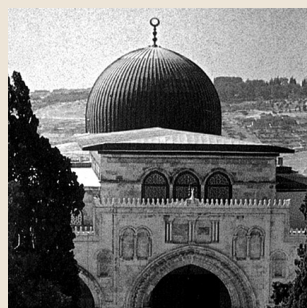


Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

www.aqsa.org.uk



Al Aqsa Mosque

Quarterly — Newsletter 16 — May 2003

Israel kills UK journalist

Israeli forces demolishing a Palestinian home in the southern Gaza Strip shot dead a British documentary cameraman on Friday 2 May 2003.

Palestinian witnesses said the shooting was unprovoked and that Mr Miller was shot despite identifying himself as a foreign journalist. "We got close to the area and filmed, but we couldn't leave because an (Israeli) tank was around 100 metres (yards) from where we stood."

Abdel-Rahman Abdullah, a freelance Palestinian journalist who saw the incident, told Reuters by telephone. "We were very visible to the troops, with a white flag and 'TV' markings on our vests, but still the troops opened fire, hitting James Miller," he said.

Dozens of foreign journalists have fallen casualty while reporting on the Palestinian uprising for independence in the West Bank and Gaza, which erupted in September 2000. Abdullah, Miller and two colleagues were in Rafah making a documentary on how children had been affected by the violence.

Nidal al-Mughrabi, Reuters 2 May 2003

Road Map that lead to nowhere

The release of the "road-map" peace plan, and the appointment of the new Palestinian Prime Minister, Mahmoud Abbas, are being seen around the world as a new window of opportunity to resolve the Middle East conflict. But most Palestinians, from those on the street to political leaders, do not think the road-map is such a big deal – or that it will end their suffering and meet their national aspirations.

The road-map is no more than an entrance ticket to the dance hall where the Israelis will play the same old tunes against "terror". The Palestinian officials, with their VIP cards and what's left of their fancy cars, have been readying

themselves for the thrilling dance that will put them once again at the centre of international attention. A careful reading of the road-map predicts an unhappy ending. The peace plan deals with the Israeli demand that the suicide bombings and other attacks by the Palestinian militants end. But it does not give the demands of the Palestinians equal importance.

Why doesn't the road-map clearly and unequivocally include the main demand that Israel withdraw to its internationally recognised pre-1967 borders? Instead, it refers back to UN resolution 242, which Israel has ignored for a long time. What about the future of Jerusalem's Arab quarters and the city's Muslim and Christian holy sites? Where is the solution for the millions of Palestinian refugees across the Middle East?

The road-map does not recognise the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the primary source of instability in the region. On the contrary, everything is the fault of the Palestinians, who unleashed the Intifada against Israel. In fact, the road-map is no more than a phased security initiative for Israel, opening the gate for the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Israelis to work together to quell Hamas, the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and the other militant factions. The PA must do this first. Until it succeeds – no easy task – there will be no steps forward from Israel. The Israeli army will not even pull back from the re-occupied Palestinian cities.

Sa'id Ghazali, The Independent – 1 May 2003

To receive regular updates on Palestine visit www.aqsa.org.uk

Israel to bar pro-Palestinian activists from entering country

Israel will from now on bar pro-Palestinian activists from entering the country and will try to expel at least some of the dozens of activists who are already there, according to a new plan drafted by the Israel Defence Forces and the Foreign and Defence Ministries.

Most of the activists, who come from Europe, Canada and the United States, belong to the International Solidarity Movement (ISM).

Their goal is to act as "human shields" for Palestinian individuals and houses during IDF incursions into Palestinian towns, and they have often been involved in confrontations with IDF soldiers. They also try to help Palestinians pass through IDF roadblocks.

Some two months ago, an American ISM activist, Rachel Corrie, was run over and killed by an IDF bulldozer in Gaza. Her colleagues accused the bulldozer driver of having run her over deliberately. The IDF denies the accusation and decided not to indict the driver. In two other recent cases, international activists have been seriously injured by IDF gunfire during confrontations in the territories.

Amos Harel and Aluf Benn, Haaretz – 2 May 2003

Israeli army kills 10 Palestinian civilians in Gaza, West Bank, 3 children among victims

The Israeli occupation army on Thursday 1st May 2003 killed at least ten Palestinian civilians, including at least three children, during fresh bloody incursions in Gaza and the West Bank. Medical sources in Gaza City said two children, aged 2 and 4, and an older child were among the victims of the latest Israeli rampage in the Shujaiya neighbourhood on Gaza's eastern outskirts.

The 2 year old was identified as Amer Ayad, who was struck by a bullet to the head. Three other people, all of them civilians, were also killed in the indiscriminate machine gun strafing of civilian neighbourhoods, which also left many people injured, some badly.

Palestinian sources said Israeli occupation forces, backed by tanks and apache helicopter gunships, attacked the Shujaiya neighbourhood shortly after dawn.

"They were shooting in all directions and indiscriminately," said Muhammad abu Shama, a resident of the neighbourhood. "They behaved like the Gestapo, they targeted civilians including children." The Israeli army said the purpose of the latest bloody incursion into Gaza was to destroy the homes of several Palestinian families whose relatives were suspected of carrying out anti-occupation activities. An Israeli spokesman said seven Israeli occupation soldiers were injured by Palestinian resistance fighters, three of them seriously. In the West Bank village of Yatta, 10 kilometres south West of Hebron, two Palestinians were killed Wednesday night during an Israeli army rampage inside the village.

The nearly permissive killing coincided with the ratification of the new reform Palestinian government and the publication of the "road-map" blueprint for peace in the Middle East. Observers in Palestine opine the killing in Gaza and the West Bank show that Zionist regime of Ariel Sharon is not really interested in seeing the new Palestinian government succeed.

The Palestinian premier, Mahmoud Abbas, said he would seek to control the anti-occupation resistance in order to foster an adequate atmosphere for renewed peace efforts. However, the killings in Gaza on Thursday and continued Israeli repression of Palestinian civilians throughout Palestine will conceivably make it difficult for Palestinian resistance groups to agree to stop the resistance.

Khalid Amayreh

Amnesty International delegates denied access to Gaza

Amnesty International today condemned the Israeli authorities' decision requiring foreigners entering Gaza to sign "waivers" that absolve Israel from responsibility should they be killed or injured.

"The organization is categorically opposed to any attempt to get people to sign away their rights," Amnesty International said. "The signing of 'waivers' does not absolve the Israeli army of its responsibility in any way, nor the Israeli authorities of their duties to ensure that armed forces respect human rights in all circumstances."

The organization is concerned that one aim of these new and drastic restrictions is to prevent outside monitoring and scrutiny of the conduct of the Israeli army. It is also concerned that these restrictions will lead to more killings in Gaza and calls on the army to immediately end the use of excessive and unlawful force.

Amnesty International's delegates were denied access to Gaza today. They were required to sign the "waivers" which they refused to do. The organization has repeatedly demanded that international human rights monitors be deployed in Israel and the Occupied Territories to ensure that international standards are abided by. *9 May 9, 2003*

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE150402003>

Muslims under attack

British Muslims have come under a barrage of attack from some quarters of the media and politician after it was alleged that two British Muslims were involved in an attack in Tel Aviv.

The allegation raises many questions as to how anyone can hide in Tel Aviv, a Jewish only city, and as yet again like 9/11 the passport survived the blast.

British Muslims have been literally frog marched to condemn the incident whereas later that day Israeli murdered 13 innocent Palestinians with a total absence of any British Jews condemning the killings.

Even the Prime Minister joined in but his absence when British peace activist and journalist were killed by Israel was for all to notice.

The incidence have given Israel the perfect excuse to stop foreigners entering Palestine and get Mossad, the Israeli Secret Service to operate in the UK. No doubt, many will try to gain mileage from this tragedy and attempt to link legitimate peace groups, wishing for justice in the Holy Land with the so called, 'Suicide Bombers'.

18-month baby seriously wounded by Israeli army

Israeli occupation soldiers in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday shot and seriously wounded 18-month old Palestinian baby, Eliyan al-Bashiti, in Khan Younis in southern Gaza. Medical sources said al-Bashiti sustained serious-to-critical wounds when Israeli soldiers manning an army tower outside a Jewish colonial outpost opened fire indiscriminately on Palestinian homes south west of Khan Younis.

The baby was transferred to hospital where his condition was described as very serious. Palestinian security officials said the toddler had been in his home when he was hit. *7 May, 2003*

Innocent Palestinian the main victims of Israeli occupation army

A report published in the Occupied Palestinian territories on 10 May 2003 showed that the overwhelming proportion of Palestinian victims of Israeli killings were innocent civilians.

According to the report, published by the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), Israeli occupation troops and paramilitary Jewish terrorists have killed as many as 2350 Palestinians since the outbreak of the Intifada nearly 32 months ago.

Of this figure, 1911 were innocent civilians, including 469 children. The figures apparently don't include children and toddlers killed in Gaza during recent Israeli incursions.

The report also showed that as many as 22700 Palestinians, virtually all of them civilians, were injured by Israeli gunfire since September 2000.

Moreover, the report showed that more than 800,000 dunums of Palestinian land were confiscated by the Israeli army and another 18521 dunums were razed.

Furthermore, 227995 grown trees were uprooted and 475 greenhouses were destroyed.

Finally, the report that 265 Palestinian students were killed by Israeli troops and settlers, 3981 students injured and 458 others imprisoned.

Slur on Friends of Al-Aqsa

The Jewish Chronicle (9 May 03) has ran an article which attempts to vilify Friends of Al Aqsa. In an article titled "Bridges and breaches" it implies Friends of Al Aqsa a cause of trouble between Jews and Muslims.

The Jewish Chronicle quotes:

"Alex Keller, a retired history lecturer at Leicester University and chairman of Leicester's 80-member Progressive Synagogue, is a vice-president of Leicester's Council of Faiths. Dr Keller says that what little trouble there is comes from a group called the Friends of Al Aqsa, which effectively "calls for ethnic cleansing of all Jews from Palestine."

ACTION

These false accusations and condemnation of Friends of Al-Aqsa are very grave and serious please write/ring immediately to: **Mr Tony Stokes, The Co-ordinator, Leicester Council of Faiths, Pilgrim House, 10 Bishop St, Leicester, LE1 6AF**

Tel: 0116 254 6868

Fax: 0116 254 3528

Email: lco.faiths@webleicester.co.uk

1. Be polite
2. Ask for any proof of quotes or otherwise that Friends of Al-Aqsa promotes ethnic cleansing or brings about trouble.
3. Demand Leicester Council of Faiths ask Mr Keller to apologise or bring forth evidence.
4. Ask Leicester Council of Faiths if it is appropriate for them to have a vice President who makes unsubstantiated remarks and condemns other organisations.

Israelis fire on parents of injured British peace activist

The parents of a British peace activist who was shot in the head by Israeli troops came under fire themselves as they travelled to the spot where their son was critically injured.

Anthony and Jocelyn Hurndall were in a British diplomatic convoy entering the town of Rafah in the Gaza Strip when Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint fired a shot, which passed narrowly over the top of their vehicles.

The incident on Saturday afternoon took place despite the Israeli Army being given notice of the journey on at least three occasions – the last minutes before the convoy arrived.

The journey by the Hurndall family to Rafah, where they met peace activists from the International Solidarity Movement who had been working with Tom, was made as they launched an appeal to raise £20,000 to bring him back to Britain by air ambulance.

The 21-year-old student, who was studying photography at Manchester Metropolitan University, was hit by a high-velocity bullet fired by an Israeli sniper as he moved towards two frightened Palestinian children in daylight.

The Independent, Cahal Milmo – 06 May 2003

Bazaar Success

Once again the generous people of Leicester coupled with the hard work and dedication of sisters the Bazaar held on 4 May, for sisters and children was a great success. Over 2,000 people are estimated to have passed through the day and nearly seventeen thousand pounds collected.

Start a Branch

Friends of Al-Aqsa invite individuals or existing groups to create branches. Please contact our office for further details.

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

Ismail Adam Patel – The Editor
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