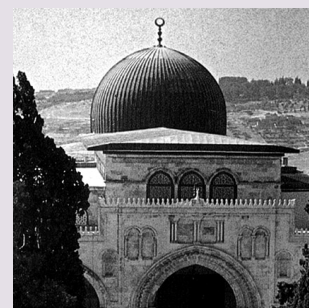


Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

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Al Aqsa Mosque

Quarterly — Newsletter 17 — July 2003

Truce at last

After months of intensive and often acrimonious deliberations, the main Palestinian resistance groups have declared a 3-month truce with the Israeli occupation army.

Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, and the Islamic Jihad, declared the truce jointly on Sunday, 29 June, with Fatah's military wing, the Aqsa Martyrs' brigades, simultaneously making a separate but similar truce declaration.

The truce stipulated a halt to all resistance attacks on Israeli targets both in the occupied territories and inside Israel proper in return for ending "all aspects of Israeli repression against the Palestinian people."

This includes ending Israeli incursions, assassinations, atrocities against civilians as well as home demolitions, curfews, tree-uprooting, and destruction of private and public infrastructure throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The decision to accept the truce emanated from a confluence of factors, including intensive behind-the-curtain efforts by the Egyptian government.

Many Palestinians are viewing the declaration of the truce as a brilliant step on Hamas's part since it would arguably shoot the political ball into the Israeli court and alleviate international pressure on the Palestinians.

In fact, Hamas and the rest of the Palestinian resistance groups had realized for some time that Israel was not really interested in reaching a dignified cease-fire with the Palestinians whereby the resistance movement would acquire a semblance of parity with Israel, despite the nearly totally oblique balance of power in Israel's favour.

This realization made the resistance groups reason that they would have nothing to lose by declaring unilaterally a truce since Israel, not the Palestinians, would be held responsible for breaching it.

Moreover, the truce declaration has effectively desensitized the tension within the Palestinian arena, particularly between the Abu Mazen government and the Islamic resistance groups.

Israel dismissed the truce as "a time bomb" and "a poison covered in honey." Israel's hawkish leadership, it is well known, had hoped the truce would never have materialized in the form it did in order to not to "fetter Israel's hands," an allusion to Israel's policy of assassinating Palestinian leaders.

Indeed, Sharon had always sought to defeat the Palestinians and impose on them an unconditional capitulation, particularly after the Anglo-American occupation of Iraq.

Having failed to achieve this goal, Sharon must have felt greatly disappointed by the truce, which he views as a skillful propaganda feat rather than constituting a form of Palestinian capitulation.

Hence, the truce seems to have disrupted or even corroded Israeli designs vis-à-vis the Palestinians which found expression in the slogan "let the army achieve victory."

But the army, in nearly three years of repression, during which over 2500 Palestinian men, women and children were killed and tens of thousands others injured and maimed, failed to achieve a decisive victory over the Palestinians.

Khalid Amayreh July 1, 2003

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

Rice: apartheid wall is a problem

In a rare criticism of Israel, US National Security Advisor Condaleeza Rice on Sunday 29 June, criticized the Separation Wall, the apartheid Israeli regime is building in the West Bank.

Rice was on a three-day visit to the Zionist regime aimed at expediting the implementation of the American-backed peace plan known as the "roadmap."

The Israeli state-run radio quoted her as describing the wall as a "problem". The Zionist regime claims the wall is aimed at preventing the infiltration of Palestinian guerillas into Israel.

However, the fact that the wall is built deep into the West Bank suggests that Israel's real goal is to seize more Palestinian territory and reduce Palestinian towns and villages into virtual detention camps.

Rice held talks on 30 June with PA premier Mahmoud Abbas in Jericho before meeting Sunday with Zionist officials in West Jerusalem. Rice reportedly urged both Palestinian and Zionist leaders to make their utmost efforts to carry out the roadmap. 29 June, 2003

Right-Wing Paper apologises to George Galloway

The Christian Science Monitor, a publication renowned for its right-wing views and its content which often verges on the borders of racism and Islamophobia, apologised for the accusations it levelled against the Rt. Hon. George Galloway MP in April.

In a story that was also enthusiastically adopted by The Daily Telegraph, Mr. Galloway was accused of receiving huge amounts of money from the fallen Iraqi Ba'ath regime of Saddam Hussein, in return for 'favours' rendered.

These accusations were reportedly based on documents that were miraculously found in the rubble and ash of a burning government building. The Christian Science Monitor has now admitted that these were a fake.

George Galloway, who continues to be the most outspoken personality within the British Anti-War movement, and has long been an advocate of the issues of the Iraqi and Palestinian people. "There can be little doubt that this story has been conjured to discredit Mr. Galloway. It is almost beyond belief that such an obscure piece of paper can be found in a burning building where nothing has been left intact" said, Anas Altakriti of MAB. He then added: "The Muslim Association of Britain and the entire Muslim community in Britain are adamant that they will stand by George Galloway in fighting these lies, as he has long stood by the principles of decency, justice and freedom."

We now expect The Daily Telegraph to issue a similarly unequivocal apology for publishing these slanderous allegations against a prominent Member of Parliament and a true voice for the people of Britain. We look forward to the full reinstatement of Mr. Galloway to the Labour Party, following his unjustified and inexplicable suspension.

Action

1. Send letter of support and congratulation to George Galloway at:

Email: gallowayg@parliament.uk

Party regional office:

John Smith House

145 West Regent Street

Glasgow, G2 4RE

Email: scotland@new.labour.org.uk

Tel: 0141 572 6900 Fax: 0141 572 2566

2. Send letter to The Daily Telegraph Editorial Director Kim Fletcher on demanding apology to George Galloway

Telegraph Group Limited

1 Canada Square

Canary Wharf, London E14 5DT

Email: editor@telegraph.co.uk

Tel: + 44 (0) 20 7538 5000

3. Send a letter to the Labour Party demanding the full reinstatement of George Galloway

Labour Party

16 Old Queen Street

London, SW1H 9HP

Email: info@new.labour.org.uk

Tel: 08705 900200

Musharraf debates opening ties with Israel

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said on 29 June that his country should seriously consider recognizing Israel and establishing diplomatic relations with it.

Speaking in an interview with the private Geo Television station upon his return from a two-week tour of Europe and the United States, Musharraf said: "This is the responsibility of the nation to decide. This should be seriously thought over. The media should have an open debate on this. The debate should be serious. There should be no emotionalism of the extremists."

"What is our dispute (with Israel)?" he continued. "We should think. I have been saying: 'Should we be more Catholic than the pope or more pious than the pope or more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves?' Is this the right attitude or should there be some change in it? There should be national consensus on it."

Israeli officials stressed, Musharraf is unlikely to follow through on this opening unless he musters significant public backing for such a step.

Musharraf's remarks yesterday were preceded by the visit to Israel last week of a Pakistani businessman who is considered one of the president's close associates. The businessman was apparently sent to "test the waters" as to whether Israel, which has close ties with Pakistan's traditional foe, India, would be interested in relations with Pakistan as well.

Israel currently has no ties of any kind with Pakistan, and Pakistani passports even state that they are valid for entry into any country but Israel. Israeli sources attributed Musharraf's apparent change of heart regarding ties with Israel to his new strategic alliance with the U.S. and the recent thawing of relations between India and China. China has always backed Pakistan against India, but Musharraf fears the new Sino-Indian rapprochement could leave him increasingly isolated.

Yossi Melman, Haaretz, 30 June 2003

Netanyahu says Iraq-Israel oil line not pipe-dream

Israeli Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he expects an oil pipeline from Iraq to Israel to be reopened in the near future after being closed when Israel became a state in 1948.

"It won't be long when you will see Iraqi oil flowing to Haifa," the port city in Northern Israel, Netanyahu told a group of British investors, declining to give a timetable.

"It is just a matter of time until the pipeline is reconstituted and Iraqi oil will flow to the Mediterranean."

Netanyahu later told Reuters the government is in the early stages of looking into the possibility of reopening the pipeline, which during the British Mandate sent oil from Mosul to Haifa via Jordan. "It's not a pipe-dream," Netanyahu said.

In April, a source at the National Infrastructure Ministry told Reuters Israel and Jordan would hold talks on reopening the pipeline, which Israel believes would lower fuel costs by 25 percent.

The source said that the Israeli section of the pipeline was in good condition but did not know about the Jordanian section.

Jordanian officials denied they would meet Israeli officials, citing cold relations with the Jewish State since the outbreak of a Palestinian uprising in late 2000.

Reuters via Ha'aretz - June 20, 2003

168 Homes Demolished in central Gaza Strip

A total of 168 homes inhabited by 188 families (1200 individuals) were demolished in the central Gaza Strip area since the beginning of the Intifada. 1042 homes were partially destroyed. 12 official buildings were demolished. 7485 people were affected by the destruction caused.

Also, a total of 97,270 fruit trees were uprooted, 280 green houses, 1350 water networks, 30 chicken farms, 40 water wells, 135 agricultural pools, 162 cattle heads, 466 beehives, 59600 main water pipes and 5446.5 dunums were destroyed.

13 factories and workshops were demolished completely and 5 partially.

7 electricity generators, 96,935 meters of electricity wires and 153 poles were destroyed.

Total labour force in the area is currently 23,510 workers, and 17,632 of those workers (75%) are unemployed.

Overwhelming Destruction Left Behind by Occupation Army in Beit Hanoun

Industrial losses left behind in the town of Beit Hanoun were estimated at \$5 million as a result of the destruction of raw material and several factories in the industrial area of the town during the past 2 months.

The Israeli army from 15 May 2003 and until 29 June 2003 completely demolished 40 homes using bulldozers and explosives and inflicted damage on 550 other homes.

Additionally, 2500 dunums of agricultural land cultivated with citrus and olive trees were demolished along with 7 water wells.

25 residents were killed in Israeli attacks on the town during the same period of time and 280 were wounded according to medical sources.

The Israeli army also destroyed large sections of electricity, telephone, water and waste water networks in the town.

June 30, 2003 - WAFA

Justice in the Holy Land Conference

ALL WELCOME

Sunday 31 August 2003
2.00 pm – 7.00 pm [Dinner]

Dewsbury Sports Centre,
Longcause Way, Dewsbury, WF12 8EN

SPEAKERS TO INCLUDE:

Imam from Palestine (pending allowing to travel)

Shaykh Khalilul Rahman Sajjad Nomani, executive member of The All India Personal Law Board; founder of Rahman Foundation, editor of "Al Furqan".

Shaykh Ebrahim Bham, General Secretary of Jamiatul Ulama of South Africa.

Anas Takriti, Spokes person for Muslim Association of Britain.

Dr Daud Abdullah, Senior researcher at the Palestinian Return Centre.

Dr Anthony McRoy, An Evangelical Christian.

Andrew Murray, Chair, Stop The War.

Dr Azzam Tamimi, Director of Institute of Islamic Political Thought [London].

Alice Mohan, MP for Huddersfield.

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Ismail Adam Patel – The Editor, Friends of Al Aqsa

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