



Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa



Al-Aqsa Mosque

Quarterly

Newsletter 11

February 2002

Are Israelis stealing body parts?

The bodies of Palestinian children have been violated by Israeli doctors and their vital organs extracted, according to a disturbing report by Islamic Association of Palestine based in occupied Palestine. The three Palestinian children, who had been murdered by Israeli soldiers ten days earlier, have allegedly had their organs illegally removed by Israeli doctors at the L. Greenberg Institute of Forensic Medicine at Abu Kabir.

In a separate investigation, The Jerusalem Post reports that the Greenberg Institute has been charged with the retention of body parts from Israeli soldiers. MK Anat Maor, Chair of the Knesset Science & Technology Committee, has called on Health Minister, Nissim Dahan, to immediately suspend the Director of the Institute, Professor Yehuda Hiss. The Ministry, which owns and supervises the Institute, had identified body tissue illegally stored there as belonging to four soldiers whose bodies had undergone autopsies.

Maor said the country's only forensic institute "treats bodies as if they are its personal property, holds them without approval and in contravention to the law, violates the sanctity of the dead, and prevents the families from carrying out their right to bring [all parts] of their dear ones' bodies to burial."

She added that the institute "is run almost as an underground facility, with more hidden than revealed, and this seriously harms its professionalism and reputation, thereby minimizing its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. She called on Internal Security Minister Uzi Landau to speed up the police investigation, which "was to begin three months ago but was launched only this week."

Health Ministry Associate Director General, Yitzhak Berlovich, told the Post that he did not know when the police would finish its investigation. "Until then," he said, "we have no basis to suspend Prof. Hiss, who is a civil servant." Last Spring the Greenberg Institute was put under the direct control of Berlovich, who suspended all research activity and obtained funds to renovate the 70-year-old building, whose autopsy rooms and refrigeration facilities were reportedly in a terrible condition.

This followed serious allegations by the Jerusalem Post, that the country's sole institution for autopsies in cases of unnatural death, had been involved in "selling" body parts removed from corpses without the families consent, to medical research institutes for use by medical students – a criminal offence. The paper also claimed that when the bodies were returned for burial, the organs were not returned but replaced by "broomsticks, cotton wool, garden hoses," and other objects to fill out the corpses.

Attorney Nitzana Darshan-Leitner, who has accused Hiss twice of violating corpses in cases she represented, is also calling for his suspension. In 1998, Darshan-Leitner sued the institute on behalf of the family of Alistair Sinclair, a Scotsman who died under mysterious circumstances in the Ben-Gurion Airport lockup. The institute conducted an autopsy and then sent the body back to Sinclair's parents, who discovered that their son's heart and other organs were missing. The institute sent the parents a heart and other missing organs, but the family is still not certain they belonged to their son, said Darshan-Leitner.

The Health Ministry told the Post it had no intention of taking any action against Professor Yehuda Hiss at the present time.

Syria Equates Israeli Action with Sept 11

Syria has equated the demolition of Palestinian homes by Israel, with the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11th.

In his debut speech to the UN Security Council on 18 January 2002, Syrian representative, Fayssal Mekhad, also accused the UN of practising double standards in denouncing terrorism around the world but avoiding any condemnation of Israel.

He added: 'We must note that the scene of tens of Palestinian houses demolished by Israeli tanks in the Rafah camps a few days ago, is not much different from the scene of the World Trade Centre destroyed by terrorists, whom we have all agreed here to combat and eliminate.'

A US official described the comparison as 'outrageous.' It's really unfortunate the Syrians took this opportunity of an open meeting on counter-terrorism to make what we saw as an outrageous speech. This is not the kind of speech we would expect to come from a responsible member of the Security Council,' he said.

But Mekdad was unrepentant: 'The problem is, if you only use one eye, you only see half the truth. Israel's 'daily acts' against the Palestinians, are war crimes, which require us to bring its perpetrators to justice.'

HOLDING ISRAEL ACCOUNTABLE

Israel's massive and cruel attack on 10 Jan, 2001 on an impoverished civilian population of Palestinian refugees, 58 or more homes systematically demolished (some while their inhabitants were still sleeping inside, at least 520 people made homeless in the dead of winter (300 of them children), is chilling in its conception no less than in its human cost.

While presented as "retaliation" for a Hamas attack on an Israeli military outpost the day before, the Israeli Army spokesman admitted that there was no connection between the attack and the demolitions. In fact, plans for massive demolitions, described by the IDF spokesman as "a number of structures demolished out of tactical considerations" had been drawn up weeks before, and were only awaiting an "opportune" moment. General Yom-Tov Samia, former Commander of the IDF's Southern Command, said in a radio interview back in September that "The IDF must raze all the houses [in the Rafah refugee camp abutting the Egyptian border] within a strip of 300-400 meters in width. Arafat must be punished, and after each incident another 2-3 rows of houses must be razed. We must employ this very extreme instrument; it is workable and I am happy it is being used. Sadly, in steps which are too small. It must be done in one big operation."

The razing of the houses in Rafah, while unusual in its scale, is part of a long-term policy, a kind of low-intensity warfare that often escapes public attention. Since the start of the second Intifada, 80 Palestinian civilians have been killed in the Rafah refugee camp. 1125 people have been wounded. Some 200 homes have been demolished, another 200 seriously damaged, 1400 homeless. Even the IDF characterizes Rafah as a "wasteland."

The demolitions are visible violation of international law, but hardly the only one. And here's the rub: with the help of its own lawyers and the international community, Israel has acted with absolute impunity vis-a-vis international law, and has escaped accountability. It has done so in a number of ways. First, it cynically presents itself to the world as a "victim." Begin was the first to make the Holocaust into a political tool giving moral authority to his policies of aggressive settlement and the invasion of Lebanon, while effectively using Western/Christian guilt to deflect criticism of his policies. Germany, for example, plays a key role in shaping Europe's foreign policy, but its "Special Relationship" with Israel prevents it from holding Israel accountable.

Israel also possesses one of the most sophisticated armed forces in the world, between 200-300 nuclear warheads (making it the world's fifth nuclear power, but passes itself as a "victim" of terrorism, demolishing the houses of 500 refugees in "self-defence." Not being able to persuade the world to hold Israel accountable for its actions, the Palestinians, in the words of Edward Said, have become the "victims of the victims," isolated, powerless, with nowhere to go.

Second, Israel makes the Alice-in-Wonderland claim that there is no occupation at all, that it is simply "administering" the West Bank and Gaza until their final status is negotiated.

Thirdly, the effectiveness of AIPAC (the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee, Israel's lobby in Congress), the uncritical and even dishonourable role played by organized American Jewry who think that support for extreme right-wing Israeli positions constitutes "support for Israel," together with the influence of the Christian Right - and certainly the anti-Arabism of post-September 11 - have all created in Washington an impenetrable umbrella of support that leaves Israel and its occupation untouchable.

That is all Israel needs to thumb its nose at the rest of the world. Europe has no independent foreign policy (despite being a much larger trading partner with Israel than the US), the UN and its human rights agencies have been neutralized, and the Arab world tows the line. The Palestinian people remain absolutely isolated. House demolitions represent one of the cruellest expressions of the Israeli policy of repression. It may be likened to rape, where the very essence of people's humanity is violated as the contents of their houses — furniture, documents, children's toys, clothes, all of a family's most intimate possessions — is thrown out and the house demolished before the terrifying eyes of the children. **Jeff Halper**

Killing Palestinian civilians and destroying homes consistent with international law

The Israeli army's chief of staff Shaul Mofaz has defended the killing of Palestinian civilians by Israeli troops saying all the killings were consistent with international law. "Before we kill anybody or destroy any homes, we ask the legal advisor and he tells us it is fine," the Israeli state-run radio quoted Mofaza as saying.

Mofaz said the demolition of more than 70 Palestinian homes in Rafah in the southern part of the Gaza Strip on 10 January 2002 was necessary for the security of Israel. "We had to destroy the homes, we are sorry for the misery we caused for the civilians, but our security comes first," said Mofaz. Mofaz said all actions of the Israeli army against Palestinians, including assassination of Palestinian activists and demolition of civilian homes, were compatible with the rule of international law.

On Sunday, former minister of education Shulamit Aloni warned Mofaz that he might be tried one day before an international tribunal as war criminal for the rampage of murder and terror he has been leading in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the past 15 months.

Many Palestinians and foreign human rights activists have described the Israeli campaign against the essentially unarmed Palestinians as "similar to Nazi treatment of Jews during the second world war."

The Israeli army killed almost one thousand Palestinians, a third of them minors and children, in the past fifteen months and destroyed thousands of buildings. The Israeli army also uprooted tens of thousands of fruit and olive trees to punish the Palestinians for wanting to be free from Israeli apartheid and occupation.

British arms trade with Israel

The British government has approved over 297 Standard Individual Export Licences (SIELS) for the supply of goods on its so-called Military List to the Zionist regime since the past two years. Since the start of the Palestinian intifada 230 SIELS were granted. The sales included equipment for attack aircraft, large calibre weapons, armoured or protective goods and ammunition.

An intelligence source says the Israeli army uses British Transit vans and Land Rovers in the Occupied Territories.

The Metropolitan and South Wales Police forces buy soft-round ammunition from Israel. It is rumoured the British Ministry of Defence is in the process of buying the Rafael Gil Spike anti-tank missile from Israel.

Israel has announced it is opening an army recruiting office in London. The Labour Government has made no objection to the plan.

Amnesty International reported, 'some parts come from the UK for the Apache helicopters used to commit human rights violations during the present intifada.'

Peres seeks Strategic alliance with India

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres arrived in New Delhi on 7 January for a week-long-visit during which he pressed for a closer strategic relationship with India. Peres held extensive talks with prominent Indian officials, including the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the interior Minister and the Defence Minister. Peres also visited India's military industrial complexes in Bangalore.

Peres' unscheduled visit coincides with the continuing stand-off between India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The Israeli media spoke enthusiastically about the visit, recognizing its added significance in light of Indo-Pakistani tension.

Earlier this week, Indian police arrested three Palestinian students studying in India on suspicion of affiliation with Hamas. The Indians, with their growing security relations with the Israelis, are likely to follow Turkey's path in its strategic alliance with the Zionist regime. India reportedly expressed the desire to purchase the Arrow anti-ballistic missiles developed jointly by the United States and Israel.

Birzeit University International Volunteer Workcamps

Introduction

Every year since the late 1970's, the Palestinian university of Birzeit (BZU) has organised international 'workcamps' based on its own campus. The University lies about 15 miles north of Jerusalem. For more than 4 years (from January 1988 to April 1992) the campus was closed by Israeli military order and students were banned from the campus.

Workcamps

Workcamps are held each summer, usually during August. They are two weeks long and each one accommodates 30-60 international volunteers. The camps are an opportunity for volunteers to experience the local situation at first hand and to contribute to improving the local conditions of life. Tasks range from helping farmers with their harvest to building basic sanitation facilities in refugee camps. Some of the work is symbolic in nature – showing solidarity with the community – and some is much needed support, which will really benefit the local people. The work is highly rewarding and participants should be prepared to contribute fully.

In addition to the work, a wide range of visits, meetings and cultural events are arranged. Volunteers must be aware that they are travelling to an area of unrest and must behave accordingly. There have not, however, been any serious incidents involving volunteers attending the workcamps. Accommodation is in huts or tents amongst trees on the campus and facilities are basic but adequate. Food is provided.

Date & Cost

The dates of the Workcamp vary from year to year, but are usually for two weeks each year in August. The camps will cost about £95 including food and accommodation. In addition you will need about £6 per day for extra travel and expenses. An £18 application fee is to be sent with all completed application. This includes the small cost of administration and a year membership to Friends of Birzeit University.

Additional Information

UK applications to the workcamps are administered by Friends of Birzeit University. For more information and initial enquires contact Friends of Al Aqsa.

International Conference

**Palestinian Return Centre will host an
international conference on:**

***“The Israeli Law of Return and its Impact
on the Conflict in Palestine”***

Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th April 2002

10.00am-6.00pm

**Brunei Gallery, SOAS, Thornhaugh St.,
Russell Square, London. WC1H 0XG**

Registration fee: £10 Students, £20 Others

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