

# CORNER STONE

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# WALLS of SEPARATION

## "Hafrada" or a Genuine Peace?

From the beginning of history, humans learned to build walls for protection, defense, or boundaries. Walls have been built to keep people in or out. Prisons have walls to keep inmates in while homes have walls to give people privacy.

Many famous walls were built throughout history for one reason or another. Ultimately, they were torn down. In the history of war, the strongest fortifications including the highest and thickest walls were eventually destroyed. Through superior military means, or months and years of siege, or tricks and deceptions, armies managed to find ways to defeat and kill each other, and tear down the walls.

In the recent past, the Berlin wall became famous. It was a symbol of the Iron Curtain which divided the Soviet "empire" from the rest of the world. It also prevented the German people from being united after WWII. After almost 50 years of separation, alienation, and injustice, the wall was brought down by the determination of the people themselves who defied the patrolling soldiers. Its destruction signaled the beginning of a new era of unification and freedom for the Germans.

It has been tragic that walls of separation have always been built physically or figuratively whenever humans feared each other and could not live with each other. When there is injustice in one form or another, humans resort to building walls that separate them from their neighbors and enemies. In this sense, the walls are always oppressive.

**"It has been tragic that walls of separation have always been built physically or figuratively whenever humans feared each other and could not live with each other"**

by Naim Ateek

In 1923, Ze'ev Jabotinsky the forerunner of right-wing Zionism wrote about an "Iron Wall." It was his theory of conquering Palestine and subjugating the Palestinians. He wrote, "Every indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement. This is the way the Arabs [Palestinians] will behave and go on behaving so long as they possess a gleam of hope that they can prevent Palestine from becoming the Land of Israel" (Shlaim, 2001, p. 13). "What Jews need is an "iron wall" ... the establishment of a force that will in no way be influenced by Arab pressure...a force that is not dependent

on the local population, an iron wall which they will be powerless to break down" (Shlaim, p. 14). Jabotinsky's ideas have been implemented in the way the state of Israel has built its military forces.

We are all equally guilty in the way we have treated others. As an example, Christians for centuries negated and condemned other Christians because they differed from their own denomination. We built walls of race, discrimination, and prejudice; walls between religions and cultures; walls of class and economic status; and so on.

In the New Testament, Paul talks about the wall of separation between Jews and gentiles. This was a religious, cultural, and psychological wall that alienated people from one another and segmented their humanity. For Paul, the death of Christ on the cross destroyed that wall of separation. So he wrote,

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with saints and also members of the household of God...” (Ephesians 2:14-19).

Paul was expressing clearly that the purposes of God for all of humanity must not be marked by walls of separation and alienation. The alienation was destroyed through the sacrificial death of Christ for the sake of others.

In the Book of Revelation 21:12-19, the seer, John, describes the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. It is a “great and high wall” built with precious gems and metals yet the wall was not built for the protection from outside attacks because the gates of the city are never closed. The city’s security lay in God who is its defense and protector. “The vision of the wall of New Jerusalem maintains that while everything inside the city is in harmony with the ways of God, there is an outside that remains imperial in character. The wall serves to demarcate the imperial and the divine, earth and heaven. It is not a rigid boundary dividing specific people from one another. Rather it is a porous boundary, the open gates of which allow people who are ‘washing their robes’ to enter. The gates of the city are always open to receive those who come out of Babylon” (Howard-Brook, Anthony, 1999, p. 188).

Theologically speaking the building of the wall of “*hafrada*” (Hebrew for separation) by Israel is inevitably its way of building and maintaining “empire.” To build empire is to live in the worry of defenses and security. Empires are built and expanded through armies and wars. They can only be maintained by the power of a strong military. The choice for Christians and all people of faith is always between empire and New Jerusalem. **The tragedy of Israel is that it has built its empire on the foundation of injustice and oppression; consequently it will always feel the need to build walls of “*hafrada*”.**

For those of us who find ourselves living in the midst of empire, we must discover New Jerusalem. To begin with, we must reject empire and its false securities and defenses. The New Jerusalem for us is the community of faith whose defense and security lie in God. It is the community that is in the world but not of the world. It is the community that calls attention to the travesty and sham of empire and what empire stands for in its oppressive and dehumanizing policies. It is the community that maintains its loyalty and faithfulness to God and that refuses to walk the way of empire but walks in the *sabeel* (way) of God. It is the community that does justice, loves mercy, and walks humbly with God (Micah 6:8). With empire many people do not count. They have no

value because only those on the side of empire have value, only the militarily powerful count. Tragically, therefore, it seems essential and inevitable for empire to build walls even when these walls choke and suffocate the indigenous people of the land.

According to Revelation, “Babylon exists wherever sociopolitical power coalesces into an entity that stands against the worship of YHWH [God] alone ... to displace God from the center of reality in favor of human power arrangements.” New Jerusalem, however, “is found wherever the human community rejects the lies and violence of empire and places God at the center of its shared life. Revelation exhorts its audience to come out of Babylon and to dwell in New Jerusalem” (Howard-Brook, Anthony, 1999, pp.157-158). It is the place where every individual is a human being created in the image of God and has worth. That is why the gates of New Jerusalem remain open day and night in order to receive those who choose to leave Babylon in order to live in New Jerusalem. These are powerful symbols that must speak to us as people of faith who must expose the naked and deceptive nature of empire that builds walls.



As it has expanded its control of the land, Israel has used all the means of war at its disposal. According to research, the earlier system which the Israeli government used to control its Arab minority within Israel included three important components, namely, cooptation, dependence, and segmentation (Lustick, 1980). When this system was not totally successful with the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, it was continuously developed and refined. It eventually evolved from a system of control to a system of suppression. It was no more aimed at merely controlling the Palestinian population but at crushing them. The Israeli everyday policy included the employing of helicopter gun ships and fighter aircraft, targeted assassinations of local Palestinian leaders, demolishing of homes, and destruction of political, economic, and ecological infrastructures of Palestinian life. Furthermore, the closures and separation of villages from one another, the erection of dozens of checkpoints and the daily humiliation of young and old, men and women, and so much more, all indicate a policy of suppression rather than control.

What has been most worrying and frustrating for Israel, however, has been the suicide bombings. As Israel developed a more effective system of suppression, the Palestinian resistance evolved a more effective system of reprisal. The pernicious climax of both systems stood at the height of the second intifada with both sides using the worst systems available to them. For Israel, the targeted assassinations and the demolishing of homes became almost a weekly occurrence. For the Palestinians, it was the suicide bombings. Both actions struck fear in the other.

From the beginning of the second intifada on September 28, 2000, until the end of June 2003, approximately 2,072\* Palestinians have been killed and 5,745\* wounded. In the same period 846\* Israelis have been killed and 2,278\*\* injured.

(\* Figures taken from B:Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories; \*\*Figures taken from the Palestine Red Crescent Society.)

Israel used the increase in numbers of dead and injured as an opportunity to construct a wall (or so-called "Security Fence") around the West Bank as it had done previously around the Gaza strip. The wall was built in a way that would incorporate large sections of land and aquifers which had been inside the 1967 borders of Palestine.

The wall reflects a number of things in the Israeli Jewish psyche, namely, fear, distrust, separation, and frustration. The Road Map expresses a glimmer of hope for the region and a fresh start. Understandably, the American administration wanted Israel to stop building the wall and give a chance to the new spirit in which the two sides have started to implement the Road Map. Israel, however, has refused and continues to build the wall.

This hafrada wall (apartheid wall) has become, like the settlements, a great obstacle to peace. It has made the life of many Palestinians miserable. It is an added instrument for the system of oppression and suppression that the Israelis are using because they have become bankrupt of ideas. In fact, some feared that with the constant deterioration in the security situation, Jewish extremists would push for mass expulsion of Palestinians and even more killings which would border on genocide.

With Israel's withdrawal from the Bethlehem area and parts of the Gaza strip, local Palestinian leaders have been calling on Israel to stop the building of the wall. The wall will certainly add to injustice and the agony of people. Instead of contributing towards greater trust, it will add to increasing resentment and hate. As we embark on a new venture for peace with the Road Map as guide, it is important to lift up certain guidelines that could enhance the process.

In his book *Just Peacemaking* (Pilgrim Press, 1998), Glen Stassen called attention to the importance of taking independent initiatives to reduce threat. Stassen was using the ideas of Charles Osgood, a social psychologist who first proposed the idea of independent initiatives as a peacemaking method. "Osgood argued that in a relationship of distrust and heightened threat perception, nations are blocked from initiating peacemaking steps and misperceive peace initiatives from the other side as insincere manipulation" (Stassen, p.47). What is needed in such cases is a strategy of independent initiatives that each side would undertake in order to enhance trust and reduce threat. These initiatives must be "visible and verifiable actions" that can be seen by the other side. They must be independent of the negotiating process that is taking place and can boost the climate of negotiations and increase its rate of success. Such initiatives must be "designed to decrease the threat to the other side, but they should not leave the initiator weak. A feeling of weakness often increases distrust and threat perception." Furthermore, these initiatives must be carried out in series, they must be announced in advance, and their purpose of de-escalating the tension must be clearly explained in spite of the blunder of the other side. The objective must be to increase the level of trust and to invite the other side to reciprocate (Stassen, pp. 47-48).

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has suffered so many

setbacks that the greatest casualty has been "trust." The level of trust has fallen below the minus sign. Neither side believes that the other side really wants peace. The Palestinians do not believe that Israel is serious about the implementation of UN resolutions 242 and 338 that call for withdrawal to the 1967 lines. While Israel does not believe that the Palestinians will be satisfied with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip once they achieve that goal.

It seems to me that the final goals must be clear. The step-by-step negotiations will not work because people are afraid of the final goals. In this the Road Map is much better than its predecessor, the Oslo Accords, because it clearly talks about the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. It is possible to clarify the end result even further. The Palestinians must be assured that Israel will not be allowed to dominate their lives; and the Israelis need to be assured that once UN resolutions are fully satisfied, no further claims will be sought.

Since there is a serious beginning on both sides to implement the Road Map, we must work at enhancing the level of mutual trust. The above suggestion of independent initiatives can provide some help. But to begin with, the Quartet and especially the United States needs to make certain basics more clear. The movement in the negotiations between the two sides must be based on the principle of equality. Israel cannot continue to behave as the stronger dominating force that can impose its will on the weaker party. Such an attitude will not yield peace. **Israel cannot forever use "security" as an excuse to prevent or slow down the movement towards ending the occupation. Security is a pagan god that Israel worships today.** Certain security needs are obviously legitimate but so much of Israel's oppression of the Palestinians is not due to security - the closures, the humiliations, the prolonged agonies - these are the result of a pathology that Israel has brought on itself. Indeed, it needs help and help must be rendered. But we must not allow ourselves to be sucked in by a pathology that will damage and destroy the possibilities of peace.

As the Road Map is implemented, it must be emphasized that unless the quality of life for the Palestinians changes quickly and drastically for the better, the Road Map will be doomed to failure. I believe that the Palestinians will honor the agreement if Israel keeps its part without deception and blunder. The real beginning is the shattering of the gods that both sides have created and worshiped. Israel created the god of "security" and in the name of this god it is destroying the Palestinians. Similarly, the Palestinians created the god of "liberative" violence with the claim that violence will attain liberation. We believe these are illusions. Violence and terrorism on either side will come back to haunt us and we will feel their results within our own homes and communities.

These false gods must be destroyed and abandoned before progress in peacemaking is possible. It must begin in the minds and hearts of people. The true and authentic God is the God of justice and peace. This God demands that peace be based on justice. Justice in this case means simply the ending of the oppression and domination of the Palestinians by Israel and the sharing of Palestine between the two people in accordance with UN and international law. ■

# What Does a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Version of Apartheid Look Like? Palestine Knows.

*by Jamal Juma'*

You can call it a "Separation Wall," "Isolation Wall," "Colonial Wall" or, as we call it, "Apartheid Wall"; but certainly not a "Security Wall."

Yet, none of these names reflect the shocking reality of what the Wall really is. What may not have been clear to some at the beginning of the Wall's construction, when the pretenses and buzzwords of "security" and "fighting terror" were dominant in the Israeli and global discourse, has recently come to surface. Only a few months after the first bulldozers began large-scale destruction of Palestinian lands, trees and property, the open public debate in Israel about how many settlements to annex with the Wall has turned commonplace. The Wall presents for us the future map of Palestine and the meaning of the kind of lifelessness that has befallen the Palestinians, on the little that remains of their land. All in all, we are witnessing a 21<sup>st</sup> century version of Apartheid, which will lay siege to Palestinians within fragmented, disconnected cantons, taking final possession of the Palestinian right to live in freedom, in a state, like any other people.

Work on the Wall's "first phase" began in June 2002 in the northern West Bank, starting from the village of Salem, northwest of the city of Jenin, leading all the way to the village of 'Azzun 'Atma south of Qalqiliya, running the length of about 145 kilometers. In fact, the Wall is not being built on, or even close to the Green Line. Even in the case of Qalqiliya city, which is a community bordering the Green Line, the Wall is built over 150 meters inside the city, adjoining homes and shops, threatening their demolition as they lie within the Wall's 30-100 meter buffer zone. In other cases, such as in Jayyus, 'Isla, 'Azzun and Kafr Sur, the Wall is built 4-6 kilometers inside the West Bank. This massive sweep is isolating approximately 11,500 people living in 16 villages between the Wall and the Green Line, disconnecting them from both the rest of the West Bank and from Israel. The Wall further isolates the lands of at least 50 additional villages located east of the Wall, while their lands lie west of the Wall.

Alongside large-scale confiscation and de facto annexation of thousands of dunums of agricultural lands, the uprooting of tens of thousands of trees has already taken place. More than 85 com-

mercial stores have been demolished and more than double that number are awaiting the arrival of bulldozers, in most cases, in order to further isolate West Bank communities near the Green Line into the non-livable, annexed zone. Hundreds of families have had their lands confiscated or their properties destroyed. Most of those who have lost land and property because of the Wall have been left with virtually nothing, awaiting monthly humanitarian assistance when, not so long ago, they were able to sustain themselves, and at times flourish, off their lands and from commerce.

The "first phase" was nothing more than a "modest" beginning for what would soon follow. Amidst accelerated threats by the U.S. to attack Iraq at the beginning of 2003, expansionist plans simultaneously began to appear, one after another, and in undoubted harmony between the settlers and their government. In January of this year, the maps that determined the Wall's path to be the shocking length of 360 kilometers that will isolate 95,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and the 200,000 residents of East Jerusalem from the West Bank, would quickly fade. At the beginning of February 2003, the "Yesha" settler's council/Israeli government announced its proposal to make modifications to the Wall's path in order to annex additional, if not most of the settlement blocs. Some of them, such as the Ariel settlement bloc, are 16 km inside the West Bank. This new plan, which the Israeli media announced, was produced by the settlers in direct cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Defense. It isolates a total of 405,000 Palestinians and annexes to Israel 343,000 settlers, dividing the West Bank into two separate blocks north and south of the Jerusalem area.

In March 2003, Sharon put his final touches to this colonial project, which began in 1967 or rather in 1948, by announcing the building of a second wall in the eastern-central West Bank alongside the Jordan Valley; thus completing the isolation of an already shredded West Bank, while annexing the Jewish settlements in the central West Bank. This plan of walls will divide the West Bank into

three main disconnected residential ghettos; even within these areas, communities will further be isolated from one another. These ghettos will be located, in most cases, kilometers inside the 1967 borders, as Israel chisels away into the West Bank from all directions. These ghettos are: the northern ghetto of Nablus, Jenin, Tulkarm; the central ghetto of Salfit and Ramallah; and the southern ghetto of Bethlehem and Hebron. Qalqiliya and Jericho, as well as several other villages to the west of Ramallah and Salfit, will each be an open-air prison surrounded by walls from all sides. Here each group of neighboring villages will be fenced in, with a single gate leading to the closest larger ghetto. In total, the ghettos, between the two Walls, comprise 45% of the West Bank upon which the Palestinian “state” will be established and where some form of connection lines, like fenced roads, may be provided between these ghettos.

By tearing apart the West Bank into these disconnected areas, the Wall is reshaping the “final status” of the Palestinian state according to the Zionist project. Through the fortification of these walls Israel will “achieve” the following:

\*First, Israel lays hold over the realm of Palestinian expansion in order to control the “demographic factor” that must, in the long-run, ensure a Jewish majority in all of historic Palestine.

\*Second, Israel negates any possibility of the Right of Return for Palestinians by the besieging of Palestinian cities and ensuring the limited capacity of the integration and survival of the increasing population. It is estimated that by the year 2015, these areas will reach their maximum capacity of inhabitants.

\*Third, Israel makes certain that no future Palestinian state will be viable, through the control of Palestinian water resources and fertile agricultural lands that could otherwise be the base for any future socio-economic and agricultural development.

\*Fourth, Israel effectively erases the 1967 borders and redesigns them to meet its political ambitions of maintaining full control over the West Bank, which it considers to be the land of “Greater Israel.”

\*Fifth, Israel completely isolates Jerusalem from the West Bank through the building of settlement blocs on all sides, strangling the city whereby no room remains for Palestinian expansion, whether demographically, socially or economically. The Wall is the final step of Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem away from the West Bank.

To date, and including the Road Map, there has been no genuine interest by Israel and its partners to end this colonial project of dispossession. The first commitment to putting an end to the colonial project, where the Wall represents the tip of the colonial pyramid, is the dismantling of the Wall and the settlements. A Road Map that deals not with the fundamental, causal issues, negating the existence of the ’67 borders, relegating Jerusalem insignificant, denying the inalienable rights of the refugees, and allow-



ing for the continued existence of the settlement project brings about a legitimate fear to the Palestinian people that such a document will blind the world into seeing the opposite of what really is. Taking into account the daily “developments” on the ground, marked by brutal violations and crimes, the Road Map could symbolize not only the Oslo whirlpool but a momentum that could lead to even further devastation.

Therefore, the Wall should be defined as the last phase of the Zionist colonial project. It aims at the complete control of the West Bank, which began immediately following the Occupation of the West Bank in 1967 and whose implementation has continued in a well-planned and organized manner, culminating with the building of a succession of Walls that will absolutely control the fate of the Palestinian communities.



# Solidarity

## A One-Sided Wall

by Steve Kalil

The message “Do not cross this Barrier” applies only to Palestinians Under Occupation - Jewish settlers are free to come and go.

A visit to the West Bank at this difficult time would stir in anyone a range of probing thoughts and mixed emotions. During a visit to the West Bank, in April 2003, we were filled with a sense of outrage as we witnessed the construction of what is commonly called the Apartheid Wall. The Wall has achieved the unique ability to be a barrier only from one side: Palestinians under

occupation are caged in, while Israeli and non-Israeli Jewish settlers living in illegal settlements inside the “cage” are free to come and go at will.

Our group had a chance to visit Bethlehem, Salem, Nablus, Jenin, Baqa el-Sharqiya, Qalqilia, and Ramallah. Unfortunately, Gaza was closed off. We are writing this out of respect for the tenacity of the residents of Qalqilia, Bethlehem, Nablus, Jenin, Salem, Baqa el-Sharqiya, and Ramallah, and all of the other Palestinian Arab towns and villages in the West Bank that are going to be affected by the evil Wall currently being constructed by the government of Israel.

Contrary to many media reports, this Wall will not mark the 1967 border, which is also referred to as the Green Line. Indeed, in Baqa el-Sharqiya, it was being built well past the Green Line, on Palestinian land, and many Palestinian buildings were demolished as a sort of buffer zone between Israel and the Wall. I stood beside the rubble of recently demolished businesses, well within the Palestinian side of the Green Line. The reality is that this hideous monument to racism, this unilateral offensive will further allow Israel to annex more Palestinian land, destroy more agricultural lands, destroy more property, restrict the movement and assault the dignity of Palestinians already under occupation, and further mock international standards

and laws regarding human rights. In a word, it's inhuman.

First, a description of the Walls being built. There are three types of Walls, each insidious and each a creation of demented minds. We first encountered it at the village of Salem in the north, where the Palestinian side of the village is divided from the side closest to Israel. Prior to the Wall, it was a short, five minutes drive, fifteen minutes walk from one side of the village to the next. As a result of the wall, it now takes thirty minutes to drive to get to the Israeli checkpoint, and from there, it's anyone's guess as to how long to pass through that checkpoint. The checkpoint is only open from 8 AM - 4 PM. All the residents on both sides of this monstrosity are going to be affected. Physically, this evil Wall is actually an electronic fence, surrounding the entire Palestinian Arab village. On either side of the fence, there is a paved road, used by Israeli tanks to patrol the fence. Beside that road, there is another road of smooth sand, smoothed daily as a method of detecting footprints made by people trying to cross the fence. Beside the sand road is a three-meter high barbed wire fence. The Wall's buffer zone has been deemed by the military to be a sort of no man's land, paving the way for further large-scale demolitions, all on the Palestinian side of the Green Line. This Wall in Salem, like other parts of this wall is located in many places, just meters away from homes, shops and schools.

The second variation of the Wall we encountered was in Baqa el-Sharqiya. Again, it has as its mid-point an electronic fence, a paved road on either side for tank patrols, along side is a sandy smooth road which will detect footprints or movement, plus a deep five meter steep ravine, and a razor barbed wire fence, four rolls thick at it's bottom, and at least 4 meters high. It couldn't help but evoke images of Nazi wantonness of occupied Europe. For me, this massive section of the Wall provided the catalyst for a chilling catapult back in time. If one ever wonders how other people must have felt when confronted with this type of imprisonment and brutality, it becomes clear at Baqa el-Sharqiya. Stand behind the fence, go to Baqa el-Sharqiya and try to get out, go to Baqa el-Sharqiya and wonder why you're trapped, go to Baqa el-Sharqiya and wonder what comes next, go to Baqa el-Sharqiya and you'll be a witness to something sub-human. Our emotions swept over us as we stood up

# Reflections



against the razor barbed wire. Anger, horror, shock, despair, fear, revulsion and helplessness. Utter silence overcame our group, each individual trying to understand how to deal with in their own way. The burning question amongst our group was how even any amongst a people which experienced Nazi evil could stoop to such cruelty.

Again this Wall has separated the Palestinian Arabs from the adjoining Palestinian Arab town. There is only one way in or out of the town, again through a checkpoint, which has banker's hours. In this town, where there is no doctor or hospital, anyone unlucky enough to require medical help, during the hours of checkpoint closure, are, well, simply either going to have to wait or die. In January of 2003, sixty-three stores were demolished in the commercial area to make way for the wall and the checkpoint. My wife took a picture of me next to rubble, lest anyone suggest this was an incredible tale. One quarter of the commercial area of the town was destroyed. The Israeli Army (IDF) has informed the town, the rest are to be razed, but that is currently being decided in the courts. The shops were destroyed along with their contents, belongings, equipment and supplies. The demolitions and the Wall are not only meant to destroy the lives, and livelihoods of hundreds of families, but are to seal the fate of the town and paves the road for the ethnic cleansing of the residents, leaving them homeless, landless, hungry and hopeless. The wall also separates the town people from their farmlands. What was once a short walk to their farmlands has become a daily exercise in frustration, humiliation and despair, as the only way to get to their land is through the military checkpoint.

The third example of the Wall, around Qalqilia, clearly exposes it as an Apartheid Wall. This however, is a bit of a misnomer. It is doubtful that even at its worst, this third type of wall was ever present in Apartheid South Africa. For the residents of Qalqilia, they are now forced to look at gray slabs of concrete, at some places, eight meters high. At the bottom of the concrete, the Israelis have dug pits, giving the impression of an even higher fence. Machine gun turrets are placed at intermittent intervals along the wall. Once again, images of WWII came to mind. Further, the Israelis have taken the dirt from the excavation and placed it on the other side of the fence. The

effect of that action has been to provide an illusion as to the height of the Wall from the Israeli side. For them, it looks like it is not so high and not so bad.

Qalqilia was at one time a lively market center, and was called the "fruit basket" of the West Bank. They are now hermetically sealed by a travesty erected by the Government of Israel. The wall coils around the city, like a snake, with two kilometers of its reinforcement being an 8-meter high barricade. This wall, along with closure and curfew, will have only one outcome for the residents of the city. Devastation. The residents have been caged in, like animals, with only a bloody military checkpoint serving as the sole entrance and exit to the city. In the last academic year, about forty-five school days were completely lost due to closure and the Israeli military refusing to allow teachers to enter at the checkpoint.

I have not described the amount of Palestinian Land to be confiscated for the Wall, the number of buildings and homes to be razed, the water wells in confiscated areas, or how the Wall is separating water sources from agricultural lands, the water pipes destroyed for agricultural or domestic use, and how some villages will lose their only source of water.

The reference in the international media, and within Israel to a "fence" being built to help separate the "two sides" should and can be seen as a cynical, obscene, attempt to put a human face on an act of evil. The massive oppressive physical structure and its implications for the lives of hundreds of thousands of people cannot be overstated. This pathetic attempt at separation rhetoric cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. It is not in any way a reflection of the historic, geographic, and physical divide of two peoples. Rather, it is a transparent attempt by an aggressive regime, in its ongoing campaign of forcible, unilateral separation and plans for ethnic cleansing with complete disregard for the national, cultural and economic sovereignty for the Palestinians, those with whom it ultimately needs to make peace.

Can the Israelis not see the symbolism of this evil Wall? Does it not immediately and painfully remind them of evil done to them? One would have to be blind not to see imagery that this Wall screams with. This inhuman, malicious act, undertaken

by a sinister government cannot be allowed to stand. This one act of evil has created within the Palestinian community a deeper sense of despair, new levels of poverty, and a higher level of urgency for action amongst Palestinians and from all of us who believe that peace can only come with justice.

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## I am back in Cedar Falls. Now what?

*By Germana Nijim*



I left Hebron, Palestine, on May 30, flying to Milano, Italy, where I was met by a dear friend. “How are you?” he asked. I started to cry. This is not my usual reaction on returning to my country of birth. The cappuccino, as good as it was, did not cheer me up, and the bag of cherries handed to me made me smile, but I did not touch them. We sat at a little table in the terminal, while the tears kept falling. I did not want to be here. I did not want to be anywhere except in Palestine. My friend understood and gave me time and space. As we headed toward Verona on the autostrada, I continued crying, uttering short sentences that did not convey my feelings of desolation.

Eventually, Italy took over. There are so many things I love about my old country that I was soon caught up in the joy of being back. But I dreaded the nights. For almost a week, Israeli soldiers would infiltrate my dreams and rob me of my rest. The mornings brought relief mixed with feelings of guilt for having “abandoned ship,” for having left behind my Christian Peacemaker Teammates (CPT) and the people we served.

It was not until we drove to the Dolomite Mountains that I regained some peace. I grew up in the mountains, and I love them with a passion. Near Corvara, the tall, imposing peaks rose all around us like strong, protective arms. I wanted to hug them back. The valleys were incredibly green and full of a daz-

zling mix of wild flowers. In my walks I often stopped to marvel at them. And the feelings of guilt came back; what had I done to deserve being in such breathtaking place when there was so much injustice and violence and oppression in this world; when so many people would never be able to gaze at this majesty or experience its peace?

Once back in Chicago I felt more miserable than ever. I felt out of place, useless, in the way. I was so self-absorbed that I did not realize how perplexing and hurtful my behavior was to my sons. They had read my daily messages and knew what my life in Hebron had been like, but they could not realize the very deep imprints Hebron had left in me. They did not lose their patience with me. They let me cry and talked to me gently and made me realize that I was a mother before I was a CPTer. Again I thought, what had I done to deserve such compassionate and loving sons in this unjust and suffering world?

Reluctantly, I finally got in my car to drive back to Cedar Falls. Having lived in community in Hebron, with people I liked very much, I was dreading the empty, silent house. The drive in the sunny and cloudless day took me over five hours. On the road, I stopped twice, but voluntarily, not because of checkpoints where I had to show my passport to kid soldiers armed to the teeth.

I watched farmers working in their fields without the threat of settlers descending on them and causing them harm. Lucky for them, soldiers of an occupying army would not suddenly declare their fields a “closed military zone.” If some of their land were wanted for road expansion, the farmers would be compensated.

The state would not rob them of their land to settle an alien and hostile population. Bulldozers would not uproot their trees. The worst criminals would not have their houses blown up in the middle of the night. They could hop in their pick-up trucks or Sports Utility Vehicles (SUV) and drive miles even across state lines to see family and friends without having to apply for travel permits, which most probably would be denied. Nowhere would they be stopped and made to wait hours under the summer sun without food or water while soldiers decided their fate. They could make appointments and keep them without military interference. They could make vacation plans. Military snipers were not likely to kill their children or assassinate their neighbors for their political views and activities.

As bad as the American economy is, American citizens can live in relative security and freedom. **Yet, I thought, the United States pays millions of dollars to Israel to fund an illegal, immoral, devastating occupation that robs Palestinians of their human and civil rights, of their hope in the future, of life itself.** This “Christian” country does not give much credence to the “Do unto others” Gospel injunction. And Christians, Muslims and Jews suffer and die as a consequence of misguided American policies.

You might say, "Wait! There is a Road Map on the table now. The United States is seriously committed to supporting a Palestinian state and bringing justice to all the people in the area." But if this is true, why is the Apartheid Wall still being built? And the electric fence that separates farmers from their land and puts a stranglehold on Palestinian villages robbing them of vital aquifers? Why is Hebron denied the right to restore damaged buildings while settlers are given permission to build colonies that the U.S. has declared "obstacles to peace"? Why is it that in every statement our politicians utter they make sure to mention, "Israel is our friend"? Why is it that Sharon-widely perceived as a war criminal- is given honor and privileges and Arafat is declared "irrelevant"? Why do we insist on labeling Hamas as a "terrorist organization" while we honor Israelis elected to the highest offices who were members of the terrorist Stern Gang? Why is "state terrorism" not in our vocabulary even when Israel, our Friend, fired missiles into occupied, densely populated areas in Gaza?

It will take more than a Road Map to convince me that the United States is committed to justice. As a start, our entire vocabulary referring to the conflict needs to be revised to give credibility to American-stated good intentions.

After a few weeks of restlessness, depression, inactivity and tears, I feel my quiet house finally, though slowly, becoming alive with the voices and issues I left behind in Palestine. Next year in Hebron, inshallah!

*Germana Nijim, was the director of International Services at the University of Northern Iowa, for 22 years. She is a reservist with Christian Peacemaker Teams.(CPT)*

### *How Long, O Lord?*

Book Results from Sabeel-Sponsored Pilgrimage

*Maurine and Robert Tobin, editors*

Members of a May 2002 pilgrimage to Israel/Palestine sponsored by Sabeel, have organized the creation of a book which speaks to their experiences and those of many who visit the beautiful, but conflict-torn region. The book, entitled, *How Long, O Lord? Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Voices from the Ground and Visions for the Future in Israel/Palestine*, is a series of articles by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bishop M. Thomas Shaw, Bishop Riah Abu El-Assal, The Rev. Naim Ateek, Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi, Henry R. Carse, Gila Svirsky, Edward Said, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Jeff Halper, Elaine Hagopian, Martin Federman, Sara Roy, Yehezkel Landau, and Andrea Anderson. It is available from Cowley Publications in the U.S., ([www.cowley.org](http://www.cowley.org)); John Garratt Bookroom in Australia, ([www.johngarratt.com.au](http://www.johngarratt.com.au)); Novalis in Canada, (416-363-9409); and Columba (Dublin, Ireland) in UK and Europe (353-1-294-2564).

## Positions Available

If you are well organized and have excellent skills in English you may be just the person Sabeel is looking for to work as a **Personal Assistant** to its director, The Rev. Naim Ateek, in our Jerusalem office. A wide variety of responsibilities from editing articles to making travel arrangements keeps this job from becoming routine. Basic computer skills required. Contact Nora Carmi for more information.

Tel:(972) 2 532 7136

or: [local@sabeel.org](mailto:local@sabeel.org).

Help us stay connected with our friends around the world by **building and maintaining a working database at Sabeel**. This full-time position has the potential to be reduced to an on-going part-time maintenance position that would allow time for other opportunities or travel. A good working knowledge of Microsoft Access is required. For more information contact Janet Lahr Lewis at Sabeel by phone or email.

Tel: (972) 2 532 7136 or

[Friends@sabeel.org](mailto:Friends@sabeel.org)

You can play a key role in the growing ministry of Sabeel. We are looking for someone who is friendly, motivated, and inspired by our ministry to serve as a **Public Relations and Development Officer** in assisting us in meeting our many visitors, and in the funding and development of our expanding programs. Proposal writing and experience are required for this full-time position. Contact Nora Carmi for more information.

Tel: (972) 2 532 7136

or: [local@sabeel.org](mailto:local@sabeel.org).

## Archbishop Desmond Tutu Patron of Sabeel International



Sabeel is pleased to announce that Nobel Peace Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu has agreed to be Patron of Sabeel International. His patronage will assist Sabeel in its outreach and development work.

James Wall, former editor of the *Christian Century* and advisory board member of Friends of Sabeel-North America said, "Archbishop Tutu's courageous leadership in confronting the evil of apartheid in South Africa makes it particularly significant that he has now agreed to be our patron, because the occupation of Palestinians has shown itself to be similar and detrimental to both Israelis and Palestinians just as apartheid was to all South Africans." Tutu is widely recognized as a world leader speaking on behalf of the oppressed and promoting non-violent methods of resistance in their struggles for liberation.

## Prayer *for the* Human Family

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*From The Book of Common Prayer, Episcopal Church.*

## When Will The **Wall** Come Down?

*By H. Paul Shuch*

When will the wall come down,  
The one I have spent forever building,  
The wall which protects me from hurt  
And distances me from life?  
When will the wall collapse,  
The wall built of bricks to match my years,  
Bound with the mortar of my darkest fears  
And stretching beyond the horizon?  
When will the wall be breached,  
The one impervious to battering ram  
And lead shot hurled by catapults  
And all the horns of Jericho?  
When will the wall desist  
In holding at bay, beyond my grasp  
All my soul's yearning and heart's desire,  
In keeping me safely alone?  
When will the wall's resolve  
To shelter me from others, and myself  
Weaken, and permit me to admit  
Life and love into my heart?  
When will the wall come down?

# Snapshots of our Activities

Both the atmospheric and political heat of summer are at their maximum in Palestine and Israel. Will the cease-fire last? Why is the number of casualties on both sides still high? Will the Road Map lead to the end of occupation and a just peace? As the questions remain unanswered, feelings fluctuate between hope and despair in a stifling atmosphere that dominates the region. With signs of Israeli redeployment from Gaza and Bethlehem, the crawling Apartheid Wall decries 'good will and intentions.'

As we wait... Sabeel perseveres in its efforts to proclaim the truth, to promote non-violence and work for justice with mercy, both locally and internationally.

## Clergy

**Meetings:** On May 20 and June 18, the clergy gatherings were held at the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem. Only one West Banker, Father Francois Shamieh from Jericho was able to join the Jerusalem priests at the two gatherings. In May, the Greek Orthodox priests Father Issa Touma and Archmandrite Atallah Hanna respectively gave the Bible study and a resume on "The history of Christians in the Levant." The visit of Pastor Said Ailabouni from the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) in Chicago was an added blessing as clergy and staff of Sabeel continued their fellowship over a simple meal. In June, Father Boulos Armaleh from the Melkite Church summarized Irfan Shaheed's study on "Christianity before the rise of Islam."

The ecumenical presence of Clergy during the International Solidarity Visit, May 3-11, 2003 clearly reflected their involvement in community life in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nablus and Jifna, as expressed to the visitors. The concluding worship service for the solidarity visit was held at St. Mark Church where Mar Sweirios Malki Murad, the Syrian Orthodox Bishop introduced them to some of the traditions of this Eastern Church, the only one whose liturgy is still conducted in the Aramaic language (as spoken by our Lord, Jesus Christ).

## Women

The encounters of International Solidarity visitors with the local indigenous people were enlivened and enriched by the participation of the women from our Sabeel groups in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Galilee.

**Lectures:** Dr. Magi Abdul Massih, Professor of Religious studies at St. Mary's University in Halifax, Canada, spoke about "The Religious and Doctrinal basis of Dialogue" from a Christian perspective, with reference to the various interpretations of the gospels. Magi, an Egyptian by birth delivered her lecture in Arabic on Friday May 16, 2003 at Sabeel. An interesting discussion followed the challenging presentation.



### "Developing Strategies for Non-Violence and Democracy"

Ten Palestinian women participated in the workshop under the heading "Developing strategies for non-violence and democracy" organized by Sabeel and the Swedish Ecumenical Council in

Sweden, held at the Sisters of Sion Convent in Ein Karem, May 12-15, 2003. Participants varied in age, faith and backgrounds. Some were still students, others professionals. Seven came from Jerusalem, one from Jericho, another from Nazareth and a third from Egypt. Unfortunately, Israeli Women who had initially shown great interest were unable to attend when the original dates in March had to be moved to May, and the two who had confirmed dropped out at the last moment.



Sue Williams from Northern Ireland with a rich history of long-term political mediation and assistance to reconciliation, development and human rights groups in various countries such as Kenya, Senegal, Colombia, Georgia, and Abkhazia (to name a few) was the key facilitator. The group studied the definition of conflict, violence and nonviolence, the dynamics of violence, models of decision-making and learned tools and techniques such as mapping, strategy circle etc. By identifying roots and indicators of violence in their own Palestinian conflict, and once the painful stories were shared, the women were now ready to look for successful strategies that could assist in promoting change. The days flew by as the two groups diligently worked on their chosen projects: increased dehumanization in the conflict; and the issue of youth as decision-makers. The program ended with a visioning session, filling out evaluation forms, receiving certificates and a closing meal.

In addition to Sue, Agneta Magnusson and Birgitta Lorentzi from Sweden, Cathy Nichols and Nora Carmi from Sabeel formed the team that organized the workshop.

Agneta Magnusson's dictum: "Give to the world the best you have and the best you do and the best will come back to you" will long remain with the participants, some of whom were able to attend the follow-up session held at Sabeel. Again, they decided to focus on the issue of youth as decision-makers and to share their experiences in regular meetings, with a commitment to work towards non-violence and democracy.

*For a personal reflection by Zahra Khalidi, one of the participants, please read page 16*

**Together...we will build.** ' : The third encounter in the series entitled "Together, we will build" was held in Haifa on June 20. Like the second encounter that had taken place in Nazareth, the program combined spirituality, visits to traditional and historical sites, and a meeting with over 30 women from Haifa. Both the Jerusalem and Nazareth participants, included newcomers who welcomed the explanations provided by the official guides accompanying them, Rula Shbeita, one of the few female guides from Jerusalem and Anton Farah, the regular guide of the Nazareth group. The meeting with the Haifa women was held at the Melkite Church that filled up with over 130 women from the three locations. The parish priest Father Na'man Quzayha greeted the guests, and Naim Ateek who, many of those present remembered from his years of pastoral service in Haifa, introduced Sabeel and its ministry.

Father Na'man then presented his views of "the role of women in a parish," listing the traditional social services that women can be involved in. Anna Karram, principal of the Latin School in Haifa spoke about her personal experience in serving the community, an involvement based on her faith. Abla Jabali, a counsellor and educator from Nazareth highlighted the role of women as the link between family and parish, and she pointed out the challenges of Christian education today. A few of the Haifa women remained for lunch and continued the fellowship in a charming restaurant at the foot of the meticulous and beautiful Baha'i gardens. The rest of the day covered sites like Stella Maris, the Lady of Carmel, and the old Melkite Church in Wadi Jmal by the sea. Again history and tradition came alive as prayers and hymns mixed with tears brought back memories of Haifa, Palestine. Here, Violet Khoury, the Sabeel Nazareth coordinator shared an article written by her late father, Lutfi Haj in 1950, about his feelings as a refugee after the loss of his beloved city. Before heading back, the group enjoyed the sunset on the beach while a few women waded in the soothing ripples of the mediterranean sea. On the journey back, the women reflected on the benefit of combining fun and relaxation with spirituality. If this is the way to promote empowerment, then let us have more of these blessed moments.



## Youth

Haya Di'des, the new Youth coordinator at Sabeel, continues seeking creative means of meeting the needs of the Palestinian Youth. If numbers are indicative of needs, then there is an urgency to invest in youth.

On May 8, the grounds of the Maison d'Abraham Convent protected by its fence from the neighboring illegal Jewish Moskovitch settlement in Ras-al-Amoud, overlooking the walled city of Jerusalem filled with over 120 lively teenagers accompanied by their group leaders. Expressing and sharing their fears, concerns and aspirations helped Sabeel prioritize its future programs for the 14-17 age groups.

One of the issues that Sabeel dealt with immediately, was leadership training for summer camps. The local department staff accompanied and supported Haya with this important venture. Twenty one young people aged 15-26 as well as two adults belonging to eight youth groups met in Ein Karem June 15-17 to prepare themselves for the responsibilities they would have to shoulder in the coming weeks. The two trainers Yasser Qos and Faten Khoury introduced principles and basic elements of leadership, team work and concepts of trust-building, through drama and play. After the icebreaking games introduced by the trainers, Naim Ateek invited the participants to list some of the traits necessary for good and responsible leadership. He then compared these with model leaders, Jesus Christ being our anchor. In the following days, these characteristics were enacted and expressed through practical exercises and various methods of communication. The training course also dealt with obstacles that can hinder good leadership and the difficulties that leaders have to face.

The effect of the short training period was reported upon by the group that met at Sabeel on June 25, when certificates were awarded to the 23 participants. Some of the young leaders had already put to use skills that they had acquired. A follow-up meeting at the end of the summer with both camp and youth leaders will help in evaluating the program and pave the path to be adopted in the future.

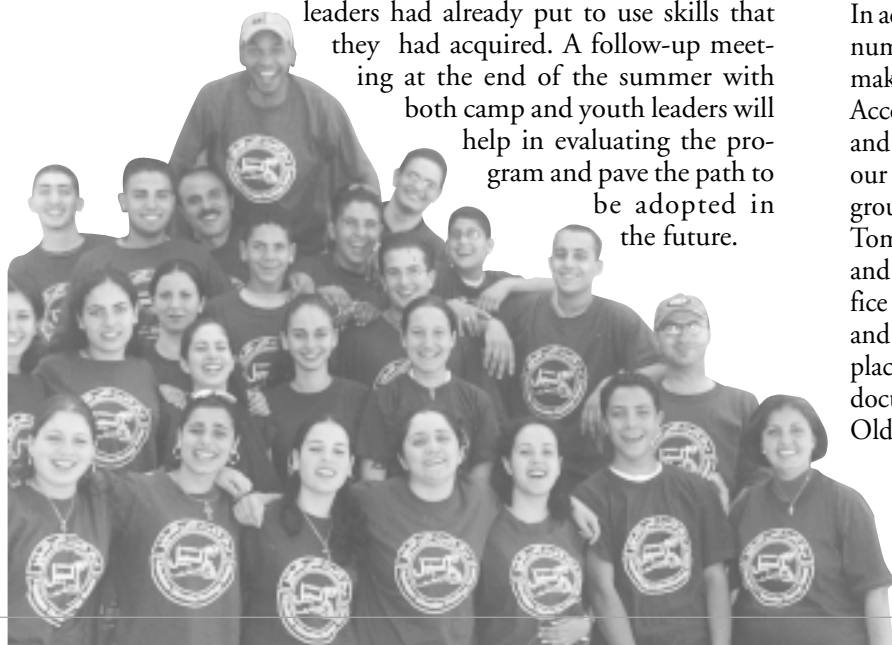


## Visitors

Sabeel organized its second "Solidarity Visit" of the year in April 2003. Seventeen persons from the UK, Canada, and the US were able to get into the country despite the strikes that affected the airport. Participants visited Nablus, Ramallah, Jenin, Bethlehem, and enjoyed a trip to the Galilee where they met with our Sabeel-Nazareth friends and staff.



In addition to the Solidarity Visitors, Sabeel hosted an increased number of people to our office. Members of Christian Peacemaker Teams delegations, new participants in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Program of the World Council of Churches, and friends of the Mennonite Central Committee were among our guests as was a group from Christian Aid in the UK. A group of 25 visitors from the Boston area, including Bishop Tom Shaw, was headed by FOS-NA members, the Rev. Bob and Maurine Tobin. Individuals also visited the Jerusalem office to meet with staff from as far as Canada, UK, US, Sweden, and Japan. Their interests and concerns were as varied as their places of origin; everything from oral history projects to video documentaries, to an ethnographic study of Christians in the Old City.



## News from Nazareth

**The Young Couples** program is prospering. Between April and June, the couples met twice with Naim Ateek in Nazareth to further explore their needs and draw strategies to fulfill their goals. They also went on educational/spiritual trips. The first visit to Mjeidal, the once Palestinian village, where the only remaining Palestinian site, the Roman Catholic Church defies the tall buildings of the now Israeli town Migdal ha Emek, had such an effect on the couples that they went back with their children for an outing and picnic. On April 12, the young families explored Akka,(Acre) and on May17/18, they went on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. At Sabeel, they met with young couples from Jerusalem and heard Father Shawqi Batarian speak about the role of Christian couples in society. The next day, after visiting Christian sites, they discovered the Old City with Khalil Tufakji, an authority on illegal Jewish settlements within the city. What an eye opener! The afternoon was spent in peaceful Ein Karem.



**Easter Concerts:** On May 9 and 10, The auditorium of the Nazareth Hospital resounded with music and hymns glorifying Jesus Christ. The Quartet Multimedia ensemble from Haifa and the Basilica of the Annunciation Choir paid tribute to the life of our Savior throughout the ages "From Anunciation to Resurrection" through musical pieces by renowned composers like Bach, Gounod and Handel. The remarkable program was led by conductors Bishara Khell and Victor Kristosoff.



The Sabeel committee with its coordinator Violet Khoury and secretary Janan Sa'maan have been extremely helpful in coordinating the joint programs with the Jerusalem office, i.e., Young couples visit to Jerusalem and the Women's trip to Haifa. On the International level, the Nazareth branch was active during the two solidarity visits when they met with the visitors at the Holy Land restaurant for a meal and talk with father Elias Chacour on the challenges of co-existence and obstacles to peace-making. The Sabeel Committee also met with Bishop Thomas Shaw's group from Boston, and the Swedish delegation led by Emanuel Furbacken, Coordinator of FOSS.

## Community Building: Palestinian Liberation Theology Course

With only two more chapters to finish the book '*The Strife for Justice*', the basis for the Palestinian Liberation Theology Course in Arabic, the participants in Jerusalem are ready for a summer break, but look forward to the next course...

**Participation in local conferences and various roundtables and meetings:** The Sabeel Board and staff continue to be involved in local workshops, conferences and civic life. Janet Lewis and Janan Samaan set up a Sabeel table at the Givat Haviva international conference on Global Peacemaking held in Nazareth for three days. In addition, Janet attended a workshop entitled "Building a Society of Volunteers" at the International Center in Bethlehem.

Nora represented Sabeel at the Local Working Group meeting involved with the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Accompaniers. Together with Roberta Johnson, the Coordinator, the group assessed the program, analyzing the impact of the accompaniers' presence in 'hot spots' in the West Bank where their mere presence was a source of power versus their placement in church offices or church-related organizations. The general consensus was that there are several ways of advocacy and none should be excluded or neglected.

Sabeel also took part in al-Liqa's 10th annual conference, in Bethlehem, June 27-29 entitled "The Palestinian Christian Presence" at which Naim Ateek presented a paper on "Palestinian Liberation Theology and Settlements."

Sabeel, along with seven other church related organizations has been sending personal stories under the title VOX. (So far 12 issues) Please check links on [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)

## Congratulations

Only three months after joining Sabeel, Betty Jahshan bids us farewell to tie the marriage knot to Issa Habash on August 16. Sabeel hopes that living in Denver, Colorado will encourage Betty to start a new chapter of Friends of Sabeel there.

Cathy Nichols, a member of our International Department, and her husband, Asher Kaufman, have been blessed with a baby boy, El'ad Andrew. Cathy returns to the Sabeel office in October.

# S n a p s h o t s

International Friends of Sabeel (IFOS) have been very active these past few months with hosting conferences and extending their outreach and effectiveness through increasing memberships, establishing new regional chapters, and participating in our latest Solidarity Visit. We are happy to announce the establishment of our latest IFOS chapter in Ireland. If you are interested in their activities or becoming a member, please see their contact information on the back cover of Cornerstone.

## Friends of Sabeel-North America (FOS-NA)



Canadian Friends of Sabeel is happy to announce two new National Steering Committee members: One representative from the flourishing local group in London, Ontario and the other from Calgary in the western part of Canada where they hope to begin new CFOS local groups.

CFOS enjoyed an excellent visit with the Rev. Naim Ateek in March. Stops in London, and Ottawa included meetings with local members, lunch with several Bishops and representatives from the Mosque, and two public events each with over 150 people in attendance. They received good press coverage both in print and on television.

American Friends of Sabeel have been working on increasing membership and establishing new regional chapters. They were also instrumental in assisting Sabeel in Archbishop Desmond Tutu's invitation and acceptance to become the Patron of Sabeel. They will also hold a conference in Portland, OR in August where Rev. Naim Ateek, director of Sabeel, will be one of the speakers. For more information contact [SabeelSeeds@aol.com](mailto:SabeelSeeds@aol.com).



**Friends of Sabeel-UK (FOS-UK)** reports that they have been invited to participate in international conferences as workshop leaders. Janet Davies will be meeting with some of the Anglican bishops when they will all be attending a meeting in Liver-

pool. She will be presenting them with Sabeel's Position on the Road Map, the latest issue of Cornerstone, and some other materials.

FOS-UK will be sending four representatives to the IFOS meeting to be held in Boston in September. We look forward to their input and participation. In addition FOS-UK co-sponsored a one day conference in London on June 28th which included Sabeel board vice-president, Fr. Elias Chacour, and Friends of Sabeel member Rev. Dr. Michael Prior.

**Friends of Sabeel-Ireland** have held their first meetings to elect a chair, Rev. Ken Thompson, and to begin their planning and strategies.



They are already working on such areas as establishing their finances, membership and subscriptions, registration for charitable status, and local initiatives such as the sale of Palestinian embroidery and other

local crafts. We send our very best wishes for their continued growth and support.

**Friends of Sabeel-Australia (FOS-OZ)** has announced that it has been given charitable



status and is working diligently on increasing membership and identifying people who may be interested in setting up regional chapters. (It's a big country!) If you would like to help in these efforts please

contact Ray Barraclough, whose information can be found on the back cover of Cornerstone.

# Developing strategies for Non-Violence & Democracy

*by Zahra Khalidi*

**I**t was quite exciting to receive an invitation from the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center to a seminar for local women of the three faiths on “Developing Strategies for Non-violence and Democracy.” I had attended many lectures sponsored by the Center and have always been impressed by their industrious and dedicated activity towards enlightenment and peacemaking. My journey started early on the morning of the seminar, but unfortunately and as always, in our region peaceful efforts are thwarted by numerous frustrating obstacles. The irony of it was that a “peace emissary” - Powell was either leaving the country or arriving here - I cannot remember exactly which, but the end result was the same; the Palestinians had to suffer due to the many checkpoints around Jerusalem barring them from entry. I struggled to find a taxi that could take me to a point where I could “sneak” into Jerusalem, the city of my ancestors for the last 800 years or so; it seemed so ironic. Eventually, I made it to the Sabeel Center to find that the rest of the group were waiting for a participant from Jericho, who had actually made it out of Jericho, but then got stranded in the area where I had been. She finally managed to come into Jerusalem with the help of an American volunteer for Sabeel. After all this, we ultimately arrived at the convent in Ein Karem which is surrounded by beautifully picturesque gardens full of flowers and ivy gracefully dangling from the walls. The walls of the convent seemed to protect and envelop us creating a haven from the clamour and tumult of life in the occupied territories filled with the other type of walls obstructing millions of Palestinians from going about their daily lives - reaching their workplace, going to their schools or carrying out com-

mercial transactions and even going to hospitals. I felt that the stage was set in these beautiful surroundings for meaningful and valuable work that would help us overcome so many stumbling blocks and psychological barriers that had accumulated over years of strife and cycle after cycle of violence. We were greeted warmly as we entered the Convent by Sue Williams, the wonderfully innovative and inspiring facilitator from Ireland, and Agneta Magnusson and Birgitta Lorentzi, the charming organizers from Sweden. After resting a little, we were all eager to learn new strategies to resolve a conflict that has grown increasingly difficult throughout our lifetimes. But it was a little disappointing to hear that the Israeli women invited, had all apologized. Despite this I felt our work was extremely productive and informative. The diversity of the group - in religion, age and background - kept us all interested and attentively absorbed in, and drawn to everything that was said. The films shown and the stories told about women responding to the barriers created by violence in various parts of the world were especially valuable and rich in information on how to make a difference within your community, by finding ways to stop the violence before it reaches the point of wall-building and exclusion. Unfortunately, our area has reached that terribly painful stage of wall-building that is an apparent indicator of extreme lack of trust. The apartheid wall being built by the Israelis is actually a physical expression of their attitude and intent. However, we shall persist, and I hope many others like the Sabeel Center who truly believe in the power of positiveness, dialogue and working hard to tear down the negative walls of separation, will continue undaunted. May we always have the opportunity to drink from the refreshing waters of the Sabeel.

*Zahra Khalidi is the co-managing editor at “The Palestine-Israel Journal.”*

# 5<sup>th</sup> International Sabeel Conference

Join Us For

April 14-18, 2004

## Challenging Christian Zionism: Theology, Politics, and the Israel-Palestine Conflict

*For information about Fees and Travel Packages contact the following after August 1, 2003*

Conference Coordinator  
PO Box 49084  
91491 Jerusalem  
Tel: (972) 2 532 7136  
Fax: (972) 2 532 7137  
Email: conf2004@sabeel.org

Shepherd's Tours and Travel  
PO Box 19560  
Jerusalem  
Tel: (972) 2 628 4121  
Fax: (972) 2 628 0251  
Email: shepherd@baraka.org

Notre Dame Conference Center, Jerusalem.

Topics will include areas such as:

- History and Theology of Christian Zionism
- End Time Theology through Different Faith Perspectives
- Christian Zionism and International Politics
- Key Responses to Christian Zionism
- Advocacy and Strategic Planning

\*Pre-conference Program during Holy Week blends the traditions of both Eastern and Western churches and a contemporary Way of the Cross. April 4-11, 2004.

\*Post-Conference Program "Witness for Justice and Peace", includes day trips in and around the West Bank and the Galilee (situation allowing).

Registration begins November 1, 2003

Space is limited so register early!



# WHAT IS SABEEL'S POSITION ON THE ROAD MAP

The Lord said, *“Stand at the crossroads and look. Ask for the ancient paths and where the best road is. Walk in it, and you will live in peace”*  
(Jeremiah 6:16).



The name of the only game in town these days is called the Road Map. The people of the Middle East are asked to play it. The Palestinians, out of a passion for achieving a just peace, immediately accepted the Road Map as presented and agreed to play the game with the hope that it would lead them to the desired goal. The Israeli government with much delay and reticence accepted to play but only after lengthy debate and after receiving assurances from the American administration that its concerns would be taken into consideration. It is still not clear whether the United States' administration would bow to Israel's pressure and make substantial changes to the Road Map. There is real fear that such changes would torpedo another important opportunity for peace.

Before presenting Sabeel's position on the Road Map, it is important to present a faith basis for Sabeel's position.

The only way to judge the Road Map is through the lens of justice. To insist on doing justice is to be faithful to God, the God of justice. It is only justice that would ultimately yield peace. Unless the United States exerts pressure on Israel to do justice,

**Jerusalem May 26, 2003**

the Road Map, as its predecessors, will fail and more violence would ensue. Peace and security are the fruits of justice.

Since the Road Map has been presented to both the Israeli and the Palestinian governments, Sabeel has followed with great interest the comments of both sides.

When one considers the total picture and the ultimate goals, the Road Map has some positive elements that must be acknowledged. To begin with, it makes clear that the resolution of the conflict would be based on UN resolutions 242, 338, and the Saudi Arabia initiative that was endorsed by the Beirut Arab League Summit. The implementation of these resolutions would result in ending "the occupation that began in 1967"; and lead to the emergence of "an independent, democratic, and viable Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbors... ." Within such a comprehensive resolution, the Saudi initiative has called for the "acceptance of Israel as a neighbor by the Arab states." Furthermore, the Road Map has set 2005 as a specific date for the establishment of the Palestinian state.

Another of the potentially positive elements in the Road Map is the presence of a Quartet of powers - United Nations, European Union, Russia, and the United States; it does not leave the United States as the only arbitrator and interlocutor with the two sides. Obviously, Israel prefers to deal with the United States only. As the past has shown, Israel is able to put pressure on the American administration through its friends in the Congress, the pro-Israel lobby, and the American Christian Zionists who number in the tens of millions. Moreover, a careful analysis of the Road Map reveals that the United States enjoys the upper hand within the Quartet. Nevertheless, the presence of the UN, European Union, and Russian representatives will, hopefully, keep the emphasis on the importance of basing the resolution of the conflict on United Nations resolutions.

Keeping the ultimate goal in mind, there are vague and disturbing elements in the Road Map. Although it uses the word "occupation" it does not define it clearly. From our position, the occupation includes all the Palestinian territories conquered by Israel in the 1967 war. Similarly, there is vagueness in

defining the borders of the Palestinian state. We know that Sharon has been talking about a Palestinian state recently. His plans, however, envisage a small area of approximately 42% of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip excluding East Jerusalem. In effect the Palestinian state according to Sharon would be comprised of less than 9% of historic Palestine that existed before the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Such a state would certainly not fit the criteria of "an independent...and viable...state..." Furthermore, the Road Map does not address the necessity for an enforcement mechanism without which it would simply provide for a "monitoring mechanism."

Sabeel's position is to welcome the Road Map as offered by the Quartet for implementation. We are certain that Israel will do its best to change it or even to derail it. As Israel succeeded in obstructing and derailing the Oslo Peace Process, blaming the Palestinians for its failure, it is capable of doing the same with the Road Map. Indeed, the implementation of the Road Map is the litmus test for Israel's genuine intentions and commitment to peace.

Indeed, on the one hand, there is skepticism and apathy among the Palestinians regarding the Road Map, but on the other hand, there is distrust of the United States and Israel's commitment to produce a just peace in Palestine. If the Palestinians are assured that by 2005 the Road Map, in spite of some meanderings, will lead to a viable, democratic, independent, and sovereign Palestine state on all the territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, and resolve the issues of Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements in accordance with UN resolutions, most Palestinians would enthusiastically support it. It is only then that hope will replace the present apathy and despair, and end the cycle of violence, because the prospect of a just peace will begin to loom in the horizon and the dawn of a new and brighter day for all the people of our land will be anticipated. It is only then that the Road Map would have reached its true destination. It would be the road that leads to life and freedom.

*"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).*

## 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.

For more information on *Friends of Sabeel* groups in your area please contact our International representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.

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