



Land grabs or peace?

Israel must decide

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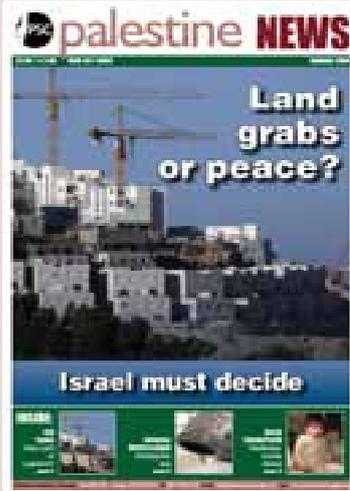


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Cover photo: The settlement of Har Homa, under construction

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palestine NEWS

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

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

Normalising the occupation

Betty Hunter explains how the West continues to finance Israeli colonialism

Nowhere is the colonial project of Israel clearer than on the road from Ramallah to Nablus, in the heart of the West Bank. Dozens of Israeli flags flutter from the new lamposts erected on the roadside wherever a settlement is nearby. If Bush or Blair ever left Jerusalem to speak with the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah they would see them. But this is something they simply don't want to see.

The catalogue of Israeli government expansionist policies continues, in blatant disregard of both international law and negotiated agreements. The problem for Palestinians is that the political leaders of the dominant nations will never ensure that Israel keeps its side of the bargain. Not only was Annapolis immediately nullified by the announcement of more settlement building, but donor aid to the Palestinian Authority is being structured to support Israel's policies.

The donor conference to discuss giving the PA £90 million pounds to build prisons, re-structure the police and judicial systems seems like a sick joke, when the Palestinian prison in Jericho was deliberately destroyed by the Israeli army in March 2006 in order to abduct Palestinian prisoners. There are 12,000 Palestinians held illegally in Israeli prisons, and arrests and 'administrative detention' continue relentlessly; yet the donors demand that the Palestinians police themselves to Israeli satisfaction before the question of the occupation is even addressed. And now Israel has been rewarded for its human rights violations and illegal actions with even more favourable status from the EU.

The supposed support to the Palestinian economy embodied in the recent Palestine Investment Conference in Paris is yet another example of complicity in Israel's colonial project. Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad may be seeking to plan economic development, but in the course of these deals 'facts on the ground' are being accepted and used to secure further economic subjugation. The proposals are a means of normalising the occupation: Blair talked about making movement through the checkpoints easier – but the expansionism of the Wall and its route are unquestioned. The so-called joint projects in Bethlehem, Jenin and the Jordan Valley will give Israel more control over Palestinian lives. The Bethlehem military checkpoints will be incorporated into a plan to allow tourists in to Bethlehem, but these will undoubtedly benefit Israeli tour companies, not the Palestinians in Bethlehem. In Jenin workers will find themselves forced to work

in factories on the confiscated land between the Wall and the Green Line since they are prevented from reaching their agricultural lands. And in the fertile Jordan Valley a massive agri-business will employ Palestinian workers at low wages, some of them on their own lands (see Stop the Wall's critique, "Development or Normalization?" on www.stopthewall.org). Tell the farmer in Jayyous, who showed us his confiscated land and bulldozed orchards, that the industrial zones will provide employment. "This is my paradise", he said, looking at his ravaged and fragmented farmland.

In terms of land grab, Jerusalem is a major target. As well as the huge settlement blocks being erected to the east of the Old City, to cut off the city from the West Bank, the Old City itself is being taken over. On entering the Palestinian sector of the Old City one of the first sights is a makeshift hut in a Palestinian garden above the street. In it is a settler, who can stay in the garden with the protection of his gun and the IDF, while the Palestinian family who own it live in fear of intimidation and eviction. Further on, a community centre, Burj Al Luq, providing a park, library and activity centre for the Palestinian children in the Old City, is under threat of demolition by the Israelis in order to build a settlement. And even further on, a

group of Palestinian homes have had their roof space invaded by yet more armed settlers. No more cool summer nights sleeping on the roof for these families, but raised temperatures and blood pressure as they worry about how their children will get home safely having to run the gauntlet of these armed settlers,

"The so-called joint projects in Bethlehem, Jenin and the Jordan Valley will give Israel more control over Palestinian lives"

proclaiming support for 'Eretz Israel' in a plaque on the stairway to the Palestinian homes. And the Israelis have tunnelled under Palestinian homes, undermining their foundations, so that tourists can go from the Wailing Wall to the Via Dolorosa with as little chance of seeing Palestinians as possible.

The audacity of these measures is breathtaking. No one can doubt that the Israeli government is intent upon pushing the Palestinians into smaller and smaller ghettos until they leave or accept their fate. It is exactly what Israel is doing to its own Palestinian citizens, where those in unrecognised villages watch the new houses and roads encroaching ever closer, while they are denied even the basic facilities.

We should be telling our Members of Parliament and our MEPs that urgent action to end the occupation is the only way to help the Palestinians. When the donors meet again, here in London, we should make it clear that complicity in colonialism, in the twenty-first century, is totally unacceptable.

● ***Betty Hunter has just returned from leading a delegation of lawyers and trade unionists to the West Bank.***

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Nakba 60: celebrating survival

Around the world Nakba Day was remembered — and the Palestinians' ability to survive and even thrive under the harshest of conditions was celebrated. In the Occupied Territories

every town saw exhibitions, rallies and demonstrations, and in the UK cultural and political events marked the 60 years of dispossession and occupation (see pages 21 – 27).



MAANIMAGES/WISSAM NASSER

A street exhibition in Gaza, marking the Nakba

Not in our name

- 80 year-old Hanna Braun, born and brought up in Israel, and a member of the Hagana in '48, spoke for many people at the 10 May rally in Trafalgar Square, when she said: "My dream is that one day we shall all live together in harmony again. It can happen if we fight for it." She told the crowd of her own personal experiences, especially in relation to the massacres of Deir Yassin and the expulsions in Haifa. "Many of us can still bear witness to these events."



Hanna Braun at the Nakba Day rally

- On 30 April over 90 prominent members of the British Jewish community from all walks of life, including Harold Pinter, Stephen Fry, Professor Steven Rose, Alexei Sayle, Professor Moshe Machover, Miriam Margolyes and Mike Marqusee signed a letter in the Guardian utterly rejecting Israel's ideology: "We cannot celebrate the birthday

The Right of Return is still the issue



MAANIMAGES/HAYTHAM OTHMAN

Nakba Day in Bethlehem: hundreds of black balloons were released on 15 May at the gate of Aida refugee camp, Bethlehem. A ten-meter long metal key weighing two tons was made specially, to symbolise the Right of Return of the Palestinians forced into exile in 1948. UN Resolution 194, re-affirmed annually, asserts their right to return to their homes. Many families keep the keys to their houses, as treasured possessions to hand down to the next generation.

of a state founded on terrorism, massacres and the dispossession of another people from their land."

- At the 'Salute Israel' rally in Trafalgar Square on 29 June, protesters lining the route carried placards bearing the names of the 400 villages razed to the ground 60 years ago.



JONATHAN PLAYER

What have the Duke of Edinburgh, the TUC, Manchester United and Barbra Streisand in common? They were all, quietly and discreetly, unable to join in Israel's anniversary celebrations. The Duke of Edinburgh was supposed to host a big party for the Jewish National Fund at Windsor Castle, but was said to be 'indisposed' at the last moment. Barbra Streisand had agreed to open a three-day convention in Jerusalem on 13 May but withdrew, citing other, "personal" obligations. Manchester United got a pressing invitation from the Israeli Ambassador to go to Israel for a celebration match, but later said they had no plans to go. At a TUC jamboree in May for Histadrut leader Ofer Eini there were embarrassingly few delegates to greet him.

- Some of those diplomatically bound to treat Israel with deference offered back-handed congratulations: when Pope Benedict XVI received a new Israeli ambassador at the Vatican on 12 May he offered his "cordial good wishes on the occasion of Israel's celebration of 60 years of statehood," but said he hoped that the anniversary celebration could foreshadow "even greater rejoicing when a just peace finally resolves the conflict with the Palestinians".

- On Nakba Day, over 140 Christian leaders, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, put out a unified call for a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians, noting that, for the Palestinians, "this day is not just about the remembrance of a past catastrophic dispossession, dispersal, and loss; it is also a reminder that their struggle for self-determination and restitution is ongoing."

Getting the message

Israel is beginning to realise that, for much of the world, it has become a pariah state. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni announced recently that Israel will boycott the UN "Durban II" conference on human rights, saying she felt it would simply be "a platform for more anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic activity". (At the 2001 conference there was much criticism of Israel's policies of land expropriation, settlement building, imprisonment without trial and extra-judicial killing.) The anti-semitism defence has worn paper-thin; sooner or later, Israel is going to have to find the moral courage to see itself as others see it.

Holy Land or Legoland?

Gill Swain looks at the strategies used to divide and rule the West Bank

The promotional video for the luxury new settlement of Nof Zion opens with the image of a revolving globe while a fruity-voiced actor with an American accent intones: "Six billion people share our planet. Among them are seven million Jews yearning to be in, to live in, to visit Jerusalem."

As the scene changes to views of the city from the development, the voice-over pronounces that Nof Zion – Zion View in English – is set "in the warm bosom of Jerusalem" and that a "modern road network provides convenient access to every corner of the city" (www.nofzion.co.il).

The privately-built development will be 395 luxury condos set in 28 acres with schools, parks, a fitness centre and several synagogues and the sales pitch is aimed at wealthy American Jews, many of whom are unlikely to live there permanently. The agents claim 60% of the first phase is already sold.

What the pitch fails to mention is that the desirable Nof Zion is actually set just to the south of the Old City, in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Jabel Mukaber, in the bosom of the area which every internationally recognised peace plan considers the future capital of a Palestinian state.

The implications are, of course, not lost on the 10,000 Palestinian residents of Jabel Mukaber. In an interview with the New York Observer in January, Ali, 48, noted: "This is a strategic plan. They come and put this neighbourhood in an Arab neighbourhood and in 100 years there will be no more Arab neighbourhood."

"It is like Lego – you put the pieces out there and connect the dots... Our eventual goal is Jewish continuity in all of Jerusalem"

Indeed, even some Israelis will publicly admit to this strategy. Uri Bank, chairman of the right wing Moledet Party, stated it clearly in an interview with the Christian Science Monitor: "We break up Arab continuity and their claim to East Jerusalem by putting in isolated islands of Jewish presence in areas of Arab population. Then we definitely try to put these together to form our own continuity."

"It is like Lego – you put the pieces out there and connect the dots. That is Zionism. That is the way the state of Israel was built. Our eventual goal is Jewish continuity in all of Jerusalem."

He added that: "Everything that goes on in East Jerusalem is a microcosm of what goes on in Judea and Samaria." Which is exactly the point. Whatever is happening in the realms of political negotiations, whatever promises Israel makes, settlement building goes remorselessly on, spreading like an invading cancer throughout the West Bank. The cynical and determined expansion of the settlements



The dream of Nof Zion

is the major barrier to peace and is relentlessly destroying the potential viability of a future Palestinian state.

Broken commitments

At the latest peace talks at the Annapolis conference in November, 2007, the Israelis and Palestinians once again renewed their respective commitments under the Quartet's "Road Map", first agreed in 2003, ostensibly leading towards the vision of two states living side by side in peace and security.

Chief among Israel's obligations is the freezing of all settlement activity, including the "natural growth" of settlements, and immediately dismantling all settlement outposts erected since March, 2001.

Yet in the first six months after Annapolis, Israeli settlement activity in virtually all areas, from planning to authorisation to construction, substantially increased. The government approved the construction of at least 946 housing units and plans are in the pipeline for a further massive 9,617 housing units in and around East Jerusalem, according to a report by the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department (www.nad-plo.org).

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and other senior Israeli officials have repeatedly made it clear that, whatever their promises to the Quartet, there is in fact no freeze on settlement building. Assistant Minister of Defence for Settlement Matters, Eitan Broshi, told the Knesset State Control Committee in February that there was no policy of "drying" the settlements.

He gave examples of the approval of several settlement construction projects which are to be implemented in the coming months and added that "priority is being given to Jerusalem, Gush Etzion and the settlements located in the settlement blocs."

On the same day Deputy PM Haim Ramon informed the committee of a new policy – that settlement construction in areas deemed not to have "political significance" would no longer require formal approval by

the political echelon, ie the Prime Minister and/or Minister of Defence.

Israel has continued to confiscate Palestinian land for settlement purposes, particularly in order to build the Wall/Barrier. For example, in February a military order was issued for the confiscation of 766 dunums of land in the south Hebron governorate to build the wall around the Eshkolot settlement (pop. 225). Once complete, the wall around Eshkolot will effectively seize an additional 2,400 dunums that will become inaccessible to Palestinians, according to the PLO report.

Focus on Jerusalem

Israel issued tenders for at least 847 new housing units in the six months since Annapolis, compared to 138 units in the 12 months before the conference, and in the first three months issued building permits for at least 327 units. Meanwhile ongoing projects total 4,878 housing units, of which 91% are in the metropolitan Jerusalem area.

In addition, on December 27, a plan for the final stage of the massive Jerusalem Ring Road was put up for public view. This 11.5 km long stretch cuts through several densely populated Palestinian neighbourhoods and will require the construction of three tunnels and five bridges.

This settler road completely encircles East Jerusalem, linking the main settlements with each other and with West Jerusalem while disrupting the fabric of life for 250,000 Palestinians, curtailing their prospects for urban growth and economic development and breaking up the contiguity of a future Palestinian state.

Around 35% of the Palestinian economy is dependent on metropolitan East Jerusalem. This road will reinforce the settlements and consolidate Israeli

control over Palestinian parts of the city but without East Jerusalem, including the Old City, there can be no economically or politically viable Palestinian state.

As a sop to these concerns, the IDF is constructing what it calls "fabric of life" roads, mostly around Jerusalem, to provide alternative connections to the traditional links Palestinians once used between their communities

which have been severed by the settlements, the Wall and closures. Along with the tunnels and underpasses which are being built to funnel Palestinian traffic beneath the settler road network, these roads constitute a stark apartheid transport system far more comprehensive than anything South Africa constructed.

A law unto themselves

So, what about the promise to dismantle all settler outposts erected since March, 2001? This would cover 58 of the approximately 110 outposts, but in fact only three have been dismantled while new ones appear every week and established ones are strengthened.

In Hebron, for example, a busload of young male settlers arrived in December to join the community which took over an Arab-owned apartment building in March 2007 and called it "Beit Shalom". The settlers are defying an Israeli Court eviction order, issued in April 2007



Palestinian farmer in the shadow of the illegal settlement of Kiryat Arba, Hebron

but never implemented.

All settlements contravene international law but many of these outposts violate even domestic Israeli law (though apparently not all – in fact Israel has identified only 26 illegal outposts). However, large parts of the settlement movement have proved themselves willing to operate outside the law, even to the extent of perpetrating murder, serious violence and criminal damage, if the law does not suit them.

Settlers come in two kinds, the economic and the religiously motivated. Economic migrants, who are in the majority, are attracted by government financial incentives such as housing subsidies, preferential loans and lower taxes, plus cheaper housing. For instance, last year a four room flat in Har Homa, one of the fastest growing East Jerusalem settlements, was advertised for 799,000 NIS (about £123,000), compared to a three room apartment in West Jerusalem for double the price at 1,615,000 NIS (see www.ochaopt.org: The Humanitarian Impact on Palestinians of Israeli Settlements).

The extremist religious settlers, who are prevalent in northern and central West Bank, notably around the Nablus area, and in Hebron's Old City and the southern Hebron hills, believe the West Bank is part of the "Land of Israel" and that it is their religious duty to settle it.

One resident of Beit Yehonatan, a new seven storey settler building in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Silwan (where the law states buildings should be no higher than two storeys), Yehoshua Brosh, put the philosophy neatly to a local court hearing: "Living in the building is part of upholding the religious precept of settling the Land of Israel, one of the good deeds we are ordered to do by the Bible, which defers any law opposing it," he said.

Grabbing the hilltops

Though Israel prides itself on being "the only democracy in the Middle East" and wedded to the rule of law, flagrant flouting of the law was originally encouraged by Ariel Sharon in 1998 when he urged the Israeli public: "Everyone has to move, run and grab as many hilltops as they can to enlarge the settlements because everything we take now will stay ours... Everything we don't grab will go to them."

His plea led to the rise of the "hilltop youth," the generation born in the settlements who are far more radical than the religious-nationalist leadership and reject the authority of the Jewish state and its institutions. They are mostly responsible for the shocking assaults on and even occasional murder of Palestinians, the harassment of their children and the destruction of their property and livestock which is well documented by peace groups such as the Israeli-Palestinian Ta'ayush (www.taayush.org).

David Shulman, a distinguished academic and member of Ta'ayush, spent four years in the south Hebron hills documenting such events

"They have unfettered freedom to terrorise the local Palestinian population; to attack, shoot, injure, sometimes kill – all in the name of the alleged sanctity of the land"

in his book, "Dark Hope: Working for Peace in Israel and Palestine." He wrote: "Like any society, Israel has violent sociopathic elements. What is unusual about the last four decades in Israel is that many destructive individuals have found a haven, complete with ideological legitimisation, within the settlement enterprise.

"Here, in places like Chavat Maon, Itamar, Tapuach and Hebron, they have, in effect, unfettered freedom to terrorise the local Palestinian population; to attack, shoot, injure, sometimes kill – all in the name of the alleged sanctity of the land and of the Jews' exclusive right to it."

This lawless scenario was brought into being not only by Sharon but by the entire Israeli state.

In 2005 Talia Sasson, the former head of the State Prosecution Criminal Department, was asked by Sharon to conduct an enquiry into the establishment of "unauthorised outposts". Her investigations revealed that many public authorities had illegally supported outposts through funding, allotting land and issuing permits for connection to water and electricity networks (www.mfa.gov.il).

She identified the Ministry of Defence, the Israeli Defence Forces including the Civil Administration, the Ministries of Construction and Housing, Interior Affairs and Agriculture and the Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organisation. Feigning shock when Sasson



Thamam AlNawaja, injured in a settler attack

presented her findings, Sharon and his ministers promptly buried her report.

Yet the issue of a growing movement of extremists out of control of the law is not going to go away. In a recent editorial, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz accused not only the settlers but all of religious Zionism of having "positioned itself as a movement that denies the sovereignty of the state..."

"As long as the state serves the goals of the settlements, they support it. But the moment a contrary decision is made – on territorial withdrawals or evacuation of outposts – this camp allows itself to break the law."

Population growth in the settlements is, at 5.5%, three times higher than that in Israel itself, the equivalent of adding one and a half busloads every day to the 450,000 settlers in the West Bank. At this rate the population will double to 900,000 in just 12 years. Meanwhile, the Palestinian population is increasing at around 2.5% a year.

The problem is obvious: in a region equivalent in size to Norfolk, conflict between the indigenous Palestinians and the settlers over resources is inevitable, particularly over water (see page 9).

Security has been the reason offered by Israel to justify the founding of the settlements but the vast majority of them have created huge new security problems. They enrage and terrorise the Palestinians whose land is stolen to make room for them and their infrastructure. At the same time, the collusion of western governments gives the lie to our declared support for democracy and the rule of law. Hardly a recipe for a secure and peaceful future.

Detailed maps of the settlement areas, the Wall and settler-only roads can be found at www.nad-plo.org, www.ochaopt.org and www.btselem.org

A fight for survival in the Jordan Valley

● **Al Jiftlik** in the northern Jordan Valley has a population of around 5,500 Palestinians and is surrounded by fertile land which the villagers have traditionally used for grazing animals and growing crops.

The nearby settlements of Argaman, pop. 166, and Massu'a, pop. 140, cultivate extensive areas of land beyond the settlements' outer limits. In addition there are military bases, closed military areas, nature reserves, settler roads and checkpoints in the area.

Al Jiftlik is now surrounded on all sides and fragmented. Grazing land is scarce and the villagers cannot reach many natural springs. Farmers are forced to buy the fodder they once grew.

Only limited building has been allowed in the village since 1967, resulting in over-crowding. Through 2005 and 2006 the IDF demolished 24 structures in the village. On 23 January, 2007, they knocked down five shelters, displacing 32 Palestinians, including 17 children (www.poica.org).

In 2006 the Israeli authorities approved a "master plan" for Al Jiftlik which leaves some 2,000 residents – 40% of the population – outside the approved urban area.

Only 25% of residents are connected to the electricity network and the water system needs repairing. The master plan includes electricity and water connection but only for residents within its borders. Meanwhile the settlers of Argaman and Massu'a enjoy efficient electricity and running water and sophisticated irrigation systems for their stolen land.

● The small village of **Al-Aqaba**, also in the Jordan Valley is fighting a determined battle to stay alive, with the help

of international supporters.

From 1967 it was used as a military training ground by the Israeli army but in 2002 the villagers won an Israeli Supreme Court decision for the army to withdraw. They left in June 2003 and some of the villagers who had fled the unbearable living conditions began to return.



Children from Al-Aqaba kindergarten prepare a protest banner

The village built a small sewing factory, a kindergarten and a medical centre funded by the British government. But the Israeli government is bent on destroying the village. It has issued demolition orders against 35 structures, including the mosque, the factory, the kindergarten, the medical centre and the new homes built by returning villagers.

The US-based "Rebuilding Alliance" (www.rebuildingalliance.org) hired Israeli attorney Elia Tusa Cohen to present the villagers' appeal against the demolitions to the High Court in April. Whatever the legal outcome, the people of Al-Aqaba say they will not be moved.

“Blueprint Negev”

Isabelle Humphries reveals the master plan for a new wave of ‘judaisation’, within Israel

Those Palestinians who survived the Nakba of 1948 and eventually became Israeli citizens have found that citizenship is no guarantee of a secure home and livelihood. On the fringes of Israeli society, the country’s Bedouin Arab community continues to be a key target of Israel’s ongoing expansion programme to “Judaise the Negev and the Galilee”, areas which have significant Palestinian populations remaining from 1948. Most recently, since Israel’s destruction on 8 May of the Bedouin village of Twail Abu Jarwal, 20 of the tin homes assembled to shelter the homeless families have been bulldozed, once again.



The women of Twail Abu Jarwal now have to cook in the open

A key player is the Jewish National Fund (see the Spring issue of Palestine News). As an officially “non-governmental” organisation, the JNF can be explicit that its mandate is to serve the Jewish community only. Despite that status, however, it is given state-level powers to implement its programme.

A visitor to the JNF web site, www.jnf.org, can click on a link entitled “Blueprint Negev” and learn that:

“Over the next five years, our goal is to bring 250,000 new residents to the Negev. Seven out of a proposed 25 new communities have already been created. Existing communities are being strengthened with economic opportunities and improved quality of life.”

Clearly, this last sentence does not apply to Israel’s non-Jewish citizens. As Human Rights Watch state in their recent report: “In theory, any citizen can apply to live in these Negev communities, but in practice selection committees screen applicants and accept people based on undefined notions of ‘suitability’ that systematically exclude Bedouin.”*

At the end of 2007, Adalah, a Palestinian non-governmental legal centre in Israel, appealed to the Supreme Court against a decision by the Water Commissioner and the Israel Land Administration not to provide drinking water to residents of a group of ‘unrecognised’ Negev villages. Approximately 70,000 Bedouin are living in villages in the Negev, to which Israel has denied building permits and public services such as roads, utilities and piped water provided to other Israeli citizens. Some of these Negev residents have been living in the area since before 1948; others have been repeatedly dispossessed over the 60 years since Israel’s establishment.

But the Jewish state wishes to see these unrecognised villages removed and all Bedouin relocated to one of several overcrowded and underdeveloped settlements. Built as part of an effort to contain the Bedouin community, these towns provide neither a traditional agricultural lifestyle nor an adequate alternative source of income.

The appeal to the Supreme Court was made by six Palestinian Bedouin citizens on behalf of 128 families living in six villages. Adalah states: “The main basis for denying the requests of these residents is to exert pressure on them to relocate to these government-planned towns, which violates their basic right to dignity, solely in order to advance Israel’s policy...in practice a severe and totally illegal punishment.”

Currently inhabitants are forced to obtain drinking water from access points several kilometers from their homes, “via improvised plastic hose connections or by transporting the water in unhygienic metal containers by vehicle or donkey” – a health risk as well as a physical hardship. This is despite Israel’s 1956 Water Law, which stipulates that “every person has the right to access and use of water”. However, Jewish families living in settlements – sometimes without building permits – are directly connected to the water network.

Adalah is also campaigning with Binkom (an Israeli planning rights organization) against the current master plan for the northern Negev. Working on behalf of 82 residents of heads of families of the unrecognised village of Atir-Umm al-Hieran, the organisations demand that the plan be revised to include this Bedouin community, with similar planning for infrastructure and employment as is done for new Jewish settlements.

According to the Beer el-Sabe (Beersheva) Master Plan, a new exclusively Jewish community will be constructed on most of the land on which Atir-Umm al-Hieran is currently located. This new community, to be named Hiran, will provide for 7,000 to 10,000 inhabitants. The state has filed lawsuits to evict and demolish the homes of the 1,000 Bedouin members of the Abu al-Qi’an tribe who already live there. Dispossessed in 1948 of their land in Wadi Zaballeh, the villagers first moved to another area, only to be transferred again, so that new Jewish settlements could be built. In 1956 the Regional Military Governor ordered them to relocate to the Nahal Yatir area, which is where the village is located today. Much of this land given to the Abu al-Qi’an already has been officially transferred to JNF control. One wonders what the people of the Abu al-Qi’an think of the JNF’s claims of “bringing life to the desert”.

Isabelle Humphries is currently conducting doctoral research on internally displaced Palestinian refugees. She can be contacted at isabellebh2004@yahoo.co.uk.

*For more information see Human Rights Watch report: ‘Off the Map: Land and Housing Rights Violations in Israel’s Unrecognized Bedouin Villages’ on their website: [//hrw.org](http://hrw.org), 31 March 2008. A longer version of this article was published in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, March 2008.

“Jewish families living in settlements – sometimes without building permits – are directly connected to the water network”

Drinking the sea in the West Bank

Clemens Messerschmid examines the reasons for the chronic water shortage¹

Contrary to commonly held perceptions, the West Bank is not a dry country. Its mountains, high above the Israeli coastal plain, act as principal rain catchers of the Mediterranean winds during the cold, wet winter months. On their peaks and western slopes rainfall comparable to that of temperate climates is common. Only down towards the Jordan valley to the east does a rapid transition to arid climates occur. And yet the Occupied Territories of the West Bank suffer a severe water crisis every summer. Might the causes of this crisis be at least partially man-made?

With an average consumption of 60 litres per capita per day (l/c/d), the inhabitants of the water-rich West Bank have way below the minimum supply of 100 l/c/d suggested by the World Health Organisation for every human being on the planet. However, the average Israeli citizen enjoys a current domestic water supply of 280 l/c/d, almost five times that of a West Bank Palestinian.

In addition, averages for the West Bank are much less evenly distributed than in Israel: while some cities like Ramallah do reach an annual average of 100 l/c/d (summer droughts notwithstanding), the 30,000 inhabitants of a town like Adh-Dhaheriyeh in the Southern West Bank regularly go unserved for up to four months at a time in summer. This means taps are dry for the most critical third of the year (June/July to Oct/Nov). Yet 40% of all West Bank communities (20% of the population) still envy Adh-Dhaheriyeh because they belong to the list of villages, camps and hamlets that dispose of no piped water and water networks whatsoever. They have three possible sources of water:

- Cisterns harvesting rainwater that usually lasts two months into the summer
- Local traditional village springs that were once sufficient – before toilets and showers were introduced and when the population was a sixth of what it is today
- Lastly, water tankers, that carry the precious resource from so-called filling points — unfortunately often at Israeli-controlled wells — throughout the West Bank.

A military drought

The fact that 40% of communities have no piped water is a direct consequence of the neglect by the occupying power over a period of 40 years. 12 years ago, Oslo (and specifically the Taba agreements of 1995, “Oslo-II”) raised hopes that the Palestinians under their new



PHOTO: PHG.ORG

40% of West Bank communities have no piped water

“Since June 1967, the Palestinians have been prevented from developing their only available source of water, right under their feet”

Authority could finally start to develop their water sector. However, little has been achieved since, especially because it makes little sense to construct a water network if there is no source of supply to fill the pipes, water tanks and taps of the people. Control over water resources lies at the heart of Israel’s regime in the West

Bank. Three short administrative decrees (military orders – MO’s) have dried out the Occupied Territories and sent Palestinian water resource development into a deep freeze, from the very start of the occupation in June 1967:

- In August 1967, MO 92, ‘Order concerning jurisdiction over water regulations’, decreed: “This vests all power [...] in the hands of an Israeli [...] official-in-charge [who] assumes full control over water resources.
- In November 1967, MO 158, ‘Order concerning amendment to supervision of water law’, stated: “No person is allowed to establish or own or administer a water institution (to extract [...] water resources [...]) without a new official permit. It is permissible to deny any applicant a permit, revoke or amend a licence, without giving any explanation. [...] Authorities may [...] confiscate any water resources for which no permit exists.
- In December 1968, MO 291, ‘Order concerning settlement of disputes over land and water’, stated: “The Military Commander has the jurisdiction to cancel any regulation in the law or any water and land transactions even if these transactions were ratified by civil courts [...].”

The Palestinians have no other source of water than groundwater, lying deep in the three so-called Mountain Aquifers, all of which

are classically shared transboundary water basins, naturally recharged mostly within the West Bank by the heavy annual winter rains. Since June 1967 the MOs cited above have prevented Palestinians from developing this only available source right under their feet. Instead, Israel insists, the bulk of the water has to flow unhindered into Israel, where it is pumped intensively. (The PLO's support of Oslo II in effect ratified this asymmetrical arrangement.)

Astonishingly, not a single new Palestinian well has been sunk since 1967, in the largest, most productive and sweetest of all groundwater basins in historical Palestine, the Western Aquifer Basin.

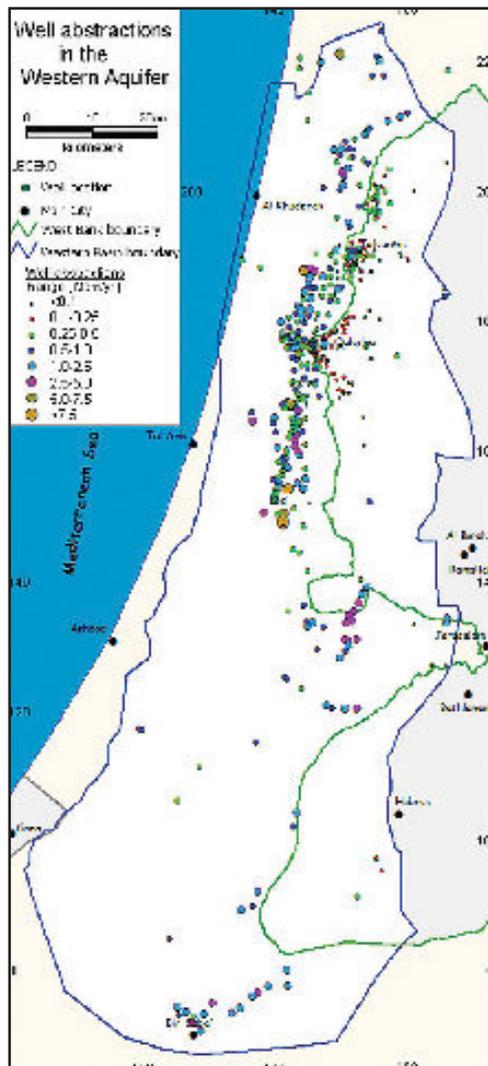
Stretching from the West Bank Mountains down to the Mediterranean, and from Mt. Carmel in the North down into the Sinai, the Western Aquifer is by far the largest aquifer in historical Palestine. It has more water than the total of all Palestinian water control and production in the West Bank and Gaza Strip together. However, this renewable yield is almost exclusively in the hands of Israel, with an average Palestinian share of 7% (in extreme years down to a mere 3%) of the total abstractions. In fact, this Palestinian share – 21.9 million cubic metres per year (mcm/yr) – is so small that it constitutes only two thirds of a tiny local aquifer yield like that of the Carmel basin and a fifth of the relatively large but dry Negev and Arava aquifers. The Palestinians of the West Bank can only watch helplessly as, a few kilometres away, in the Israeli foothills and coastal plain, one new productive well after the other is lowered into this rich groundwater basin.

The disparity between Israeli and Palestinian water consumption is particularly marked in the Jordan Valley, where illegal settlements are steadily increasing agricultural production on Palestinian land.

Under the Oslo II Accords of 1995 the extremely modest amount of 70-80 mcm/yr additional water ("immediate needs") was promised to Palestinians, to be realized by the end of the interim period, 1999. However, after three times this period, until this day, the amount of water gained from new wells (mainly in the EAB) remains at the scandalously low level of 12.3 mcm/yr. (By way of comparison, Israel's annual water budget stands at over 2000 mcm/yr).

The Joint Water Committee: joint mismanagement

The Oslo-II Accords stipulated a mechanism of joint coordination, monitoring and management of the shared groundwater resources in the West Bank. A Joint Water Committee (JWC) was set up to discuss and decide upon any water-related works, especially on the issuing of permits for drilling new wells. The JWC consists of an equal number of Israeli and Palestinian officials, working by consensus. This has led many observers to misinterpret the mechanism as fair and balanced, and even as a model for transboundary water cooperation. However, the Committee deals



New wells are sunk almost exclusively on the Israeli side of the Green Line

“The Palestinian Water Authority is coerced into approving even illegal settler supply projects”

exclusively with water issues inside the West Bank — all water development outside the West Bank is and remains an Israeli privilege, not to be shared with anybody, according to the motto: What's mine is mine, what's yours is ours!

The setup of the JWC has become an ideal tool for Israel to maintain the status quo, now represented as “co-operation”. Israel has de facto exclusive veto power over all Palestinian projects. So, in the hope of obtaining at least occasional Israeli consent to a project, the Palestinian Water Authority in the JWC is coerced into approving even illegal settler supply projects. Hence Israel is able to overpump the Western aquifer even in dry years, while Palestinian abstractions are cut down to a trickle, even after exceptionally wet winters.

Any donor agency, and the PA, should be deeply embarrassed by the results of this arrangement (an actual drop in per capita supply, due to a fast growing population). Yet the donors seem to prefer to ignore the political roots of the inequities and failed development efforts. Instead of applying political and diplomatic pressure on Israel to concede more drilling licenses, in more productive areas, they shy away from the whole issue, in the name of pragmatism. Instead of focusing on water resource development, the US and European governments channel large amounts of money into other, less conflictive water sectors (waste water, rainwater harvesting cisterns, or desalination plants), thus politically and practically abandoning the Palestinian people, while keeping up the illusion of funding and promoting water sector development under shiny new buzz titles like “capacity building”, “integrated water resources management” and of course “sustainable development”.

As a result, the gap is widening between the pretence of aid for the Palestinians and the reality of a deepening water crisis.

Israel, for its part, encouraged by the lack of any international pressure, has swiftly re-

interpreted Oslo in a truly creative manner: the additional resources mentioned in Oslo, supposedly to be developed by mutual agreement, shall now be provided by large-scale desalination plants located on the Mediterranean coast — under Israeli control. This will then be pumped up a thousand metres into the very mountains which bear the water being denied to the indigenous population. The Israelis are in effect telling the Palestinians, in the words of the Arabic proverb for a worst-case scenario: *Ishrab ilbahr!* — Go and drink the sea!

¹ This article complements that by Mark Zeitoun on the water situation in Gaza (Palestine News, Autumn 2007)

Clemens Messerschmid is a German hydrogeologist working in Palestinian water projects for the last 11 years. He is currently working on a PhD in groundwater recharge and also works as a freelance consultant.

For more information, see the website of the Palestinian Hydrology Group: www.phg.org

Healthcare – access denied

Dr Derek Summerfield reports on the evidence presented by the Physicians for Human Rights - Israel

Having witnessed at first hand the Palestinians' struggle to cope with increasingly severe physical and mental health problems, especially in the Gaza Strip, I was deeply interested to hear the views of the three Israeli representatives of the medical charity PHRI on their visit to the UK this April. During their speaking tour, Miri Weingarten, Hadas Ziv and Ruchama Marton addressed a number of public meetings, including one at the Royal Society of Medicine in London, the heart of Britain's medical establishment. What they had to say came as no great surprise to me, but the audience at the RSM was clearly shocked by the evidence they presented.

The increasingly harsh blockade of Gaza, especially since Israel decided to designate the entire population a 'hostile entity' in September 2007, has led to dwindling supplies of food, water, fuel and medical supplies. This has naturally had devastating effects on the health of a community already suffering from decades of occupation, unemployment, house demolitions, bombings and military incursions – not to mention the shelling of Palestinian hospitals and the killing of medical personnel on duty. But the focus of the data presented by the PHRI delegation related specifically to the ways in which access to healthcare outside the Gaza Strip is being blocked by the Israeli authorities. (PHRI's work is essentially to monitor and report on what is happening, to facilitate access and where possible to pursue cases through the Israeli courts.)

Closure of the crossings

Israeli government policies are making access to care outside the Gaza Strip increasingly difficult for patients who need the more advanced medical care available in Jordan, Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem or Israel. Prior to June 2007, about 400-500 patients left Gaza for Egypt via Rafah each month, and an additional monthly average of 652 patients requested permits for exit via Erez Crossing to medical centres in Israel, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Jordan or elsewhere. Since then, however, most requests for exit permits have been denied due to "security prohibitions" issued by the Israeli General Security Service (GSS).

Patients then often turn to the PHRI for help. An analysis of applications they received showed a steep rise in the number of people denied access to care during the summer and autumn of 2007. Israel decided to allow exit via Erez only to "lifesaving" cases, which

has meant that treatable medical conditions often become chronic or acute, resulting in amputations, loss of eyesight and other permanent disabilities. Meri Weingarten told the tragic story of Rajab AlMughrabi, a young man who was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer in October 2007. In November he was referred for medical care at Maqassed hospital in East Jerusalem, but the GSS opposed his exit. First one leg and then the other had to be amputated, and Rajab died at home in Gaza on 9 March, untreated.

Over the past year the charity has handled hundreds of applications for assistance to obtain an exit permit – with diminishing success – and has recorded increasing numbers of avoidable deaths. (By April 2008 the World Health Organisation had itself registered 32 deaths related to denial of access to care.)

The High Court of Justice: non-intervention, delay and rejection

In principle, Israel's High Court recognises the right of individuals to treatment: "even if these are evil persons...access to life-saving care should not be denied them." In practice, their response is generally not to intervene, to support the GSS in refusing access on "security" grounds or to delay for so long that treatment is no longer possible. When challenged by the PHRI, the Court initially refused to even discuss the legal status of Gaza and Israel's legal responsibility for a population effectively under occupation. Then in January 2008 the Court declared that the occupation of the Gaza Strip had ended and that Israel has very little responsibility toward its residents. Through this ruling the Court has, in effect, granted legitimacy to the collective punishment imposed on the civilian population of the Gaza Strip, leaving its residents little hope of legal redress.

Blackmail and coercion of patients

According to data collected by PHRI, in at least 30 cases since July 2007 the Israeli secret service has called patients – many of them with exit permits – to interrogation at the Erez Crossing. In the course of the interrogation they were asked to provide information about relatives and acquaintances, and/or required to collaborate and provide information on a regular basis, as a condition for being allowed to leave Gaza. If they refused or could not provide the information, they were turned back. These cases include several patients with life-threatening conditions. A petition submitted by PHRI to the Court on this issue was rejected after the judges simply refused to discuss the topic.

A case in point is that of Ashraf Qdeih, who was diagnosed with lymphoid cancer about a year ago. In September he was told to go to Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer (Israel) for an advanced isotope test that is unavailable in the Gaza Strip, but his application for an exit permit was rejected. Two further applications were also rejected but following intervention by the PHRI and a petition to the High Court, Ashraf received a permit for entry on December 2, 2007. At the Erez crossing he was summoned for interrogation by the GSS and was told that he must collaborate with the GSS in order to enter Israel. The interrogator scolded him for filing a petition against the State of Israel and told him "You have cancer and soon it will spread to your brain if you do not help us." After Ashraf refused to collaborate he was eventually allowed to leave but he had missed his appointment at the hospital and the radioactive isotope materials had been destroyed. He returned to the Gaza Strip and rescheduled his appointment. Only after concerted media pressure initiated by PHRI was an exit permit issued, in March 2008.

“Treatable medical conditions often become chronic or acute, resulting in amputations, loss of eyesight and other permanent disabilities”

No one is exempt

Children are among the many patients caught up in these inhumane cat-and-mouse games. The youngest victim, four year-old Qusai Issa, had previously had treatment in Israel, but following Israel's tightening of the siege of the Gaza Strip he was denied entry for renewed treatment "on security grounds". His relatives submitted four applications, but he finally succumbed to neuroblastoma in February this year.

Amnesty International has taken up a number of cases, such as that of Karima Abu Dalal, Hodgkin's Lymphoma, which normally responds well if treated in the early stages.

Al publicised her case and after a few months she was granted an exit permit to Egypt – but then a new ploy came into play. The Israeli authorities run a shuttle-bus service which transfers urgent medical cases to medical centres in Egypt or Jordan. However, this bus runs on average only once every five weeks. Last-minute cancellations are frequent and patients then remain trapped in Gaza. Karima was one of those patients; her future remains uncertain.

Complicity in torture

Hadas Ziv, Director of PHRI, reported that there is very little response from either individual doctors or from the Israeli Medical Association to the current denial of access to healthcare to the inhabitants of Gaza. Moreover, she confirmed that Israeli doctors examine Palestinians before and after torture sessions in Israeli jails. As long ago as 1996 Amnesty International reported that Israeli doctors working with the security services "form part of a system in which detainees are tortured, ill treated, and humiliated in ways that place prison medical practice in conflict with medical ethics." Other major human rights organisations, such as Physicians for Human Rights (USA) and Human Rights Watch, published similar reports.

Yoram Blachar, longstanding head of the IMA, was from 2003-7 no less than the Council Chairman of the World Medical Association. The WMA's Declaration of Tokyo (1975) is the definitive statement about a doctor's ethical duty not to participate in or collude with the practice of torture, and to speak out when he encounters it. Blachar is on record in *The Lancet* as defending "moderate physical pressure" during the interrogation of Palestinian detainees, while Professor Dolev, the 'Head of Ethics' of the IMA in 1999, stated openly that "a couple of broken fingers" during the interrogation of Palestinians was a price worth paying for information. Hadas Ziv called for a campaign to expel the IMA from the WMA while it continues to flout internationally recognised ethical standards.

We cannot remain silent

The audience expressed horror at the evidence placed before them, as well as admiration for the courageous work carried out by the PHRI. In response to questions from the floor about academic or medical

boycott, all three speakers expressed personal sympathy with pro-boycott arguments – whilst stressing that PHRI had no organisational position on the matter.

Unfortunately the majority of the medical profession in this country, like the general public, remains largely ignorant of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories. It is up to those of us who do know to speak out in every available public forum, including local branches of the BMA, and to put pressure on our Israeli colleagues to abide by both the spirit and the letter of the Hippocratic oath.

I would urge any doctor or healthworker – or any concerned human being – to go and see for themselves what the occupation means, in human terms. There is a special fact-finding tour to the Occupied Territories this autumn, and a major conference on mental health in Gaza (see below).

Derek Summerfield is an NHS consultant psychiatrist, and Teaching Associate at the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford

For further details and case studies please contact Miri Weingarten at miri@phr.org.il, 00 972 546 995 199, or Ran Yaron at ranyaron@phr.org.il, 00 972 547 577696.



Mustafa and Mohammed ElShanti, both suffering from cystic fibrosis; exit permits for treatment have been delayed.

CREDIT: IMEMCO.ORG

Clinicians' Study Tour

November 2008

- See the situation on the ground and hear from both Palestinians and Israelis who work to see the end of the Occupation with a just and sustainable solution for all communities.
- Visit Palestinian hospitals, clinics and teaching establishments and compare treatment offered in Israeli and Palestinian hospitals.

Visiting clinicians will be able to give seminars in medical establishments, participate in giving practical treatment and in distributing gifts and donations to organisations visited.

The tour is being coordinated with Physicians for Human Rights-Israel, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Dove & Dolphin Charity, Foundation for Al-Quds Medical School and senior clinicians in England and Italy. For more information phone 01737 843408 or email tours@icahduk.org.

Siege and mental health – walls vs bridges

*An international conference in Gaza: 27 - 29 October
Organised by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme
and the World Health Organisation*

The GCMHP have worked in Gaza for nearly 20 years, not just in providing a clinical services and academic research, but also in witness, documentation and other human rights work. Their founder/president Dr Eyad El Sarraj is well known internationally for his contribution to the field and has become a human rights ombudsman for Gaza.

For more information see: www.gcmhp.net.

In Brief

TUTU SPEAKS OUT

At the end of May Archbishop Desmond Tutu led a UN fact-finding mission to Gaza — nearly a year and a half late because Israel had denied them entry visas. They finally entered the Strip via the Rafah Crossing from Egypt on Tuesday, 27 May. The aim of the mission was to investigate the Israel army's shelling of Al-Athamneh family's homes, which claimed the lives of 19 civilians, including seven children and six women. Seventeen of the victims were from one family.

Tutu grieved with Saad Athamneh, 55, who lost three of his sons, themselves fathers, in the shelling. After the visit he condemned the incident as a "massacre" and said:

"My message to the international community is that our silence and complicity, especially on the situation in Gaza, shames us all. It is almost like the behaviour of the military junta in Burma."

During the visit he also met with Hamas leader Ismail Haniya.



Archbishop Tutu in Gaza

SUPPORT FOR THE PALESTINIANS' RIGHT TO EDUCATION



Professor David Mumford, co-winner of Israel's prestigious Wolf Prize for Mathematics announced he will give his share of the prize money (one third of \$100,000) to the University of Birzeit on the West Bank and to the Israeli peace organisation Gisha (www.gisha.org), that campaigns for freedom of movement for

Palestinians, especially those trapped in Gaza, and their right to education.

He told the Israeli daily Haaretz: "I decided to donate my share of the Wolf Prize to enable the academic community in occupied Palestine to survive and thrive. I am very grateful for the prize, but I believe that Palestinian students should have an opportunity to go elsewhere to acquire an education. Students in the West Bank and Gaza today do not have an opportunity to do that."

"SHOOTING BACK" AT VIOLENT SETTLERS

On 8 June, two Israeli settlers tried unsuccessfully to drive shepherds off Palestinian land near Hebron, in the south of the West Bank. After they left, the shepherds called relatives for reinforcement, fearing an attack. Among those who came was Muna an-Nawaja, with a video camera she

had received from the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem. Ten minutes later, she filmed four masked men armed with clubs approaching the family and attacking one of the shepherds. They then severely beat other members of the family (see page 7).

In January 2007, B'Tselem launched "Shooting Back", a project which provides Palestinians living under threat of attack from settlers with video cameras. The aim is to bring the reality of their lives under occupation to the attention of the Israeli and international public, and seek redress for violations of human rights.

Some of the video clips can be viewed on www.btselem.org.



Settlers caught on camera

● A NEW VOICE FOR AMERICAN JEWS

A new Jewish American lobby group called "J Street" was launched this April, as an alternative to the powerful and well-funded right-wing American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Its fundamental principle is the belief that Israel's security interests are best served by negotiating peace with its neighbours and establishing a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.

Director Jeremy Ben-Ami said in a recent interview: "We see no political voice and no organized political support being generated for diplomacy, peacemaking and a two-state solution."

Until now Israel policy debate in America has been dominated by Christian evangelicals, neoconservatives, AIPAC and other right-wing American Jewish groups. A politician not 100 per cent supportive of Israel risks losing the lucrative support of these groups.

Financially, J Street is not in the same league as AIPAC which has an endowment of more than \$100m, over 100,000 members and 18 offices around the US. In contrast, J Street's first-year budget is just \$1.5m, but it plans to raise money to donate to sympathetic politicians.

Ben Ami also said that J Street believes Israel and the US should find ways of engaging with Hamas — making it the only US lobby group to oppose Israeli government policy on the issue. "There's a lively debate in Israel with people in favour or against the government position, and we don't see why the debate here can't be just as open and vibrant."



HAARETZ GIVEN A MAKEOVER

The Israeli leftist daily paper, Haaretz, the only one to be critical of Israel's policies of occupation and dispossession, has undergone a major overhaul. Two of its top journalists, Gideon Levy and Amira Hass, famous for their fearless reporting and analysis of life in the Occupied Territories, will no longer be given their regular columns. Levy's Friday column has been scrapped and Amira Hass has been downgraded to freelance status, on half salary.

A new German owner has bought the paper and decided, according to inside sources, that "the occupation doesn't sell newspapers". Henceforth the paper is to concentrate on the business world. The 'putsch' is reminiscent of the manoeuvre by which Conrad Black (now serving six years for fraud in a US jail) bought the Jerusalem Post and hired an Israeli censor to be publisher.

Haaretz was a beacon of free speech on an otherwise bleakly conformist media scene. In the Spring issue of PN (page 6) we reported on the growing clampdown on the independent media in Israel. The Haaretz takeover looks like one more nail in its coffin.

HATE WEBSITE – EXTREMIST OR A SIGN OF THE TIMES?

Haaretz opened its pages on 1 June to a website preaching religious war, the exploitation of children and terrorism. The site, samsonblinded.org, states for example that: "Slavery is not an option in the modern world, but Israel adopting children from the poorest countries, indoctrinating them with anti-Islamism, and training them for low-rank military service in Israel Defense Forces may be feasible." It also suggests that "Israel could invite Western Christian radicals to police the Palestinian territories," as "they would be happy to get a training ground in Israel for their militia".

Samson Blinded, whose publishers keep their identities secret, calls on Israel to eliminate all Palestinians from the territory it controls and to annihilate their culture. They demand that Israel "destroy the Palestinian settlements [sic] and exile them far away – not to refugee camps in neighboring Arab countries, or the conflict would be perpetuated."

While such websites can be dismissed as plain loony, they do echo in an extreme form the increasingly widespread calls for 'transfer' of Palestinians, to be heard from members of the Knesset and the general public in Israel.

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR SNUBBED

The speaker of the Welsh Assembly, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas refused to meet Israel's ambassador to Britain, Ron Prozor, at a meeting in June, saying: "I am unwilling to accept the invitation to meet the



Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas with HM the Queen

SAYING THE UNSAYABLE

To the fury of the American and Israeli governments, former US President Jimmy Carter spent hours in talks with leaders of Hamas during a nine day trip to the Middle East in April. "Since Syria and Hamas will have to be involved in a final peace agreement, they have to be involved in discussions that lead to final peace," he said.

Carter visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Syria as well as the West Bank and the Israeli town of Sderot during his tour. He was refused entry to Gaza by Israel.

In Damascus he met the exiled Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal and Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Although in Sderot Carter publicly condemned the rocket attacks from Gaza as "abominable acts of terrorism" and urged Hamas to declare a unilateral ceasefire, his visit was condemned by Condoleeza Rice and Barack Obama and by Israeli leaders. In an unprecedented snub, Shin Bet, the Israeli domestic security agency, refused to give him protection, even in Sderot.

At the end of his tour Carter dramatically announced a "breakthrough" by saying that Hamas would accept a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, so long as it was approved by the Palestinian people in a referendum or by a newly elected government, and would recognise the right of Israelis to live in peace as neighbours next door. Meshaal later confirmed this announcement though emphasised that he stopped short of a formal diplomatic recognition of the state of Israel.



President Jimmy Carter

ambassador because of my objection to the failure of the State of Israel to meet its international obligations to the Palestinian people of the Holy Lands." He added: "I would invite other colleagues to (do) the same."

Elis-Thomas's comments come after Prozor wrote in a newspaper article that Britain has become a "hotbed for radical anti-Israeli views" in recent years, particularly in universities – referring perhaps to resolutions passed by the lecturers' union (see page 17).

RABBI MELAMED ON 'RESIDENT ALIENS'

Fundamentalist Rabbi Zalman Melamed has a master plan for ensuring a Jewish majority in Israel. On the one hand Israeli citizenship should be conferred on all Jews worldwide, while stripping the rights of 'gentiles striving to undermine the country'. (One can imagine how easily such an accusation could be made to stick: in the past, Palestinian members of the Knesset like Azmi Bishara have been hounded out of office and into exile, for proposing that non-Jews should have equal rights with Jewish citizens.)

Secondly, he proposes that only non-Jewish residents who recognise Israel as a Jewish nation and pledge to adhere to the seven Noahide Laws should be allowed to stay, with the status of 'Ger Toshav'. The term means 'resident alien' and was used to refer to gentiles living in Israel under during biblical times. The Rabbi said: "Our ideal objective is for the land of Israel, on all its borders, to be filled with the people of Israel, as was promised to Abraham our father".



Jenin after an Israeli incursion

● BLAIR'S WONDER PACKAGE

Jenin lies near the Green Line between Israel and the northern West Bank, and has for years been one of the most economically deprived areas in the OPTs. In June Tony Blair, in his role as Middle East envoy, unveiled plans to revive Jenin's stagnant economy. The economic recovery plan calls for the creation of a new industrial park, more permits for Jenin residents to work in Israel and the removal of Israeli roadblocks and obstacles between the city and other parts of the West Bank. Blair said that construction of the industrial park will stimulate Palestinian economic activity by attracting foreign investments and creating sustainable employment and income generation in the region of Jenin. Similarly, in the region of Hebron, in the south, another project, the Tarqumiya Industrial Park is planned, though the exact location has not been decided.

Sceptics have suggested that these industrial zones, discussed for more than a decade in Israeli circles, while ostensibly aiding the Palestinian economy, are in fact part of a plan to create a chain of Israeli-controlled industrial zones along the Apartheid Wall. They would use cheap Palestinian labour, but would mean that Palestinians could be kept out of Israel, while working for Israeli companies.

● ISRAEL'S AD WITHDRAWN

On 9 April the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) ordered the Israeli Tourist Office to withdraw a ThinkIsrael.com advert implying that Qumran, the site where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, is in Israel, when in fact it is in the Occupied West Bank.

This was the result of the persistence of Camden resident Janet Green, who was surprised when she saw the advert stating: "You can travel the entire length of Israel in six hours", with illustrations including an image of Qumran, in the 24 November edition of the Radio Times. Janet said: "I thought 'that's not right. I am sure Qumran is not in Israel. Why are they claiming it is?'" After several exchanges of letters over a four month period the ASA upheld Janet's complaint and expressed concern that ThinkIsrael did not respond to their enquiries. They said: "The ad breached Committee of Advertising Practice CAP Code clauses 2.8 (Non-response) and 7.1 (Truthfulness)".

However, it still features on the itinerary of a number of tours of "Israel", as do many other parts of the Occupied Territories, most notably East Jerusalem.



Qumran, as featured on the ThinkIsrael website

● HISTORY GCSE: RESISTANCE = TERRORISM

Draft new 'specifications' (i.e. syllabuses) for History GCSEs were recently published, for use in England and Wales. 'Modern World History' courses are the only GCSE History courses that cover the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Under the new specifications the Palestine Liberation Organisation will be examined as a case study of a "terrorist organisation", to be compared with two other case studies — al-Qaeda and the Provisional IRA.

Specialist on Christian Zionism, the Rev Stephen Sizer, said: "This seems to contextualise the Palestinian struggle for national

● A MESSAGE FROM THE WORLD OF HIGH FASHION

Visitors to the Royal Academy may have been surprised to see some unusual shoes on display, as part of the London College of Fashion graduate exhibition. They incorporate traditional Palestinian embroidery involving calligraphic, floral and geometrical motifs.

Said designer Lucette Holland: "I've always wanted to involve myself in the Palestinian cause. This seemed a good way of raising awareness of both the Palestinian struggle and Palestinian identity, whilst benefiting Palestinian trade a little."

The shoes can be ordered direct from: lulove@gmail.com.



self-determination within the framework of the 'war on terror'. I do not believe it will provide an adequate framework for an objective understanding of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, or for that matter of 'the troubles' in Ireland. No attempt is made in the wording of the specification to look at the violence of the PLO in the context of the dispossession of the Palestinians, or the violence of the state of Israel."

Teaching of the course will start in 2009. Since the specifications have yet to be approved by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (www.qca.org.uk) there is still an opportunity for teachers and others to contact the authority to query the approach.

Go to 'Draft GCSEs' on the OCRA website (www.ocr.org.uk) for details of the proposed Modern World History B course. The Chief Executive, Greg Watson, can be reached at: OCR, 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU. There is also a subject Officer for GCSE History.

OBAMA GETS CARRIED AWAY

At a huge meeting of the all-powerful American Israel Public Affairs Committee, his first public address after winning the nomination as the Democratic presidential candidate, Barack Obama declared: "Jerusalem will remain the capital of Israel, and it must remain undivided." In his efforts to demonstrate his unconditional support for Israel he pre-judged one of the most contentious issues in the Middle East and flew in the face of international law, that rejects Israel's annexation of Jerusalem.



The following day a campaign adviser modified this statement, saying that Obama believes "Jerusalem is a final status issue, which means it has to be negotiated between the two parties" as part of "an agreement that they both can live with." He didn't rule out the possibility of the city also serving as the capital of a Palestinian state or Palestinian sovereignty over Arab neighbourhoods.

Nathan Diament, director of public policy for the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations said: "The Orthodox Union is extremely disappointed in this revision of Senator Obama's important statement about Jerusalem".

Morton Klein, president of the Zionist Organization of America, who had originally lauded Obama's statement, called the candidate's later words "troubling". He said: "It means he used the term ['undivided'] inappropriately, possibly to mislead strong supporters of Israel that he supports something he doesn't really believe."

President Abbas responded: "The whole world knows that holy Jerusalem was occupied in 1967 and we will not accept a Palestinian state without having Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state."

Come the elections, Obama is going to have to make up his mind...

HILLARY GOES OVER THE TOP

While Obama vowed during his campaign: "I would do everything in my power to stop Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons" (an issue high on the Zionist agenda), his opponent Hillary Clinton, in an almost hysterical bid to outdo him, said: "I want the Iranians to know that if I'm the president, we will attack Iran," and talked of her readiness to "totally obliterate them". Even hawkish McCain had only threatened to: "Bomb bomb bomb, bomb-bomb Iran"

Eye on the web



• To see our old friend Afif Safieh, for 15 years General Delegate to the UK and then for three years in Washington, and recently posted to Moscow, go to tinyurl.com/59fv6q.

In an in-depth interview on Russian TV he talks about his new job and the prospects for peace in Palestine.

• For a glimpse of life in Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon, scene of the 1982 massacres, see the BBC website via tinyurl.com/5e27am



• For the most recent report on child prisoners held in Israel see www.dci-pal.org

• To get a flavour of Christian Zionism – its unconditional support for Israel and total disregard for human rights – have a look the website of Christians United for Israel (www.cufi.org). Their leading spokesperson, Pastor Hagee, has claimed that supporting the State of Israel is "God's foreign policy". And he means it literally.

• Frank Barat's double interview with Noam Chomsky and Ilan Pappé can be read on www.palestinechronicle.com. These leading Jewish intellectuals, one American, one Israeli, discuss issues such as the notion of Apartheid, applied to Israel, the effectiveness of boycott and one-state v two-state solutions.



• Dr Mustafa Barghouti, who spoke so eloquently at the Nakba rally in London on 10 May, gives an excellent, clear hour-long résumé of the 'shrinking map' of Palestine, from 1947 to June 2004, with the growth of the wall, the demolition of homes in Gaza and the West Bank, the creation of ghettos and the killing and maiming of civilians. Email it to a friend who needs to know the basics: www.washington-report.org/barghouti_presentation.html.

(to the tune of the Beach Boys' 'Barbara Ann' – viewable on YouTube).

As far as support for Israel goes, Clinton's campaign website states: "Hillary Clinton believes that Israel's right to exist in safety as a Jewish state, with defensible borders and an undivided Jerusalem as its capital, secure from violence and terrorism, must never be questioned."



Palestinian academics tour the UK

A motion passed at the Universities and Colleges Union Congress in May 2007 called on the UCU's National Executive Committee to "organise a UK-wide campus tour for Palestinian academic/educational trade unionists". After the cancellation of a tour, which was to have taken place in October 2007, the UCU renewed its invitation to the Palestinian Federation of Unions of University Professors and Employees (PFUUE) and the tour was successfully conducted in April this year.

The members of the delegation were Samia Al-Botmeh and Lisa Taraki from Birzeit University, Hala Yamani from Bethlehem University and Saed Abu-Hijleh from An-Najah National University.

The tour covered the universities of Leeds, Durham, York, Sunderland, Glasgow Caledonian, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Brighton, Sussex, Kent, the College of North East London, Lambeth, Warwick, Birmingham, SOAS, UEL, London Metropolitan and Cambridge. The delegation also met with members of PSC, the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), the Friends of Birzeit University, CAABU, and members of the UCU secretariat, as well as a TUC representative.

The level of support from the UCU was perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that President Linda Newman accompanied delegation members to several of the meetings, introducing the speakers and explaining the purpose of the tour. Other UCU officials were in close contact with delegation members and contributed significantly to developing ideas for further cooperation between PFUUE and the UCU.

Call for boycott

The speakers were welcomed warmly at all venues, and the Palestinian



The delegation, from l to r: Samia Al-Botmeh, Saed Abu-Hijleh, Lisa Taraki, Hala Yamani

call for the academic boycott of Israeli institutions was well received. Speakers outlined the main features of the apartheid regime in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the siege on Palestinian higher education. They explained that the realities on the ground and the utter failure of the "peace process" call for a new strategy. Only by exerting concerted pressure on Israel to respect international law can Palestinian rights be rectified, and international civil society, including academics, play an important role in bringing this about. The rationale for the academic boycott in the face

of the complicity of the Israeli academy in the structures of domination was explained, and the various forms that the academic boycott might take were suggested by the speakers. The speakers also noted that Palestinian civil society had recently issued a call for a comprehensive campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions, and that the call for an academic boycott was part of this overall strategy.

At the conclusion of the tour, delegates met with members of the UCU secretariat to explore areas of future cooperation. These include facilitation of access by PFUUE to international academic unions and institutions (such as Education International); developing academic exchanges between Palestinian and UK academics; campaigning for freedom of movement for Palestinian academics, especially those in the besieged Gaza Strip; gaining access to European funding sources for Palestinian universities and academics; and organising tours of UK academics to Palestine.

The members of the Palestinian delegation returned to Palestine greatly encouraged by the high level of support for Palestinian rights within the UK academic community. Maintaining close ties with the UCU and academics in general is a high priority for Palestinian academics.

Complicity of Israeli academia condemned

On 28 May the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) Annual Congress in Manchester passed a motion, by an overwhelming majority, re-affirming both its opposition to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and its determination to highlight the extent of the complicity of Israeli Higher Education Institutions in the occupation.

Congress resolved that "**colleagues be asked to consider the moral and political implications of educational links with Israeli institutions, and to discuss the occupation with individuals and institutions concerned, including Israeli colleagues with whom they are collaborating**". More specifically, they resolved that "**Ariel College, an explicitly colonising institution in the West Bank, be investigated under the formal Greylisting Procedure**". (Greylisting is UCU's procedure for action against institutions, in the UK or abroad, which break normal rules of behaviour; if an institution is greylisted, members are expected not to co-operate with it in any way.)

A significant factor in the strengthening of the union's position was undoubtedly the visit by Linda Newman, UCU President, to the Occupied Territories as part of a PSC trade union delegation. Having

been against last year's motion, this year she seconded the motion. Seeing the situation for herself had transformed her attitude.

The motion underlined the issues of complicity that drive the call for boycott. Opponents had threatened legal action against UCU if they even discussed the motion, claiming that actions against the occupation would encourage anti-semitism. However at Congress Sally Hunt, UCU's General Secretary, dismissed these legal threats, saying that the union would not be bullied about what it could or could not discuss.

Congress passed two further motions on Palestine/Israel, one condemning the blockade of Gaza, the other drawing attention to the shameful behaviour of Histadrut, the Israeli TU confederation, towards the Palestinian Confederation.

UCU's resolutions represent a major step forward in the campaign against Israeli occupation, but also demand a lot of work, if we are to turn paper commitment into practical action.

Mike Cushman

LSE UCU delegate to Congress

For more information see www.bricup.org.uk

Call to lift the blockade on Gaza students

A campaign has been launched to expose the continuing Israeli policy towards students in the Gaza strip. 'Let the Palestinians Study' has been launched with Khaled Al-Mudallal, a Bradford University student who for six months last year was detained in Gaza as a consequence of the Israeli siege policy. Khaled was freed after a broad-based campaign in Britain, supported by the PSC alongside Bradford Students' Union, NUS Black Students' Campaign, the lecturers' union the UCU, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies and others.

Now Khaled, the NUS Black Students' Campaign and PSC are working with the Israeli human rights group Gisha to repeat the success of his campaign, this time calling for all students who have been awarded places in universities around the world to be allowed to travel outside of Gaza. Recently campaigning pressure in the US forced authorities to restore prestigious Fulbright scholarships to Palestinian students prevented from leaving Gaza by the Israeli government.

Campaigners are calling on the British government to insist the

Israeli authorities allow Palestinian students their right to education. Khaled said: "Campaigners in Britain played an important role in putting pressure on the Israeli government to allow me to leave and return to my studies. The new 'Let the Palestinians Study' campaign hopes to achieve the same success."

NUS Black Students' Officer Ruqayyah Collector described the situation in Gaza as "a full-scale humanitarian crisis", stating that the "Palestinians urgently need our solidarity, to know that they are not being ignored by the international community – and our government urgently needs to listen to calls for the right to education."

Raising the issue of the right to education, and the way in which it has been disregarded by Israel, is an important way of building solidarity in Britain amongst students. It also highlights how Israel's siege of Gaza has created widespread hardship and curtailed human freedoms. Following Khaled's release, the National Union of Students made the unprecedented move of adopting a policy calling for an end to the siege of Gaza.

Visit www.letpalstudy.co.uk to sign the petition and find out what you can do to support the campaign.



Khaled Al-Mudallal

American university backs academic boycott

The Senate of the prestigious American University of Cairo (AUC) passed the following resolution on 14 May:

"The AUC Senate

- condemns Israel's systematic measures that strangle Palestinian academic development – from curfews, checkpoints, severe control over research laboratories, to not allowing Palestinian academics with dual citizenship and international academics to resume their work at Palestinian universities
- supports the growing voices of global civil society organizations, and prominent individuals, calling for various forms of boycott of Israel
- Calls for AUC faculty, staff, and students to refrain from dealings with Israeli Academia within the AUC environment, and consider divestment of the AUC endowment from all companies investing in Israel"

Award for LSE Pal Soc

The LSE Palestine Society won the NUS Black Students 'Campaign of the Year Award' at their annual conference in Coventry, on 1 June. The campaign culminated this February in an overwhelming vote by LSE NUS calling for divestment from companies that provide military and commercial support for the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, and condemning the decades of human rights abuses and systematic oppression that has occurred as a result. A spokesperson said: "We are delighted that the efforts of our society have gained national recognition. We will continue to defend Palestinian rights and refuse to legitimise racism, oppression, colonisation and Apartheid."

An olive tree for peace

On 9 May, to celebrate their recent twinning with An-Najah University in Nablus on the occupied West Bank, the University of Manchester Students Union organised the ceremonial planting of an olive tree. Said a spokesperson: "The twinning with An-Najah has had a huge profile and been a great success in supporting a Palestinian's right to education. This summer several Manchester Students are visiting An-Najah and studying there as part of the twinning. Some of the twinning activities have included debates held over video link and articles from An-Najah which are published in Manchester Student Direct. The campaign has been a vibrant and lively one which has involved many students." For more information contact: manuni@actionpalestine.org.



An-Najah University: twinned with Manchester

International support for Gaza fishermen

On 16 June, the fishermen of Gaza took to the sea claiming: "The right to live! The right to fish! End the siege on Gaza!"

There are 3,500 registered fishermen in Gaza directly supporting 40,000 people. Their industry used to bring in £5m a year, but has now been brought to a virtual standstill by Israel's siege of Gaza. While they used to fish 20 miles out to sea, where they could catch sardine as they migrated from the Nile delta up towards Turkey during the spring, they are now allowed, at best, to fish less than six miles offshore. Those who venture further run the risk of machinegun fire from Israeli naval vessels.

Sometimes the boats are not allowed to leave harbour for months at a time. In any case, shortage of diesel fuel and spare parts means that many boats can no longer run.

In response to the protest, supported on the spot by international activists headed by Dr. Eyad Sarraj, psychiatrist and human rights activist, Israeli peace activists hired a catamaran in Herzliya Marina, bearing a banner in Hebrew,



Pozzuoli, near Naples, in solidarity with Gaza



Arabic and English: "Gaza: Stop the Siege, Let the Ceasefire Sail!" In the event, they were prevented from sailing because they were carrying Palestinian flags.

In Italy, the Italian Lega Pesca, the oldest and largest organisation of 13,000 Italian cooperatives representing more than 400,000 fishermen, expressed its "solidarity with the fishermen in Gaza, regarding the very serious human, social and economic conditions in which they are illegally forced to live in." At fishing ports around Italy many demonstrations of solidarity with the fishermen in Gaza took place.

In Sweden, the President of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering said: "As we sit here, the fishermen of the Gaza Strip have left their boats in the water. The fishermen are protesting for their rights to fish their waters so they can live. Our delegation [14 MEPs who were in Israel and Palestine from 30 May to 2 June] promised to support the fishermen. In the name of the European Parliament, I would therefore offer my support to the fishermen."



Palestinian TU federation calls for unity

In a mass rally in the West Bank on 1 May, thousands of Palestinians gathered under PGFTU banners calling for national unity, as the best form of defence. The main theme was: 'National unity and democratic dialogue – not confrontation!'

TSSA backs boycott of Israeli goods

The Transport Salaried Staffs Association, representing 30,000 members nationwide, is one of the 19 national trade unions affiliated to PSC. In the past it has called for an end to the EU blockade on the Palestinian people, for the release of the Palestinian parliamentarians held by Israel, and an end to Britain's arms trade with Israel.

At this year's conference in May several motions relating to Israel/Palestine were passed.

One expressed deep concern about the severe deterioration in the living conditions of Palestinians especially in Gaza. Another called on the British government and the EU to take stronger steps to ensure Israel abides by UN resolutions and called on the TUC to organise and support a boycott of Israeli goods, until such time as Palestinians can receive the same rights and privileges as do the citizens of Israel, in the same way as the boycott of South African goods and products was a significant factor in ending apartheid in South Africa.

An emergency motion was also passed which instructed the union to disaffiliate from the Trade Union Friends of Israel.

BDS Action Plan

On 11 May a day-long session of brainstorming and planning was attended by 40 PSC members from 17 branches and by representatives of sister organisations such as Scottish PSC, JBIG (Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods) IMRI (the Interfaith Group for Morally Responsible Investment) and BRICUP (British Committee for Universities in Palestine).

It produced proposals for the next eight months, across the whole range of BDS areas, and identified the people or groups who will lead the different campaigns. It all adds up to an Action Plan with, hopefully, a powerful cumulative impact.

• Consumer action

The overarching theme is the relaunch of the BIG programme of consumer boycott in September, which has links with the other action areas such as the issue of settlement produce and firms complicit in the occupation and dispossession of the Palestinian people (see www.bigcampaign.org for details).

The national relaunch on 1 September will be accompanied by a press release and letters will go out to all major supermarket HQs – Tesco, Waitrose, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Asda and the Co-op. Branches are being asked to write to and leaflet local supermarkets, and in late September there will be a Campaign Week of action stalls, pickets and demos.

With regard to specific companies, effective research, campaigning, lobbying and action has already been carried out locally e.g. against Agrexco in Brighton, Veolia in Portsmouth and Eden Springs in Scotland. What is now needed is the active sharing of the accumulated information across the country.

A hard, but essential, nut to crack is the EU Trade Association Agreement, under which Israel is exempt from trade duty on exports (illicitly, in the case of settlement goods). There are strong arguments for demanding suspension of the Agreement, or at least for the investigation of Israel's contravention of the human rights conditions (Article 2). Pressure must be kept up both on the Council of Ministers and the Parliament on this issue, via MEPs and EU Ministers.

• Academic, cultural and sporting boycott

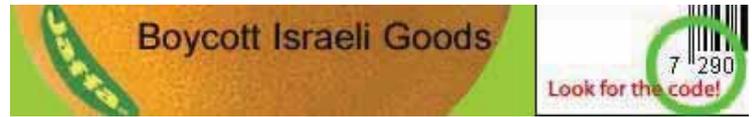
As with the South African anti-Apartheid campaign, the boycotting of cultural and sporting links and relationships has immense potential for impact, both on Israel and with the public in Britain.

The Israeli reaction to the AUT's 2006 original motions in favour of boycotting three Israeli universities showed how sensitive and important this area of work is, and how virulent the Zionist opposition. There have been significant breakthroughs on this front (see page 17) and the movement Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (www.apjp.org) is also gathering momentum.

PSC and BRICUP are formulating a clear call for the general cultural boycott, based on the PACBI statement (see www.pacbi.org), which will be launched before the November lobby of Parliament. The focus will be on Israeli institutions, institutions that officially support Israel, any celebrations of the Israeli state and funding for Israel from arts councils. There will be a call not to visit Israel as a tourist, or perform there or take part in cultural or sporting events, with detailed information on the latter being provided on the BIG website.

• Divestment

Fund divestment is an area of campaigning that focuses on corporate constituencies – private firms, local councils, churches, trade unions – an extremely effective way of raising the issues and raising consciousness.



A good point of entry is to approach trade union Fund Managers to examine their investments and divest from Israeli-supporting institutions – with a view to raising this at the trade union conferences of 2009. Progress has been made on divestment in the case of church portfolios, most notably in the US, within the Methodist church. In the UK, moves within the Anglican church to divest were hurriedly suppressed, but there is scope for progress.

• Faith group action

All faith communities can be approached: Christian, including Methodist, Catholic, Baptist, Anglican, as well as Jewish and Muslim communities.

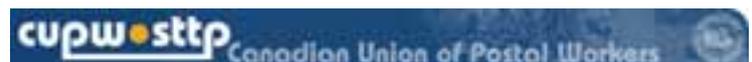
Pilgrimages are a great way of seeing what is happening on the ground – if they are properly organised – and of benefiting the Palestinian economy. IMRI are also considering organising 'faith leaders' visits to Palestine, as personal experience has proved in the past to be more effective than any verbal argument.

• Trade Union action

Great progress has been made in gaining support for Palestine in the trade unions, but the strength of support for boycott varies greatly, partly according to the economic and legal vulnerability of particular groups of workers. But the history of TU support in the South African struggle was so crucial that this is clearly an area of action that must be built up as creatively as possible.

A positive approach is the strengthening of relations between British TUs and Palestinian workers' organisations, while research is needed into the potential for divestment, with regard to TU pensions funds.

If you would like to be involved in any of the above campaigns contact Zoe Mars at: zoe.mars@palestinecampaign.org. A second Workshop will be held in November, probably in York, to elaborate on the Action Plan and review progress.



Breakthrough in Canada

At their annual convention in April, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) passed an historic resolution in support of the global campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israeli Apartheid.

It is the first time in North American history that a national union has passed a BDS resolution which recognises Israel as an apartheid state, re-affirms the Palestinians' Right of Return and expresses support for boycott and divestment from Israel. It was passed almost unanimously after nearly one hour of discussion on the convention floor.

CUPW represents more than 50,000 postal workers across Canada and has a proud history of international solidarity. During the South African apartheid years, CUPW was at the forefront of labour solidarity with South African workers and engaged in concrete actions such as the refusal to handle mail from South Africa.

The Union also committed to working "... with Palestinian solidarity and human rights organizations to develop an educational campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and the political and economic support of Canada for these practices."

See www.cupw.ca for more details

Rallying round Palestine

The 60th anniversary of the Nakba fired PSC members with a new determination to get the message across about the monstrous injustices still being inflicted on the Palestinians.

The national rally on 10 May attracted some 15,000 people who came from all over the country to march past the Houses of Parliament and attend a rally in Trafalgar Square. Then the colourful *Palestine Lives!* rally in Manchester on 7 June saw over 1000 people enjoying a fantastic celebration of Palestinian art, culture and history.

The London rally was organised by PSC, the British Muslim Initiative and the Palestinian Forum and was supported by a range of trade unions and pressure groups.

Speaker Dr Mustafa Barghouti, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said that the 'peace process' of Annapolis was an illusion and accused western governments of hypocrisy in undermining democracy in Palestine while supporting apartheid in Israel and the OPTs.

Richard Burden MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Palestine, reminded people of the ongoing plight of the refugees from 1948, especially those in Gaza: "Gaza is dotted with masses of cesspits of raw sewage, as deadly as any bomb or missile," he said.

Tony Benn found some optimism in an increasing understanding for what is happening to the Palestinian people, while Respect MP George Galloway reminded the crowd of Britain's historic responsibility for the tragedy.

Manchester's

Palestine Lives! event began on the Friday evening with around 200 people listening to Israeli historian Professor Ilan Pappé explaining how the "transfer" of 1948 was part of a carefully planned strategy of ethnic cleansing. Alan Hart, author of "Zionism: Real Enemy of the Jews", said the oppression of the Palestinians was resulting in dehumanising Jewish people in Israel while Palestinian people, despite their oppression, were maintaining their humanity.



The next day people thronged to the city's Albert Square to watch performers, visit stalls and exhibitions, sample delicious food and listen to speeches by Linda Clair (Manchester PSC), Baroness Jenny Tonge (Lib Dem), Musheir al Farrar (Palestinian living in Sheffield), Khalid (from Gaza), Linda Ramsden (Director of ICAHD UK) and Richard Kuper (Jews for Justice for Palestinians).

A contingent of more than 40 from the **Sheffield** branch had a very successful day at the rally with displays about the Break the Siege of Gaza boat project and children's projects. The branch, which contributes to the Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund, received a single fantastic donation of £300.

Branch members thought the rally was a great opportunity for Palestinians living in the UK to see the depth of support for them and for British people to appreciate Palestinian culture. "Musheir did a great speech and then he and his nephew Mohammad made mobile phone contact with meetings being held in Jabalia and Khan Younis and we all chanted messages of support to people in Gaza – which was a very inspiring moment."

Sheffield also held a vigil on 16 June in solidarity with a demonstration by the fishermen of Gaza. For a report on the impact of the siege on Gazan fishermen (see page 18).

PSC boldly goes...

The **Bangkok** branch of PSC got going when ex-pat Stuart Ward discovered that he and office colleague, Sune Larsson, had like-minded views on the Middle East conflict. A series of events including film showings was



March to Manchester city centre

being sponsored by the Israeli embassy at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand so Stuart persuaded the club also to dedicate an evening to showing Mohammed Alatar's documentary, "The Iron Wall", followed by a panel discussion.

Having created a PSC membership nucleus they worked hard at cultivating local media. "This has yielded excellent results with many letters and articles published," says Stuart. Other activities include a successful panel debate "Where is that Palestinian State?" at Bangkok's main university.

With nearly 40 paying members already, Stuart says: "I'm very encouraged with our development. We face a lot of obstacles, however, with a media which doesn't really cover issues like the Middle East, a population which is traditionally reticent to involve itself in politics and a national discomfort with anything that reeks of conflict, confrontation and strife."

Support for Palestine is flourishing in a slightly less tropical climate, in the **Orkney Islands**, perched on the NE tip of Scotland. Founding member Tony Reid, says: "Orkney is an amazingly political place; we have 30 – 40 people at meetings. The local school is keen to twin with a school in Palestine; with the help of modern technology we can get a real dialogue going between young Palestinians and our children here." They have joined forces with the local branch of Amnesty International, who also campaign on Palestine, and get regular updates on the situation in the Occupied Territories from activist Ian Bell, a worker in conflict resolution, who has been several times to Gaza.



Bangkok member posts letter to the Israeli Ambassador

speakers.

In an inspiring event in May, "Voices from Palestine", they set up video links which enabled people from Lancaster to "gain a sense of Palestine which goes beyond the images many people have become immune to."

Nakba Day around the country

Most branches made imaginative efforts to raise awareness of the 60th anniversary of the Nakba. **Oxford** joined with the Oxford Arab Cultural Society and Oxford Palestine Society for two weeks of events, including talks and a dramatic vigil in which they read out the names of 600 Palestine villages destroyed by the Israelis in 1948 and laid a candle on a large map for each village.

That same week some pro-Israel Oxford students, reacting to the successful 'Israeli Apartheid' weeks organised by Palestinian students, tried to organise a week of celebrating Israel. They took over Broad Street with free food, camel rides, belly dancing and stalls, but demonstrations by PSC and Oxford Women in Black were soon joined by sympathisers and local Palestinians including children with posters saying "Not Free Humus - Free Palestine!".

The Israeli supporters had organised meetings on "Israel supporting the Environment", "Israel Saving Lives Worldwide" etc, to each of which the Palestinian students prepared leaflets with hard-hitting questions. But it turned out that so few people went to their meetings that it was hardly worth leafletting them.

On a more sombre note, Oxford announced the death of Faith Minnion, highly-valued member secretary of the branch, on 29 May. Believing that it was necessary to put real pressure on Israel, she was one of the main organisers of regular pickets of shops to boycott Israeli goods. She organised the weekly stall in Cornmarket, and ensured a PSC presence at many events.

York PSC held two demonstrations: one focusing on the massacre at Deir Yassin, the other on the massacre at Tantura. They also produced a "Nakba Diary" detailing atrocities committed in 1948 and are releasing sections of it at specific times of the year in order to concentrate attention on these events (see www.yorkpsc.org.uk).

Another large public meeting in April attracted around 200 people. Speaker Clare Short gave an overview of the situation and Asad Khan, a medical practitioner from Manchester, spoke of the plight of ordinary people based upon his time in the West Bank.

In addition they helped organise Palestine Lives!, continued to run stalls in the city and at union, political and church conferences in the region and held successful talks and film showings.

In **Bristol** over 150 attended the Nakba Conference on April 26th where Maha Rahwanji, Kerry McCarthy MP, and Ilan Pappé delivered excellent speeches. A briefing document on Labour Friends Of Israel delivered in one of the workshops is available at <http://israel-palestine.janineroberts.com>.

On 15 May the branch held a Nakba 60 Day of Action including a tree-planting ceremony and boycott stalls outside local stores including Morrisons and the Coop. "We're glad to report one local independent store has now withdrawn all their Israeli organic produce pending more research." A full report with pictures is available at <http://bristol.indymedia.org/article/688343>.

Talks, walks, films

Birmingham's Nakba Day vigil attracted local press coverage and they also ran an event with the regional group of Friends of Sabeel on Christian Zionism, addressed by leading expert Stephen Sizer.

Brent invited local MP, Sarah Teather, to talk about her recent visit to Palestine.



The town centre stall of Lancaster PSC

Another thriving new branch is **Lancaster**, which began less than a year ago after one member returned from volunteering in Palestine. Though small, the members say: "We have demonstrated that neither money nor large numbers are necessary to create a vibrant, active group."

They have significantly raised the profile of Palestine in the local community through film nights, stalls in the town centre, fund-raising gigs and exhibitions, forging links with local churches and inviting

The conference organised by the **Glasgow** branch at the University on May 17 had excellent speakers: Maha from Brent branch spoke of her father's experience of having to leave Jaffa in 1948, while Ruth Tanner of War on Want spoke of the difficulties of working in Gaza and Henry Maitles of Jews for a Just Peace spoke of the need for anti-Zionist Jews to be clearly heard. Andree Ryan from Dundee gave an excellent presentation on her recent work as an Ecumenical Accompanier in the West Bank.

A Land Day March organised by **Halifax** to Hebden Bridge on March 30 attracted around 50 participants and lots of attention and ended with a jolly meal in the Trades Club.

Regular talks have included one based on "Occupied Minds", a study of the Israeli psyche, and they have shown two films, Encounter Point and Occupation 101, in different locations to attract a wider audience. A photographic exhibition in June, "A Palestinian Flavour", showed the work of photo-journalist Muthanna Al Qadi who tries to break media stereotypes of Palestinians and to highlight the nobility and resilience of a culture which survives in the teeth of suffering and deprivation.

Exeter held a fringe meeting at the GMB conference in Plymouth at which Joni McDougal (GMB Int Officer) and Dan Judelson (JFJFP) spoke passionately about their recent visits to Palestine. The branch organised a public meeting in February with PSC Patrons Ilan Pappé and Ghada Karmi, attended by about 200 people. In May they hosted three women from Physicians for Human Rights Israel (see page 11 for a full report of their tour). On International Women's Day in March they hosted all nine women from the twinning tour who visited four schools and addressed a lively public meeting.

Cambridge and **Kingston** kept up their weekly stalls while the latter also ran a stall at Kingston Green Fair and, with **West London**, organised a screening of "Jerusalem – East Side Story" at the Richmond Filmhouse, introduced by Victoria Brittain.

Hackney hosted Mike Marqusee talking about his highly acclaimed book, "If I Am Not for Myself: Journey of an Anti-Zionist Jew" and made the case for Palestine at the huge Million Women Rise rally in Trafalgar Square (pictured).



Action in the OPTs

A delegation from **Brighton** visited Al Farisiya, in the Jordan Valley in April, where about 200 people live in tents with a few greenhouses, a wooden cowshed, a small chicken and dove coop, and a latrine made of tin and plastic. On 11 March the Israeli army cut the pipes from their spring, claiming that the water belongs to Israel and that the villagers cannot use it. Their only water source is now 7km away, plus used water from the nearby illegal Israeli settlement.

There are already demolition orders on two of the family tents, the cattle shed, the chicken and dove coop, and the latrine. The villagers believe that the Israelis want to get rid of them so they can expand the nearby settlements of Rotem and Mahola.

Said a supporter: "The villagers have documentation confirming their legal rights to the land. We need to let the Israeli authorities know that the villagers are not alone, that they have our support and that we are watching every move that the Israelis make."

Bethlehem Passport

Joanne Moston, organiser of the **Cheltenham and Gloucester** branch, has been to Bethlehem so many times that she has been awarded the honorary Bethlehem Passport, created to distinguish people "who have made an important contribution to the city's life and who act as ambassadors for Bethlehem in their own country".

Joanne worked in the city 1994-2000, during which time she guided around 50 groups, taking them to Deheisha refugee camp as well as the holy places. Since 2000 she has visited 34 times taking about 12 groups and raising substantial funds. The award was presented to her in a simple ceremony at the Casa Nova hotel next to Church of the Nativity. She says: "It was given to me because of the services rendered and funds raised for the children of Bethlehem, especially in Deheisha camp."

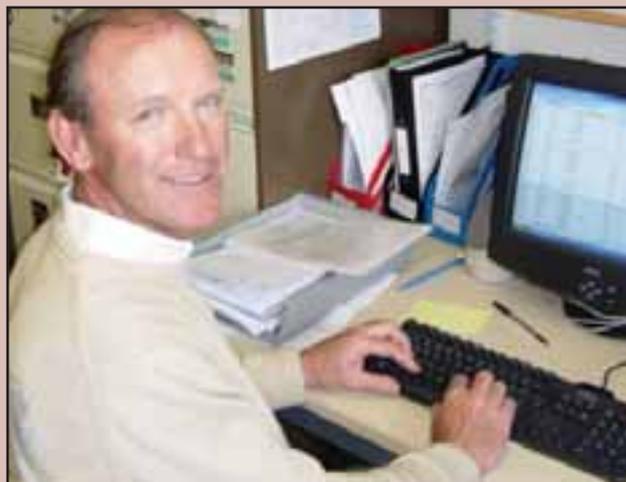


Finance in good hands

Recent additions to PSC's vital volunteer force are Steve and Anne James, who are taking care of the key area of finance. Steve became Treasurer at February's AGM while Anne has taken charge of PSC merchandise, from storing goods in their loft to chasing up invoices.

Both come fresh from East Jerusalem where for three years Steve was CEO of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital which mostly serves the Palestinian communities in the OPTs. Middle East politics and history caught Steve's attention as a schoolboy. He studied Arabic in Lebanon and spent much of his career with a multinational company in the Middle East.

Through witnessing the way Palestinians were treated, it became clear to Steve and Anne that Israel is not interested in a just peace. "When we returned to the UK, we decided we should get involved as constructively as possible; hence our work with PSC," he says.



Steve James at work

Peace cyclists ride again!

More cyclists are needed to join the 2008 Peace Cycle, which will be a fabulous cycle ride from Amman to Jerusalem to mark the 60th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. This will be followed by a rally in Brussels and a presentation to MEPs at the European Parliament. As part of their campaign, the Peace Cyclists are calling for the suspension of the EU-Israel trade agreement: you can sign the petition on their website.

Arriving in Amman on 14 August, the Peace Cycle will set off the next day to visit a Palestinian refugee camp. Then they will travel by coach to Nazareth and cycle through the West Bank, staying with local families.

After arriving in East Jerusalem on 31 August, they will have five days free before flying via Amman to Brussels for the presentation on 9 September. Participants have to raise sponsorship and can do the whole trip or join either leg.

The Peace Cycle was founded by Brian Moran and Laura Abraham who were, coincidentally, both planning separate bike rides for peace. The first Peace Cycle, in 2004, was an extraordinary event involving 25 cyclists from 10 countries riding from the UK through Europe to Palestine, getting great media coverage as they went.

The second Peace Cycle reached Jerusalem in September 2006, where they were greeted by patron Mordechai Vanunu. The aims of this year's event include campaigning for justice, raising funds for Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP), cycling alongside the newly formed Palestinian Cyclist Club and demanding the EU acts to end the occupation.



Jerusalem, here we come!

To find out more about the Peace Cycle, see www.thepeacecycle.com. To register to take part, e-mail cyclists@thepeacecycle.com or write to: 1st Floor, Eden House, 62-68 Eden Street, Kingston-Upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 1EL. Tel: 0794 105 6616.

For more information about MAP, see their website: www.map-uk.org.

Exciting news from Zaytoun

On 7 May, the Fair Trade Foundation and the Fairtrade Labelling Organisation held a workshop in Ramallah on the process of fair-trade certification for Palestinian olives and olive oil. The feedback so far has been very positive; hopefully the whole process of certification will be complete for this year's harvest!



Zaytoun have also just received their first shipment of olives — organically grown and sourced through Canaan Fair Trade in Jenin. There are two types to try:

- Nabali green olives, pickled in the Palestinian tradition with olive oil, water and salt.
- 'Tree ripened' black olives which are smothered in Palestinian olive oil and seasoned with sea salt.

Nabali is an olive indigenous to Palestine, which has been cultivated since Roman times. The green olives are picked early in the harvest; the fruit left on the tree to ripen is picked later when it is black. The green olives have a strong and distinctive taste that those who have been to Palestine will recognise. The black olives have a mellower yet still rich taste.

Zaytoun would like your feedback (literally!) on these new products, so they can relay your comments to the producers.

The new season olive oil from the 2007 harvest in Palestine will be arriving in the UK towards the end of July (though Zaytoun still have plenty of oil in stock for anyone who needs it before then).

More information on Zaytoun's work, and on their upcoming trip to help with the olive harvest (9 – 16 November) can found on their website: www.zaytoun.org.



Gala benefit performance

On 22 October a star-studded cast of actors, writers and musicians will perform at the Cadogan Hall, to raise funds for PSC's campaigning work.

Two of the world-famous musicians taking part in 'Palestine Aloud' are guitarists John Williams and John Etheridge (pictured). John Williams (a Patron of PSC) explained why he felt it was important to support the Campaign: "PSC is playing a crucial role in raising public awareness of the human and political situation in Palestine, and in challenging the British government's complicity in Israel's illegal and punitive policies."

Some of the best known names from the theatre world taking part are Juliet Stevenson, Colin Firth, Corin Redgrave, Julie Christie and Miriam Margolyes – with Sam West directing.

See back cover for details.



Visit Palestine and meet the people

Visiting Palestine is easier than you think. Whether you go as a long-term volunteer or on a short study tour, there are organisations that will help you make the most of your stay.

Over the last ten years the ways of visiting Palestine have multiplied, even as Israel has sought to deny entry to 'activists'. For the seriously committed, there are organisations like the **Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme** (see inside back cover), whose volunteers, by their very presence, provide protection for Palestinians trying to go about their daily lives and who agree to give talks about their experiences on returning to the UK.

The **International Women's Peace Service** are also seeking new volunteers to join them in Palestine. An international team of women based in the Salfit district of the West Bank, they provide accompaniment to Palestinian civilians, document and intervene non-violently in human rights abuses and help coordinating teams of internationals during the olive harvest.

"Volunteering with IWPS provided a powerful opportunity to deepen my understanding of daily life under Occupation," said Katie, a long term volunteer, "and being based in a village enabled me to meet many people and learn about rural life in Palestine."

For further information see www.iwps.info.



IWPS volunteers at work

organise 10-day tours every spring and autumn, giving participants the chance to meet with people from both sides of the divide. This autumn they are leading a specialised medical tour (see page 11), but they also provide tailor-made tours for small groups, and specialise in visiting the Old City of Jerusalem. A regular feature of their activities is the 'Re-building Experience' summer camp where you help to re-build Palestinian homes destroyed by the Israelis. For more details see www.icahd.org or contact info@icahd.org.

The **Olive Co-op** is a Manchester-based workers' co-operative that has five years of experience of taking visitors to Palestine and Israel. The tours are usually themed, but all are suitable for anyone wanting to gain a general understanding of the current situation, to see sites of historic, cultural, political and religious significance, and to visit refugee camps.

Upcoming are their Dialogue Tour (11 - 18 October 2008), which will focus on grassroots organisations forming links across ethnic, religious, economic, political and geographical divides, while the

If you are interested in a short trip, several organisations run general interest tours or more specialised ones. Many people in the UK will have heard Jeff Halper speak – head of the **Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions** (ICAHD) – who

Architecture, History and Culture Tour (21 - 28 October) will explore some of the ways in which architecture is being used and abused in the current conflict, from the construction of para-military hilltop settlements to the dispossession of Palestinians of their cultural and religious heritage.

Olive Co-op's Teachers' Tour (26 October - 2 November) will visit Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem and Nablus, offering participants the opportunity to hear first hand about the effect of the occupation on Palestinian education and about the increased militarisation of the Israeli education system. Ideas for tours in 2009 include an Artists' Tour and a Legal/Justice Tour.

For the linguistically minded, Arabic language courses in Bethlehem are available through the Olive Co-op throughout the year. Most universities on the West Bank also run Arabic language courses, which often include community work; www.fobzu.org is a good source of information on this.

To find out more see www.olivecoop.com or call their office on 0161 273 1970.

The Palestine-based **Alternative Tourism Group**, who published the excellent guide 'Palestine & Palestinians', offers everything from challenging one-day tours of Bethlehem plus Hebron to longer tours of all the main sites of interest in the West Bank. They also have long experience of providing services for visiting delegations and conferences, from transport to room bookings to excursions.



Helping with the olive harvest

ATG are perhaps best known for their annual Olive Picking Programmes, which will this year take place from 25 October to 3 November. This agricultural event is of special significance to the Palestinian economy, when the energies and efforts of whole communities are mobilised. (Since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000, the olive harvest has been overshadowed by Israel's closures, roadblocks, expropriation of land, as well as by repeated attacks on Palestinian farmers by Israeli settlers.) Part of the programme this year will be helping with planting new olive trees; in the last seven years alone over half a million trees have been uprooted by the Israelis in the West Bank.

However, besides picking olives, the programme features introductory presentations about the current situation in Palestine and the effect of the Apartheid Wall, tours of the Old City of Jerusalem, of Bethlehem and Hebron, in addition to cultural events and social gatherings. You learn a lot and meet a lot of people just in one week!

A new initiative is their 'Pilgrimages for Transformation' in which pilgrims will have the opportunity of meeting members of local Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities, in addition to visiting the holy sites.

See www.atg.ps for details (their brochure can be downloaded from the website).

A new Patron for PSC

Harold Pinter, acclaimed playwright, director, actor, poet and staunch campaigner for social justice, has recently agreed to become a Patron of PSC.

In 2005, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. In announcing the award, Horace Engdahl, Chairman of the Swedish Academy, said that Pinter was an artist “who in his plays uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression’s closed rooms”.

Harold Pinter is well known for his outspoken views on a wide range of political issues and has



Award for Mohammed Omer

On 16 June, in the plush surroundings of the Bafta HQ on Piccadilly, two young men came to collect the Martha Gellhorn Prize – for journalism that “has penetrated the established version of events and told an unpalatable truth”, and that exposes establishment propaganda, or “official drive”, as Martha Gellhorn herself called it.

Both are independent journalists working in highly dangerous environments: Dahr Jamail in Iraq, and Mohammed Omer in Gaza. At 24, Mohammed is the youngest journalist ever to be awarded the prize.

Many people will be familiar with Mohammed’s photo-website, rafahtoday.org, through which has documented the daily traumas and heroic endurance of the population. More recently he has found outlets for his reports in the western media, such as the UK’s New Statesman.

As John Pilger said, it is all the more astonishing that someone who is, effectively, a prisoner should bear witness so fearlessly to one of the greatest injustices of our time.

Receiving the award, Mohammed said he was accepting it on behalf of the people of Gaza, and that he was looking forward to the day when he could in fact give up the job of war correspondent in his own country.



Dahr Jamail (left) and Mohammed Omer (right) at the award ceremony

STOP PRESS:

Attempting to return to Gaza on 28 June, Mohammed was strip-searched at gunpoint by Israeli soldiers at the Jordanian border, abused and beaten unconscious. He recovered consciousness in a Palestinian hospital.

The Dutch embassy in Tel Aviv, who had organised Mohammed’s trip and secured the necessary permits, protested to the Israeli Foreign Ministry and a spokesman from the Dutch Foreign Ministry said: “We are taking this whole incident very seriously as we don’t believe the behaviour of the Israeli officials is in accordance with a modern democracy.” He added: “We are further concerned about the mistreatment of an internationally renowned journalist trying to go about his daily business.”

PeopleforPalestine

campaigned fiercely against the violations of international law committed by the American government and supported by this government. At an anti-war rally he famously described the US as “a country run by a bunch of criminals ... with Tony Blair as a hired Christian thug” and called the war on Iraq “a pre-meditated attack of mass murder”.

On Palestine, Pinter has joined other Jewish intellectuals in distancing himself from Israel’s policies and became a founder member of Independent Jewish Voices, which prioritises human rights above notions of group loyalty. On the occasion of Israel’s 60th anniversary, IJV published an advertisement saying it was impossible to support the country that “for decades has occupied the territory and lives of its Palestinian neighbours, surrounded them with settlers, barriers and checkpoints, confiscated their land, demolished their homes, uprooted their trees, subjected them to daily humiliations, mass detentions, periodic sieges and deadly incursions”.

On 15 May, his name was among those of 115 leading writers, artists and public figures who signed a statement appearing in the Times that called for an end to the Israeli occupation and upholding the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees.

Pinter was also one of the Patrons of the first Palestine Festival of Literature (see page 27), held in May in the Occupied Territories. Like the late Edward Said, he is a believer in “the power of culture, against the culture of power”.

Peace activist jailed

For four years Mousa Abu Maria has dedicated himself to non-violent protest against the Israeli occupation. He has planted hundreds of olive trees, marched against the Wall, removed roadblocks and helped set up an organic farming co-operative in his home village of Beit Ummar, near Hebron.

As co-founder of the Palestine Solidarity Project, Mousa is well known to Israeli and international peace activists in the West Bank. But that didn’t save him when Israeli security forces raided his home at 4am on 11 April and took him away.

He was interrogated about activities he left behind long ago – as a hot-headed 17-year-old, Mousa joined Islamic Jihad and threw stones at soldiers. He served five years in jail during which he became convinced that non-violence was the way forward, and since then has never strayed from the peaceful path.

Yet the Israelis have put Mousa, 29, in “administrative detention” where he joins nearly 1000 other Palestinians imprisoned without any charge being brought against them or any evidence laid before them.

His American-Jewish fiancée, Becka Wolf, a co-founder of PSP, says: “It is very threatening to the Israeli government to have a Palestinian who wants to unify his people in a popular, unarmed struggle. It is dangerous, because it might succeed.”

Mousa intends to take his case to the High Court of Justice. Find out more, and lend support, via www.palestinesolidarityproject.org.



Support for Mousa featured in 10 May rally in London

The power of culture

The dream of a literary festival in Palestine was born in London more than a year ago, inspired by the words of the late Edward Said on asserting “the power of culture against the culture of power”. The Egyptian novelist, Ahdaf Soueif, created a small committee of friends who invited some authors who had never visited Palestine to join others who had or who are from there, raised the money, and found keen and generous Palestinian partners to make it happen.

The patrons of the festival are the great names of today’s literary world: Nobel prize winner, British playwright, Harold Pinter, Nigeria’s Chinua Achebe, the Irish poet Seamus Heaney, Palestine’s Mahmoud Darwish, and the French-based British writer John Berger, who has written extensively on Palestine.

Most of the authors travelled together by bus from Amman, and the “culture of power” showed its hand in the first minutes of trying to enter Israel. At the border, five people with British and American passports failed the “your father’s name” test because those names were Arab. For three hours they sat glumly. Then, as the border prepared to close, they were suddenly allowed to cross.

We arrived in occupied East Jerusalem just in time to make it to the opening readings, in the Dar al-Tifel al-Arabi Museum, chaired by Hanan Ashrawi – as an English literature professor, not as a political negotiator. The authors who read – William Dalrymple, Esther Freud, Brigid Keenan, Hanan Al Shaykh, Andrew O Hagan, and Jamal Mahjoub – were astounded to have a chair who not only wanted to question them on the books they read from, but who had clearly read their other books too.

“The ‘culture of power’ showed its hand in the first minutes of trying to enter Israel”

The beautiful old stone building next to the American Colony hotel was packed, and the audience gave a taste of the warm appreciation we would meet in the various venues in Ramallah and Bethlehem.

The reasons for taking the festival around the West Bank, rather than waiting for audiences to come to us, were only too evident. One of our star performers, the poet Mourid Bargouti, originally from Ramallah, (and author of ‘I saw Ramallah’) could not come to Jerusalem. The same applied to our Bethlehem organizer, Carol Michel. Neither have the blue Jerusalem ID card. And on the last night too, two performers from the Edward Said Conservatory in Ramallah got permits to come to Jerusalem, applied for through the French Cultural attaché, but at the last minute the military refused them.

When the bus left Jerusalem for Ramallah, it had to make two U turns when the driver found a new roadblock, or a checkpoint closed – one of the West Bank’s 612 checkpoints. Finally we crossed into the West Bank at the main Qalandia checkpoint, now so difficult to cross that most people in the West Bank have given up trying.

On the Israeli side the massive Wall, condemned by the International Court of Justice as illegal and by the UN General Assembly, is landscaped and there are posters welcoming tourists; on the West Bank side are stenciled iconic pictures of Leila Khalid, with the words: “I am not a terrorist”. There are occasional home-made ladders against the wall, used by who knows what desperate man, making a bid for illegal work in East Jerusalem, or medical care, or a

family reunion.

In Birzeit University on the outskirts of Ramallah Adhaf Soueif, Pankaj Mishra, Bargouti and I read in the huge Gamal Abdul Nasser hall, which was full to overflowing. All the writers gave workshops for groups of students in the afternoon, and some teachers, taking advantage of rare outsiders where it has become increasingly difficult to get lecturers to come, asked for extra classes.

Raja Shehadeh, author of the magical “Palestinian Walks”, which recently won the Orwell Prize in Britain (see page 30), read in the last event in Jerusalem, from an older book of walks which he clearly treasured.

In the evening in Ramallah’s Al-Kasab Theatre Mahmoud Darwish’s letter to the Festival was read in Arabic, setting the sombre political tone of today’s realities:

“Dear friends, in your visit here you will see the naked truth. Yesterday, we celebrated the end of Apartheid in South Africa. Today, you see Apartheid blossoming here most efficiently. Yesterday, we celebrated the fall of the Berlin Wall. Today, you see the Wall rising again, coiling itself like a giant snake around our necks. A wall – not to separate Palestinians from Israelis, but to separate Palestinians from themselves, and from any view of the horizon. Life here, as you see, is not a given, it’s a daily miracle. And everything, even the landscape, is temporary and vulnerable. Life here is less than life, it is an approaching death.”

Mourid Bargouti and the Lebanese/British writer Hanan al-Shaykh read in Arabic, and both received tumultuous applause. The two Palestinian/American poets, Souheir Hammad and Natalie Handal, who work in English, already had loyal followings in the audiences. And if some people struggled with the Irish, Scottish and British voices of the other writers, they loved them anyway. Roddy Doyle’s readings brought the house down, and his books sold out at once.

But there were many Palestinians unable to attend. For instance in Hebron we saw Palestinians hemmed in by violent settlers who have seized points deep inside the city, protected by the Israeli military. As in the Old City in Jerusalem there is a systematic scheme to push the Palestinians out.

Bitterness against the leadership, that has allowed this degradation to deepen while the mockery of a peace process continues, dominates talk in the West Bank today. But for a few hours, for some, it was books, poetry, and jokes, with the inspirational music of the Edward Said Conservatory to end the festival.



Souheir Hammad reading from her work

Victoria Britain

Sponsors and partners of the Festival were: The British Council, A.M. Qattan Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Sigrid Rausing Charitable Fund, Royal Jordanian Airlines, The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, The Bookshop at the American Colony, Bir Zeit University, Dar Annadwa, Yabous, with a number of generous private supporters, and UNESCO.

Memories and dreams

This April the tenth annual London Palestine Film Festival presented a powerful collection of images and voices both on the screen and in person, during a lively and well-attended two weeks at the Barbican Centre and the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Opened by acclaimed Egyptian novelist and patron of the festival, Ahdaf Soueif, the 50 films ranged from a three minute piece of contemporary video art to a three hour classic documentary and brought the difficulties of daily life in the Occupied Territories to vivid life. Fascinating discussions after some of the showings involved 15 internationally known film makers, historians and activists.

Ahdaf Soueif welcomed the first night audience by saying it was “amazing how big, accomplished and effective this event has become.” Since this year’s festival was taking place in the year of the 60th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, it would commemorate the catastrophe and examine its significance today. It would also look at the relevance of film as a medium for campaigning work, she said. “Commemorating the Nakba is not about victimisation or insisting the world remembers, it is because it is still continuing. Researching, archiving and documenting it gives us the tools without which we can’t understand what is happening now.”

Two compelling documentaries, “Nakba Archive” and “Women’s Testimonies of the Nakba”, shown on the opening night, set the tone for the festival by bringing to the screen eye witness accounts of Palestinians who were forced to flee their homes in 1948. “Nakba Archive” was a selection from the 450 statements of refugees living in Lebanon which have been recorded by film makers Diana Allan and Mahmoud Zeidan since 2002, while the “Women’s Testimonies” by Raneen Geris were recordings of displaced people living inside Israel who described life in their communities before 1948.

Mahmoud told the audience afterwards that it had often been difficult to persuade the refugees to speak. They said, “What do we know about history?” and felt it would do no good. Diana added that the purpose of the archive was to create a “body of primary material”



Workers in the ‘9 Star Hotel’



Dreaming of the world cup

which could be used in future by artists and historians. Some of their interviewees described massacres which have never been documented in written records.

Raneen, who was brought up in Israel, said she had never been taught any Palestinian history at school but had begun to be curious about her identity and asked her grandmother a lot of questions. “She said our family were expelled from Haifa but she refused to be interviewed. I recorded 100 other women, but not her.”

One day of the festival was devoted to a series of films about Jerusalem, including Mohammed Alatar’s “Jerusalem: the East Side Story”, while another day was designated “Football Sunday”. This featured two emotional and inspiring documentaries, “Hard Ball”, about how the football team from Sakhnin, a small Palestinian town inside Israel, snatched Israel’s national cup against all the odds in 1984, and “Goal Dreams”, which followed the Palestinian National Football team’s preparations for the World Cup in 2006.

Amongst the classic offerings were the 1977 epic “A Grin Without A Cat”, an 180-minute elegy to the struggles and failures of the global Left in the late 60s and early 70s, and the only two fiction films which were both adaptations of stories by Ghassan Kanafani, “Return to Haifa”, made in 1982, and “The Dupes”, made in 1972.

The rest, apart from some short, video art films, were documentaries ranging from a hilarious look at life in the West Bank through the eyes of its only zoo-keeper in “The Zoo”, to a study of the trial of Sami Al-Arian, a university professor who had lived in the USA for 30 years until he was suddenly accused of terrorism charges, in “USA vs Al-Arian”.

A particular favourite of mine was “9 Star Hotel”, the illuminating and touching story of Palestinian construction labourers working illegally in Israel. The film followed young Ahmed and Muhammad as they scrambled across the border carrying blankets and bags and set up home in a makeshift camp on a hillside overlooking a large, gleaming, new Israeli town.

At dawn they went to work building the town’s luxury apartments and at night returned to their coffin-like sleeping cubicles knocked together from hardboard and plastic sheeting. Regularly in the night they were raided by Israeli police or soldiers who smashed their “homes” while they fled with whatever they could carry.

Gill Swain

The Palestine Film Foundation, which organises the festival, also puts on film and video related tours, special screenings and seminars throughout the year and across the country. For more information go to www.palestinefilm.org.

THE LAST COLONIAL PROJECT?

Lords of the Land: The War over Israel's Settlements in the Occupied Territories, 1967-2007

Idith Zertal and Akiva Eldar

Nation Books, New York, 2007

The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977

Gershon Gorenberg

Times Books, Henry Holt, New York, 2006.

Israel never had any intention of allowing an independent Palestinian state, either before the 1967 war or at any time following it. This is the definite conclusion which can be drawn from the research undertaken by the authors of both these books.

As early as 1963, the Israeli Army presented Levi Eshkol, the Israeli prime minister at the time, with several military plans – the Whip, Mozart and Bnei Or – the ultimate aim of which was to extend Israel's occupied Arab land to the River Jordan in the east, the Litani River in Lebanon and the Suez Canal to the west. That was considered the ideal situation for a 'secure Israel'.

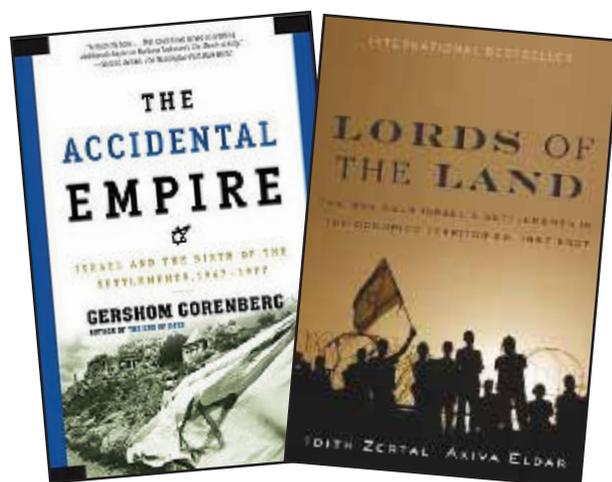
Relentless propaganda notwithstanding, the Israelis knew that Nasser had no intention of attacking Israel in 1967. Earlier in 1967, Military Intelligence reported that the Egyptian army was not in a state of preparedness to attack Israel (Gorenberg p.9).

After the Israelis dealt the devastating blow to the Arabs in 1967 and occupied Arab lands several times the area of Israel, the Israeli government embarked on two simultaneous campaigns: a diplomatic and media campaign of misinformation and deception (Levi Eshkol declared that he did not wish to retain a metre of Arab land; Israel sought only peace with its neighbours); and a settlement plan to confiscate the land and populate the West Bank with Israeli settlers.

As Henry Siegman notes (London Review of Books, 10 April 2008), the political and media campaign was intended to camouflage the colonisation plan of the conquered territory. Just after the 1967 war, the intelligence services reported to the Israeli government that the Palestinian leaders in the West Bank were ready to accept a demilitarised independent Palestinian state. The report was buried and ignored.

Theodor Meron, legal counsel to the Foreign Ministry under Abba Eban, wrote a memorandum on 18 September 1967, giving his legal opinion: "Civilian settlement in the administered territories contravenes the explicit provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention". Meron, who immigrated to Britain, confirmed his opinion last year in a BBC documentary.

Nevertheless, settlement went ahead. Yigal Allon prepared the most detailed plan: to retain Jerusalem and the areas adjacent to the Armistice line in the West Bank and to the River Jordan, to put the Palestinians in enclaves and give them some autonomy. He was "shocked" to see that the Palestinians had stayed put after the



1967 invasion. The idea of outright annexation was dropped, lest the Palestinians claim equal rights and their increasing numbers eventually undermine the Zionist project.

In 1971 Sharon demolished parts of the refugee camps in Gaza and expelled Palestinians in the Rafah area from their homes. An intelligence unit was set up, complete with travel agencies and diplomatic agreements with foreign countries, in order to persuade refugees to emigrate. Few did and the plan failed.

In spite of condemnation, under international law, of settlement as a war crime and of settlers as war criminals, colonisation of the West Bank and Gaza continued unabated. Israeli media spin was that these areas were "liberated" and "administered territories", not "Occupied Palestinian Territories". East Jerusalem was illegally annexed in June 1967 and settlement activity was entrusted to the Jewish Agency from that date.

Now there are about half million settlers in about 150 settlements, 40% of them built on Palestinian private land and the rest on public or common land belonging to Palestinians.

It is obvious that massive financial, political and logistic support was given to the settlers, to the extent that, as both books indicate, many settlers are virtually self-governing. Also many IDF officers play a double role as soldiers and settlers, confiscating land and harassing the Palestinian population. For the same purpose, the Apartheid Wall and about 600 roadblocks have been erected, to undermine the fabric of Palestinian society and induce them to leave.

Lords of the Land describes this colonisation project from 1967 to 2007 in meticulously documented detail. It particularly exposes the lies and deception used to cover it. However, the Foundation for Middle East Peace (fmep.org), the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem (btselem.org) and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (pchrgaza.org) all provide regular and detailed reports about the progress of settlement.

The Accidental Empire, apart from its misnomer, describes the origins of the colonial project in the period 1967-1977, when the most intensive settlement took place under a labour government, exceeded only by post-1993, when it was hoped that the Oslo Accords would bring peace and justice. Gorenberg clearly documents the careful planning behind the colonisation and confiscation of the land.

A Palestinian author, Saree Makdisi, in his book, *Palestine Inside Out: an Everyday Occupation*, describes the suffering of the Palestinians under occupation and arrives at the conclusion that the two-state solution is dead and that the only hope lies in one democratic non-racist state for all its inhabitants.

These two books confirm this view – unless Israel's policies undergo radical change.

‘Theodor Meron, legal counsel to the Foreign Ministry, gave his legal opinion on 18 September 1967: “Civilian settlement in the administered territories contravenes the explicit provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention”’

Salman Abu Sitta

THE LAST COLONIAL PROJECT?

Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape

Raja Shehadeh

Profile Books, London 2008

In this book Raja Shehadeh has combined the legal and the literary to produce a compelling and melancholic memoir. Founder of *al-Haq*, the human rights group, he looked to writing for catharsis, “to overcome the anger that burns in the hearts of most Palestinians”.

Here he vividly reconstructs the sensory and emotional contours of seven *sarhas* – “to go on a *sarha* was to roam freely, at will, without restraint” – in the West Bank, and combines descriptions of the natural and built environment with stories of his struggles as a legal activist.

His is a chronicle of love of the land and loss of the land; it is both personal and profoundly political. But on his walks Shehadeh never once strays onto the path of the polemic. Instead the book is a more subtle but searing act of resistance to Israeli occupation and colonisation, and the Zionist myths which have sustained it.

He explains how Zionism’s “search for its own cultural roots has silenced Palestinian history, paving the way for the modern state of Israel to take control not only of the land but also of Palestinian time and space”.

An Israeli in Palestine: Resisting Dispossession, Redeeming Israel

Jeff Halper

Pluto Press, London & Ann Arbor MI, in association with ICAHD, 2008

This compulsively readable book is written from a personal point of view, but only one chapter is about the author’s life; it is clear that he is not motivated by egoism but subordinates his own personality to the cause to which he is dedicated. Even on the personal level, his own journey from left-wing Zionist to “critical Israeli” – brought about by his witnessing the demolition of the house of the Palestinian couple Salim and Arabiya Shawamreh, later to become his friends – is treated as less important than one simple question: why was Salim and Arabiya’s home demolished?

The quest for an answer leads Halper from discovery of the extent of Israel’s policy of house demolitions to questioning why this policy has been adopted. He finds the answer not just in the Occupation but within Zionism itself. Halper argues that Israel is an ethnocracy based on the old Eastern European model, in which one national group dominates a state. This inevitably led to a nationalistic, expansionist ideology – Political Zionism – which cannot acknowledge the existence of another people within the land that it claims as its own and has

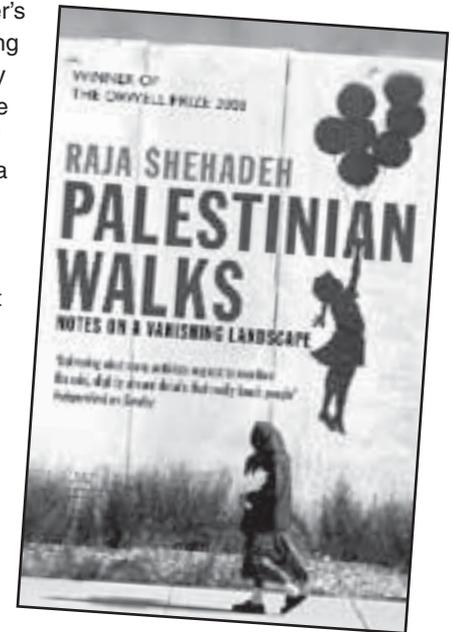
The tale of his grandfather’s cousin who, when not seeking respite in his *sarha*, tirelessly worked the land, gives the lie to the Zionist propaganda of a “land without a people for a people without a land”, who went on to “make the desert bloom”.

Then there is the very act of the *sarha*, which is itself a defiant declaration of the Palestinian right to walk freely on what is, after all, their homeland.

Shehadeh dedicates the book to his nephew and niece, “with the hope that they will be able to walk in the hills of Palestine”. Yet this is essentially a stirring obituary to a landscape fallen victim to the irreversible Israeli assault on nature; one despairs of Aziz and Tala ever enjoying a simple *sarha* in the way their uncle once did.

However, some optimism may be gleaned from the words adorning the book’s jacket: “WINNER OF THE ORWELL PRIZE 2008”. They are an invitation to readers who may know little or nothing of the land Shehadeh so loves, but who will be hard pressed to close their eyes to the injustices he so compellingly describes.

Andrea D’Cruz

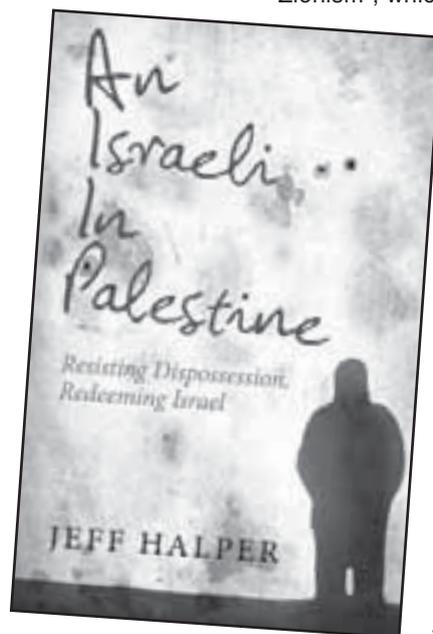


to inflict “*nishul*” (Hebrew for “dispossession”) on that people, by means of ethnic cleansing and bantustanisation. Israel, he writes, needs to “reconceptualize” itself as a modern Western-style state of all its citizens, while returning to the earlier Zionist trend of “Cultural Zionism”, which can share the land equally with the Palestinians.

So Halper’s second goal in his sub-title – “redeeming Israel” – is not about saving the Jewish soul, in a self-absorbed way, but about solving the conflict.

Halper fears that a one-state solution is as unachievable as a viable two-state solution and he suggests a Middle Eastern Union similar to the European Union, with residency separated from citizenship. This vision of course raises many questions. Nonetheless, it does transcend the often entrenched one-state/ two-state debate. Moreover, it is not put forward in a dogmatic way – indeed, this book is the reverse of dogmatic; the writing style has a dynamic quality, open to change and question. And Halper is surely right that the conflict has a regional and indeed global dimension.

Halper also provides practical advice about the organisation of a grassroots global campaign against Israeli apartheid. But perhaps this book will cause the word “*nishul*” – dispossession – to catch on as the word that best describes Israel’s particular form of oppression of the indigenous people of the region.



Deborah Maccoby

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Further information is available from PSC:

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