership

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