



# palestine NEWS

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## The death of democracy?

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# The shattered window of opportunity

**The West never gave the National Unity Government a chance, says Betty Hunter**

**T**ony Blair wants the world to believe that he can play a constructive role in resolving the sixty year old injustice meted out to the Palestinian people by Britain and the UN. If he is to achieve anything, then the man who took us to war against Iraq and who failed to condemn Israel's war on Lebanon in summer 2006 must undergo a conversion such as Saul on the way to Damascus, and ditch his partisan view of Palestine/Israel. He, along with every other world leader, knows that Israel's strategy is not to promote peace but to prevent the formation of a Palestinian state.

Our last editorial, 'A window of opportunity', stressed that the Palestinian Unity Government, representing 96 per cent of the Palestinian electorate, should be welcomed by the British government and the international community: they should grasp this opportunity

to abandon their policy of boycotting the elected Palestinian representatives, lift the sanctions and press Israel to abide by international law. However, the West has chosen to help Israel undermine and destroy the democratic process. There was strong criticism of Hamas when they wrested power from

Fatah in Gaza in June, but when Fatah strongman Mohammed Dahlan attempted a violent coup against the then Hamas government last December and January, he was actually backed by both Israel and the US. Subsequently, the US and Israeli-led siege of the Palestinians in Gaza has intensified, and Israel has continued to abduct Palestinians, imprisoning one third of the elected Palestinian representatives without a single critical word from Western governments.

As Palestine News goes to press, calls from Hamas for a return to negotiations and power-sharing are being spurned. The US and Israel are now attempting to bolster Mahmoud Abbas by restoring partial funding, while Israel's preferred 'solution' – the bantustanisation of the West Bank alongside the complete separation of Gaza from the West

Bank – continues apace.

Western-style democracy has been preached to the Middle East interminably; yet Hamas' experience is hardly conducive to encouraging other militant organisations to lay down their arms and take the path to the ballot box. The message is clear: if you don't toe the line of Western governments you will never be allowed access to power.

Recent events were engineered some time back. A leaked report by UN envoy for the Middle East, Alvaro de Soto, said: "The US clearly pushed for a confrontation between Fatah and Hamas, so much so that, a week before Mecca, the US envoy declared twice in an envoys' meeting in Washington how much 'I like this violence', referring to the near-civil war that was erupting in Gaza in which civilians were being regularly killed and injured." As Ali Abunimah reminds us (see page 4), arming insurgents against elected governments is a common feature of US foreign policy. Elliott Abrams, deputy national security adviser and apparently involved in the plan to militarily overthrow the Unity Government, honed his strategy when arming of the Contras against the Nicaraguan Sandinista government in the 1980s.

Less than a month after Saudi Arabia brokered the Mecca agreement, under which Abbas finally agreed with Hamas on a Unity Government, a document dated 2 March was reported as circulating in the Middle East clearly outlining the US plan. The plan was: "to maintain President Abbas and Fatah as the centre of gravity on the Palestinian scene", to "avoid wasting time in accommodating Hamas' ideological conditions", to "undermine Hamas' political status through providing for Palestinian economic needs", and to "strengthen the Palestinian president's authority to be able to call and conduct early elections by autumn 2007" (Jonathan Steele, *The Guardian* 22 June). The deal had upset the Israelis and Washington because it left Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh in charge.

The terms of the Mecca agreement and the 2006 prisoners' document could still form the basis of peace negotiations if only the

West would intervene, not by starving the people of Gaza and attempting a military overthrow of a democratically elected government, but by backing the will of the majority of the Palestinian people.

Blair has only to read the recent reports of the UN, World Bank, Oxfam and Amnesty International for evidence of

the Israeli strategy of economic, physical and political destruction. He can either redeem himself, or become the second Balfour. Gordon Brown could show political courage by actively supporting a power-sharing Palestinian government, rather than undermining it. However, the new British government's emphasis on governance and economic funding and reform is simply an extension of the previous policy of supporting the Occupation by supplying international aid. What is needed is an immediate end to occupation, release of prisoners, including abducted members of the government and legislative council, and final status negotiations on the refugees, the borders and the status of Jerusalem. Can enough pressure be put on Blair and Brown to help them make the right decisions?

## PSC PATRONS

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# Repeating a failed strategy

**Ali Abunimah sees historical precedents for US and Israeli policies in the Middle East**

The US decision to back Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in the recent turmoil virtually guarantees an escalation in violence. Abbas has installed an unelected “emergency” government to replace the democratically elected Hamas-led national unity government.

Some have portrayed Hamas’ takeover of PA security compounds in Gaza as a “coup.” But many Palestinians do not view it that way. In January 2006, Hamas decisively won legislative elections, giving it the right to form an administration. The US, despite its rhetorical support for democracy, decided to crush Hamas rule, imposing sanctions that have harmed ordinary Palestinians in the hope that Hamas would be forced out.

When it won the elections, Hamas had already observed a one-year unilateral truce with Israel, and had suspended the suicide bombings against Israeli civilians that had made it notorious. It tried to enter mainstream politics through the front door, to play by the rules, but was undermined at every step. The bitter conclusion for many Palestinians is that the US is not interested in supporting real democracy, and will intervene relentlessly to overthrow leaders it does not support, regardless of the will of the Palestinian people.

The militias that Hamas took on and defeated in recent weeks were particularly hated in Gaza because they had abducted, tortured and killed many Hamas members and were widely seen as thoroughly corrupt. It so happens that these militias received arms and funding from the United States and had vowed to take on and defeat Hamas, overturning the result of the election.

We have seen this strategy before. Does anyone remember the Nicaraguan contras? The core of US strategy, both

in Central America and in Southwest and Central Asia, particularly Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Lebanon has been to establish puppet regimes that will fight America’s enemies on its behalf. This strategy seems to be failing everywhere. The Taliban are resurgent in Afghanistan. Despite its “surge” the US is no closer to putting down the resistance in Iraq and cannot even trust the Iraqi army it helped set up. The Lebanese army, which the US hopes to bolster as a counterweight to Hezbollah, has performed poorly against a few hundred foreign fighters holed up in Nahr al-Bared refugee camp (although it has caused death and devastation to many innocent Palestinian refugees).

**“Ultimately, neither Hamas nor Fatah controls the fate of Palestinians; they remain under crushing Israeli military rule”**

Israel’s policy is a local version of the US strategy – and it has also been tried and failed. For over two decades Israel relied on a proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army, to help it enforce the occupation of southern Lebanon. In 2000, as Israeli forces hastily withdrew, this militia collapsed just as quickly, and SLA members and leaders fled to Israel.

Now, in Gaza, the latest blow. Despite the power-sharing deal Fatah and Hamas signed in Mecca last February, key Fatah leaders refused to place their militias under the control of an independent interior minister. He resigned in frustration, and the US continued to funnel in weapons.

Following its dramatic rout of Fatah positions, Hamas leaders gave televised speeches emphasizing that they were

not at war with Fatah’s rank and file (many of whom did not even fight) and did not want to seize power or overthrow Abbas, whose legitimacy they explicitly reaffirmed. Their problem, they said, was only with the US-supported militia leaders, such as Mohammed Dahlan and Rashid Abu Shbak, who had made the job of the elected Hamas-led government impossible. As a goodwill gesture, Hamas leaders issued a general amnesty for all captured Fatah commanders and appealed for dialogue, reconciliation and reconstructing a national unity government. Abbas rejected these appeals and has opted to form an unelected government and rule by decree even though Palestinian law denies him that authority.

There has been much talk that the events in Gaza herald the birth of a “three-state solution” – Israel, plus a Hamas stronghold in Gaza and a Fatah-led West Bank. In reality, the West Bank and Gaza had already long been isolated from each other by Israeli policy. Ultimately, neither Hamas nor Fatah controls the fate of Palestinians; they remain under crushing Israeli military rule.

Some Israelis assert that intra-Palestinian fighting proves that Palestinians are incapable of democracy. They hope that all the heat will be off Israel as it entrenches Bantustan-like separation and discrimination against non-Jews under its rule.

The reality remains that 11 million souls – half Palestinians and half Israelis – inhabit a small country. Closing off Gaza and allowing it to descend into further misery, and propping up a Fatah-led Palestinian Authority that has lost legitimacy, while Israel continues to build Jewish-only settlements across the West Bank, is not the path to peace.

Intra-Palestinian dialogue without outside interference, and South Africa or Northern Ireland-style peace talks aimed at ending all forms of military occupation, inequality and discrimination, with strong outside support, may yet save the situation. But so far there are no signs that the Bush administration will heed these obvious rudiments of peace.

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*This article was originally published in the Chicago Tribune on 21 June.*

# 1967: myth and reality

**Glen Rangwala**

deconstructs the ‘official’ account of the war

**5** June saw the fortieth anniversary of the start of the Six Day War, in which Israeli forces conquered the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula – the first three of which remain under Israeli occupation today. The anniversary prompted both Palestinian demonstrations demanding once again an end to the occupation, and Israeli celebrations of the ‘unification’ of Jerusalem. It also led to a string of retrospectives in the international media, mostly marked by a high degree of conformity to the standard Israeli narrative of what happened forty years ago. The *Times* and the *Economist*, and the websites of BBC and Channel 4 News, all referred uncritically to the devastating Israeli military assault against Egypt as a ‘pre-emptive’ strike, bowing to the tendentious Israeli claim that Egyptian forces were on the verge of massively attacking Israel, and implicitly validating Israel’s action as defensive. This was not an occupation born in sin, the story goes, but out of necessity.

The official Israeli account of the 1967 war has become the only version available for popular consumption in the UK, the US and Israel itself. However, this does not mean the narrative should go unchallenged. After all, Palestinian and critical Israeli historians have successfully deconstructed the myths of Israel’s creation in 1948, and few British mainstream media outlets now recycle old and discredited tales of a ‘voluntary’ Palestinian exodus in 1948 or of Israeli ‘purity of arms’ in that war, in the way they used to.

And yet there has been no similar concerted attempt to re-examine the Israeli justification for its 1967 assault as a desperate war of last resort. Palestinian advocates have instead relied upon long-after-the-fact quotes from disgruntled Israeli ex-officials, which is a poor substitute for challenging Israel’s account. And that account is extensively documented, with Israeli historians such as Michael Oren, Ami Gluska and Isabella Ginor producing long books on the 1967 war in the last few years, with Moshe Shemesh, Arye Naor and Moshe Gat all producing weighty and original academic articles. Some of these contain useful new insights into the Israeli decisions in the lead up to the war – particularly Ami Gluska’s recent book on the Israeli military in the 1960s. However, they all end up defending Israel from charges that it acted dishonourably and they all assume that the leaders of the Arab states and Palestinian groups were acting irrationally and genocidally in their determination to ‘throw the Jews into the sea’.

This is a phrase often repeated by Israel’s advocates, even though there is no record of any Arab leader or official broadcast outlet saying it. It conveys a desperate sense of Israeli victimhood that is entirely belied by the obvious military disparity at the time – with the Israeli



Palestinians flee Gaza in fishing boats

military, armed largely by the US and France, fully aware of that superiority at the time.

From records kept, and still largely untranslated into English, we know that General Uzi Narkis (commander of the forces that went on to capture the West Bank) dismissively told Israel’s then Prime Minister Levi Eshkol a week before the war that Israeli forces ‘are stronger than ever and the Arabs are just a soap bubble’, ready to be blown away. Major-General Matti Peled, one of the most senior figures in the Israeli military, told Eshkol three days before the assault on Egypt that it was clear that the Egyptian army was not prepared for war, and Egyptian

President Gamal Abd al-Nasser was not expecting there to be military hostilities. And yet Eshkol kept on whipping up fear, telling his own parliament that Nasser had threatened ‘to attack Israel for the purpose of destroying her’. This was a lie, and Eshkol must have known it: Nasser had said specifically that if Israel attacked Syria, then Egyptian forces would

attack Israel – an entirely legitimate strategy of collective defence authorised by the United Nations Charter.

What is often forgotten about the 1967 war is that the crisis began when Israel shot down six Syrian airforce planes in Syrian airspace, and then on 12 May publicly threatened to invade Syria and topple the government there. This came on the back of an Israeli army assault on the Jordanian village of Samu’ in November 1966 that killed 18 Jordanians, and repeated Israeli aerial bombardments in 1965 of Syrian water installations on the Syrian side of Lake Tiberias. Israel had been a repeated aggressor, and when Nasser ordered Egyptian troops towards the Israeli border in mid-May 1967, it was with the avowed aim of deterring further Israeli attacks on Arab states. Nasser

**“The crisis began when Israel shot down six Syrian airforce planes in Syrian airspace, and then publicly threatened to invade Syria and topple the government there”**

had accepted a two week 'cooling off' period suggested by the United Nations, had sent his Vice-President to the White House to begin talks on how to achieve regional stability, and had made a series of offers to allow Israeli ships to pass through Egyptian waters to reach the Israeli port of Eilat, a transit route Egyptian forces had blocked in late May. All of this was well-known to the Israeli leadership.

And yet the Israeli military was not looking for a way out of the crisis. They were looking instead to assert their dominance in the Middle East. Ariel Sharon, then commanding a division of the Israeli army that would capture the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, told Eshkol on 2 June that his objective was to 'make sure that in the coming ten or twenty years or generation or two the Egyptians will not want to fight us', and this was to be achieved through 'no less than total annihilation of the Egyptian forces'. He even talked with his military colleagues about staging a military coup in Israel if Eshkol didn't agree with him.

Eshkol though by this time was ahead of Sharon: he had already appointed a defence minister, Moshe Dayan, who had long argued for a more aggressive military-led approach, and had brought the Herut party – later renamed Likud – who were in favour of expanding Israel through conquest, into his coalition government. When Israel began their attack on Egypt, Dayan didn't even bother to consult with the Israeli cabinet before beginning the assault to capture the Golan

Heights from Syria. He knew that he had the green light from the Israeli leadership to capture as much land as possible before the US would call upon them to stop. Hence the scale of the conquests in just six days.

That was not the only 'green light' at stake. Israeli officials had consulted extensively with the US in the lead-up to the war. The Israeli head of intelligence returned from a meeting with the US Defence Secretary Robert McNamara six days before Israel launched the war, telling the cabinet that the US 'would bless us if we were to break Nasser into pieces'. In declassified documents, leading US officials referred to their 'strong pent-up desire to wash our hands of Nasser'. They were irritated by the way that Nasser had tried to build up a non-aligned movement of third world states during the Cold War. Nevertheless, the US publicly claimed it was a neutral peacemaker in the Arab-Israeli dispute, a claim it continues to assert today.

Forty years on, there remains no full critically-informed history of a war that resulted in a disastrous and ongoing occupation, a second Palestinian refugee exodus of 200,000 people, and which remains central to much of the conflict in the Middle East. Its absence means that the Israeli government is able to keep on perpetuating its excuse for the occupation, both internationally and to its own public, with terrible consequences for all concerned.

# Azmi Bishara – traitor or democrat?

**F**or years, Palestinian political parties in Israel have been calling for Israel's transformation from a Jewish state into a "state of all its citizens" — that is, a true democracy. At the forefront of this campaign is former Member of the Knesset Azmi Bishara, a charismatic and highly articulate politician whose merciless, outspoken logic has proved deeply embarrassing to his Zionist colleagues.

Two earlier attempts to silence him were thrown out by the Israeli High Court, as was the attempt to disqualify his political party at the last general elections, on the grounds that it was 'subversive' to call for equal rights for non-Jewish citizens.

But in April, while he was abroad with his family, Shin Bet (the Israeli intelligence service) announced that he would face charges of treason on his return. Under emergency regulations — which have been in operation for nearly 60 years — he could be executed if found guilty.

Azmi is accused of actively helping Hizbullah in targeting Israeli communities in the north (his own constituency) during the war against Lebanon last summer — an accusation seemingly based on bugged phone calls. (A change in the law in 2005 allowed the security services to tap legislators' phones.)

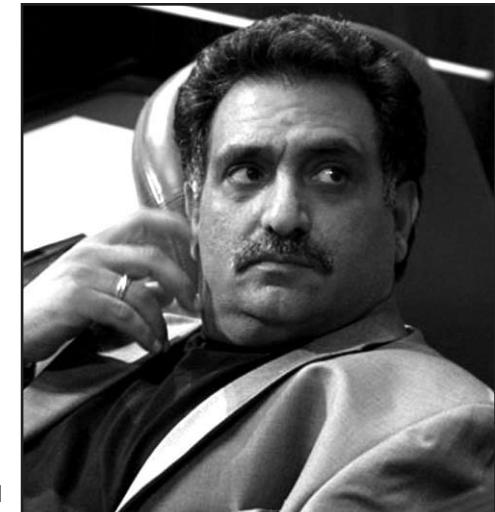
However, an editorial in Israel's daily newspaper Haaretz suggested that the charge "will turn out to be a tendentious exaggeration of his telephone conversations and meetings with Lebanese and Syrian nationals, and possibly also of his expressions of support for their military activities. It seems very doubtful that MK Bishara even has access to defence-related

secrets that he could sell to the enemy..."

He is also accused of laundering money from "terrorist organisations", though no money has been found in extensive searches of Bishara's home and office, and the evidence seems to be based solely on testimony from a family of money-changers in East Jerusalem.

The latter accusation closely resembles one brought against Sheikh Raed Salah, a spiritual leader of the Palestinian minority in Israel. He was eventually exonerated — after two years in jail. Commenting on the charges, Salah said it was "as if helping orphans, sick persons, widows and students had now become illegal activities in support of terrorism".

These cases are symptomatic of the increasingly hostile attitude to the Palestinian community in Israel. According to recent polls, two-thirds of Israeli Jews would refuse to live next to an Arab and nearly half would not allow a Palestinian into their home. Some politicians, including the Minister of Strategic Threats and the Deputy Prime Minister, have even demanded that the citizenship of some 30 percent of Palestinian citizens of Israel be revoked, and that "disloyal" Arab MKs be executed. Recently, Israel Hasson, former deputy director of the Shin Bet, described Israel's struggle against its Palestinian citizens as "a second War of Independence" — with the clear implication that a second Nakba or ethnic cleansing is called for.



# Separate and unequal

**Marie Badarne gives an alternative view of early labour history in Palestine and Israel**

The existence of an Arab labour movement in Palestine before 1948 is virtually unknown to Arab, Israeli and international labour activists alike. Zionist historical discourse successfully positioned the struggle of the Arab working class and landless peasants against the bourgeois Arab "effendis", instead of acknowledging popular Arab rebellion against colonial rule and Zionist hegemony in Palestine. However, a close look at labour history in Palestine reveals that the local Arab population quickly developed grassroots movements aimed both at the emancipation of workers and at national liberation. Furthermore, evidence suggests that the ideology and practice of the Histadrut (the Israeli Trades Union Congress) contributed significantly to the separation of Arab and Jewish workers and to the dispossession and uprooting of the native Palestinian people. Up to the present day, the New Histadrut fails to live up to its mandate – the representation of all workers in Israel.

In early 20th-century Palestine there was no working class consciousness among the largely rural society, but the local population adjusted quickly to the challenges posed by mass immigration, rapid industrialisation and Western colonial rule. Between 1925 and 1947, Palestine had a thriving Arab labour movement, led by the largest union institution PAWS (Palestinian Arab Workers' Society), which was in the 1940s challenged by the Arab Workers Congress (AWC). The Palestinian Arab working class and their leaders displayed a diversity of political ideologies and different attitudes concerning the Histadrut and joint Arab-Jewish organisations. Palestinian Arab unions were also internationally recognised



Women demonstrate in Nazareth, March 2007

as legitimate representatives of Arab workers in Palestine at the founding conference of the World Federation of Trades Unions (WFTU) in 1945. The Palestinian labour movement collapsed during the Nakba, and by the mid-1950s, all Arab organisations of pre-1948 Palestine had either disappeared or been absorbed by Israeli parties and institutions.

**"The Histadrut set up hundreds of pickets near citrus groves and urban construction sites employing Arabs, trying to convince the Jewish employers to fire the Arab workers"**

The Histadrut was established in 1920 as the General Federation for Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel, a name which clearly set an agenda. Firstly, the institution was meant to be for Hebrew workers only, and secondly, it represented the workers of Israel, not Palestine, which was the region's official name at the time. This self-definition continued to cause major contradictions between the organisation's exclusive ethnic-national identity and its declared socialist ideals. The most illustrative example of this ideological contradiction is the Histadrut's Hebrew Labour

campaign which aimed at ousting all "foreign" – i.e. native – workers from Jewish workplaces. In the years between 1927 and 1936, when the Arab revolt began, the Histadrut set up hundreds of pickets near citrus groves and urban construction sites employing Arabs, trying to convince the Jewish employers to fire the Arab workers.

Only in 1959 were Arab citizens of Israel allowed to become direct members of the Histadrut. At that time, however, the Arab population was still under military rule, administered by the Labour-led government; after dropping the term "Hebrew" from its official name, the Histadrut continued to undermine labour struggles led by Arab workers.

Today, the Arab labour force in Israel is still faced with structural problems similar to its situation in pre-1948 Palestine, i.e. concentration in the low-wage sector, unequal pay, lack of infrastructure and other obstacles that contradict the principle of decent work, including the lack of labour law enforcement and inspections.

Over time, the exclusive approach of the Histadrut has created a separate, low-wage sector for a largely unskilled and unorganised Arab labour force in Israel, which is nowadays joined by migrant workers from Eastern Europe, Africa, and South Asia and new immigrants from Ethiopia and the Russian-speaking countries. This low-wage, manual labour sector occupied by the Arab labour force is now in times of globalisation gradually being transformed into an unemployed labour sector, and growing poverty and unemployment are further exacerbated by economic policies eroding the last resort, the public social safety net. In its poverty report for 2005, the National Insurance Institute revealed that 52% of Arab citizens of Israel live below the poverty line, as opposed to 16% of Jewish Israelis.

Not only does the Histadrut have a history of racial exclusion of indigenous Arabs and foreign workers; it has also repeatedly proved its inability to solve conflicts of interest in favour of its constituency, the working class. Due to its historical ties to the Employers' Unions and the hegemony of the white-collar Labour Councils within the Histadrut, blue-collar workers of all ethnic backgrounds have little influence in today's New Histadrut. This lack of interest in the country's original working class is reflected in the Histadrut's hesitation to admit migrant workers to its ranks and its unwillingness to address the social injustice

# Palestine on the breadline

**Samia Botmeh looks at the reasons for the increasing reliance on food aid**

Well before the disastrous events of mid June, the state of food security had deteriorated to such an extent that the World Food Program (WFP) labeled over one-half of the West Bank and Gaza Strip population as being 'food insecure', in 2006. The last time food aid loomed as large in Palestinian lives was in the years following the catastrophe resulting from the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The international community then came to the rescue of the Palestinian refugees and provided them with food aid. Nearly sixty years on, the international community is at it again, however, this time round, the target is the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip (WBGS). It seems as if we are back to square one – or worse!

Yet again, Israel has been at the root cause of the devastating destruction of Palestinian lives in the WBGS. Its policies turned an otherwise dynamic people who, for decades, managed to maintain reasonable standards of living, relatively high educational rates and a functioning economy, into a hungry population waiting to be saved by meagre food rations. The following explains the process leading to this state of affairs and questions the responses of the international community.

In spite of considerable fluctuation, the WBGS economy witnessed strong growth trends during 1995-1999, the

MAANIMAGES/MAMOUN WAZWAZ



**EU food aid in Hebron**

period after the Oslo Accords. These trends came about as a result of a rise in investments from Diaspora Palestinians and public investment of the Palestinian Authority, combined with a large inflow of aid. This was fostered by a general sense of optimism about a future peace settlement in the area, as well as the relative ease of access to external markets, including the Israeli labour market. These favourable trends

**1** of current economic policies, including the welfare-to-work programme "Wisconsin Plan".

Recently, the Histadrut suffered another blow to its image, from an Arab perspective at least. During Israel's war on Lebanon in July and August 2006, Defence Minister Amir Peretz, best known as the New Histadrut's chairman of the past decade, displayed a relentless and

hawkish attitude towards Lebanon's civilian population. So, once more, the Arab working class associates Israel's labour movement with violence and aggression.

**Marie Badarne** works with Sawt el-Amel (The Laborer's Voice), a grassroots organisation founded and led by Arab workers from Nazareth and the Galilee, in order to promote and protect the rights of

resulted in improved standards of living, which were reflected in the quite modest poverty rates. Accordingly, food security was a concern for only a relatively limited segment of the Palestinian population – those incapacitated by severe poverty.

However, with the start of the second Intifada in the year 2000, Israel began to squeeze the WBGS economically, to force the Palestinian Authority into further political compromises. The main feature of this new state of affairs has been the intensification of the restrictions placed on the movement of Palestinian people and goods. These restrictions take various forms, including closures, flying checkpoints, road blocks, curfews and the separation barrier which reaches 12 meters high in places and cuts through urban, rural and refugee Palestinian centres of population.

Between 1993 and 1999, the WBGS were subject to 311.5 days of comprehensive (external) closure. Then closures increased sharply after the Intifada; 2002 alone saw more than 250 days of internal closure. This means that the Palestinians had only three months of unrestricted movement during that year.

This situation was further compounded in 2006, following the election of Hamas. Israel withheld most of the indirect taxes it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, thus contributing to a severe fiscal crisis. Revenues accrue to the Palestinian Authority from two sources: domestic tax collection and indirect taxes collected by Israel. In 2005, these clearance revenues accounted for two thirds of the Palestinian Authority revenues. However, in 2006, only US\$70 million was transferred to the Palestinian side, contributing just 6% of total PNA revenue. By the end of 2006, the Palestinians were due more than US\$600 million of their own import taxes, VAT and customs duties. The detention of several Hamas ministers and many Members of Parliament by Israel since March 2006 further restricted the government's ability to function normally.

As a result, overall economic growth performance has been negligible, and

Arab workers and the unemployed in the Israeli economy and social security system. The full text of *Separate and Unequal: The History of Arab Labour in pre-1948 Palestine and Israel*, published by Sawt el-Amel in December 2006 and a report on the effects of the Wisconsin Plan are available online at [www.laborers-voice.org](http://www.laborers-voice.org), or you can order hard copies by contacting [laborers@laborers-voice.org](mailto:laborers@laborers-voice.org).

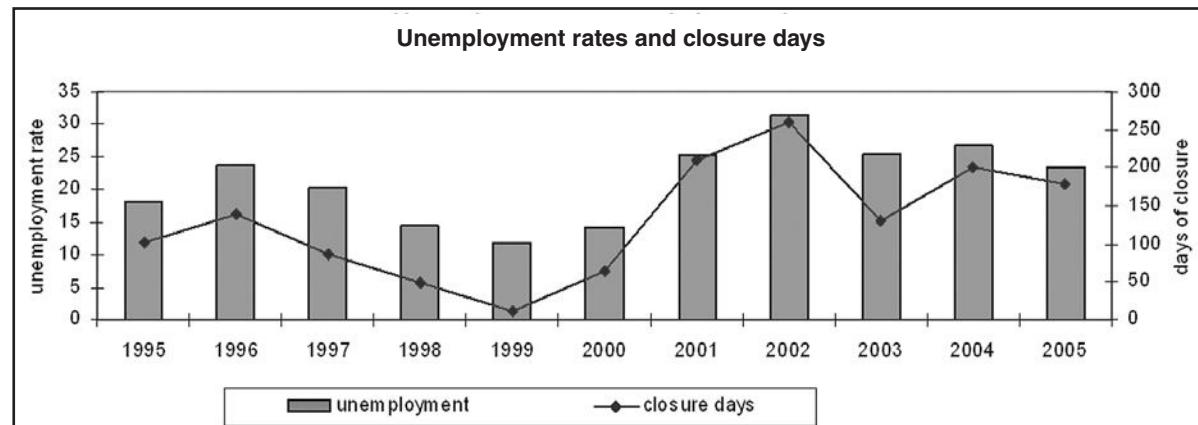
at times negative. The real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (excluding Jerusalem) dropped by a staggering 26% between 1999 and 2002. By 2006, real per capita income was lower than in 1996. This is a greater decrease than that suffered in the American Great Depression (where per capita GDP fell by around 20% over 2 years) and the Argentine financial crisis of the 1990s (where it dropped by 15-17%).

Another immediate impact of Israeli measures has been the rise in unemployment rates, reaching an unprecedented level of 31% in mid-2002. These rates have since leveled off, but remain high at 24%. The main reason behind the substantial increase in unemployment rates is the Israeli restrictions imposed on Palestinian labourers entering Israel for work.

Palestinian employment in Israel fell from 146,000 in the third quarter of 2000 to 37,000 workers in the third quarter of 2006, a decline of about 75%.

The overall decline in economic performance in the WBGS resulted in lower standards of living. The World Bank estimates that before the start of the second Intifada, 20% of the population was living below the poverty line of \$2.1 per day. That number increased to 37% in December 2001 and reached more than 51% by 2006. Similarly, in 1997, a mere 200,000 Palestinians (8.5% of the population) received assistance from relief organisations, including food aid. By 2003, nearly 1.7 million Palestinians were the target for assistance, some 51% of the WBGS population.

Restrictions on movement have also adversely affected the whole food chain in the WBGS, including: domestic production, food imports, the ability to reach and provide food to the needy, food prices and, most importantly, people's economic access to food. Israeli-imposed closures, curfews, incursions, land confiscation, and destruction of productive properties have combined to bring the issue of access to food to problematic levels. The situation worsened dramatically following the election of the Hamas government in 2006 and the subsequent cutting of assistance to the Palestinian government by the international community. The drastic decline in revenues to the government came just when a much



Source: Unemployment statistics are obtained from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, various issues. Closure data is from the Palestinian Ministry of Labour and UN Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO).

stronger social welfare net was needed. Since the events of June it seems as though there may be some resumption of aid for the inhabitants of the West Bank – but for those living in Gaza the outlook is grim indeed.

## “The international community would do better to break down the cages incarcerating the Palestinian population, rather than feeding them through the bars”

However, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip did not, until recently, suffer from shortages in food supply. Levels of food energy and protein consumption during 1996-1999 indicate that the Palestinians were then relatively food secure. However, this situation has changed drastically since the beginning of the second Intifada in 2000. The deterioration in economic conditions and decline in standards of living as well as the increase in food prices, all led to a rise in food insecurity in the WBGS. Economic access to food in terms of the ability to purchase food rather than the lack of food *per se* is the main constraint to securing a healthy nutritious diet. To cope with this situation, members of vulnerable households have been consuming minimal amounts of the more expensive protein, while many meals consist solely of bread and tea. One of the gravest consequences of high poverty rates is therefore malnutrition. The World Bank estimates that per capita real food consumption has declined by 25% between 1998 and the end of 2002. The PCBS nutrition survey finds a significant increase in both acute and chronic malnutrition between 2000 and 2002.

Yet again, just as half a century ago, food aid comes to the Occupied

Palestinian Territories to treat the symptoms rather than the roots of the food crisis. Food insecurity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is primarily an outcome of Israeli measures. However, the international community prefers to address it as if it was an outcome of technical and/or natural dysfunction, by pouring in food aid, rather than by helping to end the Occupation and create the conditions that will allow for normality.

Humanitarian aid efforts have undoubtedly saved lives, yet food aid can never be a sustainable solution to alleviate poverty and foster people's dignity. The Israeli occupation has prevented Palestinians from accessing work, expanding their businesses or accessing health and education freely. Only when the Palestinian population is allowed to move freely, run their businesses, engage in import and export activities and utilise the available natural and human resources will they become food secure again. What needs to be tackled is the root cause of food insecurity in the WBGS – the Israeli Occupation. The international community would therefore do better to break down the cages incarcerating the entire Palestinian population, rather than feeding them through the bars.

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**Samia Botmeh** is a teacher and researcher in Economics at the University of Birzeit.

Most statistics given are taken from publications of the World Food Program, the UN Special Coordinator for Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the OPT, the World Bank and the Palestinian Ministries of Labour and Finance. For more information on sources contact Samia Botmeh at [samiab@pal-econ.org](mailto:samiab@pal-econ.org).

# Remember us

**Victoria Brittain**  
revisits Palestinian  
camps in Lebanon

The explosion of violence in the northern camp of Nahr el Bared, causing hundreds of civilian casualties and mass displacement, was a catastrophe waiting to happen, and risks being a rerun of the iconic camp massacres of Tal el Zatar in 1975, and Sabra and Shatila in 1982.

This new disaster highlights both the inhuman lives still eeked out in these forgotten Palestinian camps after the decades since 1948, and the use of Lebanon and its Palestinians in the latest reckless project of Middle East destruction sponsored by the Bush administration and their Saudi colleagues.

Since last autumn, when a group of foreign fighters from Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iraq, Tunisia, calling themselves Fatah al Islam, took up residence in the Nahr el Bared Palestinian camp north of Tripoli, there were occasional reports of violent shoot-outs in the camp. There was also a trickle of reports in the US media, including by Seymour Hersh in *The New Yorker* in March, that US aid, funnelled by Sunni financial backers in league with the Bush administration, was committed to funding Islamist Sunni groups to weaken Hezbollah at any price, after the defeat of Israel in the summer of 2006. The US writer Franklin Lamb, a specialist on Lebanon, has detailed in *Counterpunch* the Lebanese political interests involved in funding this group, Fatah al Islam, as part of Lebanon's own political power struggle.

The original 100,000 Palestinians who fled into Lebanon in 1948, and their descendants, have suffered more violence, and worse conditions of every kind, than any other Palestinian group – including those in the prison that is Gaza today. Unlike Syria, Lebanon has given Palestinians no civil rights:

VICTORIA BRITTA



A children's art exhibition in Bourj El Barajneh

no access to Lebanese education, health care, work opportunities (they are specifically banned from most jobs) or even the right to build or rebuild property in the camps.

Most camps have no drinkable water and must buy it, and have no consistent electricity. UNRWA's declining budgets have seriously affected educational standards which

**"Beside the despair there is always the flame of Palestinian resilience"**

are now very poor. Since 1982 the conditions in the camps have seriously worsened and the early years of keeping village identities alive in a group are only a memory.

Overcrowding is dramatic, poverty chronic, and a rising tide of violence and criminality has eroded the social cohesion, worsened too by the influx of many extremely poor people from

many countries for whom the camps have been the last resort for a toehold in Lebanon.

This year is the 25th anniversary of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila by the Israeli-backed Phalange. Sabra was completely wiped out, and Shatila now has only 8,000 or so Palestinians among its 15,000 inhabitants .

Today there are 12 Palestinian camps, housing the majority of the 433,000 Palestinians in Lebanon. Others live in unofficial settlements even more miserable than the camps themselves. Some camps are in Beirut itself, like Shatila, and Mar Elias, while Bourj El-Barajne is in the southern suburbs, the streets and bridges around it smashed to rubble in last year's Israeli assault. Other camps, like Al-Badawi, Jal El-Bahr, Ain El-Hilwa, Rashidieh, Bourj El Shemali, El-Buss, Wavel, Mieh Mieh, are scattered up and down the country. Nahr el-Bared is just north of Tripoli and is one of the camps with the highest percentage of 'hardship cases' registered with UNRWA for support. (These are

essentially now only widows with children under 18.) The incoming foreigners of Fatah al Islam would have easily bribed their way into the camp, nominally controlled, as they all are, by the Palestinians faction. (The 1969 Arab League agreement made the camps off limits to the Lebanese security forces.)

In the rabbit warrens of narrow streets in the camps lethal tangles of electric wires hang overhead, and the walls are covered with pictures of the deceased leaders from the past who lived the long narrative of suffering with them: Sheikh Yassin, Yasser Arafat, Ayatollah Khomeini, Saddam Hussein.

The only pictures of today are Sheikh Hassan Nasrulla. "We are really forgotten," said one woman. Another spoke of how the hope of returning to Palestine had faded to a dream, and the struggle just to survive was all consuming.

Another spoke of how educated people were increasingly finding ways to leave Lebanon, paying bribes, using people traffickers, selling all their family effects for a chance of a life elsewhere. But, beside the despair there is always the flame of Palestinian resilience. Last month saw a celebration in Bourj El Barajneh camp of 20,000 people in one square kilometre, on the very edge of the rubble of the southern suburbs: a procession of children dressed as apples and bananas, girl and boy scouts with bagpipes and drums wound through the camp as the Women's Humanitarian Organisation launched a campaign and exhibition of healthy eating, with nuts and traditional herbs as well as fruit. Tshirts and posters showed a strong baby kicking a bottle away as no good for his health.

A small exhibition of art work by children – including an extraordinary blue mosaic of two mirrored faces by a blind girl – showed only paintings of space, flowers, beach, books, every luxury of space and time they do not have. The exhibition shows how these children, whose schools are chronically under-funded, under-equipped, dark and prisonlike, who have no play space, and are, camp leaders say, caught in a culture of violence, can flourish for an hour or two given the most modest of means.

The grotesque situation of the Palestinians in Lebanon is deeply shaming of successive Lebanese authorities, but also of the rest of the world who have been happy to forget them.

# End the violence – and the sanctions

## Mona El-Farra speaks from Gaza

**As a physician from Gaza, I have treated far too many Palestinians wounded by Israeli troops. Then a day came that I thought I would never see.**

Throughout our 59-year struggle to obtain our freedom, we Palestinians debated strategy and tactics. Political factions competed for popular support. But never would I have believed that we would turn guns against each other. What brought us to this point?

In 2006, Hamas won free and fair elections on a platform that promised clean and efficient government. But Israel and the West meddled with our democratically elected choice by imposing devastating economic sanctions. Our economy and our livelihoods have been destroyed, reducing many of us to poverty.

At last, we exploded with a desperation born of decades of oppression and loss of hope. We brutalized each other over the crumbs of power. The shame is ours – but the responsibility must be shared between reckless Palestinians and external powers that turned the screws on our people.

Israel might have removed its soldiers and settlers from Gaza in September 2005, but it still controls Gaza from the sea, air and land. The borders are mostly closed according to the whim of Israel, transforming Gaza into an enormous open-air prison for its 1.4 million people, half of whom are children. Too many of these youngsters suffer from the stifling effects of violence and hunger.

To thrive, Palestinians need access to the sea and to commerce. Most importantly, our people must be imbued with a sense of hope.

**Sanctions imposed after the election of Hamas made hard lives harder, but we must not forget that even under the 'moderate' leadership of President Mahmoud Abbas we did not control trade in and out of Gaza.**

"There is a seeming reflex", United Nations peace envoy Alvaro de Soto said in a report, "in any given situation where the UN is to take a position, to ask first how Israel or Washington will react rather than what is the right position to take."

Washington's bias toward Israel is significantly responsible for the appalling situation in which we find ourselves.

Yes, we Palestinians must accept blame for our perilous situation. However, Palestinian Foreign Minister Ziad Abu Amr has correctly declared, "If you have two brothers, put them in a cage and deprive them of basic and essential needs for life, they will fight." The fact that we would sink to this level is perhaps the surest sign of the terrible damage meted out to us over the years by dispossession and occupation.

When one is in a hole, it is imperative to stop digging. If we are to win our freedom, surely it will not be done with one brother digging the grave of another. The violence, therefore, must stop. That is our first responsibility as Palestinians and we must meet it immediately. And the United States and the international community must end the sanctions that deprive us of our basic needs and our hope for a better future.

The Israeli leadership brandishes our plight as evidence that we cannot govern ourselves nor be trusted as 'peace partners'. White South Africans similarly claimed that black South Africans were incapable of self-governance. In the last years of apartheid, more than 250 blacks were killed in black-on-black violence each month.

Yet decency and equality eventually prevailed in South Africa. Apartheid was vanquished and the world learned that black-on-black violence was an outgrowth of apartheid – not an indication that black South Africans were incapable of self-rule and undeserving of rights.

We, too, have the right to be free. But we must first free ourselves from fighting over the scraps of power.

**"Gaza is an enormous open-air prison for its 1.4million people, half of whom are children"**

# Shattered lives

Two

In October 2000, 17-year old Asel Asleh, an Israeli of Palestinian origin, was watching a demonstration, following the deaths of Palestinians in the West Bank who had protested against Ariel Sharon's march on the Al Aqsa Mosque. He was shot by an Israeli sniper and bled to death in an ambulance, waiting to cross checkpoints. Twelve other young men were also shot dead — but no one has yet been brought to justice. Asel Asleh's mother, Jamila, told Palestine News: "Mothers think that they can protect their children. But I discover that I, as a Palestinian mother, cannot protect my children, I felt so guilty because I gave birth to my children but could not protect them."

The inquiry into the deaths found that the use of snipers against civilians had no justification and breached police "directives and bye-laws". Supreme Court Justice Theodor Or called this "regrettable". Five years later, an official 86-page report found that there was no reason to issue an indictment in relation to even one of the 13 killings by police officers. Jamila said: "It is clear to this day, in Israel not a single person who has killed an Arab has been brought to justice."

**"When a Palestinian is killed or their house is demolished, the world is silent"**

The media has not been sympathetic either: "They dealt with our children as numbers. The media did not mention the names of any of the martyrs by name. Imagine how I feel as a mother when my son became a number. How would you feel? As a result of justice not having been served, the killing has not stopped."

Asel was born in Haifa, where he went to a Christian kindergarten, although the family is Muslim. Later they moved to the small village of Arraba, in Lower Galilee, but he was very clear about his own identity. His mother said: "He used to understand equality as every person having the right to be there. He was very proud of his Palestinian-ness. There was no contradiction between his dignity as an Arab and a Palestinian and his respect for other people. He did not believe in passports and borders. He used to dream about an open

world in which there is no fear, a world of safety."

He was a brilliant young student, with a particular interest in philosophy and history, and spoke Arabic, Hebrew and English fluently. At an early age he got hooked on computers, seeing the Internet as a gateway to the wider world. As a teenager he even began designing websites.

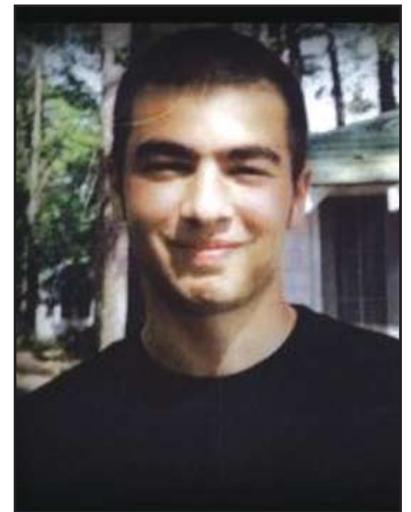
Jamila takes some comfort in what her son achieved in his short life. In his few years he had touched many people with his kindness, humour and openness. She told Palestine News: "He was described by his friends as the boy with the 1000-watt smile. He was such a warm person. He saw all people as being good and he would treat people according to this principle. From this came the love of other people for him."

Asel was a key figure in the US-run Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence. As an active member he visited the US and Switzerland, and got to meet international figures such as Madeleine Albright, Kofi Annan, Shimon Peres and Yossi Beilin.

It was his idea to set up SeedsNet, an online chatroom for all the 'seeds' – young people of all backgrounds who joined the organisation. His daily emails were eagerly read. He was all set for a brilliant career of his choosing. Then came the day of the peaceful demonstration, and he was shot, wearing his 'Seeds of Peace' T-shirt.

After his death the organisation printed a tribute to Asel – but it did not send condolences to the family; Mrs Asleh feels that the concept of peace is meaningless without justice. "When there is no justice when 13 young men are killed, how can there be peace? I will not speak empty talk and speak about peace when justice is not served." The bitter silence over the death of her much loved and popular son is compounded by the lack of justice for Palestinians, no matter where they live. Jamila feels that the oppressors have international support: "When a Palestinian is killed or their house is demolished, the world is silent. The world has got used to death and killing. Every person in this world bears some responsibility. What makes Israel do this if not the financial support of Europe and the US? The silence of the world in relation to Israel allows all of this to happen."

At the age of 14 Asel wrote, at the end of an essay on peace: "I wish that all people all over the world can be united by a desire to give up feelings of selfishness, hatred and greed, and adopt the principles of love, freedom and justice, in order to have a new world where mothers and children will not cry any more."



Asel Asleh — the boy with the 1000-watt smile



Jamila Asleh at a meeting at the House of Commons, February 2007

To find out more about Asel's life, including his writings, and poems about him by the family, visit [www.slider17.com](http://www.slider17.com). To find out more about the legal case see [www.adalah.org](http://www.adalah.org).

# mothers talk to Nisa Ali about their sons

In April 2003, Tom Hurndall was shot in the head as he carried a Palestinian child out of the range of an Israeli army sniper in the town of Rafah in the Gaza Strip. He was unarmed, and wearing the internationally recognised peaceworker's fluorescent orange jacket. Severely wounded, he never recovered consciousness and died nine months later in a London hospital. His family found themselves at the centre of a legal and media battle which, eventually, lead to the conviction of an Israeli soldier.

When Tom Hurndall was shot, his mother showed amazing courage in her determination to get to the truth. Her book on Tom's life and tragic death, 'Defy the Stars' evokes with great clarity and emotion the months and years in which her family's life was transformed. She told Palestine News: "One of my intentions was to give people some understanding of the situation, hoping that people will ask the questions themselves. That's why I wanted to write the book, so people wouldn't switch off from a situation of huge oppression and injustice. And I wanted to present the facts without any form of prejudice. I hope when people read the book that their minds are opened, because Tom was someone who believed in having an open mind. You filter out the propaganda and seek all the facts; only when you have done that can you come to a conclusion."

**"Today I feel a complete incomprehension and a kind of disgust at our government's foreign policy"**

"One of the most valuable things people can do is go out there and see for themselves. If it was a life transforming tragedy for me, might it not be a life changing experience for others?"

Following her visits to Israel and Gaza, Jocelyn describes the casual militarisation of Israeli culture and society, fearfully cocooned against its neighbours. And yet the book is not anti-Israeli. Her fury is clearly directed at the policies and policymakers fostering violence and death.

Jocelyn notes the silence of the British government over Tom's death, and that of other 'internationals' killed or injured observing the situation, such as aid worker Brian Avery, cameraman James Miller



**Jocelyn Hurndall**

and UN worker Iain Hook, compared to the huge outcry it made after the Tel Aviv café bombing. When she finally got the chance to ask Tony Blair why he hadn't publicly condemned Tom's murder, she got a shrug of the shoulders. She said: "Today I feel a complete incomprehension and a kind of disgust at our government's foreign policy."

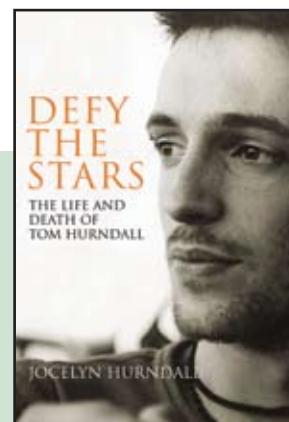
She describes her son as daring, intelligent and selfless, a young man whose inquiring spirit led him to try and make sense of the madness that is the Occupation in Palestine. Despite the gnawing sadness of a promising life cut short, the dead hand of British government policy, official Israeli intransigence and the despair she witnessed in Gaza, Jocelyn found elements of hope. So many people rallied to the family, in what turned into a rapidly escalating campaign. She describes the contrast between her feelings of isolation and delayed grief, as Tom lingered in a coma, and the very public outcry and expressions of sympathy at the shooting.

The story is far from over. She has recently written to Foreign Office Minister Kim Howells, while her former husband Anthony has written to Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett, and they have both written to the Israeli ambassador asking for an apology. The family are also pursuing a civil claim against the government of Israel.

"A formal apology is part of the process of accountability. There's no reason, now the soldier is in jail, not to have a formal apology."

"It remains our view that it is the policymakers who should take responsibility for this. The military personnel who wrote the rules of engagement for the second Intifada are ultimately responsible."

Jocelyn takes comfort in re-reading Tom's journals: "You can see in them a constant questioning. He was always so determined to get to the nub of something." She is currently searching for a publisher for Tom's journals and photographs.



**'Defy the Stars' is published by Bloomsbury Press at £16.99. It is available to PN readers at a 25% discount at: [www.bloomsbury.com/defystars](http://www.bloomsbury.com/defystars) or by phone on 020 74402475. The offer will run from 15 July for three months.**

# In Brief



PHOTO: MAANIMAGES/WISAM NASSAR

## BBC JOURNALIST ALAN JOHNSTON IN GAZA

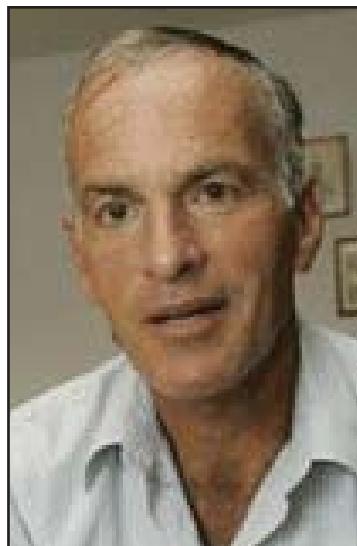
**with Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, on his release on 4 July, after being held hostage for 114 days by the militant group, the Army of Islam. Hamas exchanged prisoners with the Army of Islam in order to obtain his release.**

Alan Johnston thanked everyone who had supported him, especially all the Palestinians who had held vigils and demonstrations for his release, in Gaza.

## ● ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN THE US

Norman Finkelstein, author of 'The Holocaust Industry' and 'Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History', has been denied tenure at the Political Sciences Department of DePaul University in Chicago.

Finkelstein has argued in his books that accusations of anti-semitism are used to silence criticism of Israel. In 'Beyond Chutzpah' he was particularly scathing about the tactics used by Alan Dershowitz, a Harvard law professor, and his book 'The Case for Israel'. Dershowitz led the months-long campaign to oust Finkelstein and succeeded, despite the intervention of intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky and the Oxford historian Avi Shlaim on Finkelstein's behalf. (Dershowitz is also leading the threat to target UK academics campaigning for an academic boycott of Israel – see page 17.)



Norman Finkelstein

Finkelstein responded: "They can deny me tenure, deny me the right to teach. But they will never stop me from saying what I believe."

*For details of the debate see [www.normanfinkelstein.com](http://www.normanfinkelstein.com).*

## ● SETTING SAIL FOR GAZA

25 May saw the launch of 'Break the Siege', an initiative of the Free Gaza network. In August, Break the Siege's ship Free Gaza will sail to Gaza with 80 Palestinians and internationals on board, along with \$25,000 in aid donated to the Red Crescent by the Palestinian Children's Welfare Fund. The ship will defy the Israeli navy's closure of Gaza, raising awareness of the fact that, although Israel claims to have withdrawn, it still maintains a crippling hold on the area's borders, preventing trade, human rights workers, adequate health supplies, food and water from reaching Gaza's population.

Those sailing on Free Gaza will include Hedy Epstein, a



Gaza fishing boats lie idle

survivor of the Kindertransport trains which saved German Jewish children from the Nazi death camps, Mahmood Ibrahim, a Nakba survivor now resident in the USA, and Huwaida Arraf, one of the founders of the ISM.

To find out more, or to make a donation go to [www.freegaza.org](http://www.freegaza.org).

## ● CRISIS IN RAFAH

Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament, issued a statement on 28 June about the plight of thousands of Palestinians stuck on the border between Egypt and the Gaza Strip: "4000 Palestinians – elderly and ill people, children, women and men – are currently stuck at the Rafah border crossing, the southern border of the Gaza strip with Egypt. They are waiting under the burning sun, 42 C° degrees, without money and with scarce water and food. These people do not receive any humanitarian aid, any assistance from international organizations or from the Egyptian government.

"The hygienic and logistical situation is completely improper, especially considering that in the group there are a lot of ill people, who are coming back from Egyptian hospitals, trying to go back to their homes."



**Luisa Morgantini**

desperate conditions for the last two weeks."

She called on the international community, and especially the EU, "to put pressure on the Israeli government to immediately re-open all the border crossing points at the Gaza Strip, in which Palestinian civilians are arbitrarily and unilaterally imprisoned and forced to survive with no food, nor water and with a health service on the verge of collapse."

She also called on Tony Blair, as the newly elected Special Envoy of the Quartet, to endorse this appeal. It would be "a first step to give credibility to his role towards the Palestinian and Arab population, sceptical of the neutrality of one of the main promoters of the Iraqi disaster and strong supporter of an aggressive US foreign policy".

**Since Morgantini's report, the services of Western Union and DHL in the Gaza Strip have been discontinued under Israeli and American pressure, making it impossible for families to send money to their trapped relatives. On 1 July, Taghreed Abaed, a 31 year-old Palestinian woman, mother of five children, died at the**

MAANIMAGES/HATEM OMAR



**Waiting at the border**

**Rafah crossing. Her family has not been allowed to take her body back into the Gaza Strip.**

## ● UN SPLIT OVER EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT

On 20 June UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's office openly backed the new Palestinian Emergency Government. However, a US-led attempt to support Abbas and isolate Hamas was thwarted by the objections of Russia, South Africa, Indonesia and Qatar.

The US was forced to withdraw its initiative (proposing a Security Council declaration of confidence in the Emergency Government), even before it reached the draft stage.

UN sources in New York said that governments of those four countries objected to the anti-Hamas policy and to American and European efforts to isolate the group as a terror organisation. Russia and South Africa have questioned the legitimacy of the Palestinian Emergency Government and argued that a Palestinian Unity Government is both possible and preferable.

The South African ambassador said that the international community, especially the US, Israel and the Quartet, are to blame for the situation in the Gaza Strip. The Indonesian ambassador complained that the UN was devoting time and energy to the question of Lebanon, but ignoring the Palestinian problem.



## ● PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Fundamentalists from opposing camps manage to unite against gay and women's struggles for self-determination and reproductive and sexual rights. Perhaps they recognise the threat to themselves, in these challenges to rigid gender roles

In March, despite attempts by both Jewish and Muslim groups in Israel to stop the fifth anniversary conference of feminist Palestinian lesbian NGO Aswat (Voices), the organisation held a successful event, and joined the Palestinian LGBTQ Community Project Al-Qaws (The Rainbow) for May's International Day against Homophobia, and marched in Haifa's Gay Pride event.

# Eye on the web

## Interviews to revisit:

• **Ali Abunimah and journalist Laila El-Haddad**, who lives in Gaza, discuss the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in mid-June, and the role of the US and Israel in the fighting between Fatah and Hamas. See <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article7033.shtml> (19 mins).

• **Azmi Bishara** on the accusations of treason being brought against him, and the reasons for his resignation from the Knesset: <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=07/05/04/1419201>

• Interview with **Jimmy Carter** on Radio 4 on 19 May. He explained clearly why he uses the word 'Apartheid' in conjunction with Israel, and criticised Tony Blair's blind support for Bush on foreign policy: 'loyal, blind, subservient'. Unfortunately much of what he said about Palestine has been deleted – but much of interest, on Iraq, remains. Go to: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/today/listenagain/> and type in 'President Carter'.

**S**ix videos documenting the horrors of the Israeli Occupation, produced and published by B'tselem (The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories). These include filming of house demolitions and a short film on child prisoners in Israeli jails, who are forbidden visits by their parents. Only their siblings under 16 are allowed to see them: <http://desertpeace.blogspot.com/2007/06/peace-loving-israeli-occupation.html>

**T**wo Channel 4 programmes, broadcast in May, 'Jerusalem' and 'Love They Neighbour', presented by Paddy Ashdown and by Rod Liddle, can be viewed on [http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/C/can\\_you\\_believe\\_it/debates/holyland.html?intcmp=docpage\\_box3](http://www.channel4.com/culture/microsites/C/can_you_believe_it/debates/holyland.html?intcmp=docpage_box3) A firm supporter of Israel, Liddle poses the question: should Israel still be considered part of the western club of democratic nations in light of its policies in the Occupied Territories?



15

There were violent counter-demonstrations by anti-gay protesters, including the exploding of a pipebomb, but June's march went ahead. 'We voice the values of equality, dignity and freedom of speech,' said an organiser.

International support rallied in defence of freedom of assembly, although the failure to place Jerusalem Pride in the wider context of relentless Israeli colonisation of the city and the occupation means Pride remains controversial. Israel's claim to be a democracy is given the lie by its treatment of Palestinians inside Israel; its portrayal by some as a haven for gay Arabs is also far from the reality. Two bills banning gay parades are currently before the Knesset.

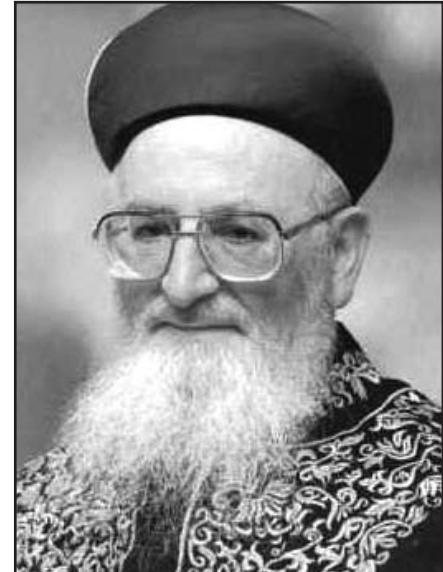
### NO PROHIBITION ON GENOCIDE

An article on the website of the Jerusalem Post reported that Israel's former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu "ruled that there was absolutely no moral prohibition against the indiscriminate killing of civilians during a potential massive military offensive on Gaza aimed at stopping the rocket launchings".

They quote a letter from the Rabbi to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, which was then published in a weekly journal that is distributed in synagogues throughout Israel. "According to Jewish war ethics", wrote Eliyahu, "an entire city holds collective responsibility for the immoral behavior of individuals. In Gaza, the entire populace is responsible because they do nothing to stop the firing of Kassam rockets."

Eliyahu's son, Shmuel Eliyahu, himself Chief Rabbi of Safad, added: "If they don't stop after we kill 100, then we must kill a thousand. And if they do not stop after 1,000 then we must kill 10,000. If they still don't stop we must kill 100,000, even a million. Whatever it takes to make them stop."

Again, the mainstream Western media did not see fit to report on these statements. And no Western politician or statesman has condemned them. Imagine if a senior Palestinian spokesperson were to come out with such a statement. It would be splashed over the front pages and that person would be considered an international pariah. Under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, "Direct and public incitement to commit genocide" is a punishable act. If either of these rabbis



Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu

travels abroad, will steps be taken to apprehend them and put them on trial?

(See the *Jerusalem Post* website, 30 May, 2007).

### GORDON'S APPOINTEES

PM Gordon Brown has appointed Simon McDonald, the UK's former ambassador in Israel, as his chief foreign policy adviser. Political sources in Israel expressed their satisfaction with the candidate, describing McDonald as "a friend to Israel." They said: "It is a signal that Britain will continue its positive policy toward Israel."

McDonald, 46, served as UK ambassador to Tel Aviv from 2003 to 2006.

He is considered to be one of the most influential foreign envoys posted to Israel, and one well-connected to Israeli decision-makers.

At 41 new appointee David Miliband will be the youngest Foreign Secretary for about 30 years. It is rumoured that he could be more critical of Israel than his predecessor, although he has made few public pronouncements on the Middle East.

One official in Jerusalem said that Miliband is expected to follow Brown's policies toward Israel. (Brown is considered to be a friend of Israel.) On the other hand, as the BBC reported on its website: "Miliband's Jewish background will be noted particularly in the Middle East. Israel will welcome this – but equally it allows him the freedom to criticise Israel, as he has done, without being accused of anti-Semitism." Last July, according to press reports at the time, Miliband was critical in a cabinet meeting of Blair's refusal to denounce Israel for its actions during the second war on Lebanon.

# The unions and boycott – the domino effect?

In February 2006 Israel instigated an international boycott of Palestine, which has created a humanitarian and political crisis well documented by the UN, the World Bank, Oxfam and other authoritative bodies. Yet, when the grassroots international community discusses ways of defending Palestinian rights, the juggernaut of the Israel lobby launches its attacks. The refreshing reality, however, is that the support is increasing.

In April the National Union of Journalists voted by 65 votes to 44 for a motion calling for "a boycott of Israeli goods similar to those boycotts in the struggles against Apartheid South Africa, led by trade unions and the TUC, to demand sanctions be imposed on Israel by the British government and the United Nations." It condemned "the savage, pre-planned attack on Lebanon" last summer and the "slaughter of civilians by Israeli troops in Gaza and the IDF's (Israeli Defence Force) continued attacks inside Lebanon following the defeat of its army by Hezbollah". It also condemned the continuing occupation of Palestinian land, Israel's withholding of PA money, and the refusal to recognise internationally-accredited Palestinian journalists.

## Media storm

The decision provoked reactions ranging from warm approval to incandescent fury and charges of anti-semitism. The arguments were often confused. Some said that the NUJ should be condemning the kidnapping of Alan Johnston, rather than putting pressure on Israel to abide by international law – as if the two positions were mutually exclusive. (The kidnapping was condemned by the NUJ in a separate motion.)

Many vaunted the freedom of speech in Israel, unparalleled in the region.

These critics are silent on the targeting by the IDF of Palestinian and international journalists, including Britain's James Miller. They are also perhaps ignorant of the fate of Members of the Knesset who dare call for equal rights for non-Jewish citizens (see page 6), and the vilification and ostracism meted out to vocal critics of the regime, such as Israeli academic Ilan Pappe, who has just taken up a post in Exeter University.

30 May brought a resolution by another influential national union, the newly formed University and College Union (UCU). By 158 votes to 99 they called for a process of debate and discussion, asking the Executive to "circulate the full text of the Palestinian boycott call to all branches/LAs for information and discussion; encourage members to consider the moral implications of existing and proposed links with Israeli academic institutions; organise a UK-wide campus tour for Palestinian academic/educational trade unionists and issue guidance to members on appropriate forms of action".

Critics have distorted and misquoted both resolutions; the UCU motion in particular has been widely represented as a direct call



**James Miller, shot in Gaza in 2003**

## The NUJ, the UCU and UNISON join the debate

to academic boycott, rather than an open discussion of the issues – which is surely in keeping with the principle of free speech?

Brighton University lecturer Tom Hickey, the local UCU representative who moved the motion, said he has been subjected to a campaign of "the most sustained vilification".

He points out that "no Israeli college or university has publicly condemned what is being done in the Occupied Territories in the name of every Israeli citizen. None have condemned, or dissociated themselves from, the consequences of the Occupation for Palestinian education. Some have established campuses for settlers on illegally confiscated land; others conduct their archeological digs on land from which Palestinian farmers have been expelled."

Opposing the argument that it is 'unfair' to single out Israel, he said: "Here we are not simply speaking of the manufacture of a humanitarian catastrophe (the description of the UN Special Rapporteur), we are also speaking of a protracted process of colonisation, and the attempted extirpation of the history of a whole people. Yet that itself does not explain the peculiar circumstances of this particular barbarity.

"In the case of Israel, we are speaking about a society whose dominant self-image is one of a bastion of civilisation in a sea of medieval reaction. And we are speaking of a culture, both in Israel and in the long history of the Jewish diaspora, in which education and scholarship are held in very high regard. That is the specific reason why an academic boycott might have an effect in this case."

## Threats

In advance of the motion, Alan Dershowitz, prominent US lawyer and Harvard law professor, mustered a team of 100 high-profile lawyers on both sides of the Atlantic to "devastate and bankrupt" anyone acting against Israeli universities.

"If the union goes ahead with this immoral petition, it will destroy

## Background to the academic boycott debate

Steven Rose, Professor of Biology at the Open University, launched the campaign with a letter to the *Guardian* in April 2002, signed by 125 prominent academics. It called for a moratorium on EU funding of Israeli research, "unless and until Israel abides by UN resolutions".

In 2005 the Association of University Teachers – recently merged with the NATFHE to form the University and College Union – voted to cut links with Haifa and Bar Ilan universities, which it claimed were complicit in the abuse of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

The decision provoked a furious response, particularly in Israel and the US, and a few weeks later, the union held an emergency conference at which the boycott was overturned.

See [www.bricup.org.uk](http://www.bricup.org.uk) for more information.

British academia," he said. "We will isolate them from the rest of the world. They will end up being the objects of the boycott because we will get tens of thousands of the most prominent academics from around the world to refuse to cooperate and refuse to participate in any events from which Israeli academics are excluded. It will totally backfire."

In Israel, the UCU's position triggered a wave of criticism. Some have threatened a retaliatory boycott of British products and union workers have said they may refuse to unload British imports. Many have repeated the accusation that anti-semitism has motivated the boycott debate. "Boycotting a product because it's made in Israel resembles, in my opinion, hanging a sign on the store that reads 'Jew'", said one union spokesman.

## Overwhelming support

On 20 June UNISON, the largest union in Britain representing 1.4 NHS and other public service workers, voted overwhelmingly for the motion: "The conference believes that ending the Occupation demands concerted and sustained pressure upon Israel, including an economic, cultural, academic and sporting boycott". In addition, delegates called on the British government to press for an arms embargo against Israel and condemned the economic boycott imposed on the Palestinian Authority last year, when Hamas won the general elections. At the same time they emphasised that the boycott does not mean breaking off contact with sympathetic Israelis.

As one of the many national trade unions affiliated to PSC, UNISON also called for "branches and regions to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and help build PSC branches".

In July 2005, 171 organisations representing Palestinian Civil Society called for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until it complies with International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights. (For a full list of the organisations visit <http://www.stopthewall.org/downloads/pdf/BDSEnglish.pdf>.)

## Architects for justice

The campaign of the Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, launched in May 2006 is gathering momentum, with about 200 signatories to date. These include architectural historian Charles Jencks, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects Jack Pringle and President-elect Sunand Prasad, as well as geographer Oren Yiftachel of Ben-Gurion University in the Negev, architect Zvi Hecker of Israel and Berlin, Zvi Efrat, head of the architecture department at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design and UK-based Israeli architect Eyal Weizman, author of 'Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation'.

They call on Israeli architects and planners to put an end to being "partners in the social, political and economic oppression of Palestinians", asserting that "the actions of our fellow professionals working with these enterprises are clearly unethical, immoral and contravene universally recognised professional codes of conduct...We ask the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA) to meet their professional obligations to declare their opposition to this inhuman occupation."

The campaign focuses on three major projects in the Occupied Territories: the master plan for the E1 region between the settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim and Jerusalem, which will prevent Palestinian territorial contiguity; construction in the Silwan district in East Jerusalem, which involves the demolition of dozens of homes; and a plan to build a luxury neighbourhood on the remains of the former Palestinian village of Lifta (see Spring issue of *Palestine News*).

See [apjp.org](http://apjp.org) for more details of the campaign. See [www.biggampaign.org.uk](http://www.biggampaign.org.uk) for details of the various boycott campaigns.

## Medical boycott launched

**I**n April 130 doctors signed a letter to the *Guardian*, calling for a boycott of the Israeli Medical Association (IMA) and its expulsion from the World Medical Association (WMA).

The letter, drafted by Dr. Derek Summerfield, who has long experience of working in the Occupied Territories, detailed the "violation of medical ethics" that had compelled them to seek a boycott. In the Occupied Territories, the IDF has "systematically flouted the Fourth Geneva Convention guaranteeing a civilian population unfettered access to medical services and immunity for medical staff". Moreover, "ambulances are fired on (hundreds of cases) and their personnel killed", many Palestinians "die at checkpoints because soldiers bar the way to hospital". On a larger scale, "the public-health infrastructure, including water and electricity supplies, is wilfully bombed, and the passage of essential medicines like anti-cancer drugs and kidney dialysis fluids blocked".

According to the letter, what implicates the IMA in these crimes is its refusal to condemn – a dereliction of its "duty to protest about war crimes of this kind". The IMA also stands accused of complicity in, and justification of, torture, and silence in the face of war crimes.

The IMA President responded in the *British Medical Journal* to the documentation of human rights abuses by labelling it "anti-semitic lies and filth".

Like other boycotts, the British Campaign for the Medical Boycott of Israel (BCMBI) recalls the precedent of the campaign against Apartheid South Africa. As the letter noted in its conclusion, "a boycott is an ethical and moral imperative when conventional channels do not function, for otherwise we are merely turning away". The BCMBI call also echoes the approach of the academic and cultural boycott campaigners in citing the (in this case 18) Palestinian organisations in the same field who have urged action by their fellow professionals abroad.

Dr Summerfield asks: "If not now, when? It was at a moment like this that calls went out (and there was considerable opposition then, too) for the academic isolation of South Africa, during the Apartheid era. This rightly included a boycott of the medical profession for collusion of a very similar nature to what we see today in Israel".

Dr Summerfield also detailed repeated attempts to raise the matter with the IMA itself, with the WMA, and also with the British Medical Association, all of which came to nought. The latter has "consistently declined to challenge the IMA record at the WMA", a failure that begs the question: Does this refusal reflect the power of the Israeli lobby?



Ambulance crushed by Israeli tank

# UK campus news

The last National Union of Students (NUS) annual conference saw a setback for the campaign for Palestinian rights, when the conference voted by a significant majority to support the controversial European Union Monitoring Commission (EUMC) working definition of anti-semitism, which labels some criticism of Israel as being anti-semitic. The definition has been heavily criticised by European Jews for a Just Peace (EJJP) and many others.

In spite of this, activists have refused to be silenced and are continuing to raise the issue of Palestine on campus.

Ironically, the very day after the NUS conference vote the government released its response to the All Party Parliamentary Enquiry into anti-semitism, which decided that the EUMC definition should not be recommended for adoption.

Meanwhile, hard-fought twinning campaigns have seen successes at the London School of Economics, Manchester, Staffordshire and Sussex universities. Students at Sheffield University succeeded in their campaign to renew the Union's Palestine solidarity policy, committing the Union to marking the UN Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people each November.

In addition there was a good student presence on the Enough! demonstration and rally, and despite exams and coursework deadlines,



Saed Abu Hijleh of Najah University with representatives of LSE Student Union, at the twinning ceremony in May

a series of meetings and days of action were held in London and around the country in the run-up to the 9 June.

Already plans are underway for Freshers Fairs in the Autumn term and for film showings, speakers meetings and a national student conference. If you are a student and want any help organising events or setting up a group on your campus, please get in touch with George Woods at: [students@palestinecampaign.org](mailto:students@palestinecampaign.org).

## Players from Palestine

**Activists from the NW have been working hard and fundraising, to bring to the UK young Palestinian players who cannot meet to play inside Palestine, due to the closures and the permit system imposed by the Israeli government.**

The plan is to provide air tickets for West Bank players able to leave from Amman, and for players resident in Gaza, leaving from Cairo.

There will be a squad of 20 players, four coaches and a delegation leader, staying for three weeks from 21 August to 10 September.

Their programme will begin with fitness assessment, followed by training and a series of friendly matches with local teams. Their visit will culminate in a two-day event in London.

Besides playing football, the team will work with Football in the Community groups and help build links with Palestinian communities. Good coverage is expected in the local media.

Many local sponsors and volunteers have come forward, but more support is needed. To find out more, to make a donation or get involved in any other way, see their website: <http://www.palestinefootball.myzen.co.uk>.



Palestine United with coach Suaad George

## Pal United in the UK

D r. Suaad Genem-George, a committee member of the Kick Racism Out of Football Campaign, decided it was time Palestine was represented in the Campaign's annual tournament. So she set about putting a team together in the UK, with the help of the Exeter City Football Club and Exeter PSC.

Not only was she organiser of the Palestine United Football team – as a keen player herself she also undertook the daunting task of training the team. "At the beginning it wasn't easy, as a woman, but after I actually played with them they were quite impressed and all of them voted for me to be their coach and manager."

Exeter PSC contributed the kit and supported the team as it prepared for the big day, 27 May, at Exeter City Football Training ground. Despite the wind and the rain Palestine United reached the quarter final. Suaad says: "It was wonderful to see the Palestinian flag everywhere, with players of so many different nations wanting to carry it. And we got excellent coverage in the local media."

Suaad wants other PSC branches to get involved: "On 9 June at the big rally in London I met potential team managers, from Bristol, Leeds and Liverpool, so we are hopeful."

## WEMBLEY VIGIL

From September 2000 to December 2006, 869 Palestinian children have been killed, a quarter of those were under twelve. Every month an average of fourteen will die. Many have been killed just kicking a ball around.

On the 8 September 2007 England are playing Israel in a Euro 2008 qualifier match at Wembley Stadium. PSC and the Boycott Israeli Goods campaign will hold a vigil in protest at the match and to call for a sporting boycott of apartheid Israel.

During the campaign against apartheid South Africa supporters of justice boycotted South African sport. It is equally necessary to boycott Israeli sport, until its government complies with international law.

# A day to remember

**2**0,000 demonstrators massed in Trafalgar Square on 9 June to mark the 40th anniversary of the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, and to send our government a clear message that British policy must change.

Called by Enough!, a coalition of over 50 charities, trade unions and other campaign groups, the demonstrators represented the sheer diversity of British society, and the breadth of support for the issue.

In brilliant sunshine, demonstrators were welcomed by the Palestinian Ambassador to Britain, Manuel Hassassian. Mustafa Barghouti, the Palestinian Minister of Information, said that Palestine has become the number one human rights issue in the

world. He noted that, despite the democratic elections in Palestine, "a third of our (elected politicians) are in Israeli gaols" and pointed out that "there is something wrong in this world when occupation transforms in front of the eyes of governments into apartheid." He called for measures against Israel including boycott, and for the release of journalist Alan Johnston.

Two other members of the Palestinian unity government, the Minister of Education (who is now under Israeli detention) and the Minister of Planning, had intended to attend the rally, but were not granted visas by Britain. Palestinian Prime Minister Ismael Haniyeh delivered a video message to the crowd, saying that Israel had conquered the land, but had failed to conquer the people, and calling for a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. Ismail Patel, from Friends of al Aqsa, reminded the crowd that the "crimes against Palestinians are all partly the responsibility of Britain", while Dr Azzam Tamimi recalled the events of 1967 and their effect on his family.

Bishop Riah of Jerusalem spoke of

PHOTO: CATH AGER



his belief in the ultimate victory of peace based on justice, while Bruce Kent of Pax Christi praised Jews who campaign for justice for the Palestinians, and who formed a major part of the coalition. Alexei Sayle introduced Netan'l Silverman, an Israeli member of Combatants for Peace, who spoke of their important work and called for an end to the Occupation and the colonial policies of Israel. Miriam Margolyes sent a strong video message of support.

Richard Burden MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Palestine, pointed out that "we asked for democratic elections; when they held them we boycotted those very institutions." Other British politicians who called for an end to the Occupation included Jeremy Corbyn and Baroness Jenny Tonge, who are both Patrons of PSC, as well as MPs Richard Burden, Emily Thornberry, George Galloway and MEP Caroline Lucas.

Alison Shepherd, President of the Trade Union Congress stated that the TUC had renewed its policy of support to the Palestinians last year and would add its voice to the growing call for an end to Occupation. She highlighted the worsening economic situation and the exploitation of Palestinian workers. Keith Sonnet of UNISON spoke of the need to recognise international law and demanded that the Apartheid Wall be brought down.

Demonstrating that campaigning can bring change, Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Nobel Peace Laureate, travelled from Northern Ireland to speak at the rally, recalling her presence at Trafalgar Square 30 years ago.



**H**ow wet can you get? PSC supporters got to find out on the sponsored walk weekend in Powys, Wales, which had its heaviest rainfall for decades.

45 participants aged 10 to 77 walked between 25 and 40 kilometres, on Saturday 30 June and Sunday 1 July, raising over £20,000 for PSC. On Saturday evening they were rewarded with a sumptuous Palestinian supper at Abergavenny village hall, complete with dabke dancing, and the presence of the Mayor and Mayoress of the town.

On Sunday some sunshine revealed the fabulous views around Skirrid and the Usk valley. All agreed this should definitely be an annual event...

# Northern branches build huge rally

**N**orthern branches joined to build the largest Palestinian solidarity event outside London in May, with over 1000 participants and scores of shoppers taking part.

**Sheffield, York and Halifax PSC** branches co-organised the **Northern rally** in Sheffield City Centre with support from branches from all over Britain. The political rally and march called for an end to 40 years of Israeli occupation, commemorated 59 years since the Nakba and called for justice in Palestine. An outstanding line-up of speakers included Clare Short MP, Ismael Patel, Chair of Friends of Al Aqsa, Betty Hunter, PSC, Nahella Ashraf, Stop the War Coalition, Linda Clair, Jews for Justice for Palestinians and Arwa Abu-Haikal, resident of Hebron. The highly colourful and noisy march was accompanied by a 'cyclists for Palestine' cyclecade, a very lively and loud Sheffield/Bradford Samba band and hundreds of Palestine flags. Palestinian dabke dancing from a group of Nottingham-based Palestinians drew a comment from a teary eyed Palestinian woman that "it's like being in Palestine!" The fake checkpoint street theatre (with a model apartheid wall) run by Leeds students was so realistic a confused onlooker wanted to call the police! There was also delicious Palestinian food and numerous stalls from many national organisations. The marquee caught the attention of Saturday shoppers with a photographic exhibition from Birzeit

university, Palestinian children's drawings and a 'football in Palestine' display. A Boycott Israeli Goods market stall featuring 'forbidden fruits and vegetables' was also an eye-catching and informative addition. The intention was to celebrate Palestinian culture and resilience, and highlight the devastating impact of occupation, for a broader than usual audience.

The hope is that the Rally will be run as an annual event moving around different Northern towns. The day was a great fillip to the more northerly branches of PSC which have strengthened ties and increased the possibility of further group action in the future.

Outside the work for the rally, **Sheffield PSC** has organised several events, including calling a joint vigil with South Yorkshire National Union of Journalists and Hazards Magazine for Alan Johnston, the BBC journalist who has been held hostage in Gaza since 12 March. The branch is also supporting women's education in the Occupied Territories. It recently held a women-only event to raise funds for the **Sheffield Palestine Women's Scholarship Fund** with a display and update about how the young students that the branch is currently sponsoring in Gaza are progressing.

PHOTO: CATH AGER



Drumming for Palestine



Clare Short at the Northern rally

PHOTO: CATH AGER

## Branches work with the unions

**Liverpool PSC** members have been active within trades unions in the region. At the Fire Brigades' Union Annual Conference in May, Ruben Linares, from the Venezuelan Confederation of Unions, met with FBU delegates and PSC members on the Palestine Solidarity stall, and was presented with Palestinian olive oil and a keffiyah.

Ruben was so moved by what he heard about Palestine and the importance of the olive harvest to Palestinian communities, that when he gave his address to the Conference he held up the oil and condemned the Israeli state for destroying the olive groves, livelihoods and lives of Palestinians. He urged delegates to remember Palestine — the PSC stall sold out of oil after that! Members leafleted the North West TUC in **Wigan** and have spoken at the Liverpool

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FBU Executive Council member Tam McFarlane (left) presents Venezuelan TU leader with Palestinian oil and keffiyah. Nahida from Liverpool PSC (right) ran the stall.

# Help needed!

**Y**orkshire Palestine Cultural Exchange is looking for help with sponsorship ideas for its second Concert 4 Palestine in Sheffield City Hall on Wednesday 17 October 2007, featuring the highly acclaimed musician Reem Kelani and her band. Hilary Nelson from YPCE said

that it's not so much money that's needed, but inspiration and ideas about obtaining sponsorship: "The concert will cost around £5,000 to stage. All profits generated by ticket sales will go to children's projects in Gaza. "We are looking for sponsors from organisational, private, trade union, celebrity, or commercial benefactors."

Palestinian singer, musician and broadcaster, Reem Kelani who released her debut CD last year – "Sprinting Gazelle" – is considered one of the foremost researchers and performers of Palestinian music. Send your ideas to Hilary Nelson at: hilary@nelsonandco.org.uk



Reem Kelani to sing in Sheffield

**21** Trades Council, Wirral Trades Council, Merseyside TUC and Birkenhead Constituency Labour Party, which has since affiliated to PSC! The branch also ran a PSC stall at the TSSA conference in May in Southport. Earlier this year they organised a production of '**My Name is Rachel Corrie**' at the Unity Theatre in Liverpool with a local director — the three nights sold out. The play returns to the Unity Theatre on 3 July — supported by Arts for Palestine. The branch will run a stall at the **Liverpool Arabic Arts Festival** which will be held from 1-15 July. A member from the branch was responsible for getting **Marcel Khalife** to Liverpool — Marcel will be closing the Festival on 15 July at the Philharmonic Concert Hall with the orchestra. The branch will also run its annual Breakfast for Palestine on Sunday 22 July

— a fundraising event for the Union of Health Workers Committees in Gaza, which has raised more than £7000 to date.

## Cycle for justice rides on

**York PSC** welcomed the **Cyclists for Palestine** to Ripon after a hot and dusty ride from Faslane in Scotland. They were drawing attention to the plight of Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli peace campaigner who remains under house arrest in Israel, despite having served in full his original jail sentence. Israeli authorities have now extended Vanunu's detention for a further year, so the struggle for justice goes on. Along with many of the other northern branches, York PSC were heavily involved in helping to organise the excellent PSC Northern Rally in Sheffield. The branch took the **Birzeit University exhibition** back to York after the rally and held its own successful show and also joined a "York One World Linking Association" event, where a member of the branch gave a talk on Palestine and the work of Hadeel (see page 24). The branch continues to maintain its weekly stall, which has proved to be a crucial way of spreading our message to the community and a vital source of income. As well as continuing with local stalls, **Hackney PSC** supported the sports boycott 'Kick Israel out of Football' picket outside the Football Association headquarters (pictured).



Hackney support football boycott

The branch welcomed the Vanunu Freedom cyclists with a stirring speech at Hackney Town Hall as they arrived from their ride from Scotland. The branch also organised a screening of '**Since You Left**'

## Behind the scenes

**M**artin Sullivan has been working as a volunteer in the London PSC office since 2003, after he retired as Director of Administration at the Open University Business School in Milton Keynes. A member of PSC for six years, Martin began by doing everything from dealing with the post, to organising the office filing system. But his main task now is managing the membership database: he registers and welcomes new members, logs subscriptions, provides statistics on membership, identifies members who are overdue on subscriptions (could this be you?!?) and a whole lot more. To do this he commutes fortnightly from Birmingham, where he is membership secretary of his local PSC branch.

There are plenty of tasks for volunteers, at national and Branch level: picketing, leafleting, fundraising, stewarding at demonstrations, lobbying MPs, writing to newspapers, organising PSC stands and stalls at political party, trade union and other conferences, or helping to run a branch as chair, treasurer or branch secretary. The London office is always looking for occasional volunteers to help with the massive task of getting out multi-insert mailings to over 3,000 members!

Martin says: "There is the buzz of working with others who have an interest in the same cause as you do — you discuss and exchange ideas, debate how you can use limited resources to the maximum effect. You meet a wide range of people in the PSC office — staff, Exec members, other volunteers — all activists with a common interest in Palestine."

He would recommend the work to other members: "Volunteers can choose both the type of work they undertake and the amount of time they give to it." The only problem? — "The stairs you have to climb to get to the PSC office at the top of the building. I'm glad I only have to do that once a fortnight!"



by Mohammed Bakri at the Rio, the local cinema, with a dynamic Q & A session with the director, chaired by film-maker Jenny Morgan. This was a moving and complex film, and the screening was well attended, even on a hot Saturday afternoon.

## Films draw in support

Members in **Cheltenham and Gloucester** visited Deheisheh camp for half a day during a recent visit to the Occupied Territories. On their return, the branch held a public meeting in Gloucester, which was chaired by Ed Hill, and showed the film '**The Iron Wall**'. The branch were asked to repeat the filmshow and talk. And Liz Burroughs, who was an observer in the West Bank for three months, gave a talk about her experiences.

The **Herefordshire** group leafleted Hereford town and organised two open meetings with speakers – Ed Hill from Bristol and Eileen from International Women's Peace Service.

Ed presented his film, '**Our Sufferings in this Land**', which documented his visit to Palestine to help with the olive harvest and to act as an international observer. It included an abundance of facts about the history, politics, geography and culture of the region and some shocking footage of the conditions under which the Palestinians are forced to live. During the discussion which followed, he urged us to write to MPs, boycott Israeli goods, get involved with local PSC groups and buy Palestinian olive oil and other products.

The branch also had a display and table at the Millichap Peace Fund's Adrian Mitchell Peace Poetry evening at the local theatre.

A number of members of **Manchester** branch have also been showing '**The Iron Wall**' in their own districts to peace groups and other forums to a positive response – and the activity has provided an opportunity to distribute other material.

## London campaigns for Bushra

**Tower Hamlets** have launched a petition following the murder of 17-year-old girl Bushra Bargheish, from Jenin refugee camp. She was shot in the head by an Israeli soldier while revising for her final school exams. The petition demands that the Israeli government take responsibility for the killing, and calls on British MPs to press for an inquiry.

Tower Hamlets twinning campaign focuses on health and education issues.



## Summer plans for camp children

Preparations for the visit of eight children and two adults from **Al Amari refugee camp to Oxford** from 21 July to 6 August are well underway. The children will join workshops with local Oxford kids at the Pegasus Youth Theatre culminating in a performance (details at [www.oxford-ramallah.org](http://www.oxford-ramallah.org)). The branch finalised plans during their visit to Ramallah in March. They met with friends in the Oxford-Ramallah link. They also paid a return visit to the **Mayor of Ramallah** after her visit to Oxford earlier this year. Conditions in the West Bank have

deteriorated, especially in Bethlehem and Nablus. On return the branch spoke at reportback meetings as far afield as Faringdon and Stroud, where we provided a display on 'Palestine — Imprisoned Society' for their Amnesty group. The local arts cinema hosted a showing of '**Since You've Been Gone**' by actor-director Mohammed Bakri, who answered questions on this tribute to his mentor Emil Habibi. The branch's black lace banner attracted attention to our Women in Black contingent with the Oxford PSC group at the June 9th Enough! march and rally.

## Branches flourish in northern climes

**Manchester PSC** is supporting activities in **Bury** where it was asked to provide a speaker and stall at a showing of the film at Bury STW. A group of people from Bury are going to the Occupied Territories in August. The hope is that they will set up a PSC branch on their return. Manchester branch will assist in this development. The branch continue to hold Saturday stalls in the city centre and surrounding areas, with good responses. (They had a very successful stall at the Sheffield rally.)

A well attended meeting was held at the Friends Meeting House with Saed Abu Hijleh of Nablus University after he had spoken at the university. Manchester PSC are in discussions with trades council on joint working on the boycott issue.

An excellent article appeared in the Northern Echo, written by Stuart Hill, an active PSC member from **Darlington**. In it, he described his experiences on a recent ICAHD (**Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions**) tour. The article was a double page spread and accompanied by striking pictures.

Stuart is now looking at the possibility of starting a branch in Darlington. There is also the chance to form new branches in **Lancaster**, **Bolton** and **Preston** (any local members who are interested, please contact the PSC office).

**Halifax Friends of Palestine** hosted a book launch and talk

in May by Joel Kovel for his latest work "Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine", (Pluto Press). The event, in the Fair Trade shop in Hebden Bridge, was packed and all the books were sold out. Later that month the branch gathered in Sowerby Bridge holding bright yellow tabards with "Boycott Israeli Goods" on the front. The tabards, made by member Liz Russell, caught the attention of locals who were, with a few exceptions, eager to take our leaflets. The branch aims to repeat these "uniformed" appearances in a number of towns in the Calder Valley. Members in **Stevenage** have established a "coalition for peace" which includes many related organisations.

**Brent PSC** has been leafleting widely at local underground stations, the FE college, Tricycle Theatre, a Palestinian cafe and a local mosque. The branch is currently organising a meeting in July with Ramzy Baroud and Victoria Brittain, together with STW and the Close Guantanomo group. Plans are in hand to involve local unions, campaign and church groups.

**Chester PSC** has become a member of the Chester International Links Association, the city council twinning organisation, to strengthen the council's current friendship agreement with **Jericho**. The branch hopes the move will help in efforts to upgrade the link to a full twinning agreement. The branch is also supporting the Chester Action for Palestine Group with donations to fund the visit of a **Bethlehem** drama company.

# Hadeel – backing the workers, spreading the word

The Hadeel shop in Edinburgh, which sells traditional goods from Palestinian community groups and camps, is a vital link in supporting the people of Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon. Now in its fourth year, the project has seen both sales and public interest increase, through a team of local representatives throughout England and Scotland.

The crafts — bags, accessories, olive wood carvings, pottery and cards — are made by workers who have no other source of income and who face the constant problem of getting goods out through Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints.

One group, Idna Ladies' Association, has particular difficulty in moving its work out as the village, south of Hebron, is isolated and suffers from frequent blocking of the roads as well as the construction of the Separation Wall. A recent incursion by the Israeli army caused disruption and distress when the building which houses their workshop was raided. The target was said to be a children's centre, allegedly linked to Hamas, but the Association's office was ransacked, embroideries were trampled on, furniture and equipment overturned and book-keeping records destroyed. The group's computer and their embroidered map of Palestine were taken away. "The women speculate that the soldiers were looking for a weapons storage or something, but of course they didn't find anything", said Shirabe Yamada, Executive Director of Sunbula in Jerusalem, who visited to assess the damage. Since her visit Sunbula has raised funds to repair the building and has donated a computer.

Earlier this year Hadeel, through its charity, Palcrafts, awarded Idna a grant which enabled three women to study English and acquire computer skills. A Fair Trade shop, it believes that giving people work is the best form of development and aid. Thousands of pounds have been sent to groups by way of grants over the past four years.

A wide range of Idna goods were featured at the AGM and Open Meeting of Palcrafts in Edinburgh in June, when customers were encouraged to buy from this small group which is one of the shop's most successful producers, now

employing 59 women.

Apart from a manager and assistant, Hadeel is run by volunteers, many of whom have visited partners in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Lebanon, resulting in close personal contacts. On their return, speakers travel extensively to talk about the projects and show the crafts as an aid to education and awareness-raising.

Carol Morton, who set up the business, acknowledges the growing support and interest when volunteers organise exhibitions and give talks to groups, churches, and at Fair Trade events. "The more people get to know the groups the more inspired they are by their skills, their determination and refusal to give in to injustice and despair", Carol says. "The PSC and other groups help enormously and we are grateful to them all. Palestinian



**Embroidering to order, for a Scottish customer**

handicrafts are living examples of ethnic art, deeply rooted in the culture and history of the people of the land."

## Hope Flowers in Bethlehem

**W**hat began in 1984 as a rented room with no chairs has now grown into the Hope Flowers School, a symbol of community-building education. The school, based in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, aims to 'raise a new generation in Palestine believing in peace, democracy, freedom and respect for the rights and needs of others'.

The school was founded by the late Ibrahim Issa, who grew up in a refugee camp, after his family were driven from their home in 1948. He was determined to give children a better life, especially those like him, growing up as refugees. To this day 80% of the students come from Palestinian refugee camps and rural areas, where the effects of a brutal military occupation are all too evident. Ibrahim's commitment and hard work paid off as his 22-child nursery grew into an elementary school and by 1994 a secondary school.

The school has faced many threats to its existence in the past (the building was shelled by tanks in 2000). Settlement expansion and the Apartheid Wall have meant that the school was served its first demolition order in 1999. So far international pressure and support from Israeli partners have prevented the Israel authorities from carrying out the demolition. But the school relies on its friends and supporters worldwide to keep it going.

Beyond the usual curriculum, the school offers children psychological support through a variety of Programmes, including the 'War Trauma Counselling program', which trains teachers in supporting traumatised and under-achieving children.

Volunteers and visitors are welcome: the school has a charming guest house and conference facilities within their building.



**The Hope Flowers kindergarten**

- **To find out more, or to make a donation, please see [www.hope-flowers.org](http://www.hope-flowers.org), or write to Hope Flowers School UK, PO Box 2427, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8XX.**

# Celebrating resistance

**D**AM is Palestine's seminal hip-hop group, who performed at this year's Celebrating Sanctuary festival (part of Refugee Week), an extraordinary annual event which gathers together musicians, dancers and artists from all corners of the globe to celebrate the positive cultural contribution of refugees to the UK.

They brought this year's Festival on London's South Bank to a triumphant close: despite the inevitable technical difficulties that go with reproducing hip-hop performances on stage, with accompanying decks and laptops, the three singers generated much of the wonderful energy and inventiveness of their debut CD 'Dedication'. Their music is a unique fusion of East and West, combining Arabic percussive rhythms, Middle Eastern melodies and urban hip-hop/rap – a true tour de force. The success of the album has seen them touring across the globe with their ground-breaking live shows and unique message, garnering international support for the Palestinian cause.

In London they had the crowd singing Arabic responses and dancing



**DAM at the Celebrating Sanctuary Festival**

enthusiastically. They managed to put across the Palestinian message in the powerful lyrics and short introductions to each song: a great example of how art and campaigning can work together.

If you missed them on the South

Bank, they are back on 15 July at the Rise Festival in Finsbury Park.

**DAM's CD 'Dedication' is available from the PSC office at £13 +pp.**

## Autumn in Palestine...

**Two suggestions for a trip later this year: helping with the olive harvest, or going on a women's tour of the Occupied Territories.**

**T**he Women's Tour, organised by the Olive Coop, runs from 30 September to 7 October (cost: about £745).

The Olive-Picking Program, from 21 to 30 October, marking an agricultural event of special significance to the Palestinian economy, is organised by the Alternative Tourism Group (cost, excluding flight: about £260).

Both include social gatherings, staying with local families, meeting important campaigning organisations and visiting sites of historical, religious and cultural interest. You will also see the separation Wall first hand, and learn about its impact.

The Women's Tour includes visits to

women's centres and cooperatives in Bethlehem, Nablus and Jericho in the Jordan Valley.

The Olive Picking Program is a very hands-on experience. Since the beginning of the Intifada in 2000, the olive harvest has been overshadowed by the Israeli policies of closure and confiscation of agricultural lands, as well as repeated attacks against Palestinian farmers by Israeli settlers. Now, with the construction of the Wall, many farmers are separated from their lands. You are invited to participate in helping with the harvest, especially in areas that are near to Israeli settlements and by-pass roads. The very presence of international visitors affords protection



to Palestinian farmers. (A tour guide is present with the group at all times.)

Why not make a month of it, and combine the two trips...?

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More information can be found at [www.atg.ps](http://www.atg.ps) and [www.olivecoop.com](http://www.olivecoop.com). You can contact Jawad Musleh of ATG at [jawad@atg.ps](mailto:jawad@atg.ps) or by phone at (+972) 2 2772151, and the Olive Coop at [info@olivecoop.com](mailto:info@olivecoop.com) or phone 0161 2731970.

# Making Palestine visible: The London Palestine film festival, 2007

This annual event at the Barbican and the School of Oriental and African Studies, organised by the SOAS Palestine Society, began in 1999. In 2004 members of the Society established the Palestine Film Foundation (PFF)\* as a specialised body to promote and exhibit film and video work related to Palestine with the Film Festival as a centrepiece of their work. Now, in 2007, the festival was significant for many reasons, with professionalism and substance at the forefront.

As noted in the recent "Dreams of a Nation: on Palestinian cinema" (reviewed in the last issue of *Palestine News*), countering the Zionist project of making Palestine and all things Palestinian invisible and ensuring the vitality

of Palestinian cultural life are crucial elements in the struggle. Clearly this is an imperative that the festival assiduously adheres to, although the programme of 35 films included some that were made not simply by non-Palestinians but by Israelis. It is this element perhaps, combined with the numerous discussions and debates with visiting directors and others, that made the event both substantive and groundbreaking.

Inevitably the range of subjects covered was wide. During the discussion following the screening of Mustafa Abu Ali's classic 1974 documentary 'They Do Not Exist', rescued from the ruins of Beirut in 1982, Israeli filmmaker Eran Torbiner revealed to Khadijeh Habashneh that other films in the PLO archive, apparently also lost in the ruins, are held by the Israeli Defence Force. Eran's



**From Lina Makboul's 'Leila Khaled – Hijacker': shortly after flight TWA 840 took off from Rome for Tel Aviv, passengers were addressed via the intercom: "Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please: kindly fasten your seatbelts, this is your new captain speaking from the Che Guevara commando unit of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine..."**

own film, 'Matzpen – Anti-Zionist Israelis' provided an interesting glimpse into the work and history of this Israeli socialist organisation, one of whose members, Moshe Machover, joined the post-screening discussion, pointing out, amongst other things, that it was ironic that Israel violently insisted on its right of return to Palestine after 2,000 years but denied Palestinians the same right after only 60 years.

Leila Khaled is the subject of Swedish Palestinian Lina Makboul's documentary 'Leila Khaled – Hijacker' and Sato Makoto covers the memories and legacies of Edward Said in 'Out of Place'. These were the high profile Palestinians represented alongside so many others whose lives provided a tapestry of a nation, a history and a people. 'Reel Bad Arabs', a US production documenting the history of negative Arab stereotyping in

Hollywood cinema, provided an overdue revelation and criticism of US racism, one which began from the earliest days of cinema, long, long before 9/11. 'Palestine, Summer 2006', a collection of films of three minutes or less using only one shot and commissioned to reflect the mood of that summer, brings together contemporary filmmakers living in Palestine. It's a fascinating panorama; I particularly enjoyed Enas



**From Nida Sinnokrot's 'Palestine Blues': the story of a village's confusion, desperation, and resistance, when its very survival is threatened by one of the world's most powerful armies.**



**Based on Jack Shaheen's book, 'Reel Bad Arabs', the film examines Hollywood's most persistent Arab caricatures, from over-sexed Bedouin bandits to sinister sheikhs and blood-thirsty terrorists.**

Muthaffar's funny but sad film 'A world apart within 15 minutes', which shows her driving around Jerusalem asking Israelis the way to Ramallah – needless to say no-one knows, even though it's only 15 minutes drive away. Irony is the centrepiece of Dalia al-Kury's short film 'Our Kuffiyah in London' in which she looks at how the Palestinian scarf has become appropriated and commercialised.

The festival was impeccably organised, with full houses and enthusiastic debate. The open door policy, which brought into the fold non-Palestinians who support the cause, was most remarkably represented by Eyal Sivan's 'The Specialist', followed by a discussion with Sivan. The film comprises footage taken from the 350 hours of the trial of Adolf Eichmann for his role in the Holocaust and in which Sivan makes apparent the timing and staging of the trial for Zionist propaganda. Even taking this into account, its inclusion in the festival also involves recognition of the suffering of the Jews and surely speaks volumes, as did the expression of solidarity and a common humanity that was created amongst filmmakers and audiences, one too easily lost in the conflict.

**Sheila Whitaker**

**• The PFF's website — [www.palestinefilm.org](http://www.palestinefilm.org) — has synopses of all the films shown since 2005, and also details of how to submit films for 2008.**

# Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

**Sara Roy**

Pluto Press, 2007

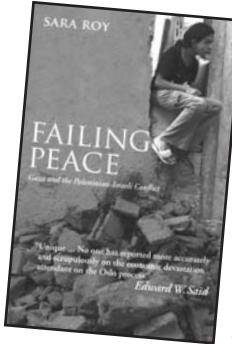
**S**ara Roy's new book is an extraordinary demonstration of both scholarly and moral integrity, containing a wealth of economic analysis and critical political comment. It comes also as a challenge to dishonest, sometimes downright fraudulent writings and media coverage of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in the US, where Roy lives and teaches. Her sound judgment on all aspects of the conflict is grounded in meticulous research but informed with a profound sense of personal engagement with the moral issues.

Although Roy is a political economist by profession, we are not bombarded with facts and figures of interest only to another specialist. Her book is wide-ranging and accessible and her own background reverberates on every page. Her mother and aunt, both Holocaust survivors, are vividly described. Her mother refused to go to Israel: "She told me so many times during my life that her decision not to live

in Israel was based on a belief, learned and reinforced by her experiences during the war, that tolerance, compassion, and justice cannot be practiced nor extended when one lives only among one's own".

After Roy's moving

of de-development is deterioration so severe that major political changes are required to address the main problem, namely, Israel's Occupation. The Palestinian economy was further worsened



nothing left to feed my children, but black milk. What good am I?"

Hamas' rise to power cannot be understood without an understanding of this economic and social background. The Israeli notion of peace appears to be premised on total Palestinian surrender, while the increasing subservience of the PA to Israel made the need for a political alternative acute. Roy's

**"Ever since Israel occupied Gaza in 1967, together with the West Bank and East Jerusalem, it has been pursuing a crippling policy which essentially aims at destroying any vestige of economic viability or independence"**

introduction, the historical, social and political elements that underpin the workings of the Palestinian economy are described. Roy's 20 years of rigorous research reveal an Israeli policy of systematic de-development. Ever since Israel occupied Gaza in 1967, together with the West Bank and East Jerusalem, it has been pursuing a crippling policy which essentially aims at destroying any vestige of economic viability or independence. The politics of de-development go further than under-development. The outcome

by the mismanagement of the Palestinian Authority. Thus, both Israel's intransigent economic policy and the corruption of the Palestinian Authority defines the "Oslo era" (1993-2000).

With this background, when the attainment of even the basic economic means of survival have become a struggle for Gazans, the social effects are far-reaching. As a case in point, Roy recounts a poignant encounter. A Palestinian woman approached her and took her by the arm and said, "The milk from my breasts is no longer white. It is black. I have

profound understanding of the nuances of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict can be summed up in her statement: "As for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the greatest threat to peace is not extremism – Islamic or secular, but the context that produces and nurtures it: occupation. Palestinians are a secular people seeking their political rights and national liberation, but this could change if their misery deepens and their possibilities end."

**Atef Alshaer**

## The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle

**Ramzy Baroud**

Pluto Press, 2006

**W**hile Sharon's visit in September 2000 to the Haram ash-Sharif provides a clear beginning to what would become the Second Intifada, it has been harder to pinpoint an end. Attempts to publish narrative accounts of the uprising, therefore, have perhaps been stymied by this lack of a definitive 'conclusion', as well as by the more



complicated picture that began to emerge with Palestinian elections.

Baroud is well placed to offer an Intifada overview; as editor of the online Palestine Chronicle,

and frequent contributor to a variety of international newspapers and media outlets, his journalistic bird's eye

view serves him well for the purpose. But it would be a mistake to see The Second Palestinian Intifada as dry chronology. The historical is interwoven with the personal, news with analysis, keeping the reader's attention in what could otherwise have been a trying trawl through news headlines.

These personal stories often occur unexpectedly, and while for some the juxtaposition of correspondent's analysis and personal anecdote might jar, Baroud's writing skill is

evident in both styles, as the reader is drawn into the human dimension of the conflict. There is no better example than when Baroud describes hearing the news of the death of two cousins in an Israeli attack on Bureij in the Gaza Strip, and his subsequent lack of appetite for dealing with an Anti-Defamation League (ADL) response to one of his articles. It is at once intensely personal, yet also a microcosm of the conflict at large. It shows the journalist and activist sapped of energy by events – "the strong urge" to write a counter letter "faded", in that moment when the struggle becomes personal.

Readers of the book benefit from the lucid

# Married To Another Man

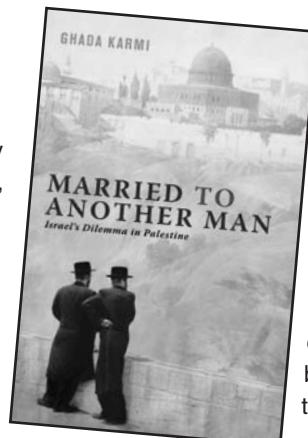
**Ghada Karmi**

Pluto Press, 2007

Perhaps this book should be on Tony Blair's reading list, as he takes up his new post of Middle East Envoy to the Quartet. Certainly Ghada Karmi's analysis and insight might lead him to make huge efforts to encourage Israel to engage meaningfully with the Palestinians. Her book argues that change will not happen until everyone involved in finding a solution accepts the real causes of conflict, the Zionist project, and its consequences on the ground.

The title refers to those original Zionists who acknowledged in the 19th century that the land was occupied by another people, and Dr. Karmi explains that the Zionist project of a Jewish state depends upon a perpetual policy of 'might over right'. Israel will have to continue to subjugate Palestinians by military means, creating hostility and hatred throughout the Arab world, in the attempt to preserve an exclusively Jewish state.

"It should be clear from the line-up of complex issues I have described – the Jewish imperative for Israel to survive, its many faceted, powerful web of Western support, the inability



of the Arabs to deal with it and their paralysing dependence on Israel's staunchest ally, the US – solving the problem that this totality of circumstances created would be a monumental task."

The book is organised in clear

in the US, but she characterises the relationship between the US and Israel as one of mutual benefit.

In the section 'Destroying the Palestinians' she exposes the horrifying complicity of a world community standing by, as Israel uses all means necessary, military and political, to achieve its ends. She states that the destruction of Arafat and the PA by Israel is "the clearest demonstration of Israel's reluctance to reach a peace

The various attempts at a 'peace process' – from resolution 242 to the Road Map, are examined, and Dr. Karmi concludes that the increasingly reductionist proposals of Israel as the stronger power could never lead to effective and durable stability. She explains the Palestinian motivation in the agreement to the Oslo Accords as 'facts on the ground' — the trappings of a state will promote the notion of a state in international consciousness. But essentially Dr. Karmi argues it is this pursuit of 'statehood' at almost any cost which has hindered the Palestinian people from building an effective strategy for establishing full equality and rights.

Dr. Karmi believes that the two state solution reiterated by Israel and the West ad infinitum is unrealisable, since Israelis will not acknowledge the injustice of the Nakba and the right of return of the refugees. Moreover the unremitting success so far of the Zionist project will never allow Israel to concede a meaningful state of Palestine. For Dr. Karmi, there is only one logical outcome — a single secular state in which all citizens are equal, though she is careful to describe the objections to this position and its current limited support.

**Betty Hunter**

**"Even the submission of the governments of Egypt and Jordan to signing treaties of 'normalisation' has not changed the general view of Israel as a belligerent enemy on the streets of those and other Arab countries"**

sections dealing with essential aspects of historical and contemporary issues arising from the problem of the establishment of the state of Israel.

The ability of Israel to operate on the basis of division amongst Arab states is contextualised in the colonial policies of the West following the first World War. Dr. Karmi explains Israel's reliance on the West to survive, especially the power of the pro-Israel lobby

settlement with the Palestinians."

There is fascinating detail in her exposition of the problems created by Zionism and Israeli policy for both Jews and Palestinians. Dr. Karmi argues that even the submission of the governments of Egypt and Jordan to signing treaties of 'normalisation' has not changed the general view of Israel as a belligerent enemy on the streets of those and other Arab countries.

**27** descriptions of a number of key elements of the Palestinian struggle in recent years, whether it is the ICJ ruling against Israel's Separation Barrier, or the concise defence of the Palestinian right to resistance under international law. But Baroud is perhaps at his best when exposing the double standards of the Western media and politicians. Shaped by a Zionist-framed discourse, these politicians and pundits place 'demands' on the

Palestinians, and 'understand' the Israelis. Baroud cites the likes of Kofi Annan who would urge the Palestinians to "end their terror campaign" while Israelis "must ease travel restrictions". Baroud exposes the absurdity of the Road Map approach, asking: "So this is what the Middle East's conflict boils down to: the removal of a few checkpoints?" The book also demonstrates how one side's violence is legitimate, and another's illegitimate; one kind of victim is worthy, another

unworthy. Israel is praised as the only democracy in the Middle East, and when the Palestinians go to the ballot box their government is boycotted.

Refreshingly, Baroud is not afraid to be specific about Palestinian failings, particularly when it comes to those who claim to represent their people. Baroud rightly calls the Intifada "a Palestinian revolt against the Occupation", but points out that Israel's rule had been "solidified by the PA's unreserved collaboration".

Baroud also notes further sell-outs, including the complicity of some PA members in selling concrete for the building of the Wall.

Overall, *The Second Palestinian Intifada* is an engaging and informative chronicle of the Palestinian struggle against occupation, incorporating the human and political dimensions of a conflict that has dramatically changed shape in the last few years.

**Ben White**

# Teta, Mother and Me, an Arab Woman's Memoir

Jean Said Makdisi

Al Saqi, 2005

**D**ispossession and resilience are the hallmarks of every Palestinian woman's experience, and this memoir spanning three generations reveals in intimate detail both the pain and the coping mechanisms lived by these three women, each of her time, and each making homes with large extended families in places as distinct as Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, and the United States, as the great political upheavals across the Middle East ended one kind of family continuity after another.

Jean Makdisi is an academic, writer and feminist who lives in Beirut and is married to a Lebanese professor. The wars and upheavals her mother and grandmother had lived through with the end of the Ottoman empire, British Mandate Palestine and French Mandate Lebanon, were a prelude to the devastating war of 1948 which overshadowed her childhood.

Then came the 15 years of civil war in Lebanon she lived through herself as a mother, and which illuminated for her the inner price paid by those two

generations of women before her, whose great survival strengths she only then understood as a "war veteran" herself.

The book contains a prodigious amount of research into the unwritten social history of Palestinian women of this period, some of it from the memoirs written by her mother and uncles about her grandmother in a heyday of strength in Palestine that Jean could never have imagined. Household rituals, menus, embroidery, passed from one to another, all deemed important, nothing ever rejected.

She describes how in her research into this past, it began to feel like an archeological dig where she was looking for one set of relics and found quite another. And the book led her deep into the history of the region, and to "the long ago era when historical Syria was one wide open space and the whole region was connected with itself and with its past." She revelled in that sense of wide open space "before the constrictions brought about by

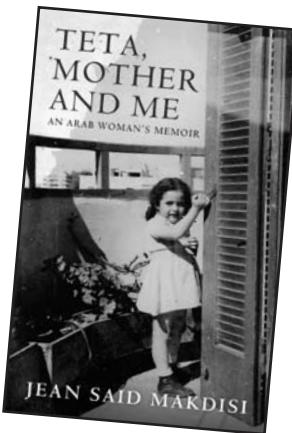
modern imperialism, which divided and locked people into new, small countries that became rivals, and even fought each other."

Makdisi was born in Jerusalem, one of the four sisters of Edward Said, whose memoir, 'Out of Place', described the privileged childhood of their wealthy, westernised family from a more conventional perspective. Makdisi's portrait of her mother is deeply insightful and poignant. Hilda was a country girl from Nazareth, a brilliant student whose academic career was interrupted by early marriage, and who poured her energy and talent into making an extraordinarily warm and nourishing home which not only held her extended family together, but was a kind of buttress

to a much wider wounded community. She became an elegant sophisticated woman who travelled the world with her husband and whose children would all excel in the

academic world she prized and later regretted not having entered personally. Makdisi captures in her a whole generation of women across the world whose daughters, like Jean herself, in the 1960s were drawn some way into an exhilarating feminist movement. She writes honestly and touchingly about the ambivalence of revolting against the tug of perfect domestic arrangements, but still putting her sons first, and of both feeling her work undervalued by the conservative society in which she lived and believing that she did not fulfil her potential in it.

From her grandmother's encyclopaedic knowledge of who married who, and which place in Palestine they came from and where they lived in the diaspora, through her mother's giving home and support to enormous numbers of people who had lost everything except their lives in the catastrophe of 1948, to this fascinating book, these women have kept Palestinian history alive against all odds.



**"She revelled in that sense of wide open space 'before the constrictions brought about by modern imperialism, which divided and locked people into new, small countries that became rivals, and even fought each other'."**

Victoria Brittain

# The Return Journey

*A guide to the depopulated and present Palestinian towns and villages and holy sites*

Salman H. Abu-Sitta

Palestine Land Society 2007

**A** large, detailed map of historic Palestine, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean, has been produced by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. It bears the title 'Touring Map of Israel' and shows every town and village (mostly with a Hebrew name) – but indicates neither the Green Line nor the Separation Barrier, despite the latter's looming presence across the landscape. There is no mention of 'Palestinian Territories', let alone 'Occupied Territories'; simply a seamless stretch of territory, crisscrossed by new highways, that is wholly Israel. The naïve visitor can indeed tour the area and assume that every town and village they pass is within the state of Israel.

Salman Abu-Sitta's new book is a clear rebuttal of this shameless statement of Israel's ultimate ambition. Essentially a scaled-down version of his magnum opus, 'Atlas of Palestine 1948', the 200-plus pages of detailed maps and commentaries are a powerful and poignant reminder of the ethnic cleansing that took place — and continues to take place — in Palestine.

The introduction, in English and Arabic, gives all the essential information about the events that led up to the Nakba. From 1917, when Jewish Palestinians constituted only 9% of the population, owning 2% of the land, they grew through immigration to 30% of the population in 1947, owning 6% of the land. After the Nakba, they took possession of 78% of the land, and set about destroying hundreds of Palestinian villages, so that the inhabitants could not return. Even before the British withdrew, and before any Arab neighbour intervened, Palestinians had been driven from 200 villages. By April

29 1949, 675 villages had been depopulated. The fact that the seizure of land had been carefully planned well in advance is clear from the detailed map of the 'Dalet plan'. The sites of the 70-odd major massacres that speeded the flight of the refugees are indicated.

Later maps show the villages destroyed in

"Above all, the book is an affirmation of the right of return of the refugees: Abu-Sitta shows that it is not just an inalienable, individual right under international law; it is also physically feasible"

the 1967 war, and the routes and destinations of the two major waves of refugees. The maps also show the growth of illegal Israeli settlements, roads and checkpoints, and the Apartheid Wall.

Although Palestinian homes in the cities were occupied by Israeli families, many of the village sites were not rebuilt, but demolished, to become national parks and nature reserves. Nevertheless, remains can still be seen, amid the cactus and the ancient olive trees. Traces of many of the 5000 holy sites of the region, from tiny wayside shrines to mosques, are also still visible.

So the book is more than a meticulously researched and handsomely produced record of dispossession and colonisation. It is an invitation to actively explore and understand the history of the whole area – an invitation which may be taken up by Israelis as well as visitors with roots in Palestine. (The detailed index of place names is in Arabic, Hebrew and English.) Several routes are suggested – together with sensible advice about how to proceed with caution in sensitive areas. A select bibliography provides the reader with further important sources of information and analysis.

Above all, the book is an affirmation of the right of return of the refugees: Abu-Sitta shows that it is not just an inalienable, individual right under international law; it is also physically feasible. Much of the refugees' land is still sparsely populated, as the Jewish population has remained largely urban. For example, he points out that "all the rural Jews in the southern district, from Ashdod to Eilat, are less in number than one refugee camp in Gaza".

As the sixtieth anniversary of 1948 approaches and Israel threatens to announce its borders unilaterally, this is an essential work of reference that should be on the bookshelf of every serious student of the question of Palestine.

Hilary Wise

The book is on special offer from PSC, at £20 + p&p. Contact the office on 0207 7006192.

# What Did We Do to Deserve This?

## Palestinian Life Under Occupation in the West Bank

**Mark Howell**

Garnet Publishing, 2007

This beautifully illustrated, large format book seems to be aimed at an audience relatively unfamiliar with the cause of Palestine and Palestinian rights. Mark Howell presents the case for justice for the Palestinians with a combination of factual explanations, personal testimonies and, above all, photographs of the reality of Palestinian lives. Every page has a striking colour photo of people – at work, at play, queuing at a checkpoint, strolling the streets of Hebron, standing amid the rubble of a home, gazing from a martyr's poster...

The author describes his personal journey of discovery with feeling, tackling the way in which issues such as anti-semitism are commonly used to obscure factual arguments. He declares his intention of avoiding the usual media slant of two equal sides to the debate, providing a clear presentation of the historical and political background, while leaving the reader in no doubt as to how his journey has convinced him of the great injustice done to Palestinians by Israel and the West.

The subtitle 'Palestinian Life Under Occupation in the West Bank' explains the scope of the book: he does not

## What Did We Do to Deserve This?

Palestinian Life Under Occupation in the West Bank



Mark Howell

present testimony from Israeli settlers since their presence is in fact illegal. Mr. Howell acts as a witness to the humanity of the Palestinians, which is movingly displayed in testimonies and photographs showing their activities, aspirations and emotions, as well as their suffering. Testimonies from the older people dispossessed in

1948, workers, farmers and residents throughout the West Bank, as well as political and religious figures feature in this narrative. The photographs are wide-ranging and the numerous portrayals of children and young people are a reminder of the importance in creating a viable future for the people and the state.

The author appeals to readers for

"Testimonies from the older people dispossessed in 1948, workers, farmers and residents throughout the West Bank, as well as political and religious figures feature in the narrative"

fairness and castigates the West for ignoring the violations committed by Israel and poses questions about Israel's intentions, categorising the occupation as colonial and the effects of occupation as Apartheid. He suggests that "...the US's unqualified support for Israel may ultimately do Israel no favours. Like a child left alone in a sweet shop, Israel cannot resist the temptation to take more and more Palestinian land." The maps demonstrate this point.

The book gives a rare opportunity to hear the voices of Palestinians, in an accessible format together with a succinct historical and political background. It is a great present for friends and family not yet engaged with the issue and a welcome visual and personal reminder for those of us already committed.



Street art in Deheisheh camp,  
Bethlehem

Betty Hunter

# Hadeel

**A BAFTS\* registered Fair Trade shop and importer, we encourage economic development of Palestinian craftspeople and farmers, by promoting fairly traded goods from Palestinian communities in the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Lebanon**

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0131 225 1922

[www.hadeel.org](http://www.hadeel.org)

Sales :[info@hadeel.org](mailto:info@hadeel.org)

General:[palcrafts@phonecoop.coop](mailto:palcrafts@phonecoop.coop)

\*Hadeel, (cooing of a dove in Arabic) is entirely owned by the charity Palcrafts(UK)  
\*BAFTS, British Association for Fair Trade Shops

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PSC Box BM PSA London WC1N 3XX

# Olive Co-operative

## Visit Palestine

Meet Palestinian and Israeli groups working for a just peace. Meet co-ops and fair trade groups working for a viable economic future. Olive Co-op has a program of 9 specialised study tours in 2007. We can also organise tours tailored to suit you. See: [www.olivecoop.com/tours.html](http://www.olivecoop.com/tours.html)

## Fair Traded Goods & Olive Oil from Palestine

Support Co-ops and fair trade organisations working for a just peace and a viable economic future, including Atfaluna, Ibdaa, Sindyana, Zaytoun, Canaan, and ATG. Handcrafts, books, CDs, foodstuffs, and the best selling Olive Oil, all available from our office in Manchester, and from our online shop at: [www.olivecoop.com/catalog](http://www.olivecoop.com/catalog)

## Trees For Life Programme

Sponsor olive tree planting in Palestine. The new trees offset the destruction wrought in Palestinian olive groves by the Israeli army and settlers. £20 will sponsor five trees. For more info: [www.olivecoop.com/trees.html](http://www.olivecoop.com/trees.html)



# Join us!

# National Lobby of Parliament

# **to mark UN International Day for Palestine**

# **Wednesday 28 November**

Ask your MP to support  
Palestinian democracy and call for the  
implementation of all UN resolutions  
relating to Israel/Palestine



# **PETITIONS on PSC website:**

- End the siege of Palestinians and support Palestinian democracy
  - Kick Israeli Apartheid out of football

## **Sign and circulate!**

For more details: [www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org)