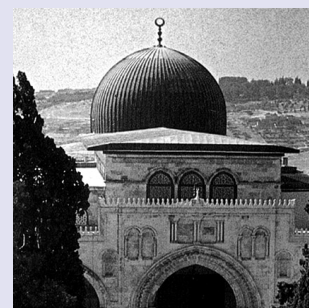


Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

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Al Aqsa Mosque

Quarterly — Newsletter 13 — July 2002

ISRAEL RAISE WALL OF APARTHEID

Work has begun to create an 8-foot high wall covering 469 km. The wall is the ultimate Israeli ideology in creating Bantustans ghettos for the Palestinians. The wall which is being built on stolen Palestinian land and will further separate one Palestinian village from another making it impossible for Palestinians to

visit relatives, the sick or travel to work outside their own town, in effect the Palestinians will be held prisoners in their own homes.

The wall being built around Jerusalem will also have an electrified chain link with watchtowers and motion detectors. Another wall will run from Salem in the south

via Tulkarm and end at Qalqilya. This will in effect cut off the majority of Palestinian community in the West Bank.

The wall, a symbol of apartheid, is no doubt going to be the principle focus for human right activists, who wish to see an end to Israeli occupation and justice in the Holy Land.

Europeans view Israel as oppressors

Recent opinion polls indicate Israeli policies are viewed as oppressive and in Germany parallels are drawn with the era of Nazi Germany.

A German poll showed that 25 per cent of respondents compared Israel with Nazi Germany. In the Guardian, (24-04-02), an opinion poll showed Palestinians have twice as much support amongst Britons. 28 per cent backed Palestinians as compared to only 14 per cent supporting Israel.

For the first time an American poll conducted on 7-8 June 2002 showed that 43 per cent thought the US is too supportive of Israel while 40 per cent thought it was about right and 10 per cent thought the US did not support Israel enough.

This incredible change in the West is the direct result of aggressive apartheid policies of Israel, which are transparent despite being camouflaged by the Western media and politicians.

With music, Washington reaches out to Arab world

From a ground-floor office in a nondescript building in Washington, the U.S. government's newest radio station is sending a message to the Arab world. "Oh kiss me, beneath the milky twilight, lead me on the moonlit floor, lift your open hand, strike up the band and make the fireflies dance." This is the sound of the three-month-old Radio Sawa: 85 per cent pop music, 15 percent government-generated news, slickly packaged with market research in hand. To counteract anti-American diatribes on airwaves in the Middle East, an American radio executive has persuaded Congress to use the simple syntax of the young and lovelorn to sell the United States to the youth of the Arab world.

Felicity Barringer,
The New York Times

Belgian Courts refuse to put Sharon on Trial

It is greatly disappointing that the Belgian Court of Appeal of 26 June 2002, has found that the investigation and complaint against Mr. Sharon and Mr. Yaron cannot proceed because they are not in Belgium. The Court has cited article 12 of the Belgian Penal Code of Procedure and failed to uphold the spirit and text of the Belgian laws of 1993 and 1999 allowing for prosecution under the principle of universal jurisdiction: so that a defendant need not be in the territory of Belgium and a crime perpetrated outside Belgium can still be investigated and tried before its courts. In so doing, the Belgian court has failed not only the victims of the war crimes and crimes against humanity of Sabra & Chatilla in 1982, but has severely set back the ability under international humanitarian law and international criminal law to provide a remedy for any and all victims of killings, acts of torture and rape, and other war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Dying on the Side of Palestinians

“Ramzy, I must admit it, it's so hard being a Palestinian these days.” That's how a friend of mine, a dedicated individual who is spending her days and years advocating justice for the Palestinian people, ended a distressing message to me a few months back. I recall her words often, and as often I recall my grandfather who died in a refugee camp's

sy until he died, at the age of 85, decades after he was forced out of Palestine.

We would see grandpa walking toward the radio briskly from the kitchen, or waking up abruptly from an afternoon nap, fervently asking, while pointing at the radio: “did they just say something about refugees?”

When grandpa gasped his last breath, all of his friends and family stood by muttering verses from the Quran as many tears were shed that day. I too stood near to him, frightened of confronting my first experience with death.

mud home, away from his village and land.

My grandpa believed that being a Palestinian was a blessing. “You cannot be entrusted to defend a more virtuous cause than the cause of Palestine, unless Allah has blessed you greatly,” he once told me.

I often wondered what kept the old man going. He lost his home and the pride of his life, his land, and was forced at gunpoint to haul his family away and leave the village of Beit Daras where they once happily lived. He spent the rest of his life, getting old and tired in a refugee camp, for many years in a tent, then in a mud house subsidised by the United Nations. He died there, homeless and helpless beside his radio.

Grandpa's radio was once green, yet its colour faded to white somehow. It was battered, and covered with duct tape, just enough to keep it whole. The old man cared little for the look of the radio. All that mattered was that the radio managed to broadcast the news, the “Voice of London” in Arabic, the “Middle East Radio” or the “Voice of the Arabs” were constantly on. At night, he tucked the radio beside him and went to bed, to start his next morning by the latest news.

He fancied that one of these days the radio would declare that Palestinian refugees were allowed to go back home. He carried that fanta-

“No grandpa, they haven't,” one of us would reply with a juvenile smile. He would return back to his chore, carrying the weight of many years, and his unending hope. But by the time grandpa died, he was too old to walk, to argue with grandma for not feeding the chicken on time, or to converse with an ailing neighbour. But never too old to hold his little radio, lovingly, with a final desperate hope that the long awaited news segment about his return to his village would be declared.

When grandpa gasped his last breath, all of his friends and family stood by muttering verses from the Quran as many tears were shed that day. I too stood near to him, frightened of confronting my first experience with death. He made it easy on

I often wondered why old, dispossessed and ailing grandpa died in a mud house with a **smile on his face.**

me, as he had a smile on his face, and near him was a radio with a lower volume but never muted.

The year of his death was a year that many older refugees also passed away. They were buried in a graveyard surrounded by the graves of younger refugees, mostly martyrs who fell throughout the years.

I wish I could have managed to keep grandpa's old radio. I haven't. But when I left my refugee camp, I did manage to smuggle many mem-

ories, his undying hope, and his pride of being a Palestinian.

I recall the words of my friend about how difficult it is being a Palestinian these days, very often, and more than ever. I recall it with every Palestinian child killed or home demolished, with every speech that President Bush makes outlining his visionless vision of the Middle East; I recalled it when a Brussels's court denied Palestinians the right to try Ariel Sharon for his massacres in Lebanon; I recalled it when a Dutch officer held me for a long time delaying the entire flight while investigating me for the mere fact that I was born in Gaza; I recall it when I read the New York Times or the Washington Post; I recalled it when my father talks to me in the phone just to tell me that the Israelis are bombing his neighbourhood; I recall it not every day, but every hour.

But I also recall my grandpa's words: “You cannot be entrusted to defend a more virtuous cause than the cause of Palestine, unless Allah has blessed you greatly.”

I often wondered why old, dispossessed and ailing grandpa died in a mud house with a smile on his face.

We will all die one day, rich and poor, citizens and stateless, Palestinians or Israelis, Presidents or

refugees. It's that final and decisive moment, when grandpa gasped his last breath that counts. He lived a hard life, a refugee, with his dearest possession, a battered transistor radio. But he died a Muslim Palestinian, who never compromised on his rights. He died proud, with a smile, leaving us with nothing but a transistor and an abundance of hope. Grandpa never returned to his village of Beit Daras, but I know that one day my children will.

By Ramzy Baroud

Friends of Al Aqsa International Conference

Johannesburg, South Africa

19th, 20th & 21st July 2002

Indaba Hotel and Conference Centre, Johannesburg

Peace with Justice in Palestine

Lecturers to include:

Mr George Galloway [British MP]

Canon Naim Ateek [President, Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre, Jerusalem]

Dr Azzam Tamimi [Director Islamic Political Thought, London]

Mr Palla Jordan [Minister of Telecommunications, South Africa]

Mr John Qwelane [Journalist and Radio Talk Show host, Radio South Africa]

Shaykh Ebrahim Bham [General Secretary, Jamiat Ulama, Transval, South Africa]

Shaykh Ebrahim Jibrail [General Secretary of Cape Town, South Africa]

Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane [South Africa]

Br. Ismail Adam Patel [Chairman, Friends of Al Aqsa]

Those interested to participate please email: info@aqsa.org.uk

Israeli forces keep 700,000 Palestinians under curfew

Israeli combat helicopters blasted missiles into a Palestinian Authority compound in the West Bank city of Hebron yesterday to force out a group of Palestinians who have been holed up for three days. Six weeks after the end of the bloody siege of the Church of Nativity in Bethlehem, another stand-off has developed between Israeli forces and Palestinians, which has so far claimed four lives. It began after the Israeli army, trying to stop suicide bombings, reoccupied all but one of the big Palestinian towns in the West Bank. The sweeping military operation left 700,000 people under curfew. Israeli forces have killed at least five small children in the West Bank in the past week; reports yesterday suggested that another Palestinian child, aged six, had been added to the death toll. Israeli military officials have said that 150 people inside the Palestinian government compound in Hebron, a British Mandate-era building, have surrendered. In the past few days, the compound has been pounded by tanks and helicopters as the Israeli army tries to winkle out its inmates. Yesterday, Israeli helicopters fired four missiles into the building. Israeli officials said about 40 Palestinians remained inside, some of whom it considers as wanted men.

By Phil Reeves, *The Independent* June 28, 2002

Bazaar triumph

Once again the sisters in Leicester championed the Palestinian cause by holding a fund raising bazaar. In one day over £13,000 was collected, truly a magnificent effort. The sisters were grateful to the greater community who were instrumental in raising the funds. All the proceeds have been forwarded to INTERPAL to help the orphans of Palestine.

BRITISH JEWS SERVING IN ISRAEL ARMY

While the British government howls daily about war against terrorism and in particular stifling aid of any nature from Britain to the oppressed, it has been disclosed that over 150 British Jews are going to serve in the Israeli reserve army.

The duplicity of British government in denying Human Rights activists in even sending humanitarian aid Palestinians is all too apparent to see. While British Muslims Charities sending legitimate aid are being intimidated it appears the Jewish community having been given a total right to assist Israel in any way they wish including in assisting the Israel army maintain the illegal occupation of Palestinian land.

There is no doubt a possibility that the Israel Reservist army can be involved in the subjugation of Palestinians and even their killing.

Friends of Al Aqsa calls upon everyone to write to Mr, Jack Straw the Foreign Secretary and also Mr David Blunkett, the Home Secretary.

Sample Letter:

The Rt Hon Mr Jack Straw
Foreign Secretary
King Charles Street
London SW1

Dear Mr Straw,

It has been reported in the Jewish Chronicle dated 3rd May 2002 that 150 British Passport holders are to travel to Israel as reservists in the Israeli Army in order to partake in military activities.

Is it permissible for a British Passport holder to enlist and conscript themselves to another foreign army? Similarly at this time with the conflict in the Indian Sub Continent between India and Pakistan, can a British Passport holder travel to any of these countries and assist its military?

It seems rather curious that Jews, with British passports are allowed to enlist themselves in the Israeli army in order to maintain the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, whereas the Terrorism Act 2000 makes it illegal to assist Palestinians resisting occupation of their own land.

I hope you will be able to clarify the matters for us.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours Faithfully

Israeli economy dwindling as a result of the Intifada

Israeli officials continued to draw a bleak picture of the Israeli economy despite constant efforts by the government to encourage growth and create jobs.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak on Wednesday [3/07/02] described the state of the Israeli economy as "fragile."

Earlier, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon admitted that "we are going through difficult times."

Statistical figures released by the Israeli government showed that only 33000 tourists visited the Zionist state in group tours in the first half of 2002, compared with 116,000 in the corresponding period in 2001, and 500,000 in the first half of 2000. The figures also showed that group tourism is 70% below the level in the corresponding period last year and 94% less than in 2000.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Hebrew newspaper, Ha'aretz, reported Thursday [4/07/02] that European investments in Israel all but evaporated due to the "security situation."

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