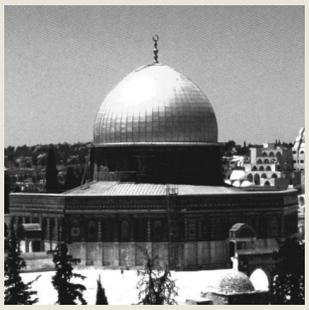

Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

www.aqsa.org.uk

Quarterly — Newsletter 18 — October 2003

Al Aqsa Mosque

Banned from Praying at Al-Aqsa

The holy month of Ramadhan is here and it is the time when Palestinians fortunate enough to be close to al-Aqsa mosque will try to spend as much time as possible praying there. However, the government of Israel is determined to stop them from doing so.

Israeli Police have forced many Palestinian youths living in occupied Jerusalem to sign written pledges not to pray in al-Aqsa mosque until the end of Ramadan. They forced them to sign by arresting many of the regular worshippers at al-Aqsa Mosque and interrogating them. They were then only released if they signed the pledge.

All of those arrested were between the ages of 17 and 35 and were held in detention for at least 24 hours. The reason for this was to stop large numbers of Palestinians coming to the holy site during Ramadan.

The father of one of the arrested boys, 19 year old Hussein, said he was summoned by Israeli forces early on Tuesday morning. He was interrogated about his Da'wah activity, his visit to al-Aqsa mosque and why he performs prayer there.

"Three hours after Hussein went to see the Israeli authorities I received a phone call from an Israeli interrogator saying he would remain in detention until Wednesday morning and would only be released if he signed a pledge not to pray in al-Aqsa," stated Hussein's father.

Israel is doing everything it can to prevent Muslims, particularly the youth, from visiting al-Aqsa mosque. In the past, they have even imposed bans on people beneath a certain age from praying there.

Israeli Public Security Minister Tzachi Hanegbi in May pledged that sometime soon Jews would be allowed to pray inside the al-Aqsa Mosque compound.

Israel Strengthens Ties With India and Turkey

At a time when Israel is at the height of its aggression against the Palestinian people, some of the less scrupulous world leaders are scrambling towards it to strengthen ties. The reasons are many, but usually to do with economic and military might.

On 9 September 2003, during Ariel Sharon's state visit to India, a billion-dollar deal for selling advanced radar systems to New Delhi was reached. This will ensure that the technical military might between India and Pakistan is tipped in India's favour. The consequences for Pakistan and more seriously the occupied Kashmir region could be catastrophic as peace between the 2 countries in recent years has been mainly due to the equality in military power between them. There were country-wide demonstrations by thousands of Indians against the visit by Ariel Sharon suggesting that many Indians oppose his oppressive policies against Palestinians.

Turkey is Israel's closest ally with military cooperation agreements between the countries. In its first ever water import deal, Israel has agreed to buy 15 million cubic metres of water annually from Turkey for 20 years. The price for this has not been revealed. This may be the beginning of more trade of natural resources including gas. Considering Israel's current defiance of many international laws, countries such as Turkey should be fighting to impose sanctions against it, not increase trading relations.

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

Assassinations

Israel's policy of killing Palestinian leaders has left over 140 Palestinians dead, including many innocent women and children. Those killed were only suspects to Israel, but they were murdered before being arrested, charged, tried and found guilty. Israel says that the difficulties in collecting evidence against these individuals make the judicial route problematical. What Israel is doing is illegal under international law.

Most governments around the world are opposed to this killing policy, but Israel keeps doing it because the only state in the world that could stop it, the USA, does nothing. This inaction by the US fuels anger against them and makes the US just as much to blame for the death of the Palestinians as the Israeli's.

The government of the UK seems to support the US with everything, and we have to make sure that this stops. Friends of Al Aqsa encourage everyone to take action whenever there is news of British support for Israel, and lobby the government to change this.

Israeli Pilots Rebel

At the end of September 2003, twenty seven Israeli pilots signed a letter refusing to continue participating in the bombing and killing of Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories.

This is a very brave act by these men, as the Israeli military is known for its brutal response to anyone who has sympathy for the Palestinians.

The letter signed by the pilots stated that they refused to take part in attacks from the air on Palestinian towns and cities or in any future killing of Palestinians, saying that bombing Palestinian cities and assassinations are "illegal and immoral" and "are the direct result of an extended occupation that is corrupting the Israeli society as a whole." The Air Force Commander-in-Chief issued an order to stop the pilots from flying again.

There are a growing number of army reservists in Israel who have signed a letter refusing to serve in the occupied territories on moral principles. In part, the letter reads, "We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people."

To view letter and signatories, see: http://www.seruv.org.il/defaulteng.asp

The Apartheid Wall

The fall of the Berlin wall was celebrated the world over because it represented injustice, division and oppression. Yet in another part of the world, we are now witnessing the building of this exact same wall. Israel claims that it is building a 'security' wall intended to separate it from the Palestinians thereby safeguarding it from Palestinian terrorism. In reality, it is building a wall across Palestinian land and stealing almost 55% of the West Bank from the Palestinian people.

The construction of the wall began in June 2002 and since then the wall has caused great hardship and distress for the Palestinian people. Over 100,000 fruit trees have been destroyed and many water sources such as wells have been confiscated as they fall within area's that Israel wants for the wall. There are now a number of Palestinian villages without any water supply, which threatens their existence. Israeli bulldozers have also destroyed thousands of metres of water pipes used domestically and for agriculture; and many homes, factories, businesses and schools have been demolished to make way for the wall. No Palestinian was compensated for the loss of their lands.

In addition to this, it is reported that the Israeli's are stealing hundreds of fruit and Olive trees from the Palestinians by uprooting them and selling them for as much as $5,000 each. The fruit from these trees were all that sustained many hundreds of Palestinian families and have done so for generations. Israel has now taken this away from them.

The wall is made of re-enforced cement, barbed wire and electric fences, but will include trenches, electronic motion sensors, guard towers and security roads. It costs $1 million for each kilometre to be built and the complete wall may be in the region of 700 kilometres in length. Most of the funds are coming from the US government; a continuation of its aid to Israeli terrorism.

Lobbying for INTERPAL

On 26 August 2003, the Charities Commission in the United Kingdom froze interpals assets, a charity which provides relief to Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and Lebanon. The reason for this was that the US government claimed that Interpal was a terrorist organisation linked to Hamas. This put pressure on the Charity Commission to investigate Interpal. However, the Charity Commission asked the US government for evidence of their claim but no evidence in support of the claim was ever received.

This is a victory for British Muslims as many lobbied the Charities Commission and the government during the enquiry, requesting that fair treatment be given to Interpal and that pressure form the US government be discarded in favour of freedom and justice. This ensured that Interpal was rightly cleared of any offence and on 24 September 2003, less than a month after the investigation was commenced, the Charity Commission declared that there was no clear evidence showing links between Interpal and any so called terrorist organisation. Interpal's assets were unfrozen and the enquiry closed.

The trustees of Interpal have stated that the charity was 'founded to provide humanitarian aid and relief for needy Palestinians' and re-iterated the fact that 'Interpal is an independent, non-political, non-profit making charity which operates according to the law..'

Rafah Declared a Disaster Zone

The governor of Rafah, a refugee camp in southern Gaza, was declared a disaster zone after Israeli occupation forces raided it between 10 and 12 October 2003 killing eight Palestinians including 2 children and 2 teenagers, and injuring 80. 1500 people were left homeless after the occupation forces demolished over 100 homes. Roads, water supplies, sewage works, telephones and electricity supplies were also severely damaged in the bombardment.

The international community condemned Israel's action when the full extent of the damage caused by the military invasion began to emerge. Israel claimed that the attack was to destroy weapons-smuggling tunnels snaking under the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. However, it is believed that the real reason behind the attack was Israel's desire to seize yet more Palestinian land and create a buffer zone on the border.

Friends of Al Aqsa Appeal

Friends of Al Aqsa works to inform people of the truth of the occupation of Palestine in order to protect the Palestinian people and Masjid al-Aqsa, by:

- **Organising seminars across the country;**
- **Distributing thousands of Newsletters, journals, and fact based leaflets every year;**
- **Organising international conferences on the issue of Palestine;**
- **Campaigning against companies and individuals that promote Zionism and distort the true; fact of the occupation and suffering of the Palestinians;**
- **Creating support and contact between like minded groups to further the Palestinian cause;**
- **Political lobbying nationally and internationally;**
- **Hosting a web-site that is updated on a daily basis;**
- **Producing daily press releases on developments in Palestine; etc.**

We appeal to all brothers and sisters to assist us by making donations, however small, towards the cost of running the organisation. Please only make LILLAH payments.

Your donation will insha'Allah be rewarded in the hereafter and we pray it will work towards the liberation of Masjid al-Aqsa.

Amount £ _____ [cheques to 'Friends of Al Aqsa']

Name and Address: _____

Post to: PO Box 5157, Leicester, LE2 0WU

Israel's Nuclear Bombs

Iraq was invaded because it was accused of having weapons of mass destruction and Iran is now facing pressure over similar claims even though there is no evidence. While Israel on the other hand, have developed many Weapons of Mass Destruction including nuclear weapons, yet this is ignored.

Israel is estimated by experts as having 200-300 warheads, not to mention a variety of air, land and sea-based delivery systems. Yet Israel still calls for Iran to be investigated while it itself has so many weapons and would never allow its weapons programmes to be investigated.

The USA has a law which bans foreign aid to countries that either do not sign or fail to obey the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. Israel has not even become a party to this treaty yet more than $3 billion is sent from Washington to Israel every year.

If America does not comply with its own laws when these do not suit Israel's purposes, why should anyone trust it at all?

Sainsbury's to Buy Chocolate from Israel

Sainsbury's announced that it awarded a contract worth over £1.5 million a year to an Israeli company called Elite which has factories based in Nazareth. The supply of chocolate is due to start in December 2003. It is unclear at this stage what the name of the chocolate is, but it will be Sainsbury's own brand.

Friends of Al Aqsa has launched a campaign encouraging people to boycott Sainsbury's until they stop trading with Israeli companies or Israel ends the occupation of Palestine and adheres to international laws.

Seminar on "Palestine"

6th/7th December 2003

Overnight accommodation and meals included
Only open to students with a valid NUS card

£25 per person

Markfield Conference Centre
Ratby Lane, Markfield, Leicestershire

SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

Dr Daud Abdullah, Senior researcher at the Palestinian Return Centre.
Dr Azzam Tamimi, Director of Institute of Islamic Political Thought, London.
Ismail Adam Patel, Chair of Friends of Al Aqsa
Ibrahim Hewitt, Chair of Interpal
Othmann Moqbel, President of FOSIS
Sheikh Mahmood Chandia, Lecturer in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, Manchester Metropolitan University

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