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Journal

The United Nations' Role in Peace and War

Denis Halliday

Orthopaedic Initiative for the Gaza Strip

Dr Sohail Ali Khan

Gaza Beneath the Bombs

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Questioning Our Special Relationship with Israel

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The Lobby vs. America

Ramzy Baroud



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We welcome contributions to Aqsa Journal. Referenced articles, comments and analysis related to the Middle East conflict can be submitted to the Editor for consideration. Topics may include history, politics, architecture, religion, international law and human rights violations, amongst others. We also offer a range of books related to the Palestinian issue for Review. To review a book, contact the Editor. All submissions should include the author's full name, address and a brief curriculum vitae.

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EDITORIAL

editorial



Who is he that will loan to Allah a beautiful loan, which Allah will double unto his credit and multiply many times? It is Allah that giveth (you) Want or plenty, and to Him shall be your return.

Barack Obama sold his Presidency to recession hit Americans on the platform of hope and change. That was a dream shared by people across the Middle East and his victory was welcomed by Palestinians eager for a shift away from the Bush era policies of unrepentant support for the Israelis. However this year his grand ambitions for a resolution to the conflict seem to have flat lined.

Meanwhile, the Palestinians find themselves in the familiar position of being in a boat without a paddle whilst trying to withstand the torrent of Israeli violations against their nation. These include, but are not limited to, settlement expansion, encroachment around Arab areas of Jerusalem, the appropriation of holy sites, intimidation at al-Aqsa, and of course, the economic strangulation of the Palestinians in Gaza.

The Western media avidly reported the rare sound bites of American diplomats voicing their tame indignation as Israelis crossed one red line too many but they have neglected to press their politicians on following through on their words. Following Vice-President Biden's humiliation in Jerusalem, Hillary Clinton reaffirmed the usual track of unconditional support for Israel. Her address to the powerful AIPAC lobby in March was a grovelling ode to the Israeli state, laced with the usual lambasting of Hamas and sparsely punctuated with pleas to halt settlement activity, just for now.

The whole episode shows that hope in an American solution to the issue is naïve, and for too long the parameter for reaching a settlement has been defined by America's determination and

ability to reign in Israel. Four decades after the occupation of the West Bank, history has time and again shown that America is not capable of establishing a viable and fair solution. Too often hype is mistaken for hope.

The fall of apartheid in South Africa was not in any part the work of the Americans and the fall of its cousin system in Palestine will not be either. Pressure on Israel to stop its violations of Palestinian rights, just as in South Africa, can only come with the concerted efforts of individuals as well as the international community.

Responsibility to act against Israeli policies falls on individuals as well as NGOs, the media and community leaders. The nuisance of having to check products to see if they are from illegal settlements or Israel is no greater than checking to see if they meet dietary requirements. Likewise, the effort that goes into writing a letter to lobby an MP or Minister is no greater than one written to an airline when baggage goes missing. These are small acts that can collectively make a big impact.

The tide of pressure against Israel needs to come from individuals and the general public, as politicians and governments prove reluctant to sever economic, diplomatic and military ties with Israel. The economic impact of boycotting companies supporting Israel is already being felt and the media's balance on reporting the conflict is slowly shifting to more accurately represent the reality on the ground. This momentum cannot fall prey to complacency, and to ensure this does not happen, each of us bears some responsibility.

Ismail Patel, EDITOR

ANALYSIS

analysis

The United Nations' Role in Peace and War

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Gaza Beneath the Bombs

Sharyn Lock



The United Nations Role in Peace and War

Denis Halliday

Denis Halliday spent most of his career with the United Nations in development and humanitarian assistance-related posts both in New York and internationally. In 1997, he was appointed United Nations Assistant Secretary General and head of the Humanitarian Program in Iraq. One year later, after a 34-year career with the UN, Denis Halliday announced his resignation from the United Nations over the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq, characterizing them as "genocide".

In 2000, Halliday was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2003, he was presented with the Gandhi International Peace Award. Since leaving the UN, Denis Halliday has been involved in a number of peace activities. He is currently involved in the Kuala Lumpur Initiative to Criminalise War. He also lectures at Trinity College, Dublin.

This paper was delivered as a Global Research Public Lecture in Montreal in December 2009.

Change

Some times the New York Times does the right thing. The Editorial on December 1, 2009 condemned the Swiss referendum vote to prohibit the construction of minarets on Mosques throughout the country. And on the Op. Ed. Page, Bob Herbert quoted Eisenhower: "I hate war, as only a soldier who has lived it can, as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity." He added, and "every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed."

This paper is not intended to be a 'feel good' review of the UN. It is intended to reflect and consider something different, something better. Something representative, something respectful of international law: committed to equality of nations and people. In other words, an organization that really believes in a single standard of behaviour and treatment for all... and not double standards as we have now.

The New York Times Editorial of 21 November 2009 suggested that readers should not be too

critical of President Obama's recent visit to China... as he is still trying to restore America's moral authority! My first thought was: Restore what moral authority?

My second thought was that this restoration concept should absolutely apply to the United Nations, and in particular to the Security Council responsible for global Peace and Security. It is to that Council that we should look for secular moral authority, global leadership, respect for international law and for management of global peaceful co-existence. However, the reality is that we don't.

Before considering the business of restoration, it is necessary to look at how the UN is viewed today. Firstly, there is the UN of people's unrealistic expectations which reflects how we want the UN to be and to act. A UN that brings good will and well-being to people-kind everywhere. We want it to be the UN of the Preamble - "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small... to establish... justice and respect for the

obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law... to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom... and for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security..."

The Perfect UN does not Exist

I believe most of us want a UN set apart and distinct from the ugly politics of the G-8, the EU, NATO, US/UK and the wars illegally pursued by UN Member States such as in the Congo, Chechnya, Gaza, Georgia, Iraq, Pakistan, Sudan, and Afghanistan. However, ugly politics have undermined the Preamble and neglected the entire word and spirit of the UN Charter. In reality, this perfect UN does not exist, and nor does its moral authority.

The Second perception is of a UN of the 'Masters of the Universe', the five veto powers and permanent members of the Security Council – the so called victors of the Second World War. The old boys club of 1945 of five States have corrupted the UN Charter and corrupted the work of the UN. Applying double-standards, and disregard for law - they have made the organisation primarily serve their best interests rather than serve its mandate.

I refer to the five most dangerous Member States that together manufacture and sell some 85% of military arms, including nuclear weapons, and so called weapons of mass destruction. This is the UN of the arms dealers - the most disreputable and yet profitable business on earth. Tragically and quite bizarrely, these arms dealers are the same Member States that the UN Charter entrusts with maintaining Peace and Security around the world. There is a certain madness in this - nuclear powers and weapons salesmen being responsible for our peaceful co-existence.

Perception number three is the UN of the Secretariat, the Secretary-General - the servant of the member states. The Secretary-General is the administrative leader of the UN family of Agencies, Programmes and organizations. This is the so-called UN System that takes instructions from the member states (or the share holders), some from the permanent five and some from the 191 member states of the General Assembly who subsist under the shadow of the Permanent Five. Politically driven orders come directly, such as my personal experience in Iraq when I headed up the

UN Humanitarian Programme, or via Member State boards, councils, assemblies, committees etc.

I can argue that this is proper as the stake holders have rights. What it does, however, is remind us that despite the words of the Preamble to the Charter... "We the peoples" - the UN is an organization of States, NOT people. Real people actually have limited input. Sometimes via NGOs affiliated in a variety of ways. The bottom line, however, is the State, and mostly States think not with heart or mind, nor are they guided by any moral standard but with the sensitivity only of self-interest, power, and ambition. This-self interest reaches a high art form when it comes to the five veto powers of the Security Council. And self-interest is not endorsed in the UN Charter.

As Bill Clinton and Madame Albright liked to say, the United Nations is there to further the best interests of US foreign policy. However, to be fair, other States undoubtedly see it much the same way, but are more discrete, and lack ambitions and military capacity for global empire.

And now we have President Obama who wants to work with the United Nations and be a player rather than dominate and control. We await the reality as he expands the war in Afghanistan, keeps Bagram airbase prison full of the tortured and uncharged, finishes off the destruction of Iraq, refuses to end the occupation of Okinawa, has the thick skin to criticize China for human rights abuses when America itself has a deplorable record, and now militarily threatens Iran. Not exactly the sort of new player we had hoped for perhaps but let us remain hopeful.

Manipulation of UN Organs

Let me add in the context of UN perception number three that the Programmes, Agencies, and bodies of the UN do good work everyday all over the world WHEN not instructed by the Masters of the Universe to do otherwise. Such contrary instructions have resulted in the unwillingness of the World Health Organisation to deal honestly with the appalling dangers of military usage of Depleted Uranium. The latest data from Fallujah shows that child mortality has sky rocketed and birth deformities including two heads or no limbs, are increasingly common. Women are now afraid to get pregnant. The horrors of Fallujah today will be faced by the rest of us tomorrow if we do not ban the use of Depleted Uranium.

Another example is the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), whose objective expert advice is too often set aside by the Security Council when military aggression is more politically attractive, or simply ideal for empire building. Or in respect of some nuclear states – such as Pakistan, Israel and India – IAEA is allowed no role at all.

The lack of attendance at the recent Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) meeting in Rome on “food” in a world where now over one billion face starvation and billions more face constant hunger is something that should shame us all. It does shame us all. From our Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) countries, the rich and the richer, the only leader in attendance was Mr Berlusconi, Prime Minister of the host country, The Pope made the best statement: Where was the leadership of the North?

Where were the Big Five? Is food shortage not an issue of humanity, of peace and security? In an environment of less fresh water, declining food production in the South, the dangers of genetically altered seeds and new agro-imperialism, why were we not represented at the highest levels? Is it because we are busy looking after ourselves?

However, as stated earlier, despite this political interference and negligence, good work happens everyday, these UN technical organizations are staffed with good minds and good intentions, although limited budgets. They work with NGOs and civil society all over the globe, particularly in the developing countries. Regarding UN humanitarian assistance, UNRWA in Gaza feeds some 80% of the entire population as Palestinians struggle, and often fail to survive under the genocidal blockade of Israel. A blockade the US supports, and the EU and the Arab states enable as they stand by and watch life and expectations come to an end.

Despite the UN Agencies UNICEF and UNWRA and others on the ground, the human catastrophe grows as Egypt blocks the exit at Raffah as they did in 2009 when thousands of refugees tried to escape civilian bombing with white phosphorus. And today they block Palestinian students going out and food and other basic supplies coming in. The Security Council’s role in this has been to fiddle as Gaza and its people literally burned. And still it remains unwilling to demand that Gaza be opened to world-wide assistance, freedom, democracy, hope and opportunities. A glaring failure to act, a glaring failure of corruption of its mandate – clearly a Council held hostage by a few.

Let us hope the UN Security Council reads the Goldstone Report, and has the courage to act upon it, and accepts its responsibilities in protecting the Palestinians of Gaza, the victims of what has been described as a “perfect” genocide.

Whether it is Gaza, or the work of the World Food Programme which now feeds countless millions every day, the self-serving UN of the Security Council is always a political danger. The danger of resorting to sanctions, or military aggression, before peaceful resolution or proper dialogue is sincerely attempted. Politically driven R2P is a mockery of humanitarian needs. The politics of the Council makes a mockery of the Charter.

Where Iran is concerned, military confrontation or the imposition of “crippling” sanctions would be preferred by Secretary of State Clinton, the latter of which Russia and China are slowly warming to. The states have learned nothing from the deadly UN sanctions on Iraq, it appears. Crippling or otherwise, UN Sanctions on Iran and the people of Iran would constitute “collective punishment”. Collective punishment is in violation of international law. Sanctions are a form of warfare that can kill communities and kill children, slowly, as those familiar with Iraq are aware. There was no justification then and there is no justification for killing the people of Iran now.

My perceptions may be different to that of many people, but they come from my experience of working with the UN. Good, very good, and very bad; very dangerous and absolutely unacceptable - a Charter corrupted with self-interest dominant. With very few in control, UN failure in peace and security is all too common and International Law is only in the service of some, not all.

The consequences of the day was that the UN Security Council under US/UK leadership refused to allow the Arms Inspector Hans Blix to finish his work in Iraq because the opportunities for war, the very smell of profits, was too much for Bush and Blair to resist, is still resonating today. Such is leadership in democracies which are manipulated by capitalism. To enable the Iraq invasion, the Charter was abused and misinterpreted as Article 51 which allows for rightful defence to imminent threat clearly did not apply.

The UN Security Council is now faced with expansion by Britain and the US, and maybe the reluctant NATO, of the war on the people of Afghanistan. I expect no action by the Council, but expanded war raises a question: when the majority

of citizens in a democracy are opposed to war or expanded warfare, is it legitimate? And who is responsible? How can the citizens be held responsible, as they must be, when democracies determine to undertake a war of aggression? Many would say there are no non-combatants in a democracy pursuing aggressive warfare. Otherwise what is the shared responsibility of democracy all about?

The Security Council A Historic Undertaking

As war expands again, how did we reach this state of weakness and failure in the Security Council? When did the rot start? We could begin in 1945, but allow me to take you back to the 1920s, when Churchill and his man Harris set about frustrating Kurdish dreams of independence. Using bi-planes they decided to bomb civilians in the Kurdish towns and villages of northern Iraq. Churchill and Bomber Harris continued these infamous tactics when they killed hundreds of thousands of civilians by firebombing Hamburg, Berlin, and Dresden etc.

Since then, the UN Security Council has watched passively as matters have further deteriorated. Now we see military regimes kill civilians with sophisticated aircraft, or Predator drones in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Gaza – using massive bunker busters, cluster munitions, white phosphorous or depleted uranium on children, women and men. They bomb the media - such as Al Jazeera offices in Baghdad and Kabul. Professor Chossudovsky and I met with an Al Jazeera cameraman - Sami Al Haj - recently in Malaysia as he described 7 years of abuse and torture in the Guantanamo cages - to a “peoples” war crimes Commission.

In Gaza, civilians and UN staff members have been attacked and killed, along with UN food warehouses, schools and health clinics. I learned last week from a UN colleague in Jerusalem that, having completely destroyed the American International School from the air, the Israeli army found it necessary to bulldoze the playground, swings and slides, of the Primary School. The Permanent Members of the Security Council made sure nothing was done to stop the killings. Genocide can be astonishing in its thoroughness, and its continuation, as winter arrives crushing the children of Gaza.

Why mention Churchill? Because he, together with Stalin and Roosevelt, were the authors of the UN Charter and it was they who demanded

the stranglehold and the control that the Five Permanent seats with veto powers provide.

Stalin’s record is clear on human rights with his brutal and deadly ethnic cleansing practices. After some twenty million lost lives in the war itself, many millions more were killed in the Soviet Union, a human catastrophe that is difficult to envisage.

As for Roosevelt, it now appears to many that he wanted to join Churchill in the war and that the attack on Pearl Harbour was “facilitated” in order to trigger American entry into the war in Europe. Despite the reservations and finally the resignation of the Admiral of the Pacific Fleet, US warships remained vulnerable out in the middle of the Pacific. The Admiral begged Roosevelt to withdraw the fleet to California. Intelligence was available on the impending attack. Churchill celebrated when Pearl Harbour was hit.

In short, we had these three very hard men in 1944-45 to which we can add Chiang Kai Chek and Charles de Gaulle, to make 5. They led the same 5 countries that created and hold to this day, some 65 years later, veto power, and permanent seats, that control the UN Security Council. The consequence of having midwives of this questionable calibre is damaging to the credibility of the UN and their impact on how it functions, or fails to function has been huge. How it is perceived around the globe, particularly by those not represented in any way by the Magic Five is often negative.

I refer primarily to the South, the poor and the poorest, who constitute the majority. I refer to some sovereign states unlucky to sit on oil, mineral wealth and perhaps water and other resources that are required by the rich, and the militarily powerful. Some of us are ruthless in the manner we gobble up the natural finite resources of other sovereign states. The “somewhat” or theoretical democracies seem able to justify to themselves wars of aggression, plus exploitation, rape, and pillage; of course they may prefer to use words like development, investment and trade.

The UN Security Council delays, compromises, and ultimately acquiesces to the Big Five wishes, as happened during the lead in to the totally illegal invasion of Iraq by American and British forces in early 2003. Those States which could have vetoed that invasion did not make the gesture of rejection as required by the Charter. The Charter was ravaged, but the US and UK got away with it. No censure. No suspension from the Security Council.

There is also the evident application of double

standards. Iraq illegally invades Kuwait and all hell breaks loose, although Baghdad was ready to negotiate a peaceful retreat. However, capitalist greed for Iraqi oil and opportunity for war and the desire for strategic presence in the region set that peaceful possibility aside immediately. No compensation or reparation has been paid to the victims; meanwhile, Iraqi reparations to Kuwait so far have reached some 60 billion dollars and continue. When one considers that Viet Nam still waits for its first penny, reparation payments to Iraq are put in clear light. This is a clear example of the double standards at work.

I lived and worked for the UN in Baghdad under UN sanctions in 1997-98 and it was a safe city. Today, following massive bombing, occupation and a puppet Government, assassination and ethnic cleansing is a daily event. Some 100,000 American mercenaries run wild, killing people outside of both domestic and international law. The Security Council has not spoken.

The next question involves the role of the UN International Criminal Court (ICC), and the reality is no better. It is hog-tied, like prisoners en route to Guantanamo Bay. The prosecutor has little power; otherwise he would be knocking on 10 Downing Street. The Old Boys of the Big Five are protected, so the ICC works on Taylor and Vladovic, and other war criminals. Again that is a double standard at play which reflects the familiar Achilles heel of the United Nations.

Security Council Failures

The list of Security Council failures is long, and I do not intend to drudge through it. I have already touched in passing on the consequences of self-interest, inequality amongst member states, and the profits of war, and consumption of natural resources.

In Srebrenica, UN peacekeepers stood by as the massacre of some 7,000 Muslim men and boys took place. The Council failed to prevent ethnic cleansing. In Rwanda, none of us can forget the massacres that took place as a few thousand UN troops were in the country forbidden by the Council to lift a finger, although some did assist under a courageous Canadian General who has described it in detail. Who set off the genocide? That is still an open question; meanwhile, Rwanda has become English speaking - strangely the same outcome that war had in Cambodia and Viet Nam.

In Afghanistan, we have witnessed an inva-

sion and occupation, with endless civilian loss of life, grown out of hysteria in the days after 9/11. The UN Security Council endorsed revenge on the people of Afghanistan. But were they involved in the 9/11 atrocity? I do not recall that the money, the pilots, nor the brains behind this terrible act came from Afghanistan.

The country of Iraq has been destroyed in terms of cultural, social, economic and infrastructural integrity and wellbeing. The Council kept quiet. In Gaza this very year we have witnessed similar total destruction. Again the UN Security Council has failed to halt violence.

We cannot pass without expressing concern over the rise of NATO as a new and dangerous aggressive force outside its region. We have to regret the UN role in expanding NATO capacity and reach.

The Threat to Iran

We cannot neglect the threats to Iran of attack. Without solid evidence of military intentions for nuclear power, Iran is under threat of military attack from Israel and the USA. The Security Council is being bulldozed yet again into acquiescence. The similarity to the lead up to the invasion of Iraq is frighteningly clear. The pre-emptive concept is again in play and there is no provision for that 'game' under international law. Iran, regardless of its internal struggles, is a sovereign state with the right to defend itself. It is currently surrounded by American and Israeli nuclear war heads. Were Iran to seek nuclear defensive weapons, a case could be made, as per a deterrent. But not by me.

To expect a sovereign state of such vulnerability and dignity to accept the UN/EU demands that its nuclear fuel be processed overseas by the very countries now threatening its security and sovereignty - is of course unreal. The Security Council must recognize Iran's perfect right to nuclear power and to ensure via the IAEA that such power is only for peaceful purposes. Of course you could ask why Iran should be inspected when the US refuses to be inspected. And Israel denies any knowledge of its nuclear arsenal? Double standards again.

The Council needs to demand and make conditional for Iran's inspection compliance that the Americans and Israelis stand down, and that Israel gives up its nuclear weapons. And demand that all nuclear powers disarm, including the Five Permanent Members, another crime of omission by the Big Boys.

Bringing Change to the UN

What can we do about changing the UN and the Security Council in particular? For a number of years I have been proposing at University and public meetings, reform of the Security Council. Discussion to this end in the General Assembly has been ongoing for some 15 years. Changes made have been miniscule and growth of real power has been limited to proposing Germany, Italy and Japan be promoted to Big Boy status. This is ridiculous as the Council is already dominated by the North. What the Council needs is balance between the North and South. The majority of the world's people need to be represented.

A further issue is who gets to decide? Is it appropriate for the Permanent Five to select the States they fancy? My view is that Council representation should be regional and not country specific, and that each region should select its representative State to sit for five years before turnover to another. Further, the selected country would speak for and on behalf of the whole region. This would seem to require intra-region consultation before major decisions and this consultation might prevent the errors of haste, such as the Council's approval three days after 9/11 to endorse invading Afghanistan.

With such a globally representative system, with the loss or at least reduction of Nuclear Powers and the inclusion of the majority, the countries of the South, I believe we would see different decisions. With this reform, the pressure to disarm and destroy Nuclear Weapons might be greater. The pressure to address climate change and rising waters would also be greater. With poverty represented around the table, the rights of the poor and poorest would be properly addressed for the first time. Food, food security, and human security would be better considered and solutions found. The influence over the World Bank and IMF would mean they become more people-friendly and developmental, while less punitive.

The possibilities for enhanced decision making are endless and there would be new ownership of the United Nations with new hope and perhaps a new beginning. There would be less self-serving control, less presence of the military powerful and less corruption of international law and the UN Charter.

I am sincerely hopeful because we have seen a change recently and our potential friend and player President Obama has recognized that the

G-20 format must stay in place. That means the South has been acknowledged properly for the first time. To see Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria and South Africa, India and Indonesia and other represented – all formerly colonial subjects - that is something revolutionary.

Some may be unhappy because the G-20 is the rich G-8 all over again, just bigger. It does have the rich countries of the South on board but the additions to the G-8 bring in more than 4 billion human beings, a definite positive change. The G-20 breakthrough can be used for the purposes of UN Security Council reform. The question arises as to why the Five Old Boys would accept this kind of dilution of power in the UN Security Council. The answer is simply that it is their interest to do so. They are beginning to recognize power in the South, and they know the UN is becoming irrelevant, and to sustain the Security Council – the same South must be seated.

With new seating in the Council, the double standards seen this far will be much less likely. The provisions of the Charter and international law are more likely to be respected as second class countries and second class peoples would be no more. There would be full representation on matters of Peace and Security for the first time ever. The little countries that the Big Boys like to bully, invade and/or sell weapons to, will now be around the table. That may constrain the arms dealers, the empire builders and those who feel able to steal the sovereign rights and natural resources of those not militarized.

The Big Five understand that Geo-political power has already moved away from the Council to the G-8 and the G-20 has enhanced that geo-political power and further diminished the role of the Council. They fear that critical global initiatives in the coming years will not come from the UN but from the G-20 where the world is represented both geographically and in terms of North/South balance. Meantime, the Security Council is becoming largely reactive, dealing with individual country issues rather than global concerns which are intimately linked to Peace and Security. Their very mandate is therefore in danger.

Fearing redundancy and irrelevance, old Europe has become the new EU which has grown into the largest economic block on earth. More important, despite the dangers of NATO, Europe with a history of war has become a Europe at peace. In the meantime, the Security Council has been stagnant and is in danger of being set aside unless it becomes

representative, and dare I suggest it, democratic. This would mean no more veto power, but a new sense of responsibility supported by the goals but within the constraints of the Charter and international law. No more double standards of approach.

To complete this revolution we would need to have real people represented more in the UN dialogue and halls of consideration, and participation. Full NGO and civil society representation must

be integrated. We would need to see greater respect for international law, human rights, and rights of the child amongst other legal provisions. For war crimes of the kind we have seen in recent years, the UN needs to make the ICC work. Prosecution of domestic leadership war crimes and crimes against humanity should be pursued by domestic laws and courts. However, failing that, the machinery of the International Criminal Court must be used.

BOOKS AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW

Friends of Al-Aqsa have a number of books that are available for review. Reviews are included in our journal, newspaper and/or website.

The following titles are currently available:



**Broken Promises,
Broken Dreams
(Second Edition)**
By Alice Rothchild



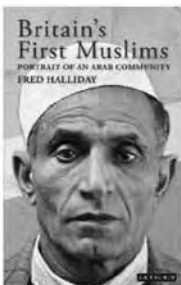
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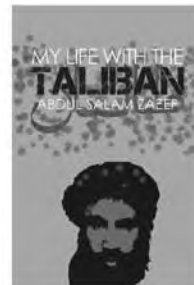
Gaza Stay Human
By Vittorio Arrigoni



**My Father was a Freedom
Fighter**
By Ramzy Baroud



Britain's First Muslims
By Fred Halliday



My Life with the Taliban
By Abdul Salam Zaeef

To review one of these titles, please email your name, postal address and a short CV (including academic/ writing experience) to:
info@aqsa.org.uk



Orthopaedic Initiative for the Gaza Strip

Dr Sohail Ali Khan

Dr Sohail Khan is a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon based in England and Director of the Mobile International Surgical Team (MIST). He qualified from Sheffield Medical School in 1987 and began training as a surgeon in 1990. He spent four years researching at the World Health Organisation Metabolic Bone Unit, where bone regeneration was a particular interest. He was appointed as a Consultant in 1999 and currently runs the Limb Reconstruction Unit based at Hope Hospital, Salford. He has set up a centre in the Gaza Strip to provide vitally needed Orthopaedic and other medical needs to the people, as well as providing medical training.

‘Knowledge has no borders; wisdom has no race or nationality’

Caliph Al Mamun, 805 AD

Introduction

The Health Care of the 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is worse now than it has ever been since the start of the Israeli military occupation in 1967. With the Israeli military incursions in January 2009, the already fragile Health Care System has been toppled into free fall, creating an acute-on-chronic crisis.

Compared to other countries at a similar level of economic development, the Palestinian population’s overall health status outcomes were relatively good. These outcomes were noticeably better than the closest neighbouring Arab states (Jordan, Egypt, and Syria) and reflected, in part, on strong performance on most basic public health and primary health care functions. Unfortunately, the achievements that were made in the last three decades are now being dramatically eroded.

With the deterioration of the political situation, the strict blockade, the aggressive Israeli-de-development policies, the suspension of international aid and the internal Palestinian division, there is a worrying deterioration in many health indicators (WHO report). The Gazans’ healthcare has dramatically deteriorated on two levels: the

provision of health services inside Gaza and access to treatment outside Gaza. The siege that Israel imposed and then intensified on the Gaza Strip in June 2007 has greatly harmed Gaza’s health system, which was already struggling to function under the occupation beforehand. Many services and life-saving treatments are now no longer available to Palestinians inside Gaza. In addition, the supply of medicines, medical disposables and medical equipment to Gaza is significantly delayed.

Palestinian internal disputes and frictions between the political factions have also affected Palestinian health facilities and led to distortion of work system, lack of accountability, unclear lines of authority, contradictory decisions “between Ramallah and Gaza”, unjustified displacement and/or redeployment of employees and long labour strikes. With the diminished ability of the governmental health facilities to provide services due to managerial problems and lack of resources (drugs and disposables), the total number of patients presenting to NGOs and UNRWA has significantly increased. This patient shift places more burden on the other sectors particularly NGOs and a challenge for them is to respond to the needs of the population

by expanding their services and introducing new selective services that are needed without distorting the framework of the Palestinian health system.

The lack of medical equipment and medicines for health facilities in Gaza is steadily increasing. The blockade is destroying public service infrastructure and hospitals cannot generate even electricity to keep lifesaving equipment working or to generate oxygen. As a result of fuel and electricity restrictions, hospitals are experiencing power cuts sometimes lasting for 8-12 hours a day. Frequently, a 60- 70% shortage is reported in the diesel required for hospital power generators. Furthermore, increasing use of hospital generators has led to the need for maintenance and replacement, which is mostly impossible given the lack of spare parts or new equipment.

This combination of economic and social collapse, and the inability of health services to cope with the consequences of the crisis, has exacerbated the deterioration of health status of the population in Gaza. Many of the primary health care achievements that have been attained in the last years are now at risk. In other words, historical and geographical factors, compounded by the current emergency situation, have given rise to a high demand for health services. These demands appear to exceed the capacity of current domestic resources and of the substantial international resources available.

Following a number of visits and meetings with key people in the Gaza Strip, Jordan and Qatar, we at Mobile International Surgical Teams (MiST) propose a long term plan for improvements in Orthopaedic Surgery in the Gaza Strip. Funding for this project has been sought from Human Appeal International (HAI) and the Qatar Red Crescent (QRS). MiST has affiliations with Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP-UK), which will facilitate the transfer of equipment and personnel into The Gaza Strip.

Aims of the Gaza Project

1. Help develop the European Gaza Hospital (EGH) into a 'Centre of Excellence' within the Gaza Strip
2. Help develop Orthopaedic postgraduate teaching and training
3. Develop the local Allied Health Professionals (AHP's) through a distance-learning diploma course, delivered in a modular form and hands on training by visiting MiST units
4. Help to develop rehabilitation services and

introduce acute and chronic pain services

5. Help to develop a local sustainable limb prosthetics service
6. Help develop undergraduate medical teaching

1. A Centre of Excellence

MiST will be based at the EGH and I will take the role of visiting Professor in Orthopaedic surgery and operate out of this establishment. A working week needs to be established with the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) and I hope to establish a fracture clinic, a new patient clinic, a trauma list and elective sessions in the Operating Room. In addition, I and my colleagues will spend some time teaching at the IUG and the monthly Grand round will be established by local orthopaedic surgeons.

Visiting MiST units will each have a specialist interest in an orthopaedic field of surgery. The patients will have been screened prior to these MiST specialist visits and the lead Gazan surgeon will attend EGH during the MiST visits, to assist and perform the specialist procedures. Local Gazan surgeons visiting the EGH to train with MiST units will pick up good practices which will then ultimately be disseminated amongst the Gaza Strip hospitals.

Equipment Needs for the EGH

Many of the instruments and trauma implants are now out-dated in many hospitals in the Gaza Strip. Over recent years there has been limited access to advancements in Orthopaedics by Gazan doctors due to difficulty in attending courses and meetings abroad as a result of Israeli imposed border crossing restrictions. In addition, many of the orthopaedic complications seen by MiST were due to inadequate primary fixation of the fractures due to lack of appropriate kit and on some occasions due to lack of experience. Gazan Orthopaedic companies will send tenders to supply equipment needed to practice safe orthopaedics at the EGH for MiST and local surgeons to use. The necessary equipment includes an IM nailing kit, a plating kit, drill and accessory instruments (appendix 1).

Organisational Issues at the EGH

Theatres:

A study of the workflow through theatres needs

to be commissioned and a ratio of day-case to in-patient needs to be assessed. MiST would like to introduce a theatre operational programme to EGH. The intended patient flow through theatre is as follows:

- Admission to Surgical Admissions Lounge (SAL);
- Consented, marked by surgeon and seen by anaesthetist;
- Transfer (walked or put on trolley) to anaesthetics room by ODP and monitors applied;
- Transfer into theatre – theatre discipline;
- Transfer to recovery room;
- Transfer to wards/HDU/ITU.

Wards:

- A clean treatment room on the wards will be necessary for wound inspections and dressing changes; with changes to be made appropriately.
- Morning 0800 trauma meetings will be followed by a ward round accompanied by the senior nurse and physiotherapist. Notes and management plans will be documented by junior surgeon and X-rays made available at the end of the patients bed. Interesting and difficult cases would have been discussed in the morning trauma meeting as well as the previous night's admissions.
- A postoperative round will be performed at 1700 on the days of theatre.

Radiography:

Our lead radiographer will inspect and install appropriate protocols to ensure safety and quality issues with X-ray films. This will include an audit and correct labelling of all radiographic imaging. The 19 radiographers at EGH will be trained by MiST how repair the C-arm in theatres and its use during operative procedures.

Accident & Emergency Room:

All members of the A&E department should be ATLS trained. The TARN database will be introduced to the EGH. Two secretaries will be given training on how to input the trauma data. Theatre spaces for minor operations will be performed in A&E. Adequate analgesia protocols will be in place.

MiST intends to help develop the EGH into a Level-1 trauma centre and a centre of excellence, with the help of the local hospital committee established by Professor Mofeed at EGH.

2. Postgraduate Orthopaedics

Middle grade and junior Gazan Orthopaedic consultants will visit the EGH on a monthly rotation basis; to expose themselves to different aspects of trauma surgery and improve their own specialist fields. The specialists from the Gaza Strip have been identified and the MOH will need to make provisions to have these surgeons released from their host hospitals for the duration the specialist MiST unit visits.

MiST intends to teach the Masters in Orthopaedics (MCh Ortho) as a distance learning course in 24-modules. This will be taught at the monthly meeting established by Fadel Naim and Adnan Bursch. The core syllabus will help the local surgeons prepare for their own Palestinian Board Exams. Each MiST Unit, when visiting Gaza will teach a module, over the 2-year duration of the course. The core syllabus taught will help the local surgeons prepare for their Palestinian Board accreditation examinations.

The following Orthopaedic training and refresher courses are planned:

In the initial phase;

- Basic and Advanced AO Fracture Courses (*Philip Stabel, Wade Smith*)
- External Fixation Course (*Khan/Stryker/Orthofix*)
- Interlocking Nailing Courses (*Stryker*)

At a later stage as required;

- Deformity Planning Course (*El Batraway*)
- Basic and Advanced Ilizarov (*Prof Shetzov*)
- Arthroplasty Courses (*Exactech/Stryker*)

An AO Fellowship of 1 year in Denver, USA with Dr Wade Smith will be offered to give one of the top Orthopaedic surgeons in Gaza an opportunity to develop and perfect his/her skills in a fully funded fellowship to a leading American trauma unit.

3. Allied Health Professionals (AHP's) Teaching and Training

There is a need for the training and continuous professional development (CPD) of AHP's. Diploma courses in Paramedics, Operating Department Practitioners, Nursing and Physiotherapy will be taught in modules via e-learning. All nursing staff at the EGH will be assessed to determine how many additional modules they will need to reach the adequate level to be awarded a diploma. Some of the established staff may also be at a level to be awarded

a degree in nursing accredited by Edge Hill University. The staff achieving such degrees will take the role of mentors and will carry on the process of learning and capacity building for the current and future nursing infrastructure.

Each MiST unit will provide continuing education in the theatres and on the wards with a standard established for the local staff, in co-ordination with the local head of nursing. The modules for the diploma courses will be taught by these visiting MiST units.

The total number of nurses at EGH is 222:

ICU = 28

Theatre = 20

Lab Technicians = 28

Radiographers = 19

4. Pain Management and Rehabilitation Service

The MOH has agreed to the use of opiates for pain control in the Gaza Strip. MiST will provide all the necessary protocols and proforma's and will conduct an audit into the use of opiates.

With the local clinicians, MiST would like to develop an acute and chronic pain service in Gaza based at Al Waffa Hospital (AWH), Gaza City. This site has been chosen, as this will also be a site for limb fitting for amputees. Some amputees are left with phantom pains, stump pain and regional chronic pain syndrome, all conditions that can be addressed by the 'chronic pain unit'. Re-fashioning of stumps will be performed by the locally trained surgeons. MiST physiotherapists will educate locals regarding treatment with Ilizarov frames and post operative mobilisation.

5. Limb prosthetics

MiSTs' lead on prosthetics, Mr Viquar Qureshi, a Consultant Orthopaedic surgeon will be visiting Gaza with his team, to set up a workshop and teach local technicians how to make and fit the Jaipur foot. The Jaipur foot is a functional, user-friendly device which can be made in a low-tech environment from readily available raw materials. The two centres to be developed in the Gaza Strip are at the AWH and EGH. The initial phase of the project will be the transportation of limb fitting equipment. The technicians will follow and over a 6-week programme, the locals will be taught the art of the Jaipur foot.

Out reach clinics are planned for the out-lying camps and patients will be invited to attend the Limb Fitting units for further rehabilitation. Our Jordanian colleagues are also exploring the possibility of sending psychiatrists to help in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorders in many of the victims.

6. Undergraduate Medical Teaching

To improve the Teaching and Training of Medical students; it is far better to use the skills available in Gaza and to capacity build for the future. For this reason, we propose to Train the Clinical Trainers, in the Teaching Hospitals with the help of the Postgraduate and Undergraduate Deans. For this initiative, Dr Salem Madi and Dr Tim Johnson are MiST leads.

Dr Salem Madi, MiST's lead on Undergraduate teaching visited Gaza in December 2009 and provided MiST a further opportunity to explore the possible ways to deliver medical education in Gaza. Dr Madi met with Dr Anwar Khaleel, the sub dean for the clinical years at EGH and Professor Mofeed, Dean IUG.

Amongst the things discussed was IUG's eagerness to proceed with the OSCE type of assessment for the medical students for the clinical years by taking our experience from the UK and adapting this locally in Gaza. Dr Madi will be liaising very closely with Dr Anwar Khaleel both in setting up the OSCE examination and also to discuss the importance of having external experienced clinicians involved in the OSCE process whenever possible.

At the EGH, the number of in-patient beds is not sufficient to generate enough patients to sustain and support satisfactory clinical education. MiST has suggested outpatient clinics could be used for teaching instead. However there is a problem with space and they are looking into running the current service clinic, as well as selecting suitable patients for teaching purposes.

On the numerous MiST visits to Gaza, all team members have been impressed with the quality of the medical students in Gaza, who are of a high calibre and are highly motivated, keen and eager to take the initiative in their medical education. Problem based learning (PBL) has been discussed within the EGH department and there appears to be initial enthusiasm about it. However, the many facet of delivering medical education should be geared

towards the local needs and prevalence of health issues, as the same programme material from another medical school in a different country will have different medical and social needs.

Training the local trainers for the most efficient and sustainable delivery of medical education is the consensus view of MiST. However our concern is the limited number of local clinicians in Gaza able to deliver the medical education. Therefore MiST's initial input and involvement would be quite extensive, until sufficient mentors have been trained.

Summary and Conclusions

The current challenges facing the health care system are best described as “acute on top of chronic”, as the Palestinian health system has suffered for long years from scarcity of resources, plurality, lack of coordination and integration, unclear roles of the MOH and lack of strategic direction and leadership. The combination of economic and social deterioration and the inability of health services to respond to the consequences of the situation have exacerbated the already dire health status of the population of Gaza and these

facts necessitate rapid interventions.

A need exists for both immediate action and to plant the seeds for sustainability amongst the orthopaedic and nursing profession in the Gaza Strip. By taking forward the proposals for teaching and training provided in this document, MiST hopes to help improve the Orthopaedic services of Gaza, develop a Centre of Excellence, in tandem with the Ministry of Health, the local EGH committee and The Islamic University of Gaza.

Appendix 1 Orthopaedic Equipment List

Intramedullary nailing kit for Long Bones (sizes and quantity available)
Small and large fragment plates
Locking Plate System; Proximal tibia and humeral; distal femur and tibia
AO femoral distracter
LRS kit for femoral reconstruction
300 smooth and olive Ilizarov wires
Paediatric elastic nails



“ I and the person who brings up an orphan will be like this in heavens; and he put His index and middle finger together.

Saying of the Prophet (PBUH), Bukhari

£15
per month

*£180 for full year

... That's less than 50p a day

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Orphans are the most vulnerable of society and are the targets of physical, psychological and religious abuse. It is the first and foremost responsibility of the Ummah as a whole to protect them from such abuse.

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Saying of the Prophet (PBUH), Muslim

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Gaza Beneath the Bombs

Sharyn Lock

The Israeli offensive in Gaza was described by Amnesty international as '22 days of death and destruction'. Sharyn Lock's eyewitness account brings home the horror of life in 'Gaza Beneath the Bombs'.

Sharyn went to the Gaza strip with the Free Gaza Movement, thinking the greatest danger she faced was making it past the Israeli sea blockade in a fishing boat, but soon after her arrival Israel attacked Gaza's 1.5 million inhabitants by land, air and sea. With others from the International Solidarity Movement, Sharyn volunteered with Palestinian ambulances, assisting them as they faced overwhelming civilian casualties. Her candid and dramatic blogs from Gaza gave the world an insight into the conflict that the mainstream media - unable to enter Gaza - couldn't provide.

Gaza: Beneath the Bombs provides a view of Gaza difficult to glimpse from outside - of a people who face their oppression not only with courage but with humour. Sharyn Lock writes for the *Aqsa Journal* here and includes extracts from her book, published by Pluto Press in 2010.

I recently saw the film "Invictus", about Nelson Mandela using the (mostly white) South African rugby team as a way of uniting a fractured and angry South Africa in the beginning of his presidency, and the common ground white and black South Africans found in following their team to what seemed an impossible victory. In my years of Palestine solidarity work, an older friend has often reminded me that South African apartheid also looked as if it would never end. She went to vigils and actions for years with little belief in their success, just the knowledge that they were right.

So as I watched this film, I spent much of my time warily re-imagining some of the scenes; imagining Palestinians and Israelis finding themselves in one state of equals, carrying their own trauma, exploitation and ignorance as did black and white South Africans, and somehow finding the courage to search for something on the other side of that.

If it was me, I don't know if I could do it. There were times, under the 22 days of Israel's attack on Gaza, when, if asked, I would have

shaken my head and said it was too late now; how could anyone here see any Israeli now without also seeing blood on their hands? But I was forgetting this: Palestinians have what I find an almost incomprehensible capacity for steadfastness, for moving on, and for hope for life beyond Occupation.

I was forgetting also that they have done it. The Parents' Circle and Family Forum is 'a cross-community grassroots organization of bereaved Palestinians and Israelis.' The PCFF 'promotes reconciliation as an alternative to hatred and revenge'. These parents jointly hold Israel's Occupation of Palestine responsible for the violent deaths of their children, regardless of race, and build relationships that not only share the loss but look to overturn the injustice that led to it.

The Israeli Anarchists Against the Wall weekly stand beside West Bank residents, confronting the Israeli soldiers who defend the building of the Land-Grab Wall with live ammunition, and afterwards everyone shares food and tea in whichever Palestinian village is currently the front

line, as they together wait for word of the injured. I remember the locals telling me how important it was for their children to see Israelis come into their home who didn't carry guns.

I am not a political analyst. I know that while black South Africa and Palestine have much in common, there are also major differences that make extrapolation from one to the other unworkable on many levels. But for the purpose of hope, I don't care. There, the impossible became possible, and if my Palestinian friends can continue to hope for that, in the face of pain and injustice that ought to make hope itself impossible too, then so will I.

AUGUST 24 2008

How can I possibly begin to coherently write anything of the last 24 hours? I can't even comprehend any of it right now, let alone communicate it. It'll just have to come in scraps of thoughts... Yvonne and I are sitting here, trying to think of the date yesterday. 'We've made history and neither of us even know what day we did it on,' says Yvonne. 'Just as well it wasn't us running the Battle of Hastings. We'd be saying – 1063 was it? 1065 maybe?' We've now agreed it was August 23 yesterday, and I am very much hoping that finally gets me into the Housmans Peace Diary, without actually dying.

We left Cyprus on August 22, in the morning, and were very lucky to have two slightly cloudy days, because normally there simply wasn't enough shade for 25 people above deck on the Free Gaza Boat, and below was steaming hot. The sea was good in sailors' terms, but not for passengers making most people a little sick and about eight very sick.

Acting as medic with former nurse Kathy turned out to be the perfect job for me. I spend most of the night feeling a little queasy unless lying flat on the deck, but one of my comrades was so ill all night that we had to keep rehydrating her at 15 minute intervals. I simply lay beside her, drowsing in between doses, observing our fantastic crew as they stepped over me and my patient to keep the Free Gaza going through the night in two hour watches. The sense of being in a great randomly rocking cradle was intensified by watching the unchanging stars above. Sometimes I could get up for a little while and gaze at the horizon, sea-edged in all directions, watching lights of occasional other ships (which always unnerved us a little) as well as the red port light of the Liberty moving parallel with us.

During the day, the sun had been harsh, but on the sea at night there is just beauty.

Channel 16 is the emergency radio channel which must always be kept unobstructed, but ever since sailing from Greece there have been strange messages in Hebrew, Arabic music played at us, etc. Tonight, someone was just repeating: 'They're lost. They're lost.' For long stretches at a time, our two boats couldn't contact each other, though we could see each other's lights. Never rely on technology – satellite phones, radios, expensive internet and video streaming – the last apparently sabotaged from a distance before we even set sail, though it functioned a little sometimes. The rest entirely stopped working on both boats shortly after the 'they're lost' broadcast. We were no longer able to use even the normal sea communications systems for SOS messages. We heard later that the Greek government, wondering how the MP they had sent with us was doing, had tried every method to contact us and eventually decided we must have sunk.

Before the comms systems went down, however, we'd heard that the media coverage had taken off, and that the Arab League had announced its support of us, and stated that Israel must act in every way to protect our peaceful mission. Then there was silence. But we had two secret weapons: (1) Our walkie-talkies, too low tech to be sabotaged. They worked at least some of the time, and then we could talk between the two boats. (2) Mr Ramattan and Mr Al Jazeera – our captive journalists – had a functioning satellite phone. On this we put out a press release announcing the apparent sabotage, calling particularly on the Greek government to protest this as we were sailing under the Greek flag (actually we were sailing under about 50 flags, including a Free Leonard Peltier one; I wished I'd brought the Aboriginal one I was given last time I was in Australia).

Morning was a blessing. Everyone cheered up, I felt fine again, the sick people attempted some dry Greek bread, the undefeatedly cheerful Lauren stopped juggling walkie-talkies and made yet another round of tea (I apologise for thinking her most useful role was being related to Tony Blair). The single working phone began ringing and didn't stop – Musheir giving interviews in Arabic, Vik in Italian, Jeff in Hebrew. We began to put up more flags. Conflicting messages came in about whether a medic boat was coming from Israel to try to meet up with us. We kept grabbing passing crew and asking them – how many hours now left of international

waters? Two, one. And then, we got a call from an Israeli journalist. “The Foreign Minister has just stated, “We are not going to stop the boats.””

We weren't going to prison. Vik wasn't going to be climbing the mast and refusing to come down. I wasn't going to be shot for refusing to co-operate with the Israeli navy. We weren't going to get to eat our siege supply of stuffed vineleaves. Lauren wasn't going to get to sing 'Israeli men' to the tune of It's Raining Men as we were boarded, which was just as well, since we hadn't worked out the dance routine yet. None of that was happening. The impossible was happening. We were going to get to Gaza.

JANUARY 15, 2009

I'd ridden with the ambulances since Wednesday afternoon. In the darkness of early evening, we'd arrived at a residential tower block that was a scene of chaos, terrified people pouring out of its doors, having fled down endless stairs. Craning my neck, I could see the top storey was destroyed, and the next was on fire. The medic I was working with ran towards the apartment entrance, where someone thrust into his arms a baby girl of about 1, bleeding from the head. As we sped towards Al Shifa Hospital, she screamed, then slipped into unconsciousness, then woke a few seconds later to express her pain and outrage further. I passed bandages and cheered her on; the fact she kept wailing to cry meant she had half a chance. We handed her in and went back to the scene. As we left the apartment building with the next injured resident, the ground rocked. Same building, second strike.

Returning to Al Quds hospital later, with the army getting ever closer, we realised that anyone who left the hospital again might not get back to it. I decided to stay. I couldn't think of anything worse than being on one side of an army line while the hospital was on the other. But it wasn't long anyway before the bosses of the medic teams instructed all but two of the ambulances to leave, go park up at Al Shifa hospital in the city centre, and answer calls from there, where their mobility and safety was more assured than in Tel al Howa. Al Quds retained two ambulances, and they were stationed at the front door. The hospital had to retain some emergency transport, even though it risked them being turned into the same burnt-out husks as the ambulances round the corner beside the evacuated Red Crescent Dispatch Centre.

By the early hours of Wednesday morning, our world had shrunk to Al Quds hospital only. All else was darkness and explosions. Mobiles worked only intermittently. Some of the locals had taken shelter with us. Al Jazeera English had asked me if I could write something about what the current situation was like for pregnant women, and so I'd spent some of the evening downstairs in the obstetrics department, housed in the basement of the middle building, speaking to an obstetrician with the help of Raja. I'd helped feed the triplets in their incubators.

Finally, I'd joined some of the Disaster Team and the hospital's dietician to smoke on the front porch of the main building; the broken middle building we'd previously gone to for this now deemed too far away, though we continued to access obstetrics and A&E there via the basement route. Each explosion seemed closer. We rocked along with the ground and the buildings. It felt as if the end of the world was coming. In which case, smoking shisha beside my friends seemed the right thing to do.

Once smoking was finished, it occurred to me that there was another sensible thing to do at this point, something I hadn't done for a while, Sleep. So I found one of the offices with a chair still free, and a blanket, and settled down amid snoring off-shift Disaster Team workers. The disaster was going to come right to us. All that was left to do now, was wait for it.

At some point in the early hours, an enormous explosion threw me out of sleep. I sat bolt upright, only somewhat awake, saying something very loudly that you should never say in Palestine, but then, strangely, lay down and went immediately back to sleep. I realise now, looking back, that what I was expecting was for the army to occupy the hospital. Nothing else was really registering. With all those explosions, my unconscious was playing some sort of game whereby every bang that I heard that didn't get me, didn't get anyone. Despite the daily evidence I'd seen of rubble where buildings had been, of body parts where people had been. Sometimes explosions came every few minutes. How could I bear to equate each one I heard with another death, another home gone? I guess I couldn't. Not till afterwards.

Yet as I slept, all around us, Tel al Howa was burning, and that explosion that woke me was probably the first direct hit to the hospital. From this point, time becomes elastic.

COMMENT

comment

Questioning Our Special Relationship with Israel

Stephanie Westbrook

The Lobby vs. America

Ramzy Baroud



Questioning Our Special Relationship with Israel

Stephanie Westbrook

Stephanie Westbrook is a U.S. citizen who has been living in Rome, Italy since 1991. She is active in the peace and social justice movements in Italy and traveled to Gaza last year.

A ‘regional economic power’ – that is how ANIMA, the Euro-Mediterranean Network of Investment Promotion Agencies encompassing 70 governmental agencies and international networks, described Israel in its January 2010 Mediterranean Investment Map. The report analyzed the economies of the 27 European Union countries as well as 9 ‘partner countries.’

And who can argue. Touting an annual GDP growth rate of around 5% for the years 2004 to 2008, Israel was also ranked 27 out of 132 countries in the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report last fall. It ranked 9th for innovative capacity.

In the 2008 World Competitiveness Yearbook by the top ranked business school Institute for Management Development (IMD), Israel comes in 2nd for the number of scientists and engineers in the workforce. No other country in the world spends more on research and development as a percentage of GDP than Israel. Since the year 2000 it has hovered around 4.5%, or twice the average of OECD member countries.

One has to wonder why US taxpayers are doling out \$3 billion a year in direct military aid to a ‘regional economic power.’ In August 2007, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the United States and Israel committing the US to give, not loan, \$30 billion in military aid to Israel over 10 years. US taxpayers are directly funding close to 20% of Israel’s annual defense budget. No wonder Israel is able to invest in R&D!

To help put these figures into perspective, a new web site was launched in March 2010 illustrat-

ing how each state in the US is contributing to the Israeli defense budget, and what could have instead been done with the money. At www.aidtoisrael.org, I learned that my home state of Texas will give more than \$2.5 billion over the ten year period. For the same amount, over 2 million people could have been provided with primary health care.

At the 2007 signing ceremony for the \$30 billion giveaway, then Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns stated, “We consider this 30 billion dollars in assistance to Israel to be an investment in peace.” But peace isn’t exactly what we’ve got for our money.

Instead our tax dollars continue to pay for advanced weaponry used to maintain an illegal occupation, culminating a year ago in the Israeli attack on Gaza with US-made F-16 fighter jets, US-made Apache helicopter gunships, US-made naval combat ships, US-made hellfire missiles, US-made tanks and armored personnel carriers, and US-made white phosphorus shells.

Every cent we give Israel is in violation of the Foreign Assistance Act, which specifically prohibits aid to countries that ‘engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.’ Sales of US weaponry made to Israel are in violation of the Arms Export Control Act, which restrict their use to legitimate self-defense.

But weapons we do continue to sell, and aid we do continue to give. And if that weren’t enough, we also provide Israel with special conditions. Unlike all other countries receiving military aid from the US, Israel receives its entire bundle in a lump sum during the first 30 days of the fiscal year. The money sits in

an interest bearing account at the Federal Reserve, the interest going to Israel, of course, until 74% of it is funneled back to US weapons manufacturers in the way of purchases for the Israeli Defense Ministry. Israel is free to use the remaining 24% to purchase 'in house' weapons systems, an arrangement afforded to no other recipient of US military aid.

While we may hear some calls to freeze (or limit or curb) settlement construction, and as of late, for an end to the siege of Gaza, one subject no one on Capitol Hill dares to touch is this massive military aid package given to Israel. The new self-proclaimed 'pro-peace pro-Israel' lobby, J-street, has said the subject is not up for discussion.

But some are starting to question our 'special relationship' with Israel.

On February 9, Intelligence Squared, the British debate forum, held a debate in New York City – home to the country's largest Jewish community – asking if the "US should step back from its special relationship with Israel." Prior to the start of the debate, audience members were able to cast their votes electronically on the question, with 39% in favor, 42% against and 25% undecided.

Arguing for the motion were British author and New York Times columnist Roger Cohen and Columbia professor and author Rashid Khalidi. Former US ambassador to the European Union Stuart Eizenstat and former Israeli ambassador to the US Itamar Rabinovich argued against. Cohen spoke of US aid to Israel:



What also makes the relationship special is the incredible largess that the United States shows towards Israel - over the past decade, \$28.9 billion in economic aid. And on top of that, another \$30 billion in military aid, that's almost \$60 billion. That's 10 times the GNP of Haiti that is being gifted to a small country. Now, I ask you, to what end is this money being used. Ladies and gentlemen, we would submit that it ends often inimical to the American interest.



Following the debate, the audience was once again called upon to vote on the resolution, however this time there was a slight majority in favor: 49% for, 47% against and 4% undecided.

Still further signs that the 'special relationship' is hereby up for discussion came in early

March as I participated with over 150 activists who had traveled to Washington DC from 30 states across the US for grassroots training and congressional advocacy days. Organized by the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation and Interfaith Peace Builders, the weekend saw workshops aimed at hammering out strategies to affect changes in US policy towards Israel and Palestine.

The following Monday, nearly 60 meetings with offices of both Senators and Representatives of the House were held. We called upon members of Congress to leverage the multi-billion dollar aid package to achieve policy goals. While there have never been any restrictions placed on the military aid package, there is precedent for restricting the use of funds for loan guarantees to Israel under both the Bush I and Bush II administrations. We urged members of Congress to put forth amendments prohibiting all disbursements of funds until investigations into violations of the Arms Export Control Act had been completed. We also called for amendments cutting off funds while Israel continues to build settlements and maintain the siege of Gaza.

The proposal that met with the least resistance in our meetings was the investigation into tax-exempt 501(c)(3) charitable organizations that are supporting the occupation through the transfer of tens of millions of dollars for Israeli settlement expansion. According to tax exemption laws, charitable organizations should work to lessen neighborhood

tensions, eliminate discrimination and defend civil and human rights. Not only are these organizations subverting US tax laws, they are also directly fueling the conflict.

Finally, we urged members to travel to the area to see for themselves the conditions on the ground.

Not surprisingly, some of the most vocal critics of current policy are those who have actually been to the West Bank or Gaza – or been denied entry as in the case of Rep. Delahunt’s five-member J Street sponsored delegation last February. Rep. Delahunt as well as Rep. Baird, who has been to Gaza three times and recently issued a statement calling on the US to circumvent the siege of Gaza by sea, are also, coincidentally, not seeking re-election.

No one expected to walk out of these meetings with any firm commitments to cut off military aid to Israel, however constituents must ensure that their representatives know where they stand. As Dan Fleshler documented in his book *Transforming America’s Israel Lobby*, and several congressional aides confirmed, more than a few members of Congress resent being constantly bullied by AIPAC.

During the plenary on Sunday, Rebecca

Vilkomerson, executive director of Jewish Voice for Peace, talked about the importance of congressional advocacy work. Long-term citizens lobbying work in her home of San Francisco resulted in not a single Bay Area member of Congress voting ‘Yes’ on the resolution condemning the Goldstone report last November.

However, Vilkomerson also pointed out that, while important, JVP’s congressional advocacy work is secondary to their work promoting the boycott of companies that profit from the Israeli occupation or fund the settlements. “Congress will be the last to move.” It is important to remember that those who first called on Congress to sanction the apartheid state of South Africa were laughed out of the building. Tireless work for sanctions eventually led cautious members of Congress to follow. It’s up to us to lead.

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The Lobby vs. America

Ramzy Baroud

Palestinian-American journalist, author and former Al-Jazeera producer, Ramzy Baroud is an internationally-syndicated columnist and the editor of PalestineChronicle.com. Baroud's work has been published in hundreds of newspapers and journals worldwide, including The Washington Post, The International Herald Tribune, The Christian Science Monitor, The Philadelphia Inquirer, The Seattle Times, The Miami Herald, The Japan Times, Al-Abram Weekly, Asia Times and nearly every English language publication throughout the Middle East.

He has also authored books including: The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle (Pluto Press, London, 2006) and most recently, My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story (Pluto Press, London, 2010)

As I listened to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu address an animated crowd of supporters on March 22, I felt physically sick. The man has already displayed time and again a complete lack of moral sense or ethical framework in his words and actions. In his recent arguments, he once again twisted history, manipulated facts and fabricated his own selective, self-interested and highly questionable narrative. Netanyahu, a colonialist from a faraway land, also had the audacity to convince himself and a few others that he had legal, moral and historic rights over my land. While I am the son of a Palestinian family rooted in Palestine since time immemorial, Netanyahu is the son of an immigrant from Lithuania. While he giddily robs more Palestinian land in Jerusalem, I live in exile.

Netanyahu was addressing the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). The 'powerful' lobby group encompasses a large conglomerate of rightwing Zionist politicians and lobbyists and is seen by many as the most instrumental platform that influences – and, to a large degree, controls - US foreign policy regarding Palestine, Israel and the entire Middle East.

AIPAC is dangerous for many reasons. For one, it's not a lobby group in the conventional

sense - meaning a group of well-paid lobbyists harassing US Congressmen with telephone calls with the hope of advancing the agenda of their benefactors (in this case, the state of Israel). The pro-Israel lobby has actually grown and morphed into a political body that is embedded within all branches of the US government, as well as the media, academia and elsewhere. It is no secret that the neo-conservative cliques of politicians who engineered, steered and to an extent continue to influence US war policy are in fact a mere component of the same 'lobby'.

While Jewish communities in the US may not be united in their support of the largely rightwing and hawkish Zionist lobby groups, both major political parties in the US and all branches of the government stand in complete support of Israel. The AIPAC annual conference is almost mandatory for them. Sadly, Netanyahu's speech before AIPAC is of equal, if not of greater import to some of them than the State of the Union address.

Following Obama's address in 2010, many US politicians openly voiced criticism of his take on many issues. But few dare challenge Netanyahu on much of the malice he spewed on March 22.

Americans need to realize that this is no longer about Palestine and Israel. It is now about their own country, their own sovereignty and the future of

their own democracy. They must ask hard questions and refuse to settle for sentimental answers. How could America be so divided on so many issues, yet so united on the ‘cause of Israel’? Where does a feeble politician like Netanyahu find the courage to defy the president of the very country that supplied his own with many billions of taxpayer dollars? Of course, we know that much of the fund was used to occupy, torment and wage war on Palestinians for many years. This is the atrocious fact that Americans need to understand fully: Israeli war crimes were made possible because of American funds, weapons and political cover. America is not an outside party to the conflict. It has done more than its fair share in the ongoing Palestinian tragedy.

Even if one is somehow convinced by the most recent and unusually strong stance taken by the Obama administration regarding Israel’s settlement policy in East Jerusalem, there still remains the question of what comes next. When the President of the United States articulates a seemingly unmovable US position that rejects the building of more illegal settlements that would preclude any possible peace talks, and yet he fails to weaken Israel’s resolve even by an iota, some questions must be asked. Will the US use its leverage to twist Israel’s arm to respect international law? Will it at least hold on to some of the billions of dollars of funds that it continues to pour into Israel - especially as the US undergoes an unprecedented financial crisis, resulting in growing poverty and homelessness?

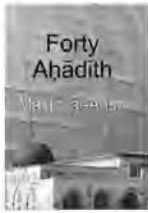
The answer might be in the UPI report on March 26, citing Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz:

“

Despite the sharpest rift in decades between Israel and the United States, the Pentagon is reported to have given the green light to the \$250 million sale of C-130J transport aircraft to Israel...The deal...involves three ‘Super Hercules’ aircraft manufactured especially to the Israeli air force’s requirements. (The report) indicates that despite the belief among the United States’ top military commanders that Israel’s failure to reach a peaceful settlement with the Palestinians is undermining U.S. influence and standing in the Muslim world and thus endangering its forces, the Pentagon is prepared to maintain Israel’s military superiority in the Middle East.

”

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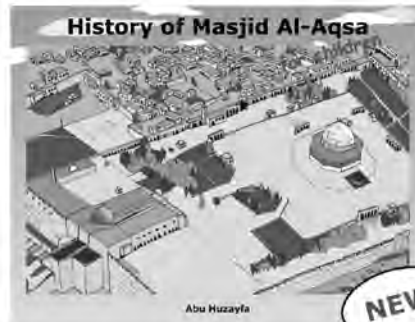
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**Under the Cover of War:
The Zionist Expulsion of the Palestinians**

By Rosemarie M. Esber
Reviewed by Dr Samuel J. Kuruvilla, India

Gaza Beneath the Bombs

By Sharyn Lock
Reviewed by Shabaana Kidy, Leicester

Arafat and the Dream of Palestine, An Insider's Account

By Bassam Abu Sharif
Reviewed by Yusuf Shabbir, University of Manchester

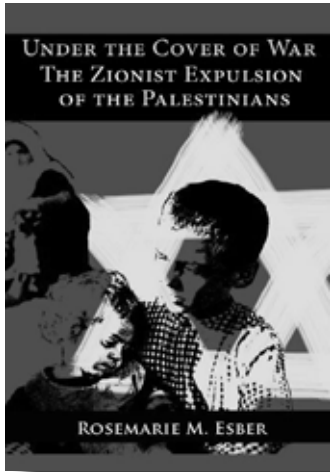
**Women and War in the Middle East:
Transnational Perspectives**

By Nadja Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt (eds)
Reviewed by Dr. Maria Holt, University of Westminster

**Under the Cover of War:
The Zionist Expulsion of the Palestinians**

By Rosemarie M. Esber

Alexandria, VA, Arabicus Books and Media, 2008,
ISBN 978 0 981513171,
pp 423, £15.99



Rosemary Esber's book on the expulsion of the native Arabs of Palestine during the course of the 1947-1948 Palestine War is a welcome addition and adds to the amount of world class scholarship that has emerged from the University of London in the field of Palestinian refugee studies. Esber has carried on the tradition of many Palestinian and Israeli 'new' historians who have sought to reinterpret the history of the 1948 war based on historic facts and archival materials.

Two researchers who have produced similar works that have reflected on the contents of this book are Nur Masalha and Ilan Pappé, both currently based in higher education institutions in the UK. Esber's book makes use of primary materials and in particular archival resources culled from the British archives that have been relatively underutilised in the hitherto unfolding research saga about what actually happened to the Palestinian people who were expelled from their homes within what later became known as the state of Israel. She also makes extensive use of oral history and in particular first-person testimony from surviving expellees of the 1948 Palestine war who were residing in refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. An admirable aspect of Esber's work must be the database she created out of first-hand interviews with 130 survivors of the 1948 Palestinian Nakba who were based in refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan.

The Author has clearly made her standpoint in support of the Palestinian version of the Nakba, corroborating and supporting the fact that Palestinian Arabs were expelled from historic Palestine by the forces of the Jewish pre-state Yishuv. By focussing on the events of the so-called first six months of the Palestinian debacle from November 1947-May 1948, the book indeed focuses on the final six months of the British mandate in Palestine as the crucial period that determined the future of mandate Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Esber makes the point repeatedly in her work that the state of Israel was founded both with and without the direct connivance of the British mandatory and military authorities in the region. Among 'new' Israeli historians, she singles out Benny Morris for particular criticism as a historian who has sought to deny the true cause of the 'forced' departure of the Arabs from the soil of Palestine. While providing initial path-breaking research, study and evidence on the dispersal of the Arab populations of Palestine, Morris has proved increasingly unwilling to speak against the Zionist nature of the dispersal, in particular the forced atrocity-sponsored mode in which the Arab evacuation and destruction of their communities within historic Palestine was achieved by the forces of the resurgent Zionist Yishuv (the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine).

A particular advantage of this book has been the detailed work done by the Author in the British Archives at Kew. This was a marked advantage over the work of other Palestinian-Israeli researchers such as Pappé and Masalha. Esber includes a detailed description and analysis of what actually happened in Deir Yassin. She also describes in detail the emptying of Haifa and Jaffa of their Palestinian residents. Esber reveals how the British were actually presenting a state to the pre-state Jewish Yishuv by various policies that they followed during the mandate period that ended up supporting the Jews over the Palestinian Arabs. Esber clearly describes the development of the Jewish Yishuv during the British Mandate with its repercussions for the Palestinians and particularly on their development as a national community during that period.

The work has an excellent selection of maps and graphics that are intended to educate and illustrate the depopulation of the Palestinian Arabs from their lands in Mandate Palestine. A point that has come up repeatedly in the course of Esber's research has been the fact that all British policies in

Palestine towards the end of the Mandate were directed towards ensuring the safe evacuation and dispersal of remaining British forces in Palestine. The British did not give the impression that they were particularly interested in who would take possession of Palestine after they departed.

Esber's book must be commended for its over-riding coverage of all the factors leading towards the Zionist takeover of Palestine by the Jewish forces. Ultimately, the Palestinian Arabs lost out because there was no one to support them in their fight against the much better prepared Zionist forces within Mandate Palestine. Nobody among the great powers were interested in their plight, whereas the Zionists had the private, if not very public backing of the US, and in particular that of President Truman, a committed Christian Zionist. Esber also hints at the extent of collusion between the Jewish settlers in Palestine and the Mandatory Authorities, collusion that allowed the Zionists to build up a regular army as well as associated fighting forces and to receive arms from the West, by covert as well as overt means, including direct collaboration with the British authorities in the Holy Land.

British imperial soldiers like Orde Wingate played a major role in the development of the Haganah, the Jewish defence force that from an initial settlement defending role, grew into the major offensive weapon that powered the Zionists into taking control of almost the whole of mandatory Palestine and in the process, expelling the vast majority of Palestinian urban dwellers and rural peasantry of the land. The strength of this book lies in Esber's categorical conclusions regarding the real reason for the expulsion-flight of the Palestinian people from their homes, during the critical period in the first half of 1948. She convincingly states that the reason for this flight lay with the campaign of violence, coercion and forceful expulsion practised by the Zionist fighting forces in Palestine during the end of the British Mandate and the period immediately after the declaration of the state of Israel in May 1948.

Esber in her work brings some very interesting facts to light. She reveals the extent of war-preparedness of the Yishuv (pre-Mandate Jewish community) with some fascinating news about a Jewish brigade recruited in Palestine that fought with British forces in Italy during World War II. Apparently, a separate British and Jewish infantry training school functioned within close reach of each other in Nathania, Palestine and Jewish forces

would have had every opportunity to collaborate with British forces, in times of need. She quotes from many British Military Intelligence and other officials to the score that the Yishuv was well-prepared to handle any form of external and internal aggression directed against them.

Esber also covers the geo-political considerations that made it imperative for the British to wind up their operations in Palestine in 1948. She lists the changed economic situation in the British Empire after the end of the Second World War as the primary reason for the British withdrawal from all regions east of Suez, such as Palestine, India, and eventually Singapore and Malaya (present day Malaysia).

Esber's first chapter describes in detail the various reasons attributed to the Palestinian refugee crisis from scholars as well as those politicians and diplomats who had been active in the field during the period when the crisis was taking place in Palestine. She makes particular reference to Benny Morris's conclusions regarding the exodus of Palestinians that they mainly departed as a result of negative Arab propaganda regarding Zionist state motives from neighbouring Arab states. Esber clearly makes a case for the forced dispersal of the vast majority of the Arab populace of Palestine at the gun-point of the Zionist forces. She quotes at length from a selection of 'new' Israeli and Palestinian historians to show the conclusive proof in favour of such a conclusion. She contrasts this with the general historical debate within Israel over this period and shows how Israeli official policy towards the 1948 war and the refugee issue was slowly veering round to a grudging acceptance of at least the 'middle-path' narrative of Benny Morris in accepting dual or mutual responsibility for the Palestinian refugee issue.

The second chapter covers Mandatory Palestine and the historical reasons for the outbreak of the 1948 War between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine. Esber records the British repression of the Arab rebellion of 1936-39, as a conducive factor that contributed towards the all-out defeat of the Palestinian Arabs in the 1947-48 period. She describes how the British policy in Palestine, like in India was calculated towards ensuring partition as a viable solution to the problem of two competing nationalisms in the Holy Land. The Arabs, however, rejected this partition solution as not a fitting solution to the disposal of what they saw as their homeland of Palestine.

The third chapter deals with the whole concept

of population transfer as reflected in Twentieth century world history. Esber traces the roots of this process as it was revealed in the Greek-Turkish population transfers in the early part of the Twentieth century. This was again carried on to India during the Partition of India in 1947. She also reveals the root of the Zionist ideology of transfer as it was inculcated in their ideology from the times of Theodor Herzl onwards. The Jewish Yishuv was well prepared for the 1948 fight between Arabs and Jews. They had done all their groundwork, including essential reconnaissance and other activities and knew just what they had to do when it came down to a question of war.

Chapter four deals mainly with the logistics of the British withdrawal from Palestine without suffering significant losses. Esber reveals how the main pre-occupation of the British was to leave Palestine with minimum losses to themselves and their armed forces. She reveals how the British managed to do this with little concern for the welfare of the native inhabitants of the land that they had come to serve in. As an American researcher, Esber has revealed a much more perceptive and critical eye for British activities and designs in the Holy Land than might have been possible for a British researcher tasked with the same job. She reveals how the main British preoccupation with evacuation from Palestine was as regards the military stores that were there, stores that had been purposefully built up taking into consideration the purported strategic and military significance of the region in the eyes of post-World War II Cold War Allied strategic planners. Chapter five deals with the passage of the situation from a state of phony war to that of outright war in Palestine. A point made by Esber in repeated references in chapters was the extent of purported collaboration between the British and the Jews within Palestine, particularly in the view of the native Arabs of the land.

Chapter six mainly focuses on the grand Arab debacle at Deir Yassin, the destruction and depopulation of which compelled many Palestinian Arabs to seek refuge either outside Palestine or within Arab-only secure enclaves in the area. This chapter mainly focuses on the evacuation and dispersal of the Arabs of the Jerusalem sub-district under Zionist pressure induced mainly by the massacre at Deir Yassin as well as the Haifa debacle. Chapter seven gives close attention to what happened in Haifa and the adjoining areas during the period leading up to the British evacuation of

Palestine in May 1948. Esber has very perceptively traced the events leading up to the almost wholesale expulsion of the Arab residents of Haifa. She has recorded in detail with graphic narrative the large-scale exodus of Arabs from the port of Haifa under conditions of extreme stress and duress. Chapter eight deals with the so-called de-Arabisation of Jaffa, the largest Arab city in Palestine. Chapter nine deals with the de-population of the Galilee region of Palestine, including Safad, Acre, Baysan and the entire Nazareth sub-district.

In the final concluding chapter ten, Esber seeks to summarise all the arguments set out to prove conclusively that in the final estimation, Palestine's Arabs left their homes and heaths primarily as a result of violent intimidation, wholesale destructive acts and expulsion on the part of the armed forces of the pre- and immediately post-state Israeli Yishuv in Palestine during the war and disturbances of 1947-48.

Reviewed by Dr. Samuel J. Kuruvilla, India

Gaza Beneath the Bombs

By Sharyn Lock

Pluto Press (2010), ISBN 978-0745330242

pp 240, RRP £9.99



Sharyn Lock's book is a priceless contribution to the library of literature detailing Israeli aggression during the attack on Gaza from December 2008-January 2009, known as Operation Cast Lead. The writer goes into great depth to describe events leading up to the attack as well as events following this from an eyewitness perspective. The reader is taken on a journey through the eyes of Lock herself

as well as countless other Palestinians whom she interacts with as they struggle through a besieged and attacked land. Though both terrifying and heart-breaking in parts, the book still offers hope to the reader through the unbreakable will and determination of the people in the face of intense violence.

The book is divided into seven chronological chapters, beginning with a discussion on the breaking of the siege and escalation of violence before discussing the attacks in the following two chapters. The last three chapters describe life for Gazan's after the attacks. Disturbingly, daily injuries and deaths continue and are described as being "grindingly everyday". However, Lock manages to remain upbeat, injecting her personality into the book and peppering the entire writing with personal anecdotes, humour and sarcasm. Her daily interaction with fellow International Solidarity activists such as Caiomhe Butterly, as well as Palestinians, is a source of inspiration to anyone who would like to pick up the book and transport themselves for a few short moments to live the life of a Palestinian, devoid of great political complexities. The structure of the text is similar to a series of diary entries with the inclusion of specific dates and times also included, and the text itself is preceded by an introduction by Sarah Irving who comments on the content of the book.

Chapter One sets the scene by introducing the role of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and the subsequent creation of "the Blacklist". Lock describes how efforts to enter were denied and elaborates on her detention in Ben Gurion airport before being sent back to the UK. She humours at the criteria used to 'qualify' a person for detention when Bulgarian student Natalia joins her cell: "She was here to visit Israeli friends, but back home she studied Arabic, and she has some Arabic friends' names on her phone, so she ended up in detention instead." Lock returns home to the UK disappointed, only to begin an intense and stressful period of planning before setting sail with the Free Gaza Movement that Israel surprisingly allowed through.

Chapter Two represents Lock's complete immersion into Palestinian culture. From the head covering or hijab to visiting the house of a martyr, Lock is able to portray to the reader a little of what everyday life is like for Palestinians, though of course, no two days are ever the same. She explores the notion of the sheer lack of necessities such as food and electricity – an alien concept to any privileged westerner. A young Palestinian

named Fida who Lock has the opportunity to meet, says "We are in paradise, because we still have flour and gas." Lock also travels with 150 Christians to Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, the other 550 who applied to go were denied permission. Richard Faulk, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Territories is quoted in the chapter and elaborates on the increase in violence following the breakdown of the truce between Israel and Hamas.

The third chapter, aptly entitled 'The Sky Falls In' is beyond description. Attack after attack is sketchily covered in a futile effort to document all the happenings at the time, which seem endless. Lock describes continual trips to collect bodies and injured people, drop them at the overflowing hospital, only to receive another callout. Despite the dangers, Lock continues to work tirelessly alongside paramedics to do what little she can, receiving a "crash course" in first aid along the way. International calls for eyewitness accounts, statements and interviews mean that Lock's phone fails to silence. Startling statistics are given in this chapter such as the statement that 80% of those who call for help are not being attended due to refusal from Israeli authorities. Also, the horrific story of the Sammouni family.

Chapter Four continues to detail the brutal and continual attacks with added revelations of the suspected use of illegal substances such as white phosphorus, and the evacuation of an entire hospital and its patients onto the streets after threats of bombings. The chapter also reveals the remarkable psychological strength of the people despite the attacks and the moral fight the mind of Sharyn Lock – "I don't cope with the dissonance of trying to live in a Western society which pretends that this reality – the reality of the road I am walking right now – does not exist. In the UK, in front of me is McDonalds, in my head are the tanks. It almost sends me crazy sometimes."

In Chapter Five, Lock attempts to convey some of the destruction that has resulted. She describes the heart-wrenching scene of people sitting in the rubble of what was their home. Yet the response of the average Palestinian is nothing short of remarkable "It's not us, it's God who give us peace and strength."

The final two chapters conclude Lock's journey with a reminder of Israeli ongoing brutality – such as the 'fire upon rescue' 'two-strike pattern' whereby those gone to rescue injured peoples are fired upon for doing so. This however, is coupled with stories of

hope such as the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children. Lock takes us through the kindergarten class she visited where she describes being surrounded by “energetic and joyful small people.” “For the first time ever, I am seeing what Palestinians look like when they are surrounded by beauty: by art, by books and resources, by unbroken, unbombed, undamaged, working things. It makes me want to cry.”

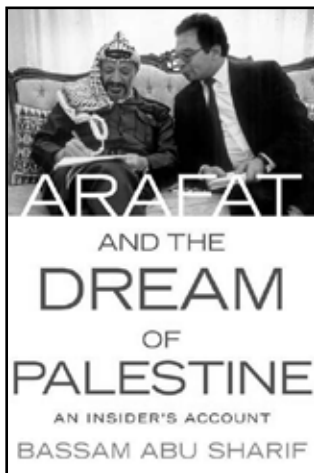
Lock uses language that is very easy to understand and has infused her writing with a great deal of everyday language, which some may find off putting. However, her contribution is inspirational and her book is an invaluable tool for the average person who seeks a better understanding of the impact of the attacks, upon the civilian population of Gaza. She sparks a desire in the heart of the reader to take an active role in the search for justice and rejects any excuse for complacency. The book itself is described as “a moving and understated account” by Richard Faulk, UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Territories who writes the afterword.

Reviewed by Shabaana Kidy, Leicester

Arafat and the Dream of Palestine, An Insider's Account

By Bassam Abu Sharif

Palgrave Macmillan (2009), ISBN 978-0230608016
pp 288, RRP £14.99



Bassam Abu Sharif was described as the ‘face of terror’ and the ‘most notorious terrorist’ in the 1960s and 70s when he advanced the cause of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). In 1972, a bomb placed in a book sent to him left him severely disabled. Subsequently, he

abandoned the use of violence and aligned himself with Yasser Arafat, eventually becoming one of his closest advisors and an architect of the peace plan. In this indispensable personal memoir, Abu Sharif presents a first hand account of all the major events in the Middle East over the last 30 years; from the wars in 1967 and 1982 to the 1993 Oslo accords and Arafat’s death in 2004. Throughout, he reflects on his relationship with Arafat, his role and methodology and how this affected the Palestinian cause.

Abu Sharif begins his account by exploring the rise of Arafat after the 1967 war when he decided to infiltrate the Occupied West Bank and recruit fighters. This early period saw huge sacrifices and struggles and Arafat and his colleagues faced various internal and external challenges from the Israeli government as well as the Jordanians. The situation worsened after the attempted El Al hijacking from Amsterdam failed and Arafat decided to relocate to Southern Lebanon. From here, guerrilla operations against Israel became much easier.

Abu Sharif narrates key details of events and summits and in particular how Arafat was betrayed by two people. Firstly, in September 1973, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat invited Arafat to visit Cairo. Sadat’s aim was to get Arafat’s support as he planned a war to recapture Sinai. George Habash, the founder of PFLP, was sceptical about Sadat but Arafat took a pragmatic approach. He said, “Whoever participates in the war will reap its results, whether they are good or bad. But whoever does not participate, will lose for sure”. (p.40) Arafat and his team played an instrumental role in this process but Sadat’s decision to visit Israel a few months later and sign a peace agreement with Israel shocked him and other Arab leaders. Despite the 1977 Arab Summit decision to suspend diplomatic relations with Egypt, Abu Sharif describes how Arafat secretly maintained communications with Sadat because he saw the importance of having at least one of his “neighbours” open for diplomatic relations. The rationale for this, although many disagreed with Arafat and continue to see this as bearing negative consequences to this date, is explained by Arafat’s vision to keep on Sadat’s good side so that he could become the spokesperson for the new Palestinian state. This is because Sadat had started negotiations with Israel about the West Bank and Gaza.

The second betrayal came from President Reagan. Arafat understood the dynamics of international politics and the importance of convincing the United States. The fall of the Shah in Iran in

1979 was a blessing in disguise as far as Arafat was concerned due to the cooperation that resulted in training and resources and the severance of the Iran-Israel cordial relations that the Shah maintained. Arafat was the first leader to meet with Khomeini and the United States was aware of this. In 1979, a year before the US presidential elections, the American Embassy hostage crisis presented a serious challenge to President Carter. The Republican Party capitalised on this and an aide of Reagan was sent to meet with Abu Sharif as they knew he had 'Arafat's ear'. Reagan promised Arafat that he would open the doors of the White House for the PLO if Arafat delayed the mediation efforts. Arafat kept his promise but Reagan failed to do so.

Abu Sharif played a crucial role in representing Arafat at an international level. In 1983, he travelled to India and met with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who was a good friend of Arafat. In somewhat contrast to the current Indian policy, she said to him, "Do not forget to tell him that India loves him". She also said, "The problem with President Arafat is that he relies too much on the countries of the Arab peninsula and the Gulf. He must be wary of them and be wise for they do not like him". (p.136)

What is most interesting and revealing in this account is how the 1993 Oslo accord was reached and the role of Abu Sharif in the process. In 1988, he convinced Arafat to launch a comprehensive political peace initiative and started to draft the document at Arafat's instruction. However, Arafat wanted Abu Sharif to publish the document under his name to test the waters. In what became known as the "Abu Sharif" document, it attracted international attention. Opinions varied both within Palestinian and the Israeli leaders and commentators, and there was uncertainty whether Arafat had endorsed or agreed to the content. This instigated official diplomatic contact from many European countries including Germany, France and Britain. Abu Sharif's aim to portray the Palestinian people as victims was partially achieved through the proposition of a two state solution. Arafat realised the impact of the document when he arrived at Belgrade Airport, welcomed by Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic. In the UK, Oxford University invited Abu Sharif to give a lecture which was attended by many Arab ambassadors and the Director General of the Foreign Office.

There is no doubt that the Abu Sharif document opened doors which were previously closed. In December 1988, the Swedish government invited

Arafat and his colleagues to meet with American Jewish Leaders. This was the beginning of improving relations with the US administration and ultimately the recognition of the PLO. Abu Sharif describes in chapter 19 how the infamous Arafat speech before the UN General Assembly was drafted. In 1989, the British government officially recognised the PLO following a joint press conference with the Foreign Office in which Abu Sharif renounced violence in the hope for an independent Palestinian state. After Nelson Mandela's release from prison in 1990, Arafat joined international leaders in the ceremony and sat next to Mrs Thatcher on the presidential table.

In chapter 34, the author describes the historical trip of Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin to Washington D.C. in 1993 where they shook hands and signed the agreement. However, what followed in the next 11 years echoed Arafat's concern expressed to Abu Sharif in 1997, "Israel handed over 80 percent of Hebron with great reluctance ... I see trouble on the way. They do not want peace. They will go back on their pledges and will not honour their agreements" (p.231). This is reflected in the September 2000 Intifada, after which Ariel Sharon rejected all international calls to cease the fighting. Abu Sharif received information in 2001 through reliable sources that Arafat was to be besieged, and in December, Israeli tanks invaded Ramallah and surrounded Arafat's headquarters. The siege continued and Abu Sharif continued to visit Arafat and warned him to be cautious about food and water. On one occasion in 2004, Abu Sharif visited Arafat who was extremely ill and pale. Abu Sharif remains confident that the Israelis poisoned Arafat as they did to Dr Haddad thirty years ago. Abu Sharif made arrangements to 'medivacke' him to Paris but as he predicted, death was destined for him. The hand kiss of Arafat before embarking the helicopter was to be the last glimpse of this heroic President, leaving Abu Sharif to lament that the world will never be a same place.

Arafat was a man of passion, dedication and peace but he was betrayed by Israelis and the international community. His role in trying to avert the first Gulf War, mediating between Arab leaders and for the American hostages, illustrates his multi-facet approach to the Palestinian issue. However, the peace process, as he realised himself, was one sided and achieved little. The history of Palestine since the Balfour Declaration has been characterised with betrayal and the future of Palestine remains unclear.

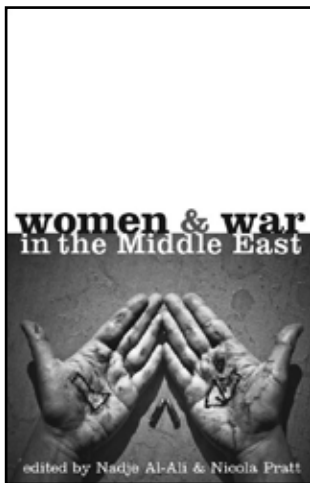
Although Abu Sharif proposes the unity of Palestinian factions, the historical opposition to the peace process makes this difficult. It is somewhat surprising that Abu Sharif makes no mention of Hamas throughout the book despite its increasing influence since its inception in the late 80s and its relationship with Arafat especially before his death. Nor is there an assessment, perhaps deliberately, of the much speculated role of Mahmoud Abbas in the death of Arafat and his resignation from the office of Prime Minister a few months before his death.

The book is highly informative and adds significantly to what the world knows about the late Yasser Arafat. A very useful list and biographies of key characters, organisations and key terminology is provided before the book begins. This personal account is invaluable for those who wish to understand the cause and the history of a nation of freedom fighters to whom Abu Sharif dedicates this book.

Yusuf Shabbir, University of Manchester

**Women and War in the Middle East:
Transnational Perspectives**

By Nadja Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt (eds),
London & New York, Zed Books, 2009
ISBN 978-1848131866
pp 224, RRP £17.99



The editors of this new and useful addition to the literature on “women and war” in the Middle East have approached their topic from the perspective of transnational feminism which, as they observe, “suggests a conscious crossing of national boundaries and implies a shift from the nationally

oriented second-wave feminisms and the clashes between ‘Western’ and ‘Third World feminists’”. The book’s objective, say the authors, is “to explore the significance of gender in understanding processes related to conflict, reconstruction and peace-building”, although the case studies selected to highlight their concerns, Iraq and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, cannot realistically be considered in terms of “post-conflict” or “reconstruction”. Nonetheless, the contributors to this volume have succeeded, within their relatively restricted terms of reference, in starting to move beyond, on the one hand, the notion of the nation-state as the primary focus of attention in understanding women’s complex and multi-layered experiences of conflict; and, on the other hand, the frequent linkage of women with peace, passivity and victimization, which tends to essentialize constructions of femininity and masculinity in the Middle East.

The book is divided into three sections: “Gendering the Neoliberal Imperial Project”, “Revisiting Transnational Women’s Activism in the Conflict, Post-conflict Reconstruction and Peace-building” and “Gender, Citizenship and Post-conflict reconstruction”. It devotes four chapters to Iraq, including Shahrzad Mojab’s interesting contribution on Kurdish women’s NGOs. The editors provide a helpful introduction and conclusion on “transnational perspectives”. Although there are similarities between the experiences of Iraq and the Palestinian Territories, there are also important differences and these are well explored in the various chapters. In her analysis of “gendering informal economies in Iraq”, Peterson considers informal economic activities within a framework of neoliberal globalization. She identifies the existence of three types of economy in the context of war: firstly, of survival needs or what she terms “coping economies”; secondly, military objectives or “combat economies”; and, thirdly in the absence of regulatory mechanisms, the emergence of “criminal economies”. All three are explored from the perspective of post-invasion Iraq.

The chapter by Al-Ali and Pratt discusses the effect of the – often disproportionately powerful – Iraqi women’s diaspora on women’s “empowerment” in Iraq. They argue that reconstructed notions of gender identities “impose new restrictions on women’s mobility and are sometimes reproduced within the women’s movement, both inside Iraq and transnationally, consequently presenting new obstacles to

women's participation in the 'new' Iraq". The theme of obstacles is further explored by Mojab in her discussion of "post-war reconstruction, imperialism and Kurdish women's NGOs". Mojab makes a convincing and empirically-grounded argument that "post-war" reconstruction projects reproduce, and even embody, conditions of violence against the majority of the populations". Attempts to "liberate" Kurdish women, she suggests, "have failed to challenge structural-patriarchal violence". Kamp's contribution, on "fragmented citizenship" in Iraq, discusses "the actions and attitudes of the internal and external actors involved in the constitution-drafting process in 2005." It demonstrates, she suggests, "how the relationships between state power and the subject are being renegotiated in the context of internationalized reconstruction processes".

The Palestinian Territory, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, provides further strands in the transnational debate. In her interesting chapter on "Palestinian women's activism", Richter-Devoe, with reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, argues that, while international and Israeli organizations "claim that joint conflict resolution is most empowering for women", Palestinian women's "participation in resistance activism is more broadly mobilizing and empowering". She concludes that women's transnational initiatives will succeed only by "working with, negotiating and broadening rather than provocatively challenging existing gender and political normative frameworks". From a different perspective, Isotalo addresses the question of "gendered Palestinian citizenship", in the sense that "citizenship" can be said to exist in the absence of a sovereign Palestinian state. She interestingly suggests that, "at the core of women's citizenship" are women's roles "in practices related to getting there...staying there and maintaining connectivity". However, she is not willing to equate women's "connective practices" in opposition to the Israeli occupation with resistance. Her conclusion focuses on three issues: firstly, she suggests that "it is problematic to apply a rights-based agenda to

gender successfully in conflicts that are lacking a rights-based political resolution"; secondly, in her view it is "somewhat artificial to separate 'women's strategic needs' from their practical needs"; and, thirdly, it is "important that the donor community considers carefully its attitude towards post-conflict legal pluralism".

In a separate chapter which does not focus on a particular case study, Nusair discusses "gender mainstreaming" and "feminist organizing" in the Middle East. By considering the ways in which gender mainstreaming is being implemented in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region by United Nations and European Union bodies, she argues that "the local remains the main site for action for women's and feminist groups as a result of structural conditions and limitations imposed on their work by state and non-state actors". She concludes that a major criticism of gender mainstreaming in conflict situations such as Iraq and Palestine is that "it could foster adaptation and change without transformation".

I was impressed by the depth and scholarship of the various contributions. There is evidence of careful and sympathetic ethnographic research. Clearly, the topic of "women and war" in the Middle East raises many questions and many competing claims. The decision to situate the debate within a transnational feminist framework, while keen not to disregard the experiences of "ordinary" Iraqi and Palestinian women, must inevitably exclude some dissenting voices or tendencies. As the editors rightly note, "the question of how to protect human rights and women's rights at the local level while avoiding a backlash against women's rights is a core dilemma". As they conclude: "we need to look for creative ways of engaging with the situation". Many of us, scholars, activists and sympathizers, are engaged in precisely this quest.

Reviewed by Dr. Maria Holt,
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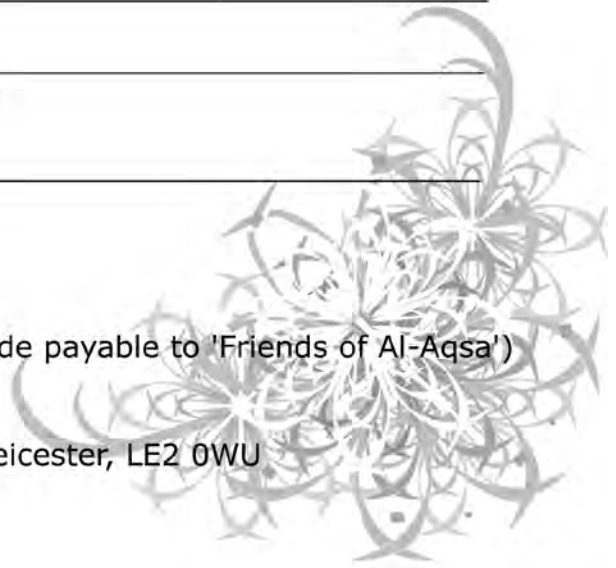
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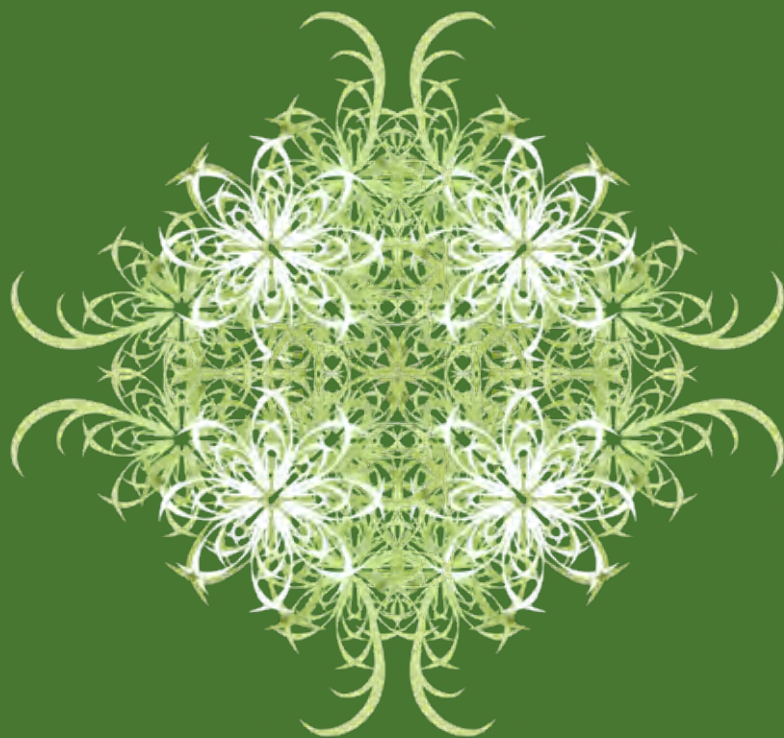


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