

# Palestine Focus

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NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE NOVEMBER 29th COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINE

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Editorial:

## “Terrorism”: Smokescreen for Intervention

From the Reagan White House comes a sensationalized but carefully orchestrated campaign against “international terrorism”; the barrage from Washington saturates current newspaper headlines and television coverage. Not very well hidden behind this campaign is an attempt to overcome the “Vietnam syndrome,” to rebuild the American public’s support for a revival of the policy of aggressive military intervention by U.S. forces in the Middle East and other areas of the world.

Although this campaign focuses on violence associated with armed resistance in the Middle East, particularly Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, it presents a danger to movements for independence and self-determination throughout the world and to the nonintervention movement in the United States.

The war hysteria whipped up over hijackings and airport attacks is adroitly used by President Reagan to seek military aid for the contra terrorists in Nicaragua and the Unita terrorists in Angola. And remember that it was Marines en route to Lebanon who invaded tiny Grenada.

The real lesson of the Achille Lauro affair—whatever one thinks of the misguided attempt to hijack an Italian cruise ship—is that the United States government sent warplanes to hijack an Egyptian airliner over the Mediterranean—and few Americans protested.

At the height of the hysteria following the attacks on the Rome and Vienna airports, on national television, Senator Howard Metzenbaum (Dem.-Ohio)—ordinarily a liberal reluctant to endorse the use of military force—openly called for the assassination of Libya’s Muammar Qadhafi. It has not seemed to matter that the airport attackers—as acknowledged even by the Israeli government—had no connection whatsoever with Qadhafi or Libya. Indeed, weeks before the airport attacks, administration “leaks”



Who is the real terrorist? Palestinian woman faces Israeli troops in occupied Jerusalem.

revealed U.S. plans to overthrow the Libyan government.

Libya has long been targeted by the Reagan administration because it defies U.S. control. Qadhafi closed U.S. bases, and Libya has been an important supporter of the Palestinian cause, as well as of other liberation movements such as the African National Congress. Libya has also used its oil revenues to benefit its population by building schools, hospitals, and housing. Libya is also strongly supported by the Soviet Union. Unable to tar Qadhafi with the “Communist” label (Qadhafi is a devout Muslim and assertively noncommunist), the next best thing is to call him a “terrorist,” and a “flaky” one at that.

Fortunately, the Reagan administration scenario has not played well in Europe and has backfired in the Middle East, causing outrage and solidarity with Libya among other Arab states, including those previously hostile to the Libyans. The Soviet Union stepped in to bolster Libyan defenses.

### The Roots of Intervention

Nevertheless, the frightening political fact is that there is growing support for the idea that the United States, in the words of Secretary of State George Shultz, has the

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## Ramsey Clark Speaks Out For Palestinian Rights

*Ramsey Clark served as Attorney-General of the United States in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in the 1960s. The following remarks were made on November 12, 1985 at press conference on Star Wars at the United Nations in New York.*

### Israel’s International Activities

Israel is a major part of the arms merchant establishment in the world. It supplies weapons to tyrannies around the world that use them against life and against the people. It is not only wrong but a pity that Israel is determined to advance its technology—I believe that it’s had an atomic if not a nuclear weapons capacity for nearly two decades now—and anyone who would think that they would forego an opportunity to participate in advancing their own technology and advancing something like Star Wars hasn’t been following the policies of the Israeli government for some time. It’s a tragedy and it jeopardizes the people of that country. Their relationship with South Africa has been well-known. Their relationship with El Salvador and elsewhere, including Guatemala, is well-known and Liberia, which I’ve just mentioned, and many other places. In the Philippines, they’ve played a comparatively minor role, but a role nonetheless and that’s a country where the people are finally achieving a level of power that hopefully will change the government soon.

**Every human right we know is violated on the West Bank and Gaza.**

I worry about the taxpayers, but not so much because of expenditures but because of the impact it has on history and the potential for violence. It’s a tragic mistake, it’s tragic for the Middle East. It’s tragic for the people who live in Israel, all the people who live there. It only makes more dangerous the future for everyone. It artificially subsidizes war in many parts of the world. A main way our administration overcomes congressional limitations on involvement in El Salvador is through military assistance to Israel which, in turn, redeploys that elsewhere. It’s something that we really need to pay attention to. Why are we funding this several billion annually to such a small nation? How do we justify to them and our own children the meaning it has in terms of future potential for violence?

### Attacks on Palestinians in the United States

The failure of the people in this country to react in outrage to the bombing murder of

Alex Odeh is a very severe commentary on both our press and our public common sense. This happened in the United States, in Santa Ana, California, the murder of a gentle person who peacefully, if firmly, sought to inform the American people about

a problem that concerns us importantly, the rights of Palestinians, not just in the Middle East but throughout the diaspora because they are a people whose rights are denied constantly everywhere. Sunday I sat at the dais in Chicago with a representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization (at the AAUG conference) who couldn’t speak, but his silent presence speaks volumes both about Palestinian rights and about American freedoms.

I’m a lawyer, and I’m trained and committed to the idea that people and groups are innocent until proven guilty beyond a

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# "Civilization" Versus The "Barbarians"

By Hilton Obenzinger

Strangers come to your country, taking your land and forcing you out of your home and into refugee camps. They draw new boundaries and invoke new laws all of which are designed to force you out or to deny your existence. Books are written to justify the strangers doing all this, books which say you never even had a homeland to begin with. Living under military occupation, anything you do or say to express your desire to live free from the domination of the invaders is against "the law." *What would you do?*

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza live under such conditions. And other Palestinians, in refugee camps in Lebanon and other parts of the Arab world, are forbidden by "the law" to return to their homes. *What would you do?*

You would resist in all the ways you could. And, no matter how you protested—whether by demonstrations, by writing the truth in your newspapers, by electing your mayors to speak out in defense of your people, or by armed attacks against the occupying army and the armed settlers who have come to displace you—no matter how you resisted, the invader would label you an outlaw.

Thus, the logic of domination compels

the Israeli military occupation authorities in the West Bank and Gaza to consider even ten-year-old children who throw rocks at the cars of armed settlers as "terrorists." In the eyes of the occupiers, anyone who resists their will is a "terrorist."

The PLO—and the Palestinian people as a whole—are waging a legitimate fight to regain rights which have been denied them by an expansionist, colonizing power. Naturally, Israeli leaders consider the PLO—the organized expression of Palestinian aspirations for freedom—to be "terrorist." The Apartheid regime in South Africa likewise considers the African National Congress "terrorist." Anyone threatening the "rights" of the oppressor is regarded as a monster attacking the very foundations of "civilization," especially if they are bold enough to take up arms.

In the language of the Reagan administration, Israel represents Western "civilization" and "democracy," despite Israel's occupation in violation of international law, its countless bombings of innocent civilians whether in Beirut or Tunis, its history of massacres such as Deir Yassin and Sabra and Shatila, all of its calculated violence financed by American taxpayers. The Palestinians are considered "barbarians," and every act of their resistance is scrutinized under a self-serving moral microscope, always to be found defective. A misguided

action, such as the airport attacks, gives Reagan even more leeway to distract public attention from the truth of the Middle East conflict.

Rather than focus on the underlying reasons for violence in the Middle East—the systematic denial of Palestinian national and human rights—the Reagan administration instead chooses to campaign against "terrorism," using such crude good-guy/bad-guy rhetoric so as to make demagogic appeals for public support of further military intervention, all in the name of "the war against terrorism." After all, "from the halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli," America remains the guardian of all that is "civilized," from the contras killing school teachers in Nicaragua to armed settlers shooting school children on the West Bank.

It is the civilization of the colonizers, the mentality that viewed Native Americans as "savages" because they fought—and continue to fight—to keep their land and way of life. It is the chauvinist mindset that considered the Vietnamese to have lesser esteem for the value of life because so many of them were willing to die defending the independence of their country. It is the civilization of Reagan's moral amnesia at Bitburg, willing to "forgive and forget" the crimes of Naziism in the crusade against the "evil empire," while the likes of Rev. Jerry Falwell can hail the great "Christian" values of

America as he comes to the defense of Apartheid, of the Marcos dictatorship, and of Israel's "sacred" right to steal Arab land.

Of course, there has always been another side of America, the side which struggles for peace and justice. This America is embodied by those who fought in World War 2 against the horrors of fascism, by those who marched in the civil-rights movement, and by those who protested against the Vietnam War. It is the America that has most recently expressed itself in the Rainbow Coalition and in the fight to stop U.S. support of Apartheid and to halt U.S. intervention in Central America and around the world. It is the America that opposes Reagan's nuclear buildup, financed at the expense of our children.

The American people *can* recognize the plight of the Palestinian people and demand a real policy of peace in the Middle East. The Palestinians are fighting for basic democratic and national rights, the "inalienable" rights made famous by the Declaration of Independence. Americans are capable of understanding—and sympathizing with—the Palestinian quest for justice and self-determination once the smokescreen created by the "terrorism" scare campaign has been penetrated. As an American, seeking to end racism and to protect democratic rights at home and to stop war and intervention abroad—what will you do? □

## FOCUS On Action

By Steve Goldfield

Nationwide protests met the accelerated Israeli campaign of expulsions of Palestinian leaders from the West Bank and Gaza. Hundreds of postcards, produced by the November 29th Committee for Palestine, were mailed to the Israeli minister of justice to stop a group of four Palestinian men from being expelled from their homeland. When they were expelled (after withdrawing their challenge in court because it appeared to grant legal legitimacy to proceedings which violate international law), many organizations and individuals sent telegrams. The postcard campaign continues; write to *Palestine Focus* for copies of the postcards or send your own letters and telegrams. The text of the postcard, directed to Minister of Justice Moshe Nessim, 29 Salah Adin Street, East Jerusalem, via Israel 91010, reads: "I urge you to act without delay to bring about an end to the illegal expulsions of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza." Copies are also being sent to Amnesty International and the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Israeli government, apparently nettled by the deluge of postcards, sent a paper by Israeli Attorney General Itzhak Zamir to some of the signers. The paper purports to justify expulsions in the context of international law. The only "authority" cited, however, is the Israeli Supreme Court.

The November 29th Committee for Palestine picketed Israeli consulates in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco and held a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington on February 13. The press conference was addressed by Wilhelm Joseph of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, James Zogby of the Arab-American Institute, Virgil Falloon of SEARCH, Najwa S'ad of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign, Mary Habib of the Palestine Aid Society, and Ann Talamas of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. A second picket to protest the expulsions was held in Washington on February 20 and cosponsored by a dozen groups.

Six congressmen sent a telegram to United Nations Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar in November to protest the orders of deportation. The signers included John Conyers, Jr., Charles Hayes, Ronald Dellums, Walter Fauntroy, Parren Mitchell, and Mervyn Dymally. Also signing the telegram was Gerald Horne, executive director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, who is also a member of the National Executive Committee of the November 29th Committee for Palestine.

The Committee to Confront the Iron Fist in Jerusalem, made up of Palestinians and Israelis, has called for an international day of fasting and education on April 17,

1986, which also marks the beginning of Palestinian Prisoners Week.

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The African National Congress of South Africa and the November 29th Committee for Palestine have scheduled a national tour on Apartheid in Israel and South Africa to begin in Spring 1986. Watch for more details on the cities



Protesting expulsions and Iron Fist policies in front of the Israeli consulate in San Francisco.

and dates. The committee's Boston affiliate, the Middle East Solidarity Committee, presented a program on "The Apartheid Connection: Israel and South Africa" on February 13. Themba Vilakazi of the African National Congress, South African Professor Alfred Moleah from Temple University and the International Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and Jeanne Butterfield, National Director of the November 29th Committee for Palestine spoke.

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We have been monitoring concerted campaigns against chapters of the November 29th Committee for Palestine in a number of cities. Our findings remind us of the charged political climate in which we work, a climate which tolerates domestic terrorism and harassment against those who work for Palestinian rights. In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for example, officials at Louisiana State University refused to let our chapter register as a student organization until the American Civil Liberties Union stepped in.

In Sacramento, a stir was raised last year when a leaflet for one of our events was found in the Hillel building in nearby Davis; it turned out that a Hillel member had put it up. Then a smear campaign was conducted with many peace and anti-intervention groups by circulating a spurious and defamatory description of our organization by the "Anti-Defamation League" of the B'nai B'rith.

And the *Sacramento Bee* has run an "expose" on fundraising for educational work for Palestinian rights. The title, "Palestinian group defends its fundraising," is misleading since there was no "attack" to defend except for the article.

The *Bee*, which never saw fit to call our national office for comment—though the November 29th Committee for Palestine was mentioned by name as the group in question—insinuated that fiscal sponsorship by the San Francisco Women's Centers of educational work on Palestine was illegal. Aside from the fact that such sponsorship is both commonplace and legal, the *Bee* did not seem very interested in getting the facts but rather in getting supporters of Palestinian rights. Such an attack can only be interpreted as an attempt to discredit organized support for Palestinians and their rights. We ask anyone who has experienced or is aware of other examples of intimidation or attacks against democratic freedoms of speech and political action to let us know about it.

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Amnesty International (AI) is again raising the issue of abuses of Palestinian human rights by the Israeli government. The winter 1985 issue of *Amnesty Action* has a brief article on administrative detention without charge in Gaza and the West Bank. The 1985 AI annual report also takes up this issue and other human-rights concerns for Palestinians living under Israeli control. An "Urgent Action" bulletin issued in November 1985 protests the use of torture in the strip of southern Lebanon still under Israeli control.

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The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee organized protests at NBC outlets in Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Houston in February over the network's February 9 broadcast of the film "Under Siege" which depicts massive acts of terrorism by Arabs in the United States, though no such attack has ever occurred in this country. In these and other cities, NBC received thousands of telephone calls protesting the film, and in some places ADC speakers were allowed to appear after the broadcast. In Dearborn, Michigan, where some of the film was shot, protests were made directly to the filmmakers. The film reinforced racist ideas such as justifying the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with the pretext of wiping out "terrorism" at its source and calling for revenge for the occupying U.S. Marines killed by the Lebanese resistance. The film also opens an ominous debate about whether we have to turn to authoritarian rule, perhaps even fascism, to combat "terrorism."

In Los Angeles, a demonstration was held on February 22 at the gala opening of Cannon Group Productions new headquarters. Cannon produced the new Arab-bashing film, "The Delta Force." In Detroit, the ADC, Palestine Aid Society, Ramallah Club, and other groups held a rally against racism on March 1.

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## Israel's Iron Fist:

# Expelled Palestinians: The List Grows



Arabs and Jews protest Iron Fist in Jerusalem.

*"There is no basis for international law in this court," Israeli Supreme Court Justice Levin.*

Worldwide attention has focused on recent expulsions of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. On January 31, three Palestinians were expelled, including Hassan Abd al-Jawad Fararjeh, a journalist who headed the Bethlehem Press Service and a leader of Dheisheh refugee camp; Ali Abu Hilal, founder and secretary of the Workers Unity Bloc, a large organization of 52 affiliate unions of Palestinian workers on the West Bank; and Dr. Azmi Shū-aibi, a dentist who served as an el-Bireh city councilman. Trade unionist Zaki Abu Statieh, from Gaza, was handled as a separate case and had not been expelled at press time.

A delegation of lawyers from the United States—including President Mark Van Der Hout, Michael Smith, and Mary Beth Luedke of the National Lawyers Guild and Co-Chairman Wilhelm Joseph of the National Conference of Black Lawyers—traveled to the West Bank to investigate this case, preparing a brief which argued that such expulsions conducted by an occupying power violate the Geneva conventions and other international laws.

When the lawyer for the three Palestinians, Felicia Langer, attempted to raise such an argument before the Israeli Supreme Court, she was rebuffed by presiding Judge Levin, who asserted that "there is no basis for international law in this court." When reminded by Ms. Langer that former Israeli Supreme Court Justice Haim Cohen had asserted that such deportations were against international law, Judge Levin declared that such a statement "has no weight in this court." In response to Langer's question, "Is it then correct to say that the Israeli High Court is against the Geneva Convention—for the record?" Judge Levin responded, "Yes, if you say so." At that point, the three withdrew their appeals, concluding that there was no hope of receiving justice in an Israeli court.

As if to drive the point home, occupation authorities immediately arrested four more victims for deportation—Adnan Ghanem, Mahmoud Fanoun, Jalal Azizeh, and Hassan Al-Amoudi. All four are former prisoners released in the May 1985 prisoner exchange (as is Zaki Abu Statieh), and the expulsions were in blatant violation of the terms of the exchange. In addition, Adnan Ghanem's lawyer, Lea Tsemel, reported that evidence of torture was

quite visible on his face. Ghanem was beaten, subjected to repeated cold showers, forbidden from sleeping, and even denied a blanket. All of the four except Ghanem were immediately expelled. Again, they waived appeals, preferring not to confer legitimacy on the illegal proceedings.

Expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland—an illegal and inhumane practice—had been suspended since 1980 but has resumed in the last year. According to a January statement from the Committee to Confront the Iron Fist, an organization of Palestinians and Israelis in Jerusalem defending Palestinian human rights, "Fifteen hundred Palestinians have been imprisoned during the past six months, some without trial or even accusations. Deportations have also continued, 32 deportation orders have been handed down, of which 29 have so far been deported." Community leaders have been singled out for deportation, which is intended to strip the Palestinian population of its most active representatives and most articulate spokespeople.

The Israeli military government, which rules the West Bank and Gaza with an "Iron Fist," rarely reveals any charges as a basis for deportation (international law expressly prohibits such removals of the population from an occupied territory on any grounds). At most, the vague charges of "incitement" or of "membership in an illegal organization" are presented at deportation hearings. Lawyers representing those slated for expulsion must, therefore, guess why their clients are being expelled and fashion an appropriate defense.

The report of the NLG-NCBL delegation concluded that

the present deportations have no basis in Israeli law or international law. It is the most fundamental right in a deportation or criminal hearing to know the charges against yourself, so the defendant can be adequately represented in court. In these deportation proceedings, the evidence is secret. The lawyers do not know the charges or the evidence of the charges. We are particularly concerned about the secrecy of these proceedings.

Wilhelm Joseph of the NCBL offered further observa-

tions at a February 12th press conference in Washington, D.C. organized by the November 29th Committee for Palestine.

As a Black man and a person who has spent sixteen years in the Deep South and as an opponent of Apartheid in South Africa, I was particularly concerned with the many parallels I saw with the treatment of Blacks in South Africa and Israel's treatment of Palestinians.

The current wave of expulsions has been compared, in microcosm, to the massive forced removals of Palestinians from their homes and homeland in 1948. It is, indeed, part and parcel of a larger campaign to drive Palestinians out with pressures of all sorts: repression, humiliation, harassment, and economic restriction. Israeli extremists, such as Meir Kahane and Geula Cohen of the Kach and Tehiya parties openly call for forced removals of all Palestinians from Palestine. But the Israeli government, without overtly proclaiming that it shares their goals, is carrying out policies which achieve precisely the same purpose.

In fact, the Israeli military authorities have stated that they plan to substitute expulsion for town arrest. By expelling the current group of Palestinians, many believe the floodgates will open and expulsions will follow in massive numbers. The term, "expulsion," is used because one cannot "deport" a person from his or her own homeland.

The fundamental and internationally recognized formulation of the rights due to the Palestinian people include the right to self-determination, the right to return, and the right to set up an independent state. Without these rights as a minimum, there is no hope for peace in the Middle East. In this context, the removal of more Palestinians by any means—expulsion, economic pressure, or other forms of harassment—raises the barriers to a peaceful settlement that much higher.

The United States government is in a position to pressure Israel to stop such practices. While the Reagan administration continues to speak loudly about "international terrorism," it speaks softly indeed when it comes to obvious violations of international law and accepted norms of behavior by Israel—whether such violations are expulsions from occupied territory or hijacking a Libyan civilian airliner. Americans who are concerned about human rights and peace in the Middle East can only conclude that by supporting Israel's blatant violations and violence, the Reagan administration is neither pursuing human rights nor peace, making the endless talk about "terrorism" hollow, cynical words.

Considering the massive amount of aid provided by the U.S. government to Israel, Americans can play a key role in stopping these expulsions and other policies of the "Iron Fist." Given the lack of media coverage received by these expulsions, the first step is to demand that these human-rights abuses receive the public attention that they deserve. □

*This article was compiled by the Palestine Focus staff with the help of Rev. Don Wagner of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign and Michael Smith of the National Lawyers Guild.*

## Book Review

### Separate and Unequal

By Michael Steven Smith

*Separate and Unequal: The Dynamics of South African and Israeli Rule*, Louise Cainkar, Editor, Palestine Human Rights Campaign, 220 S. State Street, Suite 1308, Chicago, IL, 60604. \$3.00.

I read this new pamphlet as I was on a recent fact-finding trip to the West Bank and Gaza with a delegation of American attorneys.

We were investigating the legal and humanitarian aspects of deportation orders, which were then still pending and under Israeli Supreme Court review, issued against four Palestinian leaders from the occupied territories. The pamphlet gave another dimension to what I saw firsthand.

*Separate and Unequal: The Dynamics of South African and Israeli Rule* is a well-conceived 98-page collection of short pieces written by Israeli and American (Black, white, and Jewish) analysts in the finest tradition of political pamphleteering. Its publication is especially timely given the American public's interest in and support of Blacks in South Africa and the Israeli government's renewal of its "Iron Fist" measures against the native population it militarily rules. And it is especially hard-hitting because it makes the connections.

As Rev. Donald E. Wagner of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign writes in his introduction:

The parallels between South Africa's system of legalized racism and that of Israel are well-known in academic circles but rarely discussed in the mainstream media, peace community, or halls of Congress. Israel's systematic colonization of Palestine, its strategies to create Bantustans in the occupied West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights, its attempt to delegitimize and avoid the elected leadership of the Palestinians, its brutal tactics of military control and pre-emptive warfare, and its doctrine of racial supremacy all have their parallels in South Africa. In addition, these two settler-colonial regimes have "found each other," and have developed a military-economic interdependence. Among the products of this alliance is the joint development of nuclear weapons, including the 1979 nuclear explosion in the South Atlantic Ocean.

The Palestinians the government expelled for "security reasons"—also Nelson Mandela's crime—have all been outspoken in their resistance to Israeli designs vis-a-vis the West Bank and Gaza. State Prosecutor Renato Jarach told our delegation that they are "organizing prestate formations." No act of or advocacy of violence is alleged against them. They only want a homeland.

"Palestinian Life Under Israeli Apartheid" is the subject of a lucid speech Israel Shahak of the Israeli League for Human and Civil Rights and Hebrew University recently gave in the United States and reprinted here. The author himself survived several Nazi concentration camps.

We had the good fortune to meet this wonderful man at our West Bank hotel. He recounted the story of a Palestinian who, along with several friends, had completed construction of his home. To celebrate, they had a party and baked a cake, frosting it black, white, green, and red: the Palestinian national colors. The Israeli army raided the party and arrested the man, who served a prison sentence. They confiscated the criminal cake.

The Arabic-language press is even more heavily censored than the Israeli press. Daoub Kuttub, editor of *al-Fajr*, told us that to get around the censorship they will submit "scoops" to the Hebrew papers and then reprint them. Even obituaries are scrutinized by the government. The word "homeland" is forbidden in crossword puzzles.

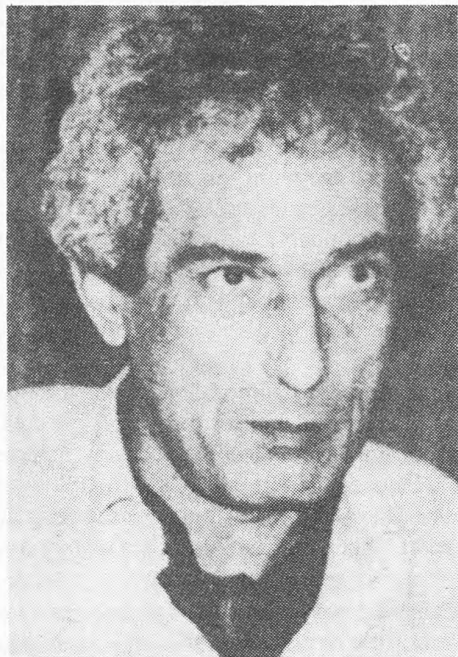
The fundamental Israeli operation, though, is directed at seizing the land of the indigenous people, which the whites have already done in South Africa, and in the United States for that matter.

The pamphlet provides excellent ammunition on this score. Of the land on the West Bank, occupied since 1967, 52 percent has already been taken from Arabs for the exclusive use of Jews. It is illegal even for a Jew to rent this land to an Arab. The number of settlers in the West Bank is about fifty thousand, the number of Palestinians there is more than eight hundred and fifty thousand, i.e., seventeen times greater, but for their benefit only less than one-half of the land in their homeland is intended. Indeed, 92 percent of the land in pre-1967 Israel has been taken for exclusive Jewish use. All the world's Jews may become citizens of Israel, but Arabs who left in 1948 cannot come back.

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# Palestinian Cartoonist

## Naji al-Ali نجي العلي



**PF:** How did you become an artist?

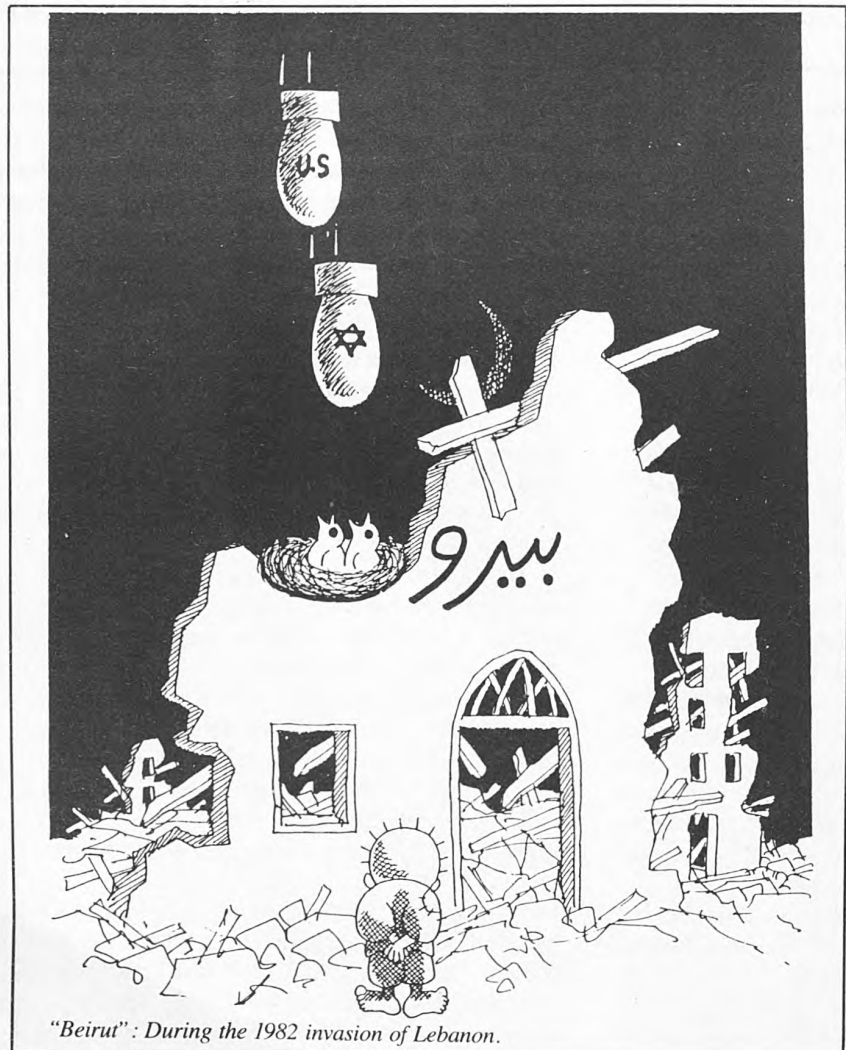
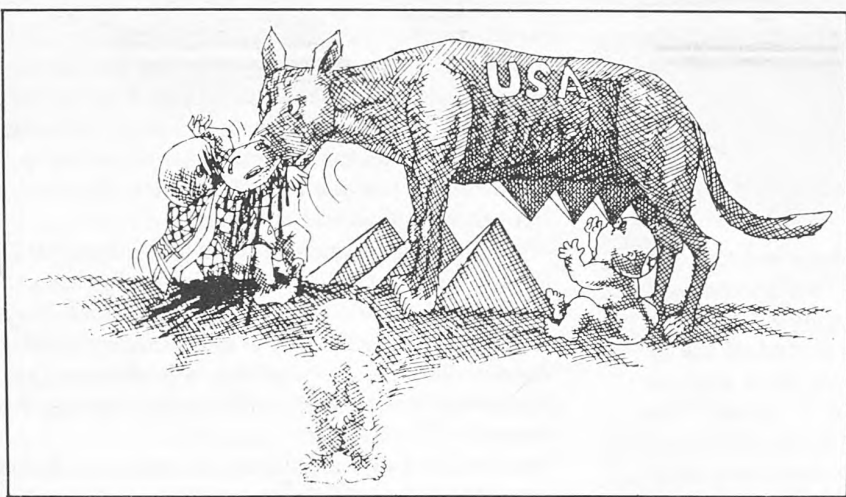
**NA:** My love for art started as a hobby in childhood and continued into my teenage years. I became an artist because of the extreme hardship I faced during my early education in elementary and secondary school. The decision to become an artist was spontaneous because I found art to be the only language I could use to express myself, my cause, and my people's problems.

In Lebanon, when I was young, I was imprisoned several times for political reasons, because of my participation in Palestinian national events. I spent time in many jails, so my art was my only pastime. It was the language through which I expressed my personal hardship as well as the hardships of my people. Hence, my artistic tendencies arose from political causes.

When I went to Kuwait, I did not go to look for a job as an artist. My intention was to work in Kuwait because the Lebanese made it hard for Palestinians even to find jobs. Kuwait was a place where I could save some money and study art academically so as to become an artist, not just a cartoonist.

Once I started working for the printed news media, I began to appreciate the art of the cartoonist and realized that his influence is much greater than that of a painter who displays his work once a year in an exhibit. I became convinced of this and postponed my studies. I was enthusiastic about pursu-

*Naji al-Ali is one of the best-known and most widely published political cartoonists in the Arab world. He was born in the northern Galilee in Palestine and grew up in the Ein El Hilweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon near Sidon. Palestine Focus interviewed al-Ali in San Francisco in June 1985 while he was touring the United States with an exhibit of his work. The interview is translated from Arabic.*



"Beirut": During the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

ing the cartoon medium, so I stayed with it.

**PF:** Who is your intended audience?

**NA:** All along, I've had a particular point of view. I've tried to instill a political perspective in people's minds, a class perspective. The characters and heroes I identify with in my work are based on working people. Through them I felt there could be hope for our return to Palestine.

**T**hese characters appear in confrontation with other class forces. My drawings are not directed exclusively toward a Palestinian audience. My thinking is internationalist, and my concerns are humanitarian. I am not a tribal artist or someone who only belongs to a grouping of people called the Palestinians and only directs his drawings exclusively toward them. In my work are people of all nationalities, Arab and others. My goal is to reach all sectors of society.

**PF:** How, in one drawing, can you depict all the different players on the stage, including the United States?

**NA:** A cartoon is something very artistic. The difficulty in this kind of art is to summarize several situations which are politically interconnected so as to capture people's curiosity and attention around such issues.

In my daily work I am able to cover all aspects of not only the Palestinian problem, but of Arab concerns in general, and of the human condition. I have drawn about sixty thousand cartoons in the course of my work. If each one were a drop of water falling on a rock, together they would dig a channel into a person's thoughts. I hope they would influence those thoughts so that this person would arrive at a higher level of understanding. It is this persistence in my work and the themes I am trying to express which have led to people's knowledge of and interest in my work. My message is clear by now.

**PF:** What message do you bring to the people of the United States?

**NA:** If sometimes there are racist attacks by artists on the peoples of our region or on other peoples of the Third World, I don't blame the common people. Rather, I blame the artists.

American artists have a duty because the people of our region have been historically oppressed. We used to look up to the United States as a symbol of a nation aspiring for justice. Since the United States has experienced revolution, we expect it to understand the dilemma of our region.

I don't expect our call to be heard by the administration. But I firmly believe that the conscious people, the artists, the writers,

those who work for democracy, can sympathize with us and respond to us. As long as we know where to "point the guns," I believe people will respect us, even Americans.

**I** expect a response from artists in the United States because those of us in the rest of the world view the people of the United States as an example of a strong nation, not strong in the Star Wars sense, but strong in the sense of democracy and history.

But, in general, we—the people not the regimes—view the United States as strong and oppressive, not strong and just. We hope that the United States could become strong but just at the same time. Our message is to the American people, not the administration, because the American people suffer under their administration just as we suffer under our regimes. For this reason, our voices could form a unified response to our common conditions.

I've been in touch with many artists and have participated in international cartoon exhibits. Once I was on a panel of judges for an exhibition that included some American cartoonists. I have some familiarity with American cartoonists, especially the political ones. In terms of technical skill and ex-

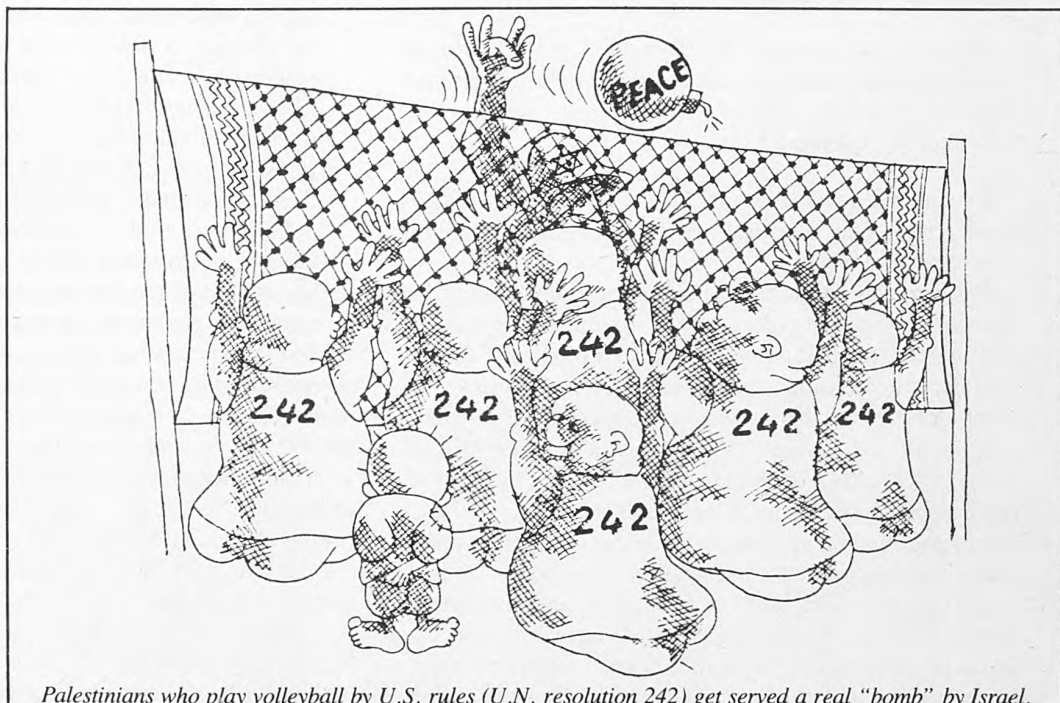
*If there are racist attacks by artists on the peoples of the Third World, I don't blame the common people. Rather, I blame the artists.*

perience with political themes, they are quite accomplished. They are leaders in that respect and even surpass us.

Some are also conscious, progressive politically in their content, but these are few in number. The nature of their experience and political concerns are different from mine. The American artist, in general, is like the American person. During the Vietnam War for example, the American public would not have been interested if not for a certain sector of society. They were able to move the people and draw their attention to the kind of war going on in Vietnam: they had an influence. Journalists, cartoonists, and other artists, even those in the film industry, had a role in making people aware of what was happening in Vietnam; they had a leading role in that regard.

**PF:** During the Vietnam War, there were many racist cartoons, images, and pictures of Vietnamese. Today we see racist depictions of Palestinians, Lebanese, and Arabs in general.

**NA:** Throughout history there have been artists who wittingly or unwittingly have been tools of a government or regime. Then there are the rare ones, artists who are willing to die for their ideas or positions. In the Arab world there are cartoonists and artists who are propaganda tools of their governments because of their lack of awareness. So this situation is not limited to the United States. In general, in whatever nation, principled



Palestinians who play volleyball by U.S. rules (U.N. resolution 242) get served a real "bomb" by Israel.



artists—be they poets, painters, or something else—are in the minority.

In our region there are some artists who use the racist stereotypes found in American cartoons more than the Americans themselves. These cartoonists agree with the regime. Let us say the regime in question supports U.S. policy. Then the cartoonist draws what the regime approves of even if that means being racist, reactionary, and antidemocratic.

Geographic identity is not a determining factor. An artist could be from South America but might empathize with our situation. Recently I've noticed that some American cartoonists have become in-

## Cartoons by American of our region, I mon people. artists.

terested in politics, namely Nicaragua. Some take a brave, principled stance. Most others, either in the United States or outside, ignore the issue. Some cartoonists oppose the Reagan administration, so it is a relief to know that there are those who take a just position on the issue of Nicaragua. Artists in the Arab world are aware of such developments.

Politically unaware cartoonists draw racist anti-Arab cartoons. Every day, I too draw cartoons about reactionary Arabs, but there is an important difference. The American cartoonist generalizes; he is not selective. He depicts the Arab individual as something horrible: we all become petro-Arabs.

This is not fair. The artist has to be able to make distinctions in order to know whom to attack. If the cartoonist wants to attack the "petro-Arab" in a political sense, he should be specific. But attacks or criticisms should not be generalized, e.g., against the people of southern Lebanon or the Palestinians. These attacks are confused.

If they want to attack the situation in Lebanon, it is not fair to target the inhabitants of the refugee camps or even the poor Shi'ite population. The attack should be focused. Political cartoonists should help analyze the situation so that others may take a stand. They should not generalize. For example, they should not equate me with the king of Saudi Arabia in a very narrow sense. This is wrong.



American cartoonists should also differentiate themselves from the U.S. administration if they have any clarity of understanding. The U.S. administration supports reactionary and undemocratic regimes. At a time when we are conducting a democratic struggle in our region, I think the artist should condemn the administration's actions and policies. Artists in our region criticize the undemocratic actions of Arab governments who act in harmony with U.S. foreign policy.

The artist's responsibility is to be with us in the same trench by resisting and being critical in a common battle. Given the technical achievements of American cartoonists, they have a duty to support us in our cause.

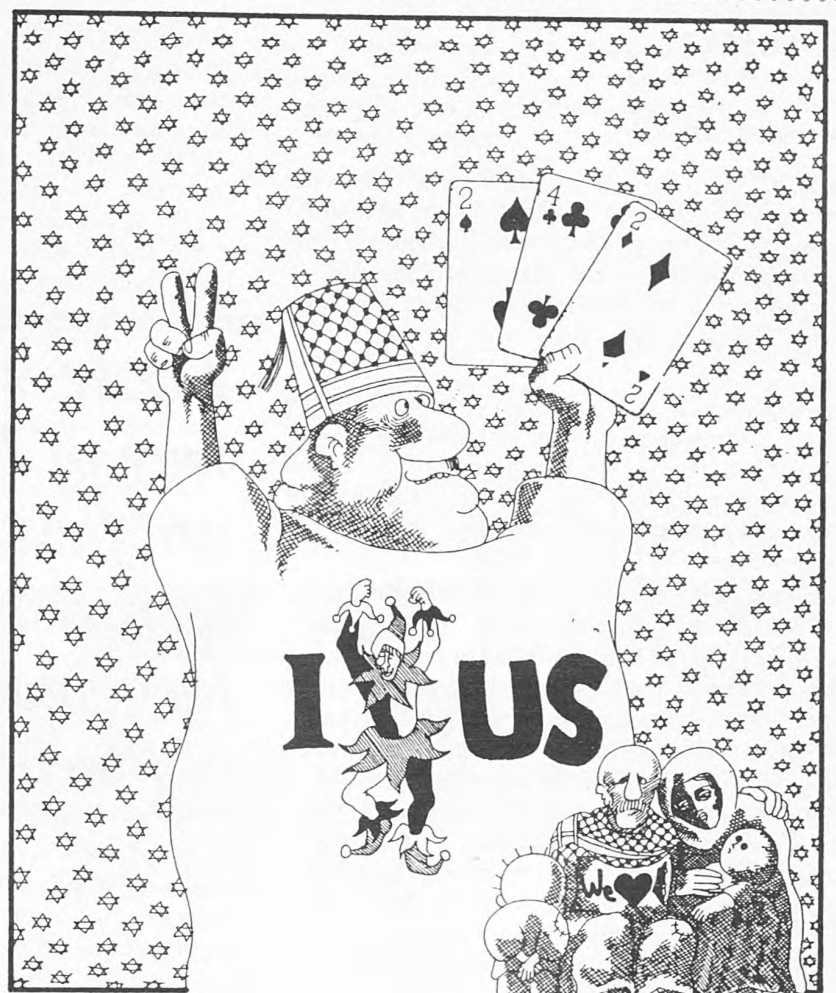
**PF:** As a cartoonist, you are very much a part of Palestinian cultural expression. How important is that expression in advancing the Palestinian cause?

**NA:** Images have an influence, cartoons in particular, given the abundance of newspapers and other publications. Concerned individuals are interested in grasping a situation quickly, so one of the advantages of the cartoon is that it serves as a fast and effective briefing. An image is easier to retain than words which might be forgotten. The position or issue can be etched into one's mind.

I am filling a specific role as a cartoonist. The PLO has numerous concerns, many informational offices, and many contradictions. I am unique because I'm not working with any particular information office of the PLO, so I can't be classified as leaning to this or that faction. I observe from the periphery, declare my position, and prescribe the right road for our return to Palestine and state my understanding of peace and of armed struggle.

In our region of the world, although not in the Palestinian arena, there is no democracy. Our work becomes difficult because we have to turn in a thousand different directions in order to confront the issues. We live in a different environment than that in the United States. We face difficulties, but they are invigorating difficulties. If we had freedom, perhaps we wouldn't produce such art. □

Cartoons are from "Cartoons of Naji al-Ali," published by Palestine Congress of North America, P.O. Box 9621, Washington, D.C. 20016, \$15.



The pro-American joker holds up the winning hand for U.S. support: U.N. resolution 242.



All of Naji al-Ali's cartoon's feature a witness in the foreground. The boy, whose name is Handala, depicts al-Ali when he left Palestine at the age of ten. He stands with his back turned and will face forward only when he returns to his homeland.

## "Terrorism"...

Continued from page 1

"moral right" to go beyond "passive defense to consider means of active prevention, preemption, and retaliation" in "the war against terror." Direct American military intervention in the Middle East and other parts of the world—and not just support for Israeli, South African, and other "reprisals" against civilians—is now on the agenda.

In a recent article, Noam Chomsky probed the nature of U.S. international strategy. He found that the mission of U.S. intervention was laid out in most candid and clear terms in 1948 by George Kennan, then head of the State Department's policy planning staff. In Top Secret document PPS23, Kennan wrote,

We have about 50 percent of the world's wealth, but only 6.3 percent of its population.... In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity.... We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction.... We should cease to talk about vague and ... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.

Chomsky commented, "The idealistic slogans are, of course, to be constantly trumpeted ... in order to pacify the domestic population." Chomsky continued, "In order to maintain the freedom to rob and exploit, we do have to consistently oppose democratization, the raising of living standards, and human rights. And we do consistently oppose them; that, of course, is in the real world."

Today's "idealistic slogans" for the Middle East are "security from terrorism," "secure borders for Israel," and "protecting 'our' oil." But it is the "straight power concepts" which affect the people of the Middle East.

In that light, it is essential for the Reagan administration to defuse domestic opposition of the sort which grew into the movement against the U.S. invasion of Vietnam. The power to define and redefine the victims into perpetrators one needs to attack is key. And so the question of what is terrorism and what is legitimate resistance is an important question indeed.

For Reagan and Shultz, the most important point is whether the "accused" are fighting with or against the U.S. government and its allies. And the underlying causes which move people to armed resistance are deemed irrelevant.

But the resort to arms when democratic channels are completely blocked—as they are to the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza, as they are to South Af-

rican Blacks, as they are in many other countries—is not terrorism. Palestinians and South African Blacks would much prefer to peacefully achieve their ends if they were given the chance. The Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian people are continually castigated as "terrorists." No matter that the PLO disavowed the airport attacks on innocent civilians.

The United States calls the Israeli government "democratic," terms U.S. policy toward South Africa "construc-

## Those who get in the way of U.S. policy are first defined as terrorists and then targeted for obliteration.

tive," and refers to the contras in Nicaragua and Unita in Angola as "freedom fighters." The United States government thus condones the use of violence to overthrow popular governments and block genuine democracy.

### The Roots of the Problem

The real causes of violence in the Middle East are buried under the hysteria. Yugoslavian Foreign Minister Raif Dizdarevic commented in December 17, 1985, "When speaking of terrorism and the struggle against terrorism, one must also view the causes that lead to it, because we believe that by elimination of causes of terrorism, the phenomenon can be controlled and eliminated." In response, his guest, U.S. Secretary of State Shultz, exploded in a most undiplomatic rage.

Italian Prime Minister Craxi acknowledged that there are legitimate reasons why any people living under occupation, such as the Palestinians, should take up arms. Palestinians are deported, tortured, disappeared, assassinated, imprisoned without cause, humiliated, and deprived of their land and livelihood. As imprisoned South African leader Nelson Mandela responded when he was asked to renounce violence, it is not up to the victims of violence to renounce violence first.

It would certainly be easier for the United States and Israel to maintain their negation of all Palestinian national and human rights if Palestinians were to disavow armed resistance. The resistance of the Palestinian people in any form—including peaceful protest—is the real target of the "terrorism" smear campaign.

The long history of Israeli violence, filled with mas-

sacres of unarmed civilians, is largely ignored. In some cases, more Palestinians died in a single massacre of an entire village—men, women, and children—than those killed in all Palestinian operations since 1965. The perpetrators of these massacres—men like Menahem Begin, Ariel Sharon, and Yitzhak Shamir—rose to the highest positions in the Israeli government and proceeded to massacre tens of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians in the 1982 invasion.

Few recall that Israel introduced airplane hijacking to the Middle East in 1954 when two Israeli warplanes forced a civilian Syrian airliner to land at Lydda airport in Israel. The passengers were held hostage until five Israeli spies captured in Syria were released. Later, Israel shot down a Libyan passenger plane over Egypt, killing all passengers. As of February 1986, Israel is still hijacking civilian airliners, this time a Libyan plane filled with Syrian diplomats.

Consider also that Israel's foreign intelligence agency, the Mossad, indulged in a vicious string of letter and car bombings and assassinations of Palestinian leaders and intellectuals. It is, therefore, painfully ironic to watch the Israeli government parade its wounded outrage before television cameras and newspaper reporters.

Indeed, labeling Palestinians and the PLO as "terrorists" dehumanizes an entire people and is used to justify continued terrorism against them. This mentality of the colonizer is the same mentality that regarded Native Americans as "savages" and in that way justified the theft of their land. It is the same mentality that Apartheid South Africans use to justify their despicable system.

This tactic of character assassination of the victim while waving the flag is a key element in the revival of an aggressively interventionist American foreign policy. Despite crippling budget deficits, the same arguments are used to justify a war budget exceeding \$300 billion, primarily spent on ground forces primed for intervention. The same arguments are used to inflate the dole of U.S. dollars to Israel to over \$4 billion this year. Another result is devastating cuts in social spending.

The Reagan administration, by its own admission, is dealing in straight power concepts. Those who get in the way of U.S. policy are first defined as terrorists and then targeted for obliteration. But these victims—the Palestinians, Nicaraguans, South African Blacks—are not the enemies of the American people. They are only striving for their rights to freedom and independence. The campaign against them is literally at our expense.

The real fight, then, is not against the vague threat of "terrorism" but against the very real and immediate threat that U.S. troops will again be sent to fight and die in foreign lands to crush popular movements and to maintain undemocratic regimes. Whether the location will be the Philippines, Nicaragua, Libya, or Syria we cannot now know. What we can say is that only tremendous popular opposition can counter the "terrorist" hysteria and stop the current momentum toward war. □

## Ramsey Clark ...

Continued from page 1

reasonable doubt. We can observe that the FBI has determined that the murder of Alex Odeh was, by its definition, a terrorist act. We know that the JDL has more recently denied participation. We know that people like former Senator James Abourezk have suggested that it may have been the work of Israeli agents, directly or indirectly. We don't know at this time. We ought to know.



Ramsey Clark

We ought to demand to know. We ought to insist upon a thorough investigation and prosecution of anyone implicated. It ought to be a very high call of our people. But we recognize how lethargic we are about such things as we were with Orlando Letelier and other people assassinated right on the streets

of our nation's capital. The thing that we do know is that he was the victim of a bombing at a time when he was engaged in active exercise of first amendment rights to protest conduct of Israel in the Middle East, and we know how very violent the Israeli government has proven itself capable of being. Its attack halfway across the Mediterranean upon Tunis is unacceptable by any moral or legal standard I can imagine. Necessarily killing whomever happened to be there including dozens perhaps scores of Tunisian people, men, women, and children, while blind irrational lashing out with airplanes given them by the United States of America. That's something, and then our president says initially "it's legal." Later he's not too sure, but obviously savoring the strike.

### Violations of Palestinian Rights

I spent quite a bit of time on the West Bank and less, but some time, in Gaza and every human right we know is violated there. Censorship itself is pervasive. The capacity to publish or distribute elsewhere Arab-language things is extremely limited and dangerous. The risk of preemptory arrest and prolonged confinement at the whim of the Israeli government is an omnipresent fear of the people. There is a systematic effort to humiliate people, which is a very fundamental violation of human rights. There's really an effort to drive as many out as possible. If you follow what's been happening, it's clear that there's an intention to permanently occupy the occupied territories and to integrate them into the state and to reduce the Arab/Palestinian population to a menial service minority.

The white South Africans recognize—

not only recognize, they spend most of their time working at the problem that arises from the fact that they're a very small minority in their own land. And for all the efforts of Apartheid, the presence of this huge majority is their most prominent conscious recognition. They deal with it throughout their waking moments: legally, illegally I would say, through systems of laws they call it and socially and economically and otherwise. Israel is haunted by the same problem. It knows that democracy is not possible if there is to be a Jewish state that remains a political dominance within the geographic borders of Israel without the occupied territories alone. Therefore, it's constantly forced into measures that violate human rights and democratic principles and there's no alternative to those techniques until the purpose of domination by a single group is abandoned.

It's not possible to have peace or peace of mind in the Middle East without full recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to statehood, independent and secure. The extremism that we see in Israel today is similar to the growing extremism that you see in South Africa. And it arises from the realization of how wild and dangerous and finally impossible the policies of government in South Africa and Israel really are. You can't dominate by force large populations, denying them dignity and human, political, civil, economic, cultural and social rights. It radicalizes people and it makes for a very, very dangerous world. □

## Focus on Action ...

Continued from page 2

Several organizations have taken out newspaper ads to counter the wave of war hysteria and fear of "terrorism" sweeping the United States. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) responded to the many attacks against it with a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* condemning the terrorist bombings in Boston, Washington, and southern California (causing the death of Alex Odeh), and other attacks on the ADC. The November 29th Committee for Palestine was one of the ad's signers. The American Friends Service Committee ran an ad of its own in *The Nation* condemning the attacks. The ADC held a memorial dinner for Alex Odeh in New York featuring ADC Chairman James Abourezk, Odeh's brother Sami, attorney Wilhelm Joseph, journalist Alexander Cockburn, and Jacob Bender of the New Jewish Agenda as speakers.

The Committee to Confront the Iron Fist ran an ad in two Palestinian newspapers in the West Bank, *al-Fajr* and *al-Sha'ab*, on January 1, 1985 to protest the rising repression against Palestinians. Some of the signers included Congressman John Conyers, Ramsey Clark, Mayor Gus Newport, Rabbi Elmer Berger, Paul Findley, Dr. Cheryl Rubenberg, Rev. Don Wagner, Israel Shahak, and Dr. Steve Goldfield, Hilton Obenzinger, and Douglas Franks of *Palestine Focus*. □

# Getting It All In FOCUS

By Hilton Obenzinger

Anthony Lewis appropriately titled his January 13, 1986 *New York Times* column, "There Were No Indians," and asked, "Has the life of the mind been so politicized in this country that intellectuals who welcome a book's political conclusion will shrug off challenges to its truth?" The question was in response to the rave reviews for *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* by Joan Peters (Harper and Row), a book which asserts, according to Lewis, that Palestinians "are mostly recent arrivals and hence have no real moral or historical claim to the land."

Those who have followed the Middle East conflict for some time recognized such an argument as an old Israeli propaganda lie, one which has lost credibility even within Israel itself. Yet a long list of intellectual luminaries praised the book, with Barbara Tuchman lauding it as "a historical event in itself" and Saul Bellow stating that "millions of people the world over, smothered by false history and propaganda, will be grateful for this clear account of the origins of the Palestinians." Indeed, such a "clear account" provides an easy solution to the conflict—*Palestinians simply do not exist.*

Yet the six hundred pages of "evidence" in *From Time Immemorial* seemed to triumph within intellectual circles—that is, until Norman Finkelstein painstakingly examined Peters' research in a September 11, 1984 issue of *In These Times*. "Finkelstein showed that Peters' work was what he called a 'hoax': her evidence was unsound in all sorts of ways; her demographic statistics were inconsistent, mathematically impossible, wildly exaggerated; and, most important, in all cases he was able to check, she either plagiarized Zionist propaganda sources or deliberately tampered with quotations so as to change their meaning entirely." So wrote Edward Said in the October 19, 1985 issue of *The Nation*.

Finkelstein's revelations were joined by others, such as William Farrell's in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. In Great Britain and even in Israel itself the book was dismissed as "ludicrous and worthless." Both Noam Chomsky and Alexander Cockburn further exposed the scandalous hoax. Hebrew University Professor Yehoshua Porath wrote a devastating critique in the *New York Review of Books*—from a Zionist perspective no less! Still, the book continues to sell briskly with its author and publisher refusing to answer any challenges.

It would be foolish to think that this hoax will go away just because of the honesty of a few intellectuals. People need to talk to their librarians, question its use in schools, tell their friends. Questions of honesty and fiber in American intellectual life go beyond even the Middle East conflict in this case. As Edward Said so movingly commented, "I speak here less as a Palestinian who wants to keep saying 'but we exist and always have and will,' than as an American intellectual disgraced by the shoddiness of our present so-called life of the mind. The Peters case

is not just a matter of poor work. It is, after all, a case of orchestrated compliance by which the history and actuality of an entire people are consigned to nonexistence."

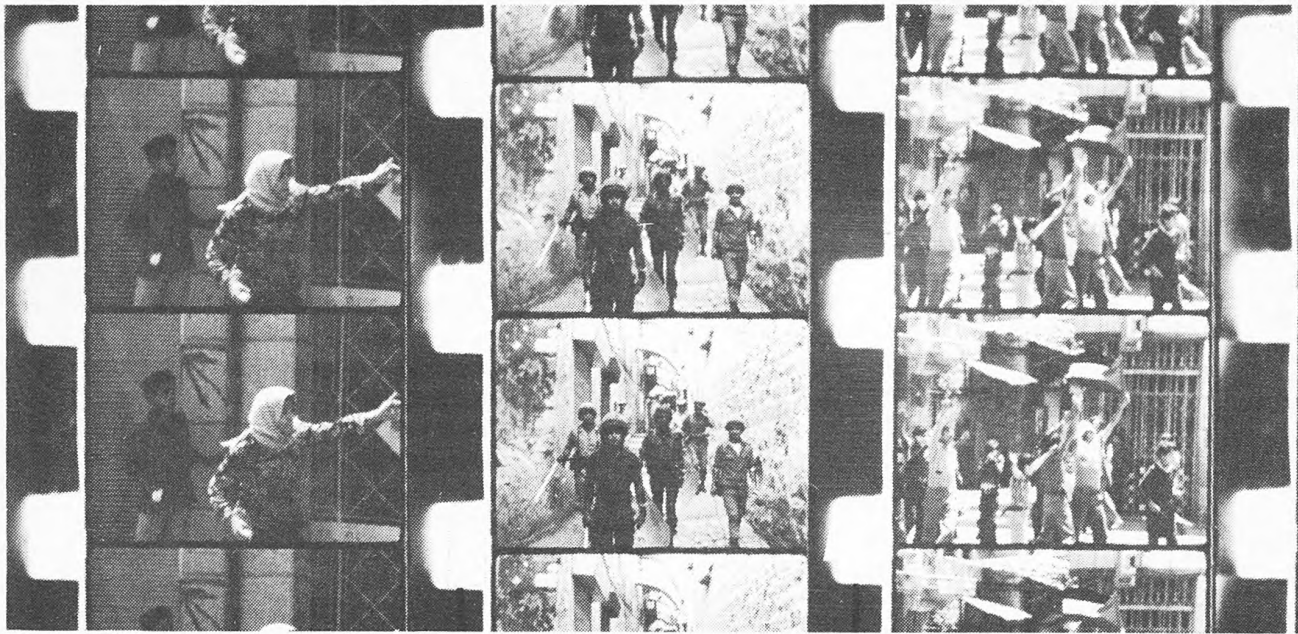
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Of course, the pressures that helped create the *From Time Immemorial* hoax also prevent people from seeking the truth or speaking their minds freely about the Middle East, as former Illinois Republican Congressman Paul Findley knows only too well. Findley, targeted by the pro-Israel lobby for being too open-minded about the Palestinians, lost his recent re-election bid partly because of a massive campaign launched against him by the lobby.

Now Findley has written *They Dare To Speak Out* (Lawrence Hill) in which he examines the influence of such organizations as the Zionist Organization of America and AIPAC in politics, the U.S. intelligence establishment, media, and education. He traces not only the way the pro-Israel lobby stifles even the mildest dissent on American

Of course, if such highbrow trash as the Peters' book isn't to your taste, you could take in a movie: How about "The Delta Force," the latest Rambo incarnation where America gets back at "Palestinian terrorism" by taking over Beirut. Concocted by Israeli producer Menahem Golan, this movie takes the current wave of jingoistic hate-Arab films to yet another level of racist idiocy. "The Delta Force" joins such notables as "Under Siege," an NBC special-for-TV movie featuring a completely mad Arab terrorist operating out of—yes, Dearborn, Michigan.

Given this whole sad state of affairs, cultural products that actually reflect the truth about Palestinians and the conflict need to be noted—and vigorously supported. One such example is the upcoming Public Broadcasting System showing of "Flashpoint: Israel and the Palestinians" on April 9th. This program—billed as "free speech" video trying to show both sides of the question—will feature an hour-long version of the movie "Occupied Pales-



Scenes from "Occupied Palestine."

foreign policy issues concerning the Middle East by its formidable organizing ability, but also ways in which questionable—even "dirty trick"—tactics are employed. Just read the way the University of Arizona's Near Eastern Center was so attacked by political and media manipulation that the entire program was virtually destroyed...and you'll get a better idea of the atmosphere in which a *From Time Immemorial* hoax could hoodwink so many American intellectuals!

Findley, incidentally, bought an ad for his book on Cable News Network (CNN-TV) in mid-January. Within 24 hours of the ad's first broadcast, CNN received phone calls from other advertisers, who threatened to withdraw their sponsorship if Findley's spot was not canceled. CNN Chairman Ted Turner stood firm and refused to bow to the threats. Write to CNN supporting their decision to run Findley's ad and not to give in to the same kind of pressure tactics which robbed Findley of re-election. The address: Ted Turner, Chairman of the Board, Turner Broadcasting System, Inc., 1050 Techwood Drive, N.W., Atlanta, GA 30318.

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time," called "quite simply the best film ever made about the Palestine question" by *MERIP Reports* editor Joe Stork. As well, Israeli films offering bold-faced defense of the settler's movement along with voices from the Israeli peace movement will be shown. According to the program's producers, "Rarely has a film sympathetic to the plight of the Palestinians been given national media exposure in the United States. Similarly, films sympathetic to the Gush Emunim, Israel's religious settler movement, have rarely been seen." At the end of each film Columbia University Professor Rashid Khalidi and Likud Knesset member Ehud Olmert will "illuminate the issues in a point-counterpoint style."

"Flashpoint: Israel and the Palestinians" is a must see! But it's also a must do! Given everything that the Peters' hoax and Findley's book have shown, Americans can't rest too assured that such a fair and even-handed program will be shown by nervous local stations. Call up your local PBS television station and make sure that this program is aired! □

## BOOK REVIEW...

Continued from page 3

All Palestinians in the "conquered territories" are forbidden to draw from their own wells greater amounts of water than those which were drawn in 1967. The military government forbids the opening in the territories of any new factory which will make products for sale to the inhabitants of the territories themselves. All Israeli exports to the territories are not only allowed, but actually encouraged. At the same time, all exports from the territories to Israel are prohibited, for practical purposes. So much for Hillel's famous injunction: "What you do not like to have done to you, do not do to your fellow."

Truly, former South African Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd knew what he was talking about when he wrote, "The Jewish people took Israel from the Arabs after the Arabs had lived there a thousand years. In that I agree

with them, Israel, like South Africa, is an apartheid state."

Attorney Adrien K. Wing visited the same places we did, having organized a delegation from the National Conference of Black Lawyers in March of 1985. Her excellent essay points out that "Israel is the major investor in the South African 'independent' homelands, the 13 percent of the barren land reserved for the 76 percent majority population." And too, "Israel is the largest supplier of arms to South Africa."

She writes of the same reaction—"shock"—that we had to the massive human-rights violations.

It comes down to Bantustans in the Holy Land. Conditions of forced migrant labor exist as in South Africa, where the vast majority of the population can't live in areas of their choosing. In the Occupied Territories we found that two-thirds of the labor force must commute to Israel to work every day.

They carried identity cards similar to the passbooks required of Blacks in South Africa.

The courageous Black Congressman from Detroit, George Crockett, returned from Israel on September 13, 1985 and released a statement which is reprinted in the pamphlet. Crockett stated that his talks and observations had convinced him that the situation in the occupied territories "was desperate and deteriorating." He called for a denial of American funds which allow Israel to settle the West Bank and to "maintain a military establishment in the West Bank and Gaza that functions not just for national defense, but as a finely honed instrument of repression against an entire subject people." □

Michael Steven Smith is an attorney and member of the National Lawyers Guild who practices law in New York City. He has been active in the civil-rights and peace movements in the United States.

PALESTINE FOCUS (415) 861-1552 P.O. Box 27462 San Francisco, CA 94127

*Palestine Focus* is the national newspaper of the November 29th Committee for Palestine (formerly November 29th Coalition). The newspaper is an activist vehicle tied to an activist movement, yet aimed at a general audience with little background knowledge. We report on activities, not only of our committee, but of other groups; and we provide consistent commentary and analysis of events in the Middle East.

The November 29th Committee for Palestine takes its name from the date declared by the United Nations as the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Our task is to spark and support consistent, far-reaching, and effective activity which brings the issue of Palestine before the American people and builds a growing and deepening base of understanding. Our committee organizes to stop U.S. intervention in the Middle East and to cut off U.S. aid to Israel. We educate Americans on the need to support the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to oppose Israeli policies of discrimination which deny the Palestinian people their rights.

Signed articles are not necessarily the opinion of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. Letters, opinions, and other contributions are welcome.

Contributing Editors: Douglas Franks, Steve Goldfield, Tony Martin, Hilton Obenzinger, Randa Baramki, Ur Shlonsky

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# Palestinian Women In the International Arena

By Camilia Odeh

*Camilia Odeh is a Palestinian woman who has lived mainly in Lebanon and the United States. In the Middle East, she worked with the General Union of Palestinian Women, and in the United States, with the Palestinian Women's Association. She is also Midwest Regional Coordinator of the November 29th Committee for Palestine, which she represented at the FORUM '85 United Nations women's conference in Nairobi, Kenya. The following article is based on an interview recorded for KPFA Radio in Berkeley, California in August 1985.*

The Nairobi conference was of tremendous importance in getting out the issues of Palestinian women to the international arena so that other sisters would have the opportunity to learn and hear about conditions of Palestinian women living under occupation, in exile, or in war circumstances.

The PLO had representation at the official conference, because the PLO has official observer status at the United Nations. The Palestinian delegation was made up of women from different regions of the world, particularly occupied Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and other countries. In addition, nine to ten women were also supposed to attend but were not allowed exit visas by the Israeli authorities.

One of these women, Um Khalil, is well-known inside occupied Palestine, and she heads the Society for the Preservation of the Family in el-Bireh. Because of her important role in the Palestinian movement, she was under house arrest even before her invitation to Nairobi. The Israelis did not want her to go. Thus a number of our women were denied the right to attend this very important conference. Even the basic right to leave our country and return to it is not accessible to Palestinian women.

But some women did come from the various women's committees that carry on social and political work inside the occupied territories. Two women released from Israeli jails in the recent prisoner exchange also attended. All together the delegation numbered about forty Palestinian women. The delegation was very spirited and very strong in terms of the issues they presented and the cause they represented.

## What Happened in Nairobi?

The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) conference had a great impact on us. First, there were women's organizations from all parts of the world. There was such consolidation and unity among the women. But at the same time, there was also real polarization. That's why the issues of the Middle East, South Africa, and Central America were so important.

The issues of Zionism, Apartheid, Nicaragua, Central America are dividing the world because they are the issues representing progress, peace, liberation. On the other side are those who want to dominate, oppress, and exploit. You are either on one side or the other of the coin; it is difficult to be neutral.

The Middle East took priority on the agenda, along with South Africa and the question of Apartheid because Zionism and the role of Israel and South Africa are so linked together. There was an attempt by some groups to say they are against Apartheid but are with Israeli policy. The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) made it clear that you cannot be against Apartheid and support Israeli policy because it is Israeli policy that is supporting Apartheid in South Africa right now.

There is a big movement for boycotting

goods made in South Africa. But part of the agreement between Israel and South Africa is that products made in South Africa are completed and labeled in Israel. The sisters in the ANC and SWAPO wanted to make this point because they are suffering from this relationship with Israel. We cannot close our eyes to it because it is strengthening Apartheid.



*Palestinians driven out of Jaffa during 1948 war. Return to their homeland is a focus for all Palestinian women.*

These two issues were interlinked and very important to the progressive people in Nairobi. There was a lot of loving support for the people of South Africa, for the ANC and SWAPO, and at the same time I could feel clarity about the role of Zionism. For me as a Palestinian this was great because people understood that Zionism, like Apartheid, divides people according to race. The Western Jewish sectors have the top priority, Jews from the Arab countries have the second, and the Palestinians are at the bottom of the list just as in South Africa where people are divided according to color: white, Asian, colored, and Africans on the bottom of the list. That correlation was made so that people could understand that Zionism is not a national liberation movement for any people; it is only an ideology that is oppressing us. Palestinian women were able to explain their situation, what it means to be a woman under occupation, and how you cannot separate occupation, Zionism, oppression, from the issues women suffer from.

As a Palestinian woman, I cannot talk about my situation as a woman, as a feminist, without tying it to my political situation, to my oppression. Maureen Reagan and some others tried to insist that this conference involved issues only pertaining to women and was not to get involved in the political problems of the world. This attitude is ironic to me and to many of the women at the conference because it was impossible. The representatives at both the popular and official conferences came from the mass organizations leading the day-to-day struggle.

## Who Came to Nairobi?

Representatives came from various national liberation movements struggling for their freedom. Representatives came from the democratic progressive forces in Europe, the United States, and Canada. They came from women's organizations in El Salvador and Nicaragua, in addition to the socialist countries and countries all around the world. These women carry on the day-to-day work on the issues of women, and they tie it together with their struggle as a whole against their entire people's oppression.

Just in regard to the Middle East, the conference was very exciting. I mentioned the Palestinian delegation. Delegations came from the Lebanese Women's Union and the Committee in Defense of Human Rights in Lebanon, a lawyer's committee. From Egypt came representatives of the various women's unions, from Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, the Gulf countries, and the Polisario Front. The Arab

Women's Federation, which unites all the progressive Arab women's groups in the Middle East, was there. In all, it was a really dynamic situation for those of us from the Middle East because for the first time at a conference we had all the Arab women who suffer from the same exploitation as Palestinian women all united and struggling around the same issues.

they even had Mossad agents, men from Israeli intelligence, attending—women from occupied Palestine were threatened with reprisals for speaking about the policies practiced against them. They were threatened with imprisonment on their return. But the solidarity was so strong, we could feel our strength in Nairobi. The entire international community stood up and supported us because they knew that it is not just our issue but is a threat to everyone because of the way the role of Israel is interrelated with everyone's concerns.

## A Huge Tent of Peace

The Peace tent was something unique, a huge tent where people from all over the world discussed issues of peace in the Middle East, in Central America, in southern Africa, and all over the world. And we discussed how we could reach that peace. There were many dialogues, for instance, between women from the United States and the Soviet Union on world peace and nuclear disarmament. On the Middle East, there were discussions on how a just peace could be found. Everyone had a real concern with the nuclear threat. And most were able to understand the connection with the flashpoints of the world. Our task for the future is to unite the international peace movement.

Making the connections between Central America and Israel and Israel and South Africa was very important for all of us there. By defining where our suffering comes from, we are able to gain strength from each other. We recognize that any victory of the people of South Africa is a victory for all of us. Our work as Palestinians in supporting the struggles in South Africa and Central

***As a Palestinian woman, I cannot talk about my situation as a woman, as a feminist, without tying it to my political situation, my oppression.***

## Presenting Palestinian Problems

Palestinian women had an opportunity to present studies of their situation in Israeli jails. Women just released from prison spoke about their conditions, including systematic torture. Conditions of women's health were covered, including the so-called epidemic in the West Bank in which hundreds of children were deemed by the Israeli authorities to suffer from hysteria. It seemed to us that they had been poisoned. The educational status of Palestinian women, family life under occupation, all these issues were discussed.

In addition, sisters from Lebanon spoke of life under continuous aggression. One woman there lived through the Sabra and Shatila massacre. She gave an eyewitness account and spoke about her own experiences as a married woman who lost her children in the massacre. There was also a workshop on problems facing Palestinian women in exile. Many women from 1948 and 1967 and others who left because of the economic squeeze in occupied Palestine or due to the war in Lebanon were forced to leave their homeland or their places of refuge.

Palestinian women also explained some of the difficulties of living in the diaspora: raising children outside their homeland, keeping ties with one's culture, identity, people, and land. The Palestinian delegation sincerely tried to present these issues so that other women could understand our situation.

At the workshops the Zionists attended—

America is just as important for us as our own struggle. There were many opposition forces in Nairobi, but that unity was the dominant feeling at the conference.

I think some women were confused at the beginning. They did not understand the significance of these political issues for the situation of women. Through their experiences at the conference they were able in the end to agree that we have to take a stand on such issues. It is difficult for us to be passive about our national oppression because it creates the conditions that cause women and their societies to stay underdeveloped.

The three slogans of the conference were Peace, Equality, and Development. Women were raising questions: How can you have development without peace? How can you develop your society when you are constantly at war? How can you have equality when there is oppression? These were the slogans of the decade of women. How could we tie these slogans to our everyday lives?

Who is responsible for the absence of peace in the world? Who is selling the armaments? Who is making these policy decisions?

We are the ones struggling for peace because we are the victims of these policies; the poor people of El Salvador and Nicaragua are the victims of these policies. So we know and feel the importance of peace. The people in Lebanon, in Palestine, in South Africa are facing bombs, poverty, malnutrition. They face the lack of basic human rights, of a home or a homeland. So for us having peace is a matter of our survival. For us, when we talk about peace, it means having a better life for everybody. □