

# PALESTINE:

the case for justice



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Palestine Solidarity Campaign

# **PALESTINE**

The case for justice

A Palestine Solidarity Campaign publication

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*Third edition*

**“If you are neutral in situations  
of injustice, you have chosen the  
side of the oppressor”**

**– Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

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## Who are the Palestinians?

Two thirds of the entire Palestinian population were expelled from their homes in the 1947–49 war, which followed partition and the creation of the state of Israel. A second wave of about a million Palestinian refugees was created after the 1967 war, when Israel occupied the remainder of Palestine (the ‘Occupied Territories’).

There are approximately ten million Palestinians in the world today, two thirds of whom are refugees. Some live in camps in the West Bank and Gaza, others in camps or as stateless persons in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Gulf States. A minority have managed to acquire citizenship in Arab countries (mainly Jordan) or elsewhere.

About 88% are Muslim and 12% Christian. Before World War I, when the British occupied Palestine, the Arab Muslims, Christians and Druze comprised over 90% of the population, living at peace with small Jewish, Greek, Armenian, Bosnian and Circassian communities.

Over three million Palestinians endure increasingly harsh conditions in the towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza, and in East Jerusalem (the ‘Occupied Territories’), about a fifth of the historic territory of Palestine, surrounded and controlled by the Israeli army. Over one million Palestinians, whose families remained in 1948, live as second-class citizens in the state of Israel.

Over the last ten years the brutal attacks in the Occupied Territories have escalated, with more than 6,500 Palestinians killed, including over 1000 children, and many thousands more injured or made homeless.

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## Life under occupation

Today, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, whether or not they are refugees, live in inhuman conditions. Organisations, such as Amnesty International and the International Red Cross, record the daily catalogue of violence, humiliation and abuses of human rights by the Israeli authorities.

The Israeli organisation B’Tselem also documents human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, which include complete closure of towns and villages and the continuing construction of the Wall. This makes normal daily life virtually impossible. Basic supplies have to be carried in by hand when the Israeli army denies access to vehicles. Over 80 pregnant women have been obliged to give birth at road blocks: about one third of the babies and some of the mothers have died. Other patients die because they cannot get to medical treatment.



*A checkpoint in Hebron, where 500 settlers control the lives of 160,000 Palestinians*

illegal Jewish settlements continue to be established and expanded on Palestinian land on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, demolishing Palestinian homes, expropriating agricultural land and destroying acres of orchards and olive groves. A far cry from Israel’s claim of ‘making the desert bloom’...

“These actions are in direct violation of Jewish tradition which teaches that even in times of conflict we must not cross the red line between legitimate defence and collective punishment of innocent civilians.” (Rabbis for Human Rights protesting in 2001 at the uprooting and burning of 250,000 olive and fruit trees since 1967.)

Legal representation is denied detainees simply because Palestinian lawyers cannot reach them. The environment is polluted daily by Israel’s use of the Occupied Territories as dumping-grounds for sewage and nuclear, industrial and domestic waste.

Under the protection of the Israeli army,

## Collective punishment

Collective punishments are routinely imposed by Israel — all in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory. They include



PHOTO: STOPTHEWALL.ORG

*The destruction of olive trees near Qalqilya*

school closures, 24-hour curfews, cutting off water supplies, blowing up wells and emptying water tankers taking supplies to more remote villages. These may be in retaliation for offences such as children throwing stones at armed soldiers or tanks.

More violent measures include targeted assassinations, the destruction of power stations and the bombing of public buildings or homes, which are then bulldozed. (Under a recent ruling by the Israeli High Court, assassinations of political activists have been deemed legal.)

The imposition of a curfew does not require a military excuse: Palestinians in Hebron are regularly put under curfew to allow Israeli settlers and tourists to celebrate in the streets without having to encounter a single Palestinian.

Other humiliations include holding people for hours at checkpoints (sometimes requiring them to strip naked), confiscating goods, identity cards or car keys and invading homes in the middle of the night.

The Palestinians have repeatedly asked for an international observer force to monitor these violations of human rights and provide some degree of restraint and protection. The UN General Assembly voted overwhelm-

ingly to encourage the creation of such a force, but Israel has refused to accept one.

## British responsibility and the Nakba (‘catastrophe’)

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In 1917, with an eye to establishing a client state in the Middle East to watch over the Suez Canal and Britain’s trade routes to India, and following pressure from the Zionist lobby, the British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour wrote a letter to Lord Rothschild, which later became known as the **Balfour Declaration**. This promised a ‘national home for the Jewish people’ in Palestine (not a nation state), stipulating that ‘nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities’.

However, Balfour commented that ‘we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country’. The Declaration was endorsed by US President Woodrow Wilson within a month of its release.

A major revolt by Palestinians seeking the right to self-determination took place from **1936 to 1939** against British policies in the area. It was brutally crushed. According to British figures, over 5000 Palestinians were killed and 50,000 detained. Throughout the period of the British Mandate, Jewish immigration continued.

As early as **1938** Ben Gurion, later Prime Minister of Israel, made it clear that partition could be accepted only as an interim measure; the ultimate aim was to take all of Palestine: **“After we become a strong force, as the result of the creation of a state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine.”**

After World War II, collective European guilt for the horrors of the Holocaust gave impetus to the Zionist cause — until then a minority movement which had gained little support since its inception fifty years earlier.

In **1947** the European and American powers that then made up the majority of the UN General Assembly members resolved to partition Palestine:

a Jewish state was to be established on 56 per cent of the most fertile areas of Palestine. At the time Jews constituted only one third of the population, and owned 6 per cent of the land. Jerusalem was to be an international zone.

Successive Israeli governments have all followed policies that have extended Israel's borders, while refusing to recognise the right of the Palestinians to their own state.

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## What is Zionism?

Mainstream Zionism was an essentially secular, nineteenth-century nationalist movement, based on ethnicity but using religious ideology to clothe a colonialist enterprise.

Justification for the establishment of the state of Israel theoretically rests on a particular interpretation of parts of the Old Testament. According to certain verses, the land of Israel, 'from the Nile to the Euphrates', with Jerusalem as its exclusive, undivided capital, was promised to Abraham and his descendants by God. These texts remain a cornerstone of hardline Zionism, most clearly exemplified in the violent discourse and behaviour of settlers in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.



Every major political party in Israel claims that all of Palestine constitutes 'Eretz Israel', the Land of Israel, and that to allow the indigenous Palestinian population to remain in any part of it would be a major concession.

Some fundamentalist Christians have also lent their support to Israel, due to their literal belief in the Old Testament and their anticipation of the second coming of Christ. Such Christian Zionists wield very considerable political power in the United States, and evangelise world-wide.

However, for both Orthodox and Reform Jews, 'Zion' was for centuries a purely symbolic concept, a dream to be realised only with the coming of the Messiah. The notion of emigrating to the region was barely raised before the late nineteenth century, when colonialism and emergent nationalisms of all kinds sparked the idea of an actual Jewish state.

Today, Israeli citizenship is open to anyone who can prove Jewish ancestry, or when conversion to Judaism is recognised by the authorities.

There is still much debate, predominantly within Jewish communities, about the relationship between Judaism and Zionism, with many Jews finding the two ideologies incompatible.

## The myth of an empty land ---

To encourage Jewish immigration, Palestine was portrayed as an empty land awaiting settlement and development. Chaim Weizmann, later to become the first President of Israel, stated in 1914: **'There is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and on the other hand there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary, then, but to fit the gem into the ring, to unite this people with this country?'**

The notion of 'empty' was perhaps rather flexible, for both the Zionists and the British. In an early example of the racism which underlies Zionist ideology, Weizmann confided to a friend, after persuading the British to sign the Balfour Declaration: **'The British told us that there are some hundred thousand blacks [in Palestine], and for those there is no value.'**

Despite the puncturing of this myth by later generations of Israeli historians, visitors to Israel and even Israeli schoolchildren are still being told the same story. The eminent Israeli Professor, Israel Shahak wrote angrily in 1973

that Arab villages were ‘destroyed completely, with their houses, garden walls, and even cemeteries and tombstones, so that literally a stone does not remain standing, and visitors are passing and being told that “it was all desert”.’

## — 1948: ‘Transfer’ — or ethnic cleansing?



*Refugees in 1948*

The current public Israeli discourse on ‘transfer’ has its roots in the original Zionist dream of an exclusively Jewish state in Palestine. This could only be realised if most of the indigenous people could somehow be persuaded to leave. In 1895, one of the founding fathers of Zionism, Theodor Herzl, wrote: **‘We shall endeavour to expel the poor population across the border unnoticed, procuring employment for it in the transit countries, but denying it any employment in our own country.’** To

avoid international condemnation, ‘the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly’.

During the British Mandate, the Zionist Transfer Committee planned how best to rid their projected state of non-Jews. Joseph Weitz, head of that Committee, and later director of the Jewish National Land Fund, wrote in 1940: ‘There is no room for both peoples in this country [...] The only solution is Eretz Israel, without Arabs... We must not leave a single village, a single tribe’.

In 1941 Ben-Gurion stated clearly, in relation to transfer, that **‘It is impossible to imagine general evacuation without compulsion, and brutal compulsion’.**



*The King David Hotel after the bombing*

The policy was therefore firmly in place — albeit not widely publicised — even before the state of Israel was established.

To speed the departure of the British, various Zionist gangs undertook terrorist operations, the best known being the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1946, in which 91 people were killed. The attack was ordered by Menachem Begin, then head of the Irgun gang, who later became Prime Minister of Israel. Two years later, UN mediator Count Bernadotte was murdered by the Stern gang.

Before the British withdrew and before the state of Israel was declared in May 1948, the plans to ‘transfer’ the indigenous population and to occupy as much territory as possible were put into action. For villages, the tactic was usually to attack simultaneously from two directions, but to leave an ‘escape route’ for the villagers. Over 531 villages were ‘evacuated’ in this way during the Nakba, and most of them were later razed to the ground.

Seventy massacres took place, one of the earliest and most notorious being that of Deir Yassin, in which the Irgun boasted that they had killed the inhabitants of an entire village — 110 men, women and children — either murdering them in their beds or taking ‘prisoners’ out to be shot. Menachem Begin, head of the Irgun terrorist organisation at the time and future Prime Minister of Israel, took special pride in this operation: “As in Deir Yassin, so everywhere... Oh Lord, Oh Lord, you have chosen us for conquest.” The news spread and terror helped to speed the departure of many unarmed inhabitants.

When the conflict following partition subsided, 13,000 Palestinians lay dead, 900,000 had been expelled and the Israelis had occupied 78 per cent of historic Palestine. Palestinians kept the keys to their houses: they expected to return.

# United Nations partition plan

UN Resolution 181

Rhodes Armistice Line



Israel's 'New Historians', such as Benny Morris, Simha Flapan, Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé, with access to hitherto secret archive material, have been able to document in great detail the process of ethnic cleansing that took place. Their view is summed up by Uri Milstein:

**'In all Israel's wars massacres were committed but I have no doubt that the War of Independence was the dirtiest of them all.'**

To this day, the official Israeli version of history is that the Palestinians left of their own accord or were encouraged to leave by neighbouring Arab states.

## **After '48: Israel's expansion**

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Ben Gurion's dream of "a dynamic state bent upon expansion" was to be pursued after the armistice of 1949 by the tried and tested methods of massacre, expulsion and the destruction of villages.

**1953** The infamous Special Unit 101 massacred 69 men, women and children in the village of Qibya. A photograph of the original order was published on the front page of Ha'aretz, 9 September 1994; it included the sentence: "Objective: to attack the village of Kibiya, occupy it and cause maximal damage to life and property [underlining in original]", and was signed by Major Ariel Sharon, head of the Special Unit, later to become Prime Minister. The Major had already distinguished himself in an operation against al-Bureij refugee camp south of Gaza, where 50 refugees were killed, according to Israeli reports.

**1956** Israel participated with the British and the French in the invasion of Suez, though on that occasion they were forced to retreat by the intervention of the US, who had not been informed of the plan. Nevertheless, in the course of the operation about 3,000 Egyptians were killed by the Israelis alone.

**1967** Sinai was occupied, together with the West Bank, Gaza and the Syrian Golan Heights, as Israel claimed its existence was threatened by neighbouring states. Israeli General Matti Peled, who later resigned, said: "The thesis that claimed genocide was suspended above our heads in June 1967, and that Israel was fighting for its very existence, was only a bluff."



*Victims of the massacres*

In the course of the war another 325,000 Palestinians became refugees. Though many voices were raised in Israel urging withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, the hawks prevailed and the illegal settlement of the West Bank and Gaza began.

**1978** Israel invaded Lebanon, where the large Palestinian refugee population and the presence of Palestinian resistance was seen as a threat to Israel's security. The immediate pretext was that Israeli settlements near the Lebanese borders had been shelled. But Chief of Staff Mordechai Gur was summarised in the Israeli press as saying:

'The army has never distinguished civilian from military targets even when Israeli settlements had not been struck'.

Many civilians died and 250,000 were made homeless. This particular operation was an embarrassment to the former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, who said:

**'The picture that emerges is of an Israel wantonly inflicting every possible measure of death and anguish on civilian populations in a mood reminiscent of regimes that neither Mr. Begin nor I would care to mention by name'.**

**1982** Israel mounted another invasion, and remained in southern Lebanon for the next nineteen years.

The most notorious incident of this period was the 1982 massacre of refugees in the camps of **Sabra** and **Chatila**, on the outskirts of Beirut. The Israeli army, in actions sanctioned by General Sharon, sealed off the camps and sent in the Christian Phalangist militia on a 'mopping up' opera-

tion after heavy aerial bombardment. For two days the slaughter of men, women and children was carried out methodically, despite objections from American observers. Special Envoy Morris Draper protested to the Israeli High Command:

“You must stop the massacres. They are obscene. I have an officer in the camp counting the bodies... They are killing children. You are in absolute control of the area and therefore responsible for that area.”

The Lebanese said later that 2000 people had been killed, while Sharon himself put the figure at about 800. Two Phalangists died. Although an Israeli Supreme Court Commission of Inquiry found that Sharon was responsible for the incident he did not resign from the cabinet, nor did his Prime Minister ask him to.

In all, over 35,000 civilians died during the invasion and occupation of Lebanon.

All these military adventures have been presented as defensive or pre-emptive, although many independent Israeli historians and even politicians recognise the expansionist policy behind them. Israeli governments and supporting organisations have successfully exploited ongoing sympathy for what the Jews had suffered in World War II, although this is distasteful even to many Zionists. Nahum Goldmann, President of the World Zionist Organisation from 1956 to 1968, wrote in 1981:

**“We will have to understand that Jewish suffering during the Holocaust no longer will serve as a protection, and we certainly must refrain from using the argument of the Holocaust to justify whatever we may do. To use the Holocaust as an excuse for the bombing of Lebanon, for instance, as Menachem Begin does, is a kind of ‘Hillul Hashem’ [sacrilege], a banalisation of the sacred tragedy of the Shoah...”**

## **Whose right of return?**

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After the conflict of 1948 the UN adopted Resolution 194, which states that:

**‘...the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest pos-**

**sible date... Compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return’.**

This Resolution has been confirmed more than 130 times since then, but Israel has never recognised its validity, on the pretext that the refugees abandoned their land and homes voluntarily.

By contrast, anyone with a claim to Jewish ancestry, or any convert to Judaism, has the right to Israeli citizenship. New immigrants are immediately given accommodation, training or a job and a range of welfare benefits. The accommodation they occupy will in all probability be the former home or on the land of a Palestinian family.

Many immigrants go to Israel essentially for economic reasons, using it as a stepping stone to a better life elsewhere — often in North America. Some years net emigration from Israel exceeds immigration, and now nearly half a million Israelis choose to live outside Israel.

The collapse of the USSR led to an influx of about one million immigrants. To boost immigration further, people from across the globe, with no ethnic or religious links to Israel, are now being allowed to immigrate and convert to Judaism, although the Israeli religious authorities have expressed concerns over the genuineness of many of these conversions.

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## **Settlements — or colonies?**

One of the major stumbling blocks to peace has been the continuing expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory. This has been repeatedly condemned by the international community. Security Council Resolution 452 “calls upon the government and people of Israel to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem”.

SCR 465 states that Israel’s policy of “settling parts of its population and new immigrants in those [occupied] territories constitutes a flagrant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention”. It also calls for the “urgent dismantling of settlements”.

Even the United States has, on occasion, been vocal in its condemnation: “The United States has opposed and will continue to oppose settlement



*The settlement of Har Homa, built on Palestinian land near Bethlehem*

activity in the territories occupied in 1967, which remains an obstacle to peace... Thus, we do not recognise Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem or the extension its municipal boundaries" (Official communiqué, October 1991).

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright wrote in 1999: "The United States knows how destructive settlement activity has been to the pursuit of Palestinian-Israeli peace."

Nonetheless, the Israeli population in the occupied West Bank has climbed steadily from 100,000 in 1991 to over 300,000 in 2010, in over 200 settlements. In addition, there are more than 200,000 settlers in occupied East Jerusalem.

This flies in the face of the Fourth Geneva Convention:

**"The occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."**

Nevertheless, successive Israeli governments have all pushed ahead with the colonisation.

According to Daniel Ayalon, head of the Israeli immigration agency, the NBN, the projected settlement population of 'Judea and Samaria' (i.e. the West Bank) should be at least a million by 2020.

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The settlements and military bases are linked by an expanding grid of Israeli-only highways (known as ‘sterile’ roads by the IDF), which bypass Palestinian towns and villages. Settlements, highways and over 500 road-blocks and checkpoints are used to destroy agricultural land and to block the urban development of Palestinian communities and impede movement — for instance along the main North–South arterial road linking the towns of Nablus, Ramallah, East Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron, and between these towns and the surrounding villages that depend on them.

Settlements are usually situated on a hilltop, dominating a Palestinian village or town (in the case of Hebron, it is a fortress built in the heart of the old city), or on aquifers.

Sniper fire and armed raids from the settlements are a major hazard for the adjacent Palestinian towns and villages, together with the theft of agricultural and building land. A whole string of settlements has been created along the border with Jordan, in what looks like an attempt to exclude all possibility of a viable Palestinian state with international borders. The settlements also provide the Israeli army with an excuse for a heavily armed presence to defend these enclaves. The settlers themselves are equipped with the latest weaponry, and the army is reluctant to prevent them making use of these arms against unarmed civilians.

Some settlements are primarily military bases, housing only a handful of ‘civilians’. Settlers tend to be either the poorest elements of the Israeli population, who are enticed by very cheap or free accommodation of a high standard (air-conditioning and swimming pools are often provided) and by guaranteed employment; or they are immigrants of the most fanatical type, such as the Gush Emunim sect, who believe that it is their religious duty to drive out the Palestinians.

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## The Apartheid Wall

Israel is currently constructing a ‘separation barrier’, ostensibly to protect Israel from attack by Palestinians. Begun in June 2002 and now nearing completion, the barrier is in many places a concrete wall 8 metres high, complete with watchtowers, floodlights and electronic detectors. Elsewhere, it is a parallel series of high barriers of razor wire and/or electric fencing,



PHOTO: PENGON/ANTI-APARTHEID WALL CAMPAIGN

### *The Wall near Qalqilya*

all of which includes a 70-100 metre “buffer zone” with trenches, roads, cameras, and trace paths for footprints. 400 miles long, it is costing about £1 million a mile to build. (See map on page 28–29.)

The Wall does not follow the Green Line (the pre-1967 border between Israel and the Occupied Territories), but cuts deep into Palestinian territory. If completed, it will effectively annex 40% of the West Bank, incorporating dozens of illegal settlements. The convolutions of the route taken by the Wall are especially marked around Jayyous and Qalqilya (north of Jerusalem): the former has lost all of its agricultural land, to the west, and the latter is almost entirely encircled by a noose which can be closed at any time by the soldiers manning the checkpoint. It is clear that this whole ‘bulge’ of territory is destined to be incorporated into Israel at an opportune moment.

Many villages are cut off not only from the land they live off, but also from their water supply. Over 300,000 people are trapped between the Wall and Israeli territory, or are completely surrounded by the Wall. The only way in and out of the village of al Walaja, near Bethlehem, is via a tunnel.



*Villages trapped between the Wall and the Green Line*

Bethlehem is now cut off from Jerusalem and pilgrimages and the tourist trade there have almost disappeared. While the Wall surrounds it on three sides, a settler-only road to the south impedes access to the rest of the West Bank. The aim of creating such ghettos is clearly to drive people from their homes.

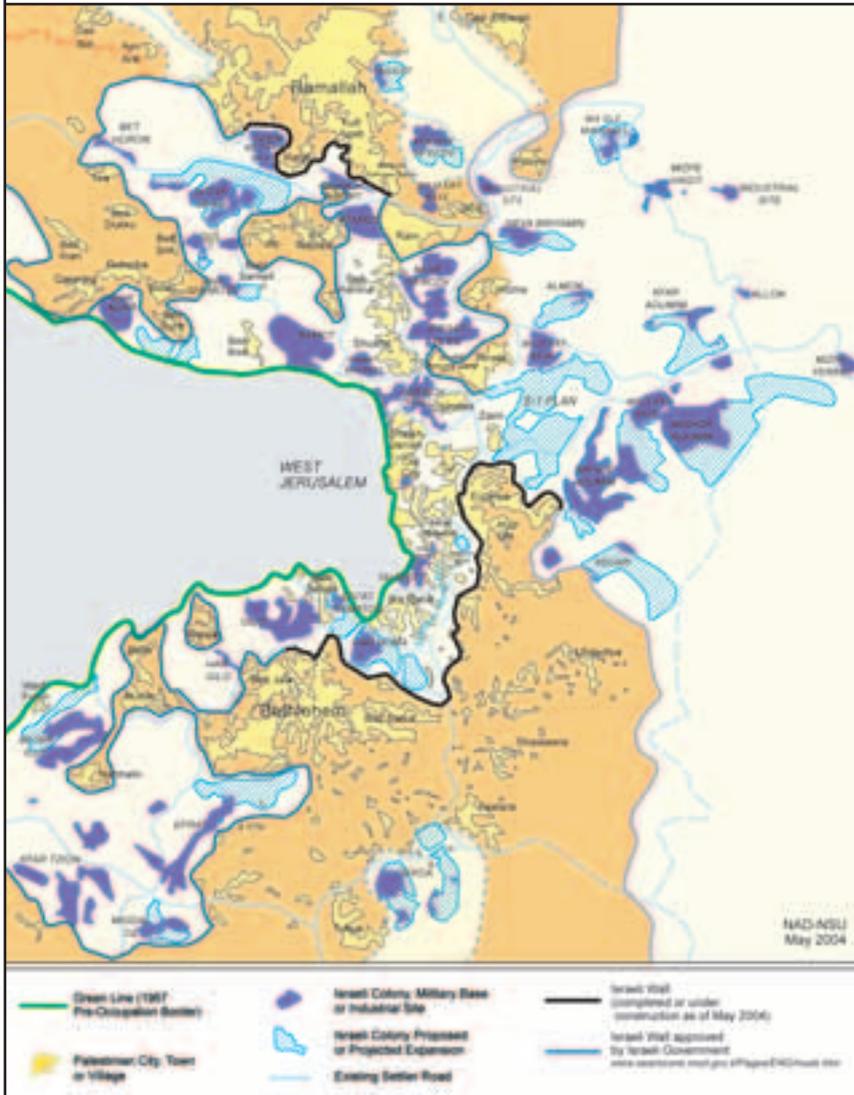
Under international law an occupying power

does not have the right to effect permanent changes detrimental to the indigenous population. In July 2004, following a ruling by the International Court of Justice, a UN Resolution declared that the Wall is illegal, when built on Palestinian land (i.e. for most of its length), that it should be demolished, and that Palestinians be recompensed for their losses. However, since then the international community has remained largely silent on this issue.

## Jerusalem

This city, sacred to Christians, Muslims and Jews alike, and designated an international zone by the UN, is claimed by Israel as its exclusive property and future capital. Until 1967 its population was very largely Christian and

### The Wall cutting off East Jerusalem from Ramallah and Bethlehem



Muslim, which had for centuries been living peaceably with a small Jewish community. However, after occupying the area, Israel set about colonising the Old City by implanting settlements and expropriating Palestinian land and property. They are currently excluding Palestinian residents whose families

have lived in the city for many generations, by withdrawing or refusing to issue residence permits, so that many have found themselves both stateless and homeless. As Jerusalem is central to Palestinian economic, social and cultural life its annexation calls into question the very viability of a future Palestinian state.

The Old City is now ringed by huge settlement blocs, and developments are planned to make Greater Jerusalem reach as far as the Jordan Valley in the east, taking another 10% of the West Bank and cutting off Hebron and the south. The construction of a settler-only light railway connecting the blocs will further isolate the Palestinian communities. This will make the possibility of the city becoming the capital of a future Palestinian state even more remote.

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## Water resources

Settlements are often sited near water resources — wells or underlying aquifers which give them control of the local water supply. The settlement of Ariel has access to the largest aquifer in the West Bank, and sells back the water to surrounding Palestinian communities.

The Israeli authorities decide if a Palestinian village should be allowed to sink a new well, and the Israeli army frequently uses the cutting off of water supplies as a form of collective punishment.

“The water shortage violates the basic human rights of Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories such as the right to health, to adequate housing, to equality, and to benefit from their natural resources. This harm results from Israeli policy, in effect since 1967, based on an unfair division of resources shared by Israel and the Palestinians” (B’Tselem, Israeli Human Rights organisation).

An Israeli’s per capita consumption of water is 350 litres a



*Queueing for water*

day, while that of the average Palestinian is about 60. Water consumption by the 5,000 Israeli settlers in the Jordan valley alone is equal to 75% of the amount consumed by the two million Palestinians in the entire West Bank — i.e. about 100 times as much per head.

## **A democratic or an apartheid state? —**

Israel prides itself on being a truly democratic state — indeed the only one in the Middle East. It is true that Israel's neighbours (the richest of which enjoy the full political and military support of the West) are far from democratic. However, Israel's claims to genuine democracy do not hold up on close examination. Israel defines itself as 'the state of the Jewish people' although 1.4 million — that is to say about one-fifth — of the population is of Palestinian origin, either Christian or Muslim. This is in contradiction to Israel's Declaration of Independence, in which it committed itself to 'maintain complete equality of social and political rights for all citizens, without distinction of creed, race or sex'. Now, any political party even advocating that Israel be defined rather as the state of all its citizens can be disbarred as being 'disloyal' to the 'Jewish state'. It seems that Zionism and democracy are incompatible.

It is difficult to imagine an avowedly 'Christian state' or 'White European state' being considered morally acceptable in the twenty-first century — but the essentially racial basis of Israel as a mono-ethnic state is generally ignored in the West.

**The UN International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid (1973) defines apartheid as 'inhuman acts committed for the purpose of establishing and maintaining domination of one racial group of persons over another racial group of persons and systematically oppressing them' — a definition which clearly applies to Israeli domination of the Palestinians.**

Palestinian citizens of Israel are discriminated against in a variety of ways. Over 93 per cent of what is now Israel was once owned by Palestinians; since land can only be sold to Jews, even the little that is left in Palestinian hands is being rapidly whittled away. Palestinians who were farmers are now landless labourers. 42 per cent of Palestinian Israelis live below the poverty

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line, while the mass of the population enjoy a standard of living comparable with that of Western Europe.

One hundred Palestinian villages in Israel are not marked on the map, and do not officially exist; this means that nearly 100,000 people are in a state of limbo, getting virtually no municipal services, despite the fact that they pay full taxes to the Israeli government. At every stage of the educational process Palestinian Israelis have much lower funding and poorer facilities than their Jewish neighbours. Although Palestinian Israelis comprise nearly 20 per cent of the population, they constitute only 3.7 per cent of federal employees and one per cent of faculty positions. Since they are not called for military service it is easy to bar them from government jobs by stipulating ‘military service necessary’ — a frequently used method of discrimination. Non-Jews also receive lower welfare funding on the same pretext.

Israel passed a clearly racist law in 2003 that makes it all but impossible for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship to bring a Palestinian spouse to Israel. For the time being, such couples have little choice but to seek asylum abroad, if other countries will give them refuge.

The Minister of the Interior also has the power to withdraw citizenship from anyone he judges to have ‘broken faith’ with the State — i.e. to have criticised the Zionist ideology underpinning Israel.

Palestinian Members of the Knesset are constantly harassed for demanding equal rights for the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Azmi Bishara, founder of the Balad party, now lives in exile for demanding a truly democratic system, and MK Haneen Zuabi was stripped of her parliamentary immunity in 2010 for joining the aid flotilla to Gaza.

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## **Israel’s two-tier justice system**

Many Israeli human rights organisations, such as B’tselem and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, and international NGOs like Amnesty International protest against the legal procedures and inhuman treatment meted out to Palestinian detainees. Hannah Friedman, Director of PCATI wrote in May 2001:



*Position used during interrogations*

“Two judicial systems are functioning simultaneously in Israel, creating a rule of apartheid under which Israeli and Palestinian detainees accused of an identical offence are tried according to different laws. The High Court of Justice should decree that the system of justice is equal to all men and put a stop to this racist policy”.

Minor ‘offences’ on the part of Palestinians, such as throwing a stone at a tank, merit a prison sentence. In contrast, in January 2001 Jewish settler Nahum Korman was sentenced to 6 months’ community service and a modest fine for beating to death a 10 year-old Palestinian child with his rifle butt; a month later a sentence of six and a half years was handed down to a 17 year-old Palestinian for attempting to stab a settler.

Another settler, Shimon Yifrah, was given a 7-month suspended sentence after shooting a girl in the school playground, on the grounds that he had ‘only intended to shock her, not kill her’.

Members of the armed forces are also treated with a leniency which amounts to positive encouragement, when they act illegally against Palestinians — that is, if they are brought before the courts at all. (Even when Western journalists or peace workers, like James Miller, Tom Hurndall or Rachel Corrie, are killed by the army, prompting widespread protests abroad, it is extremely difficult for their families to elicit any response from the authorities.)

In a grotesque effort to reconcile acknowledged illegal violence with the much vaunted national principles of justice, democracy and humanity, the authorities claim that the soldier suffers as much as the victim: his alleged anguish at being ‘forced’ to shoot unarmed civilians is taken to be a sign of his humanity. ‘Yorim ve bochim’ (‘Shoot and cry’) is a motto popular with the armed forces. A more nauseating mix of brutality and hypocrisy is hard to imagine.

‘Administrative detention’ of Palestinians (imprisonment without charge

or trial, often for several years) is commonplace within Israel and in the Occupied Territories. At any one time there are several hundred such prisoners.

Collective punishments like house demolitions, in retaliation for actions such as stone-throwing, are permitted. Since Israeli law forbids rebuilding property, even in the Occupied Territories, without prohibitively lengthy and expensive legal procedures, tens of thousands of Palestinians have been made homeless in this way. In all there are 38 statutes in force which enable the Israeli state to expropriate Palestinian land. One method is to deny Palestinians access to land and then confiscate it to the state on the grounds that it is being under-utilised, under obsolete British or Turkish legislation.

Within Israel, predominantly Palestinian villages are denied expansion while Jewish villages are given every encouragement to develop.

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## Israel and South Africa

During apartheid the Israeli leadership was a strong supporter of the South African regime, providing illicit military aid during the arms embargo. The two had much in common: a belief in the racial inferiority of the people they oppress; the myth of a 'chosen people' upon whom God has bestowed a promised land; economic and legal discrimination; violent military suppression of any attempt to resist or reform the regime. Dr. Verwoerd, Prime Minister of apartheid South Africa, noted that **“[the Zionists] took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there for a thousand years. In that, I agree with them, Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state.”**



*Archbishop Desmond Tutu*

It is no accident that South Africans today are vocal in drawing parallels with their own past, and are at the forefront of international support for the Palestinian cause. Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote after a visit to Israel:

**“I am a black South African, and if I were to change the names, a description of what is happening in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank**

could describe events in South Africa [under apartheid].”

Reflecting on his own people’s struggle for freedom, Nelson Mandela said in 1997:

“The UN took a strong stand against apartheid; and over the years, an international consensus was built, which helped to bring an end to this iniquitous system. But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians.”

## Overt and pervasive racism

PHOTO: CHRISTIAN PEACE-MAKER TEAMS



*Graffiti on the wall of a home in Hebron*

and conscience” (Moshe Katsav, President of Israel, 23 May 2001). ‘Sanctity of life’ presumably does not extend to Palestinian lives.

Rabbi Ya’acov Perin in his eulogy at the funeral of Baruch Goldstein, who murdered 29 worshippers in a mosque in Hebron, said “One million Arabs are not worth a single Jewish fingernail” (*New York Times*, 28 February 1994).

Rafael Eitan, Israeli Chief of Staff in Lebanon under Sharon, had a dream of military conquest which is well on the way to being realised:

**“Force is all they do or will ever understand. We shall use the ultimate force until the Palestinians come crawling to us on all fours...**

Open racism is not confined to the zealots of the settlements. Israeli military, political and religious leaders express unashamedly racist views about their Palestinian neighbours: “There is a huge gap between us [Jews] and our enemies — not just in ability but in morality, culture, sanctity of life and

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**When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do will be to scurry round like drugged roaches in a bottle”** (*New York Times* 14 April 1983).

In recent years there has been growing public support for actually expelling Palestinians both from Israel and from the Occupied Territories. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said of the Palestinian citizens of Israel:

“They have no place here. Let them take their bundles and go to hell.”

The kind of language regularly used of Palestinians would be considered totally unacceptable if applied to any other group. But as Noam Chomsky has pointed out: “Anti-Arab racism is... the only remaining form of racism to be regarded as legitimate”.

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## **US involvement**

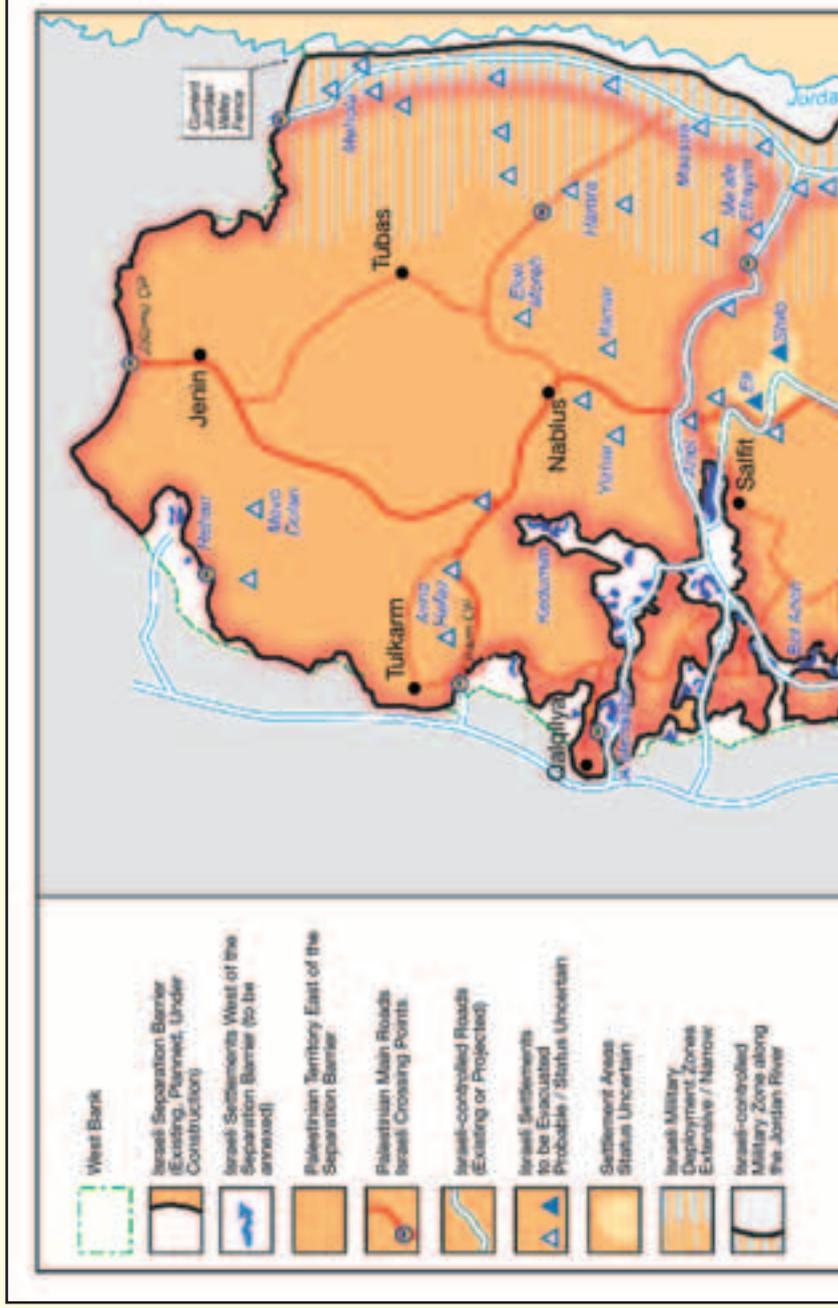
According to a long-established tradition, every new Israeli Prime Minister is publicly welcomed at the White House, where the American President solemnly reaffirms US ‘unconditional support’ for Israel. This support is political, military and financial. The US provides between \$3 and \$5 billion in ‘aid’ every year, more than it gives to all of sub-Saharan Africa. Much of the aid is in the form of the latest weapons, including military aircraft and helicopter gunships, automatic weapons, mines etc. (The Israeli airforce is the fourth most powerful in the world). American aid and expertise were involved in developing Israel’s nuclear arsenal, although Israel refuses to either confirm or deny its existence. Israel has also succeeded in developing a thriving arms industry, recently signing a lucrative deal to export the highly sophisticated AWACS spy planes to China.

On the political front, the US refuses to criticise virtually any aspect of Israel’s policies, and vetoes UN resolutions that seek to pressurise Israel towards recognition of its legal and moral responsibilities. It is particularly difficult to voice any criticism of Israel in the US media, or to publish research which has negative implications. Journalists and scholars who are brave enough to do this often find themselves out of a job.

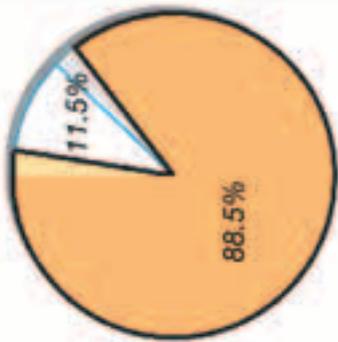
Despite explicit US disapproval of Israeli expansion and settlement in the Occupied Territories, American dollars have continued to be a vital re-

# The Wall and the major settlements in the West Bank

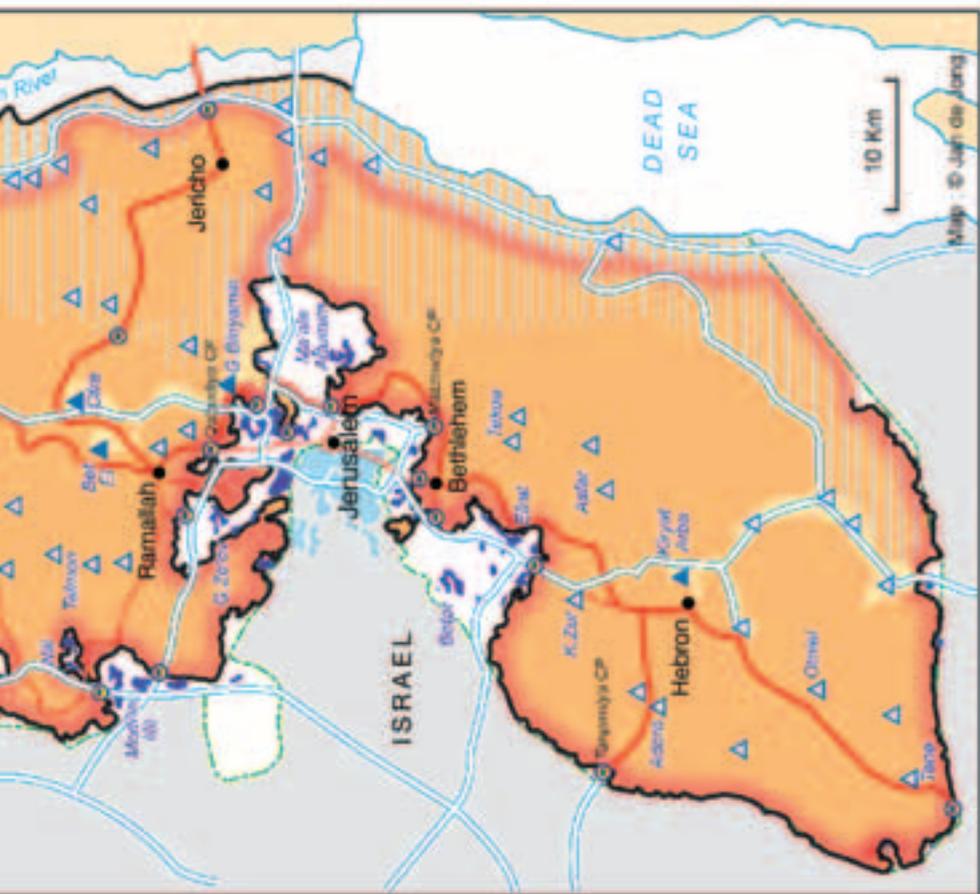
## 2008



### West Bank Territorial Division (%)



-  Palestinian Territory East of the Separation Barrier
-  Settlement Areas  
Status Uncertain: 2.7%
-  West Bank Territory  
West of the Separation Barrier: 8.8%
-  East of the Jordan Valley Fence: 2.6%



source in financing these policies. The Bush administration, largely from an oil industry background, was particularly supportive of Israel.

The reasons for this policy of total support go far beyond the traditional Zionist lobby groups, such as organisations like AIPAC — the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Christian Zionist fundamentalists, who believe that Israel's control of the 'Holy Land' presages the second coming of Christ, constitute an even more powerful lobby.

At the geo-political level, President Reagan referred to Israel as America's 'greatest strategic asset' abroad — a base adjacent to the oilfields of the Middle East which can be relied upon to act in the interests of the US. Mossad (the Israeli Intelligence Service) is said to be the most efficient in the world, and shares much of its information with its powerful backer.

Moreover, Israel has been an invaluable ally in furthering US interests in various parts of the world, particularly in Central and South America, Africa and Iran, where direct US involvement would not have been tolerated by American public opinion. In Guatemala, for instance, the Israelis provided military training for a series of regimes under which thousands of Amerindians were killed; in South Africa they provided military and intelligence training as well as arms and spare parts to the apartheid regime, breaking the international embargo; American jets were sold to the Indonesian government via Israel to further the policy of genocide being carried out in East Timor.

After September 11, 2001, Israel sought to associate itself ever more closely with the US and to justify its oppression of the Palestinians as part of the global 'war on terror'. Israeli Minister of Defence Ben-Eliezer called September 11: **“from the perspective of Jews, the most important public relations act ever committed in our favour... It is a fact that we have just killed 14 Palestinians in Jenin, Qabatiya and Tammun, with the world remaining absolutely silent”** (*Yediot Aharonot*, 14 September 2001).

## **Oslo and Arafat's historic compromise—**

A lengthy peace process was sponsored by the US from 1991 to 2000. On both sides, hopes were high. Under the Oslo Accords, Israel granted the Palestinians limited autonomy in some areas of the West Bank and Gaza, and agreed to the staged withdrawal of troops from the Occupied

Territories. (It did not recognise a state of Palestine, only a civil Palestinian Authority, despite the fact that the PLO officially recognised the state of Israel in 1988).

Arafat made the historic compromise of recognising Israel on 78 per cent of Palestinian land. Core issues were left unresolved: the fate of the refugees, the status of Jerusalem and the future of the illegal Israeli settlements. Nevertheless, it was hoped that this ‘interim self-government’ arrangement (known as Oslo I), could ultimately lead to the formation of a viable Palestinian state, and Arafat returned in 1994 to the West Bank from decades of exile abroad, to a jubilant reception.

In the wake of the Accords Israel was able to sign a peace treaty with Jordan, and to establish economic and political relations with most member states of the Arab League.

Under Oslo II in 1995 provision was made for the first stage of troop withdrawal, elections were held in the Occupied Territories and a new Legislative Council set up, to run Palestinian internal affairs.

However, Shimon Peres was able to reassure the Israeli public that in Oslo II no real concessions had been made: **“The Deal kept the following in Israeli hands: 73 per cent of the lands of the [occupied] territories, 97 per cent of the security, and 80 per cent of the water”** (*Jerusalem Post*, August 26, 1995).

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## A phony peace



*Ambulance in Gaza wrecked by an Israeli tank*

Oslo was to be followed by ‘final status talks’ to resolve all outstanding issues. However, Israel failed to implement Oslo I and II and accelerated expansion of its settlements, despite international protests. Very little redeployment of troops took place. The army only withdrew from

the centre of the six Palestinian cities of the West Bank — approximately 3% of the area. Throughout the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Israeli forces remained in permanent military control and were able to enter all towns and villages, restrict traffic between them and seal them off at will. 62 new military bases and new ‘settlers-only’ roads were built, further dividing the territory. The ‘single territorial unit’ promised to the Palestinians in Oslo I had become a fragmented patchwork. Few of the 5000 political prisoners were released as promised, and Israel retained control of all borders and airspace, as well as most of the land and water resources.

Final status talks were scheduled to start by 1996, but Israel prevaricated. The Wye Agreement signed in 1998 stipulated limited withdrawal by Israeli forces from parts of the Occupied Territories, but both Barak and Netanyahu (two successive Israeli prime ministers) failed to implement even this.

## **The myth of Barak’s generous offer**——

Clinton’s attempts at producing a settlement at Camp David in 2000 failed when Barak presented Arafat with a take-it-or-leave-it offer: the Israeli army was to remain in overall military control of the West Bank and Gaza; the Palestinian capital could be the village of Abu Dis (used as a municipal rubbish tip by Israel), to the east of Jerusalem; only a tiny proportion of refugees would be allowed to return, no compensation would be granted, and the Palestinians would have to relinquish for ever their right to return.

The Palestinian negotiators were ready to cede some of the West Bank territory and settlements to Israel, and made a distinction between the right of return and its full implementation. But they were not prepared to sign away forever rights which are considered inviolable under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 13/2), and which have been reaffirmed on countless occasions by the UN General Assembly.

In Clinton’s last throw at Taba in January 2001, it seemed as though progress was being made on the crucial issues of Jerusalem and the refugees, and that a settlement might be forged before the Israeli elections. However, Barak withdrew at the last moment. Arafat appealed to Barak on Israeli television to return to negotiations, but Barak refused and Arafat returned empty-handed to the Occupied Territories.

It had finally become clear that what Israel had in mind was not a 'viable Palestinian state' but isolated patches of territory economically dependent on Israel and surrounded by Israeli forces. It would have no real international borders, there would be no solution to the refugee problem and Jerusalem would remain under Israeli control.

In the aftermath of the 'peace process' the Israeli and American propaganda machines were somehow able to project the myth of a hugely generous offer by Israel, ungraciously spurned by a greedy Arafat.

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## The al-Aqsa Intifada



*One casualty of an Israeli 'incursion'*

The collapse of the peace talks in July 2000 saw the rise to prominence of Ariel Sharon, head of the far-right Likud party. In September his 'private' visit, with a 3000-strong military escort, to the holy sites of al-Haram al-Sharif and the al-Aqsa mosque in East Jerusalem triggered demonstrations in both Israel and the Occupied Territories.

Over three days the Israeli army killed 28 and wounded 500 (the army itself suffered no casualties). The response was a foretaste of the policy of extreme repression that Sharon was to enforce when he came to power a few months later. An increased military presence throughout the Occupied Territories, curfews, blockades of towns and villages, incursions by tanks, shelling and bombing by Apache helicopters and F16s, assassinations and house demolitions made living conditions unbearable. In the first three months 94 children under 17 were killed, mostly by live bullets.

According to an Amnesty International Report: **"...approximately 80% of the victims were killed in demonstrations in circumstances when the lives of the security services were not in danger"** (2001: Broken Lives — a Year of Intifada).



*Casualties of an Israeli attack on the Jabalya refugee camp*

of a leading Palestinian would ensure a response that could then be used as justification for renewed oppression.

The Saudis proposed a peace plan in February 2002 involving complete normalisation of relations between all the Arab states and Israel, in return for implementing UN resolutions. It was welcomed by the Palestinians and by the US, but Sharon's immediate response was to send tanks into refugee camps in the West Bank and kill 24 people in one day.

In April 2002, ostensibly in response to suicide bombings, Sharon launched increasingly violent attacks on the West Bank, the most brutal of which occurred in the refugee camp of Jenin. Since the Israeli government denied access to outside observers, including missions from the UN and all NGOs and relief organisations, the true death toll may never be known; but early in the incursion the Israeli army reported 200 Palestinian deaths. (The Palestinians put the figure at 500.)

## **Terrorism or resistance?**

A common definition of terrorism is the 'use of violence or threat of violence against civilians to provoke terror for political or ideological ends'. Nation states as well as subordinate groups may be responsible for terrorist acts and policies, though in practice it is usually groups opposing state power that are referred to in this way. The ANC, with Nelson Mandela at

Sharon stipulated that no negotiations were possible without seven days of complete passivity on the part of the Palestinians. Even the throwing of stones by children was considered a violation of this period of calm. If it looked as though things were remaining quiet, the assassination

its head, was considered a terrorist organisation by the government of Margaret Thatcher as well as by the South African government for many years — but every liberation movement has been labelled terrorist by the dominant or occupying power it seeks to overthrow or expel. In fact state terrorism is usually much more brutal in its impact and far-reaching in its scope, since states have greater material and legal means to impose their will.



STOPTHEWALL.ORG

*Protesting the annexation of land at Bil'in*

In December 1987 the UN General Assembly affirmed the right of ‘peoples under colonial and racist regimes and foreign occupation or other forms of colonial domination to struggle to this end [i.e. self determination] and to seek and receive support in accordance with the Charter and other principles of international law’ (Resolution 42/159).

The Palestinians therefore clearly have the right to defend themselves against the aggression of the occupying power, in their struggle for self-determination.

**“... It is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.”**

*Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Throughout the conflict, Israel has sought to portray Palestinians as violent terrorists, and themselves as innocent victims. And yet Israel has the fourth most powerful army in the world, equipped with F16 planes, Apache helicopter gunships, Merkava tanks and nuclear weapons. For every Israeli

who has died since the beginning of the Intifada, at least ten Palestinians have been killed.

Following the failure of all the ‘peace talks’, and in the absence of any international initiative to pressure Israel to abide by the law, some Palestinians have resorted to using themselves as human bombs. Such tragic actions are a reflection of the utter despair felt by some members of a community faced with the prospect of servitude, expulsion or annihilation — and with the indifference of the world at large.

## The human effects of occupation



*Pupils in a school in Ramallah*

In the last ten years, living conditions have worsened dramatically throughout the Occupied Territories. Conditions in Gaza are especially harsh. Even before Israel’s sustained bombing raids of 2006 and 2008, child poverty and general unemployment had reached unprecedented levels.

According to UNICEF: “Children in Gaza are living in an environment of extraordinary violence, insecurity and fear. Electricity and fuel shortages are leading to a reduction in the quantity and quality of health care and water accessible to children. The ongoing fighting is hurting children psychologically. Caregivers say children are showing signs of distress

and exhaustion, including a 15%–20% increase in bedwetting, due to shelling and sonic booms” (July 2006).

In a recent survey, 80% of the children of Gaza were shown to have fallen badly behind in basic maths and Arabic language.

Throughout the Occupied Territories untreated illnesses and severe men-

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tal trauma have contributed to lower school attendance. (The road closures affect the ability of children and their families to travel to clinics and hospitals, while ambulances have been destroyed and ambulance drivers killed.)

Detailed reports published by UNRWA, the World Bank, OCHA and Christian Aid over the last few years tell the same story of rising poverty and increasingly unbearable living conditions.

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## **British complicity**

The British government tries to give the impression of an ‘even-handed’ approach in the Middle East. In reality it mimics the US policy of backing Israel, militarily, economically and politically. After calling for ‘a viable Palestinian state’ in an attempt to ensure Arab support for the campaign in Iraq, Britain, like the US, has signally failed to condemn Israeli atrocities. Even when projects built by the UK in the Occupied Territories are destroyed by the Israeli army, Britain never demands compensation.

The arms trade between Israel and the UK has flourished for many years. The UK equipment sold to Israel in recent years includes high calibre weapons, bombs, torpedoes, rockets, missiles, mines and military imaging equipment. In 2005 the UK government licensed the sale of £22.5m worth of arms to Israel, more than twice the amount in 2004.

This is despite the fact that under EU trade regulations export licenses cannot be issued ‘where there is a clearly identifiable risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression or adversely affect regional stability’. However, no attempts are made at scrutiny of the end use of such weaponry, though it is clear that both UK and US arms are used regularly to repress, kill and maim Palestinian civilians.

The UK also imports military equipment from Israel, effectively subsidising the Israeli war machine, and has spent millions of pounds on ‘battle-tested’ arms from Israeli companies. Imports include bomblets and ammunition used by the British police, while Israeli reconnaissance drones, the Hermes 450, are used by the British army in Iraq and Afghanistan. The two countries currently have joint research projects to develop new weapons.

## Boycott, divestment and sanctions

Israel enjoys a preferential trading relationship with the European Union, its second most important trading partner after the US. The most substantial imports are fruit and vegetables, beauty products and clothing (to M&S, GAP, Donna Karen, Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Hugo Boss and others). When produce is grown or goods manufactured in the Occupied Territories, illegally by settlers, they are often labelled 'Made in Israel' and exported as coming from Israel proper — hence enabling Israel to avoid EU excise duty. Legal proceedings are under way to put a stop to this practice, but getting hard proof from territory under military occupation is difficult.

The EU trade agreement also legally commits Israel to conforming to European human rights legislation, but Israel violates these norms on a daily basis.

In July 2001 PSC launched a consumer boycott campaign in the UK: **Boycott Israeli Goods** (the BIG Campaign). It is now Europe-wide — and growing. As with the very successful campaign to boycott South African goods under the Apartheid regime, the present boycott campaign now includes academic, cultural and sporting events, as well as products. Supporters of the boycott monitor shops for Israeli goods and provide information about the political and humanitarian background to the campaign, as well as taking part in demonstrations and leafletting customers.

Israel currently enjoys substantial tax benefits from the EU under the EU-Israel Trade Agreement, although it does not abide by the clauses of the Agreement relating to respect for human rights. There was a major breakthrough in February 2010, when the European Court of Justice ruled that products from settlements in the West Bank are not Israeli and must be taxed accordingly. The British government has issued guidance to supermarkets that produce should display the correct place of origin, so that consumers can tell if products are from the illegal settlements.

More and more unions are responding to the call for boycott, both in the UK and abroad, and organisations including unions, churches and local councils are also divesting from Israeli companies or companies that contribute to or benefit from the Occupation.

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Writers, musicians and academics have been refusing to participate in concerts, festivals and conferences in Israel. Israel has responded with tabling legislation that makes support of boycott a criminal offence in Israel and bans boycott supporters from entry to Israel.

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## Israeli dissent

Since 1967, courageous individuals and organisations in Israel have been calling for an end to the occupation and a just peace based on international law. Academics like Ilan Pappé and groups like Gush Shalom headed by Uri Avnery have sought to tell the Israeli public and the wider world just what is happening in the Occupied Territories. Organisations like B'Tselem and the women's group Machsom Watch monitor closely the activities of the IDF, while the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions helps to rebuild Palestinian homes destroyed by the army; founder Jeff Halper travels tirelessly in order to expose Israeli policies of expansion and colonisation.

For more than five years, Israeli activists have joined Palestinians and international supporters in their weekly demonstrations against the building of the Wall and the theft of land, focusing on the villages of Ni'lin and Bil'in.

The Israeli movement 'Boycott from Within' supports the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions as a means of "applying effective pressure on Israel and holding it accountable for its occupation and apartheid policies". (Supporters risk prosecution under new legislation.)

There is also a growing reluctance among army reservists and professional soldiers and pilots to participate in illegal and inhumane actions in the Occupied Territories. In a petition launched in 2002 the conscientious objectors announced: **"We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people."** (Up-to-date figures and information on the 'refusenik' campaign can be found at [www.oznik.org](http://www.oznik.org).)

An organisation called 'Breaking the Silence', founded in 2004, collects and publishes the testimonies of Israeli soldiers serving in the Occupied Territories. These include many accounts of systematic humiliation, maltreatment and murder of unarmed Palestinians, including children, and of the subsequent cover-ups.

It is significant that a poll conducted by the Israeli daily paper, *Maariv*, in 2007 found that approximately a quarter of the Israeli population was considering emigration, including almost half of the country's young people.

Perhaps the best-known Israeli whistle-blower is Mordechai Vanunu, who revealed details of Israel's nuclear weapons programme to a British newspaper in 1986. He was subsequently abducted in Rome by an Israeli Mossad agent and spent 18 years in jail, twelve in solitary confinement. Even on his release in 2004 he was put under virtual house arrest and has not



*Mordechai Vanunu after his release*

been allowed to leave the country. In 2010 he was once again put in solitary confinement in a high-security jail for his relationship with a Norwegian woman, contrary to the terms of his release.

## A renewed 'peace process'

In April 2003 President Bush published the 'Roadmap', or peace plan backed by the 'Quartet' of the US, the EU, Russia and the UN, supposedly designed to bring peace to the region and establish an independent, viable Palestinian state alongside a secure state of Israel.

The borders were not specified (no mention of the 1967 Green Line), and both the refugee problem and the status of Jerusalem — sticking points in the Oslo process — were referred to in only the vaguest of terms.

Given that Sharon had already insisted that any Palestinian 'autonomous areas' should be limited to at most 40% of the existing Occupied Territories, it is difficult to see how these could form a contiguous, undivided, potentially viable state. Nevertheless, both sides were committed to attempting the process. The first stage involved a cessation of all hostilities and the dismantling of some 'settlement outposts'.

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The second phase involved further (vaguely specified) withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, then Palestinian elections, then the creation of a Palestinian state within ‘provisional’ borders. Only then would there be a ‘permanent status agreement’ at which permanent borders, the refugees, settlements, and Jerusalem would be discussed and solutions agreed.

However, once again, Israel has shown no sign of giving up its ambition of creating a Greater Israel, continuing its policies of settlement expansion, land theft and political assassinations throughout the process. Bush himself fatally undermined the whole process in 2004, by endorsing Israel’s retention of all the major settlement blocs in the West Bank, without even consulting his partners in the Quartet. Obama’s efforts to halt settlement expansion in 2009 were greeted with contempt by the Israeli government.

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## Withdrawal from Gaza

Israel’s decision to withdraw its 7,200 settlers occupying one third of the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005 was hailed as a great concession. It was in part a recognition by Sharon that it was simply impractical to attempt to colonise an area densely inhabited by 1.5 million Palestinians.

However, the real purpose of the exercise was revealed by Sharon’s senior aide, Dov Weissglas, who told the Israeli daily, *Ha’aretz*: “The disengagement is actually formaldehyde. It supplies the amount of formaldehyde necessary so that there will not be a political process with the Palestinians.”

Even as the settlers were being removed, with maximum media coverage, plans to enlarge the illegal settlement of Ma’ale Adumim with an additional 3,500 homes on 67 square kilometres of Palestinian land were going ahead — with virtually no media comment. In the months following the withdrawal a total of 32,000 settlers were installed in the West Bank. Israel announced in December 2006 that a group of religious extremists from the Gaza Strip would be housed in a new settlement to be built in the Jordan Valley. This move was criticised by both the EU and the US, as being in contravention of the Roadmap, but no sanctions were proposed.

In the meantime, Israel maintained total control over the Gaza strip by land, sea and air, virtually sealing its borders. Egypt cooperated fully with

Israel in keeping the southern border closed. It was now possible for Israeli forces to bomb civilian targets and subject the population to sonic booms from low-flying aircraft, without the problem of disturbing Israeli settlers.

The discovery of huge deposits of natural gas in Gazan waters in 1999 may be a factor in Israel's determination to retain control of the area.

## **The election of Hamas**

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General elections were held in the Occupied Territories in January 2006, judged free and fair by international observers, despite the difficulties of registering, campaigning and voting under military occupation. The Islamist party Hamas won a resounding victory — a surprise to many, given Palestine's tradition of secular nationalism. It has been explained as both a reaction against corruption in the leadership of Fatah, the party founded by Yasser Arafat, and as a rejection of the empty 'peace processes', that had produced endless concessions and compromises on the Palestinian side, but only a harsher occupation and ever greedier land-grabs by Israel.

A National Unity Government was formed, but the US and Israel immediately imposed stringent sanctions on the Occupied Territories, declaring Hamas to be a terrorist organisation. They were joined in this by many European countries. The conditions laid on the Hamas government were that they should recognise Israel, cease all violence and abide by all the agreements previously entered into with Israel. No such demands were made of the Israeli government, who continued their blockades and violent incursions, in violation of international law.

Millions of dollars of taxes which should have been remitted by Israel to the Palestinian government were also withheld and Western aid was cut off. This meant that more than 165,000 public employees, including 11,000 health workers and 38,000 teachers received no pay.

A few months after the elections Israel kidnapped and imprisoned half the new Hamas cabinet and over 30 Hamas MPs, hoping that the government would not be able to function and that new elections, producing results more to their liking, would be held. Israel and the US offered to back Fatah President Mahmoud Abbas, financially and militarily, if he would cooperate.

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Regarding the blockade of Gaza, in February 2006 Dov Weisglass, adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, said: “The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger.”

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## **Carnage and blockade**

When the Lebanese Islamic party Hizbollah captured two Israeli soldiers on the Lebanese border in July 2006, hoping to exchange them for prisoners in Israeli jails, Israel launched an all-out attack on Lebanon that lasted several weeks. As Chief of Staff Dan Halutz put it: “We shall set Lebanon back twenty years.” A thousand Lebanese civilians were killed and many thousands displaced and made homeless. The finale was the use of a million cluster bombs dropped in a few days, making much of southern Lebanon a booby-trapped no-go area for years to come.

Despite the high-tech weaponry at Israel’s disposal and its destruction of much of Lebanon’s infrastructure, it was unable to subdue Hizbollah, who inflicted heavy losses on the Israeli army and became heroes throughout the Arab world.

At the same time, while the media were focused on Lebanon, Israel stepped up its attacks on Gaza, and continued them after the ceasefire with Lebanon. During the summer of 2006, over 300 people in Gaza, largely civilians, were killed, many homes were shelled and the only power station bombed. Over 85 per cent of the population of Gaza were reduced to living below the poverty line.

Mass demonstrations around the world protested Israel’s actions, in both Lebanon and Gaza, but the US and British governments refused to voice any real criticism.

In June 2007 Hamas pre-empted a Fatah coup in Gaza and took sole control there. Israel’s response was a further intensification of the siege, with the backing of western governments. An already desperate situation became critical, as reports by the UN, Oxfam and the World Bank have testified. Acutely ill patients were not able to seek treatment outside the Gaza Strip and students could not leave to take up scholarships abroad. (This is still the case today.)

Hamas offered Israel a long-term truce, which held until the IDF killed six Palestinians in Gaza in November 2008. Hamas responded with home-made rockets (which killed no-one) and in December Israel launched attacks of unprecedented savagery by land, sea and air. After three weeks more than 1400 Gazans had been killed in 'Operation Cast Lead', including over 300 children, and much of the remaining infrastructure in the Gaza Strip had been reduced to rubble.

Worldwide condemnation followed, but western governments failed to take any action.

Some interpret Israel's onslaught as an attempt to repair the damage done to its military reputation during the war on Lebanon; others suggest it was aimed at forcing the people of Gaza to reject Hamas, in the interregnum between the Bush and Obama administrations. In neither aim was it successful.

A UN fact-finding mission into the attacks produced what has become known as the Goldstone Report, in September 2009. The Report found Israel guilty of "gross violations of the laws of war", including deliberate targeting of civilians, use of human shields, use of prohibited weapons and wanton destruction of food production, water and sewerage facilities.

The Report was rejected by the US but endorsed by the European Parliament. Since then it has become difficult for senior Israeli politicians and military personnel to travel abroad, for fear of arrest for war crimes.

Israel has continued to maintain the blockade on Gaza, so that the damage wrought by 'Operation Cast Lead' could not be repaired. People are still living in tents amid the ruin of their homes, schools, factories and hospitals have not been rebuilt and clean drinking water is a precious commodity.



*The effects of white phosphorus bombs*

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## Reactions worldwide

On his arrival at the White House, Obama criticised Israel strongly for its ongoing illegal settlement policy, and demanded a complete freeze on all settlement construction. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu responded by announcing a plan to build thousands of new housing units in East Jerusalem. Humiliated, Obama backed down.

Among the international community, however, there has been growing outrage at Israel's actions in both Gaza and the West Bank. The boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign is being taken up by individuals and organisations around the world.

A series of land convoys and flotillas from different countries have attempted, with varying success, to break the siege of Gaza. The largest to date, a flotilla of seven ships from different countries, gathered in the Eastern Mediterranean in May 2010. They were carrying 700 supporters with 10,000 tons of humanitarian aid, including food, wheelchairs, books, toys, electricity generators, medicine and cement – all banned by Israel.

While still in international waters, the lead ship was attacked by the Israel navy and air force and nine passengers were shot dead at close range. The survivors from all the ships were arrested and all their laptops, cameras and phones recording the assault were taken.

Amid universal condemnation, there were huge demonstrations around the world demanding Israel be called to account and the siege on Gaza be lifted. The UN demanded an independent inquiry into the deaths but, with US backing, Israel announced it would carry out its own investigation.

In the UK, 169 British MPs signed an Early Day Motion calling for an end to the siege and a genuinely impartial, transparent inquiry into the killings.

More unions joined the call for boycott, and the Methodist churches in both the UK and the US announced they would boycott settlement goods and divest from firms contributing to or benefitting from the occupation of Palestinian land, such as General Electric and Caterpillar.

After visiting Gaza, Conservative elder statesman Lord Chris Patten called the “medieval siege” of the Gaza Strip “immoral, illegal and inf-

fective” and called on the European Union to take a position on Israel that is independent from that of the United States.

The EU’s Senior Representative for Foreign Affairs Baroness Catherine Ashton also visited Gaza in the aftermath to the killings and said: “The position of the EU is very clear. We want to see the opportunity for people to be able to move around freely, to see goods not only coming in to Gaza but exports coming out of Gaza.”

Prime Minister David Cameron declared in July 2010 that ‘Gaza is a prison camp’ – and that this is unacceptable.



*Thousands demonstrate against the flotilla killings*

## What does Israel want? \_\_\_\_\_

Israel claims that it wants peace, and that all its actions in the Occupied Territories are aimed at ensuring the security of its citizens. However, it is hard to see how annexing large sections of the West Bank and imposing closures and collective punishments on the indigenous population can be anything but counterproductive to both peace and security.

Israel appears rather to be aiming at expanding in a way that will exclude all possibility of a viable Palestinian state. It has already threatened to declare borders unilaterally, without reference to either the Palestinians or the international community. These borders will presumably coincide approximately with the route of the illegal and highly intrusive ‘separation barrier’.

With the added colonisation of the Jordan Valley and the expansion of the existing settlements and the settler-only network of roads, Palestine’s major centres of population will be reduced to ghettos isolated from one an-

other and from the rest of the world. The only borders will be with the state of Israel, which will continue to control all access by land, sea and air to the Palestinian areas, as well as their water resources. (To satisfy the condition that a viable state should consist of contiguous territory, the Israeli authorities are planning tunnels between the ghettos in order to provide 'transportational contiguity'.)

Israel will hope to get international recognition of this collection of ghettos as a 'Palestinian state' — though it could clearly not function as such, economically, socially or politically.

Israel is currently building 'industrial zones' along the Wall, which will use cheap Palestinian labour without allowing workers access to Israel. Since most Palestinian agricultural land is being annexed or destroyed by Israel, the former farmers will have little choice but to supply that labour.

(Tony Blair, in his post-PM role as Middle East envoy working on behalf of the US, Russia, the UN and the EU, is in complete support of these industrial zones, claiming the main problems facing the Palestinians are economic.)

Under such conditions, many Palestinians will be forced to leave, for the sake of their families. Those most able to emigrate — the educated with contacts abroad — will also be those most needed for the development of a fledgling state. The million or so Palestinian citizens of Israel will probably find themselves under pressure to leave Israel for the new 'state' — or elsewhere.

This disastrous scenario is well on the way to being realised, and is bound to provoke increased resistance from the Palestinians.

### A viable Palestinian state?



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## No justice, no peace

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This is a critical period for Israelis as well as for Palestinians. Internal schisms due to the highly fragmented nature of Israeli society are deepening, and polarising the political scene. The rightwing parties in power possibly see the maintenance of an outside threat as a vital cohesive force for the country. But in the long run Israel needs to establish normal relations with all of its neighbours — which must entail a just settlement for the Palestinians. Without this, the situation can only continue to deteriorate.

The enormity of the injustices suffered by the Palestinians, for which Western countries bear a heavy degree of responsibility, will continue to have massive repercussions throughout the Middle East. The war on Iraq, for which Israel lobbied heavily, has only strengthened the belief in the Arab and Muslim worlds that the US and Britain are hostile to their interests. It has also brought into focus Western double standards: failure to comply with UN resolutions, aggression against neighbouring states and alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction were all used to justify the Iraq war — but do not apparently apply to Israel.

Israel is currently lobbying for a ‘pre-emptive’ strike on Iran. If it ignores US warnings against precipitate action and bombs Iranian targets, Iran may well retaliate by targeting Israeli centres of population. Israel’s long-standing allies, such as the US and the UK might then get dragged into the conflict, with unimaginable results.

**Around the world more and more people are appalled both by Israel’s actions in the region and by the apathetic stance of their governments. They are standing up to say: ‘Enough is enough!’**

**At this critical time in world history the fate of Palestine is a key issue, which concerns everyone.**

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## What can you do?

UN Special Rapporteur John Dugard wrote in his September 2006 report:

“It is pointless for the Special Rapporteur to recommend to the Government of Israel that it show respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. More authoritative bodies, notably the ICJ and the Security Council, have made similar appeals with as little success as have had previous reports of the Special Rapporteur. It also seems pointless for the Special Rapporteur to appeal to the Quartet to strive for the restoration of human rights, as neither respect for human rights nor respect for the rule of law features prominently on the agenda of this body, as reflected in its public utterances. **In these circumstances, the Special Rapporteur can only appeal to the wider international community to concern itself with the plight of the Palestinian people.**”

Every individual has a role to play in seeking a resolution to this issue. As in the anti-Apartheid movement, we need to build a mass campaign, mobilising support across Britain through political parties, trade unions, student bodies, workplaces, local community groups, women’s organisations, mosques and churches.

### **We must campaign for:**

- **An immediate and unconditional end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza**
- **The right to self-determination for the Palestinian people**
- **The right of return for Palestinian refugees**
- **East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine**

Without political and economic pressure Israel, as the dominant state, has no incentive to make a genuine and lasting peace. Pressure may be brought to bear in a variety of ways:

- ▶ **Join the Palestine Solidarity Campaign**
- ▶ **Be active in the campaign: join or set up a local PSC branch**

- ▶ Boycott Israeli goods, events and institutions
- ▶ Affiliate your trade union branch or national union to PSC
- ▶ Express your views to the media
- ▶ Write to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and lobby your local MP or Euro MP
- ▶ Write to the Israeli embassy demanding an end to the occupation
- ▶ Campaign for your home town to be twinned with a town or village in Palestine
- ▶ Visit the Occupied Territories as an International Observer or a volunteer

The campaigns against South African apartheid and against segregation in the US began at grassroots level, with individuals working together to bring about change; the same can be done for Palestine.



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## —PSC and the trade union movement

PSC works closely with the Trade Union movement in Britain to further the Palestinian cause and raise awareness of the plight of Palestinian workers within the labour and trade union movement. PSC also works with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions and other Palestinian workers organisations, encouraging twinning, delegations to the Occupied Territories and building practical links of solidarity.

**ASLEF, BECTU, BFAWU, Connect, CWU, FBU, GMB, NUM, NUT, PCS, RMT, TSSA, UCATT, UCU, UNITE** (formerly Amicus, CYWU, TGWU), **UNISON**, and **UNITY** are all affiliated to the PSC. Several of these unions have called for a boycott of Israeli goods and institutions, and in March 2010 the TUC and PSC launched a joint campaign to ban settlement goods completely from the EU. Some unions have also voted to suspend or sever relations with the Histadrut, the umbrella body for Israeli trade unions, which is generally totally supportive of the occupation and colonisation of Palestinian territory.

If you are a member of one of the above unions then please affiliate your region and local branch. If you are a member of a union not on this list then please encourage them to affiliate nationally, regionally and locally to the Campaign.



*2009: TUC vote to support the Palestinians and to work with PSC.*

*Photo: PCS/Jess Hurd*

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## More information

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Much of the information in this pamphlet is taken from the following sources.

*Books dealing with the historical and political background include:*

Simha Flapan: *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities*; 1987

Nur Masalha: *A Land without a People*; 1997

M. Palumbo: *Imperial Israel*; 1990

Ilan Pappé: *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1947–1951*; 1992

*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*; 2006

Edward Said: *The Question of Palestine*; 1980

*The End of the peace process, Oslo and After*; 2000

Avi Shlaim: *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*; 2000

Ben White: *Israeli Apartheid: a Beginner's Guide*; 2009

*Other valuable sources of information include:*

Adalah, the Legal Centre for Minority Rights in Israel

**[www.adalah.org](http://www.adalah.org)**

Alternative Information Centre – Israel

**[www.alternativenews.org](http://www.alternativenews.org)**

Amnesty International

**[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)**

The Boycott Israeli Goods Campaign

**[www.bigcampaign.org](http://www.bigcampaign.org)**

B'tselem: the Israeli Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

**[www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)**

Defence for Children International

**[www.dci-pal.org](http://www.dci-pal.org)**

Electronic Intifada: daily news and analysis

**[www.electronicintifada.net](http://www.electronicintifada.net)**

*Ha'aretz*: liberal daily Israeli newspaper

**[www.haaretz.com](http://www.haaretz.com)**

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Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions

**[www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org)**

Maan news agency – from the Occupied Territories

**[www.maannews.net](http://www.maannews.net)**

Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (Gaza)

**[www.mezan.org](http://www.mezan.org)**

Palestine Chronicle

**[www.palestinechronicle.com](http://www.palestinechronicle.com)**

Palestine Monitor (news and comment from the OPTs)

**[www.palestinemonitor.org](http://www.palestinemonitor.org)**

Palestine Red Crescent Society

**[www.palestinercs.org](http://www.palestinercs.org)**

Physicians for Human Rights – Israel

**[www.phr.org.il](http://www.phr.org.il)**

Public Committee Against Torture in Israel

**[www.stoptorture.org.il](http://www.stoptorture.org.il)**

Save the Children

**[www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)**

Stop the Wall

**[www.stopthewall.org](http://www.stopthewall.org)**

UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Occupied Palestinian Territory)

**[www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org)**

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

**[www.un.org/unrwa](http://www.un.org/unrwa)**

The UN Information System on the Question of Palestine

**<http://unispal.un.org>**

The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

**[www.wrmea.com](http://www.wrmea.com)**

Zmag – for comment and analysis on the Middle East

**[www.zmag.org](http://www.zmag.org)**

See also **[www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)** for news, campaigns, events, a wide range of fact sheets and back numbers of *Palestine Nems*.

## Palestine Solidarity Campaign

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign has been in existence for nearly 30 years and now has more than 40 branches around the UK. It is an independent organisation with members and affiliations from many trade unions, student groups and other bodies. It supports the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. A just resolution to the conflict can be achieved but efforts to impose an unjust settlement on the Palestinians will fail.

**PSC** is building a mass campaign in support of Palestinian Human Rights. We work with all those who share our objectives, organising demonstrations, protests, lobby politicians and building direct links with the Palestinian people.

**PSC** opposes all kinds of racism including anti-Jewish prejudice, and rejects the suggestion that criticism of Israeli governments and the Israeli army is anti-semitic.

**PSC** is working for a just, democratic and peaceful future in the Middle East.

Building an effective solidarity campaign requires the active involvement of many.

**PSC Patrons:** John Austin, Tony Benn, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Sir Geoffrey Bindman, Victoria Brittain, Julie Christie, Caryl Churchill, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Bob Crow, William Dalrymple, Pat Gaffney, Revd Garth Hewitt, Dr Ghada Karmi, Bruce Kent, Ken Loach, Lowkey, Dr Karma Nabulsi, Prof Ilan Pappé, Prof Hilary Rose, Prof Steven Rose, Alexei Sayle, Keith Sonnet, Ahdaf Soueif, David Thompson, Baroness Tonge of Kew, Dr Antoine Zahlan, Benjamin Zephaniah

## Get involved!

Contact:

PSC, Box BM, PSA, London WC1N 3XX

Tel: 020 7700 6192

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

Email: [info@palestinecampaign.org](mailto:info@palestinecampaign.org)



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**The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is often presented in the Western media as a battle between two equal parties.**

**But what is really happening in the state of Israel and the Occupied Territories? What are the origins of the conflict? And what can be done to bring about a peaceful solution?**

**This PSC booklet provides some answers.**

