

Palestine Focus

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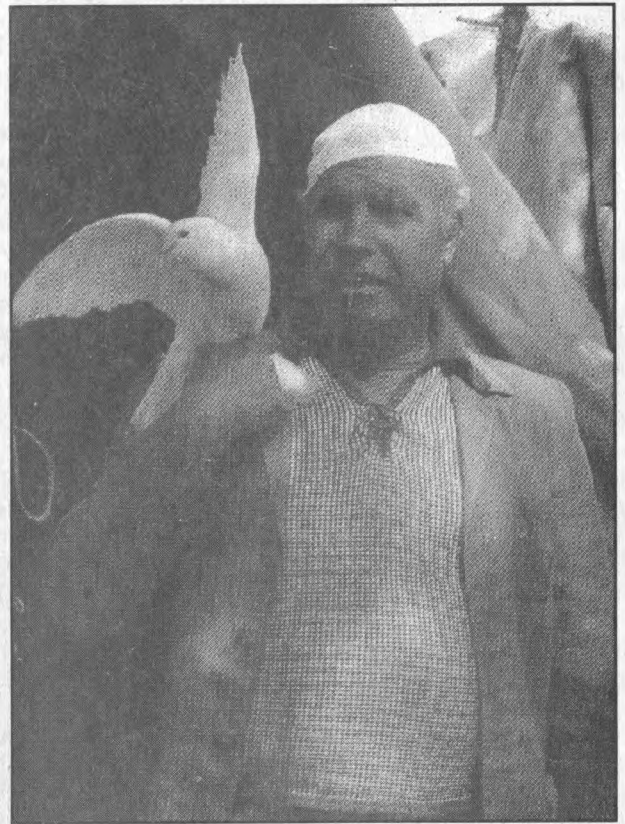
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Editorial

The Limited Logic of Peace



In effect, Yitzhak Shamir said, "I'm going to put out both your eyes and cut off your right arm, and I may take more of you later." Yitzhak Rabin says, "I'm going to put out only one of your eyes now and break both your arms. I may take more later, but I promise to leave you your legs so you can run away." Baker says, "Israel has compromised; it is time for the Arabs to compromise. And meanwhile I am favorable to giving Israel \$10 billion in loan guarantees."

Such is the perverted logic of Middle East peace talks as seen through the lens of the U.S. government. The terms of discussion revolve around the issue of how much

to take from the Palestinians; granting the Palestinians national, human, or civil rights is not on the table. The Palestinian

response was rapid and reasonable. Palestinian negotiators told Baker that while a

Continued on page 6

New Era or the Same Old Errors?

By Steve Goldfield

Once again, the parameters of the ongoing battle for Palestinian rights have dramatically shifted. Israeli elections have brought the Labor Party and Yitzhak Rabin to power, a change that promises to bring the Israeli government into close alignment with the U.S. government. One obvious consequence will be the release of \$10 billion in loan guarantees and, as a corollary, the

potential massive increase in Jewish emigration from the former Soviet Union. The arrival of hundreds of thousands of European Jews would be a tragedy for the prospects of peace in the region. Another tragedy is that nobody is articulating such a position in the national political discourse in the United States.

Although it is very likely that the massive Israeli settlement program in the West Bank and Gaza will slow, the Seven Stars

Continued on page 4

INSIDE

- Michal Schwartz—
Israeli Electionspage 5
- Haider Abdul Shafi—
Peace Processpage 7
- Gideon Spiro—
Israeli Nuclear Threatpage 11

FOCUS ON ACTION

By Sharon Rose and Todd May

In observance of the 25th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza on June 5, the Palestine Aid Society (PAS) sponsored "Walk-a-thons for Palestine" around the country. Participants raised money for projects in Palestine by obtaining pledges for total miles walked. Walkers returned to the starting point for a program of speakers and entertainment. All told, more than 2500 people participated in seventeen cities—a significant increase over the number who came out for the same event last year. The apparent key factor was this year's special effort by PAS to involve other organizations. The program in San Francisco, for instance, prominently featured the San Francisco Mime Troop, the Middle East Children's Alliance, and Pacifica Radio's affiliate, KPFA. Many other groups, including Palestine Solidarity Committee, helped to publicize the event and sent walkers.

Chapters of PSC around the country also observed the anniversary by placing ads in local publications. The ads, signed by local public figures, were part of the educational activities of the "Don't Pay for Occupation" campaign. In Chicago, 15 ads appeared in 11 subway and elevated transit stations for a month. The Chicago billboards, asked commuters to "stop Illinois Senators Dixon and Simon from spending our tax dollars to fund the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza."

Feedback from PSC members to our national office about both of these activities has focused on the difficulty of raising the issue of the continuing Israeli occupation against the drum rolls from the U.S. administration for the "peace process" and the portrayal of the new Israeli government as a peacemaker whose limited settlement freeze received the Bush administration's stamp of approval in the form of support for the 10 billion-dollar loan guarantee. PSC National Coordinator, Riyadh Khoury, told *Palestine Focus*, "Simply put, the danger is that many honest people will be lulled into believing that peace has come to Israel and Palestine. With this in mind, our focus through the end of the year will be on redoubling our efforts to widen our audience and to remind people of the ongoing brutal occupation. Many chapters are preparing a series of local events."

At the same time that we have been grappling with how to get ourselves heard over the barrage of misinformation produced by most of the mass media, we received cheering news of two suc-

cessful recent attempts to raise the issue of the occupation within large membership organizations. A four-year effort by a group called the International Human Rights Task Force (IHRTF) of the American Library Association (ALA) won approval for a resolution condemning Israeli censorship at the ALA national convention in June. The resolution called for an end to all censorship and human-rights violations in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. In the process of raising the issue within various bodies at all levels of the organization, IHRTF members have held forums, debates, and petition drives. They also have worked to publicize individual cases of suppression of intellectual freedom. Their effort to win passage of the resolution at the June convention included a call for ALA members to protest to the Israeli Supreme Court in the case of a Palestinian colleague. Omar Safi, a librarian at Bir Zeit University, is among eleven people threatened with expulsion from the country—without trial—for alleged "security offenses." In Safi's case the offense is alleged membership in a banned organization, the Democratic Front.

Members of Local 3211 of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) at the University of California at Berkeley also succeeded in getting their union's international convention to pass a resolution on the Israeli occupation, although the final version contained compromise language not in the original draft. Instead of condemning outright Israel's occupation and U.S. support for it and opposing the U.S. loan guarantees, the version that passed explicitly followed the lead of the Israeli labor federation, Histadrut, "in calling for a ban on the establishment of new settlements and the expansion of existing ones" and opposed the granting of the loan guarantees unless conditioned on prevention of new and expanded settlements. Nonetheless, the drafters of the resolution felt that many gains were made in the process, which gave them a chance to inform AFSCME members on the issue.

Lebanese composer and performer Marcel Khalife will be on tour to celebrate the release of his newest work, "Summer Night's Dream" on CD and tape from Redwood Records. For more information on his appearances, phone the following: Washington, D.C., October 2, 202/244-2990; New York City, October 3, 212/713-2103; San Francisco, October 9, 510/526-2627 or 415/386-1879; and Los Angeles, October 10, 213/466-2838. Khalife also plans a larger tour of North America in 1993. □

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Test of Strength at Al-Najah University

In an important test of political strength, a four-day standoff between the army and more than two thousand students sitting in at Al-Najah University in Nablus on the West Bank ended July 17 with the Palestinians having shown that the new Israeli administration is under some constraint to refrain from using force. The confrontation began on July 14, Yitzhak Rabin's first day in office, when, according to the army, twenty Palestinian men, some of them armed, took refuge on the campus. Troops surrounded the area and announced that everyone leaving would be searched unless the men gave themselves up. Spokespeople for those inside sent word that they would not hand over the alleged gunmen and would occupy the campus rather than submit to searches. In sympathy, 200 people began a hunger strike at the nearby Palestinian Red Crescent Society. The army imposed a curfew on the entire city. This incident demon-

expulsion of Palestinians by Israelis is still opposed by all Palestinians.

The Intifada Examines Its Flaws

While the Palestinian/Israeli negotiations continue to be played out against the backdrop of the Israeli and American elections, the process of soul searching begun last year within the intifada has taken on a new urgency in recent months. Among the most important issues that appear to be on the minds of everyone—from discussions in coffee houses throughout the country, to formal debates, and exchanges in the press—are the sectarian rivalry and in fighting among the nation-



INTIFADA CHRONICLE

By Sharon Rose

strates that the new Rabin government has no intention of reducing the repression of the occupation. Those who expect Rabin to initiate a kinder, gentler occupation are primed for disappointment.

The confrontation threatened to interfere with Secretary of State James Baker's visit to Israel scheduled for the following week, and Rabin apparently wanted to avoid bloodshed while still needing to save face for the army. Three days of behind-the-scenes negotiations brought a settlement in which the army agreed to lift the siege, permit the students to leave without being searched, and end the curfew. In exchange, six men agreed to give up their weapons and accept expulsion to Jordan for a period of three years. The outcome was generally viewed favorably by Palestinians. They noted that though it was difficult to accept expulsion, which violates the Geneva convention governing treatment of occupied populations, the army was forced for political reasons to give up people they sought to arrest. In addition, sources in Palestine told *Palestine Focus* that those expelled were not among the men who originally took refuge inside the University, and the army negotiators knew that when they accepted the deal. Although this incident and the agreement are unique,

alist groups that are under the umbrella of the PLO and the conflict between PLO supporters and members of the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas. The latter conflict has often spilled over into physical confrontation.

In December, a Hamas activist was killed in the West Bank town of Tulkarim by an activist of Fatah, the largest group within the PLO, during a clash between the rival movements. Several more confrontations between the two groups have taken place in other areas of the occupied territories since the beginning of the year. These have resulted in serious injuries. Hamas opposes the peace process in its present form (in which the starting position of the Palestinian side is an independent state in part of Palestine), while Fatah plays a leading role in the negotiations.

Hamas now appears to be growing in influence, as gauged by a some successes in elections for positions in chambers of commerce and leading bodies of professional associations in the West Bank and Gaza. These elections have been held as a result of a campaign of persuasion by the Israeli Civil Administration against the wishes of the intifada's Unified National Leadership (UNL). Hamas supports the holding of local elections, while in the

view of the PLO and the UNL, local elections should only come after general elections instituting Palestinian self-rule. Some PLO organizations view local elections as providing the Palestinian people an important means of social and political expression. While agreeing that the demand for national self-determination through national democratic institutions would not be satisfied by the holding of local municipal elections, they argue that the two issues should be separated. The UNL did succeed in blocking Israeli-proposed municipal elections, which Israeli negotiators seem to equate with their negotiating position in favor of "interim self-rule arrangements" and "autonomy for people but not land." But the Hamas victories in the chambers of commerce in Hebron and Ramallah and in the Workers Council of the Maqassed Hospital in East Jerusalem, have served to crystalize long-held criticisms among the national movement's supporters.

Self-Criticism

In his article, "Intifada Flaws or a Crisis of National Movement?" in the Arabic language daily, *Al Quds*, May 29, 1992, Haider Abdul Shafi, head of the Palestin-

Continued on next page

Intifada ...

Continued from previous page

ian negotiating delegation to the peace talks, wrote, "We are facing the moment of truth.... The national movement, with all of its factions, has been and still is busy with factional in fighting that has kept it away from its responsibilities of attending to the development of the intifada and to the problems of the citizens."

In a widely read and discussed *Al Quds* article, June 5, 1992, entitled "Reflections on the Present State of the Intifada: Achievements and Failures," Gaza activist Ghazi Abu Jiab said, " Hamas' success during the intifada can be attributed largely to the fact that it has one, and only one, leadership—inside [the country—ed.]—and therefore does not suffer from the results of having a variety of [leadership] groups, or of the existence of various centers which issue their directives from a distance, without being strongly and

directly connected to what is going on here."

In particular, the leadership of the intifada is coming under growing public criticism for its inability thus far to put a stop to assassinations carried out against those suspected of collaboration with Israel. The practice has continued despite UNL statements opposing it. Abu Jiab wrote in *Al Quds*, May 10, 1992, "The way these liquidations are carried out exceeds the bounds of reason and violates all accepted norms—national, religious, and moral.... Even if we assume that the suspects in all these cases actually committed a crime, would an independent system of justice in an independent Palestinian state issue a death sentence in every instance?" This view was echoed by Abdul Shafi (in the article cited above) who argued that the assassinations undermine national unity and the resolve of people to continue to make the great sacrifices required to sustain the intifada.

Hamas and Fatah leadership in Palestine are apparently working to end the

violence. A joint leaflet issued June 7 outlined an eleven-point agreement calling for cooperation and coordination between their organizations. The leaflet renounced the use of force to resolve differences. It came a week after publication of a leaflet by the UNL calling for a "national honor charter" to stop in-fighting among all factions and an increase in democratic dialogue to solve national disagreements. The leaflet, number 83 of the intifada, also called for limits in dealing with suspected collaborators.

Many have pointed to the difficulty of instituting democratic processes under conditions of occupation that necessitate a clandestine leadership. That hardship notwithstanding, the future of the intifada appears entirely bound up with the ability of the leadership to, in the words of Abu Jiab, "listen to their people—whose once whispered grumbling is becoming louder and louder." (English translation of Abdul Shafi article from *Al Fajr*, June 1, 1992; English translation of Abu Jiab articles from *News From Within*, July 3, 1992.) □

New Era ...

Continued from page 1

settlement program will continue to strangle Palestinian communities on both sides of the Green Line that separates Israel from the occupied territories. In the Galilee and the Triangle, in particular, Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship can expect their land and livelihood to be severely threatened, even more so than previously. The Seven Stars plan is the brainchild of former Minister of Housing Ariel Sharon; Israeli journalist Michal Schwartz described it as "a political plan using the immigration as a pawn to achieve far-reaching political and demographic goals.... By the year 2005, the plan aims to completely overturn the homogeneous Arab character" of the Triangle—a strip of land on the Israeli side of the Green Line—by surrounding existing Arab towns with modern Jewish settlements, the "stars," and a toll road system. Moving 390,000 Israeli Jews into an area that abuts the West Bank will undoubtedly have severe consequences for the West Bank as well.

The new Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, claims to be serious about the peace process and genuinely committed to working out some form of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza,

though he offers nothing in East Jerusalem or the Golan Heights. We sincerely hope that some sort of improvement to the desperate situation of Palestinians, who lack any political, civil, or national rights under Israeli occupation, will come. But experience has made us highly skeptical that genuine improvement will come from the likes of Rabin and Bush, or from any of the latter's likely successors without tremendous grassroots pressure.

It was, after all, a Labor government in Israel that began the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and launched the construction of settlements. Although there are Israeli peace forces inside Rabin's cabinet, he does not represent them. He still hopes to bring the far right into his coalition to "tilt" his government away from a position that recognizes legitimate Palestinian rights.

The influence of the U.S. government and the massive financial and military aid it continues to provide Israel is still the most important lever available to U.S. citizens interesting in promoting peace and justice for both Palestinians and Israelis. Although a majority of U.S. citizens opposes increased aid to Israel—for a variety of reasons—the election of Rabin appears to ensure that the 1992 national elections will not contest this issue.

The U.S. government wants stability in the region. Its need for Israel is different now that the Soviet Union and its aid for Arab regimes are gone. The current U.S.

strategy appears to be to defuse the Palestinian issue as a threat to the stability of the Arab states and to eliminate the intifada as an example of popular resistance. U.S. policymakers hope to achieve those goals by moving toward a peace process with severely limited changes for Palestinians, which are to be imposed on their negotiators. Now is a good time to mobilize public pressure to push the results of the peace process much further toward a genuinely just resolution of the outstanding issues.

Uncritical support for Israel, regardless of Israeli government actions, should be made a political liability in U.S. elections. With only a few months left before the elections and no standardbearer for Palestinian rights in the presidential race, there is no easy or simple prescription for political action. The American public favors a just resolution of outstanding issues in the Middle East. Americans also have high expectations for real progress in peace negotiations. But these concerns are not reflected in either of the major national campaigns, which are outdoing each other to curry favor with Israel and its supporters. Supporters of Palestinian rights need to introduce the issue of a just U.S. policy that addresses Palestinian human and national rights into Congressional and Senatorial races (see for example "Five Questions for Candidates" in this issue). Our voices must be heard, and the candidates must feel political pressure if U.S. policy is even to begin to change. □

PF: What is the state of the Israeli peace movement since the Gulf war and Madrid?

MS: The Gulf War was a big blow. Even before the war, Peace Now and the rest of the mainstream Zionist peace movement were very inactive. They supported the Camp David accords, the peace treaty with Egypt, which was rejected by the Palestinians, and they have continued in the same tradition by supporting the Madrid talks without putting any demand on Israel that they recognize the PLO and stop trying to dictate to the Palestinians who will represent them. They agree with the Israeli mainstream on the question of Jerusalem which is the most sensitive question. That would really empty any peace agreement of any content if Jerusalem were to remain annexed as the eternal capital of Israel and East Jerusalem would not be recognized as the Palestinian capital. So they have been very inactive during the intifada—much less active than they should have been. They did do some good things. They worked against the Jewish settlement in Silwan, the Arab village near Jerusalem. They did a lot of work gathering information on settlements in the occupied territories. But that is like gathering a database. They did not mobilize people on central demands.

So no one was surprised when they supported the Gulf war and distanced themselves from Palestinians and criticized their stance in support of Iraq. I feel that this is a very bad position because the Palestinians have the right to self-determination regardless of

their position. It is a natural right of a nation. And if the Israeli peace movement doesn't like their political stance on one thing or another it has nothing to do with their right to have a state of their own. But the real blow was that the more radical wing of the peace movement was also paralyzed after the Gulf War. Even the best of its people supported the war to my great disappointment. There were a lot of discussions in Women in Black, for example, about whether or not to go on demonstrating when there were missiles falling on Tel Aviv.

that Peace Now will not be active because it was always like an extra-parliamentary lobby for the Labor Party. And now that Labor is in power, I fear that they will not do any work in opposition to Rabin. But as for the more radical wing, I'm sure they will continue to try to educate and mobilize people, because we know Rabin to be the bonebreaker of the intifada, the person who gave Ariel Sharon advice in the Lebanon War to tighten the siege around Beirut. And we see what Rabin is doing now. He is not forming a coalition with Meretz and the Arab parties who are to his left. He

is going to T'somet which got eight seats in this election and which is led by Rafael Eitan. He is the person who said that the Palestinians are like drugged cockroaches in bottles, a real right-winger. So Rabin is trying to form a coalition with the right wing and with religious parties, in order to marginalize Meretz and the

Interview with Michal Schwartz

"If the American administration goes on pumping Israel with dollars, the Israeli public will stay with the occupation."



Michal Schwartz is a member of the editorial board of Challenge/Etgar: A Magazine of the Israeli Left, a bimonthly, English-language publication (\$30/year to Challenge/Etgar, P. O. Box 14338, Tel Aviv 61142, Israel.) Before the Gulf war she worked on the newspaper Derik Hanotzot/Tarik al-Hishara, a Hebrew/Arabic publication. She served an eighteen-month prison sentence without parole when she and other staff members were tried on trumped-up charges of membership in a Palestinian organization. Palestine Focus interviewed her during a visit to San Francisco in July 1992.

But we recovered from that crisis after three weeks and we began demonstrating again. And basically that movement is coming back to all its activities. We have a lot of committees, like the Committee Against Torture, and Women for Women Political Prisoners, Physicians for Human Rights. These were always active and never stopped their activities. But as for mobilization in the streets, the picture was quite dim. Now that the elections have changed the political scene in Israel, I fear

Arab parties, and by no means appear as a leftist or a dove. That means that we are in a lot of trouble because Rabin will have the aura of the peacemaker in the United States, the U.S. administration will give him the ten billion-dollar loan guarantee, he will continue to get U.S. support. He will stop the settlements in some places but continue settlements in Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights and in the Jordan Valley. He has even declared that he is not going to even discuss the future of the occupied territories in the next four years. He is just willing to discuss autonomy. Now autonomy can develop into an independent Palestinian state if the right of Palestinian self-determination is recognized. But it can also develop into a Bantustan if that right is not recognized. And Rabin does not recognize that right. So therefore there is all the

reason to be very apprehensive of the new scene.

PF: The U.S. media has done a lot of trumpeting about how the peacemakers are now in office in Israel.

MS: Yes, Rabin will make peace—with the U.S. administration. But I want to say one thing so I will not sound more pessimistic than I feel. The election did make a

Continued on next page

Michal Schwartz ...

Continued from previous page

change in one thing, and we should not overlook this. The party which crusaded for annexation—Guela Cohen's Tehiya Party—disappeared from the map. And Likud took a big blow because it was unable to put an end to the intifada. The blows which these rightwing parties took should not be attributed only to the withholding of the loan guarantees by the United States. It also must be attributed to the strength of the Palestinians in continu-



ing their intifada against terrible repression. Sometimes this element is overlooked when people say that the Israeli public is not now in favor of peace and the exchange of territories for peace, that they only voted against Shamir because of the economic hard times.

But you must say that the Israeli public said "no" to annexation. They understood that that would not work. So they went as far as to reject annexation, but they have not said "yes" to a Palestinian state. They are still stuck midway. So if the American administration goes on pumping Israel with dollars, the Israeli public will stay right where they are, which means perpetuation of occupation. But if on the other hand you have strong pressure not to give Israel any help as long as it is still occupying the territories and building settlements in Jerusalem, then the Israeli public may develop further toward support of ending the occupation.

PF: In that regard, some Palestinians have said that it would be better for their cause for Bush to be reelected because he stood up to Shamir and also began the peace process with the talks in Madrid. Would

you like to comment on the U.S. elections and what they offer from your perspective?

MS: I think it is very narrow-minded to vote for Bush because he initiated the peace process with the Madrid talks. He is the man who waged the terrible war in the Gulf. That war had terrible consequences for peace in the Middle East and for Palestinians. It showed that the Americans are after oil profits and not winning for any people the right of self-determination, least of all the Kuwaitis. Because if they were concerned for this they wouldn't have bombarded the Iraqi people and would not be starving them to death as they are doing

now. And they would not ignore the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. So I believe that both parties in one way or another serve the interests of those Americans who are looking for oil profits, and none of them really give a damn about the homeless, the poor in the United States, or our own people who are deprived of housing, of jobs.

I think those same Americans who are sick and tired of unemployment, of homelessness, of drugs, and how your administration always cares for the rich and keeps the poor in the gutter should see the same picture happening in our area where Israel is occupying Arab lands and exporting arms to all the dictatorships in the world. Americans who see this should be outraged that Israel gets so much aid while Palestinians are living in refugee camps and getting nothing but repression. So we in the Israeli peace movement should say to your people who are progressive and who want peace, "you should demand from any government (and I don't see much difference on this issue between Bush and the Democrats) that they not support the rich, but support the poor—support the Palestinians and support peace. And any support for Israel should be conditioned on ending the occupation and getting out of the occupied territories." So I think it is stupid to see Bush as better than Clinton—both as he treats the poor in the United States and in the Middle East. □

Editorial ...

Continued from page 1

complete freeze on settlements was the only justifiable condition, the release of the loan guarantees without strong conditions preventing their use in the West Bank and Gaza could cause a Palestinian withdrawal from the discussions. Unfortunately, George Bush simply wants to defuse Israel as an issue in the 1992 presidential campaign. The Bush administration is no more interested in genuine and comprehensive peace than it is in Palestinian rights.

We hope the change in Israeli government will lead to a real attitude of compromise and real progress toward peace. But the opening gambit of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin was not promising. Rabin invited Arab leaders to Jerusalem; none of the Western commentary mentioned that

Rabin was inviting his adversaries to formally acknowledge Israel's illegal annexation of Arab East Jerusalem. Rabin did stop planning 5,713 unfunded housing units scheduled for the West Bank and Gaza and halted construction of 1,855 in

The Bush administration is no more interested in peace than it is in Palestinian rights.

preliminary stages, but he is permitting 9,633 to be completed, in addition to about 1,800 new units in occupied East Jerusalem. (*New York Times*, August 7, 1992) Rabin also limits his commitments by promoting a meaningless

distinction between "political" and "security" settlements. Building this settlement housing is illegal under international law and in direct violation of U.S. policy.

So long as U.S. policy is so determinedly one-sided, the notion of genuine progress toward peace is little more than a sad joke. Palestinians can continue to see through a single eye, but all they can see for now is little more than empty posturing. □

The Peace Process:

Overcoming the Obstacles

By Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi

Pace is a function of fairness and justice. That the Middle East has been deprived of the blessing of peace for so long is a matter worthy of deliberation. It is necessary to review the past with objectivity and without prejudice or preconceived ideas. If we follow such a course, we find that the absence of peace is simply due to denying the Palestinian people its right to self-determination. Peace is also the antithesis of force and violence. The concept of "peace from strength," initially adopted by Zionism and

which dictated the necessity of building up a military potential to achieve political aims, has undermined the chances of peace. That the Zionists decided in the first Zionist Congress of 1897 to establish a Zionist state in Palestine, notwithstanding the fact that Palestine was the home of another people who were politically conscious and had all the qualifications of peoplehood, has led to destabilization of the whole region.

So the drama started by violating the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. Jewish immigrants were forced into Palestine against the resistance of the Palestinian people. The violent confrontation that ensued led to involvement of the bordering Arab states, thus complicating and compounding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict into a wider Arab-Israeli conflict.

While Zionism needed a sponsor, in the initial stages, to implement its doctrine of "peace through strength," which it found in colonialist Britain, it soon developed its military capability and carried on

with the same determination, supported politically and financially by the Western world. At the same time Zionism has been able to befog the facts with a well-planned and sustained propaganda campaign delivered to a rather gullible Western audience. So peace has been deprived of any chance.

The present ongoing peace process is the outcome of basic international developments. Recent events have dictated the necessity of dealing seriously with the question of peace in the Middle East. If we really understand the past, then peace is readily achievable by giving back to the Palestinian people their usurped right in self-determination while they are still extending their hand for peace. The prospects of success on this road are dependent on the positions of the protagonists, the Palestinians and Israelis in particular, the Arab states, the Europeans and Americans in general. So let us examine the positions of these parties as they have evolved over the past half century.

Continued on next page

Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi is Chairman of the Palestine Red Crescent in Gaza and Chairman of the Palestinian delegation to the ongoing peace negotiations. He gave the following speech at United Nations Headquarters in New York on the occasion of the Ninth United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, June 24-26, 1992.



George Baranki Azar

I. The Palestinian Position

To understand clearly the present Palestinian position, it is necessary to review briefly the past, to understand the process of transformation that it has undergone from the ultranational zero-sum stance to that of the peace initiative of November 1988 with marked flexibility that permitted participation in the current peace process in spite of the intransigent Israeli conditions.

The mandatory government of Great Britain undertook the establishment of a Jewish national home—a euphemism for a state—in Palestine. It allowed Jewish immigration into Palestine in increasing numbers; allowed sale of lands to the immigrants to establish colonies and plantations; and allowed the establishment of a Jewish agency with extensive powers for administering the life of the Jewish community, becoming practically an autonomous government within the mandatory

Israel continues to adopt an intransigent stand in opposition to legitimate Palestinian rights.

government and a shadow government for the prospective Israeli state. The demographic ratio, Jews to Palestinians, which was 1 to 10 at the start of the mandate became 1 to 2 in 1948 at the end of the mandate, which shows the extent of injustice initially suffered by the Palestinians.

The Palestinians resisted such a stark violation of their right to self-determination. Out of a bitter and deep sense of grievance and with an overwhelming emotion that thwarted the dictates of reason, they waged a severe and protracted struggle against far superior forces and suffered massive sacrifices in person and material, finally culminating in the catastrophe of 1948, which witnessed the birth of Israel and the emergence of the Palestinian refugee problem. Seven hundred and fifty thousand Palestinians were driven out of 10 mixed and nonmixed cities and 416 villages, which were all razed to the ground to obstruct their return. Israel came out occupying 77 percent of Palestinian territory, 22 percent more than was allocated in the partition scheme.

The events of 1948 remained for a long time the subject of recriminations and extended debate between Arabs and Israelis concerning what actually took place, especially the cause of the Palestinian

exodus and the real objectives of the Arab state's intervention in Palestine. Many of the contested events were finally settled through well-documented research by the late Simha Flapan, who was a very respected Israeli scholar. He based his findings on research of declassified Israeli state archives and Ben-Gurion's memoirs. He embodied his findings in a book entitled *Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities*. Allow me to quote from his book (pp. 8–9) concerning two myths:

“Myth Two: ‘The Palestinian Arabs totally rejected partition and responded to the call of the mufti of Jerusalem to launch an all-out war on the Jewish state, forcing the Jews to depend on a military solution.’ This was not the whole story. While the mufti was, indeed, fanatical in his opposition to partition, the majority of Palestinian Arabs, although also opposed, did not respond to his call for a holy war against Israel. On the contrary, prior to Israel's

Declaration of Independence on May 14, 1948, many Palestinian leaders and groups made efforts to reach a *modus vivendi*. It was only Ben-Gurion's profound opposition to the creation of a Palestinian state that undermined the Palestinian resistance to the mufti's call.

“Myth Three: ‘The flight of the Palestinians from the country, both before and after the establishment of the state of Israel, came in response to a call by the Arab leadership to leave temporarily in order to return with the victorious Arab armies. They fled despite the efforts of the Jewish leadership to persuade them to stay.’ In fact, the flight was prompted by Israel's political and military leaders, who believed that Zionist colonization and statehood necessitated the ‘transfer’ of Palestinian Arabs to ‘Arab countries.’”

June 1967—Under the ever-available pretext of security, Israel waged a pre-emptive war against adjacent Arab countries and occupied Sinai, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Golan Heights. Notwithstanding Security Council Resolution 242 that calls for withdrawal and which stipulates the inadmissibility of acquiring territory by war and in glaring violation of the 4th Geneva protocols,

Israel embarked on confiscating lands, establishing colonies, and settling Israeli citizens in the occupied territories.

Later, Israel exploited the peace treaty with Egypt to activate its settlement policy and to wage a dirty war in Lebanon in June 1982. The legitimate Palestinian resistance to occupation was met by the most brutal conduct, physically and psychologically, rewarding all citizens—men, women, and children—with a style of collective punishment that included the demolition of homes and the destruction of farms in flagrant violation of the principles of human rights. All this has been exposed to the whole world since the start of the intifada.

The intifada has been a spontaneous, broad-based, popular uprising by Palestinians in the occupied territories to portray the tragedy of the Palestinian people, to affirm their will to defend their right to self-determination, whatever the cost, and to express their categorical rejection of occupation.

In asserting their dignity and self-respect through the intifada, the Palestinians have been demonstrating that their uprising is pregnant with the seeds of reconciliation and peace. True enough, hardly a year passed when the Palestine National Council, in its 19th session in Algeria on November 15, 1988, adopted a peace initiative that calls for acceptance of the two-state principle as the basis for negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis in the context of an international peace conference for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Israel rejected this initiative out of hand and abusively and escalated its brutal practices against the inhabitants, its usual response when it faces the challenge of peace.

The Palestinian leadership, consistent with its serious commitment to peace and in spite of Israeli rejection, did not hesitate to agree to participate in the regional peace conference proposed by the United States and Russia after the Gulf War. The genuineness of the Palestinian position is enhanced by the negative and intransigent Israeli conditions. In Madrid, the Palestinians declared clearly and frankly the practical means for realizing a just and stable peace, and at present they continue to be engaged in the peace process with open minds and hearts. They defined their understanding of the interim period (the first phase of the peace process) as follows:

The basis of the peace process, as stipulated in the letter of invitation, is Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. In accordance with these resolutions, the stipulations of the 4th Geneva Convention

Continued on next page

and the tenets of international law established in The Hague Agreements of 1908, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip are considered to be occupied Palestinian territories and Israel is a belligerent occupant. The letter of invitation stipulates that negotiations will be conducted in a Palestinian-Israeli track in two interrelated phases. The first phase aims at establishing an interim Palestinian self-government that endures for five years, with powers to be decided through negotiations. The second phase begins in the third year of the first phase with the objective of defining the final status of the

ground for developing the interim self-government toward the realization of the principle of self-determination and independent existence. It is envisaged that this should be accomplished in a manner that would not compromise the legitimate security concerns of Israel.

So, the Palestinian understanding and vision of the interim interval, which was presented to the Israeli side, is as follows:

1. The bases of the negotiation process are UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and the arrangements in the interim period are transitional and

3. Power and authority of interim self-government should encompass: a) the different aspects of the citizens' life, including legislation and administering justice; b) participation in internal security arrangements with occupation forces which will be deployed in agreed-upon sites.

4. The interim self-government should be established in the following manner: a) elections through secret ballot in accordance with the principles of the UN charter and the Declaration on Human Rights; b) provision of freedom and guarantees under the supervision of an international body for the integrity of the election process; c) asserting and activating the democratic practice in the interim period and thereafter.

Finally, the Palestinian position is characterized by 1) serious and sincere commitment to peace; 2) achieving a settlement through negotiations on the basis of the two-state principle; 3) adopting the democratic practice in the interim interval and thereafter; 4) basing relations between the future Palestinian state and its neighbors on peace, normal neighborly practice, and agreements that serve mutual interests and rein-

force regional and world peace.

Israeli Position

The declared position of the present Israeli leadership is that all of Palestine is Israeli territory; the Palestinians are simply Arabs living in this territory with no legal or historical rights and any peace arrangements should be compatible with this position. Israel has been conducting itself in the occupied territories in accord with this claim by appropriating lands, establishing settlements, and arbitrarily disposing of

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Francisco L. Conde/Impact Visuals

occupied territories. Palestinians from East Jerusalem and the diaspora will participate in the second-phase negotiations.

The concept that the first phase leads to the second and that both are interrelated dictates the banning of any physical changes in the status quo that can prejudice the outcome of negotiations in the second phase. Therefore, the Palestinian side considers that cessation of confiscating lands and establishing settlements is a practical necessity to preserve the integrity and credibility of the peace process. It further considers that the interim concept means the progressive and orderly transfer of authority from the occupation authority to the interim self-government, paving the

will not be frozen into autonomy or self-government.

2. Imperative preparatory steps that call for: a) abolition of all Israeli procedures that are in violation of international law, Geneva conventions, and UN resolutions, especially the colonization of territories and the discriminatory practice in land registration and water consumption; b) protection of the citizens against repressive and oppressive measures; c) revoking all the laws that are discriminatory against local citizens and those that are applied only to Israeli settlers.

water resources. While security was until recently the declared pretext for holding onto the occupied territories, today it is an ideological claim as security is no longer a tenable argument.

Israel consistently declared its desire for peace, claiming that it is the threatening and aggressive Arab-Palestinian position that foiled their attempts. So what is the truth? Which is the party that rejects a just and stable peace?

If we examine the conduct of the consecutive Zionist-Israeli leaderships, we invariably find that they have always been included to resort to force and violence rather than reconciliation and peace. This conduct has been perpetually debated by Israeli leaders and thinkers. Many preferred conciliation and understanding with the Arabs, but the extremists have always had their way. If we trace the conduct of the Zionist movement and Israel, we find that nothing has been realized on Palestinian territory except by force. Let me quote again Professor Simha Flapan on the years of the late forties and the establishment of Israel:

“Myth Seven: ‘Israel’s hand has always been extended in peace, but since no Arab leaders have ever recognized Israel’s right to exist, there has never been anyone to talk to.’ On the contrary, from the end of World War II to 1952, Israel turned down successive proposals made by Arab states and by neutral mediators that might have brought about an accommodation.” This proves the fraudulence of Israeli claims on peace. Its consecutive acts of aggression on pretexts of self-defense are untenable. The disproportionately violent response to symbolic violence by the intifada, especially after the Palestinians presented their peace initiative and again after the start of the peace process in Madrid, leaves no doubt about Israeli lack of concern for the imperatives of a just and stable peace. Israel agreed unwillingly to participate in the peace conference in Madrid under American pressure and after insisting on conditions contradictory to the spirit of peace. In his speech in the plenary session, Prime Minister Shamir reiterated his worn-out argument against the Palestinians’ rights in their homes and lands.

Israel continues to maintain this position on the negotiating table, where it insists on remaining the source of authority in the occupied territories, on conceding limited administrative power to the Pales-

tinian interim self-government, and on continuing the seizure of land and the establishment of more settlements.

Positions of the Arab Countries

The roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict stem from the attempt of the Arab countries to

I am sure that the present Arab stand is seriously committed to a fair and just peace on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon.

support and stand by the Palestinian people, the victim of the aggression. The initial and basic Arab position was not absolute hostility toward Jewish aspirations in Palestine. Their initial attempts were to reconcile these aspirations to the basic rights of the Palestinian people in a peaceful and fair way. The situation deteriorated to hostility and war only because of Israeli Zionist extremism that attempted initially to entice the other Arab states to stop supporting the Palestinians.

In his book, *Zionism and the Palestinian*, Professor Flapan states (pp. 267-68): “While Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon made no secret of their sympathy for the Palestinian Arabs, they were worried about a violent confrontation in Palestine and, on more than one occasion, offered to mediate. At this stage, there was no conflict between Zionism and the Arab states. Zionist leaders and Palestinian Jews were able to travel freely to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq to discuss openly with political leaders there the future of Palestine. Jews from these countries were at liberty to settle in Palestine. In some Arab capitals, Zionist organizations and some youth movements operated as freely as any other political movements. In Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus, Zionist representatives maintained regular contacts with Arab leaders, while these leaders themselves visited Jerusalem for talks with the Jewish agency and sometimes toured Jewish areas accompanied by Zionist guides. The Jews

and the Arabs also maintained cultural contacts. An Egyptian soccer team visited Palestine, and the Jewish Philharmonic Orchestra gave concerts in Cairo. Thousands of Jews took their summer vacations in Lebanon, where hotels and restaurants had Hebrew menus. Jewish manufactured goods were sold in Arab capitals, and Arab agricultural produce from Syria and Lebanon reached the Jewish market.”

There is enough proof in all this that the Arab countries never assumed an initial hostile position toward the Jews and that they had sincere readiness for constructing normal relations on the basis of equity and justice. It is the Zionist movement that tried to exploit this attitude for its objectives at the expense of Palestinian rights as in the collusion with King Abdallah [of Jordan-ed.] against Palestinian statehood. I am sure that the present Arab stand is seriously committed to a fair and just peace on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Palestinian territories, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon in exchange for solid guarantees for Israel’s security.

The American/European Position

I dare say, without hesitation, that the United States and Europe bear some responsibility for the peace crisis in the Middle East. They have maintained a supportive and accommodating position toward Israel in spite of its aggressive and extremist stance in rejecting Palestinian rights. It has, indeed, been very difficult to understand the American-European position that always reflected a stark contradiction between words and deeds. It is this attitude that enabled Israel to ignore and violate all UN resolutions for the last 25 years. This attitude also encouraged Israel to be abusively disrespectful for conditions on the use of special armaments [cluster bombs-ed.], as had been the case in the Lebanon war. Israel’s record of human-rights violations, notably the practice of collective punishment, which has been particularly badly demonstrated in obstructing education in the occupied territories, did not evoke any practical response on the part of Western democracies.

The American and European governments are most outspoken in proclaiming their support and respect for the principles of international law and human rights.

Continued on page 14

Israel and the Nuclear Problem

By Gideon Spiro

Once again, a United States' threat to enforce Iraqi compliance with a UN Security Council resolution stripping Baghdad of its nuclear, chemical, and biological arsenal has been successful. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, on April 8 Iraqi leaders announced an agreement to destroy their nuclear facilities.

Such international efforts to neutralize Iraq's nonconventional military capabilities deserve the support of everyone who cares about the well-being of the Middle East and the security of the global community. Meanwhile, unfortunately, the recent efforts to disarm Iraq are sharply contradicted by the international community's silence regarding the nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of Iraq's chief rival: Israel. This double standard is especially troubling since it was Israel that started the nonconventional arms race in the region when it decided in the 1950s to become a nuclear power and build the Dimona

reactor in the Negev desert with the cooperation of France.

The basic facts about Israel's nuclear arsenal have been known since 1986 when Mordechai Vanunu handed over the internal plans of the Dimona plant, complete with photographs, to the *London Sunday Times*. Vanunu, who worked as a nuclear technician at the facility for nine years, revealed that Israel had more than 300 nuclear bombs, far more than any think tank or intelligence expert had imagined. Does a country like Israel need such weapons? The answer, in my opinion, is unequivocally no—even after allowing for Israel's legitimate security concerns. Plainly, no defensive military needs—not even deterrence—can justify such an arsenal.

Unfortunately, nuclear weapons have tempted Israel's leaders to believe they can lord over the Middle East, maintaining their nuclear monopoly with raw military force, as needed, and with James Bond-



Mordechai Vanunu gagged by Israeli soldiers.

style operations. Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin's decision in 1981 to bomb the Iraqi Osirak research reactor was an expression of this Israeli perception of power. Though such tactics may receive welcome cheers in Tel Aviv, nevertheless, they should be viewed as the provocative acts that they are.

Moreover, the perception of power that drives such a policy may be an illusion. With hindsight it is clear that the 1981 raid on Baghdad not only did not deter Iraqi nuclear ambitions, it may even have fueled them. Following the Gulf war, the UN inspection team concluded, based on their review of Iraqi government documents, that Israel's 1981 raid served to accelerate rather than frustrate Hussein's nuclear program.

Nor is it likely that Israel's nuclear capabilities will deter other nations from pursuing the nuclear option. Iran apparently is making a major bid to join the nuclear club. In late March 1992, the German weekly, *Stern*, interviewed a senior

Iranian leader who stated that Israel's nuclear arsenal "leaves us no choice but to acquire the same weaponry." Syria and Egypt already have armed themselves with the poor man's alternative to the bomb—chemical and biological weapons—in an effort to protect themselves until such time that they can acquire nukes.

Some argue that nuclear weapons are less dangerous in the hands of Israel than in the hands of an ayatollah or a Saddam Hussein, since "Israel is a responsible democratic state." But such views reflect a naive understanding of the situation in the Middle East.

Continued on next page

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Free Palestine

In the first place, Israel's history of occupation and its continuing military rule over 2 million Palestinians is not the behavior of a responsible state—just the opposite, in fact. Second, because the harsh realities of arms trade and the effects of militarization exert such a powerful corrupting influence on all states in the Middle East, the differences between democratic and totalitarian governments can sometimes narrow and even vanish altogether.

Just as the Iraqi decision to build nuclear weapons was made by only one man, Saddam Hussein, so also the earlier Israeli decision was made by one man alone, David Ben-Gurion. Nor did Israel's democratic institutions play any role in that decision. Indeed, over the years, the nuclear issue has never once been openly discussed in the Knesset (Israel's parliament) and only rarely has it been mentioned in the Israeli press. Considering this wall of silence, the differences between democratic Israel and totalitarian Iraq on the nuclear issue seem almost irrelevant.

Nor do the Islamic states have a monopoly on nationalist religious fundamentalism. Jewish fundamentalism also exists and influences a large proportion of the Israeli population. Jews with extreme views hold many positions of power throughout Israeli society: in the military, the government, the weapons industry, and in the financial and industrial sectors. Jewish fundamentalists also thrive across most of the wide spectrum of Israeli politics, from the hawkish wing of the Labor Party to Likud and the far right. The danger posed by such people close to the Israeli nuclear trigger is not fundamentally different from the potential threat of a nuclear-armed Saddam Hussein.

There is also a rude irony in the fact that, should Israel's leaders one day decide to use nuclear weapons, the fateful step could be self-defeating. In a geographically compressed region such as the Middle East, any local use of nukes certainly would contaminate Israel with radioactive fallout. Furthermore, even in peacetime, the mere presence of nuclear reactors and bombs carries the ever-present risk of a nuclear accident. But unlike Russia, where people were able to flee to safety, Israel is so tiny that even a mini-Chernobyl would be a national catastrophe. There is also the matter of nuclear waste. Israeli citizens have no idea what has been done with the waste generated by the Dimona reactor over the past thirty years. Nobody knows

what safety precautions, if any, have been implemented to protect the nearby towns and villages. No debate on nuclear waste has ever been held in Israel nor has any political party made the issue a part of its agenda.

Last December, three decades after the establishment of the Dimona facility, the first antinuclear demonstration was held in front of the Dimona reactor by the Israeli Committee for Mordechai Vanunu. Demonstrators called on the government to release information about storage of nuclear waste, to open the reactor to international supervision, to sign the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, and to halt production of nuclear weapons. The demon-

Israel's nuclear weapons are not simply an internal Israeli issue, they are a world concern.

strators also called for the release of Mordechai Vanunu.

Indeed, it is not possible to talk about Israel's nuclear weapons without mentioning Vanunu. It was Vanunu who took the courageous step of exposing Israel's lie that it would not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East, whereupon the Israeli government reacted immediately to silence Vanunu. He was kidnapped in Rome and prosecuted behind closed doors in Israel. For nearly six years since the day he was hijacked, Vanunu has remained in solitary confinement.

Though the cruel measures used against Vanunu raise serious doubts about Israel's democratic pretensions, Israeli officials try to justify their behavior by comparing Vanunu with the spy Jonathan Pollard. But it is a false equation. Pollard was a U.S. citizen who sold state secrets to another country. Vanunu acted as an exemplary citizen on behalf of the truth. In fact it was Vanunu's commitment to democracy—not the lure of money—that compelled him to expose the lies of his government.

Vanunu is more properly compared with Daniel Ellsberg and Tony Russo, who released the Pentagon Papers and showed that the U.S. government was lying to the American people about the Viet Nam war.

Later their efforts were backed up by a U.S. court when it rejected the Nixon administration's efforts to prevent publication of the papers. The court protected the American public's right to know the facts about its government's activities. Unfortunately, because Israel does not have a constitution, the same rights are not protected by law in Israel. Today Ellsberg and Russo are free while Vanunu—no less a hero—rots in an Israeli prison cell.

Another measure of Israel's irresponsibility is its development of biological weapons at a research facility in NesZiona, near Tel Aviv. This research on biological warfare violates all international conventions. Once again, the Israeli government hid the project from its citizens and employed military censorship to block any information from reaching the public. Several months ago a leading Israeli newspaper was prohibited by military censors from printing an article describing research at the NesZiona Institute.

If Israel's leaders were truly responsible, they would ask the United States to help initiate negotiations to transform the Middle East into a nuclear, chemical, and biological weapon-free zone. Had we an

Israeli version of South Africa's De Klerk, Israel *would already have announced* its intention to end further production of nuclear weapons and to destroy those weapons already existing—as part of a peace treaty with its Arab neighbors. But this has not happened, nor is it likely to happen in the near future.

The international community has every reason to be alarmed by the spreading arms race in the Middle East. And it has a moral duty to work toward the dismantling of all nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in the region. However, because of Israel's dependence on the United States, the U.S. government *alone* has the means, and therefore a special obligation, to use its considerable influence to prevail upon Israel to sign the nonproliferation treaty already approved by most of the world's nations and to submit to international inspections.

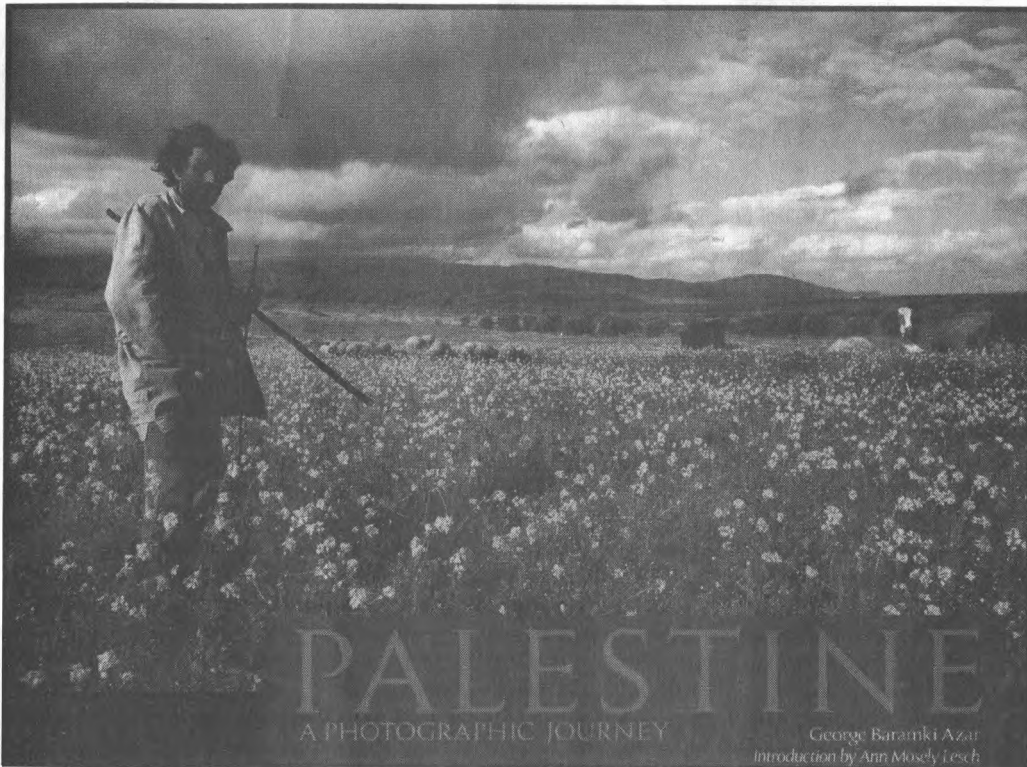
Israel's nuclear weapons are not simply an internal Israeli issue, they are a world concern. And it is high time that Israel's continuing refusal to comply with international nonproliferation standards be brought before the UN Security Council. Israel should be held to the same standards that are now being implemented in the case of Iraq. □

By Bill Hofmann

The photographer George Baramki Azar vividly describes his reaction to a July 1981 bombing of a Beirut residential neighborhood by Israeli war planes, and the brief mention it garnered in the U.S. press: "I could imagine how many news articles would have followed the death of four hundred Jewish civilians in an Arab attack; yet in 1981 the killing of

Book Review

Palestine: A Photographic Journey



four hundred Arab civilians by Israel was scarcely noticed. Even those who regularly spoke out in defense of human rights in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and South Africa were silent when it came to Lebanon and Palestine."

Making a people invisible is the most powerful way to deny them their rights, for if no one notices, you can do what you please to them. Conversely, making a people visible is one of the most important ways of helping them claim their rights. One of the major early victories for the intifada was the daily television news coverage of "muscular Israeli soldiers pinning Palestinian men and women to the ground and methodically smashing their bones with clubs and iron bars." (Azar) For the first time in many years, for Americans the

Palestinian people were real people: men, women, and children who were victims of the military might of Israel.

But shortly thereafter, the Israeli government took the lesson South Africa learned to heart—if you stop the pictures, many people will stop caring. Foreign media found it increasingly difficult to operate in the Israeli-occupied territories, and Israel made a point of closing Palestinian press offices, banning Palestinian newspapers and imprisoning Palestinian writers. So the flow of images slowed to a trickle, and new crises grabbed the attention of the fickle mainstream media. But the tide had turned—first the intifada, then the historic PNC meeting at which the state of Palestine declared its independence, have brought the Palestinian issue into

what Miranda Bergman of the Break the Silence Mural Project calls the "family of struggles" for American activists.

Palestine: a Photographic Journey is a breakthrough contribution to making the people of Palestine visible for a broad audience. The title itself is a challenge to the conventional wisdom which denies the existence of a nation and a people. Published by University of California Press, this book is a collection of beautiful and moving photographs and text which document the early days of the intifada in a warm and personal fashion. Unlike another excellent book of text and photos of the intifada, Phyllis Bennis' and Neal Cassidy's *From Stones to Statehood*, Azar's book isn't a detailed political history of the intifada, but it does contain a good brief overview by Professor Ann Mosely Lesch of Vilanova.

Azar gives us glimpses of the daily life of Palestinians by focusing on a few stories that illustrate common experience: the land of Palestine, the Israeli occupation, land seizures and house demolitions, International Women's Day 1988, arrest and detention, a funeral, a refugee camp. The images vibrantly illustrate a broad range of Palestinian experience, from joy to grief, from determination to bewilderment.

Accompanying the images are text taken from eyewitness testimony, open letters, news

clippings, and Palestinian poetry. The text eloquently complements and reinforces the images. For instance, facing a photo of a young man being beaten and dragged away by soldiers are two affidavits collected by Al Haq (a West Bank human rights organization) from two young men who were beaten horribly by the IDF (one lost an eye as a result).

In his preface, George Azar says "Like shadows, the Arabs ... do not exist except when they threaten Jewish lives or American financial interests. For Americans the Arab world is invisible, or at best a shadow reality, dark, threatening, and unknown." In *Palestine: a Photographic Journey*, he brings the Palestinians out of that shadow, and lets their lives and their voices speak. □

Peace Process ...

Continued from page 10

However, their double-standard attitude has made a mockery of these values and principles. Is it consistent with human-rights principles to help Russian Jews (who never had any connection to Palestine) to settle on Palestinian territory, while the Palestinian refugees who were forced out of Palestine four decades ago are still denied their rights of repatriation? Thirty thousand Palestinians from the occupied territories who have been working in Kuwait are presently under threat of deportation and are not allowed to go back to their homes and lands.

However, there are hints of positive change in the American and European positions. The repeatedly declared European community stance in recognizing the Palestinian right to self-determination and independent existence has been enunciated in meetings in Venice, Madrid, Dublin, and Brussels. Israel's relations with the Common Market may be linked to its conduct in the peace process.

The present United States attitude toward Israel's demand for loan guarantees is another hint. The hope is that the American and European positions are moving toward a more balanced attitude.

Conclusion

While Israel continues to adopt an intransigent stand with frank opposition to legitimate Palestinian rights, it is obvious that Palestinian and Israeli interests need not be mutually exclusive. Palestinian and Israeli objectives will become compatible if the spirit of compromise and moderation prevails. The Palestinians have already gone a long way on this track by dropping the ideal of one democratic state in all of Palestine and accepting the two-state solution. Israel has already accomplished the basic objective of creating a safe haven for Jews who may suffer discrimination. It should drop the unjustified greater-Israel ideal and respond to the legitimate demands of the Palestinians. The American and European democracies no longer have any valid reason to continue accommodating Israel's illegitimate aspirations that entail flagrant violations of all the avowed principles and values of the democratic world.

We are facing a moment of truth and crucial choice between a path that would lead to peace and equitable coexistence or a path that would lead to protracted violence and bloodshed.

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Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) is a national grassroots organization working for Palestinian rights and to change U.S. government policy towards the Middle East. Many Americans have responded to the tremendous upsurge of the Palestinian intifada and now question the United States' role in the Middle East. PSC believes that the conflict in the Middle East is a key issue of global war and peace, of U.S. intervention and of justice and human rights. With other groups we are building a broad and growing movement for Palestinian self-determination. This issue is now an important component of the broader peace and justice movement. We need your support, and we invite you to join with us in working to advance the issue of Palestinian rights.

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The Gulf war refuses to go away. Two years after Iraq's military rolled across the border into Kuwait and a year and a half after the U.S.-directed military victory over Iraq, Iraq's infrastructure is still in a shambles, Iraqi civilians still suffer from the ravages of the "surgical" bombing, and Saddam Hussein is still in power.

Texas Democrat Henry Gonzalez, chair of the House Banking Committee, recently said that the committee's probe of Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, an Italian bank whose Austin branch was under federal investigation for a multibillion-dollar bank fraud, has uncovered documents that show the administration "knew a great deal about Saddam Hussein's military procurement program and made a conscious decision to tolerate it, and in many cases facilitated the effort." Perhaps coincidentally, the United

States, Britain and France then escalated a refusal of Iraq to permit UN inspection of its Agriculture Ministry to the brink of war, crowding out this embarrassing reminder of Iraq's cozy relationship with the United States government until the invasion in 1990.

The instant books on the conflict and its background have long since been pulped to produce new instant books (some, like the bios of Ross Perot, with even shorter shelf-lives). Articulate and in-depth discussion of the many issues raised by the Gulf war take longer, though. We've reviewed two very important contributions to the genre in past issues of the *Focus*, Bennis' and Moushabeck's *Beyond the Storm* (*Palestine Focus* #47) and *War After War* (*Palestine Focus* #49-50). Two more books warrant attention:

The Gulf War and the New World Order
[Haim Bresheeth and Nira Yuval-Davis, eds., Zed Press 1992]

Edited by two members of the respected Khamsin publication collective, this is an exceptionally brilliant and literate collection of essays. The editors describe its genesis, during a meeting early in the Gulf war: "We discovered very quickly that, unlike during previous wars in the Middle East, this time there arose some sharp division concerning the attitudes socialists should take towards the war." The collection is encyclopedic in its coverage, reflecting the editors' commitment to regional, not just local, change.

It is divided into four sections: the superpowers' role in the crisis, the Middle Eastern protagonists, the context of the

GETTING IT ALL IN FOCUS

By Bill Hofmann

The Gulf War in Perspective

crisis, and the left debate on the war. It begins with a short and clear contribution by Noam Chomsky and an interesting discussion of Britain's role in the war.

The Gulf War contains very detailed analyses of the roles and motivations of the regimes of the region in the Gulf conflict. Authors discuss the North African Arab states, Egypt, Turkey, the Gulf states and Iran. The popular reaction against threatened Western intervention in the region and for Saddam Hussein played a decisive role in many countries' policies, and the dimensions of this reaction, in the West Bank, and across the Arab world, are clearly discussed.

If this work has any failing it is that it is relentlessly academic and theoretical, and nowhere is this clearer than in the discussions of the background to the crisis. Dense presentation mars a series of fascinating articles about the rise of economic inequality around the world and the negative role of oil on the region. Contributors discuss the pivotal role of Islam, gender in the Gulf war, and the environmental impact (and the West's one-sided view of whose fault it was).

The last section presents, almost in stereotypes, the three main positions that progressives and peace activists took around the issues raised by the war. A Palestinian, Adel Samara, strongly supports Iraq against what he sees as reactionary Arab regimes in collaboration with Western imperialism. Fred Halliday shocked many on the left, familiar with his scholarship around Iran, when he supported Western intervention against Iraq. His contribution articulates his position, which, in a sentence is, "better imperialist

intervention than fascism." Moshé Machover, an Israeli leftist, takes us to the final position, which many (including PSC) took during the war, critical of both Saddam Hussein, and his cynical manipulation of Islamic fundamentalism and the Palestinian situation, and of the Western governments who built Saddam Hussein only to impose a terrible cost on the Iraqi people.

Collateral Damage: The "New World Order" at Home & Abroad [Cynthia Peters, South End Press, 1992].)

"Across the pond" in Boston, Cynthia Peters has edited a collection that is different from Gulf War in some ways, both positive and negative. The good news is that the writing in this collection is much more accessible. And many of the contributions to this collection are equally brilliant. The

bad news is that some of the contributions are rhetorical in ways that do not illuminate, but merely aggravate.

This collection, too, has its contribution by Chomsky, which benefits from a little more time (it was written several months after his contribution to the first volume). It is followed by a fascinating set of essays by Cynthia Enloe (whose book *Does Khaki Become You* has become a model for feminist analysis of women and the military). Arthur MacEwan, an editor of *Dollars and Sense*, contributes a detailed explanation of the economic crisis facing the United States, which largely motivated the war. One useful feature of this volume is that it includes pieces from other publications, such as Joe Stork and Ann Lesch's piece about the motivations of the war from *Middle East Report*.

This volume, as its title indicates, is not so much about the Middle East as the New World Order and its repercussions at home and abroad. One special strength of this volume is its collection of interviews and information about the many communities affected by the war. There are valuable contributions about minorities in the military, anti-Arab racism, and military resisters.

One-fourth of the volume consists of discussion pieces from progressives of all stripes who reflect on the implications of the New World Order and the lessons of the war. Contributions by Rebecca Gordon, Salim Muwakkil, Roots Against War (a group of young people of color active in San Francisco), Ward Churchill, Leslie Cagan and South End Press founder Mike Albert round out this thoughtful yet activist volume. □

Five Questions for Candidates

By Bill Hofmann

National elections are approaching, and we at *Palestine Focus* thought that candidates for national office should be asked where they stand on important issues of human rights and peace that face national leaders.

1. Should recipients of U.S. foreign aid be held to minimal standards of human and political rights, and if so, why do we ignore consistent violations by our top recipient of aid: Israel? Why are we granting \$10 billion in loan guarantees to a government which is occupying another nation? Background: Israel routinely censors Palestinian media, tortures Palestinian prisoners, holds Palestinians for months without charges, and denies Palestinians any basic human, civil, or political rights.

2. Do you oppose the proliferation of nuclear weapons? Since the United States is a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and since U.S. law prohibits aid to any country which is in violation of this treaty, why do we ignore Israel's

widely-acknowledged stockpile of nuclear weapons, even as we help the United Nations remove Iraqi nuclear capability? Background: Israel has even helped other countries, such as South Africa, develop nuclear capability.

3. What should be the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War world? President Bush, with almost universal support of the American political establishment, used the UN as a forum for condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Later he used Security Council resolutions as justification for the U.S.-led intervention in the Gulf. Should we apply all Security Council resolutions about invasions with equal force? Is the United Nations the appropriate venue for peace negotiations and discussions of the illegal Israeli invasion and occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights (condemned in UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338)?

4. In a world in which political intransigence is falling out of favor, should we be rewarding continued Israeli rejection of Palestinian rights? If South Africa has legalized and even contemplatess sharing

power with the African National Congress, why does Israel refuse to talk to the chosen representatives of the Palestinian people: the PLO? Why does Israel refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the United Nations to resolve disputes and ignore UN resolutions 242 and 338, which call for Israel to withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967? If the new Israeli government is as committed to peace as it claims, why does it not offer to compromise on these issues?

5. What should U.S. leaders do about arms sales and arms technology transfer? Background: Israel has long served as a silent partner in U.S. military policy both in the region and around the world. When President Carter was forced to remove military support for the corrupt Somoza regime in Nicaragua, for instance, Israel stepped in, shipping arms up the last day.

You can ask candidates these questions at candidate's nights, on call-in talk shows, at personal appearances, or in one-on-one meetings with candidates, elected officials, or their aides. These questions can also be used by organizations which endorse candidates (such as Democratic clubs and labor organizations). In posing these questions, don't assume that the candidate will answer them "wrong." They are all questions which any candidate who professes support for international justice and human rights should be able to answer in a positive way. They can also serve as talking points to be used to educate leaders about a just U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East. □

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