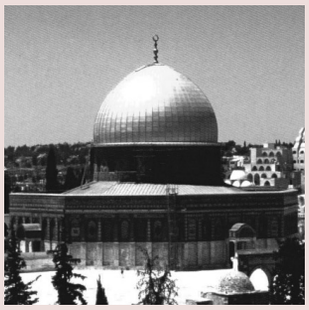

Dome of the Rock

Al Aqsa

www.aqsa.org.uk

Al Aqsa Mosque

Quarterly — Newsletter 22 — October 2004

THE HUNGER STRIKE

Israel currently holds over 7,500 Palestinian political/security prisoners in the most appalling conditions within the prisons of Israel. Hundreds of these prisoners are women and children.

On Sunday 15th August, 1,600 of the inmates began a mass hunger strike in peaceful protest at the conditions in which they are being kept. This figure rose to over 4,000 prisoners by the 9th day of the strike.

The prisoners entered the hunger strike to force the Israeli government and prison service to recognise their human rights. Mistreatment of prisoners includes: 1) Arbitrary and indiscriminate beating of prisoners in their cells, in prison courtyards and during transportation to and from prisons. 2) Humiliating strip searches of prisoners in full view of other prisoners and guards each time they enter or exit their cells. 3) Subjecting prisoners to solitary confinement for excessive periods of time, for months and even years. 4) Withholding or delaying medical treatment and the provision of medication to sick detainees. 5) Maintaining prisoners on near starvation diets that are insufficient to sustain health.

Israel reacted to the hunger strike by taking even more abusive measures against the prisoners by imposing further restrictions. The prison staff even lit barbeques outside prison cells to torment the prisoners out of their hunger strike.

The strike ended after 19 days, with many prisoners suffering ill health. Many people around the world joined the hunger strike in solidarity with the prisoners. 53 year old Aisheh Al-Zaban, the mother of one of the in-mates went on hunger strike in solidarity and died as a result.

The Israeli authorities made their position clear when Israel's Public Security Minister, Tzahi Hanenbi stated: "They can strike for a day, a month, even starve to death, as far as I am concerned." Israel refused to improve the basic conditions of the prisoners reflecting the brutality with which Palestinians are treated by the occupying forces.

The Peace Cycle Ends in Jerusalem

The Peace Cycle, which commenced from Hyde Park in London on 14th August, arrived in Palestine in time to mark the 4th anniversary of the Al-Aqsa intifada on 28th September 2004.

Dozens of cyclists travelled across Europe by bike to draw attention to the daily atrocities being committed against the Palestinians under occupation. The bike ride was gruelling and exhausting and a real test of resilience and patience. They wound their way down England, across France, Switzerland, Italy and Greece before flying to Amman. From Amman the cyclists went to the King Hussein Bridge to pass in to Palestine. All the cyclists were allowed to pass through the checkpoint and enter the occupied territories.

They then cycled to Jerusalem, stopping at Jenin, TulKarem and Ramallah. Israeli Occupation Forces prevented them from entering Nablus and thus they were forced to cycle many more kilometres to get around it. Their arrival in Palestine, and especially Jerusalem, was greatly welcomed by the Palestinians living there under a brutal occupation.

Friends of Al-Aqsa Web-site Attacked

Since Friends of Al-Aqsa launched in 1997, it has maintained an informative web-site to educate people on the realities of the occupation and the dangers to Al-Aqsa. Numerous attempts have been made in the past to bring the web-site down, and in early October, hackers accessed the web-site twice leaving behind filth and Zionist propaganda.

FoA staff continue to work tirelessly to repair the damage, produce a new web-site and keep it secure from such vandals.

Friends of Al-Aqsa Attends Annual Party Conferences

FoA members took part in events at the annual conferences of the Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties in Brighton and Bournemouth. In continuation of the FoA work in lobbying the policy makers, fringe meetings or stands were arranged at the conferences in order to raise awareness of the often forgotten Palestinian story.

The Liberal Democrat Party fringe meeting was an unprecedented success, with delegates filling the room wall to wall. A proposal was put forward for the establishment of a 'Liberal Democrats Friends of Justice in the Holy Land' forum, which would be a medium by which awareness can be raised within the party on the realities of the conflict.

The stand at the Labour Party conference was reported to be a 'welcome change' from the usual pro-Israel groups that appear there. The most successful event was the fringe meeting held by FoA at the Conservative Party conference which was addressed by Shadow Foreign Minister Streeter and David Atkinson MP. This was the first time the many pro-Zionists that lobby the Conservative Party were challenged on their views.

22 Years after Sabra and Shatila – The Massacres Continue

The month of September marked the 22nd anniversary of the massacre of 2,750 Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. The silent cry of the Palestinians has been forgotten once more, as they mourned the deaths of thousands of their countrymen who were butchered under the command of Israel's current Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

The evidence that emerged after the 1982 massacre showed how women and girls had been raped and then murdered, men were disembowelled then murdered, and pregnant women had their bellies ripped open. The Israeli forces commanded by Ariel Sharon at the time, forced refugees back into the camps when they tried to flee from the carnage. They even assisted the militia by lighting up the camps so they could find their victims more easily.

Israel has since then continued in its senseless murder of Palestinian civilians and resistance fighters in an attempt to make life so unbearable for the Palestinian people, that they leave their homeland and become refugees elsewhere in the world. Israel has robbed Palestinians of over 78% of their homeland and it continues to expand itself unabated, and now even supported by the US government who arms and finances Israel.

During the current Intifada, over 3,000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli occupation forces and illegal Jewish settlers, over 500 of whom were children. Most of those who died were killed by gun shots, including children only months old. Many were in their homes when they were killed with no reason. The Israeli army has never expressed remorse for the deaths.

The Palestinian Death Toll

From March 2004 until early September 2004, Israel enjoyed a period of 'calm' with no self bombings claiming the lives of their civilians. They claimed that the two bus bombed that occurred on September 1st shattered that calm. The Palestinians tell a very different story. In these 6 months when they did not make any retaliatory attacks against Israel, Israeli occupation forces killed almost 400 Palestinians across the occupied territory.

These killings are largely unreported by the media that rushes to report the Israeli fatalities. Israel continued its policy of extra-judicial assassinations, and in this 6 month period, killed the wheelchair-bound spiritual leader of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The attacks against Palestinian leaders usually result in the death of many civilian bystanders too.

Mailing List

Friends of Al-Aqsa send out daily updates on the events occurring in Palestine. To join the mailing list, please visit www.aqsa.org.uk and subscribe your email to the mailing list.

10 Year Old Palestinian Girl Shot in Classroom

The Israeli Occupation force's use of indiscriminate gun fire has received condemnations on many occasions. Most recently, the soldiers were responsible for the death of 10 year old Raghda Alassar who was shot while sitting in a classroom at a U.N. run school in Gaza.

The bullet hit her face under the right eye and exited out of the back of her head. A pool of blood quickly formed on her desk and around her chair, causing the other children to scream frantically. The trauma this will cause them remains to be seen.

Raghda's chances of survival were completely diminished when the Occupation Forces blocked her transfer to an Israeli hospital with specialised equipment which may have assisted.

Raghda's father was reported to have said: "I find it so difficult to believe what happened to my daughter. She was at school, just carrying her notebook, not a gun. What is my daughter – nine years old – guilty of that she has to be shot? It's state terror against the whole population."

FRIENDS OF AL AQSA
Defence of Al-Aqsa and Peace in Palestine

Presents

One Day International Conference

PALESTINE IN THE MEDIA

Wednesday 9th February 2005

2.00pm — 6.30pm

Khalili Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London,
Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London, WC1H 0XG

Tickets: £10 including buffet dinner / £5 students
(Limited seats only Book early)

For further details and bookings, email info@aqsa.org.uk

Amnesty International Slams Israel for Racist Policies

Amnesty International declared that a new law passed by the Israeli parliament on 31 July 2003 bars family unification for Israelis who are married to Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law explicitly discriminates against Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It also implicitly discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel, who constitute some 20% of the Israeli population, and against Palestinian residents of Jerusalem, for it is they who usually marry Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. As such, the law formally institutionalizes a form of racial discrimination based on ethnicity or nationality.

United States to Sell 5,000 Smart Bombs to Israel

The US congress has revealed plans to sell 5,000 smart bombs for $319 million to Israel, the funding for this will come from the U.S. military aid to Israel.

Among the bombs are 500 one-ton bunker busters that can penetrate two-meter-thick cement walls; 2,500 one-ton bombs; 1,000 half-ton bombs; and 500 quarter-ton bombs.

An unidentified senior Israeli security official is reported to have said: "This is not the sort of ordnance needed for the Palestinian front. Bunker busters could serve Israel against Iran, or possibly Syria," according to Reuters.

Al-Aqsa Intifada enters 5th year

The atrocities on Palestinians have continued and been intensified over the past 4 years by the Israelis. With over 3,300 Palestinians killed of which 82% were civilians. There are over 50,000 injured and 424 Palestinians assassinated.The Israelis have varies grotesque means to continue punishing the Palestinians including imprisoning children and torturing them. There are currently 100 Palestinian women and 377 children in Israeli prisons. 30% of Palestinian children suffer from chronic malnutrition while more than one billion dollars worth of Palestinian infrastructure has been destroyed by Israeli forces.

Israeli forces have shelled or broken into 298 Palestinian schools and since September 2000, the price of water in the Palestinian Territories has increased from $2.5 per cubic meter to $7.5 per cubic meter.

Further, the restriction of movements has been intensified and 'the Wall' has imprisoned whole Palestinian communities.