Dr. Majed Nassar

**Nassar Ibrahim** 

# THE STUPIDITY OF POWER THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE



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# The Stupidity of Power VS.

# **The Palestinian Resistance**



Dr. Majed Nassar

Nassar Ibrahim

### About The Authors

Dr. Majed Nassar, a second-generation refugee from Al Mujeidel/Nazareth, was born in Beit Sahour in 1953. He attended medical school at the University of Hamburg and completed his specialization in internal medicine in 1987. On his return to Palestine and the outbreak of the first Intifada, he founded the Beit Sahour Medical Center/Greek Catholic Convent Clinic and is presently its director. Since 1993, Dr. Nassar has been the deputy director of the Health Work Committees, a Palestinian non-governmental organization. He is a board member of the Alternative Information Center. Dr. Nassar is married to Melanie and they have four sons.

Nassar Ibrahim, a Palestinian writer and journalist, was born in Beit Sahour in 1953. He is married to Najma and they have two daughters. Mr. Ibrahim received a BA in sociology as well as a diploma in the sociology of labor at the University of Lebanon, Beirut. He was the editor-in-chief of Al-Hadaf magazine, published in Damascus. His book, *The Role of Palestinian Workers in the Israeli Economy* was published in Arabic in Damascus in 1997. After living more than 20 years in Greece, Lebanon, and Syria, Mr. Ibrahim returned to Palestine in 1996. In 2003, his first collection of short stories, *Ightiyal Kalb* (Assassination of a Dog), was published in Arabic in Palestine. Mr. Ibrahim is currently working at the Alternative Information Center, where he writes regularly for the magazine News from Within. He is also the director of Jadal Center for Culture and Development, located in Beit Sahour.

Both writers co-authored *The Palestinian Intifada: Cry Freedom* which was published in 2002 in English and has since been translated and published in Spain. They also published a collection of short stories in 2003, *Small Dreams*, which includes some of Nassar Ibrahim's short stories translated from the original Arabic as well as stories written by Dr. Nassar in English. *Small Dreams* is to be published in German and Spanish at the beginning of 2004.

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Fax: +972 2 277 5567 E-mail: bsmc@p-ol.com To the memory of my parents Rashid and Fadda Ibrahim

To my father Jaber Nassar and to the memory of my mother Lourice Nassar

# **Acknowledgments**

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# Introduction

Since the publishing of our first book *The Palestinian Intifada: Cry Freedom* in May 2002, many dramatic incidents have changed the lives of the people in the Middle East. The success of the first book encouraged us to continue our response to the current events and dynamics of the Palestinian reality in the period between May 2002 and November 2003.

Despite all efforts from the international community to solve the conflict, we in the Palestinian lands are still suffering under an inhumane and barbaric Israeli military occupation. Israel's policy of oppression, destruction, dispossession, deportation, siege, killing and colonization continues, and Palestinian resistance and steadfastness have reached legendary levels.

In the meanwhile, not far away from Palestine, the US and British armies have occupied Iraq and propelled the situation in the Middle East into a much more complicated stage. While the Iraqi resistance inflicts losses on the occupying forces daily, there is growing international opposition to United States attempts to achieve hegemony over the world's resources.

The Middle East has not become more secure since George W. Bush and Sharon came to power. Israel has not achieved "absolute security" since Sharon began his war on the Palestinians and the world is not a safer place since Bush attacked Iraq. Israel has developed into a modern Sparta that is not interested

in peace, but with the backing of the Unites States, is ready to strike anywhere, anybody and anytime.

Most of the articles in this book, written over a period of 18 months, were as in *Cry Freedom*, a response to particular significant moments or events, and as such, are bound by their time-specific contexts. We have arranged the articles in five chapters.

The first chapter deals with the stupidity of power. Dr. Ilan Pappe, an Israeli lecturer at the University of Haifa, allowed us to use his analysis of the 1948 Nakba. In the same chapter we follow the policy of the Israeli government of the past years under Sharon and his useless attempts to subdue the Palestinian people and their resistance movement. At the end of the first chapter we publish a letter from an Israeli father who lost his son in a suicide attack. It is a moving and touching testimony of humanity, ethics and politics.

The second chapter deals with the Americanization of the world and the present United States administration's policies which push the world towards endless clashes for the sake of oil, influence and hegemony.

The third chapter deals with the failures of the Arab states and the crisis of democracy in those states, as well as with the role Europe has played in the Middle East over the last one hundred years.

The fourth chapter deals with Palestinian challenges, foremost the call for reform and restructuring, showing the differences between the Palestinian vision for reform and the Israel/US vision. The roadmap, the

truce, the prisoners, and the refugees are daily Palestinian concerns, which, if not properly addressed, will return the conflict to square one.

In chapter five we present our readers two letters addressed to the Israeli public and the world community.

We have added as an appendix a glossary of occupation contributed by our friend Paul de Rooij, showing how language is misused to deceive.

We make no claim to be neutral observers to the conflict. We are Palestinians, and we take a clear stand on the side of the Palestinian people who have been struggling for so many years to live in freedom and security. At the same time, we have attempted to be objective in bringing new insights into the complex and often oversimplified reality and to avoid justifying certain actions. We come to the conclusion that peace will not prevail until the Israeli occupation with all its manifestations on the ground is brought to an end.

Dr. Majed Nassar

Nassar Ibrahim



## Chapter One

# THE STUPIDITY OF POWER

The 1948 Nakba by Professor Ilan Pappe

Sharon's Policy

The Wall

Under Siege

Diary of an Invasion

Amram Mitzna

The Ethics of Revenge by Yitzhak Frankenthal

# The 1948 Nakba & The Zionist Quest for its Completion

by Dr. Ilan Pappe

This article is based upon the transcript of a lecture presented by Dr. Pappe to the Right To Return Coalition - Al Awda UK, held at the School for Oriental and African Studies in London 16 September 2002.

I have come here to present the comprehensive story of the history of the expulsion and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in 1948 and its relevance to the present and future agenda to peace in Palestine.

For Israelis, 1948 is a year in which two things happened which contradict each other. On the one hand, it was the climax of Jewish aspirations to have a state or to fulfill a long dream of returning to a homeland after what they regarded as 2000 years of exile. In other words, it was considered a miraculous event that only positive adjectives could be attached to, and that you could only talk about and remember as a very elated kind of event. On the other hand, it was the worst chapter in Jewish history. Jews did in 1948 in Palestine what Jews had not done anywhere for 2000 years prior. The most evil and most glorious moment converged into one. What Israeli collective memory did was to erase one side of the story in order to co-exist or to live with only the glorious chapter. It was a mechanism for solving an impossible tension between two collective memories.

Because so many of the people who live in Israel lived through 1948, this is not a distant memory. It is not the genocide of the Native Americans in the United States. People know exactly what they did, and they know what others did. Yet they still succeed in erasing it totally from their own memory while struggling rigorously against anyone trying to present the other, unpleasant, story of 1948, in and outside Israel. If you look at Israeli textbooks, curricula, media, and political discourse you see how this chapter in Jewish history -- the chapter of expulsion, colonization, massacres, rape, and the burning of villages is totally absent. It is not there. It is replaced by a chapter of heroism, glorious campaigns and amazing stories of moral courage and superiority unheard of in any other histories of people's liberation in the 20th century. So whenever I speak of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, we must remember that not just the very terms of "ethnic cleansing" and "expulsion" are totally alien to the community and society from which I come and from where I grew up; the very history of that chapter is either distorted in the recollection of people, or totally absent.

### Zionist Leaders' Strategy: Settlement and Expulsion

Now, when you start reading the diaries of the leaders of Zionism, and researching their ideologies and ideological trends since the movement's conception in the late 19th century, you see that from the very beginning there had been the realization that the aspiration for a Jewish state in Palestine contradicts the fact that an indigenous people had been living on the land of Palestine for centuries and that their aspirations

contradicted the Zionist scheme for the country and its people. The presence of a local society and culture had been known to the founding fathers of Zionism even before the first settlers set foot on the land.

Two means were used in order to change the reality in Palestine, and impose the Zionist interpretation on the local reality: the dispossession of the indigenous population from the land and its re-populating with newcomers -- i.e. expulsion and settlement. The colonization effort was pushed forward by a movement that had not yet won regional or international legitimacy and therefore had to buy land and create enclaves within the indigenous population. The British Empire was very helpful in bringing this scheme into reality. Yet from the very beginning of Zionist strategy, the leaders of Zionism knew that settlement is a very long and measured process, which may not be sufficient if you want to revolutionize the reality on the ground and impose your own interpretation. For that, you needed something more powerful. David Ben-Gurion, the leader of the Jewish community in the 1930s and later the first Prime Minister of Israel, mentioned more than once that for that (imposing your interpretation on the ground) you need what he called "revolutionary conditions". He meant a situation of war -- a situation of change of government, a twilight zone between an old era and the beginning of a new one. It is not surprising to read in the Israeli press today that Ariel Sharon thinks that he is the new Ben Gurion who is about to lead his people into yet another revolutionary moment -- the war with Irag -- in which expulsion, and not a political settlement, can be used to further.

indeed, to complete the process of de-Arabizing Palestine and Judaizing it, which had begun in 1882.

Towards the end of the British Mandate, there was a need to make these more theoretical and abstract ideas about expulsion into a concrete plan. I have been writing about 1948 since 1980, and for much of that time have been concerned with the question of whether there had or hadn't been a Zionist master plan to expel the Palestinians in 1948. Then I realized, (largely as a result of what I have learned in the last two years), that this was not the right track: neither for academic research nor for more popular ideological research of what has happened in the past. Far more important for ethnic cleansing is the formulation of an ideological community, in which every member, whether a newcomer or a veteran, knows only too well that they have to contribute to a recognized formula: the only way to fulfill the dream of Zionism is to empty the land of its indigenous population.

### Mass Ideological Indoctrination: Behind 1948 Nakba

Master plans are not the most important component in preparing yourself for that time of a revolutionary juncture or for the contingency plans of how to practically make the idea of expulsion a reality. You need something else: you need an atmosphere, you need people who are indoctrinated, you need commanders in every link of the chain of command who would know what to do even if they don't have explicit orders when the time comes. Most of the preparations before the 1948 War were less about a

master plan (although I do think there was one). The commanders were busy compiling intelligence files for each Palestinian village for the use of Jewish commanders on all levels, so they would know how wealthy and how important each particular village was as a military unit, etc. Armed with such intelligence. they were also aware of what was expected from them by the man who stood at the top of the Jewish pyramid in Palestine, David Ben Gurion and his colleagues. These leaders wanted only to know how each operation contributed to the Judaization of Palestine. and they made it perfectly clear that they did not care how it was done. The expulsion plan worked very smoothly exactly because there was no need for a systematic chain of command that had to check whether a master plan was fully implemented. Anyone who has done any research on ethnic cleansing operations in the second half of the 20th century knows that this is exactly how ethnic cleansing is achieved: by creating the kind of education and indoctrination systems that ensures that every soldier and every commander, and everyone with his individual responsibility, knows exactly what to do when they enter a village, even if they haven't received any specific orders to expel its inhabitants.

Just recently, as a result of reading testimonies not only of Palestinians but also of Israeli soldiers, it became clear to me that the master plan, although significant in itself, pales in comparison to the whole machinery of indoctrination of a community. In 1948, the Yeshuv's (the pre-1948 Zionist community) population was a little more than half a million, and

before 1948 it was even less. Those who had an active role in the military aspects of their community knew precisely what to do when the moment came and not one moment too soon.

But it should be remembered that the plan was successful not only because of the ideological indoctrination. It was done under the eyes of the UN, which had been committed ever since its General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 to the safety and welfare of those 'cleansed'. The UN was obliged to protect the life of the Palestinian people who were supposed to live in the areas allocated to the Jewish State (they were meant to make up almost half of the population of the prospective state). Out of 900,000 Palestinians living both in these areas and additional areas occupied by Israel from the designated Arab states, only 100,000 remained. Within a very short period during the time in which the UN was already responsible for Palestine, a massive expulsion operation took place within a very short period of time.

We have yet to be told the most horrific stories of 1948, although so many of us have been working as professional historians on that. We haven't talked about the rape. We haven't talked about the more than 30 or 40 massacres which popular historiography mentions. We haven't yet decided how to define the systematic killing of several individuals that took place in each and every village in order to create the panic that should produce the exodus. Is this a massacre or not when it is systematically repeated in every village? It is quite possible that some chapters will never be

revealed, and many people who are vital witnesses are being lost each day. No specific orders were written, there was merely an atmosphere that has to be reconstructed. A glimpse into that atmosphere can be found on the bookshelves of almost every house in Israel -- in the official books that glorify the Israeli army in its activity in 1948. If you know how to read them, you can see how the Palestinians were de-humanized to such a degree that you could rely on the troops, and that they would know what to do.

# Israeli and Palestinian Leaders accept the American Game: Shrinking Palestine Physically & Morally

Noam Chomsky was correct in his analysis that we in Palestine/ Israel and the Middle East as a whole were eagerly playing the American game ever since they decided to take an active role in the peace process, beginning in 1969 with the Rogers Plan, and then with the Kissinger initiatives. Ever since then, the peace agenda has been an American game. The Americans invented the concept of the peace process, whereby the process is far more important than peace. America has contradictory interests in the Middle East, which include protecting certain regimes in the area that preserve American interests (this entails paying lip service to the Palestinian cause) while it also has a commitment to Israel. In order not to find itself facing these two contradictory agendas, it is best to have an ongoing process which is not war and not peace but something which you can describe as a genuine American effort to reconcile between the two sides -and God forbid if this reconciliation works.

We were playing this game not only because the Americans invented it, but also because the replacement of peace with a "peace process" became the main strategy of the Israeli peace camp. When the peace camp of the stronger party in the local balance of power accepts this interpretation then the world at large follows suit.

Such a process, which can and should go on forever, coached by the only superpower and supported by the peace camp of the stronger party in the conflict, is presented as peace. One of the best ways of safeguarding the process from being successful is to evade all the outstanding issues at the heart of the problem. In such a way it was possible to erase the events of 1948 from the peace agenda and focus on what happened in 1967. The outstanding issue became the territories Israel occupied in the 1967 war. The concept of "land for peace" was invented simultaneously in Tel Aviv, London, Paris and New York for United Nations Resolution 242. It presents a very concrete variable, in fact about 20% of Palestine, while wiping out the remainder 80% from the formula. and juxtaposes it against "peace", which is in fact the never-ending peace process; a process that was not meant to bring a solution, let alone reconciliation. In return for a peace process, the Palestinians would be allowed to talk about and maybe gradually build something of a political entity on 20% of Palestine.

In 1988 (after the PNC accepted UN 242 in Algiers) and 1993 at the Oslo Accords even the Palestinian leadership joined this game. No wonder then that

after Oslo, the American policy makers felt that they could round up the whole story. They had Palestinian and Israeli leaderships that accepted the name of the American game. This was the beginning of the process, which culminated with the "the most generous Israeli offer ever made about peace" in the Camp David summit in the summer of 2000. Had this process been successful, history would have witnessed not only the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland in 1948 but the eradication of the refugees, as well as of the Palestinian minority in Israel, and maybe even Palestine, from our collective memory.

It was a process of elimination that could have succeeded to a certain extent, had it not been for the second uprising. I wonder what would have happened had the second Intifada not broken out. If the Palestinian leadership had continued to partake in the ploy to shrink Palestine, physically and morally, it would have succeeded. The second Intifada was trying to stop this. Whether or not it will succeed, we do not know.

## Agenda for Peace Activists in the Shadow of Transfer Scheme

The problem for us as peace activists is that any coordinated pressure on Israel to stop its plans can in an absurd way lead the Israelis to accelerate their plans for wiping out Palestine, namely to feel that the revolutionary circumstances have arrived. This is my greatest fear for the second Intifada. I fully support it and regard it as a popular movement determined to stop a peace process which would have destroyed Palestine

once and for all. The uprising, and certainly on top of it the coming war against Iraq, have produced in the minds of Israelis -- of all walks of life, not only within the circles of the right-wing camp -- the idea that "we have reached yet another fortuitous juncture in history where revolutionary conditions have developed for solving the Palestine question once and for all". You can see this new assertion talked about in Israel: the discourse of transfer and expulsion which had been employed by the extreme Right, is now the bon ton of the center. Established academics talk and write about it, politicians in the center preach it, and army officers are only too happy to hint in interviews that indeed should a war against Irag begin, transfer should be on the agenda.

This brings me to chart what I think are three agendas of peace, for anyone involved in supporting peacemaking in Israel and Palestine; otherwise we may miss the train, so to speak. The first agenda is the most urgent one: we must all take the danger of a recurrence of the 1948 ethnic cleansing very seriously. This is not just paranoia when I directly -- not indirectly -- link the war against Iraq with the possibility of another Nakba.

Take it seriously, believe me. There is a serious Israeli conceptualization of the situation in which Israeli leaders say to themselves, "we have a carte blanche from the Americans. The Americans will not only allow us to cleanse Palestine once and for all, they even will help create the window of opportunity for implementing our scneme. We will be condemned by the world, but this will be short-lived and eventually forgotten. This is a rare opportunity to 'solve' the problem."

The second agenda is the immediate one, and that is ending the occupation. We should be very careful in adopting the American, the Israeli Peace Now, and I'm sorry to say, the Palestinian Authority discourse about a two-state solution. Because the two-state solution nowadays is not the end of the occupation but continuing it in a different way. It is meant to be the end of the conflict with no solution to the refugee problem and the complete abandonment of the Palestinian minority in Israel. Anybody who has not learned this after the Oslo Accords has a problem of understanding and interpreting reality. We have to make sure that the idea of peace is not hijacked by people who are seeking indirect ways of continuing the present situation in Palestine. This is not easy because the western media has already adopted within its main vocabulary that anyone who wants to present himself as a peacemaker or as a supporter of peace must talk about a two-state solution.

Only after the occupation ends can we talk about what it entails. Then it is possible to discuss the political structure best needed to prevent a reoccupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. But it should be clear that the political structure needed to end the conflict is a different one. It has to be one that enables us to end refugeehood and the apartheid policies against the Palestinians inside Israel. We have to be sure not to get caught in the same dead end that Yasser Arafat found himself in at Camp David when he was asked to equate the end of occupation (when it wasn't even the end of occupation) with the end of the conflict

Finally, and this is our third agenda, we have to keep on thinking about how to devise concrete plans for making the Right of Return feasible and for making possible the end of discrimination against Palestinians in Israel. These are the two pillars of a comprehensive settlement and they have to be specified. I think it is quite clear that we haven't done that job yet: we are still stuck with slogans of the 1960's, of a secular democratic state. These slogans have to be updated according to the reality of 2002. What was meant in the 1960's by a secular democratic state is a possible vision for the distant future. Our focus on the urgent and immediate agenda should not absolve us from long-term strategies. What people need to hear from us are concrete plans, even if they sound utopian given the situation on the ground. This is a delicate enterprise which entails not only creating a political culture and structure that would rectify past evils and prevent another catastrophe, but also one which would not inflict another evil, or replace the past evil with a new one. We are not calling for the expulsion of the Jews. We do want the Right of Return. We do want equal rights for the Palestinian citizens.

I think many of us who think in such a long-term span would like to see one state or a political structure which has one state in it. But you cannot disseminate these ideas by just giving highlights, nuggets or slogans. There needs to be a very serious and detailed presentation of such a solution, to convince people of its feasibility.

Finally I want to come back to where I started. In the collective Israeli memory there are two 1948s: one is totally erased, and one is totally glorified. But there is a young generation in Israel -- and I have ample opportunities to meet with young audiences -- who may prove to have a potential to look differently at the reality in the future. The fact that you have generations of young people who are basically willing to listen to universal principles provides the opportunity to break the mirror and show them what really happened in 1948, and what is going on in 2002. I think we shall eventually find partners, more than in our wildest dreams, on how a solution should look.

The problem is of course that while we do this --educate, disseminate information, etc. -- the government of Israel is preparing a very swift and bloody operation. If it succeeds, even our best dreams and energies would be wasted.



# **Sharon's Policy The Legend of the Seven Walls**July 2002

Since the inception of Zionism in the late 19th century, its leaders have attempted to erect an impregnable IRON WALL for the sole purpose of making the indigenous people of Palestine lose hope. The road map for the Israeli leaders' policies toward the Palestinian people was proclaimed by Ze'ev Jabotinski, the father of the Israeli right, in an article published in Haaretz in 1923:

"Settlement can thus develop under the protection of a force that is not dependent on the local population, behind an IRON WALL which they will be powerless to break down.... A voluntary agreement is just not possible. As long as the Arabs preserve a gleam of hope that they will succeed in getting rid of us, nothing in the world can cause them to relinquish this hope, precisely because they are not rubble but a living people. And a living people will be ready to yield on such fateful issues only when they give up all hope of getting rid of the alien settlers."

After almost two years of confrontation within a series of continuous Palestinian resistance activities against the Israeli occupation beginning in 1967, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict seems to be locked in a vicious cycle. Sharon has led his government and his people into a direct and total confrontation.

Sharon came to power promising the Israeli public that he would crush the Palestinian resistance movement (Intifada) in "one blow". Actually he did nothing but continue with the same policies implemented without exception by his predecessors. He unleashed the Israeli army, continued assassinations, and built more settlements. He arrested thousands and put two million under an extended curfew. And like his predecessors he has failed to crush the Palestinian resistance movement.

Since the beginning of the Intifada 21 months ago, more than 1700 Palestinians and almost 560 Israelis have been killed. Nevertheless Sharon continues to smile and pull rabbits from his hat. The quick final-blow strategy against the Intifada has failed. It has been replaced by "a long-term war against terrorism".

Many politicians have observed that Sharon has neither a plan nor a vision. By default, his refusal to set a political agenda has set the agenda of war and revealed his primary goals to be maintaining the occupation and building more settlements which further deny Palestinians' existence and legitimate rights. This policy is the starting agenda of Sharon, which aims not just to maintain the occupation and the benefits of the occupation, such as continuing the colonization of Palestine (building settlements), but also to secure a captive market for Israeli goods, to secure cheap labor, to maintain control over land and water resources, and finally to enter the Arab market through the Palestinian window. In other words, the Israeli occupation is a political and economic project

motivated by profit as much as politics. The notion of Israeli 'security' has become another popular explanation for maintaining the occupation, and it must be judged in the larger context.

But in order for Sharon to succeed, a huge amount of false information must be disseminated and many fundamental understandings turned upside down. The Palestinian resistance movement must be renamed "Palestinian terror". Israel has been exonerated by the Mr. George W. Bush's statement that Israel has the right to defend itself. (Which country in the world does not have the right to defend itself?) According to Mr. Bush's testimony Israel is the victim and the Palestinians are the victimizers. Hence the basic problem is not the Israeli occupation but the Palestinian resistance movement against the Israeli occupation, which has been violently imposed for over 35 years. The slogan "fighting Palestinian terror" has been invoked to demonize the legitimate Palestinian resistance movement for freedom and independence. The Americans and Israelis reinvent a kind of history that attempts to deny the morality of Palestinian resistance.

Sharon then introduced another item to the distorted understanding of the conflict and reality, which is "absolute security", a psychological-ideological tool used to gather the Israeli public under his flag. The slogan "Israel has the right to defend itself" stole the limelight and was a precious and valuable present from George W. Bush to Israel. With the refrain of absolute security, Sharon thought he was invincible, especially when the policy of self-defense, the alleged basis for

absolute security, became synonymous with the continuation of the occupation.

In order to proceed with the realization of these policies, Sharon had to suppress the Palestinian resistance movement by waging a long, open war against the Palestinian people, making repeated invasions of Palestinian cities and villages, killing and arresting as many individuals as possible, inflicting economic disaster on the Palestinian people, and destroying their infrastructure. This would eventually force Palestinian leaders against their own people and turn them into puppets of oppressors. Eventually a political settlement could be reached, but then according to Israeli wishes with US intervention to further those wishes.

Sharon succeeded in winning the support of most Israelis for his strategy, leading the Israeli society to become more radical and more racist than ever before. He succeeded in reducing support for the Labor party to an unprecedented low. The leaders of this party (e.g., Shimon Peres) were given secondclass public relations assignments. He succeeded in turning the lives of Palestinians into a living hell and in manipulating the various Arab regimes to the positions where they belong: in the corner of weakness and indecision. And he thinks he succeeded in positioning himself with Bush as a defender of the world from international terrorism After September 11th Sharon immediately embraced US rhetoric and declared himself devoted to the cause of the free world. Palestinians became terrorists and Sharon was given the right to deal with them as he wished without any accountability whatsoever.

Sharon started what he called "a long-lasting war against terrorist infrastructure". And because the Palestinian resistance movement is a comprehensive resistance movement supported by all Palestinians, the Palestinian people with all their political parties, leaders, institutions, and economic structure and infrastructure became the actual targets for Sharon's destructive war machine. No matter what war crimes or crimes against humanity Sharon committed during this war, he was pardoned beforehand by Mr. George W. Bush, even in the case of Jenin.

### But what next?

As Sharon has proved his inability to crush the Palestinian resistance movement and his parallel inability to grant the Israeli public absolute security, he has started to encounter problems with his own community and among his constituents. The Israeli public's mind is distorted and its understanding is perverted. There is a loss of vision in general and a denial of the reality of the occupation in particular. The Israeli political mind has become fixated on tanks, F-16s, and Apache helicopters as the only options for solving the conflict. The present Israeli rhetoric defies all logic and dismisses international conventions. Sharon's problems have begun to surface and create serious waves; the main theme of this internal Israeli commotion is that Sharon has been unable to provide security for the Israeli public. In fact the security of the Israeli citizens deteriorated dramatically since

Sharon came to power and statistics show that the highest losses were incurred during the Sharon era.

The following trends arose as a result of Sharon's failure:

- increasing deterioration of the Israeli economical situation due to lower investments, devaluation of the shekel (once the shekel goes beyond 5 NIS per US dollar, there is no way to predict how low it may go thereafter), catastrophes for the tourist branch, increased cuts in the social budget, and rising unemployment;
- increased budgets for the military and security apparatus, despite a current deficit in the Ministry of Defense budget for fiscal 2003;
- a rise in the number of Israeli soldiers refusing to serve in the occupation army;
- a rise in the number of those leaving Israel and not returning, compared to a shrinking number of new immigrants;
- increased tension between the various political parties, especially between the Labor and the Likud;
- growing confusion within the Israeli public where 65% support dismantling the settlements, while at the same time a similar number also support the policies of Sharon as a direct result of his intimidating polemics;
- restructuring and rise of the Israeli peace movement that had dwindled after the assassination of Rabin;
- breaking a taboo in the US and Europe and calling

for a boycott of Israel and Israeli goods;

 increased international criticism toward the policy of occupation.

These are the direct results of the occupation on the Israeli public. But the indirect results are already being felt in Israel.

There has been a rise in racism and racist legislation against the Palestinian Israeli population (20% of the total population). The suspension of two Palestinian members of the Israeli parliament, Mr. Azmi Bishara and Mr. Ahmad Tibi, and their prosecution reflect a worsening state of affairs. In addition to increasing racism, Israelis' morals and basic respect for human rights are plummeting, as evidenced by the recent legislation preventing non-Jews from owning land in Israel. Further there is increased tension between Israel and the neighboring people on the regional level as well as on the international level, giving rise to the question: Is Sharon defending the good of the Jewish people, or is he conjuring up evil spirits against them?

Under pressure from inside the Israeli community as well as from the international community to reach a political settlement, Sharon found himself on the defensive again. Unpleasant memories of Lebanon in 1982 surfaced among Israelis, and public unease grew. Many doubted Sharon's ability to bring a conclusion to this war that is breaking the budget of the Israeli Finance Ministry and is already leading to severe budget cuts in various ministries, even to future cuts in the budget of the Ministry of Defense.

Exactly at this stage Sharon demanded that the Palestinian leadership be changed. Reforms are necessary now and they are an essential prerequisite for Israel to engage in talks. Not only that, but the Palestinian society as a whole has to be changed and suddenly become receptive to the Israeli occupation. Again we find the total support of Bush in his speech of 24 June 2002.

Employing the distorted logic of Sharon, he introduced his guidelines for a (non)political settlement:

- no negotiations with the current Palestinian leadership;
- no negotiations on a permanent settlement of the conflict;
- negotiations on the Palestinian state to be based on 48% of the occupied territories;
- proper management inside Israel of the crisis created by the Intifada rather than its resolution;
- no settlements to be dismantled;
- invasion and siege of Palestinian cities and villages while avoiding the reintroduction of the so-called "civil administration" for as long as possible;
- more pressure on the Palestinians to accept Israeli terms for a long-term agreement.

It is certainly up to the Palestinian people to accept or reject this fantasy. But it is also up to the international community to support Sharon or not. We believe that any policy based on so many inconsistencies and distortions of history cannot lead to a possible solution to the conflict. The policy and tactics of Sharon have

nothing to do with the fight against terrorism, and everything to do with maintaining an illegitimate and inhumane military occupation. As long as Sharon and his ideas represent Israel, a just and peaceful solution remains a distant goal.

In the very near future, we will witness the transformation of the hills and fields of Palestine into a magnificent fantasy-land of dividing walls, reminiscent of the Dark Ages. Palestinian cities and villages will be surrounded by seven walls and behind them seven seas. Eventually, perhaps crocodiles will be posted as underwater guards to devour anyone bold enough to dare to swim to the other side. A solid concrete wall, barbed wire, electronic fences and cameras, land mines, and an additional wall of bypass roads will add a surrealistic touch (worthy of Salvador Dali) to the scene. Nothing should be spared to realize this fantasy of eternal occupation...



# The Wall:

# Occupation, Colonization and Concentration Camps

July 2003

"What is to become of the Palestinians?"
"Oh," Sharon said, "we'll make a pastrami sandwich of them."

I said, "What?"

He said, "Yes, we'll insert a strip of Jewish settlements, in between the Palestinians, and then another strip of Jewish settlements, right across the West Bank, so that in twenty–five years time, neither the United Nations, nor the United States, nobody, will be able to tear it apart."

Interview with Winston Churchill III in 1973

The ugly face of the Israeli colonization policy and its racist character has become eminently manifest in the wall of apartheid that Israel is currently building. While the Israeli Labor Party still refers to this wall by the relatively innocuous term 'fence', the Likud has started calling it what it is; a wall. It is not just a wall at a border. It is not just a security fence. It is a prison wall for 3.4 million Palestinians. It encloses a concentration camp. Inside the concentration camp there are additional walls for further smaller concentration camps.

Long before the current Intifada started in 2000, many Palestinians warned of the Swiss cheese model that Israel was trying to implement, in which the Palestinians would be living in the holes with no geographic or

demographic continuity. Ever since Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu sabotaged the implementation of the Oslo Agreement, Israel has continued with its racist idea to separate the Palestinians by surrounding them with a fence, but not by withdrawing from the occupied territories and leaving the Palestinians to build their own independent state.

Many politicians from Palestine, Europe, the US and even Israel warned of the upcoming disaster very early. But NOT ONE country reacted decisively to prevent Israel from continuing confiscating land and building more settlements. The Intifada broke out and Israel is now building the wall. To add insult to injury, Israel is NOT building the wall on "its" territory. It is built on occupied Palestinian land. When finished, the wall alone will have gulped 40% of the Palestinian territories, automatically confiscating this land for Israel.

The concentration camp's wall will be built from the farthest point in the north to the farthest point in the south of the West Bank near to, but not on the so-called Green Line, which demarcates the border before 1967. Currently the wall is being built in the Qalqilia, Tulkarem, Jenin, Jerusalem and Bethlehem areas. The total length will be at least 360 km. There are reportedly already plans to build an additional wall along the Jordan valley. Sharon was quoted in the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth on 26 April 2002: "You cannot have a fence just on one side of the seam zone, you have to have fences on both sides, and there is the Jordan valley where another fence on both sides is needed."

The wall is made of concrete and will be as high as 8 meters. Several armed concrete watchtowers are being built along the wall. There will be an additional "wall buffer zone" 10-30 meters wide to make way for electric fences, trenches, cameras, sensors and security patrols.

It goes without saying that the settlers would like to have the wall deeper into Palestinian occupied lands and Sharon will be appearing as the moderate who is making "painful concessions".

So far Israel has completed only a part of the whole wall. But already approximately 30 ground water wells are slated to be confiscated by Israel in the first phase of the building of the wall. Many villages will lose their only source of water. In this first phase at least 15 villages will be trapped in the area between the wall and the green line, negatively affecting the daily life of more than 13,000 people who will NOT have access either to the West Bank or Israel. For the villages whose lands will be left between the wall and the green line, their mere existence is at stake as they will be losing their income from agriculture, estimated at 2,200 tons of olive oil per season, 50,000 tons of fruits and 100,000 tons of vegetables. If Israel succeeds in the completion of the wall, a humanitarian disaster will befall the Palestinian community.

As the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth exposed on 22/11/2002, "Israel's millionaires have a special reason to celebrate [the building of the walf]: hundreds of Palestinian olive trees on the route of the 'fence'

are uprooted by the builders, smuggled and sold for up to \$5000 for an ancient tree to rich Israelis for their gardens."

Ran Hacohen, an Israeli professor at Tel Aviv University writes on 21 May 2003: "These lands are on the western part of the large water reservoir originating from the West Bank, whose waters flow under the ground also to the center of Israel. Out of 600 million cubic meters of water that this reservoir provides in a year, Israel withdraws about 500 million. Control of water resources has always been a central Israeli motivation for maintaining the occupation."

A close look at the different maps of the wall shows clearly the malice of Sharon and his government. Those who build a wall in this way cannot have peace on their agenda. Those who build a wall in this way are the Nazis of the 21st century.

Indeed Israel's government is building the biggest concentration camp in human history. The Palestinians inside the camp will be allowed the following:

- elections, but only for camp representatives to Israel;
- autonomy in matters of trash removal and mail distribution;
- camp police and camp courts for solving internal disputes, while Israel's army stands by to wield a heavy hand if necessary;
- permission to request permission to leave the camp temporarily or have visitors.

De facto, according to Israeli practices and according to the wall, the Palestinians are allowed to do one thing entirely freely: leave and not come back. But according to the Palestinians who are unlikely to do so, they will resist. They will resist because this is exactly what every decent, honorable human being would do.

No matter what happens in the future, the international community, foremost the United States, which willingly and knowingly allows and even pays Israel to build this prison, will share the responsibility with Israel for this crime against humanity.



# **Under Siege**

April 2003

"Never, never, in anything great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

Winston Churchill, 29 October 1941, from a speech at Harrow School

The recent Israeli military actions aiming to crush the legitimate Palestinian resistance movement against the Israeli occupation were given a green light by the United States administration. In essence, the US made two points: first, go ahead with the war against "terrorism" and second, make it short. (The United States has its own agenda, including the recognition of a Palestinian state.) Sharon, however, seems to have his own agenda too: first, teach the Palestinians a lesson they will never forget by killing as many as possible and destroying as much as possible; and second, bring the Palestinians to their knees in surrender, obliterating all hope for a Palestinian state. Sharon had a similar (hidden) agenda when he entered Beirut in 1982.

Sharon began this murderous campaign and dragged Israeli society into it with him by promising absolute security. He also promised further confiscation of Palestinian lands and further building of Israeli settlements. According to B'Tselem human rights

organization, Sharon has established 34 new Israeli settlements on occupied land during the last year. In addition, he wants to keep the occupied territories as a market for Israeli goods and the Palestinian people as cheap laborers.

Sharon declared a comprehensive war, which is in fact nothing else but the continuation and preservation of the Israeli occupation. He called his operation "preventive shield". We have seen many other operations of this kind in the last 18 months under various names such as 'revolving door', 'intimate night', 'colored journey', 'field of thorns' etc.

The timing of this operation had nothing to do with this or that explosion. More importantly, it began only one day after the participants at the Arab Summit declared openly and publicly their commitment to live in peace with Israel if Israel should comply with United Nations resolutions by withdrawing to the borders of 4 June 1967.

Instead, Sharon invaded Palestinian villages and cities, including Ramallah, where President Arafat has been confined to his political residence since December. He has surrounded Arafat and tried to isolate him. He has destroyed his residence and confined him to a small space in this destroyed compound, cutting off water and electricity. He has tried to prevent European and UN diplomats from meeting with him.

The destruction that Sharon has inflicted on the Palestinian community is beyond comprehension. Hundreds have been killed, thousands have been injured, and more than 5,000 Palestinians have so far been arrested. The infrastructure has been almost completely destroyed.

Although our backs have been pushed against the wall, our chests continue to face the tanks, and our hearts are with all of those who are resisting the occupation. Our eyes, the eyes of every single Palestinian -- man or woman, old or young, disabled, sick, or imprisoned -- are firmly fixed on the goal of freedom and independence, and finally peace. There is no going back. We have never been as close to our freedom and independence as we are these days.

Surrender to the Israeli occupation means death. Resistance to the Israeli occupation means life and dignity even in the face of death. The Palestinian people are shouting a clear NO to the Israeli occupation and a clear NO to surrender. Sharon will never gain the submission of the Palestinian people.

We are under curfew at home or at work, among family and friends, surrounded by the strongest army in the region. We are witness to the humiliation, mutilation, and murder of our friends and relatives. And we are just as afraid as our children of the sounds of the shells and the bombs. But our fear is turning slowly but firmly into an unbreakable resistance.

A mad general has led his people to the worst security situation ever experienced in the country. The economy has not been as bad since 1953. Many Israelis are leaving the country. More and more soldiers are refusing to serve in the army. The tourism industry has suffered catastrophic losses. Agriculture and other industries have also incurred immense losses. Everything which Israel has worked for during the past fifty years has been put at risk in the one year of Sharon's reign of terror. Even when he had the chance to have peace with the Arab states, he refused. The Israeli public is beginning to wonder where all this is leading. Where is he taking Israeli society?

In the arrogance of his own power he has turned the whole world against him, except the US administration and perhaps Micronesia. He has single-handedly exposed Israel as a colonial expansionist state. In his attempt to isolate Arafat, he has instead made him the most popular figure in the Arab world. Arafat's picture is now displayed from Morocco to Bahrain. (Only Jamal Abdel Nasser enjoyed such wide-spread popularity.)

Although confined in his destroyed residence, Arafat has affirmed his indisputable leadership of the Palestinian people: "They want me captured. They want me hunted. They want me dead. But I tell them: they can have me only as a martyr."

Sharon was wrong when he thought he could bring President Arafat to his knees. Sharon was wrong

when he thought that he could find an alternative to Arafat. Arafat has been elected by the majority of the people in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and whoever replaces him must be elected in the same way. (Palestine is not Pakistan.) Sharon was wrong when he thought he could force the Palestinians to surrender. Sharon was wrong when he thought he would crush the Intifada, the legitimate resistance movement, within ten days or a hundred days. Sharon was wrong when he thought the Palestinian people would not stand united against his aggression. Sharon was wrong when he thought that the Palestinian people would not sacrifice everything they have, even their lives, in order to be free from Israeli occupation. Sharon was wrong when he thought he could smash the Jenin refugee camp in a "blitzkrieg". Sharon was wrong when he thought he would not lose soldiers and other Israeli lives by continuing the occupation. Sharon was wrong when he thought that the Israeli settlement interests were above the interests of Israeli citizens inside Israel. More than 62% of Israelis are now in favor of the evacuation of the settlements. It borders on insanity that even the Likud party cannot explain why a few thousand settlers are living in the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated areas of the world. There they must be protected by troops and tanks from the one million Palestinians on whose land they have chosen to build their colonies.

Sharon's actions during the past weeks have not only cost Israel sympathy in the world, they have also

fueled a worldwide campaign against the Israeli occupation. (Israel, predictably, would like to equate any anti-Israel or anti-occupation campaigns with anti-Semitism. Another wrong move. You cannot fool all the people all of the time.)

Protests against the Israeli occupation have been carried out everywhere, from New Zealand to Canada, and from Brazil to China. The whole of Europe is demonstrating against the Israeli occupation. Fifty thousand in Rome, and similar numbers in Paris. London, Berlin, Madrid, Athens. Copenhagen. Stockholm, Brussels, Amsterdam, Istanbul, and Oslo have held demonstrations against Sharon's measures. During a demonstration in Oslo. Norwegian ambulances even circled the Israeli embassy in protest against the atrocities committed against Palestinian paramedics and medical teams. In the United States similar demonstrations took place in New York. San Francisco, Los Angeles and many other cities.

The masses of the Arab World are demonstrating in every major city. In Bahrain over fifty thousand people marched in the funeral of a young man who was shot dead by the Bahraini police while protesting his government's failure to stand up against US/Israeli policy in Palestine. One million people demonstrated in Yemen. Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated in Egypt and a student in Alexandria became a victim of the Egyptian police. The Jordanian police are attempting to quell the demonstrations with water cannons and clubs. Due to serious threats, a scheduled large-scale

demonstration was cancelled in Jordan for Friday, 13 April. People coming from Aqaba in the south to Irbid in the north were to have marched in protest in front of the Israeli embassy. Similar demonstrations are taking place in Damascus, Sudan, Algeria, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, and Beirut.

In defiance of US calls to pull out of West Bank towns immediately and without delay, the Israeli government is still invading and attacking and killing and destroying. A massacre of as yet unknown proportions is taking place. The city of Nablus, in particular the historic old city, has been bombarded beyond recognition by Apache helicopters, F16s, bulldozers, and tanks. There are unofficial estimates that over 65 people have been killed and hundreds more wounded. How many are under the rubble is still unknown.

Yet what happened in Jenin refugee camp is a war crime for which Mofaz and Sharon will one day have to face an international tribunal. The Palestinian resistance movement inside the camp fought up to the end. Sharon's invincible army suffered severe losses, leading Sharon to respond by destroying parts of the camp completely. The camp resisted with all its strength, sending a message to Sharon and to the world that they preferred to die rather than to live under Israeli occupation. We have no idea how many are dead or how many were executed by the Israeli army. The number of people killed there is unknown. Many are buried now under the ground after Israeli bulldozers "cleaned the streets". The bulldozers of

the Israeli army have destroyed countless homes, walls, and buildings to cover up their crimes so that no one knows how many Palestinians are buried under the rubble.

Sharon is repeating the Sabra and Shatilla massacre in Jenin refugee camp. As far as Foreign Minister Peres is concerned, he will be standing alongside Sharon facing charges of war crimes after his Nobel Peace Prize has been rescinded. (The awards committee is reportedly already examining this possibility.)

All this happened while Colin Powell was in the region. He found words to exonerate Israel by saying that Israel has a right to defend itself. Only after he was bombarded by questions regarding Jenin, did he say that he was sorry about what was happening there. He did not find it important enough to go to Jenin to see for himself.

The Jenin refugee camp is silent. There were about 15,000 refugees living there. The resistance movement inside the Jenin refugee camp is silent. The camp is momentarily destroyed.

For us, the people of the camp are our heroes. The heroism of the resistance movement inside Jenin refugee camp in the face of impossible odds and against an overwhelming military power will be in our hearts forever. The Palestinians have already coined the term 'Jeningrad' to describe the heroic resistance witnessed there. Despite all the grief, the pain and the anger that we suffer every day, we know

that we are engaged in a struggle that will ultimately lead to peace for both peoples. Our cause is just. It is shared by many throughout the world who are standing against injustice and for peace with justice.

We are not alone.

We recognize our friends in the millions who are protesting the Israeli occupation. We see them on TV screens carrying slogans, marching together, gathering signatures, writing letters, raising funds, raising the Palestinian flag and even being beaten or arrested because of their support of the Palestinian cause. These friends write to us in solidarity and they visit us in solidarity.

Sharon's "war" will come to an end and the moment of truth will appear: We will still be here defying Sharon's tanks and airplanes. We will remain steadfast and we will resist until the last Israeli soldier leaves the occupied territories. We will never give up our right to freedom and independence.

Sharon's "war" will come to an end and Israeli society will find that the source of the problem and the cause of all the bloodshed on both sides was and is the Israeli occupation.

We are here in our villages, refugee camps, and cities among our families and friends. Our cry for freedom cannot be silenced.

\* \* \* \* \*

# **Diary of an Invasion**

April-May 2002

On March 29th, I was informed by the Palestinian Ministry of Health that an Israeli invasion of Bethlehem was imminent. As the director of the Beit Sahour Medical Center, I should begin taking all the necessary measures to deal with the upcoming emergency situation. So I organized a team of 2 nurses, a lab technician, X-ray assistants and a general practitioner. We are planning to continue our work 24 hours a day. A sufficient supply of medication and materials has to be prepared, for the wounded and other emergencies, but also for normal illnesses. We prepared for the possibility of a curfew and stored food in the clinic as well.

On April 1st, just at midnight, approximately 200 tanks and personnel carriers rolled into Bethlehem. Around 50 of these entered through Beit Sahour and passed by our clinic on their way to Bethlehem, ½ mile away. The mood in the clinic was very tense. We have all seen the reports of the past few days in Ramallah. Ambulances were being shot at, the sick and wounded couldn't be evacuated, and the entrances to hospitals were blocked. We knew that we were facing difficult times. In addition, we all have our families at home to worry about, and no one can guarantee their safety.

# Wednesday, April 3, 2002

We are still under curfew. No one can go outside. It is windy, rainy and grey. Depressing. We watch the

olive trees in front of us being washed by the rain. We know that there are Israeli sharpshooters around, but we don't know where. We only know that they are shooting at everything that moves.

We hear the shots of the battle raging around Manger Square, only 800 yards away. On TV we can see the wounded lying in the streets and in their homes. One family had to spend over 24 hours with the bodies of two of their relatives lying next to them in their tiny 2-room apartment in the Old City of Bethlehem. Ambulances can't drive; they're being shot at. We see on TV that the Israeli army has surrounded the Church of the Nativity. Of our three local TV stations, only one is still on the air, and it is constantly showing news flashes about the location of the street battles, who has been arrested, and which homes have been demolished.

Although we have been in the clinic three days now, we haven't seen a single patient yet. Normally, we have over 200 patients a day.

We have water, electricity, and telephones. We have food for two more days. One thing we have learned is that 6 people eat a lot under these circumstances.

# Friday, April 5, 2002

We will never in our lives be able to forget what happened to us last night, our fourth in the clinic. Despite the curfew, an ambulance driver attempted to bring a 4-year-old girl to the clinic for treatment. She had fallen and broken her elbow. Although he

came under fire, the driver refused to halt. He reached the clinic, but was immediately surrounded by a tank and several armored vehicles at the entrance. Soldiers jumped down and aimed their machine guns at us. After about ten minutes, which seemed like an eternity to us, they allowed the child and her mother to enter the clinic, escorted by soldiers. We will never forget the frightened pale face of the mother carrying her child in her arms entering the clinic.

While the child was being X-rayed, the soldiers explained we were under curfew, not even ambulances were allowed to break the curfew. The mother and her child would have to stay at the clinic until the curfew was lifted. The mother's protest that she had a 6-month-old infant at home, left in the care of his 7-year old brother, left the soldiers cold. One soldier even proceeded to tell the mother how to instruct her young son over the phone to prepare infant formula for a bottle. He neglected to explain to her how her son should obtain formula during the curfew.

In the meantime, the ambulance drivers were allowed to come into the clinic and relax slightly after their harrowing experience.

The Israeli officer asked me, as the director of the clinic, to make sure that everyone sat down in the waiting room. The tank in front of the entrance was aiming directly at us. The officer asked a lot of questions and threatened to shoot anyone who moved. He asked whether there were any other patients in the clinic,

and threatened to arrest us all if I lied. We had a young man who had been wounded a month earlier, and had been transferred to us from the hospital in Bethlehem in anticipation of the invasion, to make room for emergencies. I was ordered to get him, which I did. He was immediately arrested.

We couldn't help noticing that the soldiers were at least as afraid as we were. They jumped at every noise. Even I, as a physician, could have told them that the shots we were hearing were coming from a long way off. One of our technicians speaks Hebrew and he began chatting with a soldier about our work. At the same time, he could hear the communication over the walkie-talkies. At one point, one of the soldiers waiting outside in the tank asked, "Should I shoot?" "Are you crazy?" came the reply, "We're still in here!"

When the soldiers finally left the clinic, the officer informed us that it was only a matter of 48 hours before they would kill everyone in the Church of the Nativity. He threatened again to shoot immediately anyone who tried to leave the clinic.

After they left we took a deep breath. It was the proper moment to make a hot cup of tea. An atmosphere of depressed jokes filled the room which later broke into sincere laughter as we commented on our various reactions during this encounter.

# Saturday, April 6, 2002

We slept rather well despite the tense situation. The Church of Nativity is under heavy siege. 200 clerics

headed by the Roman Catholic Bishop Sabbah were prevented from entering Bethlehem. We heard that 7 collaborators were executed by the Palestinian resistance movement because of collaboration with the Israeli soldiers and the Israeli intelligence. At 5 p.m. Israeli tanks drive through Beit Sahour. At the street crossing just near the clinic they stop. A detonation of a street bomb did not damage the tank. It exploded prematurely. We sat in the clinic waiting for the arrival of the soldiers. They didn't come.

At night we learn of the United Nations resolution 1403 calling for Israel to withdraw from the Palestinian cities. None of us believed that Israel would comply. We made fun of this resolution quoting Bush's initial demands to Sharon and asked each other "Does that mean now? Or immediately, or as soon as possible, or today rather than tomorrow?"

#### Monday, April 8, 2002

I wake up to the loud noise of shelling. Later we learned that Israeli soldiers bombarded the Nativity Church and caused a fire in the yard.

My youngest son, Nasim, 13 years old, called me to tell me that he has been filming the Israeli tanks from our balcony. I wondered how he could. The main street is over three hundred meters away. He went on to tell me that he also had seen, using binoculars, an Israeli sniper on the roof of one of the buildings in Bethlehem. (Nasim kept watching this sniper who never moved from his place, until weeks later when we found out that this sniper was an old black box.

We explained to him that the snipers are invisible and that is why they are so dangerous.) He seems to be keeping himself occupied by playing the cameraman reporting from the 'heart of the action', just like Walid Al Umari from Al Jazeera TV. I told myself this is his way of coping with his anxieties, and may relieve post traumatic stress disorders.

# Tuesday, April 9, 2002

The curfew was lifted for a few hours. Some of our employees came to the clinic so that others could go home for a few days. A change of shifts. In addition, a few volunteers, among them my 16-year-old son Salim, came to help out. I remained in the clinic. After the first few days, we have noticed that we will be having problems with the food. We have been eating out of cans for days. That is certainly fine for an emergency, but now some patients and families of employees took pity on us and started arranging "meals on wheels" for us. This is difficult, because on the days when the curfew is lifted, we have so many patients to tend to in a few hours that we don't have time to eat, and when the curfew is not lifted. no one can bring us food. But in the meantime, our white clinic van, well marked with a large Red Cross flag, has been able to drive around without being harassed. The soldiers know the car now, and allow it to be on the streets. So every day, someone cooks a meal for the 10 people in the clinic, and then calls us to say that there is an "injury", and could we please send the ambulance to bring them to the clinic. Problem solved.

But we are exhausted. We try to tell each other stories to keep our spirits up. We try to guess what Sharon's next step will be. We even plan picnics, now that the torrential rains of last week are over and the first signs of spring are in the air. When I first leave the clinic after several days, I am astounded by the sight of so many wildflowers growing in the fields. Such a beautiful spring, and no one is outside to enjoy it!

We have begun sleeping in shifts. Some people sleep only during the day. What difference does it make? Day and night are the same, when you are locked up. And when we wake up, the others tell us the latest developments. Today 8 people killed at Aida refugee camp were buried. Or 60 tanks are used in the siege of Bethlehem. One of the rooms at the Church of the Nativity caught fire. More than 500 Palestinians arrested.

We sleep while the soldiers shout from the loudspeakers of their jeeps, reaffirming the curfew.

#### Friday, April 12, 2002

It's becoming increasingly clear that the siege of Bethlehem is going to last more than just a few days. The 48 hours predicted by the IDF officer was a little off the mark. And the population is suffering. Many haven't had work for months, and their savings have been used up. They have a hard time borrowing, because no one has much to spare, nor any idea what lies ahead. You can't even get to a bank to withdraw cash because the banks are in Bethlehem, and the

curfew is never lifted in Beit Sahour and Bethlehem at the same time. A charitable organization has contacted us in the clinic to oversee the distribution of emergency food to the needy. It's very difficult to get the supplies into Beit Sahour. We finally decide to pack the food into an ambulance and transport it to the clinic, where we divide it into 50 packages and bring it to needy families. Flour, rice, lentils, oil, powdered milk and canned goods.

The mood in town is very depressed because at midday the Israeli soldiers shot Atallah Hayek from Beit Sahour. He was called by friends to go to his unfinished house as the soldiers were knocking fiercely at the door. When they couldn't open it they threatened to blow up the house if the owner didn't appear. Atallah's brother drove him there, and then panicked when he saw the soldiers threatening them with their weapons aimed at the approaching car. When he turned the car and tried to drive away, a barrage of bullets followed them. Three hit Atallah, two in the neck and one in the head. He was killed immediately.

In the afternoon we hear the bells of the Orthodox Church signaling his funeral.

# Tuesday, April 16, 2002

After two weeks of curfew and siege, Colin Powell finally arrives in the region. But if he was hoping, as we were, that the Israelis would withdraw before his visit, he was disappointed. While Powell found time to make a speech congratulating Israel on its day of independence, he unfortunately found no time to visit

the refugee camp in Jenin. He was able to state however, without even seeing the site, that no massacre had taken place there. And that Sharon was a "man of peace".

Two bodies have been lying inside the Church of the Nativity for days, and in Jerusalem they are celebrating independence. There were fireworks in Jerusalem and fireworks here as well. But we can't enjoy the fireworks that set the roof of the church on fire. The Church of the Nativity is burning, and the firemen have to undergo a search before they can begin putting out the blaze.

We see about 12 patients a day now. Usually we pick them up with the clinic vehicle, but every day some patients arrive on their own. It just takes a few phone calls to determine whether the tanks are presently in Beit Sahour, where they are, and if it's safe to venture out. Tanks make a lot of noise when driving through the streets; they can't exactly sneak up on anyone. On the days when the curfew is lifted, though, the clinic is packed for four hours. We ourselves don't have the time to do any shopping then, or to see our families. More and more patients are unable to pay the fees, let alone buy medicine.

# Wednesday, April 17, 2002

Someone managed to bring a newspaper today, the "Al Quds". Everyone wants to read it at the same time, so we divide it up, a page apiece. We know even before we start reading that the newspaper won't tell us anything we haven't already heard. After all,

we watch the news all day long: BBC, Al Jazeera, Abu Dhabi, Jordan TV, Israel TV, etc. Not an hour passes that we don't have some news station on. Sometimes we speak the very sentence that the newsman is going to use before he opens his mouth. But a newspaper has something we don't hear on the news: for example the obituaries.

# Saturday, April 20, 2002

We hear that food supplies have run out in the Nativity Church and an Arab member of the Israeli Knesset decided to go to the Israeli Supreme Court to enforce the provision of food to the besieged.

120,000 people demonstrate in Washington against the Israeli invasion into the Palestinian cities and villages. We feel encouraged and long discussions ensue on whether such demonstrations are helpful or not. The words of one of the nurses put down our enthusiasm: "If the killing and injuring of so many Palestinians is not moving the world's opinion, why should a demonstration like this make a change, especially if it is once in a lifetime?"

# Wednesday, April 24, 2002

One of the two young men who were evacuated yesterday from the Church of the Nativity died of his wounds today. The decision of the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to investigate the happenings in Jenin is met immediately by Israeli refusal. We are amused about the 5 people who were able to break the siege and flee from the church.

#### Thursday, April 25, 2002

I have gotten used to my new home. On the first day I moved my office from the second floor down here to the ground floor. My office has a large window that faces the new Israeli settlement of "Har Homa". The outside walls already have a few pockmarks from earlier attacks. I simply couldn't work well in that room now. We have a small (5' x 8') examination room next to the X-ray department which we have converted to a temporary office and my bedroom, too. The hard examination bed is good for my back, as I suffer from a prolapsed disc.

We advise many patients via the telephone. The patients with chronic illnesses are suffering the most because they need regular treatment.

When the curfew was lifted, Ellen Kassis, the director of our senior citizen's center, came to me to report that the center, which lies in a sparsely populated area on the edge of Beit Sahour, had been broken into overnight and the small stock of food there stolen. Only food. We are facing difficult times. The person who stole food must have needed it. But does that make it right? I tried to calm her down. I said, "Listen, Ellen. We have been under curfew for nearly a month. We are still OK. We have to keep going, no matter what happens. Our means of helping are limited, but we have to show that we aren't giving up, because if we do that, the others will give up too." We will keep on working. We will have to find money to replace the stolen food, but we will continue.

Two bodies were taken out of the Nativity Church today.

# Sunday, April 28, 2002

Today is Palm Sunday, according to the Greek Orthodox calendar. The curfew was lifted in Beit Sahour and Beit Jala but not in Bethlehem, which means that it is impossible to reach Beit Jala because the street goes through Bethlehem. In the night the mayor of Beit Sahour was taken from his house by the Israeli soldiers and was forced to open the municipality building. There the soldiers told him that Israel will be confiscating more lands from Beit Sahour.

# Monday, April 29, 2002

During the long curfew, one is tempted to be lazy. Time has no meaning. You have plenty of time, and time is wasted. Work stands still. The economy stagnates and agriculture is neglected. Unemployment rises and poverty grows.

We decided to work on finishing the new addition to our clinic. Whenever possible, we called on craftsmen for their help; electrician, plumber, carpenter. When they couldn't return home at night, they simply slept here with our team. Supplies such as wiring, floor tiles, cement, wood and paint were brought whenever the curfew was lifted, and then we closed the door and worked until the sun went down. In two weeks, we have finished two new offices. What do people do who don't have such a way to keep busy?

# Wednesday, May 1, 2002

Today is my wife Melanie's birthday. I broke the curfew to walk the three minutes to our home. Crazy! A little. We celebrated with wine and cake.

# Thursday, May 2, 2002

Our amusement couldn't have been greater as we watched on local TV the successful maneuver of the International Solidarity Group to enter the Nativity Church. We still do not know how many succeeded in entering, but many who couldn't enter were arrested by the Israeli army.

My son Salim, came back at noon very proud of himself. He managed to go with the ambulance to the Tourism Minister's house, where the Palestinian negotiating team was meeting. They were preparing to enter the Nativity Church. We received a call in the morning that the besieged are in need of medication, and prepared an emergency pack of the most urgently needed items. He took as much as he could with him and tried to give them to one of the escorts to the negotiators. When this escort refused, claiming that it was "dangerous", Salim spoke to him quite harshly and made him blush in shame. Finally the escort took the medication.

I couldn't sleep at night. I kept thinking of my wife and my children. Most of the employees talk about their families and their longing to be with them and they also talk about their fears. I listen very carefully to what they say and I try to comfort them or just try to take their fears away. I feel that I am obliged to show additional strength, and I do not have the chance to talk about my own fears.

I thought of Ali, the nurse who was the dynamo of the group. Ask for anything and Ali can get it. He made us delicious fruit ice cream cocktails. I thought of his

distress being in the clinic while his wife gave birth to his first son. I thought of the small quarrels between him and Dr. Ghassan, who hungrily devoured a platter of fish one night, not leaving anything for others. I thought of Abu Dani, the polite X-ray technician who was anxious about the fate of the "fagous" this year. (a cucumber-like vegetable and a speciality of Beit Sahour, which should be planted in April). I thought of the brave Ureib, our female X-ray technician who defied all "norms" and spent nights at the clinic in the midst of so many men. I thought of the day when Dr. Naim came to visit us from Jerusalem during the three hours lifting of the curfew and how the whole clinic was happy to see him. I thought of Dr. Ahmad being in prison for several months now, not knowing when he will be released. I thought of Melanie and the children.

It was indeed very difficult to sleep that night.

# Tuesday, May 7, 2002

Every day we hear reports that the siege is going to be lifted. The negotiations with the besieged men in the Church of the Nativity aren't making much progress, even though we keep hearing that there has been a breakthrough. They categorically refuse to be sent into exile, and the church authorities are unwilling to allow the tradition of granting sanctuary in a holy place to be violated. The population, while suffering under the prolonged siege, stands with the trapped men. But Arafat has made his deal over the heads of the negotiating team; 39 men are to be sent into exile to Gaza and Europe. I would prefer to see them stand trial than set this precedent.

#### Friday, May 10, 2002

The siege and curfew are over. Finally. The 39 men are on their way into exile, the clergy and civilians are allowed to leave. The curfew is lifted. The members of our team can go home. We are all physically and mentally exhausted. Each one of us has his own thoughts. We have come closer together during this time. Some really proved their mettle; others were incapable of mastering the situation. Yet we all agree that it was a good time.

We have overcome.



#### **Amram Mitzna**

### Another Zionist racist colonialist liberal leader or the General de Gaulle of Israel?

December 2002

In less than two months, on January 28, 2003, the Israeli public will vote in an early parliamentary election. Israelis will have the chance to change their future and opt for a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian conflict. Polls show that 65% of the Israeli population support an end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and dismantling of the settlements. Paradoxically, the same polls show that they will vote by the same margin to elect Sharon, who is propagating and practicing the opposite. Does this seeming contradiction stem from the fact that Labor, as the largest opposition party, has lost its credibility as a result of its participation in the national unity government? Perhaps Labor has not had a charismatic candidate to inspire confidence. Now Amram Mitzna, yet another former general, has become the new leader of the Labor party. Mitzna, a candidate unsullied by participation in the Sharon government, is the new hope for a fresh start. Can General Mitzna become the General de Gaulle of Israel? Can he put an end to the Israeli occupation as de Gaulle pulled France out of Algeria?

When Ehud Barak of Labor was elected Prime Minister of Israel he had one success story amidst a plethora of failures. He was successful in extricating

the Israeli occupation forces from South Lebanon, thus concluding an embarrassing chapter in the annals of his glorious army. Barak thereafter indulged in megalomania as the national and international media praised him for his "courageous" move.

From his predecessor Mr. Netanyahu of the Likud party, Barak inherited a peace process that was already in the intensive care unit. Instead of resuscitating the patient, he chose to continue along Netanyahu's course and thus became a Labor Prime Minister implementing Likud policy, finally causing the demise of the peace process.

Barak did not show enough courage and vision to withdraw from the occupied territories or to halt settlement activities. Despite the acclaim that his "generous offer" to the Palestinians received in the Western press, he was no better than a colonial ruler attempting to force Israeli peace on the Palestinians from the barrel of a gun. Barak was the one who sanctioned Sharon's provocative visit to the Haram al-Sharif and he was the one who gave the order to shoot the Palestinian protesters. The second Intifada broke out and he was unable to contain it. Incapable of leading his party to victory, he left office thoroughly defeated, with no tears shed at his departure.

Along came Sharon, promising the Israeli people the same things that Barak before him had promised -- namely, continuation of the occupation and

settlement-building and above all, security. What Barak hadn't achieved by force, Sharon would achieve by more force. The Sharon era brought more assassinations, demolitions of homes, and mass collective punishment to the Palestinians. Yet the Palestinian resistance movement was able to destroy Sharon's premise that security for Israelis could be achieved through increasingly harsh measures taken against the Palestinians and it succeeded in bringing the conflict to the Israeli public and in damaging the Israeli economy.

Sharon invited the Labor party to join a national unity government, using Shimon Peres' reputation to gain an international seal of approval for the harsh measures he took against the captive civilian Palestinian population. Peres' complicity in this deal caused him to lose credibility even among his friends, the Europeans. Ben Eliezer, the Defense Minister from the Labor party, was more a Likud than a Labor minister. Both Peres and Ben Eliezer were described as Sharon's doormats; their role being to whitewash their master's image abroad.

In the end, the Labor party was sidelined to the point of meaninglessness. The national unity government was dissolved and new parliamentary elections scheduled.

In its search for a new candidate, the Labor party discovered Amram Mitzna, who had become mayor of Haifa. He had earlier gained a reputation as the general who resigned in protest of Sharon's policies in Lebanon in 1982. However sincere his resignation may have been, he withdrew it and returned to active duty two weeks later. That Sharon and Mitzna can't stand each other is an understatement, but it does not do Mitzna any credit.

Mitzna himself had no qualms about meting out harsh treatment to the Palestinians under his control while commander of the West Bank during the first Intifada. According to Hadas Ladav in Challenge magazine (September 2002), General Mitzna was responsible for the demolition of 121 houses, 28 deportations, and the killing of 302 and injuring of 3252 Palestinians from December 1987 until March 1989.

Noam Chomsky describes Mitzna's activity as commander of the West Bank in his book Fateful Triangle as follows:

The army has destroyed the homes of over 3000 people (often destroying or severely damaging others nearby) on the pretext that a family member is suspected of throwing stones or some other crime. This particularly ugly form of collective punishment, the Israeli press reports, is conducted "under a law that also does not permit them to rebuild". General Amram Mitzna....was "particularly brutal in this regard" while commander of the West Bank, the report continues, because "he

had to compensate for his left-wing image". General Mitzna's soulful expression was regularly seen on American TV screens, revealing the inner torment of the humanist compelled by Arab violence to resort to force in selfdefense -- 'to shoot and crv'. in the conventional Hebrew phrase. Israeli journalist Tom Segev saw a different picture. Reviewing hospital records of victims of army shootings, with splinters of bullets in the upper part of the body and parts of the brain leaking out of an empty eyehole, he wrote that "the name of General Amram Mitzna was not mentioned by the doctor, but his face was visible, so to speak, from the X-ray photos he was showing us, and it was disgusting, frightening, a negative of the image of 'the beautiful Israeli' that his public relations experts construct for him."

Mitzna served as mayor of Haifa propagating peaceful coexistence between the Jews and the Arabs of that city. He managed to develop a good relationship with the elite of the Arab population, who boasted of having coffee or tea with Mitzna. That his good relationship with the elite did not result in improvements in the poorer Arab parts of the city or the building of housing projects for the Arab community is rarely mentioned, nor is the fact that the Haifa municipality will very soon

demolish tens of houses in the poor Arab neighborhood Wadi Nisnas to make room for a highway. Not even the Arab elite who like to take their tea with Mitzna mention these things; it is not their homes which are threatened. Mitzna resembles a typical colonialist with a military background who has nothing but contempt for the Palestinians, but wants to do things by the book and keep his slate clean.

Mitzna was called on to leave his comfortable life as mayor of Haifa and become the Labor candidate for Prime Minister by supporters who see their business interests in the Middle East jeopardized by the continuation of the conflict and deterioration in relations between Israel and its neighbors. The US showed an interest in him also. Just two days after Mitzna met with members of the US Congress in August, the local newspaper Yediot Haifa reported that he was paid a visit by Mr. Daniel Kurtzer, US Ambassador to Israel.

Among Mitzna's early statements after announcing his candidacy was a pledge to withdraw from Gaza and to resume negotiations with the Palestinians. He also spoke vaguely about dismantling some of the West Bank settlements, but would not be pinned down as to how many of them would be abandoned. Nevertheless, we cannot help feeling hopeful when people compare him to de Gaulle. If only he could achieve what his predecessors failed to achieve, bringing the two sides out of their deadly wedlock!

General de Gaulle holds the position in history as the French general who possessed the courage, ethical clarity, and political firmness to get France out of Algeria. Even as the killing was at its peak, and more than one million Algerians had lost their lives, he stood up and declared that France should get out of Algeria.

The true strength of this position was that it was clear and final. De Gaulle did not negotiate to continue the French occupation in another form. The decision was as simple as it was radical: Algeria was to be free and independent.

Can Mitzna be the de Gaulle of Israel? Why not!

This would entail taking a position as firm and final as that of de Gaulle. End the occupation of all the territories that were conquered in the 1967 war. Dismantle the settlements. Acknowledge and adhere to the UN resolutions regarding the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

Yes, this is possible, if Mitzna avoids the smooth intrigues of Yossi Beilin, the tricky maneuvering of Shimon Peres and the word games of Ehud Barak. This is possible if Mitzna refrains from flirting with Ben Eliezer and the Likud in hopes of winning over those in the Israeli "middle".

The first signals from Mitzna are indeed encouraging, despite the analysis of his history and personality. It

is imperative that he manage to etch his good intentions in the hard stone of Israeli reality. This requires a strong Labor party that must detach itself completely from Likud and present a new face.

The experience of some fifty years of conflict should give impetus to Mitzna's new vision. Barak's and Netanyahu's failures should be a warning of the urgency of the situation. The blood and grief of the past two years under Sharon should provide the momentum essential to change the course of the conflict. Peace will not be attained through occupation and settlements.

Mitzna may not be able to win the coming election on January 28, 2003. But he can present an alternative vision for a better future; a future where a genuine and comprehensive peace will be enduring. This can be his opportunity.

Will Mitzna live up to the comparison with General de Gaulle? It could happen.

But first he has to believe.

Then he has to change.

Then he has to act.



#### The Ethics of Revenge

A speech made by Yitzhak Frankenthal, Chairman of the Families Forum, at a rally in Jerusalem on Saturday, July 27, 2002, outside the Prime Minister's residence.

My beloved son Arik, my own flesh and blood, was murdered by Palestinians. My tall blue-eyed goldenhaired son, who was always smiling with the innocence of a child and the understanding of an adult. My son. If to hit his killers, innocent Palestinian children and other civilians would have to be killed, I would ask the security forces to wait for another opportunity. If the security forces were to kill innocent Palestinians as well, I would tell them they were no better than my son's killers.

My beloved son Arik was murdered by a Palestinian. Should the security forces have information of this murderer's whereabouts, and should it turn out that he was surrounded by innocent children and other Palestinian civilians, then -- even if the security forces knew that the killer was planning another murderous attack that was to be launched within hours and they now had the choice of curbing a terror attack that would kill innocent Israeli civilians but at the cost of hitting innocent Palestinians, I would tell the security forces not to seek revenge but to try to avoid and prevent the death of innocent civilians, be they Israelis or Palestinians.

I would rather have the finger that pushes the trigger or the button that drops the bomb tremble before it kills my son's murderer, than for innocent civilians to be killed. I would say to the security forces: do not kill the killer. Rather, bring him before an Israeli court. You are not the judiciary. Your only motivation should not be vengeance, but the prevention of any injury to innocent civilians.

Ethics are not black and white -- they are all white. Ethics have to be free of vengefulness and rashness. Every act must be carefully weighed before a decision is made to see whether it meets the strict ethical criteria. Ethics cannot be left to the discretion of anyone who is frivolous or trigger-happy. Our ethics are hanging by a thread, at the mercy of every soldier and politician. I am not at all sure that I am willing to delegate my ethics to them.

It is unethical to kill innocent Israeli or Palestinian women and children. It is also unethical to control another nation and to lead it to lose its humaneness. It is patently unethical to drop a bomb that kills innocent Palestinians. It is blatantly unethical to wreak vengeance upon innocent bystanders. It is, on the other hand, supremely ethical to prevent the death of any human being. But if such prevention causes the futile death of others, the ethical foundation for such prevention is lost.

A nation that cannot draw the line is doomed to eventually apply unethical measures against its own people. The worst in my mind is not what has already happened but what I am sure one day will. And it will -- because ethics are now being twisted and the political and military leadership does not even have the most basic integrity to say: "we are sorry".

We lost sight of our ethics long before the suicide bombings. The breaking point was when we started to control another nation. My son Arik was born into a democracy with a chance for a decent, settled life. Arik's killer was born into an appalling occupation, into an ethical chaos. Had my son been born in his stead, he may have ended up doing the same. Had I myself been born into the political and ethical chaos that is the Palestinians' daily reality, I would certainly have tried to kill and hurt the occupier; had I not, I would have betrayed my essence as a free man. Let all the self-righteous who speak of ruthless Palestinian murderers take a hard look in the mirror and ask themselves what they would have done had they been the ones living under occupation. I can say for myself that I. Yitzhak Frankenthal, would have undoubtedly become a freedom fighter and would have killed as many on the other side as I possibly could. It is this depraved hypocrisy that pushes the Palestinians to fight us relentlessly. Our double standard that allows us to boast the highest military ethics, while the same military slays innocent children. This lack of ethics is bound to corrupt us.

My son Arik was murdered when he was a soldier by Palestinian fighters who believed in the ethical basis of their struggle against the occupation. My son Arik was not murdered because he was Jewish but because he is part of the nation that occupies the territory of another.

I know these are concepts that are unpalatable, but I must voice them loud and clear, because they come from my heart -- the heart of a father whose son did not get to live because his people were blinded with power. As much as I would like to do so, I cannot say that the Palestinians are to blame for my son's death. That would be the easy way out, but it is we, Israelis, who are to blame because of the occupation. Anyone who refuses to heed this awful truth will eventually lead to our destruction.

The Palestinians cannot drive us away – they have long acknowledged our existence. They have been ready to make peace with us; it is we who are unwilling to make peace with them. It is we who insist on maintaining our control over them; it is we who escalate the situation in the region and feed the cycle of bloodshed. I regret to say it, but the blame is entirely ours.

I do not mean to absolve the Palestinians and by no means justify attacks against Israeli civilians. No attack against civilians can be condoned. But as an occupation force it is we who trample over human dignity, it is we who crush the liberty of Palestinians and it is we who push an entire nation to crazy acts of despair. Finally, I call on my brothers and sisters in the settlements -- see what we have come to.

We were not able to contact Mr. Frankenthal to ask him for permission to include this article in our book. We hope that he does not object as his speech is a clear statement against inhumanity and injustice. We want to thank him for that. The authors





#### Chapter Two

# THE AMERICANIZATION OF THE WORLD

The US Globalization

Bush's Doctrine

Democracy and the Hard Choice

The Invasion of Iraq

The New Mongols in Baghdad

#### The United States' Globalization:

## A conflict of civilizations, cultures and religions, or economic and political hegemony?

With the beginning of the new Millennium, the world entered a new phase of major contradictions that found their ultimate expression in the mono-polarization efforts of the United States. This followed directly the violent blow that hit New York and Washington on 11 September 2001.

The severity, immensity and high drama of that event affected the whole earth as the United States used it to justify many of its policies, practices and understandings. It was presented as a moral and political justification for US wars, economical pressure and blockades, in addition to hostile media attacks against the cultures, civilizations and religions of other nations around the world.

This new reality led many politicians and media professionals to consider 11 September a new point of reckoning; they began to divide history into the categories of *pre* and *post* 11 September.

While never trivializing the tragedy and the wanton targeting of civilians, we must distinguish clearly between the incident itself, and how it was misused as a political, economical, ethical, and ideological justification for the wars and hegemonic intentions of the United States and its allies which have antagonized

other religions, civilizations and cultures to a degree unlikely to be forgotten, much less forgiven.

What happened on 11 September was a result and not a cause. It was the result of many inconsistencies accumulating at a universal level. What we are experiencing today is the ultimate misuse of the date to further hidden agendas and policies that were conceived long beforehand. The danger of reading the evolution and the progress of societies in light of 11 September is that this reading mutilates the framework and the natural, reasonable course of logic.

After the Second World War, the world was divided into two camps; the capitalist countries with the United States as their leader, and the Socialist bloc with the Soviet Union as its leader. It was an expression of the huge contradictions between workers and the distribution of wealth, according to Karl Marx, or between the empire of evil and the freedom-loving empire of democracy, according to the capitalist interpretation. In whichever spirit it was referred to, this universal divide permeated most or all of our political, economical, cultural and military vocabulary: Warsaw Pact, NATO, Comecon, IMF, World Bank, the Big Seven, non-aligned nations, the Third World, the ideological conflict between capitalism and socialism, international solidarity, national liberation movements, etc.

By the end of the Cold War and after the fall of the Soviet Union, the United States was quick to congratulate itself, assuming full and exclusive responsibility for the victory of capitalism over socialism. The world was entering a new phase that called for a new restructuring based on demanding complete agreement with all forms of US policy: economical, political, and military. Yet a serious challenge rose against the United States in the form of national liberation movements throughout Asia, Latin America and Africa.

The United States, while celebrating its historic victory, found itself beset with new facts and new questions. While previously it had led only the capitalist countries, the United States now found itself "called" to lead the world. More precisely the United States recognized that 11 September was an ideal pretext for cementing its economic and military hegemony over the world.

Despite the mortal blow that the Soviet Union had already suffered, the accumulation of 70 years of conflict left rebellions and conflicts in many areas of the world, which necessitated a quick US response to impose the conditions of the victor over the defeated everywhere. The world had to be reformed according to the US vision.

In the absence of the counterbalance provided by the Soviet Union, it became apparent that contradictions in their economic system were giving rise to increasing competition among the capitalist countries themselves. The two biggest competitors, Europe and Japan, constituted a threat to many facets of US global influence. China, which had followed a policy of self-isolation, as well as other countries in the US sphere of influence constituted lesser dangers while remaining

potential competitors. Many economists predict that within ten years the united Europe could pose a real challenge to the economic superiority of the United States, while not, however, threatening its military supremacy. This new economic power would then seek to extend its political influence.

In view of this new reality the United States went ahead to "Americanize" the world, economically, politically and culturally. This became the new strategy of the United States, which Al Gore formulated as follows: "Let us move away from ideology. Let us move together towards a common goal and build an informational infrastructure to the benefit of all to serve our free market and to improve the services of health, education, environment and democracy." This is exactly what John Stratton described as the sandwich approach, putting the human dreams and aspirations, such as health, education, and the environment, between two slices of bread known as the free market and democracy.

This is the US-style truth. Anyone who tries to excuse himself from the luncheon is force-fed, subjected to the nauseating aftertaste of the sandwich, bluntly reminded that there are no other items on the menu.

This vision remains essentially the same whether Democrats or Republicans occupy the White House. However, it is gaining further definition and its mechanisms are accelerating as neo-conservatives assume greater influence within the present US administration. The administration thus has devoted itself to fabricating the environment most conducive

to fulfilling its objectives by any means, including or even prioritizing violence.

United States policy finds its cultural justification in Fukuyama's "end of history" and in Huntington's "clash of civilizations". According to Fukuyama "The triumph of the West, of the western idea, is evident first of all in the total exhaustion of viable systematic alternatives to western liberalism. . . What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the cold war, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

Fukuyama concedes that the notion of the end of history is not his own, but instead found within the philosophies of Hegel and Marx. Nevertheless one cannot escape the impression that he is defending this notion so long as it stems from and glorifies western liberal thought. He dismisses as retrograde the parallel observation of Marx that "the direction of historical development was a purposeful one determined by the interplay of material forces, and would come to an end only with the achievement of a communist utopia that would finally resolve all prior contradictions".

It is noteworthy that, whereas Fukuyama does not object to the disenfranchisement of workers or the contradictions often entailed by national sovereignty, Marx called for an end to every form of exploitation, whether at the state, industrial or personal level.

Huntington elaborates, "From now on the main pattern of global conflict would probably be cultural, not economic or ideological. In the coming years the local conflicts most likely to escalate into major wars will be those along the fault lines between civilizations; Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Latin American and African that would clash with each other sooner or later."

Despite Huntington's explanations of why civilizations clash with each other, and despite the fact that religious and cultural differences in fact can and do ignite conflicts, the central fact remains that, almost without exception, major disputes are economically based, politically motivated and militarily executed. Are we seriously to believe that Germany, France, England and Spain clashed with each other in the last centuries because of differences in their civilization, and not because of their irreconcilable lust to control Europe and European colonies?

If we are to take the Huntington theory seriously, we find ourselves before an eternal conflict. And how then are we to reconcile that with Fukuyama's "end of history", short of resigning ourselves that eventually capitalism will vanquish those who still dare to question its legitimacy as a universal model?

Of course such questions should be addressed by the likes of Fukuyama and Huntington, and no more time squandered here to address the many prejudicial assumptions bearing upon their theories.

According to the United States, Western liberalism must be exalted and perpetrated as the superior model

for all humankind, East and West, North and South. Any societal development that might take place elsewhere, by its reasoning, is predestined to mimic that of the United States.

This logic has the dangerous by-product of stoking inevitable confrontations with those nations whose natural development bears little or no similarity to the US model. In Washington's vision societies everywhere must "progress" along the identical path and not waste time discussing and experimenting with other models, not even if those models better reflect a nation's civilization and culture.

The all-embracing frame for the US vision has taken the mantle of Globalization. Now the so-called universal melting pot is overflowing and threatening to engulf humanity by the spread of one particular culture that cannot be separated from its economic, political and military foundations, and whose outstanding feature is intolerance.

Endless discussions and conferences have been held to define the term globalization as well as its implications for technology, philosophy, culture or society. We would like to emphasize that true globalization, not the US understanding of the term, should signify an objective evolutionary process. This would entail greater interaction among the peoples of the world; the use of modern communication technologies to promote a "new world order" based on social justice rather than capitalistic accumulation, greater respect for cultural and religious diversity, and a more equitable global

distribution of wealth, science and technology. In addition to striving to cure disease and to relieve victims of natural disaster, we could work together on issues such as the population explosion, better utilization of the earth's resources, combating illiteracy, exploration of the universe, elimination of the weapons of mass destruction, the ending of all kinds of human extortion, nationality disadvantages, gender inequality, and in achieving equality between all nations.

Globalization, according to the capitalist vision, dictates that the industrialized countries should and must tighten their control over the world's resources. As such, globalization does not result from the desire of the citizens of the industrialized countries to generate a new world order that benefits all people. Instead globalization reflects the will of the industrialized countries to protect their national interests, most specifically their economic interests, as spearheaded by national and multinational corporations and protected by official political and economic pressure, including threats of war.

Some philosophers view globalization as a force intending to reduce the role of the state to that of an institution working for the benefit of corporations (without touching the substance of the state as a tool of oppression in the hands of one class against other classes and even other nations). This force becomes more evident in developing countries where corporations control not only economies but also the whole state apparatus, turning those countries into completely "dependent entities".

During the Cold War, the role of the state in industrialized countries was to control discrepancies within the capitalist system, ideally to gain real or perceived advantages in its competition with the socialist system. As such, the state introduced an economic model which appealed to all classes and at the same time contained rebellions against the state within this society. This required state intervention to limit the ambitions of large corporations. That role is evident in developed countries where the state administers basic services and hinders privatization. The state also works towards a capitalist social welfare system and controls the class struggle in a manner that promotes the capitalist system.

After the fall of the Soviet Union this equation became seriously imbalanced. Economic development in the former Soviet republics allowed the larger competitors to erode the control of the state while enhancing their own profits through privatization.

However this new trend did not negate the role of the state because corporations still required protection, especially in view of the competition between multinational companies and states. In addition, corporations needed the state to increase their influence, to secure markets, to quell any rebellions in the developing countries, and to contain any other social forces that might threaten their interests.

These are some of the general features of the globalization process. Moreover, the United States endorses a specific variety of this process which

utilizes its political and economic power to consolidate its position as the foremost capitalist power and, as such, the foremost power in the world.

This perspective helps to explain US policies and practices from the later 20th century until today, when American officials continue to seek every means of forcing their model upon the world. The political map of the world is being redrawn to permit the White House to apply its massive power to bring the world into conformity with its propaganda. While some meaningful cross-cultural dialogue remains possible despite this imbalance of power, the United States is eager to hold the world hostage to its own monologue.

Increased competition with the capitalist European states, Japan and China has prompted Washington to dwell on establishing control over developing countries, extending exclusive US control over their financial markets as well as their raw materials and energy resources, in particular oil and gas.

This is what happened when the US lead an international alliance in the Gulf War against Iraq in 1991. When it became undeniable that the US officials were using the war to tighten their control over Arab oil reserves, the alliance began to falter and European opposition rose. Russia and China pointedly rejected moves to increase US dominance in the region. As a result, the United States was forced to seek alternatives.

The incident of 11 September 2001 was misused. The US administration exploited it to transform its imperial

vision and strategy into military facts on the ground. President Bush launched a series of slogans which had an ideological and cultural dimension. He described what happened on that date as a "war on the free world and democracy" and a "war against western culture and civilization". He announced "whoever is not with us is against us" and war must be waged against "the axis of evil" as well as on the barbaric civilizations, cultures and religions. Finally the US would launch a comprehensive war against "international terrorism".

The US strategy of imposing its hegemony universally was disguised by a language of demagogy and incitement against Arabs, against Muslims, and against countries which expressed any concerns whatsoever in regard to US hegemony.

The US administration hoped to rally American public opinion as Bush shamelessly addressed right-wing American nationalism. At the same time he pushed the European countries into a narrow corner from which there was no way out except by following US policies. They were turned into executive tools and fuel for the US policy and its wars.

The US administration succeeded in inventing a new enemy, global terrorism, to coerce the European countries and vassal regimes to adopt its position.

Afghanistan was attacked under the pretext of overthrowing Taliban, annihilating al-Qaeda and killing Bin Laden. The real purpose of this war was to gain

access to the Caucasus oil and set foot in the former Soviet republics in order to encircle Iran from the east and subdue Pakistan by containing its general who was looking for legitimacy after he came to power through a military coup.

After accomplishing this objective, Washington proceeded to settle its unfinished business with Iraq. The mounting pressure to change the system in Iraq, which is resisting US hegemony, will set an example for any state willing to rebel against US policy. Iran, Syria, Lebanon and North Korea were put on the "waiting list", and can certainly expect more US attention once Iraq has been subdued. Similar expectations are to be found in Africa and Latin America.

The United States successfully changed the equation -- politics, economy and war to clashes of civilizations, cultures and religions. If the aim of the United States is to annihilate "international terrorism", in particular that linked to al-Qaeda, how do we explain its intention to destroy Iraq and the threats to Iran, Syria and other "axis of evil" countries? What do these countries have to do with al-Qaeda, which was adopted, raised, equipped and promoted by the United States? These countries have never had any connection to al-Qaeda!

More controversial is the US stand against the Palestinian people's aspirations and against their legitimate right to freedom and independence; describing the resistance movement as terror, while supporting Israel unconditionally even in light of the

ongoing destruction of the Palestinian political and economic infrastructure. Needless to say, this war against the Palestinian people was being waged by the United States long before 11 September. The United States consistently describes the Palestinian resistance movement against the Israeli occupation as terror, and it has been going on for more than 50 years, even before bin Laden was born. The Palestinian people refused to comply with the US/ Israeli demands to accept terms for surrender, which thoroughly neglect the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people under international law. This rejection of the US/Israeli proposed solution for the Middle East conflict and the continuation of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation constituted a challenge to and an unwelcome disruption of the US policy and strategy for the Middle East. The US vision came closer to the Israeli position.

The Middle East is the cradle of civilizations and the monotheistic religions. It provides the geographical connection between the East and the West, and it has been the incubator for historic interaction throughout the Mediterranean. Finally it represents markets and oil and a logical place for the US to implement its vision.

Asserting complete US hegemony over the Middle East would shut the door to European and Japanese influence in the region, and thus would turn one long-cherished US dream into a reality. As the Palestinian cause holds great ethical and historical significance for many people around the world, this cause has to

be demolished and annihilated; breaking its will for resistance and pushing it to surrender in front of the Israeli war machine.

This is the objective of US policy, disguised by the slogan "fighting international terrorism", which seems reasonable to many citizens who mistakenly assume the best of their government. It is impossible to question the extent of US power in this world, yet this power has not endowed Americans with any insight into world history. Although their leaders have succeeded in pressuring European and other states to join in their alliance, their overall vision is bound to self-destruct, as it is based on neglecting all other cultures, civilizations and perceptions of justice.

Some say that bin Laden succeeded in bringing the US into his trap. If President Bush is waging his war against civilizations, cultures and religions, then he will find himself in a hopeless quagmire, steeped in endless ethnic and religious conflicts. Then there will be no victor and no defeated as the conflict will redefine itself perpetually. Power will lose its quantitative and qualitative effect because this new dimension will not involve traditional armies, but religions and cultures against the other, where no side admits the rights of the other, and instead seeks its annihilation. History will not be repeating itself (Middle Ages cluster), but Mr. Bush will have turned the wheels of time back by a thousand years. In that case humankind's greatest cultural and philanthropic achievements will prove to have been in vain

In view of this US strategy or the insanity of power, what kind of reaction can be expected from Middle Easterners, Africans or South Americans? Between its imperial policies and self-perceived cultural superiority, the United States is bound to awaken the most negative reactions across traditional boundaries. Whether Christian or Muslem, Buddhist, Hindu, atheist or deist, leftist or rightist, non-Americans everywhere have cause to fear that the distinctness of their cultures might become the next target of the US military-industrial complex.

As long as this policy continues and as long as the people behind this policy continue to fan its flames, the confrontation will defy any ethical or moral borders. Logic and reason will be lost in America's quest to control the universe.

This is the logic behind Bush's campaign to rule the world in the name of the end of history, clash of civilizations, US globalization, and fighting international terrorism. It is an imperial war to impose hegemony and to steal natural resources on behalf of corporations devoted to pursuing their own profits irregardless of the humanitarian cost. It is not a coincidence that this policy has accompanied a decrease of civil liberties in the United States and Europe in the name of security and fighting terrorism. And it is not a coincidence that this policy is accompanied by the attack on the features of independence and sovereignty that the people of the developing countries have achieved through long years of struggle and sacrifice. Most dangerous, however, is that the continuation of this policy -- one part hegemony,

one part jingoism -- will destroy the achievements of humankind over the centuries when a multitude of cultures and civilizations were permitted to coexist. Additionally, this policy will mutilate or obscure the class and social contradictions within the capitalist societies.

The drums of war being pounded in Washington are arousing political and cultural resistance from the nations which realize the dangers of the American viewpoint. A growing number of intellectuals throughout Europe and even within the United States are warning of the repercussions of the US attempt to bring the world under its undivided control.

Anti-globalization movements around the world are also expressing similar concerns and rejecting the "Americanization" of the world. Seattle, Durban, Kyoto, and Genoa are names that signify the melding of political, social and cultural resistance from all over the world. Though the movement does suffer from inconsistencies, it reveals a deep awareness of the perils of US hegemony based on control and negation of the other. This movement is well aware that the globalization process in the US sense reduces whole nations to a matter of paperwork on the desk of the multinational corporations.

Certainly this will inspire more powers to embrace resistance, defending not only themselves but also human values. They will be fighting for a world where justice and freedom prevail over exploitation. They will be fighting for a world based on respect and nurturing of civilizations and cultures, and based on knowledge

that there is no pure civilization or pure culture, since for millennia they have interacted. This is the world with its multitudes and particularities; this is the reason for its beauty and magnitude. Any society which attempts to impose its model worldwide denies the very richness of human history. The planet's other societies also will have themselves to blame if they fail to protest and resist the xenophobia directed against them.



## **Bush's Middle East Doctrine:**

Ever-changing, never-changing June 2002

Mr. Bush finally spoke. And the Palestinian people, in spite of their experience with US foreign policy during the past fifty years, listened carefully, hoping that they would hear something new, something hopeful.

In their naïve optimism, they thought that maybe the US administration had modified slightly its anti-Palestinian stance. Or perhaps, after all the visits and meetings and clarifications, it had reconsidered its foreign policy and could offer something balanced and morally just, on par with its acclaimed moral status in the international arena.

During those brief ten minutes, however, it became devastatingly clear that politics and policies are not the result of diplomatic courtesies or charming rhetoric exchanged politely around a negotiating table. Policies and politics are founded on protecting of the interests of the powerful, who will go to great lengths to maintain their power.

Mr. Bush and the US administration had a unique opportunity to regain some of the respect and credibility they had lost in front of the millions of people suffering from the oppression and injustice that result from the double-standards of US foreign policy. The simplistic "vision" for solving the conflict that Mr. Bush delivered to the Palestinians exposed not only the

colonialist mentality on which US foreign policy is based, but also a complete bias toward Israel.

His first premise is that Israelis, as victims of terror, have the right to defend themselves. This obviously translates into the belief that the Palestinian resistance movement is a movement of terror and, as such, is the root of the problem. Not even a hint of course, that Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian lands may be the root of the problem. In self-defense, Israel apparently has the right to use any and all tactics "necessary" to combat terrorism: assassination, brutal siege of captive civilian populations, arbitrary restriction of movement, etc.

During the brief time it took Mr. Bush to articulate his "vision", the occupation army had assassinated six Palestinians from Gaza, among them three brothers. And just after the speech, Israeli tanks invaded Hebron and killed four more Palestinians. Israel presently occupies almost all Palestinian cities and villages in the West Bank and is imposing a 24-hour curfew on two million people.

Mr. Bush prides himself on his discovery of the formula for peace in the Middle East: new Palestinian leadership must be "found", so that a Palestinian state can be born. Mr. Bush has conveniently decided that President Arafat is the obstacle to peace. Not the Israeli occupation. Not the illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land. Mr. Bush apparently believes that the solution to the conflict will come about in spite of the Israeli occupation and the continued presence of the occupation army.

And he is prepared to work together with Israel to force the Palestinians to accept this solution.

Mr. Bush's "logic" is clear. Israeli suffering must be stopped. The cause of this suffering, namely the Palestinian resistance (terror) movement, must be stopped. Since the Palestinian leadership (Palestinian Authority) is unable to stop the resistance movement, it must be changed. This change in leadership must be brought about through democratic elections, provided that the newly-elected leadership has nothing to do with the resistance movement against occupation. In order to ensure an "appropriate" new leadership, the elections must be held according to US and Israeli criteria while the occupation continues.

In the meantime, various Palestinian security services must be restructured. The focus of these services would be to subdue the Palestinian people and their resistance activities, as well as to guarantee the security of the Israeli population.

What Israel was unable to achieve in 35 years of military occupation, with its superior army, secret police, and methods of collective oppression, should now be achieved through a new Palestinian Authority and its restructured security services. Its success would probably be measured by the number of Palestinians imprisoned or killed while resisting the Israeli occupation. Years ago, many political activists feared that the Oslo agreement, even if implemented properly, would produce a small Vichy government. Now it seems that this Vichy government is being established.

Mr. Bush did happen to mention the establishment of a Palestinian State. But rather than being founded as a result of the resistance movement, it should come to life through the grace of the United States, and only after Mr. Bush decides that he is content with the outcome of Palestinian elections and the new (puppet) leadership. Is this the "democracy" touted by Mr. Bush? What if the Palestinians elect Mr. Arafat again?

Mr. Bush has stipulated three tasks that must be accomplished:

- 1. The annihilation of the Palestinian national resistance movement, since it has been declared a terror organization. This includes the suppression of all historical Palestinian political parties that oppose US policies, as well as the election of a new Palestinian leadership that can provide security for Israel.
- 2. The restructuring of Palestinian security services that would then be used to oppress the population (strikingly similar to the situation in many other Arab regimes).
- 3. The creation of an economic system modeled on the US vision, and under full control of the IMF, the World Bank, and other similar entities.

In order to ensure the success of this process, the US must remain in control. This means that:

 Any Palestinian state with potential to be approved by Bush would be temporary. This allows the US to easily withdraw its backing if the elected leaders do not conform to US policies.

- The entire election process would be implemented while Palestinians remain under complete Israeli occupation. (Perhaps this is what Mr. Bush means when he speaks of free and democratic elections.)
- The three-year designated time frame for the process ensures that any outcome could be sufficiently controlled.

Underlying everything, of course, is the threat that if the Palestinian leadership refuses to play by the rules, they will be kicked out of the game. (Slightly reminiscent of Mr. Clinton's ultimatum to Mr. Arafat in January 2001: If you do not sign the agreement, Israel will wage war against you with the support of the United States.)

All is clear so far.

But when Mr. Bush attempts to articulate the final aim of his vision, we are met with an ambiguity that seems to indicate his unwillingness to take a definitive stand. What we are left with is: The negotiations between both parties will determine the outcome.

How are we to interpret such an ambiguous conclusion to an otherwise crystal clear plan of action?

Mr. Bush happened to mention that the Israeli occupation that began in 1967 should end, according to UN resolutions 242 and 338. He even stated that Israel must withdraw to secure and recognized borders that will be determined through negotiations by both parties. What he failed to mention, however, was that within the context of a thirty-five year military occupation, the phenomenon

of suicide attacks began only recently. What does this have to say about the "root of the problem"?

Mr. Bush knows that Israel is confiscating more land and building more settlements. He sees the efforts expended to continue the occupation. And yet, the paternalistic language he uses when speaking to Israel can only be understood as words of unconditional support and understanding -- the language of an ally and an accomplice. Even the demand for Israel to comply with and execute the US-patented Mitchell Plan is now connected to Palestinian compliance with US conditions.

A couple of months ago, when asked about the implementation of the Mitchell Plan and Israeli withdrawai, Mr. Bush replied in no uncertain terms: Israel must withdraw NOW....not tomorrow, not next week....but IMMEDIATELY. His "new vision", however, has no apparent connection to previous demands. Instead, without naming any time frame, he simply says that Israeli forces need to withdraw fully to positions they held prior to 28 September 2000.

#### More omissions:

Mr. Bush made no mention of Israel's plan to construct "walls of apartheid". He obviously has no idea of the magnitude of suffering that will be caused by these walls. He probably has not even realized that these walls will be built on occupied territory, in clear violation of all international conventions. Mr. Bush does not even acknowledge the assassinations or the wanton destruction of Palestinian infrastructure or the 24-hour curfews imposed on every Palestinian child, woman,

and man. All is justified, it seems, as Israel's right to "self-defense". Palestinians must never be seen as victims of Israeli violence.

When Mr. Bush responded to the Arab initiative presented during the summit in Beirut, he called on all Arab countries to normalize their relations with Israel even before it withdrew from the territories. But he did not stop there. Arab leaders, he said, should fight terrorism (as defined by the US administration). To paraphrase Mr. Bush: "Those who are not with us are against us. And those who are against us have aligned themselves with the axis of evil and very soon will experience the wrath of the United States." Instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to challenge the United States, the Arab leaders reverted to their former submissiveness and more or less agreed to comply with US dictates.

As the world's guardian of moral norms, Mr. Bush saw no need to address the European community or other countries. He is apparently satisfied with Europe's role to pick up the pieces left by the occupation and to pay the cost of whatever is needed in the wake of the destruction wrought by occupation.

And so, Mr. Bush finally spoke. Unfortunately, he got it all wrong.

- 1. The Palestinian cause and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict are more complex than Mr. Bush's simplistic "vision" can capture. Blind Palestinian compliance with US and Israeli demands is not a solution.
- 2. The logic of power and the Israeli military

occupation have not been able to crush the Palestinian resistance movement during the past 35 years. Palestinian culture has become a culture of resistance due to the occupation. This culture includes an awareness of injustice, an experience of humiliation, a vision for a better future, and a firm determination to gain freedom and independence. Unjust dictates and imposed solutions will be totally rejected, especially if they do not address issues of basic human rights.

- The collective memory of the world community is deeper and more complex than Mr. Bush realizes. You cannot fool all of the people all of the time.
- 4. The simple fact remains: the Israeli occupation alone is the root of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

If Mr. Bush truly understands the "deep anger and despair of the Palestinian people", then he must also understand that the occupation must end before anything else can be achieved.

If Mr. Bush honestly believes that the "interests of the Palestinian people are held hostage to a comprehensive peace agreement that never seems to come, as your lives get worse year by year", then he must understand that the occupation must end before anything else can be achieved.

If Mr. Bush honestly believes that we "deserve democracy and the rule of law....an open society and a thriving economy", then he must understand that the occupation must end before anything else can be achieved.

If Mr. Bush believes that we "deserve a life of hope for our children", then he must understand that the occupation must end before anything else can be achieved.

Only when the occupation is ended can "liberty...blossom in the rocky soil of the West Bank and Gaza". Only when the occupation is ended can liberty "inspire millions of men and women around the globe who are equally weary of poverty and oppression, equally entitled to the benefits of democratic government".

Either the occupation is ended once and for all or the doors of history will remain open for the conflict to continue, with or without the United States.



# **Democracy and the Hard Choice**

February 2003

Democracy. That charmed word that so stirs the imagination is undergoing something of a testing time these days. Is it now finding its greatest expression through the mass demonstrations against the war with Iraq, or is it undergoing its greatest assault providing the justification for an unjust war? Is democracy a force for good in the Middle East, or for evil?

What confuses matters is that both uses of the concept of democracy emanate from the same place. President Bush, leader of the free world, is pushing the world towards a choice in the name of democracy and by the same token, the major bugbear for Mr. Bush is stemming from the heart of Western civilization, from Europe, the cradle of longstanding democratic traditions. What we see is a polarization in perceptions of social justice between those that have become over fixated on systems of duality, and those whose world-views are capable of accommodating more developed systems.

Within the first category we can firmly place the United States, and especially the post 9/11 United States. Bush claims to speak in the name of the free world with a divine ability to proclaim on good and evil, while in fact doing nothing more than settling accounts with the nations and civilizations that oppose the United States. Likewise, Osama bin Laden and his ilk also claim a duality for the world, in this case between the believers and the infidels. Osama, we are to believe, has been

sent by God to face the infidel and to preach from the caves of Afghanistan as the official spokesperson of Islam and more than one billion Muslems.

More than anything else, however, the message of the recent worldwide demonstrations against the war in Iraq speak of a world that can encompass more complex realities. This world, the demonstrators' world, allows for different cultures, religions and civilizations and rejects the basis on which Bush's absolute military butchery and bin Laden's bloody deeds are founded. Europe, in particular, is awakening to defend its values and democratic traditions. This awakening should not be regarded at as a mere transient reaction that can be attributed solely to a conflict of interests, but it reflects a deep dimension which we in the Middle East should look to and learn from.

That said, we in the Middle East owe a debt of gratitude to Mr Bush's version of democracy, for with it he has unveiled the sad reality of the Arab regimes. The Arab leaders, kings, presidents and sheikhs have long been stepping on the dignity of their people under the pretext of pan-Arabism and the defense of homeland. At the moment of truth, however, there was nothing there but impotence and fearfulness while millions of dollars -- millions of the Arab people's dollars -- continue to be poured into the Arab armies that are apparently only fit to fight with each other.

Meanwhile, the Arab leaders at Sharm al-Sheikh (and later on in the Islamic summit) cursed each other in a brotherly language. The Arab leaders, pathetically like

so many tribal sheikhs, simultaneously took a unanimous position against the war on Iraq while at the same time their deserts were covered with thousands of American and British soldiers.

During this time, not one single Arab Parliament has stood up to say "no" to its government. Within the region, the Turkish parliament alone (although a member of NATO and relying on pressure from the US to assist its entry into the EU and having been offered something in the region of 30 billion dollars as a sweetener) raised its voice against the presence of American army on its own territories. In the Arab Middle East, armies and airplanes pass in front of our bedroom windows and our leaders remain silent. Arab parliaments convene only to mark the marriage, birth, or death of their monarchs.

Not very far away from besieged Baghdad, here in Palestine, state sanctioned revenge continues. Tens of people are killed every day and the entire population is being kept under siege. The whole world can see as Sharon sidesteps the countless Security Council resolutions, General Assembly resolutions and EU directives. Israel's occupation of Palestinian land is nothing more than a version of Bush prescription for democracy -- might spells right. Soon Iran, Syria, Lebanon and North Korea (and who knows, even France and Germany) will feel the force of this vision.



# The Invasion of Iraq:

### A road map for the "new" Middle East April 2003

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence -- economic, political, even spiritual -- is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal Government.... In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence ...by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Farewell Address, 17 January 1961

What kind of peace do we seek? Not a 'Pax Americana' enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of a slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children -- not merely peace for Americans, but peace for all men and women; not merely peace in our time, but peace for all time.

John F. Kennedy, 1961

On 20 March 2003, the United States and Britain launched a war against Iraq, with the help of a dubious 'coalition' of various and sundry war partners. Even before the beginning of this war, disagreements within the international community overshadowed the usual and well-known attempts at diplomacy. Despite clear opposition from the international community at the United Nations, as well as innumerable protests from peoples and governments around the world, the US plowed ahead with its illegal and illegitimate war as Britain dutifully tagged along.

This war is different in a number of ways:

- Through the wonders of media technology, the war is being waged right in our living rooms as TV screens bring minute-to-minute news and images of the battlefield. War has become a daily reality for everyone.
- 2. A certain "objectivity" in reporting is available due to the multiplicity and variety of media stations. The phenomenon of embedded journalists jeopardizes this objectivity for the US audience, which relies heavily on CNN and Fox News.
- 3. False information is rapidly and easily revealed. (except, apparently in the United States)
- 4. In contrast to the first Gulf War, there is not even a semblance of international consensus on the justification for or the implementation of this war.
- 5. The US clearly underestimated the Iraqi people and their army, and made a gross miscalculation regarding their inevitable revolt against their government.

The belief that Iraqi government officials would flee into exile or surrender is yet another US miscalculation.

US and British officials repeatedly told us the war would be swift, clean, decisive, and fruitful. So far, we've seen that it's slow, foul, confused, and ultimately fruitless.

### Ignorance, Lies, and Sins of Omission

After the first 17 days of this "brief" war, we were told frankly by US Defense Minister Donald Rumsfeld that he doesn't really know how long it will last. He doesn't know how much it will cost. He doesn't know the number of Iragi prisoners or casualties. He doesn't know why friendly fire killed more than 36 US Marines and British soldiers and injured dozens of others. He doesn't know why 23 US soldiers have already died in accidents. He doesn't know why a US F-16 shot a Patriot battery. He doesn't know why the captain of an Apache helicopter intentionally shot a British soldier. He doesn't know where the sandstorms came from. He doesn't know why his soldiers raised the US flag over Um Qasr, only to take it down shortly afterwards. He doesn't know why a small town like Um Qasr can resist the US and British armies for 6 days. He doesn't know why so much contradictory information is given to the US public.

One day he declares that the entire Iraqi 51st tank division, with 8,000 soldiers, had surrendered. A short time later we hear from General Franks that the number of soldiers who had surrendered is only

between one and two thousand. And yet soon after, we see with our own eyes the commander of the 51st tank division in top form inside Basra waiting for the showdown with US and British troops. It seems that the main characteristics of this war are deceit and misinformation. While the people of Iraq are being attacked by some of the most sophisticated weaponry in the world, we are being bombarded with lies!

Rumsfeld lied when he said that Irag burned the oil fields. The British lied when they announced they captured a high-ranking Iraqi officer, though they later admitted the lie. They lied when they said the Iraqi people would welcome the "liberating" army with flowers. They lied when they said their "liberating" army would bring "happiness" to the Iragi people. They lied when they claimed they brought fresh water to the people in south Iraq. In fact, they did bring fresh water, but not for the Iraqi people. They brought it for their own forces who had destroyed the water systems and reservoirs in Basra. They lied when they said they would bring 200 tons of food for the Iragi people (after having bombed a food store of 75,000 tons). They lied when they said that they would not target civilians and basic infrastructure. Simple neighborhoods with no evidence of military installations are being attacked every day. leaving thousands of casualties -- neighborhoods like Mansour, Shu'la, Sha'ab, Amin, and Karradeh. A bus traveling to Syria and a car carrying seven children were bombed. Four ships packed with food and medicine for Iraq were prevented from docking in Um Qasr harbor. This is the "liberation" of the US and British

armies. This is "protection" for civilians. We hear that small towns have "surrendered", yet at the same time, on another TV station, we hear that fighting inside those same small towns is still going on, and in fact, no town has surrendered yet.

US and British media declare that there is an uprising in Basra. Another lie. Then we're told that Rumsfeld believes the people of Basra should NOT revolt because he fears for their safety!

Then come the sins of omission.... It seems that Rumsfeld "forgot" to inform us that the Shi'a in southern Iraq have openly professed their allegiance to the Iraqi government and their refusal to cooperate with the colonialists. He forgot to mention that 150,000 Iragis left the safety of Jordan to defend Baghdad. He forgot to tell us that the Iraqi Government distributed weapons to 7 million Iragis to help them resist the invaders. He forgot to tell us that it was a farmer who shot down an Apache helicopter. (Admittedly, it was a coincidence, but in Iraq, who cares for such minor details?) He forgot to relate the story of the 20 US paratroopers who, after landing somewhere in northern Iraq, were attacked and forced to withdraw by 4,000 farmers. He forgot to mention that until now, no Iragis have willingly left their homes and towns. He forgot to tell us that they have stated clearly their intention to stay in their homes and their rejection of US army "protection". He forgot to tell us that this is the reason that hundreds of tents erected at the Jordanian border are empty.

Mr. Rumsfeld neglected to explain why five Syrian civilians were bombed to death in a bus while going back to Syria or why seven women and children were shot in a civilian car. He neglected to explain why over 600 persons (clearly not all were soldiers) were killed in the last assault on Karbala. He conveniently forgot to tell us that, confronted with massive popular support for the Iraqi regime, the US army will "have to" kill thousands of civilians -- the very same civilians that the US allegedly came to save! He neglects to tell us that the reason for cutting off the water and electricity supply to 1.8 million people in Basra was to force them to revolt against their government.

Lies and ornissions are part and parcel of this war, it seems. Without the diverse media coverage, we may even be tempted to believe the lies. US and British officials were offended by Iraqi TV's airing of prisoners and dead soldiers. They are not offended, however, to see Iraqi prisoners on their TV screens. Will we soon hear that US and British media (along with Kuwaiti TV perhaps?) have a broadcasting monopoly?

The United States believed it had recovered from the Vietnam War after the Gulf War of 1991. Now, it seems that Iraq's recovery from the Gulf War of 1991 has precipitated a new outbreak of 'Vietnam complex' in the United States. Meanwhile, Bush remains ignorant as usual and indulges in repetitive rhetoric, boring us to the bones with all his clichés.

Asked why the war is not going as smoothly as he envisioned, Mr. Rumsfeld defended his cowardly self

by saying: "It's not me! It's General Franks who made the military plans!"

### Why this war on Iraq?

The US couldn't prove that Iraq has weapons of mass destruction. The United Nation's inspectors couldn't find any evidence for any nuclear weapons, nor any bacteriological or poisonous gas. Even the invading US and British army declared that they have not found any evidence for weapons of mass destruction.

While Iraq tried to avoid the war by cooperating with the United Nations, the United States never tired of inventing excuses to launch the war. First it was the weapons of mass destruction. When these were not found, a connection to bin Laden and international terrorism was invented. When this connection proved wrong, a regime change became necessary. When this proved to be not so simple, freedom for the Iraqi people was put forward.

We all know about the rich oil fields and the strategic geographic location of Iraq. But do we understand what Iraq represents in terms of progressive thought, culture, history and Arab nationalism? Iraq indeed did not abide by the conditions of US globalization and has worked against US hegemonic plans. Iraq was an exception among its neighbors and established itself as a progressive, modern, secular and ambitious state, despite the style of the regime in Baghdad, in particular when we compare it with all those backwards, feudal, but US-friendly regimes surrounding Iraq. Universities, advanced science,

schools, hospitals, books, social security and a relatively high standard of living characterized life in Iraq. In addition, Iraq provided jobs, before the embargo, for more than one million Egyptian workers, contributing more to the Egyptian economy than all the US aid given to Egypt. Tens of thousands of students from the Arab World were able to study in Iraq completely free of charge. Indeed, Iraq grew as an economic and political power in the region. The US administration decided that this model of independence had to end.

It is clearly not the weapons of mass destruction because Iraq has none. It is also not the dictatorial style of the regime in Baghdad. There are plenty of dictators in the world, many of them US friends. It is Iraq's defiance of US conditions that was seen by the US administration as a permanent threat to US ambitions in the region. The war on Iraq is meant to send a clear message, not only to Iraq but also to any others who might dare oppose US terms of globalization: We, the US, are enforcing the Pax Americana!

#### Another vital dimension to the war

But what we may not know or understand is how Iraq fits into the broader picture of the US (and Israeli) plan for the Middle East. We may not understand why the Iraqi people truly believe and are utterly convinced that the US Zionist lobby and Israel are another driving force behind the aim to destroy Iraq. Patrick Seale described the aims of the war as follows: "Since 1991: to affirm America's global supremacy in a strategically vital, oil-rich part of the world, and to protect Israel's

regional supremacy and its monopoly of weapons of mass destruction".

All this may become clearer as we study a report published by the US-based Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies in 1996. The report was prepared by the "Study Group on a New Israeli Strategy Toward 2000," long before the events of September 11, 2001. Some of the authors of the report are presently senior advisors in the Bush Administration. Among the authors are Richard Perle (who recently resigned his position for ambiguous reasons), Douglas Feith, and David Wurmser. The report, entitled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm", has some interesting points to ponder:

- The Israeli Government under Netanyahu is advised to back away from the concept of "comprehensive peace" with its neighbors and move toward a "peace for peace" formula.
- Israel is advised to work closely with Turkey and Jordan "to contain, destabilize, and roll-back some of its most dangerous threats".
- Israel is advised "to change the nature of its relation with the Palestinians, including the 'right of hot pursuit' for self defense into all Palestinian areas and nurturing alternatives to Arafat..."
- A new approach to peace is presented, in which the land for peace formula, which "placed Israel in the position of cultural, economic, political, diplomatic, and military retreat", should be changed into 'peace for peace', 'peace through strength' and self reliance: the balance of power."

- "We have for four years pursued peace based on a New Middle East. We in Israel cannot play innocents abroad in a world that is not innocent. Peace depends on the character and behavior of our foes. We live in a dangerous neighborhood, with fragile states and bitter rivalries. Displaying moral ambivalence between the effort to build a Jewish state and the desire to annihilate it by trading 'land for peace' will not secure 'peace now'. Our claim to the land...is legitimate and noble. It is not within our own power, no matter how much we concede, to make peace unilaterally. Only the unconditional acceptance by Arabs of our rights, especially in their territorial dimension, 'peace for peace' is a solid basis for the future."
- The northern border has to be secured by engaging Hizbollah, Syria, and Iran as the "principal agents of aggression in Lebanon" by "establishing the precedent that Syrian territory is not immune to attacks emanating from Lebanon by Israeli proxy forces". If striking Syrian military targets in Lebanon "should prove insufficient, striking at select targets in Syria proper" is an acceptable tactic. Israel should take every opportunity to "remind the world of the nature of the Syrian regime".
- "Negotiations with repressive regimes like Syria require cautious realism. One cannot sensibly assume the other side's good faith. It is dangerous for Israel to deal naïvely with a regime murderous of its own people, openly aggressive toward its neighbors, criminally involved with international drug traffickers and counterfeiters, and supportive of the

most deadly terrorist organizations. Given the nature of the regime in Damascus, it is both natural and moral that Israel abandon the slogan 'comprehensive peace' and move to contain Syria, drawing attention to its weapons of mass destruction program..."

- "Israel can shape its strategic environment in cooperation with Turkey and Jordan by weakening and even rolling back Syria. This effort can focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq [emphasis ours] -- an important Israeli strategic objective in its own right..."
- "Jordan has challenged Syria's regional ambitions recently by suggesting the restoration of the Hashemites in Iraq."
- "Israel has an interest in supporting diplomatically, militarily and operationally Turkey's and Jordan's actions against Syria, such as securing tribal alliances with Arab tribes that cross into Syrian territory and are hostile to the Syrian ruling elite."
- "Were the Hashemites to control Iraq, they could use their influence over Najaf to help Israel wean the south Lebanese Shia away from Hizbollah, Iran, and Syria."

Originally, the US and British vision for the success of the war depended on three premises; one of them or all three together would have led to the successful outcome of a swift and decisive war:

First, the Iraqi people would rise up against the regime. Second, the army would engage in its own revolt against the regime. Third, the Iraqi government would collapse due to fear and embarrassment.

Based on these three premises, Mr. Rumsfeld and his generals predicted that the war would be brief. Not six days, of course, but maybe six weeks. Definitely not six months.

The first 17 days are over and there is no end in sight. On the contrary, the US has even resorted to sending in "reinforcements" of an additional 120,000 US troops. The media war is as brutal as the war itself and preliminary reports indicate that the US and Britain are losing. Peter Arnett, the former CNN reporter during the first Gulf War in 1991, has been fired from his job at NBC and at National Geographic because he dared to say that the first stage of this war has been a fiasco for the coalition forces. Censorship is evident all over the news in the United States as only Fox News and CNN are widely heard.

The Iraqi Government, as well as its army, has proven so far to be professional, disciplined, and effective. Their display of courage on the battlefield has surprised all the analysts. How else can we explain that a small town like Um Qasr is able to resist for six days? How else can we explain that a small city like Nasiriya and other Iraqi towns continue their brave resistance?

In view of this new and unexpected reality, and facing the increasing worldwide protests against the war, especially in the Arab world, George Bush, Tony Blair, Jack Straw and Colin Powell have deemed the time is right to introduce the "Road Map" as a possible solution for the Middle East conflict. Jack Straw confesses guilt over double standards and Powell promises to go ahead with the Road Map "as soon as possible". Once again the Palestine question has been pushed into the core of the day's events, even though it was used as an escape hatch by Britain and the US.

The Iraqi people love Iraq. Their passion for their country is greater than their hatred for Saddam Hussein. And their hatred for the US government and its inhumane embargo that caused the death of hundreds of thousands and destroyed their infrastructure, causing poverty, illness, and death, and forced a prosperous country with a relatively high standard of living to beg for its own money from the United Nations, is infinitely greater than their hatred for Saddam Hussein's regime. The people of Irag sincerely believe that the US Government is the cause of their misery. And the Iraqi people truly believe that the United States and Britain are the new colonialists and occupiers, driven by the US Zionist lobby and Israel. They give examples of how the Russian people hated Stalin but they stood beside him and fought with him against Hitler.

The United States, facing the unity and the determination of the Iraqi people to defend their homeland and independence against the invaders, may end up bombing and killing those whom they have allegedly come to liberate.

The pictures of US and British soldiers lining up Iraqis against the wall, binding their hands behind their backs, blindfolding them or hooding them and humiliating them, in addition to the pictures of the

blown-away civilians and the destroyed markets and homes remind the world, the Arab world and the Palestinians in particular, of the similarity between the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the new US/British occupation of Iraq.

The pictures of the destruction and bombardment of Iragi cities, people and culture will remain for years to come a clear mark of disgrace in the history of the United States and England. The resistance of the Iraqi people proves that they neither desire nor cherish the "freedom for Iraq" á la United States/Great Britain or Israel. In addition, as the economic vultures are already roaming over the corpses of Iraq, dividing and playing "catch as catch can", the Iragis have no reason at all to believe in the good will of the occupation and the words of Mr. Bush, who will most probably be heading a petroleum company with interests in Iraq after leaving office. The Iraqi people are sophisticated enough to realize that the Iraqi oil which Mr. Bush allegedly came to save will soon be shamelessly exploited by foreign corporations.

The battle in Iraq might be won by the US and British army because of their clear military supremacy, but the war in Iraq is far from over. The Iraqi spirit of resistance, which proved itself on the ground in the last 17 days, surprised all political and military analysts who were predicting a quick surrender. The battle of Baghdad will play a decisive role. The United States is now bombarding Baghdad and all other Iraqi cities with tons of bombs and thousands of rockets hoping

that by killing thousands of civilians, the resistance movement will cease to exist.

The outcome of this war is not certain by any means. Whoever believes that a happy Hollywood ending is in store for this new American blockbuster is sorely mistaken.



# The New Mongols in Baghdad

April 2003

Once again, Baghdad is ravaged by a horde of Mongols. The memory goes back to 1258 A.D. when the Mongol army marched from the steppes and caves of Central Asia, and with their horses and weapons destroyed the cradle of human civilization. They entered Baghdad, ravaging its houses, its cultural heritage, its museums, schools, hospitals and libraries.

Holagu Khan, the Mongol prince cried: "I want the gold and silver!"

"We found thousands of books, maps and architectural heritage," some of his companions said.

"I do not care. Throw everything in the Tigris. Bring me the gold and silver."

Baghdad was burning. The city was destroyed. So many books were thrown into the ancient river that the water was turned blue after flowing red from the blood which had been shed into it. Baghdad meant nothing to those invaders but gold and silver. After the city was destroyed the Mongols left Baghdad in flames, with smoke billowing over the proud city.

Baghdad has had its share of sad and terrifying history. The land between the two rivers looks back on seven thousand years of civilization and human invention. Baghdad was the capital of human civilization, evidenced by its walls, its buildings, and its architecture. In Baghdad the first alphabet was used and the first laws were written. In Mesopotamia the

first-ever creation myth, the Gilgamesh legend, was written, and the hanging gardens, one of the wonders of the ancient world, were built. On the shores of the Tigris and Euphrates the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Akkadians and the Hittites built the most famous civilizations of ancient times.

How today resembles those days 800 years ago! The Mongols are back again. This time they came from overseas with large ships and aircraft carriers, transporting tanks and rockets. They came in like thunder, bringing with them the most sophisticated killing machines mankind has ever known. The cry of their leader is similar to that of Holagu 800 years ago. They are repeating words that have no real meaning: liberation of Iraq, democracy and the fall of dictatorship. On the 9th of April 2003 Baghdad fell after having been bombarded day and night for 20 days.

The world cried: "Take care, invaders! Remember the richness of the culture. Protect the libraries and the museums. Do not allow the universities and the heritage of centuries-old civilizations to be destroyed."

The new Holagu did not care a bit. He laughed. "What do we care about culture? We came for the black gold. The civilization of Mesopotamia can be thrown into the river and go to hell."

For the new Mongols, Baghdad was no more than a mere gas station or fuel depot. The people of Baghdad stood by helplessly: "You came for our gold but leave us our civilization, our museums and our universities."

The Mongols did not listen; they went wild and allowed the wild to get even wilder. While the soldiers had time to protect the oilfields they stood by idly and allowed the temples of civilization to be raped and ravaged. Other cities shared Baghdad's fate. In Mosul the university, in Baghdad the museums... The new Mongols watched as a civilization was destroyed. They watched as the houses were burned down and the museums were robbed.

How little the Mongols of this world have learned from the past! Just as in 1258, the first thing the Mongols of the White House did was to secure the black gold and the wealth of Iraq. The last thing they thought about was the well-being of the Iraqi people, the culture of Iraq, the civilization preserved at the museum of Baghdad.

Who knows? Maybe Bush was dancing in a trance seeing Baghdad burning and its culture raped? Maybe indeed this leader of the free world who can barely read at an adult level suffers from an inferiority complex towards a civilization that gave so much more to mankind than the present US administration will ever be able to offer. What do the Holagus of the modern world have to offer aside from the culture of consumption, arrogance, and disrespect for other civilizations?

Despite everything Baghdad will endure and remain and ultimately will have its last word. Baghdad will find the suitable way to reply to those who dared to rape it and enslave it. Hammurabi, Nebuchadnezzar, Harun al-Rashid, and the poets and scientists will return to walk along the banks of the Tigris and among the palm trees, restoring them their dignity.

The cannons will be silenced after they have discharged all their greed and ignorance. The Mongols will finally discover their historic stupidity and the crime they have committed thinking that the power surplus could ever replace the culture and civilization surplus in Baghdad and the land between the two rivers.





### Chapter Three

# **THE MISSING ROLES**

The Arab States and the Intifada

Democracy and the Arab World

The European Role

## The Arab States and the Intifada:

### A Relay Race -- Backwards

October 2002

People still remember the day when the old general Sharon came to power after defeating the young general Barak in the last Israeli elections. Sharon's victory was a lightning bolt that struck the Palestinian leadership and Arab regimes. The initial reaction was one of surprise, despair and depression. Most people predicted the area descending into still greater violence. Loud cries of protest came from all corners of the Arab world from those seeking to isolate Sharon and protect the peace process.

A different opinion came forth from the United States administration which viewed Israeli 'democracy' as a model for the Middle East, notwithstanding the Jewish state's inhumane policies and more than 35 years of illegal military occupation. The US immediately protected Sharon and turned all its efforts towards strengthening its relationship with the old general. It seemed that the United States was ready to sacrifice the peace process in an attempt to legitimize its pro-Israeli bias, even as Sharon was leading the region deeper into confrontation.

It was said then that only the most extreme and cruel leaders were able to make historic decisions, i.e. anything involving what might be construed as a concession to the Palestinians. It was noted that Menachem Begin from the Likud was the one who reached a peace agreement with Egypt. Sharon, it

was argued, was now head of the government and not the same adolescent Sharon who had led the opposition. "Give him a chance," Washington implored. The Arab regimes and the Palestinian Authority accepted the US vision, firstly because they had no realistic choice and secondly because they lacked their own independent vision.

#### III omens

Instead of having his right-wing government risk isolation, Sharon began surrounding the Arab capitals and dictating terms. Within a few months his tanks were aiming their guns into Arafat's bedroom, confining him to his destroyed compound and isolating him completely from the outside world.

Sharon declared a comprehensive war against the Palestinian people and their political, economic and cultural structures without anyone daring to oppose him or condemn his acts. This situation was made possible after Bush announced that "Israel has the right to defend itself". Sharon became the "man of peace" while the resistance movement of the Palestinian people was declared an illegal terrorist organization. Arafat, not Sharon, became the outcast.

#### The Arab World

Though the first reaction of the Arab regimes was to call for solidarity with Palestinian resistance, power changes in the Middle East presented the Arab regimes with a serious test which led to the unfortunate (but unsurprising) revelation that the regimes were more impotent and paralyzed than ever before, both

internally and externally. As a consequence, the initial support of the Arab states gave way to an abrupt adoption of the US position of almost indiscriminately taking the Israeli side.

The question is, did the Arab regimes have any viable alternative but to retreat and collapse before the United States-Israeli alliance?

If we are to move away from simplistic, if persuasive, conspiracy theories which attribute the poor performance of Arab regimes to "external" factors, we must analyze their economic, political, and class structures as wielding tremendous influence on their external and internal policies. In these terms, we would wish to argue that a political system that fails to adopt an internal policy which respects the individual and national interests of its people and does not work to enhance democratic understandings and build a solid and sound social welfare system is unlikely to adopt an external policy that protects the national interests from external threats.

Over the years the Palestinian cause has always been important for the region as a whole, and therefore has provided much cause for concern for the Arab regimes. On the one hand, the Palestinian cause holds such general public approval that any political approach that fails to take Palestinian national rights into consideration would find itself in a permanent clash with the Arab masses. On the other hand, the Palestinian cause has consistently been a factor in mobilizing the Arab masses against the regimes themselves.

### **Principles of Resistance**

Within this framework, the Palestinian resistance movement (the Intifada) has become an expression of the Palestinian and Arab conscience and status of awareness; it has become the model to which all other movements are compared in terms of influence upon the collective mind of the Arab masses.

The Palestinian resistance movement reached legendary horizons and became, along with the Lebanese model, a comparative issue. It contained the potential to transform the national liberation struggle to a social and political liberation struggle against those Arab regimes which are confiscating the economic and political rights of the Arab people. The Palestinian people, through their steadfastness, sacrifice and resistance, proved that, despite suffering from an imbalance of power and being clearly overwhelmed by foreign arms and external finance. they have persevered in their resistance movement and clung firmly to their rights. This stands in clear contrast to the official speeches of the Arab regimes that have referred to the uselessness of the resistance movement toward the US/Israeli alliance

Most Arab regimes acknowledged very early on the dangers of the spreading of the revolutionary ethos of the Intifada; an ethos which threatens to spread beyond the borders of the occupation army. Its lessons and its political and humane values transcend boundaries and threaten to release the huge kinetic potential of human resources, economic power, natural reserves and the liberation of the culture and values of the Arab world.

Due to the weak performance of the Arab regimes and their political and economic fellowship with the imperialist countries, they have been transformed into vassal states which, in turn, have subdued Arab society over the last decades, making them backward and lacking in a political, social, and economic vision to create a future of hope. At the same time, resistance activities against these dynamics are establishing themselves in every country in the Arab world as a natural process to improve individual and societal conditions.

Despite the outstanding kinetic potential of the Arab world, most of the Arab people suffer from poverty, unemployment, oppression, the absence of democracy, inadequate social welfare systems, and the lack of developmental visions of their leaders. Furthermore, these societies suffer from political disunity. The national interests and the Pan-Arab national decisions are controlled by the multinational companies and foreign capital which promote a consumer culture that stands in opposition to thoughts of Pan-Arab progressiveness.

### **Mapping the Middle East**

In view of this general panorama, how should we interpret the positions and behavior of the Arab regimes, and in which direction are the vectors of their movement aimed? It is imperative to note that while we use the term Arab regimes, we still have to distinguish between each individual regime and avoid dealing with them as if each one were simply a copy of the others.

The nationalist Arab regimes, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon, are still applying a policy of resistance regardless of external pressures. They have, to varying degrees, internal and external social, political, and economic visions that do not necessarily conform with the vision of the United States.

The so-called moderate regimes, which include Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, are considered allies of the United States and with the exception of Saudi Arabia have signed peace treaties with Israel. As the political balance of power stands at the moment, the rest of the Arab countries have very limited influence in forming Pan-Arab policies -- either because they are geographically distant or because they are embroiled in their own internal problems, as is the case in Algeria, Tunis, Libya, Sudan and Yemen.

#### **Two Streams**

There are thus two streams forming the policy in the Arab World; the axis of Syria and Lebanon which finds support in Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Algeria, and the axis of Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia which finds support in Morocco, Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf states. There are, of course, many contradictions, inconsistencies, disagreements, and competition among the members of the first axis. The Syrian-Iraqi dispute, for example, is still unresolved, despite the detente and rapprochement between the two states. Lebanon is still attempting to minimize the influence and presence of Syria.

There is also clear competition between Saudi Arabia, which considers itself the cradle of Islam and has a strong relationship with the United States, and Egypt, which is a fulcrum of Arab thought, human resources, human power, history and culture. Jordan has an 'inbetween' status but retains significance despite the dissolution of its political and administrative bonds with the West Bank (as announced by the late King Hussein in July 1988) by virtue of the fact that more than half of the people in Jordan are of Palestinian origin and Jordan has the longest border with Israel.

Although Egypt and Jordan have peace treaties with Israel, both have similar problems in selling the peace treaties to their public. In both countries, grassroots opposition to the treaties is strong. The significance of the so-called "moderate" axis is evidenced by the inclusion in this axis of the Palestinian Authority, which also follows what is perceived as a pragmatic policy line in relation to the U.S. and Israel.

#### **Lowest Common Denominators**

The relations between Arab countries are regulated according to the grade of inconsistencies or the number of interests that happen to overlap at a given time. However, all differences aside, the following major features are common to all:

The relations of those regimes with their constituencies are based on oppression. The regimes view the political movement of the people as a threat to their own legitimacy and privileges.

Those regimes came to power through military coups or through inheritance or unbelievably contrived elections (e.g., winning by 99.9%).

Most of the regimes deal with the Palestinian problem in a manner that serves their own interests, and often little else. In short, they use the Palestinian problem to legitimize their own power.

Most of the regimes are hostile to democratic changes whether of political, social, or cultural nature. These regimes view democracy as a threat to their stability and they deal with democracy only as a method of cementing their own power, not to unleash their people's capabilities and energies.

The position and daily practices of the Arab regimes toward the Intifada constantly reveal decreasing levels of enthusiasm and support. The reason and motivations for this frustrating reality can be traced to the following significant stages of the Intifada:

### Stage one:

# From the beginning of the Intifada on 28 September 2000 to the fall of Barak in February 2001

Most of the Arab regimes viewed the Intifada as a spontaneous response by the Palestinians to the provocative visit of Sharon to the al-Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. They dealt with the Intifada initially as a limited or transient phenomenon, which would soon wear itself out. They saw the Intifada as an attempt to improve the conditions of the Oslo agreement within its own context, but never as an effort to create an alternative to Oslo.

The Arab regimes also saw the Intifada as a convenient tool for improving their own image at home. This was evident in many political addresses hailing the Intifada as the realization of a legitimate right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation. In addition, they used the Intifada to agitate against many oppressive policies of Israel.

Barak's massive violent reaction to the outbreak of the Intifada very quickly bred hope in those regimes for a swift end to the Intifada. However the ability of the Palestinian people and their political movement to absorb Israeli blows, their readiness to make still greater sacrifices, and the clarity of their political goals of freedom and independence started to worry the Arab regimes, especially after the Arab mass movement began forming a larger support mechanism for the Palestinian people.

The Arab regimes, especially those moderate regimes, clearly showed their dismay and started to press the Palestinian leadership to halt the Intifada and accept whatever the United States administration and Israel called for in terms of political and security settlements during the Camp David summit and later in Taba.

When Arafat refused "Barak's generous offer" he was immediately put under pressure not only from the United States, but also from several Arab leaders. Arafat remained steadfast and insisted on the national rights of the Palestinian people to demand a withdrawal of Israeli soldiers to the June 1967 borders, the right to return, dismantling of the settlements and a just solution for the Jerusalem problem. President

Clinton threatened Arafat very clearly, "If you do not sign, Israel will wage war against you with the backing of the United States."

The concerns of the Arab regimes started to grow as it became evident the situation was threatening to spiral out of control. The resistance movement was growing stronger. On the other hand Barak, who was preparing a comprehensive war, was acting under two influences: first, his conviction that he could stop the Palestinian resistance movement through the use of greater force; and second, increasing pressure from the Likud opposition and Sharon.

In March 2001 the Arab Summit held in Amman reached agreement on the following points:

- glorifying the Intifada and its heroism;
- condemnation of Israeli policies and practices;
- approval of a plan to support the Palestinian people;
- formation of a committee to follow up on the incidents in Palestine.

The resolutions of the Arab summit were approved despite the contradictions between the two axes in the Arab world. The nationalist axis (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon) called for the boycott of Israel, the condemnation of US bias in favor of Israel, and the unconditional support for the Intifada. The moderate axis (Jordan, Egypt) emphasized its support for the Intifada and condemnation of the Israeli occupation, but insisted on asking the United States to play a larger role to stop the violence in the region. They refused

to consider implementing a boycott of Israel and stated that maintaining ongoing relations was necessary in order to influence Israel positively.

At this conference, Saudi Arabia distinguished itself through its criticism of the United States and reassurance of financial support for the Palestinian people. Indeed, this was an attempt by the Saudis to secure a leading role based on their economic power, influence in the Gulf Cooperation Council, and their long-standing relationship with the United States.

It is noteworthy that the Arab Summit usually meets to discuss Pan-Arab issues. Nevertheless, top-level meetings of Arab leaders, whether at the level of their foreign ministries or in affiliation with the Arab League, remain captive to the rivalries among the different countries. For this reason their decisions are usually vague and non-binding and the Arab masses tend not to take the Arab summits seriously, with the possible exception of the first one in 1964 under the leadership of Jamal Abdel Nasser.

Shortly before the Arab summit, Barak lost the Israeli elections on 6 February 2001 and Sharon came to power.

### Stage two:

# From Sharon's accession in March 2001 through 11 September 2001

Barak had failed to crush the Intifada, and he had failed in the Israeli elections. Sharon came to power as the King of Israel, the savior. He was elected not because he had an overall vision for peace or a unique master plan for solving the Middle East conflict. He was elected because he promised the Israeli public absolute security. He was the general with a bloody history. He was the "hero" of the 1973 war with Egypt and the commander who from 1970 to 1973 taught the Palestinian people in Gaza a lesson. His chances of winning the elections were not at all diminished by his past masterminding of the invasion of Lebanon and Beirut and the 1982 massacres in Sabra and Shatilla.

Sharon's election was a challenge for the Intifada as much as it was an embarrassment for Israel's friends. Further, it presented the Arab regimes with another serious test of their credibility among the Arab people. The unpleasant picture of Sharon in the Arab world helped the Arab regimes to elevate the tone of their political rhetoric to include the cry for isolating Sharon if that were to prove necessary.

Initially the speeches of Arab leaders were aggressive. Nevertheless, they expected that the elected general would crush the Intifada within one hundred days as he had promised. They calculated in both directions; if Sharon were to succeed in suppressing the Intifada, then it would be good for them, and if the Intifada were to succeed in bringing down Sharon, then it also would be good for them.

But the expectations of the Arab regimes were undermined by the steadfastness of the Palestinian people and the efficiency of their resistance movement, the increasing losses on the Israeli side (in both human and economic terms) and the increasingly oppressive measures of the Israeli army.

The dilemma for the Arab regimes grew more complicated when the Palestinian resistance movement succeeded in establishing a certain delicate balance with the occupying forces. As the confusion of the regimes held no foreseeable resolution, they increased their call for the United States to play a larger role. (The game had become too dangerous for their liking.) They continued to support the Intifada but only in their speeches. The first sign of diversion took the form of directing their financial support from the Palestinian National Authority in favor of international and national non-governmental organizations. Their support suddenly acquired a more humanitarian character, intended to avoid political support of the Palestinian authority.

During this period it became evident that Sharon was unable to crush the Intifada. The Israeli public started to question where he was taking them. He responded with an agenda that emphasized power over negotiations or compromise. His speeches became more radical than before and the government's assassination policy proceeded to reach its highest peak to date.

Sharon's open and comprehensive war against the Palestinians was met with increasingly softer speeches by the Arab leaders. It culminated when the Qatari Foreign Minister, Hamad bin Jasem, stated that the Arabs should go to the United States "begging" for an end to Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

### Stage three:

## From 11 September 2001 through the Arab summit in Beirut in March 2002

The United States declared a comprehensive war on international terrorism. It started to reorganize its agenda and priorities. Disguising its actions in the wake of September 11th, the United States began to settle outstanding accounts with those states it resented for failing to conform with its policies.

Sharon rode the US wave to settle the Israeli account with the Palestinian people. Until that time Sharon was under heavy attack, not only from the international community but also from the Israeli community for not being able to end the Intifada as he had promised. His neglect of the economy led to the deterioration of all sectors in the Israeli society, especially the tourism sector. Sharon found no way to subdue the Intifada with the measures he used at that time. The incident of September 11th provided him with an opportunity to maximize the use of force. He pushed militarily, politically and economically to crush the resistance movement. With US support, he declared that his war against the Palestinian people was part of the campaign against international terrorism. Arafat became tantamount to bin Laden and the Palestinian resistance movement was compared to the Taliban.

In view of Washington's new formula ("Those who are not with us are against us") and its embrace of Israeli oppression ("Israel has the right to defend itself"), greater inconsistencies emerged between the Arab regimes and the Palestinian leadership, as well as the resistance movement. The official Arab position lost room to maneuver in and accordingly started to readjust itself, especially after the US-Israeli alliance left no room for objection or criticism. Washington started to demand very clear statements of policy consistent with its own vision.

In the meantime, the United States' relatively easy victory in Afghanistan increased its appetite for influence in the Middle East. Driven by the common interests of the United States and Israel and the oppressive measures of the "Israeli general" under the slogan of fighting international terrorism, the United States pushed to enforce its will, and that of Israel, in the Middle East. However, this endeavor faced two major obstacles: first, the Palestinian resistance movement was unbreakable and escalating and second, Iraq was steadfast in rejecting US demands.

Just as the Palestinian cause represents a moral and historic cause for the Arab masses, it also represents a model for improving one's own situation. This fact pushed the United States to seek an end to the Palestinian "problem" as soon as possible, driving the Bush administration out of its initial silence. It was difficult, if not impossible, for Washington to finish its business with Iraq without first dealing with the Palestinian problem.

In view of this, US policies took four major strategies:

 unleashing Sharon and his machinery against the Palestinian people under the slogan "Israel has the right to defend itself";

- isolating Arafat by referring to a loss of trust in him and describing him as impotent and useless in controlling the "Palestinian terror";
- asking the axis of "moderate" countries -- Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia -- to declare openly their willingness to work to stop the Intifada and reject the "Palestinian terror";
- pressuring the axis of nationalist countries -- Syria and Lebanon -- while threatening them with war and categorizing them in the "axis of evil", in addition to speaking openly of the need to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

Pressure from the Arab masses grew along with the countervailing pressure from Washington, leaving the Arab regimes between the hammer and anvil, a situation accommodated by the resolutions of the Beirut summit in March 2002. There, the axes of the "moderate" regimes and those of the national axis accepted the Saudi initiative that had been published beforehand in several international newspapers.

This particular incident angered several Arab leaders and most likely contributed to Mubarak's and King Abdullah's boycott of the summit, while claiming their absence was an act of solidarity with Arafat who was prevented by Israel from leaving the country.

Saudi Arabia knew well that Amman and Cairo would have to support the initiative, not only because the United States and Europe had approved it but also because the Palestinian leadership did so as well. This explains why Saudi Arabia was more concerned about convincing Damascus and Beirut.

On his way to meet Colin Powell, the Saudi crown prince traveled through Damascus to Morocco without stopping in Cairo or Amman. In general, the acceptance of the Saudi initiative was an attempt of the Arab regimes to prostrate themselves before the United States. They sought to push themselves into the limelight as if they had something to contribute. Arafat, whom Israel prevented from attending the Beirut summit, agreed with the Saudi initiative, which called for the implementation of the land-for-peace formula and normalization of relations between Israel and the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia. The refugee problem was to be postponed for further negotiations.

### Stage four:

From the Israeli invasion of Palestinian cities on 28 March 2002 through President Bush's speech on 24 June 2002

The invasion (reoccupation) by the Israeli army of the Palestinian cities and villages and the massive destruction it left behind came as a military and political response to the resolutions of the Beirut summit which had been widely considered a strategy for peace. The invasion was a slap in the face of all Arab regimes.

As much as Sharon wanted to teach Arafat a lesson and as much as he wanted to end the Palestinian resistance movement, forcing both to surrender, he also wanted to send a message to the Arab leaders. Its essence was that the horizon of the initiative was still too high and, instead, they needed to make unending concessions. Needless to say, the Arab initiative was rejected de facto by Israel while the United States for a

moment lost its perpetual justification for Israel and agreed to meet with the Saudi crown prince to discuss the initiative. When the two leaders met, the initiative was killed, and the Arab regimes have not uttered a word to defend their own initiative.

Washington's support for Israel and its military options and the cruelty of the invasion caused high losses on the Palestinian side involving the severe destruction of cities, crops, and homes. This revealed the Arab regimes' latest phase of impotence and re-ignited the Palestinian resistance. Developments moved the Arab masses for a while, leading to an explosion in the streets from Morocco to the Persian Gulf. This revealed again the deep inconsistency found between the Arab masses and their governments.

The Arab regimes found themselves in a quagmire. The Arab uproar was understood to be a political or social expression of a multi-dimensional discourse in the following three dimensions:

The first dimension expressed the deep frustration and despair within the Arab masses as a result of their difficult economic and political reality;

The second dimension was an expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people, a rejection of US policy, and a condemnation of Washington's pro-Israel bias. The Arab masses reaffirmed that the Palestinian cause is still at the heart of Pan-Arab nationalism;

The third dimension found its expression in the condemnation of the Arab regimes' impotence as much as the declaration of Beirut found a general consensus by the Arab masses.

These three dimensions coalesced in a dialectical manner that led to a fourth dimension. The movement of the Arab masses surged ahead to express solidarity with the Palestinian people, reject US policy, and condemn the impotence of the official Arab regimes, and this process began its transformation from a movement of rage toward external issues to a movement raising awareness of the internal issues. The continuation of this movement would indeed threaten the interests of the Arab regimes.

This transformation in the movement of the Arab street started to reflect itself at the societal level. It also started to reflect a collective awareness that was maturing through its practice. At its core was the necessity to stand firmly on the side of the Palestinian people and to protect Arab national interests and these objectives were not possible without radical changes in the Arab society at large; politically, socially and economically.

The movement of the Arab street was no longer a spontaneous expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people, and the Arab regimes never again looked at this movement in such simplistic terms. The movement started to unite all sectors of the society in calling for radical change that would restructure and rebuild the political, economic and social life throughout the Arab world and in each of its member states.

This imminent danger had to be ended as soon as possible before it were to acquire major political power. To this end, the Arab regimes started to pressure Arafat more and more to put an end to the Intifada and take

strong measures against the activists. Their positions started to echo those of Washington and Tel Aviv.

Nevertheless, the motives and goals of Washington were not the same of those of the Arab regimes. The Arab regimes desired a political initiative that would stop the uprising of the Arab masses. The United States had a more comprehensive solution in mind -- encouraging the Arab leaders to compete with each other over which could please the United States more. Washington wanted to give Sharon enough time to crush the infrastructure of the resistance movement as a first step toward an overall solution based on US-Israeli conditions.

The Bush administration was well aware of the dangers of the movement of the Arab street since it conveys open hostility toward the United States. However, the Bush administration used the same movement as a means of pressuring the Arab regimes and extracting further concessions from them. The price they had to pay Washington was to remain silent as the Palestinian resistance movement was slaughtered and to accept the coming attack on Iraq.

The comprehensive goal of US policy was to bring the Palestinian Authority and the Arab regimes to the point where they were forced to accept the US-Israeli conditions for the resolution of the Middle East conflict. Washington could then rearrange the region as it saw fit.

### Stage five:

# From Bush's speech of 24 June 2002 through the present

The area witnessed a dramatic increase in war activities, invasions and re-invasions as well as increased Palestinian resistance activities. Israel reacted with a comprehensive invasion and siege over many cities and villages, extending a curfew and further damaging the economy. The climate was ready for the United States to present its vision for peace without any serious Arab opposition. The Arab regimes were aware that they had but one choice -- to accept the US vision despite the weaknesses and inconsistencies of Bush's speech, which concentrated on the following:

- isolating Arafat and changing the Palestinian leadership;
- restructuring the Palestinian security forces under CIA, Egyptian and Jordanian supervision;
- redrawing of the Palestinian society and its political forces;
- controlling and supervising the economy of the Palestinian Authority.

According to Mr. Bush, the solution of the Middle East conflict was not so urgent. The land-for-peace formula could wait three years or more, and the Arab initiative of the Beirut summit could be buried in the deepest drawer. The lesson was for the Arab monarchs and leaders: if there were to be a solution on the horizon, then it could only be an American one (even though the Saudi initiative did not necessarily contradict the

most basic US designs for solving the Middle East conflict).

All conditions in Bush's speech were to be met against the gradual alleviation of the pressure and the oppressive measures of the Israeli government. Bush retreated from his demand that the Israeli government should withdraw immediately from Palestinian cities, as Sharon had already rejected this demand in his own dramatic way. As far as the final solution was concerned, this problem could be resolved somehow when the negotiating parties addressed issues including Jerusalem, borders, refugees, and settlements.

The Arab regimes, as currently structured and dependent upon the United States, had to accept the US initiative. They also accepted the US terminology regarding terrorism. Even the long-standing ally of the United States, Saudi Arabia, was now receiving indirect threats from Washington regarding its alleged harboring of terrorists. The present compliance of Saudi Arabia seemed to be insufficient. Saudi Arabia was being asked to be more careful in its initiatives, not to assert itself too strenuously in dealings with the other Arab regimes. The Arab regimes accepted the restructuring of the Palestinian society on the social, political and economic level that they would never accept in their own countries. But for the United States and Israel this is not the issue.

Finally, why should the Arab regimes not accept the Palestinian Authority being transformed into a copy of themselves?

All done, four main points now characterize the future US policy in the Middle East:

- changing the governments in Palestine, Iraq and Iran;
- continuing the long-term war against "international terrorism";
- eliminating the weapons of mass destruction;
- changing the face of societies in the Middle East (democratization).

Confronting these objectives, which are for the most part directed against us, we cannot avoid recognizing the permanently weak position of Arab leaders, whose political horizons are in chronic decline. What started as their full support of the Palestinian resistance movement ended, after Amman and the Beirut summit, in complete resignation to US-Israeli demands. Any mistake or uproar could cost the head of any Arab leader.

However, life is richer than the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, and the results as viewed from a historical viewpoint differ from the results as judged by immediate self-enrichment. What remains certain is that as long as this reality contradicts the interests of the vast majority of the people, the people will strive with their last breath to change it.



## **Democracy and the Arab World**

November 2003

The Arab world seems to be an exception to the democratic changes elsewhere in the world. It is a region where oppression and absolutism reigns. Human rights are violated broadly and on different levels. The rule of law is absent and the riches are unfairly distributed in a much more visible way than any place on earth.

The rich people behave superficially, stupidly and pretentiously. Corruption is widespread and the rights of the marginalized sectors of society, in particular the poor, women, and minorities, are neglected. There is an enormous amount of violence which takes several forms, such as long-lasting cruel civil wars and terror movements that waste the lives of citizens as well as foreign visitors.

Prof. Muhammad Sayyed Said

Consultant to the Arab Committee for Human Rights

There has never been an apter description of the Arab world of the late twentieth century than in the words of Professor Muhammad Sayyed Said from Egypt.

Three significant factors have prohibited a development in the Arab world towards a strong and stable social, economic, and political entity which is

able to implement and defend democratic structures appropriately.

First, nearly a century of colonization and exploitation that succeeded the Turkish occupation;

Second, the appearance of regional Arab states with diverse development modes, coupled with differing economic systems in each due to alliances with various economic and political partners;

Third, the emergence of the Zionist state Israel that, in addition to its strong alliance with the colonial powers and the US, allied itself with the most reactionary powers in the region; acting viciously, forcefully, and destructively against any attempt to establish a progressive system in the Arab world.

The Salvador Allende experience has occurred several times in the Middle East up to the present day, culminating in the rejection of the Palestinian aspiration for statehood and the destruction of its nuclei and infrastructure.

Most of the Arab countries went through similar sociopolitical changes in the last 100 years. After World War I the Arab world was divided into regional states under colonial exploitation. After World War II, regional national revolutions ended decades of European colonialism and exploitation. The Arab Nation rose as part of the national liberation movement in the Third World at large. These national liberation movements chose to adopt different ideologies to pursue their freedom and independence. The nonaligned nations, to which most of the Arab countries belonged, formed an umbrella in order to avoid an alliance with the Soviet Union or an association with their former colonial powers and the emerging world power USA. Finally the national liberation movements succeeded in ridding themselves of the colonial armies, partly due to the exhaustion and weakness of the European countries, particularly England and France, who came out of WWII as victors, but were economically dependent on and politically defeated by their ally, the United States.

While Europe and the United States reaped the benefits of the industrial revolution, the bourgeois revolution was able to liberate the workers and the markets, establish new market strategies for the benefit of the capital, and build politically and economically powerful states that were protected by much more powerful armies.

In the Arab world, the bourgeoisie was not able to follow the same trend, being plagued by weakness due to poor economic structures and feudal conditions on the one hand, and relationships with international capital on the other side. Finally the Arab bourgeoisie failed to lead the cultural-economic revolution in the Arab world and any attempt, whether it was in form of the industrial revolution of Muhammed Ali of Egypt in the nineteenth century or Jamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt in the twentieth century, was crushed before it could bear any societal fruits.

In 1867 Karl Marx wrote in the preface to "Das Kapital": Alongside the modern evils, a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production, with their inevitable train of social and political anachronisms. We suffer not only from the living, but from the dead.

This sums up the development in the Arab world in the post-colonial era, especially in the present with the New World Order and era of Globalization. The Arab world of today is facing all these new challenges while already defeated and is ultimately incapable of standing up to these challenges. The Arab world could have been able to had it possessed the scientific tools and the sound knowledge to hand over control from the "dead" to the "living". Having not achieved that thus far contributed actively to the resurgence of the same old methods that result in the same backwardness that keeps the same production and social relations in an unenlightened state.

Those Arab countries such as Iraq and others, which tried to follow in the footsteps of Garibaldi or Bismarck were taught a lesson that ended in destruction, poverty and misery.

The Arab countries exist nowadays in a state of confusion and a permanent crisis. Arab society, due to its weak economy and subsequent tribal-feudal-aristocratic structure, lost the compass for modernization and the internal knowledge that should help determine its evolution and its future. This fact has nothing to do with the theoretical

acceptance of modern scientific development level of awareness among the existing ruling class or the society at large.

Despite the fact that we have reached the 21st century, the Arab world now seems to be dwelling in the 15th century -- the era before the notion of civil society. Despite capitalistic features and economic transactions in the Arab world, Arab society has not yet embraced post-modernization features or the culture of modern enlightenment with its rationale for change and for a more critical broad-based involvement towards increased freedom and democracy.

The new semi-capitalistic relations between the class structures of the Arab society were unable to displace the semi-feudal, aristocratic and tribal structures. Power remained in the hands of the family, tribe, and was evidenced by land ownership. Production and social relations remained bound to feudal, aristocratic and tribal traditions.

Military coups and small revolutions followed in most countries, pushing for land and agriculture reform and an end to the power of the feudal and aristocratic system. However the new system, which emerged from a feudal tribal system, continued utilizing the same old fashioned tools. The new system did not sever its ties with the centers of societal powers that served the previous colonial masters, but rather depended on them in almost all transactions. As long as the new system did not touch the basic interests of the colonial powers in their respective countries, the

colonial powers were content to deal with the new social structures in the Arab world.

President Jamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt led the Pan-Arab national movement by his strong charismatic personality, undisputed integrity, and sincere belief in freedom and independence. Although he propagated socialism, he failed to benefit from the democratic structures in his society or the potential energy of political diversity. The defeat of the Arab armies of 1967 constituted an end to the national liberation program of the Arab nation and allowed the former power structures to re-implant themselves onto the political ground -- but with a new facade and a contemporary character that was compatible with the new political powers in the international arena. These new structures became more dependent on the US than their previous regimes ever had been. Today the different Arab regimes are competing to satisfy their new master and lord of the New World Order and Globalization, the USA.

At present, Arab society is reverting to the dark ages of the past due to the regeneration of the unenlightened forces of fundamentalist Islamic movements, which are gaining momentum because the tribal-feudal-authoritarian ruling system fails to answer to the needs of the people and the leftist progressive forces proved unable to present an acceptable alternative. Omnipresent clashes between all social bourgeois structures drive the Arab society into a quagmire of currents: Islamic fundamentalist, national-feudal-tribal- aristocratic,

progressive leftist, and the current of the eternally poor and marginalized. It is best described as a "premodern" society where the gaps between the different classes are widening and social injustice is reaching alarming dimensions.

Within this analysis of the present situation of the Arab World we can conclude that democracy cannot dwell and be practiced until a certain environment has been achieved.

It goes without saying that democracy in the modern understanding emerged as a direct result of the industrial revolution and the bourgeois revolution, and cannot be simply imported and forced on others without the necessary groundwork. The experiences of post-war Japan and Germany are not likely to be successfully repeated in the same manner elsewhere. Saddam Hussein in Iraq was unable to repeat the Garibaldi's or Bismarck's experiments. If democracy should be established in the Arab world or in the Arab states, then it has to emerge from the same environment that provides the necessary and vital ingredients for its manifestation -- foremost among these economical development and political stability.

An industrial revolution in the Arab world is far from a reality at the time being and if one had been taking place in some sort or another as in Iraq, the colonial powers moved swiftly to quell it as quickly as it began. As long as the interests of the Arab bourgeoisie are directly linked to the globalization magnates it is

hardly likely that a change would come through them. It has been said that the bourgeois revolution of the nineteenth century was the first and the last bourgeois revolution.

Democracy in the world in general and the Arab World in particular must answer to the three following questions:

- To what extent are the practices of democratic freedoms allowed? And to what extent are these practices restrained by direct political, legal, and economical pressures?
- To what extent do the people possess the means to practice democracy? Which social structures control the financial resources, the legal experience, the media, the educational and cultural resources, and finally the economy? To what extent do living conditions limit the ability of the people to practice their freedoms?
- To what extent does the process of practicing civil liberties and democracy influence the political, cultural and economic decision-making? How and to what extent can the practice of civil liberties be translated into policy? Are there any social, legal or political tools that prevent this transformation?

These questions touch the nature of the state and its structures. These questions differentiate between the substance of democracy and the form of democracy.

#### Four remarks on the Arab countries:

- The Arab states that claim to be democratic never touched the structure, the financing, or the jobs of the oppressive tools of the state: the police, the army, and the secret police. There is no control over these organs but the will of the regent, which making them a Damocles sword hanging over the heads of the people. These organs are allowed to develop their tools of oppression through modernizing their methods.
- These countries are still ruled by totalitarian aristocracies which control all state institutions, public and official, whereas the vast majority of the people do not participate in or do not possess the minimum conditions to practice democracy. These conditions are either contained and/or controlled by the aristocracy itself or by the different shapes and structures of petite bourgeoisie.
- The process of decision-making is solely in the hands of the aristocracy and their bureaucratic apparatus, with only limited participation allowed to the bourgeoisie. The decisions that are taken depend mostly on general economic, political, and cultural policies that are set forth by outside powers such as the United States, the Zionist Movement, the World Bank and the IMF.
- Most of the regents have never separated religion from state affairs. They keep a violent balance between obedient regime-friendly religious streams and a rebellious Islamic fundamentalist religious stream.

The major task that is facing the Arab nation today is not modernizing our educational institutions or adopting a new, friendlier tone. The Arab states and their regimes are unable to practice democratic behavior on the political level and thus cannot pass this task to the public level. Democracy is not a grace or a gift that can fall into the peoples' laps. And it is not the people that are ungrateful and rejectionist.

Keeping democratic understanding out of the realm of the individual's daily life gives an excuse to backward rejectionist powers to fill in the gap and conquer the Arab street through slogans that cannot be discredited, thus empowering unenlightenment to generate more unenlightenment.

Achieving democracy in the Arab World requires breaking the monopoly of the aristocracy and their allies. It requires breaking the chains that were put on the people by the international corporations, the United States, and the Zionist movement. It requires establishing strong economies that secure the basic needs of the society, forming relationships with all sincere and freedom loving peoples through out the world, and creating an educational process in which people are taught the truth. It is the liberating of the Arab peoples' will and their national decision. It is the participation of all popular powers in forming a national consensus according to the best national interests.

Democracy in the Arab World is directly linked to the liberation of land and man and it cannot be

disconnected from the Pan-Arab national liberation movement.



# The European Role in the Middle East

#### and the Palestine Question

November 2002

#### The confluence of civilizations

For approximately three millennia European influences have permeated various aspects of daily life throughout the Orient, well beyond the Mediterranean where those influences are perhaps most notable. The interaction of scientists, philosophers, theologians, mathematicians, and astronomers, for example, tended to promote mutual benefits in the realm of empirical knowledge as well as culture. The Arab World became the Silk Road for Europe, and at times the traffic along it flowed in both directions to engender generally favorable perceptions on both sides. While the influence of the Arab World declined, Europe developed into a strong economical and military power. Despite this disparity, some interaction between the Arab world and Europe was maintained by individuals who viewed their different backgrounds as a resource, not a liability. Certain realities did unbalance commercial relations, but did not always become exploitative by nature. In this regard the Arab World maintained notably healthier relations with Europe than were possible with other countries including the United States, China, and Russia.

Long before the Crusades -- and especially thereafter -- the cradle of civilization wove together elements of Greek, Persian, Egyptian, Roman and finally European

culture. In the West the Arab Empire extended its boundaries to reach Spain, Middle France and Italy, and in the East as far as India. Arab culture and science influenced Europe like no other culture in modern European history, and the emergence of Ottoman Rule reversed the decline of the Arab Empire for the impressive duration of four centuries.

For over two hundred years the Crusades constituted one of the darkest eras of the relations between Europe and the Arab World. Although they were marketed under the guise of religion, the true motivations grew out of internal unrest in the political and economic spheres of Europe. It is noteworthy that the conflicting interests and ambitions intersected in Palestine, more specifically in Jerusalem, which lay at the heart of the conflict. After the Crusades, Europe fell into perpetual internal wars that culminated in the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of the modern concept of nation-statehood. During that period European interests in the Orient declined significantly due to the outbreak of another long war. this time related to the Ottoman invasion. The competition among European countries, in particular France and England, over the Arab World started with the Napoleonic invasions of Egypt.

### **Ambitions of modern Europe**

As the success of the Industrial Revolution increased the need for markets, European interests in the Arab World and Africa grew markedly. For that reason the Sick Man of the Bosporus had to die and all other competitors in the Middle East had to be eradicated.

The First World War actually began prior to 1914 when various European countries, concerned by the rise of Germany as a new competitor, started to compete with each other over their influence in the world to secure markets and raw materials for their industries. England and France (as well as the United States) took advantage of their victory in the First World War to implement their imperial policies in the Middle East as early as the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement. This document postulated that England was to acquire Palestine (under the British Mandate), Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and "Arabia", while France was to be given Syria and Lebanon. It is important to note that at the time England had forged an alliance with the Arab countries; in exchange for their support against the Ottoman Empire they were promised their independence after the war. Lenin revealed the details of the Sykes-Picot agreement after the Socialist revolution in 1917.

Although the United States was also on the victorious side, its presence in the Arab World did not reach significant levels for two reasons: its adherence to an isolationist policy and its recognition that France and England were the leading world powers, both economically and culturally.

#### Rise of Zionism

Meanwhile the Zionist movement that had been initiated officially with the Basel conference in 1897 became a political movement which was linked to the larger imperial policies. The Zionist lobby used the Jewish religion as a tool and declared Palestine as its home. On 2 November 1917 British Secretary of State

Lord Balfour issued his (in)famous statement committing England to allow the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The gradual emergence of Israel through the proliferation of Jewish settlements can and must be defined as the byproduct of European colonialism in the Arab World, permanently linking the Jewish state to unwelcome outside intervention.

The economic crisis of 1929 led European countries to redraft their plans for dividing the world into new and more closely guarded spheres of influence. Germany soon grew into a large and dangerous competitor, promoting Fascism within its own borders and in Italy, yet, despite reservations, some US and British leaders continued to invest in the German industry. Finally this inconsistency, coupled with other elements, contributed to the rising trend of conflict that led to the disastrous Second World War.

# The sun sets on Great Britain and France and rises over the United States

Despite the fact that England and France again emerged as victors after World War II, both countries were at the end of their political and economic power as absolute hegemonic forces. They started ridding themselves of their colonies for a variety of reasons including:

- the resistance of the colonized people against them;
- tile rise of United States imperialism, which began to manifest itself as never before in economical, cultural and political spheres;

- the formation of the Soviet Bloc and outbreak of the Cold War;
- the support from the Soviet Bloc for liberation movements in the Third World;
- the creation of the United Nations to succeed the League of Nations.

## The Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe)

After issuing the Balfour declaration, England encouraged Zionist settlement in Palestine while arming and training the settlers to take over. The Palestinian resistance movement to the colonization of their country lasted for many years, during which England forcefully put down the recurrent revolts. On 29 November 1947 the United Nations issued Resolution 181 which called for dividing Palestine between the Jews and the Palestinians. England ended its colonial mandate over Palestine on 14 May 1948. The Zionists seized control and declared the State of Israel the very next day, 15 May 1948, with the blessing and protection of the rising world leader: the United States. This forced creation resulted in the 1948 war and the expulsion of nearly one million Palestinians from their homes and the complete destruction of more than 470 Palestinian villages. It is necessary to mention that the Zionist movement was well prepared to enforce this bloody transition, as demonstrated by its haste in declaring the State of Israel and by the sophistication of its governing institutions. Moreover the forces of the Zionist movement included over 96,000 well-trained and wellequipped soldiers, whereas the Arab forces that

entered Palestine did not exceed 26,000 soldiers, who were much less well-trained and poorly equipped. In December 1948 the United Nations issued Resolution 194 calling for the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes. From that time to the present, however, Israel has refused to comply with any resolution that it perceives as detrimental to it own, uncompromising interests. The United States has served as a loyal apologist for Israeli intransigence.

#### Jamal Abdel Nasser and Pan-Arab nationalism

The Marshal plan in Europe cemented the hegemony of the United States in Europe and established the basis for its hegemony around the world. In 1956 France and England together with Israel, their organic creation, fought their last imperial war against Egypt after it nationalized the Suez Canal. England agitated against President Nasser and against the idea of Pan-Arab nationalism. Chamberlain compared President Nasser to Hitler and the drums of war were beaten in Israel and echoed as far away as France.

Interestingly, it was the United States that forced the European powers to withdraw in 1956, not because it had any particular affinity for Jamal Abdel Nasser or viewed him as a potential ally, but because it wished to send a clear message to England and France. That is, if Nasser were to be toppled, his downfall should be orchestrated exclusively by the United States. This episode can be viewed as one of the last acts of European imperialism in the Middle East, and as the starting point for United States imperialism. After having exploited what remained of European power

to its own advantage, Israel was forced to recognize that Europe was no longer the leader of the world and therefore reoriented it policies to generate goodwill and increased patronage from the United States. This shift can be viewed as having laid the foundation for the present US-Israeli alliance. Indeed there is little choice but to regard the Suez War as the last vestige of European imperialism in the Middle East. England lost all its colonies in the Arab World and Africa, and France left Algeria in 1962.

Meanwhile Pan-Arab Nationalism gained followers while resentment concerning the Nakba of 1948 increased. President Nasser in Egypt and Dr. George Habash from Palestine established the Arab Nationalist Movement. Under the leadership of Jamal Abdel Nasser and after Egypt emerged from the Suez conflict undefeated, the movement grew stronger. The Egyptian leader recognized very early the importance of independence and the strength of the Arab World. He called for the unity of the Arab states. He genuinely believed in the organization of the nonaligned nations as a means of gaining independence from the United States and the Soviet Union. This perspective was shared by many Third World leaders from Nehru (India) and Tito (Yugoslavia) to Lumumba (Congo), Nkruma (Ghana) and Sukarno (Indonesia). It is not surprising, though nonetheless disappointing, that the United States would support military coups designed to topple the regimes of leaders of the nonaligned nations. The Arab people revered Jamal Abdel Nasser greatly even though the unity of the Arab states in many ways fell short of his ideals. It is undeniable that during Nasser's

era, Arab populations from the Persian Gulf to the Maghreb enjoyed unprecedented unity in their vision for a better future. His call to expel the colonizers was heard in each and every house. He supported the Algerian people in their war of independence from France and the Yemeni people against the British and against the Islamic movement of that time. A further example of his solidarity was evident in his support for the Palestinian cause and with the Palestinian people -- whose plight was inseparable from the emergence of Pan-Arab Nationalism.

The Fifties were characterized by the following points:

- Israel made a definite choice after the failure of the Suez War to forge an alliance with the United States. In the early Fifties it started to build a strong economy using all the funds it could secure from external sources, including compensation from Germany for the Nazi crimes against the Jews, the terms of which were defined by the "Arava" agreement. The basic structure for Israel's nuclear technology was set with the help of the French government.
- The United States and European countries proceeded to support Israel and to strengthen its economic and its military potential.
- The Cold War began to overshadow international policy.
- NATO and the Warsaw Pact were formed.
- The Soviet bloc showed increased support for the Arab States.
- The idea of a united Europe was born.

- England, France and the rest of Europe accepted the hegemonic role of the United States in the world.
- Germany regained its strength and became the leading economic power in Europe by the late fifties.
- Pan-Arab nationalism as a common awareness among the Arab people was on the rise.

# Build-up to the war of 1967

The era of Jamal Abdel Nasser did not have the opportunity to mature and was largely dependent on his charismatic personality. His thoughts did not take the form of an organized social-political movement, and neither did they have the time to flourish into an active dynamic within the Egyptian society and the Arab society at large.

In particular after Nasser initiated the United Arab Republic with Syria in 1958, which lasted for three years, leaders in Washington and Tel Aviv grew alarmed and started drafting plans for his removal.

For Israel, Europe and the United States, Pan-Arab nationalism (itself and specifically as embodied by Nasser) posed a threat to their imperial objectives, and their fears grew worse when the PLO was created in 1964 in Cairo. Throughout the 1950s the Israeli economy drew heavy subsidies from Europe and the United States, leading to its abrupt growth and eventual overproduction in the mid-Sixties and bringing about an economic crisis and alarming unemployment. Thus the stage was set for the War of 1967, which became the first test for the US-Israeli alliance. Israel gained

territory and markets in addition to American protection. Pan-Arabism was dealt a severe blow through the destruction of the Nasser experience and thoughts.

#### The results of the 1967 war were:

- the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank including East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan Heights, parts of Lebanon (Shebaa farms) and Sinai; (an additional 250,000 Palestinians were deported or fled to Jordan)
- a blow to the nationalistic regimes in Syria and Egypt;
- the expansion of the Israeli market by approximately forty percent;
- United Nations Resolution 242 calling for the withdrawal from the lands occupied during the war;
- emergence of Palestinian self-reliance to liberate Palestine. Most of the Palestinian resistance organizations were established after the 1967 war.

Supporting Israel remained firmly on the agenda of the European countries after the 1967 war since they were still burdened by their colonialist past. Germany continued doing its best to support the Jewish State though compensation. During this period Europe exerted no serious pressure whatsoever for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories.

# Let us rephrase:

After 1956 Europe continued in a dynamic retreat from its policy toward the Middle East and the Arab World -- a retreat which had started after the end of World War II. France left Algeria in 1962 and England left its last colony

in Aden in 1967. In this year the alliance between Europe and Israel was effectively terminated, and Israel aligned itself closely with the United States after its victory in the 1967 war had established it as a superpower with virtually unrivalled hegemony in the Middle East. Since then, Israel and the United States have cooperated together, while generally excluding other powers, to determine their common strategy and future policies toward the other Middle Eastern countries.

The contemporary Palestinian resistance movement was initiated in 1965, but Europe never accepted it as legitimate, especially not after the 1967 war. Europe permitted itself to be dazzled by the Israeli "Blitzkrieg" and, worse still, to defend the Israeli aggression that resulted in a harsh military occupation. Europe went along with Israel and the United States to modify its policies toward the Middle East along pro-Zionist lines, yet it preserved a small margin of restraint to avoid completely estranging the Arab world.

The United States and Europe witnessed the growing Soviet influence in the area, which extended to equipping the Arab armies and financing the Aswan Dam in Egypt.

The main features of the European policy in the Sixties and Seventies were:

- acceptance of the leading role of the United States;
- further involvement in the cold war;
- recognition that the major contradiction was with the Soviet Union and the Socialist bloc.

After the Six Day War, Europe tended to pardon, even to glorify Israel's war of aggrandizement and occupation. At the same time Europe accepted the importance of UN Resolution 242, calling for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied lands, and, without repudiating Israel, sought and achieved good relations with the Arab world as far as possible with that qualification. The United States, on the other hand, made no effort to disguise its role as the foremost defender of Israel and its occupation.

Until the late Sixties the Israeli army had been almost completely served and built up by Europe, mainly France. However, in January 1968, a US ban on selling arms to Israel was lifted and the sale of American weapons began to flow. By 1971, Israel was buying \$600 million of American-made weapons a year. The US patronage of Israel was in fuli swing, and European influence declined.

# Egypt and Syria restore dignity: the war of 1973

Undoubtedly the most prominent event in the Seventies was the war of October 1973 in which Egypt and Syria attacked Israel in an attempt to change the political reality imposed by the war of 1967. Sadat used the results of the war to improve his conditions for the negotiations with Israel. The United States succeeded in neutralizing Europe, and the United Nations issued Resolution 338. The war of 1973 and the consecutive oil embargos reminded Europe of its vulnerability as it suffered mostly from the oil embargo. Europe knew quite well that it was much easier to acquire oil through negotiations and contracts than through wars.

Before and after this incident, the Rogers plan of 1970 signaled a possible peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict that was accepted by Nasser and the European Community but rejected by Israel. Arafat addressed the United Nations in 1974, offering peace to Israel on the basis of United Nations resolutions 242 and 338, and other relevant UN resolutions. Europe endorsed the initiative, but Israel rejected it with the full support of the United States.

#### Sadat crossed the Red Line

This period was crowned by the visit of Anwar Sadat of Egypt to Israel in 1977, signaling the beginning of the peace process with Egypt which culminated in the signing of the Camp David accords in 1979. Sadat broke the strategy of the Arab states and completely ignored the demurrals of the Europeans to whom he responded, "Ninety-nine percent of the cards are in the hands of the United States." Europe found itself isolated from the political arena and given the position of a spectator, to which it reacted by attempting to play a larger role. In 1980, the European Union issued the Declaration of Venice, emphasizing the traditional ties and common interests which link Europe to the Middle East and proposing a special role for Europe in solving the conflict and for the first time indirectly acknowledging the right for Palestinian statehood. Without US support this declaration remained in the drawer for over twenty years and had no direct bearing on events. However, its conceptual significance was tremendous since Europe at last acknowledged that the Palestinian struggle lay at the heart of conflict in the Middle East.

### Europe's shy attempts to regain influence

Europe tried to expand its political role through building up its strategy of internal unification. That process was extremely challenging since the two major figures associated with the independent European policy -- Helmut Schmidt of Germany and Valerie Giscard d'Estaing of France -- were no longer heads of state. They were replaced by Mitterrand in France and Helmut Kohl in Germany, who more readily complied with US policies but still kept plans for a unified Europe at the top of their agenda.

The alliance between the United States and England grew stronger when President Reagan and Margaret Thatcher agreed to expand their cooperation beyond planetary borders through the Star Wars initiative, designed to pressure and contain the Soviet Union. This Anglo-American alliance, much stronger than any in Europe, had a deleterious effect on the quest for the European Union. Margaret Thatcher extolled free markets and privatized major industries related to electricity, railroads, and other formerly state-run sectors. Her policy enjoyed the strong approval of Reagan and enhanced the alliance between England and the United States.

Aside from these developments Europe was kept busy in the Seventies with the aftermath of the student revolutions and the activities of the Red Army factions, in particular in Germany, Italy and France. In addition popular unrest against the Vietnam War swept through Europe as the Cold War reached its peak.

Israel attempted to keep a low profile and to secure economic advantages through its peace agreement with Egypt, despite the vicious invasion in Lebanon and the Sabra and Shatilla massacre in 1982 (for which Sharon was indirectly responsible). Again Europe was unable to halt the Israeli aggression against Lebanon and the Palestinians in Lebanon, and the United States insisted on preserving its role as the most closely involved external power. Later the Arab world grew distracted by the Iran-Iraq War, in which Europe and the United States supported Iraq almost unconditionally.

#### The First Intifada

Meanwhile the situation in the Palestinian occupied territories deteriorated and led to the outburst of the Intifada of 1987. The Palestinian resistance movement, which for years had been demonized, now gained overdue respect. It was no longer the Palestinians from "outside" who had opted to fight for their freedom and independence, but also the Palestinians from the "inside".

The First Intifada instigated a real but short-lived alliance between the Palestinians, the Arab world and Europe. The purpose and techniques of the Intifada of 1987 appealed to the European mind and succeeded in pricking the moral and ethical conscience of the Europeans, both at the official and grassroots levels, to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The United States, facing the unbreakable spirit of the Intifada, had difficulty coping with the situation which corresponded to a decline in

its own influence. Europe was more present in the arena. Thousands of Europeans formed solidarity groups devoted to multi-factored analysis of the Middle East conflict. Israel and the United States were on the defensive.

At their National Conference in Algiers in 1988, Palestinians accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis for resolving the conflict, and Arafat announced the declaration of the Palestinian State. Europe unfortunately hesitated to use its position to generate support for these developments. Rather it awaited the reaction of the United States and Israel. which together conspired to prevent any meaningful progress based on the Palestinian initiatives. A rift began to emerge between popular European support for the Palestinian cause and the reluctance of officials to modify their policies accordingly. Government leaders proved resistant to the strong component of public opinion that sympathized with the Palestinian uprising. No matter what happened later, Europe would never be able to regain such influence in the Middle Fast as at that time

# The collapse of the Soviet Union

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1989 signaling the end of the Cold War. The Berlin Wall also collapsed and with it the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon, severely weakening Third World liberation movements and inhibiting progressive leftist thought in the Third World, Europe and elsewhere.

On 2 August 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait, apparently

under the delusion that the US, which had largely supported Iraq in its war against Iran, would stand by and allow Iraq to annex Kuwait. The extent to which the US had encouraged this delusion is disputed. The United States formed an alliance of 32 countries, foremost among them the European nations, to wage war against Iraq. This Gulf War ended with the retreat of Iraq from Kuwait and the reinforcement of US-Israeli hegemony throughout the region, at the expense of Europe and the rest of the world. The United States established new military bases in the Middle East to quarantee its access to valuable oil resources. (According to widely discussed rumors, a secret agreement with Saudi Arabia gave the United States the right to purchase Saudi oil production over OPEC limits for just \$5 per barrel.) While Washington signed numerous economic contracts in the wake of its victory, Europe was left virtually empty handed.

In view of the fall of the Soviet Union and the results of the Gulf War, the United States and Israel found it opportune to impose a solution on the Middle East, considering that after the war the Arab World was divided as never before. It was time for the Arab World and for the Palestinians to pay tribute for the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 and the war of 1967. It was time for them to surrender to US and Israeli conditions that they had never surrendered to despite losing wars.

#### The New World Order

The United States declared its victory and introduced the New World Order with itself in the leadership role. It transformed its military victory into a political and economic victory, and organized the Madrid Conference in October 1991, inviting what remained of the former Soviet Union as well as Europe and the United Nations. The United States initiative for "solving" the Middle East conflict hinged most importantly on an attempt to end the Intifada.

The Palestinian leadership and most of the Arab states accepted the Madrid Conference as the starting point for solving the Middle East conflict, based on United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338 and land-for-peace formulas. Israel had to comply with this initiative as it could never have ignored the voice of its US master. Shamir gave an insight into his planned tactic in dealing with an unwelcome situation when he slyly declared that the negotiations would continue forever without achieving any satisfactory agreement.

# Oslo, 13 September 1993

Europe had been engaged in the bilateral and multilateral negotiations when the world learned of the secret negotiations that precipitated the Oslo Agreement. Not only Europe but also the United Nations had been excluded from these backroom dealings. Europe, which felt abandoned by the Palestinians, accepted the US-Israeli terms to remove itself from developments except for playing the role of an observer or outside donor, as Israel sought. Finally the United States and Israel succeeded in depriving Europe of any influence on the political decision-making process. Though Europe was aware of its weakened position, it took no steps to strengthen it, choosing instead to fully endorse the Oslo Agreement and to defend its

obligations. In the end Europe found itself economically and politically marginalized in the Middle East.

## The European reality

It is obvious that Europe can never take a revolutionary stand in favor of the Palestinian cause. While bound primarily by its own interests and markets, over the decades it has demonstrated far greater moral integrity than the United States. Its inability to confront Zionism directly is a result of many factors.

Europe suffers from the weakness of being a union of several sovereign nations with varying agendas, not a single country, a fact which counteracts its willingness and ability to take serious decisions against the United States and against the influence of multi-national corporations, often based in the United States. There are also inconsistencies between each member of the European Union regarding the Palestinian cause.

Four main groups can be found among the official European policies on the Middle East:

- The United Kingdom, which claims the United States as a permanent ally and generally closely agrees with US policies;
- France, Spain, Italy and Greece, which take more moderate stances toward the Palestinians and sometimes harshly criticize Israel, with a preference for an independent European policy versus following orders from the United States;
- Germany (and Holland), which for historical reasons have been long-standing allies and

supporters of Israel and never dared to criticize it in public; Germany in particular has made huge financial contributions to the Jewish state in form of reparations.

 Scandinavia, which reserved for itself a more humanitarian role and the privilege of having the Oslo Agreement signed within its borders; Scandinavia automatically became the staunchest defender of the Oslo agreement and later the staunchest advocate of the misleading normalization projects.

Each of these groups has its own political and economical agenda that becomes evident in the different forms of involvement it seeks with the Middle East conflict.

The Nineties were characterized by the economic development of the European Union coupled with its decreasing political influence in the Middle East. More European countries joined the Union and the progress was made in domestic issues such as employing a common currency and removing internal borders, with France and Germany playing significant roles in realizing these visions. England is still resisting full inclusion into the European Union. However toward the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third millennium, Europe's role started to grow again.

#### The Second Intifada

The second Palestinian Intifada, which broke out on 28 September 2000, was understood as a rejection by the Palestinians of the imposed solution of the Oslo Agreement. The post-Oslo years revealed the true intentions of the Israeli state, as it proceeded to torpedo every initiative to reach an agreement regarding its withdrawal from the Palestinian occupied territories. Foremost were the illegal building of settlements and the further confiscation of Palestinian land.

Much earlier than the United States and many other countries, Europe voiced opposition to the construction of further settlements, whereas the United States innocuously referred to the settlements as posing one of many obstacles to peace.

Europe continued to play an active role in defending Palestinian rights based on UN Resolutions 242, 338 and the land-for-peace formula, but it did not succeed in turning their defense into an influential political agenda. As a result Europe was excluded from all interim negotiations such as Wye River, Tenet, Taba, Mitchell and Camp David. The Second Intifada succeeded in once again focusing attention on the Palestinian reality and the Israeli military occupation. The Intifada succeeded in restoring the proper terminology that was lost in a culture of deceit during the post-Oslo years. But most importantly the Intifada succeeded in revealing the Palestinian resistance movement in the proper light despite all attempts by the United States and Israel to demonize it. The Intifada sought recognition and justice for the resistance movement of a people under military occupation.

# 11 September 2001

The incidents of 11 September 2001 changed understandings and concepts completely.

Immediately after the big disaster, the whole world sympathized with the United States. President Bush introduced his new doctrine and agitated against "international terrorism". Most countries throughout Europe and around the world initially supported the US stand. President Bush declared war on international terrorism and Sharon rode the same wave. Sharon compared Arafat to bin Laden and the Palestinian resistance movement to the Taliban, and he likewise announced a comprehensive war on the Palestinian people. Sharon was exonerated for his war on the Palestinians by Bush's statement that Israel "has the right to defend itself", and the world including the official European regimes watched the destruction of the Palestinian community. After a short while it became clear that the true intentions of the United States were not merely to counter "international terrorism" but to expand its own hegemony to the farthest corner of the world. The true intentions of Sharon included continuing the occupation, building further settlements and thwarting the establishment of a Palestinian state. This led to serious and intensive discussions around the world about the sincerity of the US administration which, despite international protests, consistently denied any need to censure Israel for its brutal repression of the Palestinians.

# The European position

The reservations and protests of the European governments and the European populations grew clearer in the position against the war with Iraq. While the United States sought to build an alliance of the same magnitude as in 1991, Europe showed clear

resistance. The German Chancellor Gerhardt Schroeder and Jacques Chirac of France made unequivocal statements against the war. Europe challenged the United States (and Tony Blair of Britain) and conditioned its military cooperation with the US "coalition" on a United Nations mandate, clearly frustrating the Bush administration in its search for endorsement of its planned aggression. The Europeans succeeded in extracting some concessions from the United States, which were welcome on the popular level. Thus far Europe has reached no uniform understanding or acceptance of the Bush doctrine. The Europeans find it difficult to understand and to adopt the US interpretation of terrorism and the best means to fight it. Bush has yet to win international support for his personal objectives.

In the Palestine question, Europe is still lagging far behind the US, despite all the visits by Moratinos, Javier Solana, and other European envoys. Europe could not demand an international conference and finally accepted the initiative of the Quartet (Road Map), which is nothing more than an expression of the Bush speech of June 2002.

The popular resistance in Europe against the Israeli occupation and the solidarity movements with the Palestinian people were not necessarily in contradiction with the official governmental policies. The anti-globalization movement worldwide started to grow and the Palestinian flag became the symbol for the rejection of US policies.

Europe acknowledged first that the Oslo agreement was unjust and predestined to fail due to Israeli intransigence. Europe was unwilling to condone Israel's plans for the construction of further settlements immediately after the Oslo agreement had been signed. Europe was ready to accept Israel as any other state in the region with no special rights or exemptions from international law. Moreover, Europe still regards President Arafat as the legitimate, elected leader of the Palestinian people.

# Europe, the USA and the war on Iraq

The interests of Europe in the Arab world and in Iraq in particular led to a strong European coalition against the war in Iraq headed by France, Germany, Belgium and Russia. Unable to form a united European Union policy against the war, they were overrun by the might of the United States and their closer allies in Europe: Great Britain, Spain and Italy. The challenge to the United States was of short duration. The French Minister of Foreign Affairs successfully prevented the United States from using the United Nations to sanction its illegal war but finally was unable to stop the war as the United States defied the world and launched the war without UN consent, overriding German, French and Russian protests, not to mention the grassroots protest of over 30 million people around the globe. As the war got underway, the countries who had withheld their support for US aggression softened their stance considerably, and pledged their allegiance to the United States by offering the use of French airspace to the Anglo-American air force. US

military bases in German were made available for the war effort and Germany's Joschka Fischer publicly announced his hope that Saddam regime would collapse very soon. In Russia, Mr. Putin expressed a similar desire.

These countries wanted to convey that Europe is ready politically and economically to compete with the United States over the resources of the world. They wanted to declare their rejection of the uni-polar world order and tried to introduce a multi-polar one. They used an impotent United Nations as the arena to face the most potent and vicious US administration in an atmosphere where Bush's infamous statement that "whoever is not with us is against us" culminated in such inane acts as changing the menu at restaurants in Washington from French fries to "freedom" fries.

Europe as a whole found itself begging from the United States for contracts to "rebuild" Iraq. While the United States found it most appropriate to enforce the lifting of the sanctions over Iraq at the United Nations, the Europeans understandably tried their best to stop this resolution. They failed again. The US administration that invested \$20 billion in the war on Iraq was about to cash in on the profits. Europe had to go away emptyhanded, despite the European governments' attempts to flirt again with the United States. To add insult to injury, the United States asked European countries to write off the huge debts owed to them by Iraq, a request that Europe will most likely feel obliged to comply with.

This round of competition between the US and Europe over influence, wealth, resources and power went clearly to the US. That basic human rights and humanitarian issues were pushed into the background didn't bother any of the parties. There was much more embarrassment over the fact that several democracies in Europe overrode the clear wishes of their constituents not to participate in the illegal attack on Iraq and let themselves be coerced by the US into supporting the invasion. The United States administration was fortunate enough to be able to rely on the corporation-controlled media to convince the American public that Iraq, which was no longer feared even by its closest neighbors and enemies, constituted a real threat to the United States.

# Europe, the Arab World and the future

In Europe, there exists an understanding of the Middle East conflict and awareness of the culture of the region that is much richer than anything found in the United States. At the same time the European public developed a highly critical analysis of the United States policy. In response to American experts who insist on the overarching importance of culture or religion opposed to Palestinian land, Europeans tend to smile, dubious that Americans know anything about culture. The anti-Arab sentiments conveyed by the US media betray a degree of prejudice clearly evident in the movie industry, and also permeating cartoons and schoolbooks. In Europe, while prejudice still exists, it is never blunt at the official level. On the contrary, if in their own rather selective manner, many Europeans

take pride in their own Arab-influenced heritage. In Europe, Huntington and Fukuyama would never have succeeded in presenting their civilization-based theories designed to rationalize the myopia that characterizes the White House.

Europe must regain its political and economic influence in the Middle East and elsewhere, lest it remain a second-class passenger. This is not to say that Europe should return to its colonialist past, but rather that it should regain its cultural, ethical and economic potential. A sentence found at the Spanish pavilion of Expo 2000 in Hannover "Science must be best used to the benefit of the world community" conveys not only appreciation of the impact made by Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn Khaldoun and other Arab philosophers and scientists on Europe and the world community, but recognition of the necessity to continue such interaction.

The possibility exists, despite all US pressures and nonsensical allegations of anti-Semitism, for Europe to exert pressure on Israel to accept a just solution. If Europe should pursue this course, it might prioritize ending the Israeli occupation and settlement activities. The use of its economic power should not be underestimated. According to the Israeli yearbook of statistics for 2002, Europe is the biggest exporter to Israel with over \$17 billion (52% of all Israeli imports), while Israeli's exports to Europe top \$9 billion (31.8 % of all Israeli exports). A motion calling for an economic boycott was made at the European Parliament after the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian cities and villages

in April 2002, but the various countries could not agree on a unified action. Nevertheless, a boycott of Israeli goods until it determines to end its illegal occupation would be an ideal likely to generate support at the popular level. It is no longer sufficient for nations to salve their consciences by making sympathetic declarations -- it is time to take real steps to convince Israel to end the occupation.

As the Palestinian cause is at the heart of the Arab World, the Palestinian cause remains the cornerstone of relations between Europe -- whether individual countries or the larger Union -- and the Arab World. Without standing firm on the side of a just solution in the Middle East, Europe will remain an indecisive follower of the US imperialism.

Changing this reality is indeed the challenge for modern Europe in the coming decades.





# Chapter Four

# **PALESTINIAN CHALLENGES**

Reform and the Restructuring in Palestinian Society

The Road Map

The Truce: Between Reality and Deception

The Military Mind and the Collapse of the Truce

The Palestinians: A Refugee People

The Palestinian Prisoners: Freedom First

# Reform and the Restructuring in Palestinian Society:

# Free Will of the People or Conditions of Globalization?

February 2003

While Israeli tanks and planes were attacking the Palestinian cities, villages and refugee camps, and while Sharon was threatening to use even more force to break the will of the Palestinians and crush the resistance, the US administration began demanding that the Palestinian people and its Authority should reform its political, economic and security systems.

Since then, hardly a day passes without someone from the US administration or Israel mentioning reform and restructuring of the Palestinian Authority. A remarkable turn of events given that US has never shown any particular interest in internal Palestinian policies. What, one must ask, are the real reasons behind these new demands, and why were they made now? How do the Palestinians view this new turn of events?

#### No coincidence

The timing of the calls for reform was by no means a coincidence. For more than two years, Israel has been waging a comprehensive war against the Palestinian people, aborting negotiations that were to have led to Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. The US repeatedly intervened on Israel's behalf, granting Israel the right to "defend itself" and, after September

11, condoning nearly every action Israel took against the Palestinian population as necessary in the fight against "international terrorism".

The United States would have liked to see a quick and decisive suppression of the Intifada so that the conditions could be imposed on the Palestinians for a final surrender. Neither the US nor Israel wanted to risk a replication of the Lebanese resistance movement's success, which led to the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000. As usual, the US blocked every attempt by the UN Security Council to censure Israel for its actions.

The ostensible aim of the attacks against the Palestinians was to put down resistance to the occupation and, despite the magnitude of the continuous Israeli operations and the backing provided by the US in the international arena, this goal has yet to be reached, leading to the question of whether winning this war is actually feasible. Consequently, the call for Palestinian reform became necessary as the Israeli war machine proved unable to stop the Intifada and Sharon's promises for security were dashed on the rock of Palestinian resistance. Facing the legendary steadfastness of the Palestinian people, Israel was once again obliged to call on the US for political backing, and it came in the form of a call for reform.

#### Factors of influence

When it became apparent that the military might of Israel was not enough to suppress Palestinian

resistance, the US found it necessary to back up the Israeli war effort with additional political armor, aiming at destabilizing the Palestinian position from within. It is within this framework that Bush's call for reform and restructuring can be understood. This very shrewd move, unlikely to stem from Bush himself, pushed the confrontation to a new dimension.

First factor of influence: kidnapping the Palestinian will

The United States was well aware of the extent of the Palestinian public's discontent with the performance of the Palestinian Authority in the years following the Oslo agreement. Mismanagement, the granting of lucrative monopolies in many areas of the economy and outright corruption led to a widespread disenchantment. Economic conditions deteriorated, unemployment grew and the expected "dividends of peace" failed to materialize.

The authoritarian style of the PA, characterized by the refusal to separate the judicial and legislative branches from the executive, resulted in an ineffective judiciary and nearly impotent Legislative Council. Civil society organizations, especially those aligned with the PLO, were neglected. Political groups, especially the leftist and popular organizations joined with NGOs in making persistent calls for reforms. Some Palestinian bodies went to the extent of requesting, unsuccessfully, that European donor nations condition their support of the Palestinian Authority on the holding of city and village council elections.

In view of this, the US demand for reform was tantamount to kidnapping the will of the Palestinian people, which had been expressed openly over the years without attracting any attention. Democratic changes within the Palestinian Authority were not welcome at that time. Indeed, with a little help from our friends, the Palestinians could have taken steps toward reform themselves. The US and Israel, and to a certain extent Europe were not only instrumental in creating the authoritarian style of the Palestinian Authority, they were most interested in preserving it.

Second factor of influence: conditionalities

The United States conditioned its willingness to facilitate a renewal of the "peace process" on the realization of the reforms. In the meantime, it became apparent that the US was more interested in the reform process than in achieving peace. Sharon was unleashed on the Palestinian people even as the administration spoke of peace, with negotiations to be continued only after the groundwork for settling the Middle East conflict according to the US/Israeli vision had been completed.

Third factor of influence: pressure from within

The US call for reform became a tool in the hands of the US apologists within the Palestinian Authority. As the aggression against the Palestinian people escalated and daily life became increasingly difficult, this lobby began agitating for an acceptance of the US vision as the only possible solution for the Palestinians. These voices loudly demanded a

change in the Palestinian leadership. The US encouraged this trend and called shamelessly for the replacement of President Arafat. They dictated further that there are no more red lines and boycotted Arafat, pressuring other countries to do likewise. Israel kept up Arafat's isolation by besieging and bombarding his compound in Ramallah, with occasional threats to deport him or worse. The United States hoped for a vacuum that would be filled by a lackey of their choosing.

Fourth factor of influence: Arab support

The United States is well aware of the impotence of the Arab regimes and their inability to support the Palestinian people. Furthermore, these regimes regarded the Intifada and Palestinian resistance movement as a threat to their own stability. While generally voicing approval of the US vision, they disapproved of the ridiculous and provocative suggestion to replace Arafat, well aware that they themselves could be the next targets for replacement.

#### **Reform and Restructuring**

All of these factors interacted and gave rise to the slogan "reform and restructuring", a partial dimension of which was accepted by the Palestinian Authority itself. A series of changes in the structure of the PA were implemented and the security organs were overhauled. The government resigned, and new ministers were appointed. Elections were scheduled for early in 2003, despite uncertainty of how free

elections could be held under an occupation amounting to siege conditions. Talk continued of creating the new post of prime minister, relegating Arafat to the role of a largely symbolic honorary president.

The reform and restructuring process as envisaged by the United States administration differed from the Palestinian vision, not only as put forward by the Palestinian Authority itself, but as expressed by national political forces of the opposition. The imperious demands to replace their elected leader moved Palestinians, even those who opposed Arafat, to reject US interference, just as every tightening of the siege of his compound resulted in a surge in his popularity. The US, dissatisfied with the direction Palestinian reforms were taking, allowed Sharon to step up the military pressure on Arafat and continue wearing down Palestinian society through more sieges, curfews and destruction.

### The Palestinian vision for reform and restructuring

How do the Palestinian people and the political parties understand the vital process of reforms and restructuring? How does this differ from the US? What are the mechanisms that shape the Palestinian practice?

The Palestinian reality and the aspiration to transform this reality into a viable state are the determining factors, which shape the Palestinian vision for reform. This motivation is completely at odds with US and Israeli goals of reforming the government in order to maintain the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands

and to cement the US hegemony over the region. For the Palestinians, the reform process is a necessary step towards improving national and social conditions in order to resist the occupation and diminish the political, economic and cultural dependency that the occupation entails. Thus, the reform process is a part of the resistance movement with its ultimate goal the independence and sovereignty for the Palestinian people -- in short, liberty.

The reform and restructuring process is a prerequisite for improving the conditions of the Palestinian people by addressing adequately their basic needs at all levels. It is a complex social process within a specific historical framework and given political, economic and cultural conditions. As such, it is a process of the accumulation of experience in the socio-political arena. The decisive political condition necessary is the ending of the Israeli occupation and the decisive social condition is complete freedom to choose priorities and make decisions according to national interests. Real reform is contingent on these two conditions being met.

Here exactly lies the contradiction between the US/ Israeli reform plan and the Palestinian vision. The first is pushing towards increased hegemony and is missing the single most important factor for ensuring acceptance and success, namely democracy. It is for all purposes a colonialist plan, imbued with the policies of oppression, siege, destruction and political isolation. For this reason, the US demands for reform lack ethical credibility and international legitimacy. The US vision stems from a particular reality which has as its base an obsession to control the economical, political, social process and which finds its expression in the philosophy of globalization and the New World Order. The proponents of this philosophy believe that the United States model of capitalism has already prevailed at all levels (and for all time) and that it is now time to impose the New World Order.

According to that philosophy, the future history of mankind must pass through one compulsory channel, where the US dominates philosophically, economically and politically. All others must be indoctrinated to this vision and have it imposed on them. The United States, unwilling to deal democratically with the interests of the "other", enforces a violent process by means of military might and economic blackmail to subdue him to the US will. The incidents of September 11 provided the neo-conservatives in the US administration and their right-wing Christian fundamentalist and Zionist henchmen the justification they sought for imposing their will.

### The Palestinian Way

The repeated rebellions of the Palestinians in the past 50 years, and in particular during the two Intifadas, embrace an awareness and political will for liberation as well as a progressive dimension to liberate the Palestinian individual and the Palestinian collective at the level of human rights and civil liberties, women's issues, children's rights, education, health, agriculture, social security and worker's rights. There is a profound understanding of the need for an unbiased

judicial system that is accountable and transparent. The Palestinians are striving to build a free and democratic civil society.

The Palestinian striving for a free society takes its strength from the history of the Palestinian people. The Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948, the refugee reality, the dispossession, the deportation and killing, the rape of the land, and the new and real threat of transfer together form the basis of their legitimate struggle to defend their land and rid themselves of the yoke of Israeli occupation. It is their belief that it is morally and ethically right to resist the occupation. It is their belief that any society has the right to make its own national democratic choices. Progress and sociopolitical development are not products that can be imported from New York or Tel Aviv.

It is free choice and the accumulated experience that reflect the movement of a society in its uniqueness, civilization, culture and beliefs. Thus, reform and restructuring are an internal social process whose dynamics are to be found in the reality and awareness of a people, and whose results will be reflected in the infrastructure and administration of that society. If this process should be separated from its social incubator, it becomes an alien product and as such, will be rejected.

Since the early 80's, the reform and restructuring of the different sections within the PLO and later within the Palestinian Authority have been the subject of many discussions and disputes in the Palestinian political forum and later became a fixed point on the agenda at several Palestinian councils. The Palestinian leftist forces, in particular the Popular Front (PFLP) and the Democratic Front (DFLP), submitted a comprehensive document on reforms that included the political, economic, and administrative structures of the PLO. Early on, the progressive Palestinian forces acknowledged the inconsistencies and weaknesses within the political and organizational structures of the PLO. They were calling for a reformulation of a democratic political system, an end to authoritarianism and monopolistic policies, changing the election code, a separation of the judicial and legislative branches from the executive, the respect of civil liberties and strengthening the civil society years before President Bush demanded these reforms.

These calls were rejected by the conservative forces and authoritarianism within the Palestinian society, who recognized that the democratization process posed a threat to their own interests. The increase of corruption and mismanagement led to further mistrust in the national institutions.

There are three basic attitudes in the Palestinian society regarding the imperious US demands for the reform and restructuring of Palestinian government.

- The first basically adopted the US vision as inevitable, but is supported only by a small minority among the people and the political cultural elite.
- 2. The second group, found mainly within the Palestinian Authority and Fatah, endorses the

US vision with reservations and some resistance, coupled with pragmatism. On the one hand, these groups have strong historic ties with the Palestinian national movement but on the other hand, the fear of losing any confrontation with the US administration compels them to side with the strong man.

3. A third group opposes the US plan but espouses a reform process as a reflection of an internal Palestinian necessity, regarding it as a democratic prerogative of a free people. This stance is found among the progressive Palestinian forces and in a large portion of the Fatah movement. Since the Islamic parties are also against the US plan, the opponents constitute the majority of the Palestinian society, (irrespective of the profound and deep-seated differences in the social and political concepts between the progressive, the nationalist and the Islamic forces). The severity of the confrontations with Israel's military might, the assassinations of progressive leaders and the absence of a true democratic system prevent the opponents of the US plan from taking the initiative. The international community has made a point of deliberately ignoring the voices against Bush's reform plans.

The US is well aware of the opposition to its proposals and has no qualms about imposing its vision in a compulsory manner. This, of course, contradicts everything that is said about democracy. As long as the Palestinian people oppose the plans of the US,

the US will do its utmost to hinder the development of democracy in the Palestinian society.

### The coming Pyrrhic victory

In light of all of these unresolved issues and the ongoing Palestinian/Israeli conflict, what could be the outcome of the clash between the US and Palestinian visions for reform?

Well for one, the US-Israeli alliance could succeed in imposing its vision partially or completely. In doing so, it would merely be creating a system of government in Palestine similar to the ones found depressingly often in the Arab world, particularly in countries friendly to the US. These regimes generally lack popular support and are, in fact, constantly threatened by virtue of having to constantly repress their people.

It will, however, be a Pyrrhic victory. The cultural and historical heritage of the Palestinian people, the reality of their experiences under Israeli occupation, would lead one to suppose that the Palestinians would sooner or later rebel against an imposed US reform and restructuring. Inasmuch as compulsory structures for reform are born outside of the societal incubator, the incubator will also bear the tools of resistance to shape the natural course for reforms and restructuring.

The conflict will continue and peace will not prevail until the national rights, the democratic choices and the sovereignty of the Palestinian people are recognized and respected. The Palestinian vision arises from the resistance against the crushing of their

aspirations and denial of their rights, and thus is an organic part of the democratic forces throughout the world which oppose the inhumane and unjust policies of globalization and US hegemony. The international solidarity movements, in embracing the Palestinian resistance movement, reject the US attempts to forcefully impose its globalization policies and the New World Order on us all.



## The Road Map:

## Will it Awaken the Devil of Civil War?

June 2003

The interest that the "Road Map" has received from local, regional and international forces is surprising. It is as if this plan were the magical solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a conflict that has its roots in several centuries of Western colonialism. Suddenly, we are being asked to believe that the Quartet has found a miracle cure -- a cure that took no more than perhaps a week to discover. Are people so easily convinced that the destiny of the Palestinian people and the conflict can be decided by merely putting a plan on paper?

What is almost uniformly being left out of everyone's calculations is that the solution to the conflict does not reside in the accounts of the great powers or in their checks and balances. The solution ultimately lies in the reckoning of the Palestinian people. This reckoning is not so easily swayed by short-term regional concerns and quick-fix security measures. It is based on the specific history, culture and reality of the Palestinians. Any proposed solution that does not respond to and respect these facets of Palestinian life will overturn the table and toss the cards in the air — it will not work.

It seems that those who formulated the road map were meticulous in their work; it consists of both deliberately clear provisions and deliberately vague ones. They were precise in the distribution of roles and the creation of stages that are simultaneously sequential and interlocking. However, though sifting the vague from the precise, the good from the bad, is currently the focus of political pundits, all of this, in truth, misses the point. The Palestinian people will have the final word, away from texts, commas, and political and diplomatic double-speak. The issue here is self-determination for a people who have been struggling for over a century for freedom and independence; we are not talking about a deal between two corporations. The Palestinian political-social mosaic is complex, and it cannot be controlled if its specificities and internal dynamics are not understood.

The main danger that looms on the horizon (and in the road map text) is represented by the attempt to divide the Palestinian people by forcing them to "fight terrorism". What is meant here by "terrorism", is, of course, all the forces of Palestinian opposition to the Fatah-dominated PA, including the religious political forces (Hamas and Jihad), the democratic forces (the Popular Front and the Democratic Front) as well as wide sectors of the Fatah movement itself. One wonders who will be left. Who will inherit the walled-in Bantustans that are to be handed over?

The US-Israeli answer to these questions is Abu Mazen et al. To them falls the responsibility of collecting arms, stopping incitement and arresting those who threaten Israeli security. However, the question remains: How will the government of Abu Mazen achieve this goal? During the years of the Intifada, Israel has reoccupied the entire West Bank, and there

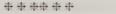
is no place in the Gaza Strip which Israel cannot reach with its army; rockets, assassins and bulldozers. For all this Israel has not been able to stop the resistance. How then is an imposed Palestinian government distanced from a true Palestinian political constituency going to achieve this goal?

Israel is, of course, perfectly aware that such an attempt will fail; their goal is to sink the Palestinian people in internal division and to reinforce the fractures between the PA and the other popular Palestinian political forces. The Israeli objective is to finally silence the resistance and thus to end it. Until now, Palestinian national unity has been steadfast in the face of the fiercest attacks; today, the challenges it faces have never been greater.

Security, peace, and stability will not be created by tracking down the very people who are struggling to remove the occupation and seeking to realize their right to self-determination and freedom. The starting line is the end of the occupation and the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people as stipulated in the UN and other international agreements; nothing more and nothing less.

This is the basic methodological flaw in the Road Map, the Bush policy, and Israeli practices. It must be remembered that this is the same occupation that led to the failure of Oslo. Internal pressures and deception may succeed in sustaining the Road Map for some time. Things may look as if everything is going in the right direction and the doves of peace are flapping

their wings above our heads. However, if the Palestinian people are not convinced, and if the people do not attain their national rights, freedom, and independence, the Road Map will fail. Who will stop the eruption of the third Palestinian Intifada then?



# The Truce: Between Reality and Deception

July 2003

Political progress towards a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the implementation of the roadmap are being made contingent on achieving a truce, or *hudna*, the Arabic term. The various peace plans which appeared and were shelved over the past 2 years, including the Mitchell and Tenet plans, were all doomed from the start for two main reasons:

First: They were inherently flawed for prioritizing Israeli security concerns. Sharon avoided entering into negotiations by insisting on a period of quiet.

Second: Israel persisted in using force as a means of suppressing and subjugating the Palestinian people. The period of quiet prior to negotiations applied only to the Palestinian side, and indeed, Israel's harsh measures were aimed at drawing a Palestinian response which would absolve Sharon of the necessity of negotiating.

Israel was successful in presenting the conflict as one of purely security dimensions; arousing the world's sympathy while portraying the Palestinian resistance as terrorism, stripping it of its political roots and ethical basis. Israel succeeded in the following:

-- exempting itself from bearing responsibility for the results of its occupation policies; the primary cause of the tragedies experienced by the Palestinian people over the past three decades.

-- depicting its occupation practices against the Palestinian people as a form of self-defense.

This is the state of distortion in which we now live. It is a conscious political process in its essence and manifestations and it aims at using force and deception as a prelude to imposing political conditions in the name of peace.

The adoption of these strategies by Sharon and his extremist government are obstacles to finding a real solution to the conflict. It is the same logic which made Sharon overrun all the Palestinian territories, reoccupy them, set his military machine loose and declare the demise of the Oslo Accords. A rational human being cannot imagine that occupying an entire people and subjecting it to siege, destruction, isolation and killing will not elicit a more furious reaction of resistance in all its forms, against which no defense is possible.

Now, the same policies and organized state terror continue but within the framework of the roadmap. For weeks, Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue has been taking place in an attempt to respond to the turbulent transformations witnessed in the Middle East after the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. A tremendous earthquake is shaking the region. This requires a reshuffling of the cards and specifying work strategies in their political forms.

After George Bush and the neo-conservatives in his administration achieved their aim by toppling Saddam and seizing Iraq's oil wealth, regional calm became necessary in order to reap the fruits of the swift victory. Prerequisite to this is quelling the burning volcano of

the decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict. With this in mind, the Quartet adopted Bush's roadmap which was also endorsed by most of the Arab regimes. Success in achieving the strategic goals of re-drawing the map of the Middle East, depleting Irag's wealth. and imposing American hegemony globally requires coordinating American and Israeli measures without harming the achievements or interests of either party. From the beginning, Sharon behaved as an integral part of the victorious alliance in Iraq. Accordingly, he is seeking to obtain his promised share of the dividends. which means America's support in imposing Israeli conditions on a political solution with the Palestinians. Bush himself described this as freeing himself to deal with the Palestinian question after accomplishing his mission in Iraq. The sequence of events:

- -- June 24, 2002: Bush delivered a speech in which he specified his vision for solving the conflict in the Middle East.
- -- December 20, 2002: the Quartet adopted the roadmap plan in its final form. In the period between the two events, America gave Israel the green light to continue its war and its aggression. At the same time, it put pressure on the Palestinian Authority to implement the political-security-economic reforms plan (not to mention isolating President Arafat).
- -- On the morning of March 20, 2003 the American British invasion of Iraq began.
- -- April 9, 2003: Baghdad fell, symbolized by the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue.
- -- May 1, 2003: Bush declared the end of major

operations in Iraq and the end of the Ba'ath regime.

-- June 4, 2003: Bush held the Sharm al-Sheikh summit with a number of Arab leaders (Husni Mubarak, King Abdullah, The Saudi Arabian crown prince, a representative of the King of Morocco, and the newly appointed Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Mazen). They gave their blessing to the American policy and accepted the roadmap.

-- June 5, 2003: The Aqaba Summit was held with Bush, King Abdullah, Abu Mazen, and Sharon. The Palestinians and Israelis declared their official acceptance of the Road Map.

After all these events, the participants were faced with the question of what to do next. Sharon resorted to his old policy and vision, conditioning the implementation of the road map on the security situation. Sharon insisted on a halt to all forms of Palestinian resistance and manifestations of the Intifada. Additionally, Abu Mazen's government is expected to do what the Israeli war machine was unable to accomplish throughout the years of the Intifada; namely put a halt to Palestinian resistance and dismantle the infrastructure. All along, Israel reserved the right to continue its war and its occupation. It seems that Israel's main aim is to transform the Intifada from Palestinian resistance against the occupation into a Palestinian civil war. Is there another explanation for what is happening today?! However, the Palestinian factions recognized the danger and the enormity of the trap set up by the roadmap, especially after Abu Mazen declared his endorsement of this plan. The response of all active and influential factions in Palestine (Hamas, the Popular Front, Fatah, Islamic Jihad and the Democratic Front) was to reject this scheme and reinforce national unity. This placed the government of Abu Mazen between the anvil of Palestinian political and popular rejection and the hammer of the American-Israeli pressure.

In view of the complexity of the equation and the difficulty of implementation. Sharon took recourse to violence in order to force everyone to take a step backwards. As soon as the Sharm al-Sheikh and Agaba summits ended, he undertook a series of "disproportionate" measures consisting of assassinating activists and crowned by the fiasco of the assassination attempt against the most prominent leader of Hamas. Dr. Abdul Aziz al-Rantisi. The assassination attempt, in which a number of Palestinian civilians were killed or injured, occurred at the time when Abu Mazen was exerting his utmost efforts to reach a truce agreement with the different Palestinian forces. Naturally the reaction of Hamas came quickly and violently in a suicide attack in Jerusalem. American, Arab and European officials renewed their efforts to control the situation. Once again there was talk of a Palestinian-Palestinian dialogue and the necessity of reaching a truce. Egypt played its role through the intervention of the Egyptian Intelligence director 'Umar Suleiman. However, Sharon surprised the world for the thousandth time when the Shabak apparatus assassinated a Hamas official, Abdullah al-Qawasmi, and waged a broad campaign, arresting hundreds of Palestinians in Hebron, Jenin and Nablus.

On the ground nothing changed; the situation is still characterized by the same state-terrorist policy of siege, assassination and destruction. At the same time, Sharon made a theatrical performance of evacuating some caravans in what are called "illegal settlement outposts" for the benefit of the media. The settlers rebuilt most of these settlement outposts and others within a few days of the performance.

Thus Sharon insists by all means on returning to square one: attempting to exhaust and drain the Palestinian people and forcing them to surrender politically. He is unconcerned with the success of the hudna and reaching a political solution, because he does not seek a solution which leads to peace, but rather a solution based on Palestinians signing away their rights. It seems that this is in the context of a comprehensive agreement with Bush with no consideration given to a sincere commitment to justice, peace and democracy. Bush provides Sharon with a cover for his practices, embellished with political and material support. No pressure is exerted on Sharon to change his policies. Palestinians view American policy as lacking neutrality and objectivity, and cite the following to prove their point:

 In his meeting with the leaders of the European Union at the White House last week, Bush declared that it is no longer sufficient for the Palestinian factions to declare a ceasefire. Rather "Palestinian factions should be dismantled". He demanded that the European Union countries exert all their efforts to

- discontinue financing "the Palestinian terrorist organizations".
- The US consistently uses its power of veto to negate any attempt by the UN Security Council to condemn the practices of Israeli occupation.
- Bush expresses only subdued regret when tens
  of Palestinian civilians are killed, calling the war
  crimes committed by Israel legitimate acts of
  self-defense, while any Palestinian resistance
  act, even against occupation forces, is
  condemned as brutal terrorism.
- 4. On June 25, 2003, the US Congress took two serious steps:
  - a) A decision passed by 299 votes emphasized the firm US stance in support of Israel and considering the practices of Israel in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as part of the American war against terrorism.
  - b) Another decision, which obtained more than 400 votes from Congress, expressed concern with the escalation of anti-Semitic trends in the world, confusing the distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli sentiments, and ignoring the role US policy plays in the rise of racism throughout the world.

This is the general framework in which there is talk about an open truce or one which is limited by a timeframe. It is clear from the political events of the past several weeks that the Palestinian forces are inclined to suspend their fighting operations to give diplomacy a chance. Despite this, questions based on prior experience come

to mind. Will the efforts to achieve calm succeed? Will the truce last or will it collapse under the pressure of oppression and the continuous occupation policies? The answer to this focal question is tied to the implementation of three elements:

First: Sharon must end his illusionary demands of disarming the resistance and destroying its infrastructure. No Palestinian with a minimum level of national dignity would accept disarming while his/her land is entirely occupied.

Second: The occupation army must discontinue the aggressive practices against the Palestinian people (siege, assassinations, destruction of homes, arrests, settlement building and restrictions on movement) and withdraw from Palestinian cities, villages and camps.

Third: Most importantly, the success of the hudna and its transformation from a temporary state into a permanent situation is tied to the final status negotiations, and whether the peace process will lead to the end of occupation and the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people based on international law. Will the negotiations end with a viable Palestinian state and a comprehensive Israeli withdrawal to the borders of 4 June 1967, including dismantling all the settlements, or will the Palestinian people and their political forces find themselves faced with an agreement that is based on surrendering and yielding to Israel's conditions? Will we enter a new maze of the dialogue of the deaf which actually aims at capturing new parts of the Palestinian territories and

abandoning the concept of sovereignty in order to firmly establish the occupation and the continuation of the suffering of the Palestinian people?

In order to delineate a sound stance vis-à-vis the truce, we must distinguish between two contradictory aims. On the one hand, there is the understanding offered by Sharon which views the hudna as a process of Palestinian compliance with the condition of disarming resistance fighters and accepting Israel's belligerent occupation. This constitutes fulfilling the security objectives prior to imposing a political solution according to the Israeli-American criteria. On the other hand, the Palestinian side views the hudna as a prelude to ending the occupation and endorsing the rights of the Palestinian people. This deals with ending the root causes of the conflict in order to arrive at a just peace based on respect and equality.

Without clarifying the purpose of the truce and tying it to the end goal, the ground will be ripe for an even more violent and ferocious eruption of the conflict.



# The Military Mind and the Collapse of the Truce

September 2003

Any local and international optimism surrounding the road map was not utterly groundless. The social and psychological exhaustion of the Palestinians after three years of bloody conflict, the US/UK occupation of Iraq that seemed to be pushing the US to "calm" the Middle East, a role for the EU, Russia and the UN in monitoring the roadmap, an increased interest on the part of the Arab states to compromise with Israel -- all these factors seemed to suggest some kind of window of opportunity for the Palestinians.

If you trace the situation on the ground during the last two months, it is not difficult to see the collapse of the truce gathering on the horizon. The International Solidarity Movement reports that between the start of the ceasefire and 09 August (10 days prior to the bus bombing in Jerusalem), the Israeli military killed 10 Palestinians, 5 of them children, wounded 348 Palestinians, including 65 children, arrested 435 Palestinians, damaged or completely destroyed 211 Palestinian homes and uprooted or destroyed over 10,050 Palestinian fruit and olive trees. B'Tselem reports that in the same period there were 5 Israeli fatalities, 4 of whom were civilians.

However, even given these revealing facts, it would be a mistake to see the failure of the ceasefire as merely the accumulation of such actions. The current collapse of the truce is not the result of a technical malfunction; rather it is the logical result of flawed long-term strategic thinking. In terms of tracing causes and effects, the truce had failed long before Israel destroyed its first Palestinian house in the ceasefire period.

Israel's success in convincing everyone that security is the key issue to be settled prior to any other has led to a situation where the entire peace process is seen as being comprised of a succession of military exchanges. Israel's obsession with short-term militaristic thinking can be seen in its response to the creation of the ceasefire itself. The Israeli leadership was rather schizophrenic in its response to the declaration of the ceasefire; Sharon being reluctant to accept the ceasefire, seeing it as conceding victory to the Palestinians, while Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon declared the ceasefire to be a "victory" for Israel. Nevertheless, Israel used short-term military exchanges, all aimed at pressing its advantage.

In this framework, it was utterly natural for Israel to exploit the truce and its collapse to eradicate the resistance organizations, instead of using it as an opportunity to move forward in a serious effort towards a political solution. This desire to avoid substantive negotiations accounts for the constant Israeli rhetoric on dismantling the infrastructure of the Palestinian terrorist organizations. Israel has succeeded in prioritizing its security concerns to the extent that the international legitimacy of Abu Mazen's government is entirely dependent on its ability to provide Israel with security, to the exclusion of all other issues.

The collapse of the truce could not have happened without the assistance of the internationals. The Quartet wasted two precious months of relative calm (at least on the Palestinian side) in which it should have attempted to forge a dynamic for a genuine political process. Instead, the Quartet not only failed to engender real negotiations, but was utterly silent and invisible in the face of Israel's continued aggression.

Recent events have only fed the anger and frustration accumulating in the Palestinian people, and there is a widespread feeling that Palestinians have once again been duped by the international community into giving up their rightful resistance while Sharon has been free to continue his tactics of dispossession.

Unfortunately, Sharon is probably very satisfied with the present collapse of the truce. Nevertheless, the facts of the conflict remain more or less unchanged. In the end there will be no Israeli security without ending the occupation. This is not a war between armies; it is a war between one army and a people charged with awareness, myths, rights, and all the mundane details of trying to continue daily life. Until Sharon gets this, no ceasefire will bring us peace.



## The Palestinians: A Refugee People

July 2003

This is an important time of year for Palestinian refugees. May 5, 2003 was the 55th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba (the catastrophe), and June 5, 2003 was the 36th anniversary of the Naksa (the relapse). These dates commemorate the two key periods during which the Palestinians became a refugee people -- the 1948 and 1967 wars.

This last month has been particularly fraught as the commemorations of the Nakba and the Naksa have coincided with an intense period of diplomatic activity (Sharm al-Sheikh, Aqaba) in which conflicts of interest between Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)-based Palestinians and those in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria have threatened to come to the fore. What concessions, the refugees are wondering, is Abu Mazen prepared to make regarding the Right of Return in order to secure the objectives of the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza?

The Right of Return has always been a red line for Israel and, in deference to Israel, the international community, which, when engaged in mediation efforts, either conspire to exclude it or push it to the end of the list of things to be dealt with. This was true in the Geneva Peace Conference of 1974, the 1978 Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel, in Madrid and, of course, in Oslo. Once again, no recognition

of the Right of Return is being demanded of Israel, and settlement of the refugee issue is being left for the last phase of the Road Map -- as if it were some small technical difficulty that could be sorted out at the end of a long day.

In fact, the refugees and their concerns sit at the epicenter of the current conflict, representing the historical origin of Palestinian resistance and the key to resolving the conflict. Any agreement or peace negotiation that does not deal conclusively with the issue will leave the roots of the conflict intact. We should remember that in addition to the five million Palestinian refugees living in the camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, the Right of Return directly impacts the rights and interests of 60% of the Palestinian people in the OPTs.

More than being numerically significant, however, the refugees hold another kind of power. From the Nakba to the first Intifada in 1987, the refugee camps, and particularly the Palestinians in exile, were the engine driving Palestinian resistance. The camps were the breeding grounds for ideas and the locus of political organization and activism. It was the activities of the refugees that kept Palestine alive in the minds of the Arab leaders who have all, at some time or another, wished that the Palestinian problem would evaporate. It was the refugees who fought in the name of Palestinian nationalism during the bloody conflict in Jordan in 1970 and for twenty years in the bitter conflict in Lebanon. The refugees have suffered massacres at the hands of Arabs and Jews alike, and yet they

still drive their ambitions forward even as their graveyards fill with martyrs.

Thus, for millions of Palestinians refugees, the value of any peace treaty is determined solely by to its ability to realize their Right of Return -- all other matters are mere details. The refugee population feels that it has carried the biggest burden of the Palestinian problem during the decades of harsh struggle; they have had to live in the miserable and intimidating camps, and thus their compensation -- the Right of Return -- is sacred.

Obviously, the primacy of the Right of Return is not something about which non-refugees feel as strongly (though there are few Palestinians who are not connected to refugees by family, marriage or friendship). Therefore, there are some areas of potential disagreement between refugee and non-refugee groups. Put in its most polarized form, for non-refugees the refugees clinging to the "unrealistic" Right of Return should not be allowed to impede political progress between Israel and the Palestinians. For refugees, there lurks the danger that those not directly affected by the Right of Return will trade the refugees' sacred right for some land-locked archipelago of Bantustans.

For what then do the refugees struggle? First, it is not solely for a Palestinian state. Palestinian refugees had a long and established history of resistance even before Israel occupied the Palestinian Territories in 1967. Moreover, the refugees continued to lead the

resistance at least until the first Intifada (at which time resistance began in earnest inside the OPTs themselves). The awakening of resistance within the OPTs, however, does not mean that the concerns of the non-refugee Palestinians inside the OPTs (e.g., the end of the occupation, Palestinian sovereignty etc.) should be allowed to supersede the claims of the refugees. The refugees battle is not a battle for a state in the West Bank and Gaza, it is for the right to return to the land that Israel has taken from them, land mostly inside Israel.

That is not to say that the "insiders" and "outsiders" are in conflict, but rather that they highlight different aspects of the same struggle. Palestinian political organization resists division by virtue of the fact that the parties representing Palestinians inside the OPTs are those that represent the refugee populations outside. Nearly all currently active Palestinian parties were formed by refugees outside the OPTs (indeed, only the marginal Palestinian People's Party PPP can be said to be a true OPTs political party). Significant parts of the party leadership and rank and file of Fatah. PFLP, DFLP, Hamas etc. are based outside the country in the refugee camps. The representatives of these parties inside the OPTs will not be able to make a deal that is in any way predicated on undermining the Right of Return. The issue is so fundamental to the political parties outside the OPTs that, should representatives inside the OPTs make such a deal, the parties would almost certainly split.

The US and Israel are doing their utmost to cause such division, particularly through US pressure applied to Syria (for example, the banning of Palestinian political representation there), in order to break this connection between "inside" and "outside". By doing this, the Israelis hope to create the space in which Palestinians in the OPTs will be willing to grant concessions on the Right of Return. So far, resistance to this plan has, in fact, worked to fortify a sense of unity -- see, for example, the communal anger at the speech of Abu Mazen in Aqaba, whose failure to endorse the Right of Return is the first indication that a division within the Palestinian leadership between insiders and outsiders is possible. Arafat would give no quarter on this issue.

The Right of Return is not, as it is so often presented, an emotional issue, a matter of irrational sensibilities. It is a political problem, a political problem of the first order. As such, it cannot be treated lightly or diluted on the basis of some ambiguous Israeli promise. The OPTs are suffering terrible attacks (sieges, assassinations, house demolitions, erecting of settlements), but for all refugees -- both inside and outside the OPTs -- the value of the Right of Return is higher than the cost of the resistance against the forces that would deny their right.

The Road Map may move along for a while, but ultimately, when the word games are over and the diplomatic maneuvers are exhausted, the issue of the Right of Return will force the debate back to its root: the Palestinian Right of Return and application of the

United Nation resolutions relating to it. If there is no clear answer to the Palestinian refugees who have been waiting for five and a half decades in the camps of misery and humiliation, the only logical reaction will be that "agreements do not concern us... we are here in the camps and our homeland is there, our right is to return and our resistance will continue -- even if there is a Palestinian state."

For those looking for peace, here lies the root of the problem. In the final analysis, any Palestinian leader, politician or government in the West Bank or Gaza will have to answer to the Palestinian refugees.



# **The Palestinian Prisoners: Freedom First**

October 2003

Since the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, over 650,000 Palestinians have been arrested by Israel; statistically speaking, 40% of the male population. Since the outbreak of the Al Aqsa Intifada in September 2000, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been arrested. The number of Palestinian prisoners held at present in occupation prisons and concentration camps is estimated to be around 10,000 prisoners, among them 150 to 200 children.

The situation inside the prisons is dramatic. Overcrowding, poor food, lack of hygiene, and inadequate medical care make the situation intolerable. Family visits are rare and sometimes months go by before the family members know where the detainee is held.

The most commonly used method to detain Palestinians is administrative detention, which was used extensively during the first Intifada in particular. The detainee may be held without giving him or his lawyer insight into the allegations against him. The trial is conducted by a military court which makes extensive use of a "secret file", allowing little chance for a defense. Prior to sentencing by the military court, many of the detainees go through a harsh inhumane procedure of interrogation combined with torture.

The number of Palestinian prisoners can only be estimated. At present there are the following statistics about prisons and prisoners:

Israeli prison/detention center	detainees
Ofer Military prison camp	1000
Negev (Ansar 3)	800
Megiddo	1000
Shatta	260
Nafha	807
Telmond	70
Hadorim	120
Kfar Yuna	1
Ramleh women's prison	73
Ashkelon	400
Ber Sheba	472
Ramle Hospital	10
Etzion detention center	17
Erez detention center	24
Huwarra detention center	52
Kadomim	41-45
Beit-El detention center	40
Different interrogation centers	100

Since the Palestinian resistance factions announced "the three-month truce", the issue of Palestinian prisoners has gained in importance. It is a matter of paramount interest for the Palestinians, as there is hardly a Palestinian family in which one or more of its members have not been arrested or threatened by imprisonment from the beginning of the occupation until today.

In the consciousness of the Palestinian people, the prisoners are a symbol of sacrifice and resistance to

the occupation and their suffering for the sake of freedom and independence is greatly appreciated at all levels of Palestinian society. Any harm done to the status of prisoners causes real injury to national dignity.

The great majority of Palestinians are directly affected by the issue of the prisoners; it is a perceptible and direct tragedy and not simply a theoretical problem. The plight of the prisoners continues to be a cause which inspires action, protest and rebellion. In many cases it has been the spark which again and again rekindles the flames of the conflict.

The sensitivity of this issue is magnified whenever the Palestinian and Israeli parties enter into negotiations. The Israeli side insists on using the prisoners as a political bargaining chip to put more pressure on the Palestinian negotiators; referring to political prisoners as "killers and terrorists" and classifying them into prisoners "with (Jewish) blood on their hands" and others whose hands are clean, the "opposition" prisoners and the "PA" prisoners, This provokes all the elements of a comprehensive popular reaction and poses a radical contradiction to the views of the entire Palestinian people, who historically view the prisoners as the fuel of the resistance and embodiment of the values of the Intifada and struggle for freedom.

Now having begun marching in the direction indicated by the Road Map and declaring the truce, the Palestinians again bring the issue of thousands of prisoners to the forefront. The political-social significance must be addressed before political bargaining about Israeli security matters forces the Palestinian party into the narrow tunnel envisioned by the Israeli side.

The truce has been deemed a necessary prelude before real movement towards peace begins, but the resentment among the Palestinian population about the thousands of prisoners who are being held in inhumane conditions, with and without charges, has the potential to provoke a collapse of the truce. The parties of the Quartet must recognize the social and political dimensions of this issue and not allow themselves to adopt Israel's narrow security-based perspective as they attempt to implement the two dimensions of the Road Map -- first, security (for Israel) and second, the political aspect.

The Palestinian view must also be taken into account. No political process, negotiations, or belief in the possibility of peace would have been imaginable without the resistance and sacrifices which were made by the martyrs and thousands of prisoners. The strength of these views precludes any progress towards building bridges of confidence as a prelude to real peace unless the prisoners are released without discrimination or procrastination. This would constitute a measure affecting thousands of Palestinian families, tens of thousands of children, wives, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. This is the only approach which could motivate the majority of the Palestinian people to stand and to hope. Obscure political concessions and smiles for the cameras mean practically nothing as long as settlement, land confiscation, building the racist segregation wall, the siege, destruction, checkpoints, and refusal to recognize national rights continue.

As long as the present situation continues, confidence in the negotiations, the Road Map and peace is shaken beforehand. The refusal to free thousands of prisoners, dealing with them as political hostages to blackmail the Palestinians simply adds more steam to the cauldron of the already pressurized reality. The resulting explosion will start a chain reaction and all expressions of regret about lost opportunities will be to no avail.

The Israelis are using the prisoners to blackmail the Palestinians. For the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian political forces, obtaining a meaningful release is essential to gain credibility and legitimacy among the population. Israeli occupation forces recognize this pressure and its seriousness. Thus, it is no coincidence that they are intransigent concerning liberating the prisoners. It is an attempt to strike at the relationship and confidence between the leadership and the Palestinian political forces and the thousands of prisoners, and to prove that this leadership is unable to liberate them, and in fact, willing to trade their suffering for their own survival. This is the sly trap which Israel has set.

Based on the above, it is clear that the success of implementing the two dimensions -- security and political -- of the Road Map is contingent on solving the issue of Palestinian prisoners. They could be a driving force on release, but an impediment should their tragedy continue.

They are the first test of Israel's credibility and its desire to move towards peace. They are also the first test for the solidity of the Palestinian political leadership; the confidence which has become conditional on its ability to succeed in liberating the prisoners as an elementary prelude for continuing the race towards the political objectives. If the political leadership fails, it will stand with its back to the wall of Israeli intransigence while its face is confronting that anger and the pressure of the Palestinian street.

This is now the challenge, away from political maneuvering and negotiation tactics. The continuity of the truce and keeping the wheels of political process moving are conditional on liberating the Palestinian prisoners. They are the difficult factor and the easy one at the same time. They have been seen as such throughout the long years of struggle. Any attempt to eliminate this factor is illusionary, and one needs only to observe the Palestinian street to realize it.

In May 2003 the Palestinian prisoners issued the following document:

We, the Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons and detention centers affirm the following points as our declaration of principles:

- The issue of Palestinian prisoners is first and foremost a political issue, which is the result of a period of struggle for national liberation and independence. As such, it is a whole that cannot be divided from the political sphere.
- 2. We, the Palestinian prisoners, affirm that the

prisoners issue is one unified issue that cannot be divided or geographically categorized, and that the political approach to it cannot consider phases. The only manner in which to deal with this issue is to ensure the unconditional release of all prisoners.

- 3. The unity of the Palestinian prisoners issue, without political divisions by party, just as dealing with the Palestinian issue as that of an entire nation without political divisions, is the only foundation on which to deal with this issue. There must be no categorization or distinction between prisoners based on their political affiliation or otherwise.
- 4. Palestinian prisoners are considered as a unit in regards to unjust sentencing that was passed by the courts of the Israeli occupation, and as such there must be no respect for such sentences or the period of these sentences from a political perspective, as these occupation courts are a part of the system of occupation that we reject as politically unjust.
- 5. The issue of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons and detention centers is a national issue of the first degree, an issue that affects the whole of the Palestinian nation, wherever Palestinians may be. It is an issue of national agreement and there must be no distinction between this issue and any other affecting the Palestinian nation, other than the fact that it is an extremely sensitive issue and carries a great deal of importance.

- 6. We strongly emphasize that the prisoners issue must not be marginalized, delayed or only periodically dealt with in any political negotiations or agreements. The prisoners issue is a fundamental issue and no political negotiations or agreements should be pursued unless they deal with this basic issue and come to a final and complete resolution.
- 7. Palestinian prisoners in Israeli occupation prisons and detention centers call on all Palestinian national groups, committees, all PLO representatives, the Palestinian National Authority, all Palestinian movements and organizations inside and outside Palestine, and all branches of these organizations, including unions, associations, ministries, etc. to deal with the prisoners issue with the responsibility and importance it demands within the spirit of the above mentioned principles.
- 8. All representative and political parties hold this responsibility and must genuinely work towards reestablishing this issue and to rally around it, and to refuse any solutions or agreements that sideline and divide this issue. Their role is to reinforce the importance of this issue as a whole and to resolve it.
- Palestinian prisoners are the pioneers in defending Palestinian national interests, and have struggled to realize Palestinian goals, hopes, dreams and desires. The Palestinian prisoners are to be considered as messengers

of the Palestinian Nation and its fighters in order to remove the occupation and to achieve national independence. As such the prisoners issue is a part of the whole Palestinian struggle that cannot be separated from the pursuit of national liberty and independence.

- 10. The Palestinian leadership, organizations and representatives, as well as the Palestinian people and all its associations, should refuse any partial solution to the prisoners issue, and should learn from the experience of previous negotiations and agreements from Madrid until Taba. The foundation for dealing with these negotiations is that no agreement or peace is possible without releasing all Palestinian prisoners without distinction.
- 11.Palestinian prisoners reaffirm their absolute and non-negotiable right to liberty and the right to resist the occupation. The responsibility for securing the release of all prisoners within occupation prisons and detention centers is a sacred duty for the entire Palestinian nation with all its political parties and various actors. It is imperative that the political leadership take advantage and learn from past experience.
- 12. The previous political experience regarding the prisoners issue and the experience of the past years has proved the failure to approach the issue politically. It has become clear that solving the Palestinian prisoners issue will not be realized unless all forms of political

pressure and solidarity activities from the Arab and International community are utilized, along with all other methods of struggle. Using only one method of struggle will not bring the necessary results.

- 13. The Palestinian prisoners issue is an on-going and live issue that cannot be related to any other issue, particularly as it concerns human beings, families, fighters and the community. Based on this, the prisoners' file should not be placed within the context of other issues or as a "good will" or "confidence building" measure. It is an important issue in its own right. It is immoral to deal with people's lives on the basis of good will
  measures. It is difficult to build confidence amongst those who are continuously trying to destroy you.
- 14. The Palestinian people, leadership, organizations, associations, movements, trade unions, general unions, committees, and groups should understand and be aware that it is not possible to resolve the prisoners issue within the occupation prisons and detention centers through experimental negotiations alone. The acting Palestinian national committees should learn from the experiences of other nations and should act according to the importance of this issue in order to resolve it.
- 15.Based on the above, our people must understand that:

Ensuring the release of all Palestinian prisoners is a sacred duty for our people and fundamentally relies on our people and existing structures throughout the world. What is demanded is that existing committees, organizations and leadership change their strategies in regards to this issue in order to ensure a fundamental solution of the prisoners issue: the unconditional release of all Palestinian prisoners.

The Palestinian Prisoners Movement in Israeli occupation prisons and detention centers.





### Chapter Five

### **PEACE IS POSSIBLE**

A Letter to .....

An Open Letter to the Israeli Public

### A Letter to Berlin, Paris, Damascus, Washington, Moscow, Baghdad, Rome, Cairo, Tokyo, Beijing, London, New Delhi, Madrid and..... Oslo.

April 2003

Dear Friends,

I want to thank you all for inviting me to speak to you (in Berlin). I am very sorry to tell you that I cannot be with you as the Israeli government once again has prevented me from leaving the country. I know the supposed reason for this. They told my Israeli lawyer and friend Mrs. Tamar Peleg that I am a member of a terrorist organization and that I would constitute a danger for the region should I be allowed to leave the country.

They don't need to tell me the real reason for my travel restriction. I should not be able to speak in front of you. I should not be able to tell you what it is like to live under Israeli military occupation. You should not hear first-hand how it is to have land confiscated in order for settlements to be built, to be arrested and imprisoned without charges, to be hunted down and assassinated. You should not hear about the colonial and racist policies of the Israeli occupation. You should not hear that it is this colonial policy which is the major deterrent for a peaceful and just solution for the Middle East conflict.

The term "occupation" should not be used by the media. The people who talk about the occupation

should either be silenced or killed. No one should see the ugly face of occupation. How quickly is a person who dares to utter criticism of Israel's occupation termed an anti-Semite, and thus discredited in Western eyes.

How easy it is for Israel to silence the international solidarity movement and keep it away from the events here. Persons like Rachel Corrie are killed by an Israeli bulldozer and two others are seriously injured, one of them brain dead. How easy it is for Israel to denounce the international solidarity movement as terrorists or supporters of terrorist groups and bar them from entering Gaza or the West Bank. These people are often deported or even forbidden entrance at the airport and they are sent back immediately.

Israel is behaving like a spoiled child who knows that his parents, the USA and Europe, will always forgive him no matter how naughty he is. Israel is indeed their darling. Israel forced millions of Palestinians to become refugees -- never mind, they can go somewhere else. Israel confiscates Palestinian land -- never mind, Palestinians are not human beings that need land and future. Israel is building a wall around us, bigger than the Berlin wall, imprisoning a whole nation in a concentration camp, and Colin Powell, the representative of the free world, calls it a "fence".

The more the Palestinians resist, the more they are punished.

Yes. Palestinians are not allowed to defend themselves. Palestinians should not resist.

Resistance is a word that is reserved for movements sanctioned by the West. The world praised the valiant French Resistance fighting the Nazi occupation of France, and Americans loved to make comparisons to their own struggle against British domination some 200 years ago. The Afghanis fighting the Soviet occupation were a resistance movement, but those fighting now against American forces are terrorists and warlords. The word "resistance" shall be soon removed from the Arabic vocabulary. The Palestinians should submit to everything the United States and Israel impose, and not even think of resisting.

The Palestinians are resisting the occupation of their country because they want to live like all peoples of the world. They resist because they want a better future for themselves, for their children and for the children of the others. They resist because their daily life is hardly bearable. They resist because they are looking for their dignity. And they resist in order to keep their humanity.

The Palestinians are now waiting for the Road Map to be implemented. But first Arafat had to be replaced. Then a government acceptable to the United States and Israel (but not necessarily acceptable to the Palestinians) must be found. Then the political parties which are resisting the occupation have to be declared illegal and should be banned. Then the Palestinians must give up the right to return, etc, etc.

Israel can all the while confiscate land and build settlements. The Israeli army continues hunting down Palestinians with F16s and Apache helicopters. Thousands of Palestinians are held without trial in Israeli jails. Many thousands are made homeless because Israel is allowed to blow up their houses as a measure of collective punishment. Many other thousands are made homeless because of unimaginable destruction in Rafah, Jenin and elsewhere. Thousands are to be ethnically cleansed very soon from the area trapped between the separation wall and the green line. All this can happen because the governments of Europe and the US administration allow Israel to do so.

#### Dear friends,

It is no longer enough to hold conferences. It is no longer enough to send words of solidarity. We have to act together. We have to put pressure on Israel until the Israeli army leaves occupied Palestine, until the last Israeli soldier has left every Palestinian city, village and refugee camp, until the occupation is over.

But please remember: every Jaffa orange supports the Israeli occupation. Every T-shirt made in Israel supports the Israeli occupation. Every avocado supports the Israeli occupation. Every flower imported from Israel supports the Israeli occupation. Every research and development project supports the Israeli occupation. Some Israelis, including Mrs. Tanya Reinhart, an Israeli professor at the University of Tel Aviv even propagate the academic boycott of Israel until the occupation is over. We should not wait for our governments to do that for us. We have done this successfully in the past against racist South Africa. We can do it now against racist Israel until the occupation is over. They control the army, the media,

the companies, the factories and the markets but we control ourselves. We can indeed boycott every product coming from Israel and every company that supports Israel and its illegal and inhumane military occupation, until the occupation is over.

The ending of the Israeli occupation is the best way to save lives. Only after the Israeli occupation is over we can hope that the people in the Middle East can live in freedom, security and prosperity.



## An Open Letter to the Israeli Public

November 2003

A growing number of Israelis are speaking out against the continuation of the occupation and the building of settlements. Others are asking for an immediate withdrawal from the occupied territories, even a unilateral withdrawal. Still others are introducing new plans like the Geneva accord, which implies clearly the ending of the Israeli occupation of 1967. These people express themselves in different ways, they come from different backgrounds and follow different agendas, and they have different visions for a solution but they all want the occupation to end and they all oppose Sharon and his policy. Among these people are:

Four former chiefs of Israel's security service, among them Avraham Shalom who headed the security service from 1980 until 1986 "Yes there is no other word for it: disgracefully...we have turned into a people of petty fighters using the wrong tools."

Major General Ami Ayalon who headed the agency from 1996 until 2000 and is co-author of a peace petition signed by tens of thousands of Israelis and Palestinians: "We are taking sure and measured steps to a point where the State of Israel will no longer be a democracy...."

According to Haaretz daily newspaper on 18 November 2003, "the security chiefs denounced

virtually every major military and political tactic of the Sharon administration, adding their voices to the dissent in Israel against the Prime Minister's handling of the conflict...

In recent weeks [Israel's] top general has criticized Sharon's clampdown on Palestinians in the West Bank, active reserve Air Force pilots have publicly declared the military's use of missiles and bombs to kill militants in civilian neighborhoods to be immoral, activists have initiated independent peace proposals, and opinion polls have indicated that faith in Sharon is plummeting.

The list of people who see the need for an end to the Israeli occupation is growing: Avraham Burg, former speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Women in Black, Israeli internationalists, soldiers who refuse military service in the occupied territories, Peace Now, Yossi Beilin and Amram Mitzna (who should have spoken out when he was a candidate for Prime Minister), drafters of the Geneva Accord, the committee against house demolitions, Bat Shalom, a large segment of the Labor party, the communist party of Israel, the Arab parties of Israel, university professors Mrs. Tanya Reinhart and Ilan Pappe, well-known Israeli personalities and journalists such as Uri Avnery, Meron Benvenisti, and Gideon Levy and, last but not least, Amira Hass, who wrote in Haaretz on 12 October 2003 under the title Explaining the Occupation to the Occupier:

"So how does one explain the occupation to the occupier? The knowledge of daily life of 3.5 million

people whose future offers no chance of normalcy: the daily experience of the land of their grandparents and parents falling prey to this or that army order, for some 'public' expropriation or private outpost? How does one explain to the bulldozer what it means to live when the land is constantly shrinking under your feet, when across the way, meanwhile, some rich settlement of Jews grows and a brand new road is paved just for them? How can the paper on which the army orders are written know what it is like to live for 37 years under the arbitrary rule of the representatives of the foreign occupation, many of whom are residents of the settlements, who make arbitrary decisions about who will be able to travel and who won't, who will get medical treatment and who won't, how many inches a water pipe can have as its diameter, if and when a water tanker reaches the village, which tree will be uprooted and which won't?

How to explain to the tanks and planes what a little boy's fear is like -- not the fear of 10 or 100 but hundreds of thousands, not once a month or every other week, but daily for three years, and what happens to a daughter and grandmother whose loved ones, civilians, are killed in front of their eyes, not by the dozens but the hundreds. How to explain to Israelis, who get only the most partial of reports about the horrors of the military occupation, that the Palestinians also suffer daily from horrific scenes, indeed from the very first day of the renewed clashes, when they were still only throwing rocks and not blowing up in our cities?"

Finally, we cannot find a better way to end this letter to you than to quote from Gabriel Ash's letter to President Katsav on 25 April 2002, in which he responded to Katsav's allegation that the the world was silent while terrorist acts against Israel were being committed, but dared to criticize Israel's actions in the Jenin refugee camp. In his very eloquent way, Ash offers a solution to the conflict.

. . .

The suicide bombs are the mutant flowers of Israel's brutalizing occupation, springing from the seeds of the 54-year-long dehumanization of Palestinians. They are the ghosts of your brutality coming back to haunt you, the mementos of your war against memory.

. . .

For those ready to die, their spiritless hatred towards you is what remains after you have bulldozed their past and their future. Whether you like it or not, they are your bastard offspring. Everything they know about hate, you taught them. Everything they forgot about humanity, you made them forget. Give them a hug now, as they have proven themselves worthy of their parents - you.

The short answer, President Katsav, is really short: just get out!

Call the army home. Call the occupation off. And get out of the Occupied Territories. Just get out!

Don't mumble about how "difficult" or "complex" the

situation is. It isn't. You are the oppressor. You are the occupier. You park your tanks on plundered land. You fill your swimming pools with stolen water. You kill and destroy in order to inherit. So don't bullshit about "the situation". Just get out!

Stop abusing people. Stop abusing language. Stop spinning your own moral cocoon. Stop turning your country and your people into a metaphor of evil. Just get out!

Don't wait for Bush. Don't wait for Arafat. Don't wait to negotiate with the mythical Palestinian leader who will finally accept your dominion. There is nothing to negotiate about. Just get out!

Take your rabid Jewish fundamentalists from Kiryat Arba and Beit El with you. Load them on buses and pump the gas pedal until the hills of the West Bank vanish in the rear mirror. Just get out!

Gather your thugs from the borderless "border police", give them scholarships and send them to school again. Let them discover there is more to life than beating people to a pulp. Just get out!

Take your checkpoints, with all their petty humiliations and deadly snipers, with you. And just get out!

Send the Shin Bet packing. After 35 years, the world has had enough of your clever jailers and torturers. Take them with you and just get out!

Let your hideous bulldozers loose on the illegal settlements of Ma'ale Adumim, Har Homa and Gilo.

There is plenty of demolition work for them there. Let them continue until the mountain line bears no more memory of your rape. Then just get out!

Don't apologize. Don't justify. Don't explain. There is nothing left to explain. Honestly. Just get out!

Don't even worry about the thousands of olive trees, symbols of peace, you uprooted. Someone will plant them again.

Just get out!





# **Appendix**

Glossary of Occupation

### **Glossary of Occupation**

By Paul de Rooij

Language is a powerful yet deceptive thing. It can be used to convey someone's plight and it can also be used to hide unpalatable sordid deeds. Nowhere are words adulterated more for political ends than in Israel and Palestine today. It is no secret that Israel employs a legion of well-funded propagandists, and it also relies on self-appointed members of the press -- the pro bono apologists, who serve the same purpose. Just like the lopsided imbalance of military power, the means to command and change language rests primarily with pro-Israeli propagandists. Their language obfuscates and exculpates Israel's actions against a basically defenseless population; it perpetuates the injustices and contributes to a continuation of Israel's occupation and theft of more land.

To make sense of the situation and to peer through the fog, a fraction of the post-Oslo commonly abused terms are translated in this glossary. However, there is a limitation to this glossary; it discusses abused terms generally used in the Israeli-centric discourse. Now, Israelis don't want to talk about what they are doing to the Palestinians, and therefore there is a tendency for there to be NO words to describe what they do. Israelis have no interest to describe, let alone coin terms for the Palestinian condition. Similarly, the media discourse has no words to describe the Palestinian condition because it has adopted an Israel-centric point of reference. For this reason, defining

terms in a glossary is not satisfactory; it only looks at the glaring problems, the instances where there is a descriptive word.

Abused terms	Translation
Administrative detention	Arbitrary imprisonment without charges, trial, sometimes without legal representation, for undefined terms. Imprisonment usually takes place in prisons and even in a concentration camp in the Negev desert.
Bilateral negotiations	Confiscation of land. Israel confiscates/steals land, and to legalize its claims it engages in "bilateral negotiations." There have been no bilateral negotiations about Palestinian claims pertaining to land inside the Green line.
Bypass road network	Exclusive Israeli-only roads carving up the West Bank and Gaza — the concrete manifestation of the policy to divide and rule. All Palestinian property within an arbitrary range of the road is bulldozed, all trees uprooted. Bypass refers to the fact that the roads avoid Palestinian towns.
Caught in crossfire	Deliberate Killing of a Palestinian
Check points	Choke points strangulating Palestinian economic activity by closing roads and not letting any Palestinians pass without lengthy and often unnecessary humiliating personal searches.

Abused terms	Translation
Clashes	An unequal contest. Clashes suggest that two equal forces are slugging it out, but the Israelis happen to have one of the most powerful armies in the world.
Closed military area	A demarcation for the press and observers to stay out so that they won't witness the depredations of the occupation forces.
Closure	Siege and curfew. Curfew is implemented for weeks on end thereby creating an end to normal life for all innocent civilians.
Cycle of violence	Disproportionate violence "It suggests, at best, two equal sides, never that the Palestinians are resisting violent oppression with violence." John Pilger, New Statesman, July 1, 02. "Yes, there is a cycle and the violence is disproportionate, but what is missing is the context. Why is there violence at all? The standard refrain, when it is rarely mentioned, is there is "hatred" on both sides. But since Israelis are like us (fun loving and child hugging) and we don't think of ourselves as hate-filled, then it must be the other side, the Arabs, who are hateful. Add the history of persecution of Jews into the mix, and what you have is a cycle of violence based on Arab hatred of the Jews. Presto, we arrive at the Israeli propaganda line." Nabeel Abraham.

Abused terms	Translation
Democracy	Chauvinist ethnocracy. During the apartheid years in South Africa Whites also claimed to have a democracy and were rightly ridiculed for this posturing. Israel isn't much different, and its political system cannot be praised or labelled "democracy" due to its systematic oppression of others.  Democracy is inclusive; the Israeli political system excludes a large portion of the population. Israel makes a distinction between citizenship and nationality. Thus Palestinians living in Israel have an Israeli citizenship, and an "Arab" nationality. Democracy applies to the Jewish nationals, not to the citizens of the state. There are Arab members of the Knesset, but their rights are curtailed in the Jewish state. Palestinians in the occupied territories have zero democratic rights although they are forced to pay some taxes to Israel — a case of taxation without representation.
Demographic factors	"Israeli newspeak for keeping the Arabs from outnumbering Israeli Jews." Nabeel Abraham
Deportation	Expulsion or exile.  The dictionary definition of deportation: banishment of an undesirable person to their native land. Given that Palestinians are natives, thus legal residents, their expulsion is an imposed exile. Furthermore, the term deportation

Abused terms	Translation
	implies that the Israelis are just pursuing legal procedures. The dubious nature of the appeals process and the simultaneous demolition of the victims' homes contravene the Geneva Convention.
Disproportionate response	Israeli violence appearing in the press Harshest admonishment uttered by the US gov't in response to Israeli bombings or assassinations. By implication a "proportionate" response – killing less people – is acceptable. The complicating factor of the usual Israeli actions is the press coverage. However, "proportional" responses are ignored.
Disputed territories (NB: this is giving way to just "territories")	Occupied territories. Curiously enough this term was coined by the US gov't under Clinton. Language reflects policy preference and the nature of the US "mediators". (see honest broker)
Facts on the ground	Settlements. At best they are considered bargaining chips, at worst they are considered immutable.
Final status negotiation	Chimera. The Oslo framework stipulated negotiations dealing with matters of substance and most important to solve the conflict. Note these negotiations are always in the future. Current negotiations deal mostly with issues of interest to Israel, e.g., security, confiscation of more land.

Abused terms	Translation
Generous offer	Demand for surrender.  Anything that the Israelis offer is generous, and should be accepted. The Camp David II "generous offer" amounted to an offer of a fraction of the West Bank and Gaza, no control over borders, limited removal of settlements, and no sovereignty, yet this was supposed to be generous. In good faith negotiations the parties have a right to refuse an offer without admonishment.
Green Zones	Palestinians out.  "Zoned areas in the Israeli-occupied Arab residential areas of the territories which are protected allegedly for environmental reasons. A legal sleight of hand to prevent Arab development."  Nabeel Abraham
	"Using its juridical control of the land, in 1992 Israel classified the area in which the village is located as 'green land' land that cannot be built on and is basically a nature reserve. The idea was to strangle the local population, prohibiting them from constructing new houses. Young adults who wished to build a family home were forced to choose between leaving their birthplace or building illegally, knowing that the Israeli authorities would most likely destroy any new house."  Neve Gordon, The Bad Fence, CounterPunch May 30, 2003. Referring to Mazmuriah in an area annexed after the 1967 War.

Abused terms	Translation
Hamas	Catch all opposition group.  An Islamic opposition group fostered by the Israeli secret services during the first intifada. Its purpose was to undermine the support for the PLO. Since then it has become an effective opposition force opposed to Arafat's sell out.  Anyone voicing criticism of the "peace process" is automatically classed as a Hamas supporter. Several leading intellectuals who objected to Arafat's shoddy approach to negotiations earned themselves a Hamas label by both Israelis and the Palestinian "authority".
Held in detention	Hostages. Practice that became common during the first intifada whereby Israeli occupation forces imprison family members of wanted persons. Several Lebanese hostages have languished in prison without charge, trial, and with no prospect for release. Shaykh Ubayd has been held for more than 14 years. They are held even though the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon has come to a partial end.
Honest broker	The United States. The country supplying Israel with most of its weapons and giving no-strings-attached economic handouts – several billion dollars every year not counting forgiven loans.

Abused terms	Translation
Incursion	Attack.  "The latest euphemism, 'incursion', is from the vocabulary of lies coined in Vietnam. It means assaulting human beings with tanks and planes." John Pilger, New Statesman, July 1, 02.
Instilling hatred	Palestinian News, Education.  Describing the consequences of occupation to its own population. The term "instilling hatred" is used to describe any Palestinian news or information, and forms the justification to bomb Palestinian TV and radio stations, and even target individuals linked to some schools. Also a justification to remove accreditation of all Palestinian journalists.  Israelis find it galling to be called assassins, thieves, and occupiers. Palestinians are not allowed to convey their experience to others. Palestinian existence is criminalized, and so is their voice.
Israeli Defense Forces, IDF	Occupation Forces. I "D" F confers some legitimacy, but it is a misplaced respect for a fully equipped army of occupation.
Israeli-side	the "Israeli side" – today's euphemism for the occupation forces. Azmi Bishara, July 25, 2002, Al Ahram A curious adoption of a euphemism by both Israelis and the Palestinian "authority".
Offers you can't refuse	"In essence, Israel holds most of the cards and its willingness to use the

Abused terms	Translation
	population as hostages, coercing the Palestinian leadership to accede to ever more onerous demands." Dr. Majed Nassar.
Leverage	Israeli desire to determine the outcome of negotiations on the basis of balance of power instead of a balance of justice.
Man of Peace	War Criminal.
Mekhabel	"Thirty-five years ago, Israel invented an untranslatable word to describe any Palestinian the military wanted to kill or arrest: Mekhabel (in the plural, Mekhablim). Its untranslatability was crucial: the point was to foreclose any universalization. The closest English equivalent would be 'saboteur' ('he who comes to disrupt'). But Mekhabel isn't a euphemism; it was a new name that could be given to any Palestinian — and later to any Lebanese, or any Arab guerrilla, or terrorist, or school, or hospital (it can be used for buildings as well as people). Tens of thousands have been arrested, tortured, expelled or killed for being Mekhablim." — Yitzak Laor, Silent Partner, London Review of Books, Vol. 25 No. 9, May 8, 2003
Militants	Resistance. Western media cannot portray the Palestinian resistance as military because this label obviously doesn't apply. Instead they use "militants" also conveying the impression of armed gangs, and therefore easier to justify Israeli assassinations.

Abused terms	Translation
Moderate physical pressure	Torture. Israel is the only country in the world where torture is legal and used routinely.
Natural growth	Subsidized settlement expansion. Justification to continue expanding settlements. Every time demands are made for Israel to stop building settlements on occupied land, its retort is that expansion of existing settlements must continue to accommodate "natural growth", i.e., the subsidized stream of immigrant colonialists.  Many of the settlements have a large percentage of empty housing, bringing into question the need for further expansion.
Neighbor practice	Human shields "The use of a local resident as a 'human shield' is a war crime. That was confirmed, on live television, by a senior reserve officer, the former president of the highest military court.
	The Fourth Geneva Convention expressly forbids the use of 'protected persons' (as the convention calls inhabitants of an occupied territory) for such purpose. This practice, like the practice of compelling Palestinian neighbors to tour buildings suspected of being booby-trapped, is similar to the killing of hostages in retaliation for resistance actions
	It was disclosed that this is a widely-

Abused terms	Translation
	used method, which has even been given a regular military appellation: 'neighbor practice'. Not long ago the army promised the Supreme Court to give up the practice [but] had no intention at all of fulfilling the promise."  Ury Avnery, Palestine Chronicle, Aug. 19, 02
Neighborhood	Settlement. Israelis and their apologists insist that Gilo is just another neighborhood of Jerusalem. The fact is that it is built on illegally confiscated occupied land – thus a settlement.
No building permit	Order for destruction.  An excuse to demolish Palestinian homes. Israeli buildings built without a permit are issued with one retroactively and are spared. No Israeli-owned home has ever been demolished for lacking a permit. Palestinians cannot in general obtain building permits.
Occupation	Creeping redefinition of a key term.  "these walls would cage the emerging 'Palestinian entity' into three disconnected cantons in the north, center and south of the West Bank, covering about 42 percent of its territory but hosting most of its two million or so denizens. This is the 'occupation' Sharon wants to end: Israel's occupation of the Palestinian 'people, not the occupation of the land and resources that is their patrimony."  Graham Usher, Israeli diktat?, Al Ahram Weekly, May 29, 2003.

Abused terms	Translation
Operation X	Another attack.  Military operations are given names to make them more palatable – it is a military marketing gimmick. Any journalist referring to an attack on refugee camps by the operation's name is in the very least not trying to be objective.  the Israeli pilot who bombed an apartment block in Gaza, killing nine small children as well as well as his Hamas target, an "operation" – that was the description, for God's sake – which Ariel Sharon described as "a great success".  — Robert Fisk: "Bush fights for another clean shot in his war", The Independent, Nov. 8, 2002
Outpost	Outhouse. A stake on occupied land that serves two purposes. First, a means to suggest that Israel is willing to give up some land. It aims to allay pressure on removing settlements, and removing attention away from the settlements. "Outposts" can be created overnight, and are useful for propaganda purposes. Second, a threat that if Israel doesn't get its way, then another settlement will be built.
Peace process.  Note that Ariel  Sharon's  pronunciation of this is  closer to "piss  process." He seldom  refers to "peace" as an	Ruse to placate world opinion. A perpetual process not intended to reach any conclusion. A means for Israelis to gain time and consolidate their hold on the occupied territories by expanding the settlements. From their viewpoint, the longer the

Abused terms	Translation
outcome. He is always in favor of the peace process, but not peace.	negotiations leading to endless haggle the better. Occasionally, if negotiations are advancing, they may need a timely disruption, e.g., hold an election and it is time to start the negotiations all over again!
Pending investigation	Case closed. Of 25 Israeli army investigations in the past 22 months, six were closed without a result; others have yet to be completed. "The army hardly ever opens investigations into cases of unlawful killing," says Lior Yavne, Btselem's spokesman. "The army is basically conducting a policy of impunity. Soldiers realize they can do anything they want and they will not face problems." — Marie Colvin, "Cruel death of a West Bank local hero", Sunday Times, July 21, 02
Period of calm	Israelis aren't at the receiving end, never mind the Palestinians.  "there is a widespread tendency in the US media to simply ignore or severely underplay violence when its victims are Palestinians, while focusing intensely on incidents when the victims are Israeli."  — Michael Brown and Ali Abunimah, "Killings Of Dozens Once Again Called Period Of Calm By US Media", Electronic Intifada, Sept. 20, 2002
Phased withdrawal	Grudging Israeli pullout (always a "redeployment") of occupying forces

Abused terms	Translation
	over the area it chooses, on a timescale it determines, and only after it obtains guarantees that the local population will be policed to its satisfaction. No settlements are ever dismantled, only areas where the cost of occupation has become too high.
Proof of residency	ID confiscation.  Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are often asked to show their ID papers to prove their residency rights. Often police confiscate the identity papers, and thereby these people lose their right of residency. It often leads to the families in question being split up and losing their homes. The victims of this bureaucratic "transfer" policy number in the thousands.  ID papers are generally not reissued — the victims cannot prove their residency because the papers were confiscated. Photocopies of ID papers aren't considered valid proof to reissue documents.
Reform process	Satrap selection. Political transformation that delivers the collaborators with Israelis and Americans. Any politician signing up to this must accept to oppress their own population to comply with Israeli/ US demands. Arafat had signed on, but couldn't deliver.
Refuseniks	Semi-refuseniks. Israeli soldier refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories. However, they remain in the army to receive the

Abused terms	Translation
	discriminatory benefits given to "those serving in the army." A code term for Jewish Israelis.  Imagine during the Vietnam War if an Arnerican soldier stated that he would not go to Vietnam, but would accept remaining in the army so that he would be eligible for all sorts of benefits – this is called hypocrisy.  There is a key question for the semis. If tomorrow a group of Palestinians of Israeli nationality were to seek to reclaim their native villages in Israel, then where will they stand? Marching for the rights of the dispossessed or crush their bones?
Removing cover	Pretext to flatten homes, clear agricultural fields, trees, and so on. Making a lunar landscape out of the West Bank and Gaza.
Restraint	Kinder/Gentler Aggression  "If this is the latest Israeli military spin, the reality for Palestinians is that even 'restraint' by the Israeli army is enough to make their lives miserable. The army may no longer be destroying vast chunks of Palestinian cities, but it continues to terrify Palestinian civilians by indiscriminate shooting. The army still sends tanks and troops into Palestinian towns for forays of several days, as it did in Jenin last week, or for a single night as it did twice in the northern part of the Gaza strip. Curfews are slapped on or lifted without notice, making life for all Palestinians unpredictable and

Abused terms	Translation
	humiliating." Jonathan Steele, The Guardian, August 9, 02.
Retaliation, or Israelis never initiate violence, they always respond.	State terror, or wholesale violence. The actions taken as reprisals are: (1) collective punishment on targets unrelated to the original action, and (2) totally out of proportion to the original action. On both accounts the actions are in contravention of the Geneva Conventions.  Several times Israel has wrecked ceasefire agreements by assassinations or deliberate actions meant to aggravate the situation.
Right of Return	Bringing in your people to displace us.  "We regard it as morally wrong that this legal entitlement should be bestowed on us while the very people who should have most right to a genuine 'return', having been forced or terrorised into fleeing, are excluded."  — letter by British Jews renouncing their "right of return", The Guardian, Aug. 8, 02.  The "right of return" requires a determination to drive out the native population — it is all in the name of creating lebensraum.
Rocks	Stones. Palestinians throw stones at soldiers in tanks and armored vehicles – it is a symbol of defiance and resistance.

Abused terms	Translation
Security	Their security.  Demand that the occupiers not be attacked, and that the violence not spill over into Israel proper.  Security always refers to the safety of Israelis, it never refers to Palestinian concerns.
Settlements	The stolen land. Jews-only garrison villages built on violently confiscated Palestinian land. The purpose of the settlements is to make a permanent claim to the land, and impede the formation of a Palestinian State. These garrison villages always appear on Israeli maps, whereas the Palestinian villages whose land was confiscated for the same settlements disappear from the maps.
Strongholds, nests of terror	Refugee camps, home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, mostly refugees from villages conquered by Israelis.
Suspicion	Grounds for imprisonment or assassination.  " to say nothing of many thousands of 'suspects' rounded-up and still imprisoned by Israeli soldiers"  — Edward Said, Punishment by Detail, Aug. 8, 02.
Targeted killings	Assassination where a military commander plays the role of judge, jury, and executioner. It lists as a war crime under the Geneva Conventions where the occupier has a duty towards

Abused terms	Translation
	the captive population.  "nobody asks whether all these people killed were in fact terrorists, or proved to be terrorists, or were about to become terrorists."  Edward Said, Punishment by Detail, Aug. 8, 02.
Tear Gas	A euphemism for poison gas. Despite the clear warnings on the canisters that they should not be used in confined areas, this is where much of the gas is actually thrown. The occupation forces impose curfews and then whole neighborhoods are tear-gassed.  Medical personnel have repeatedly requested a list of the active agents in the gases, but so far, neither the manufacturer, Federal Laboratories of Pennsylvania, nor the Israeli authorities have replied. The only response has been to remove from the canisters the unheeded warning and the Federal Laboratories logo.  A new brown colored gas has also appeared on the "market"; exposure to it induces vomiting.  "I would not hesitate to state that the spraying of CS from the air – which is an action entirely impossible to control – and the imposition of a curfew after its wide use, should be thought of as a war crime."  Prof. Israel Shahak, AIC, Jan. 5, 1991
Terrorism	Retail violence, resistance. An oppressed population has a right to resist and use violence when there

Abused terms	Translation
	is no alternative. Its violence is labeled "terrorism", and judged to be illegitimate. Israeli violence is always found to have redeeming characteristics. (see retaliation)
Town planning	"A euphemism for replacing Arabs by Jews, reminiscent of some uses of 'urban planning' in the United States." Noam Chomsky in The New Intifada.
Transfer	The obscene euphemism for ethnic cleansing (which is itself a euphemism).
Unconfirmed reports	Accounts of Israeli forces depredations. Reports are only confirmed when either Israelis say so or when "Western" journalists report them. Palestinian accounts of events don't count to substantiate a report, and at best are ascribed the "alleged" adjective.

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## THE STUPIDITY OF POWER



## THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

This is the state of distortion in which we now live. It is a conscious political process in its essence and manifestations and it aims at using force and deception as a prefude to imposing political conditions in the name of peace.

This is the US-style truth. Anyone who tries to excuse himself /herself from the function is force-fed, subjected to the nauseating aftertaste of the sandwich, bluntly reminded that there are no other items on the menu.

As long as the Palestinian people oppose the plans of the US, the US will do its utmost to hinder the development of democracy in the Palestinian society.

The Palestinian striving for a free society takes its strength from the history of the Palestinian people. The Nakba (catastrophe) of 1948, the refugee reality, the dispossession, the deportation and killing, the rape of the land, and the new and real threat of transfer together form the basis of their legitimate struggle to defend their land and rid themselves of the yoke of Israeli occupation. It is their belief that it is morally and ethically right to resist the occupation.

Although our backs have been pushed against the wall, our chests continue to face the tanks, and our hearts are with all of those who are resisting the occupation. Our eyes, the eyes of every single Palestman — man or woman old or young, disabled, sick, or imprisoned — are firmly fixed on the goal of freedom and independence, and finally peace. There is no going back. We have never been as close to our freedom and independence as we are these days.

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