



Sabeel hopes and prays that 1999 will be a happy, blessed and peaceful year for all.

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Human Rights and Human Wrongs by *Jean Zaru*

International Human Rights Organizations all over the world are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is ironic from a Palestinian perspective. Palestinians living both inside and outside of their own country have been suffering from the burden of human rights violations just the same number of years. The Palestinian refugee situation in Palestine and elsewhere, is deplorable and the Oslo accords have not gotten down to discussing the right of return or compensation of refugees.

The fifty years since the establishment of Israel, and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights have seen the systematic violation of Palestinian national and individual rights. In theory, both international human rights conventions and international humanitarian law guaranteed the rights of Palestinians, in practice the situation has been rather different. Palestine was transformed from being the home of the Palestinian people to becoming the State of Israel. Though small parts of mandated Palestine remained under Arab rule, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip; these parts were to fall under Israeli occupation in 1967. The United Nations' Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947 resulted in our

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dispossession rather than our independence. We call the events of 1948 "Al-Nakbah," the catastrophe.

Since the 1948 Nakbah, Arabs and Palestinians sought the support of the United Nations to protect our rights. As we can clearly see, Palestinian refugees are still in refugee camps. Palestinian land is continuously and illegally expropriated for the exclusive use and benefit of Jewish immigrants. Massacres have been committed and extra-judicial murders against Palestinians by Zionist organizations, as well as by government forces still happen today. Israel is continuing its violations of our rights, including the killing of civilians, torture, denial of the right to freedom of movement, denial of the right of return to one's own country, and denial of family rights, including family unification and reunification.

According to international law, the conquest of territory by war is illegal. Therefore, under occupation Palestinian civilians enjoy the status of protected persons, but the reality is a completely different story. Thirty-one years have passed since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. Despite Israel's gross violation of our rights and our human dignity nothing has changed.

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It seems that either international law and the community of states are not in a position to stop this human tragedy or there is no willingness to do so. While the whole international community, except Israel recognizes that we are victims of ongoing violations, no significant pressure, such as economic sanctions for example, is applied to the culprit.

I am tempted to ask, "Why is it so?" Are we children of a lesser God? Or, is international law - an expression of the norms developed and accepted by civilized nations - so weak that it cannot provide us with shelter against Israel's illegal policies and human rights violations? Or, is it that the weakness comes from the fact that Palestine's occupier is granted a special status? After all, the international community provided protection to civilian populations in other instances, such as, Kuwait, Haiti and former Yugoslavia.

We in the occupied Palestinian territories, as protected persons, are entitled to respect for our persons, our dignity, our family rights, religious convictions and practices, manners and customs. We should be treated and protected against all acts of violence, or threats, or insults. We still have no sovereignty. Most of our land is being expropriated for Jewish settlements and the transfer of Israeli populations into the West Bank and Gaza, which is illegal according to International law, is still going on. House demolitions and confiscation of Jerusalem identity cards have increased since the Likud government took over. Even torture is legalized in Israel, and sanctioned by the parliament, the government and the high court of justice.

What about the right to health, education, worship, and the right to movement within one's own country? The closure of Jerusalem and Israel to the West Bank and Gaza, the lack of connection between Gaza and the West Bank, the restriction of movement

between the north and south of the West Bank, all of these things make it difficult to move anywhere. We need a permit to leave the occupied territories to travel outside the borders.

Human rights are indivisible and interdependent. Economic and social rights are essential and fundamental, and are indivisible from civil and political rights. The closure is another instrument of social political and economic strangulation of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories, because it does not only restrict the movement of people, but also of goods and vehicles. All the above mentioned violations are human

settlement expansion, and increasing land confiscation measures aimed at judaizing Jerusalem, and the creation of facts on the ground that violate international law and human rights. Peace cannot be achieved unless it is based on freedom, justice and the removal of historical oppression inflicted on the Palestinian people. Our internationally recognized rights, as affirmed in relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, also need to be realized. These resolutions call for the end of occupation, condemn the illegal annexation of Jerusalem, and affirm the illegality of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Israel is not above the law and measures should be taken against their policies.

The only agreements that are capable of bringing about a permanent peace are those that guarantee an end to occupation and realize justice for Palestine, together with guaranteeing the right of return, or compensation for Palestinian refugees.

It is only a matter of time before the population between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River will be half Israeli Jewish, half Palestinian Arab. The Jewish Israelis are free and we are not. We are not equal. The well being of the two parties is very interrelated. Peace and respect for Palestinian human rights is not only for the sake of Palestinians. It is desired for the

sake of humanity and humankind. Ending Israeli occupation of the West Bank including Jerusalem and Gaza conforms not only to the requirements of international law and justice, but also with the future peace and stability of the Middle East and the world.

Our common future as Israelis and Palestinians makes it inevitable for us to try to heal the traumas of the past, right the wrongs of today, and build a better future for all. A future, to which we apply a universal morality emanating from our God, measured by a simple standard of

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Deportation by Aminah Kazak

*Before they came for me
I took my voice and hid it under the dawn
so they found only my bleeding mouth, my broken
hands, my eyes empty of vision*

*They traveled
to every corner of my country,
frustration building
The sound of my voice split their heads like thunder,
my agony pumped through their veins*

*Later they took my bleeding mouth, my broken hands,
my eyes empty of vision
and threw them past the horizon
So I left them with a voice
singing its song of love for my country
which they will never understand
never embrace and never possess.*

wrongs which stand in the way of one right and abundant life. "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10b).

The passage of time and the gross violations of our human rights have not taken our resolve to regain our rights. Legitimized and recognized by the international community, our struggle for peace is based on justice and international legitimacy. I hope that all the friends of truth, justice and ultimate peace will confront the illegal Israeli policies which obstruct the realization of a just peace. These policies include

Is international law so weak that it cannot provide us with shelter against Israel's illegal policies and human rights violations?

Human Rights Are God Given Rights *by Naim Ateek*

'Divine Rights' Versus Human Rights

Many Christians would like to think that the church, over the last 2000 years, has always championed human rights, stood on the side of the oppressed, and used the Bible in a way that promoted the dignity and respect of human beings. At a closer look we are shocked and astonished that, for most periods of history, the hierarchy of the church did not do so. Human rights were not always recognized as essential. For many church leaders, the recognition of divine rights had greater priority. Humans, it was believed, have no rights, they have duties.

Throughout Christendom, church hierarchies believed that the king was endowed with divine mandate to govern. Some kings were explicit in the claim that their authority was derived from God and not from the church or people. The people's primary duty was loyalty and obedience to the throne. This theology, which promoted the divine right of the sovereign while at the same time emphasized the duties of the subjects, was pervasively held by many church hierarchies. In retrospect, it seems amazing that the leadership of the church whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant rejected the concept of human rights and only stressed divine rights.

It was only after the increasing pressure of the masses had become so great that church leadership began to change. The French Revolution of 1789 is considered by many scholars as the great watershed which began to turn people's attention towards the importance of upholding human rights. Unfortunately, it was only in the wake of the Second World War that human rights issues began to be taken more seriously and eventually led to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. From then on, a good number of church leaders and ecumenical groups have been in the forefront of the struggle for human rights and have even led that struggle.

It is significant to reflect that so often in the history of the church, instead of

being the avant-garde of change, we trailed behind. Instead of being prophetic, we succumbed to state theology. Instead of standing up and championing the rights and dignity of people, we remained silent. So often, instead of using the Bible as a source of inspiration in the struggle for justice and peace, we affirmed the status quo and shackled the word of God. And more often, it was only when the cry from the margin and periphery had become so loud and clear that we began to see things in a new light and slowly changed. What was lacking was the inner freedom and spiritual acumen and courage that should have caused us to risk all in order to be faithful to God. We need, therefore, to give thanks to God for all those people, who whether from within the church or outside of it, have dared to dissent, to lift the voice of truth, and to take a stand for others even at the risk of persecution and death.

It is important to point out that the dynamic tension between 'divine' and human rights is not yet over. Those of us who live in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict can testify to this. Many Israeli settlers show greater interest in what they call 'divine rights' than human rights. In their tenacious hold on 'divine rights', they have no qualms about infringing upon the human rights of Palestinians. They look to certain passages in the Bible as divinely allotting the whole land of Palestine as an eternal inheritance to the Jewish people. Therefore, if the implementation of this mandated 'divine right' happens to infringe upon the human rights of Palestinians, so be it; since in the final analysis, they believe that divine rights

For people of faith, human rights are at the center of God's concern and focus in the Bible, provided the central message of God's love is taken seriously.

take precedence over human rights.

The Bible is, at one and the same time, the most wonderful and yet the most dangerous book in the world. On the one hand, we use it to praise God and proclaim the Good News of God's love in Christ for all people. On the other hand, it can be abused by supporting and justifying injustice and oppression of people. It is amazing that throughout history people have read what they wanted in the Bible. It was used by many to support their greed and prejudice. One only needs to reflect on the way we have used it to justify wars, slavery, colonialism, apartheid, discrimination against women and so many other evils. May God have mercy on us.

I believe that the time has come when we must consistently reject any such misuse of the Bible. For us Christians, it must be read from its center, Christ, who affirmed and honored all people and especially the outcasts and the marginalized of society. It must be understood from the outlook and the position of an inclusive God who cares and respects the freedom and dignity of every human being.

Interestingly enough, the Bible does not use the term "human rights" and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) does not mention the name of God. But for people of faith, human rights are at the center of God's concern and focus in the Bible provided the central message of God's love is taken seriously. Similarly, the name of God is implied in every sentence of the UDHR both as a judgment as well as a blessing. As a judgment because we have, for so long, dishonored God through our abuse of God's creation and in the way we have breached and violated the humanity of our brothers and sisters. As a blessing because we are honoring God in the adoption, and hopefully enforcement, of the UDHR with its fundamental recognition that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights....". Therefore, we see the UDHR not only as an expression of what the

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United Nations have been able to produce in the post war era but as a document that honors God and stands at the center of God's concern for all people.

It is noteworthy that the UN has not stopped with the UDHR but has issued additional conventions which are equally important and need to be enforced. These include the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Although not all governments have ratified these conventions, they make up an important corpus of documents which advance human rights.

A Theological Basis for Human Rights

There are two fundamental theological bases on which our belief in human rights rest:

The first is the commandment of love. Our Lord Jesus Christ has made it abundantly clear that the biblical injunction to love God and love others stand as the summary of all religious teaching. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37). To love others is the natural extension of the love of God. And without love of neighbor, love of God is a lie (1 John 4:20-21). To make it extremely sharp, Jesus extended the definition of the neighbor to one's enemy. In the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus demonstrated that the one who behaved as neighbor to the Jewish victim was a Samaritan, his nationalist enemy (Luke 10:25-37). The robbers in the story are the guilty violators of human rights. The priest and levite represent those people who witness

the violations but are not ready to do anything about it. The Samaritan represents those who take a stand and risk their lives to extend a helping hand to those whose rights have been encroached upon even though they are a deadly enemy.

Furthermore, it is clear in the New Testament that our love for others must stem from our love of God. Our love of God is a response to God's unconditional love for us. "We love [God] because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19; see also Romans 13:8-10). From a faith perspective, human rights find their source in God, otherwise, the Incarnation does not make sense. The Incarnation, in essence, expresses God's love for the world to the extent of being willing to enter into their humanity and to identify with it. This means that God not only honors and sanctifies humanity

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in the Incarnation, but also confers on it God given rights. These rights include life itself, lived fully and abundantly, freedom and liberty, peace and security, respect and dignity. In other words, in order for humans to realize their full humanity, it is essential that their human rights which are ultimately God-given rights must be fully honored and upheld for all equally, regardless of the masks and stamps that have been placed on them by others.

What is at stake, in loving one's neighbor as one's self, is the measure of true self-love. With the exception of a few who, for severe psychological illness find it difficult or are incapable of loving themselves, most people know what it means to love one's self as a true measure for loving others. In all these cases, the Golden Rule can be applied and practiced as a way of upholding the rights of others as well as being able to

overcome one's selfish tendencies to harm others. Once the basic humanity of all is affirmed and instilled in peoples' hearts and minds as well as in their psyche, the simple formula of the Golden Rule can work well, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you" (Matthew 7:12). This rule, in essence, translates the injunction into daily practice, "love your neighbor as yourself". This will, surely, guarantee the respect of human rights and guards against their infringements.

A second basis for human rights stems from the doctrine of creation. "We believe in one God creator of heaven and earth, and of all things seen and unseen..." The doctrine of creation is an important basis for the unity and equality of all human beings. They are born in the image and likeness of God. This means that regardless of race, color, ethnic background, language, sex, creed, social or economic status, they are all born in the image of God, and, therefore, entitled to freedom and equality. "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them..." (Genesis 1:27-28a).

There is a wonderful verse in the book of Acts which is pertinent in this regard. The Apostle Peter says to the people gathered in the house of Cornelius in Jaffa, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). When we remove the different masks which we have accumulated over the years, the masks of ethnicity, nationalism, sectarianism, denominationalism and all other masks, underneath it all is a human being created in the image of God. This is the great common denominator. This common humanity is God's gift to all of us. Its dignity and worth have been affirmed, as mentioned above, in, through, and because of the Incarnation.

Traditionally, we have tended to evaluate things on the basis of Scripture. It is still a valid approach. But in the case of the UDHR and other conventions on

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Thoughts from Jerusalem on the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights *by Tom Getman*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. The senior editor of the Washington Post, Stephen Rosenfeld, calls it "the sweetest document of the century". Because, he says, "it has brought an incalculable sum of comfort, relief and dignity to people under abuse or threat".

However, as residents of Jerusalem when we think of human rights, it causes conflict in our hearts. "The sweetest document" has yet to have a sufficient impact here. We know that Peace on Earth cannot be accomplished when individual, ethnic or religious human rights are violated in part or whole. In fact, if any person or group is having their rights violated all humankind is diminished and put at risk. Underlining this reality the preamble of the UN

Declaration, Resolution 217, even acknowledges that "it is essential, if a man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law".

United Nation's Conventions on Human Rights seem sadly not to reduce but mainly highlight that rights of whole groups of people are NOT respected. The force of international law makes the human made suffering more apparent rather than seeming to have the power to reduce the suffering. In the political realm it appears that the more one focuses attention on the violations, the more likely that offending government leaders or whole countries rise up to deepen their oppression! Maybe it seems that way because conventions and resolutions, and even appeals in Scripture "to love one another", have the power to set off contrary forces in stony souls. It certainly keeps us cognizant that the human heart is deceitfully wicked. We do not

seem to be able to sort these intractable realities out. Rather we, and our political structures and leaders need to be sorted out by common cause or transcendent energy. Isn't it sad that we are often shocked by the cruelty of those who submit to "principalities and powers from the very headquarters of evil" but we are rarely surprised?

On the 50th Anniversary of the Declaration, it is good for each of us in our own situations to reflect on the various appropriate Articles... consider these excerpts:

Article 1. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Article 2. "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this

If any individual or religious group is having their rights violated all humankind is diminished and put at risk.

Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

Article 3. "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Article 5. "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Article 7. "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law."

Article 9. "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

Article 11. "Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to the law in a public trial."

Article 12. "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor or reputation."

Article 18. "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to

change his religion or belief."

Article 20. "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association."

Article 23. "Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work... the right to equal pay for equal work."

Reading and pondering the Articles in the context of Palestine/Israel leaves me a bit weak in the knees. How about you? Each of us here knows very personally about terrible abuses of ID confiscations, home demolitions, land seizures, administrative detentions, torture, extrajudicial killings, and police violence. How I pray that the litany of violations of these Articles right here in our own

neighborhoods will not be the "essential" compelling "last resort...to rebellion against tyranny and

oppression". How one must hope and pray that political leaders in both Israel and Palestine will have the grace to create a more human rights-sensitive commonwealth.

I shared recently some of the details of the troubled Israeli/Palestinian relationship with former Ambassador Herbert Beukes from South Africa. He dared in 1987 to go out on the steps of his embassy in Washington, after one of the cruel township massacres in Johannesburg, and tell the media that his government's actions were "immoral". He said, "It has such a familiar ring to the South African ear and reminds me of so much wasted pain and suffering. It remains a mystery that people who are caught up in race/ethnic/religious conflicts (e.g.: South Africa and Ireland) can see the wrongs and futility of their ways so clearly after a solution and yet fail to recognize the same signs at the time the wrongs occur. A healthy proportion of responsibility must be attributed to the

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leadership for protracting conflicts that may long since have ceased to be conflicts in the minds of the public. Unless credible leadership with integrity commits itself to the rightness and justness of a cause and challenges the prejudice within its own group it will be very difficult to break down the wall of self delusion that gives comfort and protection to the wrongs of your beliefs."

In the practical everyday experience the Declaration causes a great functional ambiguity for humanitarian agencies such as World Vision, Christian Peacemaker Teams, Catholic Relief Service and Mennonite Central Committee, when we seek to intervene in the suffering of our friends and project partners. We respond to Jesus' inaugural admonition (Luke 4), and many other of the over 400 injunctions, to meet the needs of the poor and oppressed. But we often discover to our horror that we are actually providing a "fig leaf" for oppressors to keep violating human rights because we relieve the pressure just enough to keep society from boiling over with despairing anger and violence, in "last resort rebellion." Op-

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pressive regimes, often with the rationale of religious mandates, in fact turn up the heat and add to the pressure. We in our own way seek to live out the spiritual mandate of the Gospels so that the Kingdom of God is built, rather than a political kingdom on earth. The inevitable conflict of value systems argues persuasively for the need for a Universal Declaration . . . yet its application is spotty and difficult.

behavior and valid for all people in all lands. Let us celebrate these universal standards expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by expressing our will to implement these rights everywhere.

The occasion of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the UDHR should not merely recall the momentous advance made fifty years ago. This anniversary should make us all resolve to ensure that its terms are respected everywhere. Although I live ten miles from the Holy City, it requires considerable hope for me to say, "Next year in Jerusalem."

Jean Zaru is the Presiding Clerk of the Society of Friends in Ramallah, West Bank and Vice President of Sabeel.

Metamorphosis by Hanan Mikha'il 'Ashrawi

Ramallah, June 10, 1989

The Day Yasser was shot his mother turned to stone; draped with the flag, his makeshift shroud, she held her ground at the deserted town square. Each chilly dawn she clutched a torch of modest flowers - jasmine, daisies and roses from her garden - while bewildered soldiers driving by, returning from their night shift, wondered at the mist - clad apparition vaguely reminiscent of a statue somewhere.

The Night before Raja was shot the lights went out; his mother lit a lamp muttering in anger at her superstitious fear of omens. A hastily painted name on the Martyr's Wall, next day, unraveled his substance before her very eyes, and she reached out and touched his asence. Carved out, hollowed/hallowed in the dark - filled womb she turned and shed what little remained and calmly transformed herself into a night vision.

So if the commitments of international conventions and individual convictions don't seem to turn the tide but only intensify the focus, must we despair of our efforts and slip like so many into the modern consumer rendition of "eat, drink and be merry"? God forbid.

Testimony to the right of every human individual to basic amenities and caring treatment as a Child of God has inherent within it redemptive power for our own souls and our immediate communities, if nothing more. And all of us in the field of "human rights documentation", emergency intervention, and development assistance, find that the "face of Jesus" is so often discovered in those who suffer oppression. "The Word becomes flesh" in poignant encounters, and civilization, albeit in tatters, holds together as a result.

Desmond Tutu has said that for the Christian who witnesses for Christ in a situation of injustice, oppression, and exploitation, redemptive suffering is the unavoidable result: "When we make the so-called preferential option for the poor, when we become the voice of the voiceless ones; when we stand in solidarity with the hungry and the homeless, the uprooted ones and the downtrodden, those that are marginalized, we must not be surprised that the world will hate us...and yet, another part of the world will love us."

If there has to be a choice would we not want to be loved by those who are hurt, rather than those that do the hurting? Human rights are somehow wrapped up more in that reality than in laws or Conventions or

in international courts, as important, even crucial, as they are. All of us have seen personally the quality of men's and women's lives who give themselves without regard for self-preservation, and do it with joy, such as Bishop Desmond and Mother Teresa. I am convinced that the focus on human rights is one of the tools God uses to keep us from descending into hopeless chaos and personal self-

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Peacekeeping in Hebron - Is that Possible? *by Hans Morck*

It has been my good fortune to be posted with the mission of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) since February 1998. Prior to coming to Hebron I spent several months, on and off, in Bosnia during 1996/97, working for the OSCE on election issues. I was scheduled to go back to Bosnia in January 98, but was then asked by the Danish foreign office to go to Hebron instead. I was not too happy about that to begin with, since I had been looking forward to going back to seeing my old friends in Bosnia, where there is still a lot of unfinished business that needs taking care of. However, I must admit that my stay here in Palestine has given me, not only many new friends, but also an insight into a world I only knew through the newspapers, the history books and the Bible. It has been quite an eye opener to be in Palestine for eleven months, so far, to see for myself what is going on in this part of the world, the cradle of the three monotheistic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. To have easy access to Jerusalem - the City much coveted through the ages by Kings, Emperors, Sultans and Presidents - has been a great privilege for me - this city, which, despite its absence of any economic or military value, continues to play its traditional symbolic role and at the same time it presents the peace negotiators in the Arab-Israeli conflict with the ultimate test of ingenuity and political will.

As part of this peace keeping process the 'Temporary International Presence in Hebron', called TIPH for short, was established on 1st February 1997 in its present form, upon the invitation of the two sides of the conflict, the Israeli State and the Palestine Liberation Organization. This is an interesting form of peace-keeping activity consisting of completely unarmed observers, 110 in all, from six nations: Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. This observer force is very diversified, consisting of police officers, military personnel, academics, Arabic and Hebrew speakers as well as administrative staff. However, the majority of those performing observer

duties are active police officers. The Head of Mission is always a Norwegian Chief of Police and the other posts in the organization are divided among the six nations in accordance with a mutual agreement.

Hebron is a large City with approximately 130,000 inhabitants. The Oslo II Accord called for a division of Hebron into two security zones, one controlled by the Palestinian Authority and the other by the Israelis. TIPH must therefore be seen in conjunction with this partial transfer of territorial control and security responsibility. With the signing of the Hebron Protocol in January 1997 Israel implemented the redeployment of its security forces from the larger part of

It is only by engaging - in some way or another - in the promotion of justice and peace that we can begin to appreciate the significance of God's cosmic covenant with mankind as a whole.

Hebron with approximately 110,000 inhabitants. However, Israel maintains full control over the smaller but central part of the city with approximately 20,000 Palestinian inhabitants - the part where four small Jewish enclaves have been established housing only a few hundred people. From a government point of view Hebron is divided into two parts, but it functions as one city with regard to the freedom of movement. Hebron has no apparent 'Berlin Wall', but checkpoints on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides, marking the dividing line in several places, which can easily be turned into effective barriers in case of tension or security threats.

It is not TIPH's task to monitor the implementation of the Hebron Protocol as such or any other formal agreement between the two parties. Nor is TIPH a human rights organization working for the international community in order to

safeguard international law. UN resolutions or the like. The essence of TIPH's mandate is: to assist in monitoring and reporting the efforts to maintain normal life in the city of Hebron, thus creating a feeling of security among the Palestinians living there. Thus, the TIPH Mission is here to assist the two sides in carrying out their jointly expressed will to maintain normal life in Hebron with the purpose of safeguarding the Palestinians. The Jewish inhabitants are not mentioned in the mandate. TIPH may base its reporting on internationally recognized human rights standards, an aspect that induces the observers to closely monitor the treatment of civilians by military and police personnel, be they Israeli or Palestinian.

The Arab Israeli conflict as played out in Hebron, has received extensive media coverage worldwide for several years - starting with the massacre of the twenty-nine Muslim worshippers in 1994 by a Jewish settler. The City has earned the reputation of being a hot spot of violence, riots and extremism on both sides.

Hebron is a microcosm of the Palestinian/Israeli problem with the Jewish settlers, heavily guarded by Israeli soldiers, and living among Palestinians in the downtown area. Consequently, tension is constant, confrontation common place and violence latent - just beneath the surface. Sudden outbursts occur time and time again. Stone throwing, if not a daily event, is common place, instigated by Palestinian youths, directed at Israeli soldiers, who at times react by firing back rubber coated metal bullets back, which may cause serious damage and even death.

There are also a number of individual confrontations, usually between Palestinians and Jewish settlers. Harassment by Jewish settlers against their Palestinian neighbors without the Israeli Police reacting in defense of the Palestinians. Palestinians are frequently checked and detained by Israeli soldiers in ways that cause much consternation, resent-

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An Open Letter to President Clinton *by Samia and Yousef Khoury*

The following letter demonstrates the legalized political injustices experienced by the Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli government. Please help us to raise awareness about this matter.

December 12, 1998

Dear President Clinton,

Welcome to the Holy Land. We know you have a busy schedule but we appeal to you to take a few minutes to read our letter and hopefully to help us resurrect our daughter's Identity Card from the tombs of the Israeli Ministry of Interior. After all, this is the Land of Resurrection. It is also a paradoxical Land because of the absurdity of the logic and narrative that prevails. By some mysterious way we can be present and absent at the same time. Yet we have not lost hope in justice and peace, and our faith has sustained us through the hard and long years of occupation.

Because we know you are genuinely interested in bringing about peace and justice in the Middle East, we are seizing the opportunity of your historic visit to the region to beg you to intervene to redress the grave injustice that has been inflicted upon our daughter Dina.

Dina was born in Jerusalem in 1961 and has always lived in Jerusalem. Even when she was studying nursing in London at the School of Florence Nightingale, she used to come home every three months. In 1984 she married an American citizen, Yousef Nasser, and they have three children, all born in Jerusalem. As far as the Israeli Ministry of Interior is concerned, Dina and her three children ceased to exist when in reality we are still blessed with their presence around us in flesh and blood. When her youngest son was born in April 1995 she could not register him in her Identity Card and was told she should register him with his father. And when later on in February 96 she went again to the Ministry of Interior to request the renewal of her travel document, both her travel document and her identity card were confiscated at the Ministry and never returned to her up to this day. In the meantime, she gave her case to an Israeli lawyer. After one year he regretted that he could not do anything because he was told that the right of residency in Jerusalem was a political issue. Dina is one of hundreds of Palestinian women who have been deprived of their right of residency in Jerusalem since the Oslo Accord, because their husbands are not from Jerusalem. If this is the outcome of Peace, we dread to think what it would be like in times of War.

Dina was refused the reunification of her husband three times under the pretext that only a man can request the reunification of his wife. Of course, a Jewish wife can reunify her husband irrespective of where he comes from. And the status of a Jewish woman is never affected by the citizenship or residency of her husband. She may live outside Israel and obtain citizenship of two or three other countries without losing any of her rights either in Israel or in any of the other countries.

The USA administration considers Israel to be the only democracy in the Middle East. How can democracy apply to one faith only when this Land has a population of two other faiths as well? We ask you dear sir, what democratic procedures can allow a woman to be deprived of her right of residency in the city of her birth, and the center of her life? Dina is the Deputy Field Nursing Officer at the Head quarters of the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA). She maintains a flat in Jerusalem and pays its municipality tax (arnona). Yet when the municipality elections took place she discovered that she had no name. It is only in this paradoxical "Holy Land" that you can exist for tax purposes and to cease to exist when you have rights!!!

Please help us to regain Dina's rights, and the rights of her children. And our best wishes for you and your family for a blessed Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

Yours sincerely,
Yousef and Samia Khoury

(Yousef Khoury is a Palestinian Civil Engineer and his wife Samia is a member of the board of Sabeel.)

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Human Rights, we need to evaluate Scripture in light of them. In fact, I believe that every religion must look at its doctrines of God and humans in light of human rights conventions. Any doctrine that tends to infringe on human rights cannot be of God. I hope that

people will have the courage to freeze it, neutralize it, or push it to the "realm beyond". The UDHR and other human rights documents represent the best expression which humans have been able to articulate on issues of justice, peace and freedom. Our constant prayer is that all countries as well as groups and

individuals would commit themselves to guarding and implementing them.

The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek is director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center.



Do Not Rob Them of Their Voices *by Abla Nasser*

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice." Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We teach our children to talk and wait with great excitement for their first utterances of "dada" and "babba", but once they master the beginnings of language we impose our expectations and the utterances that we want them to say. Unintentionally, we rob them of their voices and expect them to echo our own.

Self expression in all its forms is a skill and an important instrument for all children particularly those who live in difficult conditions. This medium, which has been affirmed as a right, provides children with the means to express and say what they want through a variety of ways like writing and other forms of art.

Tamer Institute for Community Education in Palestine adopts a philosophy that depends on creating alternatives for learning and creative expression. The objective is to create a learning environment for children, where they are provided with opportunities for mental growth that will be reflected in their personality as individuals with an important role to play in the process of community building. One of the channels that the Institute provides for those children is the opportunity to express who they are, what they think and how they feel though that is not made available for them within formal education. We help them to regain their voices and express their growth by inviting them to write about their personal experiences.

Joanna, a nine-year-old girl from Nazareth, wrote about an eye problem that she was born with. She expressed how sad she felt when children in her neighborhood made fun of her and called her names. However, she could forgive their insensitivity and lack of understanding of her condition because she believed that they did not know that they



Photo by Rula Halawani

were hurting her. At the end of her story, Joanna was able to say that although the doctors told her there was no cure for her eye, she was determined to do daily exercises to help improve her condition. She was able to reconcile with her reality and say that she had a dream to grow up and study and become an eye doctor and help other children.

Joanna's story was published in a book and many children were able to read it and relate to it. This medium for self-expression allowed Joanna to come to terms with her problem and hold on to her dream. Other children were able to share Joanna's experience and reflect on their own similar experiences.

The Convention for the Right of the Child constitutes 54 articles and article

Self expression in all its forms is a skill and an important instrument for all children, particularly those who live in difficult conditions.

13 is one that I chose for my topic on Children's Rights. There are many forces that play against this right, some are social and others educational. The traditional system of education continues the process of robbing children of their voices. It probably equips them with knowledge and information but it does not provide them with the skills for life outside the school grounds. Children are directed through one form of acquisition of knowledge which totally depends on reiterating what the teacher and book say. Even in an art class, children are seldom given the choice of drawing what they want. The houses and trees they draw are all the same, the sky blue and the ground green. Any attempts to break out of the conventional are rejected and the children are given low grades plus a rebuke from the teacher.

A group of children, aged 6-12 years, have been meeting weekly at Tamer to discuss their rights. I had the opportunity to attend a couple of their meetings and I must say that I have learned a lot and have seen how distant we are from our children's thoughts and development. It is simply fascinating to listen to those children talk about what they see as their rights. In the first session, the facilitator who is 12 years old asked the group what they knew about their rights. The children looked at him not understanding what he meant. To simplify his question he started by giving examples. "Are there people who annoy you or hurt you and make you feel sad?" One child responded, "my teacher rebukes me and pulls my ear. That, not only makes me sad, but it also makes me very angry and hate school." More responses were shared and the group could lead itself through the different articles of the convention and discuss each one in relation to their life. It was through an opportunity for self-expression that those children could voice their rights and we could hear them and learn a great deal from them.

Abla Nasser is the director of the Tamer Institute for Community Education

Someone Else's Evil: A Personal Reflection by *Laurel Nelson*

So many times we as humans waver between good and evil, not because we do not know what is good and what is evil, but only because we do not want to get involved in "someone else's evil." This is why I believe the Universal Declaration is an important document: it clearly states standards, and a commitment to those standards by all the nations who signed on.

It is so easy to convince ourselves that we cannot interfere with others' lives, while all the time power is being manipulated so that individuals without power suffer.

But what is a government's commitment if that government's individual constituents are not willing to make their own commitments to human rights, on a very simple, personal level? It is so easy to convince ourselves that we cannot interfere with others' lives, while all the time power is being manipulated so that individuals without power suffer.

Perhaps similar to others of my racial, national, religious, and economic background, I have always been quite "middle of the road" when asked to take a stand on issues or controversies. I aim to not isolate the people with whom I am dealing, to not offend them. In a similar way, I have always removed myself from politics, from knowing too much, from getting too involved; I preferred to work with individual personal relationships.

However, living in Jerusalem, it was precisely through these personal relationships that I became involved in politics, for an oppressed community inherently lives and breathes politics. I realized I've never had to deal with politics in my comfortable class and race bracket in the United States. Laws, policies, jobs, education, etc. were usually in my favor, and there was no need to question them. I always had vague "liberal-minded ideas"

about the way laws "should be" structured in order to provide for oppressed populations, but I never took the time to talk much to the same individuals I supported in my liberal vote, nor did I learn much about the oppressive systems themselves (perhaps because this would point out my intrinsic involvement in them).

Now, having returned home to the United States after a year in Jerusalem spent living and working with Palestinians, I am realizing that I cannot, with a conscience, remove myself that far anymore. It is the moral equivalent of seeing a person, who has been hit by a car, lying at the side of a road and driving away (or of the priest and Levite walking past a dying Jewish man on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho), convincing myself that there is nothing I could do and that it is best to go along and not complicate things. I never realized how *alive* the complacency is within me until I came to Jerusalem. It is so easy to rationalize things when one is not faced with the brutal reality of oppression.

But Jerusalem, and the things one sees through living there, tend to force someone like me to deal with the cycle of violence and oppression in a very personal way. Of course, being an American, I was never forced to live *under* oppression, but simple things like walking down the street caused me to witness it often.

I saw a scene repeated each day as I walked to Sabeel: the line formed every morning (beginning around 5:30 am sometimes) in front of the Israeli Ministry of Interior, the line Palestinian residents of Jerusalem had to form in order to obtain the documents to remain living in their city.

One day Imm Wasim emerged out of this line and approached a friend and me, two foreigners, as we spoke on the street one day, and began to tell us, out of sheer desperation, how she and her daughter and son in law, who had lived in Britain for four years, had been trying to register her granddaughter. This was the third day they had come, waited all

morning in the hot sun, and still no one had seen them. I sighed as I listened to her, knowing that even if they did finally get into the Ministry, they would be asked to fill out a "family reunification form" and then wait an extended period of time, just to give their daughter the right to live in Jerusalem, when the parents are both residents of Jerusalem themselves. On that day, Imm Wasim held my shoulder and began to cry. I saw her act of confiding in two foreigners, who knew very little Arabic, as an act of desperation and sheer frustration at a completely tiresome and unjust system.

One evening when some friends and I were walking through the Old City at night, we came upon a Palestinian detained by a group of soldiers. The soldiers held the man tightly, but he struggled to get away. After holding him for a few moments, the soldiers suddenly began hitting the man. My friends and I, all foreigners, were not sure what to do. One of us began to ask the soldiers what they were doing. As the beating escalated, I

I can no longer rationalize peoples' behavior, saying they are doing only what their tradition, their religion, their political system require.

pulled out my camera to capture the scene, but as my flash went off, a soldier immediately came and took the camera, shaking it to try and get the film out. After we got back the camera, we realized that my act had changed the focus of the scene from the beating, and we had no idea where the man being beaten was. The Palestinians around us watched with all-too-knowing looks. They knew nothing could be done about the beating, or the camera, or the fact that the chaotic scene was repeated several times per week.

Living in Jerusalem taught me over

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Human Rights and Jesus by Munir Fasheh

Sometime ago, across from where I currently live near Boston, a police car stopped at the entrance of a neighbor's house. Their 16-year old daughter came out and spoke with the policeman at some length. After the car left, my son went to ask what was going on. She said that she filed a complaint against her parents because of some argument she had with them. Later, my wife went to talk with the mother. She found her crying. She said that they could hardly wait for their daughter to turn 18 and leave.

Such incidents, at both the individual and community level, raise serious questions. The legalistic, the formal, the technical, and the analytic aspects are at times important and needed. But, what is even more important is that, in the process, we do not lose what is fundamental in human life and for human happiness and sense of community. We should make sure that in our rush to gain the legalistic battle, we do not lose what makes us human and cannot be legalized, such as friendship, compassion, love, trust, faith, generosity, care, hospitality, mutual help, sense of community and acting upon our beautiful dreams. These are so important to human health that we cannot afford to lose them without being dehumanized and demoralized. These values belong to what is usually referred to as wisdom.

Is it possible not to lose these values while we seek the formal and the legal? Why do we seem to forget about wisdom?

Why do we seem to stress the formal and legal and neglect what is human and wise? Is it possible to embody both? Why do we usually look for short-cut solutions for which we pay a high price in the long-term? Why are we lazy and sloppy when it comes to something as important as human relationships? Such questions are extremely important and should be embodied by human rights groups working in the Arab world, and in the Palestinian community in particular.

Jesus' approach to oppression and the abuse of people's rights and lives was fundamentally different from the approach taken by human rights groups today. His approach was more concerned with the essence than with just the for-

While the stress in human rights is usually translated to seeing what is wrong in others, Jesus stressed another aspect, without which attaining rights will always be deficient.

mal, technical, symbolic and legal. Jesus' approach was wise and human.

Jesus lived at a time not very different from ours. As a child and as a young man he witnessed injustice, discrimination, oppression, killings, imprisonment, demolition of homes, just like many chil-

dren and youth witness and face in the same place today, in Palestine. He witnessed how foreign powers often used local people to inflict such abuses. Like many young people today, he fought against what dehumanized and demoralized people. Two aspects distinguish his approach: first, the right of human beings when they do wrong not to be stripped of their humanity and, second, differentiating between those who knowingly design to harm others and those who unknowingly do so, as a manifestation of social ills. He never had nice words for the Caiaphas of his time, but he asked God to forgive the soldier who stabbed him at the cross. He was ready to embrace that soldier as a soul that can be regained to humanity. He defended the prostitute against the hypocritical moralists who failed to see their own failings. He clearly saw the importance of differentiating between the act (which he considered a social ill) and the woman (whom he saw as a victim, and fully human, and had the right to be defended). Does anybody know of any human rights group today, that has the clarity, the commitment and the courage to take the same position, publicly, in the streets of any modern city?

Jesus in, his wisdom knew very well and very wisely that to demand rights from the Caiaphas, from those who benefited from the situation, would be a waste of time and effort. He knew they were

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Living in Jerusalem taught me over and over that my faith in Jesus Christ requires me to have an opinion when someone is being beaten, when someone steals land, when someone's home is destroyed, when someone has to stand in the burning summer sun for five hours just to receive an identity card to remain in one's home city. It showed me that I need to call something evil when it is evil. I can no longer rationalize peoples' behavior, saying they are doing only what their tradition, their religion, their

political system requires, nor can I remain silent when I feel people are being scandalized.

My ignorance of and naivete about the situation in Palestine and Israel mirrored my ignorance and naivete to injustices I have been witnessing/participating in my entire life but never really questioned for fear of the trouble it would stir up, feeling as if I would leave the issue for those who were "directly involved." Christ, in his death and resurrection, gives us the power to think beyond this world, to triumph over this

world, to be reborn against all the forces of evil that squelch hope and strength and the desire to bring justice into the world. What incredible and unrealized power we have! It seems to me, again, that we all know what is good and bad, and we need to learn to name it. This is what the Universal Declaration does.

Laurel Nelson worked at Sabeel as a Peace and Justice intern of the Young Adult Volunteer Program PCUSA.



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doing harm knowingly and with a pre-conceived plan and predetermination. He did not spend time on the Caiaphas except to expose their hypocrisies. Instead, he spent his energies on a positive dream. His dream revolved around people (not a special or chosen group), but all people, that they may love one another and have compassion for one another. He was probably the first one in history who was against both the Pharisees and the idea of chosenness, the idea that one people or race is better than another. His dream was one of love, compassion, and caring, among all people. His approach for those who did harm to others unknowingly, was to point out the wrong in their words, thoughts and perceptions. And, at the same time, for the oppressed to see and regain the intrinsic value they have as human beings. Both groups, in Jesus' perspective, are demoralized and dehumanized. His whole life was devoted to defend human beings who were victims of all sorts of abuse. His dream led him to the cross. He was crucified at the prime of his life. Similar dreams are leading young people in Palestine, today, to the cross.

Hypocrisy, at different times, has different forms. I will choose one example to illustrate hypocrisies in today's world. The New York Times constantly publishes articles deploring the pollution and abuse of the environment. However it totally neglects to mention even once, that every day it uses what is equivalent to 150 acres of forested lands, as if future generations have no rights to a healthy environment! Is it not part of our rights that our environment be protected from such onslaughts?

Similarly, is it not part of the rights of the child to be protected from advertisements that publicly propagate harm to their bodies, minds and souls, such as smoking, cola, the IQ, and racist propaganda (often through the words of experts)? When, in the name of science, children around the world are told they can never make it in life because a crimi-

nal measure called IQ says so; is this not a violation of human rights?! Why does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) or the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, not say that children have the right to be protected from what harms them in a planned way? A "universal" declaration of "human" rights, which sees in a slap on the face of a child a violation of the rights of the child, but fails to see the violation in a test, which tells a child that s/he is no good for ever, is - to me -- neither universal nor human. I keep wondering why violations of the human body and soul have no room in a declaration which is referred to as universal, and are of no concern to human rights groups!

On the one hand, we need a universal document that calls for the right to protect the environment. No one has the right to abuse nature and make it unfit to live in. However, I know of no foundation, that claims to be concerned about

Why do we seem to forget about wisdom?

Why do we stress the formal and legal and neglect what is human and wise?

human rights, which is ready to support groups that care to look into such abuses. On the other hand, such concerns are embedded in most of the wisdoms around the world. A Native American wisdom, for example, says: "humans belong to Earth, not Earth to humans." Where in the UDHR is there any reference to the rights of people, who are not born yet, for a clean environment in the future -- the rights of the seventh generation, to use another Native American wisdom? The abuse of the Earth is exactly what has been done in the name of development, progress and the advancement of science. And there is no declaration, which says it is a violation of human rights.

A most basic and fundamental right which seems to be missing in the UDHR is the right to doubt, including doubting the universal declaration itself: the right of children to wander in their imaginations and dig into their experiences and articulate how they see things. I am talk-

ing here about the right of children to construct meanings for words they use or hear, in light of their experiences and discussions. To mention just one example, a 13-year old boy in a refugee camp said, "I am afraid even to dream because my dreams will most probably hit the walls surrounding us, or will be polluted by the smell of the sewage pipes which fill the space around us."

In my career as a teacher and educator for over 30 years, I became increasingly convinced that the worst anti-learning approach is to provide a ready answer for people, and call it universal, and intimidate children and people into accepting it. To me it is a violation of the right of people to learn.

If we have to teach the UDHR (as many believe we should), we should at least include the history of the declaration. Who was present? What are their backgrounds? Did any one of them experience violations of rights on a daily basis, both in overt and hidden ways, or did they come from privileged backgrounds and only heard about viola-

tions, second hand? What were some of the suggestions and views that were debated but discarded or excluded, and why? Which of these views that were discarded then, seem reasonable today, and, thus, should be included? This is usually referred to as learning and intellectual honesty, without which talking about human rights becomes empty.

My biggest problem with the UDHR is that it does not embody wisdom, and that to me is a serious drawback. Part of wisdom is to see the interrelationships among the various aspects, rather than just seeing them in separation, as fragmented items and events. At least, this lack should be mentioned in order that we remain honest with children and young people; that what is in the declaration is just one aspect and that there are many others that are not there.

Another item in the universal declaration, which confirms a right in its *formal sense*, more than in its *essence*; the

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Go Out and Tell the Truth *by Jim Wall*

This speech was given September 13, 1998 on the occasion of the Anniversary dinner of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University, Evanston, Illinois.

We hear much these days about the importance of truth telling. But do not worry, I am not about to add to your over-saturation with the sad story of the Starr Report. What I do want to say by way of introduction to our evening together, following the very moving and sobering view we have just seen of the Sabeel Photo Exhibit of Palestinians under occupation, is that there are lies and then there are words that are shaped to mean whatever the speaker wants them to mean.

The lies that trouble me are not the lies from a man caught in an immoral relationship. The lies that trouble me are those shifting terms that shape political reality for the communication elites, the politicians and the policy makers in our land who tell us about the Middle East. On one of my first trips to Jerusalem in 1975, I wrote an article for the Chicago Sun Times about a visit I made to a once deserted Jordanian army post just outside of the town of Nablus. The post had been taken over by a group of Israeli citizens, some of whom were from Chicago, religious fundamentalists determined to live in what they then

called the land of Judea and Samaria. The Israeli government said it did not approve of this takeover on land but it had sent an Army unit to protect this group now living in the deserted army post. The soldiers were living in tents next to the fort.

From the front of that fort I looked across at a Palestinian village across a small valley in which farmers were working on land they had lived on for generations. The words then used by

Words are tools used to shape reality. When those tools are used to discriminate and oppress, what we are hearing are lies.

journalists and U.S. officials and, indeed, Israelis, indicated that what I was seeing was an "illegal settlement", in the "Occupied West Bank".

Over the years these words slowly changed in order to change the reality there. During the Carter Administration years, these settlements were described as "illegal"; later in the Bush administration they were called obstacles to peace. And now they are simply new communities in land that Israel no longer considers "occupied", but accepts the terms, Judea and Samaria, religious designa-

tions rooted in long-ago biblical history.

When words change, reality changes. We need to tell our political and government leaders that we are tired of hearing words that are lies because they seek not to be true, but to discriminate against Palestinians. We don't want to hear that settlements are new communities; this is a lie. The truth is that they are an intrusive presence on the land of another people, built to codify an illegal takeover of property.

We do not want to hear other lies, like: "Rubber bullets" are humane instruments meant to serve as crowd deterrents. The words convey to the unsuspecting that they are soft pellets, when we know that "rubber bullets" are steel bullets lightly coated with rubber. They penetrate the body and they can kill. That is the truth we need to hear. We do not need to hear that our cruise missiles have struck a "chemical weapons site" in the Islamic nation of Sudan when the facility hit was a pharmaceutical plant. This has become more obvious with the passage of time, but the initial description, which was a lie, has stuck in the public mind. We do not want to hear that "check points" and border closings are for the purpose of security for all the people involved. We know their purpose is largely one of harassment and punishment. We do not want to hear that Pales-

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right to education. This means in practice sending children to school. The fundamental right is to *learning* and not to *education*. Learning is a much more fundamental human right. It is a right which can be achieved in many different ways. One of them is schools and formal education (when they function as learning environments, which is rare any way). Learning requires access to information, the ability to function in small groups and to express personal experiences and construct meanings and understandings, ... all of which can be accomplished in many ways, often much

cheaper and in more effective ways.

There is another important aspect, which differentiates Jesus' perspective from what is propagated today. While the stress in human rights is usually translated to seeing what is wrong in others, Jesus stressed another aspect, without which attaining rights will always be deficient: to put an effort to see what is wrong with us, with ourselves. He urged that we take the log from our own eye so that we can see the speck in the eye of the other. It is another piece of wisdom, which we cannot afford to ignore, if our purpose is to create a happy future.

Jesus' approach does not stress the technical and the legal but the human and social. It is an approach which takes both the individual and the communal into consideration; the personal expression with the connectedness among people, among generations. We cannot afford to lose the family for the sake of consumer values. I am not unaware of the harm done by families sometimes. But if we discover lice in somebody's hair, we do not chop off the head.

Munir Fasheh is the founder of the Tamer Institute for Community Education and a board member of Sabeel.

Legalizing Injustice by Jonathan Kuttab

The most basic element in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the struggle for International law is precisely its universality. International law developed over many years and through difficult periods to the point it has reached today. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was intended to be a summary declaration of the principles and values which had evolved over the years as normative principles obligatory on all States and applicable to all countries regardless of their political systems and the conditions under which they operate.

The development of international law was a slow and painful process because on each issue, controversies arose depending on its application within a particular area or to a particular party in a conflict. Each State continuously tried to avoid any international normative standards that would limit its total and absolute discretion and sovereignty to do what it wishes and enlisted its allies in that endeavor. However, with the progress of civilization and humanity, there came the general realization that states must be governed by some restraints and controls and that issues cannot be left indefinitely to the discretion of each state. Similarly, individuals and organizations that worked for the advancements of human rights needed to refer to constant principles which they were willing to apply to friend and foe alike in differing political contexts. The power of these principles was precisely in their universality and applicability across the board rather than on a case-by-case basis, which would lend itself to bias and special pleading.

It is curious that the state of Israel which was born, in the same year that

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created has evolved into the single most problematic obstacle to the normal growth, development, and expansion of respect for human rights and international law generally in the world. There were three reasons that have allowed Israel to claim this dubious honor: *The first* is that it was born in the context of tremendous sympathy, support, and solidarity from most of the countries of the world, particularly the Western World. The Jewish people had just undergone the traumatic experience of genocide and holocaust in what was probably the most grievous atrocity of the 20th century. They were systematically and massively oppressed and killed in a process of cold-blooded deliberate genocide right in the heart of Europe. Furthermore, the process of genocide undertaken against them was properly viewed as a direct result of a long process of anti-Semitism and hatred against Jews. In that context, the outpouring of sympathy, and support: military, political and financial to the cause of Zionism was practically unlimited.

Israel also gained moral power from the guilt feelings that the West had about

their silence and complicity during the holocaust and the anti-Semitism that led to it. In that sense, few in the West felt that they had any moral grounds for questioning or censuring the fledgling state in its heroic attempts at survival. Theologically, the Christian West was filled with guilt feelings about its own anti-Semitism, and holocaust theologians made such statements as "after the holocaust, no theology can make sense unless it makes sense in the presence of burning children" Greenberg.

This outpouring of sympathy and support from powerful quarters throughout the Western world led to undermining the principle of Universality from both directions: The State of Israel and the Zionist movement, on the one hand, was treated with special concern not awarded to others. On the other hand, its enemies, opponents, and critics, were viewed as an extension of that most evil and sinister of forces, and was labeled "Nazi", or at the very least anti-Semitic. This approach struck a blow to the very foundation of the principle of universality which by definition required the same standards to be applied regardless of who was the perpetrator, and who was the victim.

This support for the 'uniqueness' of the State of Israel and its entitlement to special treatment even had theological underpinnings for some Christians with regard to the doctrine of the Chosen People. The special status of Jews and their return to the Holy Land was presumed to be the prophetic fulfillment of God's plan for history. The result was devastating upon the uniform application of international law and human rights standards.

The second reason why I believe the state of Israel

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Photo by The Christian Peacemaking Team

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has undermined human rights and international law is that it utilized the support it had to develop a number of legal doctrines and arguments to justify its clearly illegal actions and give them legitimacy in the world arena. Whether because of its rich Talmudic tradition, and the historical role law played in Jewish culture and religion, or merely from a sophisticated awareness of the value of public opinion, internally, and externally, the Zionist movement consistently sought legitimacy and justification. Elaborate and convoluted logic was used, myths created and vigorously defended, energy and creativity was invested in creating legal structures, and facades for what was simply an act of conquest, subjugation, and empire building. While others have carried out similar acts of conquest, expansion and oppression in the past, and even the present century, few went to *such* great lengths in pretending it was entirely legal, proper and moral.

The end result, however, was that in the process, it diluted the moral authority and respect for the doctrines and principles of international law, and universal human rights. This made it easier for others to flaunt international law. If such other countries, like Iraq, failed to do so with the same impunity, they could legitimately claim a double standard exists.

A few of the examples of this are:

Development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Israel is the only country believed to have a formidable array of nuclear weapons not open for international inspection. It is also reputed to have large quantities and varieties of biological and chemical weapons, and the delivery systems to deploy them. The argument is that as survivors of genocide who have vowed "never again", they are quietly allowed to develop their own doomsday weapons.

Hijacking civilian craft on the high seas. While hijacking civilian aircraft is readily acknowledged to be an act of terrorism against international law, Israel has, on several occasions intercepted over the Mediterranean, and forced to land at its airports civilian craft, hoping to find "wanted" persons abroad. It routinely stops ships on the high seas, particularly

between Cyprus and Lebanon, and kidnaps resistance fighters or political enemies making the trip on civilian craft. No protest is heard, and this behavior is routinely tolerated.

Expanding the definition of "self defense". Israel and its apologists have expanded the definition of legitimate self-defense to make any distinction between aggression and defense meaningless. They also pioneered the concept of "preemptive self-defense" under which a country may legitimately attack another country it suspects or fears may attack it in the future. This doctrine was first used in the Six-day war of 1967 to destroy the Arab airforces, and was subsequently used to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactors years before it could develop nuclear weapons. Israel hinted it might use the

Israel systematically avoids the application of international laws and human rights standards by substituting its own rules

doctrine to attack Pakistan or Iran before they develop capabilities that may pose a potential threat to it in the future. Regardless of the particulars of each case, it introduces absolute anarchy to international order if each country can have the right to unilaterally attack any other country it fears or suspects might create a threat to it in the future.

Kidnappings, assassinations and operations within other countries. The Israeli Mossad routinely operates in many countries and carries out kidnappings, assassinations, and other clandestine operations. It usually does not acknowledge them and often blames them on radical Palestinian groups. When these operations fail, however, as in the case of the assassination of a Moroccan in Europe (who turned out to be the wrong person), or the attempted assassination of Mash'al in Jordan, the debate in Israel centers only on the advisability and political wisdom of the operations, not on their illegality, the infringement

upon other countries' sovereignty, or the chaos in international affairs if each of the world's countries runs operations in other countries as it deems fit.

Use of torture. While torture is practiced in many countries, it is never acknowledged, much less excused. Amnesty International was recently forced to acknowledge that this statement is no longer true. Israel is currently the only country that has developed an elaborate system of legal justification for the use of torture as a method of obtaining information or confessions. By calling it "moderate physical pressure", and stating that certain circumstances require the use of torture to extract information that may save lives ("the ticking bomb" justification), Israel publicly permits and justifies the use of torture.

The third and final reason is that Israel systematically avoids the application of international laws and human rights standards by substituting its own rules, and the treaties it imposes on its weaker neighbors to avoid the provisions of international law. In this matter, the courts play a major role in justifying Israeli actions. Appeal to the Israeli High Court, which was flouted as a progressive step was made the forum for evading the requirements of international law. The High Court has held that the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, concerning the Protection of Civilians Under Occupation, are not legally binding on the State of Israel, but that the state will voluntarily apply the "humanitarian" but not the "political" provisions of the Convention (without bothering to define which is which). Israel has no constitution, but applies its own laws, including Zionist principles that clearly violate international law and principles. It legitimized extensive and systematic racism and discrimination inherent in the concept of a "Jewish state" dedicated, not to the service of its citizens, but to the service of Jews, from whatever country, to the detriment of non Jewish citizens and inhabitants of the Land.

During the current peace process, Israel has managed to evade its international responsibilities by replacing international laws with a set of agreements it

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Palestinian Women Acknowledged by *Salwa Duaibis*

Little did the staff and board members and all the many supporters of the *Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling (WCLAC)* know what was awaiting them when their leading project "The Palestinian Model Parliament: Women and Legislation" was launched in February 1998.

WCLAC is a Palestinian NGO, established in 1991 with the aim of promoting Palestinian women's social and legal rights. "The Palestinian Model Parliament" is one of its projects which materialized following the completion of two stages of legal research which the *Center* conducted in 1995 and 1996. The currently applicable laws which discriminate against women were surveyed and documented, and recommendations for amending them were suggested in a manner consistent with the internationally recognized norms and standards. The *Center* then realized that if the recommendations were to ever become reality, support for the suggested changes needed to come from within the Palestinian society. A campaign to raise awareness and mobilize support for the recommendations was launched, the highlight of which was, "The Palestinian Model Parliament: Women and Legislation."

Five "Model Parliament" sessions were held in four locations in the West Bank and Gaza between February and April 1998. Hundreds of participants, men and women, members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and religious leaders de-

bated and discussed issues like inheritance; custody of children; divorce and separation; polygamy; rape; adultery; crimes of domestic violence; legal competence of women; the right to equal job opportunities; the right to freedom of movement; the right to sue and go to court; the right to participate in public life; and many other related issues.

In a predominantly patriarchal society and a strong religious establishment, this was no joke. An unprecedented public debate erupted, of the kind previously unknown in the Palestinian society. Local newspapers filled with strongly opin-

This prestigious award highlights the international dimension of the battle against fundamental ideologies in all societies.

ionated articles; leaflets and "counter leaflets" filled the streets in towns and villages all over the West Bank and Gaza. Heated arguments and counter-arguments appeared to have gone out of control. Some religious clerics went as far as calling it "the new Satanic Verses."

For many, the value of this project was that it brought to the surface the, until then, hidden conflict in the Palestinian society. The issue is no longer marriage and divorce, it is a battle

against fundamentalist beliefs which contradict the essence of all religious teachings and international declarations.

Dazzled by the scope and intensity of the debate, and motivated by its commitment to promoting human rights, the French Consulate in Jerusalem invited *WCLAC* to apply for the Annual Human Rights Award which the French Government grants to distinguished human rights organizations and individuals. One hundred organizations from all over the world applied for the 1998 special award which marks the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. *WCLAC* was one of ten organizations who won the prize.

This prestigious award marks a crucial juncture in *WCLAC's* work in promoting Palestinian women's rights. It highlights the international dimension of the battle against fundamental ideologies in all societies, and provides the support needed to continue working in the potentially dangerous field. The ceremony was attended by celebrities and world famous human rights activists which gave the members of the center a sense of strength in the knowledge of worldwide solidarity and support. Palestinian women will remember with pride the applause which the center and all that it represents received from the French Cabinet during the award ceremony.

Salwa Duaibis is a partner in the MATTIN Group, a policy research and advocacy partnership based in Ramallah, focusing on Palestinian economic and human rights.

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tinian homes are torn down because they lack "permits" when we know that they are destroyed to reduce the presence of Palestinians in their own homeland. We know that Jerusalem ID cards are designed as tickets out of Palestine, instruments of further harassment of the citizens there. The words "peace process" are a double lie. A process implies moving forward toward a commonly designated goal. What "process" in the Israeli-Palestinian situation actually means is the codification of a political imbalance agreed to five years ago in the Oslo Accords. There is no process when the two

sides are not even close to being equal; where one side is the military occupier who controls access to the occupied lands and the other side is shoved into a few small areas which are subject to demands and control of the military occupier. And there is no peace in a process that is so flawed with these imperfections.

Words are tools used to shape reality. When those tools are used to discriminate and oppress, what we are hearing are lies. And what are we to do about these lies? We must do what we must always do in confronting lies: Tell the truth. Every one of you here tonight

should leave this room at the conclusion of this program, determined to go out and correct the lies that you hear about the Middle East. When you do so you begin an important process to bring truth and light into an arena where too many lies continue to be told under the pretension of truth. Truth always prevails over lies; not always at the time we want it to, but truth will ultimately prevail. Go out and deliver this message.

Jim Wall is the editor of The Christian Century Magazine.



Excerpts from the B'Tselem Quarterly for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

B'Tselem is a Hebrew word which means 'in the image'. It is an Israeli information center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.

Over one million people live in the Gaza Strip. About 8,000 students attend the two universities there. These institutions do not offer a wide selection of fields of study and they do not meet the higher education needs of the population. About 1,300 students from Gaza are enrolled in West Bank universities. In January 1996, a sweeping prohibition forbade these students from travelling to the West Bank universities where they were enrolled. Since then they have been denied permits to travel to the West Bank from Gaza. The sweeping violation of the right of all Gaza Strip students to an education harms not only them but also the development and advancement of Palestinian society as a whole.

The Quiet Deportation

In 1967, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and another 64,000 dunams (16,000 acres) in its environs. The status of the Palestinians resident in the annexed territory was determined by the Entry to Israel Law, even though they did not "enter" Israel, but rather Israel "entered" to them. Their status was designated "permanent residents," although the "permanent" was highly doubtful. Israel "encouraged" the departure of Palestinians by expropriating land on a massive scale, withholding building permits, creating a severe housing shortage, denying requests for family reunification, neglecting the infrastructure and more. In recent years, Israel has revoked residency status to thousands of Palestinians who were out of the city for a certain period, invoking the same Entry to Israel Law, giving them 15 days to leave Jerusalem."



Photo by Miki Kratsman from B'Tselem Quarterly 12/98

Testimony of a non-person

I'm frightened all the time that something bad could happen to me or my brothers because we don't have any papers that say we exist. I'm even afraid that somebody will separate us from our mother and maybe arrest our parents because they are living here illegally. I don't feel safe. I feel like I am a person with no identity, no name and no address. I feel like I can't be part of life. I exist at the level of the dead." From the testimony of Muhammad Sami Darwish, 17. In 1978 his parents went to live in Saudi Arabia, where he was born in 1981. In November 1994 members of the family came back to live in the part of Kalandia that is within the city limits, and his mother submitted a request for family reunification for her husband and her children. As long as the request is not approved, the children who were not born in Jerusalem have no identity card numbers. In December 1996 the mother's identity card was revoked.

How long does it take to demolish a house?

It takes a year to build it. Sometimes a hundred years. And there are also houses that have always been there. How long does it take to demolish a house? How much time is spent thinking about whether to demolish it? Less time than the phone call that ordered the demolition. One shove and it's gone. A hole gapes in the familiar landscape and the family that had substance and a name and an address and human beings of all ages and relationships - has in the blink of an eye become an example: the punished. And this, too, was the thinking behind the demolition. It did not think about people but about all kinds of abstract concepts: inciters, punished, deterred, and all the rest. And then the abstract arises and demolishes the real. And the living become a concept. At night, no one sees where the destroyed family has gone. No one knows what they are doing now. And where they are sitting now - in some corner, uprooted with their possessions, under empty, heavy heavens. Is anything being noted down about them in some corner there now?

From the outbreak of the Intifada until November 15, 1998, Israel demolished at least 451 houses and completely sealed at least 294 as a punitive measure in the Occupied Territories. At least 62 houses were partially demolished and at least 118 partially

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A Christian Witness by Mark Frey and "Jake" Kauffman

As long as [peacemakers] look at resistance as performing individual acts of herosim, there won't be many peacemakers who will survive the enormous pressures put upon them. Without community, we will be quickly sucked back into the dark world of needs and wounds, of violence and destruction, of evil and death."

Henri Nouwen

Members of the Christian Peacemaking Team (CPT), Pierre Shantz, 24, and Sara Reschly, 26, were arrested on Sunday, the 10th of January, 1999, by Israeli police after "getting in the way" of soldiers about to shoot at a Palestinian nonviolent demonstration in Hebron. The demonstration protested the closure of the Abraham Mosque and the curfew placed on the 30,000 Palestinians living under military occupation in the 20 percent of Hebron still under Israeli control. The curfew was imposed on Monday, January the 4th, after Israeli settler women were injured, one seriously, when their van was shot at near the Mosque.

Holding banners reading, "No For Closure of Ibrahimi Mosque," and "No for Collective Punishment," a group of 70-100 Palestinians marched from the Hebron Municipality to the border that separates the Palestinian and Israeli-controlled areas. As the marchers approached the border, soldiers, armed with rubber-coated metal bullets, tear gas and sound grenades, took positions behind large cement barriers, ready to fire at the people.

CPTers Shantz, Reschly and Joanne "jake" Kaufman jumped in front of the

soldiers and their guns. They cried, "This is a nonviolent demonstration! They are not throwing rocks!" The soldiers, not knowing how to respond, tried to push CPTers away. They lowered their M-16s, but soldiers threw sound grenades which sent the crowd scurrying. The demonstration leadership quickly calmed the Palestinians and the crowd returned, standing face to face with the soldiers.

Palestinian leaders worked to keep the demonstration peaceful, circulating among the youth and telling them not to throw rocks. Yet it appeared at times as if violence might break out. After about 30 minutes of this face-off, soldiers began pushing the people. The marchers started to run away and some threatened to throw rocks. Soldiers quickly moved into firing positions and CPTers again got in the way, standing in front of the rifles saying, "This is a nonviolent demonstration!" Only a couple of rocks were thrown before the Palestinian leaders restrained the youth. No one was injured.

One of the military officers, furious with the CPTers for interfering, began shouting in the faces of CPTers Mark

Frey and Shantz, telling them to leave the area. Shantz was slapped twice in the face by the officer for refusing to be quiet.

About an hour and a half after the demonstration began, the Palestinian leadership called for everyone to pray in the street to defuse mounting tension. The older men lined up on prayer rugs to pray, calling for the younger ones to join them. An Israeli officer circulated among the soldiers, telling them to stay calm and also, in Arabic, encouraged Palestinian youth to join the prayers. After the prayers, the leaders declared the demonstration finished and called for everyone to return to the Palestinian area, although many people remained. No clashes developed after the demonstration ended.

A Palestinian leader formally thanked CPTers after the march, saying, "Thank you. You have done your work." Frey said, "I'm convinced that if CPT hadn't interfered when the soldiers were ready to fire, the situation would have immediately become violent."

Reschly and Shantz were taken to the police station near Kiryat Arba settlement where they issued a joint statement:

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national laws with a set of agreements it forced upon the weaker Palestinians. It accepts no responsibility for implementing those agreements, but treats them as superior to international law, whenever challenged. It has every intention of using its power to force the Palestinians, as part of any final settlement, to legitimize some of its illegal acts (such as annexation of Jerusalem, setting up of settlements) and to evade some of its obligations under international law, such as returning occupied territories, the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and

allowing genuine self determination. When challenged on these issues, it will claim that the agreements do not require them, or that whatever compromise is ultimately forced upon the Palestinians releases them from the duty of obeying international law on that issue.

The outcome of this is that international law and agreements are further diluted, and that the concept of international law and human rights, universally applied to the weak and the strong alike suffers further still.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations itself was

born in the hope and the vision of countries gradually moving away from the rule of the jungle, where the strong swallow the weak and every nation is a law unto itself, and moving towards an international community and a world order that is more responsive to human rights and human needs. Unfortunately, the State of Israel and its friends and apologists are insuring that that vision is still remote and further from realization today than it was 50 years ago.

Jonathan Kuttub is an attorney, a human rights activist, and a board member of Sabeel.

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"Curfew is wrong. It is punishing 30,000 people for the actions of a few people. Today we felt called to support the nonviolent march of Palestinians to the Ibrahim mosque to pray. All people should have the freedom to pray where they want."

Hebron, a Palestinian city of 130,000, is considered the traditional burial place of Abraham and Sara and is revered by both Muslims and Jews as a holy place. Several hundred Jewish settlers live in the Israeli-controlled part of the city, accompanied by about 1200 soldiers.

Cheers and sighs of relief rose from 18 CPT supporters in the narrow hallway outside a "Shalom Court" room in Jerusalem on January 11 as CPTers Shantz and Reschly were released from police custody, Shantz minus his shackles and handcuffs.

Reschly was released Sunday night on condition she return to the police station in the morning, but Shantz was held in prison overnight. The shackles and cuffs were put on for transport.

Shortly after noon, police brought Reschly and Shantz to the courts in the Russian Compound in Jerusalem, where Israeli, Palestinian and international freinds were waiting anxiously. According to Shantz, the charges brought against them were, "pushing two border police and hitting one on the helmet" and interfering with police doing their duty." Shantz said, "I intervined with the soldier trying to shoot at the nonviolent demonstrators, but I never hit one or pushed one."

Reschly said she was accused of "yelling 'don't shoot' at soldiers," and "assaulting a soldier, i.e. pushing him in the chest two feet back." Regarding the latter charge, she said, "I believe in non-violence. I would never do that." A third charge, by a Russian-speaking soldier, that Reschly called him a Nazi was dropped after it was discovered he didn't speak English.

Police pressured Reschly and Shantz to avoid a courtroom hearing by accepting the stipulation that they stay out of Hebron for 15 days. The pressure continued from the time Reschly arrived at the police station at 8:30 a.m. until they entered



the courtroom. But the CPTers held firm throughout, refusing to accept this limitation on their movements.

Around 1 pm, the pair walked into the courtroom followed by the hodgepodge support group who sat on benches for the hearing. Israeli friends translated the proceedings for the non-Hebrew speaking supporters, and an artist friend sketched the scene.

The Israeli judge told the police officer that the police did not have a strong enough case to prohibit Reschly and Shantz from returning to Hebron. He decided that they could be freed during a police investigation which expires February 1.

The pair agreed that until February 1, they would relinquish their passports, report to the police station when asked and pay 2000 shekels each, about \$1000 US total, in bond. If no charges are brought by February 1, the passports and bond money will be returned. The money was raised on the spot when the group of supporters reached into their pockets and came up with the needed amount. The judge said that Reschly and Shantz must use Hebrew copies of their court proceedings in place of their passports at checkpoints.

CPT's Palestinian lawyer, Jonathan Kuttab, said he doubts that the police will bring charges. He said he supported the action. "You have a lot of moral power that both sides recognize... Running around without guns throws [both sides] off and gives you leverage."

As the police officer who prosecuted the case and brought Shantz in shackles left, Shantz called after him, "See you in

Hebron." The officer said with a smile, "I'll probably see you in another investigation."

After the court hearing, team members and a Palestinian friend relaxed in a restaurant where Shantz shared about his night in an Israeli prison where he had been well-treated. CPT's Palestinian friend then shared about his 18-day administrative detentions and torture experiences in Israeli prisons, putting the events of the last two days into a more sobering perspective.

The Christian Peacemaking team issued a statement of thanks after the event in which they expressed their appreciation of "the solidarity of our Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities witnessing on our behalf in the courtroom struck deep into our souls. This distinct support community, comprised of varied skin colors, varied languages, and varied prayer styles bore witness to God's inclusive love. It is in this solid community that we CPTers find witness of God's strength, love and nearness. We thank you for your witness of love. We thank God for our community."

The Christian Peacemaking Team is an initiative among Mennonites, Quakers, and Church of the Brethren that sends trained peacemakers to areas of conflict around the world in an effort to reduce violence.

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centeredness.

Could it be that the power to express the inalienable human right of every man, woman, and child for humane treatment is a clear indication that the Incarnation which became flesh in Bethlehem 2000 years ago still continues to be manifest in tender, joyful and willing hearts today?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights will truly change the world when each leader and every subject in all the nations make the mandate of the Articles an intrinsic part of their own personal value system. Until critical mass builds in this manner, the goal of having human rights protected by the rule of law will remain but a dream.

Tom Getman is the director of World Vision Jerusalem.

Abu Yusuf Won't Be Celebrating *by Michael Adams*

On a warm evening in the West Bank village of Burin, Abu Yusuf was harvesting his olives. He was in a hurry, because a few hundred meters away several Israeli bulldozers were carving a new road through the hillside, uprooting the olive trees of one of his neighbors and sending clouds of dust over the rest. Abu Yusuf was afraid that his turn would come, and those olive trees are all he has to live on and to support his family.

Abu Yusuf is bewildered by the turn events are taking in his homeland of Palestine, and one can see why. He has heard of an agreement signed the other day in Washington, under the sponsorship of President Clinton, which he is told means that the Israeli soldiers who have occupied his land for 30 years are about to withdraw. So why should Israeli bulldozers be tearing down his neighbor's trees to build a road through these centuries-old olive groves? There is a perfectly good road already, which links his village with Nablus to the north and Ramallah to the south, and which goes on to Jerusalem; but for reasons he does not understand Abu Yusuf is forbidden by the Israelis to go there.

That the new road is not for him to use, but is for the exclusive convenience of Israeli settlers who want to travel to and fro without meeting any Palestinians, is just one more detail in the incomprehensible jumble of restrictions and prohibitions which have made life intolerable for the likes of Abu Yusuf ever since the Americans launched their "peace process" five years ago with another of those carefully staged meetings on the White House lawn in Washington.

Like his father and his grandfather before him, Abu Yusuf has seen various conquerors come and go in what Westerners (but not its inhabitants) like to call the Holy Land. Before the Israelis came, his village was part of the Kingdom of Jordan (strictly speaking, it still is); be-

fore that, his father had a British passport, because a British army had driven out the Turks to whom his grandfather owed allegiance as a citizen of the Ottoman Empire. None of this means much to Abu Yusuf, certainly not as much as the fact that those alien bulldozers threaten to destroy his livelihood.

Nor is it likely that he knows much about the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which set in train the whole tragic course of events in which he is caught up, and which promised his people that in supporting the idea of a "national home" in Palestine for the Jewish people, the British Government wanted it to be "clearly understood that nothing shall be done that may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-

The New Road is not for Abu Yusuf but for Israeli settlers who want to travel without meeting any Palestinians

Jewish communities in Palestine" - a curious phrase with which to describe the overwhelmingly Palestinian majority in the country at the time.

Thirty years later, when the infant United Nations - it was only two years old - came to wrestle with what had now become the Palestine "problem", the decision was taken simply to partition the country and allow the establishment of two states, one Arab and the other Jewish. Abu Yusuf's land would have been in the Arab part but this would not have done him much good, for the Palestinian Arab state was never allowed to come into being; and in any case the Jews, who had now become the Israelis, snapped it up after their lightning victory in 1967 and have occupied it ever since.

But in 1967 the United Nations had another go at solving the problem. The once-famous but now almost forgotten Security Council resolution 242 ordained that there should be an exchange of land

for peace, that the Arabs should agree to live in peace with Israel, provided that the Israelis withdrew from the Arab lands they had recently occupied. Nothing was said about the lands they had occupied in 1948, or about the Palestinians they had dispossessed and who by then had lived in refugee camps for 20 years, despite a UN ruling that they should be allowed to return and to receive compensation for their property.

For another two decades the two sides argued about the implementation of resolution 242 and all that happened was that the Israelis took advantage of the impasse to colonize the territories they had occupied. The Security Council condemned this violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power from settling its own citizens in occupied land. The Israelis hesitated, but once they found that the United States was ready to support them, even against the will of the United Nations, they

pressed ahead with the building of settlements for Jews on land taken from its Arab owners, people like Abu Yusuf, whose ancestors had farmed the land of the West Bank for unnumbered generations. When the UN tried again to put a stop to this, the United States vetoed its resolutions; at the same time the huge subsidies paid by the United States helped to finance the construction of the Israeli settlements and the roads which linked them - and to arm and pay the Israeli soldiers whose job it became to enforce this process of ethnic cleansing against the "terrorists" who opposed it.

For five years now, the "peace process" has rolled on with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders confronting each other with a gala performance in Washington every now and then to promote the illusion of progress. And the net result is that the Israelis remain in overall control of the West Bank, while the

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Snapshots of our Activities

News from Nazareth

Sabeel in Nazareth is active within the local Christian community. In order to define our identity ecumenically, we try to establish relationships with the different Palestinian Christian communities. On Sunday, October 4th, 1998, a group of 55 people, of all ages from the large Sabeel "family" of Nazareth, guided by Father Elie Kourzum spent an entire day visiting and sharing experiences with Palestinian Christians in the West Bank. In Taybeh, a predominantly Christian village, the group split into two, one group attended mass at the Orthodox church and the other joined Roman and Greek Catholics who were celebrating mass together. After the services the visitors had the opportunity to meet their host congregations and later hear a presentation about the history of Taybeh and its Christian community. They also visited the small museum called "The Palestinian House." For most, this was their first visit to the area. Lunch was in the nearby village of Jifna - where a small Christian community still lives. Canon Ateek joined the group for lunch and later for a visit to the town of Birzeit. The day ended with vespers at the Benedictine Church in the village of Abu Ghosh near Jerusalem. It was a rich and exciting day for all.

Ten people from our Nazareth branch joined the Sabeel trip to Turkey and another 50 attended the panel presentations on Human Rights in Jerusalem, organized by Sabeel. Twenty five people had the pleasure of participating in the ecumenical Christmas dinner with the Jerusalem area Sabeel. The Nazareth

Sabeel branch is currently trying to find a center with some office space in order to be able to meet the growing need and expand its activities.

Clergy Programs

The countdown to The First Ecumenical Clergy Conference has started! Only a fortnight until February 2, 1999.

The monthly clergy meetings that started four years ago have paved the way for this momentous event. By strengthening the bonds of understanding among those called to serve God in the Christian Church, the time is now ripe to explore together the meaning of being servants of Christ at the threshold of a new century.

The 3-day conference will deal with the following topics: servants and stewardship, Christian unity, challenges facing the church, the church in a multi-faith society, the church through the eyes of its laity, and religious education for future generations. Please pray for the conference so that it will open a new phase in the long path to unity and *Koinonia*.

Ecumenical Christmas Dinner

The evening of December 19, 1999

was a busy one at the Ambassador Hotel in Jerusalem. It was the first day of Ramadan, the music from a wedding party filled the air and 170 guests were gathering in the lounge to attend Sabeel's ecumenical Christmas dinner. The presence of twelve clergymen, among them three bishops, seated at different tables with their own parishioners was obvious only through their attire. This was the gathering of one large Christian family - twenty five supporters came from the Galilee to be with their brothers and sisters from Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Beit Jala, Jifna, and Ramallah. This is the way Sabeel chose to celebrate the birth of the savior,



Carol singing at the Sabeel Christmas dinner

by sharing a meal, Christmas carols and simple gifts. As the gospel story was read proclaiming the message of 'peace on earth', thoughts and prayers were lifted for Iraqis who were being bombed in the name of 'false' peace and security. The

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sealed. The houses belonged to families of security suspects, sometimes even before their guilt had been proven in court. In some cases the suspects were killed and the family home was demolished after their death. As a result about 4,500 innocent people were left without a roof over their heads. In virtually every petition in this matter, the High Court of

Justice approved the house demolition. In addition, since 1987 Israel has demolished at least 2,000 Palestinian houses in the Occupied Territories, on the grounds that they were built without a building permit. For several decades, Israel has refused almost every request by Palestinians to build houses on their own land in the Occupied Territories. Having no alternative, thousands of Palestinians are

forced to build without a permit. Israel demolishes tens of hundreds of houses every year. Over 10,000 Palestinians have been left homeless as a result. In contrast, in the Jewish settlements hundreds of structures have gone up without permits. These structures have not been demolished and the authorities have granted retroactive permits for the illegal buildings.

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messages of the Bishops and priests emphasized the importance of being true to one's faith, of working for unity and the need for peace. Several people signed up to become 'Friends of Sabeel.'

'A Call for Justice'

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights, Sabeel invited three panelists to address the issue of human rights and justice on November 29th (the UN day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people). Lawyer Usama Halaby dealt with the legalistic aspect of the Declaration and Human Rights Conventions and the connection with moral values. Randa Siniora, a feminist who specializes in the application of Human Rights laws, spoke about the articles that concern women and children and pointed out that most societies today, including the Palestinian society do not apply these articles. The Canon Naim Ateek analyzed the connection between the Bible and the Declaration of Human Rights. He pointed out that neither mentions the other in actual words, but the message of loving God, one's neighbor AND the enemy are definitely the basis for Human Rights.

Jean Zaru moderated the session attended by about seventy people some of

whom came from the Galilee.

Groups

Though the Fall is usually a good season for tourism, this year's political atmosphere and the bombing of Iraq almost wiped out the breadwinning industry of the Palestinians. However, many bold and committed pilgrims resumed their planned trips and over 200 people, fact finding groups, academics, nurses, students of theology, clergypersons, and potential tour leaders from Britain, Germany, Ireland, Sweden, and North America stopped at Sabeel in order to listen to the testimonies of the speakers about the whole complicated situation. *Sabeel* realizes that with the influx of pilgrims, we need a more structured, varied approach to meet the visitors. In the year 2000, *Sabeel* will be able to offer special half-day or full-day programs in addition to the already existing services.

A Day of Prayer and Fasting for Jerusalem

Sabeel invites all its friends to observe a day of fasting for Jerusalem on March 26, 1999. The Center in Jerusalem will be open to all those who would like to drop in. You can write prayers, poetry, or meditations and share

them with others at the center.

The Padare

Three *Sabeel* members, The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, Cedar Duaybis, and Hilary Rantisi participated in the Padare, 'the meeting place' in the Shona language of Zimbabwe, of the WCC General Assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe between the 7th and 11th of December, 1998. They gave presentations on Jerusalem and put the photo exhibit "Qissatuna, Our Story", on display.



Upcoming Sabeel Events

February 2-5: Clergy Conference

March 2: Book Launch of "Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee" at All Hallow London Wall

March 26: A day of prayer and fasting for the peace of Jerusalem



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Palestinians, the remnants of that indigenous population whose rights Mr. Balfour and his colleagues so emphatically guaranteed in 1917, have been granted a fictitious independence in a few parcels of land separated from each other by Israeli troops manning roadblocks and by armed Jewish settlers in 150 illegal colonies throughout the West Bank.

Whatever the British Government may have intended all those years ago, this is a conclusion which cannot be justified in terms of international law or of humanity or elementary justice. It has been achieved because successive Israeli governments, culminating in that of Binyamin Netanyahu, have ridden roughshod over the rights of the Palestinians, confident that the United States,

with its powerful pro-Israeli lobby, would protect them against the attempts by the rest of the United Nations to restrain them.

In 1919, less than two years after the publication of the Balfour Declaration, Mr. Balfour himself acknowledged, in an extraordinarily revealing memorandum, that what was planned for Palestine was in "flagrant contradiction" with the newly proclaimed principle of self-determination. The Palestinians had not been consulted about the future which was to be forced on them and to which they had already registered their strenuous objection. "In short", wrote Mr. Balfour to his cabinet colleague Lord Curzon: "So far as Palestine is concerned, the powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly

wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate."

In the light of that admission and as we approach the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption by the United Nations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on 10 December, is there not an obligation on Britain to do everything in its power to rescue Abu Yusuf and his neighbors from the designs of the Israelis?

Michael Adams is a former Middle East correspondent of the Guardian

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ment and anger. Such incidents can quickly turn very dramatic. In recent months the Palestinians have experienced collective punishment from the Israelis in the form of curfews and even total closure of the town following some serious incidents. Many Jewish settlers are licensed to carry arms – even automatic rifles and sub-machine guns – and often do so – making street quarrels potentially very dangerous.

The task of the TIPH observers is to observe and report critical incidents and to discuss means of reducing tension, promoting the efforts needed to bring the City back to normal life, i.e. a situation without fear and aggression. TIPH has no formal authority whatsoever and no right to interfere in disputes, incidents or the activities of the Israeli security forces or the Palestinian Police. TIPH cannot stop or intervene as a go-between in violent incidents. It is TIPH's mere presence that forms the operational basis and supposedly contributes to a calmer, less confrontational climate in the City. TIPH's only 'weapon' is its ability to raise relevant issues in a dialogue with the two parties, using persuasion and reasoning combined with constructive proposals.

TIPH endeavors to establish good bilateral links with both sides and TIPH is in daily contact with the Israeli army and the Palestinian Police. TIPH itself cannot be termed an 'international police force' due to its limited mandate. Despite their lack of power, no doubt TIPH Observers

are a deterrent and can, to a large extent, act as police officers on patrol, much the same way as they do at home. TIPH is a preventive force exactly as the police are in any other country. The only difference is that TIPH cannot resort to the use of force, because it does not have the mandate to that effect. When writing reports on incidents the TIPH Observers can ask questions to the persons involved and later follow up with the Israeli army or the Palestinian Police Force for further clarification. However, it is not possible for TIPH to undertake a proper police investigation.

Is TIPH a model for peace-keeping in general or is it tailored specifically to the Hebron situation? With its unique mandate and composition, being civilian and unarmed, TIPH has the potential to become a model for peace-keeping given a certain environment, an acceptable security level making armed self-defense unnecessary, an accord between the conflicting parties that sets up mechanisms of cooperation, generally benevolent attitudes among the population towards the observers, neutrality and objectivity on the part of the observers and the Mission as a whole, and last but not least professionalism manifest in dialogue and mediation. Few people will probably disagree when I say that things would properly be worse in Hebron had TIPH not been here. However, some Palestinians express their frustration with TIPH and its limitations arguing that TIPH should be provided with more powers to exer-

cise its function more effectively, and some Jewish settlers see the TIPH presence as a great nuisance.

There is an old Rabbinical saying that runs as follows: 'Do - and you will understand'. It is only by engaging – in some way or other - in the promotion of justice and peace - that we can begin to appreciate the significance of God's Cosmic covenant with humankind as a whole - not just with the Jews - in every aspect of our lives. There are many different ways of doing this. A useful guideline could be: 'think globally - act locally'. That is what TIPH is trying to do in Hebron despite all the shortcomings of its mandate.

In the Hebrew Bible the poor are called the 'Anawim' which means 'the bent-over ones'. It is from the Anawim that salvation will come. To ignore the oppressed is to ignore God, no matter how many hymns we sing or prayers we pray during our various religious services. For the oppressed God's love takes the form of liberation - for the oppressors, it takes the form of a call to conversion and disempowerment.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly (Luke 2:52).

Hans Morck is the Chief Personnel Officer of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH).



Jerusalem Day *March 26, 1999*

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem! . . . How many times have I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings!"

Sabeel has designated March 26 a day of prayer and fasting for Jerusalem.
Please join us! Local activities will be announced soon.
International Friends of Sabeel - please look for further information from your
country coordinators.

Purpose Statement of *Sabeel*

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. *Sabeel* strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. (The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.)

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

We would encourage those who feel led to make a financial contribution to any aspect of our work. We too are encouraged when we know that others believe in what we are doing.



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