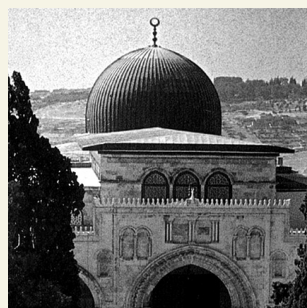


Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

www.aqsa.org.uk



Al Aqsa Mosque

Quarterly — Newsletter 15 — February 2003

TWO DAY SEMINAR ON THE HISTORY OF PALESTINE

Friends of Al-Aqsa Seminar. This two-day seminar has been arranged for University students but anybody interested is welcome.

Venue

Markfield Conference Centre, Markfield, Leicestershire

Date

Saturday 22 and Sunday 23 February 2003

Lecturers to include

**Dr Azzam Tamimi, Dr Daud Abdullah, Anas Takriti,
Ismail Patel, Ataullah Siddiqui and Hasan Patel**

Saturday Lectures to include:

- 1 Ancient times up to Prophet Muhammad
- 2 Islamic era to Ottoman period
- 3 Emergency of Zionism to 1948
- 4 1948 to First Intifada
- 5 Oslo to Al-Aqsa Intifada
- 6 Refugees

Sunday Lectures to include:

- 1 Fadail al-Quds (Virtues of Jerusalem)
- 2 Practical aspects of employing University Motions
- 3 Discussion and debate on how to promote the Palestinian Issue.

To Book your place

- 1 For both days (NO accommodation – meals included) £20
- 2 For one day (Saturday or Sunday – meals included) £10

**Subject to availability,
limited spaces only, apply early.**

To register send payment, cheque made payable to Friends of al-Aqsa and post to:

Friends of Al-Aqsa,
P.O. Box 5127, Leicester. LE2 0WU

(Programme may be altered at organisers discretion)

ISRAEL CLOSES MORE PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS

Even the education system does not escape the clutches of Israeli aggression. As the innocent Palestinian victims continue daily victimisation the one place for children to escape the daily trauma was their schools.

But even education has become a target for the Israelis. Since the Intifada, over 90,000 Palestinian children have been denied daily access to their schools and colleges.

On Tuesday, 14 January 2003 Israeli military forces issued a military order to close two other educational institutions in Hebron, Hebron University, and the Palestinian Polytechnic for fourteen days, renewable for up to six months, for 'security' reasons.

The Israeli forces are said to have surrounded Hebron University's buildings, north-west of the city, and the Polytechnic in the 'Ein Khair al-Deen area in the centre and sealed its doors, denying Palestinian students their right to education.

The right to education is one of the basic humanitarian needs which Israel has snatched away from the Palestinians while the international community ignore Israel's atrocities and Palestinian rights.

TIME FOR SOLIDARITY

As Islamophobia is gaining currency pedaled by the media and derogatory remarks by politicians the community needs to lend support where it is due. It is time we openly become critical of the handful few that have advocated violence but not allow the authorities to use this as an excuse to label the rest of the community as terrorist.

There has been recent moves by the police to victimize organizations in particular charity groups and the community must lend its full support to these groups. The arrest of over 200 Muslims since 9/11 without a single conviction in the court is a clear indication of the blanket and high handed approach taken by the authorities.

If we allow this draconian approach unchallenged by legal and political means the authorities will usurp Muslims civil rights. Muslims are at risk and will soon find themselves as the second class citizens of the country that is assuming Muslims are already not there.

Muslims in the days ahead will be called to make difficult decision and we must side on the side of justice. A wrong reaction to a bad action is not justified and the cry of terrorism must not hinder our support for the oppressed, victimized and occupied.

Muslims must be in forefront shining light on the depressed and the oppressed world, providing amicable solutions and guiding humanity out of the insanity. Those who rise to the challenge will truly be the liberators of mankind.

MUSLIM REVERTS SENT FOR PSYCHIATRIC TREATMENT

It has come to light recently that Israeli authorities are placing obstacle on to the path of those Jews who wish to become Muslims. Recently a Jewish man S converted to Islam and when he filed a request to change his name and report conversion, the clerk treated him rudely. S was told his conversion would only be registered after he acquired a certificate from the Rabbinical Court in Jerusalem. When S went to the Rabbinical Court he was bounced off and directed to the Ministry of Religious Affairs. S was told that a special committee will examine his request and that a social worker and a psychiatrist are among its members.

S tried to convince them he reverted to Islam with his free will but he was told without the special committee's approval his conversion cannot be accepted.

Five different appointments were set each cancelled at the last minute. Seven months have passed since S asked for his conversion to be registered but the situation remains the same.

A 24 old Jewish women who also reverted to Islam, told Haaretz, an Israeli paper, she converted to Islam not because she lived with a Muslim man but because she has found truth in Islam. After going through the tortuous process of registering as a Muslim she was interviewed by people in the Israeli Ministry who presented themselves as rabbis, lawyers, social workers and psychiatrist. Each in turn tried not only to interrogate her but attempted to make her change her mind about Islam.

G, a Jewish woman who married a Muslim tried to acquire a conversion certificate however the officials tried to convince G to change her mind. G did not change her mind and is told her request will take between 6-18 months.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) says G's case is not unique, there are many like her. Applicants for a conversion certificate are made to suffer prolonged delays and to weed through masses of red tape; they are heavily pressured to reconsider their conversion. When such pressures fail the two ministries just ignore the letter of the law.

All this to punish the reverters and deny them their right.

(Palestine Times Jan 03)

LIFE UNDER APARTHEID RULE

Nowhere in the Gaza strip are traffic lights respected as they are at Abu Houli junction. When the light turns red, Palestinian drivers show an unusual deference by rapidly grinding to a halt at the edge of the narrow tarmac umbilical cord linking the two parts of Gaza prised apart by Jewish settlements. No trying to beat the system here because the system might put a bullet in your back.

On an almost typical day recently, Palestinians were held hostage to the vagaries of the Israeli army as it severed the strip for more than eight hours, trapping thousands of people trying to get to work, market or school. And by the end of the ordeal, a Palestinian youth did get a bullet in the back.

The Israelis say the frequent closure – sometimes lasting days – are a necessary security measure. The Palestinians see the shutdown as another piece of gratuitous harassment designed to add to their misery.

"This is the true nature of occupation" said Mohammad Abu Mughaiseb, a Palestinian doctor returning to Gaza city from a refugee camp clinic. "It happens at least once a week. The Israelis do not explain they do not even tell us how long we will have to wait. Why should they? We are second-class people. It's our place to wait."

(Guardian 27 Dec 02)

For further copies, more information about its projects or contributions please contact:

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QUIZ ON THE MIDDLE EAST

- Q Which country alone in the Middle East has nuclear weapons?
- Q Which country in the Middle East refuses to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and bars international inspections?
- Q Which country in the Middle East seized the sovereign territory of other nations by military force and continues to occupy it in defiance of United Nations Security Council resolutions?
- Q Which country in the Middle East routinely violates the international borders of another sovereign state with warplanes and artillery and naval gunfire?
- Q What American ally in the Middle East has for years sent assassins into other countries to kill its political enemies (a practice sometimes called exporting terrorism)?
- Q In which country in the Middle East have military officers admitted publicly that unarmed prisoners of war were executed?
- Q What country in the Middle East refuses to prosecute its soldiers who have acknowledged executing prisoners of war?
- Q What country in the Middle East created 762,000 refugees and refuses to allow them to return to their homes?
- Q What country in the Middle East refuses to pay compensation to people whose land, bank accounts and businesses it confiscated?
- Q In what country in the Middle East was a high-ranking United Nations diplomat assassinated?
- Q In what country in the Middle East did the man who ordered the assassination of a high-ranking U.N. diplomat become PM?
- Q What country in the Middle East blew up an American diplomatic facility in Egypt and attacked a U.S. ship, the USS Liberty, killing 34 and wounding 171 American sailors?
- Q What country in the Middle East employed a spy, Jonathan Pollard, to steal classified documents and then gave some of them to the Soviet Union?
- Q What Middle East country allows American Jewish murderers to flee to its country to escape punishment in the United States and refuses to extradite them once in their custody?
- Q Which country in the Middle East is in defiance of 69 United Nations Security Council resolutions and has been protected from 29 more by U.S. vetoes?
- Q Which country in the Middle East receives more than one-third of all U.S. aid?
- Q Which country in the Middle East receives U.S. weapons for free and then sells the technology to the Republic of China even at the objections of the U.S.
- Q Which country in the Middle East had its Prime Minister announce to his staff not to worry about what the United States says because "We control America?"
- Q What country in the Middle East was cited by Amnesty International for demolishing more than 4000 innocent Palestinian homes as a means of ethnic cleansing?

Answer: ISRAEL

FRIENDS OF AL-AQSA CAMPAIGN WATFORD FC

After the European FA recommended it was not safe for European football team's to play in Israel, the Israeli FA have been in search for a venue in the UK.

Israelis approached Watford FC to use the stadium for all Israeli fixtures.

However upon learning about this Friends of Al-Aqsa began a campaign asking its members to lobby Watford FC.

Support also came from the local Watford councillors who thought to allow Israel play would be a security risk as well as bring race relation problems in the city.

Friends of Al-Aqsa maintained that it is incumbent upon all peace loving people to boycott apartheid Israeli just like we boycotted apartheid South Africa.

It is the great foresight of Watford FC executive that a sensible decision of refusing Israel uses its grounds, was taken.

Friends of Al-Aqsa would like to thank all those who supported us.

PIPELINE DEAL SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

It just took around a year after the defeat of the Taliban to sign a deal for a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The deal has been signed by the Presidents of the three respective countries and the pipeline will off course be built by an American/British company.

In the mid 1990's a US consortium had to abandoned plans for the same pipeline because it is thought the Taliban regime refused co-operation.

Many believe the US has a motive to bring Afghan under a single authority in order for US companies to exploit the business there. However many still worried in this project as vast areas of Afghanistan are controlled by various warlords.

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

***Don't Attack Iraq / Freedom
For Palestine***

**Saturday 15 February 1200 (noon)
Start: Embankment • End: Hyde Park**

**Friends of Al-Aqsa, Muslim Association of Britain,
Stop the War and CND**

ISRAELI DELEGATION PUSHES WASHINGTON FOR \$14 BILLION FROM AMERICAN TAX PAYERS

A top-level Israeli delegation flew to Washington on Saturday 5 January 2003 to press the Bush Administration to speed up the transfer to Israel of some \$14 billion dollars in loan guarantees.

Israel hopes to use the money to revive its sagging economy, build more Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank and tighten its grip on the Palestinian people.

The Israeli state-run radio quoted sources at the Prime Minister's office as saying that the Sharon government "expected the loans to be approved very soon."

Earlier, Israeli Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon indicated the Israeli army needed a billion US dollars to maintain the blockade on Palestinian population centres as well as keep up settlement expansion in the West Bank.

In December 30th op-ed piece in the Jordan Times retired US Brigadier General James J. David noted that "Israel is a wealthy country, sixteenth among all countries in per capita income" of \$21,000 yet the country "receives \$1,200 per person from the United States with no strings attached."

"America needs the money for its own people and for the starving people of less fortunate, Third World, countries. The \$5 billion in annual foreign aid to Israel has got to stop," he wrote.

SHARON IN CORRUPTION SCANDAL

Sharon who was predicted to a win with a majority in the Israeli election scheduled for late January 03 has run into difficulties with media bringing news of revelations about corruption throughout his Likud party reaching right upto him.

Besides a few ministers caught in the act the main focus is on Sharon's two sons Omri and Gilad.

It appears Omri played a pivotal role in electing his father to Likud instead of the more popular Netanyahu. It was Omri who is accused of sponsoring a mass enrollment of new members selected for their pro-Sharon sympathies. Omri's efforts managed to boost the party roll to over 300,000, an unprecedented achievement that had almost one in ten Israeli adult registered as Likud Party member.

Omri Sharon is suspected of encouraging underworld figures to take over party branches which then elected pro-Sharon representatives to the Central Committee.

Gilad, the younger son turned out to hold lucrative post as "consultant" to a wealthy contractor who conducts extensive dealings with government ministers. This raised suspicions of influence-peddling, particularly when it emerged that the said contractor has a rare knack for winning state contracts without ever submitting legally required tenders.

Middle East International Jan 03

PALESTINIAN CHILD SENTENCED TO 6 MONTHS JAIL FOR THROWING STONES

On Monday, 30 December 2003, Zakir 'Arar (16) from Qarara Bani Zeid near Ramallah was sentenced to 6 months administrative detention for throwing stones which the Israelis have said posed a danger to the security of the region. LAW's lawyer, Jawad al-Imawi, noted that Zakir is a student, with no past conviction behind him.

There are at least 1,950 Palestinians currently in detention because of administrative detention. An administrative detainee is sentenced to a certain period, usually six months. However the period is subject to extension to an indefinite period. Israel has used this measure against Palestinian detainees whom they failed to prove guilty or had no intention to try at a court of law. With so many Palestinians having been administratively detained it appears that the Israeli authorities have used this measure indiscriminately, and made little attempt to have their practices in this area conform to international law.

When a detainee is sentenced to administrative detention, the sentencing does not come from a judge in a court session unless the sentence exceeds six months.

Administrative detention is a blatant violation of human rights.

VOLUNTARY WORK-CAMP IN PALESTINE

*Youth Exchange Program
An-Najah National University*

The following dates have been fixed for individuals interested in voluntary work-camp.

For further details visit our website

www.aqsa.org.uk

[Go to activities section and campaigns]

**Workcamp 05: 10th -31st July 2003
Workcamp 06: 10th -31st August 2003**