# Al Aqsa Newsletter

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## Gaza: Free Again?

**The Palestinians in the Gaza Strip breathed a sigh of relief when the moment they had dreamed of finally seemed to be coming true. After decades of living under Israeli military rule and settler violence, their homes and families seemed finally free of the daily threat of violence from extremist Israeli's. Israel invited the world's media to witness its 'painful concession' of Gaza, when in reality it was simply giving back to the Palestinians land to which Israel had no right either morally or legally.**

Gaza is now free of the numerous road-blocks which divided the land, and it is finally possible to cross the stretch of Gaza within an hour, rather than the hours upon hours of queuing and checks imposed by the Israeli occupation. Across the Salahiddine route between Gaza and Egypt, hundreds of Palestinian families flowed from the Palestinian and Egyptian sides to see each other for the first time in years, having previously been denied such reunions by the Israeli Occupation Forces.

However, there were many voices of caution following the pullout, from segments of the international community well versed in Israeli tactics, which sadly proved correct just 2 weeks following the end of the pull-out. Israel launched its military offensive aimed at disabling the Palestinian resistance factions, selling it to the Western media channels as provoked defence due to rocket attacks from Gaza. The rocket attacks were actually in response to the killing of Palestinians by Israel in the West Bank. Sharon has made his position clear, by stating that there should be "no restrictions regarding the use of all means to strike at the terrorists". There is no blanket attack on the Palestinians and after one deadly air strike, the Akram School was flattened. Israel's response, believed by few, was that the school was used to raise funds for HAMAS.

Israel's role in Gaza is far from over, and it has made clear it's intent to retain the final say over the borders, and has retained control of the air space and sea lanes, thus in effect meaning the occupation will continue, but from the outside of the Gaza Strip. Israel also controls the vital water supply to Gaza and the electricity grids and Palestinians will therefore be reliant on their long time adversaries for their most basic human needs.

The joy of Palestinians has been short lived. In the meantime, away from Gaza, Israel continues to expand its settlements in the West Bank, drawing up plans for approximately 3,500 new housing units. The houses built in the Ma'ale Adumin illegal settlement, is an open bid to connect it with East Jerusalem in the drive to 'Judaise' the whole of Jerusalem. Israel has continued unabated with its plans to annex Jerusalem, contrary to international law and world public opinion, and has strategically built its apartheid separation wall around the city, cutting it off from the Palestinians of the West Bank.

## Israeli Occupation Forces Install Spy Camera's at the Al-Aqsa Haram Sharif

In a further bid to control the Al-Aqsa Haram Sharif, Israel has installed hi-tech monitoring apparatus and spy cameras to observe the entire Al-Aqsa precinct. The new equipment is capable to monitoring every inch of the grounds and surrounding area's, and also reported to be able to detect movement beneath the ground as well as on the surface. This is a deliberate move by Israel to tighten its grip on the land of the Al-Aqsa sanctuary, and makes this holy place of worship akin to military barracks.

This move has come amid changes in Jerusalem which are making Palestinian life more and more unbearable by the day; with nearly double the number of Occupation troops now patrolling the city and backed up by elite military units. This will make Palestinian defence of the Al-Aqsa Haram Sharif more and more difficult.

# Accused Israeli War Criminal Flees London

**Retired Israeli Major General Doron Almog fled London after the Palestine Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) and Hickman & Rose solicitors successfully lodged a complaint against him for War Crimes. The Major was warned by Israeli diplomats not to leave the El Al aircraft in which he landed in London, as British police were waiting to arrest him on charges of war crimes. He then flew back to Israel without having entered the country.**

Major General Doron Almog a 54 year old Israeli national was GOC Southern Commander of the Israeli military from 8th December 2000 to 7th July 2003. Under his command the Israeli military were responsible for a countless variety of extensive human rights violations inside the Gaza Strip.

"The Palestinians living under Israeli military rule have very little recourse to legal justice themselves. It is encouraging to see British human rights organisations playing their role in pursuing Israeli Generals for war crimes; however, it is very concerning to learn that a British Official must have leaked information to the Israeli Embassy. We hope steps are taken to investigate the possible mole", said Ismail Patel.

The warrant issued on 10th September 2005 was in relation to the destruction of 59 houses in Rafah refugee camp on 10th January 2005, in breach of the Geneva Convention IV. The PCHR and other human rights organisations in Palestine have also accused the former general of a set of grave breaches, including: the killing of Noha Shukri al Makadma, who was nine months into her pregnancy at the time of her death on 3rd March 20003; the killing of Mohammad Abed al Rahman al Madhoun on 30th December 2001; and the mass murder committed on 22nd July 2002, when a one ton bomb was dropped on Gaza City killing 15 people including 9 children, and injuring over 150 others.

**Foreign Secretary Jack Straw apologise**

Since the Major's escape from British justice, Scotland Yard has come under pressure to launch a criminal investigation into how he was allowed to leave the country. In a move that has angered human rights activists and lawyers alike, British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw apologised to Israel over the issue of the warrant. Ismail Patel commented: 'It appears Mr Straw is more concerned with preserving the stature and respectability of Israeli generals than British law and Human Right Conventions by aiding and sympathizing with an accused war criminal; rather than supporting the British judiciary".

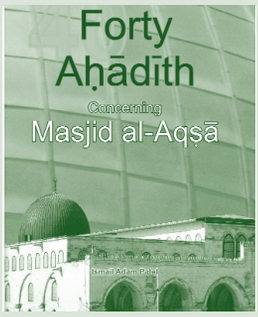
# Demonstration

British activists once more marched for peace and liberty in the streets of London on Saturday 24th September. Organisers claimed 100,000 people flooded Hyde Park in the massively successful demonstration in support of the call to bring British troops home from Iraq and in defence of Britain's Muslim community made scapegoats by the government post the 7th July bombings. The gathering in Hyde Park was a sea of faces reflecting every culture and religion in Britain's vibrant multi-faceted community. A clear sign to Mr Blair that his policies are rejected by the vast majority of British people.

In a speech by Ismail Patel, he stated: "British Muslims are not scared of the British public and have no problems with the society at large, but they are scared of the British Government and Mr Blair in particular".

In gratitude to the Stop the War movement, Ismail Patel stated: "Despite the attempts of some to castigate Muslim as 'sympathisers of bombers' the anti-war movement rose to the occasion and provided us with not only a platform but an avenue through which we can challenge bigoted views."

He further stated: "We in Britain, where once we celebrated diversity, Mr Blair's actions have tried to created fractures and segregated the society into clusters of defensive groups, each suspicious of the other. Mr Blair perpetuates this with every new speech, every new proposal and every new piece of legislation."

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## Mailing List

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# British Muslims Call for Equality in Remembrance of Genocide Victims

Since the 7th September attacks in London, the government has made a number of moves to set up Muslim committees to advice the Government on extremism. One such committee has advised the government that its Holocaust Memorial Day set up 4 years ago in remembrance of the Jewish victims of WWII should be made more inclusive and include the remembrance of the many other groups of people who, prior to and following the Jewish holocaust, were also victims of mass murder and genocide. These would include the genocide of 15 million Armenians by the Turks during WWI, the Genocides of Rwanda, Cambodia, Bosnia and as some scholars have tried to argue, the Palestinians.

The Jewish community has reacted angrily to the calls for a more inclusive Genocide memorial day, because they feel Muslims are trying to devalue the Holocaust. The response of one Muslim adviser to this claim is that the name Holocaust Day gave the impression that "Western lives have more value than non-Western lives". A Genocide memorial day would bring together all peoples who have suffered the barbarism of Genocide without giving anyone exclusivity, and would take away the divisions created by restricted claims to the level of suffering brought about by genocide, and reinforce the fact that the loss of all human life is equally tragic.

# Boycott Israeli Universities – Back on the Agenda

The British Committee for Universities of Palestine (BRICUP) is aiming to bring the academic boycott of Israeli universities back on the agenda this autumn, by presenting the reality of living under occupation. Hilary Rose, a founder of BRICUP, has said that the boycott is moving forward with universities willing to set up meetings to discuss the issues. So far, meetings have been scheduled at Birmingham, York, Sussex and the University of East London, and shall be addressed by speakers from Palestinian universities.

This follows on from the divisive events at the AUT earlier in the year when a vote to boycott Haifa and Bar Ilan Universities was successful, for the roles of those academic institutions in supporting Israel and restricting academic freedom of Palestinians. This was then overturned later in an emergency meeting, but has opened up the debate that even 5 years ago would have been unthinkable.


## *SPECIAL BOOK OFFER FOR AL-AQSA READERS*

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- traces one of the most energetic and dynamic episodes in the history of Islam;
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- addresses the Islamic expansion from a wider perspective with both the Muslim and non-Muslim readers in mind.

***Palestine & Palestinians*** describes places rooted in Palestinian memory: sites which bear witness to a history . It also presents the contemporary tragedy and struggle of a people seeking recognition of their rights.

- The book offers practical information as transport, hotels, cafes, restaurants, museums, hiking routes, cultural centres, etc. so you may plan your own multifaceted visit.
- As a guidebook, Palestine & Palestinians is a comprehensive guide to Palestine, including those parts of Israel where Palestinian culture and traditional hospitality still thrive.
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# Ramadhan Pledge 100

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