Palestine Perspectives

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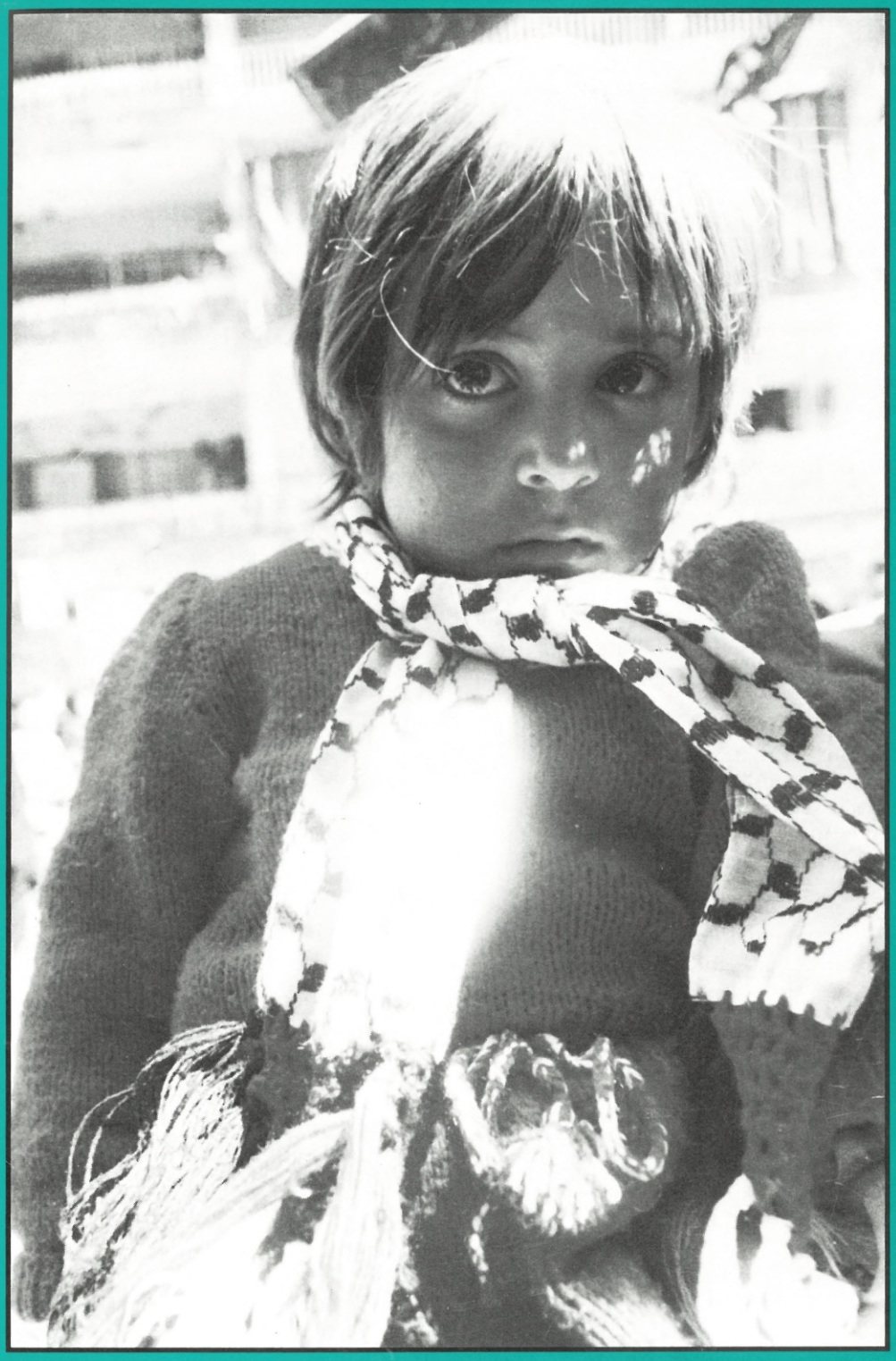

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"LET GO OF MY FUTURE"

$2.50

IS WASHINGTON BEGINNING TO THINK FOR ITSELF?

In May, Secretary of State James Baker appeared before the Israeli lobby and said a few sensible things which left "Israel's friends" shaking with rage. He said that Israel should give up the unrealistic notion of greater Israel, forswear annexation, reopen schools in the occupied territories, and deal with the Palestinians as neighbors who deserve rights.

There is nothing revolutionary about these statements. That's what the entire world has been telling Israel. In fact, Baker's remarks only put in explicit terms what U.S. policy has always implied.

Mr. Baker, of course, more than balanced his statement by making a long list of demands on the Palestinians and the Arab states, a list which actually includes every Israeli whim. In fact, to placate Israel's friends, he made demands which have already been met, and he praised Shamir's "election" plan which the U.S. government itself finds deficient in many ways.

Perhaps, what angered Israel and its friends was Mr. Baker audacity of suggesting that both sides need to make concessions, an idea which does violence to Israel's contention that peace is a gift that the Arabs owe it...for reasons unknown. And it is also possible that he worried Israel's friends in Washington by daring to make his remarks to the face of Israel's lobby, perhaps hinting that there is a limit on its ability to intimidate American public officials.

"A country that has made a career of pushing others around does not respond to gentle hints."

An official of the State Department who participated in drafting Baker's speech expressed surprise at the reaction of Israel's friends, saying that he thought the speech was 99 percent pro Israel. But that is precisely the problem: Israel's friends worry when it is not 100 percent pro Israel, because anything less than total compliance with Israeli policy indicates a glimmer of independent thinking, something which Israel's friends view with apprehension.

Israel's friends know that U.S. policy toward the Middle East was never the product of rational debate and free discussion. For that reason, they know that it is not considered and thought out policy and, thus, threatened with sudden collapse if it were to become, like all other issues of public policy, subject to debate. That is why Israel and its friends in America tremble before the possibility of American disagreement with Israel, which would open the way to scrutiny of that policy.

Once upon a time, in the early 1970s, the governor of Pennsylvania Bill Scranton was sent to the Middle East as a presidential emissary to study U.S. policy toward the Middle East. Scranton came back and reported that the United States needs to follow a more even-handed policy between Arabs and Israelis. That was the last act of his political career. He has not been heard of since.

It is not likely that James Baker would suffer the same fate. The man is different and his position and stature are different, and the times and circumstances are different. But he can be frustrated, and if he does he would not be entirely blameless himself. The policy of thinking out loud in front of Israel and its friends is self-defeating. Israel is not that sensitive to the opinion of others. A country that has made a career of pushing others around—and has gotten away with it so often—does not respond to gentle hints. There has not been a country in the world that has not been pressured by Washington when peace, freedom, or human rights required it. The time has come to push Israel away from the edge over which it holds the region hostage to its ambitions. □

M. Hallaj

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PALESTINE EXISTS: THE CRITERIA FOR STATEHOOD

By John V. Whitbeck

In successfully wielding its financial muscle against Palestinian membership of the World Health Organization, the United States termed the State of Palestine "a state which does not legally exist." However, the existence of the State of Palestine ought not to be so easily dismissed.

While extending diplomatic recognition to foreign states and governments lies within the discretion of each sovereign state, there are, as a matter of international law, four customary criteria for sovereign statehood: 1) a defined territory over which sovereignty is not contested by any other state; 2) a permanent population; 3) the ability and willingness of the state's government to discharge international and conventional obligations and 4) effective control of the state's territory and population.

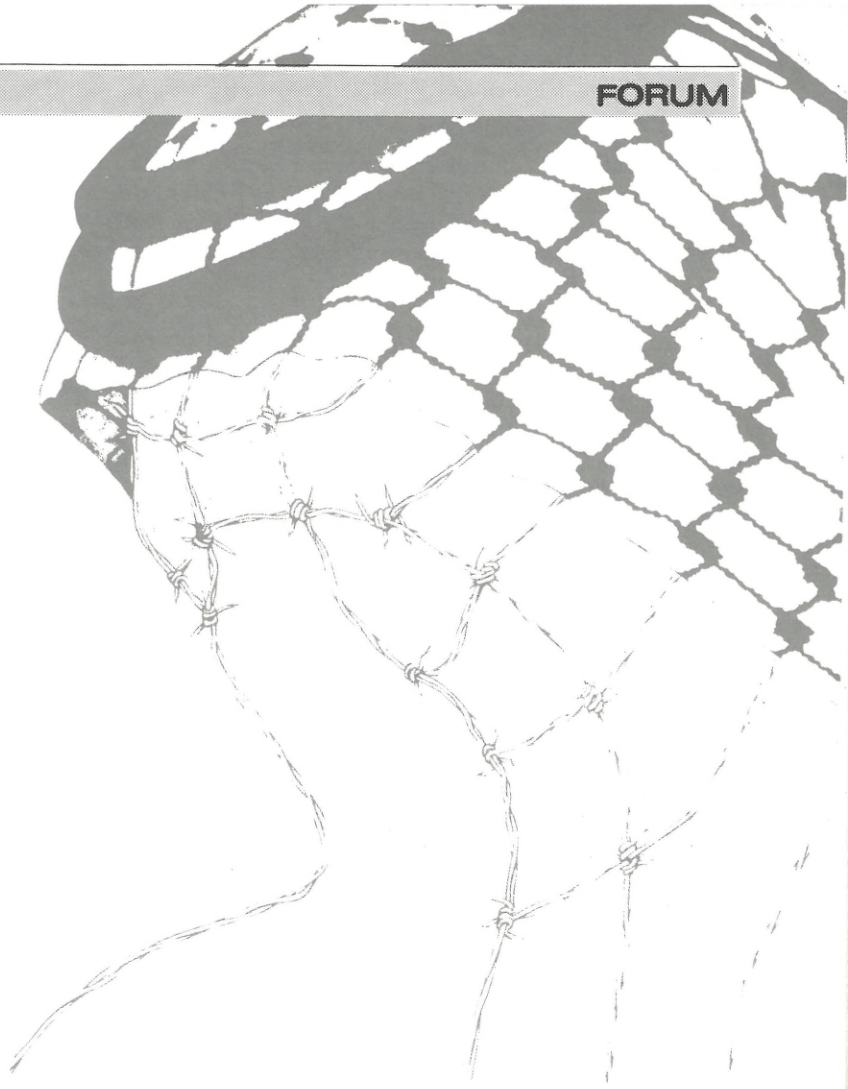
Judged by these customary criteria, the State of Palestine is on as firm a legal footing as many states whose sovereign status is not a subject of public discussion.

While Israel has never defined its ultimate borders, an act which would necessarily place limits on them, the State of Palestine effectively has. They encompass only that portion of historic Palestine occupied by Israel during the 1967 war. Sovereignty over East Jerusalem, formally annexed by Israel in 1967, is explicitly contested. However, the sovereignty of the State of Palestine over the Gaza Strip and the rest of the West Bank is technically uncontested. Israel has never formally annexed these territories, recognizing that doing so would raise awkward questions about the rights (or lack of them) of the people who live there. Jordan renounced all claims to the West Bank in July 1988. While Egypt administered the Gaza Strip for 19 years, it never asserted sovereignty over it. From July to November 1988, the West Bank and Gaza Strip existed in an extraordinary legal limbo as densely populated territories over which no state asserted sovereignty. Since November 1988, only one state has asserted sovereignty over these territories—the State of Palestine.

By contrast, Belize is claimed in its entirety by Guatemala, two-thirds of Guyana is claimed by Venezuela and Surinam, the People's Republic of China and Taiwan reciprocally assert sovereignty over each other and border disputes of varying sizes and degrees of seriousness dot the globe.

The permanence of Palestine's population is not in question. The new state's ability and willingness to discharge international and conventional obligations is demonstrated by its establishment of diplomatic relations with a majority of the world's sovereign states and its efforts to obtain membership in international organizations such as WHO and UNESCO.

The weak link in the Palestinian claim to already exist as a state is, of course, the fourth criterion, "effective control." The entire territory is under the military occupation of another sovereign state. Yet "effective control" is not purely a question of guns and the capacity to compel submission by physical force. It also encompasses the allegiance of the population, what is sometimes termed "the general acquiescence of its people."



"The State of Palestine is on as firm a legal footing as many states whose sovereign status is not a subject of public discussion."

Few states on earth can claim the degree and intensity of allegiance which the people of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip manifest, day after bloody day, to the State of Palestine. When the State of Israel and the State of Palestine issue conflicting instructions to the population, it is clear which state exercises "effective control" over their allegiance. If the State of Palestine advised the population to vote in an Israeli-organized election, they would turn out in a proportion to put Americans to shame. If it advised them not to vote, the polling stations would be virtually empty.

At last count, 104 states, representing the vast majority of mankind, had recognized the State of Palestine. There are United Nations member states, including Israel, which cannot match this breadth of acceptance. The United States, which still welcomes in Washington the "embassies" of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, almost 50 years after these states were conquered and formally annexed by the Soviet Union, is particularly ill-placed to dismiss Palestinian statehood on technical legal grounds.... □

[Excerpted from an article published by *Middle East International* of 26 May 1989]

DID ARAFAT HAVE HIS FINGERS CROSSED?

By Jonathan Kuttab

[The following article is a satirical commentary on Israel's efforts to belittle the peace initiatives made by the PLO and to deny the significance of its moves to resolve the conflict with Israel. Its author is a Palestinian attorney and human rights activist who lives in the occupied West Bank]:

While the rest of the world seems enthusiastic about the decisions of the Palestine National Council and the clear statements of Yasser Arafat, Israel's politicians are not only skeptical, they are downright indignant in their declarations that the whole thing is a trick and an act of deception. Shimon Peres says that the Palestinian statements only complicate the peace process and make the convening of a peace conference more difficult. Yitzhak Rabin talks about an international campaign of deception, and Yitzhak Shamir is even less subtle. He calls the Palestinian peace initiative an open declaration of war against Israel and the first step in an effective program for its destruction.

What is it that the Israeli leaders know, and want the Israeli public to believe, that the rest of the world does not know?

For one thing, they know about peace pronouncements. They have been making them for the last forty years, and they are past masters at political gymnastics and public relations. For another, Israelis have had a long tradition of saying one thing and doing another. Wasn't it Ben-Gurion who said in the Knesset: "Of course I promised, but I didn't say that I was going to keep my promise"?

But that alone does not explain Israeli skepticism about Palestinian peace offerings. They have other evidence.

Have you noticed, for example, that in all the peaceful pronouncements that Yasser Arafat had made, on television, you could never see both of his hands at one time while he spoke? You may see one or the other; but at all times, without exception, at least one of his hands was hidden under the podium or behind his back where he—in all probability—had his fingers crossed. In Stockholm, you remember, he agreed to the statement as it was read, but he didn't read it himself!

Furthermore, there is a top secret memorandum, containing intelligence not yet released, which indicates that before Arafat makes any of his peace pronouncements he consults with a Gypsy who prepares a special potion for him to cast a spell making the words that he utters ineffective and exonerates him from any obligation to fulfill the promises that he makes.

In fact this memorandum has only been seen by Israeli leaders and shared with a select few of their friends. Margaret Thatcher for one, and Nancy Reagan who passed it on to her husband. Even the U.S. State Department was not informed of it, because it is well known that that institution is infested with Arabists and others who are closet supporters of peace and Arafat and the Palestinians. In fact there were some who suspected that Secretary of State George Shultz himself had leanings in that direction until he cleared up the matter when he denied Arafat a visa.

The state of Israel is a beleaguered and embattled state—as everyone knows—which must fight for its survival every minute. It cannot afford to take any chances when it comes to its security interests. If peace—heaven forbid—were to break out, who can say what would happen? Israelis, I believe, are fully justified in treating this threat seriously. They should never ever negotiate with Arafat or take his promises seriously unless—at the very least—they can see both of his hands on the table in front of everyone while he makes his statements. □

PUNISHING A NATION:

Human Rights Violations During the Palestinian Uprising December 1987 - December 1988

by al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man

Punishing A Nation is a comprehensive view of the critical status of Palestinian human rights engendered by the Israeli reaction to the uprising that began in December 1987. The report covers the range of human rights violations from December 1987 until December 1988, and focuses on the most widespread and serious of those violations. It does not attempt to be exhaustive in detail; rather, it uses representative examples to illustrate its findings.

Copies are available for $15 (check or money order made payable to al-Haq/Law in the Service of Man) by mailing your request to:

Al-Haq
P.O. Box 27597
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"QUOTE UNQUOTE"

"The American-Jewish community has become so accustomed to reality avoidance and so pampered by previous administrations (not to mention Congress) that it is easily shocked by a speech lacking the usual rococo affirmations about how wonderful Israel is."

Richard Cohen
The Washington Post
25 May 1989

[About the reaction of the American-Jewish community to remarks made by Secretary of State James Baker before AIPAC]:

"Every day events present new evidence of a role reversal that has occurred between us and the Palestinians. You look at your face in the mirror and pinch yourself in hope that it will all have been just a nightmare. But there is no escape. The face staring at us from the mirror is our own."

Uzi Benziman
Ha'aretz
25 April 1989

MASSACRES FEARED IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

The uprising in occupied Palestine has become a two-front battle against Israeli oppression. The people of the West Bank and Gaza now confront not only the Israeli occupation army but also increasingly a second force of armed settlers. The settlers have been staging a series of pogroms in Palestinian towns and refugee camps, and their vigilantism—it is now feared—may escalate to massacres.

During the last few months, armed Jewish settlers have been descending on Palestinian towns and refugee camps in large numbers, and they have waged campaigns of terror, shooting at homes, smashing up parked cars and burning crops. In most cases, Israeli soldiers stood nearby and watched without interfering. In one known case, in the town of Azariyeh near Jerusalem, soldiers assisted the settlers by using search lights to light up the area while the settlers went about their business of destruction. It was reminiscent of a previous horror when Israeli troops used search lights to assist the perpetrators of the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Beirut in September 1982.

In the village of Kifl Harith, near Nablus, armed settler vigilantes killed a 13-year-old Palestinian girl. In the town of Sinjil, on the Nablus-Ramallah road, they rampaged and burned trees and crops. The people of Sinjil appealed to the United Nations for protection. In a letter to Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, the people of Sinjil called on the international community to "intervene forthwith and stop the repeated attacks of the settlers on our village."

According to the Jerusalem Press Service, the village of Sinjil complained that Jewish settlers have burned crops, uprooted trees, contaminated drinking water, destroyed water storage tanks, broke into homes and smashed cars and furniture, and fired at the residents to terrorize them and keep them from working in their fields. The settlers have done these things, the letter said, "under the watchful eyes of the Israeli soldiers."

The Jerusalem Post reported that the Israeli army had helped organize local "intervention forces" among settlers, and that such settlers have been active in leading vigilantism in the occupied territories. The settlers carry army-issued weapons, and among them there are people who had been previously found guilty of acts of terrorism.

Settler Vigilantism and Official Complicity Set the Stage

> "If we even hint at talking to the Arabs, then we are finished. There must be not one syllable exchanged with them. This is our land, and there is nothing to negotiate."
>
> Jewish settler **Zvi Hausmann**
> *Newsweek magazine*
> 12 June 1989

Some settlements, like Ariel, specialize in cutting trees. Ariel has a "secret squad" which goes out at night and chop down fruit trees belonging to Palestinian villages.

Sometimes the settlers commit acts of violence to attract attention, to force the army to be tougher on the Palestinians, or to undermine the possibilities of a negotiated political settlement based on the exchange of land for peace. "If you don't burn an Arab car," one settler told *The Jerusalem Post,* "you don't get a story on TV."

The settlers also try to warn the government against making any compromises by causing friction with Israeli troops, hinting the possibility of civil war in the Jewish state. Concerned about increasing activism by right wing hardliners and their demand for greater military effort to quell the uprising, the outgoing Israeli commander of the West Bank, Maj. Gen. Amram Mitzna, has warned that the only alternatives to a political solution are the mass eviction of Palestinians, starvation, or genocide.

The settlers call the pogroms a "Jewish intifada," and they justify them by claiming that the Israeli army is not being forceful enough in dealing with the Palestinians. The ugly mood spreading in Israel has been reflected in a recent public opinion poll in which Ariel Sharon, who was Israel's Defense Minister during the invasion of Lebanon and who was implicated in the massacres of Sabra and Shatila, was chosen as the most suitable Israeli leader to suppress the Palestinian intifada.

Congress Informed

In Washington, the Palestine Affairs Center of the League of Arab States informed Congress of the dangers of Jewish settler terrorism in the occupied territories. In a letter to Senator Claiborne Pell, dated 6 June, the Center's director, Mr. Hassan Abdel Rahman, wrote about "recent escalation of grave crimes and human rights violations committed by Israeli settler vigilantes against Palestinian civilians living in towns and villages in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip." The Israeli army, he said, seems "either unable or unwilling to halt these pogroms against Palestinians, and at times even assist settlers in these rampages."

Rahman quoted from press reports published in this country, citing specific incidents of settler vigilantism causing harm to Palestinian lives and property. "Thus," the letter stated, "we feel that the U.S. Congress, which is currently considering next year's foreign aid package, has a moral and legal obligation to do the following:

"1) eliminate entirely all U.S. foreign assistance which contributes to the establishment and maintenance of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"2) suspend military assistance to Israel until it can guarantee the safety of Palestinian civilians in the territories it occupies. If no such guarantee can be made, Congress should also:

"3) facilitate establishment of, (and perhaps participate in,) an international peacekeeping force in the occupied Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip, to protect unarmed civilians and later to replace the IDF in those territories, pending a comprehensive settlement which would allow the Palestinians to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination." □

ISRAEL'S WAR ON PALESTINIAN HEALTH

Health Care Used To Subdue Rebellious Palestinians

This report is based on previously available information and a lengthy briefing by four Palestinian physicians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It tells the story of Israel's war on Palestinian health as a method of punishment and a strategy to quell the uprising against the Israeli occupation.

Health care in the West Bank and Gaza, inadequate to begin with, has dangerously deteriorated during the past nineteen months since the intifada began in December 1987. The need for health services increased greatly due to high casualties and deteriorating general living standards, due to the closure of some health institutions such as the Friends of the Patient Society, and due to deliberate restrictions on health services and personnel.

Casualties

Estimates of Palestinian fatalities since the beginning of the intifada reach 700 killed by soldiers and settlers. Tens of thousands have sustained injuries. Many of the injuries—gunshot wounds, broken limbs and gas poisoning—are not typical health problems for which West Bank and Gaza care systems were equipped to handle. Palestinian hospitals had to do a lot of quick improvising to adjust to new conditions. They are still unable to handle some types of injuries and methods had to be devised—not always successfully—to arrange for treatment of such cases abroad.

Outside observers agree that Palestinian medical personnel, on all levels of the profession, have performed with utmost competence and dedication, but the nature and size of the problem have strained available capacity to cope. Moreover, the increasing need of medical care for victims of Israeli repression has adversely affected health care for normal sickness as people suffering from usual ailments hesitate to compete with the injured for attention or find themselves unable to get it.

Imposed Restrictions

In addition, restrictions of various types have been imposed on Palestinian society in general as well as on the medical profession which hinder its ability to function. These restrictions include:

■ Curfews forbidding the movement of people and holding them prisoners in their homes for extended periods. Curfews are often total, imposed on whole towns and even districts, and are frequently lengthy lasting weeks at a time.

During curfews, even when doctors are permitted to reach hospitals, patients cannot avail themselves of their services. Palestinian physicians say that the Israeli occupation authorities have even refused to exempt patients—such as diabetics or heart patients—who need regular treatment. Consequently, curfews aggravate simple and routine cases and often cause them to become life-threatening conditions.

Curfews also restrict access to food. The scarcity of fresh produce and milk, for example, has resulted in the deterioration of nutrition standards. In Jabalia refugee camp alone, one doctor who has worked there told *Palestine Perspectives*, now has more than 3,000 children suffering from malnutrition. Curfews also disrupt the work of mother and child clinics and the availability of pre-natal care for pregnant Palestinian women.

■ Restrictions on medical facilities: The Israeli occupation authorities have neither expanded nor permitted the Palestinian community to expand available medical facilities to meet increasing demand for health care. There has been no increase in hospital space or the number of beds; in fact some medical facilities have been shut down, and the 1988 health budget has been cut in half under the pretext that the people are refusing to pay taxes.

Ambulance services, crucial in the circumstances of the intifada, have been particularly restricted. An example is a new requirement of special licenses for ambulance drivers and the deliberate obstruction of the licensing process. Palestinian health officials tell stories of training courses ordered discontinued, and of long delays in licensing drivers who qualify. Several ambulances in the West Bank and Gaza are kept idle in garages due to lack of "licensed" drivers at a time of pressing need for their services.

The Israeli authorities have also, on several occasions, obstructed the delivery of medicines and medical equipment donated to the Palestinians by concerned people in other countries. A new ambulance purchased with donations of $65,000 from Americans through Roots Relief Fund and Mercy Corps International has been waiting Israel's permission to be shipped to Gaza. Ellsworth Culver, President of Mercy Corps International appealed to President George Bush in April to use his influence to persuade Israel to allow the shipment of the ambulance. "To deny Palestinian refugees," the appeal said, "this significant expression of compassion from caring American people would be a moral and human tragedy." [See box for text]. As of press time in late June, there has been no response and the ambulance still awaits permits to reach the people of Gaza. In the meantime, there is only one ambulance in the whole West Bank and Gaza Strip equipped to handle intensive care cases.

Ambulances have also been denied entry into certain "closed areas" to evacuate the wounded, and they have been commandeered by Israeli soldiers who use them to pursue Palestin-

Some Numbers

During the first year and a half of the intifada, the following statistics about Israeli repression in the Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip (in which less than five percent of the West Bank-Gaza population lives) tell some of the story of the Palestinian ordeal under Israeli rule:

■ 45 killed, three of whom beaten to death. Most fatalities suffered by persons under the age of 17 years.

■ 4,000 wounded, some maimed for life.

■ 5,000 imprisoned, in most cases without charge or trial.

■ 293 days under total curfew. On the average, all localities in the Gaza Strip were under curfew 45 percent of the time. On 97 days, the entire Gaza Strip was under curfew, making 700,000 Palestinians prisoners in their homes. □

ian protesters or to make arrests. Patients have been seized and arrested from ambulances while on their way to hospitals. A Palestinian doctor told *Palestine Perspectives* that a $750 fine was imposed on an ambulance driver for running a red traffic light while transporting a patient.

On 9 May, the United Nations information office reported that UNRWA ambulances carrying injured persons in the Gaza Strip were repeatedly stopped and searched by Israeli troops. In a press release dated 9 May, the U.N. said that in Nuseirat refugee camp two refugees were shot dead and 41 persons wounded by live ammunition, and that UNRWA ambulances were "held up on several occasions while evacuating the injured." In another incident, it said, an UNRWA ambulance in Jabalia camp "was stopped while transporting a young man who had been beaten by soldiers. The young man was taken from the ambulance to a nearby military camp." The Agency, the news release said, "is gravely concerned by this interference with Agency operations, especially on a day when UNRWA's emergency medical services were under extreme pressure dealing with an exceptionally high number of casualties."

■ Closure of schools: Coupled with curfews, the extended closure of Palestinian schools has severely affected preventive medicine programs such as vaccination.

■ Financial measures: The Israeli authorities not only drastically cut the health budget, but they have also required government hospitals, which traditionally served most of the population, to collect in advance fees equivalent to three days stay in the hospital before admitting a patient. This has curtailed access to hospital care, and Palestinian women are increasingly forced to deliver their babies at home. The percentage of births in hospitals has decreased to about 50 percent of all cases.

An increasing number of people have been forced to do without medical care or to seek it in private hospitals which have become unable to cope with demand.

■ Fear of arrest: The fact that Israeli troops have repeatedly stormed hospitals and arrested patients in their sick beds compels many people to stay

(continued on page 9)

Subscribe to **Palestine Perspectives**

Dear President Bush

During the last year, American citizens and organizations of all backgrounds donated more than $65,000 which enabled Mercy Corps to purchase an ambulance to meet the critical medical needs of injured Palestinian men, women and children in the Gaza Strip.

The ambulance is a fully equipped, state-of-the-art, American-made vehicle which is ready for service. But even though we have consulted with all the necessary United States and Israeli authorities, and waited several months for processing, we have yet to receive approval from the Israeli authorities to ship the ambulance to Gaza.

Mr. President, in the meantime we became aware of a series of frustrating experiences and baffling events encountered by hospitals and other humanitarian organizations in their attempts to secure ambulances to meet emergency needs. For instance, an ambulance sat on a dock for months while awaiting permits. Capable drivers are disqualified because they can't get ambulance driver's licenses. Ambulances have not been able to leave their garages because the Israelis have refused to license the vehicles.

We are seriously concerned that our ambulance will suffer this same fate while the demand for emergency medical help continues to mount at an alarming rate.

The Mercy Corps ambulance is desperately needed in Gaza. To deny Palestinian refugees this significant expression of compassion from caring American people would be a moral and human tragedy.

Mr. President, we respectfully appeal to you to intervene on our behalf with Prime Minister Shamir of Israel to facilitate the delivery and service of this ambulance so generously provided by people in the United States to the Palestinian men, women and children of the Gaza Strip.

Sincerely yours
Ellsworth Culver
President, Mercy Corps International
3030 S.W. First Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97201

SABOTAGE IN THE ISRAELI ECONOMY

Palestinian Workers Blamed, Without Proof

Israel's Transport Minister Moshe Katsav wants to "seal off" the occupied West Bank and Gaza for three months. He believes that the Israeli economy is being sabotaged by Palestinian workers as an act of intifada resistance to the Israeli occupation.

The Jerusalem Post (int'l ed, week ending 27 May) reported that although there was no proof of responsibility, the following types of sabotage have been reported:

- Broken glass in food served in hotels and restaurants, and possible "contamination with spit and urine."
- Tampering with hospital equipment.
- Using less steel and cement in construction work.
- Arson in forests and farms.
- Heavy vehicles attempting to cause accidents with Israeli cars.
- Textile products slashed with scissors.

In a letter to the Israeli cabinet, calling for closing off the occupied territories, Katsav said that "slogan writing and other hostile actions have become a regular thing in many factories" in Israel. He admitted that there was no proof of Arab responsibility for such acts of sabotage, but he proposed sealing off the territories, establishing "massive presence" of troops to "launch an operational plan to end the disturbances," and barring the media from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Labor Lockout

The Israeli economy employs about 110,000 Palestinian workers from the occupied West Bank and Gaza who are given hard and less paying jobs in construction, agriculture and the service industries. They constitute a pool of cheap and exploited labor who, in addition to being paid less for the same work, get no benefits such as paid vacations and sick leave or social security, and are easily terminated because they have no job security.

Although some Israelis have been calling for the replacement of Arab workers with Israelis, unemployed Israelis (about the same number of Arab workers in Israel) either cannot or will not do the work being done by Palestinian workers, and not for the same wages. Available Israeli workers include about 50,000 women and most of the others look for academic or other professional employment.

Dismissing the Palestinian workers (now comprising about 7 percent of the total Israeli labor force and a considerably higher percentage of the labor force in specific sectors) would cause chaos in the short run, and would required drastic restructuring of the Israeli economy in the long run. That is why some Israelis think that the solution would be to find a replacement pool of cheap foreign labor by importing workers from such countries as Portugal. Others are less concerned about the consequences of losing the Palestinian labor force; their primary concern is to create sufficient hardship in the occupied territories to encourage mass emigration from the West Bank and Gaza. □

PALESTINE'S "NELSON MANDELA" DIES IN CAPTIVITY

Free At Last: Omar Qassem Lived Half His Life As Political Prisoner

A Palestinian resistance leader died in prison on 4 June 1989 after 21 years of a life sentence imposed on him in 1968. Omar Qassem, 48, who had become known to the Palestinians as their "Mandela," was a member of the Central Committee of the Democratic Front For the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). In 1968 he was captured in the occupied West Bank while organizing and leading resistance to the Israeli occupation.

In prison, Qassem was also a leader. He organized political education activities for prisoners, protests against harsh prison conditions, and worked for prisoners' rights. Before his capture in 1968, he had worked as English teacher after graduating from the University of Damascus in 1965.

Last April, Qassem's health deteriorated, and pleas by human rights organization from all over the world for his release to enable him to seek medical treatment abroad were unanswered by Israel. Five days before his death, Qassem wrote to an Israeli human rights organization: "The continuation of imprisonment, in my condition, means slow death." The organization wrote West Bank commander Maj. Gen. Amram Mitzna that Qassem's continuing imprisonment "is tantamount to a death penalty, to which he was not sentenced."

An estimated 8,000 Palestinians marched in Qassem's funeral, carrying his Palestinian flag-draped coffin from his family's home in Jerusalem to Al-Aqsa Mosque where he was buried in a place dedicated to martyrs.

THE WAR OF THE TREES

Deforestation in the West Bank and Gaza has been one of the least noticed byproducts of the Israeli occupation. Wooded lands have often been cleared to make room for Jewish settlements, and forest fires have become more frequent due to the elimination of the small budgets for clearing underbrush in wooded areas.

Since the beginning of the intifada, trees have been a frequent target of Israeli wrath. Both soldiers and settlers have been guilty of destroying trees in the occupied territory. In June, columnists Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, who had recently visited the West Bank, wrote the following column on "the war of the trees" being waged against the Palestinians as part of Israel's effort to subdue them:

Israel Destroys the West Bank Trees

Thousands of trees have been bulldozed or burned by Israeli soldiers to break the spirit and the economy of Palestinians. In this arid land, the loss of a tree is mourned almost as much as the loss of a life.

We met one of the most wanted underground leaders of the Palestinian uprising, or intifada. He couldn't stop talking about the trees. "I heard the other day that they pulled up an olive tree that was 300 years old," he began. "This makes me shiver. To kill a man is nothing anymore. But to kill such a tree that has been there for eight generations, which has been watered by countless men who have sweated over its growth, well, this is madness." The last time he recalled being this angry, he said, was when a friend tore up a book, just because it was printed in Hebrew. He told the man they were no longer friends because the friend had no regard for knowledge. "To plow and to read, this is civilization," the revolutionary leader said. "Anything else is madness."

The intifada is madness. The death toll to date is more than 500 Palestinians and two dozen Israelis. Add to that 25,000 trees, by Palestinian count. Israeli security forces say the number is just a few thousand. What have the trees done to get dragged into the madness? The official Israeli explanation is that rock-throwing Palestinian youths hide behind trees. So, the trees must go.

Palestinians say the Israelis kill trees because they know it makes Palestinians more angry than just about anything else short of a massacre.

Under Jordanian law, which has ruled the West Bank for 20 years, cultivation of land is significant proof of ownership. The more fruit and olive trees an Arab has, the better the Arab's chance of keeping it. One Israeli demographer expressed public disgust over the war of the trees: "Even our trees fight. They plant olive trees. We pull them out and plant pine trees."

The Palestinians see defoliation as part of an Israeli plot to subjugate Arabs by making them dependent on Israel for essentials. "We don't control our own water, our electricity. We can't even build hospitals," one intifada leader told us. Palestinians cite examples: A professor at Bethlehem University was jailed for five months last year without charges because he encouraged Palestinians to grow vegetables; some Palestinians pooled $10,000 to buy 18 cows, then Israeli military authorities ordered them to get rid of the herd.

On May 24, Israeli settlers in the occupied territories sawed down about 50 fruit trees, burned a wheat field and destroyed groves of olive trees. It was revenge against Palestinians who had smashed a monument to a Jewish settler killed in a skirmish with Arabs. The Israeli army prefers bulldozers and torches to saws. Bulldozers leveled 60 fruit trees in the village of Ain Yabrud at dawn May 21; soldiers set fire to 10 fruit trees near Nablus on May 4; bulldozers tore out 195 olive, almond and fig trees and plowed under a wheat field east of Qalqilia on April 25; the bulldozers flattened a fence and uprooted 65 olive and almond trees on March 30; 120 fruit trees March 28; and so on. If the Israelis' intent has been to infuriate Palestinians in a way that nothing else would, the strategy has worked. □

From *The Washington Post*
15 June 1989

HEALTH *(continued from page 7)*

away from hospitals even when their conditions requires such care. Patients have also been seized and arrested while being transported by ambulances.

■ Prisons: Tens of thousands of Palestinians have been incarcerated during the intifada. Overcrowded prisons, unsanitary conditions, inadequate diet and health care have caused intolerable and dangerous health problems for many captive Palestinians. Denial of visits and gifts from relatives to certain detention camps compound the problem.

The general deterioration of the standards of living due to the circumstances of oppression and resistance in the West Bank and Gaza Strip—including restrictions on receiving funds from abroad, unemployment, strikes and lockouts, curfews and repeated shortages of food and medicine—create problems of physical and mental health for the Palestinian population. Palestinians accuse Israel of the deliberate use of health care as collective punishment and as a political weapon in Israel ongoing and futile attempt to subjugate the Palestinians.

The Silver Lining

There is a silver lining in this gloomy picture. The intifada has created an unprecedented spirit of perseverance and solidarity in occupied Palestine which helps the Palestinians overcome or at least tolerate the difficult conditions created by Israeli repression. Patients frequently stay away from hospitals voluntarily to make room for others who are in greater need for their care; patients check out of hospitals as quickly as their conditions permit to make room for others, medical staff give up holidays and vacations to stay on the job, and neighborhood medical committees provide much needed volunteer service in their areas. Foreign medical professionals have volunteered for service in the occupied territories, and many countries around the world have contributed food and medicines or have increased their contributions to UNRWA and to private voluntary charitable organizations operating in the West Bank and Gaza as a gesture of compassion and solidarity with the Palestinian people in their hour of ordeal...and hope. □

"Foreign Worker" badge

APARTHEID SPREADS IN ISRAEL

In May, the Jewish settlement of Ariel in the West Bank began to require Arab workers to wear distinguishing badges which identify them as "foreign workers." Human rights activists in Israel and elsewhere have criticized the practice which reminds people of the days when Jews in some areas of Europe were made to wear a yellow star. A number of Israeli Knesset members issued a statement calling the action by Ariel settlers "racist, designed to disgrace the Arabs, and more suitable for racist regimes."

Now the city of Petah Tikva plans its own version of apartheid. It has plans to prohibit Arabs working there from going directly to their jobs. Instead, they would be herded in a staging area then shuttled by escorted buses. The Israeli press attributes the idea to the city's new mayor who had served as Israel's military attache in South Africa.

On 10 June, several Arab cities in northern Israel marked a day of protest against racism in Israel. Protest rallies in several Arab cities in Israel called attention to anti-Arab racism in Israeli society. □

ISRAELI EDUCATORS PROTEST SCHOOL CLOSURE

Security Argument Called "One Big Evasion"

Some Israeli educators have been speaking out against their government's shut down of the Palestinian system of education in occupied Palestine, justified on the grounds of state security. One such group, the National Council for the Child, rejected Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin's explanation that "hostile elements" in the Palestinian population "have turned pupils in Judea and Samaria into hostages of those who instigate violence and terror."

Dr. Yitzhak Kadman, the Council's director, dismissed Rabin's contention as "one big evasion." *The Jerusalem Post* quoted him as saying that "Even if one disregards the moral aspects of shutting down the schools, it is simply illogical to keep the children out of school and on the streets if you aim to reduce disturbances." He said that illogic of the policy is shown by the fact that "There have been more child casualties since the schools were closed," which shows that "It's not only that their minds are on the streets, they are there bodily too."

"Even classes where three students and a lone teacher gather in someone's home are deemed illegal."

Dr. Kadman also pointed out that the fact that the government has also forbidden informal education, where students are taught at home, exposes the argument that the school closure is done for security reasons. "Even if they close the schools," he said, "there is no reason not to permit the children to do their work at home."

Palestinian schools and universities in the occupied territories have been closed by order of the military government for more than a year. The Palestinians have organized a voluntary community effort where teachers and parents try to teach the children in small groups in private homes, but the occupation authorities have also forbidden "underground education."

Some Israeli professors have also spoken out against the closure of Palestinian universities since the beginning of the intifada. A spokesman for that group, Professor Paul Mendes-Flohr, wrote *The Jerusalem Post,* in response to an editorial defending the Israeli government's closure of Palestinian universities, saying that the right to teach and study are "sacrosanct and inviolable." He called the decision to close the schools "myopic and ill-conceived policy."

The denial of education to the Palestinians, the Israeli academics said, "evokes painful memories, ancient and contemporary, of times when our own [Jewish] people was similarly deprived of the freedom to maintain its educational institutions." Following is an excerpt from Professor Mendes-Flohr's statement, published in *The Jerusalem Post* (int'l. ed., week ending 27 May 1989):

Moral Travesty

"The closure of the Palestinian institutions of higher learning, not to speak of the entire school system in the West Bank, hardly serves to promote the prospects of peace, or rather what we [the protesting professors] would regard as a just peace.

"We do not believe that peace, anchored in justice, with the Palestinians can be achieved by denying their national identity and rights. And this conviction is precisely the source of the misgivings regarding the closure of the Palestinian universities, for it seems to us that this measure is prompted not by a mere desire to foreclose the possibilities of a volatile student body from gathering on the campuses.

"Our doubts are raised by the fact that the authorities have not only sealed the campuses hermetically—library staffs and lab technicians are not even permitted to enter—but also seek to suppress all forms of alternative, off-campus education. Even classes where three students and a lone teacher gather in someone's home are deemed illegal.

"This resolute attempt to suppress all and every form of Palestinian education cannot but suggest that the closure of the universities does not rest on considerations of public order alone. We, accordingly, suspect that far from being a 'politically creative' use of repression, the deprivation of the Palestinians' right to an education constitutes a grave abuse of this tool of governance, and hence both a moral and political travesty." □

THE REALITY BEHIND THE SMOKE SCREEN

The diplomatic acrobatics which masquerade as a peace process hide behind them the cruel reality of life under Israeli occupation. While diplomacy lurches and stalls in its circular orbit, the people of occupied Palestine suffer an unending ordeal.

In an article titled "Diplomacy must not obscure the realities of Israeli occupation," published in the *Middle East International* of 26 May 1989, **Professor Israel Shahak** of Hebrew University in Jerusalem explained how Israel continues—behind a smoke screen of diplomatic maneuvers—its unceasing war on Palestinian society. Below is part of the article, dealing with the theft of water resources from occupied Palestine.

The Theft of Water

The first [problem] is the growing theft of water by the Israelis from the Palestinians in the occupied territories and the way it is divided. This is a perennial feature of the Israeli system of rule and one which reflects the determination of the Israeli establishment to keep its hold on the territories.

First the hard facts: next year the Israeli estimate for the volume of water originating from the West Bank is 807 million cubic meters (mcm). Of this, 510 mcm will be diverted to Israeli use, 160 mcm will be granted to the Jewish settlers in the West Bank (whose number is estimated to reach 100,000, but in my opinion will be much less), and only 137 mcm will be allowed to the 1,200,000 Palestinians.

The situation this year is only a little better than that estimated for next; it gets worse every year. Even if we accept the official figures the result is, percentage wise, that the Palestinians of the West Bank will get only 17 percent of their own water, while Israel will get 83 percent. Of this, the Jewish settlers, whose presence there is illegal, will get 20 percent! What is more, while a Jewish settler in the West Bank will get officially 1,600 cubic meters of water per person per year (in 1985 it was "only" 363 cubic meters per settler), a Palestinian there will get a mere 137 cubic meters, a ratio of 11.7:1. The average inhabitants of Tel Aviv use more water in their apartment than an average West Bank Palestinian family is allowed for all its needs, including irrigation. If this is not apartheid, then what is?

Enormous areas of the West Bank which could be irrigated are not allowed to be, because they belong to the Palestinians, and the Civil Administration [occupation authorities] refuses to allocate water for their irrigation. No doubt when such land is confiscated for the settlers the water will be found. Those 510 mcm of water (63 percent of the whole) which are diverted from the neighboring part of the West Bank to purely Israeli use are now an important part of the water consumption in a coastal area north of Tel Aviv. The fate of Israeli agricultural exports to Europe, an important part of the Israeli economy, depends on this stolen water.

In Gaza the situation is worse. Although there is no detailed official data it is well known that Palestinian agriculture in Gaza is being systematically dried up and destroyed, while that of the Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip (numbering a mere 2,500, but with an enormous water consumption for their agriculture) and of the Israeli settlements surrounding the Strip, is flourishing. How is this done? By their efficient deep drilling, the Israeli settlements cause the sea water to enter the underground reservoir tapped by Palestinian wells, while their own deeper wells are not affected. The settlers inside the Strip, who by deep drilling tap deeper layers of water, also cause seepage from the sea into the more superficial levels. Since Palestinians are strictly prohibited from deep drilling or indeed from digging new wells on their own land, the result is that the sea seeps into their existing wells. By now, in many areas of the Gaza Strip even the water used by Palestinians for drinking, not to speak of that for agriculture, contains more salt than even the lowest medical standards allow. Israeli control of water supplies ensures that not only is there a general prohibition on Palestinians drilling new wells and enlarging old ones, or fitting new and better pumps, but that even sales of spare parts for old pumps are rigorously controlled. □

ISRAELI SOLDIERS ACQUITTED OF BEATING DEATH

Four Israeli soldiers have been acquitted of manslaughter charges in the beating death of a Palestinian in Jabalia refugee camp in the Gaza Strip. The military court found them guilty of a lesser charge of brutality.

The case, seen by many as a test case of Israel's policy toward the beating death of Palestinians, arose out of the murder of Hani Shami, 42, who was beaten to death in August 1988. He was beaten viciously in his home by four Israeli soldiers—one of whom jumped on the man's chest from a bed—when the man tried to protect his son from the soldiers.

Although no one denied that the victim was beaten to death by Israeli soldiers, the accused claimed that they were following orders, and the court accepted the argument for the defense that responsibility for the fatal blows could not be established since about 20 other soldiers also beat the man for several hours after his arrest and transfer to an interrogation center.

Israel Scene, June 1989

In Brief

■ **WALKING TAX**—An elderly Palestinian man from the village of Biddya in the Nablus district owes the Israeli occupation authorities "walking taxes."

The 65-year-old man, Salah Abu Safiyah, had his identity card confiscated by Israeli soldiers at the beginning of this year for non-payment of taxes. The Jerusalem Press reported that when he recently complained that he did not owe taxes because he was unemployed and indigent, the occupation authorities told him that he owed taxes because "you walk on the streets."

■ **LABOR DELEGATION TO PALESTINE**—The San Francisco-based Labor Committee on the Middle East plans to send a delegation of American labor representatives to occupied Palestine in late September or early October 1989. Trade Union members interested in joining the delegation should apply by writing to LCOME, P. O. Box 421429, San Francisco, CA 94142-1429.

■ **ISRAEL TO DEMOLISH "ILLEGAL" MOSQUE**—The Jerusalem Press Service reported that the Israeli occupation authorities have decided to demolish a new mosque in the village of Sa'ir in the Hebron district. The Hassan Bin Thabet Mosque will be destroyed because it was built "without a permit."

On 7 June, four homes were demolished in the village of Beita in the West Bank, where 14 other homes were blown up by the Israeli army after a skirmish between villagers and armed settlers, during which one Jewish girl was killed by one of the settlers in April.

■ **ARAB COMMITTEE ON PALESTINE**—Morocco's King Hassan II and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat have been consulting on the formation of an Arab Committee on Palestine, decided by the last Arab summit, to further the Palestinian peace initiative proposed by the 19th Palestine National Congress in November 1988. The committee, on which six Arab states will be represented, will be charged with making international contacts to reactivate the peace process and to prepare for a Middle East peace conference.

■ **150 DISABLED SOLDIERS**—About 150 Israeli soldiers have been disabled since the beginning of the Palestinian intifada, according to the Israeli Disabled Veterans Organization. Yosef Luttenberg, the chairman of the organization released the information during a recent press conference in Tel Aviv, but he gave no details about the nature of the disabilities suffered by Israeli soldiers.

THEY PERSISTED

"We have sent more than ten plagues to the Palestinians, and still they persist. We put their villages under general curfew, and they still persisted. We fired 'improved' rubber bullets at them, and they still persisted. We blocked over their houses, and they still persisted. We fired plastic bullets at them, and they still persisted. We fired at them with live ammunition and killed their women and children, and they still persisted. We demolished their houses, and they still persisted. We expelled some of their leaders, and they still persisted. We searched their homes in the middle of the night, and they still persisted. We beat them up and broke their bones, and they still persisted. We shut down their schools and universities, and they still persisted....

"How many experiences do the Palestinians in the territories have to go through, how many beatings do they have to take from us, before we realize that they are not going to give up their national aspirations? How much more do we have to make them suffer, how much do we have to torture them, to embitter their lives? How many more killed and wounded have to be added to our statistics before we realize that this is not a caprice and not the senseless violence of youngsters, but a popular uprising, from which there is no turning back? A popular uprising which, in spite of us will in the end lead the Palestinian people to independence."

Dorit Gefen, *Al Hamishmar,* 19 April 1989

■ **CONGRESSMEN URGE REOPENING SCHOOLS**—Congressman Howard Nielson (R-UT) has introduced a sense of the Congress resolution urging Israel to "take immediate steps to reopen schools in the West Bank." Five weeks after its introduction on 16 May, the resolution has been signed by 10 Republican and 15 Democratic members of Congress. During its most recent convention (18-20 June), the National Association of Arab Americans (NAAA) organized visits by its members to their congressmen to urge them to support the resolution.

Palestinian schools in the West Bank have been closed by the Israeli occupation authorities since February 1988.

■ **BILLED FOR HOME DEMOLITION**—Fifteen Palestinian families have been sent bills by the Israeli occupation authorities asking them to pay for the cost of demolishing their homes. The bills explain that the charges are to cover the cost of Israeli bulldozers used to level their homes.

■ **ISRAELI SOLDIER BACK IN JAIL**—An Israeli soldier is serving his fourth sentence for refusing to be a "military occupier." Rami Hason, 33, is a sergeant in the Israeli army, and his troubles began in May 1988 when he was sentenced to 28 days in prison, the longest period in prison for an Israeli soldier refusing to serve.

Hason is not a conscientious objector. He is willing to serve in the occupied territories, but not in a part that would require him to shoot or beat up Palestinian protesters. He says that he does not want to be a "military occupier of the Arabs there."

■ **JEWISH TERRORISTS TO BE FREED**—Three Jewish terrorists who were given life sentences for armed assault on the campus of the Palestinian University of Hebron in the summer of 1983, killing three students and wounding about 40, are about to go free. Their sentence, which had earlier been reduced to 24 years and then to 15 years, has again been reduced by Israel's President Herzog to 10 years. The term, under Israeli law, could be cut by one third for "good behavior," which means that the three would be eligible for release next year.

ARAB DISILLUSIONMENT

The influential Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Rai Al-Am* questioned the usefulness of the U.S.-PLO dialogue, conducted by their respective ambassadors in Tunis, saying that it only yielded Arab concessions without reciprocity from the Israeli side.

Commenting on U.S. government endorsement of Shamir's "elections" proposals, the paper accused the Bush administration of faking the role of honest broker in the Arab-Israeli conflict while actually trying to help Israel stem the intifada in occupied Palestine. The Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) reported that the paper accused Washington of using the dialogue as a cover to get concessions from the Arabs in favor of Israel. □

USS LIBERTY MEMORIAL

On 8 June 1967, an Israeli force attacked the U.S. Navy vessel *USS Liberty,* killing 34 sailors and wounding 171. Out of concern for Israel's image as America's "friend," the incident was quickly patched up, and the dead sailors never got the recognition they deserved for their sacrifice.

Increasingly, however, the American public is more aware of the coverup and the consequent injustice it caused. Recently, several states and localities have decided to commemorate the *USS Liberty* and its victims. A *USS Liberty* Memorial Day has been proclaimed in the states of California, Colorado, Texas, Nebraska, New York, Washington, New Hampshire, and Maine. In addition, several local jurisdictions, including St. Louis (MO), Sheridan (WY), Lincoln and Omaha (NB), Grafton (WI) and others have also proclaimed a USS Liberty Memorial Day.

Zionist groups in this country have opposed demands for a congressional inquiry into the attack on the *Liberty* claiming that they are inspired by anti-Semitism. Several localities, such as Milwaukee (WI) rescinded their proclamations, indicating the ability of Zionist pressure groups to intimidate in some areas.

[For an authoritative account of the incident by one of the ship's officers at the time of the attack, read *Assault on the Liberty,* by James M. Ennes, Jr.]

COMMENTARY . . .
THE PLO COMMITMENTS COMPLIANCE ACT

When it comes to pleasing Israel, absurdity knows no bounds in the Congress of the United States. Among the absurdities that flowered there this spring was something called "The PLO Commitments Compliance Act." This act elevates the status of Israeli wishes to American law.

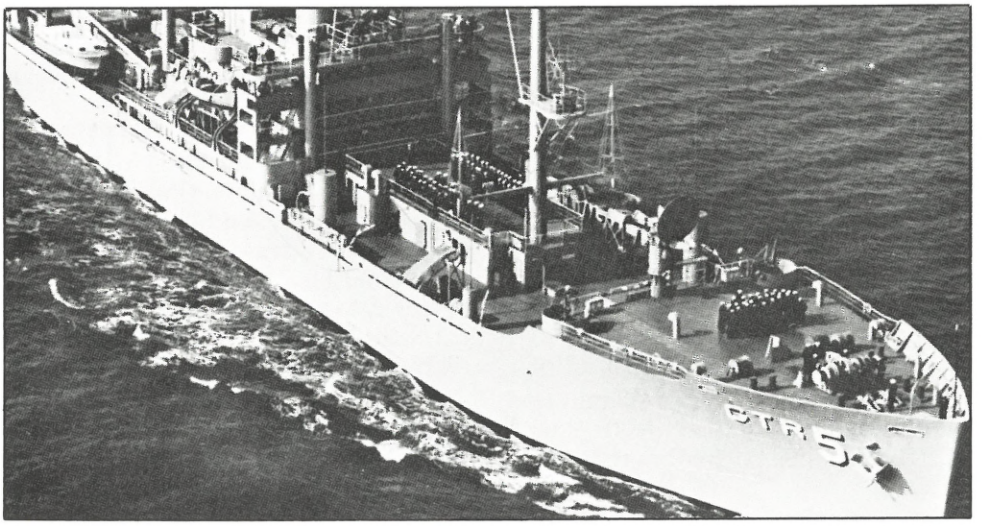
The act is much broader than its title indicates. It requires the President of the United States to monitor statements by the PLO (including all groups affiliated with it, as well as its chairman, members of the Executive Committee, and members of the Palestine National Council), and to report to Congress every 120 days on any contradictions to or deviations from the commitments made by the PLO regarding recognition of Israel, acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and abstention from terrorism. [In the act, Congress seems to adopt Israel's definition of terrorism to mean any act of Palestinian resistance to Israel and its occupation of Arab land, including unarmed resistance such as the intifada].

In addition, the act requires the President to report to Congress on PLO compliance with a long list of Israeli demands. These include the demand that the PLO persuade the Arab states to recognize Israel and enter into direct negotiations with it as well as end the economic boycott of Israel. It also requires the PLO to cease its support of the intifada or "threatening" collaborators who want to end it. It requires the PLO to change the Palestinian National Covenant, to disband some of its units, and to discipline or expel groups or individuals involved in armed conflict with Israel.

The act requires more proofs of "good behavior" from the PLO. On the other hand, it expects nothing in return from Israel. There is not a single word in the act about what Congress expects Israel to do to reciprocate Palestinian concessions and to advance the peace process. The assumption, apparently, is that peace is a gift that Israel deserves for its aggression, intransigence, and its brutalities against the Arabs.

The act, in short, tells Israel that intransigence pays, and it tells the Arabs that there is nothing that they can do that would satisfy the Congress of the United States. Perhaps the Arabs ought to get the hint and conclude: "Then why bother?" But, then, that is probably what Congress wants to happen in order to give Israel its old excuse about "there's no one to talk to."

If the U.S. Congress cannot do something to facilitate a just peace in the Middle East, at least it should not give encouragement to Shamir's efforts to obstruct. The obstruction of a just peace may serve Israel's shortsighted definition of its interests, but it serves neither America's interests nor its ideals. Shamir, after all, needs no support to obstruct peace. He is very talented in that particular department. □



New Books

"I walked past large Israeli tanks packed with soldiers. In my mind's eye, I could only see the Palestinian children of the camps with their arms raised defiantly in the victory signs. As long as there were Palestinian children, the Palestinians would keep on going."

"I looked into the face of death and have seen its power and ugliness, but I have also looked into its eyes, and seen its fear. For our children are coming, and they are not afraid."

PROFILES IN COURAGE AND COMPASSION

From Beirut To Jerusalem, by Swee Chai Ang. London: Grafton Books, 1989; 302 pages + 16 pages of photographs.

The Palestinians are perhaps the most threatened nation in the world today. Their homeland has been conquered and colonized; their society has been disrupted and displaced; their national identity has been denied; their land has been expropriated; their leaders have been deported and assassinated; their youth have been incarcerated and expelled; their schools have been closed; their orchards have been uprooted; their homes have been demolished; and in general, their lives at home and in exile have been made precarious and constantly put in jeopardy.

Periodically, the Palestinian experience—called by the Palestinian writer Jabra I. Jabra "a journey through the cosmic absurd"—has taken the form of mass massacres, such as happened during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, which the U.N. General Assembly described as acts of genocide.

But it is a telling statement about the Palestinians and their struggle for survival and liberty that it has inspired countless people around the world. They have always had friends who not only supported their cause but also shared with them their journey through the cosmic absurd. One such friend has been Dr. Swee Chai Ang, the writer of *From Beirut to Jerusalem.*

Swee was born in Malaysia and grew up in Singapore of Chinese background. She and her husband, lawyer and human rights activist Francis Khoo, have been living in Britain as political refugees since 1977 when they were granted asylum by the British government.

From Beirut To Jerusalem is Swee's personal witness to the Palestinian ordeal. It is the story of her work, as an orthopedic surgeon, in Lebanon since the summer of 1982 when, moved by her strong Christian ethic and medical commitment, she answered an appeal for medical volunteers to treat war victims of the Israeli invasion.

Swee knew nothing about the Palestinians at the time, except the "terrorist" slander prevalent in the West. She was an admirer of the Jewish state until she began to question her feelings when she heard an Israeli spokesman on a news program explain Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon by saying that what Israel was doing in Lebanon was breaking eggs to make an omelet. The insensitivity of the remark shocked her and began the journey that subsequently changed her life.

Once in Lebanon, in the summer of 1982, with a group of European and American volunteers, she found herself in the Palestinian Gaza hospital in the Sabra refugee camp in Beirut. A few weeks after her arrival, the Israeli army violated the PLO evacuation agreement, occupied Beirut and more than two thousand Palestinians and Lebanese were massacred in Sabra and Shatila. "Here we were," she wrote, "twenty-two foreign workers, who worked for seventy-two hours without food, water or sleep, trying to save a handful of lives, while out there in the camp human beings were slain by the thousand. If only I had known what was happening, I would have stopped operating, run into the streets and tried to do something, anything to stop it." Swee and other medical workers were then taken at gunpoint through the camp and subjected to a mock execution.

The survivors needed help, and Swee became their doctor, friend, spokesperson and fundraiser. She and U.S. nurse Ellen Siegel went to Jerusalem and testified before the Kahan Commission which was investigating the Sabra and Shatila massacres. She traveled to Europe and America to tell "all those who cared to listen" about the plight of the Palestinians. She accompanied injured children who needed treatment in hospitals abroad. She collected contributions and scrounged up food, medicines and medical supplies and took them to Lebanon. She lectured, gave interviews and wrote to newspapers.

In 1984, Swee worked with others in England and set up Medical Aid For Palestinians, a charity which had since sent 65 volunteers from ten different nationalities to work in refugee camps in Lebanon, and collected contributions to rebuild and equip Palestine Red Crescent Society hospitals and clinics repeatedly destroyed and plundered since 1982. Throughout the siege of the camps in 1985 and subsequently, Swee and her fellow volunteers treated victims, comforted survivors, and starved and feared constant danger with them.

In early 1988, the Palestinians in Lebanon's refugee camps wanted Swee to help their relatives in occupied Palestine who were being victimized by Israel's iron fist policy. She went to Gaza to be with the Palestinians at another turn in their seemingly endless journey through the cosmic absurd.

From Beirut To Jerusalem is a gripping story of the Palestinians under duress, but it is also a touching account of human courage and compassion by people from around the world who care. It depresses and angers, but it also inspires. □

ALTERNATIVE PERIODICALS

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UNRWA PROTESTS CLOSURE OF PALESTINIAN SCHOOLS

U.N. Agency Says Palestinian Children Are Denied Right To Learn

Vienna, 19 June—The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has been informed by the Israeli administration that all West Bank schools must remain closed for at least another month from 19 June. The closure order affects 90 UNRWA schools—all except those in the immediate Jerusalem area—as well as the Agency's three training centers at Kalandia and Ramallah. Some 36,000 students between the ages of 6 and 15, and trainees aged 16 to 20, are idled by the order of a sixth straight month.

Since February 1988, shortly after the start of the Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories, schools in the West Bank have been allowed to function for only a few weeks in all. The 1988-1989 school year, which was to have been devoted primarily to making up for time lost in the previous year, has effectively been lost.

UNRWA has repeatedly expressed its deep concern that Palestinian children, including refugees for whose education UNRWA is responsible to the world community, are being denied their fundamental right to learning. UNRWA Commissioner-General Giorgio Giacomelli said recently that the school closures were "irreparably damaging" the future of young Palestinians. Israeli educators have also recently added their voices to international appeals for the authorities to re-open the schools.

Elementary and junior high schools in the occupied Gaza Strip, including 146 run by UNRWA for 91,000 pupils, have not been ordered closed and have functioned reasonably well, despite some days lost due to sweeping curfews in Gaza's towns and refugee camps.

However, recently compiled UNRWA figures show that the violence sparked by the uprising has been felt severely around, and even inside UNRWA school compounds in the Gaza Strip. During the current school year (from 1 September 1988 through 15 June 1989), the number of casualties inflicted in or near UNRWA schools included 13 pupils killed (two of them inside school premises), 320 wounded by live ammunition (26 of them inside schools), 3,711 hurt by rubber bullets (350 of them inside the schools), and 733 pupils detained from or near their schools.

In addition, UNRWA's Department of Education in Gaza reported 61 students from the Gaza Training Center were detained (11 of them from inside the Center), and two trainees were killed and three injured by live bullets outside the Center during the school year. □

Time To Greatly Reduce Military Aid to Israel

"We are therefore ***ourselves*** fully responsible for the use to which Israel puts the power we place in its hands..."

"The so-called 'Special Relationship' now assumed to connect the United States and Israel ought to be radically rethought."

Charles L. Black, Jr.*

Sterling Professor of Law Emeritus, Yale University

**From a newly published JCOME pamphlet titled Rethinking Our Relationship With Israel.*

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SOVIET JEWS ARE NOT POLITICAL REFUGEES

Immigrants Said To Be After "Fast and Easy Buck"

Soviet Jews clamoring to leave their country "are drawn by the dream of making a fast and easy buck," according to Yosef Goell, editorial staff writer of the Israeli English language *Jerusalem Post.* Soviet Jews, whose right to emigrate has been made into an issue of human rights, are not in search of Jewish life, according to Goell, and for that reason they should not be helped by other Jews. "Neither Jewish money," he said, "nor Jewish political clout should be expended on helping people to move from one *galut* to another." He lamented the fact that most Soviet Jews who leave their country chose to go to America instead of Israel.

Israel has been trying to force Soviet Jews to go to Israel by denying them the right to choose any other destination, even though the campaign on their behalf purports to be a struggle for the freedom of choice. Israel has tried to initiate direct flights from Moscow to Israel in order to ship Soviet Jews directly, and it has tried to convince the U.S. government to deny Soviet Jews the status of refugees, which entitles them to government assistance. Deprived of benefits in America, Israel hopes, Soviet Jews would have a greater incentive to go to Israel.

Goell wrote that the American Jewish establishment is disappointed with Soviet Jewish immigrants in the United States, most of whom do not lead Jewish lives after they get settled and no longer need Jewish community assistance. Russian Jews going to America, he said, are not refugees even though the political influence of American Jews had secured for them that status and the benefits it confers on them. In reality, Goell wrote, Soviet Jewish immigrants are "like many other peoples in the world, including Taiwanese, Koreans, and Mexicans, people who are drawn by the dream of making a fast and easy buck in the *goldene medine.*"

"I believe that the U.S. does not owe such Russian Jews anything," he wrote. "But that is America's problem. What is more important is that the Jewish people itself should feel constrained to proffer assistance to such Soviet Jews only on condition that such assistance clearly serves Jewish goals," something which can be imposed on them in Israel. □

ZIONIST ANTI-SEMITISM

People who speak of Jewish influence in America are often accused of anti-Semitism. So why does Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir boast about it?

In early May, Shamir went even further and boasted that American Jews control American politics. Reporting on a chat with Jewish settlers, Joshua Brilliant of *The Jerusalem Post* said Shamir told the settlers that the U.S. administration could not retain power without Jewish support. "It is impossible," he said, "to maintain rule if all U.S. Jews are against it."

The Post (int'l ed., week ending 6 May 1989) also reported that Shamir told the settlers not to worry about his proposal to hold elections in the West Bank and Gaza. He told them to pay less attention to what he says and more attention to what he does. □

AUTONOMY IS NOT FREEDOM

Harkabi Advises Israelis Not to Fool Themselves

Yeshohafat Harkabi, former chief of Israeli military intelligence, told a Hebrew University audience in Jerusalem that the idea of convincing the Palestinians to abandon their demand for independence and to settle for "autonomy" instead was a "bankrupt proposal." He warned Israel that "either we shall have a Palestinian state in our neighborhood or we shall become a Palestinian state."

Harkabi, who changed from a "hawk" to what he calls a "Machiavellian Dove," believes that Israel's rejection of the land for peace formula is a demographic time bomb for Israel. He argues that it is in Israel's interest—and the only way to keep it a Jewish state—to give up the occupied West Bank and Gaza and to negotiate with the PLO about the establishment of a Palestinian state there. He told his audience that the recent PLO peace initiative is an opportunity "of historic importance" and must not be ignored.

Ridiculing the idea that the Palestinians ought to accept something less than national independence, Harkabi said "It is as unacceptable to them as the idea was unacceptable when [Jordan's King] Abdallah tried to convince the Jews to accept autonomy under his rule." □

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