



palestine NEWS

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Spring 2008



From the Nakba to Gaza:

Can the ethnic cleansing be stopped?



INSIDE:

Jim Bennett
The poison of
Nakba denial
page 4



Jamal Juma'
Walls
can fall
page 7



**Sofiah MacLeod
and Mick Napier**
The Jewish
National
Fund
page 8



Zina Jardaneh
What's in
a label?
page 17





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ISSN 1477 - 5808

Also in this issue...

Palestinian academics to visit UK **page 19**



Professor Lisa Taraki

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Contents

- 3 The insane arithmetic of 'retaliation'**
Hilary Wise asks where Israel's onslaughts are leading
- 4 The poison of Nakba denial**
Jim Bennett explains why Israel must acknowledge its past
- 5 Gaza: the world reacts**
A roundup of world responses to operation 'Warm Winter'
- 7 Walls can fall**
Jamal Juma' describes grassroots resistance in Palestine
- 8 Funding dispossession**
Sofiah MacLeod and Mick Napier investigate the activities of the Jewish National Fund
- 10 An education in denial**
Dr Nurit Peled-Elhanan examines recent Israeli school books
- 13 A European state?**
Hilary and Steven Rose ask how Israel has persuaded the world that it is part of Europe
- 14 In Brief**
News and events from Palestine and Israel
- 17 What's in a label?**
Zina Jardaneh investigates settlement goods
- 18 Boycott, divestment and sanctions**
Green Party backs boycott; success in Eden Springs campaign
- 19 Promoting partnership**
Professor Bart Moore-Gilbert talks to PN about a ground-breaking initiative
- 20 Campus News**
NUS: End the siege of Gaza; LSE divestment call; UCL twinning goes ahead; Palestinian universities under attack
- 22 Activism around the UK**
Branches respond to Gaza, remember the Nakba, lobby Brussels
- 25 Seeing is believing**
Hugh Lanning reports on the first TU delegation to Palestine
- 26 Arts news**
Dancing to Haifa; Salaam Bethlehem; Palestine Film Festival
- 27 People for Palestine**
Judge Eugene Cotran; Dr Ilan Pappé; the late Dr George Habash
- 28 Film reviews**
Jerusalem – the East Side Story; Occupation 101; Return to Palestine
- 29 Book reviews**
Jonathan Cook's *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations*; Patricia Rantisi's *Miriam's Legacy*; Nur Masalha's *The Bible and Zionism*; Mike Marqusee's *'If I am not for myself': Journey of an anti-Zionist Jew*

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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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

The insane arithmetic of 'retaliation'

The arguments used to justify the foundation of Israel as a colonial state have long since been discredited, thanks largely to the work of Israel's 'New Historians' such as Ilan Pappé and Benny Morris, who based their research directly on the Israeli archives of the period. It is now agreed, by all except those who cling blindly to the old myths, that in its planning and execution, the Nakba of 1948 was what nowadays we would call ethnic cleansing.

Where Pappé and Morris part company, however, is in their moral interpretation of the facts. Morris believes the ethnic cleansing did not go far enough; if only it had been carried out thoroughly, Israel would now sit securely in all of what was Palestine and the few survivors, and the world at large, would have adjusted to the new order. Pappé, and others who believe 'might is right' to be a terrible and self-defeating doctrine, disagree.

Unfortunately, the racism inherent in Morris's viewpoint is publicly voiced in many quarters in Israel today. In the summer 2007 issue of PN we quoted the venerable Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu who gave Talmudic justification for the mass collective punishment of civilians in Gaza. "According to Jewish war ethics, an entire city holds collective responsibility for the immoral behaviour of individuals." His son, Chief Rabbi of Safad, was more specific: "If they do not stop [firing Qassam rockets] we must kill 100,000, even a million."

These are not lone voices.

Spearheading the most violent wing of the settler movement are the graduates of the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva, or religious college. Its founder, Rabbi A.Y. Kook, believed that not only Palestinians, but all non-Jews, are sub-human: "The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jews – all of them in all different levels – is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle." Such teachings are used to fuel the violence of many settler communities – a violence aided and abetted by the Israeli army. The

Mercaz HaRav yeshiva is the one attended by the young men killed by a Palestinian gunman on 6 March. While no such cold-blooded murder can be condoned, one must ask whether he had taken a misguided lesson in 'pre-emptive strikes' from the Israelis themselves.

The political leadership are too careful of what remains of their tattered image to openly agree with arguments of such medieval bigotry. They prefer to justify their actions in terms of a desperate search for security, and 'retaliation' for some action by a Palestinian. As if the murder of scores of innocent civilians, the destruction of homes, shops, schools, can do anything but generate hatred and revenge. As if one Israeli death can justify that of 120 Palestinians. That is the insane arithmetic of mass murder spiralling out of control.

No, 'security' and 'retaliation' are figleaves for the application of a policy that has been pursued with remarkable consistency for more than 60 years, the culmination of which must seem to be within reach: the subjugation and colonisation of all of Palestine. The bombing and starving of the people of Gaza is intended to send a message to the people of the West Bank: This is what awaits you, unless you comply.

They hope that someone in the weakened and discredited Fatah leadership will sign up to something that a wearied world will be prepared to take as 'a peaceful settlement'. Western governments,

through the good offices of 'peace envoy' Tony Blair, have added a carrot to the stick, in the form of \$7.4 billion of 'aid' to the West Bank. Again, the message is clear.

Both the Israeli leadership and our own are wrong. The massive demonstrations throughout the West Bank, in response to the carnage in Gaza, clearly showed the solidarity of the Palestinian people. The fortitude of the people of Gaza themselves under fire and siege, and their courageous, disciplined destruction of the Wall at Rafah – a breakthrough that could be repeated again, and elsewhere – show their spirit cannot be broken.

The British government may persist in its scandalous disregard of Palestinian lives and rights, but the international community, in the shape of the UN, NGOs, charities, solidarity organisations and the general public reacted strongly to the brutality of the siege and the military strikes. This in turn has given Western governments pause for thought, and there have been murmurings of disapproval even among

traditional supporters of Israel (see page 6). The average Israeli, who regards religious extremists with distaste, wants a solution: in a recent poll, 64% of the general public said they want their government to sit down and talk with Hamas. Israel ran out of moral capital a long time ago, and is now running out of time. Time is on the side of the Palestinians.

Hilary Wise



The Wall falls at Rafah: it can happen again

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The poison of Nakba denial

Jim Bennett explains why Israel must acknowledge its past

The story of modern Palestine is the story of nineteenth century-style colonisation, continuing into the twenty-first: that of an indigenous population occupied and dispossessed by a foreign power. The British oversaw the first stage, then handed over to other newcomers, the Zionist settlers, who have been attempting to complete the process ever since. The events of 1948 – and the planning and thinking that led up to them – are among the most fully documented of any conflict of modern times, thanks to the work of two generations of historians, including Israelis.

Ethnic cleansing, by any other name

The figures speak for themselves. When the British Foreign Minister, Arthur Balfour, made a personal declaration in 1917, that his government supported the notion of 'a national home' for the Jews in Palestine, the Jewish population there constituted less than 9% of the total. The rest were Muslims (about 80%) and Christians (about 11%). They had lived together peaceably for several centuries in the ethnic-religious melting pot that was the Ottoman Empire. The small Jewish communities were essentially urban and owned virtually no land. Even by 1947, after 30 years of massive Jewish immigration overseen by the British, only 6% of the land was in Jewish ownership – but the Jewish population had increased to 31%.

Fast forward to 2008: Israel now controls virtually all of what was Palestine and has settled more than 85% of the land. More than half of the Palestinian people live outside the borders of their homeland, over two million in refugee camps.

How did this happen?

In 1947 the British, exhausted by World War II and eager to divest itself of direct control of various colonial possessions, handed over the 'problem' of Palestine to the embryonic United Nations – a body then consisting largely of European countries and the US. It came up with a partition plan giving 54% of the prime land to the Jewish minority. As the British withdrew, well-organised and well-armed Zionist forces put into operation the military Dalet Plan, which involved taking as much land as possible and expelling as many Palestinians as possible:

"These operations can be carried out in the following manner: either by destroying the villages (by setting fire to them, by blowing them up and planting mines in their rubble), and especially those population centres that are difficult to control permanently; or by mounting combing and control operations according to the following guidelines: encirclement of the villages, conducting a search inside them. In case of resistance, the armed forces must be wiped out and the population expelled outside the borders of the state."

Extract from Plan D, 1947



A family of refugees, 1948

The precise operations involved, including the infamous massacre of Deir Yassin, have been documented in detail by many historians, including Nur Masalha (*A Land Without a People*), Ilan Pappé (*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*) and Professor Avi Shlaim of Oxford University (*The Iron Wall*).

When the fighting subsided the Israelis were in possession of 78% of Palestine. The UN called on them to withdraw from the areas they had occupied beyond the allotted 54%, and to allow the return of the Palestinian refugees (see UN Resolution 194, which has been reaffirmed 130 times). Israel refused and razed to the ground over 400 villages, in an attempt to make return impossible.

When Israel overran the rest of Palestine at the time of the 1967 war with Egypt, it made a fatal error. Instead of heeding international calls for withdrawal, and making peace with the Palestinians from a position of strength, it pressed on with the policy of violent settlement that it pursues to this day.

From myth to blackmail

Israel uses and re-uses two arguments to justify its actions.

One is that, following the Holocaust of World War II, a safe haven for the Jews was essential. The fact that this haven was already inhabited and had been for centuries, and that the Palestinians were in no way responsible for European atrocities perpetrated against Jews, was ignored.

The initial myth of the 'empty land', promulgated to recruit immigrants, has been more or less abandoned. But the religious argument, that God has given all the land 'from the Nile to the Euphrates' to the Jews, lives on. Most Israelis may find it distasteful, but the fanaticism of Gush Emunim-style settlers is a useful weapon in the Israeli arsenal.

Opposition to Israeli policies has always been greeted with accusations of anti-Semitism and 'Holocaust denial' – in effect opposing calumny to logic, facts and international law. But both this and the religious fundamentalist argument are wearing thin. The bullying tactics of the massively well-financed pro-Israel PR machine provoke resentment. The savagery of Israeli attacks, however toned-down in the mainstream media, is clear to all.

Israel desperately wants to believe in its own image as a democratic, law-abiding state. But this can only happen if Israel takes the painful step of acknowledging its own past. As long as it continues to deny, or justify, what happened in 1948, it will remain in a moral no-man's-land. Acknowledgement will entail making restitution; this in turn will involve renouncing the dream of Israel as a purely Jewish state. Only when this basic tenet of Zionism is abandoned, in conformity with the ethical and legal norms of the civilised world, will a just peace become possible.

Gaza: the world reacts

February and March saw unprecedented attacks on a captive population, already reduced to abject poverty by Israel's eight-month siege of the Gaza Strip and years of increasing isolation and deprivation.

Jet fighters, F16s and Apache gunship helicopters bombed densely populated areas, while Israeli tanks moved in on the ground. Palestinian fighters fought back among the ruined buildings, killing two Israeli soldiers, but could do little against Israel's state-of-the-art arsenal.

Day after day, terrible stories emerged. Four young boys who had been out playing football were killed by one shell. On 2 March six members of one family – Abd el-Rahman Mohammad Ali Atallah, his wife Suaad and two sons and two daughters – died when their house was destroyed by two bombs.

Hospital workers desperately tried to cope as the wounded and dying poured in to A&E units that had already run out of basic supplies. One day alone – 23 February – saw the deaths of 60 Palestinians, eight of them young children.

In justification for the onslaught (termed 'Operation Warm Winter'), Israel pointed to one Israeli civilian killed by a Qassam rocket, and to some damage to property. On 29 February, Matan Vilnai, the deputy defence minister, warned of a 'shoah' (the Hebrew word for 'holocaust'), in retaliation for the rockets.

Around the world there were demonstrations, protests and vigils, calling for an end to the mass killings. In the West Bank every town saw demonstrations of solidarity with the people of Gaza.

In the UK there were regular demonstrations outside Downing Street, some with over 2,000 people, where medics handed in an urgent petition; around the country local groups organised protests in city centres (see page 22). PSC sent letters of protest to the PM and the Foreign Secretary signed by over 50 prominent people, including leading Trades Unionists, actors Corin Redgrave, Emma Thompson, Maxine Peake, Miriam Margolyes and Kika Markham, writers John Pilger, William Dalrymple, Alexei Sayle, Mike Marqusee, Michael

Rosen and Ahdaf Soueif, and artists Antony Gormley, John Keane and Laila Shawa.

Nor was the West Bank spared. As the Gaza Strip was being bombarded, there were dozens of incursions into Nablus and other West Bank towns. The most violent attack came



Paris protesters take to an open-top bus

Olmert's response: more killings, more settlements

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's response to calls for a ceasefire was to approve the construction of 750 new housing units at Givat Zeev, an illegal Jewish settlement on Palestinian land in the West Bank. Previous accords signed by Israel commit it to cease building new settlements and freeze existing ones. (Israel already has 121 Jews-only settlements and 102 'outposts' – i.e. embryonic new settlements – on the West Bank.)

Following a lull after the massacres in Gaza, when the rocket attacks on S. Israel also ceased, Olmert ordered the killing of four 'militants' in Bethlehem. This follows a pattern also favoured by his predecessors; following month-long truces with Hamas, Ariel Sharon often targeted leaders in Gaza (usually with the 'collateral damage' of civilian deaths) to provoke a response and hence give him an excuse for more land grabs and closures in the West Bank.

MAAN IMAGES, WISSAM NASAR



Women in Gaza City protest against the killing

in Bethlehem, on 13 March, when four people were shot dead near Bethlehem University.

Breaking the siege

Israeli activists organised a convoy of 4 tonnes of food and other supplies, to break the siege of Gaza, in response to calls by Palestinian health workers. Only after days of negotiation were the goods were finally allowed in, on 26 January.

Protests were organised in Israel by groups like Anarchists Against the Wall and Gush Shalom – but there were no mass demonstrations.

At the UN Libya called for an immediate ceasefire on 3 March, and there was an unsuccessful attempt to formulate a resolution to stop the killing. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon wanted to include the phrase 'disproportionate and excessive use of force' in relation to Israel's actions, but this was objected to by the US, as was a reference to the desperate humanitarian situation in Gaza.

On 4 March John Dugard, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, said: "The failure to distinguish between civilian and military targets violates one of the most fundamental rules of humanitarian law. Collective punishment and the terrorisation of an occupied people are also unlawful." In the same statement he said: "At present the United Nations is restrained by the United States, the European Union and Israel from speaking to Hamas and this has left it powerless to fulfill its principal duty of maintaining international peace. The Secretary-General of the United Nations must find the courage to overcome this obstacle and initiate meaningful talks between all parties. Without this the cycle of violence is doomed to continue."

In relation to Palestinian acts of violence Dugard said: "they must be understood as being a painful but inevitable consequence of colonialism, apartheid or occupation."



Comment by Brazilian cartoonist Latuff

Charities protest

Leading charities and NGOs, including Amnesty International, the World Health Organisation, Oxfam, Save The Children and Christian Aid have issued reports both on the effects of the siege and on the aftermath of the attacks of February – March.

They reported that denial of access to hospitals abroad has led to the deaths of more than 100 patients since mid-June. More have died due to the lack of facilities in the local hospitals (Physicians for Human Rights-Israel have documented many cases: see www.phr.il.)

On the situation faced by the health services, Amnesty stated (13 March):

“Recent Israeli military air strikes and artillery attacks on Gaza have caused further damage to Palestinian medical facilities such as hospitals, clinics and ambulances and exacerbated the effects of the stringent blockade imposed by the Israeli authorities.

“The numbers of injured arriving and the necessity to cover the shortage in beds caused hospital authorities to stop medical treatment of dozens of other patients, including chronically ill patients, and send them home.

“Funding shortages and increased consumption mean that scores of essential drugs are now out of stock in Gaza, and supplies of others are low. According to the World Health Organisation (3 March), Gaza Ministry of Health officials reported that 85 essential drug items, 52 medical supply items and 24 laboratory reagents are unavailable and are urgently needed by hospitals.

“On 27 February, an Israeli air strike on the Interior Ministry also destroyed a mobile clinic, pharmacy and ambulance administered by the Palestinian Medical Relief Society. According to Oxfam, which funds the clinic, which supported 400 patients, a large share of pharmaceuticals supplies was destroyed.”

The organisations called unanimously for an end to the siege.

Wind of change in EU rattles Israeli government

According to the Israeli daily Ha'aretz (21 February) Ran Koriel, Israel's European Union ambassador, warned Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni of a change in EU policy on Hamas, due to the Gaza crisis.

Envoys of the Quartet (the EU, the US, Russia and the UN), supposedly promoting the Road Map, met in Berlin on 11 February to discuss the situation in the Gaza Strip and the peace process. In mid February a number of Israeli ambassadors in European capitals sent classified telegrams about the meeting's contents, some of which were leaked to the Israeli press.

UN envoy Robery Serry strongly criticised Israel at the outset of the meeting. “We are deeply concerned over the situation in Gaza, especially from the humanitarian perspective,” he said. “We must find a fast solution to this situation.” He said that “even the UN's teams have difficulty entering and leaving Gaza to give aid.”

Mark Otte, the EU peace envoy, said bluntly: “Not only is nothing improving on the ground, but Israel's behaviour is getting worse, and it's failing to carry out its obligations on the road map.” He added: “We must consider a change of policy in everything regarding Gaza.”

Even David Welch, Middle East aide to Condoleezza Rice, said that the US was not comfortable with Israel's approach to Gaza and that the Quartet must demand that Israel open the border with the Gaza Strip.

Russian envoy Sergei Yakovlev said that Russia supports a national unity government – something to which Israel is absolutely opposed. Without a Hamas-Fatah reconciliation, he said, “the Gaza Strip will be a time bomb that will kill the Annapolis process.”

Ran Koriel also sent a telegram to the Israeli Foreign Ministry warning of an overall European policy change toward Israel and the PA, which could lead to a recognition of Hamas. Senior EU officials had been heard denouncing Israel's actions in Gaza, and a number of decisions on the issue had been passed in various European parliaments.

The Israeli daily Ha'aretz also quoted an Israeli government source as saying: “Israel is living on borrowed time regarding international legitimacy for what is going on in Gaza.”



Israelis demonstrate in front of the Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv

Media embargo in Israel

Haaretz correspondent Gideon Levy reported that no Israeli journalist has set foot in Gaza since the end of November 2006 (Haaretz 13 March). In the past, journalists like Levy and Amira Hass reported regularly from Gaza, during and in the immediate aftermath of Israeli incursions. No longer.

The news blackout on the activities of the Israeli army has raised no protests from fellow journalists: “The fact that the Israeli press is forbidden to cover what is happening in the Strip has been accepted with exemplary silence. The press bowed its head, submissive and obedient, as in the bad old days when it maintained other disgraceful silences, from Qibya to Kafr Qasem.”

Levy reports that all the big dailies, bar the leftist Haaretz, focus almost exclusively on Israeli casualties. When 60 residents of Gaza were killed in one day, there was no mention of this on the first two pages, which were devoted to a story about a wounded Israeli soldier. “Only on the margins of page 3, in tiny

letters, was there a first mention: ‘About 95 Palestinians killed since Wednesday.’”

On 11 March the Israeli army stormed into Al Quds Radio and Al Majd Radio headquarters in Jenin on the West Bank, seizing the main radio transmission device and other appliances, archives, and all documents from the office.

On 13 March the Israeli government also declared a boycott of AlJazeera TV – the only channel to report direct, in detail, on the events in Gaza.

Follow the daily news from Gaza on the websites of human rights organisations AlMezan – www.mezan.org and the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights – www.pchrgaza.org.

The Palestine Chronicle gives up-to-date news and comment on events all over the Occupied Territories and elsewhere: www.palestinechronicle.com

The indomitable Dr Mona Farra's blogspot ([//fromgaza.blogspot.com](http://fromgaza.blogspot.com)) carries daily reports of her life as a doctor.

• Support the campaigns to end the siege:

The Palestinian International Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza: www.end-gaza-siege.ps; and The Popular Committee Against the Siege: www.freegaza.ps/English

Walls can fall

Jamal Juma' describes the work being done at grassroots level

The Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign (AAWC) came into existence in 2002, when the construction of the Wall began. The initial phases of construction and dispossession saw the spontaneous mobilisation of popular resistance throughout the affected areas. The AAWC quickly grew to become a cornerstone for coordinating and mobilising resistance against the Wall and now consists of 50 popular committees and a large network of youth volunteers.

The Wall is essentially one concrete aspect of a larger system of control, that ranges from systems of military orders and building restrictions, to the network of checkpoints and movement restrictions and finally, to invasions, demolitions and murder. These varied modes of aggression aim to expand Jewish colonisation in strategic areas while confining Palestinian communities to controllable ghettos. Our activities, if they are to be successful, must be as multifaceted as the Occupation we are fighting. The Campaign also opposes the destructive factionalism of the political parties that threatens to weaken the struggle. We are striving to reverse this development by increasing the depth and breadth of the individuals, groups and communities that are involved in our activities, essentially returning to the popular mass resistance to the Occupation that characterised the first Intifada. These principles guide all of our different lines of action across the West Bank: research, mobilisation, action and outreach.

“Our activities, if they are to be successful, must be as multifaceted as the Occupation we are fighting”

The Campaign has first and foremost gained respect and recognition among the Palestinian people through its capacity for district mobilisation of its Popular Committees. These Committees consist of residents of varying political stripes who decide on the direction resistance will take in their community. On last year's Land Day, for example, demonstrations and protests occurred in 16 areas across the country and showed that, for the people, the fight against the Occupation is still the core issue. For large-scale demonstrations we often coordinate with national parties as well as with the Popular Committees. As part of the National Committee for the Commemoration of the Nakba, we are planning mobilisation all across the West Bank for Nakba Day.

The Campaign is actively mobilising an ever-increasing array of groups from Palestinian society. However, we do not aim to manage the actions of these groups, but rather give them the tools with which to carry out resistance. The Campaign's youth work, for example, aims to unite students against the Occupation by offering classes on the history of Zionism and resistance, giving students the opportunity to do research on the Wall and how it affects their community and assisting students in building the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

Popular resistance does not only consist of demonstrations. We have recently helped in forming the BDS National Committee. This Committee will play a key role in the internal BDS campaign and guide



national and international coordination. Currently the Committee has a wide range of support from various groups including trade, teachers and farmers unions to women's groups and charitable societies. The BDS movement is integral to fighting 'normalisation' with Israel, while at the same time actively involving all of Palestinian society in the resistance movement.

Other networking efforts are reflected in our membership in the Jerusalem Coalition (CCDPRJ), which involves forming local committees, organising a housing campaign and gathering information in an effort to prevent the annexation of the city. Against the plans for a new settlers-only ring road that is to create the de facto annexation of Jerusalem, we have assisted in coordinating the submission of 97 legal appeals in an effort to swamp the Occupation's courts.

Research is crucial for the growth of the campaign, as it serves to identify spheres that are affected by the Wall and helps us better focus our action. For instance, the Campaign has embarked on an economic study of the so-called 'development plans' that are in train for the West Bank. The research looks at international development objectives and how they interact with the settlements' industrial production, joint development projects and the Occupation's economic domination of the Palestinian economy. It is essential to formulate resistance to economic plans that are concocted to maintain the current system while at the same, through joint projects, imposing a regime of 'normalisation' on the Palestinian people. The end result, it seems, will be to create a Palestinian economy that is entirely dependent on, and peripheral to, the Israeli state.

These developments towards a ghetto economy, and indeed the continuation of the Israeli apartheid regime as a whole, would not be sustainable without continuous international support. But global solidarity for the Palestinian cause is growing. Every year, in some 25 countries around the world, up to one hundred initiatives are organised during the Anti-Apartheid Wall Week (November 9 – 16) alone. Building on ties with people around the world, the Campaign has focused since its beginning on popular solidarity campaigns and movements from the global south. It is only when we can forge strong alliances with these true supporters that we can target those in power in Palestine and abroad.

Over recent years, general global awareness of the nature and aims of the Occupation and the Zionist regime has slowly but steadily increased. Together with groups such as the PSC UK we have

Funding dispossession

Sofiah MacLeod and Mick Napier examine the activities of the Jewish National Fund

2008 sees the 60th anniversary of the founding of Israel. However, the Zionist ethnic cleansing project that exploded in 1948 is unfinished and ongoing. Today in Palestine, evictions, expropriations and the demolition of Palestinian homes and farms are daily events. Enjoying charitable status in Britain and 50 other countries, the Jewish National Fund (full title: the Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael Jewish National Fund, or KKL-JNF) lies at the core of the Zionist project: to ensure that Palestinian refugees never return home. KKL-JNF is invariably supported by all three leaders of the main political parties in the UK. The current UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon recently planted a tree in the Jerusalem JNF Park.

The KKL-JNF was established by the Fifth Zionist Congress in 1901 to be custodian of land, 'acquired' by Zionists, 'on behalf of all the Jewish people'. The land was never to be leased or re-sold to non-Jews. KKL-JNF was central to the Zionist colonisation of Palestine prior to 1948 and remains a core institution in Israel's dispossession of Palestinians. In Israel today the State owns 93% of all land; 13% is JNF land. The entire 93% is administered by the Israel Lands Administration, where the JNF controls the governing board.

Fighting the "demographic threat"

Israeli elites openly discuss a 'demographic threat', i.e. too many Palestinians. The State promotes projects to 'Judaize the land', in the Galilee and the Naqab (Negev), to 'improve' demographics there.

The Israeli OR Movement (dedicated to colonising the Negev) believes that "*the task of building the State of Israel is far from being over*" and that "*the main objective of the State of Israel... in the forthcoming years is population and development of the Negev [Naqab] and Galilee*". Their partners in the Naqab project are JNF UK and JNF USA.

Palestinians living in the Naqab since 1948 have suffered forced transfer, being rounded up and forced to live in settlement areas where building is illegal. Many Bedouin live in 'unrecognised villages', communities much older than Israel, which the state refuses to provide with basic water and electricity services, while nearby

Jewish-only communities enjoy quality services. Such Palestinian villages struggle against land confiscation and house demolitions; they must survive without water, electricity, health facilities or schools. And these are the villages of Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

Water apartheid in the OPTs

When PSC-organised protests were taking place in 2007 against the KKL-JNF fundraising dinner in Glasgow Hilton, Stanley Lovatt defended the KKL-JNF's activities, claiming that their activities do not extend to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). This is not true: the KKL-JNF is active there. Their subsidiary, Himnuta Ltd, is involved in illegal settlement-building in the West Bank; one example is Gush Etzion in East Jerusalem.

Israeli colonisation and apartheid in the Jordan Valley is blatant and severe. During the blistering summers, Israeli military-enforced water apartheid denies Palestinians enough water to live on and their parched farms lie next to lush, green settler farms, heavy with dates, grapes and herbs that will make their way on to UK supermarket shelves. Settlers surround with high electric fencing land stolen from

Palestinian farmers: wells are shut off to Palestinians and armed settlers visit water wells locked behind concrete walls and electric fencing, which have been erected inside Palestinian villages. The Israeli KKL-JNF boasts of its funding of one of these, the Tirzah Reservoir.

"The parks are beautiful places for a walk – if you are unaware of the ghosts that haunt them"

The colour of ethnic cleansing

The KKL-JNF claims so-called 'Green' credentials. In one scheme, Jews in the Diaspora are invited to sponsor a tree in various forests across Israel; one park is dedicated to the British monarch, while the British Park, built over three villages ethnically cleansed in 1948, and Canada Park, whose Palestinian inhabitants were driven out by Yitzhak Rabin in 1967, are two components of the system of parks designed to obliterate all traces of the ethnic cleansing of '48 and '67 by covering up the ruins of the homes and mosques and wells that stood there. (Signs throughout Canada Park describe the Byzantine ruins – but not the recent history of displaced Palestinians.) The parks are beautiful places for a walk if you are unaware of the ghosts that haunt them, and don't work too hard to find out what heavily-overgrown walls once were, but in the British Park, for example, a Scottish PSC group was able to find the cool cellars of once-Palestinian homes during our hike. The ruins are not so easy to completely obliterate. Yael Kahn writes about growing up in another

7 been working towards a shift in discourse on Palestine. Only if we make it clear that the so-called "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" is in reality a struggle by an indigenous people to resist apartheid and expulsion will we be able to develop the arguments and action plans for a strong and effective BDS movement. For Palestinians and solidarity activists, sixty years on from the start of the Nakba, the moment has come for the achievement of real and concrete successes in this campaign.

There is still much to be done. Demolitions and colonisation continue, with the Occupation army maintaining almost absolute military control over the West Bank. There have been both victories and defeats since the Wall has gone up in 2002, but breaking down

the Wall involves taking on the entire Israeli system of ghettoisation and fragmentation – no small task. However, we can draw hope from the strength and cohesion of Palestinian society. The continuous resistance on the ground, the growing BDS and anti-normalisation movement in Palestine and abroad, and the awakening of the Palestinian youth and student activism are the real successes to which the Campaign has decisively contributed.

Jamal Juma' is Coordinator of the Palestinian grassroots Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign

• For more information see: www.stopthewall.org, www.bdsmovement.net, www.ccdprj.ps

part of Israel in the 1950s:

I loved the family picnics in Hulda Woods and particularly enjoyed clambering over the ruined houses dotted among the trees, not realising that these were the ruins of a Palestinian village. Only when I became aware of the history of Israel did I realize that these were the homes of Palestinians who had been made refugees in 1948. Years later I met a few of these wretched refugees in the Deheishe refugee camp near Bethlehem.



Canada Park, scene of an earlier ethnic cleansing

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé describes the role of KKL-JNF in his book 'The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine' and underscores the role of these forests in impeding both commemoration of the Palestinian Catastrophe ('Nakba') and the return of expelled refugees to their home. Golda Meir, the fourth Prime Minister of Israel, revealed the uniquely political role of trees and forests in Israel: "...only in Israel does every tree have registered owners who financed its planting and its growth...and that is what makes the tree-planting effort of the Jewish National Fund not only a project for a forest that gives shade and pushes back the wilderness but also [an undertaking] that connects Diaspora Jewry to the land as partners in the act of redemption." In Zionist parlance, 'redemption' means the removal of land from Palestinian into exclusively Jewish ownership.

Zionist ethnic cleansing has continued seamlessly from before 1948 until today. On the historic site of al Walaja village stands a Jewish-only settlement and a JNF Park. Al Walaja was attacked and destroyed by Zionist forces in 1948 and this village contributed its stream to the vast river of Palestinian refugees scattered mainly, in their case, to camps in Bethlehem and, further afield, in Jordan. Once it had emptied Al Walaja of its inhabitants, the Israeli state handed over the land to the JNF. However, a few families clung to some land on the very edge of the original village site, just outside the Green Line, the 1948-67 limits of Israeli control. Today the Al Walaja villagers, in a microcosm of what is happening to Palestinians in the whole of Israel/Palestine, are being pushed off their remaining land. The mechanism in this case is Israel's apartheid wall, supplemented by the usual Israeli bulldozing of homes, uprooting of olive trees, and general mayhem visited on the villagers.

Exposing the JNF

In May 2007 the UN Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations rejected an application submitted by JNF USA branch for consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council. Although the UK representative supported the JNF, the UN Committee majority decided that the JNF fundamentally violates principles of the UN Charter. Inside Israel itself, the Israeli Knesset in 2007 passed a preliminary draft of a law which exempts the JNF from any commitment to equal treatment of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, stating that "the leasing of JNF lands for the purpose of settling Jews will not be seen as unacceptable discrimination". These developments have helped activists to either initiate or re-energise campaigns against KKL-JNF charitable status in both Scotland and Canada. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, for example, is currently carrying out an investigation into KKL-Scotland.

Every year KKL-JNF organise gala dinners. For the past few

years Scottish PSC have organised demonstrations at the Glasgow Hilton against special guests who come to fundraise for the further dispossession of Palestinians. Previous guests have included Ruby Wax, Shaul Mofaz, Bill Clinton and Colin Powell. In March 2008 Goldie Hawn and Ron Prosor, the Israeli ambassador, were called in to fill the gap when Michael Douglas pulled out of the event. Following the vigorous protests against the Ruby Wax event, on March 28, 2004, Ruby had

the good grace to cancel her appearance at the Israeli 'Independence Day' events in London in May. The Zionist Federation of Britain's Eric Moonman said: "Miss Wax had a bad experience at a JNF function and after that she was thinking of pulling out."

Although it enjoys serious political protection, the JNF is now clearly vulnerable to the campaign to strip them of their charitable status in the UK: it is up to activists to keep pushing at this open door.

For further information:

- 'Apartheid Israel' by Uri Davis, Zed Books
- 'Access Denied: Palestinian Land Rights in Israel' by Hussein Abu Hussein and Fiona McKay
- 'The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine' by Ilan Pappé
- Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights: www.badil.org
- The Arab Association for Human Rights: www.arabhra.org

The JNF in the UK

- The royal family is to host a special anniversary dinner for 300 guests at Windsor Castle on 7 April, to mark Israel's 60th anniversary and to raise money for the Jewish National Fund.

Other planned celebrations and fund-raisers will include a gala show at Wembley Stadium in May, with the entertainment line-up including American Jewish comedian Jackie Mason and London's first ever street parade for Israel on Sunday 29 June.

- On 9 March, the Israeli Ambassador Ron Prosor joined assembled guests and dignitaries at a JNF fund-raising dinner at the Glasgow Hilton, to hear Goldie Hawn speaking on the topic 'Laughter is the Best Medicine'. A touch of truly sick humour, as Israel's medieval siege of Gaza continues to notch up scores of Palestinian deaths due directly to denial of access to medical care. Scottish PSC turned out in force to point out the true function of the JNF.
- Earlier in the month the Israeli Ambassador called off his planned talk at Edinburgh University, in the face of vociferous protests by Scottish PSC and members of the student body.



An education in denial

Nurit Peled-Elhanan examines recent Israeli textbooks of history and geography¹

The denial of Palestinian national and territorial identity is still one of the core messages of Israeli textbooks. Although some of the more overtly discriminatory language of earlier books has been toned down, in deference to political correctness, Palestinians are still represented, visually and verbally, either in a racist stereotypical way or as an absent people.

The Palestinian citizens of the state of Israel are always depicted dichotomously as “Israeli Arabs” vs. the Israelis, or as the “non-Jewish population” vs. the Jewish one. For instance, a map in a geography textbook distinguishes between “Jewish villages (blue) and non-Jewish villages (red)” (Fine, Segev and Lavi, 2002).

Palestinians, both Israeli citizens and those who live under occupation, are never presented as modern, industrious individuals but always stereotypically, in racist vocabulary and racist visuals, as terrorists, as a demographic problem or in terms of third-world, ‘Oxfam images’. Their “inferiority” is presented as a natural condition or their “lot”, and their misfortunes are either a “tragedy” – an act of fate – or their own doing. Their traditions are made to signify backwardness, and discrimination against them is represented as a national necessity.

The Palestinian Occupied Territories are depicted on all maps as part of the state of Israel but the Palestinian inhabitants are missing from maps, photographs and graphs. For instance, in ‘People in Space’, a geography book for middle school (p76), a graph listing “developed countries” includes Israel – but the caption tells the reader: “*note: Israeli data refer only to the Jewish population.” – clearly excluding Palestinian citizens, as a hindrance or an irrelevance.

“Non-Jews” are also often called by the generic term “Arabs”, regardless of their origin and faith. For instance in ‘Israel: Man and

Space’, p.12, we find: “The Arab Population: Within this group there are several religious groups and several ethnic groups: Muslims, Christians, Druze, Bedouins and Circassians. But since most of them are Arab they shall be referred to henceforth as Arabs.”

These “Arabs” are presented as “the enemy from within” and therefore, as one geography book explains, they must be kept from “invading state lands”, for they threaten to “create a non-Jewish

sequence which would separate these areas from the state of Israel” (‘Geography of the Land of Israel’, p.240).

The Palestinian “problem”

One feature of racist discourse is the reference to humans by an abstract, non-human noun – in this case “problem”: “Although Israel came victorious out of the survival-war that was forced upon her, the Palestinian problem would poison for more than a generation the relationships of Israel with the Arab world and with the international community” (‘Modern Times II’: p.239).

Visually, the Palestinians are presented as an environmental problem for the Israelis, like a plague, never as ordinary human beings.

Though a chapter of the history textbook, ‘The 20th Century’, is called: *The Palestinians – From refugees to a nation*, one never encounters a Palestinian face, in this chapter or any other.

Opposite the chapter heading is a photograph (figure 2) which has become an icon symbolizing Palestinian terror against Israeli children (the attack on a school in Maalot in 1974). For Israelis this picture is the essence of the word “Palestinians”, whether they are refugees or a nation.

‘The implied centre of the “mental map” of the writers is still Eastern Europe, the spiritual centre of Zionism’

Palestinian nationalism is described either as “mock-Zionism” (“The Palestinians yearned for the land of Israel”) or in negative terms, as a movement that grew out of hatred and feelings of revenge. As the book explains (p.195): “During the years, the hate and alienation, propaganda, the hope to return and feelings of revenge turned the refugees into a nation and the refugee problem to a national problem.”

Just as the Palestinian problem in general is an environmental one, so is the “refugee problem”. In ‘People in Space’ an aerial photograph of the Jabalia refugee camp appears in a chapter called ‘*Refugees running for their lives all over the world*’. All other refugees, such as Rwandans, Haitians and Jews, are depicted as human beings, and their stories and routes are detailed in texts and in maps. In the case of Jabalia, neither the caption nor the heading mention who lives there or why. Such an aerial view conceals details such as people. It is the angle of the pilot who doesn’t see the people he is bombing.

The text under the photograph emphasizes the fact that this is an



Figure 1: “The Palestinian problem matured and festered in the poverty, the inaction and the frustration that were the refugees’ lot in their pitiful camps.”



Figure 2: Israeli victims

ecological problem: "The population in the refugee camps is growing fast and the conditions of life are very hard. The rate of unemployment is high, the houses are crowded and poor and the standard of health services, education and hygiene is low." (p110).

The geography of exclusion

Israeli curriculum planners appear to see man-made borders as an "accidental consequence of ceasefire commands which paralyzed military momentum" (Bar-Gal 1993a:125), and still teach about the Greater, "promised" Land of Israel which is "a whole geographic entity" (ibid.). None of the schoolbooks teach about "the 'State of Israel', which has achieved international legitimation" but about "the 'Land of Israel', which has divine legitimation" (Bar-Gal 1993b: 430). This is strongly reinforced by frequent quotes from the Bible, that reiterate the divine promise (for instance, in 'The Mediterranean Countries', pp.30-33). The intertextuality with the Bible gives a holy stamp to the textbook and a scientific stamp to the Bible. It also emphasises the supremacy of the divine promise over international laws and decisions.

In 'Israel - Man and Space', the maps simply omit the Palestinian cities within Israel, such as Acre or Nazareth. Although the Occupied Palestinian Territories are represented on maps as part of Israel, the inhabitants of these same territories are either non-existent or depicted as "foreign" workers. For instance on p.32 we read:

"Some of the foreign workers are Palestinians....

They are employed in unprofessional jobs and their wages are lower than that of the Israeli citizens who work in the same jobs. This is characteristic of all developed countries."

In the same book we find maps such as 'Universities in Israel', which shows the Jewish university extensions and small colleges in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but none of the major Palestinian universities or cities. A map of 'Jerusalem as Capital' not only depicts the Palestinian Territories as part of Israel but omits all Palestinian institutions and people from the city.

'The Distribution of Arab Population in Israel' (figure 3), leaves the Occupied Palestinian Territories, which it depicts as an integral part



Figure 3: Distribution of the Arab population

'The schoolbooks inculcate exclusive Jewish rights to the Land and encourage the oppression of Palestinian identity and culture'

of Israel, colourless, and the legend specifies that these are "areas without data" – namely without a registered 'Arab Population'. In view of the fact that this unknown population is the most supervised and monitored population in the world and that every soldier in every checkpoint knows more about these people than about his own, this statement is patently absurd.

Centre and periphery

Arabs (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) and Arab countries are marginalized in Israeli history schoolbooks as they are marginalized in Israeli social discourse. In a history schoolbook for grades 7-8, 'From Conservatism to Progress', (p.269) we learn that: "In the years 1881-1882 thousands of people arrived at Jaffa port: from Russia, from Rumania, from the Balkan and even from far-away Yemen." Needless to say, Yemen is one of the closest to Jaffa port, and the question is, why is it mentioned as the most "far away"? And how come the four committees that reviewed the book have never noticed this absurdity? The only answer is that the implied centre of the "mental map" of the writers is still Eastern Europe, the spiritual centre of Zionism and the origin of the dominant social group in Israel.

Arab cities and villages within Israel are pushed to the margins of consciousness and social reality, as is well expressed in the following statement from 'The Geography of the Land of Israel', p.197, under *Factors that inhibit the development of the Arab village*:

"...Arab villages [in Israel] are far from the centre, the roads to them are difficult and they have remained out of the process of change and development, they are hardly exposed to modern life and there are difficulties in connecting them to the electricity and water networks."

Most of these "distant" villages are not specified on any map, though they are all within the "narrow waistline of Israel" which is equal in breadth to the distance between Manhattan and JFK airport, as is emphasized in Israeli maps issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, Jewish sites that are built on top of the hills overlooking those villages, and Jewish colonies that are beyond the official borders of Israel, are presented as examples of a high standard of living and not as marginal, far-away, deprived settlements.

Racist cartoons

Israeli schoolbooks never show Palestinian faces, only distant or cartoon-like figures followed by a camel or a herd of barefoot children, wearing traditional dress and kafieh. (Figure 4).

This representation is compatible with the text of the book:

"The Arab society is traditional and objects to changes by its nature, reluctant to adopt novelties [...] Modernization seems dangerous to them [...] they are unwilling to give anything up for the general good."



Figure 4

The legitimization of massacres

Reports about massacres of Palestinians, which are told in considerable detail and might seem to attest to a courageous educational act, are never told from the victims' point of view.

Rhetorically, these reports are constructed in a way that legitimates them, for they have all brought about positive changes for the Israelis. For instance, the massacre of the "friendly village" of Deir Yassin in 1948 ('The 20th Century' p.184-195), "did not inaugurate the 'panicked escape' of the Arabs...but accelerated it greatly". Both "inaugurate" and "accelerated it greatly" are positive terms. The 'panicked flight' of the Palestinians, caused by the massacres, brought about a positive change for the Jews, and even "moderate" Zionist leaders like the first president, Haim Weizman, considered it a "miracle", for it solved "a horrifying demographic problem", which could have been an impediment to "the realization of the dream the Zionist movement fought to realize for more than half a century: the declaration of the state of the Jews" ('The 20th Century' p.195).

The report about the massacre of Kibieh in 1953, headed by Ariel Sharon, who entered the village with his 'special unit' – the 101 – and murdered 69 men, women and children, as a reprisal for the villagers' attempts to cross the border and reach their original villages for their crops, is often termed "punishment" and is always accompanied by heroic photographs of the killers, many of whom are today's venerated leaders. The photograph above has become an icon in the Israeli iconography of heroism (figure 5). The poster above the picture says: "Growth against Siege" and the image of the lurking Arab is the justification and the legitimization of the massacre, which as most of the books explain, "restored the confidence to the Jewish population of Israel".

The massacre of 49 men, women and children in Kafar Kassem in 1956 is presented as a "tragedy" that nevertheless had positive results because it made the Israeli court rule against obedience to "manifestly unlawful orders". ('The Age of Horror and Hope', 2001). Other books go as far as persuading us that it was even good for the Palestinians citizens themselves:

"The 1956 war was a good turning point for Israel's Arabs although it began with the tragedy of Kafar Kassem." That is because "in the long run, the smashing victory, the relative peace on the borders and the self-confidence of the Jewish population turned the military government into an unbearable moral and political burden and ten years later it was abolished altogether" ('The 20th Century', p. 211).

Students learn from this statement that immoral deeds are not rectified because they are wrong, but because they may be a burden to victorious, self-confident conquerors.

All these reports teach the legitimization of massacres by transcending the individual incident and considering the long term consequences from a political-military point of view. They also teach students to overlook moral issues unless they have political



Figure 5: "The soldiers of Unit 101 excelled in their daring [...] One of their actions was the invasion of the village Kibieh in the Samaria region [...]. The soldiers destroyed 45 houses and killed 69 men, women and children."

implications. This way the students, soon to be soldiers, are introduced to the language and arguments of politicians and generals.

Conclusion

My argument is that Israeli schoolbooks are a manifestation of "elite racism": 'racism reproduced in papers, schoolbooks, academic discourse, political speeches and parliamentary debates – the racism which is then implemented and enacted in other social fields', (Reisigl and Wodak 2001:24) – such as the army. The schoolbooks which were published after the Oslo Peace Accords inculcate exclusive Jewish rights to the Land and encourage the oppression of Palestinian identity and culture.

Israeli students are misinformed about the geopolitical situation of their country, and are denied the information necessary in order to regard their immediate neighbours as partners for shared life and co-existence. They learn from their schoolbooks how to manipulate verbal and visual discourse the way politicians do. They learn that democracy may segregate citizens according to ethnicity and that human suffering and empathy are dependent on race or religion.

The cited schoolbooks

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Notes:

- 1 The research on which this study is based, using 12 current textbooks, was completed at the Institute of Education, London University, 2004.
- 2 [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/facts about Israel/Israel in maps#threats&topography](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/facts%20about%20Israel/Israel%20in%20maps#threats&topography). 1.Jan, 2004.

Nurit Peled-Elhanan is a lecturer in language and education at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. When her daughter, Smadari, was killed by a suicide bomber in 1997, she and her husband became co-founders, with other Israeli and Palestinian parents, of the Bereaved Parents Circle. In 2001 Nurit was awarded the Sakharov prize for Human Rights and the Freedom of Speech by the European Parliament.

On 26 January, in a speech protesting the siege of Gaza, she said:

"...What can we say to the babies whose lives have been choked out of them in incubators before they began their lives because the State of the Jews shut off the flow of oxygen? What can we say to all the mothers who are searching for bread for their children in the streets of Gaza and what can we say to ourselves? Only this: sixty years after Auschwitz the State of the Jews is confining people in ghettos and is killing them with hunger, asphyxiation and disease..."

A European state?

Hilary and Steven Rose ask how Israel has managed to persuade the world that it is part of Europe

Israel's footballers play in the UEFA cup, its singers compete in Eurovision song contests, its research scientists participate in the European Research Area (ERA) and it enjoys preferential trade tariffs with the EU. How has this come about?

It was the long history of European anti-semitism and of post 1945 European guilt, combined with the Zionist project, that fuelled the exodus of European Jews to create the state of Israel in Palestine. Yet Israel's demographic facts on the ground tell another story. While some 20% are Palestinian Israelis and 80% Jewish Israelis, the Jewish population is itself not homogeneous. Jews of EuroAmerican origin are overrepresented among the elite strata. They dominate the political classes, the state institutions, the senior ranks of the IDF, the arts and the universities. By contrast Jews of Arab or African origin are to be found at the bottom of the Jewish hierarchy and overrepresented among Israel's growing poor.

Israel's desire to be part of Euro-America is not so very different from the problems of Australia and New Zealand, where the white settlers long thought of Britain as 'home.' Indeed the theorists of Zionism who founded the Israeli state saw themselves in similar terms; in his autobiography Chaim Weizman regularly refers to the Jews entering Palestine as colonising the region, and as settlers. He goes so far as to hint that they will bring civilising European values to a barbarian region. Perhaps not so different from Cecil Rhodes? Today, Australians and New Zealanders see themselves as part of south Asia, not Europe. They show that it is possible for white (European) settlers who have dispossessed and killed the indigenous population to understand that to be a successful democracy they have to both acknowledge their crime against the first antipodeans, and to collaborate with their regional neighbours. But not only does the Israeli elite shows no sign of learning from others' experience, Europe is more than willing to collude with its foundational narrative of "a land without people for a people without land".

And this is not merely a matter of sentiment or residual guilt. It requires more than this to explain why, despite Israel's continued breaches of international law and UN resolutions, European governments sit on their hands rather than take effective punitive action. UEFA and Eurovision may be marginal, but Israel's scientific and technological wealth — Bill Gates described this tiny state as matching California's Silicon Valley — makes it a valued economic partner. It is here that Israel's participation in the ERA becomes so important, and why the 2002 call for a moratorium on research collaboration with Israel via the ERA, which preceded the wider boycott calls, raised such a storm.

When the Greens in the European parliament tried to block participation for countries in breach of the European Convention

on Human Rights, they were firmly rebuffed, not merely by the EU Research Commissioner, the Slovenian Janoz Potocnik, but by many of their fellow Parliamentarians,

who unashamedly insisted that the calibre of Israeli research was so important that it took precedence over human rights. On any occasion when the claim is made that science is above human rights there are unpleasant echoes of the Nazi doctors' trial at Nuremberg. Then the doctors and scientists argued confidently that what they were doing was good science, which, as such, would contribute to human welfare. And let us be clear; some of their findings did constitute 'good science' — but at an obscene cost in human suffering.

Europe funds research through five year Framework Programmes. The current programme (FP7) began last year and is scheduled to spend 50.5 billion over its five year life. Framework is intended to fund multinational research and development programmes involving universities, research institutes and small

and medium enterprises in projects intended to enhance wealth creation and quality of life. Originally confined to EU countries, Framework expanded to include other European countries during the 3rd programme and to Israel in the 4th. Over the past decade Israel has been included in no less than 1700 such R&D collaborations.

All Israel's eight universities, from Bar-Ilan to Tel-Aviv, as well as technical institutes and many companies are active collaborators, eagerly seeking European partners. And many of these collaborations involve UK universities — amongst Britain's most powerful research powerhouses. There are currently 27 active projects at Imperial College and 21 at University College in London, for instance. Oxford and Cambridge have participated in 101 projects each over the past decade, and

Edinburgh 52.* Most are at the 'cutting edge' of science and technology — nanotechnology, molecular neuroscience, information technology. Others focus on more immediate practical matters such as water management and fishery stocks.

Cash-strapped but ambitious UK researchers will look wherever they can for research resources. Some say money has no smell, but many biomedical researchers will not touch tobacco money, making their decisions in the light of the key message from Nuremberg — ethics are not separable from research. It is time we asked British researchers to reflect on the ethical case for not including Israeli universities and research institutes amongst their partners for European research projects. Such exclusion does not discriminate against race, religion, nationality or gender. Israeli universities are not exclusively staffed by Israeli nationals, or even all Israeli Jews. What exclusion will do is to insist that Israel, whilst in breach of so many human rights, is not a 'normal' state with which to do normal things like research.

(*Details can be found via the home page of the EU's CORDIS website; choose 'projects' and under the search term 'University X with Israel').



'When the claim is made that science is above human rights there are unpleasant echoes of Nuremberg'

In Brief

US GAZA PLOT BACKFIRES

In an explosive article published in March 2008, the US magazine Vanity Fair claims to have obtained confidential documents, since corroborated by sources in the US and Palestine. It reveals a covert initiative, approved by Bush and implemented by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Deputy National Security Adviser Elliott Abrams, to provoke a Palestinian civil war. The plan was to arm forces led by Dahlan, one-time Fatah strongman in Gaza

and national security advisor to President Abbas, in order to remove the democratically elected Hamas-led government from power. However the plan backfired as Hamas itself seized total control of Gaza.

According to Vanity Fair, the Contra-style plot sparked bitter controversy within the Bush administration. David Wurmser, an avowed neoconservative, resigned as Vice President Dick Cheney's chief Middle East adviser in July 2007, a month after the Gaza coup. He accused the Bush administration of "engaging in a dirty war in an effort to provide a corrupt dictatorship [led by Abbas] with victory." He believes that Hamas had no intention of taking Gaza until Fatah forced its hand. "It looks to me that what happened wasn't so much a coup by Hamas but an attempted coup by Fatah that was pre-empted before it could happen," Wurmser says.

It apparently came as a revelation to Mr Wurmser that US policy in the region carries the taint of hypocrisy: "There is a stunning disconnect between the President's call for Middle East democracy and this policy," he said. "It directly contradicts it."

• For the full article see <http://tinyurl.com/yvIntu>



Credit: Reuters

TAWFIQ'S NATIVITY SAYS IT ALL

Tawfiq Salsaa, of the village of Beit Sahour near Bethlehem, specialises in hand-carved nativity scenes, which he sells worldwide. This year he made an up-to-date one – with the Wall running through it, so the Wise Men could not get to the stable.

The amount of international interest the sales of this item raised was extraordinary. Reuters interviewed Tawfiq, and the Independent carried a prominent piece about him – and the situation in the West Bank.

Tawfiq points out that the wall is detachable, so people can remove it once the actual Wall itself has been removed.

Amos Trust, who imported the Nativity to the UK, were overwhelmed with orders (but also by a large number of emails from people attacking it as "anti-Semitic").

Tawfiq also carved a scale model of the Old City of Jerusalem which was bought by graffiti artist Banksy.

MORE JORDAN VALLEY HOMES DEMOLISHED

The Israeli army demolished more homes in Palestinian villages in the occupied West Bank this February. The homes of Palestinian families in the villages of Hadidiya, Jiftlik and Furush Beit Dajan in the Jordan Valley were bulldozed, some for the third time. Amnesty International's observer Donatella Rovera said:

"These homes mostly have three generations – the grandparents, parents and children. In Hadidiya, there were four families, in Furush Beit Dajan, five families. All of the people have had homes demolished before, but this time they had no warning."

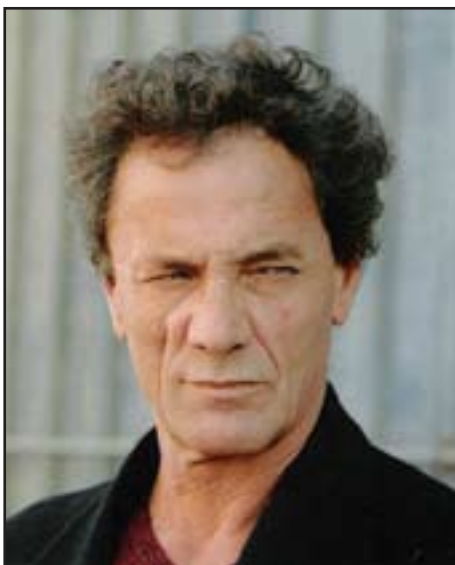
The families in Hadidiya, now reduced to tents and shacks, have lived in the same area for generations, herding sheep and goats and cultivating land on the Jordan hills. The demolitions are part of intensified efforts by the Israeli army to expel Palestinians from the Jordan Valley by designating it a "closed military area". The land vacated has often been used to build illegal Israeli settlements.



Homes in Hadidiya bulldozed

JENIN JENIN FILM-MAKER UNDER ATTACK

Acclaimed actor and director Mohammad Bakri is one of Israel's most well-known citizens. He has acted in over a dozen films made by Israeli and international directors including "Hanna K" by Costa-Gavras and is also known as a stage actor and director. But since producing a documentary on Israel's 2002 assault on the West Bank town of Jenin, Bakri has found himself virtually blacklisted in Israeli cinema, and now faces jail for making the film.



Mohammad Bakri

In April 2002, the Israeli military killed fifty-two Palestinians, flattened over 150 buildings and closed off the camp for two weeks. Amnesty International accused Israel of committing war crimes. The UN had to suspend its fact-finding mission after Israel refused to allow them entry. Bakri's documentary "Jenin, Jenin", which has been widely shown by campaigning organisations in the UK, was one of the first to tell the stories of the town's residents during the Israeli assault.

Despite receiving international acclaim, the film was initially banned in Israel until a reversal by the Israeli Supreme Court. Mohammad Bakri was then sued by five Israeli soldiers who were part of the military operation in Jenin. They allege that Bakri falsified information about them. He faces financial ruin and even jail if he is found responsible for defamation and cannot pay the 2.5 million NIS demanded by the soldiers. In the interim, he struggles simply to pay his legal bills.

• For more information: www.defendmohammadbakri.org

PALESTINIAN WOMEN IN GALILEE UNITE

On 8 March, International Women's Day, more than 500 people gathered in the town of Sakhnin in the Galilee to attend the founding conference of the Union of Arab Women's Works Committees, organised by the trade union organisation Sawt el-Amel ('The Laborer's Voice').

Grassroots activists – working and unemployed women and housewives – decided to get organised, in order to challenge the massive obstacles Arab women face in Israel's labour market and social security system and obtain the right to economic justice.

They were encouraged by an enormous wave of international support, as the conference received solidarity greetings from the International Trade Union Committee in support of Palestinian working men and women, signed by hundreds of trade unionists from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, and an international guest addressed the audience on behalf of the Belgian service worker union LBC-NVK. There were also lively performances of Palestinian poetry, song, theatre and dance.

In the course of 2008 members of the Women's Works Committees will attend leadership training workshops and consultations with experienced trade union organisers, in order to be able to face the challenges ahead, and the elected leadership will draft a constitution

PROUD TO BE PALESTINIAN

In January, in a striking gesture of solidarity, Israeli pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim accepted Palestinian citizenship. Known for his opposition to Israeli expansionist policies, he stated in an interview: "The Palestinians naturally must continue to resist the occupation and all attempts to deny them basic individual needs, and statehood." Barenboim said he was "moved and very, very happy" to accept citizenship.

For many years Barenboim has promoted cultural exchange between young people in



Barenboim in Ramallah

Israel and the Arab world, and was co-founder with the late Edward Said of the West-Eastern Divan orchestra in 1999. On a number of occasions he has held recitals to raise money for medical aid for children in the Gaza Strip. However, in the face of hostility from the Israeli government, Barenboim has been forced to cancel some concerts in Ramallah, and musicians from his Divan orchestra have been prevented from entering the West Bank.

Following President George Bush's visit to the region, in which Bush used the hitherto taboo word "occupation", Barenboim commented: "Now, even not very intelligent people are saying that the occupation has to be stopped."



Women workers protest in Nazareth

and plan of action for the newly established Union of Arab Women's Works Committees.

• See [//laborers-voice.org](http://laborers-voice.org) for more details of their work.

LIKUD LEADER BANNED FROM UK

Moshe Feiglin, head of the extreme religious faction of the far-right Likud party, was recently notified in a letter from British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith that he has been banned from entering the U.K.

Well known for his extreme racist views, he co-founded the Zo Artzeinu ("This is our Land") party in 1993. In 2004 Feiglin told The New Yorker that he favoured a theocracy in Israel based on Biblical law, and that non-Jews should be excluded from Israeli politics. "Why should non-Jews have a say in the policy of a Jewish state? For two thousand years, Jews dreamed of a Jewish state, not a democratic state. Democracy should serve the values of the state, not destroy them." He dismissed Palestinians saying, "You can't teach a monkey to speak and you can't teach an Arab to be democratic. You're dealing with a culture of thieves and robbers. Muhammad, their prophet, was a robber and a killer and a liar."

According to the Jewish Chronicle, the Home Office letter said it considered "that you are seeking to provoke others to serious criminal acts and fostering hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the U.K. ... This has brought you within the scope of the list of unacceptable behaviours."



Moshe Feiglin

WHITEWASH OF 2006 DEBACLE

January saw the publication in Israel of the long-awaited Winograd Report, on the conduct of the war on Lebanon, in the summer of 2006. Over a thousand Lebanese were killed – mostly civilians – as were more than 200 people in Gaza, including 40 children. Israel refuses to release information about the 900 sites littered with unexploded mines and cluster bombs in S Lebanon, which continue to kill and maim civilians.

In referring to Prime Minister Olmert's judgement as "sincere", if flawed, the committee presenting the Report toned down a far harsher verdict contained in an interim report published last spring. Following that report, more than 100,000 Israelis demonstrated in Tel Aviv, calling for Olmert to resign.

Amnesty International called the Report "deeply flawed", since its remit was largely restricted to the efficacy of Israeli military strategy. "The indiscriminate killings of many Lebanese civilians not involved in the hostilities and the deliberate and wanton destruction of civilian properties and infrastructure on a massive scale were given no more than token consideration by the commission," said Malcolm Smart, Director of AI's Middle East and North Africa Programme.



Child victim of Israeli bombing in S Lebanon

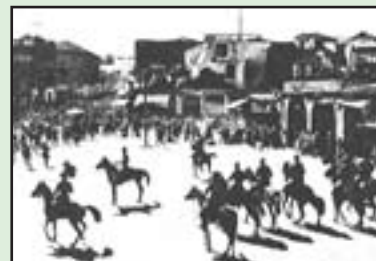
Other international human rights and humanitarian organisations that examined the situation reached the same conclusion. In its report of 10 November 2006 the

Eye on the web

• **A filmed report** of the epic Gaza breakout (by AlJazeera) can be viewed on youtube: <http://tinyurl.com/2m5yj6>



• **For a poignant collection** of thousands of photos of Palestine, taken before and after the Nakba, and many hours of oral history and home videos, see: www.palestineremembered.com



Jaffa in 1933: a demonstration against the British

• **If you want to see** how West Bank Palestinians still manage to have a good time under military occupation visit www.thisweekinpalestine.com

• **The dispossession of Jerusalem:** this online exhibition of striking photographs taken in and around the Old City tells a searing story: www.activestills.org/jerusalem/jerusalem.html

• **The struggle for education** in the West Bank is told in the Education Guardian, through an article and film taking a unique month-long look at two schools in Nablus. See: <http://tinyurl.com/2pc925>.

UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that: "... a significant pattern of excessive, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the IDF [Israel Defence Forces] against Lebanese civilians and civilian objects, failing to distinguish civilians from combatants and civilian objects from military targets". A separate investigation by four UN independent experts also reported in October 2006 that "Available information strongly indicates that, in many instances, Israel violated its legal obligations to distinguish between military and civilian objectives; to fully apply the principle of proportionality".

Plus ça change...

HEBRON SHOPS, BUSINESSES, ORPHANAGE TARGETED BY THE IDF

The West Bank town of Hebron, already under attack from the settlers who have occupied the heart of the old city, suffered a further blow in mid March.

The Israeli army moved in and served closure orders on bakeries, clothes shops, fitness centres, a supermarket, beauty salon, barbershop and library. Local warehouses were raided and goods worth about NIS 750,000 were taken. Much of the food was earmarked for the local orphanage of 150 children.

The reason given? That all these businesses or institutions are either in buildings belonging to the Islamic Charity Movement, or, in the case of the orphanage, are directly funded by it. The IDF claims that the charity supports Hamas, a claim vehemently denied by the charity's Attorney, who said: "There are no transfers of money to Hamas, as Israel claims. Our financial reports are open and transparent. We are in no way part of the infrastructure of Hamas." He added that all their finances are supervised by accountants and by the Palestinian Authority's welfare and education ministries.

What's in a label?

Shopping at my local supermarket during October of last year, I saw for the first time packs of flat leaf parsley labelled produce of the "West Bank". I became suspicious that these packs could have come from illegal Israeli settlements. Days later, my good friend Sue told me how thrilled she was to be making *tabouleh* with Palestinian parsley! This prompted an investigation!

Since then, the West Bank label has been making an appearance on many packs of fresh herbs at major supermarkets. More recently, packs of Medjool dates on supermarket shelves blatantly declare: "grown in the West Bank, by Masua" or "by Netiv Hagdud", both illegal Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley.

It is a fact that settlement produce has found its way to our supermarkets and continues to do so, labelled as produce of Israel. These settlements are illegal under international law. The Geneva Convention states that the transfer of a civilian population into occupied territory is a war crime; to be complicit in this crime is also a crime in English law. The UK government's policy is quite clear. The government's website reiterates the UN Security Council Resolution: "Settlements are illegal under international law and settlement construction is an obstacle to peace." Despite this and many other resolutions and agreements, Israel continues to export settlement produce to the UK with impunity.

Moreover, most settlement produce benefits from the preferential (reduced or nil) rates of customs duty under the EC-Israel Preferential Trade Agreement in force since June 2000. This has cost British tax payers millions of pounds in unpaid customs duties.

Israel has been under pressure from EU member states to stop this illegal practice since 2003. This brought about what is known as the "Technical Agreement" between the EU and Israel Customs Co-operation Committee. The agreement entered into force in February 2005 and was engineered by Ehud Olmert, Trade Minister of Israel at the time. In order to differentiate between settlement goods and Israeli goods, Israeli exporters undertook to indicate the names of the cities, villages or industrial zones where production had taken place. This practice would set apart settlement produce (Occupied Territories) from Israeli produce. The former would pay customs duties and the latter would be exempt under the EC-Israel Preferential Trade Agreement.

With the customs and duties issue put to rest, the Olmert agreement conveniently allowed Israel to continue exporting settlement produce into the EU. It is no longer a question of whether the export of settlement produce to the EU is legal or not. Rather, it has become a matter of tariffs.

The agreement has not been effective in making Israel declare the origin in all cases. However, it has prompted importers to probe further, for fear of accruing substantial amounts of unpaid duties. This is clearly illustrated in the following statement by Waitrose (the most forthcoming of the supermarkets we approached): "The reason for the change in packaging description was on the back of work being led by our herb supplier, who is part of the British Herb Traders Association. We believed that all our products were from the EC definition of Israel, which does not include any disputed territories. This was confirmed by our agents over there. However, on closer scrutiny, the information we were receiving was based on maps which the Israelis were

using, which does include the disputed territories. Once this discrepancy was identified, we sought guidance from the Fresh Produce Consortium and we corrected our packaging to reflect this."

Pressure from consumers and media reports have further reinforced the trend to change the label. In November 2007, a group of UK activists went inside Tomer, a settlement in the Jordan Valley, and took photos of produce labelled "Made in Israel" bound for UK supermarkets. An ITN report covered the story and interviewed representatives of Sainsbury and Tesco, who admitted 'mistakenly' mislabelling settlement produce in the past and undertook to label settlement produce as "West Bank" in the future.

Dialogue with supermarkets has revealed that they rely on their suppliers for information which they pass on to consumers. This information is often unclear and contradictory. Further scrutiny by activists has led to further probing with the suppliers and more facts being released.

Two major supermarkets now admit that they label all produce from the Occupied Territories as produce of the West Bank. They say that this complies with DEFRA guidelines on correct labelling. These stipulate that: "Under EC law, the origin of a product for retail labelling purposes can be given as a region or other geographical indication that does not equate to a country or state, *provided that the meaning is clear to the consumer*" [our italics].

The West Bank has become synonymous with Palestine in the public mind. Labelling produce that comes from the Occupied Territories as produce of the "West Bank" misleads the consumer. Consumers buying these products believe that they are supporting the Palestinian economy while in fact they are supporting the economy of these illegal settlements. The vast majority, and very probably, all produce that comes from the West Bank, comes from the settlements. Very little, if any, produce that comes from Palestinian farms makes it to supermarkets in the UK.

This unlawful practice denies consumers informed choices between Palestinian goods, of which there are almost none, and illegal settlement goods. For consumers to make ethical choices, settlement goods must be clearly labelled as settlement produce and thereby set apart from Palestinian produce.

We must continue to ask three fundamental questions:

- Why is illegal settlement produce sold in our supermarkets?
- Why does Israel get away with all these illegal practices?
- Why do we remain silent about the huge customs debt incurred due to wrongly labelled settlement produce?

Zina Jardaneh

The only safe thing is to refuse to buy goods and produce both from Israel and the West Bank — unless you can be certain it is Palestinian



Green Party backs boycott

At their Spring Conference in Reading the Green Party voted to:

- **Work towards** a just solution based on international law and an end to Israeli occupation of the Occupied Territories
- **Demand** that the blockade on all Occupied Palestinian Territories be lifted and freedom of movement guaranteed
- **Campaign for** the release all the elected Palestinian parliamentarians kidnapped by the Israeli Army
- **Reiterate** our call on Israel to allow Palestinians and their families to return to their former homes, or to compensate those unable or unwilling to return.
- **Support** the Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions made by more than 170 Palestinian civil society organizations and community groups.

After a lively debate the motion was passed by a large majority. International Coordinator Dr Joseph Healy told *PN*:

"There has since been a concerted and angry campaign with hundreds of emails from Israel, USA and UK flooding into our party office. Some have verged on the racist, asking why we care so much about Palestinians etc..."

Green MEP Jean Lambert visited Gaza in February. She reported:

"There are insufficient drugs available in hospitals to provide basic care and in some areas food assistance only fulfils about two-thirds of daily requirements. The fishing industry, which employed about 10,000 people, is under severe stress as boats cannot stray far from the coast.

"An ecological disaster could also be imminent, as the Beit Lahia sewage plant in Gaza is failing, but essential maintenance supplies cannot be obtained."



Success in Eden Springs campaign

Scottish PSC has for some time been campaigning to boycott Eden Springs mineral water, extracted from the Salukia spring in the Golan Heights and bottled in the illegal settlement of Katzrin.

A number of organisations have recently terminated their contracts with the company: the **Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations** have cancelled Eden Springs contracts at three of their offices: Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness; the **Scottish Trades Union Congress** have removed Eden Springs water coolers from their offices; **Edinburgh University, Heriot Watt University** and **Caledonian University** have all voted to cancel their contracts. The trade union branch of **Napier University Educational Institute of Scotland** passed a motion at their AGM to call for a cancellation of the university's Eden Springs contract and **UNISON Scotland** have also removed Eden Springs from their offices

(they give information about Eden Springs through their water@work campaign). The **UNISON national conference** also voted to support the boycott.

If you are a UNISON or other trade union member, raise a motion at your branch and work with colleagues to get rid of Eden Springs from your workplace!

- **The case against Eden Springs is spelled out on Scottish PSC's website (www.scottishpsc.org.uk). Further arguments on boycott are to be found on www.bigcampaign.org.**



Corporate complicity on the agenda

20 organisations (including PSC), from half a dozen European countries attended a recent round table meeting in Brussels to discuss the building of grassroots boycott and divestment campaigns, as a way of bringing direct pressure to bear on the agents of the brutal oppression in Palestine.

Two main cases were presented, before discussion. AFPS (Association France Palestine Solidarité) described their commercial court case against Connex/Alstom Veolia on the Jerusalem tramway, demanding disclosure and cancellation of the original 2005 French government-supported contract. The case is still continuing: findings have again been delayed, though they did get disclosure of the contract and withdrawal of the Dutch bank part-funding the project, and the Irish train drivers through their union (SIPTU) have refused to provide training for the tramway.

Then United Civilians for Peace detailed their sustained project to get the Dutch government to disclose which firms are active in occupation-related activities in Palestine, and the resultant campaigns against **Riwal** (crane suppliers) and **Unilever** (majority share in a bagel company operating in Israel and the settlements). After much prevarication the new minister of foreign affairs apparently admitted the government was not monitoring the activities of Dutch companies, did herself go to Palestine, and now says the government will 'remain vigilant'.

This meeting enlarges the network of European groups cooperating in exposing such firms and the many others — such as **Agrexco, Caterpillar, Eden Springs**, and the campaigns this inspires for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS).

Anyone willing to help with such campaigning should look out for the announcement of a PSC national BDS Workshop, probably in mid-May. Check the website (www.palestinecampaign.org) in late March.

Promoting partnership

Professor Bart Moore-Gilbert talks to PN about a ground-breaking initiative

Bart Moore-Gilbert's introduction to the Occupied Territories came about almost by chance, in the late 70s. "I had visited Israel several times, to stay with Israeli friends from university, knowing very little of the historical and political background. Then on one occasion I decided to take a taxi from West Jerusalem over to 'the other side', to visit Birzeit University, and the driver invited me to visit Qalandia refugee camp. It was what you might call an on-the-road-to-Ramallah experience, a real eye-opener. I was completely shocked by what I saw. About the same time I discovered the work of Edward Said, whom I was to meet later on several occasions. I got to know more and more about the reality of the situation — and got increasingly disturbed by what was being done to the Palestinians."

As Professor of Post-Colonial Studies and English at Goldsmiths College, University of London, Bart Moore-Gilbert's field of teaching and research chimes well with the experience of the Palestinian people. "I began by trying to make Palestine more visible in my teaching, principally by introducing texts, such as Said's 'Out of Place'. The effect on my students has been profound; usually they start with a stereotypical, racist view of Palestinians as wasters or terrorists; through the texts they come to see them as human beings."

Colleagues in the Sociology Department were also interested in the situation in Palestine, and have been developing links with the Women's Studies Programme in Birzeit University, to which they contribute by video-conference link. "So I thought,

why not develop a similar link, with an English Department in Palestine? Hebron has less contact than Birzeit with the outside world, and suffers the blight of an extremely violent settler population, so after some discussion I decided to work with them. I wanted to let them set the agenda, and they opted for an undergraduate course on Post-Modernism (not strictly my field!) but it's brought up all kinds of interesting issues, relevant to the students' own lives."

So how does it work, from a technical and practical point of view?

"This is really a pilot project this year. We do a two-hour seminar once a month and the coursework and exams are organised at the Hebron end. The British Council in Jerusalem has been fantastic, helping with funding the books, and relaying the video-link from the British Council in London. There are occasional technical frustrations — sometimes the link goes, for 10 minutes at a time. And students can't always physically get to the class, because of the roadblocks and checkpoints."

"On the academic side, the approach to learning, including the notion of what a seminar should be, is rather different in Palestine, so adjustments have had to be made on both sides. The students come armed with plenty of questions, and expect you to be an authoritative voice — different from the give-and-take

we're more used to over here. But overall I'd say the students have found it both exciting and disorienting — and maybe that's what education is all about!"

Professor Moore-Gilbert went to Hebron in October, to meet the students he'd seen only via the video-link: "Their excitement and gratitude were immensely moving. I could see that the feeling of being in touch with staff from a well-known university in the outside world is having a great morale-boosting effect, for staff and students. And I was hugely impressed by the students' resilience and determination; they will try to overcome any obstacles to get an education. It made me feel I'd like to take some of my undergraduates over there, so they'd appreciate more what a precious human right education is!"

The new technology is opening the way to all kinds of future developments.

"Various initiatives are in the air", says Professor Moore-Gilbert. "Other universities, like AlNajah in Nablus, are keen to get involved and I've put them in touch with colleagues from Kent]. And I know a number of other colleagues around the UK are making exploratory moves. One idea is to organise short staff secondments for intensive teaching, over two or three weeks. Another relatively simple project, technically speaking, would be to set up internet chat-rooms with English students who are doing the same course over here, so they can exchange ideas. Another idea is distance postgraduate supervision. Hebron would of course love to send us students, but there are financial and other problems. The Israelis will usually let people out to study — but may not let them back in again..."

Professor Moore-Gilbert can be contacted by anyone interested in setting up similar links at: bart.mg@hotmail.co.uk.

Palestinian academics to speak in UK!

The University and College Union has invited six Palestinian academics to come and speak at campuses around the UK, 21 – 28 April. Controversial issues like the academic boycott and the problems of teaching and studying in Palestinian universities will no doubt be raised.

Members of the UCU should contact the union to book a speaker.

For more information see www.sue.be/pal or www.palestinecampaign.org.

Professor Lisa Taraki of Birzeit University



NUS calls for an end to the siege

In a historic breakthrough, the National Union of Students National Executive Committee voted in February to call for an immediate end to Israel's ongoing blockade of Gaza.

The motion committed NUS to "support Amnesty International's call for an immediate lifting of the blockade on Gaza" and, following the high-profile 'Let Khaled Study' campaign launched last year (see below), to "continue to raise awareness of the situation faced by students in Gaza including those unable to leave due to the blockade."

This decision by NUS should be of real help to campus groups in

getting similar motions passed and in organising meetings to help build for the national demonstration for Palestine in London on 10 May.

Recent months have in fact seen energetic campaigning for Palestine in student unions across the country. Events in Gaza in particular have helped mobilise students to support the PSC demonstrations outside Downing Street and to hold their own protests and actions on campus. A number of student organisations, including **Oxford, Manchester, Warwick, LSE and Leeds**, have taken part in 'Anti-Apartheid Week' events.

UK campuses fight gag attempts

Bradford University student Khaled al Mudallal, who returned to Britain in December after having been trapped in Gaza for six months, has been speaking at a number of meetings, including at Parliament and PSC's AGM in February.

Disgracefully, he was recently barred from participating in the Bradford Students Union officer elections, due to intervention by the University Vice Chancellor and others. A campaign has been launched at Bradford to oppose this.



Khaled's case taken up in the local press

UCL twinning goes ahead

On 5 March the **University College London Students' Union (UCLU)** voted overwhelmingly to twin the Union with the Unions of Al-Quds and Al-Azhar Secular Universities in the West Bank and Gaza respectively, with immediate effect. The Union also voted to establish an educational exchange programme between UCL students and students from the Palestinian universities, and "to reiterate the UCLU Friends of Palestine Society's right to raise issues that concern the student body, criticise the Government of Israel and its policies, as well as highlight atrocities that contravene International Humanitarian law and not be treated unlike other societies for doing such."

In a maximum capacity lecture theatre of 325, people packed in, spilling over into the stairways, at the best attended UCLU AGM since 2003.

Before the meeting, the chances of passing the motion seemed slim. Just before the meeting, a hostile amendment was received, asking the Union's students to twin with the Israeli Hebrew University in Jerusalem (and remove twinning with Al-Azhar Secular University in Gaza). The speaker for the motion appealed to 'objective' sources, such as 'The Harvard Israel Review' and 'The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs' as against the United Nations' organs, including the International Court of Justice, referred to in the original motion, suggesting the former better reflected "the reality as it is today!"

Previously, the Union Media and Communications Officer, as well as members of the UCLU Jewish Society had slandered the UCLU Friends of Palestine society for "inciting racial hatred" following a recent exhibition entitled "Jerusalem Dispossessed". The exhibition documented "the dispossession of indigenous Palestinians from their native city, Jerusalem, amid rapid expansion of Israeli settlements, the separation wall and home demolitions". It was provided by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.

The President of the UCLU Friends of Palestine said that the passing of the motion "was an important and constructive step which allows UCL students to get first hand experience and knowledge of the reality on the ground in Palestine, in an environment marred by fictitious propaganda" and encouraged other universities to follow suit.

Most student societies in the UK are already thinking about their plans for next year — but not the (would be) **Palestine Society in the University of Birmingham**. The Guild of Students there failed, yet again, to approve the application. Probably aware that this is illegal and racist (can you imagine a Jewish student society being banned?), the Guild of Students has been using many different delaying tactics. The only response so far has been that "[The Guild of Students] aren't sure whether or not the society would conflict with the certain policies".

This is not new; the Palestine Society has not been allowed to operate on campus for the last six years. In 2006 the Guild of Students executive gave the following reasons for banning the Palestine Society:

"A Palestinian Society would create a forum for racism, would jeopardise the safety of the university and would provide a platform for extreme political groups."

This clear attempt to prevent the airing of the Israel/Palestine issue is both racist and contrary to the principle of freedom of speech that should be paramount in our universities.

LSE demands divestment from Israel

On 14 February a divestment motion was brought to the weekly Union General Meeting at the London School of Economics by the LSE Palestine Society. The meeting, attended by more than 400 students, resolved to lobby the LSE authorities and the NUS to divest from companies that provide military support for the Israeli occupation, facilitate the maintenance of the illegal annexation wall or operate on illegally occupied land or within Jewish-only settlements. The Union voted by six to one to support the aim of targeted divestment, until companies cease such practices or until Israel ends its discriminatory oppression and colonisation of Palestinian communities.

The Union also resolved to affiliate to the international campaign to end the siege on Gaza and engage in education campaigns to publicise more widely the injustices of Israel's discriminatory policies. This includes working with Palestine solidarity organisations such as Jews for Justice for Palestinians, the British Committee for Universities in Palestine (BRICUP), the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Zochrot and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), in a bid to end the legalised racial and religious discrimination in Israel.

Irene Calis of the LSE Palestine Society said: "By putting political and economic pressure on the Israeli state, the student movement can not only show continued solidarity with the Palestinian people, but also expedite the end of the Israeli occupation."

Job opportunities in Nablus!

An-Najah National University has a splendid new campus near the ancient city of Nablus, on the West Bank. But it is having difficulties finding teaching staff, due to the frequent closures imposed by the Israeli military checkpoints surrounding the city. Yet many rewarding professional opportunities exist, in the faculties of Arts, Science, Education, IT, Engineering, Law, Optometry and Nursing. (The language of tuition is English.) The University is able to offer a salary and accommodation to successful applicants. More details can be obtained from the Public Relations Department: pr@najah.edu.

The Public Relations Department is also looking for native or near-native English speakers to assist with English teaching, administration of scholarships, editing and/or writing articles. These positions are voluntary (accommodation provided) and would suit recent graduates seeking professional experience in the West Bank. Please contact scholarships@najah.edu or r2e.najah@gmail.com for further details.

For more information about An-Najah University see www.najah.edu.



An-Najah University

Israel targets Palestinian universities

It's a hard time to be a teacher or a student in the OPTs. Quite apart from the difficulties of just getting to the university, due to the hundreds of Israeli military checkpoints across the West Bank, you may be arbitrarily arrested and held for an indefinite period of time. Such arrests are directed mainly at staff and students who are focal members of the academic community.

Among the latest victims are **Dr Gassan Sharif Khaled**, Assistant Professor of International Law at An-Najah University in Nablus and **Fadi Hamad**, the head of Birzeit University Student Council.

Dr Gassan Sharif Khaled is the son of Sharif Omar Khaled, the well-known head of the Land Defence Committee of Jayyous, who has spoken in the UK on several occasions about Israel's land-grab policies. Gassan was abducted by the Israeli Secret Service on 16 January and was kept chained to a chair for 21 continuous hours each day for six days running and subjected to severe and humiliating interrogation. For three weeks following his arrest nothing was known of his whereabouts or about the pretext for his disappearance; only then was his attorney granted access to him. His detention has been extended every 8 days since then.

• *Join the international call for Gassan's immediate release by writing to the Israeli Embassy in London, and by signing the online petition: www.petitiononline.com/GASSAN28/petition.html.*

In December 2007, Fadi Hamad was sentenced to at least a year in jail, on the grounds that he belongs to the Islamic Bloc student group (there were no charges of connection to an armed movement). Under Israeli military law it is illegal for a student group to be affiliated to a political party — an effective way of discouraging Palestinian students engaging in political activity.

This is just part of a wave of arrests. Since January 2008, one Birzeit University employee and eight students have been arrested, including Fadi's replacement, the acting head of the Student Council, Abdullah Owais, who is still awaiting charges. This brings the total number of Birzeit employees and students incarcerated to 95, 38 of whom have not yet been charged.

For more information see [//right2education.birzeit.edu](http://right2education.birzeit.edu).



Student Council office at Birzeit University ransacked by IDF

For more information, help with submitting a motion or organising a meeting or advice on campaigning and campaigning material, don't hesitate to contact the PSC Student Officers George Woods and Akram Salhab at students@palestinecampaign.org.



Branches rally to Gaza – and remember the Nakba

Throughout the country, members expressed their outrage at the ongoing siege of Gaza and the murderous incursions of the Israeli army, through demonstrations, vigils and public meetings. Some branches hired buses to come to the national demonstrations organised by PSC in London.

In March, various branches hosted meetings with women from towns and villages all over the Palestinian West Bank, bringing their stories of life under Israeli occupation to public meetings around the country.

Since early January, **Sheffield** PSC has focused on town centre vigils, stepping up their actions to three protests in one week. This attracted a lot of local press interest. Sheffield continues to support four refugee projects in Gaza, despite the siege including Never Stop

Dreaming Project's mobile library and a 'ball pool' at the New Horizons children's centre in Nusseirat refugee camp. In February, the branch helped organise a very successful fundraiser with the Arab Club, a social group in the North of England. During Fair Trade Fortnight, Taysir Arabasi, a West Bank farmer, talked about his work with olive oil cooperative Zaytoun, the importance of fair trade olive oil to the Palestinians and his activism against the Apartheid Wall. Sheffield also welcomed back Professor Ilan Pappé, now a PSC Patron (see page 27). The Israeli historian spoke on the current situation and the escalating ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

West Midlands PSC also highlighted Gaza at its Saturday stall and at midweek vigils in Birmingham City Centre. The main event was a talk by Awad Abdul Fattah, General Secretary of the National

Spotlight on York

This June, York PSC celebrates its 5th anniversary. It was founded by a group of friends who had earlier campaigned against the Iraq war, and who realised that the cause of freedom for Palestine was the key to peace in the Middle East.

One of the most distinctive activities of the group has been political campaigning. Lobbying of local Councils, MPs, MEPs, Government ministers and other people of influence has been central to its work. Members are frequently seen at local MPs surgeries and have encouraged other activists who live in the constituencies of ministers, to lobby them. In 2007, a campaign amongst MEPs was launched which culminated in the branch's recent visit to Brussels (see page 24), to lobby both MEPs and diplomats in person. The branch also campaigns to persuade the local Council to boycott Israel.

The most important grassroots activity is the weekly Saturday stall in York city centre. In recent years, the twin Palestinian flags of their tented stall table have become a familiar sight and a much greater public concern for Palestinians has developed. Over 400 people have joined the mailing list.

Past branch events include public meetings, with speakers such as Bishop Riah of Jerusalem, Ilan Pappé, Jeff Halper of ICAHD and others. Members frequently give talks to local churches, trade unions and youth groups and these events are well supported. As people have found out more, so their desire



York PSC at NUS conference

for action has developed: 200 people marched through York on two separate occasions at the height of Israel's war on Lebanon and Gaza in 2006.

Over the years, members have used their connections with the local churches, the mosque and the trade unions, to forge strong links with those organisations. Conferences and synods frequently include PSC stalls and it was through the initiative of the group, that the national Methodist Conference voted to disinvest from companies that persist in profiting from the Occupation. The group has also been a key branch in the functioning of the PSC North network of branches – a network which has seen the growth of many northern branches.

• For more information visit: www.yorkpsc.org.uk



Women's delegation hosted by Mayor of Birmingham

On 11 March the delegation of Palestinian women visitors met the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and then spoke at a public meeting in the Council Chamber. They gave moving accounts of life under Israeli occupation and asked everyone to continue to raise the plight of the Palestinian people and to put pressure on the British Government to support the Palestinian people, according to international law.

Democratic Party in Israel, who also spoke at Oxford and at PSC's national AGM. The branch arranged for him to be interviewed by community radio.

Halifax held a vigil for the 'Break the Siege of Gaza' event. Local people who have visited Palestine recalled their experiences at 'Stories from Palestine, an evening of personal witness'. At another event in March Dr Asad Khan, specialist registrar in respiratory medicine at Wythenshawe Hospital and Beth McEvoy, a medical student at Manchester described their experiences in the West Bank.

South East London has been highlighting events in Gaza at their weekly stall (getting a really good response from the public) and writing to local supermarkets on the issue of Israeli and settlement goods. International Women's Day was marked by a discussion about the situation faced by Palestinian women and children, and ICAHD contributed a talk and filmshow about house demolitions. On 23 April they plan to show Mohammed Alatar's *The Iron Wall*.

Herefordshire PSC focused on lobbying their two local MPs. Their leafletting in the town centre against the siege of Gaza was covered by the local paper, the Hereford Times. In January the branch organised an open meeting with Linda Ramsden of ICAHD UK – their most successful to date.

Innovative events

Oxford PSC member Dave Hillman spoke at a Stop the War meeting in the format of 'Question Time'. The panel included Ken Loach, Caroline Raine and George Galloway. The branch also ran a day school on the Nakba, while another member spoke to a sixth-form group at a school. In February Oxford held a joint vigil on Gaza with Oxford Women in Black, and supported the students' Anti-Israeli Apartheid Week. The Oxford-Ramallah Friendship Association (ORFA), is planning a visit of young people from Oxford to Ramallah this July.

Cambridge PSC continues to work closely with other local groups, especially the student organisation CUPAL at the university, who organised an anti-Apartheid week and hosted Norman Finkelstein on his UK tour. They also hold regular Palestinian lunches at a local church café, to reach a different constituency.

Liverpool Friends of Palestine have set up a 'Euro focus group' to lobby MEPs and the European Commission, calling for the suspension of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. A meeting has been arranged

with Chris Davies, Lib Dem MEP, to discuss strategies for campaigning in Europe. The branch raised an amazing £1300 for charities in Gaza at its annual 'Breakfast for Palestine'.

Food for thought

Stalwart member of **Cheltenham and Gloucester** PSC, Joanne Moston, recently undertook a hectic two week fund- and awareness-raising trip across south west England, based around meals cooked by a chef from Deheisheh refugee camp, near Bethlehem. Like other branches, they have found showings of 'The Iron Wall', in various towns in the area, an extremely effective way of approaching the issues.

Brighton & Hove PSC had a marvellous evening to 'Support & Celebrate Palestine' in December with Palestinian food, music and a photo slide-show. The weekly stall continues in the town centre, alternating with a vigil for Gaza. Haringey branch raised over £400 at a recent fundraising gig. Following a visit from the Mayor of Aizaria in November, the branch will be sending its third delegation to Aizaria, in the occupied West Bank in early April. (The town is now cut off from the schools and hospitals in nearby Jerusalem by the apartheid Wall.)

Bristol PSC's New Year resolution was to publicise the Nakba anniversary as widely as possible. The branch launched a series of meetings, including films and talks from local activists delivering eye-witness reports. These meetings, and regular street stalls, are publicising the Nakba conference on Saturday 26 April at which Prof Ilan Pappé will be the main speaker. On Nakba-60 day, Thursday 15 May, the branch plans actions across the city and a peace vigil in the town centre.

Budding new branch

Sherborne has seen the emergence of a new PSC group, which complements the established branch in **Dorchester**. Some folk in North Dorset have complained about the long trek they have to make, especially in winter!

So far this year they have held two meetings, both well attended. At the end of January Talila Kosh, from the Israeli group New Profile,

In a Valentine's Day protest demonstrators drew attention to the illegal activities of Lev Leviev, multi-millionaire Israeli diamond merchant who has just opened a shop in Bond Street. He donates huge sums to aid the construction of settlements on occupied Palestinian land, in areas such as Bil'in and Jaffous.





York delegation at European Parliament

Lobbying pays off!

Last November 10 members of York PSC went to the European Parliament in Brussels to lobby for a change of EU policy towards Israel. They called specifically for the suspension of Israel's preferential trading rights with the EU, until Israel stops its human rights abuses of Palestinians.

The visit was the outcome of a sustained letter writing and lobbying campaign aimed at all the local MEPs. Liberal Democrat MEP, Diana Wallis, responded very positively by arranging the visit to the European Parliament, for a series of meetings with MEPs from the UK and other countries, EU officials and an EU observer from Russia.

They found widespread concern among the MEPs for the plight of the Palestinian people, intense frustration about the dominant influence of the USA and with the persistent blockage of any EU action against Israel by the UK and certain other EU governments. Most MEPs were angry at the deliberate destruction by Israeli bombing raids of many EU-funded infrastructure projects, such as the airport and power station in Gaza, and the fact that no compensation has been paid, either to the Palestinians or to the EU taxpayers. The delegation also heard about the campaign by MEPs to highlight Israel's outrageous assault on Palestinian democracy in its illegal imprisonment of 47 fellow parliamentarians.

They also learnt about the 5-year EU-Israel Action Plan, for the development of closer trading and cultural ties with Israel – which needs to be challenged vigorously in our campaigning work.

The delegation put up strenuous opposition to the EU case for supporting Israel, emphasising at every opportunity the growing European public support for Palestine's case, disregard for which is eroding the EU's reputation as a democratic body based on respect for international law and human rights.

Under the present constitution, change in any EU policy can occur only if there is unanimous agreement of the Foreign Ministers of all the constituent countries (the Council of Ministers). This underlines the need for continued pressure on our national governments. However, the Parliament can, and does, influence EU policy in a number of significant ways and the delegation received very strong support from all MEPs to encourage others to follow our example and to bring democratic pressure to bear on the EU, through a Europe-wide citizens' lobby of its Parliament.

- An information pack on lobbying the European Parliament can be obtained through the PSC office.
- Get more information on the delegation and participants from www.yorkpsc.org.uk.

- National Exec member **Frank Barat** has filmed recent demonstrations and vigils in London. E.g. see youtube: <http://tinyurl.com/2ajq8m>, for MPs Jeremy Corbyn and Richard Burden, and PSC General Secretary Betty Hunter, stressing the urgency of the situation, outside the Houses of Parliament on 5 March vigil.

- **Lambeth and Wandsworth's** instant protest at the massacres in Gaza can be viewed on: <http://tinyurl.com/2lmebh>

described how deeply imbedded the military is in Israel and how New Profile is trying to counteract this overbearing militarism.

The next meeting, in early March, was a showing of the film "Arna's Children", a film that had been seen previously at the Dorchester branch. The Sherborne showing elicited the same response – a stunned silence. The good attendance was due in part to excellent publicity in the cinema section of our local "freebie" paper. It sparked a lot of discussion, and one person is trying to get a local secondary school to show it.

• If you want to get in touch with your nearest PSC branch contact the office on 0207 7006192.

Lib Dems call for review of EU Trade Agreement with Israel

The Liberal Democrat Conference overwhelmingly supported an Emergency Motion calling on the EU to review and possibly remove the favourable trade terms the EU gives to Israel, at the Liverpool Conference on 9 March.

While calling for a cessation of violence on both sides, the Conference noted the disproportionality of the Israeli 'response' to rocket attacks from Gaza.

The Emergency Motion, drafted by the recently-formed Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine stated:

- Conference calls upon the EU to review with immediate effect whether Israel is in enduring breach of Article 2 of the EU-Israel Association Agreement by refusing to accept that the Fourth Geneva Convention applies on a de jure basis to the people of Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territory and whether Israel's trade privileges under the EU-Israel Association Agreement should be thereby removed until such time as any breach has been rectified.



Nick Clegg: a new broom?

- Conference further calls upon all parties to negotiate a permanent settlement to the conflict based on the recognition of each other's rights under international law.

For full details see www.libdems.org.uk.

Seeing is believing

Hugh Lanning reports back on the first TU delegation to Palestine

It was Mustafa Barghouti who articulated the need for “multipliers”: people of influence who would visit Palestine and come back and tell the story. It was with this in mind that the Trade Union Advisory Committee of the PSC set about organising the first trade union delegation to Palestine, this January.

The two largest unions in the UK — Unite and Unison — and the newly formed UCU, TSSA and the PCS were represented.

The high point of the trip was the two days spent in Nablus, hosted by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) — a city described by our hosts as a prison without a roof. We arrived shortly after the Israeli army had left and visited the sites of the incursions — conveniently staged just before George Bush’s arrival.

Nablus is high, cold in winter and surrounded by Israeli checkpoints and army encampments. The water, electricity and air are out of the control of the municipal authorities. The elected Mayor was in prison under administrative detention and the acting Mayor and Deputy explained the constraints they work under — unable to stop the incursions and having to clear up afterwards. (Theoretically this is a Palestinian controlled area, under the Oslo agreement.)

In this context we discussed not only the latest developments, but also key trade union issues. First was the establishment of a close relationship between the solidarity movement and the Palestinian trade union movement — both parties recognising perhaps more than ever before how important working together would be for the future. Politically, more delegations were seen as key. The PGFTU were keen that any boycott campaign should be focussed on the occupation — tactically highlighting and bringing pressure to bear on all illegal activities. The Histadrut (the Israeli Trades Union Congress) should be pressured to campaign for equal rights for Palestinian workers in Israel, and pay the large sums of money due on their behalf.

It was made clear that ending the occupation is the overwhelming political priority; no independent state can be built whilst they have no freedom. Economically the proposed state is not viable unless there is freedom of movement and unless goods can be exported without going through Israel. We met with the Ministers of Finance and Labour and the office of President Abbas.

In a short time we saw so much and visited so many organisations. From the media you get no idea of the number of organisations and people fighting for peace in their own way — Israelis and Palestinians working side by side: Combatants for Peace, the Parents Circle, Kav LaOved, Sawt el-Amel — a lot of brave people.

But the overwhelming feeling was one of oppression — the Wall, the checkpoints and the apartheid road system. A physical structure is being created to imprison the Palestinians in their own land. We were not able to visit Gaza, but it was seen as vital to any solution. It was also the dominant model — sealed off and controlled from the outside. We were regularly shown maps showing the length of the Wall and the land being grabbed. Perhaps the most striking comparison is with apartheid South Africa, where all the green and pleasant lands and the sea were controlled by the whites, with the black South Africans in the Bantustans as a convenient supply of labour. The comparisons are becoming too stark to ignore: passes and permits to travel around your own country, different number plates and roads, different laws...



A pile of rubble is all that remains of the headquarters of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions in Gaza, after it was hit by two F-16 missiles on 28 February.

One person was killed and 37 injured, some of them in a critical condition in Shifa hospital. There was extensive damage to hundreds of flats in the area.

Nabil al-Mabhouh, acting head of the PGFTU in Gaza said the building had apparently been targeted because “we at PGFTU are supporting the rights of tens of thousands of Palestinian workers.

“Targeting a civil organisation shows how barbaric and outrageous the Israeli occupation is,” he said. “We strongly condemn this crime which aims to break down the Palestinian labourers, and call on all trade unions in the world to stand by us and protect the Palestinian labourers from such criminal practices.”

Following the bombing, Union members have resumed their work from a tent, gathering what files and paper they could from under the rubble.

Photo: Mohammed Omer, Rafah Today

Members of the delegation are meeting to discuss how best to go forth and multiply — to take the message back into the trade union movement. A resource CD* has been produced to help run branch and regional courses and meetings and two workshops are being organised to train advocates. More than anything, the Palestinian people has, through their warmth and determination, won 13 lifelong allies — believers before, missionaries now. Our delegation reflected the strong international tradition that still exists in the British trade union movement: not always at its best over Palestine, but getting better.

**Available from PSC*

Members of the delegation: Hugh Lanning PCS Deputy General Secretary; Alison Shepherd UNISON Chair International Committee, Member TUC General Council; Nick Crook UNISON International Department; Linda Newman, UCU President; Mary Davis, UCU Executive; Sue Blackwell UCU Executive; Barry Lovejoy, UCU National Head of FE; Dave Barnes TSSA Executive; Pat Stuart UNITE (TGWU), Member TUC General Council; Adrian Weir UNITE (TGWU Region 1); Steve Sibley PSC; Joni McDougall PSC EC; Bernard Regan PSC EC.

Dancing to Haifa

This May **al Zaytouna**, Britain's leading dabke dance troupe, will be performing an adaptation of Ghassan Kanafani's "Ila Haifa" (Returning to Haifa) fusing music, theatre and contemporary and traditional Palestinian dance.

The thirty volunteer members of Al Zaytouna come from Palestine, the Arab world and the UK, and are based in London and Nottingham. The Director, Ahmed Masoud, said: "This is an undiscovered form of art, not yet introduced properly to the West. The Middle East is most commonly associated with belly dancing, and we want to show that this is not the only dance form we have to offer."

Al Zaytouna conducts educational work, running classes and workshops for school children and other groups, and performs at festivals and cultural events throughout the UK. In 2007 they held two major performances in London, one of which was a collaboration with the famous **El Funoun** troupe from Palestine.

Ila Haifa is part of PSC's programme for the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the Nakba. It tells of a young couple who were forced to abandon their home in 1948 and leave Palestine, suddenly, and without their belongings. In their haste they left their baby behind. Despite desperate efforts, the couple are unable to be reunited with their child, until twenty years later they receive a permit from the Israeli authorities to visit their home. On their return they are faced with a shocking surprise.

Haifa holds significance as one of the most important cities in Palestine, which is now within the borders of Israel. As a port linking Palestine to the wider world, it was fundamental in shaping Palestine's culture and identity. Ahmed Masoud said, "the story explores the

idea that the core of the conflict is not ideological, but based on identity and land, and the right of Palestinians to live freely". The author, Ghassan Kanafani, was one of the most important Palestinian writers of the 20th century, and was assassinated by the Israeli Mosaad in Beirut in 1973.

As performances will take place on 8, 9, and 10 May, participation in the Nakba rally on Saturday 10 May rally can be combined with a trip to the theatre. (Funds raised will be used to develop the work of al Zaytouna and PSC.) The venue is the Greenwood Theatre, Weston Street, London SE1 3RA – 7.30 pm. Tickets cost £15 full, £12 concession in advance, and £17 full and £15 on the door. To buy tickets by card, call 0207 700 6192, or send a cheque payable to PSC to PSC Box BM PSA London WC1N 3XX.

• www.alzaytouna.org



Greetings, Bethlehem!

Salaam Bethlehem, produced by the Riding Lights theatre company, toured various locations in England this winter. Set in 2006 and focusing on the plight of an imaginary Bethlehem family, the play encapsulates the whole Palestinian experience, including the 1948 Nakba, refugees, the Occupation, the illegal settlements and the Wall. The play also deals head-on with difficult issues like suicide attacks and gives space to the Israeli perspective of 'return to the promised land' – each act is preceded by a short dialogue between a Jewish settler couple just arrived in Palestine/Israel in the early 1950s.

The Mansour family is living in the shadow of the Wall, their lands either confiscated or inaccessible on the other side. They face the travel restrictions and humiliations at checkpoints that are the daily lot of Palestinians living under the 1967 Occupation. The father is

trapped in his memories of his home village while his son, caught between a desire for violent resistance and the urge to escape to a better life abroad, harbours a sad secret he has not dared reveal to his father.

The idea of *Salaam Bethlehem* arose from a visit to Bethlehem in 2006 by members of Riding Lights; it was a concrete response to pleas from the local Palestinian Christian community to Riding Lights to "pray for us, visit us, tell our

story". The company plans to bring a group of young Palestinians to take part in its summer theatre school and is also organising a Living Stones Holy Land tour in November 2008. They are looking for venues for another UK tour of the play in 2009; for details visit www.ridinglights.org.

April sees the launch of the annual two-week Palestine Film Festival in London. Art, fiction, documentary, and experimental work by artists from across the world are screened alongside panel discussions, question and answer sessions, and book talks.

Schedule forthcoming; see www.palestinefilm.org



Graffiti artist Banksy's latest defiant comment on the Apartheid Wall

People for Palestine

PSC welcomes a new Patron

In September, Dr Ilan Pappé took up a post in the History Department at Exeter University. At the same time he agreed to become a Patron of the UK Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

Well known for his resolutely anti-Zionist stance and his analysis of Israeli policies as essentially colonialist and racist, he has for years been a familiar figure in the UK. Since September he has been particularly active here, speaking at public meetings around the country and responding in the media to Israel's latest massacres — the escalation of a process which he does not hesitate to call "ethnic cleansing". (His most recent book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* documents the planning and execution of the process, from its pre-1948 beginnings to the present day.)

Pappé was born in Haifa to German-Jewish parents who had fled Nazi persecution in the 1930s. He graduated from the Hebrew University in 1978, and obtained his D.Phil. from the University of Oxford in 1984, choosing 1948 as the subject of his thesis. He says: "I found strong proof for the systematic expulsion of the Palestinians from Palestine, and I was taken aback by the speed at which the judaisation of the formerly Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods was carried out."

Continuing his research, he became one of Israel's foremost 'New Historians', academics who were for the first time able to base their research on material released from government archives — material that directly contradicted the version of history he had been fed as a schoolboy, and later in the Israeli army (see Nurit Peled, page...).

Ilan Pappé became Senior Lecturer in the Political Science Department of Haifa University and held the chair of the Emil Touma Institute for Palestinian Studies in Israel. Given his high profile worldwide as both an academic and a campaigner, it was inevitable that Pappé should become the bete noire of the Zionist academic and political establishment. When he endorsed the call for boycott of Israeli universities, the University President called for his resignation. Pappé responded: "A fair trial does not exist, and hence I do not even intend to appeal against this McCarthyite charade."

Israel's loss is our gain...

• For more details of Ilan Pappé's work, including copies of his articles and interviews, and reviews of his books, see www.ilanpappe.org.



A pillar of the community

The eminent Palestinian lawyer and scholar, His Honour Judge Eugene Cotran, was elected to head the Association of the Palestinian Community in the UK this February.

Eugene Cotran was born in Jerusalem, into a Greek Orthodox family, and educated at Victoria College, Alexandria. Of his childhood he says:

"I still have vivid memories of the time of the troubles between 1946 and 1948. Indeed I still remember seeing, from the balcony of our home in Upper Bakaa, the King David Hotel blown up."

Describing himself as "a typical Palestinian who made his life as a lawyer in the Diaspora", Dr Cotran began what was to be a highly distinguished career by reading law at the University of Leeds. He then went on to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, for research in international law, was called to the English Bar in 1959, and joined the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in 1960. During that period he also practised at the English Bar, specialising in commonwealth law and immigration law.

In 1993 Dr Cotran became the first Circuit Judge of Arab/Palestinian origin in England. During his practice, he has given advice in relation to the Constitutions of Zimbabwe, Namibia, Kenya, Brunei and, more recently, in Palestine. Since the establishment of the Palestinian National Authority he has advised on the drafting of a Basic Law and other laws for Palestine.

Dr Cotran has also somehow found time to act as Vice President of Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP), and as a Trustee or Member of a wide range of British/Commonwealth/Arab/Palestinian Associations and Charities.

Judge Cotran told PN: "Today the Palestinians are divided, but I know that we are a resourceful people and will continue the struggle for self-determination that has been our hallmark since the beginning of the Nakba. Now in semi-retirement I shall certainly soldier on as the proposed new head of the Palestinian community in the United Kingdom. I look forward to working closely with the host British Community, and with splendid organisations such as PSC."



"A Christian by religion, a Muslim by culture and a socialist by belief"

George Habash, founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in 1968, died in Jordan on 26 January, at the age of 80.

Born into a family of Greek Orthodox merchants, George Habash and his family were forced to leave their native town, Lydda, in July 1948, in what became one of the most infamous cases of mass expulsions by the Israeli army. Habash studied medicine at the American University of Beirut and graduated first in his class in 1951. In 1952, he became co-founder of the Arab Nationalist Movement and worked with refugees in Amman till 1957.

The PFLP consistently favoured armed struggle to establish a Palestinian state and Habash remained convinced that Israel was not sincere in its claim to want a negotiated peace.

However, the organisation found itself sidelined in 1993 when Yasser Arafat, then leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), signed interim peace deals with Israel.

Although many disagreed with his political strategy he was always considered a great patriot and founder of the resistance movement. Incorruptible and content with a simple lifestyle, he famously refused a handsome pension offered by a group of wealthy Palestinian businessmen, who wanted the venerable symbol of the Palestinian national struggle to enjoy more comfort in his later years.



Laying it on the line

Occupation 101: 2007, 90 mins, Dir: Sufyan Omeish and Abdallah Omeish; available from PSC at £12. **Return to Palestine:** 2007, abridged version 60 mins, Dir: Ed Hill; available from www.bristolcomputers4palestine.co.uk (all proceeds to computer charity).

In the award-winning *Occupation 101*, Sufyan and Abdallah Omeish have produced both a coherent, persuasive and elegantly edited documentary and some excellent campaigning material.

Occupation 101 does exactly what it says on the tin. It provides a comprehensive overview of the history of the conflict starting with the emergence of the Zionist movement through to the bogus "peace process" and the devastating state of affairs on the ground today.

London premiere of new Mohammed Alatar film

Mohammed Alatar's latest film *Jerusalem ... the east side story* was given a hugely enthusiastic reception at its UK premiere on 18 March, organised by PSC at the Curzon Soho cinema in London's West End.

The Palestinian-American film-maker's highly successful 2006 documentary, *The Iron Wall*, dealt with the construction of the illegal wall and settlements on Palestinian land. The focus of his new film is the past forty years of Israeli military occupation in Jerusalem and its impact on the city and its people.

Initially the film gives a wonderful flavour of traditional life in this cosmopolitan city; gradually, out of a kaleidoscope of images, emerges the reality of the iron fist of the occupation, which is dispossessing the Palestinian families who have lived there for centuries. The historical context is presented through rarely seen archival footage.

Particularly interesting, and chilling, are the pseudo-legal measures employed to this end – all in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. But the points are made through the medium of human stories. One young schoolgirl tells how she came home from school one day to find her family home demolished by Israeli bulldozers, her mother sitting amid the rubble.

The issues of house demolitions, the behaviour of fanatical settlers in the Old City, and the looming fact of the Wall which slices through it, are all treated with a restraint that in fact intensifies the emotion of anyone viewing this film.

Julia Richards



Available on DVD from PSC

Comparisons with Apartheid South Africa and the citation of Israel's multiple unpunished violations of international law help further spark the audience's moral outrage.

The facts are presented through recent and historical footage of events in Palestine; poignant testimonies from Palestinians living under occupation; annotated and animated maps; and an impressive roster of talking heads, including Noam Chomsky, Amira Hass, Rashid Khalili, and Ilan Pappé.

In this way it manages to enlighten even those viewers with zero prior knowledge of Palestine to a clear understanding of the present situation and the historical context of the conflict. A mass of material is covered over the ninety minutes but the information is delivered in a manner that is easily digestible and incredibly engaging. The ten-year-old who watched it with me found it fascinating and went from knowing next to nothing to having a wide-ranging awareness of the injustices its people has suffered.

The documentary was made with the general American viewer in mind and this gives rise to a few irksome attributes. The dramatically ominous music and fast paced cutting between scenes sometimes distract from the facts, which should be allowed to speak for themselves. The disproportionate emphasis given to Jewish Israeli and American activists and academics is done with the intention that such commentators will be perceived as more reliable by the target audience, but this emphasis comes at the expense of giving Palestinian activists and intellectuals a real voice. Likewise, the attempt to appeal to America's Christian communities results in a section of the documentary dedicated exclusively to the suffering of Palestine's Christian community, rather than focusing on these Christians as suffering a shared oppression with their fellow Muslim Palestinians and on the need to empathise and express solidarity with all, regardless of our own faith.

These shortcomings aside, the film is nevertheless a must see for seasoned activists who need a quick historical refresher lesson, and a must show for all friends, family and members of the public who do not yet know the ever urgent truth about Palestine.

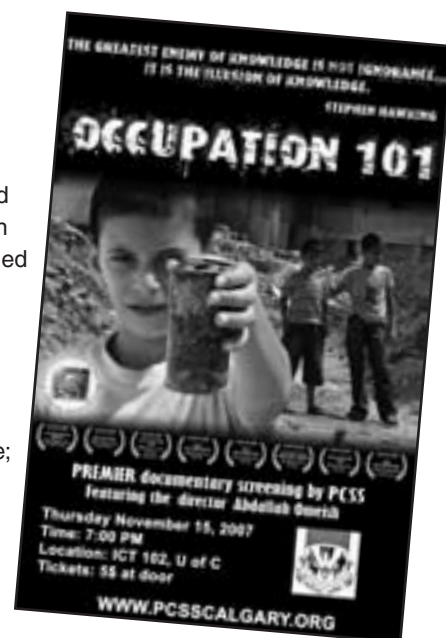
Ed Hill's documentary, *Return to Palestine*, is the follow-up to *Our Sufferings in this Land*, and is shot from his vantage point as an 'embedded activist' during the 2006 Zaytoun Olive Harvest Tour.

The film focuses for the most part on Marda. Seeing the accumulation of oppressions — closure, land grab, settler harassment etc — in just one town is extremely moving, especially when the footage later moves to Tel Aviv to highlight the massive contrast in daily lives. The underlying theme is that of the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine and we are taken from the 'quiet transfer' of today to the open horrors of the Nakba.

However, despite sixty years of dispossession there is also much inspiration to be found here: Palestinian, Israeli and international projects are featured with contact details and a call to action for the viewer.

This may not be the ideal documentary for complete newcomers, but is well worth showing to those with some knowledge of the situation or who are thinking of becoming involved in campaigning.

Andrea D'Cruz



Israel and the Clash of Civilisations

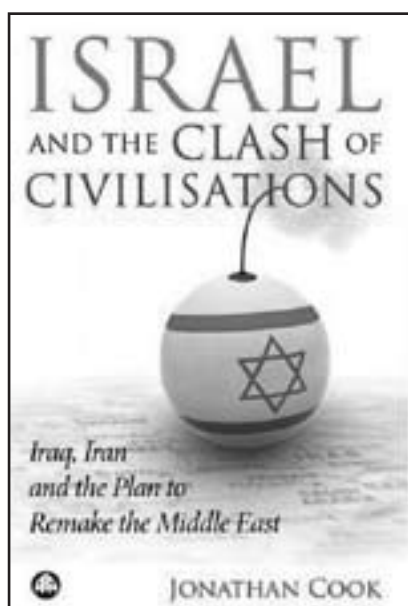
Jonathan Cook

Pluto Press, 2007

Nazareth-based Jonathan Cook's reports and analysis from Palestine/Israel, as well as his interpretation of events on a wider scale across the Middle East, have become essential reading. During Israel's assault on Lebanon in summer 2006, his clear-eyed demolition of Israeli propaganda, repeated unquestioningly (and often unknowingly) by the Western media, was a vital resource for following the conflict.

His second book, (after 'Blood and Religion', Pluto 2006), focuses on events since 9/11 in the Middle East, and the relationship between Israeli and US strategic interests and policy formulation and implementation.

This has become a subject fraught with potential hazards. The publication of Mearsheimer and Walt's 'The Israel Lobby' created a space for an almost unparalleled discussion to take place in mainstream political discourse with regard to not just the political influence of a Zionist lobby in



the US, but also as to whether such an intimate relationship actually benefited US interests.

Quickly, however, the discussion threatened to get derailed. On the one hand, Israeli apologists sought to label the book as anti-Semitic — in effect, if not in intent, stressed the slightly more sophisticated. On the other hand, a disagreement also broke out amongst those who might be broadly sympathetic to M&W's thesis, about — to put it simply — the degree to

which US policy was influenced by Israel or Israel's by the US.

The clarity with which Cook addresses this topic is therefore extremely welcome. But this is not lucidity at the expense of an appreciation of the complex combination of factors that have shaped US and Israeli policies in the Middle East over the decades.

Cook has done an excellent job in compiling examples of the direct connections between Israeli and US policies, particularly since the US became an occupying power in 2003. Since the rise of the neo-conservatives post-9/11, the pattern has recurred with

striking frequency: from the way in which hawkish US policy towards Iraq and Iran had already been explicitly advanced by the Israeli military and political elite, to Israel sharing lessons learned in 'managing' resistance with the US military.

The book makes a point of stressing the extent to which US Middle East policy, shaped by the ultra-hawkish neo-cons, has been a break from the 'strongman' approach traditionally favoured by many in the US foreign policy establishment, as well as by Big Oil. Put crudely, it doesn't matter whether such and such a president or general or king is a bastard — as long as he's 'our bastard'.

The neo-cons' preference for 'creative destruction' and 'remaking' the Middle East has been trumpeted as a war fought for 'freedom', and Cook is spot on in pointing out that many "liberal Western observers" have surprisingly assumed that "the US 'war on terror' — even if it was profoundly wrong-headed — was at least well intentioned".

Many persist in the fiction that the US and Israel are acting in good faith, despite the mountain of evidence to the contrary — much of it often proudly declared by the perpetrators themselves. In collecting, organising, and presenting this evidence, Cook presents an analysis of the grim events from Baghdad to Gaza, stripped of misinformation or naivety.

Ben White

Miriam's Legacy

Patricia Rantisi

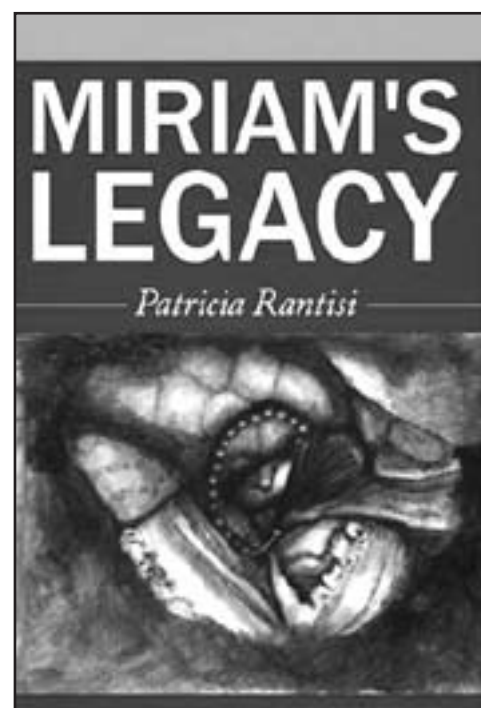
Author House, 2007

Patricia Rantisi spent 38 years living and working in Ramallah, married to a Palestinian vicar. Her novel tells the history of the last 60 years in Palestine through the eyes of a young Palestinian Muslim, Farres, who was born and brought up in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. We follow Farres from his childhood, through the shocking events in Sabra and Shatila camps in 1982 and his eventual journey to the UK to study medicine. In flashback, we also learn the story of Miriam, his great-grandmother who was forced into exile with her family in 1948 during the *Nakba*.

Through this moving and well-structured story we hear the authentic voice of a young

Palestinian man — it almost seems at times as if Patricia Rantisi is able to inhabit his head (perhaps many years working in a boys' orphanage helped here!) The book is also very well-researched and brings the locations in Palestine, Lebanon and the UK to life for the reader. Although the characters are fictitious, the events, locations and dates are real. Patricia Rantisi also conveys how intertwined are the lives and fates of Palestinian Christians and Muslims, making it clear that it is the Israeli occupation, not Islam that threatens Christians in the Holy Land and exploding the myth of the 'land without a people': this novel manages to pack in a lot of history in a very approachable and personal way.

Alan Goater



The Bible and Zionism

Nur Masalha

Zed Books, 2007

Nur Masalha has taken on a very big task here, in looking at two major religious traditions, religious texts, archaeology, and politics. In my view he has succeeded in showing that we need to understand how all these areas are interconnected, in analysing the situation in Palestine today.

This is a scholarly work, giving plenty of source material for each area of discussion. Nur Masalha particularly refers to two authors who have influenced him, and many others, in their approach to the Palestinian struggle. As well as referencing Michael Prior and Edward Said, the book ends with a critique of the work of each.

For devout Jews and Christians, who might have left textual discussion of their holy word



to their leaders or teachers, this book will raise some difficult questions. They are questions we should all be facing, because unless we do that we will allow fundamentalists (of all religions) to continue to set the world's political agenda. Or maybe what we are doing is allowing the world's most cynical politicians to use religion to ensure that their power base is expanded and maintained. Whichever way round it is, it is a dangerous mix.

Much of the history, the political analysis and the archaeological discussion in this book has been published elsewhere. The importance of 'The Bible and Zionism' is that it joins the dots between them all, and adds depth to the discussion.

As the current Zionist colonialists are

Jewish (the state of Israel) and Christian (the Christian Zionists who fund Israel and who lean on the US Government to continue their support of the state), it is their use of the Bible that is important to Masalha. However, he does deal with Islam's relationship to the two faiths, both historically and in the context of Palestinian religious nationalism and the current situation of Hamas. This chapter and the one on Jerusalem ('Fundamentalism and Sacred Geography') are both helpful in looking the reality of 2008 in Palestine.

In recent times in South Africa and in Northern Ireland religious bigotry was invoked to prevent any possibility of change. It seems impossible to argue against 'God has told us ...'. An understanding of the complexity behind this viewpoint — and the political expediency that motivates it — is essential in working for change. Nur Masalha presents the complexity of this struggle with remarkable clarity.

Sue Plater

"If I am not for myself": Journey of an anti-Zionist Jew

Mike Marqusee

Verso, 2007

In every culture, there are those who "think and act against", who, following the traditions of Spinoza and Marx, "doubt everything", and who help reconstruct the way in which we look at the world. In this spirit of critical thought and action, US-born Mike Marqusee has played a role in the political life of Britain. In previous writings, from novels and books on cricket, about which he is passionate, to works on Bob Dylan and Mohammed Ali, he shows a clear concern about the radicalism of actions, subjecting the dominant political culture to critical scrutiny. In this book he writes about himself as a secular anti-Zionist Jew, and about the importance of such a stance in the Palestinian struggle.

He has intertwined the story of one of his grandfathers, a political activist in the early part of the 20th century in the Bronx, "a man

at war with himself and the world", with his own development into an anti-Zionist. This provides a linkage to, as well as the paradox of the growing anti-Zionism of sections of the Jewish diaspora. The intellectual traditions of many of the finest critical Jewish thinkers are clearly identified as a crucial part of his own

**'Israel's
exceptionalism
denies to
Palestinians the
rights it assumes
for Jews'**

legacy, (as well as for many of us on the left generally). He reveals too the existence of a fascinating and virtually unknown (at least to me) French Jew active in the French Revolution, Zalkind Hourwitz. However, the main thrust of the book is the debate around Zionism and the Israeli state today.

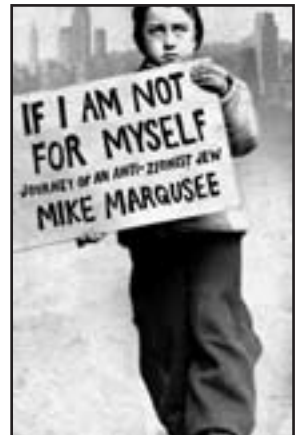
He has a fine chapter on political analogies, opening with the attacks which were made on Jimmy Carter's book "Palestine: Peace not Apartheid": "As Carter discovered, coupling the word "apartheid" with Israel is a quick way to getting branded an anti-semitic", and he takes on the arguments of the "new anti-Semitism", "double standards", and attacks

on "self-hating Jews". His case is that Israel's exceptionalism denies to Palestinians the rights it

assumes for Jews, whilst masquerading under the pretence that Israel is a democracy. "But in the case of Zionism the verdict is dramatically stark: Zionism involves unavoidably a denial to others of democratic and equal rights. It is an obscurantist claim dressed in the garb of secular modernity, underpinned from the beginning by naked power." Israel can in no way claim to be a state for all its citizens.

At a time when the demand for Palestinian rights has an increasing urgency, his chapters on the Nakba and the Diaspora are immensely important. His honesty and courage, writing personally and with great perception, will be appreciated by all concerned about the struggle for the future of the Palestinians and the Jews.

Jane Shallice



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A photograph of a man with long dark hair and a beard, wearing a black leather jacket, holding a large white sign. The sign features the Palestinian flag (black, white, green, and red horizontal stripes with a red triangle at the top) and the text 'FREE PALESTINE' in large bold letters, followed by 'END ISRAELI OCCUPATION' and the website 'www.palestinecampaign.org'. In the background, other protest signs are visible, including one that says 'STOP' and another with 'IMPA'.

FREE PALESTINE

**Join the Nakba Day
demonstration on**

Saturday 10 May

- End the siege of Gaza • End Israeli occupation
- For the right of return of refugees

**Assemble 1pm Temple tube, London WC1
Rally in Trafalgar Square**

Palestine Lives 2008

A celebration of Palestinian art, culture, history and experience

Saturday 7 June

1-4pm Albert Square, Manchester

