

# CORNERSTONE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY SABEEL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER

## A SOBERING 60 YEARS



### DOES GOD CARE FOR LABELS?

by: *Naim Ateek*

**On** May 15, 2008, the Palestinians commemorated their Nakba while the Israelis celebrated their independence. The two sides are miles apart from reconciling their divergent history. It was obvious that the Israelis were proud to celebrate 60 years of the establishment of their state while the Palestinians were mourning 60 years of tragedy. This is the enigma of history in the Middle East - the presence of tragedy and triumph, commemoration and celebration, Nakba (Arabic for catastrophe) and Atzma'oot (Hebrew for independence).

Those who celebrated paid no attention to those who mourned, and those who mourned are powerless to turn their lamentation into celebration. What exacerbated the pain of the mourners was that those who celebrated totally ignored and denied their Nakba.

We have been living in this paradox for the last 60 years. Let us stop for a moment and ask ourselves a theological question: how does God see the Palestinian Nakba and Israel's Atzma'oot?

Liberation theology emphasizes that God takes a stand on the side of the poor and oppressed and against the powerful oppressors. In this theology, the only labels that matter are those of oppressor and oppressed. The labels cross over racial and national borders. Does it, therefore, matter to God whether one is a Jew, a Muslim, or a Christian? Does it matter whether one is Israeli and another is a Palestinian? Are such human made labels important to God?

*Continued >>*

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I am sure there are believers in the various religions of the world who would argue vociferously that God started these labels and sees us through them. "This one is special and chosen and that one is not." For other people, this can pose a dilemma. On the one hand, it is difficult to be emphatic. After all, is it not presumptuous of any of us to claim that he/she can speak for God? On the other hand, is it not our duty to challenge any simplistic answers that come from fanatic religious fundamentalists? I believe it is possible without pretentiousness and egotism to address difficult theological questions. Although God is aware of the many labels we wear, I do not believe that these labels are important to God.

Let me illustrate the absurdity of labels. Here in the Middle East each religious group has its own cemetery. There is one cemetery for Jews, another for Muslims, and another for Christians. In addition, we have one cemetery for each Christian denomination. It is considered scandalous when a person is buried in a different cemetery than his/her own denomination, let alone when the religious boundaries have been crossed. How ridiculous to think that God worries about such petty things? Does it really matter to God?

I believe that God sees us all as human beings who are God's creation. We are all God's children. God sees us as members of one human family. God looks at Iraq and says, "I am grieved because my children are at war." God looks at Palestine and Israel and says, "I am grieved because my children refuse to share the land and cannot live in peace with each other."

I believe what matters to God is not the labels that we have invented but the

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national, ethnic, racial, religious, social, etc. as much as the way we violate our own God-given humanity and the humanity of our fellow brothers and sisters. Labels are useful when they are meant to make a reference to simple facts such as one's nationality or racial origin. But when they are used to denigrate, separate, and classify people's worth and discriminate among them, they become a curse and a crime.

It is hard to believe theologically that it really matters to God whether one is Israeli or Palestinian. What matters is whether both live justly and mercifully together. It matters to God when one oppresses the other and fabricates schemes to kill and eliminate them. It matters to God when one side wants to celebrate its independence while forcing the other to live in poverty and deprivation. It matters to God when one side enjoys freedom and then denies it to the other.

What we must aspire for as humans is, therefore, to shed the residual waste of our tribal theology and culture and discover the true potential of our own humanity. When we reach that level, we realize that true celebration takes place whenever good has triumphed over evil in all of us and justice over injustice and truth over falsehood and love over hate.

When this happens our theology of God and our theology of human beings has come of age.

To celebrate one's independence on the ashes of another people becomes a blasphemy and a sacrilege against God the creator of both and a profanity against our fellow human beings. It is an insult to God and it belittles the worth of man/woman. So long as the Palestinians cannot share in the celebration, it is a shame for Israel to celebrate. We are still enslaved by a theology of a tribal warrior god and a humanity that is limited to vengeance. Such a tribal theology must be rejected and abandoned. The God who attracts our loyalty and love is the God who breaks the labels that separate God's children from one another, meeting us in the face of the other, even the so-called enemy, and presenting us with the possibility of living in peace together and in freedom and reconciliation.

As we move into the next decade and in anticipation of possible worse scenarios for our region, there are important points to keep in mind:

In the past, some Israeli leaders said regarding the Palestinian Nakba, "the older Palestinians will die and the new generation will forget." The Nakba memory is deeply imbedded in the psyche of the Palestinians, in conscientious Jews, and in the hearts of many friends abroad. Public opinion in the world is growing against Israeli intransigence. Oppressed people will ultimately gain their freedom. Sooner or later, Israel will have to grant liberation to the Palestinians. It is wiser if the Israelis initiate it themselves rather than being compelled to concede it.

Nonviolence movements in Palestine are

beginning to take hold. An increasing number of Palestinians are abandoning the armed struggle and showing a commitment to nonviolent resistance. Israel's violence has helped create not only the violence in Palestinians but equally nonviolence. Israel has pushed the Palestinians into nonviolence. This trend is growing in spite of Israel's harsh reprisals. What is happening in the West Bank will also happen in the Gaza Strip. It is only a matter of time. The movement towards nonviolence is inevitable. It seems that training in nonviolence which many groups throughout Palestine have had is bearing fruit and it will gain global support. This is a hopeful sign and it will contribute to the emergence of potential leaders.

Exile and return are two phenomena this part of the world is used to. No matter what Israel does, it cannot prevent the return. It can drag it out, it can slow it down, but it cannot prevent it. Israel needs to learn from its own Jewish history. If Jews waited for 2000 years and did not forget the land; who would bet that the Palestinians will forget Palestine? The day will come when a Palestinian "Herzl" would rise and the Palestinians will find a way to return. It is better if Israel works with the international community to find how to achieve a resolution of this issue rather than to plot ominous schemes to expel the Palestinians.

Justice remains the issue. For many years, Israel has created policies that would displace the Palestinians, deny them their rights, humiliate them, and force them to leave. It has invested billions of dollars to make life miserable for them so that they would emigrate. Israel has taken the shortest way to make itself insecure. The shortest way for the resolution of



the conflict is the doing of justice in accordance with international law. All other schemes will not work in the long run. Justice is the only true foundation for peace.

Israel needs to listen to its modern-day prophets. They are Jews from Israel as well as from abroad. They care about Israel, its security, and its survival. But they are in agreement that Israel today is on a self-destructive course. It must change. They are asking Israel to stop its injustice against the Palestinians. They are calling for a true sharing of the land with the Palestinians. It is sad to observe that the voices of these prophets are not heard. The true prophets are those who know that true peace can only be built on the foundation of truth and justice.

Israel needs to confront the internal forces that continue the process of the

Nakba. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel's report "The State of Human Rights in Israel 2007" documents tragic statements and legislation by Jewish Knesset members against Arab Israelis including proposals for population transfer of the Arab citizens of Israel. Israel's obsession with maintaining a Jewish majority and its fear of its Arab population together are breeding a culture of racism. Many fear that these incitements will lead to additional actions against citizens who already suffered in 1948. This racism and discrimination only perpetuates the sin of the Nakba of 1948.

With other courageous people, we continue to commit ourselves to speak truth to the powerful leaders. Israel must change if it wants peace. I hope we do not have to wait for another decade to see that transformation happen.

*Rev. Naim Ateek is the director of Sabeel, Jerusalem.*

# Why can't they fix the shutters?

by Nabla Assali

I have given numerous speeches and related personal encounters describing our predicament as Palestinians, and I have often been told that I should write these experiences down, especially now that our generation – those who remember Palestine before 1948 – is dwindling. It is only the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of our Nakba and my coming of nearly 70 years of age that gave the spark. Death and old age spare no-one. It is either now or never. This hard fact reminds me of a short news item that I read in an American newspaper while sitting in a car during a speaking tour back in 1998. Under the very appropriate title “Race against Time” the article stated that a number of Jewish groups are protesting the inefficiency and negligence of some law firms who are following up on the restitutions of survivors of the holocaust then in their late seventies or eighties and that if they were not paid now, it would be “too late”. There and then, my brain started working, I thought:

I am a victim as well, but not so vocally recognized.

I lack the money or support groups to pay a law firm to present my case. Who dares talk about the Palestinian right of return or restitution?

There is no acknowledgement on the aggressor's side that there has been a wrong-doing or historical injustice inflicted against the Palestinians. The enemy lives in denial, we live in bitterness, and the world wears its blinkers, while the suffering goes on.

Whenever I visit our house in Baqa'a,

“ I often wonder how the first-comers who occupied our house... could sleep in our beds. ”

West Jerusalem, I park my car opposite the building that my father built in the thirties on what they now call Rehov Hamaggid. Our house, number 17, has the aspects of architecture that distinguishes it as an Arab house, not like the ugly match box apartment buildings that were built after 1948 in the open space between our house and another row of lovely houses that belong to the Nammari Jerusalemite family. I often wonder how the first-comers who

occupied or were allocated our house could sleep in our beds, use our kitchen pots and wares, dig into our drawers, and eat at our dining table enjoying the view of our back garden with its huge berry tree. One has to be very hard-hearted to endure such an experience. Or was it the rationalization that the Jews were persecuted and that justified the dispossession and uprooting of one people to provide space for another? Two wrongs do not make one right, especially since we, the Palestinians, were not party to the Jewish question in Europe. We just happened to be at the receiving end.

My mother kept repeating an argument she had with my father back in late April 1948. Following the Deir Yassin massacre, and after a bullet went



The Tamari, 'Abdo, Mushabek, Burdqush and Faraj families in front of the Faraj home in West Jerusalem (1920s). Photo taken from *Our Story The Palestinians* (Sabeel 1999).

(Tamari Photo Collection)

(Photo by Mona Halaby)



Nahla Assali talking about her lost house to Linda Gradstein from US National Public Radio during the Nakba survivors' march.

through the balcony door of my parents' bedroom and ended in the bottom drawer of the dresser, my father decided to send us all – mother and five kids - to Damascus to stay with my maternal grandmother until things settled down. Mother was packing a couple of suitcases, adding some woolen sweaters, when my father shouted at her saying that there would be no need for woolen wear since we were only going to be away for two or three weeks at most. Mother packed a piece for each of us saying that Damascus was cold at night. It is now sixty years since that encounter and we have not returned to our house in Baqa'a.

In 1950, we came back to join my father, leaving my two elder sisters in Damascus to finish high school. After being a landlord, my father rented half a house in Ras El-Amoud, East Jerusalem: a kitchen, two bedrooms, no lounge, no electricity, no running water, and minimal furniture. Mother borrowed some tiles and wooden boards from the landlord to build makeshift beds for a

multipurpose room: living-dining-visitors room day time and bedroom at night. Mother's creativity provided us with running water by installing a small tank with a faucet over the kitchen sink; she even heated it by adding boiled water to the tank in the freezing cold winter days. We had our share of refugee life, though we were never registered as refugees because to my father, the status of refugee was portrayed in the queue of destitute people waiting for their monthly rations. His pride did not allow his name to be entered in the UNRWA records.

Between 1948 and 1967, we all made it through school and university. It was my parents' conviction that at least we are not going to be robbed of our education. This possibly explains why the Palestinians – in spite of their meager incomes - put great value on learning. My father refused to visit our house in Baqa'a after 1967 when West Jerusalem

became accessible to Palestinians living in East Jerusalem. We finally visited in the summer of 1969 when my brother, who was then working in Kuwait, was able to get a permit to visit us. Through appealing, cajoling, and repeated arguments, my father finally consented and we drove to Baqa'a. Sitting next to me in the front seat, my father did not utter a word, but I could see the blood congested in his face. As I parked the car, he remained seated, looked at the three-storey building and noticed one of the shutters facing the road slanted sideways. He mumbled a few intangible utterances and then said aloud "Can't they fix the shutters?" and told me to drive back home.

My father's comment about the shutters was, and still is, one of my most hurtful memories. My brother and I regretted subjecting father to that agonizing ordeal. All that mattered to him at that moment was to have his only remaining house in good shape. My father owned another house in upper Baqa'a which was leased to someone who worked at the US Consulate in Jerusalem, but that house was razed to the ground soon after the 1967 war, and an ugly multi-storey building stands in its place. My father never saw the house nor did he bother to see the ugly building. This, in fact, is Israel's way to obliterate our physical existence in West Jerusalem and in Palestine at large; but it will never succeed in obliterating our memories. A demolition order will not destroy our memories.

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# BUSH AND THE NAKBA

by Sam Bahour

“[When David Ben-Gurion proclaimed Israel’s independence] it was the redemption of an ancient promise given to Abraham and Moses and David: a homeland for the chosen people Eretz Yisrael.”

“You have welcomed immigrants from the four corners of the Earth.”

- President George Bush, May 15, 2008

President Bush addressed the Israeli Knesset to mark Israel’s sixtieth anniversary. The President’s speech was absent of any real insight or policy. Instead of addressing the politics of a region that can only be equated to a powder keg about to explode, he assumed the other worldly role of bestowing on Israel a religious right, one dangerously terrifying because it represents the views of the most rabidly extremist Jews, similar to the Jewish law student that assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the gun-toting Israeli settlers (many holding dual U.S./Israeli citizenship) that populate Israel’s Jewish-only settlements across the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

President Bush used the out-dated words “Eretz Yisrael” [biblical Land of Israel] to depict the Israeli state. This sort of usage was, and is, exactly what most right-wing Jewish fundamentalists use to refer to an Israel that reaches from the Euphrates River, in what’s left of today’s Iraq, to the Mediterranean Sea.

Adding insult to injury, he went on to praise Israel’s welcoming of immigrants from around the world to populate the newly created State of Israel. It meant absolutely nothing to President Bush that the indigenous Palestinian population, lingering for 60 years only hours away from where he was standing while



A Palestinian businessman, who fled the fighting in 1948, returns to Jerusalem in 1967 to discover his shop has been appropriated by a Jewish family.  
Photo taken from Our Story The Palestinians (Sabeel 1999).

(UNRWA)

addressing the Knesset and on whose ruins Israel was built, remains today’s longest standing refugee community.

It does not come as a surprise to Palestinians, and an ever-growing number of non-Palestinians, that President Bush’s speech reflected blindness to the plight of Palestinian refugees. Those Palestinians from the Diaspora, not refugees, but Palestinians with their homes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, along with non-Palestinian foreign nationals trying to assist Palestinians by working and serving in the occupied territory, have become the latest category of victims of the most recent application of the Israeli “might is right” mindset. Israel has been denying entry to scores of foreign nationals, Palestinians and others, trying to enter the occupied territory. The mass majority of these foreign nationals are U.S. citizens

and the Bush Administration, although acknowledging that Israel is discriminating against U.S. citizens based on their ethnicity, has done very little in standing up to its “eternal” ally Israel in order to resolve this latest problem.

If U.S. citizens are left to vie for themselves in the face of Israeli intransigence, Palestinian refugees are absolutely correct in not believing that any U.S. mediated “peace process” will lead to the realization of their inalienable rights, including the right of return.

Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism and the author of the infamous novel *The Old New Land* (*Altneuland*) and the book *The Jewish State* (*Der Judenstaat*), who Bush was keen on recalling in his speech, is surely laughing in his grave at Bush’s visit to Israel and his being more Zionist than Israeli extremists.

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March 30-May 15 | Second coastal “clearing” operation. Attacks and expulsions drive out almost all Palestinian communities from coastal area from Haifa to Jaffa prior to British withdrawal.

The moment President Bush affirmed his belief in Israel's right to establish a Jewish nation in fulfillment of a divine promise given to Abraham, Moses and David for the "chosen people" in "Eretz Yisrael" (with all that these terms imply), George Bush could not avoid the inevitable conclusion that Israel would be an exclusive club in which gentiles would live within its borders on sufferance only, with unequal rights with their Jewish neighbours.

In the light of these remarks, followed by George Bush's affirmation of the unwavering US commitment to Israel as a Jewish state and its unquestioning support of it, which includes support for the actions of its leaders and armed forces, the US disqualifies itself from acting as the honest broker of peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Such a role has long been entertained among ordinary Palestinians but which has, for some time, been teetering on its last legs. Bush gave it the coup de grace in his address to a special session of the Knesset on 15 May 2008 on the occasion of Israel's 60th anniversary celebrations.

The President praised Israel for its democratic institutions and its agricultural and technological development. It is however necessary to remind the President and others who might be tempted to take this line, that even democracies can be oppressive. It is also axiomatic that the greatest danger to peace comes from the application of technology in the service of the war machines of nations. Accordingly, just because Israel is a democracy or it is technologically advanced, it does not follow that it is deserving of unqualified accolades and approbation without reference to its conduct.

“ For someone who never ceases to proclaim the morality of policies and actions, Bush has demonstrated his inability to recognize the universal morality which enables us to recognize basic right from basic wrong. ”

World-wide audiences were regaled to President, or one should say Prophet, Bush's vision of the region 60 years from now. Israel will still be a thriving democracy living in security; Palestinians will have their homeland, whatever it might look like; Cairo, Riyadh, Baghdad and Beirut will boast free and independent societies; Iran and Syria will also be peaceful nations. It is beautiful for us mortals to dwell for a moment on this vision of paradise on earth. But what President Bush omitted to mention, or would not, is that whilst democracies in the region could flourish, they could only do so if they submitted to some form of Pax Israelo-Americana, currently in embryonic state, which would reserve for itself the right to dictate and determine how such regional democracies should behave and function. But then perhaps the tyranny of democracies is preferable to the dictatorship of dictators.

President Bush's speech was focused and rambling, at the same time; focused in praise of an Israel incapable of wrongdoing and rambling in its references to ante-diluvian promises all the way to modern-day Israel. The speech was calculated to secure maximum approbation from a willing and receptive audience.

His remarks on the UN resolutions condemning Israeli human rights violations shed a great deal of light on the level of regard in which he holds that august, but ineffectual, body. It confirms what we already knew back in 2003, that his respect for the UN is in direct proportion to its willingness to follow US wishes and demands.

The biggest disappointment was his deafening silence with regard to the still unremedied injustice suffered by the dispossession and forced exodus of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1948, who lived and worked for centuries in Palestine in order to make room for Israel and Jewish immigrants from Europe. Indeed, the glaring injustice to Palestinians underlying the establishment of Israel seems to have eluded the President. Still, there were plenty of reminders of the Nakba all around him, if he cared to look. For someone who never ceases to proclaim the morality of policies and actions, President Bush has demonstrated his inability to recognize that brand of universal morality which defies definition, but which enables the least of us to recognize basic right from basic wrong. But perhaps Palestinians are lesser children of God!

*The writer is a native of Jerusalem*

# THE LITTLE OLD IRON

by Mona Halaby

It was the end of a long, hard day - a day spent photographing Nakba Survivors, who stood nervously in front of their West Jerusalem family homes, which were confiscated and looted in 1948 by the Israeli forces. They wore T-shirts we had purposefully printed for the occasion that read "Nakba Survivors" on the front and "This is My Home" on the back.

From early in the morning we had met our Survivors clandestinely in front of their homes, handed them their T-shirts, which they quickly slipped over their heads, and "click" the shots were taken. We didn't want to run into the present Israeli owners, or create a stir. Our purpose was to document the rightful owners standing in front of their homes for flyers and posters we are preparing

for a silent, peaceful march to commemorate the Nakba of 1948. "Nakba" – the catastrophe in Arabic, the word Palestinians use to describe the 1947 to 1949 dispossession, expulsion, and deportation of over 750,000 Palestinians from their homes and land. We shall never forget and we want justice to prevail.

Near dusk the last two people I was photographing were Liliane Farah Matar in the Baqa'a, and her husband, Ibrahim Matar in Katamon. We had finished taking shots of Ibrahim, and were slowly walking back through the residential streets of Katamon, when we came upon a 'For Sale' sign hanging on the fence of a small Palestinian-style stone house. I stopped at the wrought-iron gate to

admire the Escher-like designs on the walkway tiles.

"Hey", I called out to our friends, "the house looks abandoned. Let's look around." They were game. We opened the gate and stepped into the front garden. While David and Ibrahim leaned against the fence, completely engrossed in a political discussion, Liliane and I noticed that the front door lock was broken and discarded on the porch. The front door was open, slightly ajar, beckoning us to step inside.

I did not hesitate. I felt drawn to the house, and eager to explore it. As we stepped into the dark and musty foyer, I immediately felt saddened by a sense of history and decay, of ancient splendor turned sour. I was aware of desecrating someone's intimate and private space, which was now derelict and forlorn. Who were the original Palestinian residents? Who usurped their home after 1948? I gingerly walked into the large empty rooms with high ceilings. The tiled floors were sagging in places as though an earthquake had shaken the house and unsettled its foundation. I closed my eyes and let my ears pick up the past sounds of the original household – the clanging of dishes in the kitchen, the soft classical music emanating from the living room radio, the whistling of mina birds on the loquat tree outside the window. When I opened my eyes, I was faced with drab walls that looked like yellowed, tattered old photos.

(Mona Halaby)



Mona (3<sup>rd</sup> from right) in front of her mother's home in Baqa'a, west Jerusalem

21-22 April | British forces suddenly withdraw from Haifa precipitating an all-out dawn offensive against the city's Palestinian population, forcing them to flee.

After a quick tour of the house, a side door remained unopened. "It probably leads to the attic," said Liliane. She was right. We faced a small landing and a staircase leading to the attic. Above our heads we spotted the underside of the red-tiled roof, but what caught my eye was a small, dilapidated wooden cupboard covered with dusty old irons dating from the thirties or forties. I was immediately drawn to the smallest of them, a rusty little iron with a cane woven handle, which I imagine was designed to keep you from getting your hands burnt. A frayed electric cord hung from the side. On the back of the iron some words were engraved, 'Rowenta model E5048 Universal 200 Watt.'

Without hesitation I blurted out, 'I'm taking this one,' almost as though the iron had been waiting for me to rescue it from this dingy old place. I encouraged Liliane to pick one as well, which she did, and then we climbed the stairs to the darkened attic where a collection of disparate cases and cardboard boxes covered the dusty floor. Nothing of interest, except perhaps some old newspapers, which may have once-upon-a-time been used for wrapping fragile objects. I grabbed one of the newspapers to help us date the house or its history, and I walked out the house with my trophies in hand.

Ibrahim looked at the newspaper, which was in Hebrew, and read the masthead, 'Haaretz, January 15, 1967.' He noted a front-page article about prospects for peace. We all snickered; forty-one years

of elusive waiting. Peace is a joke if it isn't based on justice.

I took photographs of the outside of the house while Liliane picked magnificent pink roses from a bush under the front porch – tight green, to delicate pink buds, to still wide-open flailing petals precariously hanging from the bush. There was something explosive and exhibitionistic about these resplendent roses clinging to the old stone house, a reminder that they must have once been perfectly matched.

We walked back to Liliane and Ibrahim's car and drove back home. David stuffed my treasured iron in a plastic bag he was carrying, and upon arriving home placed the bag somewhere in the apartment. That evening I was determined to find the name of the owners of the little house. I knew where I would find it - the map of Katamon at the back of Hala Sakakini's book, *Jerusalem and I*. And there it was – the house belonged to the Shtakleff family. How ironic! The Shtakleffs were Palestinian friends of my mother's, whose family had settled in Palestine from Macedonia in the late nineteenth century.

The following week I got busy at school and barely thought of the iron, until one night I dreamed of it. It was almost as if the iron didn't want to be relegated to the obscure recesses of my mind. It wanted to be center-stage. In my dream I had

plugged it in and it worked. It looked brand new and sparkled.

I woke up the next morning eager to admire the iron again. David didn't remember where he had placed it. So we began to look for it, both in our rental car, and in the apartment. We searched and searched without any luck. I even called Liliane thinking that maybe the iron, which had been on the floor of her car, had maybe slipped out of our bag and had lodged itself under the driver's seat. Liliane looked thoroughly in her car, but there was no iron.

The disappearance of the little iron saddened me to no end, and began to take on obsessive proportions. Even though it was never mine in the first place, it had become what one seeks and longs for, and now I had lost it. I thought of how my mother, David's parents and all the other Palestinian families I know, must have felt when they lost their homes, their land and belongings in the Nakba. How could they have remained sane after that? How did they go on with their lives? This little old iron was a small fragment of what a Palestinian family had left behind in 1948 in their hurry to reach safer ground, and yet its loss was perturbing me.

A week later, we happened to fall upon the discarded bag, which had lodged itself under the bed. When I pulled the iron out of the bag, it was like recovering a little piece of Palestine.

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# LAMENTING THE DESTRUCTION THE NAKBA CONTINUES

by Kathy Bergen

When I read Chapter 5 of Lamentations, I feel that I could be reading something that has been written in Palestine today. In this text I feel the agony and pain of a people struggling to survive in the midst of their suffering and at the same time maintain a sense of dignity through it all.

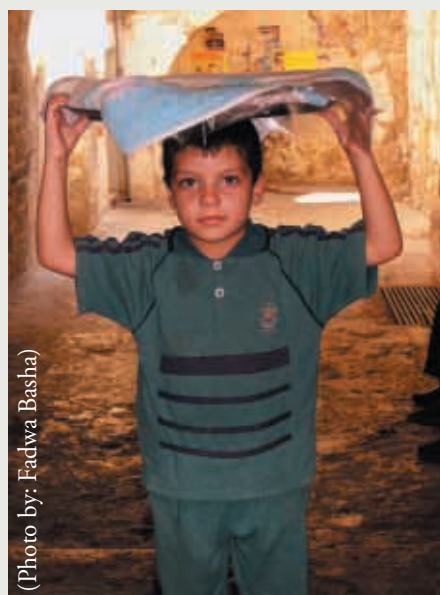
*“Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to aliens.” (5:2)*

More than 750,000 Palestinians were driven out of their homes or fled in fear and became refugees in neighboring countries and countries around the world. Their homes, and in many cases the contents in their homes, were given to the new wave of Jewish immigrants from Europe and from around the world by the newly formed Israeli government. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) there are a total of 59 Palestinian Refugee camps in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza. Many living in these camps still hold on to the key of the home they left in 1948 or 1967 and hope to return one day. Still others were forced to leave their homes and become ‘internally displaced’ in their own country. They live close to their homes and villages, but are not allowed to live in them. The dispossession of the Palestinian people that began in 1948 has never ended. It continues until this day. Palestinians

continue to lose their homes and lands through confiscation by the Israeli authorities, house demolitions as collective punishment, or by Israeli settlers in the Old City of Jerusalem and the areas surrounding the Old City taking over their homes and moving into them.

*“We have become orphans, fatherless: our mothers are like widows.” (5:3)*

More than 11,000 Palestinians are in Israeli prisons. Much of the Palestinian leadership has been arrested and imprisoned, including many elected leaders. Since the majority of these prisoners are men, Palestinian women have been left to fend for themselves and



(Photo by: Fadwa Basha)

Nablus, Old City, July 2005

their families. They have become the glue that holds Palestinian society together.

*“We must pay for the water we drink.” (5:4)*

The Israeli occupation takes the water and sells it back to Palestinian towns, cities and villages. Around 85 percent of the water in the West Bank is siphoned off for use in Israel and the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The water is cut off in Palestinian West Bank cities and towns for several days every week, while settlers living in illegal settlements next to these Palestinian cities and towns enjoy water for irrigation, swimming pools, etc. Palestinians have water tanks on their roofs in order to store a bit of water for cooking and washing during the days the water is cut off.

*“With the yoke on our necks we are hard driven; we are weary, we are given no rest.” (5:5)*

The lack of access and movement is one of the critical issues facing Palestinians. Even though the Israeli settlers have left Gaza, the Israeli authorities still control all access of goods and people in and out of Gaza, making life almost impossible for everyone. This is occupation at its finest – total control of a people from a distance and without needing to deal with them on a daily basis. In the West Bank, over 500



(Photo by: Muthanna Al Qadi) right2edu.birzeit.edu

Waiting at Azun Atmeh checkpoint on the first day of school, Qalqilya, September 2005

checkpoints control people lives - where they can go and therefore what they can do. In order to leave the West Bank, Palestinians must get permission, which is seldom granted, from the Israeli authorities. In order to get permission to accomplish a certain task, so much time and energy is spent standing in lines and going from one office to the other, I am amazed that people have the time and energy left to do the things that they asked for permission to do.

*“Young men are compelled to grind at the mill; and boys stagger under loads of wood.” (5:13)*

Due to continuing dispossession of their lands and homes, Palestinians have been forced to become day laborers, including many who are educated. It has been impossible for Palestinians to develop their own infrastructure under Israeli military occupation and they have remained largely dependent on Israel in terms of the economy. Tens of thousands of Gazan day laborers who used to work in Israel are now unemployed. In the West Bank many

Palestinians work in Israeli settlements due to the reality of their situation.

*“The old men have quit the city gate, the young men their music. The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning.” (5:14&15)*

It is harder and harder for people to celebrate. Many do not have the will or the energy to do so. Yet, it is always encouraging to know that the Palestinian culture is being kept alive through various dance groups, singers, poets, writers, choirs, women doing embroidery, and the many artisans who continue to make their beautiful wares. I believe that the soul of a nation is fed and is kept alive by its people who develop and promote culture in various ways.

After looking at the many similarities between chapter 5 of Lamentations, which many think is written by

Jeremiah, and the present situation in Palestine, we must also look at some of the differences. According to some commentators, the book of Lamentations describes a punishment of a people for their unfaithfulness to God. I do not see that the Nakba was a punishment for the Palestinian people. The West, with the support of the United Nations, was ready to alleviate its own guilt for centuries of anti-Jewishness by allowing a state to be created for a beleaguered people on the backs of another people – the indigenous Palestinians who had lived in Palestine for centuries and for generations.

Today, we must find a way to correct that wrong. We must support Palestinians and Israelis to find ways to live together in this small piece of land as equals. Whatever political shape this takes is up to them.

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*Kathy Bergen is the Program Coordinator of the Friends International Center in Ramallah (FICR). [www.ramallahquakers.org](http://www.ramallahquakers.org)*

# UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES FROM 1948

By Samia Khoury

When the Nakba struck, I was a boarding student at Birzeit College, near Ramallah. My grandmother and aunts, one of whom was the founder and principal of the college, were living on the premises, but my parents had been residing in Jerusalem until the aggravating situation, culminating in the Deir Yassin massacre, led them to join the rest of the family in Birzeit.

After Deir Yassin, people started leaving Jerusalem, either forced out by Jewish militia or fleeing in fear. Three of my aunts and an uncle followed my parents from Jerusalem to Birzeit. From other parts of Palestine where the situation was also getting tense, family came from Jaffa and Safad. It seemed like we were all on a summer camp as everybody seemed so sure that it would not last more than a couple of weeks.

When the days lingered on with nowhere to go, my father made sure all the children made good use of our time. He taught us chess and bridge, and we turned one of the halls into a temporary club. The school library was available to us and we read more books than ever that summer. The news came through a battery operated radio, as Birzeit had no electricity at the time. In the meantime we kept busy with different chores as we took turns in lighting the kerosene lamps after sunset, pumping water from the well and grinding coffee. We even wrapped cigarettes for some of the smokers. It really felt like a picnic



(UNRWA)

The exodus: Palestinians being evacuated from northern Palestine in 1948. Photo taken from *Our Story The Palestinians* (Sabeel 1999).

until that hot day on July 14.

I was sitting on the verandah reading when I saw the figures of people coming from the north via the Jaffa road. The people of Ramle and Lydda had been evicted at gunpoint by the Jewish gangs. They were stripped of their belongings, money and jewelry, and forced to walk all the way. I still remember how my aunt Nabiha, the school principal, told the workers to open the storeroom and prepare a meal with whatever provisions were available. The churches and the mosque opened their doors as well to those devastated people. It was an evening that I could never forget, as I sat listening to their traumatic experiences, and watching this

humanitarian disaster. Some lost their children on the way, some had relatives and neighbors shot and killed, while others were not even coherent after such a long walk in the heat of July.

Realizing the serious effects of that eviction, my father rallied all of us young people to help him in running a census, documenting the names of the refugees and their towns of origin. Those lists were eventually handed to the Red Cross when it took responsibility for those refugees, who sixty years later, are still demanding their right to return in accordance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194.

*Samia Khoury is a Sabeel board member*

# DEATH MARCH

*By Audeh Rantisi*

I cannot forget those three horror-filled days in July of 1948. The pain sears my memory, and I cannot rid myself of it, no matter how hard I try.

First, Israeli soldiers forced thousands of Palestinians from their homes near the Mediterranean coast, even though some families had lived in the same houses for centuries. (My family had been in the town of Lydda in Palestine at least 1,600 years.) Then, without water, we stumbled into the hills and continued for three deadly days. The Jewish soldiers followed, occasionally shooting over our heads to scare us and keep us moving.

Terror filled my eleven-years-old mind as I wondered what would happen. I remembered overhearing my father and his friends expressing alarm about recent massacres by Jewish terrorists. Would they kill us, too?

We did not know what to do, except to follow orders and stumble blindly up the rocky hills. I walked hand-in-hand with my grandfather, who carried our only remaining possessions - a small tin of sugar and some milk for my aunt's two-year-old son, sick with typhoid.

The horror began when the Zionist soldiers deceived us into leaving our homes, then would not let us go back, driving us through a small gate just outside Lydda. I remember the scene well: thousands of frightened people being herded like cattle through the narrow opening by soldiers firing overhead.

In front of me a cart wobbled towards the

gate. Alongside, a lady struggled, carrying her baby, pressed by the crowd. Suddenly, in the jostling of the throngs, the child fell. The mother shrieked in agony as the cart's metal-rimmed wheel ran over her baby's neck. That infant's death was the most awful sight I had ever seen.

Outside the gate the soldiers stopped us and ordered everyone to throw all valuables onto a blanket. One young man and his wife of six weeks, friends of our family, stood near me. He refused to give up his money. Almost casually, the soldier pulled up a rifle and shot the man. He fell, bleeding and dying while his bride screamed and cried. I felt nauseated and sick, my whole body numbed by shockwaves. That night I cried, too, as I tried to sleep alongside thousands on the ground. Would I ever see my home again? Would the soldiers kill my loved ones, too?

Early the next morning we heard more shots and sprang up. A bullet just missed me and killed a donkey nearby. Everybody started running as in a stampede. I was terror-stricken when I lost sight of my family, and I frantically searched all day as the crowd moved along.

That second night, after the soldiers let us stop, I wandered among the masses of people, desperately searching and calling. Suddenly in the darkness I heard my father's voice. I shouted out to him. What joy was in me! I had thought I would never see him again. As he and my mother held me close in their arms, I knew I could

face whatever was necessary.

The next day brought more dreadful experiences. Still branded on my memory is a small child beside the road, sucking the breast of its dead mother. Along the way I saw many stagger and fall. Others lay dead or dying in the scorching midsummer heat. Scores of pregnant women miscarried and their babies died along the wayside.

The wife of my father's cousin became very thirsty. After a long while, she said she could not continue. Soon she slumped down and was dead. Since we could not carry her, we wrapped her in cloth, and after praying, we just left her beside a tree. I don't know what happened to her body.

We eventually found a well, but had no way to get water. Some of the men tied a rope around my father's cousin and lowered him down, then pulled him out and gave us water squeezed from his clothing. The few drops helped, but thirst still tormented me as I marched along in the shadeless, 100 degrees plus, heat.

We trudged nearly twenty miles up rocky hills, then down into deep valleys, then up again, gradually higher and higher. Finally we found a main road, where some Arabs met us. They took some in trucks to Ramallah, ten miles north of Jerusalem. I lived in a refugee tent-camp for the next three and a half years. We later learned that two Jewish families had taken our family home in Lydda.

*Rev Audeh Rantisi was a Palestinian Anglican priest and founder of the Evangelical Home for Boys in Ramallah. This excerpt is taken from "Blessed are the Peacemakers" (Eagle 2003).*



## SABEEL COMMEMORATES THE NAKBA

In commemoration of 60 years since the Nakba of 1948, Sabeel helped to organize a number of different events within the local community.

On May 10, Sabeel and other church organizations conducted an ecumenical service of remembrance and hope in the Church of All Nations in the Garden of Gethsemane. The service included songs, ecumenical prayers led by members of various churches, and a message of hope for justice delivered by Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah. In attendance were 220 people from the Palestinian community, including members of the various churches as well as Muslims. Many internationals, including representatives of the World Council of Church's Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) also attended.

On May 15, the day set aside by Palestinians for official commemorations of the Nakba, Sabeel staff members and volunteers participated in a country-wide reclamation of public

memory which involved the release of one black balloon for each day since the Nakba. From locations all over the West Bank, including Jerusalem, over 21,000 balloons were released to blow over Jerusalem, as a reminder to all of the stories of those for whom 60 years represents dispossession and struggle instead of independence and celebration.

On June 5, Sabeel together with the coalition of Christian organizations in Jerusalem held a cultural evening at the Notre Dame Center in Jerusalem. This event was part of the week of International Church Action for Peace in Palestine and Israel (ICAPPI) organized by the World Council of Churches. The evening included Christian and Muslim prayers, a short video commemorating the over 400 villages that were destroyed and depopulated during the Nakba, a message by Naim Ateek, and a concert by local musician Reem Banna. Additionally, the Sabeel photo exhibit "Our Story: The Palestinians," recently updated by Canadian Friends of Sabeel,

was on display. The event was attended by over 340 people who came to remember the past and rededicate themselves to working towards a future of justice, peace, healing, and hope.

O merciful God, we call upon you to support us with patience and determination so that we may say:  
No to hate and yes to love,  
No to death and yes to life,  
No to falsehood and yes to truth  
No to oppression and yes to justice,  
No to cruelty and yes to mercy,  
No to violence and yes to peace,  
No, no matter what it may cost, and  
yes, no matter what is may cost.  
For you are LOVE, LIFE, TRUTH,  
JUSTICE, MERCY and PEACE.  
Amen

*Prayer from the Ecumenical  
Worship Service*



# IT'S TIME FOR PALESTINE

It's time for Palestine.  
It's time for Palestinians and Israelis to share a just peace.  
It's time to respect human lives in the land called holy.  
It's time for healing to begin in wounded souls.  
It's time to end 60 years of conflict, oppression and fear.  
It's time for freedom from occupation.



It's time for equal rights.  
It's time to stop discrimination, segregation and restrictions on movement.  
It's time for those who put up walls and fences to build them on their own property.  
It's time to stop bulldozing one community's homes and building homes for the other community on land that is not theirs.  
It's time to do away with double standards.

It's time for Israeli citizens to have security and secure borders agreed with their neighbours.  
It's time for the international community to implement 60 years of United Nations resolutions.  
It's time for Israel's government to complete the bargain offered in the Arab Peace Initiative.  
It's time for those who represent the Palestinian people to all be involved in making peace.  
It's time for people who have been refugees for 60 years to regain their rights and a permanent home.  
It's time to assist settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territories to make their home in Israel.  
It's time for self-determination.

It's time for foreigners to visit Bethlehem and other towns imprisoned by the wall.  
It's time to see settlements in their comfort and refugee camps in their despair.  
It's time for people living 41 years under occupation to feel new solidarity from a watching world.

It's time to name the shame of collective punishment and to end it in all its forms.  
It's time to be revolted by violence against civilians and for civilians on both sides to be safe.  
It's time for both sides to release their prisoners and give those justly accused a fair trial.  
It's time to reunite the people of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem.  
It's time for all parties to obey international humanitarian and human rights law.

It's time to share Jerusalem as the capital of two nations and a city holy to three religions.  
It's time for Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities to be free to visit their holy sites.  
It's time in Palestine as in Israel for olive trees to flourish and grow old.

It's time to honour all who have suffered, Palestinians and Israelis.  
It's time to learn from past wrongs.  
It's time to understand pent-up anger and begin to set things right.  
It's time for those with blood on their hands to acknowledge what they have done.  
It's time to seek forgiveness between communities and to repair a broken land together.  
It's time to move forward as human beings who are all made in the image of God.

All who are able to speak truth to power must speak it.  
All who would break the silence surrounding injustice must break it.  
All who have something to give for peace must give it.  
For Palestine, for Israel and for a troubled world,

It's time for peace.

*Message from the  
International  
Church Action for  
Peace in Palestine  
and Israel, a joint  
advocacy initiative  
convened by the  
World Council of  
Churches*

## “I COME FROM THERE... AND REMEMBER”

### UNRWA Commemorates 1948

#### Abu-Yaser recalls life in Tel el-Safi

A handwritten note on Abu-Yaser's office door is a stark daily reminder that on 8 July 1948 he and his family were forced to leave their home in Tel el-Safi and have never been allowed to return. Abu-Yaser now lives in Dheisheh refugee camp.

Abu-Yaser recalls that life in Tel el-Safi was simple yet comfortable. He remembers grinding coffee in the mornings before going out to work in the fields. Rhythmically knocking the wooden stick on the sides of the vessel in which he has put a handful of coffee grains and a couple of cardamoms, Abu-Yaser skillfully demonstrates how the coffee grinder doubles up as a musical instrument. “At 8 o'clock in the morning you could hear people grinding coffee like this,” he explains. “I still grind my beans in this way,” he says handing us each a cup of freshly brewed coffee.

Ever since he was a young boy, Abu-Yaser has been a keen poet. “I'm 83 years old now,” he says, “but writing poetry makes me feel like I'm 10 again.” He tells of how he would enjoy reciting his verses aloud, hearing the words “echoing” in the vastness of the Tel el-Safi countryside. His poems were about

“ Around each well, the family planted a bunch of trees called a sabeel. Any passer-by, be it a member of the family, a neighbor, a passing shepherd or a stranger - was welcome to eat to his or her heart's content from the sabeel. ”

*Khabsa al-Sameiri was born in 1924 in Ghuwayar abu-Shusha, near Tiberias. She now lives in Qabboun camp in Syria.*

“ Everything was so much better. Even the smell of the blossom in the springtime was much nicer than the perfume people use today. ”

*Khadija (Om Muhammad) was born in 1932 in Zakariya. She now lives in Dheisheh refugee camp, Bethlehem.*

the weather, the seasons and the landscapes. Today, they have become a channel for the pain of the last 60 years and the suffering of those around him.

As a boy in the mid-1930s, Abu-Yaser went to Bisan to study. There was no electricity at the time, and he used to watch in awe as the municipal labourers hung lanterns in the streets at night, and enjoyed helping collect them again in the morning. Abu-Yaser used to love the railway that linked Bisan with Akka. He was reduced to tears when he visited Bisan again in the 1980s, after more than 40 years away, to find that the railroad no longer existed.

The father of Abu-Yaser was a farmer, who sold the fruit, wheat, olives and sesame he cultivated at the markets in Lid, Ramle and Hebron. Abu-Yaser himself sold grain in Jaffa, where he used to enjoy listening to famous singers in



(Photo by: Tarek Z. Ismail)

concert. Then in Tel Aviv, he would play soccer with his Jewish friends, who oftentimes asked him if he needed anything, to which he would reply, “All I need is a pen with which to write my poetry.”

*By Vicky Samantha Rossi and Tarek Ismail.*

*The article and quotes are taken from UNRWA's commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the 1948 War. Under the theme “I Come from There... and Remember” - a line by the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, a photo exhibition features the faces, lives and landscapes of pre-1948 Palestine, illustrating how permanently the fabric of Palestinian life was torn asunder by Al-Nakba. Text and photos copyright UNRWA. Used with permission.*

# WHY I DIDN'T CELEBRATE

by Gideon Spiro

For years I have not taken part in two main events in Israel: Independence Day and Holocaust Remembrance Day. I do not consider the former as a celebration day since it is marked while my country enforces an oppressive Apartheid regime in the Palestinian territories. The joy of Israel is the Palestinians' disaster. The freedom and dignity of the Palestinians is being systematically denied through the military occupation and the settlers' phalanges. Every human being who defines human rights as their guiding principle can not take part in Israel's celebrations.

This year I was absent from those two occasions and stayed in France and Germany. In France I participated in a conference which dealt with weapons of mass destruction, which posses the potential of causing the next holocaust. The irony of history is that Israel is using the holocaust to justify its possession of weapons of mass destruction. Hundreds of atomic bombs, made in the reactor located in the vicinity of Dimona, in addition to chemical and biological weapon, produced in the biological Institute in Nes-Ziona, have turned the State of the holocaust survivors into the manufacturer of the next holocaust.

In Germany, where there is a strong Israeli lobby that does its best to suppress any critical voices towards Israel, (while using the weapon of accusations of anti-Semitism in a cynical way), I spent Israel's Independence Day meeting with Parliament members and journalists, all human rights seekers. I expressed my support of their stand not to give in to the Israeli pressure and to continue criticizing Israeli racism and colonialism.

“I do not consider [Israel's independence day] as a celebration day since it is marked while my country enforces an oppressive Apartheid regime in the Palestinian territories.”

My alienation from the State of Israel is a process which began during the June 1967 war. In this war I served as an occupation soldier in East Jerusalem. The general euphoria which spread among Israeli society due to the victory and the vast territories that had been occupied had affected me too, but I experienced a certain discomfort while moving around as an armed soldier within a civilian population. For the first time in my life I found myself in a situation in which I controlled the lives of others, not because of authority gained through democratic procedure but rather from my ability to force myself on people that did not want my presence. I remember looks of recoil, even of fear in the eyes of the Palestinians who saw me as a threat to their well being.

As aforementioned, the situation caused inconvenience, but I did not put much thought into it during those days, in which the general feeling was that David had triumphed over Goliath, few against many. Only years after was this feeling perceived as lacking logic in the eyes of those who managed to escape the national brain wash:

Goliath is Israel and the Palestinians are David.

After my army service as a reserve soldier, I was positive that the occupation was a temporary situation. I innocently thought that no normal country would voluntarily get itself, in the second half of the 20th century, the century that symbolizes the end of colonialism, into a continuation of a colonial state.

But this is exactly what happened. As the occupation continued and expanded, so I isolated myself from the national consensus. The conqueror became crueller and my resistance became more radical, until I found myself being one of the founders of two movements: Yesh Gvul (there is a limit) which supported the refusal to serve as soldiers of the occupation and the Committee for a Middle East Free from Atomic, Chemical and Biological Weapons. I refused to accept the turning of Israel into a gun powder barrel of weapons of mass destruction.

I am not one of the celebrators of Israel's 60th Anniversary, but belong to those who fear the fate of Israel and the entire region. Nowadays we hear talks concerning war against Iran, another insane move from the school of Israeli warmongers, which could deteriorate to a nuclear holocaust.

The rich international community headed by the Unites States is inflaming the situation instead of doing the opposite. During his visit to Israel, President Bush sounded more fanatic and radical than the settlers and Ahmadinejad together.

*Gideon Spiro is coordinator of the Israeli Committee for a Middle East Free from Atomic, Biological and Chemical Weapons.*

# MIRIAM'S LEGACY

## BY PATRICIA RANTISI

*Reviewed by Warren R. Bardsley*

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the birth of the state of Israel. 1948 is also the year that Palestinians commemorate as the 'Nakba' (catastrophe) when thousands of women, men and children were driven from their towns and villages by Zionist armed forces to become refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and inside Palestine itself. Patricia Rantisi's novel, based on historical facts and covering a period of almost a century, could not be more timely.

The story, told through the prism of four generations of one family, begins in 1982 in the refugee camp at Shatila in Beirut when hundreds of Palestinians were attacked and murdered by Lebanese militias as Israeli soldiers stood by and watched. We are introduced to the storyteller Farres, the great-grandson of Miriam, whose legacy consists of a brooch and a string of glass worry beads in an old shoebox, the token of a much richer legacy. We are taken back in time to northern Palestine, during the dying days of the Ottoman empire, to a village where Miriam is growing up, eventually marrying Amin and raising their family. Both are Muslims but it is a time when Jews, Christians and Muslims live and work together in relative peace

and harmony, illustrated by the close friendship between Amin and Miriam, and Majida and Yousuf who are Christians. But storm clouds are gathering; the events of 1948 are described in graphic detail, the incursion of Zionist forces into Haifa and northern Palestine, the forced evacuation of the indigenous population to Lebanon and into the refugee camp which becomes home for Amin, Miriam and their family. As events unfold through the ensuing years, we see that Miriam's true legacy is the story of Farres and his growing commitment to the cause of his people.

This is very much a story for our times, movingly and brilliantly told by Patricia Rantisi, now retired to Shrewsbury. She and her Palestinian husband Audeh (to whom the book is dedicated) worked with disadvantaged children in Ramallah for thirty years. 2008 commemorates the sixtieth anniversary of the universal declaration of human rights. Those who want to know the reality and roots of one of the most persistent violations of those rights during that period would do well to read this book.

*Miriam's Legacy is published by Author House, 2007*



## The Peace Tapestry Keeps Growing

The tapestry for the Sabeel Seventh International Conference has become an inspirational symbol of peace.

People from around the world are contributing squares with their vision of peace in the world.

There is still time to contribute. Make your square!


### How do you make your square?

1. Use a solid piece of cotton as background material, 30 by 30cm or 12 by 12 inch.
2. Then you can embroider something, sew something by hand or by machine. You can also knit something, paint something, draw something, or write something on it—use your imagination! You can work with any type of material, sewing scraps or other handicraft works. Use your creativity and put 'your' peace thoughts on this square of 30 by 30cm or 12 by 12inch.

### Mail it to Sabeel:

PO Box 49084, Jerusalem 91491

For more information, contact Marijke Egelie-Smulders at [vredesloper@vriendenvansabeelnederland.nl](mailto:vredesloper@vriendenvansabeelnederland.nl)



# THE NAKBA MEMORY, REALITY AND BEYOND

SABEEL'S SEVENTH  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

November 12-19, 2008

Through lectures, workshops, discussions, and cultural events, Sabeel's Seventh International Conference will focus on the commemoration of 60 years since the Nakba, and the complex issues of memory, narrative, and identity raised by the events of 1948. The conference will discuss how the events of the past affect the current reality and the hope for a future of justice, peace, and healing.

The total registration and program fee for the conference (including all expenses except airline travel) is:

4 star: \$1,288 (double) \$1,528 (single)

3 star: \$1,131 (double) \$1,271 (single)

**To register contact:**

Shepherds Tours, P.O. Box 19560, Jerusalem

Tel: 972-2-6284121 Fax: 972-2-6280251

Email: [info@shepherdstours.com](mailto:info@shepherdstours.com)

and copy: [conf2008@sabeel.org](mailto:conf2008@sabeel.org)

For more information, please contact:  
[conf2008@sabeel.org](mailto:conf2008@sabeel.org)

## 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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