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Autumn 2010

AQSA Journal

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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 Palestininian 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*

May Allah's blessings be upon all His Prophets from Adam to His Final Messenger Muhammad (SAW)

The past six months have seen a shift in the landscape where the Israel/Palestine conflict is concerned. The Israeli attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla proved to be the last straw for many states around the world and the wide-scale condemnation of the violent assault on the civilian convoy was not only warranted but vital. The atrocities committed by Israel against the people of Gaza are deplorable. 1.5 million people have been forced to endure living conditions similar to those in natural disaster zones and the resultant collapse of Gaza's economy and the suffering of its people have all been man-made – by the state of Israel.

My decision to participate in the Flotilla was driven by a need to see the people of Gaza and to physically be a part of the movement seeking to break the siege on the tiny coastal enclave. This was a mere extension of my years of campaigning for a free Palestine. I could not have imagined how high the price would be and what I would witness and endure. I also could not have imagined how it would bring the global community to recognise finally how severe the situation was in Palestine.

Following an orchestrated campaign of misinformation spearheaded by Israeli spin doctors, the UN Human Rights Councils' investigation in to the Flotilla attack provided welcome vindication for those on board. As well as refuting many Israeli claims, the report stated that "the conduct of the Israeli military and other personnel towards the flotilla passengers was not only disproportionate to the occasion but demonstrated levels of totally unnecessary and incredible violence". These words sum up the Israeli response to the Freedom Flotilla and the Israeli treatment of the civilian population in Gaza.

Four months on we see the 'resumption' of peace talks. Although we desperately hope for peace to be achieved, it is beyond a doubt that the whole process is a mere charade. The talks present nothing more than a glimmer of hope for one leader and a distraction for the other, but once again it promises to present yet another illusive peace for the people of Palestine and Israel. For Mahmoud Abbas, it is hope for a future in which he still leads his party, having long since lost the support of his people. For the Netanyahu government, it is a distraction from the stalemate in Israeli politics, realised due to the right wing's uncompromising strong hold over the Knesset.

The resumption of settlement building should make it clear to Palestinians that any peace offer from Israel will fall far short of reparation for 43 years of occupation and oppression. Palestinian land in the West Bank will not be returned to its rightful owners and there will be no compensation for their suffering and loss. On the current course, what can be guaranteed however is that Israel's creation of new facts on the ground will exclude Jerusalem from ever being up for discussion, thereby reflecting the reality that Palestinians will only be given what Israel is willing to part with. And history tells a clear story of what that means for Palestinians – expulsion or living their lives under the rule of an Apartheid regime. Only when both parties are equal negotiating partners, will any of these facts really change.

Ismail Patel, EDITOR

ANALYSIS *analysis*

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Life is Slow Dying

Andy Slaughter MP

Andy Slaughter is Labour MP for Hammersmith and was first elected in 2005. Andy is the current Chair of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East.

Trying to get a feel for how seriously the peace talks are being taken, I trawl through the international press. There is more speculation as to why they are even happening than on their chances of success.

Of course, this sort of meta-commentary is very fashionable. Obama is there because of the mid-term elections. Netanyahu is there because it costs nothing, and distracts from doing nothing on the immediate issues that count – the siege and the settlements. Abbas is there because otherwise the money stops. They are all there (one Arab diplomat told me) to keep the Palestinians quiet while the US and Israel sort out Iran.

The stakes are high for all these players, but they will survive. How much longer Palestine – or the realistic prospect of an independent Palestinian state – survives is a more critical question. And one that takes us to the heart of any negotiations.

The PA starts from a position that 78% of Mandate Palestine is lost. The Israelis currently directly control about another 10% and do so in a way that that means the rump could never function as a viable state. The settlements, the Jordan valley, Jerusalem - none appear to be negotiable. Of course, that doesn't mean they won't be negotiated at some point, but it is difficult to see for what.

The Palestinians hold such a weak hand that it's difficult to see how the game can be played. Perhaps someone can lend them some chips. That worked in the Irish peace talks. Even Republican presidents had to take notice of public opinion in the US, which overwhelmingly backed the Nationalist side. Although Clinton made good links with the Unionists, the presence of a friendly big brother allowed Sinn Fein to stop being the underdog and negotiate on terms.

"The Palestinians hold such a weak hand that it's difficult to see how the game can be played. Perhaps someone can lend them some chips."

How different in the Middle East, where a President whom 20% of Americans think is Muslim can't tell Netanyahu to stop expanding into the West Bank. That's problem number one: not having anything to bargain with, because it's already been pledged, and not having any credit in the bank. Problem number two is working out who negotiates for the Palestinian people. Abbas' mandate has expired (as has Hamas'). Hamas has done as much as it can to undermine the talks. This includes its armed wing whipping up opposition on the Israeli right by the murder of settlers, something which in fact lends more credibility to the PA as the legitimate negotiating body.

Khaled Mesh'al's lengthy interview with the Al-Sabeel newspaper suggests he is preparing Palestinians for no change in the current impasse, while stating both that there should be no compromise and that negotiation is a legitimate tool

to advance your position. Whether you can detect in Hamas statements, as Saeb Erekat suggests, a willingness to compromise, I do not know. But the divisions within the Palestinian leadership at every level lets the occupier off the hook every time.

It is easy to criticise all these players: the PA, Hamas, the international community and the Arab states among them. But at present it is Israel that holds more of the cards than at any time in the past 60 years. Netanyahu defies the US with no fear of sanctions. It suits him to depend on the support of ultras like Lieberman, Spiro Agnew to his Nixon. And with certain honourable exceptions the left in Israel is quiescent if not collaborating with the government.

The three most dramatic events in the region in the five years I have been an MP were the Lebanon war of summer 2006, operation Cast Lead in December 2008 and the Flotilla assault in May 2010. The common thread is existential aggression by a regional superpower that believes it can act with impunity and without restraint.

I remember taking calls from my Parliamentary colleagues in August 2006 sounding off about Tony Blair's refusal to call for a ceasefire in Lebanon. In his memoirs, Blair admits this was the final straw which forced him to set a departure date. No such chastening for the Israelis who two years later launched an even more ferocious attack on Gaza. I was one of a delegation of six British MPs that entered Gaza three weeks after the Israeli withdrawal. The horror of what I saw and heard is vivid 18 months on.

"But what depressed me more was a further visit in February this year that showed nothing had changed, other than an increase in the trauma and mental and physical degradation of the population."

But what depressed me more was a further visit in February this year that showed nothing had changed, other than an increase in the trauma and mental and physical degradation of the population. It was failure to act against the siege by the outside world that led to the Flotilla and its tragic end.

I am not excusing acts of murder and terror that have been perpetrated against Israeli citizens. But how any observer who claims objectivity can look at recent events in the region and not see where the greater injustice, aggression and terror lies I also can't explain. A further question is whether Israeli national objectives have changed or just become more overt and less restrained.

Statistics show that settlement expansion has continued unabated under governments of all colours and if anything have accelerated during periods of peace negotiation. Other than the return of Sinai and recognition of the PLO, what concessions have been made since 1967? On the other hand, Judaisation of the remaining parts of Palestinian territory has continued in a way which hampers Palestinian governance, trade and everyday life.

"Statistics show that settlement expansion has continued unabated under governments of all colours and if anything have accelerated during periods of peace negotiations."

Whether it is extremists in Hebron, evictions in Silwan, the enclosure and diversion of farmland and water, the obliteration of Bedouin villages or the ever-more baroque invention of pass laws and movement restrictions, life for Palestinians is slow dying.

Does it matter if this is a carefully orchestrated plan, handed from minister to minister from Ben-Gurion to Bibi or the callous casualness of a thousand decisions a day made to favour the occupier over the occupied?

I have stood in a Palestinian village in East Jerusalem and watched a bulldozer demolish the home of a family, who were given shelter there when they fled the Israeli forces in 1948; and seen on the skyline no more than a kilometre away cranes building settlement blocks. I have waited at checkpoints, or given up. I have watched indignities heaped on Palestinians old enough to be my parents

or young enough to be my grandchildren. I have asked myself 'why aren't they screaming?'

There is a nice ambiguity in how British public opinion views the Middle East conflict. There is empathy both with the Israeli and the Palestinian positions, though this does not extend, at least among the current generation, to any liability for what happened in 1917 or 1948. But it is an ambiguity that the Israeli propaganda factory exploits mercilessly. Bad news is blacked out, as in the case of Cast Lead, or spun, like the Flotilla. It doesn't have to persuade, just to blunt any outrage or pressure that might force the UK government to act.

"But it is an ambiguity that the Israeli propaganda factory exploits mercilessly. Bad news is blacked out, as in the case of Cast Lead, or spun, like the Flotilla."

We are going through one of those routines at present both with Obama and Cameron. A lot of tut-tutting, but no sanction of any kind against a state that feels it can use force against Palestinians whenever it chooses.

If there is to be a realistic list of issues requiring arbitration it would include: why the Israelis have any more right to Jerusalem than the Palestinians do to Al-Quds as their capital; why Jews from across the world have the right to settle in Palestine but Palestinian exiles and their descendants do not; and what is an acceptable division of the land and resources to accommodate all those who want to live there and have a claim to do so.

Just reciting that short wish list shows how far we are from any meaningful negotiating position. The problem today is that Israelis have less incentive to make peace than at any time in 60 years and the Palestinians have less ability to demand so. The reason the Middle East provokes so much polemic is not because it is the worst humanitarian disaster but because it is largely man made, and made by politicians from Balfour onwards.

But it is subjecting millions of people to degradation, imprisonment and despair. For an intractable problem it is very tractable. A solution which sorted out the key points of difference in land, access and control could probably be sketched on the back of a napkin at a Sharm El Sheikh dinner table.

"why Jews from across the world have the right to settle in Palestine but Palestinian exiles and their descendants do not"

Of course it would take 10 years at least to turn the napkin into a series of bound treaties worthy of the history. In terms of concessions and retreat from cherished positions it would resemble the end of apartheid or the withdrawal from India more than the Good Friday Agreement. It is do-able, but I don't see anyone drawing on their napkin.

One of the most worrying signs in the current round of talks is the insistence from the Israeli side on the declaration of a Jewish state. The increasing victimisation of Israeli Arabs and their representatives is a new low for the region. But how can Messrs Abbas or Haniyeh speak authoritatively on this or many other issues when they cannot conclude their own dialogue.

No one is going to take Palestinian demands seriously until they speak with one clear voice. The influence of Washington, Tehran or Damascus is cited as the reason why agreement is not straightforward. But this is the area over which the Palestinian leadership have most control, and exercising that would put them not only in a stronger bargaining position but result in their being heard in the media and at conference tables. This at least is an attainable ambition when much else looks out of reach. It is the least the people of Gaza and Ramallah deserve for their steadfastness and resolution.

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Three Visits to Gaza

Lord Hylton

Lord Hylton is a cross-bench peer in the House of Lords and the 5th Baron Hylton. He was one of 92 Hereditary Peers who were elected to remain in the House of Lords after the passing of the House of Lords Act 1999. He has been involved with various charities nationally and internationally for many decades, including the London Housing Aid Centre, Mencap and Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability.

Under Occupation

In 1992 I was the guest of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza. In those days Israel was in full occupation of this strip of territory along the Mediterranean coast. Five or six settlements (colonies) were in place and the Israeli army was much to be seen. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Gaza were free to work in Israel and many of them commuted daily. There was a complete curfew at night from about 9.00 pm. My host had a pass allowing him to move at night, so he took me for an eerie drive through the deserted and almost unlit streets. I visited nearly all the refugee "camps", which by then had become concrete block townships, with a high population per acre. I was also invited to the Islamic University.

Free but Blockaded

My second visit was in July 2008, this time arranged by the British organisation "Forward Thinking". Our party was made up of three trustees and three distinguished former European diplomats. The Israeli army and settlers (colonists) had gone, but Gaza was blockaded by air, land and sea, and a blockade reinforced massive fences. Hamas had been in control, since the attempted Fatah coup d'état of the previous year. An effective ceasefire was in force, so we felt quite safe. We entered slowly and with difficulty through the Erez check-point and then wheeled our suitcases for half a mile or more, across the cleared site of what had once been the Erez industrial estate. Unemployment was high, because so many industrial jobs had been destroyed and few, if any, could go to work in Israel. We had long and interesting discussions with Hamas parliamentarians and ministers.

> "The Israeli army and settlers (colonists) had gone, but Gaza was blocked by air, land and sea, and a blockade reinforced massive fences."

Gaza: Post-War but still Tightly Blockaded

Israel's violent military assault on Gaza took place in December 2008 and January 2009. It killed some 1400 Gazans, nearly all civilians, and wounded many more. For this it was rightly condemned by the UN's Goldstone Commission. The Hamas Government in Gaza remained in place.

In early August of this year, I visited Gaza for the third time in company with Mrs Yasmin Qureshi MP and Lord Sheikh. Our journey was

arranged by Partners for Peace and Development in Palestine and coincided with the delivery to Gaza of a convoy of ambulances, buses for the disabled and medical supplies (all in very short supply). We entered via Egypt through the Rafah crossing-point, where sadly the European Union Border Assistance Mission is still not facilitating the movement of goods and people.

The General Situation 2010

Out of a population in excess of 1.5 millions, some 1 million are the refugees from 1948 and 1967 and their descendants. 40% of those refugees live in the so-called camps, which are in fact concrete built houses, often several stories high. The passages between houses are very narrow (as in ancient Arab cities). The population density is therefore high and the degree of overcrowding great, with usually little privacy for individuals. 80% of the 1 million refugees receive bi-monthly food parcels from UNRWA, because of unemployment or low income. This provides basic low-level subsistence. In addition, primary health care and schooling up to age 18 are provided free. UNRWA buys in hospital services as needed.

> **"80% of the 1 million refugees receive bi-monthly food parcels from UNRWA, because of unemployment or low income. This provides basic low-level subsistence."**

The poorest part of the population is to be found among the bottom 25% of the non-refugees, especially the unemployed, handicapped or aged. They have no basic support.

UNRWA is involved in job creation and is providing unsecured loans to smaller businesses (average amount $2000). Palestinians do not want to remain dependant and the up-take of loans is slowly increasing. UNRWA employs 11,000 Gazans in addition to 30 expatriates. Its pay-roll is some $11 million per month. There are some "solidarity groups" functioning as producer cooperatives. Gazans are accustomed to growing irrigated crops, sometimes in tunnels, and quite skilled in such aspects of horticulture.

The amount of traffic and new building and repairing seems to indicate a relatively buoyant local economy, though this depends partly on the movement of goods through tunnels to Egypt.

The Blockade/Economic Siege

The top priority is to get the siege lifted. Imports of building materials, especially cement and steel, will immediately generate employment. Freedom for other raw materials to come in and for exports to go out (especially vegetables, fruit and flowers) will further improve the economy. Enlarging the present fishing limit of 3 miles from shore (imposed by Israel) would also help employment and improve people's diets.

> **"Imports of building materials, especially cement and steel, will immediately generate employment."**

By the time of my visit, the much-publicized relaxation by Israel of the blockade had not made much practical difference.

UNRWA's Needs

The schools already work a two-shift system. 8000 new children will start school this September. UNRWA aims to provide 20 new schools each year. It only has approval for 8 new schools, and 2 new clinics in the coming year. At present it faces a deficit of $100 million on its regular (non-emergency) budget, for the whole region (from Syria in the north, to Gaza in the south).

Water Supplies and Agriculture

Over-pumping of the available ground-water over many years has caused infiltration of salty sea-water. This was aggravated by chemical pollution from the land surface, caused by heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides in the former Israeli colonies, and by phosphorus and other by-products of the 2008/9 war. The contamination has produced a high level of kidney disease and other

human illnesses.

We saw small scale filtration and purification plants in operation, providing good drinking water to those who cannot afford bottled water. One of these was sited on the roof of an existing kindergarten. The long-term solution will probably be a large desalination plant, using sea water.

“Funding for this development has come from Bahrain and Kuwait. I imagine that there are other areas in the Gaza Strip which could be developed in similar ways.”

It was also encouraging to see how a former Israeli colony at “Hattin” is being re-used to grow olives and dates (which need little water) together with irrigated vegetables and fruit. There were also battery-hens, cattle and sheep. Former growing houses provide cover for most of this new production, which is intended to provide food of kinds not previously available to most of the people. Funding for this development has come from Bahrain and Kuwait. I imagine that there are other areas in the Gaza Strip which could be developed in similar ways.

War Damage

We saw the ruins of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior, also of the Palestinian Legislative Council. The Chamber of the latter is still just standing. The Islamic University had its laboratories completely destroyed, while a central police station and car-park (adjoining the late President Arafat’s helicopter-pad) was severely hit. If Israel’s intention was to cripple the Hamas Government, its bombs were remarkably accurate.

The buildings on the sea-front, and more so on the high ground in Gaza City, showed large numbers of bullet holes. Only this summer the centre of Deir el Bala refugee camp suffered one large bomb, which mercifully only injured 45 people, without killing anyone.

We spent time with the Deputy-Director of UNRWA. We met the President and a Vice-President of the Islamic University, the Minister for Social Affairs, the Deputy Foreign Minister, the Deputy Speaker of the PLC, and some other members. The Hamas members struck me (as on previous visits) as being intelligent, well-educated and honest. Evidence for this last point is that more than one of them continues to live in refugee camps, when they probably could have moved to more salubrious surroundings. (Due to Conservative Party policy reasons, Lord Sheikh was not involved in conversations with Hamas.)

Despite all difficulties the morale of the people seemed high. Weddings were being celebrated in our hotel and next door. The sea as always provides respite from the heat and over-crowded homes. It was a special delight to visit the Gaza City premises of the “House of Wisdom”. This is a local NGO and provides a neutral meeting place for all factions and shades of opinion. It is helping the personal development and positive interaction of young Palestinian leaders, eager to serve the common good of all. They are working with some of the children who have suffered most from recent violence.

Conclusions

(a) The siege/blockade of Gaza must be swiftly ended. The Movement and Access Agreement of 2005 should be fully implemented.
(b)Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank must cease.
(c) Recognizing the real fears of many Israelis, the western world may have to provide some specific guarantees to Israel.
(d) The British Government and the EU should begin immediately to listen to the case put forward by Hamas. They should recognize the lack of wisdom contained in the 3 pre-conditions imposed on Hamas after its election victory in 2006. These probably led to the break-down of the National Unity Government of 2007.

Hamas will have to be part of any comprehensive settlement, yet to be agreed.

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Turning Terrorists into "Heroes"

Ibrahim Hewitt

Ibrahim Hewitt is the Senior Editor of Middle East Monitor and an education consultant/school inspector. He is a graduate of the University of Leicester (BA Hons. World Humanities) but his PhD studies were interrupted by a request to head Al-Aqsa Primary School which he had founded as a trustee in 1998. Ibrahim appears frequently on television and radio programmes, usually concerning education issues and conflict in the Middle East.

Honorary positions held include Chairman of the Trustees of the Palestinian Relief & Development Fund (Interpal). Ibrahim was an Assistant Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain, 2004-6. In 2005 he was awarded the Alia Izetbekovic Prize for Citizenship at the Muslim News Awards for Excellence in London.

Celebrations have taken place in Israel to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Hagana, the Jewish paramilitary organisation which paved the way for the establishment of the state of Israel and the Israeli Defence Forces. A headline in the Jewish Chronicle refers to "the generation that established Israel" above a photograph of some elderly veterans rather sadly wearing military uniforms.

Describing the veterans as the "heroes of Israel", the IDF's Chief of General Staff, Gabi Ashkenazi, is quoted by the JC, saying, "You were the ones to pave the way for the IDF as the army of the Jewish people, and as a body that can promise to the world 'never again'", a pointed reference to the Holocaust.

The past few years have seen many celebrations of the diminishing band of survivors from the First and Second World Wars. History is written by the victors, and it is true to say that the exploits of Allied troops in both world wars were not entirely devoid of unacceptable actions long since covered up and forgotten about by official historians. While not exactly a whitewash, it has had the same effect. The same is true of the Hagana "heroes", to the extent that it is surprising that a British-based publication can laud an organisation which first cooperated with (including receiving training by British officers) and then agitated and fought against British Mandate rule in Palestine.

And that's not all; once the British were effectively out of the picture as the main stumbling block to the creation of the state of Israel, the Hagana turned its not inconsiderable military skills and manpower (up to 80,000 well-trained and armed soldiers) against the largely civilian Palestinian population. The result was what Israeli historian Ilan Pappe has called "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine".

Ostensibly formed to defend early Jewish settlements in Palestine, by 1939 the Hagana was helping to organise illegal Jewish immigration to Palestine. Post-Second World War it joined with two more extreme splinter groups, Irgun and Lehi ("the Stern Gang") to form the 'Jewish Resistance Movement'. It was the Stern Gang which assassinated Lord Moyne, the British Minister for the Middle East, in 1944. The Hagana and its elite Palmach commando unit, along with the Stern Gang and Irgun, carried out numerous terrorist acts against British governmental installations across Palestine between 1944 and 1947, including the following:

Haifa district

12 Feb 1944	Immigration offices bombed
27 Feb 1944	Tax offices bombed
23 Mar 1944	Police station bombed
25 July 1945	Railway bridge bombed
31 Oct 1945	Police launches mined in harbour
9 Sep 1946	British policeman killed
21 Mar 1947	Oil refineries destroyed
26 Apr 1947	Head of British CID killed

Tel Aviv and Jaffa district

23 Mar 1944	Police station bombed
25 Apr 1946	Seven British soldiers killed in arms raid
2-17 Mar 1947	Martial law imposed; 14 Britons killed

Nathanya district

29 Dec 1946	British army officer captured and flogged
29 July 1947	Two British army sergeants hanged; their bodies were booby-trapped

Jerusalem district

12 Feb 1944	Immigration and tax offices bombed
23 Mar 1944	Police station bombed
27 Sep 1944	Four police stations attacked
29 Sep 1944	British policeman killed
27 Dec 1944	Police HQ attacked
22 July 1946	King David Hotel bombed; 91 killed
24 Oct 1946	Bombs explode at roadblocks around the city
30 Oct 1946	Suitcase bomb left at railway station

Cairo

6 Nov 1944	Lord Moyne assassinated

Railways

31 Oct 1945	Several hundred bombs exploded on railways all over Palestine
10 June 1946	Three trains destroyed
16 June 1946	Eight railway bridges destroyed around the borders of Palestine

(Source: Guerrilla Warfare from 1939 to the present day, Robin Corbett)

Although efforts have been made to distance the Hagana from the overtly terrorist activities of Irgun and the Stern Gang, Robin Corbett claims that "Zionist armed resistance... included the much larger, but more moderate, Hagana self-defence force [sic]". David Ben-Gurion "insisted" to the British and American Governments that "his Jewish Agency and the Hagana were opposed to the Irgun and its terrorism". According to Alan Hart in *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*, this was plainly not true: "The truth was not only that the Hagana and so the Jewish Agency were colluding with the terrorists. After initially saying "No" to Operation Chick – the codename for the plan to blow up the King David Hotel – the Hagana ordered the Irgun to execute it." Ben-Gurion, of course, went on to become Israel's first Prime Minister. The brains behind the bombing of the hotel in which 91 people were killed, Menachim Begin, was one of Ben-Gurion's successors at the helm of Israeli politics. To his dying day Begin was wanted by the British authorities for terrorist crimes, as was another ex-Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, a leading figure in the Stern Gang; for this reason, neither ever visited the UK.

"Ben-Gurion, of course, went on to become Israel's first Prime Minister. The brains behind the bombing of the hotel in which 91 people were killed"

In a foretaste of things to come, money was donated "by organisations... across America to support illegal Jewish immigration into Palestine and to raise funds for Zionist terrorism". (Hart, volume 1, page 193)

Alan Hart also gives a detailed account of the circumstances which led to the Hagana supplying weapons and ammunition to the Irgun and the Stern used in the assault on the village of Deir Yassin in April 1948, in which, according to a report by the International Red Cross, 254 Palestinians were murdered, 145 of them women (of whom 35 were pregnant at the time).

Deir Yassin was but one of many massacres committed by Jewish militias in the months before

the state of Israel came into being, and Hagana personnel were involved in many of them. According to Dr. Pappe, "the Hagana, the Palmach and the Irgun were the forces that actually occupied the [Arab] villages" prior to the expulsion of their residents. Indeed, "the Hagana would enter villages looking for 'infiltrators (read 'Arab volunteers')... Any resistance to such an incursion usually ended up with the Jewish troops firing at random and killing several villagers". The Hagana was well-schooled in such tactics by British officer Orde Wingate "who had instructed the Hagana in the use of this terrorist method against Palestinian villagers in the 1930s".

"the Hagana would enter villages looking for infiltrators (read 'Arab volunteers')... Any resistance to such an incursion usually ended up with the Jewish troops firing at random and killing several villagers."

One Palmach commander (the Palmach were the elite of the Hagana, remember) sent his troops into Khisas, a mixed Muslim and Christian village, in December 1947 and "randomly started blowing up houses at the dead of night while the occupants were still fast asleep. Fifteen villagers, including five children, were killed in the attack." At first, Pappe records, the Hagana denied responsibility but "eventually admitted it". Ben-Gurion apologised publicly. The 75,000 Palestinians of Haifa were chosen as the target for "a campaign of terror jointly instigated by the Irgun and the Hagana". Explosives, fireballs and machine-gun fire were all employed in these attacks.

More than 500 Palestinian towns and villages have been wiped off the map since 1948, and the Hagana were responsible for a major part of that ethnic cleansing. For that reason if for no other, the state of Israel erected a memorial to the Hagana on the site of a village called Qastal near Jerusalem. Of course, the plaque makes no mention that it stands on what was once a Palestinian village; instead, in a grotesque form of the propaganda which also turns Hagana terrorists into "heroes", Qastal is described as an "enemy base". According to Ilan Pappe, "Palestinian villagers [are thus] dehumanised in order to turn them into 'legitimate targets' of destruction and expulsion".

"More than 500 Palestinian towns and villages have been wiped off the map since 1948, and the Hagana were responsible for a major part of that ethnic cleansing."

Given the propensity for the Israeli Defence Forces to commit crimes against civilians, it is perhaps fitting that their roots lie in a group which was itself responsible for terrorist acts across Palestine. What is not so fitting is the way that these roots are overlooked by legal authorities around the world. The real irony is that Israel's current batch of leaders and their supporters in the West blithely label legitimate Palestinian resistance against the illegal military occupation of Palestine as "terrorism", knowing full well that Zionist militias committed terrorist acts against Palestinians and the British alike in the run-up to and beyond the Zionist state's declaration of independence in May 1948. It is fair to say that the state of Israel was founded upon the terrorism of Zionist militia groups, including the Hagana. The fact that General Ashkenazi can then call members of the Hagana "heroes of Israel" speaks volumes for the morality underpinning the Zionist army, a far cry from the "purity of arms" claimed to this day by the Israeli Defence Forces.

COMMENT

comment

Tourism in Palestine:
Issues, Threats and Opportunities

Sarah Irving

Zaytoun and Agriculture in Palestine

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Tourism in Palestine: Issues, Threats and Opportunities

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During the Oslo period, tourism was cited by international economic organisations as a major potential growth area for the Palestinian Authority. Optimistic projections in the early 1990s spoke of Gaza as a new 'Mediterranean Riviera' with beachfront villas for luxury tourists.[1] International aid was ploughed into developing tourism infrastructure, including sustainable projects such as home-stays, and private investment was poured into hotels and leisure facilities in travel hotspots such as Bethlehem, Jericho and Ramallah.

The failure of the deeply flawed Oslo peace process, the rising levels of violence throughout the 1990s, especially the international media's concentration on the phenomenon of suicide bombings, and the eventual outbreak of the Second Intifada in September 2000 all signalled an end to healthy tourist figures – particularly in Palestine, but also in Israel. A small number of 'alternative' travel organisations in the West Bank managed to keep going by catering for solidarity and study tourism, but many hotels, restaurants and other tourist-dependent businesses closed.

The Roots of Tourism in Palestine

Western tourism to Palestine is not a new phenomenon. In the nineteenth century, major religious and historical sites such as Jerusalem, Nazareth, Jaffa and Acre were important stops on tours of the 'Levant' and Middle East, such as those initiated by Thomas Cook's company in 1869. Cook's Tours of the Middle East combined sites in modern-day Palestine/Israel with other parts of the region – Beirut, the Roman ruins at Baalbek, Damascus and the Egyptian Pyramids.[2] As Xavier Guillot notes, "For centuries the Middle East has been a destination for Western travellers with assorted motives. Traders, writers, pilgrims and simply the curious were attracted by the 'mysterious Orient' and the religiously historical background that characterised this part of the world."[3] Commercial tourist trips to 'The Levant' commenced in the late 1860s, but organised Christian religious tours had started coming from Italy and France in the 1850s and from the USA in 1867, while the first European-style hotel was opened in Jaffa by Kopel Blatner & Sons in the 1850s.[4]

Railways connecting Jerusalem to Jaffa had been completed in the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century a substantial tourist infrastructure developed. By 1883 Thomas Cook's tours had brought over 4,500 visitors to Palestine, which Cook himself estimated to represent around 2/3 of the Western tourists to the region over this period. During the Mandate Period (1923-48), British rule over Palestine attracted further European visitors, to the extent that a souvenir industry grew up, producing for example

Palestinian pottery labelled in English.[5] Under this impetus hotels opened, including the famous King David in Jerusalem in 1931. The well-known 'Visit Palestine' poster which has become common on greetings cards, depicting a view of Jerusalem from a tree-crowned hilltop, was designed by Franz Kraus in 1936.[6] Guillot claims, "Already in the late 19th century the Bilad al-Sham could be considered a 'prime cultural tourist destination' in a modern sense. In 1930, the Handbook of Palestine and Transjordan, published by Macmillan & Co in London, presented Palestine literally as a 'tourist resort.'"[7]

But most tourists in Palestine had little interest in the people living in the lands they visited. Some longer-term visitors, such as Mary Eliza Rogers, who visited her diplomat brother in Palestine in the 1850s, wrote detailed descriptions of the people they met and socialised and stayed with.[8] But Fuchs observed in 1998 that "one problematic aspect of the nineteenth and early twentieth century descriptive literature is its predominantly biblical-archaeological inspiration: many authors regarded the landscapes of Palestine as illustrations of the Scriptures, and their texts are frustratingly burdened with biblical quotations. Behind this attitude lay the assumption, often taken for granted, that traditional life in Palestine had remained unchanged for millenia."[9] It takes only a small stretch to imagine that such attitudes may have helped to build sympathy for Zionist claims that they sought to take over 'a land without a people', or at least one populated by a people considered by British visitors and colonial rulers to be 'backward' and 'tribal.' To many European visitors, Zionist aspirations to Palestine would introduce 'advanced' Western influences into a 'primitive' region. As Lawrence of Arabia said in 1909, Palestine was "a decent country" under Roman rule and "could easily be made so again. The sooner the Jews farm it all the better; their colonies are bright spots in a desert."[10]

The Current Situation

Gathering more recent tourist figures for the West Bank is not easy, as the Palestinian Authority has a limited infrastructure and the Bureau of Statistics is often erratic in publishing information. Nevertheless, estimates of visitor numbers for Easter 2010 showed a 50% increase over the same period for 2009, with 464,000 visitors, of whom 137,000 were said to be international passport holders and 83,000 Palestinian holders of Israeli passports. Over 80,000 of these visitors stayed in hotels (rather than with friends/family or visiting on day trips from Israel), again up 50% on the previous year.[11] At the end of 2008 the Mayor of Bethlehem was quoted by news agency Reuters as saying that at Christmas "we don't have any empty beds. Two years ago, all the hotels were empty" and predicting a total tourist count for the year of 1.25 million. The PA tourist minister was quoted in the same article citing hotel occupancy rates for Bethlehem of 70%, as against 10% a few years earlier.[12] Interviews with tourism operators in Bethlehem in 2009 suggested that figures may have dipped again in 2009 due to the global recession, but were still stronger than 2003-2006.[13] However, Bethlehem still occupies an unusual position in West Bank tourism, with other cities such as Nablus and Jericho still attracting very small numbers of visitors and Ramallah's hotels and restaurants benefiting from the presence of international NGOs and governmental organisations in the city.

"The PA tourist minister was quoted in the same article citing hotel occupancy rates of 70%, as against 10% a few years earlier."

The short-term figures for Palestine coincide with the broader tourism statistics gathered by the Israeli government, which reports an ongoing recovery in air arrivals after the low which resulted from the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, reinforced by international travel concerns after 9/11. Israeli figures show a relatively stable or even growing quantity of 1.5-2 million visitors per year during the Oslo period, dropping to less than a million in the early 2000s but now heading for 1.5 million again.[14] While many of these visitors will, of course, remain in Israel, the fact that Ben Gurion airport is still a major entry point for visitors to Palestine suggests a recovery for these as well.

Press reports and anecdotal evidence suggests that the majority of visitors to the West Bank are Christian pilgrims, but that solidarity tourism is

also growing. Some solidarity or 'alternative' tour operators have reported anecdotally that numbers of independent visitors have increased – mainly individuals or small groups staying in the Old City of East Jerusalem, Bethlehem or Ramallah, and visiting other parts of the West Bank through day trips organised by local operators.[15]

Overall, therefore, it is probably fair to say that Palestine is an emerging, albeit niche, destination appealing to pilgrims, solidarity visitors and to people interested in studying Arabic or volunteering with youth, fairtrade, art and other civil society organisations. However, it could also be suggested that the resilience of an 'alternative' travel industry during even the darkest days of the Second Intifada has positioned Palestine well to be a destination where modern interests in responsible and sustainable tourism are well catered for, alongside traditional attractions such as historical sites, climate and cuisine.

However, it remains the case that very few mainstream operators offer any kind of access to Palestine. Until recently, the combination of FCO warnings and public perceptions made all but the occasional foray to East Jerusalem's main sites and possibly the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem commercially risky. But with the relaxation in 2010 of FCO and US State Department travel warnings (meaning that more types of travel insurance become valid in the West Bank), the situation could change. A few pilgrimage and hiking/wildlife specialists are starting to include the West Bank; the most notable of these is the Ramblers Association, which now offers 'Walking in Jerusalem,' a trip which incorporates the Old City, East and West Jerusalem, Israeli sites such as Masada, and Palestinian destinations including Qumran and Wadi Qelt. As many Palestinian tourism professionals note,[16] however, the Ramblers Association and most other package holidays use accommodation in Jerusalem and their contribution to the Palestinian economy is confined to entry fees, souvenir sales and daytime meals and snacks.[17]

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many visitors to Palestine still go as independent travellers, relying on word of mouth and volunteering or solidarity links for information. A small number travel with organised groups via Olive Co-operative (based in Manchester), a solidarity organisation founded in 2003 to take small groups to Palestine and sell fair trade goods, or Experience Tours, which operates in association with the UK branch of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. In 2010 Experience Tours planned two trips to the West Bank, in May and November.[18] Zaytoun CIC, the social enterprise which imports Fairtrade certified Palestinian olive oil from the West Bank, also regularly runs trips in October/November taking supporters to join the olive harvest and meet Palestinian producers. The student solidarity organisation Action Palestine runs tours for students during the summer months, although these often use homes and community centres as accommodation and therefore make limited contributions to the Palestinian economy. Finally, in the USA, the Birthright Unplugged group, which arose from the critical Jewish community, runs tours aimed at young Jewish people from the USA and Europe who question Zionist narratives.

Within the West Bank, a number of solidarity/pilgrimage tour operators based in Beit Sahour work with church and solidarity organisations in Europe and America to organise tours; the main examples are ATG, the Holy Land Trust and the Siraj Centre for Interfaith Dialogue. Because of the emphasis on tourism as a sector during the Oslo period, many Palestinians trained in tourist services; an increasing number of these are now trying to establish commercial businesses in the West Bank (rather than the more NGO-like style of ATG et al). Examples include Laila Asfoura's Laila Tours (Bethlehem) and Latifa Kayed's Dream Tours (unusually, based in Nablus). Some of these – including Dream Tours – have survived the down-turn in visitor numbers by offering travel booking services to Palestinians travelling out of the West Bank.[19]

Guidebooks

The guidebooks available to Palestine and Israel reflect changing attitudes towards Palestine. The range of information available to potential travellers in Palestine – or at least the West Bank – has increased in the last five years, and even mainstream travel guidebook publishers seem to be looking at Palestine with new eyes. This review of the guidebooks available is intended to give a snapshot of the resources available to international travellers planning to visit Palestine, and of the kind of information available to them.

There are currently two guidebooks written from a Palestinian perspective. The first of these is *Palestine & The Palestinians*, a substantial volume

produced and published by Beit Sahour-based ATG and offering a wide-ranging introduction to Palestinian history, politics, culture and travel, but which some tourists to Palestine have reported is better used as pre-trip reading rather than a daily guide, because of its size.[20] Despite going into a second edition, it never acquired a mainstream book distributor in Europe or the USA and therefore tends to be sold only through solidarity groups and specialist outlets. The second volume is Mariam Shahin's *Palestine: A Guide*, the second edition of which came out in 2007. It includes sections on culture, history, politics, nature etc, but offers little practical travel information and, even more than the ATG guide, is more of an introduction than a practical guide to travel in the West Bank. *Palestinian Walks*, by Ramallah-based landscape enthusiast and human rights lawyer Raja Shehadeh, intersperses descriptions of walks he has undertaken through the West Bank countryside with analysis of the impacts of occupation and settlements on the land. Again, the book is an inspiration and a source of background information rather than a practical guide to hiking the region's trails.

However, with growing interest in Palestine from Britain, the USA and continental Europe, new guides to Palestine look likely to appear soon. Respected UK guidebook brand Bradt published a practical guidebook to Palestine (East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza) in 2000, just a few months before the outbreak of the Second Intifada. Unsurprisingly, this was not repeated, but Bradt has recently commissioned a new guide to Palestine, due out in late 2011. Friends of Al Aqsa and Turath Publishing are also in the process of producing a guidebook to the West Bank, Jerusalem and Islamic sites, designed to appeal particularly to a Muslim audience.

Of the mainstream guidebooks on sale in the UK, the most widely available is the *Lonely Planet Guide to Israel & the Palestinian Territories*. It covers a range of cities and towns within the West Bank and does engage with the political situation, listing web addresses for peace and justice organisations and reflecting Palestinian as well as Israeli viewpoints. But its practical advice on Palestinian destinations is sometimes vague and imprecise, with limited accommodation and food listings and no maps for key cities such as Nablus. Despite the increased background coverage, the actual practical information on Palestine has improved little since late 1990s editions. Of the 112 maps in the March 2010 edition, 7 are of West Bank locations, 2 of Gaza and 9 of Jerusalem.

Rough Guide, another well-known range of travel guides, no longer publishes an 'Israel' guide. It seems to have decided to get around the issue of how to name an Israel/Palestine guide by offering a 'Rough Guide to Jerusalem,' with Jerusalem as a hub and 'excursion' advice for other destinations, including Bethlehem, Hebron and Jericho within the West Bank. A number of other guides, such as *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700, the Dorling Kindersley Eyewitness Guide to Jerusalem & the Holy Land (2007) and Every Pilgrim's Guide to the Holy Land* (not, apparently, updated since 1998) all avoid (deliberately or otherwise) the Israel/Palestine nomenclature issue by concentrating on the 'Holy Land', devoting themselves to religious sites (mainly those significant for Christians) and including West Bank destinations but largely ignoring 'political' issues.

Finally, there is a small range of guidebooks which adhere to a Zionist account of the region and its tourist sites. Frommers Israel isn't explicit in its position, but covers no West Bank destinations apart from a few Dead Sea beach resorts in illegal settlements, which it treats as part of Israel. The Insight and Bradt guides to Israel also both completely ignore the West Bank and its sites and are explicitly pro-Israeli in their presentation of the security situation and geography. The Bradt guide, for example, includes maps which show the Jordan Valley settlements as unquestioningly part of Israel, in defiance of international law.

Looking to the Future

With the advent of new 'peace talks' – however flawed - in summer 2010, the lifting of FCO travel warnings on the West Bank, and slowly increasing interest in Palestine from mainstream as well as 'alternative' tour operators and guidebook publishers, potential for growth in the Palestinian tourist industry seems to exist. However, a range of threats, as well as opportunities, could affect how this industry develops. Many of these are unique to the Palestinian situation of Israeli military occupation and neocolonialist settlement. Others are common to developing tourist industries

around the world, including in other countries in the Middle East.

The Double-Edged Sword of Tourism

Tourism is often seen by economic planners as a means of attracting hard currency and generating economic development. It is labour-intensive, creating many jobs, few of which demand complex skills or training, and it doesn't require expensive or complex high-technology investment.[21] Cultural tourism, in particular, may also seem an excellent way of asserting national cultural identities for new and emerging national governments such as the current Palestinian Authority.

However, many voices warn of the social, cultural and environmental damage which tourism can wreak if allowed to develop without proper regulation. Campaign groups such as Tourism Concern highlight the workers' rights abuses and ecological destruction which often accompany mass tourism.[22] As Jordanian academic and campaigner Rami Daher points out, "Tourism in the Middle East... is faced with many challenges such as the leakage of tourism revenues and benefits into First World multi-national agencies and enterprises. Yet tourism in the Middle East could also be the driving force for valuable opportunities leading to 'progress' and 'development.'"[23] Many of the articles in Daher's 2007 book on tourism in the Middle East cite examples where tourism development has ruined major cultural resources. In Antalya in Turkey, Aylin Orbasli describes how "one of the best-preserved historic quarters in Turkey, today has increasingly little to offer as a historic town as extensive retail use of the quarter has replaced the tranquillity and quality of the former residential quarters... buildings have been poorly restored, incorrectly rebuilt and modified to accommodate the new [tourist] uses."[24] Orbasli points out that craft traditions are dying out in many Middle Eastern countries while tourists buy mass-produced Asian 'ethnic' souvenirs[25]; a recent Palestinian variation on this narrative in seen in the struggle for survival of the last West Bank workshop producing genuine Palestinian kuffiyehs, as it is driven to the wall by cheap imports from China.[26]

The Gulf state of Oman is cited as an example where the state has sought to keep a tight control on tourism, focusing development on 'desirable' cultural, historical and archaeological tourists who are likely to know more about the country's customs and values (and spend more money). According to author Brigit Mershen, "It has been claimed [by the Omani Ministry of Information] that there is a 'selective strategy aimed at attracting the more affluent tourists from Europe and Asia, thus avoiding the negative impact of mass tourism.' The Omani authorities are aware that an invasion of tourists, ignorant of the customs of the country, could have a disturbing effect." The Director of Tourism at the Ministry of Commerce & Industry is quoted as saying: "We are not out to sell Oman on her fine beaches but rather to attract visitors interested in our heritage, history and archaeology."[27] Even in this case tourists have disturbed local residents, especially poorer and more excluded communities who, Mershen suggests, might benefit if they are given more say in proposed projects and helped to start income-generating projects.

According to Rami Daher, the attempts at more sensitive development in Oman are unusual in the Middle East. He highlights the example of Jordan where, he says, "[until] only recently, very little attention is directed to promoting Jordan's more recent heritage realities such as agricultural villages in the north, the vernacular, and urban and social heritage of various Jordanian towns such as Salt or Amman."[28] Many Middle Eastern states, he says, have developed tourism plans which "support the establishment of key international hotel chains... while small and medium-sized tourism endeavours such as hotel businesses in the form of 'bed and breakfast' or local family tourist businesses in both urban and rural areas are not encouraged or supported, or even included in national visions for tourism development in general."[29] This, Daher claims, runs counter to strong evidence that the small-scale, informal tourism sector – which utilises local skills and leaves some autonomy in local hands - has a higher economic multiplier effect than large international hotels, which tend to employ low-skilled labour at poor rates.

Finally, despite the potential for tourism – especially higher-income, middle-class historical and archaeological tours – to highlight the status of heritage and educate visitors on national histories and cultures, Guillot points out that an over-emphasis on culture for tourism's sake can lead to what he calls "hygienification", where historical sites are preserved for the benefit of

visitors and become irrelevant or even forbidden to the people who live in or near them.[30] The exclusion of indigenous people from areas designated as nature reserves - while 'eco-tourism' groups are permitted to enter – has been catalogued in Africa and Latin America.[31] But it has taken place in the Middle East – including Palestine, where West Bank author Raja Shehadeh has described the eviction of Bedouin households from areas around the Wadi Qelt classified by the Israeli administration as nature reserves but still open to leisure walkers and Israeli settlers.[32]

Sustainable Tourism in Palestine

Until now, many developments in Palestinian tourism have avoided falling into these traps. Although West Bank tourism development has included a casino complex at Jericho and some high-rise hotels in Ramallah, it is possible that the strong civil society sector in Palestine, and its involvement in international solidarity tourism throughout the Oslo and Second Intifada periods, has helped and will continue to help shape tourism development. Initiatives such as the Palestinian Initiative for Responsible Tourism (PIRT), an alliance of solidarity tourism operators, and its Code of Conduct of Tourism in the Holy Land, stress the need to observe the rights of communities and workers in the tourism industry, to protect the environment, and to work with both communities and tourists to minimise culture misunderstandings and maximise respectful relations.[33] Staff from solidarity and ethical tour operators such as ATG and the Holy Land Trust have played a leading role in international debates and conferences on solidarity and justice tourism in conflict-affected zones.[34] Ongoing examples of this commitment include a conference on 'Sustainable Rural Tourism in Palestine,' scheduled to take place at Bir Zeit University in November 2010, which could represent a progression from the urban solidarity tourism sector, centred mainly on the Bethlehem area, to rural parts of the West Bank where communities are in even greater need of economic support.[35]

As well as facilitating international visits to Palestine, some tour operators have also run capacity-building projects aimed at developing small-scale tourist infrastructure which benefits local people and maximises contact between visitors and local people. One example is ATG's role in a programme of investment in home-stay facilities, helping 120 families in Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Beit Sahour to add bedrooms and bathrooms to their homes to allow them to generate income by hosting tourists, while providing visitors with authentic experiences of staying in Palestinian homes.[36]

Some caveats must, however, be attached to this positive scenario. The main challenges faced by any sustainable tourism industry in Palestine are, of course, the Israeli military occupation and settlement programme, discussed below. Another issue in the Palestinian tourist industry is its domination by Christian groups, mainly based in the Bethlehem area. The list of signatories to the PIRT Code of Conduct, for example, consists mainly of explicitly or majority-Christian organisations based in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, the only exceptions being the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquity and the Arab Hotel Association.[37] There is nothing inherently wrong in the Christian community's high profile in the sector, which partly stems from the large numbers of Christian pilgrims who visit Bethlehem, and it should be noted that many of the 'Christians' working in the sector have secular and non-sectarian views. But in the religiously charged atmosphere of Palestine this does open the sector up to accusations, however unfounded, of bias, especially if it is also in a position of handling development aid funds as well as operating as a commercial sector, and it also tends to concentrate tourist income in the Bethlehem area.

Tourism and the Occupation

While the Palestinian tourist industry and planning authorities need to consider other countries' experiences in thinking about how tourism in Palestine can deliver maximum benefits to its people and environment, the industry faces a unique set of challenges which do not confront tourism sectors elsewhere.

The basic underlying fact of life in the West Bank is the Israeli military occupation. This means that Palestinian people, companies, organisations and local administrations have limited autonomy, and any attempts to regulate the tourism industry, shape its priorities or develop its future can be disrupted by Israeli actions. Tourism personnel can be arrested and detained, organisations closed down if they are perceived to be too 'political,' and hotels

raided or damaged. The Israeli authorities control all borders into Palestine and often stop internationals planning to visit the West Bank, whether as tourists, conference participants or NGO staff. The arbitrariness of Israeli decisions to allow internationals to enter or not is a potential deterrent to travellers who need to know if they will be admitted to their destination country. Many visits by internationals to the West Bank go smoothly, but the impression of unpredictability created by Israeli actions will continue to deter more mainstream travellers.

Rami Daher and other academics describe the problems of tourism developments planned by governments and large corporations, excluding ordinary people and privileging certain historical and cultural narratives. But the Palestinian situation has an extra layer of power relations. The kind of interventions questioned by Daher et al might be imposed by the Palestinian Authority or international donors and institutions, but their potential to affect daily lives is surmounted by the Israeli occupation. The role of Israel in displacing Bedouin communities from parts of the Southern West Bank designated as 'nature reserves' is mentioned above. But while a future Palestinian Authority *might* follow other regional administrations in privileging tourist-oriented cultural sites such as Hisham's Palace or the Church of the Nativity over more complex and recent Palestinian identities, the Israeli authorities are *already definitely* seeking to appropriate cultural entities for their own tourist industries and wider land seizure agenda. The 'Tower of David Museum' in the citadel of Jerusalem, for example, uses selective representation of facts and images to tell "a story with Israelite origins and an Israeli ending."[38] Streets in East Jerusalem have been renamed by the Israeli administration to give them an Israeli rather than a Palestinian identity and attract Israeli settlers,[39] while in 2009 the Israeli transport ministry announced plans to remove Arabic and English versions of place names from road signs within Israel (and possibly also inside the West Bank), replacing them with Hebrew versions.[40] Areas around the Old City of Jerusalem have been redesignated for tourist development and 'beautification' to highlight the city's Jewish past at the expense of its other histories,[41] while an archaeologically significant Muslim cemetery on the edge of the Old City has become the centre of a long-running battle over plans by the Los Angeles-based Wiesenthal Centre to build a 'Museum of Tolerance' on the site.[42]

As well as the appropriation of Palestinian heritage, the material occupation of the West Bank and the ongoing construction of settlements and settler roads also poses a major threat to Palestinian tourism. It is increasingly difficult to find a vista in the West Bank countryside which is not interrupted by the security fences, arclights and indentikit houses of an Israeli settlement, and the fenced-off sweep of raised settler roads cut through the landscape. The fragmentation of the West Bank into dozens of small enclaves separated by settlements and settler roads also threatens tourism, adding to travel time and therefore reducing time spent at sites or with local people. The Israeli settlement programme also threatens the viability of Palestinian tourism because of its effects on the natural environment, ruining parts of the landscape by dumping sewage and industrial waste into the Palestinian countryside,[43] damaging rural areas through attacks on olive groves, and appropriating 80% of West Bank water resources for settler and Israeli use.[44] In the southern West Bank, settlements and travel restrictions on Palestinian people and vehicles prevent Palestinians from accessing a third of the Dead Sea which falls within West Bank borders, either on their own account or in order to build up a Palestinian version of the Dead Sea spa tourism which has become popular in both Israel and Jordan.[45]

While many of the hundreds of checkpoints which used to halt traffic around the West Bank have now been removed, some of the largest remain, such as Huwarra checkpoint which still interrupts access to and from Nablus. Entry to the West Bank is now tightly controlled at major checkpoints on the Separation Wall such as Qalandia and Bethlehem which, while largely fluid and open to international travellers, represent a permanent threat to cut off access whenever the Israeli authorities decide. Trade checkpoints on the Wall, such as Jelameh near Jenin, are generally closed to travellers; international volunteers who have tried to use them have suffered detention of up to 11 hours, intensive questioning and the destruction of items such as laptop computers.[46]

According to some Palestinian commentators, the settlement grip on the West Bank may affect tourism even more severely in years to come. According to research by Daoud Hamoudi

of the Grassroots Palestinian Anti Apartheid Wall Campaign, plans developed by Israel, the USA and the World Bank could include further closures around Bethlehem, creating a special enclave with a Gaza-style permit system for internationals to enter. Surrounded by the Wall and settler roads, Bethlehem could only be entered via the main checkpoint on the Separation Wall and tourists would only be allocated permits if they were staying in Jerusalem or in hotels which already operate from settlements such as Gilo and Har Homa, which could spell an end to Bethlehem's indigenous hotel industry. An industrial zone funded as 'aid' by the French government, Hamoudi claims, may effectively become a factory area where Palestinian craftspeople would be employed at low rates by large Israeli companies to make mass-produced handcrafts for sale in Israeli settlement hotels.[47] Even without these dire predictions, Israeli-run tour companies pose an economic and cultural threat to Palestinian operators. Despite the healthy hotel occupancy rates reported for Bethlehem, the majority of visitors still come in large tour buses from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. They enter via a special section of the checkpoint, passing straight through a gap in the Wall, while Palestinians crossing have to use a metal structure reminiscent of a cattleshed. Most visitors are taken to the Church of the Nativity and Shepherds' Fields, and their only local expenditure is on souvenirs or snacks. Some stay long enough for lunch, but only around 30% stay overnight and long enough to visit other sights such as Herodion or Solomon's Pools, or places of contemporary significance such as Deheishe Refugee Camp. Very few speak to ordinary Palestinians or see Palestinian people as anything but bit-part players on the fringes of historical and religious sights. Indeed, according to some tour operators, some Palestinian souvenir shop owners pay large sums to Israeli tour guides to bring visitors who are not guaranteed to spend anything, with the net effect that they cost the Palestinian economy more than they contribute.[48]

The Israeli influence on visitors to Palestine and the conditions under which the Palestinian tourism industry operates is not static; new problems can present themselves at any time. Recent developments include the 'West Bank only' visas which started being stamped in international passports at the Allenby Bridge border crossing into the West Bank during summer 2009. The Israeli government addressed fears from its own tourist industry by announcing that these visas would only be allocated to visitors who stated that they only intended to visit the West Bank, and would not be given to tourists crossing from Jordan to visit Israel. But the visas have apparently been used by the Israeli authorities to restrict other internationals – including aid workers and academics – who have been based in the West Bank but who would normally also visit Jerusalem and other parts of Israel.[49] While on one hand this could benefit the Palestinian tourist industry, focusing tourists' time and expenditure on West Bank rather than Israeli destinations, the loss of Jerusalem would be a major loss to visitor itineraries, and the arbitrary allocation of Israel/West Bank or 'West Bank Only' visas are likely to be offputting for some tourists.

"Even without these dire predictions, Israeli-run tour companies pose an economic and cultural threat to Palestinian operators."

Conclusion

With its spectacular desert and olive-grove landscapes, its incredibly welcoming people and its cultural, historical and religious resources, Palestine should have a booming tourist industry. And with its strong history of civil society and the place which social justice and progressiveness have occupied in its resistance movements, this should be an industry shaped to provide equitable, sustainable, environmentally considerate income for all strata in society. The groundwork has been laid for this, in the solidarity tourism organisations which have endured through the tiny visitor numbers of the Second Intifada, and in their participation in international justice tourism networks and local capacity-building projects.

But, as ever in Palestine, Palestinians have little role in determining their own futures. With the potential for another flawed US-sponsored peace deal to be imposed on the Palestinians, leaving great tranches of their land and natural resources in the control of settlers and the Israeli state, the

Palestinian tourist industry will, at least for the moment, have to continue to try to function under crippling conditions. But with slowly increasing interest in visiting Palestine from people beyond the solidarity and religious communities, this could be a pivotal moment for the industry. As with the fair trade movement, which has gone from solidarity curio to mainstream in just half a decade, sustainable and just tourism has the potential to contribute significantly to the Palestinian economy, and deserves the support of solidarity organisations.

Notes

[1] Saul B. Cohen 1993: 'Gaza Viability: the need for enlargement of its land base.' IBRU Boundary & Security Bulletin, October 1993

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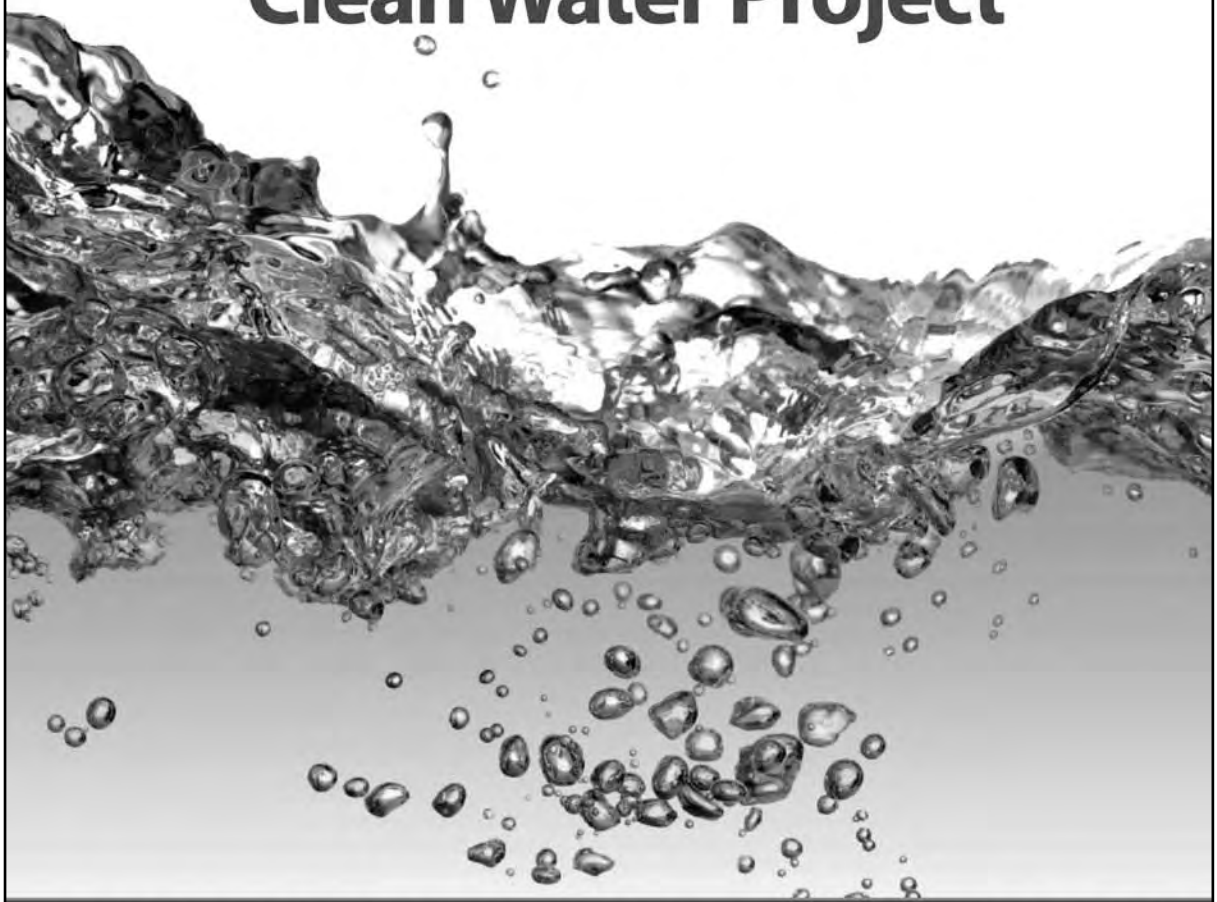

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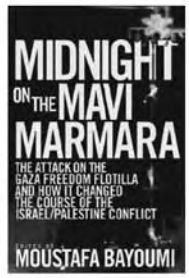

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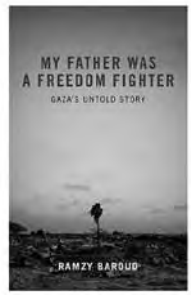

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Zaytoun and Agriculture in Palestine

Heather Masoud

Heather Masoud is Director of Zaytoun CIC. Heather went to Palestine in 2003 to join human rights observers accompanying farmers to harvest their fruit. The trip was a life changing one; after learning about the scale of injustice first hand, she became further involved. Heather has a Masters in Natural Resource Management and a long term interest in trade justice. In 2009, Heather won the Women in Ethical Business Award. www.zaytoun.org

Since the outbreak of the second Intifada (Palestinian uprising) against the Israeli occupation in 2000 the economy in Palestine has spiralled into to a severe crisis. Israeli restrictions on the movement of goods and people in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the construction of the illegal Annexation Wall have severely disrupted Palestinian employment, production and access to markets. This has had a serious and negative impact on Palestinian livelihoods and this decline was further accelerated in Gaza after Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006. Hamas's election resulted in a complete closure on Gazan population by Israel and the wider international community.

The United Nations reports that an estimated 46 per cent of the population are now food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity, with poverty rates expected to rise to more than 70 per cent of the population.[1] Agriculture has become an important survival strategy for Palestinians. Many Palestinians, who have lost their employment in Israel or through the down turn of the Palestinian economy, have returned to farming as one of the few sources for food security and income. According to the World Bank, the agriculture sector has emerged as one of the key levers of growth and accounts for a quarter of economic output.[2] The agricultural sector employed 16 per cent of Palestinians in 2005 compared to 13 per cent in 1999, and provides job opportunities for 40 per cent of Palestinians employed in the informal sector.[3]

Palestinian soil, climate and geographical diversity lend themselves to producing year round harvests and has great potential to satisfy export markets as well as the domestic population. The practice and policies of the Israeli occupation curtail this potential and, as on the UK supermarket shelf, it is the illegal Israeli settlements who currently benefit from the export markets. According to the website of the Israeli settlements in the Jordan Valley, their agricultural production is worth 500 million NIS per year (about US$130 million) from a cultivated area about 33,000 dunams (33km sq) and most of their agricultural produce is being exported.[4]

Palestinian farmers face a myriad of problems in terms of cultivating their land and accessing markets. In the West Bank farmers face restrictions of movement, loss of land from the building of the illegal settlements and their infrastructure, lack of access to water resources and violence from settlers and the Israeli army. Farmers in Gaza similarly face restriction of movement and lack of access to water and suffer attack from the Israeli army when fishing and when farming near the border. Since 2006 suffering from the Israeli blockade intensified stopping goods and people going into or leaving Gaza.

The olive oil sector is a key element of the Palestinian agricultural sector. There are an estimated 100,000 families depending to some extent upon olive trees for their livelihoods, and in good years,

this sector provides about three million days of work.[5] The olive oil sector is crucial, as it is an important source of food security, labour and cash income for large segments of the West Bank population. As the United Nations reports, olive is a source of hope for the impoverished Palestinian community, and the olive industry contributes over 118 million USD to the economy in a good crop year.[6]

Olive production is an important parameter in the economy and lifestyle of the people with ninety percent of the olives produced in the West Bank processed locally in one of the 281 village olive presses. The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture cite that Palestinian production of olive oil is about 36,000 tons of oil and 30% of this is consumed locally. Olive trees occupy approximately 50% of the cultivated land in the West Bank and in Gaza nearly 80% of cultivated land consists of fruit trees.

According to the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture a productive olive tree is uprooted [by the Israeli military and settlers] every minute in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to their figures more than half a million trees, 80% of which are olive trees, have been uprooted by the Israeli authorities since the eruption of the first intifada in late 1987. The Annexation Wall, the route of which was ruled as illegal by the International Court of Justice in 2004,[7] has been one of the primary causes of destruction of large numbers of olive trees. The Wall annexes the major illegal settlements in the West Bank onto Israel and also takes key water resources and prime agricultural land. The route of the wall does not follow the 1967 'green line' but cuts deep into the West Bank which expands Israel's theft of Palestinian land and resources. In total, 85% of the Wall is located in the West Bank. When completed, the Wall will de facto annex some 46% of the West Bank, isolating communities from their land and from each other. A swathe of land 200 metres wide has to be bulldozed in order to build the Wall and an additional 50 metres is needed for the construction of settler-only roads. The wall has cut off thousands of acres of agricultural land from the farmers particularly in the northern West Bank. The wall also separates over 200,000 Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem, who will be totally isolated from the rest of the West Bank. 98% of the settler population will be included in the de facto annexed areas. The Gaza Strip has been subject to its own separation since 1994 when a wall was build around the entire area which isolates it, and a population of 1.5 million, from the rest of the world.

In order to cement the separation of Palestinian land from its people into a permanent proposition the Israeli government has a policy where 'abandoned' land, which is not worked by its owners for more than 3 years, can be seized by the State. This policy makes permanent its destruction the Palestinian agricultural economy and there is a risk of a further refugee population being created as a rural community can not survive without its agricultural land.

"According to their figures more than half a million trees, 80% of which are olive trees, have been uprooted by the Israeli authorities since the eruption of the first intifada in late 1987."

The 2009 Palestinian olive harvest was a poor one, the worst in 30 years according to the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees, producing only 20% of the expected yield. For the West Bank farmers it was climatic conditions which put additional pressure onto their resources as there have been successive years of drought and the majority of agriculture is rain fed. In Gaza the blockade has had a negative impact on agriculture and the olive industry and the 2009 harvest was significantly worse due to the war and siege. The owners of Gazan presses face additional difficulties in trying to get spare parts, which often have to be smuggled in through the tunnels due to the blockade. The olive production in Gaza declined by 80% in 2009 compared to previous years. Four sq km of olive groves were completely destroyed during the Israeli war on Gaza at the end of 2008. According to Mohammad Al Agha, the Minister of Agriculture in the Gaza Government, the Israelis bulldozed about 130 sq km during the years from 1967 to 2005, mostly olive groves. Agha said that the shelling, white phosphorous and other chemical weapons used in the recent war had a hugely detrimental effect on the fruit yield. The decline in olive oil production caused prices to rise steeply last year. According to a senior official at the Ministry of Agriculture, the Gaza Strip has

produced 200 tons of oil this year, compared with 1500 produced in normal years. The same official said that 3250 tons are needed for Gaza to meet the requirements of domestic consumption.

Gaza used to be one of the markets for West Bank farmers to sell their products but the Israeli policies which have completely separated the Palestinian populations have made this trade impossible; leaving farmers with a need to access markets and consumers unable to satisfy their needs through local consumption.

Although there has been an overall increase in olive production in the past few years many small-scale farmers are not able to make a decent living. There has been long term underinvestment in the agricultural sector which results in low productivity and consequently low profitability of olive oil production. The already narrow profit margin has decreased even further with the closure policies, which have hampered farmers from accessing domestic, particularly Gaza and West Bank towns, and Israeli markets. This marketing problem has been compounded by the drastic drop in demand from Jordan and Israel. The Jordanian olive oil sector which, by Royal decree, has been increasing its own production capacity does not need to import from Palestine any longer. Over the last decade Israeli imports of Palestinian olive oil have also steeply declined and are predicted to continue to do so as the Wall is completed and flow of goods and people stops. Oxfam reported that many small-scale farmers in the West Bank have ended up with tons of unsold stocks of olive oil due to lack of market access. Not being able to sell their produce, many poor farmers have depleted their savings, sold their assets and slipped into debt.

An issue which affects Palestinian farmers in all areas is that of access to water and this long running problem has been exacerbated by recent years of low rain fall. The main problem is Israel's policies which make it difficult and expensive for Palestinian to access their own water resources. This difficulty in accessing water results in stark differences in consumption levels between Israelis and Palestinians; the average Palestinian consumption is about 70 litres a day per person (100 litres per person is the daily recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the average Israeli daily consumption is around 300 litres. In some rural communities Palestinians survive on far less than even the average 70 litres, in some cases barely 20 litres per day, the minimum amount recommended by the WHO for emergency situations response.[8]

"Although there has been an overall increase in olive production in the past few years many small-scale farmers are not able to make a decent living. There has been long term underinvestment in the agricultural sector which results in low productivity and consequently low profitability of olive oil production."

Access to water resources by Palestinians is controlled by Israel. The West Bank water resources are the Mountain Aquifer, the only source of underground water in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, of which Israel uses more than 80 per cent, as well as all of the surface water available from the Jordan River of which Palestinians are denied any share. In the Gaza Strip, the only water resource, the southern end of the Coastal Aquifer, is insufficient for the needs of the population but Israel does not allow the transfer of water from the West Bank to Gaza. The aquifer has been depleted and contaminated by over extraction and by sewage and seawater infiltration and 90-95 per cent of its water is contaminated and unfit for human consumption.

When travelling in Israel and Palestine the unequal access to water between Palestinians and Israelis is plainly visible to the eye; in the Galilee where lush green kibbutz agriculture is side by side with less abundant agricultural production from Palestinian citizens of Israel and in the West Bank where irrigated gardens and swimming pool in settlements border villages where the tap runs dry. The access to natural water resources mentioned above is one issue but the occupational forces and the settlers go further and there are widely documented cases of Palestinian water cisterns being destroyed so that rain water capture is also thwarted.

In Amnesty International's water report of 2009 a farmer, Mahmoud al-'Adam, was interviewed about the destruction on his land: 'We invested a lot of money and worked very hard on this project. This is good land and it was a very good project. We put in a lot of thought to shape the terraces and build the cisterns in the best way, to make the best use of the land, and we planted trees which only need little water, because this is a dry area. The cisterns had a capacity of about 80-100m3 each; even if there was not enough rain this year to fill them, the water harvested was useful for the saplings; they were growing well. You can see how well the saplings were doing. But they destroyed everything; they went up and down several times with the bulldozer and uprooted everything; there is hardly a sapling still standing. My cousin received a call at 6.30 in the morning from another farmer saying the army was bulldozing the land. We rushed here but the soldiers did not allow us to get close. There were some 25 army jeeps and three bulldozers, two big ones. There were many soldiers and some foreign workers in plain clothes, from Asia. We asked the soldiers to show us demolition orders but they didn't. We tried to reason with them but they didn't listen. It is very painful for me every time to come here and see the destruction; everything we worked for is gone. Why would anyone want to do this? What good can come from such destruction? These orchards are far from where the army is building the wall; this is what is left of our land; Israel already confiscated much of it a long time ago, and more recently they took yet more land to build the wall; why also come here and destroy this?"

> **"You can see how well the saplings were doing. But they destroyed everything; they went up and down several times with the bulldozer and uprooted everything; there is hardly any saplings still standing."**

Commenting on the destruction, an Israeli army spokesman was reported to have said: 'It's a routine action. It's nothing special. We do these activities every day in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]… We are very strict about these things. If you let one person do it unauthorized all the others will come after him.'

In reference to the spokesman's referral to 'unauthorized' building it is important to note that Palestinians very rarely get granted permission to build on their own land so whether it is house demolitions in Jerusalem or agricultural destruction in the West Bank the Israeli army will often use this blanket response.

As touched on earlier the route of the annexation wall is separating Palestinians from their water resources Not only is this devastating for farmers today but it also dictates that any future Palestinian water use will need Israeli permission.

Due to the loss of its traditional markets (Jordan and Israel), which led to a marketing crisis in 2003/4, the Palestinian olive industry has been exploring new and potentially significant markets, particularly the European Union, the world's leading consumer of olive oil. The Palestinian olive oil is of exceptional quality and there is a long history of cultivation; The International Olive Oil Council cites Palestine and Syria as being the birth place of the cultivated olive some 6000 years ago. Palestinian olive oil has strong export potential: international olive oil experts confirm that Palestinian olive oil is aromatic and, if well produced, can be considered as a unique and excellent product able to compete with the best oils from all over the world.[9]

New market access is essential for Palestinian farmers as all Palestinian agricultural production faces problems in terms of market access; both domestic and international. Israeli occupation policies of closure include movement restrictions caused through the intricate system of checkpoints and barriers and lead to high transport and distribution costs, difficulties in committing to specific delivery schedules and reliance on Israeli distributors. Uncertainty and inefficiency, caused by movement restrictions, severely hamper the marketing potential of Palestinian goods. At a domestic level this is destructive to the Palestinian economy and livelihoods and means it is often cheaper and easier for Palestinians to buy Israeli produce rather than their own.

In response to the difficulties of the Israeli occupation Palestinian farmers have used fair trade as a vehicle of entering new foreign markets to some success in the last 5 years. Also because farmers have not been able to afford fertilisers the oil is relatively easy to certify as organic.

The medjoul date is another crop which is showing good export potential from Palestine. The Jordan Valley has the perfect climatic conditions to produce this fruit; to date this has been something of a curse for Palestinians as these conditions have been seized upon by the illegal settlements expanding in this area and producing export crops. The medjoul date is Israel's leading fruit export. In 2009 The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees funded a processing facility which has the capacity to store 600 tons of medjoul dates and has started working with international fair trade partners to market this product. There have been successful campaigns in Europe which have coupled the calls for boycott of Israeli settlement products and the medjoul date has been targeted in the Muslim community, especially over Ramadan.

Zaytoun CIC was established to create a market for fairly traded Palestinian produce. Since its inception in 2004, they have enabled Palestinian olive oil farmers to access the UK market by importing over 180 tons of olive oil, as well as products such as medjoul dates, Nablusi olive oil soap, za'atar, couscous and almonds. Our trade with the Palestinian people has brought well over £1.5 million to their economy. Tapping into high value export markets, particularly fair trade and/or organic markets, and creating a specifc marketing niche for Palestinian oil is one strategy for producers to compensate for high production and distribution costs. Supporting the sales of agricultural products such as extra virgin olive oil and medjoul dates will offer a lifeline for small-scale Palestinian farmers, whose livelihoods will remain vulnerable for as long as occupation remains. The UK Department for International Development, which has stated that "Poverty in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is a product of occupation and conflict." Only by ending the Occupation can the root causes of poverty be addressed.

The olive tree is also a poignant symbol of the Palestinians' connection to their land; the longevity of the olive tree sees farmers planting for future generations and trees are passed down through families. *Abu Suleiman, one of the Zaytoun Palestinian farmers producing the oil says he and his colleagues are delighted that their oil will be available in the UK*: "The olive trees root and anchor us in our land, provide a sense of belonging, home and hope, investing in olive oil is investing in our future."

Notes

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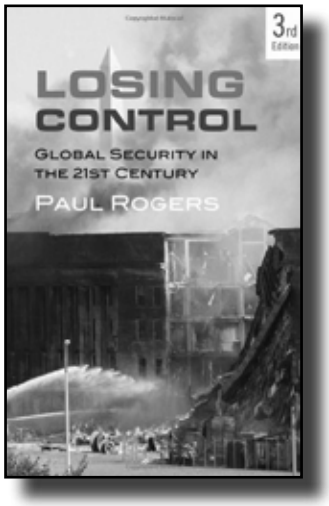
Losing Control: Global Security in the Twenty-First Century

By Paul Rogers

PlutoPress, 2010

ISBN 9780745329376

pp 220, RRP £18.99



Losing Control thoroughly outlines major aspects of the leading security paradigm, as purveyed by the United States across the globe, as one which suppresses a disadvantaged majority and benefits a wealthy minority. This paradigm, which he refers to as 'liddism', pursues security through creating social barriers and keeping a 'lid' on dissent and anti-elite activity. Rogers asserts that the dominant paradigm, this liddistic paradigm of suppression by any means to attain the security as an end, is counter productive and ultimately dangerous because it cannot sustain itself. As an alternative, Rogers suggests a paradigm that considers the root causes of security problems including a fundamentally anti-democratic set of social circumstances and environmental involvement from Britain as a leader in policy and international diplomacy for future centuries.

Rogers describes what he calls a 'violent peace' as emanating from this paradigm. This violent peace, although it clearly creates some peaceful space for the privileged in ruling nation-states; private spaces such as gated and intentional spaces, and other exclusive territorialities, in a way which bottlenecks grievances about the status quo. This bottlenecking of grievances, according to him, undermines the quest for security and negatively affects the quality of life for all. The creation of security in this manner, according to Rogers, thus stymies the rationale for implementing the leading liddist security approach to begin with. The social and political situation the world faces demonstrates clearly the need for new ideas and approaches to pursuing and obtaining security. *Losing Control* speculates about the possibility of security being a truly public good. Beyond this speculation, Rogers seems to imply further that security is only attainable when understood as a public issue at-large for the entire world's population; that including the ruling class minority and the majority encompassing both the relatively and truly poor. In other words, both the minority and majority have a shared interest in security grievances and it must be addressed from both the majority point of view and the ruling minority also.

Should the paradigm shift from liddistic security means, to a sustainable security paradigm; politicians, activists, and intellectuals would better appreciate and ultimately embrace the security issues and creative approaches to poverty, marginalisation, and environmental degradation. Rogers specifically comments on, "the need to link this to thinking on international security so that the prevailing paradigm of western elite maintaining its security, if need be by military means, is recognised as not just unsustainable but actually self-defeating" (p10). In other words, those who want to attain global, national, regional, or local securities should reject the current approaches, theories, and methods related to security and instead adopt an approach that sees the interests of the minority and majority as not only reconcilable but rather, fundamentally inseparable.

Returning to the issues of a 'violent peace', with regards to these terms, Rogers refers to a sort of quasi-peace riddled with threats of biological weapons, wild card usage of proliferated nuclear weapons, and sub-national terror threats. Such a violent peace comes forth from the way in which the Cold War ended. Despite what is often assumed to be a Cold War victory for the West, Rogers posits that no such Cold War victory took place but rather that the West brokered a re-configuration that reworked Cold War security threats into a different format. This different format provokes the development of proxy wars, the aforementioned threats of biological weapons, rogue nuclear weapons, terrorism, and anti-elite violence. In others words, we have not really *secured* a legitimate victory but have rather shifted the threat from the former Soviet Union into numerous smaller, albeit possibly more volatile, threats including rogue states and sub-national political actors, often referred to as terror

threats. Rogers writes, "the danger of an all-out nuclear war between two superpower alliances has diminished, but the prospects for a stable route to a world in which nuclear weapons are abolished or are even effectively controlled are, on present trends, minimal" (p57). Rogers therefore suggests a secondary paradigm shift away from the assumption of a Cold War victory to an understanding of complexities that not only diminish political and security-oriented victories, but actually render such a victory null.

Several additional facets explored by Rogers include competition that the United States, in the search for global prowess over competitors such as Europe, Britain, and Russia, faces. France, he claims, seeks the development of an increasingly coherent set of European influences and interests in the world arena (p69). Despite the presence of fractal security threats, or a 'jungle of snakes' as he refers to these threats, and strong competitors gaining economic, representational, and political strength, Rogers believes that the United States will continue to dominate the global political system thorough the entirety of the present century. This means, unfortunately, a continued 'violent peace' for the next several decades, at least. He writes in this regard: (p77):

"Even so, there is essentially a westernised world system now taking hold in a unipolar world in which one state, the US is dominant. It will be possible 'to keep the violent peace'. It is a comforting view but it is wrong."

However, this sort of dominance should not be confused with colonisation.

The other unique contributions Rogers makes in *Losing Control* includes the usage of the term 'military-industrial-academic' complex, which makes reference to the endemic ideological crisis that the current global situation, economic and political, entails (p76). He also brings the growth of sub-nationals like Hamas, Zapatistas, and The Shining Path into focus with regards to their relevance to political marginalisation and increasingly stark economic chasms.

Overall, *Losing Control* seeks to raise security standards, rather than jeopardize them. Security, Rogers argues, is a mutual and shared interest. Security through domination however, de-democratises global political processes and further entrenches the divide between the global North and global South. In summary, Rogers argues that the current security paradigm unjustly privileges one superpower, namely the United States at the detriment of the world, while similarly privileging short-term approaches, which ultimately fail. What makes the delivery of this message distinct from others like it, is Rogers' notable high level of both military, historical and environmental knowledge which make this book on contemporary global security suitable both for the general reader, and for those interested not only in Rogers' own field of Peace Studies but in environmental law and military science also.

Reviewed by Dr. Jeanine Pfahlert,
Al Akhawayn University, Morocco

Hamas in Politics
Democracy, Religion, Violence
By Jeroen Gunning
London: Hurst & Company, 2009
ISBN 9781850658764
pp 320, £20

The Palestinian political and militant group Hamas has been so demonized by the international community as violent, fanatical 'terrorists' that it is difficult to gain a more nuanced picture of their ideology, policies and aims. To date, there have been several insightful books in English on Hamas (for example, Robinson 1997; Hroub 2000; Tamimi 2006) which seek to present a more balanced picture as a counterweight to western sensationalizing. Nonetheless, there is still a significant gap between the mythology of Hamas and its more complex reality. This latest volume by Jeroen Gunning looks at Hamas in terms of democracy, religion and violence.

It is a useful, original and rigorous addition to the literature.

Rather than focusing solely on the more controversial aspects of Hamas' practice, such as suicide attacks against Israeli civilians or the supposedly 'oppressive' treatment of women, Gunning sets out to contextualize Hamas' ideology and its activities – social, political and military – within its own setting and the particular constraints it faces. Hamas, as he says, 'cannot be reduced to its use of violence'. One of the key elements, as he stresses, is its ability to change and evolve in response to changing circumstances. Hamas is a pragmatic organization. By analyzing it from a variety of perspectives, in terms of its political philosophy, the question of authority, the peace process and its relationship with other Palestinian political groups and also the larger public, Gunning is able to draw interesting and genuinely illuminating conclusions. Part of the value of his book lies in the many in-depth interviews he has conducted with leaders and members of Hamas, both inside the occupied territories and abroad. His valuable, and I think unique, first-hand research entitles him to insist on a more nuanced and subtle approach to what is often regarded as a 'thorn in the side' of peace negotiations.

The book starts with a discussion of how best to study Hamas and then provides a brief overview of its origins, as a branch of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, mainly concerned with religious and social welfare activities. With the start of the first intifada in 1987, however, Hamas emerged as a militant resistance group. Following the creation of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 and the holding of elections, Hamas also developed a political strand. After boycotting the first general election in 1996, the party engaged in intensive grassroots activism and mobilization and, in the 2006 election, swept to an unexpected victory. My own research with women in the West Bank confirms the effectiveness of Hamas' work with otherwise marginalized sectors of society. Many women reported that they voted for Hamas because it gave a space for women and also presented a more moral vision, in contrast to the failure and corruption of the former ruling party Fatah. There was also pride in the party's democratic behaviour.

Gunning situates his study within broader theoretical understandings of democracy, originating in western political thought. He addresses the debate on the compatibility between Islam and democracy by subjecting both terms to scrutiny and considering them in relation to Hamas' structure of authority. While Hamas 'recognizes that the Shari'ah is primarily a set of general principles, it acknowledges that it is not a sufficient source of law'. Gunning defines Hamas' system as 'neither a democracy nor a theocracy but a hybrid, in which citizens have the sovereignty to elect who legislates and rules over them, and God has the sovereignty regarding morality and the principles on which legislation is to be based'. As he says, although 'Hamas roots its political theory in Islam, it is also indebted to Western political theory'. He concludes that 'a sufficient number of Hamas' practices have come to conform to aspects of democracy'.

It would be impossible to discuss Hamas without reference to the group's use of violence and its attitude towards the peace process. While many in the outside world see Hamas as a 'total spoiler', intent on Israel's destruction and the re-establishment of a Palestinian state in the whole of pre-1948 Palestine, Gunning illustrates how Hamas has tended to restrict its violence to Israelis and even there the violence has been selective and carefully targeted. The notable exception were the violent clashes that took place in Gaza between Hamas and Fatah in June 2007. The fact that Hamas has agreed to and abided by several ceasefires is an indication that, far from seeking to reclaim the whole of historic Palestine, the group may be capable of compromise.

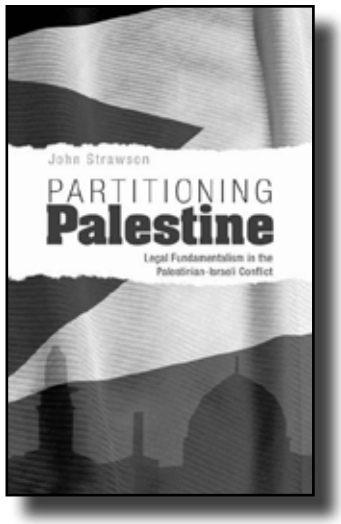
By analyzing public opinion surveys, Gunning illustrates how Hamas' popularity has risen or declined, in terms of its militant activities, its resistance against the Israeli occupation and its success in various electoral processes. He shows how Hamas has built alliances with other Palestinian factions, including leftist ones. While there has been an assumption that Hamas oppresses women, for example by 'imposing' on them the wearing of the hijab, Hamas women argue that 'the hijab enables women to operate more freely in a male-dominated public space, while at the same time averting social corruption'. In the 2006 election, women campaigned, voted and were elected to the Palestinian Legislative Council; according to Jamila al-Shanti, one of the elected women, quoted by Gunning, 'there are traditions that say that a woman should take a secondary role…but that is not Islam. Hamas will scrap many of these traditions'. Hamas leaders

tend to derive their legitimacy not from religion but from being elected by the people; most of them are well-educated professionals.

Clearly, Israel and the international community have some responsibility for the current plight of Palestinians in Gaza and the lack of progress in the peace process. Rather than treating Hamas as a 'total spoiler', Gunning recommends that the west should engage with the pragmatists in the party. It is advice they would do well to heed if there is to be significant progress in this long-standing and intractable conflict.

Reviewed by Dr. Maria Holt,
University of Westminster

Partitioning Palestine, Legal Fundamentalism in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict
By John Strawson
Pluto Press 2010
ISBN 978 0 7453 2323 7
264 Pages, RRP £21.99



John Strawson's *Partitioning Palestine* is written with the express belief that the international community has a responsibility to implement, by force if necessary, a partition of Palestine. It aims to provide a sketch of the legal landscape of the conflict that would sustain such a partition. In particular, its analysis of the UN partition plan of 1947 has many important lessons. However, in order to sustain the legal narrative of partition, the author turns a blind eye to the ethnic nature of the Israeli democracy, minimises the legal rights of the Palestinian refugees, and tries to talk as little as possible about Jerusalem. All in all, and perhaps despite the author's best efforts, this legal history of the conflict reveals that partition was never the only option on the table, nor should it be.

The subject matter of the book is the key legal documents in the history of the conflict, especially the League of Nations mandate for Palestine (1922), The UN partition resolution (1947), and the Oslo agreements (1993-99). But the remit is wider – Strawson aims to provide a historical narrative into which these documents fit. His point of departure is the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the Israeli wall in the West Bank (2004). According to this landmark ruling, not only the wall, but also all Israeli settlements were considered in breach of international law, as they contradict Israel's obligations as the occupying power under the Geneva Convention. It also ruled that Israel must respect the rights of the Palestinians to self-determination. Strawson takes this decision further – for him, this is an inherently balanced decision, which accepts the legitimacy of Israel, while simultaneously denies it any territorial claim on the territories occupied since 1967.

Strawson's idea of maintaining the balance is by depicting the Zionists as the good guys until 1948, and as the bad guys after 1967. Until 1948, Zionism is a benign movement, acting within the parameters of the international community of the time. The Arab objections to Zionism had no foundation, at least in law, and were marked by overt anti-Semitism. After 1967, Israel acts 'ruthlessly' as a colonial power in the occupied territories; its legal positions are described as 'absurd', and its leaders display racist attitudes. Such a neat division between pre-1948 Zionism and post-1967 Israel, lends legitimacy to Israel in its pre-1967 borders, while denying Israel any right over East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza.

The key event in this narrative is the UN partition resolution of 1947. For Strawson, the Arab and Palestinian rejection of that decision was a mistake that needs to be confronted and re-thought. For him, this was not merely a tactical mistake; many would agree that, in hindsight, it is likely that the Palestinians would have fared better if they had accepted partition. Rather, Strawson's point is that the Arab position lacked legal foundation: 'it was not the intention of partition to dispossess the Palestinians…[I]t is

thus a myth that the source of the problem was a legal decision to hand over part of Palestine to the Jews at the expense of the Palestinians" (p. 5).

Indeed, some of the Arab arguments at the time seem inherently weak. One common theme was the association of Zionism and communism; Strawson notes that these distant arguments undermine the current contention, all too easily made, that reduces Israel to the role of an American stooge. Another claim, still heard today, is that Judaism is a religion, not a nation. As Strawson rightly points out, this argument fails because the sense of national identity is subjective, and cannot be imposed or denied by others. It is also evident that the Arab representatives weaved quite a few biblical references, and made some explicit anti-Semitic references, which were not uncommon at the time, even so soon after the Holocaust.

But the key argument against partition was that it went against the wishes of the Arab majority of the population in Palestine. For this reason, the Arabs rejected the legality of the British mandate of 1922, which had the explicit and primary purpose of promoting a Jewish national home, at a time when the Jewish community was no more than 15% of the total. Similarly, in 1947 the Arabs claimed that the principle of self-determination is enshrined in the Charter of the UN, thereby making partition against the wishes of the majority of the current population, illegal. Strawson refutes this key argument in a rather off-handed manner, claiming that self-determination was in political currency, but was not yet enshrined in international law, and the UN charter still includes references to people who do not govern themselves, i.e., under colonial administration. In either case, whether or not the decision was legal, it was definitely undemocratic.

Since the UN partition resolution was legal, continues Strawson, the state of Israel was acting in self-defence in the 1948 war. This leads him to the matter of the refugees, in what is bound to be the most controversial chapter in the book. Strawson devotes an entire chapter to refute the claim that the refugees were expelled as part of a Zionist plan. In this chapter Strawson really struggles against the weight of the evidence, and his arguments are muddled. He accepts that a significant number of Palestinians were directly expelled by the Jewish forces, that several massacres did occur, and that it is likely that many more Palestinians fled as a result of this violence. He also recognizes the existence of Plan D, a plan that ordered the expulsion of all the population in any Arab settlement that offered armed resistance. But for him, all this was part of a war of self-defence (he fails to note that expulsions began well before the Israeli declaration of Independence and the invasion on the Arab armies in May 1948), and the expulsion of the Palestinians was chiefly motivated by military considerations. There were individual breaches of the international law of war, but it was not 'ethnic cleansing'.

As Strawson seems to admit, this question of 'ethnic cleansing' is not primarily a legal question. It is not clear at all whether the existence of a Zionist plan to expel the Palestinians has any bearing on the rights of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes. These are barely touched upon. He minimises the impact of UN resolution 194 that calls for the return of the refugees at the earliest possible date, claiming that it is modified by the clause that requires them to live in peace with their neighbours. For him, this clause requires the returning refugees to recognise the state of Israel: this is far-fetched, as an ordinary reading of this clause would simply mean that they would not use physical violence against the Jewish population. Strawson also cites examples, and there are many, of forced population transfers which have not been addressed by the international community. There are, however, also examples of refugees who quite recently did get restitution of their property and citizenship, most prominently the Jews who fled from Eastern European countries at the end of the Second World War. In any case, the international community had acted on the matter of the Palestinian refugees, in the form of UN resolution 194, which is as binding as the partition resolution that granted legitimacy to the creation of a Jewish state.

What Strawson fundamentally fails to address is the question of the Jewish nature of the Jewish state. He pokes fun at the Arab League proposal from 1946 for a unitary democratic state, which would have ensured Arab political domination through limitations on Jewish immigration, naturalisation, and a cap on Jewish representation to a third of the parliament. He compares this Arab anti-democratic proposal with the exemplary Israeli democracy, in which, so he claims, the domination of the Jewish population is not enshrined in any basic law. This comparison is naïve at best. Israel has always reconciled its 'Jewishness' and its democratic tradition by controlling demography. The Law of

Return ensured free Jewish immigration, while the 1948 expulsion, whether planned or ad hoc, kept the majority of the Palestinians out. Since 1967, the supposed temporality of the occupation allowed Israel to deny citizenship to Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. In 2003, it has passed a specific law against the naturalisation of the residents of the occupied territories who are married to Israeli citizens. There is no formal cap on Palestinian representation in parliament, but the laws on immigration and naturalisation place an informal cap. Strawson also makes here, a factual mistake: he claims that under Israeli law, only parties that incite to racism are not allowed to run for the Knesset (p. 91); in fact, the Parties Law (1992) also disqualifies any party which rejects, in the party's goals or activities, the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish, democratic state. Are these laws so different from the laws of the 'democratic' state proposed by the Arab League in 1946?

Like Strawson, I do not think that Zionism is inherently evil, or even racist, inasmuch as it reflects a Jewish national identity and attachment to Eretz Israel. The problem is that, as famously put by Ghada Karmi, the land 'was married to someone else'. The existence of the Palestinians, and their attachment to the same land, simply prevents the translation of the Jewish national identity into a state permanently dominated by Jews, except by non-democratic means. This was true in 1922, in 1948, and it is true today, when, in spite of constant Jewish immigration, and in spite of denying the refugees the right to return, Jews form only a slight majority in the borders of mandate Palestine.

So, given the legal history of the conflict, what are the options for the future? Strawson's book paves the legal ground for a future UN partition resolution, on the basis of the International Court of Justice advisory notice, that would divide the land into a Jewish state and a Palestinian state in the territories occupied since 1967. However, it will to have to give much more serious consideration to the rights of the refugees, as well as the rights Israeli settlers will have acquired as individuals through prolonged residency in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. It would also have a strong federal element. It is worthwhile to note that even UN resolution 181, chiefly remembered as 'the partition plan', has envisaged a remarkably 'soft' partition. According to the proposal, each state was to be made of several disparate regions, with the two states bound in an economic union and open borders. Jerusalem was to have an international status. It also recommended strict guidelines on the drafting of the constitutions of the two states, as the status of the very substantial Arab minority (30%) within the proposed Jewish state was a matter for international concern. Moreover, it is worth remembering that some within the UNSCOP committee rejected partition in favour of a federal state.

In the beginning of the book, the author posits that that the legal history of the conflict does not dictate one singular meaning, but offers a plurality of possibilities. The term 'Jewish national home' offers such plurality of possibilities. Strawson's book leaves no doubt that the international community had endowed legitimacy on this term since 1922, and that any future solution will have to accommodate the national identity of the Jews who live in Israel/Palestine and of world Jewry. But this does not necessarily mean a Jewish state. As Herbert Samuel, a Zionist and the first British High Commissioner, explained, Jews 'should be enabled to found here their home, and that some amongst them, within the limits fixed by numbers and the interests of the present population, should come to Palestine to help by their resources and efforts to develop the country to the advantage of its inhabitants' (p. 57). Similarly, in its interpretation of the League of Nations mandate, UNSCOP noted that the term 'national home' must have been chosen carefully, with the intention of restricting the meaning to something other than a state. Its main import, according to UNSCOP, was that all Jews in the world who wish to go to Palestine have the right to do so. The committee then, in what was a substantial legal leap, argued that the term 'national home' did not preclude the eventual creation of a Jewish state. In view of what the state of Israel has become, that may have been a mistake. Perhaps it is time for Zionism to return to these origins, and to re-formulate the real and deep link of Jews to the Holy Land in terms other than that of Jewish sovereignty.

Reviewed by Dr. Yossi Rapoport,
Queen Mary University of London

Gaza Stay Human
By Vittorio Arrigoni
Introduction By Ilan Pappe, Translated by Daniela Flippin
Kube Publications (2010)
ISBN 978-1-84774-019-9 PP 130, RRP £6.99

Gaza: Stay Human by Vittorio Arrigoni is an expressive eye witness testimony of the 22 day Israeli offence on Gaza in 2008-2009. Arrigoni being a freelance journalist writes this contribution in between the ongoing war, capturing every day as it unfolds around him. Before Arrigoni begins, he warns the readers of the emotional content of his experience making it clear that his account is a highly moving one; and one that leaves the heart affected. This is indeed his aim, to affect the hearts of those people who care for the rights and dignity of every human being. In between the bomb raids and missiles, Arrigoni takes every moment he can to record the colossal events happening around him with often unreliable internet access and whatever resources available. This in itself highlights how hard journalism becomes when trying to report a war.

Each chapter to this book ends with the phrase, 'Stay Human' refining the need for hearts to feel the struggle and pain of the Palestinians who are often seen as less significant by the international community. Arrigoni expresses abhorrence many times as he begins to understand the deep injustice of powerful countries that can help, yet fail to and forever turn a blind eye. As each day is unravelled, the reader is taken on the journey of Arrigoni's experience. Those he meets are mentioned as well as those he looses. The feelings of the Palestinian people are not just of dismay and colossal losses; but of hope and a forever sharpening intention to achieve freedom and justice as they continue to struggle against the Israeli attacks.

Arrigoni demonstrates how Palestinians endeavour to live a 'normal' life with young people trying to make their living, young lovers and couples trying to find some form of tranquillity in each other and both men and women trying to raise their own families. This reality of women delivering babies in the middle of bomb attacks is what Arrigoni explains as the only way to sustain the Palestinian nation. This chapter hits home the strongest as these are all the important and normal functions of society that in Gaza becomes so difficult. Indeed, all the luxuries we have which are simply taken for granted as we continue to live our comfortable lifestyles is a stark contrast to life in Gaza. Arrigoni's account is one of serious reflection of the harsh lives hundreds of Palestinians face in 'normal' day to day living.

Gaza: Stay Human is an intelligent and well written account expressing the ideals of justice and passion for human life. Although Gaza is a bleak reality, there are glimmers of hope through boycotting isreali products which Arrigoni encourages his readers to do. He also draws attention to hope from the speeches of great ethical leaders such as Nelson Mandela condemning the Israeli oppression but also the reaction of some Jewish Israelis who cannot stand such brutality. Many of these Israeli Jews who oppose Israeli oppression believe that justice and peace will not come from within. To them the solution lies with the continued pressure of western powers to demand that Israel 'stop!' Arrigoni also illustrates the tactics of the Israeli army who throw out leaflets warning Palestinians to evacuate their homes. This is indeed a normal occurrence in Gaza which somehow in the mind of the Israeli soldier justifies their cold blooded attacks. These warning leaflets call for Palestinians to work together with the Israelis. However, Arrigoni clearly makes the point of the Israelis blindness as they merely assume that Palestinians are weak and cannot see what is happening around them or even worse, unaffected. It is clear that Israel sees Palestinian human life as mere objects and not people of intellect, strength and purpose.

Arrigoni's contribution is an eye opener and one that is easily accessible to the average reader who seeks to understand more of the situation as it really is. Ilan Pappe writes in the preface 'daily dispatches came directly from the killing fields of Gaza, and are therefore free of any media distortion or manipulation.'

Reviewed by Hena Ahsan, University of Warwick

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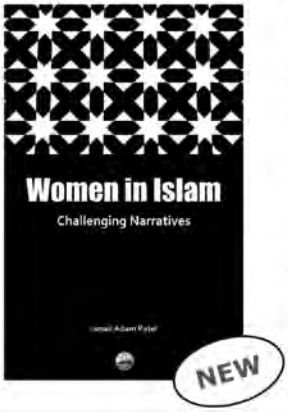

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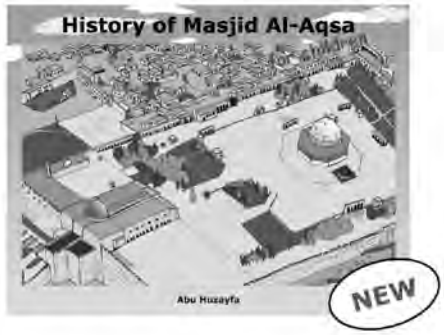

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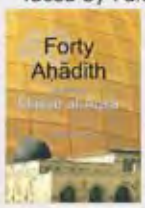

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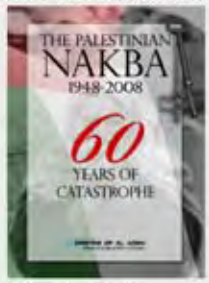
Reports
Fully referenced Reports have been produced on issues such as the Nakba and the Gaza Conflict in order to ensure that details of the history are not forgotten and that redress for war crimes can be pursued.



Public Awareness
Friends of Al-Aqsa have printed and distributed over 3 million free information leaflets detailing aspects of Palestinian life under occupation. This is an essential front in the public awareness campaign.

Lobbying Parliament

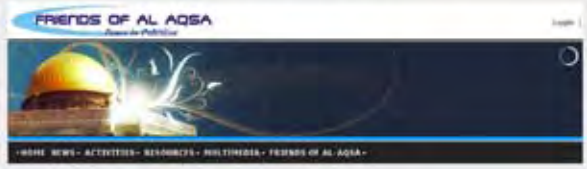
Friends of Al-Aqsa has created links with a number of key MPs and policy makers and continues to draw attention to new research and opinion on the conflict.

UN Affiliation
Friends of Al-Aqsa is an affiliate of the United Nations Civil Society Network on the Question of Palestine.

Website

www.aqsa.org.uk is a valuable resource providing up to date news and commentary relating to Palestine. A wide array of our publications are available online to facilitate access by supporters and campaigners globally.

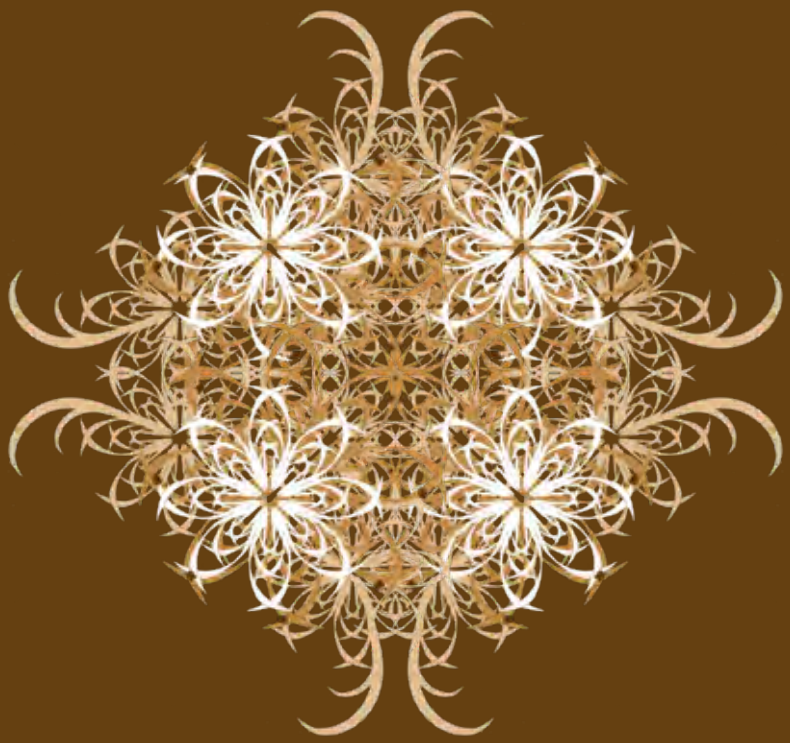
To keep people up to date, we have an ever expanding email list, and also utilise Facebook and Twitter.



Lectures and Conferences

Friends of Al-Aqsa continues to contribute to conferences nationally and globally, including in Indonesia, South Africa, Lebanon, Brussels, Geneva, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and New York, seeking to find a just and viable political solution to ending the occupation of Palestinian lands.

The fruits of this work are beginning to be seen with global public opinion now more pro-Palestinians. We cannot continue this work alone and need your support.
PLEASE DONATE GENEROUSLY



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