

## AL-AQSA

### Published By

Friends of Al-Aqsa  
PO Box 5127  
Leicester LE2 0WU  
England  
Tel: ++ 44 (0)116 2125441  
Mobile: 07711823524  
Fax: ++ 44 (0)116 253 7575  
e-mail: info@aqsa.org.uk  
Website: www.aqsa.org.uk

### ISSN 1463-3930

### EDITOR

Ismail Adam Patel

### PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Hajira Kassim  
Alli Bahadur  
Hasanji Patel

### PRINTERS

Scope Printers,  
Leicester.

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### WE WELCOME

Papers, Articles on any aspect of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque and those worshipping therein. With particular references to the History, Politics, Architecture, Religion, International Law, Human Rights violation. Letters on any related topics are also welcome. The Editor reserves the right to edit letters for the purpose of clarity. Points of Views are also welcome but must not exceed 2000 words. Reviews of books related to the Palestinian issue of not more than 1000 words will be considered. Papers, Articles, letters and book reviews must be typed and if possible on a computer disk (Word format). It must include the authors full name, address and a brief curriculum vitae. All should be sent to the Editor, on the above address.

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Front Cover: *Bombing of Bethlehem by Israel 2nd April 2001*©

# URGENT APPEAL

## Lift The Siege On Education

On 15 September, more than 5000 students and over 350 faculty and staff commenced a new academic year at Birzeit University - and will face a hard, humiliating and often dangerous journey by foot through two Israeli checkpoints as they attempt to reach their campus, classes, offices and laboratories. Since March 2001, students and teachers alike have borne the hardship of the closure of the Ramallah-Birzeit road, the main and, in these times, only vital access to our University. Over the summer, the situation has worsened and harassment and hardship have been "institutionalised" both for the Birzeit University community and for the residents of the 35 rural villages that use this road as their lifeline into Ramallah's services, jobs and supplies.

But it is not only the burdens and dangers suffered by individual students and teachers, nor even the harm done to one of Palestine's leading educational institutions that leads Birzeit University to issue this urgent appeal. These burdens are indeed heavy, as we witness our students and teachers climbing over trenches, seeking shelter from Israeli army fire, sound-bombs or tear gas, or held and humiliated and sometimes detained. The damage to academic life, community service programs, research and the very future development of the University are very real. However, it is the stark fact that these negative events are part of a new "normality" of Israeli closure and siege against the Palestinian civilian population, all contrary to international law, that most concerns us - and demands real and effective action from the international community. No peace can be built on the destruction and ruin of another people, their civil life, development, society and livelihoods.

The closure of the Birzeit road belies the security justification that is utilized by Israel for most of its illegal actions in occupied Palestinian territory. The Ramallah-Birzeit road passes nowhere near an Israeli town or settlement. Instead, the checkpoints represent a systematic and official policy of intimidation that is aimed at institutionalising the suffering of Palestinian civilians in an attempt to break their wills and lay waste to their society and nation.

As such, we call on the international community to defend human rights by taking immediate action against this closure, which clearly violates the Fourth Geneva Conventions, to which Israel is a signatory, as well as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights provisions in international time. Indeed, it is urgent and necessary that the High Contracting Parties to the Convention convene and exercise their responsibilities under international law. But alongside these comprehensive initiatives, we urge the international community to act whenever the interests of peace and security are violated and take concrete measures to ensure these interests.

We believe an open road to Birzeit University is a step forward to a just and equitable peace. Your support is urgently needed.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT THE BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY WEBSITE AT:

**WWW.BIRZEIT.EDU**



**W**hosoever kills a human being for other than manslaughter or corruption in the earth, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and who so ever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind

The World Trade Centre and Pentagon atrocities have undoubtedly introduced a new historical reference point. The barbarism of a few has affected thousands of innocent victims and has numbed the world.

The wanton terrorist acts in America, abhorrent to all but a few deviants, have forged a chasm between the Western and Islamic civilisations. If they were misguidedly enacted under the banner of Islam then the terrorists have achieved but one thing: the galvanisation of forces against Islam. The sleeping giant of Western Islamophobia has been stirred into action, despite the fact that Muslims were possibly the single highest identifiable group among the WTC and Pentagon victims, around 1,000 of the total 6,000 estimated.

The barrage of accusatory articles and programmes, starting seconds after the first jet hit the WTC, has had a major impact upon Muslims across the world. Many Muslims are now anxious for their own future, lost for direction and unsure of what stance to adopt.

Those with vested interests are nurturing racist elements within Western society against Islam by demonising Muslims, thereby preparing for and justifying their collective punishment. The arguments are well known, and yet no one refers to the actions of the IRA in Ireland as specifically “Roman Catholic terrorism”, or the events at Waco as “Christian fundamentalism” or Tamil Tigers suicide bombers in Sri Lanka and India as “Hindu fundamentalist”; or the Sabra and Chatilla massacres as a direct result of “Jewish extremism”. Yet the suspected involvement of Muslims in New York and Washington implicates, almost without question in some minds, Islam itself and the whole Muslim ‘Ummah’, across the world.

Now is the time for reason, and in telling the world that you are “either with the USA or for terrorism”, President George W. Bush is acting like the proverbial playground bully. Nothing in life is so simple, and the complex web of lies and deceit that passes for international diplomacy and intelligence gathering is no different. Having a viewpoint that is out of synch with that of the USA does not necessarily place a person,

organisation or country in favour of terrorism. Such arrogance on the part of President Bush is dangerous and, perhaps, gives a hint of why so many people around the world are anti-American in many different ways. Human rights activists and voluntary organisations of all hues must resist and ignore what is a farcical presidential demand.

Dissent is a democratic right, one that many of those gathering under the banner of the “democratic and civilised world” being raised by Mr. Bush would support. But real democracy depends on real dissent and the right to oppose governments that have been democratically arrested. Ignoring or bullying dissenters into line actually destroys democracy itself. It is hypocrisy for the West to proclaim democratic slogans while demeaning and persecuting those who prefer to take a different moral high ground.

As an organisation committed to establishing human rights for Palestinians, Friends of Al-Aqsa calls for the perpetrators of the crimes against humanity in America to be arrested and tried under international law, just as we call for the likes of Ariel Sharon and his terrorist gang to be brought to justice for their war crimes.

Muslim condemnation of terrorism does not give the US-led alliance *carte blanche* for the wholesale subjugation of a people or a country. If the US is serious about being a military *and* moral superpower then George Bush needs to employ international law in the fight against terrorism rather than acting like a secular fundamentalist state against Muslims worldwide.

The USA and its citizens should wake up to the fact that anti-Americanism across the globe (and not just in the Muslim world) arises directly from US foreign policy. While championing democracy for its own citizens, successive American governments have supported and defended autocratic dictatorships around the third world, in particular the Middle East. They have also been the paymasters of the bogus “democracy” of Israel’s illegal expansionism on Palestinian land.

The US has been behind numerous assassinations and plots against foreign leaders deemed to be unfriendly. Since 1945,

America has intervened in more than 20 countries to ensure that its own economic and political interests are protected, in most cases to the detriment of the local population. Since World War II, the USA has dropped bombs on 23 countries and has backed more than 20 coups across the globe.

The Israelis, like vultures, tried to make political hay out of the US disaster. When asked how the terrorist attacks might affect US-Israeli relations, the former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "This is good news [for us]." Realising his crass insensitivity, he immediately tried to correct the impression he was giving: "Well, not very good, but it will generate immediate sympathy."

Barak followed suit, reinforcing Netanyahu's sentiment by calling for a united stance against 'terrorists' like "those Palestinians".

Later the same night, Ariel Sharon's criminal countenance was beamed across the world's media claiming that Israel stood on the same ground as the United States, calling the assault an attack on "our common values" and declaring, "I believe that together we can defeat these forces of evil."

Building on the carefully manufactured sympathy for Israel and aware that the gaze of the world's media was focused on America, Sharon moved grotesquely to attack Palestinian civilians, a trait of his for the past fifty years.

By nightfall on 11 September, Israeli occupation forces had surrounded the city of Jenin and cut its electricity supply. Israeli occupation forces, including more than 50 tanks and numerous ground troops, then proceeded to tighten the closure of the whole Jenin district and its surrounding villages.

Israeli occupation forces then made several incursions into Ramallah, Khalil and other towns and villages. Within hours, they had killed nine Palestinian civilians and wounded 87, 15 of them seriously.

The first anniversary of the Intifada has witnessed Palestinian violations by Israeli with the direct military, political and economical support of US. "One Year of Violation" has resulted in:

682 Palestinians deaths. 294 in the West Bank and 255 in the Gaza Strip, besides 13 dead Palestinians from inside the 1948 borders. The number of wounded reaches 21,480.

The number of children killed under the age of 18 is 186 and the number of wounded 528, among them 437 will be permanently disabled.

The occupation forces purposefully assassinated 41 Palestinians extra-judicially in 35 operations. A further 22 innocent Palestinian civilians were killed in these operations.

The number of Palestinian imprisoned in the course of the year has been 1605 of which 1373 are still in prison and 218 are children.

The number of killed among medical and rescue teams is seven and 96 others were wounded.

Concerning the targeting of residential houses and in particular Palestinian civilians, the number of houses completely destroyed in the Gaza Strip reaches 341 and in the West Bank 116, whereas 5,575 houses were partially destroyed in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The amount of agricultural land bulldozed in the Gaza Strip reaches 9,970 dunams and in the West Bank 7,486. Besides 134 wells in the West Bank and Gaza have been destroyed.

The siege and the closure imposed on the Palestinian territories by Israelis has led to an economic loss of around US\$3,568,465,218

In view of the Israeli oppression and apartheid policies Palestinian human rights activists must not be intimidated by America's desire through Israeli influence to be labelled as terrorists. They must rise to the occasion and point out to the Americans the bankrupt policy of supporting apartheid Israel as a political liability and a morally degrading, colonialist venture.

If America and its allies are to counter the rising tide of anti-Americanism they must, first and foremost, question unmitigated US support for Israel. Peace *and justice* in Palestine must be the aim.

Unfortunately the US appear to be embarking on the same old path of planting an illegitimate regime upon another nation to serve its own interests. In this case, by destroying the Taliban rulers of Afghanistan, because they do not bow to US pressure and replacing them with the notorious Northern Alliance who at present only control 5 per cent of the country or the re-discovered exiled King of the Afghans.

The US can rise above its enemies on all counts if it builds on world sympathy for what happened on 11th September, and moves towards bringing all terrorists and war criminals to trial, including those of a Zionist nature, rather than punishing a whole nation and possibly the Muslim world for daring to be different. Time will tell if George Bush, Tony Blair and the rest will have the courage to make a real change, or if they are merely pandering to their Zionist stooges. Call all terrorists to account, or none. But don't pretend to be morally correct while ignoring blatant human rights abuses paid for by American tax dollars.

# The right of return in the Zionist political discourse

Dr. Daud Abdullah\*

There are two rights of return in the Zionist political discourse. One is the right of Jews from anywhere in the world to 'return' to Palestine. Their right, according to the Zionists, is paramount and must take precedence over the other, which is the right of the indigenous Palestinians to return and live in the land from which they were expelled.

All the actions of the Zionists in Palestine today are based on three claims:

1. They are a separate and chosen people.
2. There was a covenant for them in the Land of Canaan forever.
3. The occupation and return is a duty on all Jews.

All three of these claims are untenable from an Islamic point of view. The question of being loved by God and winning His divine favor is not determined by ethnic, racial or genealogical considerations. On the contrary, this favor is granted only in accord with adherence and submission to God's divine will.

Concerning the second claim, the Qur'an emphatically repudiates any such pretension that Palestine is their inheritance from Abraham. *"Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian. He was an upright man, a Muslim one who had surrendered himself to Allah. He was no polytheist. Surely the men who are nearest to Abraham are those who follow him; this Prophet, and the true believers."* (3:67)

The Jewish claim to historical rights in Palestine evaporates in the face of the right of the Muslim Arabs to their land. Although the Zionists often assert that the Arab presence in Palestine began with the advent of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Canaanite Arabs inhabited it more than 1,500 years before the Jews established their state. They continued to inhabit it during the existence of that state and after Jewish links with Palestine were severed. The Jews ruled over parts of Palestine and not all of it for about four centuries (1,000-

586 BC). Their rule faded away as did that of the Ashurites, Persians, Pharaohs, Greeks, and Romans, while the Palestinian people remained firmly rooted in their land.

In the same manner the Jewish connection with Palestine was practically broken for about 1,800 years, from 130 CE to the twentieth century. During that period they had no political presence in Palestine. Indeed, their religious teachings prohibited any return to it. More than 80% of modern Jews have no historical ties with Palestine. Likewise, they have no genealogical or patriotic connection with the Children of Israel. The vast majority of Jews today trace their origins to the Cazars (Ashkenaz), which are ancient Tartar-Turkic tribes that inhabited the northern Caucasus region and became Judaized during eighth century CE. Thus if ever there was a right of return for the Jews, it is not to Palestine but rather to southern Russia.<sup>1</sup>

## Biblical Roots

Despite the common tendency to view Zionism as a modern nineteenth century phenomenon, in reality it has its ideological roots in biblical traditions. The name Zion highlights a territorial definition of the Bible, and so too does the name Israel. Thus when Zionists speak of their historic right in Palestine they are referring to a Biblical tradition. To deny that right is, in their view, to deny the Bible.

The peculiarity ascribed to Israel and its rights take its origin from the primacy of the Bible and its precedence over human thinking. The Promise Land, the Chosen People, and the Covenant are all purported not only to be 'historical rights but also sacred rights according to the Zionists. The Zionists, as was Herzl, may not have been religious but the Biblical discourse on return and Israel is central to their thinking and conduct.

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\* Senior Researcher, the Palestinian Return Centre, London. Lecture delivered at the Friends of Al Aqsa seminar, 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> September 2001. Leicester University.

**If they do not describe it as *aliyah* –return, it would remain a foreign conquest. The project has to be taken out of this realm. Return, therefore, is a religious imperative for them**

The defeat at the hands of the Assyrians and captivity in Babylon created a crisis of Israel unfulfilled. The description of the colonization of Palestine as *aliyah* – return – testifies to its primacy in the Zionist discourse. If they do not describe it as *aliyah* – return, it would remain a foreign conquest. The project has to be taken out of this realm. Return, therefore, is a religious imperative for them.

The mission of the new state and subsequent generations is the ‘ingathering of the exiles’. Their return is seen as part of their chosen people status. As for the Palestinians, their denial of return is sanctioned in the eternal curse of Canaan as depicted in the Book of Genesis. Canaan was cursed because his father, Ham, saw his father Noah naked and drunk and made fun of him. Noah when he sobered issued a curse and blessing, the curse been thrown upon Canaan and the blessings bestowed upon Shem from whom the Israelites descended.

Accordingly, the settling in Palestine has political, economic as well as romantic and mythical value. Ben Gurion told a conference in Jerusalem in 1953 that, “all sections regard the return to Israel as a messianic movement fulfilling the mission of Israel’s Hebrew Prophets.”<sup>2</sup>

The occupation of Palestine is justified in the light of Biblical verses such as, “When these things have befallen you, the blessing and the curse...if you turn back to Him ...then the Lord will show you compassion and restore your fortune. He will gather you again from all the countries to which he has scattered you. Even though he were to banish you to the four corners of the world, the Lord God will gather you from there, from there he will bring you into the land which your forefathers occupied and you will occupy it again.” (Deut. 30, 1-3)

This Biblical exclusivity is expressed in Ben Gurion’s address to the Third World Congress for the study of Judaism in Jerusalem in 1961, “the Jewish vision of redemption has two aspects: the ingathering of exiles and the continuation of the Jewish people in its land as a chosen people, and as a light to the nations.”<sup>3</sup> This could only be achieved by denying the Palestinians their rights in their land.

The Biblical texts can themselves be interpreted in a narrow and literalist sense and give rise to extreme forms of nationalism. The book of Deuteronomy for example says,

“When Yahweh your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you – the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, Perizzites, the Hivites...and when

Yahweh your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy...break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7, 1-11; see also 9, 1-5. 11, 8-9. 23, 31-32).<sup>4</sup>

### **Impact on Palestinians**

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was an attempt to de-politicize the scriptures on Israel. In 1869 a conference of American Reform rabbis in Philadelphia decided before the establishment of the Zionist movement that, “the messianic aim of Israel is not the restoration of the old Jewish state under a descendent of David.”<sup>5</sup> Some years later on the eve of the First Zionist Congress in 1897 the German Rabbinical Council ‘formally and publicly condemned the ‘efforts of the so-called Zionists to create a Jewish national state in Palestine’ as contrary to Holy Writ.”<sup>6</sup>

The Zionists later changed this perspective. Ever conscious of the intense rivalry between the European colonial powers Herzl drifted closer to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine. Thus in 1896 he wrote in his blue print, “The Jewish State”, “We should there form a portion of a rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism.” The first Zionist Congress convened by Herzl at Basle in August 1897 marked an important turning point in the history of the Zionist movement.

One hundred and ninety-seven delegates representing all the schools of Zionist thought attended the 1897 Congress. In his keynote address to the gathering Herzl said, “we want to lay the foundation stone of the house which is to shelter the Jewish nation... Zionism seeks to obtain for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secure homeland in Palestine.”<sup>7</sup> The Congress concluded with the founding of the World Zionist Organization and the declaration of the Basle Protocol. It read in part, “Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine.”

In order to complete their colonization of Palestine the early Zionists could not rely on the conquest of Palestinian land only. They also had to pursue a policy of separate development –apartheid- that would allow Jewish political, educational, economic, and

military institutions to take root. The leaders of “Labour Zionism” were the most ardent advocates of this separatist policy. In 1920 they founded the General Federation of Jewish Labour (*Histadrut*), whose guiding slogans were; “Jewish Land, Jewish Labour, Jewish Produce.” These ideas proved especially attractive to the Jewish emigrants who were in the main poor and unemployed. They swallowed, hook, line, and sinker, the *Histadrut* argument that the exclusion of Palestinian labour meant more jobs and relatively higher wages for themselves. Thus, when translated into practice the principle of “Jewish Labour” forced many Jewish industries and agricultural settlements to hire Jewish labour only and boycott the fruits and produce from non-Jewish farms.

The drive to enforce the doctrine of “Jewish Labour” intensified in the 1930s. When some Jewish builders and citrus growers employed Palestinian workers, the *Histadrut* launched a campaign to deny them employment. This campaign spread to the cities where Palestinian Arabs were physically removed after they had found employment in Jewish industries. Members of the *Histadrut* picketed Jewish farms in order to prevent Palestinians from getting jobs. They poured kerosene on Arab agricultural produce and attacked Jewish housewives who purchased from Arab farmers. In 1936 David Ben Gurion a founding leader of the *Histadrut* and future prime minister of Israel told a meeting of the National Council of the settler movement (*Yishuv*), “If we want Hebrew redemption 100%, then we must have a 100% Hebrew settlement, a 100% Hebrew farm, and a 100% Hebrew port.”<sup>21</sup>

The Zionist colonization of Palestine differed in one significant way from other colonialist enterprises. Instead of exploiting the Palestinian Arab population for the benefit of a mother country as Indian workers were by the British, the Zionists set about to expel and replace the indigenous population. If ever they succeeded in concealing their objective in the early part of the twentieth century, it had become an open secret by the mid-1930s. While the Zionist leader, Chaim Weizmann, “compared the Arabs of Palestine to the rocks of Judea, as obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path,” Ben Gurion, in 1938, went even further and declared, “after we become a strong force, as a result of the creation of a state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine.”

Zionism exploited the power of Zion – Jerusalem – to advance its secular program.

Whereas traditional Jewish messianic teachings emphasized the mystical recreation of a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, without human intervention, as a condition for the coming of the messiah, modern Zionists advocated the direct political role.

Ben Gurion made a distinction between the centuries of longing of Jews for Zion on the one hand and Zionism as a totally new phenomenon on the other. In 1939 he significantly noted “Zionism is a modern phenomenon, new in Jewish history. It is not something that existed for many generations and then went through a renewal among us over the last 50 or 60 years.”<sup>28</sup> He dismissed the view that Jewish existence followed a predestined eternal pattern and that Zionism’s realization was inevitable: “But Zionism cannot be realized under any and all conditions. Its realization is dependent on certain specific political and social conditions.”

As expected, the Palestinians did not resign themselves to losing their land. Zionism had clearly become a danger not only to individual livelihood but also to Palestinian national aspirations as well. By 1936 about half of the peasantry could no longer sustain themselves on their land. The Zionist through various means evicted about twenty thousand families. Those who drifted into the cities did so only to swell the ranks of the unemployed.

“The return of Jewish rule to the land of Zion’ resulted in the uprooting and exile of the Palestinian people. Their enterprise of return demanded the expulsion of the Palestinians. The Zionist believed it was their right to expel the Palestinians. They still do. The *Moledat* Party in the present coalition government led by Ariel Sharon openly advocates this. As early as 12<sup>th</sup> June 1895 Herzl wrote in his diary, ‘We shall spirit the penniless Arabs across the borders and deny them of employment in our land.’”<sup>210</sup> David Ben Gurion later made a distinction between human rights in general and the specific dispensations for Zionism. “The rights to Palestine do not, as in other countries they do, belong to the existing settlers, whether they be Jews or Arabs. The crux is the Right of Return of Jewry Dispersed.”<sup>211</sup> In 1937 he coined the phrase: ‘the Mandate is not our Bible; rather, it is the Bible that is our mandate.’

Although 53 years have passed since the Palestinian exile began there are no regional or international initiatives to expedite their

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return. We hear instead calls for their resettlement in their countries of exile. Since their expulsion in 1948 and 1967 the Palestinians have lived as stateless refugees in various parts of the world or as second-class citizens or indeed enslaved in their own land trapped by Israeli settlers. The Palestinians have shown that they are ever willing and able to resist the might of Israel and its allies. While they would welcome dearly our support they can no longer wait while we indulge in dithering and antics.

Of all the discriminatory laws and practices of Zionism, none can match the Israeli Law of Return for its inequity. This Law which was enacted on 5<sup>th</sup> July 1950 affords to every member of the “Jewish people” born anywhere in the world the right to immigrate to Israel and become a citizen upon arrival. At the same time, it denies this right to Palestinian Muslims and Christians who were born in Palestine and expelled during the successive wars of occupation. While the Law of Return seeks to ensure the constant increase of Israel’s Jewish population, its legal adjunct, the Nationality Law enacted in 1952 aims to limit the growth of the Palestinians. Thus, whereas the latter guarantees automatic citizenship to Jews through immigration, residence, birth and naturalization, it enforces a completely different set of rules and conditions for Palestinians.

They see Palestinian return not as a natural right but as part of a future political deal with the Arab states in terms of Jews who left Arab countries. Following the collapse of the Camp David negotiations in 2000 former Minister of Justice and architect of the Oslo accords Yossi Beilin declared there is no right of return for the Palestinians to the territories that became Israel. Zionists of every shade and color are in agreement on this. Any recognition of the right of return would strike at the heart of the Zionist Israel as a Jewish, colonialist expansionist state. Not only in terms of numbers and the demographic balance but also in terms of the dispossession which has continued until this day in 1948 and 1967 Palestine. It would put an end to it. It is harder for the Israelis to accept it moreover because of the growing demands of the Palestinians in 1948 Palestine for greater rights and the return of their stolen property. To bring more Palestinians would make matters worse for them.

Although the Palestinians have neither surrendered nor abandoned their right to return, Zionist Israel continues to deny them this right on grounds that they bear no responsibility for the Palestinian refugee

problem, that a return of the Palestinian would change the Jewish character of their state, and that the Palestinians are not nationals of the state of Israel. The more extremist and fundamentalist Zionist elements advocate the Biblical solution to the Canaanite – Palestinian – demographic problem. This is manifested in the use of chemical weapons that induce sterility, the forced expulsion of civilians from their homes and massacre of those who resist occupation. It is justified in the light of scriptural proclamations such as;

“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places. Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.’” (Numbers 33: 51-53)

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to occupy and drives out many natives before you – Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivvites, and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you – when the Lord your God delivers them into your power and you defeat them, you must put them to death. You must not make a treaty, and show them no mercy.” (Deuteronomy 7:1-3)

## Notes

1. M. Salih, Facts Concerning the Palestine Question, (London:2001), p.2
2. H. Haddad “The Biblical Bases of Zionist Colonialism, *JPS*, Vol. III, No.4, Summer, 1974, p.99
3. Ibid.
4. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are devoted to the themes of *aliyah* and purity of race.
5. Haddad, op. cit., p.102
6. D. Vital, The Origins of Zionism, Oxford, 1975, p.336
7. Quoted in N. Masalha, Expulsion of the Palestinians, (Washington:1992), p.24
8. A. Shapira, “Ben Gurion and the Bible: The forging of an historical narrative”, *Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 33, No.4, October 1977, p. 650
9. *ibid.*
10. M. Prior, “Right of Return, the Bible, and Ethnic Cleansing” (London:2001), unpublished paper, p.2
11. Haddad, op. cit., p.103

# The future of Christianity in the Holy Land

Dr Rev Stephen Sizer\*

Underneath the beautiful Sea of Galilee, the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea lay a hidden fault line that runs down through the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula on to the heart of East Africa. Over thousands of years, earthquakes along that fault line have devastated many civilisations. Today there is a human fault line running through the same land – a fault line that is prone to volcanic eruptions, as occurred following Sharon’s provocative visit to the al Aqsa Haram Sharif a year ago, as two peoples, like two tectonic plates, try to occupy the same land - one the military occupier, the other the occupied. Stereotypes sometimes naively and sometimes intentionally portray this as a conflict between Jew and Muslim. Most people in the West are ignorant of the very existence of an indigenous Palestinian Christian community which is haemorrhaging and close to extinction, a double minority (whether as Israeli citizens or West Bank Arabs), caught in the cross fire, as at Beit Jala, between Jewish Zionism and Muslim fundamentalism. As a friend and advocate of the Palestinian Church I want to raise and answer the question: Do Palestinian Christians have a future in Palestine?

There are five key pressures facing the indigenous Christian community that will determine whether they survive beyond the next 20 years. - Apartheid, Bantustanisation, Concealment, Distortion and Emigration. To a lesser or a greater degree these pressures are also felt by Muslim Palestinians. As followers of Jesus Christ however, Christians are more vulnerable since they are called to follow the path of non-violence, refusing retaliation but instead seeking reconciliation, called by Jesus to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them.

## 1. Apartheid

While Israel presents itself as a Western democracy, respecting and protecting the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, institutionally, judicially and religiously, it gives preference to Jews. So whereas in 1922 Christians made up 52% of the population of Jerusalem, they now represent just 2.5% of Jerusalemites. More Palestinian Christians born in Jerusalem now live in Sydney, Australia than in Jerusalem. According to William Dalrymple in 1922, long before the founding of the State of Israel, Christians made up 10% of the population of Palestine. He claims they tended to be wealthier and better educated than their Muslim neighbours owning most of the newspapers and filling a disproportionate number of the senior posts within the British Mandate administration. While numerically they dominated the Old City of Jerusalem, as they had done so since the 4th Century, those with better education or wealth began to move out of the cramped conditions of the Old City and built large homes for themselves in the West Jerusalem suburbs of Talbich, Kattamon and Bak’a.

The exodus of Palestinian Christians began with the withdrawal of the British mandate forces and the war of 1948. Around 55,000 or 60% of the Palestinian Christian community fled or were driven from their homes, along with 650,000 Muslim Palestinians. As Israel occupied West Jerusalem it was the Christian Palestinians who were disproportionately made refugees. A second exodus occurred in 1967 with the Israeli occupation of the

**Most people in the West are ignorant of the very existence of an indigenous Palestinian Christian community which is haemorrhaging**

**As Israel occupied West Jerusalem it was the Christian Palestinians who were disproportionately made refugees**

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\* Lecture delivered at Friends of Al Aqsa seminar, Leicester University on 15th September 2001. Rev Sizer is a Vicar at Christ Church, Virginia Water and an area Tutor at the School of Theology, Westminster College Oxford. He holds several positions of a trustee and is renowned for his lectures on Christian Zionism. He besides having numerous articles published on the Palestinian issue also has a book published by Eagle Publishers, The Panorama of the Holy Land, a spiritual tour guide of important sites in Palestine.

**It is strangely incongruous that as Westerners we can travel thousands of miles to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem, Hebron and Bethlehem but Christians living just a few miles away are denied access to those same sites**

West Bank. Between 1967 and 1977 Israel confiscated and settled 37,000 acres of Arab land in East Jerusalem. Today only 13.5% of East Jerusalem remains in Palestinian hands.

By their intransigence at the negotiating table Israel is attempting to create irreversible facts on the ground. Between 1967 and 1992 another 19,000 Christians, or 40% of the Christians still living in the West Bank emigrated abroad.

Today only 170,000 Palestinian Christians remain in Israel and the Occupied Territories. They represent less than 0.25% of the population, and many more have left the traditional Christian villages of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour since the new Intifada began last September.

Those that remain, both Muslim and Christian, living in the Occupied Territories such as Ramallah, Bethany or Jericho are regularly placed under curfew and denied access, not only to their places of work and medical treatment, but also to their churches and mosques. Even well known Jews have been critical of Israel's racist policy. The world-renowned Jewish violinist Sir Yehudi Menuhin, on receiving the Wolf Foundation prize for music in the Knesset, a few years ago, soundly rebuked the Israeli government for treating the Palestinians with the same contempt the Nazi's had shown the Jews.

*"This wasteful government by fear, by contempt for the basic dignities of life, this steady asphyxiation of a dependent people, should be the very last means adopted by those who themselves know too well the awful significance, the unforgettable suffering of such an existence. It is unworthy of my great people, the Jews..."*

It is strangely incongruous that as Westerners we can travel thousands of miles to visit the holy sites in Jerusalem, Hebron and Bethlehem but Christians living just a few miles away are denied access to those same sites. Jonathan Kuttab is a Palestinian Human Rights lawyer. I asked him to elaborate his concerns for the future.

*The Israeli coalition is always a reflection of Israeli society. We have watched Israeli society move to the right and become more racist, more fascist, more stubborn and less open to real compromise.*

Hagop Sarkissian the Armenian Bishop in Jerusalem says, "I am seriously worried about our future. We have been here for 1600 years, yet we cannot be sure what will happen tomorrow. The Israelis claim they are the champions of religious freedom, but behind that smokescreen they make it impossible for our community to flourish. They have not granted one

*building permit to us since 1967, and they destroy any building we construct illegally. It took us four years to get a telephone for our infirmary, while a Shin Bet informer I know got one within a week. They neglect our streets. The Jewish Quarter is properly maintained, but the streets in the other quarters are subsiding because the old Ottoman-period drainage system is collapsing. Its worst in the Muslim Quarter. The people there believe the Israelis want to make their houses uninhabitable so that they have to leave; then the buildings can be acquired by settlers. They even use the tax system to put our shop keepers out of business, charging them totally arbitrary tax demands. In 1967 we had eighty or ninety shops in the Old City, now - what? - maybe ten are left, possibly less. All the rest have been bankrupted by tax officials who refuse to believe their accounts. In some cases shopkeepers got demands for more than the entire value of their businesses."*

The situation of the Palestinian Church is exacerbated by the racist attitudes of some so-called Christian Zionists who support the State of Israel. Neil Cohen, vicar of Christ Church, Jerusalem, said in a recent public debate, "Partnership of Jew and Arab is untenable in Israel... we live in an age of political correctness which claims we live in a world where all people have equal rights. I don't agree with that because I don't think it squares with the biblical record... the search for peace in the Middle East, laudable though it is, is a wild goose chase."

Others such as Rob Richards claim Palestinians are 'aliens' in a State that belongs exclusively to the Jews. "The alien has rights and we can remind Israel of this. Palestinians and Arabs who have made Israel their home come under that biblical word 'alien'."

This policy of apartheid or ethnic cleansing against Palestinians is implemented through a policy of Bantustanisation.

## **2. Bantustanisation**

Bantustans were the creation of an apartheid white South Africa which attempted to give blacks in South Africa, limited autonomy in specified reservations, while denying them the right to live in exclusive white areas. Israel has been following this same strategy under the guise of the Oslo peace accords - giving Palestinians limited autonomy in places such as Bethlehem, Nablus, Jenin and Jericho, while they have progressively occupied and settled the rest of the West Bank in what Kenneth Cragg describes "the slow but sure Judaization" of Palestine.

In the last 10 years over 2000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the Occupied Territories making at least 13,000 Palestinians homeless. Since then the Israeli government has also planted 140 illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories appropriating 60% of the land. Local Christians often describe the West Bank like a piece of Swiss cheese - its full of holes made by new exclusive settler roads and security zones. The Christian community of Palestine has traditionally been localised in the cities and villages of Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, Zebbabde and Nablus. The Palestinian Authority has recognised this and ensured that irrespective of whether Palestinian Christians remain a majority, they would continue to be led by a Christian mayor. It seems that the Israeli government has targeted many of these communities.

There used to be a green hill on the edge of Bethlehem known as Abu Ghoneim - the Green Mountain that is part of the shepherd's fields. It used to look beautiful, now it is a construction site - part of the land grab to complete the ring of Israeli settlements around Jerusalem on Palestinian land. It is part of the territory occupied by Israel during the 1967 war, which the international community has repeatedly insisted must be returned to its Palestinian owners. The mountain was originally declared a green belt and contains several significant sites to Christians. Israel is building over 6,000 housing units exclusively for 25,000 more American and European Jewish settlers.

The massive settlement at Abu Ghoneim closes the circle of exclusively Jewish settlements around the north, east and south side of Palestinian Jerusalem changing the demographic character of the West Bank forever.

Abu Ghoneim now re-named Har Homa by Israel is destined to give the Jews a strategic fortress as part of the process of "Judaising" Jerusalem before the final status talks. It lays siege to the Christian Palestinian communities of Beit Sahour and Bethlehem. It eliminates their land reserves, isolates them from Jerusalem and cuts them off from the rest of the West Bank to the north. It threatens the very existence of these ancient Christian communities.

Speaking of the Abu Ghoneim -Har Home settlements, Daoud Kuttub, a Christian Palestinian journalist, insists this is "A calculated and premeditated process of changing the character and the demographic nature of the Holy City." Only 13% of the land of East Jerusalem remains in Palestinian hands. The rest 87%, has been

confiscated for further exclusive Jewish settlements, for by-pass roads or closed military areas. In the Old City of Jerusalem the situation is more acute, as it has been the policy of successive Israeli governments to insist that Jerusalem becomes their undivided and exclusive capital. Since 1990, the Ateret Cohanim which is training fundamentalist Jewish settlers to become priests for a future Jewish Temple on the al Aqsa Haram Sharif, has purchased by underhand means or simply occupied by force over 40 properties in the Muslim quarter as well as St John's Hospice in the Christian Quarter near the Holy Sepulchre. The funding for such purchases has come from the Israeli government and rich Zionist western sponsors.

The effect of Bantustanisation on ordinary Christian families. Bishara Awad is the Principal of Bethlehem Bible College. Bishara is a father figure, gracious, patient, yet this time, when we met recently, he was clearly distressed. The story he shared typifies the reasons why the Palestinian Christian community is haemorrhaging.

*"Tony is a student of the College... He is a Christian. All his family are Christians. The family own a piece of land on the outskirts of Bethlehem, which they bought in 1924. One day the family went to work on their land and found a bulldozer opening up a new road into their land near the edge of the Neve Daniel settlement. When they tried to stop the bulldozer, the Israeli settlers took Tony's brother to the police station. He was not released until he signed a document promising never to go back to his land again. This has naturally been very disturbing for the family. It's not strange for us because it is happening all the time. But this is something near to our hearts and to our students. It happened just two weeks ago. All we could do as a College is say a prayer right on the land. We prayed for peace, for justice. We prayed for the settlers, that the Lord would give them a soft heart, that they would not take someone else's land."*

Regarding the territory around Bethlehem, Bishara further states, "There is an Israeli agenda, a Zionist dream to take all this land and they don't want any Palestinian's on the land. So they do this in many ways, they do this in subtle ways. They will not allow any new housing projects for the Palestinians, and if we do try and build houses on our land they come and demolish them."

**The funding for such purchases has come from the Israeli government and rich Zionist western sponsors**

**Even more significant, something like 95% of pilgrims who visit the Holy Land do not even meet any indigenous Christians who are 99% Palestinian**

To assist their policy of apartheid and strategy of bantustanisation, the Israeli's conceal the presence of an indigenous Christian community.

### 3. Concealment

In peace time, the presence of tens of thousands of Western Christian tourists and pilgrims in the Holy Land at any one time has great potential for good. Ironically, for the most part, the Western Christian presence does great harm. That is because most Christians visiting the Holy Land follow a predetermined itinerary purposely designed by the Israeli Government Ministry of Tourism to bring them into contact with a Jewish Israel perpetuating a myth of how the Zionist dream is being fulfilled - a land without a people for a people without a land. There will invariably be visits to the Knesset, Yad Vashem, Masada, the Western Wall, the Dead Sea and Kibbutz's, etc, all under the watchful influence of a licensed Israeli guide, while ignoring or avoiding Palestinian Israel and the Occupied Territories as much as possible.

It is estimated that 99% of guides are Israeli's and only 1% are Palestinian. Most tour groups are oblivious of the fact that they will be passing through heavily armed checkpoints into what is still, under international law, illegally held "Occupied Territory" on the West Bank, in order to visit places such as Bethlehem, Nablus and Jericho. Even more significant, something like 95% of pilgrims who visit the Holy Land do not even meet any indigenous Christians who are 99% Palestinian.

As Bishop Kenneth Cragg, once said, *"Sharp moral issues are easily submerged by outsiders in archaeology or tourism, while the local Christianity is relegated to sentiment and the museum."*

Largely cut off from personal or meaningful contact with Western tourists and pilgrims, the local Palestinian Christian community feels isolated, indeed invisible. One friend put it like this: *"People who come here wear dark glasses. When the sun comes out they see nothing."* Sometimes this "invisibility" is orchestrated by those whose interests lie in perpetuating the myth that there are no indigenous Christians present.

Bishop Kenneth Cragg observes, *"Local Christians are caught in a degree of museumization. They are aware of tourists who come in great volume from the West to savour holy places but who are, for the most part, blithely disinterested in the people who dwell in them. The pain of the indifference is not eased insofar as the same tourism is subtly manipulated to*

*make the case for the entire legitimacy of the statehood that regulates it."*

When the Israeli Ministry of Tourism does have to acknowledge the presence of indigenous Christians, according to Bishop Riah, they refer to them as "Greek Orthodox", "Russian Orthodox" "Roman Catholic" and "Anglicans"- terms which suggest Christianity is a Western religion - and that local Christians are remnants of European civilisation rather than something both ancient and indigenous. Riah insists, *'None of the Greek Orthodox are of Greek background, the Anglicans, none of them is of English background, we are all Arab Palestinians.'* Much of the isolation Palestinians experience is also due to the misrepresentation and propaganda directed against them. This brings us to our fourth pressure.

### 4. Distortion

Palestinians are deeply upset at their image as often portrayed in the West. They believe there is much blatant misrepresentation, which extends not only to Palestinians as a people and to the designation of their homeland but also as an ancient Christian community. They are convinced that the impression given to pilgrims exploits Orientalist prejudices and polarises ethnic and cultural differences, while "magnifying the achievements of modern Israel" in a land "empty for 2000 years", Palestinians feel they are always portrayed as "troublemakers" or "terrorists". Bishop Riah claims the intention is to make pilgrims feel unsafe and insecure in their presence. He frequently hears guides say, "We are coming now to Nazareth, watch for your wallets, or stick together."

One young Christian student put it like this, *"Look at me. Do I look to you like a monster? A lion? Did I bite you? You are a visitor to my house. I respect you. I don't think there is any problem with pilgrims visiting Arab villages or Arab places. We are not demons"*.

This kind of ignorance is common among Western visitors and even perpetuated in some guidebooks. Donald Bridge's, *'Travelling through the Promised Land'*.

*"The Jewish Quarter basked in golden sunshine... Take a few steps out of the Jewish into the Arab Quarter and the contrast is dramatic. It is more colourful, more noisy, more crowded, more dirty. The sounds and*

*smells are totally different. The (to us) alien chant, part moan, part yell, part gargle echoes hauntingly from a dozen minarets... Arab head-dresses splash the heaving crowds with black and white or red check, and about one in every fifteen looks uncomfortably like Yasser Arafat."*

Imagine the cry of anti-Semitism if Bridger had actually written, "...uncomfortably like Menachem Begin," or "Yitzhak Shamir". Very often it is only when pilgrims return to the Holy Land, or when they choose to leave the well worn pilgrimage path, that they even discover the existence of an indigenous Palestinian Christian community.

*"When tourists come on their own a second time, they say, "we didn't see that, we didn't know about that, how come?" I said, "If you come like sheep you left like sheep."*

This ignorance extends to a lack of understanding and sensitivity about the history of the church in the Holy Land. Several Palestinians described to me the amazement and embarrassment they feel when asked about when they had "converted" to Christianity.

*I was often asked, "When did you convert to Christianity?" I was amazed at this question. My family were Christian before the United States was born. Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem not in New York or England. They think Arab equals Moslem. They think that we converted to Christianity but we were Christians here from the first Pentecost."*

The principal means by which Palestinians have coped with the trauma of apartheid, bantustanisation, concealment and distortion is emigration.

## 5. Emigration

The vast majority of Palestinian Christians now live abroad in exile. Dalrymple estimates that whereas only 170,000 remain in Israel and Palestine, some 400,000 live either as refugees in places such as Lebanon and Jordan, or have emigrated to the West. They form just a small part of the 3.5 million Palestinian refugees currently registered with the UN living in camps around the Middle East denied the right to return to their homes in pre 1948 Israel or the pre 1967 borders of the Occupied Territories. According to the UN some 25% of all refugees in the world today are Palestinian. Dalrymple estimates though that the emigration rate of Palestinian Christians is

twice that of Muslims, simply because they tend to be better educated, receive sympathetic treatment from Western governments or have relatives already living in the West.

Moslem Palestinians are more likely to have family connections in other parts of the Middle East, whereas Christian Palestinians are encouraged by Israel to emigrate to America, Canada or Australia, where they have historically received a sympathetic reception.

Consequently the new diaspora of Palestinian Christians who have integrated into Western society act as a magnet for others seeking a more secure future than possible under Israeli military occupation.

A study undertaken recently by Bethlehem University revealed that a further 20% of Palestinian Christians plan to emigrate in the near future. Emigration is, according to many, entirely a consequence of the antagonistic and repressive actions of the Israeli authorities. The bombing and then occupation of the Christian villages of Beit Jala and Beit Sahour have merely increased that flow. It is also the systematic policy of the Israeli government to remove the residence permits of Jerusalemite Palestinians when ever possible. It has become a one-way revolving door that allows them out but denies them re-entry. Israel achieves this depopulation of East Jerusalem by denying or removing the residence permits of Palestinians forced to work in other parts of the West Bank or who leave temporarily to study, visit family members or marry abroad. Bishara Awad explains how this has happened to some of his staff at Bethlehem Bible College.

*"Two of our teachers at the College are from Jerusalem. They were born in Jerusalem. Their parents and grandparents are from Jerusalem for many, many, generations. They are Jerusalemites. They went to study abroad, one of them, Raheb, married a Spanish girl and he tried to get a family reunion for years and years. His wife is living in Spain. They have been separated for a year. He still does not have his papers. He cannot renew his ID for Jerusalem and return to live there. He cannot get permission for his wife to join him either. Another member of our faculty, Hanna, is just back from studying at a seminary in the United States. He is engaged to get married so when he came back to renew his Jerusalem ID card. They said they could not renew it. He asked why. They said,*

**Emigration is, according to many, entirely a consequence of the antagonistic and repressive actions of the Israeli authorities**

**It seems the strategy of the Israeli government, whether by carrot or stick, is to encourage Palestinian Christians to leave their homeland and emigrate to the West so that Israel can exploit the myth that the real enemy to both Israel and the West is Islam**

*“Because you have relatives in Australia.” He is engaged to be married but Hanna said, “If they don’t give me my ID card I cannot get permission for my wife to join me. I cannot register my marriage. I can hardly do anything legally.” There is no legitimate legal reason for the Israelis to do this. Raheb and Hanna still work for the College but I fear they will eventually give up and leave their land and go and live with their wives abroad. This is exactly what they Israelis want.”*

Unfortunately Raheb and Hannah are just two of the 13,000 husbands and wives or parents and children living apart, separated by this illegal Israeli occupation. The Israeli strategy is to coerce people to leave East Jerusalem and join their partners abroad. One journalist from Jaffa said, *“It’s like living in jail here. We want to feel free. Many people like my brother therefore emigrated to Canada to be free. 80% of the Christians have left Israel to go to places like Canada and the United States.”*

In 1971, Archbishop George Khodr of Beirut made this ominous prediction. *‘According to our knowledge, after four more decades of the rhythm of evacuation, no Christians will be left in Jerusalem. The result will be that the Holy Places will remain without the presence of the people. It will be an assemblage of churches.... viewed in that land as a pre-Israeli relic... It will be like visiting Baalbec when you see the Temples of Bacchus and Jupiter and then without any emotion except the aesthetic emotion... Some religious influences will be left, some nuns... and highly qualified professors of theology, and archaeologists from the Protestant world who will serve as natural guides for tourists’.*

The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey similarly estimates that Palestine will be devoid of indigenous Christians by around the year 2015, leaving behind just a religious ‘Theme Park’ like Disneyworld. Said Aburish, the Moslem writer also laments, *“Oh, there will be a Christian presence in the Holy Land; this is not*

*the point really. The issue is what kind of presence, how big, small, integrated, local or foreign it will be. Having a single church is a Christian presence, but is it acceptable?”*

Kenneth Cragg insists we should not leave the responsibility of rectifying such a situation to the Israeli authorities, since they are only concerned with maintaining access to shrines, exploiting Western Christian tourism and bringing in “lucrative foreign exchange”. The absence of Palestinian Christians simply makes the realisation of this objective less complicated. Cragg insists, *“If Christian minorities suffer... it is no more than unfortunate. The Christian museum will be in safe hands.”*

It seems the strategy of the Israeli government, whether by carrot or stick, is to encourage Palestinian Christians to leave their homeland and emigrate to the West so that Israel can exploit the myth that the real enemy to both Israel and the West is Islam. Five pressures facing the Palestinian community. Apartheid, Bantustanisation, Concealment, Dispossession, and Emigration.

Do Palestinian have a future in the Holy Land? Humanly speaking that is up to us. They will only have a future if their basic human rights are recognised and protected; only if Western governments apply the kind of sanctions used against Serbia for Israel; only if Christians, Muslims and Jews in the West show them solidarity not because of their religion but because of their common humanity.

I would like to conclude with Prayer for Peace, *“May the justice of God fall down like fire and bring a home for the Palestinian. May the mercy of God pour down like rain and protect the Jewish people. And may the beautiful eyes of a Holy God who weeps for His children. Bring the healing hope for His wounded ones. For the Jew and the Palestinian.”*

*Al-Aqsa*

**Editor**

The Articles published in this journal **do not** necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board or of Friends of Al-aqsa

# Intervene to end Israeli Apartheid

*Hanan Ashrawi\**

From Jerusalem, from the heart of Palestine, a land besieged, and repeatedly violated by a most brutal Israeli military occupation, I have come to join you today. From the midst of the people of Palestine, a tortured nation, guilty only of an unwavering commitment to freedom, dignity, and independence, I have come to join you today. From the depths of unredeemed history, I have come to join you today. I represent a narrative of exclusion, denial, racism, and national victimization, but I also come with a message of hope, redemption, and historical vindication embodied in the spirit and the will of a people that has refused to succumb to all forces of oppression, violence, cruelty, and injustice.

In convening this conference, you are the authentic embodiment of courage in withstanding the forces of domination, subjugation, and enslavement.

We stand together today to launch a truly global mission of empowerment and solidarity, to give voice to the “silenced,” to give a reality to the “invisible,” to give recognition to the “denied,” and to give credence to the victimized.

In times of adversity, and during the darkest nights of the soul, we look to you for affirmation and action as an antidote to the failure of established power systems, including governments - a failure characterized by self-interest, power politics, absence of will, and impotence. I take this opportunity to recognize before you those valiant men and women who had left the comfort of their homes in Europe and the US and joined us in Palestine to provide popular protection, a “human shield” in the face of Israeli abuses, violence, and violations against the Palestinian people.

I come to you today with a heavy heart leaving behind a nation in captivity held hostage to an ongoing “Nakba” [catastrophe], as the

most intricate and pervasive expression of persistent colonialism, apartheid, racism, and victimization.

More than half a century ago [53 years], the Palestinians as a people were slated for national obliteration, cast outside the course of history, their identity denied, and their very human cultural and historical reality suppressed. We became victims of the myth of “a land without a people for people without a land” whereby the West sought to assuage its guilt over its horrendous anti-Semitism by the total victimization of a whole nation. Zionism sought to implement its agenda of exclusivity by usurping not only the lands and rights of the Palestinians, but also by confiscating their utterance and distorting their historical narrative.

In 1948, we became subject to a grave historical injustice manifested in a dual victimization: on the one hand, the injustice of dispossession, dispersion, and exile forcibly enacted on the population that has come to be known as the “refugee question” that currently encompasses more than 5 million Palestinians. On the other hand, those that remained were subject to the systematic oppression and brutality of an inhuman occupation that robbed them of all their rights and liberties including their national identity on their own land.

The creation of the state of Israel was no heroic and legendary accomplishment as depicted by the version of history propagated by the conquerors. It is time to lift the veil, to examine the facts themselves, and to come to grips with the horrific price paid by an innocent nation for the mere fact of its existence as well as for the greed and moral blindness of others. The days of denial must come to an end. The Palestinian people deserve their day in the sun as an equal among nations, and as a

**I represent a narrative of exclusion, denial, racism, and national victimization**

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\* Address by Hanan Ashrawi at the world conference against racism in Durban, South Africa, August 28, 2001.

**Our right to self-determination, hence sovereignty and statehood, has been withheld by force and made subject to the approval of our oppressor**

tribute to the human will that cannot be broken.

As a Palestinian, as a woman, and on behalf of my people, I stand before you today to lay claim to my/to our humanity. From the non-existent Palestinians (“there is not such thing as Palestinians; they never existed” (Golda Meir, 1969) we have undergone a metamorphosis wilfully inflicted upon us by Israeli-imposed diction and policies that have variously depicted us as “two-legged vermin,” “cockroaches,” “beasts walking on two legs,” a people that have to be exterminated unless they are “resigned to live as slaves,” “grasshoppers to be crushed,” “crocodiles,” and “vipers.”

Such a systematic and racist dehumanisation was also accompanied by policies of violent expulsion. “There is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to neighbouring countries, not one village, not one tribe should be left” (Joseph Weitz, 1940).

“There is no choice: the Arabs must make room for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael. If it was possible to transfer the Baltic peoples, it is also possible to move the Palestinian Arabs”

(Vladimir Jabotinsky, 1939).

“Zionist colonization must either be terminated or carried out against the wishes of the native population. It is important to speak Hebrew, but it is even more important to be able to shoot - or else I am through at playing with colonizing”

(Vladimir Jabotinsky, 1939).

“We must do everything to insure they never return. The old will die and the young will forget.” However, for those that remained in spite of all of Israel’s military coercion and attempts at forced expulsion, other (and equally sinister) plans were in the making: “We shall reduce the Arab population to a community of woodcutters and waiters.”

(David Ben Gurion).

To the rest of the world, we were reduced to the Aristotelian dualism of pity and fear - the pitiful refugees, or the fearful “terrorists.” But never were we perceived or addressed in the fullness of our humanity.

The Palestinians today continue to be subject to multiple forms and expressions of racism, exclusion, oppression, colonialism, apartheid, and national denial. Our right to self-determination, hence sovereignty and

statehood, has been withheld by force and made subject to the approval of our oppressor. The refugee populations, mostly “stateless people,” are bereft of the rudimentary civil, human, political, and national rights, left at the mercy of host countries that view them either as a demographic threat, or as unwelcome guests. While Israel has legislated a “law of return” to bring in Jews from all over the world into historical Palestine, it persists in rejecting the Palestinian refugees’ “Right of Return” and in refusing to abide by UN Resolution 194, a legal commitment which the international community was supposed to guarantee and implement.

The Palestinians who remained in what has become Israel are experiencing in their historical homeland the worst system of apartheid, exclusion, and racial discrimination — their towns and cities either taken over entirely, or turned into ghettos and enclaves as the “non-Jewish” population of Israel. Many continue to be “displaced persons” in their own land, witnesses to the destruction of their villages. Over 500 villages were razed in the original ethnic cleansing campaign that accompanied the creation of the state of Israel. Those of us who came under Israeli occupation in 1967 have languished in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip under a unique combination of military occupation, settler colonization, and systematic oppression.

Rarely has the human mind devised such varied, diverse, and comprehensive means of wholesale brutalisation and persecution. Since 1967, Palestinian land has been expropriated at an increasing pace, while whole Jewish populations have been brought in, in a calculated scheme of settler colonization. Throughout the land, an artificial and colonial grid of infrastructure was superimposed on our authentic reality to create a spurious settler superstructure as a means of Israeli demographic, geographic, and extraterritorial incursions into Palestine.

So-called “bypass roads” for the exclusive use of the illegal Jewish settler population, tear through the heart of Palestinian land, to bypass Palestinian realities and create a unique form of racism. In the meantime, settler vigilantes habitually unleash the full force of their extremism and violence, carrying out campaigns of terror against defenceless Palestinian families and villages. Israel’s state

**Rarely has the human mind devised such varied, diverse, and comprehensive means of wholesale brutalisation and persecution**

terrorism is implemented by both military and settler perpetrators with political duplicity and legal impunity.

Another unique manifestation of Israeli racism is the blatant and sinister policy of “demographic engineering.” To maintain the “Jewish character,” or the “purity” of the state of Israel, the Palestinians have been depicted and dealt with as a “demographic threat.” Proposed “remedies” included calls for forced birth control and “population management,” to “transfer” and expulsion of whole communities, to the racist and punitive unilateral “separation” scheme currently being advocated.

In Jerusalem, land expropriation, ID confiscations, home demolitions, withholding of building permits, and the importation of settler colonies within and around the city have become constant elements of Israel’s demographic engineering through ethnic cleansing.

Jerusalem is also under siege in an attempt to isolate it from its Palestinian context and environment, and to extricate it from the heart of Palestine, as the centre of political, cultural, economic, social, and educational activity and as the future capital of our state. Such Israeli unilateral measures seek to consolidate Israel’s illegal annexation of occupied Jerusalem, and to impose a Jewish exclusivity on a Palestinian city that has always been pluralistic and tolerant. Onslaughts on Christian and Islamic holy sites and activities while banning Palestinian worshipers from reaching their holy places of worship betray a wilful policy of intolerance and a violation of the right and freedom to worship.

A state of siege has been imposed not only on the West Bank and Gaza, but also within these territories, to transform each village, town, and city into an isolated prison thereby destroying every aspect of human life, including economic, educational, health, and social cohesiveness in an attempt to sever every fibre of the fabric of normal life. Israeli occupation troops using tanks, helicopter gunships, F-16s, military barges, and checkpoints not only render a whole Palestinian population captive in 64 isolated Bantustans, they also use the full force of their military power against a vulnerable and defenceless people. Daily, they shell Palestinian homes, assassinate Palestinian activists and leaders, destroy crops and fields, indulge in cold-blooded murder of children and other innocents while implementing a policy of deliberate humiliation and suffocation at every checkpoint.

The Israeli occupation has also hijacked the concept of “security” rendering it applicable only to Israelis while depriving the Palestinians of every aspect of personal, political, legal, territorial, historical, cultural, economic, and even human security. As a blanket cover for its systematic abuses, Israel has also abused the essence of the concept, exploiting it for the sake of eradicating any mention of the occupation, and claiming the illogical “right” to have a “secure”-or even a safe and pleasant-military occupation that is in itself the very antithesis of peace, security, and human rights.

As the world watches, Israel has succeeded in evolving and imposing another grand deception in the form of an official spin that not only dehumanises and demonises the Palestinians, but also as an attempt at “blaming the victim” and resuscitating labels that represent us as subhuman species, and genetically violent “terrorists,” hence undeserving of any human treatment. At best, a false symmetry is manufactured between occupier and occupied, oppressor and oppressed, (as in the call on both sides to “stop the violence”) serving to eradicate the full horror of the occupation while depriving the victims of their right to resist. Given the disequilibria of power, the American insistence on a “bilateral solution” only serves to give Israel license to exploit the asymmetry of power and to pursue its policies of subjugating a whole nation and imposing a unilateral and unjust solution.

The Israeli solution is firmly imbedded in the tainted mentality of occupation as license to dictate by force of arms illegal and punitive realities that would further exacerbate the conflict and the suffering of the Palestinian people. Refusal to intervene by the US and the international community as a whole has given Israel a free hand to continue to act with impunity and immunity as a country above the law and beyond accountability, while the Palestinians continue to be deprived of protection of the law and the minimal imperatives of moral and human decency. We continue to plead for a global rule of law that would check the aggression of the powerful, and eliminate the ongoing dehumanisation of the Palestinian people. Such absence of will and abrogation of responsibility on the part of the international community has not only perpetuated the “Nakba” and prolonged the suffering and victimization

**Jerusalem is also under siege in an attempt to isolate it from its Palestinian context and environment, and to extricate it from the heart of Palestine**

**As victims, we rose above the pain of the moment and reached out to our occupiers to wrench the course of history away from inevitable conflict, towards reconciliation based on justice and parity**

**Having been historically the victims of war and conflict, we found ourselves the victims of a flawed and unjust peace process**

of the Palestinian people, but has also served to undermine the quest and chances for peace throughout the region.

When we joined the peace process launched in Madrid in 1991, we did so as an act of will, as a commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict with the aim of ending the occupation of 22% of historical Palestine and the establishment of our independent state on the territory occupied by Israel in 1967. As victims, we rose above the pain of the moment and reached out to our occupiers to wrench the course of history away from inevitable conflict, towards reconciliation based on justice and parity. Buttressed by the confidence of the people's will to endure and resist oppression, as manifested in the Intifada of 1987, we offered Israel and the world a unique opportunity to legitimise a daring pursuit of peace, and to gain a constituency for an equitable resolution.

Unfortunately, the peace process became a punitive process manipulated by Israel to pursue its policies of expansion, ethnic cleansing, colonialism, and subjugation of the weaker side by force. It further served as a guise to rationalize the separation of the people from the land and to fragment both the people and the land, transforming the occupied Palestinian territories into a series of isolated reservations or Bantustans while maintaining full Israeli hegemony and direct control. While seeking to bestow retroactive legitimacy on illegal Israeli settlements, and on Israel's annexation of Jerusalem by force, it also sought to negate the Palestinian refugees' right of return thereby denying the very essence of peace and destroying its foundations.

The so-called "generous offer" of Barak has been exposed for the sham that it is - an occupier's version of "what's good for the natives," based only on "what's good for Israel," thus ensuring further conflict and instability rather than cementing a fair and durable solution. Having been historically the victims of war and conflict, we found ourselves the victims of a flawed and unjust peace process.

Sharon's incursion into the Haram Al-Sharif on September 28, 2000, was only the calculated spark that ignited a powder keg already in place as a result of the inequities of the process itself. The use of live ammunition and "lethal force" against the unarmed Palestinian protestors unleashed horrific forces of hostility, racism, and orchestrated violence against the captive Palestinian people. The continued intensification of these measures sends an ominous and stark message of

brutality and is symptomatic of the regression to fundamentalist Zionism witnessed in the bloodbaths of the 1940's. By claiming, "This is the continuation of Israel's War of Independence," Sharon is sending a message to the Palestinian people and to the whole world that the national eradication and the ethnic cleansing of the 1948 "Nakba" are still in process.

The current Israeli government represents the most lethal combination of extremist right-wing political ideology, religious fundamentalism and zealots, and unbridled forces of militarism with a deceptive veneer of "the civilized face" of the Labour party. Sharon is the same army general who had committed crimes against humanity in such atrocities as the Qibya massacre of 1953, the "cleansing of Gaza" in 1973, the invasion of Lebanon and the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla of 1982. Intent on pursuing this bloody path and on repeating the mistakes of history, Sharon has not learned that no amount of brutality, cruelty, or violence can break the will of a people determined to gain its freedom, dignity, and independence. He shows no signs of drawing the right historical conclusions that colonialism is by nature a temporary form of enslavement, and that a people colonized cannot be brought to their knees by the colonizer's stifling measures of subjugation and containment.

Sisters and brothers, I appeal to you today, to restore the absent Palestinians to the agenda of humanity, to validate our reality and rights, to recognize and alleviate the pain and suffering of this tortured nation, and to give recognition to the Palestinian narrative long denied. You are the only source of empowerment for a people who feel abandoned and disempowered, but who have never lost faith in human solidarity and a shared vision of emancipation.

I appeal to you, as I have often done to governments and global forums, not to adopt the stance of "cowardly neutrality," for in the struggle against oppression, injustice, racism, intolerance, colonialism, and exclusion, there can be NO neutrality. We are all called upon to take sides on behalf of the victim, the disenfranchised, and the oppressed, and to stem the tide of evil and prevent the forces of darkness from prevailing. Here, there is no US veto to deprive us of protection and our rights, nor is their censorship or

blackmail to intimidate governments ruled by self-interest.

Let this meeting radiate the pure light of the human spirit that can never be dimmed or contained. Our path to the future must be based on the redemption of history and the past, free of the shackles of inherited inequities. Our legacy to the future must be based on the rectification of the painful legacies of the past. Sisters and brothers, Never before has an occupation army imposed such a total and suffocating siege on a captive civilian population, then proceeded to shell their homes, bomb their infrastructure, assassinate their activists and leaders, destroy their crops and trees, murder their civilians at will, steal their lands, and then demand that they acquiesce like lambs to the slaughter. Never before have the victims been denied the right to articulate, and gain recognition for, the horrendous atrocities being committed against them as a matter of policy, but were rather blamed and punished for the fact of their victimization.

The oft-repeated dictum that "Israel will not negotiate under fire" applies only to Palestinian "fire" or attempts at self-defence.

While Israel must be left unhampered in its fire-shell-assassinate at will policy, the Palestinians must maintain "zero violence" leading to a "cooling off period" that would prepare the way for "confidence-building measures" and ultimately award the Palestinians the coveted "prize" of resuming negotiations with their occupiers.

On behalf of the Palestinian people I appeal to you to have the courage to intervene, to ensure that the oppressor is held accountable and the victim is protected, to enact those principles and values that not only protect lives but that also imbue life with the human qualities that make it worth living. Despite our overwhelming pain, we have not surrendered to the forces of occupation, colonization, racism, and dehumanisation nor have we adopted their moral distortions. I ask you also not to succumb, but to maintain and enhance the struggle for dignity, equality, freedom, and justice as an act of collective affirmation on behalf of humanity as a whole.

**intervene, to ensure that the oppressor is held accountable and the victim is protected**



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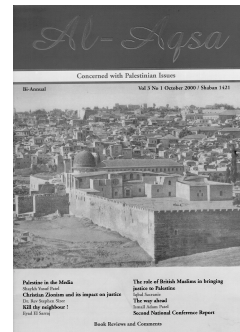
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# STATEMENT OF THE PALESTINIAN NGO'S TO GOVERNMENT DELEGATES AT THE WORLD CONFERENCE AGAINST RACISM

*Durban, South Africa – September 2001*

**P**alestinians like other victims of racism at this Conference have been seeking an opportunity to have their daily sufferings from racism discussed, understood and combated at this Racism Conference. Instead, all attempts have been made to delete any and all references to their actual experiences of racism and methods to combat that racism, and now to replace them with watered-down and politicised language that bears little relevance to this particular Racism Forum.

Israel's on-going gross violations of Palestinians' rights under human rights and humanitarian law are not perpetrated in a vacuum: it is important for governmental and civil society to understand the root causes of these violations - namely racial discrimination towards Palestinians including on the basis of their differences in descent and national origin (as defined under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination).

Palestinians acknowledge that they are not the only victims of racism in the world, and stand united in full solidarity and support of all other victims of racism, including those seeking reparations such as the Africans and African descendants and indigenous peoples, the Roma, the Tibetans, the indigenous peoples, those combating caste discrimination including the Dalits, Bhuraku, Osu and Rodiya and all others seeking a platform and voice that is otherwise being denied to them. The Caucus also supports demands made by others to have their victimisers named.

However, the fact that other countries have not been named in the governmental document does not provide a basis for precluding reference to Israel and its racist practices adopted towards Palestinians. It is in the interests of the world community to tackle expressly Israel's perpetration of on-going violations and racist systems for two key reasons: world peace and security and the nature of the system.

Firstly, as in the case of Apartheid South Africa, Israel's institutionalised system of

racism, apartheid and colonialism is destabilising the entire region and poses one of the greatest threats to world peace and security. Recently this threat has become more acute and the need for international action more urgent because of Israel's escalation of its unilateral war on civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Secondly, our common humanity demands that these forms of extreme racism, including Israel's own form of apartheid, a crime against humanity - be combated.

Just as expressly referring to South Africa and tackling racist apartheid systems in the 1978 and 1983 World Conferences Against Racism was not being anti-white South Africa, naming Israel and its racist practices is not being anti-Jewish.

Israel's racism towards Palestinians includes institutionalised and systematic methods of racism. As regards Palestinians inside Israel, racism is prevalent in many institutions including the government, legislature, judiciary, army and religious bodies, and institutions that emphasise the State's national-religious character as being exclusively Jewish, to the exclusion of its non-Jewish inhabitants. Discriminatory laws and policies have been adopted encompassing issues such as land and housing, citizenship, political participation, culture, language, education, religious rights, and other social, economic and employment rights. It has involved the denial of crucial services to the so-called unrecognised villages.

Palestinians within the Occupied Palestinian Territories have suffered from a form of colonial Israeli military occupation. According to the principles of CERD, and UN General Assembly Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries, an occupation characterised by an alien subjugation, domination, and exploitation leading to denial of fundamental human rights including rights of self-determination, with continuous disrupt-

**Just as expressly referring to South Africa and tackling racist apartheid systems was not being anti-white South Africa, naming Israel and its racist practices is not being anti-Jewish**

**Israeli practices fulfil the elements of the crime of apartheid as defined by the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid**

tion of national unity and territorial integrity, amounts to a form of colonialism, which is an inherently racist system.

We condemn the application of discriminatory laws of return that have denied the rights of Palestinians to return to their homes and lands and the denial of compensation for losses or damages suffered, and crimes committed against them.

Israel's racist crimes, in particular in relation to Palestinians living within the Occupied Palestinian Territories have included acts of genocide, systematic perpetration of grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949 (namely war crimes), methods of ethnic cleansing, and the crime of apartheid. These racist crimes have been comprehensively documented and established according to international human rights standards and norms.

The Palestinian Caucus is dismayed and shocked at apparent statements made by Mrs. Robinson rejecting the use of the term "acts of genocide" as regards Palestinians in the NGO document as being "hurtful". Specific acts of genocide have included the massacre of 3,500 Palestinian civilians of Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon of 1982, in respect of which the Israeli Kahan Commission found the then Defence Minister, Ariel Sharon indirectly responsible. The UN General Assembly itself in UN Resolution 123 (A/RES/37/123) and the UN Commission of Human Rights in a resolution (E/CN.4/RES/1985/4) have both described the massacre as an "act of genocide" and imputed responsibility to the State of Israel. Likewise, references of "acts of genocide" in the NGO Forum Declaration impute genocidal intent to those perpetrators of, or those responsible, for such acts, who have included individual Jewish Israelis and the State of Israel. These references do not impute genocidal intent to all Jews or all Jewish Israelis. No individual or State should enjoy impunity for their crimes - references to "acts of genocide" are an accurate reflection of specific historical incidents on the basis of the Genocide Convention of 1948. Accordingly, Palestinians should not be precluded from using such terms. The rejection of this term also pre-empts the outcome of any future prosecutions including the current investigation in the Belgium courts in which victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacre are seeking the prosecution of those responsible.

There has been evidence of the use of ethnic cleansing methods to drive out Palestinians including during the 1948 war, and since 1967 to date from the Occupied

Palestinian Territories. Ethnic cleansing methods used have included uprooting by military attacks; arbitrary arrests and detention/unfair trials; attacks on specific vulnerable groups including women and children; destruction and confiscation of property, land and homes; and harassment designed to make life so unbearable that people leave.

Israeli practices fulfil the elements of the crime of apartheid as defined by the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, including by racial segregation and discrimination, and inhuman acts designed to establish domination of one group over the other. In addition, South African governmental and civil society representatives have drawn clear parallels with the system of apartheid practiced in South Africa with that used by the Israeli apartheid regime. Methods of apartheid have included the dispossession and denationalising of Palestinians, with forcible expulsions of hundreds of thousands, ongoing expropriation and destruction of land and homes, military attacks on civilians; separation with restrictions on land access. Palestinians inside Israel amount to 20 percent of the population but through legislation and measures have been restricted to about 4 percent of the land. Palestinians inside the Occupied Palestinian Territories amount to more than 90 percent of the inhabitants and have access to 18 percent of the land. In the whole of the historical area of Palestine, Palestinians amounting to about 50 percent of the population but have only access to about 6.8 percent of the land. Separation has also included through use of identity cards similar to the passbooks; with system of checkpoints, curfews, total and partial closures. Since March 2001 trenches have been dug preventing villagers from leaving village to village or to urban centres. Iron gates have been erected with keys held by soldiers.

Contrary to claims made the Palestinian and Arab Caucuses have condemned in the strongest terms any and all anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish materials including any that may have been circulated during this conference. Those materials that condemn the State of Israel for its systematic violations of international human rights and humanitarian law or condemn those racist practices conducted in the name of Zionism are not anti-Semitic or anti-Jewish.

Finally, we call for the Governmental plenary to accept, and implement the document endorsed at the NGO Forum as the voice of the victims of racism from around the world, and to implement all the specific recommendations made for a plan of action, including for the Palestinians. The victims of racism cannot be blamed for the ultimate success or failure of the World Conference Against Racism by seeking to have their daily suffering from racism addressed, whomever they may be, including the Palestinians and those seeking reparations. The responsibility lies with the Governments to hear the victims, and ensure that the Conference is a success by genuinely and effectively tackling the racism issues. Failure at the World Conference Against Racism will be a whitewashing and politicising of racism issues and denial of the voice of the victims. We ask all Governmental delegates to not allow certain governments from continuing to seek to derail the Conference in order to avoid responsibility for their racist practices.

Notes: Mrs. Robinson made a statement on 7 September 2001, explaining her reserva-

tion of the document namely to paragraph 418 that calls for the acknowledgement that racist practices conducted in the name of Zionism are racist; and secondly paragraph 419 calling for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal “to investigate and bring to justice those who may be guilty of war crimes, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing and the crime of apartheid which amount to crimes against humanity that have been or continue to be perpetrated in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories”. We express further dismay at this stance, which reinforces the Israeli government position seeking to prevent the State and individuals from being held to account for crimes and undermines the current and future investigations and prosecutions of such crimes. Furthermore, we are disappointed and surprised that in spite of the agreement of the International Steering Committee to allow a Palestinian representative to respond to Mrs. Robinson’s criticisms, that she instead refused to acknowledge the speaker and left the room before the speaker had finished.



## Information on Palestine

[www.aqsa.org.uk](http://www.aqsa.org.uk)

**Journal** – Referenced articles from previous issues of Al Aqsa.

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# Zionism and its relation to Judaism

*Hanna Braun\**

Since biblical times Jewish communities lived in Arab lands, in Persia, India, East and North Africa and indeed in Palestine. With the destruction of the Temple and the final fall of their state in 70 AD many Jews were taken out of Judea and hence to Rome and the Diaspora. Many poorer Judeans however, (such as subsistence farmers) were able to stay in Palestine. Modern research suggests that when Islam arrived in the area in 633 AD many of these Jews converted and that they form a considerable part of today's Palestinians. These various communities were on the whole well integrated into their respective societies and did not experience the persecutions that later became so prevalent in Europe. In Palestine, for instance, Muslims repeatedly protected their Jewish neighbours from marauding crusaders; - in one instance at least, Jews fought alongside Muslims to try and prevent crusaders landing at Haifa's port and Salah al-Deen re-conquering Jerusalem from the crusaders, invited the Jews back into the city.

The Jews in Spain under Moorish rule flourished and experienced a renaissance mirroring that of the great Islamic civilisation and culture at the time. As Christianity spread from the north of Spain, Jews were again protected by Muslim rulers until the fall of Granada, the last Moorish kingdom to pass into Christian hands - when both Jews and Muslims were expelled at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Jews in 1492 and Muslims 10 years later). Most of the Jews from the Iberian peninsula settled in North Africa and the lands under Ottoman rule, including Palestine, and continued their peaceful co-existence with Muslims in those countries. The bulk of Portuguese "converted" Jews (these were forced conversions and such Jews were called Marranos, i.e. pigs, by Jews who had fled or who preferred to die for their faith) settled in Amsterdam, presumably because they had long established trading connections in that city. In 1655 they were invited to Britain

by Oliver Cromwell. Most of them were glad to resettle since the Netherlands had just freed itself from the Spanish yoke in 1648 and the shadow of the dreaded inquisition was still uncomfortably close.

The fate of Jewry in European countries was very different: persecutions, killings and burnings were widespread and Jews were forced to live in closed ghettos, particularly in the Russian empire, where they were confined to the "Pale" of Jewish settlement, an area which consisted of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Byelarus or White Russia. Anyone who wished to move outside these borders needed special permission, (although there were large communities in the western and south-eastern part of what had been Poland, but became part of Prussia and Austria respectively) and by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century some of the more progressive Jewish communities had established themselves in the big cities of St. Petersburg, Moscow and Kiev.

In central and western Europe religious tolerance, followed by the granting of full citizens' rights and emancipation came relatively early, in the wake of general liberalisation. However, Russian rulers remained opposed to any liberalisation including religious tolerance and emancipation. As late as 1881, Tsar Alexander the third initiated a series of particularly vicious pogroms to divert unrest amongst the population, at a time when Britain, for instance, boasted of a Jewish prime minister.

Total segregation was not always imposed from outside, however, but was frequently enforced from within by highly authoritarian rabbis who exercised absolute power over their congregations, often including the right to life and the imposition of the death penalty. Thus it was a major decision for anyone to leave these

**The fate of Jewry in European countries was very different: persecutions, killings and burnings were widespread**

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\* Born in Germany, emigrated to Palestine in 1937, she participated in Israel's war of 1947-1948 and in 1958 came to settle in England. She has been a teacher for most of her life and is now retired.

**This belief in innate Jewish superiority had a long tradition in religious Jewish thinking, central to which was the notion of the Jews as God's chosen people**

congregations and to look for a broader education, - (known as enlightenment). In Eastern Europe 'enlightenment' was a relatively late phenomenon and it found expression initially in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a revival of Hebrew language and literature and in the modern idea of Jews seeing themselves as a people.

This distinction between a people and a religion was of course disapproved of by the Orthodox Jews, who still today regard Hebrew as a sacred language to be used solely for prayers and religious studies and the Jewish people and religion as indivisible. The concept of the Jews as people closely mirrored the relatively new European idea of a homogenous nation state. An exception to this was the socialist "Bund" organisation whose members rejected nationalism and later Zionism.

Some of these early proto-Zionists, calling themselves "Hovevei Zion" (Lovers of Zion), started the first settlements in Palestine in the 1870's and a larger number of immigrants followed after the Russian pogroms of 1881-82. These settlers distinguished themselves by their deliberate segregation from the indigenous population and their contempt for local customs and traditions. This naturally aroused suspicion and hostility in the locals. This exclusivity was largely based on a sense of superiority common to Europeans of the time, who believed they were the only advanced and truly civilised society and in true colonial fashion looked down on "natives" or ignored them altogether. However, beyond that there was also a particular sense of superiority of Jews towards all non-Jews. This belief in innate Jewish superiority had a long tradition in religious Jewish thinking, central to which was the notion of the Jews as God's chosen people. Moshe Ben Maimon (Maimonides) had been an exponent of this theory and quite often thinkers with a more humane outlook, e.g. Spinoza, were excommunicated. The accepted thinking in the religious communities was that Jews must on no account mix in any way with gentiles for fear of being contaminated and corrupted by them. This notion was so deeply ingrained that it quite possibly still affected, albeit subconsciously, those Jews who had left the townships and had become educated and enlightened. Thus the early settlers from Eastern Europe transferred the township mentality of segregation to Palestine, with the added belief in the nobility of manual labour and in particular soil cultivation. In this they had been influenced by Tolstoy and his writings.

The "father" of political Zionism, Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), came from a totally different

perspective. Dr. Herzl was a Viennese, emancipated, secular journalist who was sent by his editor to Paris in 1894 to cover the Dreyfuss affair. Dreyfuss had been a captain in the French Army who was falsely accused and convicted of treason although he was acquitted and completely cleared some years later. The case brought to light the depth of anti-Semitism prevalent in the upper echelons of the French Army and in the French press, with profound repercussions in emancipated Jewish circles. Herzl himself despaired of the whole idea of emancipation and integration and felt that the only solution to anti-Semitism lay in a Jewish Homeland. To that end he approached various diplomats and notables, including the Ottoman Sultan, but mainly European rulers, the great colonial powers of the time. The British as possible Jewish Homelands offered Argentina and Uganda.

Herzl would have been quite happy with either of these countries, but when the first Zionist Congress was convened in Basle in 1897, he came up against Eastern European Jewry, by far the greatest majority of participants, who, although broadly emancipated and "enlightened" (orthodox Jews at that time completely rejected any Jewish political movement and did not attend the congress), would not accept any homeland other than the land of Zion. Not only had some of them already settled in Palestine, there were strong remnants of the religious/sentimental notion of a pilgrimage and possibly burial in the Holy Land. The last toast in the Passover ceremony is "Next year in Jerusalem", although this was a religious rather than a national aspiration, and it was common amongst the orthodox communities to purchase a handful of soil purporting to come from the Holy Land to be placed under the deceased's head.

Herzl was quick to realise that unless he accepted the "Land of Zion", i.e. the Palestinian option, he would have hardly any adherents. Thus the Zionist movement started with a small section of Jewish society who saw the solution to anti-Semitism in a return to its "roots" and in a renewal of a Jewish people in the land of their ancestors. Herzl wrote his book "Der Judenstaat" (The State of the Jews) in which he wrote, inter alia, that the Jews and their state will constitute "a rampart of Europe against Asia, of civilisation against barbarism", and again regarding the local population, "We shall endeavour to encourage the poverty-stricken population to cross the border by

securing work for it in the countries it passes through, while denying it work *in our own country*. The process of expropriation and displacement must be carried out prudently and discreetly...Let (the landowners) sell us their land at exorbitant prices. We shall sell nothing back to them.”

Some early Zionists, such as Max Nordau, a French Zionist who visited Palestine was so horrified at the evidently populated land that he burst out in front of Herzl: “But we are committing a grave injustice!” Some years later, in 1913, a prominent Zionist thinker and writer, Ahad Ha’am (one of the people) wrote, “What are our brothers doing? ... They were slaves in the land of their exile. Suddenly they found themselves faced with boundless freedom... and they behave in a hostile and cruel manner towards the Arabs, trampling on their rights without the least justification...even bragging about this behaviour...” but their dismay at the injustices to, and total lack of recognition of the indigenous population, was silenced and indeed edited out of Jewish history and other books, as was some of Herzl’s writing. The widely perceived Zionist truism of “a land without people for a people without land” prevailed and within a matter of a few years the immigrants became “sons of the land” (Bnei Ha’aretz) whereas the inhabitants became the aliens and foreigners.

Following renewed efforts and lobbying after Herzl’s death, the Balfour Declaration in 1917 - shortly after Palestine was conquered by Britain - which granted Zionists a Jewish Homeland in Palestine, set the official seal of approval on their aspirations. Protests and representations by local Arab leaders were brushed aside. Lord Balfour wrote in 1919: “In Palestine, we do not even propose to consult the inhabitants of the country ...and (Zionism’s) immediate needs and hopes for the future are much more important than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who presently inhabit Palestine”. Settlements grew slowly for a long time, but the systematic buying up of land, frequently from absentee landlords, which left tenant farmers homeless, contributed to the first Palestinian uprising in 1921- 22 and other outbursts of hostilities, including a massacre of some 65 Jews in Hebron in 1929, after orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe had founded a “Yeshiva” (a religious study centre) in the town and had aroused the suspicions and hostility of the indigenous population who prior to this had lived in peace and harmony for hundreds of years with their non European Jewish neighbours. Another contributing factor to

growing Arab hostility was the policy of neither employing Arabs nor to buying their produce.

For many years Zionism remained a minority movement of mainly Eastern European Jews, excluding the whole religious establishment, most central and western European Jews and last but not least, all non European Jews who, unbeknown to Herzl and his co-founders, form the majority of us. These communities were ignored by early Zionists and indeed had little interest in their aspirations until the establishment of the state of Israel and after the “independence” war of 1948-9. After this the new state unleashed a massive propaganda campaign to induce the Sephardi and Oriental Jews to “ascend” to the land of their ancestors, mainly for demographic reasons (in 1948 only about 6% of inhabitants were Jews) but also as cannon fodder. The same happened in the 1980’s with the Jews of Ethiopia. However, upon arrival these non European newcomers were treated very much as inferior second class citizens. This European dominance is still prevalent in modern Israel where for example the national anthem even nowadays speaks about Jewish longing for the East towards Zion, whereas for many of the non European communities Palestine lies to the West. Sadly, this has led to some groups of Sephardi (non-European) Jews becoming extreme right-wing chauvinists, so as to “prove” their credentials.

Immigration (“Aliyah” equals ascent in Zionist parlance), took off in seriously large numbers with the rise of Hitler, who initially declared himself quite sympathetic to Zionism, as had other right-wing anti-Semites before him. New Jewish settlements mushroomed by leaps and bounds, leading to a bitter and prolonged Palestinian uprising from 1936 till 1939, when it was crushed by the British mandatory powers. But it was not until the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war and the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948 that Zionism started to win the hearts and minds of the majority of Jewish society. Since that time we have witnessed an increasing and deliberate confluence of Judaism and Zionism, to the extent that today it is regarded as treason and self-hate for a Jew to criticise the state, let alone Zionism.

In my view, this development was almost inevitable given the preconception of an exclusive Jewish state. Could we realistically conceive of a France purely for the French?

**The widely perceived Zionist truism of “a land without people for a people without land” prevailed and within a matter of a few years the immigrants became “sons of the land” (Bnei Ha’aretz) whereas the inhabitants became the aliens and foreigners**

**The religious establishment has gone along with the general flow and has, indeed, profited from it.**

England only for the English? Unless, of course we belong to the National Front or similar groups. In a post-colonial world the notion is completely unacceptable and ridiculous. How then, can Israel and the majority of its citizens justify their claim and yet remain convinced that theirs is a modern, democratic society? The last resort, when all logical justifications fail, is that God has promised the land to his people. This rather begs the question of where this leaves a non-believing Jew. I have found over the years, and particularly in the last 30 or so years, that the numbers of young people wearing the skullcap and generally observing at least some of the religious laws has increased dramatically and I believe this is no coincidence

The religious establishment has gone along with the general flow and has, indeed, profited from it. Since the late 50's there has also been a notable and frightening change in the orthodox community, which led to the establishment in 1974 of the "Gush Emunim" (the block of the faithful), initiated by Rabbi Tsvi Yehuda Kook the younger. This is the fundamentalist movement which believes in accepting the state of Israel and striving to make it entirely and exclusively Jewish in all areas that the Torah mentioned as God's promise to his people. Prior to this time orthodox Jewry played no important role in politics except in pressurising successive governments to introduce more Jewish religious regulations into state law. The ultra-orthodox group, "Neturei Karta" (the landless) have never recognised the state of Israel and are exempt from army service. Although Gush Emunim are small in numbers, they wield disproportionate influence and power since successive Israeli governments covertly and sometimes almost overtly endorse their aspirations. Their followers have been allocated special army units so as to enable them to observe Jewish religious laws and rituals in every detail. Although even in the regular army only Kosher food is served and the Sabbath is observed as far as possible. These units have a reputation as dedicated crack-troops. What is less well known but silently condoned is their refusal to give medical aid or even drive wounded persons to hospital on the Sabbath unless they are Jews. In my view this is an extremely short sighted and dangerous road, leading in the end to a fundamentalist theocracy much like that of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The fundamentalists' belief is that the Messianic age is already upon us and that any obstacles to a total elimination of any non Jews in the promised land, i.e. the whole of what was Palestine including the Holy Mount, is God's punishment for sinful Jews, namely all those

**Nowadays the deliberate blurring of the distinction between Zionism and Judaism, which includes a rewriting of ancient as well as modern history is exploited to stifle any criticism of Israel's policies**

who are westernised and secular. This fully exonerates, and indeed sanctifies a man like Baruch Goldstein who murdered 29 Palestinians praying in the Ibrahimi mosque, as well as the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin. Like the Hamas movement, which was initially encouraged by Israel's secret services, this is another genie - which having been let out of the bottle - can no longer be controlled.

It seems a bitter irony that a movement that initially saw itself as progressive, liberal and secular should find itself in an alliance with, and held to ransom by the most reactionary forces, but in my view this was inevitable from its inception although the founders, and most of us, (including people like myself, growing up in Palestine in the thirties), did not foresee this and certainly would not have wished it.

Nowadays the deliberate blurring of the distinction between Zionism and Judaism, which includes a rewriting of ancient as well as modern history is exploited to stifle any criticism of Israel's policies and actions, however extreme and inhuman they may be. This, incidentally also plays directly into anti-Semitic prejudices by equating Israeli arrogance, brutality and complete denial of basic human rights to non-Jews with general Jewish characteristics.

Zionism has now assumed the all embracing mantle of righteousness, it claims to represent and to speak for all Jews and has adopted the slogan of "my country right or wrong", with the West tolerating Israel's continuous breaches of human rights that it would not tolerate if perpetrated by any other country. Few Western states and not many Jews dare take a stand against Israel, particularly as many of the former still feel a sense of unease and guilt about the holocaust which Zionists Jews inside and outside Israel have exploited in what to me seems an almost obscene manner. In the USA, the Jewish Zionist lobby is still strong enough to keep successive governments on board. Moreover, the USA regards Israel as an important strategic ally in its fight against Middle Eastern "rogue" states, which have supplanted the Soviet Union as the great satanic enemy of the free world.

I fear that unless and until Israel is judged by the same criteria as other modern states, this is unlikely to change. As an anti-Zionist Jew it is our duty to speak out against the falsifications of history by the Zionist lobby, and the dangerous misconceptions it has led the West to accept.

# Spinning a War

Maggy Zanger\*

A few weeks into the Palestinian uprising, which flared up during the fall of 2000, Israeli officials concluded the “media war” wasn’t going their way.

Nachman Shai, the Israeli spokesman during the Gulf War, hastily organized a special media unit, not long after the UN Security Council last October condemned Israel for excessive use of force. “We assumed that the US media would be on our side,” Shai told a group of Israeli officials in a teleconference, according to the May issue of Harper’s magazine.

But instead, Israeli government officials had major problems with US media coverage, he told the group. They were especially upset with CNN’s coverage. The network employs two Palestinian reporters, Shai said. “And we are putting real pressure on the heads of CNN to have them replaced with more objective, pro- Israeli reporters.”

It’s little wonder Shai assumed the US media would be on “their” side. American coverage of the long-standing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has almost always been sympathetic to Israel. For most US news organizations, “objective” has long meant “pro-Israeli.” That’s something that journalists from a range of publications including the Washington Post and Newsweek struggle with every day.

## The Israeli Story Line

The US media have historically reported on the Palestinian- Israeli conflict through the Israeli lens. Call this lens what you will — the conventional wisdom, the dominant interpretation, or the story line —it is the Israeli version that has framed how American news editors and producers view and interpret the conflict. Any presentation that does not enhance Israel’s image is labelled biased.

Most reporting on the uprising has implied that Israel is a peace-loving democracy that made generous concessions to the Palestinians at the Camp David negotiations in 2000. The unreasonable Palestinians rejected the offer and turned to terrorism to achieve their goals, press reports inferred. The US State Department, powerful Jewish-American organizations, and the well-oiled Israeli media machine tightly adhered to this narrative.

On CNBC’s May 21 broadcast of “Hardball,” host Chris Matthews said in his opening remarks about Camp David: “I look at the Israelis offering the best possible deal to the Palestinian side under Barak,” he said. “They turned him down. It looks to me like Yasser Arafat doesn’t have the political power or the will to cut a reasonable deal with Israel.”

Former US Secretary of State Alexander Haig, and Israeli Consul General in New York Alon Pinkus, both guests on the show, reinforced this description of events. “We thought it was the most fair, honourable and equitable deal - not just in town, but - but in history, for that matter, for the Palestinians, yet, Arafat rejected it,” Pinkus said. Haig’s comments were similar. “From that point on, whether it’s Wye or the two Camp David’s or the December meeting in the Oval Office, we extracted concession after concession from Israel,” he said. Wye refers to the 1998 accord mediated by then-President Bill Clinton between Israel and the Palestinian government at a plantation in Maryland.

In fact, there was nothing the journalist and his two guests disagreed on. Matthews simply affirmed his guests’ statements. If this is what passes for

**For most US news organizations, “objective” has long meant “pro-Israeli”**

**Any presentation that does not enhance Israel’s image is labelled biased**

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\* Maggy Zanger teaches journalism at the American University in Cairo. She is the former publications coordinator at Georgetown University’s Centre for Contemporary Arab Studies, and former assistant editor of Middle East Report magazine.

**Usually reporters do not see the changes, the headline, or the photo before it is published. Many say they are often shocked at the results**

“Hardball” journalism, the profession needs a hefty dose of Viagra.

Lost in the rhythm of nodding heads is any analysis of why the Palestinians rejected the Camp David “concessions.” Palestinian officials and independent analysts say Israel’s offer of only 75 percent of the West Bank (not 90 percent as widely repeated, because Israel excluded metropolitan Jerusalem and the fertile Jordan valley) was untenable. This would have bisected the proposed Palestinian state with blocs of Israeli settlements, which are illegal but have been springing up since the late 1960s. In addition, Camp David did not address whether Palestinian refugees who have been living in temporary camps in neighbouring Arab countries for more than 50 years, would be allowed to return to their homes in what is now Israel. Nor did it solve sovereignty over the important al Aqsa Haram al-Sharif holy site. This angle is rarely touched on in the US media.

The Palestinian point of view might challenge the “special relationship” the US has with Israel. Then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright showed her own bias early in the uprising on NBC’s “Meet the Press,” when she stated “those Palestinian rock throwers have placed Israel under siege.”

Many American reporters arrive in Tel Aviv imbued with this one-sided view. The Washington Post’s Keith Richburg says he strives to accurately report what he sees. What he and other reporters see is an impoverished Palestinian people frustrated by over 30 years of military occupation, fighting with stones, a few snipers and suicidal Islamists, and who are overseen by an inept Palestinian Authority. On the other side reporters see Israel, the world’s fourth most powerful military, deploying tanks, missiles, helicopter gunships, and F-16 fighter planes, backed by a highly sophisticated spin machine and the United States.

Cox News Service correspondent Larry Kaplow had to convince his editors about Israel’s lethal use of force early on in the Intifada, which resulted in a high number of Palestinian deaths. “I started writing e-mails back saying, ‘Look, you know, I didn’t believe this at first either,’” says Kaplow. “It doesn’t do any good to reinforce the conventional wisdom. I mean, what are people learning?”

To many reporters the notion that Israel is under siege is simply absurd. Palestinian children are shot by well-equipped Israeli soldiers; Palestinian leaders are systematically assassinated; Palestinian houses, orchards

and fields are bulldozed by Israelis; and Palestinian cities are surrounded by Israeli military checkpoints that block even food and medical supplies. There is simply no comparison between the daily brutality Palestinians endure and the near-normal daily life experience of Israelis.

Those reporters who try to report accurately find themselves going against the grain. Two months into the conflict, Richburg, who backs up Lee Hockstader, the Post’s regular Jerusalem reporter, wrote a story on November 30, about the 7,000-plus Palestinians who had been wounded (it is now more than 20,000). Richburg says he wanted to see the faces and hear the stories behind that enormous statistic. To ensure balance, he carefully included Israeli statements saying they only fire live ammunition when soldiers’ lives are threatened. His article also repeated Israeli claims that Palestinians send youth to the frontlines while their gunmen lurk behind. But Richburg then cited a Physicians for Human Rights report documenting Israel’s excessive use of force, and detailing several personal stories, such as the ambulance medic shot in the leg while trying to assist an injured man.

The story earned Richburg nearly 2,500 e-mailed messages within an eight-hour period — more letters than the Post had ever received in such a short time period, the paper’s web administrator told him. And one was even positive, Richburg jokes.

### **Meanwhile, Back Home...**

To be sure, journalists are under a great deal of pressure to stay ahead of the pack. They often churn out articles every day, five or six days a week - With hardly enough space to include sufficient background to enable readers to understand the complex conflict or even time to analyse wording. “You write what you think is this innocuous phrase in paragraph 16,” says a wire service reporter who spoke on condition of anonymity, “and somebody writes a letter, and it seems to have all these weighted implications you might not have intended.”

Once written, the story is then zapped to the US where several editors chop up the copy, add the headline, choose a photo and write the caption. Usually reporters do not see the changes, the headline, or the photo before it is published. Many say they are often shocked at the results.

Reporters who work for weekly or monthly publications may have the chance to see their text after it has been edited. One Newsweek reporter says that since the uprising began, most of his articles have been so badly warped by New York editors, that he has repeatedly requested to have his name taken off stories.

Reporters and editors, readers and news organizations often squabble over wording. One word choice over another can skew an entire article: settlement or neighbourhood; occupied territories, administered territories, or land captured by Israel in 1967; the holy site that Jews call Temple Mount, but Palestinians call Haram al-Sharif.

The latter example offers a good case in point. When Ariel Sharon made his now-historic visit to the holy site that triggered the current uprising, reporters almost routinely called the site by the Israeli name, the Temple Mount. There is evidence that early Jewish temples lie deep inside the hill in the Old City in Jerusalem. But on top of the hill are the current functioning al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which is the third holiest site in Islam. Palestinians were infuriated when Sharon, whom many consider a war criminal, visited the site accompanied by more than 1000 security forces.

The whole area is called the al Aqsa Haram al-Sharif in Arabic, or Noble Sanctuary in English. Many readers, viewers and Palestinians quickly pointed out to news organizations how ludicrous it was to ignore the name that refers to a site's current use and refer instead to the name of a centuries-old archaeological site. After a long tussle many news organizations settled on twisted boilerplate language, the Harem al-Sharif or Noble Sanctuary, known to the Jews as the Temple Mount.

Once an article gets past editors, it must pass muster with vigilant readers. Print reporters say they have never felt as much pressure on their reporting as when they are covering the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. "You feel watched and scrutinized," says the anonymous wire service reporter. "I mean scrutinized."

Michael Lerner, editor of the US-based Jewish magazine Tikkun, wrote in a Los Angeles Times opinion piece that he received a "flurry of death threats," after his magazine called for ending the Israeli military occupation and dismantling the settlements. A website even published Lerner's home address with instructions on how to drive there. The FBI was quickly notified.

## Spinning

Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had a reputation for shutting out the foreign press. But early in the uprising, the government realized the importance of spinning the media. "Engaging in a successful PR campaign is part of winning the conflict," an official with the Israeli consulate in New York told the Jerusalem Post.

"It's a media war," says Hugh Dellios, a reporter with the Chicago Tribune. "It's a parallel conflict. Actually, they're the same conflict."

Part of that campaign was the creation of Israeli spokesman Shai's special public relations team, which included a dozen or so former Israeli ambassadors, who were made easily available to field reporters' inquiries. But the special team was not enough. In early February, the Israeli Foreign Ministry hired the high-powered American public relations firms, Rubenstein Associates, and Morris, Carrick and Guma, to "enhance Israel's image," according to the Jerusalem Post.

Housed in a slick hotel in downtown West Jerusalem, the Israeli government press office daily cranks out reams of paper, faxed reports, e-mailed press releases, videotapes of Palestinian violence, and lists of government and academic sources ready to provide a well-packaged sound bite. Representatives of Israeli settler organizations regularly call major news reporters after an incident to offer a quote.

"They've mastered the game," the Washington Post's Richburg says. "The minute an Israeli is killed you've got their whole biography being faxed over to you."

In contrast, Palestinian public relations are dismal. "You've got to work harder with the Palestinians," the Chicago Tribune's Dellios says wryly.

Journalists and Palestinians themselves frequently complain about the Palestinian Authority's seeming disinterest in providing Western reporters access to official information.

Where the leadership has failed, Palestinian human-rights groups and other non-governmental organizations such as the Jerusalem Media & Communication Centre and the Palestinian NGO Network, have stepped in to fill the gap. With a high-tech and pretty efficient, if informal, system of listservs and e-mail messages, these groups inform reporters of demonstrations,

**"The minute an Israeli is killed you've got their whole biography being faxed over to you."**

funerals, and press conferences. They also carefully tally numbers of dead, houses bulldozed, trees uprooted, settler attacks and blockaded areas.

Still, there are precious few official sources to provide or confirm basic information, and reporters prefer to rely on official Israeli sources rather than unofficial Palestinian sources. "Try calling the Palestinian Authority and asking what was the name of the 12-year-old boy killed in Hebron," Richburg says. "Who do you call? Who knows?"

Given the Israeli media offensive and the absence of a Palestinian counteroffensive, it is little wonder that a Gallup poll found that the percentage of Americans who felt more sympathy for Israelis than for Palestinians rose from 41 percent in October to 51 percent by February 2001.

### **How the War Fares**

"The challenge of being here is to try and sort through it all and find the truth in

between," says the Chicago Tribune's Dellios, who's been based in Jerusalem for two years.

Indeed, the challenge for journalists working in conflict areas has always been to slog through the propaganda and rhetoric and come out with an independent assessment, or at least to provide a fair and accurate description of events for readers or viewers.

In the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, powerful currents pull reporters away from producing an independent assessment. They must break through the accepted story line and then resist the onslaught of Israel's spin machine. Finally, journalists must dive deep to pull information from the Palestinian Authority. But swimming against the tide is exactly what professional ethics demands of journalists. The few reporters able to successfully navigate this media war are a tribute to their profession — simply because they do their jobs right.



## **WEAR A 'PALESTINIAN FLAG' RIBBON**



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The Friends of Al-Aqsa held a seminar on Palestine on 15-16 September. It is sign of the centrality of Palestine to British Muslims that the World Trade Centre incident and the fear of reprisals could not prevent many attending this important event. Several speakers were unable to attend because of the crisis, but no one felt that the event was lacking in any way. Veteran Palestinian human rights activist Azzam Tamimi started proceedings with a historical overview of the Palestinian Catastrophe, and in the present climate of anxiety, he observed that fear was a major weapon the Zionists employed to ethnically cleanse Palestine, through the Deir Yassin Massacre, which still affected Palestinians nineteen years later. By the 1987 Intifada, however, they had overcome their fears.

Daud Abdullah of the Palestine Return Centre examined the right of return, noting that most modern Jews have no ethnic connection to Palestine. It was a principle of international law that no state may infringe on the rights of another; by creating the refugee process, the Zionist regime had violated that principle. UN Resolution 181 stated that the Jewish state must be democratic with a constitution guaranteeing rights irrespective of race or religion, again something violated by the Zionists. Nonetheless, trends point to an eventual Arab majority.

Rev. Steve Sizer, an Evangelical vicar, examining the future of Christianity in Palestine, warned of the disturbing demographic trend of Christian emigration, something deliberately 'encouraged' by the regime so they can present the conflict as Muslim-Jewish dispute. Christian Palestinians suffer the same process of Apartheid and Bantustanisation as their Muslim compatriots, and it is noteworthy that the main centres of Christian residence - Jenin, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Beit Jalla and Nablus have been the focus of recent Zionist aggression. Moreover, the Christians also suffer concealment - Zionists try to ensure pilgrimages never meet them, and use Western terms (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox) to imply they are merely a Western remnant.

Dr Farid Al-Shayl looked at the cost of the regime. This was viewed from several perspectives. It cost the US taxpayer \$83.42 billion since 1949, uniquely given as an unconditional lump sum at the start of the year, rather than a quarterly conditional gift. In contrast, US aid to the Palestinians is only \$100 million, and channelled through the Zionists, who have to approve its usage, usually denied. Zionism has over the past twelve months cost Palestinians 18,000 uprooted trees. Above all, it has cost the Palestinians their land - they were made to pay for European atrocities.

Probably the most moving speech came from Hanna Braun, a German Jew whose family emigrated

to Palestine in 1937. She presented a potted history of Zionism and Muslim-Jewish relations. Contrary to Zionist propaganda, Palestinians were of Israelite stock - after AD 70, many Jews became Christians and later Muslims. Jews and Muslims in Palestine jointly resisted the Crusaders, and later Jews were sheltered in Muslim lands after their expulsion from Spain. The Talmud taught the superiority of Jews; the great Jewish scholar Maimonides had said that Jewish life was more valuable than that of non-Jews (remember that rabbi at Baruch Goldstein's funeral who said that a million Arab lives weren't worth one Jewish fingernail? Apparently his was not an extremist position). Members of Gush Enumim refuse to medically treat non-Jews. Brown observed that the racist comments of early Zionists are excised by Israeli schools. The deception of 'a land without a people' was shattered for an early Zionist leader Max Nordau upon landing in Palestine. Although the Holocaust is exploited by the Zionist lobby, Brown observed that nazism was quite pro-Zionist. Brown's talk shattered the smear equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism.

Dr Basheer Nafi examined the specific international Islamic response to Zionism, noting that a conference in Jerusalem in 1931 attracted delegates from all over the world. During the 1936-39 uprising pro-Palestinian committees were established across the Muslim world. Tamimi returned to examine the current situation, demolishing the 'peace process' as a farce and underlining that the last Camp David proposals failed because America underestimated the value of Jerusalem to all Muslims, and because Arafat was asked to surrender the right of return, the first impossible theologically, the second because other states like Lebanon want the Palestinians out, and they want to go home. The Palestinians have stopped running.

A special open session examined the effects of the World Trade Centre incident, and whilst initially these could be dire, some voices felt that it might cause America to address the Palestine issue more seriously. There were also workshops on political empowerment and media monitoring by Ibrahim Hewitt. It was essential to be clear, concise and above all organised, with group lobbying of TV and radio stations, newspapers, etc. Many of those attending were young university students, and hopefully they will be motivated to use the information they have imbibed at this seminar to engage in the organised lobbying of media and MPs over the coming months. The current crisis presents both challenges and opportunities for the Palestinian cause. How British Muslims respond could help determine whether those opportunities will be grasped. This seminar was invaluable aid in assisting such a response.

# The Israeli Law of Return and its Impact on the Conflict in Palestine

London, 6–7 November 2001

## AIMS OF THE CONFERENCE:

- a. To highlight the illegality of Israel's stand on the Palestinian refugee issue.
- b. To emphasize the legitimacy of the Palestinian right to return.
- c. To assess the dangers which Israeli dual nationality poses to Palestinian rights.

## PARTICIPANTS

1. **Dr. Daud Abdullah**, Senior Researcher, the Palestinian Return Centre – *The Israeli Law of Return: an historical appraisal of its origins and purpose (confirmed)*
2. **Prof. Abdul Wahab al Maseeri**, Professor of English Literature, University of Ayn Shams, Egypt. Author of the Encyclopedia on The Jews, Judaism and Zionism – *The "Jewish People Concept" and its impact on the implementation of the Law of Return (confirmed)*
3. **Dr. Mustafa Abu Sway**, Director, Islamic Research Center, Al Quds University, Jerusalem – *Religion and the promise of redemption in the Israeli Law of Return*
4. **Dr. Nur Masalha**, Director of Holy Land and Palestinian Studies, St. Mary's College, University of Surrey, UK. Author of many publications on Zionist transfer policy – *The Impact of Israel's Law of Return on the Palestinians Within the Green Line (confirmed)*
5. **Dr. Rasim Khamaysah**, Palestinian expert on Israeli settlements and their distribution – *The Geographic Distribution of the Jews in Palestine: a Study on Jewish Settlements and their Demographic Support through the Law of Return (confirmed)*
6. **Dr. Shafic Masri**, Professor of international law at the American University, Beirut and Lebanese American University – *International law and the Israeli Law of Return (not confirmed)*
7. **Dr. Naseer Aruri**, Palestinian academic resident in the USA and author of numerous articles on the Jewish Diaspora – *The Role of the Jewish Diaspora in Implementing the Israeli Law of Return (confirmed)*
8. **Mr. Suhayl Me'yari**, Executive Member of the Council for Internally Displaced Palestinians, Nazareth – *The Impact of the Israeli Law of Return: a case study of the internally displaced Palestinians (confirmed)*
9. **Dr. Abdul Husayn Shabaan**, Chairman of the Arab Human Rights Organization. Has written several articles on the subject – *Policies by Western Countries and the United Nations Toward Israeli Racism & the Law of Return (confirmed)*
10. **Dr. Ja'afar Hadi Hasan**, Iraqi Academic and Director of Arabic Studies Centre, UK. Has written extensively on Jewish affairs – *The Israeli Law of Return and its Impact on Jewish-Jewish Relations inside the Jewish State (confirmed)*
11. **Prof. George Jabour**, Aleppo University, Syria, and former advisor to the President of Syria and pioneer in the studies of settler colonialism – *The Future of Israel According to the Science of Settler Colonialism (confirmed)*
12. **Dr. Muhammad Mursi**, Egypt, Member of the Egyptian parliament – *Ways of Intensifying the Campaign Against the Israeli Law of Return and Prospects of Success. (confirmed)*
13. **Mr. Munir Shafiq**, Palestinian thinker and former Director of the PLO's Palestinian Research Centre. Has written extensively on Palestinian and Arab affairs – *The Controversy Concerning the Israeli Law of Return and the Palestinian Right of Return (confirmed)*
14. **Dr. Salman Abu Sitta**, Former member of the Palestinian National Council and expert on Palestinian refugee and demographic studies – *The Israeli Law of Return, Dual Loyalty, and the Status of Jewish Communities Outside Israel (confirmed)*
15. **Dr. Samih Farsoun**, Professor American University, Washington – *A Comparative Study of South African Apartheid and Israeli Zionism (confirmed)*
16. **Dr. Asad Abdur Rahman**, executive member of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and former head of the Organization's Refugee Bureau – *The Role of the Jewish National Agency in Implementing the Israeli Law of Return (confirmed)*
17. **Mr. Souheil Al-Natour**, member of the Union of Palestinian lawyers and Union of Palestinian Authors and Journalists – *Palestinian official responses to the Israeli Law of Return (confirmed)*
18. **Dr. Said Zeedani**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, Al Quds University – *"The Law of Return and Ethnic Politics in Israel: Implications for the Different Ethnic Groups"*
19. **Dr. Muhammad El Farra**, Amman University – *Official Arab response to the Israeli Law of Return*

## RAPORTEURS

1. **Dr. Basheer M. Nafi**, Lecturer in History, Muslim College London, UK
2. **Dr. Muhsin M. Salih**, Lecturer in History, International Islamic University, Malaysia
3. **Mr. Jawad El-Hamad**, Director General, Middle East Studies Centre, Jordan
4. **Mr. Waddah Khanfar**, Director, Afro-Middle East Centre for Research and Information, Johannesburg, South Africa
5. **Mr. Michel Abdul Messih QC**, Chairman, The Association of the Palestinian Community in the UK
6. **Prof. Khalil al Hindi**, Professor of Civil Engineering, Brunell University, London, UK
7. **Mr. Afif Safieh**, Palestinian General Delegate to the UK and Holy See
8. **Prof. Musa Mazzawi**, former Professor of international law of the Polytechnic of Central London, now University of Westminster

For Further Details please contact Conference Secretariat: Dr. Daud Abdullah or Mr. Arafat Madi

**PALESTINIAN RETURN CENTRE, CROWN HOUSE, LONDON NW10 7PN**

Tel: ++ 44181 4530919 Fax: ++ 44181 4530994

E-mail: info@prc.org.uk – WebSite: www.prc.org.uk

# The International Laws of Belligerent Occupation

*Professor Francis Boyle\**

**B**elligerent occupation is governed by The Hague Regulations of 1907, as well as by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and the customary laws of belligerent occupation. Security Council Resolution 1322 (2000), paragraph 3 continued: "Calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and its responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in a Time of War of 12 August 1949;..." Again, the Security Council vote was 14 to 0, becoming obligatory international law.

The Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the West Bank, to the Gaza Strip, and to the entire City of Jerusalem, in order to protect the Palestinians living there. The Palestinian People living in this Palestinian Land are "protected persons" within the meaning of the Fourth Geneva Convention. All of their rights are sacred under international law.

There are 149 substantive articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention that protect the rights of every one of these Palestinians living in occupied Palestine. The Israeli Government is currently violating, and has since 1967 been violating, almost each and every one of these sacred rights of the Palestinian People recognized by the Fourth Geneva Convention. Indeed, violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention are war crimes.

So this is not a symmetrical situation. As matters of fact and of law, the gross and repeated violations of Palestinian rights by the Israeli army and Israeli settlers living illegally in occupied Palestine constitute war crimes. Conversely, the Palestinian People are defending themselves and their Land and their Homes against Israeli war crimes and Israeli war criminals, both military and civilian.

## The U.N. Human Rights Commission

Indeed, it is far more serious than that. On 19 October 2000 a Special Session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights adopted a Resolution set forth in U.N. Document E/CN.4/S-5/L.2/Rev. 1, "Condemning the provocative visit to al Aqsa Haram Sharif on 28 September 2000 by Ariel Sharon, the Likud party leader, which triggered the tragic events that followed in occupied East Jerusalem and the other occupied Palestinian territories, resulting in a high number of deaths and injuries among Palestinian civilians." The U.N. Human Rights Commission then said it was "[g]ravelly concerned" about several different types of atrocities inflicted by Israel upon the Palestinian People, which it denominated "war crimes, flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity."

In operative paragraph 1 of its 19 October 2000 Resolution, the U.N. Human Rights Commission then: "Strongly condemns the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force in violation of international humanitarian law by the Israeli occupying Power against innocent and unarmed Palestinian civilians...including many children, in the occupied territories, which constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity;..." And in paragraph 5 of its 19 October 2000 Resolution, the U.N. Human Rights Commission: "Also affirms that the deliberate and systematic killing of civilians and children by the Israeli occupying authorities constitutes a flagrant and grave violation of the right to life and also constitutes a crime against humanity;..." Article 68 of the United Nations Charter had expressly required the U.N.'s Economic and Social Council to "set up" this

**violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention are war crimes**

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\* Professor of International Law, Illinois USA

Commission “for the promotion of human rights.”

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### **Israel’s War Crimes against Palestinians**

We all have a general idea of what a war crime is, so I am not going to elaborate upon that term here. But there are different degrees of heinousness for war crimes. In particular are the more serious war crimes denominated “grave breaches” of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Since the start of the Al Aqsa Intifada, the world has seen those inflicted every day by Israel against the Palestinian People living in occupied Palestine: e.g., wilful killing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli army and Israel’s illegal paramilitary settlers. These Israeli “grave breaches” of the Fourth Geneva Convention mandate universal prosecution for their perpetrators, whether military or civilian, as well as prosecution for their commanders, whether military or civilian, including Israel’s political leaders.

### **Israel’s Crimes Against Humanity against Palestinians**

But I want to focus for a moment on Israel’s “crime against humanity” against the Palestinian People — as determined by the U.N. Human Rights Commission itself, set up pursuant to the requirements of the United Nations Charter. What is a “crime against humanity”? This concept goes all the way back to the Nuremberg Charter of 1945 for the trial of the major Nazi war criminals. And in the Nuremberg Charter of 1945, drafted by the United States Government, there was created and inserted a new type of international crime specifically intended to deal with the Nazi persecution of the Jewish People.

The paradigmatic example of a “crime

against humanity” is what Hitler and the Nazis did to the Jewish People. This is where the concept of crime against humanity came from. And this is what the U.N. Human Rights Commission determined that Israel is currently doing to the Palestinian People: Crimes against humanity. Legally, just like what Hitler and the Nazis did to the Jews.

### **The Precursor to Genocide**

Moreover, a crime against humanity is the direct historical and legal precursor to the international crime of genocide as defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The theory here was that what Hitler and the Nazis did to the Jewish People required a special international treaty that would codify and universalise the Nuremberg concept of “crime against humanity.” And that treaty ultimately became the 1948 Genocide Convention.

In fairness, you will note that the U.N. Human Rights Commission did not go so far as to condemn Israel for committing genocide against the Palestinian People. But it has condemned Israel for committing crimes against humanity, which is the direct precursor to genocide. And I submit that if something is not done quite soon by the American People and the International Community to stop Israeli war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Palestinian People, it could very well degenerate into genocide, if Israel is not there already. And in this regard, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is what international lawyers call a genocidaire— one who has already committed genocide in the past.

**Ariel Sharon is what international lawyers call a genocidaire – one who has already committed genocide in the past**

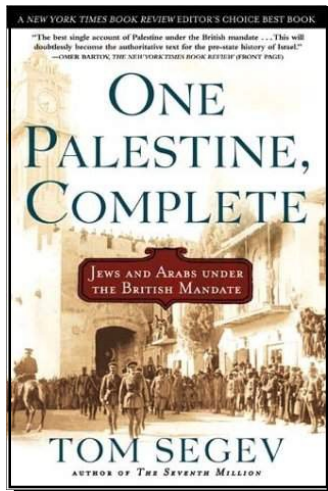
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## One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate

By Tom Segev, Little, Brown and Co., London, 2000, 612pp, £25



This volume represents an encouraging trend among some Israeli historians that contrasts markedly with Zionist politicians and apologists – honesty. For that very reason, it is an invaluable aid to those seeking justice for the Palestinians. Zionist myth after myth is exploded by Segev’s presentation of the facts. Segev is an objective historian, concerned to explore what really happened during the crucial years of the British Mandate. The book is also a rebuke to those few Muslims who fail to distinguish between Jews and Zionists.

Before examining Zionist myths, we should consider a Muslim one! Some Muslim groups claim a Khilafah would solve the Palestine problem. Yet Segev shows how the Ottoman ‘Khilafah’ allowed the Zionist enterprise, p. 16. In fact, it aided it, even when Palestinians were killed in consequence – ‘The new settlers evicted the tenants, sometimes forcibly, with the aid of the Ottoman authorities. There were incidents of violence, some of them deadly’ p. 104.

Zionists often point to the alliance between the Mufti of Jerusalem and Hitler, yet ‘ignore’ that Revisionist Zionists approached Italy and Germany as ‘partners’ to expel the British, p. 352. The Arab position on such collaboration was clear – Britain was the common foe, but if Britain changed, so would Arabs, p. 463. The Likud Party is descended from the Stern Gang, but will Sharon mention that Avraham Stern proposed an alliance with Nazis? (p. 464). The current smear of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism is undermined by the fact that many native Palestinian Jews and the ultra-Orthodox opposed Zionism as ‘sacrilegious’, pp 16-17. Most Jews

in the world did not support Zionism, p. 43. Palestinians distinguished between Jews and Zionism, pp. 29, 129-130. 1917 saw the practical demonstration of this, when Jews from Jaffa and Tel Aviv took refuge in Arab villages, p. 19. Nor was Zionism perceived by its followers as the antidote to anti-Semitism. The first Israeli President, Chaim Weizmann, stated that Zionists ‘subscribed to cultural antisemitism’, p. 41. Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism opined that ‘antisemites will become our most loyal friends...’, p. 46.

This was true from the start – those British politicians sponsoring Zionism were often anti-semitic – ‘They believed Jews controlled the world’, pp. 33, 36. Lloyd George believed - like Hitler – that Jews were behind the Bolshevik Revolution, p. 36. Support for Zionism was thus deemed essential to keep Russia in the war. This impression of Jewish world dominance was encouraged by Weizmann, p. 37. Balfour was simultaneously anti-semitic and a Zionist, pp. 40-41. Zionism owed its success partly to the Jewish Diaspora. When the 1930 White Paper proposed a more equitable policy for Palestine, Ernest Bevin, standing for Whitechapel with large Jewish population, opposed it, p. 336. American officials were conscious of the Jewish vote, p. 338. Ironically, Whitechapel now is mainly Muslim, so its voters could help liberate Palestine by similar pressure.

The idea of Palestine as a ‘safe haven’ for persecuted Jews is undermined by the fact that such a state could not have saved them from Hitler ‘even at the most optimistic estimate, only a small fraction of Europe’s increasingly beleaguered Jews could have immigrated to Palestine in the 1930s’, p. 393. Segev observes that Zionists like Ben-Gurion (first Israeli Premier) saw the European Jews merely as ‘human material’ necessary to establish the state, rather than seeing the state as a means to save the Jews.

The derogatory racist attitude of Zionist settlers is breath-taking. Ahad Ha’am, noted Zionist pioneer warned: ‘We are used to thinking of the Arabs as primitive men of the desert, as a donkey-like nation...’, p. 104. A later prominent Zionist, Kisch declared that Arabs were ‘little removed in intelligence from donkeys’, p. 154n. Weizmann was contemptuous of Arabs - ‘The Arab is primitive...’, ‘There is a fundamental difference in quality between Jew and native’, pp. 109-110. Many Zionist writers described Arabs as ‘savages or semi-savages’, p. 150. It is noteworthy that whereas current Zionist propaganda presents Arabs as alien interlopers, early Zionists objected to Jews being called ‘natives’, p. 153.

Segev bluntly presents Zionism as a racist movement: ‘The principle of segregation was accepted by all parts of the Zionist movement, with very few exceptions’, p. 284. The Zionists wanted a labour policy for Palestine that a later writer called ‘economic apartheid’, p. 287.

When Britain wanted to construct the Haifa port, Zionists like Ben-Gurion demanded higher wages for Jews over Arabs, pp. 358-9. The High Commissioner said that this reminded him of South African discrimination.

Zionism was also a *sectarian* ideology: 'In another incident, the editor of *Do 'ar HaYom* ... was put on trial for slandering the Christian religion... Hans Herzl, the son of the founder of the Zionist movement, had converted to Christianity. *Do 'ar Ha Yom* commented that, unlike Jesus of Nazareth, Herzl's son was at least not a bastard', p. 302. In contrast, Arab nationalism was expressed in 'Muslim-Christian Associations', and a leading Arab Christian, Sakakini, ascended the al-Aqsa pulpit to protest a visit by Balfour, p. 271.

Of course, it was British racism that facilitated Zionism. In 1903, Britain offered Uganda to the Zionists (without consulting the Ugandans), p. 36. Balfour was forthright: 'Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land', p. 45. As for the mantra 'Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East', Segev observes 'the Zionist dream ran counter to the principles of democracy', p. 119, opposing democracy because Arabs were the majority. This is the background to Zionist depictions of the Palestinian right of return meaning 'the suicide of Israel' – a Zionist state is impossible with an Arab majority.

The practice of dispossession and call for 'Transfer' (ethnic cleansing) were central Zionist tenets. The Jewish National Fund purchased land and dispossessed Arab tenants, p. 242. Its constitution forbade property being returned to Gentiles, p. 273. Segev observes that 'Disappearing' the Arabs lay at the heart of the Zionist dream, and was also a necessary condition of its realization', p. 406. Weizmann wanted a state as 'Jewish as France is French and England is English', p. 117. When PNA leaders today sell land to Zionists, it is a case of *déjà vu* – JNF activities were facilitated by Arab traitors, among them leaders who sold land, p. 275.

Segev notes that 'The idea of transfer had accompanied the Zionist movement from its very beginnings, first appearing in Theodor Herzl's diary.' This makes chilling reading: 'We shall try to spirit the penniless populations across the border by procuring employment for them in the transit countries, while denying them employment in our own country'. As with Apartheid, Nazism and 'Greater Serbianism', ethnic cleansing was a central Zionist policy - 'The notion of population transfer is deeply rooted in Zionist ideology, a logical outgrowth of the principle of segregation between Jews and Arabs', p. 407. Knowing that demographic realities demanded this for the success of their vision; the Zionists established a 'Committee for Population Transfer' in the 1930s.

Again, the British helped – the UK Labour Party's 1944 resolution promised 'transfer' of the Arabs, p. 482. During the 1948 war, Ben-Gurion stated, 'We decided to clean out Ramle', which with Lydda is the site of Tel Aviv's airport. Sometime later Ben-Gurion proposed the

conquest of the Galilee as a means of expelling 100,000 Arabs. Here he used the verb 'to clean' again, p. 511n. How similar this is to the Nazi term *Judenrein* – 'Jew-clean', which described the effect of their deportation policies in Eastern Europe.

The dark side of two British 'war heroes' is exposed in the book. To crush the 1936-39 Arab Revolt, they acted in similar ways to the SS in Eastern Europe. Women were forced to bare their breasts; the men were kept in cages, p. 421. Orde Wingate, the 'Chindit' hero of Burma, made villagers smear their faces with oil and mud, then whipped and killed them, p. 430. Montgomery operated a shoot to kill policy, p. 432. This book makes uncomfortable reading for Britons.

Segev exposes the lie that Palestine was an empty desert made green by Zionist colonisation: 'Most of the land purchased by the Jews was in the expensive and fertile regions of the coastal plain, the eastern Galilee, and the valleys' p. 274. By end of the Mandate, Jews owned only 10% of the land, p. 273. For the 'making the desert bloom' claim to be true, Zionist colonisation would have had to be fairly widespread, whereas Segev notes that by the end of the 1930s, every third Jew lived in Tel Aviv, p. 380. Indeed, there was an 'Arab' forestation activity, p. 300, indicating that they helped develop the land.

The present Intifada began when Sharon desecrated the al Aqsa Haram Sharif. There have been persistent attempts to destroy the Haram, or at least to transfer ownership of part of it, *pace* recent US proposals. There were Zionist attempts to buy the Wall from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, pp. 300-301, including nearby houses. It should be noted that after the Israeli conquest of Jerusalem in 1967, this residential area – the Maghrabi district – was demolished, with residents being given only short notice to leave. Weizmann tried to purchase the Wall for *nationalistic*, rather than religious reasons – it advanced the claim to Jerusalem, p. 71, which explains why so much emphasis is now being placed on transferring the wall to Zionist sovereignty.

In fact, the Balfour Declaration's terminology of 'national home' threatened the Haram: 'The term national home made allusions to the Temple, because the Hebrew word for home, *bayit*, is also traditionally used to refer to 'the House of God.' Segev refers to the words of a leading Zionist, Menachem Ussishkin, 'The Jewish people wants a Jewish state without compromises and without concessions, from Dan to Be'ersheva, from the great sea to the desert ... the Jewish people will not rest ... until its national home is built on our Mt. Moriah' that is 'the Temple Mount', p. 304.

Zionist propaganda now asserts that the Palestinians were largely the descendants of recent migrants, *pace* Joan Peters' book *From Time Immemorial*. Segev states 'The Zionist Organization also initiated research projects designed to prove that many of the Arabs had arrived in Palestine only recently', p. 300. However, Ben-Gurion and other Zionists originally claimed – accurately – that the Palestinians were actually descendants of the ancient

Jews, p. 175n. At any rate, population figures undermine the 'migrant' claim. The 1917 population was 700,000 Arabs and 85,000 Jews, p. 22. Balfour also made that estimate, p. 45. One effect of British rule was a decline in infant-mortality and increase in life-expectancy, p. 354. This led to a 1936 Arab population of 1 million, p. 368.

The Palestinians are often faulted for rejecting the UN 1947 Partition Plan, but Segev's examination effectively absolves them from blame: 'The Zionist movement accepted the partition plan, in a wise tactical step. Even then all the players understood that geographically and demographically the U.N's partition plan could not be implemented. The border between the two states was long and contorted, impossible to defend; the Jewish state would include more than half a million Arabs,

slightly more than the number of Jews then living within the proposed boundaries', p. 496. Thus, a Jewish state could only be formed by ethnic cleansing, and Palestinian reaction was simply common sense.

Segev's book makes exciting reading. It is very accessible, readable, and a mine of information. Its price may be daunting, but readers should urge the publishers to quickly issue a cheap paperback, for the book deserves wide distribution. We end with a quote from a Palestinian leader writing after the 1948 war, which resonates for the present: 'Zionism is an aggressive, dynamic movement. However much the Arabs might try to appease it, they will always fail', p. 511.

**Anthony McRoy**



### **Books Available For Review**

1. Holy Land, Unholy War – Anton La Guardia.
2. Palestinian Refugees – The Right of Return. Edited by Naseer Aruri.
3. Refugees in our own land. Muna Hamzeh

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