



Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

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Al Aqsa Mosque

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Israel's Apartheid Wall to be Investigated

90 countries voted in the UN in favour of the International Court of Justice to investigate the legality of Israel's Apartheid wall. 74 countries abstained from voting and only 8 countries opposed it. The Court must now issue an 'advisory opinion' on the legal consequences of Israel's construction of the apartheid wall.

This decision was welcomed by the Palestinians, and the Palestinian Authority described it as "a victory for justice and international law. ... It is a message from the international community to Israel to stop its aggression and to stop building the wall."

Nasser Al-Kidwa, the Palestinian UN observer, said the 90 votes in favour came "in spite of the immense pressures, and even threats, ... to which member states were subjected" not to support the resolution.

Israel has allegedly said that it will cooperate with the international court but maintains the wall has been built as a means of self-defence, although it cuts deep into the West Bank robbing yet more Palestinian land.

Violating Al-Aqsa Mosque

The current Intifada triggered by Sharon's deliberately provocative infiltration of the Holy precincts of the Al-Aqsa Mosque is well acknowledged. Despite this fact, Israel's Interior Security Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, under heavy guard, in October 2003, attempted to enter the Al-Aqsa precincts and further provoke the Palestinians.

His visit was aimed at further inflaming the already tense situation and to cast a shadow over the Palestinian Muslim's celebrations of the Holy month of Ramadhan. The Palestinians resolutely defended the mosque and barred him entry into the Mosque compound itself.

The price of Israel's Occupation

Three years of recession and Intifada has taken its toll on Israel with many businesses going bankrupt. This has reduced some previously well-off Israeli's to visiting "soup kitchens" for their only meal each day. Yet the Israeli government still persists in its occupation which costs their economy billions a year.

The violence of the occupation has slashed tourism to an all time low, taking away this usually reliable income. Israel had an annual growth of 6 per cent in the 1990s, but is now in its third year of negative growth, and unemployment is at 12 per cent amongst Israeli Jews.

The situation for Palestinians is much worse. The destruction to infrastructure and private Palestinian property inflicted by Israeli closure policies over three years of the Intifada are estimated at 3.3 billion dollars and the loss of earnings is estimated at 7 billion dollars. Closures place movement restrictions on Palestinian people, vehicles, and goods. Under closure, hundreds of military checkpoints and roadblocks make it almost impossible for Palestinians to enter Israel or to move from one Palestinian town in the West Bank and Gaza to another.

Over 50 per cent of the Palestinian population are unemployed and 67% of Palestinian households are living in poverty. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development said the Israeli occupation and the Intifada had turned the occupied territories into "an economy devastated by war."

Israeli Occupation Forces Shoot at Relief Workers

The heads of UN and international relief agencies operating in the Occupied Territories have been forced to threaten to stop their humanitarian work there due to Israel's occupation policies. Israeli forces have fired at relief workers despite being informed of the location of their workers.

The number of cities and villages placed under sudden closure has steadily increased, preventing residents and workers from entering and/or leaving the affected areas. This makes conditions for the relief workers both dangerous and uncertain. The UN states that Israel's policies are making it impossible to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinians. Despite several meetings with Israeli military authorities, the relief workers still frequently face unpredictable and sudden changes.

Many of the relief agencies now "widely question" the credibility of the assurances given by Israel's government.

Geneva Accord

The Geneva Accord seems on the face to be a fair deal between both sides, but the reality is very different. It was vocally rejected by Palestinian refugees for one simple reason, it did not allow refugees the right to return to the homes they were forced out of. The Palestinians that remain in the West Bank and Gaza are living in overcrowded and squalid conditions. However, there are also approximately 7 million refugees in other countries in the Middle East and around the world that are living as second class citizens with very few rights and freedoms who want to return to their rightful homes, and who have a legal right to return. If they give up their right to return, they give up all hopes of a better future.

The right of return is enshrined in international law and affirmed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by every regional covenant of human rights and by the United Nations 135 times. The right of return is an individual and collective right, and it cannot be diminished by passage of time, change of sovereignty, by treaty or agreement.

Israeli Army Attacks Peaceful Protesters

A peaceful protest against Israel's apartheid wall by 300 Palestinians and 30 internationals in Tulkarem was violently broken up by Israeli soldiers. The protesters were attacked with teargas, percussion grenades and batons. Bruce Groeneveld, an American from Washington was also forcefully detained in custody.

Israeli forces showed no restraint even though their actions were being witnessed by so many internationals, and also present were members of the Swedish Parliament. The Protesters regrouped several times in order to continue the non-violent protest, but each time were attacked by Israeli Forces. A Welsh volunteer was left with a seven-inch welt on his back. A 73-year-old Welsh man was hit with a baton and had a clump of hair torn out of his head. Two Palestinian women were hit by tear gas canisters, causing burning and several others were also beaten by soldier's wielding batons.

The actions of the Israeli forces were unrestrained showing complete disregard for the safety of the non-provocative protesters. This only reflects the atrocious treatment the Palestinians must receive.

Roadblocks to humiliate Palestinians

An Israeli army officer who disobeyed orders to humiliate Palestinians told an Israeli state-run radio that the army roadblocks in the West Bank were meant to "torment and humiliate Palestinians, not protect our security." "We see them (the Palestinians) coming in droves, we don't allow them to proceed, we frustrate them, we make them suffer, and we enjoy this very much." The 300 roadblocks that choke the West Bank and Gaza Strip do not contribute to preventing activists from going through.

They are meant first and foremost to inflict maximum pain and suffering on ordinary Palestinians. Palestinians and human rights activists operating in the occupied territories have asserted for some time that Israel's actions in the West Bank are mainly directed against ordinary citizens.

Israel Trains US Assassination Squads in Iraq

Israel's targeted assassination policies are illegal and deplored world-wide. However, the US government is now unscrupulously using the same policies to maintain its occupation on Iraq. It is alleged Israeli army officials have visited US military bases to train US squads in the art of targeted assassinations. It is little wonder that the world sees the US as an occupying power in Iraq. Iraq is steadily looking more like the occupied territories, with road blocks and barbed wire fences going unimpeded.

The Peace Cycle

Friends of Al-Aqsa is honoured to announce a cycle ride, in August 2004, from London to Jerusalem. Cyclists will gather from all over Europe, USA and Australia to ride across Europe to Jerusalem. The aim of The Peace Cycle is to bring the reality of the brutal occupation to the world's attention.

Over the past 55 years, thousands of Palestinians and Jews have been killed in the Holy Land. In the past three years during the Intifada, Israel has stepped up its oppression and killed almost three thousand Palestinians and wounded over thirty thousand others. In retaliation, the Palestinian resistance has killed approximately 850 Israeli's.

The Peace Cycle is supported by The Friends of Al-Aqsa, The Palestine Solidarity Campaign, The International Solidarity Movement, The Muslim Association of Britain, The Holy Land Trust, The Annur Youth Association (Bethlehem), Gush Shalom (the Israeli Peace Bloc), Al-Awda Right of Return Coalition.

Friends of Al-Aqsa, requests for donors, sponsors and riders to come forward for the 'The Peace Cycle'. If you would like to support this initiative visit www.thepeacecycle.org or contact Friends of Al-Aqsa.

Palestinians on the verge of humanitarian catastrophe

The governor of Nablus in the northern West Bank warned on Thursday of a humanitarian catastrophe in the town due to tough Israeli security measures imposed on the area for weeks.

Mahmoud Al A'loul told the Palestinian Daily of Al Quds that Nablus and its refugee camps were witnessing the worst ever situation since the beginning of the Palestinian intifada (uprising) three years ago.

"The Israeli army is besieging Balata refugee camp and prevents food and medical supplies from reaching the refugee camp," said Al A'loul.

The Israeli army has imposed a curfew on the town, keeping about 60,000 Palestinian residents indoors. Inside the town, the Israeli army has divided it into two parts, and prevented people from moving from one part to the other. Al A'loul said the restrictions were not eased on the Christmas eve. He urged the international humanitarian organizations to interfere as soon as possible to help end the tough measures imposed on the Palestinians.

Israeli army repeatedly raided Nablus over the last three months, demolished Palestinian houses and arrested dozens of Palestinians in the refugee camps.

One Day International Conference 'The Impact of Zionism on Jewish, Christian and Muslim Relations'

Friends of Al-Aqsa calls on members of organisations, institutes and interested individuals to support us by attending this important event.

The event besides other benefits will attempt to highlight, anti-Zionism does not equate with anti-Semitism. The main emphasis is to illustrate how it was possible and can be possible for Jews, Christians and Muslims to live together. Your support by attending this event is crucial and we look forward to your support.