

# Palestine Focus

NO. 24

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE NOVEMBER 29th COMMITTEE FOR PALESTINE

JULY-AUGUST 1987

## PLO Unity

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# No Peace without the Palestinians

The April 1987 meeting of the Palestine National Council—the highest political body representing the Palestinian people in their communities all over the world—marked an historic turning point in the Middle East, the end of an era and the beginning of a new one.

Between 1983 and 1987 the PLO was divided into two large groupings, primarily over a strategy of using Jordan and Egypt to achieve Palestinian objectives by pressuring the United States to bring Israel to the conference table. The convening of the PNC was preceded by the abrogation of the Amman Accord, in which Jordan's King Hussein was to represent the Palestinians in international negotiations. There was widespread sentiment within the PLO that this strategy did not succeed. The resolutions of the PNC assert that the Palestinians can and will only be represented by the PLO.

The achievement of Palestinian national unity was not easy but was necessitated by three immediate dangers. First, in the West Bank and Gaza, the "Iron Fist" of Israeli occupation continues to become more severe. Killings, tortures, arrests, expulsions—all forms of repression increased in quantity and intensity. Palestinian resistance has increased, too, but, as the PNC resolutions note, needs to be coordinated through political unity to reach its maximum effectiveness.

The second great danger is in Lebanon, where the dire necessity to defend the camps from attacks by Lebanese sectarian forces also demands unity. The PNC resolved to "strengthen the unity of effort, in order to organize the situation of our camps in Lebanon; the defense of their rights to exist; and the strengthening of the unity of our people under the leadership of the PLO, so that they can defend themselves and their camps in accordance with the Cairo Agreement and its amendments, which dictated the relationships between the PLO and the Lebanese govern-



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June 5 demonstration in Ramallah, West Bank, sponsored by the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees and the Union of Working Women's Committees. Part of many activities in the West Bank and Gaza commemorating the 20th anniversary of Israel's occupation. See article on page 3.

ment." Since the PNC, the Phalangist government of Amin Gemayel has announced its unilateral abrogation of the Cairo Agreement. This move only underscores the need for Palestinians in Lebanon to unite in their own self-defense.

The third great threat to the Palestinians is the continued conspiracy between the United States, Israeli, and Jordanian governments to impose a "settlement" without the

participation of the Palestinians or their Arab and international allies. King Hussein still wants to speak for the Palestinians—in place of their chosen representative, the PLO. The United States, through the so-called development plan, wants to finance Hussein's strategy of buying Palestinian quislings in the West Bank and Gaza. And Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, King Hussein, and the U.S. government would like to convene a "figleaf"

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## Editorial

# Five Years after Sabra and Shatila

Five years have passed since Israeli commanders, using the code name "Operation Iron Brain," sent Lebanese Phalangist units into the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Beirut on September 15, 1982 to carry out one of the most systematic and brutal slaughters of Palestinians in the history of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The massacre, although staggering in its inhumanity, was not an aberration, a deviation from Israel's highly touted "purity of arms." Rather, the massacre is only a highly visible act in a continuum of Israeli abuse directed toward Palestinians and other Arab peoples. Indeed, the massacre stands out against a backdrop of Israel's invasion of Lebanon itself, where tens of thousands of Palestinian and Lebanese civilians were killed as a result of indiscriminate bombings and attacks in the attempt by Begin and Sharon to impose a "Pax Hebraica" on Lebanon and the entire region.

Up to an estimated five thousand, according to the International Red Cross, were slain in the massacre, and the historic photographs taken during those days in September reveal the utter horror in which people were killed. The images of an old man lying with his cane in hand, his head smashed, or the bloated bodies of babies torn apart, have become emblematic of what Palestinians face as a result of their dispossession and expulsion from their homeland.

The 1982 massacre echoed past atrocities committed by Israel, such as the murder of 250 men, women, and children stuffed down the village well of Deir Yassin, near Jerusalem, in 1948. That massacre was designed to instill such fear into the hearts of the Palestinians that simply the mention of "Deir Yassin!" would compel the people to flee their land. Similarly, in 1982 Israeli leaders thought that the cry of "Sabra! Shatila!" would drive the Palestinians out of Lebanon, completing the task of Israel's

"Peace in the Galilee" invasion, the destruction of the "infrastructure" of the PLO, i.e., the people themselves.

None of this should be surprising, of course, since the helmsmen of the Israeli invasion—Begin, Sharon, and Shamir—have well-known histories as perpetrators of atrocities. But, unlike past atrocities, the Sabra and Shatila massacres provoked

worldwide outcry, including demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of Israelis. Yet, how remarkable that Israel managed once again to convince that world—or at least the United States—that it was the victim and not the grandfathers and babies sprawled in the dust. "Goyim kill goyim, and they immediately come to hang the Jews," re-

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## Los Angeles

# Palestinian Rights Still on Trial

By Jeanne Butterfield

Palestinian rights continue to be on trial in Los Angeles, where the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) is seeking to deport seven Palestinians and a Kenyan woman on a variety of technical and political charges. The case of the "LA Eight" has gone through so many twists and turns over the past four months (since the January 26 arrests) that even those who have been closely following the case are at times confused about what the eight face next. In spite of several tactical victories for the Los Angeles activists, the government has persisted in characterizing them as dangerous terrorists who must be deported from the United States. Even though Immigration Judge Ingrid Hrycenko dismissed the entire case against all eight on May 11, the government refiled identical charges the very next day. The deportation proceedings were scheduled to begin again in Los Angeles on June 26.

After dropping political charges against six of the eight in mid-April, the government changed the charges against the remaining two on April 28, dropping the original charge of membership in or affiliation with an organization that advocates world communism through its literature. The new charge against Khader Hamide and Michel Shehadeh was based on a more narrow McCarran-Walter Act provision which makes it a deportable offense to be affiliated with an organization that advocates or teaches the unlawful damage, injury, or destruction of property.

The defense team took the initiative in the face of these government maneuvers and brought a motion to terminate proceedings based on due process grounds of selective prosecution and bad faith prosecution. Defense attorney Leonard Weinglass explained the motion, saying that the section under which Hamide and Shehadeh are now charged is ideologically blind, and could, if the government chose, be applied to organizations of the right as well as those of the left. "The section has not been used for

more than a quarter of a century," Weinglass said. "Now the INS has invoked it against those whom it accuses of association with the PFLP, but refuses to apply it to the contras, Afghan mujahadeen or other organizations which it favors."

On May 8th, Weinglass presented former contra leader Edgar Chamorro and Professor Barnett Rubin, an expert on Afghanistan, as witnesses. Chamorro testified that while he was a leader of the Nicaraguan Democratic Forces (FDN), U.S. officials organized and subsidized aliens in the United States to engage in property destruction and other violence in Nicaragua but did not subject them to threats of deportation for this activity. Similarly, Rubin testified that Afghan aliens active in this country organizing support for armed struggle against the Afghan government have never been threatened with deportation.

Defense attorney Marc Van Der Hout summed up the testimony, saying "The Contragate hearings are revealing new details each day of how powerful figures in the executive branch thwarted the will of Congress to raise funds for the contras. It is extraordinarily arrogant of the federal government to assist contra representatives in the United States, to subsidize the contras in their destruction of property in Nicaragua—and the far worse crime of murder—and then to move to deport Palestinians on false charges of membership in or affiliation with an organization which 'teaches or advocates' the destruction of property."

The government's maneuvering in the case had its intended effect. On May 23 in Federal District Court, defense attorneys from the National Lawyers Guild and ACLU argued for an injunction which would have delayed the deportation hearings until the Federal District Court ruled on the constitutionality of the McCarran-Walter Act provisions under which Hamide and Shehadeh are charged. Judge Stephen Wilson found that since the government had dropped the charge of "affiliation with an organization which advocates 'world communism,'" he could no longer rule on its constitutionality. The charge of "affiliation with an organiza-

tion which advocates the unlawful destruction of property" would be reviewed should the case go up on appeal to the Ninth Circuit Court after the immigration court deliberations, Judge Wilson sidestepped ruling altogether, holding that the "proper forum" for review is the Ninth Circuit.

Speaking at a press conference at the Fiftieth Anniversary Convention of the National Lawyers Guild in Washington, D.C. on the day of Judge Wilson's ruling, Guild attorney Marc Van Der Hout called the U.S. government's behavior in the case "not only incompetent, but insidious." "This administration is intent on raising McCarthy from his grave," said Van Der Hout. "This administration is fearful of people talking about the Middle East."

Khader Hamide, one of the LA Eight, challenged Judge Wilson's ruling. "This judge refused to rule on the first amendment rights of noncitizens," Hamide asserted. "This case is clearly a first amendment case. They want to stifle debate, but they are playing with our lives. I don't want to wait four years to find out what my rights are, what are the rights of immigrants in the United States to discuss and debate." Julie Mungai, another of the LA Eight, continued, "Since January, charges have been added, dropped, changed, dismissed, reinstated. We should have our day in court."

While the LA Eight await their day in court, the government continues its "insidious" behavior. INS regional counsel William Odencrantz defended INS action in refiled charges against the eight after they had been dismissed by Judge Hrycenko by once again making outrageous assertions in the pages of the press. "We would like to get rid of the procedural shenanigans," said Odencrantz, referring to what any other observers would call due process and the right to a full and fair hearing in court. "They [the LA Eight] are who they are. We're not gonna wait in this country on a group that has violence on its agenda. We're not gonna wait for them to blow up something," he told a Los Angeles *Herald Examiner* reporter.

Guild attorney Van Der Hout gave another example of the government's own shenanigans in the

case: "Someone at the Committee for Justice office picked up the telephone to talk to someone in the next office over the intercom. Instead, they were connected to a law office on the other side of Los Angeles over the intercom. This is an office of several attorneys, one of whom has been doing support work for the case. When the attorney who had answered the call spoke with Pacific Bell, she was transferred to the security section of the Legal Department. There, she was told 'you are one of the attorneys on this case.' When she indicated that she had no connection with the LA Eight case, Pacific Bell responded 'well, there must have been some mistake.'" This obvious evidence of wiretapping will be the basis for one of several pretrial motions which the defense team will file over the next few weeks.

The Committee for Justice to Stop McCarran-Walter Deportations is not just relying on legal proceedings in the case of the LA Eight. The Committee has launched a petition campaign, addressed to Attorney General Meese, which calls for the charges to be dropped entirely. "Drop the Charges, Stop the Political Deportations" is the theme of the campaign spearheaded by the petition and supported by mailgrams, letters and visits to Meese, INS Commissioner Nelson, and selected members of Congress. As Jim Zogby, director of the Arab American Institute, asserted in response to Judge Wilson's ruling, "We went to court seeking justice, and justice was denied. The court failed in its responsibility to uphold the constitution. This is part of the Reagan Administration's war. It's a foreign policy war being brought home. It's a war on the first amendment, a war on immigrant rights, a war on individuals from countries where the United States has brought war. The court has failed. The American public has not failed."

It is the American public which can insist that enough injustice has already been done in the case of the Los Angeles Eight. Urgently needed contributions to the Committee for Justice Defense Fund can be sent to the Committee for Justice, P.O. Box 4631, Los Angeles, CA 90051, or call 213-413-3209. Copies of the "Drop the Charges, Stop the Political Deportations" petition can be ordered from the Committee at the same address. □

## FOCUS On Action

By Steve Goldfield

The centerpiece of protest to mark the twentieth anniversary of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza was, of course, in Palestine itself where there were demonstrations and strikes throughout the West Bank and Gaza in early June. In Nablus, the Israeli military killed two young Palestinian boys. Israelis demonstrated against the occupation in Tel Aviv. In the United States, activities were held throughout the country.

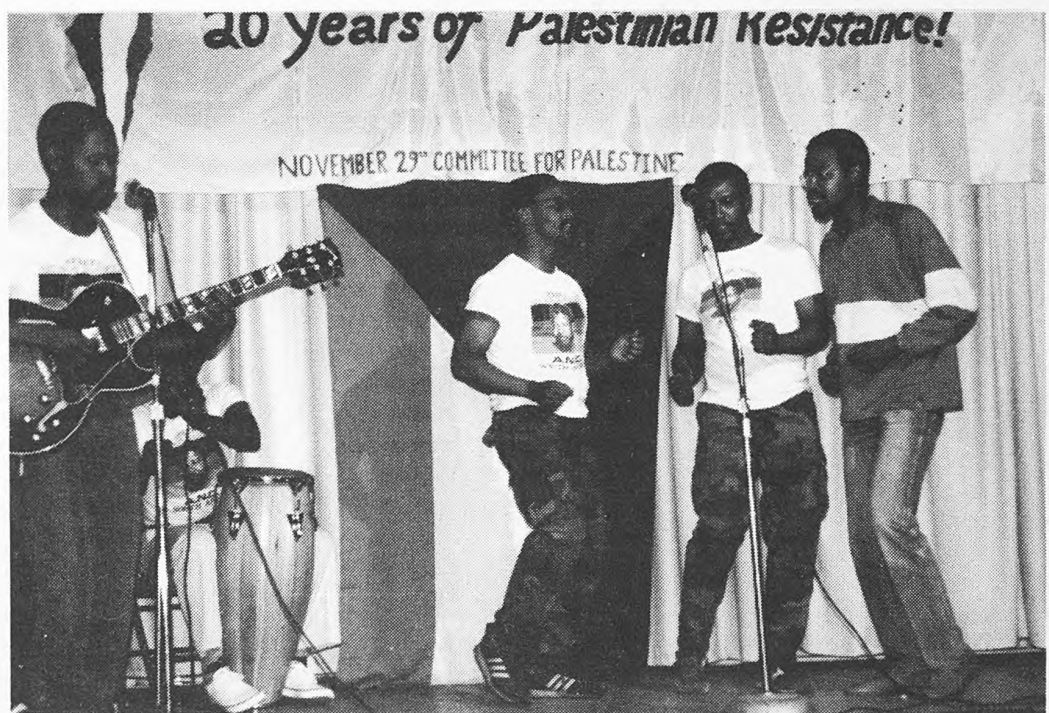
In New York, the Network for Peace and Justice in the Middle East, the November 29th Committee for Palestine, International Jewish Peace Union (IJPU), Mobilization for Survival (MfS), and the Union of Palestinian Women's Associations held a June 5 vigil including dramatic readings at the Isaiah Wall of the United Nations. A prior press conference at the UN featured Israeli peace activist Reuven Kaminer. The following day the November 29th Committee held a solidarity evening featuring PNC member Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Kaminer, Ingrid Washitock of the International Indian Treaty Council, Paul Saba of the Middle East Philanthropic Fund, the Sechaba Singers, Palestinian poet Yasmin Adib, and the al-Watan dance group. Funds were raised for sewing machines for Palestinian women's groups in the West Bank and for the Los Angeles case.

In Boston, a film festival was held at MIT. On June 7 a program entitled "Speak Out Against 20 Years of Occupation; Speak Out for Peace and Justice in the Middle

East" was cosponsored by the Campaign for Peace and Justice in the Middle East (MfS, AFSC, Lebanon Emergency Committee), Middle East Solidarity Committee (November 29th Committee local chapter), and New Jewish Agenda (NJA).

In Washington, D.C. a campaign at Metro stops, on talk shows, in op-ed pages and leaflets, and with speakers addressed the theme "Palestine Lives—End the 20 Years of Occupation" on June 5. The cosponsors included the Committee for a Democratic Palestine, Arab American

Institute, Palestinian Aid Society, Roots, and the November 29th Committee for Palestine. On June 19, a six-hour rally to "End the 20 Years of Israeli Occupation" was held in Lafayette Park opposite the White House. The rally featured speakers from the Arab League, Committee for Justice to Stop the McCarran Act Deportations, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), and the Arab American Institute. The rally was sponsored



Sechaba, the African National Congress cultural group, performing at the June 6 New York event marking the 20th anniversary of Israel's occupation, sponsored by the November 29th Committee for Palestine.

New York November 29th Committee for Palestine

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Hilton Obenzinger/  
Palestine Focus

An Interview with Rita Giacaman

# Women, Resistance, and the Popular Movement

*Rita Giacaman is a community health worker who teaches at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank. She was interviewed by Palestine Focus in San Francisco in spring 1987 while on a speaking tour of the United States and Canada.*

**P**alestinians are seeking novel means through which to resist, to stick to the land, to be steadfast. This year we will commemorate the twentieth year of occupation. We have the benefit of twenty years of experience trying to deal with the presence of the occupier. On the political level, there is still as much antagonism against Palestinians and the stifling of all legitimate political life. Clearly, the Israeli military and the Israeli state itself are becoming more and more "Iron Fist-like" in this sense: Not only these days is it stifling the freedom of speech of Palestinians, but also of Israelis as well. But, while this is happening, something else is happening as well: the emergence of the "popular movement" in the Israeli-occupied territories.

The first ten years of occupation or so everybody worked very hard to inhibit the breakdown of the infrastructure—the economic, social, health, educational, and political infrastructures in the West Bank. It was clear to Palestinians that this attempt on the part of the Israeli military to break down the social and economic infrastructures really meant a fight for survival. That infrastructure, we all knew, was crucial for the reconstruction of Palestinian society in the future. We knew that much. We knew that the Israeli military was out to possess the land without us people. We knew that, too. What we didn't know was how to mobilize under occupation, when it was becoming practically impossible to move and do anything at the political or other levels without being subjugated to arrests or attacks from the Israeli military.

That was what the military was doing—side by side with what we were trying to resist through what I call "traditional means." And "traditional means" meant organizing in the city, receiving financial aid through the joint PLO-Jordanian Committee, receiving it from the Arab world and outside, and channeling it to organizing in the city in a very highly structured sense, in a very centralized form. In essence, this money, this attempt to be steadfast, didn't even touch the surface of the problem, the people. Under occupation you have no social structure to back anybody up; those who were affected most were those who were poor and those who were invisible, the villagers and the refugee camp Palestinians. So the Palestinians responded. On the inside and the outside they wanted the poor to stick to the land, because if they left we would lose the last hope for the reconstruction of Palestinian society, the last hope for a Palestinian state even on the West Bank and Gaza.

**B**ut what we did failed to address the real issues. At the least, the military occupation failed to provide the basic services to people and at most, was out to destroy every attempt on the part of Palestinians to provide these services in a meaningful way. Our response was to set up charitable societies in the city—very middle-class, with a middle-class charitable ideology—to provide services to the people "down there" in the refugee camps and the villages.

What it did was to add insult to injury: It taught people to be even more dependent on outside aid just like UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, taught the Palestinians how to be dependent on Western money and Western food aid. And that's exactly the kind of ideology and consciousness that we not only don't think is useful to the Palestinians, but is by now rejected by the majority of the progressive forces.

By the midseventies it was becoming very clear that there was a large sector that was still unmobilized even at the political level, and actually it was the women that discovered this fact. A women's movement emerged that was trying to go to the villages instead of expecting the villages to come to it. This women's movement saw the necessity of mobilizing rural women.

But when the women from the middle class, educated sector of society who formed the initial women's movement went out to the villages to try to politically mobilize the village and refugee camp women, they were extremely shocked by a very harsh reality: You can't even begin to expect village women to discuss politics and become conscious when their basic needs are not being met. You can't expect them to do this or that politically without first taking care of their needs, providing them with necessary nursery schools and kindergartens in which to place their children so they can then participate in other activities like getting themselves literate so they can then read the newspaper and become aware and conscious of what's happen-

ing politically.

That practical experience—the discovery of the villages—was the steppingstone for the Palestinians under Israeli military rule that proved to be crucial in developing a new movement, which is a movement of committees, the popular movement. Today not only do you have women's committees, but you have medical relief, agricultural relief, voluntary work committees, and so forth. What's distinctive about this movement, especially the women's committees, is their structure and also their function.

Structurally, if you compare the women's committees to the previous women's organizations, the previous organizations organized middle-class women in the city in a very centralized way: an executive committee composed of nice middle-class women doing charity for the women down there. The women's committees, in contrast, had managed to penetrate society, go into villages, set up committees in a very decentralized way at the village level, very much at the grassroots level.

Women from the village set up the committee themselves; it could be five women, ten, it doesn't matter. One of these women is elected to represent her region in the national setup. So here you have a structure where you have the representation of the poor women—the previously invisible rural and refugee camp women—for the first time in the history of the Palestinian women's struggle. There is representation of the poor by the poor instead of representation of the poor by the middle class. This is extremely important.

**T**he other important thing about structure is that, under Israeli military rule, it used to be very easy for the Israeli military to retaliate against the charitable society should the military decide it ought to punish them. And usually the military would find simple things, such as delivering proper services to people, very threatening. It is quite clear that there is a contradiction between helping people stay on their land and the intention of the Israeli military of taking the land without the people.

In the past, with the traditional charitable society structures, if something happened and the Israeli military was upset, they could close down the center and the work would cease; or the Israelis would put one of the leaders under town or house arrest and activities would almost break up. But with the women's committees, when several centers were closed down, the work went unharmed because it's a popular grassroots organization, a movement that affects all women, that involves all women doing things for themselves.

This kind of movement doesn't depend structurally on the presence of one or two or even ten people. And you can't put sixty to seventy thousand peasant women in jail. So, in that sense, this new form came as a great success against the military who to date is still retaliating against the leaders of the women's movement. While these women are imprisoned for only doing literacy work and are put under town or house arrest, the difference is that the work is extremely effective despite all that.

At the consciousness level, the committees of this popular movement are remarkable, too. For the first time, we see a situation in which middle-class, educated women merge forces with peasant and working-class women. We

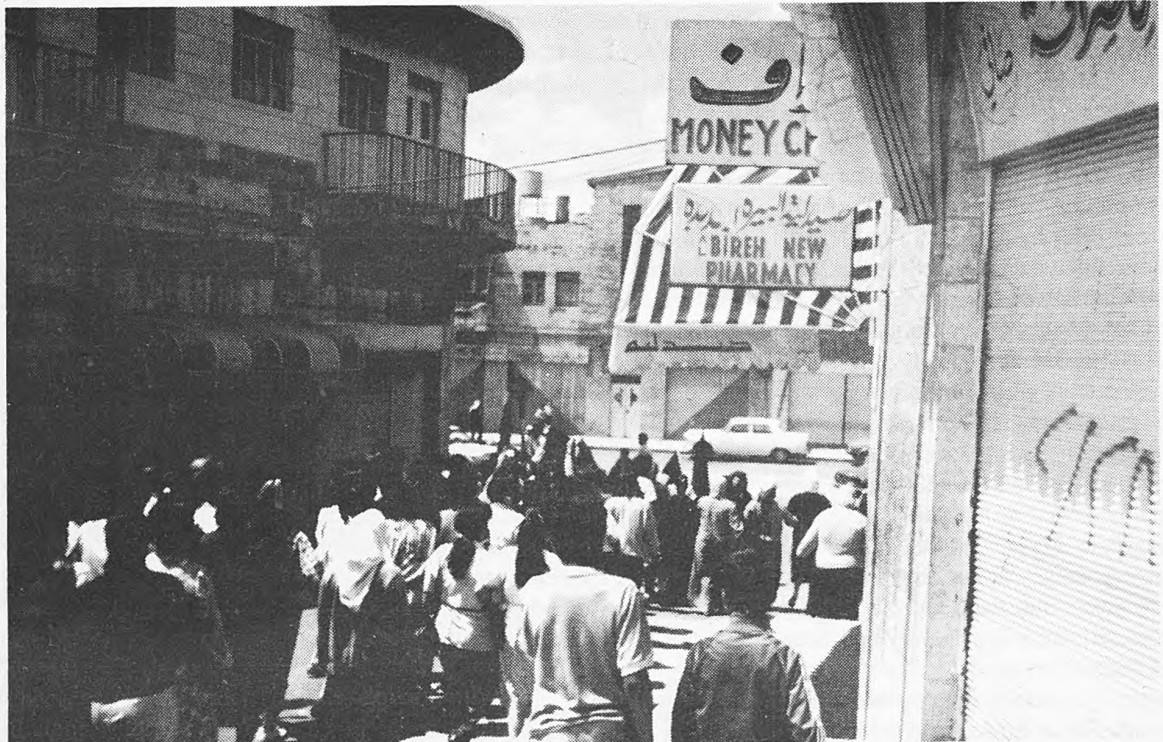
do have now more and more women from poor backgrounds joining the Israeli sweatshops. They are women in transition. So a new consciousness is emerging, a mixture of a political-national one and a feminist one.

The fact that rural women were so deprived led very clearly to national liberation but equally important, to the recognition of the need for women's liberation, i.e., the improvement in the status of women politically, economically, socially, and culturally. This new women's movement identifies three sorts of contradiction in the lives of Palestinian women: the national, the gender, and the class. Not only do they have to face the gender contradiction, now they have to face the class and national contradictions in the form of an employer who is Israeli.

**T**he popular movement is extremely important, not only because it raised the consciousness of villages, but equally because it helped people like me—nice middle-class academics on the fringes of their society—to get acquainted and link up with real people, the rural majority, 70 percent of the people. I couldn't possibly have understood the situation of rural women without the help of the popular movement. I have no means to do so, either cultural or otherwise, because I was Western-educated; I came from a family that valued Western education. Yes, I am Palestinian most definitely, but because of my own context, I would never have been able to make the links without the popular movement. I can tell you that there are many women and men like me, especially academics, who would not have been able to make the links without the popular movement.

So here we have a situation in which the popular movement—not just the women, but the medical relief committees and others—succeeded in placing middle-class people in a front in the practical sense of the word. It is a populist front. These groups are composed of everybody under the sun. In these committees are people who pray, avowed leftists, liberals, and middle-class women with nothing better to do than wear nice clothes and look for husbands; we call these last Kit-Kats because they eat imported Kit Kat chocolate which is very expensive. They come to the university to study or work as secretaries. They are being mobilized into this movement, and they are being transformed.

Physicians who otherwise would have never understood anything about village people, who would have just practiced in the city in nice plush offices, are beginning to understand what's happening because they have the chance through this popular movement to go to the villages and treat people on a volunteer basis, free-of-charge on their days off, Fridays or Sundays, and begin to realize that the health conditions in the West Bank are not like the textbooks because the texts come from America. The books talk about modern-day diseases, and what we have are third-world diseases. It's an education of both: consciousness raising on the level of the poor, but there's equally important consciousness raising and re-education of the professionals and the middle-class educated people. They have all been educated in the West and influenced by cultural and educational imperialism. We import already formed models and paradigms from the West. These will continue to be utilized unless those paradigms fail to stand up to the biggest trial of all, reality. □



Women demonstrating in Ramallah, West Bank, on June 5 against Israeli occupation. Two demonstrators were injured by the Israeli military.

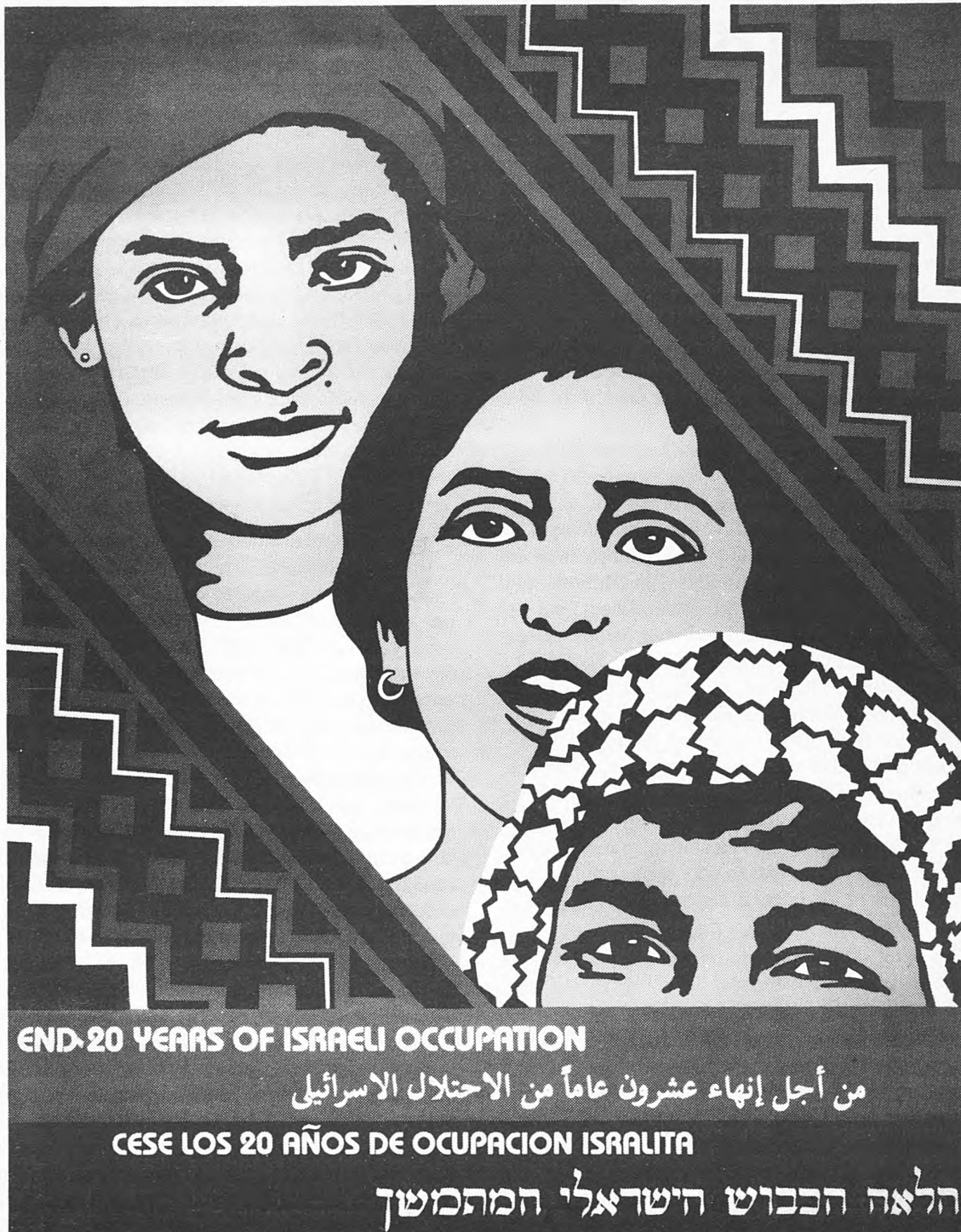
Palestine Focus



# Three Months in the West Bank

By Gayle Benezra

Gayle Benezra is a member of the November 29th Committee for Palestine in Seattle, Washington. She spent three months in the summer of 1986 studying in the foreign exchange program at Bir Zeit University and traveling in the occupied territories. She published an account of her experiences in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.



Poster designed by artist Juan Fuentes, commissioned by the November 29th Committee for Palestine to commemorate 20 years of Palestinian resistance to Israel's occupation. Posters are available for \$5 each plus \$1 postage and handling from the November 29th Committee for Palestine, P.O. Box 27462, San Francisco, CA 94127.

My first night in the West Bank, an American friend and I shared a taxi with two women we had never before met. Overhearing our discussion about finding a night's lodging, the women invited us to stay in their homes. Over dinner, I explained that my last name was Hebrew of Greek-Jewish origin. Um Mohammed, my host, turned and hugged me warmly, saying, "Habibtee (dear), we love you for coming. Welcome to the Jewish people who want to know what is really happening here."

As we sipped tea, I recalled a discussion with a Zionist in the States in which he had insisted that Arabs and Jews were "natural enemies." During the weeks that ensued, I discovered that the profound cultural values of the Palestinian people had survived the challenges of the last decades. These people, rich or poor, had remained attentive to the needs of others, hospitable and generous, attending to the needs of their community and of those who come in friendship.

The first coherent picture of the West Bank that formed from my experiences there was that of a garrison state. One could not but notice the constant presence of soldiers and the close proximity of machine guns. Most frightening were the groups of Israeli settlers, often in their teens, wandering through the streets with machine guns casually slung over their shoulders. Many of these settlers, guns in hand, support the Gush Emunim or Kahane, who openly advocate the expulsion of all Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories.

I had always been told that the military "regretfully" carried out its duties, imposed upon it by the "unavoidable" occupation. Yet my experience revealed that decades of occupation of Palestinian land had fueled the forces of racism and left both the general Israeli population and the military callous and indifferent toward the Palestinian population they control.

One day, while walking in the Old City of Jerusalem, I noticed a Palestinian boy who had separated from a group of children playing in the courtyard. As I watched him jump over the cracks in the stones, an Israeli soldier appeared and smiled at the boy. The child's face remained expressionless. The soldier stuck out his index finger, cocked his thumb, and pulled an imaginary trigger, all the while smiling. The child's eyes opened wide; he stood for a moment staring at the soldier and then turned and ran away. The soldier laughed loudly; it was only in jest. How easy it was for him to make light of a situation felt in

## House Sealings and Demolition

By John Masterson

A kitchen, verandah, and two bedrooms is a small amount of space to serve the daily living needs of a family of ten. Until February 4, 1986, however, the family dwelling of Mohamed Sulieman al Haj consisted of nothing more than these four rooms. On that winter day, a little over a year ago, an armed Israeli unit entered this simple home in El-Bireh and sealed the entrance to the small bedroom with cement and corrugated metal. Since the small bedroom was the entrance to the larger one, the family living space was reduced to the kitchen and verandah. Only the generous offer by a neighbor of a small space below their flat provided Sulieman's family with a place to sleep.

What had Mohamed Sulieman al-Haj done that warranted this punishment of his entire family, depriving them of one of the most fundamental of their human rights? He had done absolutely nothing. His family was being punished collectively for the suspected crime of one of his young children. His teenage son, Hassan, had been charged with throwing stones at the Israeli occupying forces. Although the boy had not yet been convicted, his entire family had been punished for the "crime."

The demolition and sealing of Palestinian homes in the West Bank and Gaza by the Israeli military occupation authorities have increased drastically in the last two years.

They have become one of the more routine Israeli responses to the increased resistance to the occupation by young Palestinians. The weapons of the children are usually stones. The sentences of the youths range normally from eight or nine months to several years. The collective punishment of the family, however, is often permanent, forcing them to leave their family homes as they are made uninhabitable. Israeli military authorities justify their actions in moralistic terms holding the parents responsible for the acts of their children. They never discuss the political advantage of such a punishment: the forced abandonment of Arab land which is then confiscated by the Israeli military authorities.

Like many of the other punitive measures which the Israeli military forces have applied in the occupied territories, the demolitions and sealings of homes violate numerous conventions in international law, many of which Israel has signed. The Geneva Conventions, in particular, outlaw the behavior of the German Nazis toward the Jews and other victims of Nazi policies.

In their role as belligerent in the West Bank (including Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights, Israel is required to observe the 4th Geneva Conventions of 1949 in its treatment of the protected population, their land and possessions. Article 53 of the Geneva Conventions points out clearly the Israeli violations of accepted international law:

"Any Destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private per-

sons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited, except where such destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations."

Not only do the 4th Geneva Convention, the Hague Conventions of 1907, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations deal with the protection of property of the indigenous population, they explicitly prohibit the common Israeli practice of collective punishment: Article 50 of the Hague Convention states: "No general penalty, pecuniary or otherwise, shall be inflicted upon the population on account of the acts of individuals for which they cannot be regarded as responsible." Article 33 of the 4th Geneva Convention is even more specific: "No protected person may be punished for an act he or she has not personally committed. Collective penalties and likewise all measures of intimidation and terrorism are prohibited."

Israeli authorities counter that they are not violating international law by invoking the exclusionary clauses, stating that the actions are "rendered absolutely necessary by military operations," in the words of Article 53 of the 4th Geneva Conventions. The ludicrous nature of this argument was pointed out by Philippa Strum, president of the American-Israeli Civil Liberties Coalition, in a letter addressed to the Israeli Consul General in the United States: "The homes in question," she states, "are the homes of families of accused subversives [sic], and there is no evidence that

the homes themselves are being used for terrorist acts." Even if this were not the case, Israeli actions conform in no way to the "military operations and military requirements" referred to in the law.

To keep all the legal jargon in some perspective, it is important to remember that the vast majority of the homes demolished or sealed belong to families whose young children have been accused of throwing stones at military vehicles, passing through a land which they are illegally occupying.

The frequency of this cruel form of collective punishment has dire consequences for the people of the occupied territories. Between May 1985 and June 1986, the Israeli military authorities demolished or sealed a total of 73 houses in the West Bank alone. As a result of these actions, more than 450 persons were made homeless or were displaced. In most of the cases, the families were given no notice of the impending action and little time to remove their belongings. Consequently, substantial amounts of property and personal possessions have been lost as well. As one large family in Yatta watched the parade of military vehicles approach their home, they assumed it was just another search and prepared for the usual ransacking and destruction of their belongings. That they were to lose their ancestral family home did not become clear to them until they saw the bulldozer enter their property.

The day after Christmas 1985, to give a somewhat typical example, 150 soldiers entered Bethlehem and the nearby Dheisheh refugee camp and sealed the homes of six



deadly earnest by those who looked up the barrel of an Uzi machine gun.

As experienced by the Palestinians, military occupation, in its most benign form, is a never-ending series of petty harassments and inconveniences. I visited West Jerusalem with a Palestinian friend. Stopping at a crosswalk, we saw a policeman across the street. When the light turned green, we crossed and upon reaching the other side were stopped by the policeman and asked for our identification.

He looked at my U.S. passport and told me to move aside. Then, he turned to my friend and wrote him a citation for crossing on a red light, despite my protestations that the light had been green. Later, sitting in a Jerusalem cafe, we discussed the incident; I was angry at what I perceived to be an injustice and a gross abuse of the policeman's power, whereas my friend was concerned only to the extent, which in fact was considerable, that he didn't know where he would find money to pay the fine. "It happens all the time. I'm used to it. It's nothing compared to all the rest." Suddenly my friend realized how late it had become. He informed me that as a Palestinian from the West Bank it was illegal for him to be in Jerusalem after midnight, that for so-called security reasons the government carefully monitored and controlled the movements of Palestinians. We rushed down the street in search of a taxi.

The more blatant forms of oppression arise out of a situation in which all Arabs, by the mere fact that they are not Jewish, are seen as a potential threat. Abusive treatment is thus indiscriminate, with a violence designed to terrorize the whole Palestinian population into submission. I had studied several reports on systematic torture of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, a very common occurrence. I also visited offices of Palestinian and Israeli lawyers who document human-rights violations.

These facts haunted me a short time later when Ali was taken. One morning, Ali, a university student, told me he had been ordered to go to the Israeli interrogation center. They had taken his father and said they would continue to hold him until Ali reported to the authorities. Ali went to the Israeli military headquarters that morning and was not heard from for thirty days. Ali's lawyer could not obtain information on Ali's whereabouts.

In the days following Ali's disappearance, I would often ask myself, "Where is Ali, and what are they doing to him now?" Ultimately, we were informed that Ali was sentenced to six months imprisonment. The charge was not known. According to the Administrative Detention Law, reimposed in the summer of 1985, individuals are subject to up to six months imprisonment without being charged. I remember I had once said to Ali, "You know that you may be imprisoned and tortured for speaking out. How do you mentally prepare for imprisonment?" His reply, in its stark simplicity, was a searing indictment of the conditions maintained by Israel in the occupied territories: "We have no rights here. We are in prison now. In jail, the cell is only smaller."

Discriminatory allocation of government funds, land, and water is a widespread form of oppression, largely unnoticed here in the West but no less serious in calling into question the very survival of the Palestinian people. Allotment of water and municipal funds to Palestinians was reported to be minimal in an attempt to make life unbearable. Water, a limited resource in the region, is critical to the traditional agricultural economy of the Palestinian people.

As we drove through the region near Jericho, the contrast between Palestinian villages and Jewish settlements was startling. It was as though a clear line demarcated Arab land from settlement land; the Palestinian area was dead and barren, the settlements burst with dense green foliage. We stopped to take photographs and spoke with Palestinian farmers.

One villager sat at the edge of his field surrounded by boxes of shrivelled cucumbers. He told us that the water used by his family for generations was no longer available. The neighboring settlements had dug deep wells which lowered the water table, forcing Palestinian farmers to purchase even their drinking water from Israelis. Introducing us to his family, the farmer insisted we take coffee, tea, and sweets as we gazed at his now useless field.

#### Gaza

Traveling on to Gaza, as we entered Jabalia refugee camp, images of Soweto came to mind. We walked between houses on dirt pathways about two-feet wide, stepping around streams of dirty water. I stared at the one-room houses with roofs of corrugated metal, held in place by broken pieces of cement. We stopped a man in the road and asked if we could visit his home. He turned to us, his face drawn, "You want to see my home? Come, come and see it."

As he led us to his house, his voice grew louder and increasingly shrill, "Is this a home? Tell me, is this a home?" We entered a single cement room, approximately twelve feet square. On a mat lay a multihandicapped girl of about seven years. A woman sat at her side. The father turned to us, "Ten of us live here. My daughter can't move, and I can't find work so I can't send her to a doctor or to a school. And my mother, she's blind. She lives here, too."

Do you know the Israelis only turn on the water for two hours a day? We fill these jugs and save the water. Is this a home? Tell me, is this a life?" His children, embarrassed, stared at the ground. His wife nervously patted the dirt floor. His young son, Osama, led us to a large body of water, approximately fifty feet wide, from which a terrible stench rose. Because the camp is unable to obtain funds for sanitation, this pool contained the camp sewage. We watched the children running in and out of their homes, approximately fifteen to twenty feet from this pit. As we walked away, the barefooted children ran back to the riverlets leading to the sewer hole, jumping across the streams in children's games.

One of the most personally frightening experiences occurred toward the end of my stay, on my second trip to Gaza. Traveling with a group of Palestinian and foreign-exchange students on a Bir Zeit University bus, we were immediately ordered to pull to the side of the road as we stopped at the Israeli military checkpoint at the edge of the Gaza Strip. The uniformed men indicated they had been "told" we were coming and that we could not enter Gaza.

During the discussion that ensued, the soldiers decided the foreign students could enter but the Palestinians were to remain outside. Insisting we all had a right to enter, we asked to speak with the commander or the one in charge. We were told to wait. One of the soldiers, reacting to the fact that some of the individuals in our group were Jewish, turned to us yelling, "What are you doing on a bus with Arabs? You disgust me!" At the end of an hour and a half's wait and much discussion with the soldiers, students consulted and agreed; joining hands in front of the bus, we began to sing protest songs to pressure the soldiers to allow us to enter Gaza.

About thirty minutes later a car approached the Gazan border and crashed through the checkpoint without stopping. We watched from across the street as two soldiers slid their machine guns from their shoulders and began firing at the vehicle. Never having heard gunfire before, we hugged each other close and began to sing, "We shall overcome." Suddenly the sound of gunfire was louder. We turned to see a soldier, his machine gun pointed in our direction, firing above our heads. A soldier with whom we had spoken earlier swiftly approached us, identified himself as the one in charge and ordered us to leave the premises.

Frightened and angry, we asked for the name of the soldier who had fired over our heads. "Forget it!" we were told. "He just lost control." Staring at the spent cartridges which had fallen only a few feet in front of us, a student from our group countered angrily, "So this is what the Palestinians have to live with; soldiers who 'lose control'?" The officer just looked at us and ordered us onto the bus.

As I waited to board my flight back to the States, I gazed around at the crowded airport and was filled with grief. The Zionist experiment had resulted in the creation of a garrison state. In its zeal to artificially ensure the rights of Jews, it had trampled over the rights of the native inhabitants of the land. The "benign" occupation in the "only democracy" in the Middle East was, in reality, a travesty of all that Judaism stood for.

The Palestinians would endure; they are a courageous people fighting for an ideal, a purpose. But for the Jews in Israel, the Zionist program has left them with an ideal gone awry; there can be no safe haven for those who act with such total disregard for the basic human rights of another group. The holocaust has saddled Jews with deep-seated fears that are not easily overcome. It will take courage to eradicate the causes. As I looked around the airport, I saw soldiers everywhere; the Zionists did not give the Jews courage, rather the arrogance of might. □

## ns in the Occupied Territories

families. Beginning their rampage at 4 pm, the soldiers moved from house to house, giving each family about 10 minutes to remove themselves and their belongings before the house was sealed. The soldiers damaged furniture as they hurled it from the houses. They smashed glass items, destroyed tiles, basins, and other permanent house fixtures. They beat several Palestinians who protested their actions.

When the soldiers had completed their "work," over fifty persons had been left homeless on this one day alone. Some of them found temporary refuge with relatives or neighbors. One family received two tents from the Red Cross and a third from a local organization to house sixteen persons who had lived in an eight-room house that had just been sealed.

While house sealings and demolitions on such a large scale and as a retributive act are a relatively new page in the lexicon of Israeli oppression of the indigenous population, the forced evacuation of Palestinians from their homes and land has a 40-year history and reaches a scale of even more monumental proportions.

The United Nations has regularly censured Israel for these acts as gross violations of international law and the most basic rights of people. On December 1, 1948, the U.N. General Assembly passed Resolution 194, which instructs the government of Israel to facilitate the return of the 775,000 Palestinian Arabs who were illegally displaced from their homes on the creation of

the state of Israel or to provide those who chose not to return with compensation "at the earliest practicable date." Israel responded, instead, by passing laws enabling the confiscation of the land and destroyed entirely more than four hundred Arab villages within the 1948 boundaries. Less than

3 percent of the Arab refugees were allowed to return.

U.N. Security Resolution 237, passed on June 14, 1967, made a similar demand with respect to the 350,000 Palestinians displaced as a result of the 1967 war, again to no avail. Similar U.N. resolutions in 1968,



Partially demolished house belonging to West Bank Palestinian accused of resistance activity.

Palestine Focus

1970, 1971, and 1980 reiterated the demand that Israel reverse its illegal and inhuman actions. All have been ignored.

The resolutions of the United Nations in this matter have made very clear the position of the international community. Israel cannot hide behind vagaries of interpretation. The March 1, 1980 U.N. Security Council Resolution 465, for example, declares that "all measures by Israel to change the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure, or status of the Palestinians and other Arab territories occupied since 1948, including Jerusalem... have no legal validity." The resolution continues, "Israel's policy of settling part of its population and new immigration in those territories constitute a flagrant violation of the 4th Geneva Convention and an obstacle to peace."

The recent increase in demolitions and sealings can thus be placed in context of a 40-year history of the mass eviction of residents of entire villages, the destruction or takeover of the villages themselves and the expropriation of that property by the state of Israel. In 1948 the international community knew nothing of the Palestinians or how their national heritage had been betrayed. Subsequent expose of the extent of destruction of culture, however — and a heightened world consciousness of the Palestinian plight — have forced the Israeli military authorities to be more conscious of their public image and moderate the scale of their barbarity. But it does not diminish the suffering of those made homeless or change the direction of a conscious policy of dispos-

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## SABRA/SHATILA...

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sponded Menahem Begin to the world. The Kahan Commission report conducted by the Israeli government gently slapped the wrists of the war criminals, and the U.S. media and politicians touted Israel for its profound democratic instincts, its moral credibility upheld simply because a commission scratched at the surface of the truth. With the formalities of democracy providing the stage set, the real drama of Israeli power could go on as usual.

And what of the war criminals? Ariel Sharon, who ordered the Phalangists into the camps, the real "Iron Brain" of Israel's murderous siege of Beirut, is now back in the cabinet. And Major General Amos Yaron, who commanded Israeli forces at the site of the massacre, was recently appointed military attache in the Israeli embassy in Washington (with no objection from the Reagan administration). At least Menahem Begin has sequestered himself, leaving the rest of the world in peace, although Yitzhak Shamir, a leader of the pro-Nazi Stern Gang in the forties, still jockeyed with Peres for power in the eighties. It

is unbearable: to think that accused Nazi war criminals like Demjanjuk are given show trials in Jerusalem, while a man like Sharon could still one day become prime minister.

Many of the bitter lessons of the Sabra and Shatila massacre have only deepened since those fateful days. Israel used the rightwing Christian Phalangists to do its bidding then. The savage attacks against the Palestinian camps in Lebanon by Amal since 1985 have also served Israel's interest. The racialized religious sectarianism, fostered by the "Jewish" state, has turned the Amal fighters, former allies of the Palestinians, into "Shi'ite" murderers. True, this is "goyim killing goyim," but world public opinion recognizes that the fundamental destabilizing element in Lebanese affairs, one which heightens the sectarian conflict, is Israel's continuing intervention.

Not only does Israel cultivate sectarian and ultraconservative tendencies in Lebanon, but it continues in its goals of destroying the PLO and forcing Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza to submit to everlasting Israeli rule. One of

the goals of Israel's 1982 invasion—in its attempt to destroy the PLO—was to break the backbone of Palestinian resistance in the West Bank and Gaza. "Operation Iron Brain" was soon followed by the "Iron Fist," what Israeli leaders call the policy of arbitrary arrests, expulsions, land confiscations, and killings still at full force in the West Bank and Gaza to this day. Nevertheless, Palestinians under Israeli military rule have not bowed down, and their resistance continues unabated.

Another lesson of the Sabra and Shatila massacre must be addressed: The U.S. government shares responsibility for that and other bloody episodes of Israeli aggression. The United States financed the Israeli invasion, offering political, diplomatic, and military support. The United States guaranteed, in writing, the safety of Palestinian civilians when the PLO agreed to depart Beirut. U.S. intelligence was in direct contact with both Israeli and Phalangist intelligence from the beginning and throughout the entire grisly episode of Sabra and Shatila. And the Reagan administration continues to fund Israel's adventures in Lebanon and its illegal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The Sabra and Shatila massacre was a horrifying manifestation of what Palestinians have faced and continue to face. Whether murdered in camps in Lebanon or tortured in jails in Israel, Palestinians must contend with constant attacks on their identity, their national aspirations, their hopes for a future, their very lives. Despite the tragedies facing the Palestinian people, they continually set an example to the world with their resilience, perseverance, and resolve.

The fundamental lesson of the massacre is as basic as the conflict itself: So long as the Palestinians are denied a homeland, crimes such as Sabra and Shatila will continue to occur. And given the role of the United States in supporting Israel, the American people play a critical role in preventing such crimes from reoccurring. We can begin by building a movement to cut off U.S. economic, military, and political support for Israeli crimes and end Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. And ultimately, we must demand our government join the rest of the world in supporting a Palestinian homeland, an independent state in which Palestinians can finally live safe from massacre and free to determine their own destiny. □

## PNC...

Continued from page 1

international "peace" conference to legitimize direct Jordanian negotiations with Israel. The reunited PLO which the PNC made possible is the vehicle of Palestinian resistance to such schemes.

Indeed, the significance of the reunification of the PLO is underscored by the feverish diplomatic activity in response to the PNC currently underway by the United States, Israel, Jordan, and Egypt to convene the "figleaf" conference without the PLO as quickly as possible. Not satisfied merely to eliminate the PLO, i.e., an independent and representative Palestinian presence, from such a conference, these four governments want to reduce the Soviet Union's participation to a public-relations role. And even talk of such a conference has split the two Zionist blocs which jointly govern Israel.

The PLO position is for a genuine international conference, as mandated by U.N. General Assembly resolutions, which discusses a comprehensive plan for peace in the area and includes all major parties to the conflict, namely, the PLO, Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, the United States, and the Soviet Union, and other permanent members of the Security Council. And Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sent a message to the PNC promising that the Soviet Union would not participate in such a conference without the presence of the PLO.

To emphasize the degree to which the United States/Israel/Jordan/Egypt approach is isolated, in February 1987 the twelve foreign ministers of the European Economic Community issued a joint call for a peace conference under UN auspices. The Europeans made it clear that their call was a response to the ineffectual American initiative because the Europeans were suffering the consequences in ways the Americans were not.

The PNC resolutions begin with a reaffirmation of the "inalienable national rights of Palestinian people to repatriation, self-determination, and establish an independent state on national Palestinian soil." Then the PNC affirms "the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and rejecting authorization, deputation, and allotment in Palestinian representation, as well as rejecting and resisting any alternatives to the PLO."

And just as unity is a necessary precondition for the Palestinians to work for their objectives, independence is the necessary precondition to define those objectives. The PNC adhered to "the PLO's independence and rejected any guardianship, containment, annexation, and interference in its internal affairs." The PNC rejected UN Security Council Resolution 242, "as it is an unsuitable basis for solving the Palestinian question; and because it deals with the Palestinian question as one of refugees and ignores the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people." Similarly, the PNC rejected "all the solutions and projects which aim at liquidating our Palestinian cause, among which are the Camp David Accords, the Reagan Plan, the self-autonomy plan, and the condominium plan in all its forms."

The Palestinian response to the PNC has been almost universally positive. In the West Bank and Gaza, newspapers and popular figures greeted the Algiers results with celebration and strong support. Former Gaza Mayor Rashid Shawwa, considered one of King Hussein's chief supporters, was one of the very few to publicly criticize the PNC.

PNC member Muhammad Hallaj, director of the Palestine Research and Educational Center in Washington, responded to press reports that the reunification of the PNC meant a radicalization of the PLO. Hallaj told *Al-Fajr* that the PLO "needs to become more radical. There is nothing

wrong with that." Hallaj explained that since 1974, the PLO has offered compromises in the interest of peace, giving up the idea of a secular democracy in all of Palestine and trying to be conciliatory on all issues "in an attempt to make itself more palatable as a negotiating partner to the Israelis, to the Americans, and to everyone else." *Al-Fajr* commented that "PLO politics have become motivated more by attempts to appease its enemies than attempts to please the Palestinian people, their friends, and supporters." Former U.S. Ambassador to Qatar Andrew Killgore, who attended the PNC, told *Al-Fajr* that Palestinians have been called "radical" by the United States and Israel simply because they refuse to surrender all their rights to Israel.

Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, chairman of the political science department at Northwestern University and also a delegate to the PNC, commented that Palestinian unity will necessarily mean that there will be greater activity "in all areas of Palestinian diaspora, which means strengthening or solidifying Palestinian institutions."

Naseer Aruri, professor of political science at Southeastern Massachusetts University, observed about the PNC that "the overriding concern was the preservation of the PLO as an independent national body within the Arab world. The emphasis is on unity; the emphasis is on independence."

The meeting is certainly a major positive step. As we have noted, the reunification of the PLO set off many repercussions, both positive and negative. Nevertheless, the political map of the Middle East has been significantly redrawn to include a united and independent PLO. Conditions are also more favorable for Americans who seek peace with justice in the Middle East to voice their support for the basic program of the PLO, including a genuine international peace conference. □

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session.

Sharry Lapp, a teacher at the Girls School in Ramallah, assisted with the gathering of much of the details of the demolitions and sealings. She visited with one of the victims of demolition, a family from the village of Yatta. Here are excerpts from her report on that visit:

"It was early afternoon when we found our way up the dirt roads south of Hebron, took a sudden turn onto an almost invisible track, and jolted our way to the top of a small plateau. There we found the family of Umm and Abu Na'im, who came from the village of Yatta. Recent victims of yet another house demolition, courtesy of the

Israeli authorities, the family had found temporary refuge in a sheep shack atop a plateau several miles from their village."

Abu Na'im's son, 'Issa, Sharry reports, had been accused and purportedly confessed after two months in detention to the "crime" of belonging to an illegal organization and attacking an Israeli military bus and a tractor. At the time when the home was demolished, 'Issa had not yet been brought to trial. By internationally accepted tenets of law, then, he was not yet guilty of a crime. Nonetheless, the Israeli authorities had inflicted a collective punishment on 24 people whose only crime was that they were related to a man not yet convicted of a crime. The victims included not only 'Issa's immediate family, but the spouses and children of his

brothers and sisters who lived in the house.

Referring to their rented and desolate piece of land far from any potential work, Sharry continues, "The landlord has agreed to let them stay for two months only. In the face of such a failure, the family must devote its energies to surviving. The children are underclothed and underfed and after a month in exile show signs of ill health. One mother undresses her children to expose painful-looking rashes which have developed on their unwashed skin. Water must be carried from a source 45 minutes away. Several children have contracted coughs from breathing the damp ash-laden air within the cave."

This July, the landlord decided to kick the family off the land, since they could not pay

rent. They have returned to Yatta, where they live in two tents. The family is destitute. Abu Na'im is too old to get regular work, and there is little of that anyway. One son is in prison, another so depressed that he wanders aimlessly. The burden of providing an income for the family of 24 has fallen to the eldest son, Na'im. He goes to the "slave market" in Jerusalem, the informal labor market where Palestinians compete for the small amount of day work available in Israel at paltry wages. He gets work only about two days per week. The children are showing signs of malnutrition and continual sickness. Left with nothing but their pride and sense of steadfastness—*sumud* in Arabic—they seek each day to survive and stay. □

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*Palestine Focus* is the national newspaper of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. 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.

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# Getting It All In FOCUS

By Hilton Obenzinger

If you consider how difficult it is to garner support for Palestinian rights here in the United States, just keep in mind that such support is an international phenomenon—and much more widespread in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. It's easy to lose sight of this fact, given the kind of isolation we have in the United States. So placing our work in the context of a worldwide movement is critical.

Since 1983 there has been a process of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on the question of Palestine meeting under the auspices of the United Nations to bring about much greater consciousness and organization to this world movement. As a result of this process, the NGOs declared 1987 the "Year of Palestine" because of the many significant anniversaries coincidentally occurring in 1987, such as the 20th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights. Activities are being organized around the world to commemorate these dates.

These NGO activities are now better coordinated since the recent establishment of an office for the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine in Geneva, Switzerland. Staffed by a few dedicated people, this office has been facilitating communications among all the NGOs. The Geneva office sends out a regular newsletter which reports on such developments as the "iron fist" repression by Israel in the West Bank and Gaza, on the recent Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers, and on efforts in different countries to win support for the United Nations proposal for an international peace conference which would include the PLO, Israel, the Soviet Union, United States, and the Arab states. If you are part of a nongovernmental organization and want to become involved, or at least to receive infor-

mation, write to United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights, Room 2470, United Nations, New York, NY 10017 or International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine, P. O. Box 127, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.

A big boost was given in northern Europe when the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization held a conference on collaboration between Israel and South Africa May 22-24 in Helsinki, Finland. Representatives of the frontline states, the ANC, SWAPO, and the PLO attended. According to reports from Danish friends and Jane Hunter of *Israeli Foreign Affairs* who attended, activists from Scandinavia, along with West Germany and Great Britain, built working ties between Palestine solidarity organizations and the anti-apartheid movement. With this new alliance, Israel's ability to undermine sanctions against apartheid will meet with greater protests in northern Europe.

In Denmark, Hanne Christiansen of the Danish Palestine Campaign reports on a major trade-union conference to support Palestinian trade unions held in June. The conference received broad trade-union support and resulted in a commitment to organize a material aid campaign to benefit medical relief committees in the West Bank and Gaza, along with a delegation to the occupied territories to seek relations between Palestinian and Danish trade unions. A resolution was also passed calling upon the main Danish trade-union confederation to recognize Palestinian trade unions.

In Holland the Netherlands Palestine Committee reports a week of activities in the beginning of June, including public meetings throughout the country and a demonstration in the city of Utrecht to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the occupation. A campaign is also in the works for a petition to parliament to recognize the PLO and to demand respect for human rights in the occupied territories.

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The 20th anniversary of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is high on the agenda for people here in the United States, and the number of excellent publications—and posters—continues to grow. Notably, the November 29th Committee for Palestine commissioned Chicano artist Juan Fuentes to produce a commemorative poster, reproduced in black and white elsewhere in *Palestine Focus*. While the 20th anniversary marks but one point in a history of tragedy, perseverance, and resistance, this six-color poster should endure as an artistic testimony.

## FOCUS ON ACTION...

Continued from page 7

by the General Union of Palestinian Students, Committee for Justice, and the November 29th Committee.

In Chicago, a teach-in, dinner, and cultural evening were held on June 13 with the theme: "Confronting the Iron Fist: Palestinians After 20 Years of Israeli Military Occupation." Principal speakers included Professor Ibrahim Abu-Lughod of Northwestern and Professor Cheryl Rubenberg of Florida International University. The events were endorsed by more than thirty groups. Cosponsors included AFSC, U.S. Peace Council, ADC, Palestine Human Rights Campaign, Palestine Student Association, and the November 29th Committee.

In Texas, the November 29th Committee for Palestine picketed the Israeli Consulate in Houston on June 5. In Austin, the November 29th Committee held a concert on June 13 featuring Puerto Rican singer/songwriter Roy Brown singing "New Songs of the People of Latin America and Palestine."

On the West Coast, a picket of the Israeli Consulate in San Francisco was held on June 5 to demand "End the 20 Years of Israeli Occupation." The picket was cosponsored by AFSC, IJPU, NJA, Democratic Socialists of America, and the November 29th Committee. In Portland, Oregon, November 29th Committee for Palestine National Chair Steve Goldfield spoke on "End 20 Years of Occupation" at a Portland State University event organized by the November 29th Committee. In Seattle, a slide show and music highlighted an evening event protesting 20 years of occupation on June 6 following a conference on "U.S. Foreign Policy and the Erosion of Democratic Rights." The evening event was cosponsored by the Organization of Arab Students and the November 29th Committee.

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The Palestine Liberation Organization maintains two offices in the United States: the Observer Mission at the United Nations in New York and the Palestine Information Office in Washington. Apparently, these two beacons of official Palestinian presence in the United States are too much for "beleaguered" supporters of Israel. Republican presidential candidates Congressman Jack Kemp and Senator Robert Dole have introduced legislation "to provide penalties for aiding the Palestine Liberation Organization." The official name is the "Anti-PLO Terrorism Act of 1987," but it has informally become known as the Dole bill.

The bill (Kemp's original short bill was withdrawn and replaced by Dole's version) contains a litany of accusations of terrorism against the PLO in a crass attempt to

delegitimize the Palestinian people by character assassination of their chosen representative. The operative sections read as follows: "It shall be unlawful, if the purpose be to further the interests of the Palestine Liberation Organization or any of its constituent groups, any successor to any of those, or any agents thereof, on or after the effective date of this Act (1) to receive anything of value except informational material from the PLO ..., (2) to expend funds from the PLO ..., or (3) not withstanding any provision of the law to the contrary, to establish or maintain an office, headquarters, premises, or other facilities or establishments within the jurisdiction of the United States at the behest or direction of, or with funds provided by the Palestine Liberation Organization..." The attorney general and federal district courts are mandated to enforce the law.

The implications are far-reaching. The immediate and proclaimed intent of the bill is to close the two PLO offices in Washington and New York (whether the U.S. government can actually close a UN observer mission is not clear). Secretary of State Shultz informed Dole in a letter that the First Amendment of the Constitution entitles the Palestine Information Office to operate and that the United States is obligated to permit the PLO Observer Mission by the Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations.

The danger of the legislation, however, goes far beyond the closure of the PLO offices. We can foresee the charge of a "PLO connection" made against the solidarity movement to prevent, for example, the publication of this newspaper, the holding of a Palestinian cultural event, or the raising of charitable funds for medical care for Palestinian refugee camps. The chilling effect on the rapidly growing movement for Palestinian rights in the United States could be devastating.

Unfortunately, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the leader of the pro-Israel lobby, has made this bill a top priority in this election-conscious year, and legislators are clamoring to pass it. In this 200th year of the U.S. Constitution, it appears that many of our lawmakers consider the Bill of Rights a threat to Israeli security and a haven for "terrorists." At presstime, opposition is beginning to organize, particularly by the American Civil Liberties Union and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. We urge all who support peace with justice in the Middle East to do whatever you can to oppose this bill—in Congress and in the courts.

Boston subways have been filled with posters declaring that "20 years is too long," along with text outlining the repression of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This subway poster campaign was organized by the American Friends Service Committee, Boston Mobilization for Survival, and the Lebanon Emergency Committee. Zionist organizations tried to pressure the Boston Transit Authority to refuse the posters, but, with the help of the ACLU, this campaign went ahead anyway.

Another contribution to mark the 20th anniversary is a special issue of *MERIP Middle East Report*. This magazine, already one of the most authoritative, progressive publications on the Middle East, produced a special June issue devoted to the occupation. After an introduction by Fred Halliday, the magazine features an article on the "Palestinians, 20 Years After" by Rashid Khalidi. Also included are profiles of the lives of Palestinians living under occupation by Bishara Doumani and Joost Hilterman. *MERIP Middle East Report* also looks at Americans who seek to build support for Palestinian self-determination, including interviews with activists Gail Pressberg of the American Friends Service Committee, Jim Zogby of the Arab American Institute, and Hilton Obenzinger of the November 29th Committee for Palestine. *MERIP Middle East Report* has been an institution for many years now, and this special issue continues the magazine's dedication to accurate information and timeliness. Send \$15.95 for a year's subscription to Room 58, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

*American-Arab Affairs*, published by the American-Arab Affairs Council, is a quarterly that surveys developments and U.S. policy in the Middle East from a very broad perspective, including political figures such as former Senators George McGovern and Charles Percy. The summer issue includes a special section on the 20 years of occupation, with articles on the history of peace negotiations by Sherif Bassiouni, the origins of the special relationship between the United States and Israel by Donald Ness, and observations on the recent Palestine National Council meeting by Mohammed Hallaj. Arab League UN Ambassador Clovis Maksoud is featured with an article examining the 20 years since the 1967 war. Write to American-Arab Affairs Council, Suite 512, 1730 "M" Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036. Subscriptions are \$25 a year. □



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Mustapha al-Kurd, the noted Palestinian singer, composer, and oud and flute player, toured the United States in June with a five-man group. Al-Kurd, a former blacksmith who lived in exile in Europe for eight years, is music director of Al-Hakawati in Jerusalem and inspired his audiences to clap, sing, and cheer with his moving nationalist songs. His tour was sponsored by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and included Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Miami, Chicago, Milwaukee, Detroit, Boston, Washington, D.C., and New York.

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Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish students organized demonstrations, strikes, and protests at Israeli universities on May 18 to protest a May 17 Israeli cabinet decision to charge \$500 less tuition to Israeli army veterans. The joint protests focused on the racist nature of the decision because most Arabs do not serve in the Israeli army. Hebrew University President Amnon Pazy described the decision as "immoral" and pledged not to "implement this decision in our university. Everyone will pay the same fees." The united front between the Arab Students Union and the General Israeli Union of Students has held firm; the front was initially formed to protest simple tuition increases. David Berman, head of the Israeli union commented, "The decision stinks and we must not allow it. We are no longer engaged in a struggle over money, but in a battle for equality."

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Reuven Kammer, one of four Israelis now being prosecuted for meeting with PLO representatives in Romania in November 1986, spoke throughout the United States this spring, including at events marking the 20th anniversary of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. Kammer made these points strongly: He insisted on a real international peace conference with PLO participation, and noted that it is the United States and Israel which are blocking peace. He noted that "the occupation is now reaching inside Israel"; the result is an erosion of democratic rights for Israelis. And Kammer called on American Jews to speak out on these issues. □



# Orthodox Jews Oppose Israel

Rabbi Moshe Hirsch is the "foreign minister" of Neturei Karta, a group of anti-Zionist orthodox Jews living in Jerusalem, which is associated with the two hundred and fifty thousand worldwide adherents of the Satmar Hasidim. This interview was conducted in New York on behalf of Palestine Focus by Ed Krales. In respect for orthodox custom, we write the deity as G-d.

## What is Neturei Karta?

Jewish people as individuals have always aspired to elevate to the Holy Land in order to serve G-d in G-d's so-called backyard. These Jews never had any political aspirations of ruling the land or part of the land. Their prime and only motive was the adherence to G-d's will, which was their philosophical approach to life on earth. At the outset of the Zionist ideology, the Jewish settlers organized themselves into a group called Neturei Karta, which in Aramaic means "the Guardians of the City," referring to the Holy City, Jerusalem, in order to disassociate from this Zionist movement which the Jewish people found to be infringing on principles of the Jewish faith.

This was at the very beginning, following the First World War, when Zionism first began to be felt. These were simple Jews who had no organizational tenets, who saw that it would be a matter of losing their whole *raison d'être* of being in the Holy Land or of being a Jew if they would submit to Zionism. They did get together and kept

**"We can never recognize Israel."**

apart from the Zionist movement and its facets to this very day.

The Jewish code of law teaches us that a Jew is to be loyal to any ruler he finds himself under during this period of Jewish exile. The Torah, the Bible, teaches us that G-d gave the Holy Land to the Jewish people. They were there for two periods, over four hundred years, with their Holy Temple, in which they served G-d, and they were exiled because they sinned to G-d, Who stipulated that the giving of the land to the Jewish people was stipulated with the adherence to G-d's will. When this stipulation was forfeited, the land was taken away. One of the principles of the faith teaches us that G-d will return the land to the Jewish people through his messiah in *His good time*. Any attempt to accelerate this redemption would bring disastrous consequences.

The late chief rabbi of our organization in the Holy Land was Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, who passed away several years ago. He wrote that the Holocaust is a consequence of this violation of a divine oath, which is based on a passage of the Song of Songs, which is thrice repeated, "I charge you, Jewish daughter, by the deer and antelope of the forest, not to awaken thy love [G-d's love to the Holy Land] until thou wills it." The Talmud refers to this passage, telling us of three divine oaths which G-d charged the Jewish people with. One is not to take over the Holy Land by force against the will of those residing there.

## How Zionists Exploit Religion

The Zionists are exploiting the Holocaust as they exploit the religion. They have two chief rabbis in their employ, and their opinions are not even accepted by the establishment. Exhibit A: There was a City of David controversy several years ago when they were digging up an archeological site on an ancient Jewish cemetery, which was declared an ancient Jewish cemetery by the rabbinate, both rabbis. They referred this issue to the high court, and the high court says this isn't a Jewish state, where the *halacha*, the code of law, guides the country. It's guided by secular Turkish and English law, so therefore you are permitted to continue desecrating the Jewish cemetery.

The high court said exactly what the Neturei Karta was saying all along: This state is not a Jewish state. It is a state run by Jews, just like any company managed by Jews, but whose produce is not Jewish. They exploit the rabbinate, and say, look here we have the wailing wall, we have the rabbinate, we have people with long beards in the parliament, and we have certain laws which are Jewish laws, sort of giving it a Jewish taintage, but in reality it is just a mask of political expansionists.

## Israel Isn't Kosher

In 1912, Agudath Israel was established in order to combat the new-founded ideology of Mizrachi. Mizrachi is the NRP [National Religious Party], which came out with the ideology that we must establish a state according to the Torah, a "kosher" state. This the sage leaders of the *agudas*, the orthodox community, found to be in contradiction with Jewish principles of the faith, that the Jewish people are in exile and are forbidden to establish any form of state in the Holy Land unless it is chosen by the Palestinian residents. Just as in the United States, they can have a Jewish president, if they wish, but not to force any rule over the Holy Land, be it kosher (or what they claim to be kosher), or not. So that was Agudath Israel and Neturei Karta.

In 1924 the chief rabbi, Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonenfeld visited Sharif Hussein and was honored there. He told Hussein and other Arab leaders of the Middle East of that time that the Jewish people had no aspirations for any political gain or rule. All they wished was to live side by side with their Arab neighbors and serve G-d.

But today the Agudath Israel have rebelled against what their forefathers stood for. At first they joined the Knesset to fight Zionism from within. Slowly but surely they became a pillar in the Zionist establishment. So they went in to change laws to make them look Jewish just to characterize the state.

The NRP was Zionist from the beginning, that's their whole being. The Agudath Israel were anti-Zionists. They were the veteran Jewish settlers, pioneers in the Holy Land who organized themselves against Zionism. In 1935 there were elections in the orthodox community organization, and Agudath Israel lost out to Neturei Karta. And slowly but surely they started leaning toward Zionist philanthropies.

They were led astray because of the bait which was extended by the Zionists to support their institutions. It's difficult to run an institution; it takes money; and Zionists know that.

under Israeli rule; there is the 1974 Arab Summit which chose them—and which has been reiterated by the King of Jordan and many others—that the PLO represents the people living in Palestine. And the rule chosen by the PLO is the rule we are to be loyal to. The dominating rule has no lawful position, besides the fact that it is contrary to Jewish theology, so, therefore, we do not recognize the state of Israel.

**"We have to be loyal to the rule chosen by the people living in Palestine, which is the PLO."**

## The Future

If in the future a Palestinian entity is established, we would like to appendage Mea Shearim and vicinity to it in order to get out of the *treyfa*, the nonkosher Zionist establishment, to the kosher Palestinian establishment. I was once asked on the army radio in Israel, "What do you find bad in Mea Shearim that you want to get out of the *treyfa* state of Israel? What doesn't please you there?" I said, "Sometimes people eat *treyfa*, nonkosher foods, and it's *ta'im*, it's tasty, but nevertheless the soul suffers. And the Jewish philosophy teaches the Jew that he is not on earth to enjoy tasty foods, but only to nourish the everlasting counterpart of the human, the soul which lasts on after the body is cast aside after a certain number of years.

If the Americans or those who run international politics give a Palestinian state or a Palestinian-Jordanian state a franchise, then we would be more than just willing, we would fight to be included in that. An article of ours in *Al-Fajr* [Pro-PLO Palestinian newspaper published in Jerusalem] went something like this: Would the Neturei Karta disassociate itself from the PLO if the PLO recognized Israel? The PLO is at war with the Zionist establishment because of a material claim—lands taken away from them. Material-claims compromises may



Anti-Zionist Orthodox Jews burning Israeli flag at counterdemonstration during New York's Israel independence day parade in May.

## How Neturei Karta Functions in Israel

We've reached a point where the Zionist government recognizes us—but we do not recognize them. We have a sort of autonomous principality in which we have no ties. Our institutions do not receive any monies from the government; the families do not receive any national insurance. We do not pay taxes. We certainly won't serve in the army. If we would serve in the army, we would fight against the Zionists.

According to our theology, we are to be loyal to any rule which is chosen by the population in that region of the world. Just as we are to be loyal to the American administration and even to the Thatcher administration, we have to be loyal to the rule chosen by the people living in Palestine, which is the PLO. There were elections held

occur if the deal is approved or is worthwhile. "Good, give us this part of the land and we'll recognize you, and you have the other part." But our war is a theological war which cannot bear any compromise, so, therefore, if they would recognize Israel, that would be an opportunity for us to get out of the nonkosher land and join with the other half. We can never recognize Israel, not in Tel Aviv and not anywhere else. The PLO may because there it is a material war, a material claim.

We are as Palestinian as Yasser Arafat. There are Jewish Palestinians, and there are Muslim Palestinians and Christian Palestinians. In regard to issues relating to the Palestinian people, we also have our interests. If a state is established, we would like to have our representation in the government. □