

PALESTINE ESSAYS - No. 8

THE HOLY LAND
UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION
1967

An appeal to world conscience

PALESTINE RESEARCH CENTER



THE HOLY LAND
UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION 1967

PALESTINE ESSAYS - No. 8

**THE HOLY LAND
UNDER ISRAELI OCCUPATION
1967**

An appeal to world conscience

PALESTINE RESEARCH CENTER

606 Sadat Street (Apt. 22)

Beirut, Lebanon

May 1969

**«Woe to him
that buildeth a town with blood
and establishes a city by iniquity!»**

Habakkuk, 2:12

FOREWORD

By SAMI HADAWI

The narrative in the following pages is not the work of a propagandist or that of a newspaper correspondent who is anxious to provide his readers with an exciting story. It is the honest and forthright testimony of an eyewitness who has suffered and has seen the suffering of others under the despotic rule of an Israeli overlord. Despite the writer's sad experiences, there is no malice or hatred in the account. It is merely an appeal to the human conscience against the injustices and tyrannies of an enemy who has no respect for human decency or morality.

The writer still lives in occupied territory, and for that reason must obviously remain anonymous for fear of Israeli retaliation.

This is not an isolated revelation of what is going on in the Israeli occupied territories. It is a confirmation of what others have already reported on the deplorable conditions of the Arab residents. It is relevant, in this respect, to draw attention to the testimonies of Father Paul Gauthier, priest-founder of the Companions of Jesus, and Sister Marie-Therese, head of the Women's branch. Their «bewildering testimony of what they saw and experienced during the Israeli-Arab lightning war of June 1967» was published in the Paris Catholic Weekly *Témoignage Chrétien* and reproduced by the Librairie du Liban, Riad Solh Square, Beirut, Lebanon, in book form under the title «Jerusalem and the Blood of the Poor».

The testimony of Sister Marie-Therese «on the war in Jerusalem, reveals an aspect of reality that the journalists and radio could not relate...» The same may be said of the testimony of our anonymous writer.

The systematic policy of ruthlessness, oppression, torture, expulsion, confiscation, looting, destruction and murder, at present being followed by the Israeli authorities in occupied Arab territories, will neither bring peace nor guarantee stability for the state of Israel. History has it on record that the lifespan of similar systems of horror has been short. Furthermore, the future of a nation is not judged in terms of ten, twenty, fifty or one hundred years; and the one hundred million Arabs surrounding the territory occupied by the Israelis are not likely to remain militarily weak, disunited and inefficient in the face of constant Israeli aggression. Hence, Israel's present policy of aggression and intransigence is not conducive to peace. Arnold Toynbee, in his *A Study of History*, declared after the expulsion and dispossession of the Palestine Arabs in 1948 that «the Jews knew, from personal experience, what they were doing; and it was their supreme tragedy that the lesson learnt by them from their encounter with the Nazi Gentiles should have been not to eschew but to imitate some of the evil deeds that the Nazis had committed against the Jews».

For centuries, the Jews had suffered at the hands of Christian Europe; and the Nazi holocaust of World War II horrified even those nations which had persecuted Jews at one time or another.

Great sympathy was therefore expressed for the Jewish victims. But little was it realized that the Zionist movement which came into existence at the close of the nineteenth century would take advantage of the perse-

cution of the Jews to reach political goals and ambitions in Palestine without regard to what these goals and ambitions might mean to other people.

In the early days of the Movement, the Zionists succeeded in shaping world opinion into the belief that Palestine was the «Promised Land» of the Jews alone, that it was their «historical» homeland, that it was a country without a people, that the Jews were a people without a country, and that Jewish endeavour and skill would bring civilization and prosperity to the insignificant number of nomad Arabs who roamed its countryside.

With unerring skill, the Zionists adapted their arguments to the special circumstances of each situation; they appealed to the Christians, using Biblical language to awaken in them deep emotional undertones; to the humanitarians, they urged a permanent solution of the vexatious Jewish problem; to the anti-semites, they showed the way to get rid of the Jews from their midst; and, to lure the politician, the protection of western democracy and interests in the Middle East were vividly portrayed through the establishment of a Jewish state in the region.

This beguiling approach proved a great success. With each faction thus satisfied, people made no effort to study the true nature of Zionism. They accepted the misinterpretation of Holy Scriptures as presented to them by misguided Christian supporters of Zionism without attempting to search for the truth; and they paid no attention to the injustices which their support might inflict upon the indigenous Moslem and Christian inhabitants of the Holy Land.

The true nature of Zionism remained little understood until the United Nations' recommendation of 1947 to

partition Palestine. The massacre of 250 men, women and children at Deir Yasin in April 1948 to hasten the flight of the Arab inhabitants shocked the world as not being the work of a humanitarian movement. But Zionist influence over the media of information suppressed any condemnation of the official Zionist action; and the subsequent expulsion and dispossession of the non-Jewish inhabitants was gradually accepted as another population exodus with which the world is plagued from time to time. Ironically, the West made the Palestine Arabs, who are innocent of any injury to the Jews, pay a western debt to the Jews without any remorse or feeling of guilt.

And so, within a span of sixty years of the birth of the Movement, Zionism moved from theory in 1897 to a «national home» in 1917 to a «state» in 1948 and to what the Israelis now describe and hope to retain as «greater Israel» in 1967.

The June 1967 war, hailed by the Israelis and their friends as a great victory, may yet prove to be a turning point in the history of the Middle East and the presence of the state of Israel in the area. Whereas in the early days of the conflict public opinion had accepted the Israeli claim that they were fighting a «defensive» war and rallied to their support, it has now been established that the main objective of the so-called «Six-Day War» was for the purpose of achieving territorial expansion.

What has also become more obvious is the fact that the true character of the Zionist movement is not, and never was, «humanitarian», in search of a «refuge», a «home» for the persecuted Jews of Europe, but that it is a selfish, racist movement devoid of all human feelings which is out to attain political gains by using the sufferings and tribulations of the Jewish people as a step-

ping-stone towards the achievement of their goals. It is interesting to note in this respect the analogy between anti-semitism and Zionism drawn by Arnold Toynbee when he told a gathering of Jews at an annual meeting of the American Council for Judaism in May 1961 that «Zionism and anti-Semitism are expressions of an identical point of view. The assumption underlying both ideologies is that it is impossible for Jews and non-Jews to grow up together in a single community, and that therefore a physical separation is the only practical way out. The watchword of anti-Semitism», he said, «is 'Back to medieval apartheid'; the watchword of Zionism is 'Back to the medieval ghetto'. All the far-flung ghettos in the world are to be gathered into one patch of soil in Palestine to create a single consolidated ghetto there», he concluded. (*New York Times*, May 7, 1961).

The United Nations was not unmindful of how the Israelis were treating the Arab residents of occupied territories. The Security Council on 14 June 1967, and the General Assembly on 4 July 1967, drew the attention of the Government of Israel to the provisions of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and called upon the Israeli authorities «to ensure the safety, welfare and security of the inhabitants of the areas where military operations had taken place...»

On February 1968, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights supported the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly; and on 9 March 1968, the Commission protested in a cable to the Israeli authorities «the destruction of homes of the Arab civilian population inhabiting the areas occupied by the Israeli authorities and called upon the Government of Israel to desist forthwith from indulging in such practices and to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms».

On May 7 1968, the International Conference of Human Rights which was held in Teheran passed a resolution couched in the same terms as that adopted by the Commission on Human Rights and called for respect and implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions of 1949, to which Israel is signatory.

As with all previous resolutions on Palestine, the Israeli authorities rejected the aforementioned resolutions and even refused to accept an investigation of the situation by a representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. They persist in ignoring all United Nations directions and continue in their policy of changing the ethnic and demographic structures of occupied Arab territories, hoping in this way to confront the world with the accomplished fact of disposition according to their own plans as they did in 1948.

The reign of terror in occupied territories, partly described in the following pages, has since been intensified despite all pleas for moderation and justice. That eighty-five Israeli intellectuals should have been compelled to protest their government's action in a letter to the press, indicates the extent of the Israeli horrors against the Arab residents. The letter sums up the situation in occupied territories as follows :

«The imposition of collective punishments, like the curfew and the dynamiting of houses, continues in the towns and villages of the occupied territories at an alarming rate. Families of workers and fellaheen, children, women and old people remain without shelter and means of existence. The stream of refugees and escapers from the Gaza Strip and from the West Bank of the Jordan continues unabated».

The writers then enquired : «Where do these methods lead to if not into an abyss of hatred ? Acts like these,» they pointed out, «will strengthen the resistance and the underground movement, multiply victims on both sides, and lead to another war, with an unforeseeable number of casualties».

The writers concluded by saying : «The domination of another people exposes the subduing people itself to moral degeneration and undermines its democracy. Any people oppressing another one is bound to lose its own freedom and the freedom of its citizens». (*See U. N. Document S/8892*) ,

*
**

Beirut, Lebanon
May 1969

*I am certain that the world will judge the
Jewish state by what it will do to the Arabs*

Chaim Weizmann
First President of Israel

I have been wanting to write for a very long time. And though I cannot yet concentrate enough, there is so much I would like you to know, for I feel you would be interested to hear what is actually taking place in this afflicted and suffering land of ours. I shall start writing this evening and will add more and more each day until I find a safe way to get this mailed to you from outside this zone, to avoid censorship and any consequences. The trouble is I don't know where to start. The story has no end and no limits.

This is a horrible nightmare we are living in. Nothing has been gained by what happened in the Middle East except that the bitterness and hatred, which for a time seemed to lie dormant, have now been intensified. Many of us living here in the occupied areas believe that the Israelis would have all of us Arabs killed if it were not for their constant fear that this would bring world sympathy for the Arabs. They are obsessed with this fear, hence the distortion by the Israeli authorities of all news, reports and events. The strange and perplexing thing about this situation is that the Western World at large, with very minor exceptions, believes them. An Arab friend living in Israel who has an American passport was told by a prominent Israeli, while commenting on recent events, that Israel had made a lot of mistakes but the gravest one, and one it would regret soon, was that the Israeli

authorities had not killed or driven out all the Arabs of the occupied territories. A lot is happening every day to prove that such people are the likes of Hitler.

Today, in the Arab town of Ramallah, 16 kilometers from Jerusalem, over 6,000 people took part in the funeral of one of its young men who, along with an older colleague, was tortured to death by two Israeli soldiers. The town completely closed down for the funeral and people from all over the neighbourhood joined the ceremony as a form of protest. The procession passed through the center of the town despite the Military Governor's orders, the evening before, that a side-road should be taken. Israeli soldiers with pointed guns took positions all along the roads and roof tops. The Military Governor himself watched with his hands in his pockets exhibiting an air of irreverence and disrespect.

The two victims of this cold blooded murder had been working with the Public Works Department on damaged roads. On October 8, the Israeli superintendent asked them to drive to some villages and hire more workers. As their truck approached the town of Saffa, an army jeep zoomed down a side road and nearly collided with the truck but no one was hurt. The soldiers, in the jeep, members of the victorious and glorious Israeli *Defence* Army, were determined to make the Arabs pay for this incident. They jumped out of their vehicle and ordered the two men to get into the jeep. Unarmed, the two men had no alternative but to obey and surrender to an obvious destiny. The younger of the two, however, turned to the crowd of villagers who had gathered around by then and urged them to inform his family in Ramallah of the incident. The jeep then proceeded to a front-line area, where they were blindfolded and tied up, then subjected to all kinds of torture and finally burnt alive. An Arab woman collecting

olives nearby could not stand the sight any longer and ran screaming towards them. She was told to leave or else meet the same fate. She ran back to a neighbouring village and informed the men who hurried to the scene of the crime only to find that the bodies had been carried away. The news spread to Saffa and from there to Ramallah.

When the incident was reported to the Israeli Military Governor, he refused to take any action on the excuse that he had no information on the matter and that it was the duty of the police department to investigate into such cases. Such a reply prompted the gathering of some 200 townsmen from Ramallah and Bireh at the Municipality. They decided on a general strike until enquiries were carried out by the Israeli authorities and the bodies of the two men were handed over to their families. The decision was conveyed to the Military Governor who instantly came to the Municipality and apologised for his previous answer and attitude. He promised an immediate investigation. That same afternoon the two soldiers were identified and arrested, and the bodies, found in a Jewish hospital, were handed over to their families.

This is not the first time the Zionists have reverted to cold blooded murder. Innocent British soldiers during the Mandate, Count Bernadotte and Arabs at Kafr Qasim, at Qibya, and at Deir Yasin have been killed in this manner. For the massacre of Kafr Qasim the Israeli soldiers responsible were sentenced to a fine of ten fils each. It is already rumoured that in this present case the sergeant has been declared insane and the private has been acquitted on the basis that he was obeying orders. So was Eichmann, remember !

Hundreds of Arab villages are being cordoned and searched on the pretext of hidden arms and a few have been completely demolished. Thousands of men are being

arrested and thrown in jails, hundreds are being tortured each day, homes are daily being blown up and a considerable number of persons are being deported from their own homeland.

A recent appeal by the Municipality of Ramallah states :

AN APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE

«The tragic, heart-rending cry of the stranded inhabitants of the three Arab demolished villages of 'Imwas, Yalo and Beit Nuba, in the Latroun area of the West Bank, is expressed in this appeal to all men of conscience for reflection, investigation and remedy*.

* *Editor's note:* See also Article by Michael Adams — «How the Israelis Erased Them (Zeita — Beit Nuba — Yalu) from the Holy Land», published in *The Sunday Times*, June 16, 1968.

After describing his visit to the sites of the three demolished villages, Michael Adams writes:

«Back in Jerusalem, I stayed at the Y.M.C.A. and one evening towards the end of my stay, I picked up the Bible that lay on my dressing table to see if I could find a key to the things that puzzled me about the way the Israelis behaved towards their Arab neighbours.

«My eye fell on a verse from Deuteronomy which said: 'Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance... in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it'.

«The verse stayed in my mind until the time came for me to leave the Holy Land, when another friend drove me down to the airport at Lydda — not by the main road, but following the old road that winds through the hills past Latrun.

«Passing through what a year ago was no-man's land on the border between Jordan and Israel, we overtook three women walking along that empty road with the proud gait and in the flowing robes of Old Palestine.

«We stopped and exchanged the courtesies of the Arab world. What was their errand, we asked, and their reply had the Biblical ring that falls so naturally from the lips of the Palestine Arabs: 'We go to collect a few sticks', they said. 'Where from? we

«On June 14, 1967, nearly a week after the occupation of the West Bank by the Israeli Defence Army, and the Cease-Fire Agreement, the unarmed and peaceful inhabit-

asked, looking round at the bare hillsides and the fields of young wheat.

«From Beit Nuba', one of them replied. And all at once the three of them began to wail, with a tearless misery that mocked the sunshine.

«A mile farther on, over a ridge, there was a line of cypress trees with, beside it, a patch of earth, newly disturbed. On the other side of the road was another, larger patch, bounded by a cactus hedge.

«Beyond it, another — and in the distance a whole series of these patches, half-healed scars on the quiet landscape, with here and there a cistern or a scrap of woodwork, or a twisted piece of metal.

«This was all that remained of Beit Nuba and its sister village of Yalu. The Israelis have obliterated them, wiped them off the face of the earth.

«For the Arabs whose homes were here, and whose ancestors had lived here for who knows how many hundreds of years, there was nothing left but the hope of scavenging 'a few sticks' which the Israeli demolition squads might have overlooked, when they carted away all but the last forlorn evidence that this was Arab land.

«The road we were on was the road to Imwas, or Emmaus. Yet, when we drove on from Beit Nuba and rounded the bend where Emmaus had stood — and where one Jesus of Nazareth, unrecognized by His disciples in those first strange days after His crucifixion, broke bread with them and blessed them so that 'their eyes were opened and they knew Him' — we found that Emmaus too was gone, utterly vanished.

«It was marked on my pilgrim's map of the Holy Land, but it will never be marked again on any map produced in the state of Israel, for the Israelis, pre-occupied with their security, have eliminated it.

«In days to come, no doubt, young Israelis in search of a picnic site will take the ancient road to Emmaus and spread themselves under these trees and laugh and take their ease. But there will be ghosts among the branches. For here, if anywhere, stood 'thy neighbour's landmark'».

ants of the three Arab front-line villages mentioned above were forced to abandon their homes and seek open-air shelter and refuge beyond the immediate neighbourhood. The Israeli demolishing squads then proceeded to make a complete job of destroying all that those villagers had built and cherished through long hard years.

«As a result, about nine thousand men, women and children — deprived of their homes and human rights, now roam about homeless, despondent and destitute.

«With the bitter and harsh winter months approaching, we, on behalf of this unfortunate and wretched large group of dispersed villagers, fervently implore you individually to exert all conceivable efforts to rectify the wrong and injustice done to these blameless and harmless people. To be permitted to return to their lands, villages, and homes, even demolished as they are, is all they plead for.

«To restore hope and trust in the hearts of these people will prove to be a most effective contribution to the restoration of peace and human justice in this perturbed area.

«This is an appeal made by the Municipal Council of Ramallah regarding these three villages which lie within its jurisdiction. There are, however, three more villages in the Hebron area that have suffered a similar fate in addition to the 900 Arab homes demolished in Qalqilieh in the Tulkarm district.

«*Commandos* are now the latest pretext for Israeli atrocities committed against civilians of the occupied territories. Every man arrested is told he is a commando or knows some commandos. Here is only one out of hundreds of identical examples : On October 18 an Arab house in the village of Beit 'Ur was blown up by the

Israeli Army and the 17 inhabitants, mainly children, have been rendered homeless because the Israeli authorities claimed that one of the boys knew some commandos. In each of these cases, highly explosive material is being used to cause widespread damage to surrounding homes as well. This has now become a daily practice».

*
**

By noon, on Tuesday June 6, the West Bank was left defenceless, our Jordanian Army had withdrawn along with all Jordanian administrative bodies and the police force — a state of existence now came into being which the inhabitants of the West Bank had always dreaded and had tried to remedy in struggles against the Jordanian authorities. In strolled the Israeli occupation forces after heavy bombing and shelling of every Arab West Bank town, a one-sided battle. We are ashamed to say that the Israeli Army sauntered into the West Bank. This is a humiliating fact but it remains a fact. All the films, showing the magnificent advance of the Israeli armies on the various fronts, their wonderful tactics and their brilliant planning, were films shot days and weeks after the cease-fire when the Israeli Army could afford to take its time and pose for pictures. It was interesting to watch the shooting of these films, watch Israeli soldiers act the part of our Jordanian troops, watch Jewish labourers covering Jewish road signs and placards already set up in the West Bank. In Jerusalem, Arabs were forced to take part in these films.

After Jerusalem fell to the Israelis, and the Jordanian Army had already withdrawn, we in Hebron, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarm, Jenin, Qalqilieh, Jericho and all along the West Bank, were left in a state of shock, isolated, unarmed, and helplessly awaiting a grim destiny.

Each and every one of our towns, defenceless and helpless, awaited first the air-raids and the napalm bombs already witnessed, then the heavy artillery shelling, and then the entry of the Israeli Army. The West Bank had a self-imposed curfew. In each case the Israeli Army advanced into our towns shooting blindly at homes, shops, parked cars, and at anything it passed. Then the plundering and looting by both the regular army and civilians commenced. I would first like to quote Moshe Dayan in his book «Diary of the Sinai Campaign, 1956.»

«The last problem we dealt with was that of looting by our own men (both uniformed and civilian). Our military police finally got the situation in hand and stopped it, but not before much damage was done to Arab belongings and much shame to ourselves.»

If the looting of the Gaza Strip by the Israeli regular army and civilians in 1956 was described by their General as causing much damage to Arab belongings and much shame to the Israelis — what has the General to say of the June 1967 campaign !!

No shop, no out-of-the-way house, no hotel, no government department, no car was spared looting or plunder. Men in uniform, as individuals, helped themselves to money left in the safes of the various government departments; thousands of homes, not in the centers of towns, were looted; soldiers forced owners out into streets while they went through rooms and carried away everything of value such as jewelry, money and electric appliances; hotels in the occupied territories were completely occupied and looted by the Israeli Army, especially hotels in Jerusalem. In all cases liquor store-rooms were broken into the first night of occupation and completely looted. Hotels of the West Bank did not only suffer looting but drastic damage was done intention-

ally to furniture, fittings and construction. Some hotels were left with doors but no door knobs. In some instances the wall-to-wall carpeting was rolled and taken away. In other instances hotel machinery such as heating and air-conditioning units were dismantled and carried away. Owners saw with their own eyes trucks being loaded with their hotel furniture. Thousands of shops were forced open and goods, mainly imported goods, were loaded into trucks, in cars, in buses and on motorcycles. What was not wanted was damaged. Shops that sold cameras, radios, television sets, irons, watches, electric blenders, electric appliances, duralex and pyrex products and imported clothes, canned foods, and jewelry were the shops that suffered most.

Homes in the winter resort of Jericho, once beautifully furnished and decorated, stand empty now. In a certain residential quarter in Jericho, being used by the Israeli Army, the woodwork on windows and doors has been removed to build fires with. Bathroom fittings have been taken away, even the iron gates have disappeared. Nothing is left of these lovely «villas» save the bare stones.

It appears that orders were given in June to the advancing Israeli troops to put out of gear all West Bank vehicles. Instead, cars were either completely destroyed (actually run over by tanks or burned) or stolen. In some cases doors were knocked at and owners of parked cars were ordered to hand over car keys. Some of these were later located by their owners in various parts of Israel. These cars were in wretched state. Others cars were never found.

The banks in the occupied areas were opened and deposits were confiscated by the Israeli authorities

against a receipt. None of these banks have been allowed to operate, while Israeli banks have been set up everywhere in the occupied areas, offering loans against immense guarantees and high interest.

It is also believed that a lot of antiquities and valuable items have been removed from our museum in Jerusalem.

Our most up-to-date military hospital in the West Bank was looted during the first week of occupation. Israeli guards have scribbled on the surrounding walls such vulgar terms as «striptease show every night.»

Even the King's residence at Beit Hanina has been looted.

One cannot know all and remember all but this is part of what we witnessed during the first month of occupation.

The desecration of Christian and Moslem Holy Places by Jewish mobs was a terrible exhibition of ridicule and irreverence. The attire (in some cases girls visited these places wearing bikinis), verbal mimicking and insult, and sexual carrying-ons were so great that the Catholic Patriarchate decided to close its churches to visitors.

The Israelis walked into the occupied territories saying : «We want peace»; then they asked : «If the Arabs had occupied Israel what would they have done?»; and recently they say: «Why not have an Arab Palestine State?»

What peace are the Zionists asking for? A peace of one year, two years, three years, ten years? Didn't Herzl and the founders of Zionism map out an empire from the Nile to the Euphrates? Will Herzl's followers

be really satisfied with a strip of coastland for a Zionist empire? The truth is that the whole world has been brain-washed by Zionist propaganda. No one wants to see the dangers that threaten the economic, financial and eventually political existence of the Arabs; no one wants to admit that the Arabs have the right to protect themselves against a danger that they foresee. Why is it that the whole world insists on our digging our own grave? We are fully aware of the ambitions of Zionism and we have the full right to take whatever measures and attitudes we deem necessary to protect ourselves against this danger.

What would the Arabs have done had they occupied Israel? To begin with the Arabs would not have been allowed by foreign powers, including Russia, and in particular the United States, to advance one meter into Israel. Moreover, throughout Arab history, Arab leaders were known to have instructed their invading armies to give special care to women, children and the aged. The Arabs, in addition, had they wanted to, could have killed the Jews living in the Arab countries before they left for Israel. They did not because we are not barbarians, as the Zionists try to make us out to the Western World.

It is true that some of us were naive enough to scream out that we were going to kill the Jews and that we were going to throw them into the sea, but the question remains, whether we would have done so. I believe we have proved to the world that we are a people that talk a lot but do very little; that is our nature, that is the way we are made and it will take generations to change. Even when an Arab woman scolds her own son she may say: «May God blind you.» Does she really mean it? Certainly not, but unfortunately that is our language and that is how an impulsive Arab reacts. We should not,

however, react impulsively. The West must realize by now that the Arabs can afford to lose several battles but the Israelis cannot afford to lose a single battle for they either die fighting or run for the sea — they have no alternative. But this is to assume that the foreign powers remain neutral at such a stage and allow the advance of Arab armies into Israel, a virtual impossibility.

It amuses me to hear our American friends in this particular area, the occupied territories, after the June war, declare openly and frankly that America is committed to protect Israel, that America cannot put pressure on Israel, and that it cannot impose sanctions on Israel to compel it to abide by UN decisions because that would cause disastrous internal political repercussions in the United States. Has the Zionist influence infiltrated the American political system to such a degree? American popular support of Israel amuses me. I was told that the uninterested, simple and naive ordinary American supports Israel because he is told that Israel is the only representative of civilization and progress in the Middle East; that no American wants to be called an anti-semitic, that individual Jews ask different individual American friends at least not to accept anti-Israeli efforts, an attitude that costs nothing and at the same time pleases a friend. True, it costs nothing and pleases a Jewish friend but at what expense to international justice?

What would the Arabs have done had they occupied Israel? Neither I nor anyone else is in a position to tell. The fact remains that we did not occupy Israel. It is they who have occupied our territories, and we have seen them kill civilians; we have seen them kill members of our armed forces when their hands were raised in surrender; we have seen them kill in cold blood; we have seen them intentionally leave the bodies of the dead lying

around for weeks to teach the rest a lesson; we have seen them rape our women; we have seen them steal, rob and loot; we have seen them use internationally banned weapons such as napalm bombs; we have seen them mutilate the dead; we have seen them bombard hospitals; we have seen them drive people out of their own country; we have seen them dragging men, women and children out of their villages; we have seen them demolish many villages; we have seen them blow up hundreds of homes on false pretexts; we have seen them arrest and throw thousands of innocent people in prisons without trial; we have seen them desecrate our Holy Places — churches and mosques; we have seen them use Nazi methods of torture; we have seen them mock and belittle our Arab leaders; we have seen them twist and fabricate news; we have seen them terrorize our villages and refugee camps; we have seen them impose regulations and laws to deprive us of our possessions and means of livelihood; and we have seen them throw out international principles and resolutions.

How can the Arabs forget the placards put up in New York and elsewhere in the United States not so long ago by the United Jewish Appeal which stated: «Pay a dollar and kill an Arab.»

The recent ardent Israeli appeal to the Arabs of the occupied territories has been: «Why not have an Arab Palestine State?» Now that the Israelis are in control of the West Bank which, along with the Gaza Strip and the Syrian Heights, contains one and a half million Arabs, they don't know what to do with it. If the population of Israel is three million, then we form half that number — a large and possibly an extremely dangerous minority. The Israelis have miscalculated on two points:—

(1) They believed that like in 1948, they would scare the majority of inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip into leaving (this explains the bombing with napalm, the air-raids and the shelling of defenceless civilians), but to their disappointment the majority of us have stayed, and particularly property owners. During the first month of occupation the Israeli authorities did everything possible to force the West Bankers to leave. In refugee camps, especially in Gaza, they tried to terrorize people by employing a variety of terrorist methods. In villages, Israeli authorities tried to bribe simple peasants out by offering them money and providing them with transport to the Jordan valley. At the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem, Israeli buses were offering free lifts to whoever wished to get to the Jordan River. On June 6, at 4:00 a.m. loudspeakers in Jerusalem called on the Arab inhabitants announcing the occupation of the city and bidding them to leave while the opportunity was still there, claiming that the road to Jericho and from there to Amman was still open for them to take.

It is estimated that 250,000 Arabs from the West Bank have left and sought shelter in Amman. The majority of them were the inhabitants of refugee camps of the Jericho area. Israeli air-raids and napalm bombs, fear that the Jews would deprive them of UNRWA protection and care, and the psychological effect of seeing our army withdraw in the manner it did contributed to their leaving. A large number of villagers left after more than seven Arab front-line villages were completely demolished and the inhabitants forced to roam about shelterless and destitute. Every village expected its turn. Many had to leave because of family ties, or business and financial contacts.

(2) The Israelis were unaware of the quality of the

Arab who inhabited the West Bank. It seems that they themselves were deceived by their own propaganda, by the way they portray an Arab to the outside world in their propaganda campaigns — an ignorant, illiterate, uncivilized nomad. Our standard of living, our standard of education, and our political maturity have amazed and worried them. An American Jewish doctor visiting this area remarked that when he left New York, he was under the impression that he would find the occupied West Bank inhabited by tent-dwellers and refugees. To his amazement he found beautiful homes and stone buildings, up-to-date clean looking and civilized inhabitants, and villagers working on their lands. The occupation authorities are still trying to create the wrong image of us to raise more funds on the pretext that they will be used to bring us civilization, modern hygiene, electricity, water and all the things we already have.

I doubt if the Israeli authorities are anxious to keep the West Bank and the occupied territories, because we are a source of worry to them and because we constitute a heavy economic burden that adds heavily to their own internal economic problems. Thus the idea of creating a buffer state of the occupied territories has been proposed as a solution. The state the Israelis visualize will give Israel control of defence, economy and foreign affairs. A Palestine Arab State has always been the dream of every Palestinian, but what Arab Palestinian wants a state dominated by Israel? Who wants to be cut off from the Arab World? Who wants to stab the Arab World in the back? What are the boundaries of this state? What are its potentialities? What do we live on? These are but a few of hundreds of questions that could and should be asked.

It is evident, from the recent statements of Moshe

Dayan, Abba Eban and other prominent Israeli leaders, that they are intent on keeping the Jewish character of their state. Since there are over a million Arab Palestinians in the occupied territories, and since the official declared Israeli attitude here, is that of «no withdrawal and no Israeli citizenship to the Palestine Arabs», Israel's only alternative lies in the transformation of the occupied areas into some form of a Jewish colony or protectorate. In the meantime the Israeli authorities will endeavour to carry out policies that will force the majority of the Arab inhabitants into leaving.

The following is an extract from the *Jerusalem Post*:

«The Land of Israel is the heritage of every Jew and no religious or secular authority, including the Government of Israel, has the power to yield a single inch of it,» Chief Rabbi Nassim stated last week in a halachic ruling. The Chief Rabbi was replying to queries submitted by a number of individuals and organizations regarding the halachic status of the occupied areas. «Jerusalem and the land of Israel are holy to us. The Land was promised to us by the Almighty and all the prophets foretold its return to us. Therefore it is forbidden for any Jew even to consider returning any part whatsoever of the land of our forefathers.»

Internal conflicts and disagreements in the Israeli coalition Government are so acute that each and every political group represented in the Government is seriously drowned in chauvinistic policies based on the annexation of the occupied territories for home consumption. The eyes of each group are concentrated on the coming elections which actually makes the Jarring Mission and the British proposal rather impossible. This is why the coalition Government, while abstaining from declaring a clear

and set policy, hides behind the impossible slogan of direct negotiations with the Arabs. However, if the Arabs accepted, they would find no Israeli to negotiate on reasonable and logical basis.

Last week Sassoun, one of Eshkol's aides, circulated around the West Bank, meeting mayors and various individuals. He was set on stressing the point that the Israeli authorities refuse the British proposal and are not willing to cooperate with Jarring in his Mission. He advised West Bankers to think seriously, and while the opportunity was still offered them of determining their own fate, accept the Israeli proposal of a Palestine Arab State.

If the Israelis are so concerned with our fate, are they prepared to negotiate with the Arabs of Palestine on the basis of the 1947 U.N. Partition Scheme?

Jerusalem has become a carnival. Jerusalem the sacred has lost that air of holiness and dignity, that feeling of profoundness and that overwhelming sense of awe. Everything seems dismal and grey. You walk the streets of Jerusalem and you simply hate yourself all the more for having failed to do your part in saving and protecting all that Jerusalem was, and is no more.

What destiny awaits those Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem who built their own section of the city in difficult and hard times? There is no doubt that the devaluation of the Jordanian Dinar during the first month of occupation, the high taxation, the atrocities and the economic and financial strangling of every Arab project, were intended by the Israelis to lead to an Arab exodus from Jerusalem.

Despite the UN resolutions and all international agreements, the Israeli authorities are carrying out the

annexation of Jerusalem. No Jordanian currency is accepted in Arab Jerusalem; the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem were forced to change Jordanian Dinars at the rate of 7.40 Israeli liras thus losing 26 per cent of the value of their money; a varied number of taxes are now being imposed and income tax is to be paid on a monthly basis from June 1967 (the scale and system of taxation now imposed on the Arabs of Jerusalem, is the same as those of Israel which means that the Jerusalem Arabs are already being forced to pay taxes for the building up of the Israeli defence efforts against the Arabs, for the provision of homes, facilities and services, for the new Jewish immigrants, and for the Israeli war effort); all kinds of concessions have been cancelled and replaced by ones granted to Jewish firms and companies; cars had to change number plates and obtain Israeli licences and insurances, in accordance with Israeli evaluations; the Arab Jerusalem Municipal Council has been dissolved; Arab Courts and Government Offices were forced to move out of Jerusalem; Arab government schools were forced to adopt the Israeli curriculum with all its disregard for Arab culture.

More drastic still was the amendment of the Israeli Law of Civil Administration and Justice which now gives the Prime Minister's Office the right to include new territories under this law. The Knesset also amended the Municipal Law of Israel to enable the Minister of Interior and the Israeli Sector of Jerusalem to add new areas to its municipal boundaries.

On the basis of the first amendment the Prime Minister issued orders legalizing the application of all Israeli laws to Arab Jerusalem, including a strip of territory extending from Kalandia airport to Sur-Bahir. On the strength of the second amendment, the Minister of Inte-

rior and the Israeli Mayor of Jerusalem extended the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem Municipality to include Arab Jerusalem and suburbs that were never part of the Jerusalem Municipal limits. This extra addition includes the only airport that the West Bank has.

The strangling of Arab projects in Arab Jerusalem has commenced. Arab tourist offices that have been rendering good, experienced and courteous services for the past twenty years and more, to American and European tourist and travel agencies, are out of work. With the exception of one Arab tourist office, bookings for tourist groups have shifted completely to Israeli agents. Even in the case of confirmed tourist reservations and bookings made prior to June, recent correspondence in their connection has been intercepted by Israeli authorities and reservations have been diverted. In some instances, groups, booked through Arab offices and coming via Lydda airport, have been met by Jewish agents and have been told that their Arab agents had failed to meet them and arrange for their accommodation and that the Israeli agents were there to offer services and oblige. On the other hand, Arab agents are strictly restricted by permits to reach Lydda Airport, and these permits are not easy to obtain. Moreover Arab taxi companies in Jerusalem are not allowed to operate freely in the Israeli side while Israeli buses and taxis have no restrictions and operate anywhere within the West Bank. This has put nearly 300 taxi drivers out of work. Furthermore Israeli guides are giving tourists an Israeli Jewish, version of the story of the birth, life, teaching, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, (At the 13th Station, Israeli guides were heard pointing out that this was the spot where Jesus was crucified by the *Romans.*)

Is it possible for a Jewish guide to convey the true

spirit of that most significant event in the history of the world? Yet Jewish guides are the only ones licensed to do the job.

One must bear in mind that religiously, both Christianity and Islam are considered heresies by Judaism. The Jews are searching desperately for sources that will justify their seizure of Moslem or Christian religious and holy sites. For example, the Israeli authorities claim that the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound are built on what they call the site of the Temple of Solomon, which they are seeking to rebuild. The conflict regarding this issue between the Moslem theologians and the Jewish religious and non-religious groups has reached the Israeli High Court of Justice.



Were the Arabs pushed into this situation? Were we drawn into political and military entanglements to a point of no return? Yes. We ourselves are mainly to blame and we have a lot to learn.

The Arabs are known to be an emotional, impulsive people and I would add that we are naive and simple at heart. We are now faced by a capable, able, intelligent, influential, conniving and intriguing people, who are great opportunists and expert propagandists, devoted body and soul to a political cause that binds them together no matter how acute their internal conflicts may be. The Zionists know well how the Arabs would react to any aggression, any provocation, any challenge, and we, instead of realizing this inherent weakness of ours and the necessity to at least control it if not overcome it, are naive enough to react exactly according to the «pattern» predetermined by our opponents. One more fact we have to admit and realize is that the Zionist intelligence service

is highly and shrewdly organized. In order to attain an end, it has not hesitated to exploit all resources and use any means. As an Israeli Professor has recently declared at the Hebrew University: «We have won the war because of dominantly two factors — the Jewish Intelligence Service and money».

Israel, prior to the June war, was suffering from a deteriorating economic situation reflected in acute unemployment and the closing down of factories and offices. Moreover, money flowing to Israel from various sources such as the United Jewish Appeal, American aid, German reparations and others was dwindling. Something had to be done to rekindle the interest in Israel and its financial support, something had to be done to save its economic situation. War with the Arab countries was the solution, but Israel had to play the game right. It had to build up tension but still pose as the persecuted, peace-seeking little country, struggling to survive and defend itself against the threats of surrounding aggressive and hostile powers that were planning to exterminate it. Every step was carefully and deliberately planned and taken, from the attack on Sammu', in October 1966, to Eshkol's threat to occupy Damascus and overthrow its regime, to the June war. Every step was calculated with an accurate estimation of what the Arab reaction would be.

Abba Eban had stated in the «*Le Monde*» issue of June 19, 1966, that Israel expected war with the Arabs, that once war broke out the Israeli plan would be to concentrate on fighting in the Sinai and then occupy the West Bank whether or not Jordan joined the war.

We, here, doubt the sincerity of Israel's call for peace. Israel cannot flourish and survive without the foreign money that pours into its territory. Peace will most likely diminish if not stop that flood of financial aid pouring in

from diverse sources, generously contributed to help build up the «poor and peace-seeking Israel» surrounded by hostile, belligerent war-mongers. Israel's recent contact with the Arabs, as a result of the June occupation, may have given Israeli leaders tangible reasons to doubt Israeli economic and industrial superiority over the Arab world if peace is ever accomplished. The idea of economic and financial infiltration into Arab markets is a motivation for extending Israeli political control in the long run. This, they see, will compensate for the future dwindling of funds and financial aid to Israel. It is evident to us here that what the Arab countries are producing in most cases is superior in quality to Israeli utility production.

The Jewish minorities living in the Arab World have lived in comfort and in peace; they have mingled and mixed with the Arabs with no discrimination, and yet we in the Arab World in general, and the Arabs of Palestine in particular, were made to pay to compensate for the persecution of the Jews, a persecution we had no part in. We were forced to give them a precious part of our own homeland while the Germans only gave them money and arms, and the Western World only sympathy and support.

Nazi Germany and the gas chambers have done the Arab World more harm than the injustices inflicted upon us by the Balfour Declaration and Truman's unyielding pressure behind the Partition scheme.

The numerous Christian sects of Protestantism, especially those in the United States, with their blind belief in the history of the Old Testament, in a discriminating God, in stories and prophecies full of hate and vengeance, built up blind support for the Israeli cause that no reason, no fact-finding, no justice and no humane interest can shake. I remember being told about two years ago, by an American who then held a responsible position in Wa-

shington: «It is too bad, there may be a lot of bloodshed. But whether you like it or not, this part of the world from the Nile to the Euphrates belongs to the Jews. God has promised it to them and they will have it.» My answer to that gentleman was: «If I were convinced that every American believes that, I would be the first Christian to change his religion. I would be ashamed to be called such a Christian, because I believe in a just God, a God that does not discriminate between one man and another, between one people and another, a God that does not justify the deprivation of one to provide for another.»

The Arabs allowed nearly 400,000 Arab Jews to leave our countries for Israel. The Zionist pressure and call on the Arab Jews to immigrate to Israel were persistent and alluring and in some instances intimidating. Those, however, who disregarded the call and were determined to remain are doing well and have enjoyed all opportunities and rights of first class citizens in every phase of life, while the Arab inhabitants of Israel, on the other hand, are rated second class citizens, particularly with regard to Israel's education policies.

Anti-semitism was practised against the Jews by the West and especially by the Nazi and Fascist regimes. Anti-semitism was never known or practised by the Arabs for the simple reason that we are Semites ourselves. The irony is that the very people who practised anti-semitism, in their endeavour to remove their «guilt» choose to compensate the Jews by granting them a political existence on somebody else's home and homeland. The irony also is that while racialism is shunned throughout the world, the Jews themselves are practising anti-semitism against the other Semites, namely the Arabs.



The Israeli authorities adopt a negative attitude towards Arab financial help extended to inhabitants of the occupied territories. Jordanian Government officials in the West Bank are not allowed to receive their salaries; parents or children working and scattered all over the Arab World have no means of passing financial help to their needy families in the areas under occupation; inhabitants of the occupied territories who have their money deposited in Arab banks have no access to their deposits since the local branches are not allowed to operate. With all economic projects nearly at a standstill for lack of raw materials, with no financial aid coming in, with no access to one's own money deposited in the Arab countries, and with unemployment, the inhabitants of the occupied territories are facing great financial hardships, especially since the cost of living has gone up by approximately 40 per cent.

Even foreign philanthropic and relief organizations operating in the occupied areas are subject to strict Israeli control. No distribution of any kind to the destitute and the displaced in form of money, food or clothing is allowed without the approval of the Israeli authorities. Arab social welfare and health institutions, which for years operated and survived on Arab, and in some cases, on foreign contributions and subsidies, are now faced with the question: «How can we carry on?» Even if contributions are made available from foreign and not Arab sources, these cannot be made directly and have to go through Israeli Government supervision. No contributions from the Arab countries are accepted. This is one of the gravest problems facing our Red Crescent centers. The same is true of money donated by the Arab World to the inhabitants of the demolished villages. The money is available and badly needed, yet cannot be reached. Moreover no lo-

cal charity activities of any sort, such as the holding of bazaars or even the collection of personal money contributions, are permitted without the approval of the Israeli authorities.

In the case of the 9,000 inhabitants of the demolished villages of Yalo, Beit Nuba and Imwas, the Israeli authorities are discreetly using all means of indirect pressure to have their inhabitants leave the West Bank or finally yield and accept to be resettled elsewhere in the occupied areas. These villagers were denied the request to return to their lands for the olive-picking season, and later UNRWA notified them that the rations they had been receiving as temporary relief would cease as of December.

The Israeli authorities, like the Nazis before them, have mastered the art of blackmailing. Among the most recent measures taken, has been the compilation of names and addresses of Arab students abroad by censoring letters. In many recent cases, the relatives of a student abroad have been called for cross-examination by the Ministry of Interior in Jerusalem and were *forced* to write notes asking the student to cooperate with the Israeli representatives abroad. The aim of such a measure can only be the coercion of Arab students into becoming Israeli informers or agents under the threat of throwing relatives in occupied territories in jails if the students refuse to cooperate.

Here are a few more examples of Israeli conduct:

The house of a prominent member of the Arab Jerusalem community, one time Foreign Minister of Jordan, was searched one night at 3:30 a.m. by Israeli soldiers because he had put on the lights in the house to go to the bathroom. The pretext for the search was that the lights were put on as a signal to the «commandos».

One of our pharmacists while driving out with his family had his four tires shot flat by Israeli soldiers in a jeep when he tried to signal them to slow down because there was a blind corner ahead. He was told that when an Arab sees an Israeli soldier pass by, he has to take a bow.

Hundreds of homes and offices are being closed and sealed by the Custodian of Enemy Property, particularly in Arab Jerusalem. In all instances, the furniture in these homes and goods in these shops are loaded in trucks and taken away. Hundreds of families with husbands and sons outside the occupied areas have been notified that their property is no more theirs because the husbands and sons were outside the areas and unable to return. They are considered absentees. Thousands of Arabs work outside what is now occupied territory, but have families and property here. Many own resort homes and property in Jericho and Ramallah. To fully appreciate this situation, one must be aware of certain facts: Members of nearly every family in the West Bank, — both men and women — are working in the Arab countries as doctors, pharmacists, engineers, lawyers, executives, managers, judges, sales-representatives, teachers, clerks, contractors, nurses, builders, workmen and in other professions. Funds from educated West Bank citizens working in the Arab World have constituted our biggest source of income which has been used in investment and for the development of the West Bank. On the other hand, it has been our policy to encourage the interest and investment of Arab countries in the West Bank.

Refugee men, young and old, are collected in the open and women are made to stay on roof tops under pouring rain or blazing sun, while Israeli soldiers take their time searching refugee camps.

The wife of one of our acquaintances, while on her way with her husband to a maternity hospital for delive-

ry, was made to get out of the car at an Israeli check-point and walk the distance of about two and a half kilometers to the hospital.

A small funeral procession having to cross an Israeli checkpoint outside Jerusalem, was stopped and the family of the deceased was ordered to open the coffin. An Irish sister, a member of the procession, vehemently argued with the soldiers explaining that it was the duty of the living to respect the dead, and that the coffin should not be opened. The procession was allowed to proceed only after some argument.

Twelve homes in the village of Abu Dees were blown up by the Israeli authorities (Army) on the pretext that shots were fired from that vicinity at an Israeli patrol. The truth behind the story was that three young Arabs tried to sneak back to their homes after curfew hours. An Israeli patrol passing by noticed the moving shadows of the three men and opened fire while another patrol answered back the shots. Each patrol claims that shots were fired at it from a particular direction and the houses, twelve of them, in the vicinity were blown up.

The bodies of hundreds of Arab Palestinians shot by Israeli troops while trying to infiltrate back to their homes and families across the Jordan River, were left to lie and rot for weeks. Anyone trying to approach the bodies was threatened with the same fate.

A prominent Arab doctor was recently arrested and nearly flogged to death because he treated a wounded Arab and did not report the case.

Boarding schools, vocational and teachers training colleges are raided at early hours of the morning. Students

are forced out of bed, and lined up in order to be identified by an informer.

In some cases when homes are raided, children are asked to identify whether the man and woman present are their real parents.

Very little is known of what happens to those who are arrested under the pretext of «commando activities» since no one is allowed to see them or even know of their whereabouts. There is evidence that the Israelis are employing Nazi methods of torture with prisoners under interrogation. In one specific case a young man was made to stand naked in a room with frozen water up to his waist for long periods. In the meantime he was occasionally subjected to the flooding of the same room with sudden glaring lights. A second man suffering from physical mutilation was dumped into the same room. Because of some influence and pressure, the young man was released after three days. Prisoners who are set free testify that screams of agony echo through the prison walls. This was confirmed by several Arab families living close to buildings occupied by the Israeli forces.

And now, all of a sudden, the inhabitants of the West Bank are expected to read and write Hebrew. All signs put up in the occupied territories, such as detours, all official correspondence, all warrants, all notifications, and all contraventions are written in Hebrew and we are expected to dash about to find someone to interpret the contents. Even the names of our Arab towns and villages, are now being changed officially into Hebrew names taken from the Old Testament.

Schools in the occupied territories refused to commence the scholastic year on September, because the Israeli authorities banned the use of 100 textbooks of geo-

graphy, history, literature, religion and even sciences and mathematics. They claimed to be willing to replace these with newly printed texts supervised by the Israeli Ministry of Education. The object was, to enforce in the West Bank the low standard the Israeli curriculum applied to Arab community schools in Israel and the obliteration of Arab history, culture and background from our educational system. Arab teachers, forced to cooperate with the Israeli educational authorities when some public schools were forcibly opened, especially in Jerusalem, had to sign an official statement that they would not use the old text books or even refer to them. Violations would lead to three months imprisonment and a fine of 1,000 Israeli liras. The refusal of schools to commence was of major significance because the Israeli authorities were anxious to start schooling to prove to world public opinion that life in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip was returning to normal.

After a bitter and long struggle, public schools finally commenced in late November and only after the Israeli authorities relaxed their demands and allowed the use of same textbooks with the deletion of a few phrases that referred to Israel as the enemy that had usurped the Arab homeland. This situation applied only to public schools of the occupied territories and not in Arab Jerusalem where the Israeli authorities enforced their own curriculum. The situation of public schools in the occupied territories is pathetic for lack of qualified teachers and textbooks. It is estimated that every two, and in some cases three, students have to share a book. Moreover, great amounts of school equipment have been looted or destroyed, especially school laboratories. It is worthwhile mentioning here, that the Israeli authorities have inspected school libraries and removed library books that, in Israeli eyes, are not favourable.

To write about the very real problems, events and situations facing the inhabitants of the occupied territories, is limitless. I have mentioned only a small part of what is occurring and may, as the days pass, start a new letter. However, before coming to an end there is one policy that the Israeli authorities have adopted which I would like to draw attention to — the deportation of Arab citizens from the occupied territories.

In the past three weeks, three citizens at a couple of hours' notice were deported from the West Bank by the Israeli authorities. These were educated citizens devoted to their country who refused to cooperate or be misled by Israeli deceptive talk and promises, who analyse developments in their true light, and who get to the core of every problem. Many more like them will perhaps be removed from our midst as the Israelis attempt to subdue the masses. The entire Arab population of 250 persons of the village of Insirat, living on the edge of the West Bank of the River Jordan, were expelled *en masse* across the River to the East Bank about two weeks ago. To hush up the matter, the Israelis are claiming here that these Arabs had asked to be allowed to cross over for good. These incidents and others strengthen the argument that the Israeli authorities are set on terrorizing, expelling and indirectly forcing inhabitants of the occupied territories to leave this area. In the same way they are determined to hold on the occupied areas, regardless of UN resolutions and decisions, regardless of all international agreements and principles, and regardless of the fact that this is 1967 and not the 19th century era of colonialism. There is already a great clamour in Israel for a «Greater Israel.»

A MILITARY CHRISTMAS IN BETHLEHEM

Statistically, Arab Christians have always been a minority in the Arab World but morally these Arab Christians have never felt or experienced this fact, particularly in Jordan where Christians and Moslems have celebrated each others religious holidays with mutual respect, understanding and tolerance. The celebration of the Birth of Christ at the Church of the Nativity on Christmas Eve is an occasion for devotion, joy and peace attended equally by both Christians and Moslems alike. The acceptance and recognition of Christianity are clearly expressed in the Moslem Koran. In *Surat Mariam* (chapter on the Virgin Mary), the birth of Christ is described with beauty, reverence and profound belief. This recognition of the Virgin Birth of Christ lies behind this bond that religiously ties the Arab Christians and Moslems. Moslem children for many decades have shared the thrill of the Christmas spirit, Christmas gifts, Christmas tree and Christmas parties with their Christian brothers. In schools and clubs, young Moslem girls and boys played the parts of the Virgin Mary, Joseph, the Angels or shepherds in Christmas plays and portraits together with Christian children and with as much faith and piety. Moslem young girls and boys joined and sang Christmas songs and carols with as much fervour and joy. Some of our foreign Christian friends who visited Moslem homes at Christmas time were struck and impressed to see beautifully decorated Christmas trees in their homes. This was the prevailing Christmas spirit.

This year 1967, the first Christmas in history occurred with the Israeli Occupation Authorities in control of all that is holy and sacred to both Christianity and Islam alike. For the first time in history, the Arab Christians in the Arab World are unable to reach their Holy Places of Worship. The Arab Christian community in the Holy Land itself is not allowed to reach these Holy Places except with special permits from the Israel military authorities, while contrary to tradition, the Arab Moslems of the occupied territories, were banned from reaching the Holy Places to participate in the celebrations with their Christian brothers. A few days later, the Arab Moslems celebrated the Ramadan Feast and again for the first time in history, Arab Moslems of the Arab World were denied access to their sacred shrine of the Dome of the Rock — the third most important Moslem Mosque.

Celebrations in Bethlehem and at the Church of the Nativity were known for the prevailing atmosphere of true love and peace. As a contrast, this year the prevailing atmosphere was one of mistrust, fear and intimidation. One thousand and thirty one policemen and an equal number of soldiers with pointed guns and battledress were posted all along the road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and encircled the Church of the Nativity where «the Prince of Peace was born and lay in a manger». Cars, attempting to get to Bethlehem for the various services held, were stopped for military check-ups over fifteen times despite the military permits previously obtained for the occasion. While crowds of all denominations previously jammed the interior and the courtyard of the Church of the Nativity, this year the crowd was limited to the thousands of soldiers, a few hundred pious tourists and eleven bus loads of Jewish spectators.

Throughout the centuries and according to tradition,

only the Governor of Jerusalem has the right to officially represent the governing authorities at the Procession and the Mid-Night Mass at the Church of Nativity. This year, contrary to the long established rule, the Israeli Government, for world propaganda purposes tried to break the tradition by proposing that high ministerial members of the government and army represent the Israeli authorities in the procession. This attempt was turned down by the Christian religious authorities concerned.

It is obvious that the exaggerated decorations put up by the Israeli authorities in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with loudspeakers transmitting Christmas carols at all streets in both cities, aimed at publicity which is far from the pious and simple festivities that this particular area is used to. This brings to mind the great and fabulous Christmas decorations put up by department stores owned mainly by Jews in New York, not as a result of faith in Christianity, but purely as a salesmanship gimmick.

In Jerusalem all was unusually silent during Christmas and Christmas week. Occupation, poverty, destitution, humiliation, resentment and atrocities, committed against Christians and Moslems alike, have led Arabs to confine Christmas and other feasts to quiet prayers at home.

Jerusalem on Christmas Eve was like a ghost town with Israeli loudspeakers blasting Christmas Carols down streets empty and deserted except for Israeli patrols.

Some foreign advocates of Christianity have claimed: «In Jerusalem the barriers are down!» What barriers? Barbed wire and stone walls?!! True these are down but what about the new and more fearful barriers that have arisen out of hatred, resentment and despair?

The following is an extract from a Christmas sermon «A Message from the Holy Land addressed to Heaven».

«O ye that are in heaven, do the moans and shudders of every inch of this pitiable Holy Land reach you? Are ye able to hear the sighs of those in distress, the cries of those heavy-laden with sorrow and grief, and the sobs of those suffering oppression? O ye people of the Kingdom of Heaven, there is no peace in the Land of Peace but fear, dread and persecution; there is no joy but anxiety, perplexity, wretched dispersion and the inability to act. There is nothing more humiliating, more frustrating than the inability to act. O ye people of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the name of heaven, your lack of contact with us, your absence from amongst us has been too long. This long absence of heavenly guidance and care has eased the way for the intrigues of arrogators and despots in this Holy Spot of the World where peace reigns no more, where human rights are trifled with and repudiated by the sharp swords of tyrants, where justice is crushed with the bludgeons of oppressors».

**Translated Extract from the Jewish paper MA'ARIV
25/12/67**

**Frozen Mass in Bethlehem but not because of the Weather
By Zvi Lavi**

Bethlehem looked yesterday like a painted mask, frozen and expressionless. Christians may have felt the spirit of Christmas in their hearts but no one showed it openly. Most of them celebrated the feast at home. Those few, very few, who were out in the streets looked closed within themselves, and were restrained in their reactions. Truly, it was a sad Christmas. The hundreds of policemen mobilized for the occasion just stood there with nothing to do. The bus and car traffic which was expected but never came reminded me of the common saying «The mountain delivered a mouse». Of the Christians living

in Israel only a few attended and those from the West Bank could be counted on one's fingers.

In Ramallah, the area where there is the biggest concentration of Christians, the atmosphere was much more miserable than in Bethlehem. As one of Bethlehem's merchants told me «Would you pray at the Wailing Wall if a Jordanian Arab flag flew over it?»

Even the great attraction of the evening — the closed T.V. circuit especially constructed in Bethlehem in order to enable those who had no chance to get into the Church of the Nativity because of the expected crowds, even this had attracted only a few and mainly Israeli citizens, soldiers and policemen.

All the security men (police and soldiers) were armed with machine-guns. Such a concentration of arms was never seen on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem's history. Mr. E. Bandak, the Mayor of Bethlehem, told us that «all was traditional, like every year». When we asked why the people seem so disinterested and the streets so deserted and gloomy he answered that «happiness is something in the heart».

This same evening paper on December 24, gave its editorial the following heading: «This is our test. For the first time in history, Christmas is to be celebrated under the Israeli Flag».

PALESTINE RESEARCH CENTER

606 Sadat Street (Apt. 22)

BEIRUT - LEBANON

Established in February 1965

Publications

- I. Palestine Chronology Series
- II. Facts and Figures Series
- III. Palestine Essays Series
- IV. Palestine Monographs Series
- V. Palestine Books Series
- VI. Palestine Maps Series
- VII. Special Publications

Price 1.00 L. L.