



Issue 38 - Fall 2005

# SETTLEMENTS: AN OBSTACLE TO PEACE

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## THE GAZA PULLOUT

*by Naim Ateek, Director of Sabeel*

On June 9, 2005 the Chief Justice of the Israeli Supreme Court, Aharon Barak said, "Judea and Samaria and the Gaza area are lands seized during warfare and are not part of Israel." Why was such a voice not heard after the 1967 war? Why did the government of Israel promulgate and protect a lie for 38 years? Why was nobody able to stop it? Why did we - Palestinians and Jews - have to endure so much pain, anguish, and sorrow with thousands of people killed and injured on both sides during the last 38 years of occupation?

On August 15, 2005 the government of Israel began its "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip. The plan was to dismantle the 21 settlements which Israel built after the 1967 war and evacuate its 8000 settlers. Political analysts agree that the Israeli pullout does not indicate the end of the occupation of the Gaza Strip. This action was a unilateral decision on the part of the Israeli government and, therefore, Israel is still legally responsible until a negotiated settlement is reached in line with International Law. In order to comprehend the impact of what has been happening recently, it is important to review briefly Zionist history regarding settlement building.

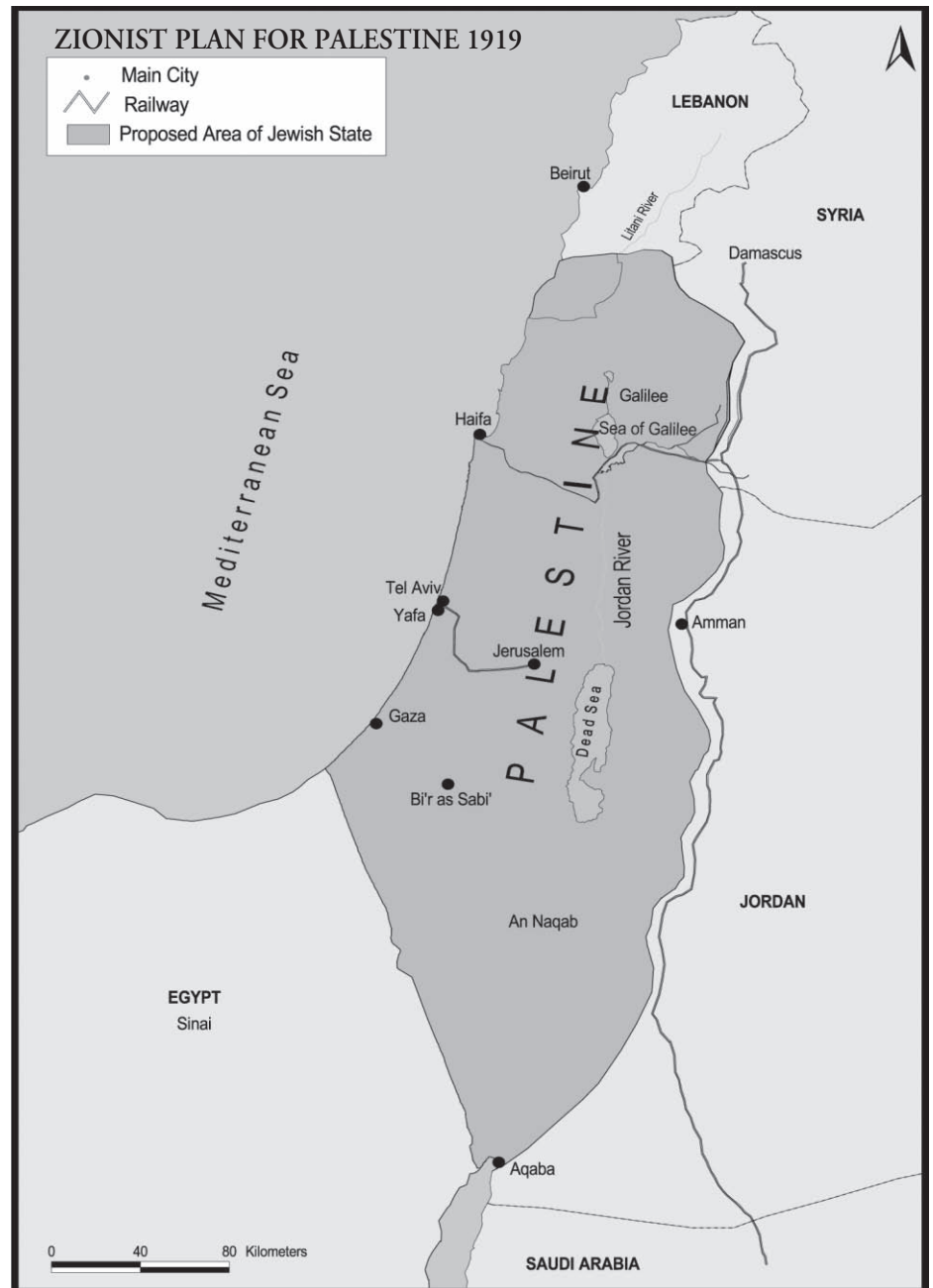
In 1919, the Zionist Movement issued a map outlining the boundaries of their proposed future Jewish state. The timing seemed appropriate. The First World War had just ended. Britain and its allies were victorious. Britain was governing Palestine after it had conquered it from the Turks. The Zionists were full of exhilaration. Now that Palestine was under the British, they would definitely implement the terms of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and establish the Jewish homeland in Palestine as they had promised. It was crucial for the Zionists to act promptly and clarify the boundaries of that state. The 1919 Zionist map was timely.

Practically speaking, however, producing the Balfour Declaration on a piece of paper and drawing a map for the future borders of the state proved infinitely easier than facing the reality of life in Palestine. The Palestinians were not willing to hand over their homeland to the Zionists on a silver platter. In spite of all the support that the British gave to the Zionists - immigration of Jews into the country, enactment of laws that facilitated Zionist expansion, training, equipping, and protecting the Zionists, etc.- it was not easy to turn Palestine into a Jewish state. Palestinian resistance continued against the great odds of the Zionist military brigades.

The 1930s and '40s saw the escalation of violence on both the Jewish and Palestinian sides. The British found themselves caught between their conflicting promises to the Arabs and Jews and consequently the aspirations of the two national communities. The Palestinians were seeking independence while the Zionists were pushing for a legal foothold that would enable them to create a state. Whereas the Palestinians lacked international support, the Zionists enjoyed powerful allies in high positions in both the British and American governments. Ultimately, the pressure and influence of these people produced results.

In fact, four factors coalesced and drove the Jewish state into reality. Firstly, during WWII, the Allied leaders suspected (some would say “knew”) that millions of Jews were being exterminated by the Nazis. This had a strong psychological and moral impact on people in the West. After the war, there was a strong feeling that the solution to the Jewish problem could be found in Palestine. Secondly, the United States gave powerful support to the Zionists by passing the United Nations resolution regarding the Partition of Palestine in 1947. America pressured some countries to vote in favor of the two-states. It was this resolution that gave the Zionists the legal foothold to achieve their project. Thirdly, the Jewish people, generally speaking, enjoyed great sympathy and support from Christians in the West which undoubtedly influenced their governments. Most people did not realize that by solving one problem they were creating another. Western countries including the United States did not comprehend at the time that they were forcing the Palestinians to pay the price of European anti-semitism. Fourthly, the disunity of the Arabs and the organizational weakness of the Palestinians also contributed to the catastrophe, Al-Nakbah. There was too much talk and not enough concerted action on the part of the Arabs. They were not adequately prepared. They did not assess the threat nor the power and preparedness of the Zionists. These factors coalesced and gave a great advantage to the Zionists.

The dream of establishing a Jewish state became a reality in 1948. The Jewish Zionists were strong enough to establish their state not only on the 54% of the land which the UN Partition Plan gave them, but on 78% of the land of Palestine. In order to accomplish this task, the Zionist forces had to displace three quarters of a million Palestinians and destroy over 500 towns and villages. In the June war of 1967, the Zionist dream came closer to fulfillment by conquering the Gaza Strip, the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Egyptian Sinai peninsula, the Syrian Golan Heights, and even small areas of



Jordan. Furthermore, in 1982, Israel occupied southern Lebanon. In the minds of many settlers and Jewish religious Zionists these territories were included in God's promise according to Genesis 15: 18-21:

*“On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the*

*Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”*

In fact, it, more or less, fulfilled the initial Zionist dream according to the 1919 Zionist map and in some areas exceeded it.

Practically speaking, the 1967 war was the last war Israel decisively won. Up until then, the Zionists went from victory to victory. It was becoming obvious that they would be able to achieve their dream. Religious Zionists were witnessing biblical

history being re-enacted before their eyes. They were convinced that God's promises to the Jewish people were being honored. Therefore, they had to act on those promises and began to "redeem" and settle the land that, from their perspective, belonged to them by divine right. At the same time they did everything they could to deny the Palestinians their right to the land. Extremist religious Jewish greed for the land and the euphoria at grabbing it knew no limit. Their own government of Israel was at their service giving them political, legal, and economic support. Millions and millions of dollars were diverted from government as well as private funds, including Christian Zionist money. These were spent on settlements in the Gaza Strip, on the West Bank, around the city of Jerusalem and inside the Old City - all in contravention of International Law and United Nations resolutions. The government of Israel did what was good in its own eyes and no one was able to stop its injustice. If the government of Israel, both Likud and Labor, was in the service of the settlers who were virtually and practically helping it realize the Zionist dream, the United States' government was behind the government of Israel supporting it with billions of dollars each year.

#### ZIONISM BETWEEN EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION

Gradually, after the 1973 war, and at a deeper level, some cracks began to be perceived in the Zionist project. One can even say that as a dream, Zionism - for its Zionist adherents, both secular and religious - was lofty and noble. Its accomplishments on the ground for Israeli Jews have, indeed, been impressive and marvelous. They built a beautiful country with increasingly impressive infrastructure. The United States alone contributed over a hundred billion dollars for its building. Actually Zionism's accomplishments fitted its own ideology, namely, the building of a Jewish state. But the Zionist ideology has failed to build peace. It cannot achieve peace so long as its ideology and theology are based on the negation and exclusion

of the indigenous people of the land, the Palestinians. Herzl's words were clear when back in 1895 he wrote in his diary that when the Zionists occupy and expropriate the land, "We shall endeavor to expel the poor population across the border unnoticed, procuring employment for it in the transit countries, but denying it any employment in our own country."

Therefore, when Zionism is tested regarding the achievement of peace and reconciliation, it is found wanting. In fact, on the ground today Zionism is not tenable. It can only live by the gun. It must change. It must be re-defined. It must undergo a metamorphosis. To pursue Zionism as envisioned by its founders is proving painful and disastrous. It is disastrous for its pronounced enemy, the Palestinians, and disastrous for its own lovers, the Jewish Zionists. Zionism as envisaged is capable of destroying both. To survive, it must be transformed from being an expansionist, dominating, oppressive ideology into a movement for peace - peace with the indigenous people of the land, the Palestinians. There is no other solution. The 1967 war achieved the zenith of Zionism. Since then it has gradually contracted. In the 1970's it had to withdraw from Sinai and dismantle the settlements there including hardcore Yamit. In 2000 it could not keep hold of southern Lebanon after 18 years of occupation. It had to withdraw. In 2002, Prime Minister Sharon said that Netzarim (one of the Gaza settlements) was no different from Tel Aviv. However, in August 2005 the government of Israel was "disengaging" from all 21 settlements of the Gaza strip after 38 years of occupation.

I am certain that some of the Israeli leaders know that if they want to live in peace, they have ultimately to give up the Golan Heights and return it to Syria. It, too, is occupied land. Moreover, for a genuine peace to be accomplished, Israel must pull out from the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem in accordance with International Law. This is the demand of justice if peace is to be achieved.

#### THE NEED FOR A NEW IDEOLOGY FOR PEACE

Secular Jews need a new ideology for peace that is not based on the old Zionist dream. This means that if Jews want to live in peace they have to give up the West Bank and share Jerusalem. Jews and Palestinians *can* live in peace. The best way to ensure peace is to base it on International Law and United Nations resolutions. Now that many Jews inside and outside Israel are beginning to realize the realistic price of peace, they can learn a lesson from the Gaza withdrawal.

Through the violence of its army and the unbecoming behavior of its extremist settlers, Israel created and nourished so much hate and resentment among the Gazans that Israel today is afraid to turn its back on the Palestinians. It is afraid to allow them to control their borders - land, sea, and air. It dominated, oppressed, and humiliated over a million and a half Palestinians for 38 years. It has sown the wind and now it fears reaping the whirlwind. Had the Israeli army known that one day it would have to leave Gaza, would they have had a different strategy? Would they have nourished so much bitterness and resentment? We need to listen to the wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach, "My son, do not sow in the furrows of injustice, and you will not reap a sevenfold crop" (Ben Sirach 7:3). I hope it is not too late. Secular Jews need a new re-defined ideology for peace.

#### THE NEED FOR A NEW THEOLOGY FOR PEACE

Religious Jews need a new theology of peace. This "new" theology of peace can be found in the heart of their Torah. According to Leviticus 25:23 God tells the ancient Israelites, "...the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants." This, I believe, is a foundational theological statement. The land, all the land, whatever we call it, Canaan, Palestine, Israel, belongs to God. All the people who live on the land - be they Palestinians or Jews - are aliens in God's land and tenants who are

responsible to the land owner. This basic theological tenet about God's relationship to the land and its people takes precedence over any subsidiary "ownership" that any group might claim. In fact the theological ramification of this tenet leads us to say that this little land of Israel/Palestine becomes metaphorically a microcosm to the way God relates to the whole world. For "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (Psalm 24:1). If we accept this basic tenet, then it is possible to argue that in God's wisdom and providence, whether some of us like it or not, God has placed both Palestinians and Israeli Jews on this land. Instead of perpetually fighting over it and killing each other, we must live together on the land and share it under God. Together we can be good stewards of it. After all we are only aliens and tenants, or as another translation has it, we are merely "sojourners."

This is not really a new theology. It is a theology that finds its origins within the most sacred texts of the Hebrew Bible, the book of Leviticus. This is a theology that is worthy of God and worthy of human beings. It is worthy of God who has created us all equally in God's image, and who calls us to love God and to love one another. Surely, such a theology can open wide the door for peace and lead us to the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation.

#### CONCLUSION

If the people of Israel want to live in peace in this part of the world, they must redefine, transform, and revamp Zionism. They must begin by defining what they mean by "neighbor". For most of its history, the last 60 years, Israel has lived by the original Zionist definition. That definition excluded, demonized, and negated the indigenous people of the land, the Palestinians. The new definition must include, embrace, and accept them AND VICE VERSA. The withdrawal from Gaza provides us with a very important lesson. The writing is on the wall. There is no future for oppression, occupation, or domination. There is, however, a great future for peace and reconciliation. The only way forward is the way of a just peace.



## Sabeel's Reflections on the Gaza "Disengagement" Facts and Concerns

"My son, do not sow in the furrow of injustice,  
and you will not reap a seven fold crop."  
(Ben Sirach 7:3)

Long overdue, it has finally happened. Israel is out of Gaza, but not quite. There is sorrow in Israel but mixed with joy. The burden called Gaza has been lifted. There is joy in Palestine but mixed with sorrow. The burden called occupation has been lifted, but not quite. Sabeel would like to share some facts and concerns with our friends:

**1. Fact:** Around 8000 settlers lived on 42% of the 365 square kilometers of the Gaza Strip, occupied by Israel in 1967. One million, four hundred thousand Palestinians lived on the remaining 58%. Gaza itself is only 5% of all of the

Occupied Palestinian Territories - and 95% still remains occupied. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon throughout the disengagement process has declared his intentions to continue the expansion of settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

**Concern:** As the settlers leave Gaza, where are they going? Some of the Gaza settlers had previously lived illegally on occupied land in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. We are concerned that the bulk of settlers will move again to live in illegal settlements on the Occupied West Bank or East Jerusalem.

**2. Fact:** The Gaza pullout is not an end to the occupation of the Gaza Strip according to International Law until the Palestinians are granted full sovereignty over air, land and sea. The pullout from Gaza is not a negotiated agreement. It is a well-calculated, unilateral Israeli project, which leaves Israel free of any obligations or commitment towards a peaceful solution.

**Concern:** Gaza will be turned into a giant prison with Israel controlling its borders, air space and seaport and suffocating its 1.4 million people. Although Israel is still responsible, according to the Fourth Geneva Convention, for the well-being of this occupied population, we are concerned they will not meet their legal obligations. Palestinians are left without a political horizon and this may trigger another Intifada.

**3. Fact:** The settlers and their sympathizers have called the Gaza pullout “a transfer of Jews by Jews.”

**Concern:** Transfer is a word dreaded by Palestinians and often advocated by extreme right-wing Israelis to “deal” with the Palestinian problem. It is now feared that since Sharon has set a precedent with Jewish Israelis, he is more likely to get away with the transfer of Palestinians.

**4. Fact:** The world has watched scenes of the evacuation of the settlers from Gaza. Everyone spoke about the suffering of the settlers and the pain of the soldiers evacuating them. On the other hand, during the evacuation, “angry settlers” killed four Israeli Palestinians in the north of Israel and four Palestinian workers in the West Bank.

**Concern:** Now that the settlers have been moved, a great deal of the blame and anger is directed towards the Palestinians. It is greatly feared that settler attacks against Palestinians will increase. Palestinians are once again concerned that they will be made to pay the price of the suffering of the Jewish people.

**5. Fact:** Prime Minister Sharon has declared that Israel will keep and annex six settlement blocks on the West Bank as well as all of Jerusalem. Silvan Shalom, his foreign minister, together with U.S. Secretary of State, Condeleeza Rice, are calling for a regional conference where Israel will normalize relations with the Arab States.

**Concern:** The pullout has changed the mutually accepted formula of “Land for Peace.” Sharon wants a long-term temporary agreement that will freeze any final peace agreement and indefinitely delay defining borders. The new formula he seems to have developed is “Land for Time.” It is clear that Sharon is expecting a reward from the Americans for the pullout. However, to grant this partial withdrawal the reward of total normalization ignores the fact that the withdrawal is simply one step towards dealing with the wider issue of illegal occupation.

**6. Fact:** Settlers in Gaza bemoaned the fact that they were being forced out of their homes. Few made the connection between their removal and the eviction of Palestinians and the destruction of

Palestinian homes which has continued since 1948. In Gaza alone, since September 2000, 2,704 homes have been demolished.

**Concern:** As the world focuses its sympathy on the relocation of displaced settlers, the international community will continue to turn a blind eye to the house demolitions and dispossession of the Palestinian community.

As Palestinians watched the settlers being uprooted memories of losing homes, neighborhoods and communities came back painfully. We remember the sorrow and sense of hopelessness. We wish that the settlers - as they receive compensation, apologies from the soldiers, acknowledgement of the government’s responsibility, and sympathy from the global community - and the world will begin to empathize and take action to end the occupation and bring about a just peace for the Palestinians who are still waiting.

Sabeel Ecumenical  
Liberation Theology Center  
Jerusalem  
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The social impact of the disengagement in essence means placing the responsibility of attending to the needs and welfare of the Palestinian community squarely on the shoulders of the Palestinian leadership. Under the prevailing circumstances this represents a heavy load that requires serious and organized attention which means establishing priorities, proper organization in all fields, and organized cooperation between all the forces on the stage.

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Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi  
Palestinian National Initiative -Gaza

# Israel's Unilateral "Disengagement"

by Diana Buttu

"[The] formula for the parameters of unilateral solution are: To maximize the number of Jews; minimize the number of Palestinians; not to withdraw to the 1967 border and not to divide Jerusalem."

- Ehud Olmert, Israel's Deputy Prime Minister[1]

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### \* What is the Israeli "Disengagement" Plan?

The Israeli "disengagement plan" (unveiled by Israeli PM Sharon in December 2003) is a unilateral two-part plan: (1) the evacuation of all Israeli colonies from the Occupied Gaza Strip (with a total settler population of 7,300) and four small colonies in the northern Occupied West Bank (with a total settler population of 475); (2) the ongoing colonization of the West Bank and its ancillary construction of the Wall, designed to fragment Palestinian communities.

The term "disengagement" is a misnomer: it implies that Israel will no longer control the Palestinians. Yet, under the terms of Israel's plan, Israel will retain complete control over the Occupied Gaza Strip as it will control all borders and crossing points (thereby controlling the movement of goods and people), Palestinian airspace and water space. Israel has also reserved itself the right to invade the Occupied Gaza Strip at will, thereby ensuring its military control over the area. In effect, what Israel aims is to isolate the Occupied Gaza Strip and cut it off from the rest of the world.

### \* Why is Israel carrying out this Plan?

The Plan is part of Israel's long-term strategy to rid itself of as many Palestinians

as possible while retaining as much Palestinian land as possible. By evacuating Israel's colonies in the Occupied Gaza Strip, Israel can divert attention away from its ongoing colonization in the Occupied West Bank. In exchange for evacuating colonies in the Gaza Strip (a mere 4.8 percent of Occupied Palestinian Territory), Israel will continue to build its colonies and Wall in the Occupied West Bank, taking more than 45 percent of Occupied Palestinian Territory.

### \* What will happen to the Israeli colonies?

The Israeli government has taken a unilateral decision to demolish the structures in the colonies, including houses.

### \* But can't the houses be used to resettle Palestinians?

Not really. The Occupied Gaza Strip is 365 km<sup>2</sup>, and has an estimated Palestinian population of 1.3 million, living on 55 km<sup>2</sup> of built-up land, making the Occupied Gaza Strip the most densely populated place on earth. In twenty years, the population of the Gaza Strip is expected to reach 2 million Palestinians.

Israel's colonization of the Gaza Strip was carried out in a horizontal fashion: Israel's colonies take up approximately 20 percent of the land of the Gaza Strip and house a

mere 7,300 settlers in 2,800 houses. These 2,800 houses will not be able to meet the housing demands of the burgeoning Palestinian population. Instead, the land upon which the colonies sit can be used to build high-rise apartments to house more people while simultaneously freeing land for investment purposes to rehabilitate the Palestinian economy.

### \* Where will the rubble be taken?

For environmental reasons, the rubble (approximately 80,000 tonnes) cannot be reused and therefore it must be disposed of in a manner that is not hazardous. The PA insists that the rubble cannot be stored in Gaza (for environmental, health and space reasons) and therefore it must be transported out of the Gaza Strip.

### \* Will the land evacuated by Israel return to its rightful owners?

Yes. Ninety-five percent of the land upon which Israel's colonies and military installations are built is "state land" and accordingly will revert to the public domain upon evacuation. The remaining five percent of the land belongs to private Palestinian owners who will have their land returned to them in accordance with Palestinian law.

### \* What about the rest of the land?

Given that the land will revert to the public domain, projects for the public will be developed there. The Ministry of Planning is currently revising its regional plan for the evacuated areas and aims to build hospitals, schools, and housing projects as well as tourist locations in the areas evacuated by Israel.

### \* What will happen to the Gaza Strip following the evacuation?

The Palestinian Authority aims to revitalize the Palestinian economy of the Gaza Strip by encouraging investment and hence creating jobs. However, in order to revitalize the economy Israel's cooperation (and international support) is necessary.

While the colonization of the Gaza Strip will end, Israel's occupation of it will not. Currently, Israel strictly controls all access in and out of the Occupied Gaza Strip, both for people and goods. If the current levels of absolute control continue, the Gaza Strip will be cut off from the Occupied West Bank and the rest of the world, thereby turning the Gaza Strip into a large prison. For the Gazan economy to improve and for the evacuation of the Gaza Strip to be a model of success, Israel will have to ensure that Palestinians and their goods are provided free movement and that the Palestinians are allowed to live without Israeli control over their lives and economy.

#### \* Don't you feel sorry for the settlers?

Israeli citizens were given large incentives to move into Occupied Palestinian Territory, including large housing subsidies, lower income tax rates and subsidies for their factories located in Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israeli settlers are now also being compensated for evacuating from the Occupied Gaza Strip and are being resettled at Israel's expense in Israel.

The settlers have been the cause of Israel's ongoing military occupation of Palestinian Territory. Their presence has led to: (1) greater Israeli military presence in Occupied Palestinian Territory; (2) the confiscation of Palestinian land for the construction of Israeli-only colonies and roads, often in the name of "security"; (3) the destruction and demolition of Palestinian homes and historic locales and (4) led to a dual system of laws imposed in Occupied Palestinian Territory: Israeli settlers, who number 430,000, live under Israeli civilian law, granted superior rights to 3.5 million Palestinians who are subject to Israeli military law, thereby denied their freedom. Israelis are granted complete freedom of movement in Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel while Palestinians are relegated to Palestinian-only roads (that lead only to Palestinian areas), live behind hundreds of checkpoints and road barriers (situated in

Occupied Palestinian Territory) and require Israeli permission to cross these checkpoints.

Israeli settlers have been involved in a number of crimes against Palestinians and their property that have largely gone unprosecuted. Human rights organizations, including Israeli, have submitted reports on such incidents.

#### \* What can be done to revitalize the Gaza Strip?

Currently, Israel exercises complete control over the Palestinian economy by controlling the movement of Palestinians and their goods. In the Occupied West Bank, for example, Israel maintains hundreds of checkpoints and barriers designed to fragment Palestinian communities. Palestinian goods are subject to a "back-to-back" system of movement, wherein Palestinian goods are unloaded and reloaded onto different trucks several times before reaching their final destination. For example, goods originating from Hebron (in the Occupied West Bank) destined for Nablus (also in the Occupied West Bank) must be unloaded and reloaded an estimated seven times. Obviously this increases transportation costs and the time for which goods reach their destination.

Furthermore, Israel does not maintain systematized rules or procedures for the movement of Palestinian goods, thereby increasing risk and uncertainty among investors. In the Karni terminal (the sole terminal for the movement of Palestinian goods from the Occupied Gaza Strip), rules for the movement of goods are frequently changed by the Israelis. Today, a mere 50 trucks per day of Palestinian goods are allowed to leave the terminal, owing to the onerous and unpredictable

searches. Israeli goods, which do not have to go through any security procedures are shipped in daily on more than 300 trucks. Accordingly, Israeli goods are often less expensive to Palestinians and Palestinian reliance upon such goods is increased.

Israel can easily improve the economy by simply removing its barriers and checkpoints and by allowing Palestinian goods to move based on international principles of "door-to-door" wherein Palestinian goods are freely allowed to move without onerous security searches that are not imposed on Israeli goods.

By creating certainty among investors, the economy of the Gaza Strip can be revitalized and improved. The World Bank is in agreement with this conclusion: "Palestinian economic recovery depends on a radical easing of internal closures throughout the West Bank [and Gaza] the opening of Palestinian external borders to commodity trade, and sustaining a reasonable flow of Palestinian labor into Israel." See "Disengagement, The Palestinian Economy and the Settlements", the World Bank, June 15, 2004.

#### \* Will Palestinians remain subject to the same movement restrictions?

Currently, Palestinians require Israeli permits to travel: (1) within the Occupied West Bank; (2) between the Occupied West Bank and the Occupied Gaza Strip and (3) to Israel. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip also require Israeli permission to cross international boundaries to visit other countries. Such permits are granted rarely (less than 30 percent of the Palestinian population receives such permits; and in the Occupied Gaza Strip the percentage barely reaches 10%).

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Under the Oslo Agreements, Israel was supposed to have instituted a “safe passage” between the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip to ensure freedom of movement for Palestinians within Occupied Palestinian Territory. Passage through the “safe passage” remained subject to strict Israeli control and in 2000 Israel closed the safe passage route, thereby isolating the Occupied Gaza Strip from the rest of Occupied Palestinian Territory.

In order to ensure that Palestinians are not enclosed in a large prison, freedom of movement must be guaranteed. Yet, while Israel asserts that it wants to “disengage” from the Occupied Gaza Strip, it wants to retain control over Palestinians and their economy. Israel has yet to respond to whether freedom of movement for Palestinians will be guaranteed: whether Palestinians will be able to travel to the rest of Occupied Palestinian Territory and whether Palestinians will continue to require Israeli permission to leave the Gaza Strip and whether Palestinians will be able to freely travel throughout the Occupied West Bank.

While many discussions have taken place on the mode for transportation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (sunken road, railroad, convoy), these discussions remain inconclusive.

With respect to the Rafah terminal (movement to Egypt), talks also remain inconclusive: While the Palestinians continue to insist on no Israeli presence in the Rafah terminal (and hence allow for the free movement of Palestinians), Israel has yet to agree.

**\* What will be the international legal status of the evacuated areas following the evacuation?**

The Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank will remain occupied territory. Israel will still be subject to international obligations embodied in the Fourth Geneva Convention and in various human rights agreements.

For 38 years Israel has carried out two projects in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip: (1) colonization of the areas through the construction of Israeli-only housing and roads and (2) military occupation of the areas through the imposition of Israeli military law on the areas and its inhabitants. While the colonization process may cease in the Occupied Gaza Strip and northern West Bank, the military occupation will continue.

**\* What will happen to the airport?**

The Palestinian International Airport was opened in 1998 by Presidents Clinton and Arafat and serviced Palestinians seeking to fly in and out of the Occupied Gaza Strip. The airport operated under the strict control of Israel. In 2000, the Israeli Army closed the airport and several months later destroyed the runway and control tower, with estimated damages exceeding USD \$8 million. It has remained closed.

Following Israel’s evacuation, the Palestinian Authority seeks to open the airport, but, to date, discussions with Israel have been inconclusive.

**\* Can’t the greenhouses based in the colonies be used as a means of job creation?**

The greenhouses in the colonies produce “organic” food that is exported to European markets. The greenhouses are heavily subsidized by the Israeli government and water is shipped in from Israel owing to the polluted nature of the Gaza coastal aquifer. The greenhouses currently employ approximately 4,000 Palestinians. While, on face level, it may seem like a good idea for these greenhouses to be maintained, unless the free movement of the goods produced in these greenhouses can be guaranteed and unless the subsidies can be maintained, the greenhouses will be worthless.

**\* What will happen to the Erez Industrial Estate?**

The fate of the Erez Industrial Estate (“EIE”) remains in the hands of Israel.

Currently, goods produced in the EIE do not undergo any security or other searches before entering the Israeli markets. After the evacuation, the EIE will revert to the Palestinian public domain and, according to Israeli officials, goods produced there will be subject to Israeli searches as well as the existing “back-to-back” system for the movement of Palestinian goods. This will undoubtedly discourage investment and likely kill the prospects of the EIE (or any industrial area). If the Palestinian economy is to recover, Israel’s control over the Palestinian economy will have to cease: the back-to-back system will have to be replaced immediately with the “door-to-door” system of movement that allows goods to reach their destination without the senseless unload/reload system employed by Israel.

**\* But isn’t the evacuation of colonies a good thing?**

The evacuation and dismantlement of Israel’s colonies is always welcomed (owing to the fact that these colonies are one of the reasons that the Palestinians are denied their freedom). However, there are two parts to Israel’s plan: one entails the evacuation of colonies (but the maintenance of Israeli military control over the area) and the second entails the continued colonization of the West Bank. It is irresponsible to simply focus on one side of the equation while ignoring the other. So, while the Palestinians may be pleased that the colonization of the Gaza Strip is coming to an end, it is clear that the colonization of the West Bank will be intensified. It is also clear that the military occupation of both areas will remain. Therefore while there is much fanfare regarding Israel’s evacuation, real applause should be withheld until Israel completely ends its military occupation of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. Until that time, Israel should be punished for its ongoing violations of international law and human rights - not rewarded.

*Diana Buttu is Communications Director to the Palestinian Technical Team*



Olive trees uprooted by settlers from Revava during the olive harvest, November 2000.  
Photo credit: Najib Abu Rokayah, B'Tselem

## LEGALITY, SETTLEMENTS AND A JUST PEACE

by *Jeff Halper*

The issue of the illegality of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories is much more than simply an academic matter. Israel uses complex issues of legality to blur the illegality of its occupation - indeed, to deny that it even has an occupation. Israel's claim that its rule does not constitute an occupation because no sovereign power had ruled the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza before 1967 is one that finds no support in the international community. The only partial exception is the United States. Realizing that it would lose in its negotiations with the Palestinians during the Oslo process if negotiations were conducted on the basis of international law, Israel prevailed on the United States - the only international power it cares about - to reclassify the status of the Palestinian territories from "occupied" to "disputed." This pulled the rug out from under the Palestinians and

gave Israel such a superior position in the negotiations that the peace process was utterly destroyed.

Avoiding international law is what has allowed Israel to expand its civilian control over the Occupied Territories without confronting the international community head-on and to maintain a façade of democratic rule. According to international law, and in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, Occupying Powers are forbidden from taking any steps that render their occupation permanent - especially transferring populations into occupied territories, establishing settlements, constructing permanent infrastructures of highways (and, we might add, walls) intended to incorporate the occupied territory into the occupying country itself and imposing its own legal system. Denying occupation and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention has allowed Israel to treat the Occupied Territories as an extension of

Israel itself. Land is expropriated from Palestinians according to Israeli law, and more than 200 settlements have been established using Israeli mechanisms of planning, zoning, law, and bureaucracy. Over the past four decades, Israel has thus "routinized" its control. Since it seeks to retain East Jerusalem and most of the West Bank permanently, the normal and routine use of law and administration to consolidate its control has allowed it, to a significant degree, to conceal the more brutal military aspects of the occupation. Thus more than 12,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the Occupied Territories since 1967 with barely a murmur of opposition from either the international community or from within Israel itself.

So successful has this strategy been, that opposition to Israeli settlements is focused today not on the 200 settlements themselves - settlements that have virtually disappeared from the public discussion - but on the more than 100 so-called "illegal" settlements (or "outposts" comprised of trailers that are gradually transformed into permanent housing) that have been established on their peripheries, significantly expanding their area. The minute the outposts have been designated "illegal," the settlements themselves become de facto "legal." The struggle is thereby diverted from dismantling the entire network of settlements to dismantling only the "illegal" ones. When one points out that all the settlements are illegal, one is often considered extreme or unreasonable.

This is especially important in light of the Bush-Sharon agreement of April, 2004, subsequently ratified almost unanimously by both houses of Congress. In that agreement, the American government extended de facto recognition to Israel's annexation of its seven major settlement blocs, an area mainly on the western side of the West Bank, including "greater" Jerusalem, which comprises some 20-25% of the Occupied Territories and 80% of the settlers. If the settlement blocs in fact become part of Israel, the two-state

solution is finished, since no viable Palestinian state can emerge in the islands between the settlement blocs. But there is every indication, since the legality of the settlement blocs themselves are not at issue but only that of the “illegal” outposts, that the Israeli government will move this Fall to formally annex the settlement blocs to Israel.

We cannot allow Israel to maintain an artificial distinction between “legal” and “illegal” settlements. The problem is not simply one of legal terminology, but of allowing Israel to “sanitize” and keep its settlement blocs at the cost of dismantling the peripheral outposts. This gets to the very heart of whether a just solution can be found to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or if Israel will succeed in establishing an apartheid system over the Palestinians. We must insist that all the settlements are illegal and that the Occupation be ended completely. If we allow ourselves to be encumbered in endless negotiations over what is legal and illegal, if we begin to compromise on the extent to which the Occupation is illegal, we will play into Israel’s hands. Either the Occupation will turn into annexation approved by the international community, or Israel will succeed, through endless legal manipulations, in delaying forever the dismantling of the Occupation. We must insist that international law be applied in the Occupied Territories and that it alone constitutes the basis of political negotiations. Anything that helps Israel maintain the Occupation indefinitely contradicts international law. We must end the occupation, period.

*Jeff Halper is the Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.*

## “Removing Some, Expanding Others”

*by Jessica Montell*

The disengagement plan, which includes removing all settlers from the Gaza Strip, as well as four small settlements in the northern West Bank, represents an earthquake in domestic Israeli politics. This is the first time in history that Israel has decided to remove settlements from the Occupied Territories. However, the implications for a negotiated resolution of the conflict with the Palestinians are unclear. This ambiguity primarily stems from the fact that, at the same time that Israel dismantles settlements in Gaza, it is expanding its settlements in the West Bank.

Settlements are a clear violation of international humanitarian law, specifically the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibition on transfer of population from the occupying power to the occupied territory. This violation is not merely a matter of the dry letter of the law. Settlements result in a long list of very tangible violations of Palestinian human rights.

Settlements deprive Palestinians of their two vital natural resources: land and water. The built-up area of settlements comprises less than 2% of the West Bank. However, settlements control 42% of the land in the West Bank. Israel has used complex legal and bureaucratic mechanisms to take control of all of this land. The main tool is to declare land to be “state land” through a manipulative application of the Ottoman Lands Law. In many cases, Palestinian residents were unaware that their land was declared state land, and by the time they discovered this fact, it was too late to appeal.

Although only 5,400 settlers live in the Jordan Valley, for example, almost the entire Valley (some 1.2 million dunams) has been declared state land, off-limits for Palestinian use. Thus Palestinians cannot exploit these vast land reserves for economic development. Although the northern part of the Dead Sea borders the West Bank, Palestinians have no access to this unique natural phenomenon and cannot develop industry or tourism-related projects, nor do Palestinians have fair

access to water resources. Settlers use 40% of the eastern aquifer, with Palestinians only able to exploit 60% of this aquifer. With regard to the mountain aquifer the division is even more discriminatory, as Israel exploits 100% of this aquifer. This is not due to the presence of the settlements, however, but rather to the unequal division of this shared resource between the State of Israel and the Palestinians.

During the last five years, Israel has imposed severe restrictions on Palestinian movement throughout the West Bank. Although these restrictions are justified primarily as necessary to prevent terrorist attacks inside Israel, they are also related to the settlements. For example, settlements are dispersed in a string formation along Road Number 60 - the main north-south traffic artery in the West Bank. With the goal of protecting the safety of settlers in this area, the IDF (Israel Defence Force) has restricted Palestinian use of this road. On some roads there are even more stringent restrictions. The road to the Elon Moreh settlement, for example, is completely off-limits to Palestinians. Altogether seventeen roads or sections of roadway are off-limits to Palestinian vehicles.

The location of settlements also obstructs Palestinian urban development. Settlements surround major Palestinian cities blocking the potential for growth. The settlement of Psagot, for example, adjacent to Ramallah, prevents the city from expanding to the east.

Israeli settlements in close proximity to Hebron, Bethlehem, Nablus, and Jenin hinder the urban development of these cities as well.

There is blatant discrimination in the Israeli authorities' treatment of settlements compared to Palestinian communities. The planning system, for example, operates on two distinct tracks: one for Jews and the other for Palestinians. While facilitating Jewish settlement, the planning system works vigorously to restrict the development of Palestinian communities. Thus, the planning system rejects virtually all requests for building permits filed by Palestinians in Area C, where Israel still has responsibility for civil affairs. Houses built by Palestinians without building permits may be demolished by the Civil Administration, even when constructed on private land.

The newest feature to the West Bank landscape is the Separation Barrier. Here too, settlements are the primary factor for the human rights violations created by the Barrier. Because the route of the barrier runs primarily within the West Bank - in order to encompass as many settlements as possible - it further limits movement, prevents Palestinian farmers from reaching their farmlands, etc. The harm is liable to be most severe around Jerusalem, where the Barrier runs down the middle of busy streets. Although Israel has annexed East Jerusalem, and considers it to be part of the State of Israel, its legal status is identical to the rest of the West Bank: occupied territory to which Israel is forbidden to transfer its own population.

Over the past five years, we have witnessed an escalation in violence by settlers toward Palestinians. The Israeli military and the Israeli police, which are responsible for protecting all residents of the Occupied Territories, have done a poor job of protecting Palestinians from acts of violence by settlers. Only in the most severe cases are settlers ever prosecuted for attacks on Palestinians and their property. B'Tselem has documented many cases in which soldiers stood by but failed to intervene while Palestinians were attacked. There is a very real fear that incidents of settler violence will increase over the next few months, during

and after the disengagement.

Concurrently, there has been an escalation in attacks by Palestinians against Israeli civilians, both inside Israel and even more severely in the West Bank. Settlers are almost entirely a civilian population. Over 400,000 people live in Israeli settlements: men, women and children. Though their very presence in the Occupied Territories constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, the majority of the settlers are peaceful, law-abiding people. Indeed, the blame for the establishment and expansion of settlements rests largely not with the settlers, but with the Israeli government itself, which granted extensive financial benefits to encourage Israelis to move there. The settlers are therefore entitled to the full protection of the law.

Israel has created in the Occupied Territories a regime of separation based on discrimination, applying two separate systems of law in the same area and basing the rights of individuals on their nationality. Israel has taken vast tracts of land from the Palestinians, established dozens of settlements and populated them with hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens. Israel prohibits the Palestinians as a group from entering and using these lands, and uses the settlements to justify numerous violations of the Palestinians' human rights, such as house demolitions and massive restrictions

on freedom of movement. The drastic change that Israel has made in the map of the West Bank prevents any real possibility for the establishment of an independent, viable Palestinian state as part of the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

The settlers, on the contrary, benefit from all the rights available to Israeli citizens living within the Green Line, and in some cases are even granted additional rights. The great effort that Israel has invested in the settlement enterprise - in financial, legal and bureaucratic terms - has turned the settlements into civilian enclaves in an area under military rule, with the settlers being given priority status. To perpetuate this situation, which is a priori illegal, Israel has continuously breached the rights of the Palestinians.

The settlements are unlawful, and their presence leads to the violation of human rights. Accordingly, they must be vacated, while at the same time respecting the human rights of the settlers, including payment of compensation. Israel is to be congratulated for its decision to remove the Gaza settlements. At the same time that the international community welcomes the Gaza disengagement, however, it must make very clear that Gaza is only the first step to a much more significant removal of settlements from the West Bank.

*Jessica Montell is Director of B'tselem*

**EDITORIAL NOTE:** The designation of Jewish settlers as "peaceful law-abiding people" in their majority is highly disputed by Palestinians; first, because all settlers by definition are violating international law, secondly B'tselem, Al Haq, and Christian Peacemaker Teams have chronicled the constant harassment, violence, and lawlessness of Jewish settlers toward their immediate Palestinian neighbors - even under Israeli laws. Many settlers are armed not only with guns provided by the Israeli army, but also with an ideology that they are under direct commandment of God and are not answerable to the human laws of the State of Israel. They often clash with the Israeli army if it fails to assist them in their violations, but are quick to call upon it for protection if Palestinians try to resist or defend themselves. They routinely and regularly harass Palestinian farmers, shepherds, storekeepers, and villagers who are in their immediate vicinity. They rampage through Palestinian villages and when the Israeli army comes, more often than not, the army simply provides the settlers with protection from Palestinians, or the army stands aside and watches silently. It is true that in areas where the Palestinians have been totally removed and within the more densely populated Jewish settlements, particularly around Jerusalem, some of the settlers do not participate in the daily torment of Palestinian Arabs. To refer to them as being "innocent civilians: Women and children" is really stretching the facts daily experienced by Palestinians.

# Jerusalem OK's Neighborhood Construction

by Ramit Plushnick-Masti

(Copyright 2005 Associated Press. 07/26/05)

JERUSALEM — Jerusalem planners have approved the construction of a new Jewish neighborhood in the city's Muslim Quarter, officials said Tuesday, threatening to further inflame tensions between Israelis and Palestinians in the city claimed by both as a capital.

The plan to build 21 apartments for Jews in the walled Old City's Muslim Quarter was approved 5-2 by a local planning board late Monday, said Yosef Alalu, a dovish city council member who is on the committee. The plan has to go through several more bureaucratic stages before final approval. The plan was presented to the planning board by the Housing Ministry.

Palestinian officials accused Israel of creating facts on the ground ahead of a peace deal that would determine the fate of Jerusalem. "It will be like adding fuel to the fire, and we urge U.S. intervention to block this decision," said Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator.

Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast War and annexed it into its capital,

a decision not recognized internationally. Palestinians want east Jerusalem, including the walled Old City, as the capital of a future state. Israeli moves to settle Arab neighborhoods of the city have sparked violence in the past.

The current plan could be even more incendiary because it does not involve private property transactions, but is backed by the government. Alalu said the municipality would have to rezone a "green" area to build the apartments. "It is clear that when the first tractor puts down the first stone it will lead to the next uprising and could have international impact," Alalu said.

The Old City consists of four quarters, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Armenian. Today, just a few Jewish families live in the Muslim Quarter, in fortified complexes.

About a dozen properties are owned by Jews, including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who bought an apartment there in 1987. \*\* For several years, Sharon used the apartment to hold political meetings,

but today rarely visits the heavily guarded compound. The plan approved Monday, which has been in the works for several years, would violate a city ban on building within 10 yards of the Old City wall, Alalu said.

The city engineer, Uri Shetrit, initially opposed the plan, which called for the construction of 30 housing units, Alalu said. Due to the engineer's concerns, the committee approved a smaller plan for 21 homes, but recommended the regional planning board, the next stop in the authorization process, approve the larger plan, Alalu said.

The municipality said Shetrit is not permitted to speak to reporters. It will take years for the plan to move from paper to actual construction, Alalu said, because several more approval stages remain. In the past, the Housing Ministry and other government agencies have halted the project in the planning stages, he said. Israeli human rights activist Danny Seidemann said Sharon's goal is to strengthen the hold on Jerusalem while the world's attention is focused on his upcoming Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. [Withdrawal was completed]

Earlier this month, the Sharon government decided on the route of its separation barrier, intended as a defense against suicide bombers, that will cut off six Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem from the city. Palestinian officials have accused Israel of drawing the barrier to reduce the Palestinian population of the city.

The approval of the Jewish neighborhood in the Muslim Quarter "is yet another example that Mr. Sharon is using the withdrawal from Gaza ... to consolidate an Israeli stranglehold over east Jerusalem in a way that no government, including his own, has ever, ever dared to do in the past," said Seidemann, an attorney who heads Ir Amim, a Jerusalem settlement watchdog group.

\*\* See related article  
"In Person... Francis Tams" page 14



Photo credit: Efrat Shvili

Construction on the Modi'in Ilit settlement in 2001.



# SCHOOL PATROL IN HEBRON

by Diane Roe

When school starts in Hebron I will be on school patrol. No, I won't be wearing a crossing guard uniform or holding up a sign that tells drivers to slow down. For ten years Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) have been in Hebron and during that time school patrol has taken different forms. Most of the time being on school patrol means trying to protect children from the armed Israeli settlers. There are no signs telling drivers to slow down near schools. The only drivers (aside from the Israeli military) allowed on the streets we patrol are the Israeli settlers and most of them speed up when they see the children. If I tried to stop them they might run over me. (They have threatened it).

There are four settler enclaves in Hebron's Old City. The children who are most at risk from settler attacks are those who live closest to these enclaves. Ten years ago CPT walked Wisam Abu Haikel, who was then in kindergarten, back to her home after school. Settlers from the militant group Kach would throw stones at her as she passed the caravans at Tel Rumeida next to the driveway to her home so the family asked us to accompany her. That was the beginning of our seeking out

individual children who were at risk from settler attacks and walking with them to and from school.

There are several schools located in the area (known as H2) still under full Israeli occupation where settler militias roam freely. Children trying to get to these schools have been confronted with settler violence. Qurtuba elementary girls' school, located on a hillside between two of the militant settler enclaves, has been the most vulnerable. In the fall of 1995, after numerous attacks on school children and staff, CPT began accompaniment at the beginning and end of the school day, especially on Saturday when the settler attacks were the most vociferous. I remember one Saturday in particular when settler youth knocked me down. When a thirteen-year-old girl tried to help me, they knocked her down, and I watched in horror as they dragged her down the street by her braided hair.

Israeli soldiers cannot arrest the settlers; they can only arrest Palestinians. Thus, in times of high tension, the Israeli Army prevents school children from going to school "for their own protection."

Especially in 2001 and 2002, we accompanied children who were trying to get past the Israeli army. Now locked gates and checkpoints, one-at-a-time turnstiles and backpack searches are the norm as children make their way to school. Wisam Abu Haikel and her cousins no longer pass by the Tel Rumeida caravans when they go to school. Tel Rumeida settlers have built a towering apartment complex and the Israeli army has blocked the driveway to the Abu Haikel home. The Abu Haikel children are forced to go out a back way. Now even that back way is threatened as the Israeli occupation forces plan a new road, and the settler militias have extended their presence to the back of the Abu Haikel home.

So, as I prepare for school patrol 2005, I wonder what is ahead. Wisam Abu Haikel's cousin Bashaer, who lives in the same house, will start kindergarten this year. She cannot take the same route that Wisam took ten years ago; the Israeli army bolted the gate shut. We will take a back way behind Qurtuba school, near the cemetery. EAPPI (Ecumenical accompaniers sponsored by the World Council of Churches) will be on the other side of the locked area helping children get down to Qurtuba school. The accompaniers will stay at the school all morning because last spring on several occasions Israeli settlers entered the school grounds and attacked the children.

Please pray for a safe school year.

*Dianne Roe is a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams in Hebron*

## IN PERSON ...

My father was killed during the early '70s in disturbances between Israelis and Palestinians under uncertain circumstances. My mother took the heavy and sole responsibility for her children; 4 girls, the eldest was 17 years old, and 3 boys, the youngest being 6 years old. I was the youngest.

My mother faced very difficult challenges to survive with her children. She didn't surrender to family pressures to get a new husband, and she was willing to pay the full price for her attitude. Our small home in the Old City of Jerusalem, where we were all born, consisted of two rooms accommodating all seven of us children and our mother. In 1987 at the height of the Intifada Ariel Sharon, currently the Prime Minister of Israel, purchased one of the 13 apartments in our building with the assistance of Atteret Cohanim (a Jewish society that acquired property in the Old City) in an effort to coopt the remaining apartments.

To put more pressure on my family, we are asked to vacate the house, being offered a huge amount of money that could have changed all our style of life. This would have meant that we would need to leave our home, but also that we abandon our history as Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land, thus jeopardizing our lives as we knew it since my family has lived in this house since 1936. My mother did not accept the very generous offer.

By our refusal we were forced to face more and more pressure from the Israeli Authorities. First my brother, George, was declared a "terrorist". The authorities tried to arrest him but he fled the house and disappeared for almost seven years. After losing a father and then the eldest son in the family we all became vulnerable, but we still had our very courageous and faithful mother who made sure we stuck together to face all challenges. George's first meeting with our mother since fleeing the authorities was in Jericho when the Palestinian National Authority took back control over the Jericho district. Later he

## Francis Tams



moved to Ramallah where in 1999 he succeeded in getting a judgment from the Israeli Court declaring him innocent enabling him to come back to his city of Jerusalem.

At the time when George left, since the Israeli authorities' efforts to force us out through fear tactics had not worked, the Israelis directed their plan to the courts where they succeeded in evacuating us from our home by military order. But the harassment continued. As if evicting us from our home was not enough, in 1988 they arrested my second brother, Elias, and sentenced him to three years in prison. He was released from prison in 1991. In 1989 I was arrested on the charge of throwing stones and sentenced to 9 years in prison, although I was released after seven years.

My mother did not even think of selling our home or accepting the bribe of the freedom of her three sons along with a huge amount of money. She wanted her sons to be able to hold their heads up with dignity. For me, whatever their reason for killing my father or stealing our home, the hardship my brothers and I had to face in prison I can only blame on the Occupation.

No one can imagine the details of my day to day life during my time in prison. It is very difficult for me to write about, even now, so I will only recount a few of the milder incidents.

In 1992 at Ashkelon prison, I was in cell number 22 on the second floor with another five prisoners. The room was very

small, only 2 meters by 3 meters square. The authority of the prison wanted to accommodate more prisoners in each room. The prisoners refused as this was an illegal deprivation of our rights since each room had a maximum capacity set by the Red Cross. The Prison Authority declared a state of emergency in the prison and they broke into my room because it is the smallest and the nearest to the emergency door. They emptied 2 gallons of tear gas and set off 4 tear gas bombs. After this they opened the door and put a new prisoner in the room. This made me very sick, affecting my lungs and sinuses, and I had to be moved to the clinic where I spent 4 days trying to recover. The excessive amount of tear gas used caused permanent damage and I suffer from chronic health problems ever since.

In 1993 the prisoners declared an open hunger strike. The strike continued for 17 days during which time we took only water with salt. The prisoners ended the strike only after the prison authority accepted to develop new conditions and agreed to some of our rights inside the prison. We succeeded to increase the time for family visits from half an hour every two weeks to 45 minutes, and to open the fence that separated inmates from their children during family visitation.

My wife, Maha, was my girlfriend before I went to jail. Before they sentenced me she insisted to be my partner for life so, against family protests, we were engaged while I was in prison. She spent all seven years waiting for the moment of my freedom. The hard feelings our families had to face, the mother, brothers and sisters, was the price we all had to pay just because we insisted on being Palestinians and not allowing the Israeli authorities to take away our identities. In 1995, after I got my freedom, my family went to see a famous lawyer to see if he could help us to get our house back from Sharon. We were successful, by the grace of God.

*continued on page 17*

# Snapshots of our Activities

## COMMUNITY BUILDING PROGRAMS

**The Open Forum:** This program is open to all family members and continues with zeal and interest. On April 21, the focus was on the different church traditions' understanding of the family of Jesus! The June meeting looked at different scripture texts dealing with mixed marriages.

**Mixed Marriages:** This topic became a priority for Sabeel as a series of local events created mixed feelings about the whole issue of Muslim/Christian relations in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Bethlehem.



Minister of State for Jerusalem Affairs, Hind Khoury

**The Sanctity of Life:** In May a panel discussion was moderated by Minister of State for Jerusalem Affairs, Hind Khoury, and attended by over two hundred participants in Jerusalem. Fr. Maroun Lahham gave the Roman Catholic position on mixed marriages, Randa

Siniora, the Director of Al-Haq in Ramallah, spoke about human rights and double moral standards, and Naim Ateek presented a theological perspective on the sanctity of life. Since over 40% of the attendants were young people, Sabeel immediately started a new program for "Singles".

**Social Problems in our Lives:** In Bethlehem in July a similar session brought together eighty people to hear Fr. Marwan DiDes, the Franciscan principal of Terra Sancta School, Randa Siniora, and Naim Ateek who shared their thoughts on intermarriage, and the sanctity of life. Dr. Jeanne Kattan from Bethlehem University moderated the session.

**Commemorating Palestinian Prisoners' Day:** The needs of the Palestinian community at large are numerous but at the core of it all is the need for JUSTICE. On April 25 Sabeel uplifted the role and responsibilities of the community towards political prisoners. Jonathan Kuttub presented the theological and legal perspectives while Buthayna Duqmaq, a lawyer from the "Mandela Institute" gave a clear picture of conditions in Israeli prisons and the suffering of incarcerated women and children. Francis Tams and Yousef Ghneim, two activists dealt with the neglect/marginalization of the issue of prisoners in peace talks and political negotiations; and the social outlook towards released prisoners. Naim Ateek, moderating the session, included the "Jesus" approach to prisoners.

**Jerusalem...Today:** Thirty eight years after the occupation and annexation of Jerusalem, Sabeel, YMCA/YWCA, Department of Service for Palestinian Refugees, International Christian Committee, Justice and Peace, and Caritas invited the Jerusalem Community to analyze the situation in Jerusalem today. The three-hour afternoon event held on July 18 at YWCA included a skit in which Sari Hussein and Muna Sabella, two amateur actors, voiced the concerns of Jerusalem youth about emigration, non-violent resistance, unemployment, humiliation at checkpoints, and the Wall, and urged the audience to work with them to preserve Jerusalem. Minister of State Hind Khoury enumerated the fears and concerns of the Jerusalemites; in a PowerPoint presentation Khalil Tufakji, Director of the Map Department, Arab Studies Society, exposed the bleak facts on the ground of a strangulated East Jerusalem with very few positive prospects. The moderator, Naim Ateek, then invited the audience of over 70 people to join in a discussion group on Youth Concerns, Social Issues, or The Role and Concerns of Jerusalem Civil Society Organizations. The recommendations were then presented to Ms Khoury to raise the issues with the Palestinian Authority and to urge them to keep Jerusalem on their immediate agenda.

**Ecumenical Worship Service:** One year after the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinion on the illegality of the



Wall Sabeel held a worship service at the Wall in Bethany. Prayers for breaking down all forms of walls were lifted in Arabic, English, French, German, Dutch and Hindi by clergy and lay participants. In his address Archmandrite Atallah Hanna called for an end of all forms of terrorism, a unified stand by Christians to safeguard their heritage and properties, and non-violent resistance to end the occupation. Singing hymns for peace, the participants then placed olive branches in the joints of the monstrous Wall. The few branches left were then offered to the soldiers blocking the entrances. A copy of the service is available upon request. Sabeel will hold such prayers at different locations of the wall until justice is done.

**An Evening of Music:** On a lighter note, Sabeel hosted the Rev. Garth Hewitt, president of Amos Trust in the UK, in an evening of spiritual and inspirational music at the Sabeel Center on June 8. For over thirty years, this Anglican priest, poet and songwriter has been singing for peace in areas of conflict around the world.

**Dialogue for Life: Christians and Muslims Together:** A new program for Sabeel was started with a gathering of young adults who met to discuss the differences and diversity within the Palestinian communities, and to develop and create a deeper sense of unity.

#### WOMEN

**Field Trips:** Sabeel held another of its popular field trips that combine awareness building, spirituality and fun on June 24. So eager were the women from Jerusalem to meet their friends from the Galilee that they had reserved their bus seats before knowing the details of the program. The

presence of Naim Ateek who had not accompanied the women on a trip for over two years was a welcome bonus. It was refreshing to have a theological perspective added to the customary pilgrimage guided tours of the Arab villages of the Galilee.

In Tur'an, women's committees of the Greek Catholic (Melkite), Greek Orthodox, and Baptist Churches welcomed the Jerusalem and Nazareth people in the Melkite Church. After prayers by Fr. Nimr Khoury and a few words from Naim Ateek, two ladies described the ecumenical co-existence in the village. A large number of the residents joined the visitors for a sumptuous buffet. What warmth and kindness!

Unfortunately the visitors had to move on to Eilaboun, where again the Melkite Church played host. (The majority of the Christians in the Galilee belong to the Melkite Church) After Fr. Suhail Khoury gave a brief history of the village, church and activities within the community, two eye witnesses told their stories about the occupation of Eilaboun in October 1948. The tragedy of that October night when Israeli soldiers rounded up all the men in the old church square and executed several of them while the women were forced to

watch this inhuman behavior was painfully remembered.

After refreshments, the visitors were taken on a tour of the actual sites of the massacre. The years had not erased the sad memories. Survivors of Eilaboun and the refugees who had fled to Lebanon had come back and rebuilt the destroyed village. There definitely is a glimmer of hope and life among the continued Christian community there. In fact, the neighbors across from the church were celebrating a wedding and showered the visitors with sweets and delicacies.

The last stop was at the village of Mughar, the site of friction that resulted in attacks and destruction of property by the Druze against the Christian inhabitants last spring. Fr. Maher Abboud welcomed the visitors, and Naim Ateek shared scripture readings about Christian response to challenges. Many of the young women present talked about their own experience and trauma of the vandalism, and called upon the visitors, and churches in general, to find means to calm the situation, and restore life to normal.

**A Visit to Tur'an:** On July 17 Sabeel welcomed over 100 people from Tur'an to



Praying at the Wall

Jerusalem. Upon their request, the meeting was both a spiritual encounter with Naim Ateek and a social gathering with over 20 Jerusalem women. Together they reflected on how to live one's faith using the model of the first followers of the way by praying and singing, and sharing a simple meal. As Sabeel prepares for its sixth international conference on "The Forgotten Faithful", such meetings among the indigenous Christian communities will pave the way for a stronger ecumenical commitment and witness.

**Showing Solidarity:** A group of Jerusalem women visited the residents of the Al-Bustan quarter in Silwan (Jerusalem) the area targeted for the demolition of 88 homes. For over an hour, five women from Silwan shared their stories and grievances in the solidarity tent visited by local, Jewish and international activists. People eagerly listened to Um Hasan al Qadi, an 85 year-old "young" woman, reminisce about the prosperous days before the settlers occupied the area.

**Invitations:** Nora Carmi, Coordinator for Community-Building Programs, attended an international women's conference on "Globalization, Violence and Equality", August 10-15 in Blekinge, Sweden, at the invitation of the Diocese of Lund. Six international guests from Ireland, Germany, Sudan and Palestine shared their experiences. Nora presented a paper on the effects of the Israeli Occupation on Palestinian women and also promoted the work of Sabeel.

#### YOUTH PROGRAMS:

**Celebrating Mothers' Day:** On the 17th of March, we celebrated Mothers' Day by holding a discussion facilitated by a social worker for youth and their mothers. Discussion topics included relationships, conflicts, and the importance of our mothers in our lives. This activity was followed by a presentation of flowers and dinner

**Celebrating Easter:** On Easter (of the Western calendar) 68 children from local orphanages gathered to hear the story of Lent, watched a short passion play followed by an Easter Egg Hunt. On

Easter (Eastern calendar) another egg hunt took place in Bethlehem for around 40 children who have cancer. Following a short lecture by a social worker who works with the children and who informed us about their situations and cancer in general, a local priest discussed the importance of volunteer work in Christianity and in the community.

**Leadership Training:** In June the Summer Camp Leadership Training took place where 22 camp leaders from different denominations were trained in communication skills, activities, and how to follow Christ in order to be good leaders.

**Singles Program:** In June a new program for Singles from ages 23 till 40 was introduced. The first program was attended by fifty-five singles who gathered to discuss issues such as interfaith marriage. Suggestions for other topics and plans for future programs were made. A second meeting took place in July for reporting and planning purposes.

**Congratulations!** The Sabeel staff would like to congratulate our Youth Coordinator, Haya Di'des, on her recent marriage to Ala Daw. The wedding took place in the Galilee with two busloads of well-wishers traveling from Jerusalem to take part in the celebrations. Sabeel extends our heartfelt congratulations to the new couple, and our best wishes for a long and happy life together.

*continued from page 14*

In 1996 I married Maha and we started our new life. The priority then and continues to be to live in this Holy Land as a Christian family, to open our hearts to all the people in Jerusalem, even our new Jewish neighbors, and to sacrifice for others.

I started to raise the problem of the Christians in the Holy Land by discussing this issue on many occasions with friends in Christian centers and clubs until I agreed with my friend and brother in law, Yusef Daher, that we needed to do something about the situation. We made many visits and consultations with others in the community and ended with us establishing the Laity Committee in the Holy Land (LCHL), aimed at activating the Christian role in the general Palestinian life.

LCHL is my area of focus for Christian and Palestinian activity. Together with my colleagues from all denominations we are trying to get the Palestinian Christian voice heard in the International and Christian communities, believing that this is our wider family, the Church we inherited from our Lord.

*Francis Tams is a certified accountant.*



Easter Egg Hunt

# ifos Snapshots

International Friends of Sabeel supports the work of Sabeel through education, advocacy, conferences, solidarity visits, partner-to-partner projects, and financial contributions. Regional chapters have been established creating a network of friends throughout the world who work in partnership with Sabeel to help bring about a just and durable peace for Palestine and Israel.

## FRIENDS OF SABELL- NORTH AMERICA



This update comes just following four major conference events (three in the U.S. and one in Canada, all in October). FOSNA has been focusing on regional conferences in major North American cities as a means for drawing church partnerships in educating American Christians. The importance of these conferences cannot be overstated. Since September 11, 2001, FOSNA membership has blossomed—from about 800 in the U.S. to over 3,000. That growth can be attributed to the widening concerns among Christians of the worsening situation for Palestinians, the war in Iraq, more threats from Washington against Iran, and to Sabeel conferences which provide the opportunity for Christians and others to hear directly from Palestinians and Israelis living at the center of the conflict. Our speakers are people who are deeply committed to justice and peace, who are expert in their respective fields of work—activism, historical and political analysis, Biblical studies, theology, church social teachings, etc. Conference participants, representing a wide ecumenical community, leave a Sabeel conference renewed with hope. Just to be in the same room with hundreds of kindred spirits who have come to understand the underlying causes of injustice and violence and who share a

common vision of peace—this is the inspiration of Sabeel that brings more and more Christians and their church leaders into the fold. It is the “mustardseed conspiracy” that won’t be reported on cable news but is the invisible promise of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts and through the actions of peacemakers. Conference participants become longtime members of Friends of Sabeel providing financial support and forming local Sabeel support groups. These typically are the same people who go on pilgrimage through a Sabeel international witness visit, who “Come and see” (John 1:39) the holy places where the Prince of Peace walked on earth and who see with their own eyes how Palestinians must live under Israeli military occupation, behind concrete walls and barbed wire, surrounded by checkpoints, armed settlements, oppressed by the evil of hatred and aggression. These people become the Voice of the Palestinian Christians who through Sabeel are living their faith through action. More Sabeel conferences are being planned for 2006. Check our calendar online at [www.fosna.org](http://www.fosna.org).

## FRIENDS OF SABELL UK



Friends of Sabeel UK are going through exciting times. We have moved into our new office in the precinct of Gloucester Cathedral, sharing with Christian Aid.

This is a good, peaceful, but central location, where many people will be able to find us

At the end of August we joined in a very successful Greenbelt Festival, where Revd Naim Ateek led three seminars, and participated in other events. His final seminar was received with a standing ovation. This was a good opportunity for us to promote the work of Sabeel and Friends of Sabeel UK, and to inform people about the Palestinian situation

The next major event is the FOS-UK residential conference, entitled What is Truth?, taking place 11-13 November. Speakers include Revd Naim Ateek and Prof Marc Ellis.

## NEWS FROM FRIENDS OF SABELL AUSTRALIA



Friends of Sabeel Australia Inc. (FOSAI) were pleased to host a meeting for the young Palestinian speaker, Zack Sabella. Zack’s visit to Australia was sponsored by the National Council of Churches in Australia - Christian World Service. On Friday, 15 July, around 35 people gathered at a FOSAI sponsored meeting to hear Zack speak about the situation of the Palestinians. Earlier in the day Zack was also interviewed on ABC radio in S.E. Queensland. National members of FOSAI were notified of Zack’s itinerary as he was going on to speak at different capital cities in the Australian states. The Brisbane Anglican diocesan paper carried a report of Zack’s meeting as well as an article by Greg Jenks (Vice President of FOSAI) on the endorsement given by the Anglican Consultative Council to divestment from any economic link with the occupation in the Palestinian territories. Greg’s article also informed readers of Sabeel’s statements on the issue of divestment.

# 2005 SABELL INTERNATIONAL WITNESS FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE VISIT

“Be not afraid,  
speak out and  
do not keep silent:  
I am with you.”

Acts 18:9

Visit begins with lunch on Friday, October 28 and concludes with closing worship and dinner on Friday, November 4.

**Witness Visit will include:**

- Exposure trips to see the political “facts on the ground” in the West Bank
- Advocacy workshops
- Lectures by Palestinian and Israeli experts
- Visits to holy sites in Jerusalem and the Galilee
- Jerusalem’s Old City

For more information

visit our website: [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org) • e-mail: [world@sabeel.org](mailto:world@sabeel.org)

If you can't join us this time, join us for the Spring Visit, March 24-31, 2006.

Mark Your Calendars...

## Sabeel's 6th International Conference THE FORGOTTEN FAITHFUL The Challenges and Witness of Palestinian Christians

Oct 27 - Nov 3 2006 (dates to be confirmed)

## Sabeel's First International Young Adults Conference

For more  
information contact  
[Youth@sabeel.org](mailto:Youth@sabeel.org)

July 28- August 5, 2006 | For ages 18-26

**Conference will include:**

- Visits to Towns and Villages
- Cultural evenings
- Sharing experiences and ideas
- Volunteer experience
- Workshops and group discussions

**Focus on:**

- Christian community
- The political situation
- Challenges confronting Christian young adults worldwide

## 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.



### Sabeel

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