

Issue 8

Summer 1997

Published by [Sabeel](#) Liberation Theology Center
We welcome your questions and comments: sabeel@planet.edu

In This Issue:

- [Thirty Years of Occupation 1967-1997](#) by Naim Ateek
- [A Journey in Search of Truth](#) by Anna Karin Hammar
- [From Occupation to Universal Redemption](#) by Michael Prior
- [A New Reality Overnight](#) by Samia Khoury
- [Sabeel Statement on Abu Ghneim](#)
- [Thirty Years On: Settlement Construction Continues](#)
- [Yesterday I Witnessed the Miracle called Humanity](#) by Munir Fasheh
- [Legalized Structural Violence](#) by Lynda Brayer
- [Interview with a Former Political Prisoner](#) by Sammy Kirreh
- [A Gap in Time](#) by Marc Ellis
- [Books](#)

[Contents](#)

Thirty Years of Occupation 1967-1997

What Israel has done to itself by *Naim Ateek*

In the early fifties when John Foster Dulles, then US Secretary of State, was asked about the Palestinians, his reply was, "the parents will die and the children will forget". This was the hope on which many pro-Israel people were banking. The truth today is that most Palestinians have not forgotten. Palestine is still alive in the memory, the psyche, and the hearts of people. As Palestinians watch the peace process collapse and the dream of a liberated state on the West Bank and Gaza turn into a mirage, they are determined to keep Palestine alive in their hearts and minds and in those of their children. Their attitude can be described in this way: let people in power shatter the physical Palestine; let them continue to confiscate the land, drive out the

Palestinians, deny them their most basic rights, and shatter every fiber of their dream. Palestinians will continue to live and survive; and Palestine will ultimately emerge out of the ashes. The dry bones will live again. If this was true for Jews after two thousand years, it will certainly be true for Palestinians and in much less time. Israel cannot totally abolish Palestine, it can only postpone its emergence. Palestine will retreat for a time and will be dormant in the hearts of its people and friends until it rises again in the future alive and vibrant.

It is interesting to observe what Israel has done to itself during the last thirty years. In spite of the 1948 injustice against the Palestinians, many people in the world, including the western powers, were able to justify the establishment of the state because of the holocaust. Today, most countries of the world, including most of the western powers, cannot accept Israel's flagrant violations of international law in the occupied territories. The Likud government does not bear all the blame. Much of the political injustice including the abuse of human rights was carried out when the Labor party was in government. The Likud, however, due to its ideology, has for all practical purposes brought the peace process to a halt and acutely heightened the tension. In fact, with the tacit support of the United States, the governments of Israel, both Likud and Labor, have cunningly turned the process to their advantage and made it into another form of Zionism. Therefore, the Zionist dream which they were not able to achieve before the peace process, is being diligently accomplished through the peace process.

During the last thirty years of Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, it has been possible for many Israelis to pride themselves on their many successes. One can point to: the strong military power of Israel that has, over the years, reduced the threat of war against it; the giant strides toward a strong economy; the peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan; the end of the Arab boycott; opening of the road for normalizing of relations with a number of Arab countries; the creation of a peace process with the Palestinians that practically and effectively removed the Palestine issue from the hands of the United Nations and placed it in the safe hands of its closest and most faithful ally, namely, the United States; the skillful manipulation of the peace process whereby more Palestinian land has been confiscated, more settlements have been established and expanded, and the success of creating a so-called Palestinian autonomy that is closer to what the apartheid South African government tried to do to the predominantly black indigenous population in the creation of bantustans and what some Palestinians are now calling the "Palestans" for the Palestinians. From the perspective of many Israelis, even the occupation itself has been humane and has helped raise the standard of life for the Palestinians. Israel, it seems to many, has the right to congratulate itself on these and other successes over the last thirty years.

We should not, however, be lured by the magnetism of these apparently impressive accomplishments. In the eyes of people of power, they are undoubtedly impressive. At a deeper level, however, the occupation has left and continues to leave many deep scars of long lasting effect. I would like to mention four major areas where, in my opinion, serious damage has been done that carries alarming ramifications for Israel and Israelis in particular and for the Jewish people in general.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Although we condemn anti-semitism and all forms of racism as evil and do not in any way justify it, Israel today has become guilty in creating anti-Jewish and anti-Israel feelings. Due to Israeli Jewish injustice against the Palestinians and the unrelenting state policies that deny the Palestinians their political and human rights, that dehumanize and humiliate them at every turn, many people including Palestinians, Arabs, and expatriates have grown to resent, abhor, and even hate Israel and consequently Jews.

"Everywhere in the land righteousness and justice will be done. Because everyone will do what is right, there will be peace and security forever" (Isaiah 32:16-17)

There are many people in the world today who cannot differentiate between an Israeli Jew and Jews in general. The wrong that Israel does gets generalized and mars the image of Jews. With its injustice, Israel is fanning the evil of anti-semitism and exacerbating it. These feelings against Israel are not the product of a deep prejudice and blind hatred of Jews, they are the product of the deliberate unjust policies of the state of Israel against the Palestinians. In other words, Israel has created and continues to create a new type of anti-Jewish feeling for which she alone bears responsibility.

Israel can no longer credibly lift the ugly face of anti-semitism around the world and expect people to rush to its support and stand with it. It is to blame for what it is creating in the lives, minds, and emotions of the victims of its oppression and discrimination. The longer the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza lasts, the longer Israel refuses to share Jerusalem, and the longer the injustice persists, the deeper the hatred of Israel and Jews will grow and the more difficult it will be to heal and rectify the damage. In the minds of many people today, Israel has created a new justified form of anti-semitism.

JUDAISM

Israel has hijacked Judaism. Some Zionists might believe that Zionism is the best thing that has happened to Jews for thousands of years. For them, it is comparable to the rise of the united kingdom under David. Many people enjoy power and are impressed by it. As Christianity got slowly corrupted when it moved into Christendom, it seems that Judaism has been co-opted by the state and has moved into its "Jewishdom". Judaism today primarily functions in the service of the state. On the one hand, Judaism has been used in the service of the state and has given legitimacy to the oppressive and unjust policies of the state. On the other hand, it has achieved its biblically exclaims by the power of the state. From this perspective, Israel has corrupted the Jewish faith and Judaism has fallen prey to Zionism.

GOD

Israel has done a great disservice to God. It has created an exclusively Jewish "God" that is very repulsive to many Jews and certainly to many other people. It is a set back to monotheism and a regression into tribalism and ethnocentrism. This picture of "God" which has emerged under occupation is that of a racist and a bigot. This is not the finer and more refined picture which some of the prophets had presented. The image of God has been marred.

A settler mother was asked on TV whether it bothers her to live with her children on confiscated Palestinian land. Her reply was simple and straightforward, "If it does not bother God why should it bother me?". God in Israel is no longer the God of mercy and compassion, or of justice and righteousness. It has become difficult for many of us to respect the "God" that modern Israel has created.

HUMANITY

Israel has done a disservice to humanity. It has become used to oppressing and occupying another people. It has become callous. It no longer hears the cry of the people it oppresses nor feels the pricking of its own conscience. Over the last thirty years, the Israelis have transformed themselves into oppressors of another people. They perceive themselves as being of a better and more superior race than the Palestinians and believe that the only way that would guarantee their security is to dominate the Palestinians directly or indirectly. The Palestinians have been described by Israeli leaders as "cockroaches in a bottle", "grasshoppers", and "animals". Humanity has suffered as a result of Israeli attitude and practice. Israel has lost its human soul.

Looking back at the last thirty years, one is struck by the moral retreat of the Israeli state. Disservice has been done to the struggle against anti-semitism, to Judaism, to God, and to humanity. The primary cause is Israel's oppressive occupation of the Palestinian people and their land. The moral toll has been heavy and if the injustice persists it will become heavier. What is needed on the part of the Israeli public is to take a much more active role in demanding the end to the occupation. The challenge before Israeli leaders is to have the courage to pull out totally from the West Bank and Gaza, and accept the basic principle of sharing Jerusalem with the Palestinians. Otherwise, the moral collapse will deepen and worsen. If and when the change occurs, Israel will discover that the Palestinian people and their leadership are ready to enter into a genuine peace that will yield its fruits of security and well-being. In the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Everywhere in the land righteousness and justice will be done. Because everyone will do what is right, there will be peace and security forever" (Isaiah 32:16-17).

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek , president of Sabeel Board, is canon of St. George 's Cathedral, and pastor to its Palestinian congregation.

[Contents](#)

A Journey in Search of Truth

by Anna Karin Hammar

We were in the bus on our way from the airport to Jerusalem when Henry Diab, our Palestinian-Swedish co-traveler, named the tragedy: "Along this road the war was fought in 1948 which by the Israeli Jews has been called the war of liberation or independence, and by the Palestinians *naqba*, the catastrophe. " We passed Deir Yassin and understood why in modern Arab literature the well is not solely an image of refreshing life but also a source of tears and tragedy. Here in Deir Yassin the dead bodies of children and elderly women and men were thrown into the wells after the massacre in 1948.

In Jerusalem we walked the way of the Cross, the Via Dolorosa, with friends from *Sabeel* and the MECC Jerusalem office. The biblical texts were read in Arabic, English or Swedish. The narratives of the contemporary experiences of pain, endurance, friendship and hope were selected from the Palestinian conflict and context. The way of the Cross became a walk of solidarity and resistance against domination and occupation in Jerusalem itself, in Palestine and Israel, but also in other places.

We listened to the stories of interrupted economic life, of closures and denial of the right to movement. We listened to the stories of denied entry into Jerusalem and its religious, cultural, economic and social life. In Jerusalem itself a forced deportation of Palestinians is taking place. Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations are protesting, analyzing and calling for action. They don't hesitate to call the strategies of Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality ethnic cleansing. Jerusalem IDs are being withdrawn from thousands of Palestinians. Palestinians born in Jerusalem cannot live elsewhere in the West Bank without risking their residency rights in Jerusalem, while Jewish settlers can settle anywhere in the West Bank without losing their rights. We understand the pain and rage of the Palestinians who were born in Jerusalem when they are treated as if they were on a temporary visit to the City and their identity as true Jerusalemites is not recognized by the occupying power.

The policies of Israel are far from bringing peace, but are increasing the pressure on the Palestinian people. The Palestinian Christian presence in Palestine is seriously threatened by the human rights abuses. Palestinian Christians tend to deal with their frustration through emigration. The worldwide ecumenical community should firmly support the Palestinian Christian community to remain in Jerusalem and Palestine in at least two ways - by advocacy for the human rights of the Palestinians and by economic support to housing projects and other measures to counteract emigration among the Palestinian Christians. A third way is silently spreading among people in the Nordic countries - namely a refusal to buy Israeli goods and services until there is a just resolution to the conflict.

We prayed at Jabal Abu Ghneim that it would not become a wall in between peoples. Much of the land is expropriated from Palestinian families in Beit Sahour and Bethlehem. The three crosses raised in protest against the settlement policies of Israel reveal that Israel no longer represents the occupied Jewish community at the time of Jesus, but has taken the place of the Roman occupying power. A just solution to the conflict will to a large extent depend on whether Israel is able to see itself in its 'Roman' identity and therefore begin to act in a just and responsible way.

Rev. Anna Karin Hammar is the Secretary of International and Ecumenical Affairs in the Diocese of Lund - Church of Sweden. In April 1997 she visited Sabeel and several Palestinian Christian communities with a group of 18 persons from Sweden.

[Contents](#)

From Occupation to Universal Redemption

by Michael Prior

June 1967 is a watershed in modern Jewish life. Israel's preemptive strike against Egypt, under the pretext of the imminence of Arab aggression which 'threatened the very existence of the state', initiated the war of 5-11 June. In fact, Israel was under no significant threat, let alone in mortal danger. The most likely explanation for its action was its intent to reap the fruits of victory which the war would bring. On its eve, Cabinet Minister Yigal Allon insisted that Israel must set as one of its central aims 'the territorial fulfillment of the Land of Israel'. Israel's victory resulted in the conquest of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and Gaza and the Sinai from Egypt.

The Conquest of 'Biblical Israel'

The June war also stimulated my first interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As a student of theology I rushed to the TV on each of the six evenings of the war and watched enthusiastically the comprehensive victory of tiny Israel over its rapacious Arab predators. TV, newspaper and magazine pictures of the liberation of the Old City of Jerusalem in particular resonated with my studies of Israelite history. Later that summer in London, billboards with quotations from the Hebrew prophets assured me and other readers that those who trusted in biblical prophecy would not be surprised by Israel's victory. It was exciting to be reliving biblical history.

Israel's long-term territorial intentions were signalled by its destruction of 135 Arab houses in the ancient Maghrebi Quarter, making 4000 Palestinians homeless, to make way for a plaza in front of the Wailing Wall, and by extending the boundaries of East Jerusalem within days of the occupation.

My first visit in 1972, albeit enquiring exclusively into the archaeological remains of ancient civilizations, offered the first challenge to my entirely favorable predispositions towards Israel. I was disturbed by the ubiquitous signs of the oppression of the Arabs, whom later I learnt to call Palestinians. In 1981 I brought some students to visit Birzeit University. Because the campus was closed by the military just before our arrival, carefully planned programs had to yield to Palestinian '*ad-hocery*'. Birzeit put a bus at our disposal, and equal numbers of its and our students constituted a university on wheels. The experience was an eye-opener. I saw at first hand the creeping Jewish settlement of the West Bank. For the first time, I began to question the prevailing view that the Israeli occupation was for security

reasons. My year-long stay in the *Ecole Biblique* in 1983-84 convinced me rather that it was an expansion towards the achievement of Greater Israel.

It took some time before my experience acquired an ideological framework. Further visits, and occasional reading spurred me into enquiring into the modern history of the region more thoroughly. The reading became more intensive in recent years and contributed towards my present perceptions. In surveying the nature of the 30 year-old occupation, I have been very struck by the coalition between secular Zionism and the dictates of a particular form of Jewish eschatology.

Settling for God

June 1967 radically transformed Zionism. Since then, its renewed ideological drive and pioneering zeal have come from within religious circles. Secular Greater Israel would be indistinguishable from the fruits of old fashioned colonialist plunder. But clothed in the pure garment of religious rectitude, religious Zionism could appeal to its divine provenance and be fuelled by eschatological fervor. Its theological underpinning lies in the trinity of the father Kook, the son Kook and the *Merkaz HaRav*, the Center for the training of rabbis established by the elder Kook in 1921.

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook (1865-1935) immigrated in 1904, and became the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine in 1921. With few exceptions, Orthodox Jewry was vehemently opposed to Zionism. They rejected it because of its secular inspiration and values, and regarded Zionists as heretics and sinners who presumed to usher in the messianic era on their own terms, without waiting for God. Rav Kook's teachings integrated the traditional, passive religious longing for the land with the modern, secular and aggressively active practice of Zionism, giving birth to a comprehensive religious-nationalist Zionism. Seeking 'the holy sparks' in every Jewish ideology, the Rav saw secular Zionism as an instrument of God to further the messianic redemption and restoration not only of Jews, but of all humanity - a critical aspect of his teleology, if widely ignored by his disciples. He was convinced that God was leading Jews, whether secular or religious to return to the Holy Land, after which the nation would return to its faith. God was bringing about his redemption through the 'Divinely inspired' Balfour Declaration that 'mirrored the Dawn of Salvation'.

In Rav Kook's view, the divine energy was at its strongest in the creative pioneers of the secular Zionist revolution who were agents of God without even knowing it. If their utopian secularism was heretical in the minds of the Orthodox establishment, for him it represented the source of renewal. Practical activities were inseparable from spiritual aspirations, and social activity as well as mysticism had religious meaning: stirrings 'down below' were a necessary preamble to evoking messianic grace 'from above'.

If Rav Kook's metamorphosis of the theory of secular Zionism into a full-blown practical and eschatological mysticism was virtually unknown during his lifetime, his prodigious writings, selectively mediated by his son, and especially his founding of the Center have proven to be critical in the renaissance of religio-political Zionism up to the present. It was only after his death that he became a cult hero and an idolized spiritual guide in the 1970s after the settler movement, *Gush Emunim*, claimed him as their forefather, and devoted themselves to carrying out his legacy, under the authoritative guidance of his only son. Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook produced doctored versions of his father's writings, reducing them to collections of articles that distilled Judaism into Zionism by means of messianism. One such collection, *Orot* (Lights) was the 'red book' of the *Gush Emunim* cadres.

The link between the two Kooks is the key to understanding *Gush Emunim*: the father is known mostly through the son, and the son is adorned with the halo of the father. While the father's view that the messianic era had begun was not taken seriously in his own day, his son now supported it with a program of messianic political activism. He saw in the rebirth of the Jewish state the first step towards the coming of the Messiah. All its institutions were means to a messianic end: its government and army were *Kadosh* (Holy).

The war of 1967 was a turning point in the tortuous process of Messianic redemption. Nobody was more prepared to build on what they believed God had handed them than a group of rabbis who had come under the son's influence in the Center. They included Moshe Levinger, Haim Druckman, Eliezer Waldman, Ya'akov Ariel, Shlomo Aviner, Avraham Shapira and others who were to become household names in Israel over the next thirty years. For them, the biblical texts were no mere literary heritage, but constituted a living title-deed. Every advance of the army recalled the promise, 'Every place on which you set foot shall be yours', anticipating some future time when 'Your territory shall extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the Western Sea' (Deut 11.24).

On the final day of the war some of these rabbis carried their mentor to the Western Wall, where Rav Kook declared, 'We announce to all of Israel, and to all of the world that by a divine command we have returned to our home, to our holy city. From this day forth, we shall never budge from here'. Since the dimensions of *Eretz Yisrael* were those of Genesis 15, rather than of pre-1967 Israel, Jews were obliged to fulfil the 'commandment of conquest', by settling in the whole land and defending Jewish sovereignty over it.

'If this be the "Messiah": I do not wish to see his coming.'

Such settlement had redemptive and messianic meaning, and would mark a Jewish renaissance. It was a sacred activity, and those engaged in such a holy enterprise had 'souls equal to the supreme *zaddik*' (the most righteous Jew). The first settlements were founded by young rabbi graduates of the Center. Under their influence, the superficial nationalism of secular Zionism was giving way to a religious Zionism, issuing in the popular slogan, 'There is no Zionism without Judaism, and no Judaism without Zionism'. The settlements dotting the landscape of the West Bank in every direction are a testimony to the success of their enterprise.

Messianic Salvation & the Palestinians

Concerning the Arab inhabitants of the region, the example of Joshua's Divine mission was eternally true: the Palestinians are *gerim* (non-Jewish residents) who according to the *Torah* are to be treated with tolerance and respect, but not more. More seriously, they are an obstacle to the redemptive process. Since the universal principle of self-determination is no match for God's mandate, it does not apply in *Eretz Yisrael*. Hence, talk of human rights and demands for national self-determination are meaningless. Palestinians have three choices: to acknowledge the legitimacy of 'Kookist' Zionism and receive full civil rights; to obey the laws of the state without formal recognition of Zionism, and be granted the rights of resident aliens; or, to accept incentives - including the inducement of force - and emigrate. Their enjoyment of redemption is somewhat down the line towards the eschaton.

Since 1967 the rhetoric of Zionism has been transposed from a secular aspiration to create a state for Jews to the apocalyptic one of redeeming *Eretz Yisrael*. Like the first wave of Zionist conquest in 1948, the period since 1967 has been a catastrophe for the indigenous population. The establishment of a Jewish state in 1948 involved the eviction of the majority of the Palestinians, and the destruction of most of their villages, and the relentless use of force and state terrorism, wars and military operations since. The extension of the Zionist dream into the religious realm continues to involve the daily humiliation of the indigenous people and a litany of other atrocities. But, in the view of religious Jewish Zionists, and not a few foreign Christians, this is a small price to pay for the benefits of messianic redemption - especially when someone else is paying.

Altogether, the two stages of Zionist achievement cast a dark cloud over the aspirations of the ethnocentric dream of nineteenth-century Jewish nationalist colonialists. What is most distressing from a moral and religious perspective is that the major ideological support for Zionist imperialism and the principal obstacle to treating the indigenous people with respect come from religious circles for whom the

biblical narratives of land, understood in a fundamentalist fashion, are normative - as we learned from the assassination of Premier Rabin by a religious zealot acting in God's name. As early as 1913, the behavior of Zionists towards the Palestinians made Ahad Ha'am fear for the future if Jews ever came to power. In a letter to a settler in Palestine he wrote 'If this be the "Messiah": I do not wish to see his coming.'

Rev. Dr. Michal Prior, C.M. is Chair of Living Stones in Britain, and a Friend of Sabeel. He is currently Visiting Professor at Bethlehem University. His most recent book, [The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique](#) is reviewed on [Books](#).

[Contents](#)

A New Reality Overnight

by Samia Khoury

The voice of my father sounded very serious as he spoke to me on that morning of June 6, 1967. "Bring the children and come and stay with us; it will probably be safer for all of you in Birzeit than where you are near the military camp." We had been living in our new home in Beit Hanina, a suburb of Jerusalem, since 1964, with a Jordanian military camp right behind our house. He was right, it was safer, but neither he nor the Israeli planes who were raiding the area realized that the camp had been evacuated before the war had even begun. One of the bombs fell directly on the strawberry bed in our garden, breaking our living room window. This gave access to the Israeli occupying forces to enter our house and steal the silver cutlery that was left on the table from my sister-in-law's wedding reception held the previous evening.

The first thing that came to my mind after I put the telephone down: "Will this be another 1948 dispossession? What if I cannot come back like all the Palestinian refugees who were forced out of Palestine in 1948?" I had to think very quickly about what I needed to take. Immediately I came to the conclusion that the things I could not afford to lose were the family photo albums and the collection of slides my husband had taken of the children; all other material things could be replaced, but a childhood could not be relived. The experience of 1948 could not be easily forgotten when so many cherished memories and souvenirs of whole families were lost along with dear lives and the dispossession of land and identity. There was no time to lose before the children and I were on our way to Birzeit leaving my husband behind with the children's canary, the dog, cat and a little lamb to keep him company. My husband refused to come along as he had been appointed a few days earlier as one of the civil guard group for the area. When I think that he could have been killed in a post

unprotected by the military, I feel so angry. I continue to wonder how the Jordanian army was expecting the young men to carry out their job. It turned out that there was nothing to do, as the Israeli army captured the city within the first 24 hours of the war facing minimal resistance.

Almost overnight the whole population was facing a new reality. We were under military occupation. We had not been prepared for the war, neither were we prepared for occupation. It was one of the most humiliating and traumatic experiences for all of us huddled in my parents home with my brother's and sister's families. My parents were living on the old campus of Birzeit University, which had been founded as a school by my late aunt Nabihah Nasir, and developed into a junior college by my father, Musa Nasir. We had to put up a white cloth as a sign of surrender to the Israeli forces as they took over the town of Birzeit. They occupied the men's dormitory and my mother was devastated as she took some of the staff to help her clear the place and hand it over.

A Brief Honeymoon & a Lost Opportunity

In the beginning nobody envisioned how serious this situation would become. We all were sure that the international community would not allow the seizure of land by force, that no occupation would be viable this century. How naive we were, as we refused to think otherwise in spite of our frustrating experience with United Nations resolutions regarding Palestine since 1948. The reality began to sink in, as Israel kept boasting of "the benevolent occupation". The Palestinians who had stayed in the Galilee after 1948, and were Israeli citizens by then, assured us that we were still in the "honeymoon period", as they had gone through all that before us. How right they were. There is nothing like benevolent occupation, occupation is occupation. It is a process of dehumanization and deprivation of freedom and all other basic rights. We became an identity card number with a bundle of documents and permits for moving, traveling, and family reunification.

In the aftermath of the war, our anger was focused on the Arab armies who lost the war on three fronts. Israel could have been able to impose a peace treaty at that time without complete withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. But the euphoria of its victory, its arrogance and greed for more land made it lose its vision. Had it withdrawn it might have changed history and spared the whole region a lot of suffering. Psychologically, the Palestinians might have been ready for such a deal because they felt let down. The hope that a unified Arab front was going to be our salvation was completely shattered. We realized as well that the US was very instrumental in Israel's landslide victory and in the maintenance of the occupation. The Gulf war proved we were right in our thinking as we saw how the power and money of the USA was used to manipulate the whole region. By supporting Israel in

its occupation, the US Administration and others should realize that if they were truly genuine friends of Israel they would not support Israel blindly in doing wrong. Good parents who are concerned about the welfare of their children do not pat them on the back and reward them when they do wrong. They direct them and even deny them some privileges to set them straight.

The so-called "honeymoon" for the Palestinians was truly over as the violations of human rights started to touch every town, every family and every organization. The euphoria of victory for Israel was over as well, as the Palestinian population refused to make it easy for Israel to continue occupying the area. The resistance reached its climax with the Intifada, the popular uprising which began in December 1987. It is very ironic that occupation is just as demoralizing for the occupier as it is for the occupied, even more so because the occupied already know that the worst is there and there is nothing more to lose. The brutal actions of the Israeli army, especially during the Intifada, agonized a great number of Israeli mothers and wives as these actions reflected on the behavior of their men at home. Likewise being on the receiving end of the brutality, the suffering of the Palestinians was endless, and a lot of bitterness surfaced. We as a family had our share of that suffering. My cousin, who had been a spokesperson for the PLO, was assassinated by an Israeli hit squad in Lebanon, my brother, who is president of Birzeit University, was expelled from the country for almost 20 years, and my son, a musician, spent six months in prison for "Intifada music". But the harshest of all the measures for me was when my 18 month old grandson was not allowed to see his father. He came back from the airport devastated, after going with his mother to meet his father who had returned from studying abroad, but his father was denied entry to the country. The little boy kept saying "naughty police" because he had seen the police push back his mother as she was trying to find her way to her husband before the Israeli security put him on a plane back to London. Any authority that denies a child his parents is indeed very naughty - to say the least!

A Twisted Language

In an occupation the authorities are experts at justifying any action. Even the language of the occupation is twisted to suit the purposes of the authorities. The invaders and the aggressors are referred to as "Defense Forces", while the resistance movements are labeled "terrorists", and violations of human rights are "security measures". Under occupation, logic and values get turned upside down. The people become almost schizophrenic trying to live by and teach the values that are basic to any society.

I remember one morning we got up to the noise of workers closing the front entrance of our house. Upon inquiring, we were told it was for security reasons; a gimmick which Israel has been using since the creation of the state. Under the pretext of

"security", Israel has been able to get away with all its illegal acts and violations against the Palestinian people.

In our case that morning, it was the security needed to protect the Israeli Military Central Command which had been built on top of the mountain right behind our house. We had a heated argument with the military, but we were eventually able to come to a compromise. We would be able to use the entrance of our house, but there would be no access beyond our house leading to the rest of the neighborhood. Barbed wire was put up at the end of the alley and our house became a dead end.

"Will this be another 1948 dispossession? What if I cannot come back like all the Palestinian refugees who were forced out of

Ironically the workers who were doing this ugly job were Palestinians. One of them asked for a drink of water. I was so furious at the closure of the alley, that I snapped at him and told him to go and get a drink of water from his masters who were paying him to do this job. After I walked into the house I could not believe that this was me refusing a drink of water to anybody! As I was still shaking with anger about the whole incident, an aunt of mine came to visit me. "Is it true you refused a drink of water to the worker?" she asked. "What happened to you? What happened to all the values that you were brought up with as a human being and as a Christian? What about our Palestinian hospitality?" "All gone", I said, "they are making us like that; I am so angry at them for making me behave like this." Then we both looked at each other and started laughing, as I went to fetch a glass of water. I knew there and then that I should not let the occupation get to me if I wanted to maintain my sanity and humanity without hatred and bitterness. A good laugh was the best therapy for dealing with the situation, but the problems during the long years of occupation have not been that simple.

My mother used to tell us that when we lived in Nablus in the early forties, the women used a curse, "May your chest be locked" (*Yeqfil sidrek*). It was only after the occupation that she was able to comprehend the real meaning of that curse. Not only were our chests locked, but so were our dreams, our hopes, our plans and our whole future. Both my parents died after the occupation without realizing any of their dreams to live in a secular Palestine again. Yet in spite of all that happened, my father never relinquished his principles in pursuit of a just solution. My mother never ceased to be grateful to God for His blessings. On her death bed, we would hear her thanking

God, but there would always be a mutter at the end "if only ... if only ..." We understood that the only thing she was yearning for was to see my expelled brother, her only son. It was so sad that she was not around to rejoice with us his homecoming at the time of the peace initiative.

Destined to Live Together

The Palestinians and the Israelis are destined to live together in this land, the cradle of the three monotheistic faiths. Since the hope for the re-establishment of one secular democratic state was shattered when Israel chose to establish a state for Jews, there does not appear to be any other alternative than a two-state solution, both equally independent with full sovereignty. The "Peace Process" which we are now engaged in seems to have given Israel legitimacy for more violations and has further entrenched the occupation which is still very much felt after 30 years. By splitting up the Palestinian territories into enclaves separated by zones and bypass roads under Israeli control, Israel is putting obstacles in the way of peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state, which are provoking Palestinian anger. Israel has to realize that its security is linked to the rights of the Palestinians, while it cannot continue to demand the impossible from the Palestinian Authority.

I can still hear my father telling me that I would be very fortunate if my grandchildren were to see a solution to the issue of Palestine. I have four grandchildren now, aged between two and nine, and it seems we still trying hard to make the best out of a bad situation. We are trying to think and work positively against all odds, so that our struggle for justice will bear fruit and give hope to our children and grandchildren. For justice and only justice is the key and prerequisite for security and peace for all the people of the region.

Samia Khoury, treasure of the Sabeel Board, is president of Rawdat El-Zahur Society for education.

[Contents](#)

Sabeel Statement on Abu Ghneim ('Har Homa')

"Hear this, you rulers of the house of Jacob and chiefs of the house of Israel, who abhor justice and pervert all equity, who build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with wrong! ...Yet they lean upon the Lord and say, 'Surely the Lord is with us! No harm shall come upon us'. Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins..."(Micah 3:9-10).

Israel's Project

On Tuesday, March 18, 1997, Israeli bulldozers started their work to build a new Jewish settlement on Jabal Abu Ghneim, near Bethlehem, contrary to the expressed wish of the international community. The intention is to build 6,500 housing units for 25,000 Jewish settlers on approximately 462 acres. It is Palestinians, rather than Jews, who have dire housing needs. Even while there are huge vacant land areas in West Jerusalem (much of it Palestinian owned before 1948), and more than 12 percent vacant apartments even in the settlements on the West Bank and Gaza (all illegal), Israel confiscates more Palestinian land. A major objective of the project is to ensure Jewish demographic superiority in the Jerusalem area.

The beautiful and serene landscape overlooking Bethlehem will be ruined, and will be replaced by apartments, shopping centers, and high-rise hotels that will transform the beauty of nature into vulgar stone structures. But whatever its architectural value and ecological damage, the project is unjust.

Injustice

The building of the settlement is an act of injustice against the people from whom the land has been confiscated. Politically, it aims at closing the circle of exclusively Jewish settlements around Palestinian Jerusalem and changing its demographic character. It is a further step in Judaizing Jerusalem before the final status talks. It aims at weakening Palestinian claim over East Jerusalem by creating new facts on the ground, which will hinder the attainment of their legitimate national aspiration.

Economically, building hotels, shopping centers and tourist industries on the settlement, Israel will devour the tourist trade from the Palestinian towns of Bethlehem and Beit Sahour (Shepherds' Field) and deprive the Palestinians of their main livelihood. Bethlehem and Beit Sahour will be places where tourists will go for a brief visit while the economic benefits will be diverted and reaped by 'Bethlehem', Israel's Har Homa shopping center.

Moreover, the construction will threaten the remains of five fifth- and sixth-century Byzantine churches and monasteries in the area of Abu Ghneim. Israel has been less sensitive to Muslim and Christian sites than to Jewish ones.

The project reflects the arrogance of Israeli power, its obsession with domination over, and economic exploitation of the Palestinians. It has and will fuel resentment, deepen the hate, ensure the passion for revenge, and bring about an inevitable future of bloodshed and violence, already seen in the suicidal bombing in Tel Aviv on March 21, 1997, so rightly condemned as an inhuman act of terrorism.

We in *Sabeel* condemn the violence of the construction at Abu Ghneim, perpetrated by the State of Israel. It is a violence against the aspirations of a whole nation. It is a violence directed against the peace process. It is a violence against the future generations of Palestinians and Israelis who must live as neighbors in peace and security. It is a violence against the environment and against a Christian archeological site. The American veto also is interpreted by many as an act of violence against justice, giving the Israelis the 'green light' to proceed. Alas, the project will adversely affect the future of millions of people who ultimately must share Jerusalem and its hinterland.

Christians should condemn all violence that deprives future generations of the right to live in peace with justice, including the unrelenting repressive policies of the state. The structural evil of state policies is no less offensive than individual acts of violence.

Action

We call on the government of Israel to abandon its violence against the Palestinian people, its partners in peace, and to consider the grave outcome of its actions. We invite it

- to interpret the biblical injunction which Christians share with Jews, 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31) as having an inclusive interpretation, that includes the Palestinians;
- to accept the sharing of Jerusalem as a key to a just peace;
- to terminate the building of settlements, which makes a fetish and idol of the land.

We call on the government of the United States to fulfill its commitment to peace, by injecting the concept of justice into the peace process as its most important ingredient. Without justice for the Palestinians, the peace process is a sham. Unless the outcome of the peace process achieves the withdrawal of Israel from the Occupied Territories (including East Jerusalem) there will not be justice, and without justice, there will not be security. The United States is entrusted with an historic responsibility to create a just peace.

Both Palestinians and Israelis are strangers and sojourners on the land, which belongs to God:

The land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants'
(Leviticus 25:23).

Let us share it under the one creator God who has placed both of our people on it. Having endured a prolonged Crucifixion, the Palestinians await the dawn of Resurrection.

This statement was issued by Sabeel on Good Friday 1997, just as the destruction at Abu Ghneim had begun. See page 9 for photos and further information.

[Contents](#)

Thirty Years Later Settlement Construction Continues

With international attention focused on the construction of Har Homa settlement on Abu Ghneim mountain between Bethlehem and Jerusalem (opposite), the Israeli government has continued land confiscation and settlement construction in other areas of the West Bank, to the north, south and east of Jerusalem.

The huge settlement of Ma'ale Adumim continues to grow, as the Jahalin bedouin are expelled and dumped with the refuse from Jerusalem. (See [Munir Fasheh's article](#)) In the north, Palestinian farmer Attallah Amira was killed by the Israeli army on 11 November 1996, while taking part in a peaceful protest against the further confiscation of land to enlarge the settlement of Kiryat Sefer, near the border between Israel and the West Bank. Israeli plans are intended to link neighboring settlements, including Kiryat Sefer, with Israeli towns across the Green Line, as a prelude to the annexation of huge areas of the West Bank to Israel.

On 12 March 1997, the Israeli bulldozers resumed their work to open a road to reach the hill of Batn Al-Ma'asi, south of Bethlehem, defying a court order to restrain from work at the site. The Israeli government plans to construct a new Israeli settlement, Givat Hazayit, at this site, a few kilometers from the settlement of Efrat, in accordance with its plan for 'Greater Jerusalem'.

As part of this plan, Israel aims to construct a ring road called Road 45 which will completely encircle East Jerusalem and cut it off from the rest of the West Bank. The road will connect Har Homa (Abu Ghneim) in the south, via Ma'ale Adumim in the east, with the Jerusalem airport in the north, before continuing through the West Bank to end near the Lod (Ben-Gurion) airport in Israel. Road 45, which will stretch approximately 45 kilometers in the West Bank will result in the West Bank will result in the expropriation and destruction of over 700 hectares (1750 acres) of the Palestinian agricultural land and the destruction of 38 Palestinian homes.

The Destruction of Abu Ghneim Forest

Pre-March 1997

The 'shaving' of Jabal Abu Ghneim, which began on 18 March 1997, has progressed considerably, even in the short time since the photograph below was taken. A road, which stretches around the mountain, has now been paved.

On 20 May 1997, the Israel Antiquities Authority, an official Israeli government agency, reported that the Byzantine monastery on Abu Ghneim had been damaged during the construction of Har Homa settlement. As many of us had predicted, the bulldozers have destroyed ancient walls and mosaics dating back to the fifth century. The Monastery commemorates the place where Mary and Joseph rested on the way to Bethlehem.

1 May 1997

From the Eye On Palestine homepage produced by Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem and the Map Department of the Arab Studies Society. For further information including maps and photos, go to <http://www.arij.org/paleve/>

[Contents](#)

Yesterday I Witnessed the Miracle called Humanity

by Munir Fasheh

June 1967

Early in June 1967, the remainder of Palestine, referred to as the West Bank and Gaza Strip, was conquered and occupied by the Israeli army. The Israeli planes over

Ramallah, the Israeli tanks entering Ramallah, people carrying their children and belongings running in every direction, the senseless crushing and stealing of cars by the soldiers ... are all still in my memory. During the six days of war, more than 325,000 Palestinians were expelled to Jordan from refugee camps, especially in the Jericho area, and from villages, mainly in the Latrun area, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Their homes were completely demolished. In place of Emmaus, one of the destroyed villages, Canada Park was constructed with money from Canada. Confiscation of Palestinian land and settlement building soon followed. Huge numbers of trees, including ancient olive trees which had produced for hundreds of years, were uprooted. Rounding people up, including children, and imprisoning them has been a continuous routine. Over the past thirty years, more than a third of the population has, at one time or another, been arrested! There is no place comparable with this; not even South Africa at the peak of apartheid. All this was done under the rhetoric of war.

1997: Thirty Years Later

Homes are still being demolished, trees uprooted, people evicted, land confiscated, movement restricted, arbitrary laws imposed, and humiliation of all sorts practiced daily. In fact the situation today, at every level, is significantworse than it was thirty years ago. The main difference is that today it is happening under the rhetoric of peace!

Yesterday, May 2, 1997, I joined a group of thirty Palestinians and Swedes to visit two sites. One is the site where Palestinians have established a post overlooking Mount Abu Ghneim where the Israelis are uprooting thousands of trees in order to build a huge new settlement on Palestinian land. The 'shaving' of a good portion of the mountain of trees by Israeli bulldozers is a reminder to us all of the dominant role of technology in the world today: crushing both nature and people. The wildlife, including some rare birds, flowers, and herbs, was completely wiped out in a few days. In addition, these bulldozers wiped out a source of joy, play and relief for thousands of Palestinians from neighboring towns and villages, who use to picnic in the woods. Roads that are being opened up on the mountain look like scars or wounds on the beautiful body of the mountain. Homes for settlers will soon be 'planted' in place of trees.

The other site we visited is near the Jerusalem municipal dump, where the Jahalin Bedouin were forcibly moved to by the Israeli army. Years earlier the same Bedouins were forcibly moved from the *Naqab* (Negev) region.

At this second site, we visited one of the Jahalin families. They are living in large old metal shipping containers given to them by the Israeli army. It is not difficult to

imagine how it feels to live in a metal container at zero degrees Celsius in winter and up to 40 degrees Celsius in summer, on rocky arid land. Everything seemed in our eyes like a heavy crushing piece in a huge political - economic - social - military machine designed to crush humanity in people. Yet, what we witnessed yesterday was something very moving, amazing and hopeful.

The father of one family spoke to the group. First, he apologized for not having the proper traditional place for guests. We had to stand the whole time in the heat of the sun. He spoke about the consecutive evictions and transfers his family has experienced over the years. Meanwhile his children were playing all around us, with beautiful wide smiles across their lovely dark faces. His wife's warmth and generous spirit was also very striking. Just before we left, she offered all that she had: tea with mint. That added to the preciousness of her gift, especially when we remember that the water had to be fetched by her children in tins on the heads.

Above and below: Mohammad, the Jahalin father, addresses a group of Palestinians and Swedes, with the shipping container that is home to his family in the background.

We left the site, but the depth of the experience remained. How can human beings keep their humanity alive under such conditions? How can they keep their smiles, their affection, their warmth, and their compassion? How can they remain hopeful, talk calmly, and make sense? How are they able to keep their humanity and sanity intact?

The answer was straight and simple. It exploded in my mind on the bus from that site to Bethlehem: it is the miracle called humanity which is, at the end of the day, stronger than all the bulldozers and the armies. Part of the miracle of humanity is the incredible fact that when people have a lot, like in places such as New York, Paris or Tokyo, they worry, while when they have almost nothing, they are hopeful. I couldn't but ask myself: who is richer inside?

Feelings of pity for the family soon changed in me to feelings of pity for us who are quickly losing our humanity -- all over the world under the rhetoric of progress and under the drums of triumphant technology, at the expense of ecology, nature, and people.

The attitude and behavior of that family reflected two main traits which are very important for all of us to remember and try not to lose: faith and hope. Faith and hope that life has meaning and purpose besides possessing, winning, and making profit; that humanity will never be crushed completely. Humanity remains the most incredible manifestation of God on Earth.

I don't know whether God exists in heaven, as I have never been there, but I know that God lives within us on this Earth. Yesterday, I saw God. I saw God within that Jahalin family currently living between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. I saw God in the eyes and smiles of the children, in the assertive and hopeful words of the father, and in the warmth and generosity of the mother. What slowly became more striking to me than the oppression and the misery was the humanity shining all around us. Humanity was naked and beautiful. It was stripped of the facade, of all the false covers that are usually referred to as modern civilization, which has been emptying people, and life in general, of their essence in the name of development and progress.

Yesterday, I witnessed the miracle called humanity

Maybe that family needs outside help for basic needs such as a network for drinking water and another for sewage disposal. But, we definitely need that family to remind us of the humanity which potentially lives in all of us, but is currently under threat.

I don't know whether God exists in heaven, I haven't been there, but I know that God exists in that Jahalin family. I saw God in the eyes and smiles of the children, in the assertive and hopeful words of the father, and in the warmth and generosity of the mother.

Visiting that family brought to my mind the situation at a larger level, both in Palestine and in the world -- in the past, present and certainly in the future. Just like at the time of Jesus, the fight today is still between preserving humanity and crushing it, between nature and economic development, geared by profit alone, between loving technology or ourselves more, between those who have faith, whether they call themselves Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists or Marxists, and the new 'god': the globalization of the world into a single market which is being imposed on all peoples, killing diversity, polluting nature, and marginalizing more than three quarters of the world's population.

Reflecting on the past 30 years, I see that what has happened in Palestine mirrors what has been happening in the world at large. The rhetoric is development, peace, and human rights, but in reality, the 'design' is to silence people by making the majority so poor that they think only of their stomachs. The war against humanity today is, as usual, covered with a rhetoric of moral and intellectual superiority, which Jesus exposed 2000 years ago as hypocrisy and evil. What we are witnessing today, both in Palestine and in the world at large, is ghettoizing people in enclaves which define the limits of their thinking and sense of isolation. The apartheid-like system which is being imposed in Palestine and in the world is being imposed under the rhetoric of peace and development. The essence of this 'project' is to justify that less than 20% of the population own and consume 80% of the resources.

Is there hope? Where does it lie? Just as we learn from that Jahalin family, hope is in us. Hope is also in all the inspiring dreams which characterized humanity for a long time: Christianity, Islam, Marxism, Buddhism and all the other worldviews which sided -- at their inception -- with human beings against all means of crushing them, and which kept inspiring people during human eruptions such as the *Intifada*. A main venue of translating this hope into a dynamic active component in communities is education in its broad sense, i.e., an education which does not start with ready-made materials and answers, but one that revolves around the process of learning. A pedagogy for the future that stems out of an inclusive vision, built around a set of core values that enhance life and protect humanity, is the main challenge facing all peoples today. Nothing less than our humanity is at stake. I strongly believe that we as Palestinians can contribute to the development of such a pedagogy. This should be the central theme of our vision for a saner future.

Dr. Munir Fasheh, former dean of students at Birzeit University, founded and directed Tamer Institute for community Education for 7 years. He is currently involved in the Jerusalem School of Economics and Diplomacy, and will be visiting scholar at Harvard University later this year.

[Contents](#)

Legalized Structural Violence

The Israeli Legal System and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

by Lynda Brayer

Israel, "the only democracy in the Middle East"

One of the more outstanding features of the Israeli legal system is its glaring anomaly as a legal system - many of characteristics are unique, while others reflect value systems which have been condemned both vigorously and systematically in Palestine/Israel and the world, and yet there remains the conundrum. How does the State of Israel manage to violate the laws of war, the international human rights conventions which articulate basic inviolable human rights, the conventions against the crime of apartheid and genocide, and the declaration condemning colonialism, while at the same time benefit from the accolades of the government of the United States of America describing Israel as the "only democracy in the Middle East?"

Herein lies the rub. The reality and truth of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is vigorously contested by the opposing sides, and there is a continuing struggle to dominate the discourse in order to establish the determining opinion as to the truth of the situation. The Israelis see this as a life and death struggle, the prizes of which are the right to Palestine and all the concomitant wealth of taking over this land and property, a stable and long-lasting international legitimacy, and not mere recognition. The Israelis demand a one-nil victory with Palestinians being vanquished to forgotten and unsustainable "Palestans" resembling nothing so much as the black bantustan of Bophutotwana drowned in a sea of white areas during the former South African white apartheid regime, or native American reservations, lost and forgotten in North Dakota.

One finds oneself being forced to return to the roots of the problem, which is Zionist ideology in order to grasp the truth and meaning of the situation in Palestine and Israeli rule and hegemony. The Zionists insist that the Jews have returned to the land of Palestine which they were promised by God according to the Bible, and from which their forefathers were exiled nearly two thousand years ago, and that all intervening history and its consequences do not, and cannot, change the promise and the right of Jews to realize its fulfillment. Therefore the presence of Palestinians, their society, their homes, their businesses, their religious institutions, their social, economic and political aspirations are as naught in the face of the rights of the Jews. This right is eternal and unconditional: it does not depend upon the agreement of the Palestinians to forfeit Palestinian birthrights and patrimony. All resistance is deemed terrorism and an extensive Secret Services network, the Shabak, relying on collaborators, with legal permission to torture any Palestinian, is in place to effect this continuing hegemony. The Palestinians are not players in this eternal plan of God for Jews.

Palestinians continue today to find themselves legally defined out of existence.

On the other side of this almost cosmic divide, the Palestinians, themselves a cosmopolitan motley of peoples living in Palestine, professing in the main, either Islam or Christianity as their religious affiliations, continue today to find themselves legally defined out of existence. Palestinians are a non-people for Jews. Palestinian fathers and grandparents who were and are native inhabitants of this Palestine prior to the invasion of the British in 1917, who own and owned homes in Palestine, who went to school in Palestine, who trace their heritage to the first Christians, the Prophet Mohammed, or to the original Palestinian Jews who were contemporaries of Jesus, do not enjoy full human status with full civil, religious, legal and political rights under Jewish hegemony, neither in Israel nor in occupied Palestine. Their existence is a thorn or a cancer within the Jewish body politic.

Palestinians have watched the waves of Jewish colonialists enter first Palestine and Palestine/Israel freely, under the appellation of "aliyah" within the protection of the Law of Return. If the foreign invasion of Jews is not colonialism depriving the native-born inhabitants of their rights to self-determination, but is rather the "ingathering of the exiles" and the fulfillment of the religious act of "aliyah: i.e. a "going up" , a Jewish religious term referring to the "going up" to the Temple, and if the acquisition of sovereignty in Palestine is the "redemption" of the land, then surely the presence of those who do not inherit the earth from God is at worst a sacrilege, or at best illegitimate, a people whom surely the rightful inheritors of the land are entitled to remove?

Ethnic Cleansing

Within this ideology, the removal of Palestinians from Palestine must perforce be a parallel purpose to the "ingathering of the exiles", despite the still oft-quoted phrase of Israel Zangwill's from the end of the 19th century, that Palestine is a "land without a people for a people without a land." And lo and behold, this removal is articulated within the Zionist legal system, initially applied within the 1949 armistice borders that carved out the Jewish state of Israel from the original Palestine, and then applied once more in Palestine occupied by Israel in 1967. Without a question, the purpose of this legal system in the Jewish-Palestinian conflict is the ethnic cleansing Palestinian territory west of the Jordan river.

The first great effort of ethnic cleansing was accomplished with the refusal of the Israeli government to allow the return of the Palestinians to their homes following the 1948 war. This refusal extended to those Palestinians beyond the armistice line - the 'green' line, and those within it. In 1952 the Knesset passed the Law of Entry of 1952 which forbade the re-entry of Palestinians into Israel while the aforementioned Law of Return promoted and encouraged the immigration of those who were born outside of Palestine if they were Jews. Thus Palestine/Israel was cleansed of approximately 90% of its native population. This law is being used to day to cleanse Jerusalem, as well as the West Bank, including Area A. No Palestinian may receive residency rights in the autonomous areas without the agreement of the Israeli government. This law continues to be used to deny Palestinians their birthright and patrimony in Palestine - called euphemistically their "residency rights" or lack thereof.

The Ottoman Land Law Code of 1853 was used to both expropriate and confiscate 92% of Palestinian owned land in 1948 Israel and transfer it to Jewish ownership - without this costing a farthing, and the same has been done with approximately 70% of the land of the West Bank. One of the methods used was not to recognize the legality of deed registration which listed the seller and purchaser of the land - when this did not involve a Jewish purchaser! This law is still being used for these purposes.

Under the occupation, the military orders destroyed local law in complete violation of the laws of war as follows: the law courts were castrated such that they could not deal with property conflicts nor town planning issues - these subjects being transferred to military tribunals. The Jordanian town planning law was shredded into fragments permitting only the destruction of Palestinian homes and bedouin encampments without providing anything for the needs of the population, other than for an infinitesimal number of homes on an ad hoc basis - preferably for collaborators. This legal destruction continues unabated.

There is no recognition of the family as the basic unit of society which not only must be protected, but which must be encouraged in order for society to survive and flourish. On the contrary, the laws, military orders and unlimited discretionary powers of the Jewish authorities and the Jewish judiciary continue to do all in their power to destroy the Palestinian family.

Agriculture has been constrained considerably both through the restrictions imposed by military orders as well as by the reduction in the water consumption permitted by the Israelis. Palestinians are permitted to use about one tenth the amount of water that Jews use. Freedom of movement and freedom of association have been curtailed such that the West Bank and Gaza are prisons - this being the application of a slow strangulation policy. Palestinian towns, particularly Arab Jerusalem is a dying , as are Bethlehem, Hebron and Qalqilya.

Apartheid Legal System

There is no independent judiciary in Israel or in the occupied territories - it is an arm of the Zionist establishment and its aims are those of that same establishment. Members of the judiciary have to be approved by the Secret Services in order to sit on the bench. It will not come as a surprise to learn that approximately 2% of the judges are of Palestinian origin, and they deal with issues that are not of central Zionist concern. Their loyalty to the Jewish state must be unwavering however.

I think that it would be fair to say that the Israeli legal system is an apartheid legal system, precisely because it establishes, perpetrates, reinforces and continues the domination of one group of people, the Jews, over another nation, the Palestinians, by dispossession, deprivation and expulsion. One can only remain stupefied that this system has not been recognized by the world at large for what it is, nor has it suffered the condemnation heaped upon the South African apartheid system which found its demise with the passing of the white-dominated apartheid regime in 1994.

Lynda Brayer is the Executive Legal Director of the Society of St. Yves. A graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Faculty of Law, she spent several years in private practice before establishing the Society under the auspices of the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Michel Sabbah. The Society is a Catholic Human Rights Center for Legal Resources and Development serving the poor and the oppressed under the exhortation "I am my brother's keeper."

[Contents](#)

Interview with a former Political Prisoner

by Sammy Kirreh

30-year old 'Imad Nasri' relates his experience as a Palestinian Christian in Israeli prisons. He is proud, a young Palestinian Christian like himself has a lot to contribute to the achievement of justice in his homeland. Although Imad believes the peace

process has done little to bring security to Palestinians and realize their national aspirations in self-determination, he maintains that only just peace can put an end to the tragedy of Palestinians. Currently, Imad works as an accountant and is still on probation. He has to report to the police every month, and is not allowed to travel abroad. He spoke to Sammy Kirreh.

On what charge were you put in prison?

I was charged with liberation activities during the *Intifada*. The Israeli military authorities claimed my activities threatened the security of Israel.

Could you tell about the circumstances of your arrest?

I can still imagine the brutal manner in which Israeli soldiers raided my family home in the Old City of Jerusalem. It was the middle of one summer night when we heard a loud knock at the door. All the members of my family trembled with fear. The door was opened and soldiers with machine guns on their shoulders entered and asked to see me. I did not hide. I yielded myself. Before I was taken away, the Israeli captain handed my mother a warrant demanding immediate evacuation of the house. Since then the house has been sealed and my family has lived in Bethany. Recently, however, I was able to get permission from the Israeli military authorities to reopen our old house in the Old City. Now we are renovating it. We will move in within four or five months.

What were conditions like in prison?

Life in prison is very special but very difficult. I had to pass through three stages. The first stage was the investigation period. This was the most difficult stage because I was under constant exposure to severe physical and psychological torture. It lasted about three months. The duration of the investigation period usually depends on the kind of information investigators wish to extort from the prisoner. At the end charges were filed against me. I was sentenced to seven years imprisonment.

I can fight against occupation by staying in the land and bringing up a family.

In the second stage I was detained in a temporary prison for about a month. I spent the time preparing myself psychologically to the kind of life I expected to have in prison. There was no torture during this stage which was a great relief to me.

Finally was the actual term of imprisonment at the central prison. I was taken to Ashkelon prison. Life in the third stage was like an undeclared truce between prisoners and the prison administration. Each kept their limits in order to avoid clashes.

Were there prisoners with you belonging to other political parties who tried to put some kind of pressure on you to change your political affiliation? What was your reaction?

Generally, the nature of the political organization I belonged to was leftist-Marxist. This was an obstacle for the religious parties especially Hamas and Islamic Jihad. They thought of me as a man of no religion. On the other hand, I was approached by some members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad who tempted me by saying if I would become one of them I could be liberated through the prisoners exchange deals between Israel and Hizbullah. We all know about the strong ties between Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hizbullah.

Did they know you were a Christian?

Everybody knew I was a Christian. While in prison I observed my religious duties without offending others lest I would be misjudged by them. Christianity offered me consolation in difficult times. However, in many occasions I was compelled to engage in heated discussions on religion with other prisoners. The discussions were extremely pointless and futile.

Furthermore, Muslim prisoners used to tell me it was a pity I was a Christian. They asked: "How could a Christian fight for his country? In fact, what did Christians have to do at all with Palestine? How can a Christian resist?" Even Jewish wardens used to tell me I was a Christian not a Palestinian. On the whole I was very proud that as a Palestinian Christian I had a lot to offer to my country just like my Muslim brothers.

You were in prison for a political reason. After you left prison and returned to normal life, did you notice any discrepancy between the political reality, the aspirations you had in prison and those of life outside prison?

Life in prison was not totally disconnected from life outside. For this reason prisoners felt extremely disappointed and despondent after the peace process, because they had allowed the Palestinian leaders to negotiate for them. Prisoners felt there was no value for any principle. They felt all their liberation activities were for nothing. Even after the peace process prisoners still suffer in Israeli prisons and Palestinians suffer under Israeli occupation.

Do I understand that you are not happy with the peace process?

I am not happy, and I do not think I am the only one in that.

What do you think then is another feasible solution to end the state of war between Israel and Palestine?

Peace is the only solution. But it has to be peace between two equal parties in order for it to be just. Israel is taking advantage of its military might. Once might interferes there will be no peace. Instead of military might there should be constructive dialogue between Israel and Palestine because what is good for Palestinians is also good for Israelis and vice versa.

Now that you have started a new life, what is your future vision of it?

I would like to live my life in total simplicity. My mother and my wife are the most important aspects of my life now. I have a beautiful wife and she and I are encouraging ourselves to begin life anew. I have a good job that I do not wish to lose. I am now convinced that in addition to liberation activities there are other ways of fighting against occupation. Steadfastness. I can fight against occupation by staying in the land and bringing up a family.

Any final statement you would like to add?

I say to Israelis and Palestinians: Stick to peace, nourish it in your hearts and in your children's hearts. Give future generations the hope for a better life. It is always better to have neighbors living in peace than in animosity.

Sammy Kirreh, from Jerusalem, gained his MA in English Literature at Brigham Young University. He is currently lecturing in English at Bethlehem University and is a regular contributor to the Jerusalem Times, with a bi-weekly column on contemporary Palestinian literature.

[Contents](#)

A Gap in Time

by Marc Ellis

On 9 April 1948, Jewish soldiers attacked the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin, west of Jerusalem, and massacred 254 inhabitants. This tragic event, the Deir Yassin

Massacre, caused massive fear in other villages, leading to a mass exodus of Palestinians. The Israeli neighborhood of Givat Shaul was built on the ruins of Deir Yassin.

On April 12, 1997, Prof. Marc H. Ellis gave a presentation at Sabeel entitled "A Gap in Time," reflecting on the 49th Anniversary of Deir Yassin Massacre. A Jewish Theologian with numerous publications, Prof. Ellis spoke about what the Massacre means for him. Following is a summary of his presentation by George Sahhar.

The massacre itself, in its meaning and consequences, continues today. Forty-nine years after the massacre, Palestinians are still not free. Palestinian land is still occupied and the Palestinian diaspora grows in numbers and in longevity. Many Palestinians experience the "autonomy" of Oslo as a pretense for a further diminution of Palestinian life.

To create a Jewish State in an Arab country and region was impossible without violence, and the massacre at Deir Yassin stands out only in the extent of violence and the fact that the violence escalated with the surrender of the villagers.

From the perspective of Palestinian history, the savagery at Deir Yassin was felt throughout Palestine as an extreme example of what Palestinians experienced at the hands of Jewish soldiers. In some sense, almost the entire experience of Palestinians at the hands of Jews and the Jewish State can be found in these two events: the military and its excess, conquering of land and villages, displacement of civilians on a mass scale, disruption and in many cases the ending of a rooted and cultured life in the land of Palestine. This is the horror of Deir Yassin: Jews have disrupted and ended the ordinary lives of the Palestinian people.

These events rend the fabric of a people's history in ways that are as horrific to the actual victims and can outlive those who were present at the event itself. The formative event of destruction becomes a collective wound through which a history of a people is felt and articulated.

The memory of Deir Yassin as part of the fabric of Palestinian history awaits its final mission and destination. The question of how Deir Yassin will function in Palestinian memory and life is both independent of and to some extent dependent on how this memory functions in Jewish life. For a wound in a people's history is two-sided; those who are wounded and those who wound. Usually we think of the wounded as responsible for their own healing, as if the perpetrator lives a history divorced from that violation. But is this the case?

Who among Jews remember the tragedy? In mainstream Jewish writing one searches in vain for references to Deir Yassin. If mentioned at all, it is in a context that buries the tragedy in the struggle for the creation of the state of Israel, a goal, at least to these writers, that far outweighs the tragedy which befell a village and a people. How else could those responsible for dislocation and death - Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir, Yitzhak Rabin and David Ben-Gurion - emerge as heroes and ultimately prime ministers?

Without the recognition of a shared history, how can a joint recognition of the importance of Deir Yassin to both Palestinians and Jews be recognized? For at Deir Yassin something happened in Jewish history. Jews, a diaspora and suffering people, created, for their own survival and advancement, a diaspora and suffering people, the effects of which have yet to be recognized almost half a century later.

There were Jews who spoke about the issue of Deir Yassin, people such as Martin Buber and Simha Flapan. Buber wrote a moving letter to Ben-Gurion about the massacre, labeling the event as "black stain on the honor of the Jewish nation" and imploring him to prevent the resettlement of Deir Yassin by Jews, as this would amount to an "endorsement of, or at least an acquiescence with, the massacre." Ben-Gurion did not respond to the letter, and a decade later Buber recalled this event as "our own crime, or my own crime, of the crime of the Jews against the spirit. Even today I cannot think about it without feeling myself guilty."

If history is only seen as a continuum, a "flow of uninterrupted succession," then the powerful are victorious and the defeated are consigned to oblivion, until, of course, they rise up and defeat the powerful and assume their place. History as a flow of uninterrupted succession is to accent to a cycle of brutality that is without beginning and end. At the same time that cycle is without appeal, to humanity or even to God. For if history is without interruption, then morality, ethics, faith, is simply an exercise without possibility, a piety without substance.

Only by taking a stand against this continuum, by taking a "stand against past and future," can a point of reference be established which allows for a reckoning and a new beginning. In this "gap in time" we can make judgments, reconsider our history, and resolve to take another road.

The history of atrocity suggests that at some point the combatants become weary of battle and, as the corpses pile higher and higher, more and more people seek another way of living with one another, a way of justice and compassion. At different moments the "gap in time" seems more propitious, as if the continuum has been broken. Those moments are sometimes found in celebration and at other times in mourning and commemoration. When those moments are seized and acted upon, it is

like a deep cry of history has been heard. On the forty ninth anniversary of Deir Yassin, one of those moments is upon us, awaiting our decision.

George Sahhar, a regular Sabeel speaker, is director of international relations at the Ministry of Education.

[Contents](#)

BOOKS

The Bible and Colonialism: A Moral Critique

Michael Prior C.M.

The biblical traditions of God's gift of land to Abraham and his descendents (Genesis), and the narratives of subsequent mandates to take possession of it and cleanse it of its inhabitants (Exodus-Joshua), has fuelled virtually every form of Western colonialism. Dr. Prior's study demonstrates how the biblical account has been used to justify the conquest of land in different regions and at different periods, focusing on the Spanish and Portuguese colonization and settlement of Latin America, the white settlement in southern Africa, and most recently the Zionist conquest and settlement in Palestine.

These biblical traditions pose a moral problem when viewed by the standards of international law and conventional human rights. Yet, biblical scholars, in their concentration on questions of historical and literary criticism, pay virtually no attention to the ethical dimensions of the discussion. For their part, scholars of human rights eschew any reference to the God-question, while acknowledging perfunctorily the link between God and the land, while political scientists discuss the issue purely in terms of political power and interests. What results is a series of truncated discourses, each peddling its own grasp of wisdom, with none respecting the complexity of the total question.

The particular perspective of this study is the moral question which arises on consideration of the impact which conquest and settlement have had on the indigenous populations. While it is novel to subject traditions of the Bible to an evaluation which derives from general ethical principles, Dr. Prior argues that such an enterprise is not only legitimate, but necessary. When a people is dispossessed, dispersed and humiliated by others not only with alleged divine support, but at the alleged express command of God, one's moral self recoils in horror. Any association of God with the

destruction of people must be subjected to an ethical analysis. The obvious contradiction between what some claim to be God's will and ordinary civilized, decent be, poses the question as to whether God is a chauvinistic, nationalistic and militaristic xenophobe. The author argues for a way of reading the traditions which rescues the Bible from being a blunt instrument of oppression, and acquits god of being the Great Ethnic-Cleanser.

Already Dr. Prior's pioneering work has won international acclaim from anthropologists, philosophers, biblical scholars and theologians, among others.

The book (ISBN 1-85075-815-8) is available from booksellers, or directly from the publishers: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., Mansion House, 19 Kingfield Road, Sheffield S11 9AS, UK; phone: 44 114 255-4433; fax: 44 114 255-4626; email: admin@sheffac.demon.co.uk

JERUSALEM:

WHAT MAKES FOR PEACE!

A Palestinian Christian Contribution to Peacemaking

edited by

Naim Ateek, Cedar Duaybis and Marla Schrader

PRICE: £12.50 MELISENDE ISBN: 1 90176400 1

This volume contains papers given at *Sabeel's* 1996 Jerusalem conference on 'The Significance of Jerusalem for Christians and of Christians for Jerusalem'. Participants came from both Palestine and overseas to discuss this complex and urgent issue.

The aim was to raise the consciousness of the international community about Christian concerns for the future status of the Holy City. Furthermore, it sought, as

recorded in this work, to foster relationships, and to stand in solidarity with Palestinian Christians at this critical time.

The papers published here cover a wide range of pressing matters, which not only emphasize the complexity of the problem, but also express a prophetic vision for a just a lasting peace in Palestine and Israel.

Available from booksellers, at Sabeel Center in Jerusalem, Friends of Sabeel - [North America](#) or direct from the publishers:

Fox Communications and Publications
39 Chelmsford Road, London E18 2PW
tel: 0181 498 9768/fax: 0181 504 2558
Add £1.80 postage and packing UK/
£2.51 postage and packing overseas

Sabeel's Third International Conference

The Challenge of Jubilee

What Does God Require?

10-15 February 1998

Bethlehem