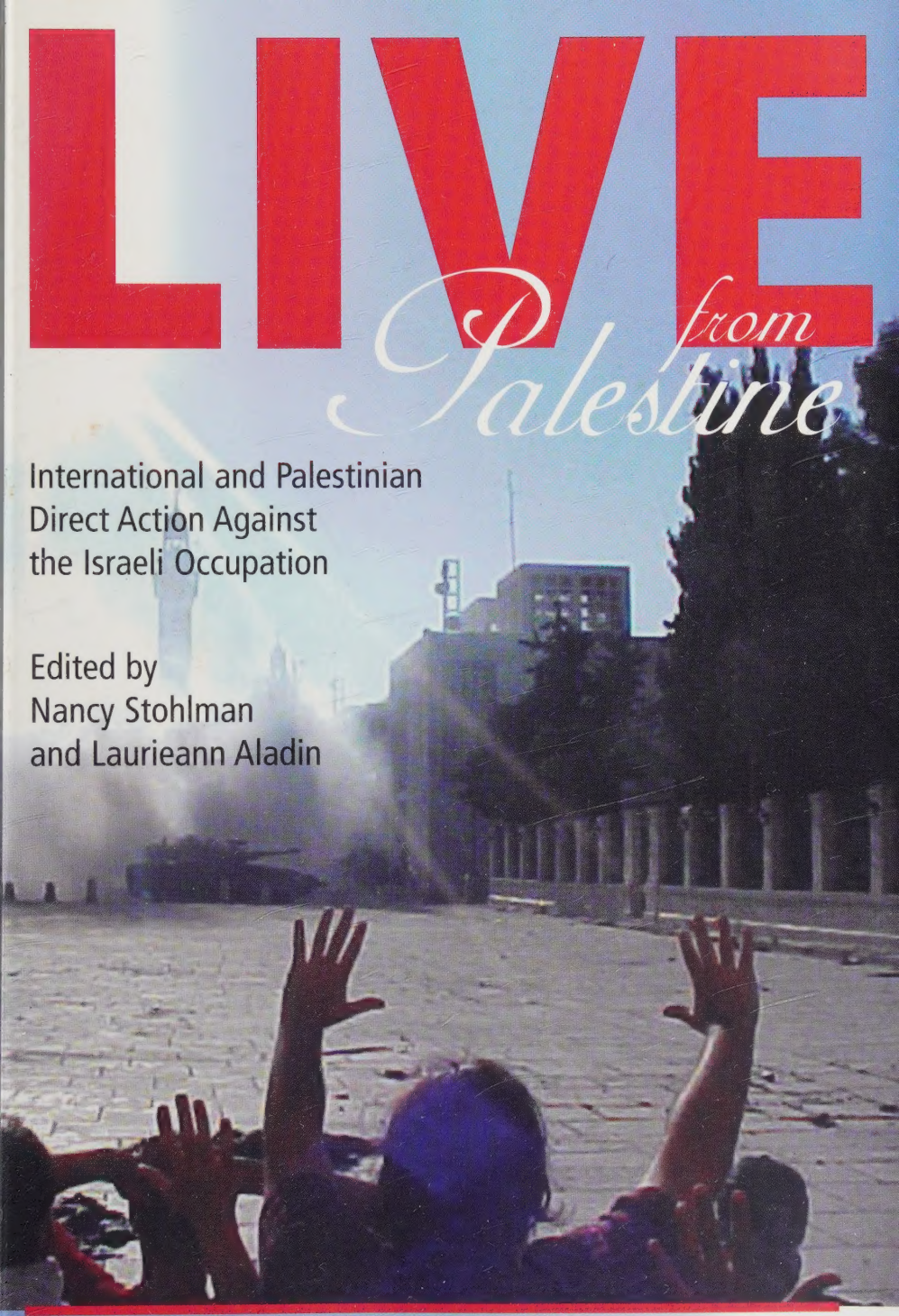
LIVE from Palestine

International and Palestinian
Direct Action Against
the Israeli Occupation

Edited by
Nancy Stohlman
and Laurieann Aladin



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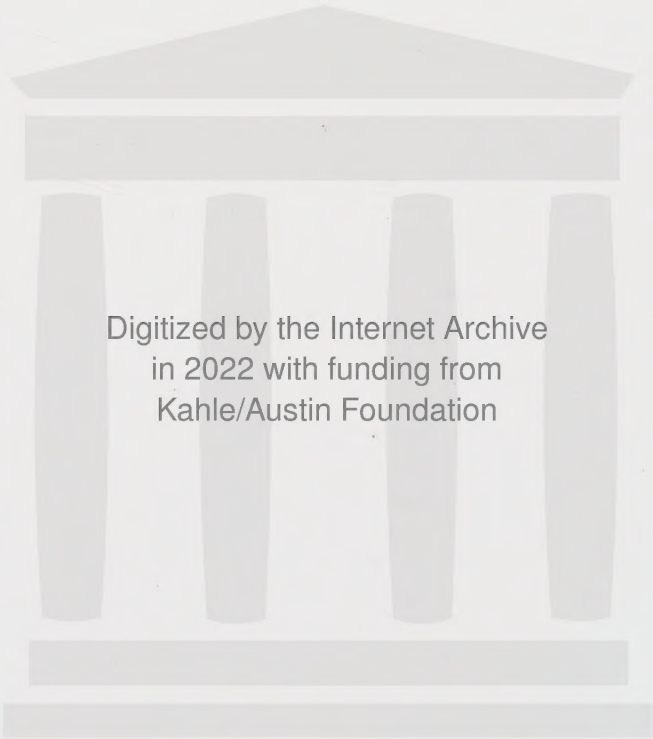

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It was wonderful to
meet you in Denver.
Thank you for your
support —
Nancy Stohlman
Sept 10, 03

Live from Palestine

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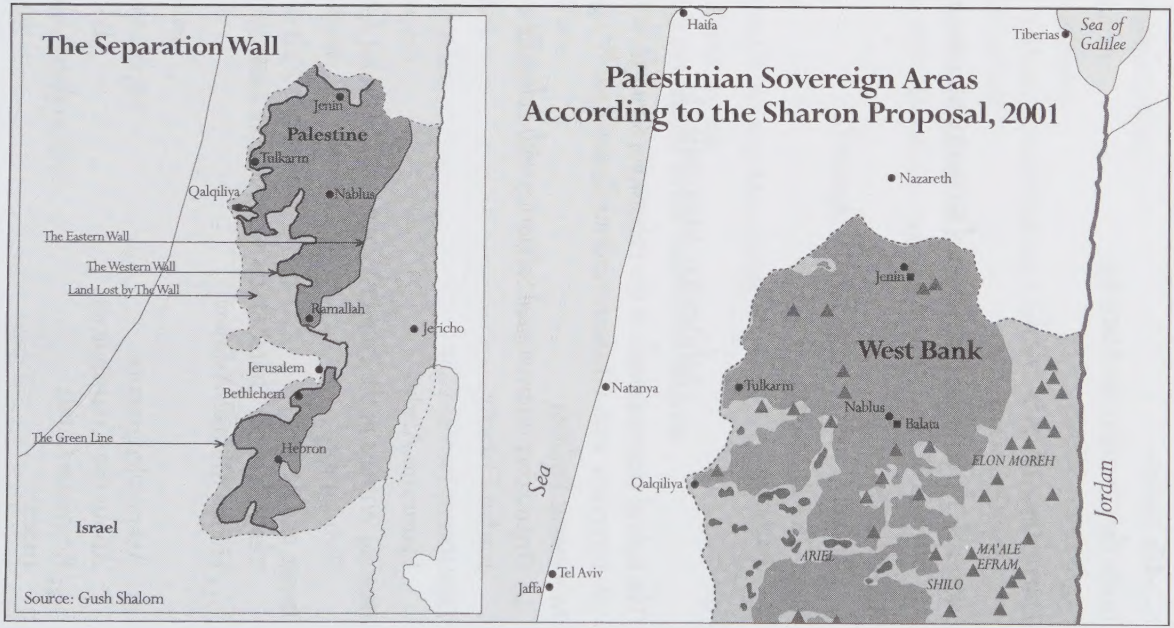
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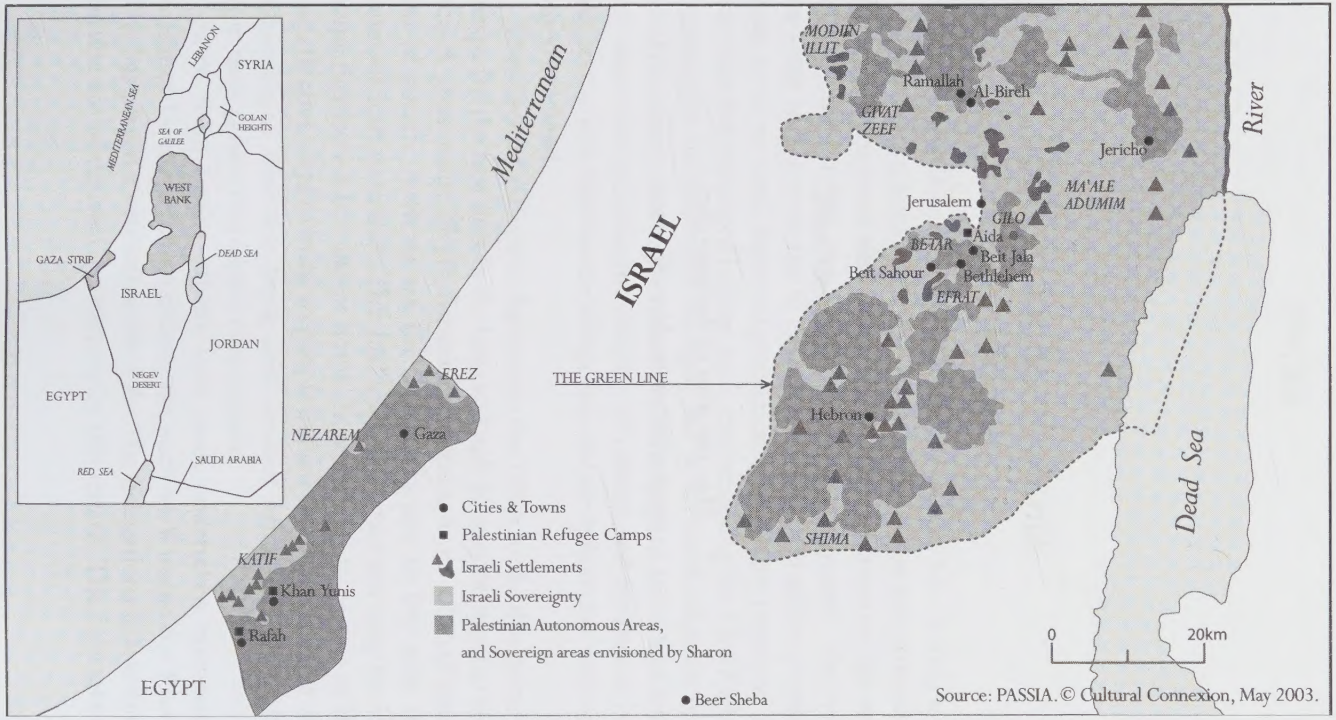
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Source: PASSIA. © Cultural Connexion, May 2003.

Dedication

To Shan, Van, Dalia
and all the children of the world.

May you grow up believing that
one person can make a difference.

Solidarity Movements

Noam Chomsky

Movements of solidarity with suffering people have a long and honorable history, but in the 1980s, they underwent an important development. Substantial numbers of people from the country that was primarily responsible for large-scale atrocities joined the victims—not only in spirit but in person—to offer help and to provide at least some minimal degree of protection by their very presence. At home, that has happened before, to an extent: during the Civil Rights movement in the South, for example. But to my knowledge, there is no real precedent overseas, even recently. During the Indochina wars there were mass popular movements of protest and resistance, but going to live in a Vietnamese village was not an option that was seriously considered.

The US wars in Central America in the 1980s broke that pattern, perhaps for the first time in the long and ugly history of imperial violence. A great many North Americans, coming from a broad spectrum of society, went to see for themselves and to live with the victims of terrible crimes. This had a major impact not only for the victims themselves but also at home. It turned out to be one of the most effective ways to bring to people in the United States some understanding of what was being done in their name—crimes that it was in their power to mitigate or terminate.

Since then, similar efforts have been undertaken elsewhere, sometimes by the same organizations, such as Witness for Peace, which has played a very admirable role. The delegations in occupied Palestine are of unusual significance in this regard. The courageous

and honorable people who have gone as observers as well as active participants in nonviolent struggle undoubtedly provide some measure of protection for those who have been suffering for many years under a harsh and brutal military occupation sustained by the United States. The information they provide, and their personal testimony, also helps to break through the severely distorted and often racist coverage that dominates in our own country. And we cannot overlook the fact that it is our own country that bears primary responsibility for these continuing crimes, and for the escalation of the cycle of atrocity that is reaching shocking levels and is bound to become worse unless there is some significant change here in the United States.

These efforts are particularly significant for those who would advise the victims to adopt nonviolent strategies. There is a familiar principle of advocacy of nonviolence: If you want to be taken seriously, stand beside those who will bear the consequences of following your advice. The internationals are living up to that commitment, and for that alone they deserve great respect and admiration.

—August 2002

Those Who Give Us Hope

Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi

As the Al-Aqsa Intifada continues, the plight of the Palestinians grows ever more hopeless. The seemingly endless closures and paralyzing curfews imposed by the occupying army and its government punish our entire civilian population. The economy and education system have been devastated, throwing hundreds of thousands of people into poverty. Additionally, the gradual re-occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has created an insidious combination of occupation and apartheid.

New settlements continue to be built on land stolen from Palestinians, and old settlements continue to expand. Palestinians remain unable to move freely from Palestinian town to city to village—the Israeli government's policy of "bantustanization" of the Palestinian areas is apparently succeeding.

On the surface little appears to have changed since the first Intifada of the late 1980s. Palestinians have been killed with greater frequency, and the Israeli army has used more brutal methods and greater violence to punish and attempt to quell our uprising against the occupation. But this is not new.

There is, however, one aspect in which the Al-Aqsa Intifada differs from the first. It has demonstrated the amazing power of people: foreigners who come here to participate in the Palestinian struggle for justice and independence.

Since September 2000, approximately 3,200 people of different nationalities have made their way to Palestine, despite the Israeli immigration services turning scores of people away from border cross-

ings and the airport, and numerous deportations.

Most of these activists arrived here directly from North America, Europe, and Scandinavia, although the occasional South American and antipodean have also made the journey. The fact that they have come, in such numbers and at their own expense, is quite frankly amazing—even more so when one considers what they have come from.

Those from the United States are coming from a country that provides billions of dollars in support, aid, and loans to the state of Israel, and have an administration that believes "Sharon is a man of peace!" They are surrounded by a media that have proved the most resistant to publishing anything but the official Israeli government version of what is occurring in the occupied Palestinian territories, using the terminology provided by that government, without question. Yet still they learned and came.

Having a conversation with these international peace activists is an eye-opening experience, especially when discussing their reasons for coming. Whether they are 18-year-old university students from Britain, a grandmother from France, or a 65-year-old priest from Belgium, they possess an understanding of the conflict that goes far beyond that of their elected representatives. The media bias felt by Palestinians everywhere is something that the internationals, too, are painfully aware of. They have come to see what is really happening in Palestine. To see the truth for themselves.

They also make a tremendous contribution to Palestine and the Palestinian people in spite of the rest of the world's failure. The United Nations in particular has failed to provide the one thing that Palestinians have consistently called for—an international protection force.

Since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, when Israeli troops responded to unarmed Palestinian demonstrations with excessive and disproportionate military force, Palestinians have called for protection. As the Israeli military onslaught has continued to the point where over 1,800 Palestinians have been killed and, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, more than 41,000 have been injured, we have pleaded for international protection.

It was not UN troops in smart uniforms who took up positions in our villages and cities, nor was it US soldiers storming ashore, as in

Somalia. It was individuals who responded to our calls, and small groups from trade unions and churches, anti-globalization activists, committees from the World Social Forum, Jewish and Christian groups opposed to the occupation, as well as those belonging to Palestinian solidarity groups.

These people came—even at the risk of injury, arrest, and deportation—to stand side by side with the Palestinians against the Israeli military occupation. They have delivered food and medicine to the sick and hungry during curfew, torn down military roadblocks, protested the draconian siege and closure, helped get the sick and wounded to hospitals, and accompanied our medical teams to enable them to provide badly needed treatment.

At the height of the Israeli military violence, during the March and April 2002 invasions, these individuals did what the Israeli army prevented the media, international aid agencies, and international community from doing. They entered the Jenin refugee camp and were witness to what had occurred there; they talked to the victims, wrote, took photos, and told the world.

I think these people are examples of the world's new generation (irrespective of age) and the positive side of globalization. News and information are accessible to people everywhere if they make the effort to find it. It may not be delivered to them on their doorstep every morning, but it is accessible through the Internet. People have learned the truth and they have come. Whether they came to break the siege, protect children going to school, or pick olives, they have come.

So despite the double standards of providing UN protection to some people and not others, and of expecting some countries to be accountable to UN resolutions and international law (Iraq) while not enforcing the implementation of resolutions for other countries (Israel), we had our protection. We turned to the people and they responded.

Not only have these international activists contributed to the ability of Palestinians to demonstrate peacefully, as the number of recent popular protests has shown, they continue, upon returning to their home countries, to peacefully work toward an independent Palestine. *Live from Palestine* is an excellent example of such motivation and dedication. It is an honor to be a part of this project.

—October 2002

A Brief History of Palestine and Israel

Edward Mast, Linda Bevis and Palestine Information Project

For thousands of years until 1948, the place now called Israel was called Palestine. Both Palestinians and Jews have lived in the region for several millenia. Today's Palestinians claim descent from the Kena'anu, or Canaanites, who founded the city of Jerusalem as well as the city of Jericho. Today's Jews claim descent from the Khabiru, or Hebrews, who conquered parts of Canaan and established Hebrew kingdoms for some centuries before being dispersed by Roman armies.

By the nineteenth century, Palestinians had a well-established society that was recognized by other Arabs as unique to Palestine. During this same century, a nationalist movement called Zionism arose among European Jews, proposing to escape from centuries of European persecution by founding a Jewish nation-state in Palestine. Jews had long been only a small minority in Palestine, however, and the Zionist plan took no account of the majority of the people already living in the region. Both Palestinian Arabs and Jews living in Palestine objected to the colonial aspect of the Zionist plan.

For several hundred years, the whole Middle East had been part of the Ottoman Empire, centered in today's Turkey. When the Ottoman Empire fell in 1917, the victorious European powers created arbitrary boundaries and Palestine became a mandate territory of Britain. At that time, there were about 600,000 Palestinian Arabs and 60,000 Jews in the territory, half of the latter figure being Ashkenazi Jews from Europe. These European Zionists often caused resentment by purchasing Palestinian land from absentee Turkish landlords. Tensions increased when Britain's foreign minister, Lord Arthur Balfour, announced his support for the establishment of "a Jewish national home in Palestine." British officials were simultaneously promising Palestinian Arabs a national state, but the number of Jewish settlers in Palestine grew by a factor of ten, accelerated by the rise of the Nazis and the Holocaust.

1948: *Al-Nakba* (The Catastrophe)

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly—under heavy pressure from the US and European governments—adopted Resolution 181, which suggested dividing Palestine into two nations, one Arab and one Jewish. In 1947, there were 1,237,332 Arabs and 608,225 Jews in Palestine. Though the Jewish people made up only 33 percent of the total population of Palestine—and owned only 6.59 percent of the land—UNGA Resolution 181 suggested allocating 54 percent of Palestine to the proposed Jewish state. Palestinian Arabs questioned the authority of the UN to partition their land, but Zionist leaders used the non-binding Resolution 181 as justification for declaring a Jewish state.

Zionist forces launched assaults against Palestinians in December 1947. On May 14, 1948, when Great Britain officially declared the end of British rule in Palestine, Zionist leaders declared a state of Israel. By that date, Zionist forces had already driven at least 200,000 Palestinians out of their homes. On the following day, Jordan, Syria and Egypt took military action to prevent the new state of Israel from expanding its boundaries and driving out more Palestinians. Israeli legend has it that the Zionist forces were far outnumbered and outgunned. In fact, Israel had superior numbers of troops, weapons and armored vehicles, and a US-European arms embargo on both sides maintained this imbalance.

Armistice agreements were signed in January 1949. The new state of Israel had conquered 78 percent of Palestine, with Jordan taking control of the West Bank and Egypt taking control of Gaza. Historic Palestine disappeared from the map of the world. Israeli historian Benny Morris has documented that 369 Palestinian villages were eradicated. At least 234 villages were destroyed by direct Israeli military action. At least 750,000 Palestinians were driven out of Palestine. In 1949, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 194, calling on Israel to allow Palestinian refugees to choose return or compensation. UNSC Resolution 194 was a condition for Israel's acceptance into the UN, but Israel has never complied. The UN set up refugee camps in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and today there are several million Palestinian refugees, over a million of them still in refugee camps.

1967: The Six-Day War and Beginning of Occupation

In June 1967, Israel launched an attack on Egypt and took control of the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula. When Jordan and Syria joined the conflict, Israel defeated them and took control of the West Bank and the Golan Heights. An additional 320,000 Palestinian refugees were driven out during the war.

Israel immediately annexed East Jerusalem, but has never formally annexed the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. As a result, over three million Palestinians who remain in these Occupied Territories are not citizens of any country. They live under Israeli military laws that closely resemble the apartheid laws of old South Africa. Under military occupation, Palestinians have no freedom of speech or assembly or movement; they can be arrested and imprisoned indefinitely without charge or trial; they are routinely tortured in prison; they have no voice in the Israeli government which controls their lives.

Furthermore, beginning in 1967 and accelerating through the present day, the Israeli government has given financial incentives to Israeli Jewish citizens to move to "settlements" in the Occupied Territories. Palestinian farmland and homes are routinely confiscated and demolished to make room for new Israeli-only settlements, along with Israeli-only highways to connect settlements to each other and to Israel proper. Though settlements in occupied territory are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Israeli government continues to subsidize the building of these settlements, which are placed strategically to divide, scatter, and even abolish areas of Palestinian residence.

1987: The First Intifada

The first Intifada (meaning "shaking off") began in December 1987 after an Israeli military vehicle ran into and killed four Palestinians in Gaza. Organized through networks of neighborhood committees and unions, the nonviolent resistance against the Israeli military occupation spread throughout the Occupied Territories, challenging the Israeli military occupation with tax revolts, general strikes, boycotts, and protests. The uprising continued until 1993.

1993-2000: Peace Process

Some people hoped that the Oslo Peace Accords, negotiated in September 1993, would bring justice to Palestine and Israel. Unfortunately, this interim peace plan only created "autonomous zones," scattered areas of limited Palestinian authority still under Israeli military, political and economic control. Under Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli government immediately violated the agreement by accelerating its confiscation of Palestinian land for Israeli settlements. During the following eight years, Israeli settler population doubled.

The Camp David talks of Summer 2000 were falsely represented as containing generous new offers by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In fact, Barak continued to propose noncontiguous islands of land, surrounded and divided by Israeli settlements and settler highways. No part of East Jerusalem was offered for Palestinian control. A token offer of return was made for a few thousand of the millions of Palestinian refugees. Barak's offers were intended as the final status agreement, but contained neither independence nor self-determination for Palestinians.

2000 to the present: The Second Intifada

On September 28, 2000—with Palestinians already frustrated and angry at the lack of Israeli good-faith negotiations toward a just peace—Ariel Sharon made a deliberately inflammatory visit to the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem, taking with him a thousand Israeli soldiers. There were protests, but no violence. Sharon left, but the thousand soldiers stayed behind. The next day, September 29, was a Friday, the Muslim holy day, and the Israeli soldiers were still occupying the courtyard in front of Al-Aqsa Mosque. Palestinians protested and threw rocks at the soldiers; the soldiers responded by firing live ammunition into the unarmed crowd, killing at least four Palestinians, wounding others, and igniting the Second Intifada. This uprising has been primarily nonviolent, though a few Palestinian factions have also initiated armed resistance, in some cases against civilian targets.

Israeli military violence against Palestinian civilians has escalated sharply, particularly since the March 2002 Israeli attacks on Palestinian cities. Nearly 500 Palestinians were killed and 1500 wounded in

that massive assault which the Israeli government called Operation Defensive Shield. Palestinian National Authority (PNA) offices and police headquarters were destroyed, ending the PNA's already limited ability to govern its enclaves as provided under the Oslo Accords. Thousands of homes were damaged or demolished, electricity and water were cut, and access to medical care was severely limited. More than a year later, Israeli military vehicles continue to patrol Palestinian cities, imposing curfews, demolishing homes, and carrying out assassinations and random killings.

In the Spring of 2002, the Israeli military began constructing a physical wall to separate the West Bank from Israel proper. This wall, often called the Apartheid Wall, will be higher than the Berlin Wall and will run the entire length of the West Bank, well inside the border and fencing Palestinians from wells and large tracts of farmland. The completed wall will imprison Palestinians into approximately 40 percent of the West Bank.

The International Solidarity Movement to End the Occupation was founded in the Summer of 2001 as another nonviolent Palestinian response to the escalating Israeli military violence.

US Involvement

The US government has consistently supported Israel and Israeli policy, giving several billion dollars of aid each year to Israel in the form of direct aid, weapons shipments, loan guarantees, and weapons contracts. The US government has repeatedly vetoed UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israel, and pressures other countries to refrain from reprimanding Israel for its policies or actions. In spite of this apparent bias, the United States continues to present itself as the only "honest broker" for Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

The US proposed a vague and contradictory "Road Map to Peace" on April 30, 2003. This proposal, though calling for a Palestinian state and the dismantling of some Israeli settlements, fails effectively to address Palestinian human rights, Israeli violence, the imbalance of power, the right of refugee return, and other key issues that must be resolved for a just peace.

Dignity Under Occupation

Live from Palestine: The Diaries Project

Arjan El Fassed

Internet cafés exist in most Palestinian cities and refugee camps, and Palestinians and international activists have made heavy use of the Internet to report otherwise unheard news and perspectives. Many Palestinians speak and write English, allowing their words to reach a wide Western audience. Counterpunch, Commondreams, *the* Electronic Intifada, *the* Palestine Chronicle, *the* Palestine Monitor, Indymedia, *and numerous other websites have published regular eyewitness reports from the West Bank and Gaza, where Israeli forces deny journalists access to Palestinian areas under attack. Here, Arjan El Fassed, describes how the Internet has allowed Palestinians to communicate with each other and people around the globe. Several of the essays in this section were originally posted to the* Electronic Intifada *website (www.electronicintifada.net).*

Journalists and correspondents covering the Al-Aqsa Intifada since September 2000 have faced a variety of hazards from the Israeli army and militant Jewish settlers, including bullets, tear gas, shrapnel, and physical assault. Just within the first three weeks of April 2002, for example, attacks on press freedom in the Occupied Territories included: one journalist killed and seven wounded; four journalists detained and fifteen arrested; sixty journalists targeted by gunfire; twenty journalists roughed up or threatened; another twenty who had their passports, press cards, or equipment confiscated; ten Arab media offices occupied and ransacked; and one journalist deported. Israeli authorities also prevented foreign media access to various cities,

towns, and villages on the West Bank declaring, for instance in the case of Ramallah, "The entire Ramallah area has been declared a closed military zone. No foreign citizens (including members of the media) are allowed to enter the closed zone. Anyone found in the closed zone henceforth will be removed."[1]

Stephanie Saldana for the *Daily Star,* a Lebanese paper, wrote: "What [the Israeli authorities] failed to recognize is that the media is no longer limited to those with press passes. In the age of the Internet, anyone can become a journalist."[2] In that realm of thinking, an unprecedented new website, the Electronic Intifada, was created in October 2000. I, along with cofounders Ali Abunimah, Laurie King-Irani, and Nigel Parry, aimed to enable a growing network of human rights and media activists to challenge the myths, spins, and distortions about Palestinians and their rights disseminated by various official Israeli spokespersons and media outlets throughout Europe and North America.

According to Parry:

> The main reason that the conflict has carried on as long as it has is simply because the Israelis have learned very well the importance of winning the war of words. The Internet has become a key new arena in which this occurs, not least because it overturns the tables on the traditional power structure of [corporate] media.[3]

The Internet highlights media's direct and indirect roles in reinforcing representations of, and policies toward, Palestinians. It enables individuals throughout the world to visit sites reporting directly from Palestine, allowing them to compare the nature and depth of indigenous coverage to that of mainstream media.

In establishing the Electronic Intifada, we envisioned the Internet giving voice not only to concerned media activists but, more important, to the Palestinian people, who have so long been deprived of the opportunity to narrate what it is like to live under what was, until the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, the world's last military occupation. Hence, we created a subsite within Electronic Intifada's website, Live from Palestine: The Diaries Project, on March 29, 2002. Saldana's review of the Diaries Project noted: "Intended as a news source, the site has slowly been transforming into a work of art, a human testimony of collective grief and a will to survive."[4] Indeed, Pal-

estinians should have a means by which to narrate their own lives, hopes, and history. The Diaries site gives writers a space in which to record their opinions and reflections on historic events. It has been a valuable asset, an alternative source, and a needed human context to understand the realities of life under occupation.

Updated regularly, this citizens' source contains on-the-ground accounts of the siege written by 38 individuals to-date, including doctors, aid workers, human rights activists, and anyone else who has managed to get access to the Internet—despite repeated power cuts and curfews—in various places throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The entries are personal, sometimes emotional, mundane and exciting, literary and pedestrian. Residents upload their entries from home or Internet cafés, making their narratives immediately available for a wider, international, English-reading audience. Instead of lobbying the media, citizens confined to their homes in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem, Gaza, and other places essentially *become* the media. The result is a diary series that "succeeds in deconstructing headlines and redefining them within a human context, reinforcing the fact that the current siege has transformed into an attack not only on militants, but on a civilian population."[5]

The diary entries, by giving ordinary Palestinians the power to narrate, address the issues of human rights, humane values, justice, and equality. For some of the diary writers, it is a form of therapy. Telephone and Internet connections are their only links to the outside world. Catherine Cook, who works for the Palestinian section of the Defense for Children International, a human rights organization focused on children's rights, described these connections as the only "grasp on sanity at this point." Andrea Becker, the refugee coordinator at Oxfam Quebec, working in Ramallah, continuously writes about the many phone calls her center is receiving, from pregnant women needing to deliver, to families needing food, water, or medicine. On the second day of the invasion, which began on March 29, 2002, Becker wrote about a pregnant woman who had called in distress for assistance. Before Becker could convey the needed information to the young woman, however:

> The phone line went dead; the land line cut. The battery on her mobile phone went dead hours ago; she hasn't had electricity for

> two days. Before the lines cut we could tell her where the tanks were in Ramallah; where the tanks were moving. Ask her how much food she had left, how long her supplies might last. She could call other people in Ramallah, and find out where the Israeli troops were. The loud noises, the shelling, how close is it? What has been hit? Where are they?[6]

This woman, the subject of Becker's entry, did not know the Israeli forces were coming into her area of Ramallah. She did not know they were going from house to house, chasing people. Becker and her colleagues could not stay on the phone and talk her through what she should say, what she could do. They couldn't tell her how she should repeat over and over, as the Israeli soldiers bang or shoot or break her door down, that she is a woman, alone in the house, and that she is unarmed.

"And now," Becker notes, "we are the ones who don't know what is going on, or how she is faring. We don't know if she has water, if she has food, and—when the soldiers stormed into her house—if she said the right thing."[7] Becker's diary entry is just one example of the many immediate and heartfelt appeals to the world.

Putting tragedies, events, and experiences into words helps to ease the turmoil and defuse the terror. Writing provides a sense of control and understanding. For some, writing is a struggle, a matter of survival. As eyewitnesses to tomorrow's news, we cannot hope to understand what is going on without access to alternative information resources. Live from Palestine: The Diaries Project represents a step in this direction—the closing of a gap between our daily experience on the ground and the different experience suggested by the media coverage that we critique. As Parry expresses:

> With Israel's current attempts to remove the witnesses from the scene of the crime, initiatives like this will become increasingly important. With the increasing ubiquity of information technology, these obstacles can be overcome.[8]

When Ariel Sharon launched a massive military offensive in the West Bank in late March 2002, the Israeli army used threats, intimidation, and lethal force to prevent journalists from covering its military actions. Where journalists cannot enter, the residents must take over.

We do not need permission to narrate; it is our duty. If the world cannot be brought to Palestine, we have to bring Palestine to the world.

Notes

1. Stephanie Saldana, "Life and Death in Palestine," *The Daily Star*, April 5, 2002.
2. Nigel Parry in Laurie King-Irani, "The Electronic Intifada," CommonDreams, March 8, 2001. www.commondreams.org/views01/0308-03.htm
3. Saldana.
4. Saldana
5. Andrea Becker, "The phone line went dead." The Electronic Intifada, April 2, 2002. www.electronicintifada.net/v2/article29.shtml.
6. Parry, "Eyewitness of Tomorrow's News." The Electronic Intifada, April 1, 2002. www.electronicintifada.net/v2/article24.shtml.

The Bridge

Nabila Assaf

For most Palestinians, the border crossing on the Jordan River is the only bridge to the outside world. The Israeli government controls this crossing point between the West Bank and Jordan like a valve, squeezing it shut as collective punishment or opening it up to allow a trickle or flood of Palestinians through. For those allowed across—currently all males below the age of 35 are excluded—the experience is one of deep humiliation. While some of the particulars of this process may have changed in the years since Assaf's childhood, "the bridge" remains ingrained in the Palestinian psyche as a symbol of their virtual imprisonment in their own land.

My first memory of Palestine begins with my father and I traveling through the Jordan Valley in the middle of a hot summer many years ago. The flies were enormous, stubborn creatures that would stick to my arms and legs, stinging me mercilessly. Swatting at them elicited only a lazy jump to another part of my arm or face. My father told me we were going to Palestine, going home.

We were riding in a beat-up, old taxicab to the border crossing in the Jordan Valley. Bored Jordanian army recruits seemed to stop us every few minutes to ask for our papers. The air was heavy and the open window brought in buffeting hot wind, like opening an oven door. My five-year-old body slouched in the seat like a rag doll, my own doll dangling from my hand onto the floor. Every once in a while, I would lift up each of my legs in turn, the skin on the back of my legs peeling off the hot vinyl seats.

Finally out of the taxi, we arrived at the border control point consisting of a few concrete buildings in the desert encircled with barbed wire. People scrambled with luggage and papers or argued with men in dark blue uniforms. Eventually, everyone was shepherded onto a large bus that lumbered toward the border, toward the Jordan River.

At the river, my father pushed me towards the window to look out. It didn't look like much of a river, just a dirty green creek choked with reeds. We crossed a narrow wooden bridge that creaked under the weight of the bus. An Israeli flag flew on the other side. My first glimpse of Israeli soldiers came when two of them popped up the stairs of the stopped bus. One stood guard as the other started down the aisle to inspect our papers.

I could see right away that the Israeli soldiers were nothing like the Jordanian ones. They wore sunglasses and crisp, khaki green uniforms. While some of the Jordanian soldiers had been carrying machineguns as well, the Israeli guns seemed bigger, shinier. The mood in the bus changed perceptively as soon as we crossed the border. My father started to fidget, and kept rearranging our papers in our passports, particularly when the Israeli soldiers came aboard. By the time the soldier had gotten to our seat, I was suitably intimidated.

With sunglasses propped up on his forehead, the soldier just held out his hand. My father handed over our passports and permits, said some things in English, and sort of laughed. The soldier said nothing. Without really looking at us or speaking, he handed back our papers and moved on. The soldiers got off the bus and waved us ahead. After one more stop in the hot sun, we proceeded to the Israeli border control.

People got off the bus and scrambled for their things as Arab workers threw luggage off the top of the bus to the ground. My father yelled at them a few times, but it did no good; our suitcases hit the

ground as hard as the rest. Ahead of us, under an awning, stood a long row of tables where the innards of the previous load of suitcases were spread out. The Israeli soldiers picked through these things like very particular vultures. Each item was thoroughly inspected before being dumped into a plastic crate, of the sort used for vegetables, below the tables.

Soon it was our turn. My father attempted to chat with the soldier who went through our things, but was ignored. Every seam of every item of clothing was inspected. Toothbrushes were confiscated, then a pen, a comb. I stood staring at the soldier silently; he was so methodical, I was somewhat fascinated.

At some point the soldier had finally emptied and inspected all of the contents from our two suitcases. We were waiting for some indication to go when he said something to my father in Arabic while pointing at my doll, which was hanging miserably from my hand. My father took the doll and gave it to the soldier.

He began turning it around, squeezing and poking at it. I was confused and more than a little upset. This was not a particularly favorite doll of mine, but it was still my doll and I didn't appreciate how he was handling her. After a bit more of this, he casually propped the doll's body against his chest and attempted to rip her head off.

At this point, the tears that had started to well up in my eyes exploded and I began to cry. The soldier glanced at me and continued prying off the doll's head. If the doll had ever seemed human to me, it was at that moment. The man might as well have been trying to rip the head off of my baby sister. I was incredulous. It had never occurred to me that an adult could do such a thing. I might not have entrusted my doll to another child, especially a boy, but at five you do not expect to hand your doll to a grown man and have him attempt to kill her.

It must have been a well-made doll because the soldier was not making much progress. I continued to bawl. Frustrated, he called to another soldier, who brought over a hacksaw. I started to shriek.

Throughout all of this, my father argued and pleaded with the soldier to leave my doll alone and kept gesturing in my direction. Seemingly oblivious, the soldier put the saw to the doll's neck. I must have been more than a little hysterical by now—maybe my decibel level went up—because he finally seemed to pay attention to me.

Then, as casually as he had started, he simply stopped, put the hacksaw down, and handed me back my doll.

There were still hours of lines to wait in and papers to exchange, not to mention a strip search to endure. I am sure we went through all of this before we reappeared out the other end of the border control building several hours later. I do not remember much of it. But by the time we were in another taxi, with the hot wind and tears streaming across my face as we headed for Jericho, I knew what it was to be Palestinian.

Note

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A Day in Palestinian Hell

Abdel Fattah Abu-Srour

The heart of Palestinian society before its annexation by Israel in 1967, East Jerusalem was further isolated from other Palestinian cities in the 1990s by a ring of Israeli settlements. Built on land seized from Bethlehem and other suburbs of East Jerusalem, the settlements have exacerbated conflict in an area already crowded with refugees from Israel's previous expansionary wars. Frustrated Palestinians sometimes shoot with rifles across the narrow valleys that separate Bethlehem's refugee camps from the settlements. These effectively symbolic attacks are answered by building-crushing shells, rockets, and high caliber machinegun fire from the Israeli military. In this essay, Abu-Srour describes a March 2002 visit to his parents in Bethlehem's Aida refugee camp and the difficulties of traveling between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem, a distance of only nine kilometers.

My child is crying. I thought I was dreaming but I'm not. It's 4 am. I am struggling to wake up. After all, my wife and I have only slept for three hours.

My son's clothes are wet. I take them off and walk to the bathroom, holding him in one arm and a candle I bought yesterday in my

free hand. I put the candle beside the sink, open the tap, and feel the water; it is cold. I take a portion of the water in my hand and wash my child's backside. I take another portion and wash him again when the water stops running.

"Shit, the water containers are hit again," I think.

I finish cleaning my child with paper tissue. When we return to the bedroom, I hear the snoring of my father, and the deep respiration of my mother in the next room. My wife is still sleeping.

My wife and my son, Canaan, had come in the late afternoon to see my parents, who live in Aida, a refugee camp within Bethlehem. Since we live in Jerusalem, my wife had to pass the checkpoint. Of course she couldn't pass the checkpoint in the car because no Palestinian cars are allowed to pass from Jerusalem into Bethlehem.

I don't have an Israeli identity card or a permit to go in and out of Jerusalem since I am originally from a refugee camp in the West Bank. Even though I have lived in Jerusalem for three years and pay taxes to the Israeli government—as does every other Israeli and Palestinian living under Israeli control in East or West Jerusalem—I still don't have a permit. The government accepts my tax money, but doesn't allow me access to any services: health insurance, a permit to pass the checkpoints, nothing.

Anyway, my wife needed to find another way to enter Bethlehem. She drove back to Jerusalem and parked her car near our rented house. Then she took a taxi to the village of Abu Dis, just east of Jerusalem. She then took another taxi into Bethlehem, along a road called the Valley of Hell, which circles Jerusalem, and finally entered Bethlehem from the east.

At around 8 pm last night, shooting started from Aida camp, followed by shelling from a large number of Israeli tanks waiting across the valley at the Israeli settlement of Gilo. Many of our water containers were hit. Three houses caught fire. Two of them were completely burned. We couldn't do anything. The helicopters bombarded two houses with missiles, in addition to the stone-cutting factory located west of the camp.

The shelling finally stopped around 12:30 am. I went with several residents to see if anyone was injured. It was then that we noticed the great damage that had taken place. The camp was in complete darkness since a missile also had hit the electricity generator. We observed

the damage under the moonlight. Some people had candles, having learned from previous experiences to keep them stocked. A lot of kids were in the streets, afraid of being buried alive or burned inside of their houses. Only two people were injured that night, though one was hit seriously. We were fortunate. But some of the houses were completely damaged or burned.

I returned home around 1 am to find my parents and wife very worried. My son had been crying the whole night because of the noise of the shelling. I didn't notice at first that our water containers had been hit, and that almost all of the water had leaked out. The containers had just been fixed two days earlier, after the last bombardment.

So now at 4 am, staring at my child in the middle of the night, I think, "This is ugly. Why do we need to suffer all the time like this? Don't we have a right to live in peace?" Then I laugh. I'm thinking, "Peace…peace…what does this word mean?" My child smiles at me. I put him next to his mother, lie beside him, and try to sleep.

I wake up at 7 am. The electricity has been repaired, and local TV stations are showing images of the previous night's bombardments in our camp as well as the nearby cities and villages of Beit Jala, Beit Sahour, and Al-Khader. The news from Hebron, Ramallah, Nablus, and other cities is the same. This morning in Hebron, a 24-day-old baby girl was found dead in her bed, having suffocated from tear gas.

Taking a bottle of water from the refrigerator to wash my hands and face, I think, "I shall repair the water containers when I return from work."

I arrive at the nearby pharmaceutical company where I work as a microbiologist. Around 40 percent of our workers couldn't come to work that day, mostly from Hebron and the southern areas of Bethlehem. Israeli checkpoints weren't permitting anyone to pass so the work in the company couldn't proceed normally. It wasn't the first time. Over 70 percent of the workers in Aida camp work in Israel, and most have become unemployed since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Going four or five months without income is catastrophic. Even those who work in local factories or hotels have been sent home, or have had their jobs reduced to part-time because all the raw materials come from Israel. Hotels and restaurants have no tourists.

The Israeli military announces the lifting of a curfew, and then cancels it. It opens a checkpoint for a few hours, and then closes it for three days or a week.

I work in a pharmaceutical company where some tests need to be read within 18 to 24 hours. How can we read the results if the next two or three days will be curfew days? How can our students finish the semester at the university? How can they still have a will to learn, to study, and to be present for exams given this permanent incertitude? How can Palestinians commit to a schedule, to a date, to a marriage, to a funeral, or to anything at all?

I finish working at 3:30 pm. Throughout the day, we could hear Israeli soldiers shooting. It was coming from the main street: there were Palestinians demonstrating against the Israeli military's control points at Rachel's Tomb. A few Palestinians were shot, and one 13-year-old child was killed.

When I return home, my son starts moving his hands and smiling at me. I take him in my arms and kiss him. After eating, my wife and I prepare ourselves to return to our home in Jerusalem. We have been in the camp for three days because of the closure imposed around Bethlehem. My wife informs me that the Hell Valley road is still open, although Israeli checkpoints control the passage. We say goodbye to my parents and walk to Bethlehem, to the Bab Ezqaq crossroads, where we can take a taxi to Abu Dis, by the Hell Valley road. After waiting for almost an hour, our taxi is finally full, with seven passengers, and we can leave.

The road is divided into different regions, some under Palestinian authority, others under Israeli military control, even though the entire population of the area is Palestinian. There are two checkpoints. One is at the end of Beit Sahour. When we arrive there, Israeli soldiers ask the driver to pull off to the side of the road. They ask for all our identity cards and then allow us to leave.

The second checkpoint is at the end of the road, before arriving at Sawahra village, to the east of Abu Dis. The soldiers are nervous and take my identity card as well as those from two other people in our taxi. Those holding Jerusalem identity cards, like my wife, have their cards returned to them. The driver is asked to wait along the side of the street. Five other cars are waiting, too.

Israeli soldiers verify the information of the identity cards by radio. While waiting, we observe what the occupation soldiers do with the vehicles before us. They ask some of the passengers to step down, ask the drivers to leave, and then tell those passengers that they might need to meet with a captain in a nearby settlement, Ma'aleh Adomim.

It is our turn now. We wait for an hour before a soldier calls our names and brings us our identity cards. Fortunately, they do not take anyone to the settlement.

Finally, at home in Jerusalem, I am tired. My wife asks me if we can go to see her parents. I'm not enthused about the idea, not because I don't want to see them, but for the simple fact that I would have to sneak around the checkpoint again and risk being caught without a permit. The Israeli government knows that its checkpoints are only there to humiliate people and make their life impossible. People are forced to sneak around to see their family, to earn their living. They are just ordinary people thinking of living, just living.

I am so tired, I don't want to play the hero again and sneak around a checkpoint to look at the soldiers and say to myself, "I am in here, despite your checkpoints and despite your arrogance. It is me who is laughing now." So I say to my wife, "If they don't lift the curfew tomorrow, we will go to see your parents, otherwise you go with Canaan while I go to work." We shower and eat a bit. Canaan is smiling and we smile back at him. We turn the light off.

Sometimes I am not allowed to pass the checkpoint to Jerusalem. Sometimes when I am in Jerusalem, I am not allowed to go to Bethlehem. We often have to use the Palestinian road that goes from Bethlehem north through Ramallah, which is difficult to traverse and four times longer. Sometimes they don't even allow Palestinian cars or taxis to pass by on *this* road, so you are never sure when they will let you go to work.

Palestinians don't have any idea what tomorrow will bring.

I am angry about the continuous silence and hypocrisy in political society. Those who still believe in the justice of Israel are invited to come here. Come and live this democracy. "Israeli actions are against terrorists," you say. Why don't you come and see? Try to pass a checkpoint with a Palestinian. Put yourself in our shoes for a short time and then make your final judgment.

Lying in bed, I think, "Will I be able to go to work tomorrow or not? And if I get through the checkpoint, will I be able to return home or will I be stuck in Bethlehem for days again?" I just remembered that I didn't repair the water containers for my parents.

Ravaged Childhood
Journal Excerpts from Médecins Sans Frontières, Paris

Presented and Translated by
Fawzia Reda and Karen Glasgow

The following stories are excerpted from the personal journals kept by psychologists working in Palestine with Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders). They date from 2001, just months after the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Through the discerning eyes of these psychologists, we are witness to the ravages that continuing violence, fear, intimidation, and humiliation are having on yet another generation of Palestinians. For many of these children and their families, visits from the Médecins team are the only contact they have with the outside world. Beyond their real suffering, both physical and mental, many Palestinians are tormented by a feeling of injustice and abandonment that can be assuaged only by telling their stories.

Hebron

February 15

The roof of the Palestinian house is an important living space. It's where water tanks—precious possessions here—and sometimes solar panels are installed. In houses that are often cramped, it is the only place for families to enjoy a little space and light. The roof is also used for hanging out laundry and raising chickens.

I went to see Hanine, a girl of 14, who had been wounded on December 31, 2000. There had been a lot of unrest that day. When the

neighborhood finally became calm again, Hanine went to bring her chickens down from the roof. She was worried that they might get killed. Hanine put them in a cardboard box, and as she was carrying them downstairs, she was shot in the stomach: *Dom-dom*. She could still hear the sound.

"I didn't pass out," Hanine told me. "I just started screaming and hurried down as fast as I could."

"At night, that day goes through my mind. The martyr, Moaz, a friend of my brother's, died that day. He was 12. He was coming home from the mosque when he was hit by shrapnel. I cry for him every night, and I think, 'What if I had died?' What scares me for later is, what if there's still a piece of the bullet in my stomach that they didn't get out? What if I can't have children?"

March 1

This was my first visit to see a nine-year-old boy who can't sleep and screams for his mother at night. The mother met us at the door, smiling wanly, her face drawn and sad. She launched right into the story of the nightmare they're living through.

Israeli soldiers have occupied their house for five months. We noticed gun barrels pointing out from sandbags as we approached the house. When the guns fire, the house shakes, and there are cracks in the walls.

There is a military position on the roof. The roof has been designated a no-entry zone. The family is allowed to go up there once every ten days if it's absolutely necessary. There are two contingents of soldiers, one during the day and one at night, and they use the front door, the only entrance to the house. When it rains, the soldiers come down from the roof and take over the living room. They force the family to leave their bedroom doors open at night. The soldiers leave garbage everywhere, and they urinate in front of the windows. Not all the soldiers are hateful, but some of them have harassed the daughter; they have exposed themselves to her. The mother doesn't dare leave the house, ever since the time she went out and the soldiers locked the door behind her. She had to wait outside for four hours. She complained in a dejected, hopeless tone. "They fire their guns all the time—just like that, for no reason." It goes without saying that no action has been taken on the formal complaints she has lodged.

March 22

Today I was in Abu Sneineh, a neighborhood that sits on a hill facing the Kiryat Albar settlement. For the last few days, Abu Sneineh has been the target of violent bombardment and machinegun fire. The family I went to see had been awakened in the middle of the night when their house came under fire. Bullets and missiles had broken the windows and pierced the walls. I saw bullet holes in the furniture, and even in the clothes hanging in the wardrobe. The mother told me how they had been pinned on the floor, terrorized. Her 12-year-old son was wounded in the head, and there was a lot of blood. It was impossible to call an ambulance, so he pulled the piece of metal out of the wound himself. His mother patched him up as best she could, but all the while her legs were like jelly, she was crying, and the two younger children, two and five years old, would not let go of her skirts.

The little ones had never drawn pictures, but they responded when I drew a house on a piece of paper. While their mother described her son's injury that so frightened them, the two-year-old made furious black marks on the house, repeating over and over, *"Tar! Tar! Tar!"* [Shot! Shot! Shot!] and the little boy insistently scribbled a big red splotch.

Tuffah

February 9

We went to see Ahmed, an 11-year-old whose house is just next to the Gush Katif settlement. He had been shot in the head when he was throwing stones at the Israeli military post guarding the settlement entrance. We found Ahmed slumped dejectedly in a corner of the courtyard of his house. He never smiles. During my last visit, Ahmed told me his dream about an Israeli soldier shooting at him: Ahmed is under a jeep, and his friend Farid comes to save him. "I'm wounded in the head, and the jeep is going to run over me. So Farid throws a Molotov cocktail at the jeep, and then he throws a stone and hits the driver. And right then the settlers shoot him in the arm and leg." When I asked if he was actually with Farid when he was shot, Ahmed answered "yes."

What really happened to Ahmed is, in fact, very close to what happens in his nightmare.

Ahmed lives in a state of constant anxiety. He cannot bear the noise of the machinegun fire and shells exploding at regular intervals just behind his house. His nights are troubled by images of bloody scenes and punctuated by fits of crying. When I asked Ahmed if he was feeling better, he said "no," and that he was "even getting worse." His mother said he is disobedient and aggressive, and does not want to go to school anymore. In short, his is a childhood devastated by the violence that takes place every day on his very doorstep.

March 3

A woman stopped me in the street and asked me to come to see her 14-year-old daughter, Kifaah. What she didn't tell me was that Kifaah had been shot in the back. We found her in bed, and although she smiled, she kept wringing her hands anxiously. The bullet is still lodged in her back and bothers her a lot. Kifaah was in front of her house when she was shot. Pain ripped through her body. She saw one doctor after another, but they all refused to extract the bullet, saying that Kifaah would not survive the operation.

Kifaah is racked with anxiety. She cannot bear the sound of gunfire now, even though she told me that she had never been afraid before. She feels ashamed.

Her friends come to see her every day, but she can't play with them because she is afraid the bullet will shift. She is even afraid to go out of the house now. She thinks that the Israelis can get her wherever she goes.

Kifaah lives in constant fear that she will die if the bullet is dislodged. She cannot live without the very thing that almost killed her.

Next we went to see Ahmed, a 16-year-old. He was not shy with us, and started to tell the story of how he was shot in the knee and pelvis. There is still a bullet in his pelvis. Ahmed had been harvesting tomatoes for the settlers in Al Mawassi and was coming home when he was shot. He lost consciousness immediately. Only at the hospital did he learn that he had been shot twice. Now he cannot sleep or walk because of the constant pain in his knee.

Ahmed never wants to go back to Al Mawassi. He thinks that the Israelis have his picture and that they will kill him. He even has dreams that they capture him and shoot him in the throat. This idea

causes him great anxiety. When he learned that he had been shot, he thought the soldiers had meant to kill him.

My third patient, named Palestine, had been shot in the head with a rubber bullet. A doctor extracted the bullet and stitched up the wound. Her friends say that she is not as intelligent as before. She has difficulty concentrating, and her schoolwork is suffering. Palestine is convinced that there is still a piece of metal in her head and refuses to have the stitches taken out. She told me that her skull might come open.

April 11

We heard that there had been demolition in Tuffah. We expected to see a few houses razed, but what met our eyes was nothing of the sort. There was nothing but debris on either side of the road. Concrete slabs were sticking up out of piles of fallen doors, crushed furniture, and refrigerators that had once been inside homes. It looked as if there had been an earthquake. A single house was left standing in the middle of the ruins. Damage to the ground floor showed that it, too, had been attacked by the bulldozers. The gaping holes in the walls of the houses still standing were witness to the violence of the assault.

Worried, I started to search for Ahmed's house. For several months we've been visiting Ahmed, who had been hit in the forehead with a rubber bullet and is now minus a piece of skull.

We made our way, stepping from one stone to another, innumerable stones that were once the walls of houses. Ahmed's house was in large part demolished. The entire family was there, in a state of shock, surveying the damage. Luckily, they all had gotten out of the house yesterday when the attack started.

The grandmother, leaning against the only remaining piece of furniture, greeted us with tears in her eyes. When Ahmed's sister saw us, she smiled and apologized for not being able to offer us a seat—as if nothing had happened. I didn't know what to say to this family who had just lost everything.

A Médecins Sans Frontières doctor working in Palestine observed: "To disperse demonstrations, the police fire steel bullets with only a thin rubber coating. There is torture during police interrogations. Arrest without charge and administrative detention (for several years) are common. Here, people must have permission to go from one place to another. Here, land is confiscated, fields are devastated,

houses are razed. It's not very different from the other countries where Médicins works—actually, yes, it is different: Here, all of these acts are legal and in compliance with regulations."

Where the Streets Had a Name

Hanan Elmasu

Ramallah acts as a second capital for the Palestinians as they struggle to regain their first capital, East Jerusalem. As such, it has a cosmopolitan atmosphere with a visible class of politicians, students, and businesspeople. Yet even in better days, as described here by Hanan Elmasu, the military presence weighed heavily on its people. The situation has worsened since this piece was written in January 2003: today no less than five checkpoints lay in the 10 miles between Ramallah and East Jerusalem.

Walking the streets of Ramallah these days has become an act of reflection, uncertainty, and force of will. Having just returned from a break in Cairo, where I was reminded what it was like to walk the streets of an Arab country without apprehension, with its bustle and life, its smells, shouts, laughter, and systematized chaos, I could not help but mourn the loss of those relaxed walks in Ramallah. In the taxi back from the airport—the third taxi on my ground journey back: one from the airport to Jerusalem; another from Jerusalem to Qalandia border crossing, as it can no more be called a checkpoint; and a third from the other side of the crossing to my apartment in Ramallah (a total of three hours, compared to my one-hour flight to Cairo)—I was reminded again of the unique beauty of this city called Ramallah. It is marred by tragedy and fear, but it is a beauty nonetheless. As one is drawn to the eyes of a child whose life has been scarred by unhappiness, so one is drawn to this place.

The beauty of Ramallah is different from what I had expected. The stories I remembered while growing up in Canada were of olive, almond, and apricot trees, of lazy summers spent in precious cool

breezes in the midst of sweltering heat, and of the warmth and kindness of the people. There is a light and life to Ramallah that I have not witnessed in any other city during my extensive travels. Unlike Cairo, where life constantly springs from the streets and seems to have a mind of its own, the streets of Ramallah exude an energy that is ancient in its suffering, but that has persevered. It is the kind of energy you sense when you touch someone's skin and feel their pulse beneath such a thin protection—a slow and steady stream of life that is hard to destroy.

I walk the streets now, wondering what could happen at any second. Going to the shop on the corner, I look at the Ford vans used to transport residents around the city and wonder if Israeli special forces could be riding within their interiors, stopping at any point in the city, bursting out with weapons and tear gas, raiding a building in the center of town or shooting into the streets. I watch the people walking in front of me, beside me, behind me, and try to recognize them, wondering if the man walking beside me with his head covered with a keffiyeh might be a member of another Israeli special forces team, and will suddenly pull out a gun and attack the young man on the other side of me. I wonder, as I am walking to my friend's home, if suddenly the drone of the reconnaissance planes that often circle above Ramallah will become an Apache attack helicopter and begin to rain down bullets from the sky. I look at the parked car beside me as I wait for a taxi and wonder what would happen if that car suddenly exploded? How far away do I have to stand from a car to not be hurt if it explodes? Will it make a difference if I cross the street? I worry when walking around blind corners that there will be an Israeli jeep hiding in the bushes waiting for someone to shoot or arrest. When I hear a loud boom, I wonder whether it is a large garbage truck going over a speed bump or someone's house being exploded by the Israeli military.

My favorite walks are the ones I take while Ramallah is under curfew, when its pulse has been slowed. I walk at night during curfew, as these small acts of defiance remind me that I am still human, that I can reject the poison of occupation. The freedom I feel when walking the streets after 6 pm, when curfew is imposed, reminds me of life. Yes, freedom is a crime under occupation, yet I commit this crime with my head held high and watch other "criminals" do the same. When walking the streets of your hometown becomes a crime, you

know you are in strange waters. It is these small acts of resistance that form the courage of a people. Like the story my friend Cathy told me of her colleague deciding to get in his car and buy much needed cigarettes and bread while under curfew. To the worried protest of his wife, he simply answered "*Ana mish kalb*" [I am not a dog].

These acts of courage hold such grave ramifications and form the everyday battles of Palestinian nonviolent resistance. Attempting to live one's life as a human being in the occupied Palestinian territories has been one of the longest-standing forms of nonviolent resistance in our history. I am wearied and sickened by the constant calls for Palestinians to take up nonviolent resistance in the face of Israel's brutal occupation. I am disheartened by those who have not lived under occupation telling me that if only Palestinians would call a halt to violence, then the world would support their cause. Palestinians, it seems, have been doing this all their lives— mere existence is resistance. In fact, they were among the forerunners of nonviolent resistance in the face of oppression. A friend reminded me that Palestinians were among the first to use civil disobedience, as early as 1925, using general strikes to protest Zionist colonization. In 1936, during the Arab Revolt, a comprehensive general strike was held for six months, well before the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Not long afterward, the world community was condemning the Zionist militias as the terrorists. The only difference now is that those militias have become a state whose government and military conduct state-sponsored terrorism with the tacit and sometimes outright support of the world community.

If you told me 10 years ago in Vancouver that I would be living this life, I would have laughed in your face. If you had tried to tell me what it was like to walk the streets of Ramallah now, I would have called you a paranoid freak. If you told me that I would be spending a night like last night, awakened by the Israeli occupying forces banging on my door at 3 am, making me and the other 40 tenants of my apartment building (many of whom are children) stand outside in the freezing cold while they searched the premises, I would have told you that things like that just don't happen in the modern world.

Yet here I am again, up at 12:30 am, having spent the day writing yet another press release about someone who has been arbitrarily detained—in this case while attempting to go to a world forum to discuss

these very issues. Here I am again, reading daily stories of tragedies, of children killed, of leaders arrested, of humiliation at checkpoints, of whole neighborhoods demolished and destroyed. Here I live in Ramallah, where the unreal has become horrifyingly real. And I wonder if 10 years from now I will be back in Vancouver, dreaming about the streets that I used to walk down, the streets that used to have a name before they disappeared under the bulldozer of apathy and the world's belated recognition of a people denied the right to live.

Nablus: "Do you hear me?"

Amer Abdelhadi

In the wake of the massive Israeli military offensive in April 2002, the assault on Nablus reached new levels of brutality and intensity. The city was fully reoccupied and placed under almost constant curfew. Israeli military forces eventually withdrew from the city center, but returned frequently, imposing random, unannounced curfews, raiding and occupying homes and schools, and shooting at residents unlucky enough to be caught in the streets.

The Israeli army invaded the Old City of Nablus quietly on Wednesday, February 19, 2003, at 2 am. Most of the residents in the Old City, not knowing that the soldiers were hiding in the area, went to work that day.

Students of Jamal Abdel Nasser Girls' School found Israeli soldiers and blindfolded Palestinian detainees inside their classrooms. "Today is a 'no-school day,' go home," said the Israeli captain in charge. One of the detainees was especially saddened to be held in his daughter's classroom.

The same morning, soldiers removed Samir Khammash from his house. When he was allowed to return several hours later, he found his home without a bedroom, bathroom, or kitchen. Now he lives with the rest of his family in the one room that survived the army's

destruction. What's left standing does not shield them from the hard rainstorms that pelt the area.

Most homes "searched" by the army were, in fact, destroyed. The army blew up the kitchens and bathrooms first, to make the houses totally useless. Of course, no explanations were given.

The Israeli army believes in capital punishment for innocent civilians. Nasser Abu Safiya was walking with his aged father in the Old City when they were surprised by the soldiers' presence that Wednesday morning. Nasser said to his father, "Don't worry, I will stay by your side, I won't leave you." When the soldiers spotted them, they asked Nasser to step aside. They laid him on the ground and opened fire—killing him on the spot right in front of his father.

What goes through the soldiers' minds? They would probably claim that "he tried to get away" or that "he was found to be carrying some weapons." A nail cutter is considered a weapon of mass destruction in the eyes of the Israeli army.

Ahmad Abu Zahra was walking with his grandfather in the Old City on the following day. They imagined they were safe as they walked near a fire engine. But the army opened fire, killing Ahmad on the spot. The grandfather died of his wounds several hours later.

The same cold-blooded, unprovoked murders were carried on the following day, the day after, and the day after that. The world doesn't question the Israeli army's actions. And who would question the policies of the "man of peace," as US President George Bush calls Ariel Sharon. To Palestinians, he is a war criminal.

That specific Israeli military operation ended in the early hours of Sunday, February 23. The death toll, mass destruction, mass arrests, and demolishing of houses in those four days surpasses anything the army has done in 249 days of sustained attacks on Nablus and other Palestinian cities.

The Palestinians are frustrated. They have been pushed into a corner and left with no choices. They are requested by the world to refrain from any kind of struggle. The world is watching, yet has done little.

Back to Occupation, Back to "Normal"

Islah Jad

Residents of Palestinian cities obtained limited self-rule through the latter half of the 1990s under the Oslo Accords. The relative calm was broken, however, by increasingly frequent Israeli military incursions toward the end of this period. Meanwhile, just outside the cities, the Israeli military ruled over the countryside and oversaw the expansion of Israeli Jewish-only settlements. The Israeli military fully reoccupied Ramallah in March 2002.

June 24, 2002, occupied Ramallah

It's been a while since I've written. I have needed some time to digest our new situation, one dominated by the presence of the Israeli army. Their presence has never been easy to accept, but what is harder to accept is that we are now back to "normal," and, apparently for Palestinians, this means being in the continuous presence of an occupying army.

Before the return of the army's visible presence, though, Palestinian lives were not exactly proceeding as normal. For example, I used to leave my house to go to work, to my dear Birzeit University, with my three children and husband. Now, you leave, you intend to arrive somewhere, but you never reach your destination since the army always prevents you from going to study, or to work, or to shop, or to pay condolences, or to visit a friend. Palestinians end up doing everything to prepare for a normal working day—but we never get to work. We return home exhausted, tired of witnessing the constant humiliation, seeing our lovely students waiting in long lines under the searing sun, sometimes beaten, arrested, or shot at, and always cursed at and insulted.

Israeli soldiers the same age as our students have the power to bring an entire academic community of 5,000 people to its knees. Israel dares to call this "fighting terror," but even a child could see that the army's aim is to make the Palestinian people so fed up that they leave their country. What parent could bear to see his or her children wasting their academic years for no good reason? It is excruciating to watch. Maher, my eldest son, still has one month to go before he graduates and cannot finish his studies this month. I think about all

the other students and how they are not allowed to go to their universities, not even allowed to be in the streets, lest they become choice targets for the Israeli army. They have no escape: no parks, no theaters, no work, no places to go. How can we make the world see this simple reality and stop talking incessantly about Palestinian "terror"?

Yesterday, I was woken at 4 am. Helicopters were hovering *so* close to the houses, tanks were roaring below in the streets. By 5 am, soldiers announced with loud speakers: "You are forbidden to leave your houses; anyone who does not follow orders will be severely punished or shot!" I realized that there would be no work again today, no school, no newspapers. By 6 am, I decided to go back to sleep.

"My son's wedding is supposed to be next week! What am I to do with all the invitation cards, with all the preparations?" said Afaf, my neighbor, who came over to visit me.

"You are not afraid to go out of your house under curfew?" I asked, incredulous at her bravery.

"The tanks just left. They did not come with as many tanks as in the first invasion in March 2002. Instead of 400 tanks and Armored Personnel Carriers, they came with only 70, or so I heard. This means that they know there is no resistance; it is more than enough to come with two tanks. Who can stop them? We have no planes, no missiles, and no rockets. So while the tank goes for a round, I will finish my coffee with you," said Afaf.

We chatted for an hour. We shared our sorrow for all the effort and work of the high school students that goes on in vain. Now they should be taking their final exams. This is the most difficult bottleneck moment in their scholastic lives, after which they apply to universities or go study abroad. And they are being prevented from taking the exams. A whole year is being lost.

Yassmine, my youngest daughter, reminded me of the stress she witnessed last year when she was studying under the tank shells and noise of explosions:

> I was lucky last year; at least I managed to pass my exams. These poor students cannot even *take* theirs. What will they do? What future awaits them? They try to do the right thing, prepare themselves for a good life, and they are stopped. And if they become

suicide bombers, they are called terrorists. Who is terrorizing whom in our situation?

Today, at 6:30 am, I awoke to another loudspeaker announcing the lifting of curfew from 7 am to 12 noon. I didn't want to wake up. I did not feel like leaving my house or buying anything, I did not want to see the soldiers or what they did to the city again, but then I remembered my toothache, my daughter's papers that needed to be sent to get a US visa, and many other "plans." I began to organize my thoughts to see what I could do.

Suddenly Saleh, my husband, who went out once he heard the call lifting the curfew, came back running. "Don't go out! They are shooting. They shot a Palestinian in the head and he is dying in the Red Crescent Hospital!" said Saleh.

"But they announced lifting the curfew!" I replied.

"Yes, they did the same thing in Jenin three days ago, but then they fired a tank shell and killed four people, including three children who were playing around, so don't listen to what they say," said Saleh. "They want to *appear* as if they are lifting the curfew, and that we are *choosing* not to leave our houses, so stay where you are until we see where this madness is taking us!"

What my husband said made me think of the case of Murad Awaissa, a 17-year-old in eleventh grade in downtown Ramallah. In the first invasion, Murad was taken for three hours by the Israeli army as a human shield and then released. The following day, the army came to take him again. He was put with a crowd of other men. Murad and one of the other hostages asked to go urinate. The soldiers took Murad's colleague first. When he came back he was covered in his own blood. He had been severely beaten in a bathtub. He told Murad not to go with the soldier or else he would receive the same treatment.

But the soldier insisted, and Murad was forced to go. Murad had previously had two operations on his head to insert a tiny, fixed tube allowing some sort of liquid to drain. He pleaded with the soldiers not to beat him on the head, which would put his life in danger. "He made a mistake," said Murad's uncle in the Ramallah hospital looking for Murad's body in the mass grave there. "He should not have told

them his weak point. They picked on his head until they killed him. He should not have done that. God forgives him," said the uncle.

After this happened, I began to wonder if we are all going to reach a point where we choose not to leave our homes even when curfew is lifted because we do not want to be injured or killed? When I reached that point, though, I decided that if I want to keep my sanity, it is better not to think about plans, needs, death, life, or anything. When you control nothing in your life, why burden yourself with thinking of how your plans will be aborted, how your life could be lost for buying some food or sending some papers?

I instead decided that I would gather strength from friends and neighbors who witnessed worse situations. Ali, my colleague at Birzeit, lost his house and all his belongings in less than one hour. "They did not allow my children to get their books to prepare for their exams," he told me. "They did not allow us to take anything from our house. Sixteen families became homeless in one hour in the middle of the night!" Ali used to live in the Abu al Kassem, a six-story building built by a Palestinian American who came back from the United States to invest his money. "They surrounded the building at 2 am looking for one single 'wanted' person, but when they did not find him, they evacuated the building and shelled it with tanks from three directions," he said. Ali told me:

> One of the Israeli officers started crying when his wife called him on his cell phone. He did not like what was going on. But then another officer told us, "I wish you were all inside while I shelled the building!" We did not know where to go or what to do. We are still sleeping in our neighbors' houses. The owner of the building had a heart attack. So did Rawda's husband, who just finished the renovation of his flat. He had spent more than $7,000 to refurbish after the mess caused by the soldiers when they used his home as a base in the first invasion. He had to start from zero again, but now everything is in rubble. His heart could not take it anymore, a man of 40 years lying in bed with a heart attack with no place to go, no money to start again, and, most important, no heart to grieve.
>
> But you know what I said to this officer who wanted to shell us in our houses: "You start counting from now. My son, who you forbade from taking his books, is now nine years old. In eight years' time, I myself, his father, will send him to kill you in your

own city and maybe in your own house if he can—remember that!"

It was funny then to hear President Bush talking about how Palestinian independence is hindered by corruption and a lack of political reform, that Palestinians should start by reforming our political system and changing our corrupt leaders. I wanted to tell him "But Mr. President, it is not Arafat who is killing our children, shelling our houses, causing despair to our children to go and kill themselves, or making us homeless in an hour, but rather it is your friend, your 'man of peace,' Ariel Sharon, with his 'moral,' but at least now visible, occupation army." Please, at least give us a break.

Open Our Schools, We Want to Learn

Ghadeer Shaka'a

Under the Oslo Accords, most Palestinian cities fell within "Areas A," islands of Palestinian self-rule under the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), connected only by roads that were still under Israeli control. By April 2002, the Israeli military had unofficially terminated this arrangement by reoccupying almost all Palestinian cities of the West Bank, destroying PNA infrastructure and Palestinian heritage and houses, killing and arresting people, and forcing all residents to remain under house arrest. All public and private civil, medical, and educational facilities were paralyzed. As the months passed, residents faced the choice of seeing their children locked up at home with no future or resisting their occupier by breaking curfew. Some took the challenging road to reopen schools.

In September 2002, after 100 days of continuous house arrest, 200 children and their mothers walked peacefully from al-Shuhada Mosque to the destroyed Fatimiyya School in the Old City of Nablus, and held a sit-in. The message: "Open our schools, we want to learn."

It was the mothers who decided to take their children to school. They were tired of waiting for the paralyzed Palestinian Authority,

and particularly the Palestinian Ministry of Education, to challenge the occupation's right to close the schools of Nablus. The emergency education classes, or neighborhood teaching facilities, that were temporarily set up by the Palestinian people in Nablus could never replace the education the children would receive at schools. The people of Nablus were tired of waiting. They decided to break the curfew and claim the right to education.

My sister and her sons, Nabih and Laith, were among them. In the neighborhood where I live, a university lecturer, Dr. Mahmoud Abu-Rob, had encouraged students to break into an empty school and set up emergency classes there, instead of in the basements of people's homes. The next day, 450 students broke into the school and classes were set up.

Everyone wanted to participate. Community members collected appeal signatures and sent them to the Ministry of Education, the secretary-general of the United Nations, and the children of the world. We made phone calls, and sent faxes and e-mails. Everyone I spoke with was excited and determined to open the schools. We hoped that the next day's sit-in would be successful. No matter how difficult and risky, the children of Nablus were determined not to let the occupation occupy their minds.

At around 10 pm, when everything was almost ready, we heard heavy shooting. Israeli tanks started moving into the Old City of Nablus. We started to panic: Would we be faced by Israeli tanks? What about the kids? Should we take onions to protect ourselves against tear gas? We were so tense; luckily the kids were sleeping.

Early the next morning, we gathered at the mosque and started distributing banners. I was disappointed to see only 70 children with their mothers. We decided to start walking anyway. A few meters ahead, more children and mothers joined us. Some members of the International Solidarity Movement joined us in the hope that their presence would reduce the risk of military reprisals. Now our group numbered around 300.

The kids all knew where they were heading to—and why. They wanted to reach the school by 8 am. For them, it symbolized the time when, more than 100 days ago, the morning school bell used to ring. I've never been around so many kids. They walked together bravely, without fear. Every child carried a banner, and most were wearing

their school uniforms. Some of them carried their schoolbags. They shouted, "Madares, madares" [schools, schools]. When we reached the Fatimiyya School, the children stood together on the remaining wall of the building, in front of their destroyed classrooms, holding their banners.

The children walked to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency office, sat on the ground and blocked the road. They held their banners and shouted, "Open the schools, we want to learn!" One banner read, "Is there a place for Palestinian children in your dictionary?" Others read, "Nablus, under curfew for 90 days, do something!" "UN: What are you waiting for?" and "We are locked up at home...no play...no joy...no education!"

A BBC radio correspondent was conducting interviews with the children. One seven-year-old boy was saying that he wanted to go to school because it would make him smart and help him reach the top rank of his class. School would make him "understand why 6 plus 6 equals 12." Others explained that emergency education was good, but there were no desks, no pictures on the wall, no playground, and no sports lessons. Their wish was to get back to school.

At the end of the sit-in, a mother and child handed the signed petitions to a UN representative. The sit-in was successful: the children wanted to deliver a message, and it was delivered.

The Ministry of Education responded to the children's appeals and decided to open the schools. Now, brave mothers break the curfew on a daily basis as they accompany their children to school. Teachers are also breaking the curfew.

The schools are open, but the problems are still not solved. They still face the occupier's tanks every morning when they go to school. They run the risk of getting shot or beaten. What other solution than ending the occupation would solve such a problem? Enough is enough. As one of the banners read, "Let us live! Get the soldiers out of our town; we want to live."


FREEDOM!

Catalyst for Change

The Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance Movement

Abdul Jawad Saleh

The Palestinian struggle for independence has included violent and nonviolent components since at least the British mandate period (1922–1948), when Palestinians used strikes, political delegations and election boycotts, along with armed resistance, to influence British policy and vie for statehood. This section of Live From Palestine *includes a number of pieces discussing the place of nonviolence within the Palestinian struggle. The history of Palestinian nonviolent resistance is discussed here by Palestinian legislator Abdul Jawad Saleh, who notes its repression by Israeli military authorities since 1967.*

There has been an active nonviolent Palestinian resistance movement since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967. Palestinians have resisted nonviolently in many ways, including simply trying to build a sustainable Palestinian society and economy, in spite of the military occupation. The popular idea that such a movement has never existed is another attempt to erase its very real existence.

As a 70-year-old, moderate Palestinian leader—I am a former mayor, cabinet member, and now a member of Parliament as well as one of the founding members of the Palestinian National Front—I have invested my professional and personal life in nonviolent resistance to Israeli occupation. Unfortunately, peaceful resistance to the occupation has never served the interests of many of Israel's leaders.

This is true for several reasons:

1. Israel is determined to pretend that it is a victim. There is no glory in being the victim of pacifism.

2. Palestinians have never been a military threat; in truth, they have never been able to pose one. But fighting against even a fictional "force" legitimizes Israel's military approach. Israel is able to imprison Palestinians in several enclaves by surrounding them with illegal settlements, bypass roads, and checkpoints. Most of these acts are justified only because they take place behind the barrel of a gun. In reality, Israel's military might opposes nonviolent civilians. And in many cases, Israel's actions are nothing more than an attempt to goad Palestinian civilians into anger.

3. The last thing Ariel Sharon wants is a Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement that the world could sympathize with. Israel wants to keep the world's sympathy, even as it sends its army to destroy our apartment buildings.

To minimize nonviolent resistance among Palestinians, Israel has systematically dismantled and discredited moderate political forces in the Occupied Territories. Other comparable occupying forces have also used this tactic with success, such as the South African apartheid regime, which devastated the leadership of black communities as a means to weaken nonviolent resistance initiatives of the African National Congress.

We, the Palestinians, have worked hard at nonviolent resistance. We have staged nonviolent marches, organized labor strikes, and boycotted Israeli goods and banks. In response, Israel has dissolved our elected municipal governments, undermined the judicial system by closing the appeal courts, and exiled the numerous Palestinian mayors and community leaders who preached nonviolence.

Nonviolent resistance demands strong leaders. In the first days of the occupation in 1967, the Palestinian nonviolence movement had a surplus. A dynamic voluntary work movement sprang up under the guidance of democratically elected municipal councils. This movement created jobs, built schools, established youth clubs, and created public libraries. Seven years later, in 1973, the establishment of the Palestinian National Front provided much needed central leadership with representation from all the Occupied Territories. Its

goal was to collectively confront the Israeli occupation by nonviolent means.

But what did nonviolence achieve? Over the next ten years, the Israeli Occupation Authority dissolved Palestinian municipal councils, deported some of their elected leaders, and attempted the assassinations of others. On December 10, 1973 (ironically the International Day for Human Rights), eight of the most moderate leaders, among them a mayor, were deported with no stated charges and no access to legal defense.

Then came further deportations, arrests, and the imposition of Israeli-controlled local governments. As the Israeli government intended, the immediate effect was an incredible weakening of the nonviolent resistance movement. This was followed by months of city and village closures, house searches, and the bulldozing of hundreds of homes, vineyards and olive groves being uprooted, personal humiliations, incessant harassment, wells being filled and made unusable, large-scale confiscation of land, and the construction of tens of thousands of housing units in Israeli settlements—all in violation of international law.

The contention that Palestinians would have a state today if we had acted differently—if we had mobilized ourselves in an effective, nonviolent way—is a presumption making its way through the ranks of the Western press, and, unfortunately, people are beginning to believe it. But regardless of how long this lie continues to circulate, history will show that Palestinians responded to the Israeli occupation with an energetic and well-organized nonviolent resistance movement that was threatened at every turn.

That the nonviolence movement survives now is evidenced by the fact that there were no Israeli casualties for six weeks in the summer of 2002, yet during that time numerous Palestinians died. Those voices asking Palestinians to peacefully organize have never experienced the problems of ordinary life throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. We struggle daily to cross the 250 checkpoints that surround us, get enough water, feed our children, earn a living, and extract a small amount of dignity from our lives. Those voices have never had to reassure their sons and daughters that the family honor is still intact, even after having endured over 40 years of oppression and humiliation.

Out of the occupation morass and devastation, the Al-Aqsa Intifada erupted. Sharon, having previously failed to destroy the peace movement in Palestine, was given another chance to do so as Prime Minister. Since he took office in early 2001, Israel's relentless crushing of democratic institutions, Palestinian towns, Palestinian Administration Ministry headquarters, educational and cultural facilities, as well as industries and socioeconomic infrastructure has taken place on the most unprecedented level in modern history. The blockading of agriculture, denial of work permits, and resulting increase in impoverishment and hunger has begun to put a strain on the limits of pacifistic tolerance. As innocent citizens continue to be uprooted, injured, and killed, and as thousands of homes are destroyed, the intensity of Israeli military and settler violence has produced the perhaps intended response from our bewildered Palestinian youth. Israel's complete disregard and violation of all international norms and standards under prolonged occupation has been the catalyst. As Palestinian youths experience Israeli government torture, illegal and arbitrary repressive measures, and nonjudicial collective punishment, it becomes more difficult to convince them that the pacifistic approach has actually been appreciated by the outside world and will eventually provide a just peace.

But the Palestinians have an indomitable will that, in the end, will survive and win. The Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement has consistently demonstrated the Palestinian people's undeniable commitment to peaceful and democratic change.

Palestinians have clear ideas about the necessity of internal institutional reform. These concepts of reform have evolved over many years. Outsiders who are interested in a nonviolent solution to the conflict with Israel should work to end the violence and extrajudicial repression caused by Israel, and should do everything possible to ensure that free Palestinian elections take place under a new and independent election committee.

A New Current in Palestine

Edward W. Said

There is a secular tendency among Palestinian leaders that rejects both violence against civilians, as represented by armed Islamist groups, and accommodating the Israeli military occupation through the so-called peace process. This "new current" favors internal democracy, uncompromising resistance to occupation, and a role for internationals in the Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement. This essay originally appeared in the February 4, 2002, issue of The Nation.

After 16 months, the current Intifada has little to show for itself politically, despite the remarkable fortitude of a militarily occupied, poorly armed, poorly led, and still dispossessed people who have defied the pitiless ravages of Israel's war machine. In the United States the government and, with a handful of exceptions, the independent media have echoed each other in harping on Palestinian violence and terror, with no attention at all paid to the 35-year-old Israeli military occupation, the longest in modern history.

As a result, official US condemnations of Yasir Arafat's Palestinian Authority since September 11, 2001, as harboring and even sponsoring terrorism, have coldly reinforced the Sharon government's preposterous claim that Israel is the victim and Palestinians the aggressors in the four-decade war that the Israeli army has waged against civilians, property, and institutions without mercy or discrimination. The result today is that Palestinians are locked up in 220 ghettos controlled by the army; Merkava tanks and US-supplied Apache helicopters and F-16s mow down people, houses, olive groves, and fields on a daily basis; schools and universities, as well as businesses and civil institutions, are totally disrupted; hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed and about 20,000 injured; Israel's assassinations of Palestinian leaders continue; and unemployment and poverty stand at about 50 percent—all this while General Anthony Zinni drones on about Palestinian violence to the wretched Arafat, who can't even leave his office in Ramallah because he is imprisoned there by Israeli tanks, while his several tattered security forces scamper about trying to survive the destruction of their offices and barracks.

To make matters worse, the Palestinian Islamists have played into Israel's relentless propaganda mills and its ever ready military by occasional bursts of wantonly barbaric suicide bombings that finally forced Arafat, in mid-December, to turn his crippled security forces against Hamas and Islamic Jihad, arresting militants, closing offices, and occasionally firing at and killing demonstrators. Every demand that Sharon makes, Arafat hastens to fulfill, even as Sharon makes still another one, provokes an incident, or simply says—with US backing—that he is unsatisfied, that Arafat remains an irrelevant terrorist (who he sadistically forbade from attending Christmas services in Bethlehem) whose main purpose in life is to kill Jews. To these logic-defying congeries of brutal assaults on the Palestinians, on the man who for better or worse is their leader, and on their already humiliated national existence, Arafat's baffling response has been to keep asking for a return to negotiations, as if Sharon's transparent campaign against even the possibility of negotiations wasn't actually happening, and as if the whole idea of the Oslo peace process hadn't already evaporated. What surprises me is that except for a small number of Israelis (most recently David Grossman), no one comes out and says openly that Palestinians are being persecuted by Israel.

A closer look at the Palestinian reality tells a somewhat more encouraging story. Recent polls show that between them, Arafat and his Islamist opponents (who refer to themselves unjustly as the resistance) get somewhere between 40 and 45 percent popular approval. This means that a silent majority of Palestinians are neither for the Authority's misplaced trust in Oslo (or for its lawless regime of corruption and repression) nor for Islamist violence. Ever the resourceful tactician, Arafat has countered by delegating Dr. Sari Nusseibeh—a Jerusalem notable, president of Al-Quds University, and Fatah stalwart—to make trial-balloon speeches suggesting that if Israel were to be just a little nicer, the Palestinians might give up their right of return. In addition, a slew of Palestinian personalities close to the Authority (or, more accurately, whose activities have never been independent of the Authority) have signed statements and gone on tour with Israeli peace activists who are either out of power or otherwise seem ineffective as well as discredited. These dispiriting exercises are supposed to show the world that Palestinians are willing to make peace at any price, even to accommodate the military occupa-

tion. Arafat is still undefeated so far as his unquenchable eagerness to stay in power is concerned.

Yet at some distance from all this, a new secular nationalist current is slowly emerging. It's too soon to call this a party or bloc, but it is now a visible group with true independence and popular status. It counts Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi and Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi (not to be confused with his distant relative, Fatah militia activist Marwan Barghouti) among them, along with Ibrahim Dakkak, professors Ziad Abu Amr, Mamdouh Al-Aker, Ahmad Harb, Ali Jarbawi, and Fouad Moughrabi, legislative council members Rawiya Al-Shawa and Kamal Shirafi, writers Hassan Khadr, Mahmoud Darwish, Raja Shehadeh, Rima Tarazi, Ghassan Al-Khatib, Naseer Aruri, Elia Zureik, and myself.

In mid-December 2001, we issued a collective statement that was well covered in the Arab and European media (it went unmentioned in the United States) calling for Palestinian unity and resistance and the unconditional end of Israeli military occupation, while keeping deliberately silent about returning to Oslo. We believe that negotiating an improvement in the occupation is tantamount to prolonging it. Peace can come only after the occupation ends. The declaration's boldest sections focus on the need to improve the internal Palestinian situation, above all to strengthen democracy, rectify the decision-making process (which is totally controlled by Arafat and his men), assert the need to restore the law's sovereignty and an independent judiciary, prevent the further misuse of public funds, and consolidate the functions of public institutions so as to give every citizen confidence in those that are expressly designed for public service. The final and most decisive demand is a call for new parliamentary elections.

However else this declaration may have been read, the fact that so many prominent independents—with, for the most part, functioning health, educational, professional, and labor organizations as their base—have said these things was lost neither on other Palestinians (who saw it as the most trenchant critique yet of the Arafat regime) nor on the Israeli military. In addition, just as the Authority jumped to obey Sharon and Bush by rounding up the usual Islamist suspects, Dr. Barghouthi launched the nonviolent Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People, comprising about 550

European observers (several of them European Parliament members) who flew in at their own expense. With them was a well-disciplined band of young Palestinians who, while disrupting Israeli troop and settler movement along with the Europeans, prevented rock-throwing or shooting from the Palestinian side. This effectively froze out the Authority and the Islamists, and set the agenda for making Israel's occupation itself the focus of attention. All this occurred while the United States was vetoing a Security Council resolution mandating an international group of unarmed observers to interpose themselves between the Israeli army and defenseless Palestinian civilians.

The first result of this was that on January 2, 2002, after Barghouthi held a press conference with about 20 Europeans in East Jerusalem, the Israelis arrested, detained, and interrogated him twice, breaking his knee with rifle butts and injuring his head, on the pretext that he was disturbing the peace and had illegally entered Jerusalem (even though he was born there and has a medical permit to enter). None of this has deterred him or his supporters from continuing the nonviolent struggle, which, I think, is certain to take control of the already too militarized Intifada, center it nationally on ending occupation and settlements, and steer Palestinians toward statehood and peace. Israel has more to fear from someone like Barghouthi— who is a self-possessed, rational, and respected Palestinian—than from the bearded Islamic radicals that Sharon loves to misrepresent as Israel's quintessential terrorist threat. All the Israeli government does is arrest him, which is typical of Sharon's bankrupt policy.

So where are Israeli and US liberals, so quick to condemn violence while saying little about the disgraceful and criminal occupation itself? I seriously suggest that they join brave activists like Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and Louisa Morgantini, an Italian member of the European Parliament, at the barricades (literal and figurative), stand side by side with this major, new, secular Palestinian initiative, and start protesting the Israeli military methods that are directly subsidized by taxpayers and their dearly bought silence. Having for a year wrung their collective hands and complained about the absence of a Palestinian peace movement (since when does a militarily occupied people have responsibility for a peace movement?), the alleged peaceniks who can actually influ-

ence Israel's military have a clear political duty to organize against the occupation right now, unconditionally and without unseemly demands on the already laden Palestinians.

Some of them have. Several hundred Israeli reservists have refused military duty in the territories, and a whole spectrum of journalists, activists, academics, and writers (including Amira Hass, Gideon Levy, David Grossman, Yitzhak Laor, Ilan Pappeacute, Danny Rabinowitz, and Uri Avnery) have kept up a steady attack on the criminal futility of Sharon's campaign against the Palestinian people. Ideally, there should be a similar chorus in the United States, where, except for a tiny number of Jewish voices making public their outrage at Israel's occupation, there is far too much complicity and drum beating. The Israeli lobby has been temporarily successful in identifying the war against Osama bin Laden with Sharon's single-minded, collective assault on Arafat and his people. Unfortunately, the Arab American community is both too small and beleaguered as it tries to fend off the ever expanding dragnet, racial profiling, and curtailment of civil liberties being orchestrated by Attorney General John Ashcroft.

Most urgently needed, therefore, is coordination among the various secular groups that support Palestinians, a people whose mere present geographic dispersion (even more than Israeli government depredations) is the major obstacle. To end the occupation and all that has gone with it is a clear enough imperative. Now let us do it.

On Violence and the Intifada

Ali Abunimah

In step with the tendency toward an uncompromising secular resistance movement identified by Said and Saleh, above, Abunimah is among those who call for an escalation of nonviolent forms of resistance and an end to attacks on civilians while

affirming the Palestinians' right, as enshrined in international law, to legitimate armed struggle for self-determination.

It has now become standard to say that Palestinians will make no progress unless suicide bombings targeting Israeli civilians end. Palestinians increasingly acknowledge that attacks aimed at civilians are a cruel and illegitimate reaction to Israel's aggression. In addition to the toll in innocent lives, there is growing recognition that suicide bombings have harmed the image of the Palestinian people and their just struggle for freedom.

It has also become fashionable to say that suicide attacks have become the "weapon of choice" for the Palestinians. The fact is that Palestinians have no access to weapons that would allow them to adequately defend themselves—as is their legal and moral right—against the Israeli army. So alongside stones and ineffectual small firearms directed at armed soldiers in tanks, suicide bombings in Israeli cities have become a weapon of *last resort*—an illegitimate and immoral response to an illegitimate and immoral occupation.

Yet while Palestinian attacks targeting Israeli civilians must stop, one would have to forget all of history to believe that these operations are the only thing standing in the way of a peaceful solution. Suicide bombings are simply a symptom of the violence and despair of life under an endless occupation. Peace, after all, must be made during conflict.

No suicide bombings occurred from the beginning of Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip in 1967, through the first Intifada and into the early 1990s. Before the first Intifada, Israel had near quiet in the Occupied Territories. Liberal Israelis were content to use Palestinians as a cheap source of labor, and to visit their occupied towns and cities during the weekends to enjoy the superior hummus. Meanwhile, Labor and Likud-led governments assiduously built the infrastructure of military occupation and colonization with the explicit purpose of making an Israeli withdrawal impossible.

As the Israeli poet and essayist Yitzhak Laor writes, "A report published on September 6 [2002] in the (right-wing) daily *Ma'ariv* revealed that during the first three weeks of the [Al-Aqsa] Intifada—*before* the wave of terror attacks against Israelis even began—the Israel

Defense Forces, according to Army records, fired one million bullets."[1] No people in history, neither Indians led by Mohandas Gandhi, nor South Africans led by Nelson Mandela, ever experienced the kind of state violence that Palestinians face without resorting to armed resistance or desperate acts of revenge. And yet today, even though the killing is spiraling and every Palestinian is subject to the intrusive, daily terror of the occupation, only a tiny number of Palestinians take part in counterviolence of any kind. In fact, there is a lengthy history of nonviolent resistance by Palestinians defending their land and rights in the face of Israeli violence, long before the recent suicide bomb phenomenon. Sadly, this has been ignored by many of the same critics who now chide the Palestinians for not being more like Gandhi.

According to the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, from the beginning of the first Intifada in 1987 until the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, Palestinians killed a total of 100 Israeli civilians, half of them inside the Occupied Territories. During the same period, Israeli occupation forces and settlers killed more than 1,160 Palestinian civilians—more than 11 Palestinians for every Israeli. Israel's lethal response to the civil protests of the first Intifada is what "armed" or "militarized" the conflict inside the Occupied Territories. Israel's violence against a generation—its grim desert concentration camps (now reopened for business) and its systematic torture—sowed what is being reaped today.

Neither the "cheap and easy" occupation that Israel enjoyed prior to the first Intifada nor the vastly better security that Israelis had at that time ever induced Israel to loosen its military dictatorship over the Palestinians, or to slow the pace of violent land confiscations and colony construction.

Israel's approach has been consistent. When Palestinians actively resist the occupation, Israel attempts to crush them with violence, using the resistance as an excuse. Whenever the Palestinians have been quiet, Israel has only felt relieved of any pressure to reach a political solution and instead has seized the opportunity to deepen the occupation. Thus, Israel doubled the number of settlers during the "peace process."

Oslo architects like Mahmoud Abbas, who today blames the Palestinians for "arming the Intifada," seem to have forgotten these

facts. Abbas is right to point out that Palestinians lack a unified strategy, but what he offers—a return to Oslo-style accommodation—is not the strategy Palestinians need. What is needed is a strong, popular campaign of resistance based on nonviolence and civil disobedience, and involving the entire Palestinian population. Such a strategy would be unable to eliminate all violence, but would offer hope to the would-be suicide bomber and a powerful moral challenge to the occupier. It might also help to transform passive global support for the Palestinian cause into concrete actions. Such a strategy cannot emerge, however, as long as Arafat and his failed Oslo leadership hang on, neither offering leadership nor moving out of the way so that a fresh leadership—one not anointed by Israel or the United States—can rise. And as long as Israel besieges Arafat, he will enjoy just enough sympathy among Palestinians to stay in place. It is a perfect stalemate.

Those who say that the Palestinians have suffered enormous losses from the current Intifada are right. But they are usually reluctant to acknowledge how great the Palestinian losses were during the so-called peace process, and that Israel's losses due to the Al-Aqsa Intifada are also enormous. Beyond the 700 Israelis killed—approaching the number killed in the Lebanon war—Israel's economy is in a deep and growing crisis. Political corruption and instability are the rule. Israelis are emigrating at record levels. Israel's international image is that of a pariah, and many Israelis feel themselves under a greater existential threat than ever before. The grim political calculus ensures there is enough Israeli support of the occupation to keep suicide attacks going, while Israel's collective punishment of the entire population and assassinations of political leaders ensure that there is always a sufficient supply of hopeless volunteers ready to fulfill any mission in revenge.

There is an alternative that Israel refuses to try. A Hamas official, Osama Hamdan, in Cairo for intra-Palestinian talks, said in January 2003, that "Hamas is sticking by its proposal formulated a year ago by recommending an end to attacks on civilians on both sides." He pledged that "Hamas would stop attacking Israeli civilians without distinction for geographic boundaries if Israel stops attacking, killing, and arresting Palestinian civilians and blockading their towns and villages."[2]

Seeking an agreement with Hamas flies in the face of Israel's public stance that the only way to deal with such groups is through violence. But it was precisely such a deal with the Lebanese resistance movement Hizbollah, brokered by the United States in April 1996, that kept Israeli civilians safe, except when, as often happened, Israel violated the understandings by attacking civilians in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon and beyond. In any case, reaching an understanding with Hamas and other factions cannot possibly be worse than Israel's current failed approach. That Israel does not really want a cease-fire has been made plain by the fact that the government has repeatedly ignored all offers and instead provoked the end of the unilateral truces voluntarily observed by Palestinian factions by carrying out death squad killings of their leaders.

The gruesome ratio has shortened—the Israeli military now kills only about three Palestinians for every Israeli killed by Palestinian militants—but innocent people on both sides are dying in far greater numbers than ever before. To pretend that unilaterally ending violence by Palestinians would suddenly produce an Israel willing to withdraw behind its borders is to ignore everything that all Israeli governments have worked for throughout Israel's entire existence. And why would Palestinians forego violence when Israel's violent occupation is allowed to continue unchallenged by the international community?

All Palestinians have an interest in immediately ending attacks on Israeli civilians, just as they have a genuine self-interest in developing democratic governance. But those who have seized on these two issues and made them the litmus test for further progress, as well as an excuse to avoid talking about the urgent need for international action to end the occupation, are not helping either the Palestinians or the Israelis who want peace. These goals—unattainable while Israel's daily assault on Palestinian civil society continues—have been deliberately emphasized in order to provide Israel with cover to continue a colonial occupation that guarantees the death count will climb on all sides, with no end in sight.

Notes

1. Yitzhak Laor, "Diary," *London Review of Books*, October 3, 2002. www.lrb.co.uk/v24/n19/laor01_.html

2."Hamas urges mutual halt to attacks on civilians," Agence France Presse, January 19, 2003.

International Solidarity

Ghassan Andoni, Renad Qubbaj, George N. Rishmawi, and Thom Saffold

As Israeli human rights violations increased during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, a growing number of Palestinian activists supported the expansion of nonviolent organizing through the inclusion of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their members. The following draws on the analysis and experiences of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People, a long-standing group based in Bethlehem's Christian Palestinian community; the Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People, a project begun in May 2001 by the Palestinian Network of NGOs and its European partners; and the International Solidarity Movement which issued its first call to action in July 2001.

The Need for Action

According to international law (United Nations Charter, Chapter 7) the international community has the right and obligation to send protection forces to the occupied Palestinian territories to end Israel's human rights violations. Since the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Palestinians have repeatedly called for UN peacekeepers, yet the United States has used its veto privilege at the Security Council to reject this option.

Due to the international community's failure to meet its obligations where Palestine is concerned, civilian associations, social organizations, NGOs, and religious groups from Palestine, Europe, and the United States launched and developed a large campaign of human solidarity, in order to offer both protection and observers to the civilian Palestinian populations.

Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People

The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People (PCR) was founded in the early months of the first Intifada in the city of Beit Sahour to activate and lead the Palestinian community in nonviolent resistance against the occupation and for human and national rights.

From 1987 to 1991, PCR took a leading role in initiating civil disobedience and other activities oriented toward peace and justice, including Victory Gardens, underground schools, the well-known Tax Revolt, dialogue groups like Visitors Not Occupiers and Break Bread Not Bones, and the Prayer for Peace. In 1989, PCR hosted South African Bishop Desmond Tutu in Beit Sahour.

From 1993 to 1997, PCR led a campaign against the establishment of the illegal Israeli colony of Har Homa, at Abu-Ghoneim Mountain, near Bethlehem. PCR initiated an around-the-clock peace camp in the Abu-Ghoneim area to protest against the construction of Har Homa. The camp existed for four months and coordinated dozens of events, including solidarity visits, demonstrations, and attempts to block bulldozers. PCR also kept a tradition of inviting the peace community to Beit Sahour for a Christmas candle procession. Each year, thousands of Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals joined the ceremony of lighting candles for peace and justice and a peaceful march.

Following the sharp escalation in September 2000 of violence by the Israeli military and Palestinian militants, PCR continued to call for nonviolent resistance to the occupation. In the first three months of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, soldiers stationed at the Shedma military base in Beit Sahour were responsible for killing two mothers and one young man, injuring 10 others, and damaging 200 homes, 4 of which were totally burnt and 8 suffered severe structural problems and needed to be rebuilt.

On December 28, 2000, the municipality of Beit Sahour, the Beit Sahour Emergency Committee, and PCR jointly organized a march to Shedma. Hundreds of Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals marched together, demanding the immediate evacuation and dismantlement of the base. Israelis came from Gush Shalom and the West Jerusalem Rapprochement Dialogue Center. The internationals

included Italians from Stop the Occupation, Women in Black, the Italian Peace Association, and the CGL Trade Union, and French from the France-Palestine Association. Upon reaching the military base, the activists demanded that the Israeli government dismantle the base. The peaceful action was ended by placing a Palestinian flag over a watchtower to the delight of cheering crowds.

The Al-Aqsa Intifada brought to an end all the attempts to normalize the occupation. The violence and increased distrust also disrupted joint work for peace and justice between Israelis and Palestinians. PCR has continued to welcome the participation of Israeli peace activists in its initiatives, along with Europeans, North Americans, and other internationals. PCR has highlighted the importance of having actions fully prepared and planned by Palestinians. In its efforts to develop a bona fide, massive, and effective movement, PCR has organized actions in the southern (Bethlehem), middle (Ramallah), and northern (Salfit) areas to prove that Palestinians from all geographic areas, including both Muslims and Christians, are interested and involved in nonviolent resistance.

Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People

In March 2001, the Palestinian Network of Non-Governmental Organizations (PNGO) invited several foreign delegations to Palestine. Their schedules included visits to harmed areas, refugee camps, homes of victims and demolished homes, the wounded in hospitals, and to Israeli settlements and bypass roads. The delegations witnessed, firsthand, human rights violations at Israeli checkpoints and collective punishment against the Palestinian people. The delegations visited the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as refugee camps in the Holy City and the southern region of Gaza, and made field trips to Khan Younis, Rafah, Al-Mawasi, and the airport (all Palestinian areas directly threatened by the Israeli occupation). In addition, the visitors participated in meetings with active leaders in civil work and took part in activities organized by political groups.

In May 2001, the PNGO extended its work with internationals by launching the Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People (GIPP), with partnership groups in Italy, France, and Belgium. The objectives of the participants include deterring Israeli

army and settlers' aggression through the pressure of international witnesses, expressing concrete solidarity with the Palestinian people and with those who struggle in Israel for a just and sustainable peace, raising awareness in their respective countries about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, demanding the deployment of a genuine international force of protection, the implementation of the UN resolutions, and the end of the occupation.

By the first anniversary of the GIPP project, in May 2002, over 2,700 international persons had been welcomed into Palestine for these campaigns. During the worst two months of the Israeli invasion of the Palestinian territories (March–May 2002), GIPP welcomed over 800 internationals who accompanied ambulances and helped to package and distribute food for the needy people who lived under long curfews.

The International Solidarity Movement

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) was founded in the summer of 2001 by Palestinian activists and internationals living in Palestine. Working in conjunction with the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement and other Palestinian organizations, ISM has defined itself as a nonviolent, Palestinian-led, international movement, with the goal of complementing Palestinian resistance, not replacing it. ISM is a consensus-based movement with Palestinian and international activists sharing in the decision-making process.

The first ISM campaign took place in August 2001. From August 8–19, 2001, 50 foreign civilians, mainly from the United Kingdom and the United States, answered the call to come to the Occupied Territories. There, these civilians both witnessed and protested the brutality perpetrated by the Israeli occupation forces against Palestinian civilians. The campaign reached a climax when internationals were arrested with Palestinians while protesting the Israeli occupation of the Orient House, the Palestinian administrative center in East Jerusalem.

Returning to their home countries, international activists reported what they had seen and done and spread the word about a second ISM campaign scheduled for December 16–31, 2001. This time, over 70 international activists joined the Campaign Against Occupation. This campaign focused on key towns and villages in occupied

Palestine where nonviolent resistance was active, including solidarity visits to those and other villages that had been hard-hit by Israeli tanks, helicopters, and F-16s.

Just as the third ISM campaign was scheduled to start on March 29, 2002, Israeli forces stormed into Ramallah and fully reoccupied the city. For the next week, the Israeli military repeated this action in each Palestinian city in the West Bank (with the exception of Jericho), imposing full military occupation and weeks of curfew. The internationals continued to arrive, however, and by the end of April, hundreds of foreign civilians had come to the Occupied Territories to help deliver food, accompany ambulances and medical personnel, and to deter Israeli human rights abuses in cities, towns, and refugee camps. ISM activists broke Israeli orders of curfew and infiltrated civilian areas that the Israeli military had declared "closed military zones," assisting in the humanitarian effort well before the arrival of aid organizations and maintaining a presence throughout Israeli military raids and assaults.

Challenging the oppressive "facts on the ground"—such as checkpoints, roadblocks, military bases, curfews, and settlements—is the cornerstone of the nonviolent resistance. In doing this crucial work, Palestinian activists face harsh punishments from the Israeli military, including detention and imprisonment, serious injury, and even death. Because international activists generally receive better treatment at the hands of the military—at least they did before the Spring of 2003—they can be a resource for Palestinians, both in terms of their very presence in the Occupied Territories and as witnesses to the outside world of the daily humiliation and injustice of the occupation.

The Uprising for Freedom is an International Struggle

Interview with Huwaida Arraf and Adam Shapiro

Founding members and key organizers in a series of International Solidarity Movement (ISM) campaigns, Arraf and Shapiro, a Palestinian American and Jewish American couple, became known as informal spokespeople for the organization. During the ISM's Freedom Summer campaign in 2002, Shapiro was arrested while filming Israeli soldiers and deported to the United States. Arraf continues to work with the ISM in Palestine. The following text was distilled from two interviews. Contributing editor Linda Wolf met with Arraf and Shapiro while in Palestine. Live From Palestine *editors Laurieann Aladin and Nancy Stohlman interviewed Arraf by phone as she was jostled in the back of a vehicle from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.*

Editors: What was the inspiration for creating the International Solidarity Movement (ISM)? What was happening in Palestine that made Palestinians decide that they needed to have international help?

Huwaida Arraf: You have to understand what the Intifada was like in September 2000. Massive forms of violence were being used against the civilian Palestinian population. The international community wasn't recognizing that Israelis were using bullets against people armed with stones.

The Palestinian organizations, from the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement to Birzeit University, were already organizing demonstrations before the [Al-Aqsa] Intifada began—for example, against the checkpoints that were completely tearing up the roads to Birzeit University and preventing the students from getting to school. But these organizations were responded to by such massive forms of Israeli military violence that it scared the average person from joining.

The Palestinians started recognizing that when internationals joined in the demonstrations, it resulted in much less Israeli violence. Sadly, Palestinians are just numbers to the soldiers, but they didn't want to kill internationals. Plus there were international witnesses—eyes watching that could testify to what was being done.

Second, internationals were able to report to their home media and give us [Palestinians] a voice. All of these atrocities and years of occupation, and the world was not listening to us. Internationals could go back to their own countries and spread the word to their next-door neighbor, to their community, and to their churches or synagogues. It was another way of reaching the international community, even if it was one by one. So there was definitely a benefit to having international activists come here.

The Palestinian Intifada, the "uprising for freedom," has got to be an international struggle. It's wrong for the struggle to be seen as "Arabs against Jews" or "Palestinians want to push Israelis into the sea," and not a struggle for freedom, a struggle for basic human dignity and human rights. Anyone who believes in freedom, believes in justice, believes in equality for all people not based on religion or nationality, can join in this struggle.

Editors: How did the ISM founders meet?

Arraf: The first time I met Neta [Golan], Ghassan [Andoni], and George [Rishmawi] was in Beit Sahour in March 2001. Before that I was doing actions mainly in Ramallah with foreigners, women's groups, and Birzeit students. Neta was trying to provide a consistent presence in the village of Hares. In May we camped out near President Arafat's compound after Israel first targetted it. In July 2001 we mobilized to provide an international presence in homes being attacked by the Israeli army as it invaded Beit Sahour. It was a host of such initiatives that led to our launching campaign in August.

Probably over 50 internationals came for the entire two weeks, mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom. We were able to do some really good things. We were most visible protesting the take over of the Orient House [the Palestinian administrative center in Jerusalem seized by the Israeli government in August 2001]. Internationals were arrested with Palestinians, were beaten with Palestinians. Our presence didn't open up the Orient House again, but it showed that internationals were willing to come and put their bodies on the line with Palestinians.

Editors: What is the philosophy behind ISM?

Adam Shapiro: The philosophy behind, and the impetus for, the International Solidarity Movement developed out of the realization that many people don't know that a Palestinian nonviolent

movement exists. It was not receiving attention or support domestically, internally, or externally. And it needed the support of foreigners because when internationals are present, the IDF [Israeli Defense Force] is more on guard not to exercise violence.

Basically, when Palestinians try to go out and march, or protest their situation, or remove a roadblock to the entrance of their village, they face the possibility of extreme violence and intimidation from Israeli soldiers. Even before a stone is thrown, any action on behalf of Palestinians will be seen as violent, and the response of the IDF is often to fight back, starting with rubber bullets, and then going to live ammunition. But when internationals are present, the dynamic changes. International media will take an interest if internationals are there. That visibility is very important, as it helps quell violent reactions.

Editors: How effective has the international movement been so far?

Arraf: It's been very effective. At the very minimum level, it has greatly raised the morale of the Palestinians. We have a big feeling of isolation—we can't believe how the international community can witness what's going on here, witness that we're a civilian population that only wants freedom, and we're up against one of the largest, most powerful militaries in the world that is determined not to give us our freedom, and not do anything. There are UN resolutions on the book, human rights documents, international laws that are being broken and violated, and no one is taking the steps to make sure they are adhered to.

So when we see civilians from other countries come and be willing to put their time, their energy, their resources, and their bodies on the line, it lessens that isolation. It is giving us heart that there are good people in the world. Even at a minimal level, it is important to a Palestinian sitting at home to see an international walk by in the streets and say, "Hello. I'm with you."

Editors: How many internationals have come over to Palestine in the last year?

Arraf: I'd say well over 1,000. A large number of them are affiliated with the European socialist forum. I'd say Italy and France send the biggest delegations. Their mission, tied into the socialist forum and the anti-capitalist, anti-globalization movement, has now put

Palestine pretty high on its agenda. The ISM in particular is doing a lot of outreach to Americans, and we actually see more Americans than anyone else coming through the ISM. The Americans we see are more in favor of direct action—less about touring the spots and more about taking action.

In Europe they come tied to NGOs [nongovernmental organizations], as part of unions, or other things. From the States, it's mostly individual activists.

Editors: We've heard three specific criticisms. One is that you won't work with Israeli peace organizations. Another is that ISM international activists leave here only having had an experience of actions without having a strong contextual grounding, a good sense of history, or broad overview. The last is that you are not balanced, you represent only one side of the picture—that of the Palestinian suffering—and leave out the Israeli point of view.

Arraf: We have good relations with the Israeli anti-occupation groups; we share information and try to support each other. However, with regard to nonviolent direct action in Palestine, there are a lot of sensitivities to Israelis joining our actions because Palestinians have so long been cheated by the word "peace," which hasn't meant justice for Palestinians. Even all the NGOs that were created around normalization never, in the end, meant justice for Palestinians. So there are these kinds of sensitivities: Why do you want to cooperate with me? Is it based on your agenda or on my agenda of calling for justice?

This sensitivity dates back to Oslo and the whole "peace process." During the seven-year peace process, Palestinian groups worked with Israeli peace groups, but the steps that were taken toward normalization of relations were seen as benefiting only Israelis. While the whole world was talking about peace, the Palestinian economy was going downhill, checkpoints were being instigated, homes demolished, settlements built. So Palestinians believe that they were misled by this peace process, and that the Israeli peace groups were in it for how it would benefit them, without achieving justice and freedom and an end to occupation.

Truthfully, in most areas, there is no problem with Israelis coming to join. Sometimes the condition is that you must come as individuals and not under a banner that has a certain agenda. Instead of

coming with your signs, come with my signs, come with what I am calling for.

Shapiro: We all feel we have not been as active as we want to be in terms of direct action, especially the last few months, because the situation is so grave. Curfews, invasions, checkpoint closures make it harder to be active. A lot of what people are doing here is, yes, helping ambulances and medical personnel, but a lot of time is spent sitting and talking to families and community leaders and community activists. I've listened to ISM activists give talks in the United States, and they have spoken brilliantly, not so much about themselves, but giving voice to those they heard. I know from living in the United States that the Palestinian people don't have much of an identity except as terrorists. By coming here [to Palestine], working and witnessing, talking to the people, and going back home and sharing what they've seen and heard, ISM people have a very important role in helping others get a broader sense of what it is to be Palestinian.

About not working with Israeli peace groups: Having worked with Seeds of Peace, I'm very aware of many of the Palestinian and Israeli organizations, and the focus of most Israeli peace groups is different than ours. Ultimately, the focus of ISM is peace, but in the immediate, our focus is freedom. These are two different concepts. Palestinians are looking for freedom *and* peace and Israelis are looking for peace and security. The dynamics used to achieve freedom are different than the dynamics used to achieve peace. I don't know if Israeli peace groups have internalized this concept in their work.

Editors: Could you describe the Palestinian position toward ending the conflict?

Shapiro: Palestinians are willing to adjust the green line [pre-1967 borders] in exchange for the West Bank, where there are [Israeli] settlements. If Israel accepts the 1967 borders—which leaves Palestinians with 22 percent of the land—Palestinians are willing to negotiate a resolution of the refugee problem that is fair and equitable, and to share Jerusalem.

There are a whole list of options for Palestinian refugees that are being talked about—some refugees accepting to go to a third country, like Canada, or to stay in whatever country they find themselves in now, like Lebanon—but at least from the negotiating position of

the Palestinians, the importance is to adhere to international law and UN resolutions, which means giving back lands that have been taken illegally. And there is the question of compensation for the refugees. Settlements are an issue as well. It's technically a war crime to establish settlements in occupied lands.

Editors: We often hear the Israeli position that for the Palestinians to have their freedom and peace, they have to stop the terrorism.

Shapiro: The terrorism stopped for years. I know because I was here; in 1998 and 1999 and 2000, there were no suicide bombings. This was a result of cooperation between Palestinian security agencies, Israeli security agencies, and the US Central Intelligence Agency. Yet the Israeli prime minister in 2000 was promising to deliver an end of conflict and make the best offer, but his offer didn't even come close [to Palestinian demands]. Israel wanted to declare an end to conflict in [the meetings at] Camp David when they hadn't even talked about refugees.

The catchphrase these days is, "Palestinians must make the painful decision to choose peace," but what the Palestinians want to choose first is freedom, and no one is laying that out for them. Peace is all wrapped up in accepting an Israeli peace deal, and it's a shame that Palestinians are in such a weak position. All they are asking is for international law to be upheld.

Editors: What other groups can you think of that use similar means—nonviolent direct action—and have similar goals?

Arraf: There aren't many. In ISM, we have two criteria for people who want to participate. One, the organization or the individual must believe in the rights and freedom for the Palestinian people based on all resolutions and international law. Two, that nonviolent direct action will be our strategy to achieve it. Even Palestinian political parties have joined some actions and have coordinated with us, knowing that we would not be armed with anything but our bodies and our voices.

We don't have any top-down structure; people can be as involved as they want to be. And people take initiative and form their own kind of ISM group abroad, or there are independent groups like Colorado Campaign for Middle East Peace who continue to send delegations to Palestine. I don't even know if I could identify all the different groups that have come from abroad wanting to join us:

from Italy, Ya Basta; from France, Civilian Mission for the Protection of the Palestinian People; the very important Christian Peacemaker Team.

Editors: How does ISM define nonviolence?

Arraf: The definition a lot of people mistakenly use for nonviolence is passivity. I'm not passive at all, and I don't define nonviolence as being passive. I am more a proponent of nonviolent direct action—knowing that violence is going to be used against us, but knowing how to respond. Even though we're being beaten, not responding violently, never physically assaulting anyone even though they are assaulting us. Also, in our nonviolence training we state that we are not going to use verbal violence. So if an armed soldier is standing in front of you threatening you, we don't even use verbal violence against that person. We believe in basic respect for people as human beings, maybe not as an occupation force or as a soldier but certainly as a human being.

Editors: I'm sure those limits get tested every day that you're out there.

Arraf: It's very difficult. The discussions that were held both between the international and local communities was that *this* [nonviolence] was the message that we wanted to get out. I'm not against legitimate, armed resistance—I think everyone has the right to defend themselves—and certainly you hear people advocating for *only* armed resistance, that it's the *only* way to liberation, and that has worked in many other countries. But I believe there needs to be an active Palestinian nonviolent resistance movement—I believe it's more powerful. I don't believe we can stand up to the Israeli military with weapons.

When you are talking to the average Palestinian villagers, students, and adults about why this method could work now, and why try it again [nonviolence was the main type of resistance used during the first Intifada in 1987], one of the things that is different now is this phenomenon of international solidarity. Internationals, through their voice and through their standing, are a resource. Yes, Israelis have might, but we have rights, and hundreds and thousands of people who are willing to come and stand with us here, willing to give us a voice outside and face the brutality with us.

We're helping in other ways. We are replanting uprooted olive trees, removing roadblocks. As Palestinians, it's our right to move freely in our villages, in our towns. The Israeli military coming to put a roadblock to restrict our movement is a violation of our rights as human beings. So we are taking them back, not by attacking our opponents but by removing these roadblocks.

We don't provide any false hope or notion that we won't be attacked or face violence. There are three options. We can continue spinning the cycle of violence, and responding to violence against our children with violence against their children (including the tactic of turning ourselves into human bombs, which I and everyone I work with is opposed to). We can do nothing. Or we can use our bodies and voices and call for other voices and bodies, and continue to resist. We have a right to confront their might with our belief that the power of the people will eventually overcome.

Editors: Is the ISM trying to teach or inspire Palestinians to use nonviolent resistance?

Arraf: The truth of the matter is, we're not showing Palestinian society a new way to resist. Sit downs, marches, teach-ins, strikes are all part of the history of Palestinian resistance. It's not the tactics that inspire people but rather either the victory or the strategy. We don't have a victory yet, and the strategy is not the takeover of the checkpoint, but rather the building of a powerful nonviolent resistance movement. ISM can help support the nonviolent Palestinian resistance by tapping into the resource that internationals can provide—global attention.

Editors: What kind of activism were the internationals coming to Palestine involved in before?

Arraf: Well, from the United States the range is so vast, from young college students, anarchists, social justice activists, as well as a large number of Jewish Americans coming to engage in dialogue or activities against the occupation. We have religious people coming from churches who've received our information through church-related publications. We've had people of color; we've had a Puerto Rican contingency. People who are concerned with social justice everywhere are recognizing a grave injustice being committed in Palestine. Jesse Jackson was here, and we had a meeting with him. He is very interested in joining or leading a march from a Palestinian city

to Jerusalem, past a checkpoint, and challenging these things. People who have worked against racism, apartheid in South Africa, all of these people are now directing their energy toward Palestine.

Editors: What do the internationals do when they return home?

Arraf: That is an amazing phenomenon. For example, look on our website right now and see all the different US contacts—I mean, these are people who were just here in April [2002] and are determined to continue. From the very minimum of speaking out in the community, to writing books and information packets, or organizing more delegations of people to come, in addition to lobbying or meeting with the media about accurately portraying what's happening in Palestine.

I was in America recently, and we are noticing a shift in the way people question things, the way more people are getting involved. It might be slow, but I think it's coming, and I don't think this occupation can maintain itself for very long.

People are standing together from all over the world for freedom. The freedom to be able to live life without restrictions put on us by the Israeli military government, freedom to elect and choose our own government, freedom to move freely in our own future state, in our own lands, freedom to be able to pursue an education, make a living, freedom to live. Right now, freedom would be being able to open the door and go to the local market without being afraid of tanks coming down the street and opening fire. Before, freedom meant going to another village; now it means just going down the street to a neighbor's house.

If so many good people are willing to act with their hearts, justice will prevail over the obstacles.


Peace Needs Bridges Not Walls
سلام يحتاج جسوراً لا جدراناً !!

Through Our Eyes

Free Palestine!

Call to Action:
Join the International Solidarity Movement Against the Israeli Occupation and for a Just and Viable Peace!

In this press release dated July 15, 2001, the newly formed International Solidarity Movement, a product of collaboration between a handful of internationals living in the West Bank and local Palestinians engaging in nonviolent resistance, makes its first worldwide call to internationals to come to Palestine.

Palestinians have lived under an illegal occupation for decades. Through UN resolutions, the nations of the world have repeatedly asked Israel to respect international law, to stop brutalizing Palestinians, and to end the occupation of their land. However, through the protection of its powerful ally and benefactor, the United States, Israel has been able to continue the occupation, build illegal settlements, deny the most basic of human rights, and pursue policies aimed at removing all Palestinians from their homeland.

Israeli Prime Minister Sharon and the Bush administration say that there can be no negotiations under violence. That is true. However, what they will not admit is: The occupation is violence. The occupation must end before there can be true progress toward justice, and justice is the only basis on which there can be true and meaningful peace.

We are asking you to support an international campaign of nonviolent direct actions to expose and oppose the occupation. This campaign will be under the leadership of Palestinian activists who are committed to nonviolent resistance. International activists have already played a significant role in bringing attention to the occupation and protecting Palestinians who try to protest Israeli brutality peacefully. For some examples see: www.rapprochement.org.

The usual response of the Israeli military to demonstrations by Palestinians is to fire tear gas, rubber-coated bullets, and sometimes live ammunition at the crowds. The presence of internationals deters the Israeli military from doing so. Italian member of [the European] parliament Lousia Morganitini and the Italian Peace Association deserve special thanks for playing an essential part in this campaign already.

We invite you to join the International Solidarity Movement for 10 intensive days of joint Palestinian and international direct actions against the occupation. From August 8 to the 18th we will:

- Arm ourselves with the basic guidelines and tools of nonviolent action.
- Accompany Palestinian farmers to their fields in areas where they are denied access, and are in danger of being attacked by settlers and Israeli soldiers.
- Join Palestinians in crossing the checkpoints that deny them freedom of movement and, as is the case with the checkpoints surrounding Jerusalem, freedom of worship.
- Join Palestinians in a nonviolent march to the sight of a new settlement outpost to protest the ongoing land confiscation.
- Join Palestinians on a Freedom Ride to Jerusalem, driving buses full of Palestinians and internationals on the bypass roads, constructed on confiscated Palestinian lands, which are restricted "for Israelis only."
- Support Israeli groups that work and call for a just peace.

Please respond, and spread the word!

International Direct Action
The Spanish Revolution to the Palestinian Intifada

Mark Schneider

Direct action is a tactic implying physical action to immediately end or curtail some function of an oppressive force, for instance, blocking a bulldozer that's trying to demolish homes. This is distinct from educational tactics or lobbying for government policy change. Here, Mark Schneider argues that direct action has more than tactical results: it empowers communities and builds autonomy. He places the International Solidarity Movement's practice of nonviolence in a broader context and locates the roots of today's internationalism and use of direct action in the freedom and solidarity struggles of previous generations.

"Join the struggle for freedom in Palestine," the call from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) read. "The presence of internationals will give heart and support to the very important nonviolent resistance to the illegal occupation of Palestine."[1]

Having watched the United States invade and brutally bomb Afghanistan while Israel renamed its 50-year-old war on Palestinians a "war on terrorism," I was tired of the peace movement's feeble response: ineffectual by-the-numbers newsletters, vigils, and protest marches. Along with four comrades who shared my rage and disillusionment, I quickly decided to use my privilege as a US citizen and heed the call from Palestine.

Nearly 70 years ago, common people from around the world were inspired by a similar passionate plea, *"No Pasaran!"* [They shall not pass!] Tens of thousands went in solidarity to Spain to defend the workers' revolution from attack by the fascist-aided insurgency. Of the over 50,000 internationals who arrived in Spain, more than 2,800 came from the United States. Together they helped to create the infamous International Brigades.

Albert Weisbord, a lifelong US radical organizer, wrote from Spain in 1936:

> The Spanish Civil War is like a huge flaming candle attracting many moths who soon enough singe their wings and fall into the blaze. German émigrés torn from their native land by the purge of

> Hitler, Italian outcasts, now long enduring the misery of exile in France and unable to pass the bans of Mussolini, French partisans of the class war who believe events in France are going too slow and want to speed them up by the acceleration of Spanish strife, British and even American youths ready to take sides, these are the people who rush enthusiastically to the borders of France, burning to give their lives and to fall on the blood soaked fields of Spain.[2]

Spain in 1936 and Palestine in 2003 are both examples of indigenous people valiantly contesting oppression by asserting their self-determination and liberation. Soliciting help from international peoples, both Spain then and Palestine now have gained solidarity in the form of direct action.

Direct action is a rejection of the idea that common people are powerless and must follow orders. Direct action seeks to empower by forming mutual, autonomous communities and breaking dependency on others to run the world. In the historical struggles of Spain, Palestine, and elsewhere, the pattern is one of people managing their own struggles, building their own accountable institutions, and understanding the need to link up with like-minded others.

Native American indigenous and mixed-indigenous resistance against European colonizers is full of examples. For more than 500 years, mutual cooperation among indigenous tribes allowed them to resist invasion and genocide from the Spanish, French, British, and US empires. In the 1840s, when the United States invaded Mexico and sovereign indigenous lands, brigades from nations including Seminoles, Apaches, and the infamous St. Patrick Battalion, fresh from British-plundered Ireland, created common cause with a militarily inferior Mexico.

Recognizing the moral right of these indigenous freedom struggles, today's internationals also view these battles as confronting their own countries' imperial practices, which are responsible for destroying the sources of liberation. And in the wake of the horrible tragedy of September 11, 2001, my comrades and I were eager to expose the root cause of such devastation: the systematic trail of destruction that is US imperialism.

The imperial connection between the United States and Israel is strikingly clear. The US government annually spends billions of dollars in economic aid to prop up the Israeli apartheid state. My state's

(Colorado) biggest employer, Lockheed-Martin, is one among many companies earning fantastic profits from the F-16 bombers raining death on Bethlehem, Nablus, and Jenin. Caterpillar Inc., grows rich off the sale of the 30-foot-tall, Orwellian, D-9 bulldozers that Israel uses to demolish hundreds of Palestinian homes.

Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People (GIPP) and ISM are the two main indigenous organizations in Palestine that have, since the Al-Aqsa Intifada began in September 2000, actively organized internationals to nonviolently act in solidarity with Palestinians under siege. GIPP and ISM have successfully mobilized thousands of people to risk their privilege. These groups' successes are in part because of the immense groundwork laid by previous international calls for direct action.

In contrast to modern-day activists in Palestine, the internationals of 1930s Spain used expressly violent resistance as a tactic. The International Brigades joined workers' militias and the regular Republican forces, using mostly crude weapons against the well-financed and well-supplied fascist Nationals.

In *Homage to Catalonia*, written just after the Spanish Civil War, George Orwell reminisced about his time in the International Brigades:

> ...the gaunt trains full of shabby soldiers creeping to the front, the gray war-stricken towns farther up the line, the muddy, ice-cold trenches in the mountains...the frosty crackle of bullets, the roar and glare of bombs; the clear cold light of the Barcelona mornings, and the stamp of boots in the barrack yard, back in December when people still believed in the revolution; and the food queues and the red-and-black flags and the faces of Spanish militiamen; above all the faces of militiamen—men whom I knew in the line and who are now scattered Lord knows where, some killed in battle, some maimed, some in prison—most of them, I hope, still safe and sound.[3]

Though the free republic of Spain fell in the spring of 1939, and nearly 30 percent of the US brigade died in battle, the International Brigades provided important solidarity when anti-fascist Spaniards were left adrift by nearly all nations. Their example has inspired the US Left for generations.

The modern offspring of anti-colonial (anti-authoritarian) struggles include two tied threads: those who resist capital and empire at its roots, and those who resist the consequences of capitalism and imperialism. A noteworthy example of the former is the anti-globalization, or global justice, movement.

In the United States, the biggest victory for these global justice forces was the 1999 mass direct action that shut down the World Trade Organization's (WTO) annual meeting in Seattle. Working outside even the weak forms of democracy in the West, the WTO and other multilateral trade and financial organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund serve capitalist leaders by imposing duplicitous loans and international agreements that consolidate money and control into fewer and fewer hands. For example, in 1999, following World Bank threats to cut off its access to international credit, Bolivia granted a 40-year privatization lease to a subsidiary of the US-based Bechtel Corporation, giving it control over the water on which more than half a million people survived. Within a month, the company more than doubled its rates, from $12 to $30 a month, for families with total earnings of $100 a month.[4]

To expose this global feudal oligarchy, activists from Bolivia and around the world descended on the kings and queens of capital and empire in Seattle. Displaying classic nonviolent direct action tactics (mass numbers, blocking streets, refusing to move or defend when attacked), this colorful people's coalition withstood heavy physical attacks from the police and ideological attacks from their mainstream media accomplices. For several days, a nonpartisan, international, nonviolent people's force taught capital and empire what democracy really looks like. As Michael Moore, author of *Stupid White Men,* wrote:

> They never knew what hit them. They had assumed it would be business as usual, the way it had been for decades. Rich men gather, meet, decide the fate of the world, then return home to amass more wealth. It's the way it's always been. Until Seattle. [5]

But in the decades prior to Seattle, the North American Left had already witnessed the rapid growth of various solidarity and accompaniment movements that confronted the worldwide consequences of capitalism and imperialism.

The committed nonviolent volunteer corps (often called "unarmed body guards") that make up groups like Witness for Peace and Peace Brigades International grew out of a desire for both a long-theorized world peace army and the necessity of being effective. Volunteers use their privilege and mere presence as internationals to protect and allow nonviolent indigenous resistance movements to continue their own struggles.

The Gulf Peace Team involved a brave soup of several dozen international activists who, just prior to the first US invasion of Iraq in early 1991, descended on a small patch of desert on the border of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Organized by British activists, the idea was to interpose a multinational nonviolent force between the United States (and the negligible "allied coalition") and Iraqi militaries—and to prevent a war. Judged mostly a failure (within 10 days of the US invasion, the internationals were evicted by their reluctant hosts, the Iraqi government), the lessons learned from this attempt, such as how to organize people of diverse cultures and languages in traumatic environments, helped spawn several organizations and creative ventures.[6]

Two years later, a radical Italian priest and a Serb–Croatian group called Mir Sada (Peace Now) organized over 2,000 internationals to march from the Croatian border on the Adriatic Sea to war-torn Sarajevo. Once there, they planned to create a three-month peace encampment in an attempt to stop the war. Though the group didn't make it to Sarajevo, these disciplined direct actionists did succeed in getting the warring sides to commit to an unprecedented cease-fire. In a situation where UN and international aid organization vehicles had been getting shelled, hundreds of internationals peacefully walked into the Bosnian villages of Prosor and Mostar.[7]

In the 1990s, two North American organizations began sending internationals to Iraq and Palestine. By 1995, Christian Peacemaker Teams had established a small, long-term presence of trained nonviolent interveners in Hebron. Since 1996, Voices in the Wilderness has worked to draw international attention to the sanctions regime that has cost the lives of half a million Iraqi. In this effort they have organized hundreds of international civilians to participate in short-term stays in Iraq. Voices in the Wilderness and Christian

Peacemaker Teams both supported activists who remained in Iraq throughout the 2003 US invasion of Iraq and its aftermath.

A confluence of this tradition of solidarity and accompaniment with the groundswell of global justice organizing—demonstrated in Geneva (1998), Seattle (1999), Washington, D.C. and Prague (2000)—resulted in hundreds of internationals arriving in Palestine just after the spontaneous September 2000 Intifada began. Global justice protests continued in Quebec and Genoa in 2001 and more than a quarter-million internationals traveled to Barcelona to protest the annual meeting of capitalist leaders of the European Union Summit. A month later, Israel ruthlessly invaded the Palestinian cities of the West Bank. Members of Ya Basta, an Italian direct action group that helped organize the 2001 mass demonstration in Genoa, joined experienced organizers and activists from France, Britain, Belgium, and the United States, and made the connection between the globalization movement and the liberation struggle in Palestine. "For the movement which came of age in Seattle," noted British dissident George Monbiot, "the World Bank and the West Bank belong to the same political territory."[8]

While the Palestinian Authority retained some autonomous control, internationals used mass nonviolent interventions, like liberating an illegal Israeli military checkpoint in Palestinian territory and removal, by hand, of village roadblocks that restricted Palestinian freedom of movement. But during Israel's brutal, Spring 2002 invasion, internationals, directed by a Palestinian leadership nearly in hiding, took on greater risks. Many accompanied ambulances targeted by the Israeli military. Palestinian refugee camps had suffered the most in previous Israeli invasions of the West Bank and Gaza, so dozens of internationals stayed in Palestinian homes in the refugee camps and clinics under threat. During the 43-day invasion, the Israeli army laid siege to the historic Church of the Nativity where 150 Palestinians (mainly unarmed civilians) sought safety. The world's governments turned a blind eye to the siege, but two dozen internationals staged two nonviolent raids that got 10 international witnesses carrying food and medicine inside to support the people nearing starvation.

If results are strictly measured by the ending of Israel's illegal occupation, then international direct action in Palestine has been a failure. However, international solidarity has been successful in many

important ways, such as humanizing the Palestinian people's plight through personal stories shared by internationals with their home communities, expanding the breadth of coverage of the Palestinian experience of the occupation in both alternative and mainstream media, and demonstrating a commitment to international solidarity that both the common Palestinian people and their leadership appreciate and want to see expanded.

Organizers in North America and Europe continue to put out well-organized calls for internationals to come to Palestine and participate in increasingly risky direct actions. And the answer is inspiring: thousands of common people from around the world, motivated by those courageous before them, continue to respond with their presence. Nonviolent Peaceforce, a new organization using interpositioning, accompaniment, presence, and witnessing as tactics, plans to organize and deploy hundreds of international peace workers by 2004. Further linking peace solidarity and the anti-capitalist movement, the radical World Social Forum, which brings together tens of thousands of international activists, has repeatedly proposed organizing their annual gathering in Palestine. In the United States, college students are quickly organizing a divestment movement (reminiscent of the global anti-South Africa apartheid campaigns of the 1970s and '80s).

My comrades and I spent four weeks in Palestine in 2001, staying in village homes and meeting well-respected leaders. Joining the Palestinians and other comrades from all over the world, we used our bodies and spirits to act against oppression and injustice. Though my time in Palestine included frustrating experiences, such as differences on various tactical questions and internecine struggles for power among the Palestinian political parties, I came away from the experience—like my historical ancestors did in 1848 Mexico, 1936 Spain, 1981 Nicaragua, and 1999 Seattle—with a taste of real equality, a feeling of liberation and freedom.

On returning to the United States, what struck me most was how simple the solution seemed: tens of thousands more people need to aggressively confront their government's foreign policy. Those with privilege must stand up, be counted, and take direct action now.

As Republican leader Dolores Ibárruri said in her farewell address to the internationals in Spain, "You are the heroic example of

democracy's solidarity and universality in the face of the vile and accommodating spirit of those who interpret democratic principles with their eyes on hoards of wealth or corporate shares which they want to safeguard from all risk."[9]

Notes

1 International Solidarity Movement, "Join the Struggle for Freedom in Palestine," October 4, 2001, www.freepalestinecampaign.org/join_the_struggle_for_freedom.htm

2 Albert Weisbord, "The Underground Railway to Spain," Albert and Vera Weisbord Archives, www.weisbord.org/index.htm.

3 George Orwell, *The Orwell Reader* (New York: Harcourt Brace, Javonivich, 1956), p. 166.

4 Jim Shultz, "Bolivia's War Over Water," February 4, 2000, www.democracyctr.org/waterwar/index.htm.

5 Michael Moore, "Battle of Seattle," December 7, 1999, www.gene.ch/gentech/1999/Dec/msg00058.htm.

6 C. Peter Dougherty, "A Way to Peace: Nonviolent Mediation and Intervention," *Synapse* 26, www.nrec.org/synapse40/peter40.html.

7 Bela Bhatia, Jean Dreze, and Kathy Kelly, eds., *War and Peace In the Gulf: Testimonies of the Gulf Peace Team,* (Nottingham, UK: Spokesman Press, 2001).

8 George Monbiot, "World Bank to West Bank, The Movement Written Off After September 11 is Demonstrating Its Worth in Palestine," *London Guardian,* April 9, 2002.

9 Dolores Ibárruri, "La Pasionaria," Barcelona, November 1, 1938, www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/scw/farewell.htm.

From "Stepping Off the Sidewalk"

Edward Mast

On August 10, 2001, the Israeli government seized Orient House, the Palestinians' chief political center in East Jerusalem. Orient House was an important symbol of Palestinian aspirations for statehood and the only establishment in East Jerusalem permitted to fly a Palestinian flag. Here, US activist Edward Mast de-

scribes his experience at a protest near the newly occupied Orient House and in the Israeli court system after his arrest.

I tried my best to find a reason not to go. The call came over e-mail in July 2001: the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement in Bethlehem was asking internationals to come to the West Bank and join Palestinians and Israeli allies in nonviolent civil disobedience to resist the occupation.

My partner, Linda Bevis, and I had just that day been at a Seattle protest against the occupation. Rumors of invasion by the reckless, militant Sharon were everywhere. That very night, when the call showed up on my e-mail, I briefly considered not showing it to Linda because I had a sinking intuition that it would be very difficult to discourage her—or myself—from going.

If citizens of the United States and the world were willing to interpose their sacred bodies in large numbers between military aggression and its target, could the aggression be stopped? I had never been arrested or beaten by a police officer, and both possibilities had made me quite dry-mouthed during the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. We knew that there were Palestinians and Israelis who were standing, sitting, and lying down in front of bulldozers and tanks to stop them from proceeding in their work of state terror. And there was always the small but definite chance that a stray bullet or missile would prevent me from ever returning to finish work on the full-length play I was in the middle of writing.

The first Intifada had been largely nonviolent and had been met with Israeli military brutality. This second Intifada had a violent component, and was being met with unprecedented Israeli firepower, aimed at militants and civilians alike. Peaceful demonstrations were being met with live ammunition. Rocks were being met with bullets. Prison was no novelty to Palestinians under occupation, but the daily killings, maimings, and assassinations were a sharp ramping up of the stakes. Since Israel has always relied heavily on the goodwill of the world in general, and the United States in particular, our presence as US citizens could make a tangible difference. If we shared some of their danger, Palestinians could share some of our safety.

We had no illusions of ending the occupation that summer, and were firm in our commitment to avoid heroics or romantic notions.

We were not there to show Palestinians how to be nonviolent; we were going to join as foot soldiers in a Palestinian nonviolent campaign. Perhaps one or both of us would lie down in front of a bulldozer, but perhaps one or both of us would remain on the sidewalk as support. Our fundamental victory condition was simple and fairly assured: to be present in Palestine.

In retrospect, the summer of 2001 seems almost placid. It did not seem so at the time. Almost as soon as we arrived in Bethlehem and began our nonviolence training, more assassinations of Palestinians took place, and a suicide bomber retaliated with an attack in Jerusalem.

The Israeli military invasion of Orient House was supposedly in retaliation for the suicide bombing, but in fact it fit well with the apparent long-term plan to drive the Palestinian National Authority out of Jerusalem. Orient House, the long-time residence of the Husseini family in Jerusalem, had, since 1993, become the administrative center of the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli assault was comparable to driving the US Senate out of the Capitol Building.

About 30 internationals traveled to Jerusalem the following day to continue an ongoing demonstration against the takeover of Orient House. (Our Palestinian coordinators, barred along with most Palestinians from entering Jerusalem, were unable to come with us). When we disembarked near the American Colony Hotel, we encountered much activity. Soldiers and police had barricaded the entire street in front of Orient House. There were a number of groups present either in protest or witness, including Palestinians with East Jerusalem residency. Lacking a more clever action plan, the 30 of us stood in a long line on the steeply raised pavement, in front of a white stone wall outside the hotel, holding our handmade cardboard signs: "Free Orient House" and "Americans Against Occupation." We were a legal gathering under Israeli law: less than 50, on the sidewalk, not blocking the street.

We had only been in line about five minutes when the soldiers—young men, mostly, looking more bewildered than ferocious—silently charged. Linda, characteristically near the front of the line, had been specifically listening for an announcement or warning to disperse; there was none, in Hebrew, Arabic, nor English. I held my breath and stood still as they charged right past us, apparently

hoping to avoid internationals and catch stray Palestinians instead. They quickly came running back to their earlier position some distance away. At this point, had I been avoiding arrest at all costs, I would have moved quickly away. I didn't have much time to consider this option, however, since the soldiers suddenly charged again, this time with noisy snarls, shouting at us in Hebrew and English, "Move! Move back!" Some 20 of us became crammed between two diagonal lines of soldiers, with the stone wall at our back. They continued shouting at us to move back—a command with which we could not physically comply. Angie, an unstoppable, white-haired activist from Britain, spoke sharply with crisp British annoyance: "We have nowhere to go!" Amazingly, this stopped the soldiers. Some of them saw that she was right, and they looked at each other with bewildered expressions. Quickly enough though, one line of soldiers moved away, and the soldiers before us started pushing back again, their faces set sternly once more.

I was neither resisting nor retreating, but simply letting myself be pressed back with the packed crowd. Suddenly, my right foot was jammed and would not move. I stretched my leg out as far as I could, but had no choice but to fall backwards to the ground. Amid the legs, shouts, and melee, I discovered that somehow my right foot had become clenched in the arm of Julien, one of our colleagues from France. He had purposely dropped to the ground to shield a terrified young Palestinian woman with his body. He was blocking—with his back and neck and head—the boots, fists, and batons intended for her.

I was grabbed by the shoulders and pulled up. My right shoe—a dirty, white tennis shoe still in Julien's grip—came off my foot, and I feared I would never see it again. I was hoisted by one shoulder and was walked off toward the barricades, wearing one shoe. Being a novice at arrest, I didn't think to hold my arms out to demonstrate to the many video cameras that I was not resisting arrest. I simply hung my head and let myself be pushed onward. The officer gave me an unnecessary shove into the unmarked police van, but otherwise I was not manhandled much. Perhaps my gray beard and glasses protected me. I watched two young US colleagues being pushed toward the van with their arms twisted up behind their backs, and when they were shoved into the van next to me, an officer leaned in and gave one of

the already-seated Americans an extra whack on the jaw, apparently just for good measure.

We watched a couple of Palestinians being brought over as well. Both of the Palestinians I saw being arrested were hit several times, and one of them was choked for a while. They were made to sign papers, and then one of them was tossed into the van with the three of us. He was a young man named Muhammed. As it turned out, this was his first arrest. It would be the first night he had ever spent away from his family.

Eleven of us were arrested: one French and five US citizens, a Dane, and four Palestinians. The four Palestinians included young Muhammed, the young woman Julien had been shielding, and one man arrested while parking his car to see what all the noise was about. We were taken to the Moscobiya Prison in West Jerusalem, and to my surprise, all eleven of us were booked and sent to jail instead of being released in a few hours. I was charged with illegal assembly. Later, they added the charges of resisting arrest and assaulting an officer, despite videotape evidence that I had done nothing but topple to the ground like a stack of plates.

My missing shoe became a continual source of puzzled amusement to everyone I encountered. Every new officer I met said "Where's your shoe?" or "You're missing a shoe." Our lawyer, Leah Tsemel, one of the heroic Israeli attorneys who does this sort of work, was stern and methodical during our short interview, hardly looking up from her notes; but even she brightened with amazement when I mentioned my lost shoe.

I was put in a concrete cell with four concrete bunk beds. The one small window had been boarded up, so the air was thick and sluggish. There were only four of us in the cell: Peter from Denmark, Andy from the United States, Julien from France, and myself. I imagined what such an airless cell would have been like with 50 Palestinian men in it, as was common practice during the first Intifada. The cell was dirty, but astonishingly there were no bugs. The walls, ceiling, and even the beds and pillars in the cell were all a yellowy cream color, covered with graffiti and calligraphy in thick charcoal lines made by lighter smoke. I recognized several Allahs and a few scattered English words. The overall effect was like some Southeast Asian temple, decorated ceiling to floor with elaborate designs.

We were surprised at first to find men in the hallway of the cellblock who appeared to be Palestinian. They were acting as some sort of custodians. It turned out that the men were indeed Palestinian, and were chosen on a regular basis by the rest of the men inside the cells. The Israeli guards demanded that Palestinians do custodial work on their own cellblocks, so the prisoners carefully selected and rotated these chores, thus avoiding accusations of collaboration.

The shouted conversation between cells on all sides of us was constant. When Andy, who spoke some Arabic, joined the cellblock chatter, the prisoners in other cells were able to pass us some prison amenities that they had collected over time: a little heating element and pot for making coffee, some fruit, some ice water. Most Palestinian men spend large amounts of time in prison, so they have developed a kind of civil society on the inside, sharing whatever gifts come from outside, developing collective rules and codes to assure physical and spiritual endurance in the face of ongoing torture and harassment.

In the middle of the night, Leah managed to get us a hearing to argue for early release. We were taken to a small courtroom, and for the first time since imprisonment, we saw the three women who'd been jailed with us—Sophia, Huwaida, and Linda—and the three Palestinian men. (The young Palestinian woman Julien had been shielding had been released without being booked.) Linda sat in a row behind me, so we were able to exchange a little touch and a laugh. The women were tired but cheerful. Leah tried—with impressive concision in English, Hebrew, Arabic, and French, as necessary—to tell us our options. Into the small courtroom gallery came two members of our delegation, Susan and Tim, apparently having been chosen for their unradical demeanor. Sue smiled with delight on seeing us safe, and as she sat down was able to signal and mouth to us a few messages, including: "We have your other shoe!"

The hearing got underway in Hebrew, the court having failed to provide interpreters for any of us. Leah stopped the proceedings and insisted that the court let in Neta Golan, one of the Israeli activists with International Solidarity Movement (ISM), who could translate for us. Neta came in and crouched with us, ready to translate. Her first whispers to us were that we were making headlines all over the world. The proceedings began, and with Neta translating we were

able to understand, for example, when the youngish prosecutor, making his case that we were threats to internal security, lifted his arm toward us and said with tones of condemnation: "Because of these people, the whole world is looking at Orient House!" We tried to keep our triumphant chuckles quiet.

Despite Leah showing the judge some videotape of the incident, he refused her request for our release and allowed the prosecution more time "to gather evidence." Before we were taken away, I asked Leah if she could get my shoe returned. When she understood that the shoe in question was nearby, she gave her customary wry little smirk and went to speak with the guards while we were taken back to our cells. At about 1 am, there were footsteps outside our cell. We waited for the door to be opened, but instead, through the little food slot appeared my dirty, white tennis shoe, which was pushed through and fell to the floor inside. In this matter, justice had somehow prevailed.

At 11 am, we were taken to the exercise yard, a square outdoor courtyard with high walls, barbed wire across the sky view, and a guard blockhouse above. We had one hour, like a long recess. About 20 Palestinians were with us. A few of them spoke some English, and so I was able to learn that most of them had been there for months already. One friendly, light-haired man made a point of inviting us to join one of the circles of squatting or sitting men. The Palestinians had heard that there were Europeans and Americans who had gone to jail for protesting the assault on Orient House. "What are you doing in here?" they asked us. "We thought Americans didn't give a shit. Why are you going to prison for Palestinians?" They seemed delighted as well as surprised by our presence. They kept coming up to us and shaking our hands.

We sat and chatted, but the Palestinians mainly walked their laps back and forth in the yard. Prison was not an overnight adventure for them. They were in for the duration and took their hour of exercise seriously. A night in prison seemed a tiny price to pay for the privilege of giving some small bit of heart to these men whose tenacious hearts had been so battered.

The friendly, light-haired man, I found out later, was a set designer for Palestinian theater companies. I learned that he had been

arrested in Jerusalem, for walking out of a mosque at the wrong moment. He had been in prison for six months already.

In the courtroom the next day, Leah had arranged a deal for us: most of us would be let out on a kind of bail, which we would only have to pay if we failed to show up for a court date that Leah assured us would most likely never be set. The Palestinians were not being offered the same deal, nor was Andy. This is a typical strategy: divide us, select one as ringleader/troublemaker, and keep him, so they don't appear to be giving in.

Some of us wanted to wait until charges were dropped; some wanted to stay in until all three Palestinians and Andy were out as well. Others wanted to get out and start doing direct actions elsewhere rather than keeping all this focus on Orient House and the Palestinian Authority. Leah's argument was that if we accepted the deal, they would have less legal ground to hold the others at the next hearing. This applied to me in particular because my charges of resisting arrest and assaulting an officer were precisely the same as Andy's. Several of us accepted Leah's contention and decided to sign and be released.

At the hearing the following afternoon, Leah was proven right. She used my release as a precedent, and the three Palestinian men and Andy were all released on the same terms. The Palestinians surely would not have been released so quickly had they not been associated with us.

It was gratifying, of course, to know that the arrest of internationals in East Jerusalem had drawn media attention around the world. But Palestinians are arrested and imprisoned on invented charges or no charges every day. Their crimes are those of resisting military and ethnic dictatorship, or in some cases, of merely being born Palestinian. Most of us spent a single night in prison. Where were the press and media on the other 364 nights of the year?

In the courthouse, after the hearing when Andy and the others were released, I saw the friendly, light-haired man from the exercise yard being led in handcuffs down some stairs. His hearing was just finished. I called to him, "You're a set designer? I'm a playwright! Do you know George Ibrahim?"

"Yes, I work with him," he called back, flashing his big smile.

"Are they letting you out?" I called.

He shook his head. "Two years," he called back. He shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and was gone.

Muhammad's Killer

Neta Golan

Deir Istiya and Hares are West Bank villages in a valley surrounded on three sides by expanding Israeli settlements. They endure frequent attacks from soldiers and settlers. Here, Israeli activist Neta Golan finds herself a fellow traveler with Israeli soldiers on a bus in the West Bank.

I had spent the day with the villagers of Deir Istiya, where we planted trees on land coveted by the settlement of Yakir. I was on my way home. Two soldiers recognized me and one asked in Hebrew, "Neta, how are you?"

A cell phone rang and a soldier answered it. "Guess who I'm talking to?" he asked the caller. "Neta, from Peace Now." To them I was a novelty. Peace Now was as far Left as they could fathom.

We talked. One soldier told me, "When I see a terrorist laying on the ground in his own blood it gives me an appetite." He hesitated before continuing. He wanted to reveal to me something he was proud of.

"There was a time when someone in Hares village picked up a huge boulder to throw at me. Do you know what I did?" he asked. I already knew.

"You killed him."

"That's right," he replied with a self-satisfied smile.

I knew two children and a young father who were murdered in Hares recently by Israeli soldiers. So I asked him when it happened, on what day? He told me.

The soldier in front of me was the murderer of my friend Muhammad Daoud.

"Let me tell you about who you killed," I said.

"I don't care."

"I know you don't. But I want you to know about the boy you killed. His name was Muhammad Daoud. He was 15 years old. He was retarded. And I loved him very much."

I told him every thing I could think of about Muhammad and his family. "I know where he was standing," I said. "I saw his blood on the ground. There is no way he could have thrown a stone at you from so far away, let alone a boulder."

"You weren't there," he shouted.

"Okay. You were there. So you tell me. How far do you think he could have thrown that 'boulder'? Three meters? Ten meters? Let's just imagine that it is humanly possible to throw it 100 meters—you were 300 meters away."

"You weren't there."

"That's right, I wasn't there. You were there. So you tell me how far away you were when you murdered him."

He tried to stop me, but I wouldn't stop. And the fact that he didn't want to hear it was the only indication that maybe, somewhere deep inside this boy, there was a piece of humanity still intact.

After we parted, I wept. I was lucky to have friends with me to hold me. Meeting Muhammad's killer reopened the wound of losing my friend—a wound that had never really healed. I knew then that if any man was evil, the soldier I just spoke to was evil. Yet he was only a boy. He was an ignorant and stupid boy. He should never have been given any power. He should not have been in Hares.

Israeli soldiers, many of them like Muhammad's killer, control every aspect of the lives of millions of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. These youths have the power of life, the power of death. This cannot continue.

Invasion of Ramallah

Adam Shapiro

After Israel seized the Orient House in Jerusalem in August 2001, Ramallah, a Palestinian city 10 miles to the north, became the Palestinians' administrative center. The following April, the Israeli military invaded Ramallah, destroyed much of the presidential compound, and surrounded President Arafat's offices. While assisting the medical community in Ramallah to keep the hospital open and ambulances functioning, Adam Shapiro, a Jewish American, spent a day and night in the besieged presidential compound.

Midnight was drawing near, and we knew they were coming. *They,* of course, are Israeli helicopters, tanks, Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), bulldozers, and soldiers. After the Passover suicide-bombing in Netanya, we knew that the response would be hard—we even knew where they would go. First they would take the presidential compound (Al-Muqata'a) and then the rest of Ramallah.

Neta, Caiomhe, Huwaida, and I discussed our options. Internationals were on their way to Palestine to participate in an organized campaign of international solidarity with the Palestinian people. Thirty or forty French activists were already with us in Ramallah. Italians and more French were due to arrive the next day. Brits and North Americans would follow. We had numbers, but not enough for a massive action.

The next morning, Ramallah was teeming with tanks, and the Muqata'a was reporting bulldozers, tanks, and helicopters attacking the buildings. By 9 am, Neta, Caiomhe, Huwaida, and myself had regrouped with the French activists. We got information from around the city: shootings, explosions, tank shellings, and many Ramallah residents already injured or dead. Hospitals were reporting that ambulances were being prevented from moving around the city, being stopped and even shot at by Israeli soldiers. They asked if the internationals could help—perhaps we could accompany the ambulances with our foreign passports. Caiomhe and I volunteered.

Maher drove up from the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC), and we sped to our first stop: the body of a security officer had to be moved from the Arab Care Hospital to the

Ramallah Hospital morgue. The security officer's body was wrapped in sheets. He had been shot in the chest around 5 am, during the initial stages of the invasion when ambulances were still able to move through the city. We lifted the body off the bed and onto a stretcher.

The route we were forced to take to the morgue—due to Israeli sniper positions, tanks, and crushed automobiles—led us down one street that was partially blocked by a car. As the ambulance passed the vehicle, we realized that not only was the car's front windshield shattered but the back had also been hit with some kind of missile. Maher explained that the car belonged to Suraida Saleh, a 21-year-old, Palestinian-American woman, who, with her husband, had attempted to drive to her father's house in the early morning after the invasion had begun. One hundred meters from their house, a tank fired at the car, killing Suraida instantly. Her husband was also hit, but was found by rescue workers and taken to a hospital. Amazingly, Suraida's nine-month-old son, who had been sitting on his mother's lap, was physically unharmed.

We reached the Ramallah Hospital and unloaded the security officer's body into the morgue. There, in the refrigerated rooms, the morgue technician showed us the dead from the invasion so far. By 11 am, the morgue had six bodies including Suraida's. Within a few days, it would fill up beyond capacity.

The internationals spent that morning and early afternoon delivering food and medicine to Palestinians too afraid to even approach their doors. We brought pregnant women and other medical emergencies to the hospital. We brought more dead bodies to the morgue. By mid-afternoon, I received word that there was an injured security guard inside the Muqata'a who needed evacuation or he would die from blood loss. The presidential compound, however, was completely surrounded by Israeli troops, including sniper and observation posts.

Caiomhe and I went to the headquarters of UPMRC and found Dr. Muhammad. I explained to him the situation inside the Muqata'a. He agreed to accompany us, and we rushed to the compound with two ambulances. When we turned the corner towards the Muqata'a, it was about 4 pm and the light was already starting to fade. A shot rang out in the darkening sky, and a voice yelled to "stop the ambulance." Karim, our driver, slammed on the brakes and threw the vehi-

cle into reverse. I grabbed the microphone that broadcast through the loudspeaker atop the ambulance and attempted to explain to the unseen soldiers that the ambulance needed to enter the compound. A soldier appeared from behind what remained of a wall and waved his machinegun. I again explained our mission over the loudspeaker.

I wondered if the soldiers would be less tense if they could see my face. Hands raised, I slowly exited the ambulance and walked in front of the headlights. I was wearing one of the white vests issued to the medical relief volunteers. A Merkava tank pulled up and blocked the side entrance. I approached the tank and shouted to the soldiers inside that the ambulance was requesting clearance to retrieve the wounded.

Caiomhe joined me outside as another tank approached. One of the tank's guns trained on me, then moved automatically to Caiomhe, and then to the ambulances. The machine stopped 20 feet from us, and six soldiers emerged. One soldier approached Caiomhe and I; the other five continued pointing their guns. The soldier asked what we were doing. We explained our mission to help the wounded. He inspected the ambulances and said he would ask for clearance.

Night was fast approaching, and we could hear Israeli machinegun fire and shelling from all around the darkening city. We continued to wait. I shouted to the soldiers, asking how long it would take, and they responded that we must wait. A troop transport truck approached. New soldiers got off and took the place of other soldiers at their posts. The troop transport left. By now, Dr. Muhammad was getting nervous and suggested that they would not let us enter.

It was approaching 6:30 pm when finally a soldier gave us permission to enter with one ambulance. In only 24 hours, much of the compound was already damaged and at least two buildings were almost completely destroyed. A bulldozer was working on a third, and soldiers infested the compound. Over 300 Palestinian men were trapped in the main building, including the Palestinian president.

Security personnel quickly ushered us into a room where the wounded security officer, Khaled, and now a second wounded officer were lying. Khaled's skin was pale and his body temperature was quite low. We brought in medicine and first-aid materials from the ambulance. Dr. Muhammad, Caiomhe, Karim, and the two injured men boarded the ambulance. We decided that I would stay behind

and compile a complete report about the conditions inside the Muqata'a and what further supplies were needed. The ambulance would return for me with more medical provisions.

After the ambulance left, I was toured around and shown the interior damage. I phoned Huwaida and gave her a report on what was happening inside the compound—the only reports on the news so far were those put out by the Israeli army. While I was relaying the day's events in Ramallah to the people trapped in the compound, I was asked to go upstairs and meet President Arafat.

President Arafat was sitting in his office by candlelight (the electricity had been cut) with several advisers. They rose to greet and welcome me. I explained to the Palestinian president how internationals had come to the compound to help the injured get medical attention, reported what I had seen throughout the day in Ramallah, and explained how peace activists from around the world had come to help the Palestinian people. He thanked us for our work and told his men to make sure I was comfortable.

An hour later, there was still no sign of the ambulance, and the Israeli soldiers had resumed their attack on the compound. The buildings were being constantly hit with gunfire, and tank shells exploded into nearby buildings. The building shook from the force of the explosions. Soon, Arafat's guards were looking for me again, and invited me to eat with the president. Again, I went upstairs and was offered a seat and some bread, cheese, and a hard-boiled egg. On the table beside the food was a stack of papers, a phone, and a candle.

A phone call was transferred into his phone, and Arafat talked with a deputy minister from some European country who was explaining that the minister was out of the capital and would be phoning later that day. Arafat thanked the official for his support, reminding him to bring more attention to the plight of his people. After he hung up, he turned to me and expressed his grief about the terrible loss of life suffered by all the people in this conflict. He did not understand the Israeli government's response to the Arab League's peace initiative, as it seemed to be everything that Israel claimed to want. And he could not understand how the world, especially the US government, could allow the Israelis to overrun Palestinian cities and impose a war on the Palestinian people. Before we parted, he thanked

me again and assured me that when this was over, the Palestinian people would indeed be free.

I returned downstairs and listened to the rain of artillery on the compound. I was offered a space on the floor with 13 other men who were keeping low to avoid bullets and shrapnel. More than once it occurred to me that at any moment a tank shell or even a tank could come crashing through the wall. I was certain that Israeli soldiers were going to eventually enter the building, and when they did there would be a gunfight. The men around me were defending their president, their country, and their lives.

There was commotion in the hallway–Caiomhe was back. I jumped up, ready to go. But the look on Caiomhe's face told me something was wrong. She explained to me that when the ambulance had left the compound earlier, the soldiers made everyone, including the injured, get out for inspection. This took over two hours, and all Palestinian identity cards were confiscated. Caiomhe and the men were questioned, then forced to sit and wait inside a room guarded by some soldiers. Khaled was slowly dying and needed immediate hospitalization, but the soldiers did not seem to care. Finally the group was ordered back into the ambulance, but they were not allowed to leave. A military jeep arrived. The soldiers announced that everybody was under arrest, and that they would be taken to Beit El—an illegal settlement and military base just on the outskirts of Ramallah. The soldiers did not know how to handle Caiomhe, as she was a foreign citizen. The soldiers also knew that I was still inside the compound, so they had ordered Caiomhe inside to retrieve me. She was forced to walk through the battlefield, with the Israeli soldiers holding their fire long enough for her to enter the building. Now that she was inside, the firing had resumed. Now there was no option to leave.

All through the night, Israeli artillery fired on the compound. Loud crashes shook the walls; bulldozers and tanks moved closer and closer to our position in the main building. One man, an assistant to the governor of Ramallah, began to complain of chest pains. He started drooling and his speech slurred. A doctor tending to him announced that he was having a mild heart attack. I tried to phone for help, but by now the lines were cut and our cell phones were out of batteries.

As the sun rose, we learned from the security personnel that Israeli soldiers had reached positions within 20 feet of the front door. President Arafat came downstairs, offering encouragement and support to each individual. He oversaw the defensive planning, including the barricading of all the windows and doors with whatever furniture we could find. Caiomhe and I helped the one doctor inside the compound to set up a makeshift emergency clinic.

I managed to borrow a cell phone and found a spot in the room where I could barely get reception. I left a message for Huwaida to send immediate help. When the other men learned I had found a spot where there was reception, they lined up and started calling their loved ones—mothers, fathers, wives, sons, and daughters.

We got word that a group of Israeli soldiers were approaching and everyone took their positions. I kept playing out in my head how it might go down. Where would the fire come from; where would they enter from? After 20 minutes that seemed like an eternity, we were told that the soldiers had retreated.

Gunfire from Israeli soldiers continued throughout the day in bursts, interrupted by the occasional tank shell. Around 1:30 pm, a security man upstairs had stood up to stretch and was hit by an Israeli sniper. He died moments later.

At 2 pm, security personnel started shouting that there were foreigners at the compound. Sure enough, we saw in the driveway a group of four internationals and two ambulances. The French and Italian activists had come with personnel from the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and were demanding to be allowed in—with or without permission. The Israelis relented and allowed the four internationals inside, along with the medical personnel.

President Arafat met with the new group of people, while I helped a medic carry the security man's body down to the ambulance. We all drove away from the compound, leaving President Arafat's personal doctor and more medical supplies. I was shaken and relieved to be out, but was quite worried about the men I was leaving behind. Outside, the night sounds of a city under invasion echoed—machinegun fire, moving tanks, shelling.

The next morning I awoke thinking, "This is not over." As I was leaving my apartment, my friend Badawi called to inform me that soldiers were outside his house and demanding entry. Israeli soldiers

had been rounding up men between the ages of 15 and 50. Badawi is 22, and he was worried. On the way to Badawi's house, Huwaida and I ran into Anthony Shadid, a *Boston Globe* reporter. He asked where we were going—Ramallah *was* under curfew after all. I told him to follow us and to be prepared for soldiers.

An APC was parked in front of the apartment complex where Badawi lived. Soldiers lined the stairs leading up to the apartment. The front door was open. The soldiers pointed their guns as I slowly approached and demanded access into my friend's house. Huwaida was filming the encounter with the video camera, while Shadid was standing off to the side, telling us we were insane. The commander came out of the house and ordered us away. I told the soldiers we were not leaving until they let us enter.

Ten minutes later, the soldiers piled into the APC and drove off. I ran up the stairs to Badawi's apartment and found him and his family huddled in the living room, shaken but okay. Other Palestinians began reemerging from other apartments, thanking us and inviting us in for tea.

Huwaida and I left for the Ramallah Hospital, while Shadid stayed behind to gather interviews from the apartment residents. As we neared the hospital, we heard APCs approaching on the street. We ran the rest of the way, and by the time we got inside, one APC was already in the emergency room driveway and a tank was parked in front of the building. We joined dozens of doctors and nurses who ran outside to block the entrance to the hospital with their bodies. The soldiers were confused and ordered us out of the way. It was a standoff, and we knew we would win. An army commander arrived on the scene at the same time as the news media.

The director of the hospital was singled out of the crowd to negotiate with the Israeli commander. The commander demanded entry. The director refused. For once we had the upper hand—we had numbers, cameras, and self-confidence. The soldiers were not prepared; they had not trained for this type of situation.

Later that day, Israeli officials would claim that, contrary to reports, Israeli soldiers were *not* entering Palestinian hospitals, pointing to footage from the Ramallah Hospital as proof. Eyewitness testimony to the contrary was given by Shadid, the *Boston Globe* reporter. Shadid had been shot by an Israeli sniper (despite wearing a clearly

identifiable "PRESS" flak jacket) after leaving Badawi's house. Israeli soldiers entered his room at the Arab Care Hospital not just once, but twice.

Only 48 hours since the initial Israeli incursion into Ramallah, the city was completely controlled by Israeli forces. By the end of the day, 40 international activists would be inside the presidential compound, challenging the lack of an international response to the crisis. The international community's tepid protests tacitly gave legitimacy to the Israeli's war-making efforts. Even the United Nations could not deliver food to Ramallah.

But the international community is no longer states and agencies. International civilians have taken action where their governments can't or won't. We have proven that by directly intervening in the standoff, we can make a difference. We can help this nation overcome the tragic onslaught it is suffering and achieve its freedom and independence.

Marching to Beit Jala

Maia Ramnath

The March–April 2002 assault on Palestinian cities was the largest Israeli military operation in the West Bank since the occupation began in 1967. On the eve of invading Bethlehem, tanks entered the neighboring community of Beit Jala. Residents were put under curfew and strategically placed homes were seized, with families crowded into a single room and denied regular access to food and water. Internationals from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) and Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People (GIPP) marched together from their bases in Bethlehem and nearby refugee camps to Beit Jala, hoping to bring humanitarian aid to Palestinians trapped in seized homes.

One hundred and fifty or so internationals are marching up the hill to Beit Jala, singing and chanting. We've had word that the tanks are massing there, poised just outside Bethlehem. The invasion is ex-

pected at any time. Hair-trigger tension has been building for three days. We'll meet the soldiers—show our faces—and make our move in a symbolic chess game.

The Italians, with their permanent presence at Deheishe refugee camp, are singing loudest: "*Bella ciao, bella ciao, bella ciao, ciao, ciao! Palestina libera, Palestina rosa!*" Next in number are the French, North Americans, and British, then a smattering of Belgians, Germans, Irish, Japanese, Swiss, and Swedes. It's April Fool's Day, and although the siege of Arafat's compound is underway in Ramallah, it has not yet become clear to us that the largest incursion in years is about to be unleashed across the West Bank. We're still thinking within the activist-at-a-demonstration box, albeit a demonstration with higher stakes than we've ever known. "It's okay," I blithely tell a journalist who asks if I'm afraid, "I've been tear gassed and arrested before."

Live ammo—now that's something I *haven't* experienced before. Three Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) meet us at the top of the hill. Bullets slam into the pavement at our feet with heavy metallic bursts, throwing off sparks and shrapnel. We link arms. Our bodies form two lines that stretch across the road as three tanks drive us backward step by step. Two BBC journalists are driven for cover behind a jeep, pursued by a blaze of aggressive gunfire. I have to admit it's a relief to have the big gun's attention leave us for a few moments. But the barrel swivels inexorably back, and we continue our laborious retreat. The tank controls our speed effortlessly, accelerating toward us if we show signs of balking.

Looking neither right nor left, my eyes remain fixed on the face of the soldier behind the gun. I'm a mouse hypnotized by a snake.

The tanks leave us at the bottom of the hill. Once they are convinced that the remnants of us are dispersing and we're only a nuisance and not a threat, they withdraw. It's not until the tanks leave that I notice how dramatically the crowd has thinned. Where the hell is everybody? Some prudent ones sought safety long ago. Others…others have been shot. Seven of my comrades are in Beit Jala Hospital being treated for shrapnel wounds. One is in surgery, in critical condition with a direct bullet hit to the abdomen.

There, in front of the hospital, I realize that the rules have changed—and are subject to further arbitrary change at any time—from here on out. This is not a demonstration. This is crazy.

Morning. Outside, a tank rumbles by, shelling indiscriminately. Tanks seem to me like dumb, brute beasts—sniffing, stalking, always circling the camp, always patrolling the roads, spitting explosive curses from long snouts.

"*Debabbe, debabbe!*" [Tank, tank!] Swarms of children in the road empty into doorways and alleys, their backs pressed against gritty stone walls ribboned with flowing graffiti: black for Fatah, green for Hamas, red for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. When the tanks have passed, the kids come out again, picking up their soccer and hopscotch right where they left off. They're live wires, their energy confined inside the camp by a 24-hour curfew. The boys form a ragtag parade behind us whenever we venture out on one of our missions, but they usually stop at the perimeter of the camp.

"Don't let them follow you," worried parents warn. "If they get near the soldiers, the boys might throw stones, and then there'll be hell to pay."

At night, the wide road through the middle of the camp is often a lane of sniper fire. To get from one side to the other, we run across one by one.

At the first warnings of imminent invasion a few days before, the internationals had moved into Al-Azza refugee camp. Within a few days it has become home. I hope I don't smell too badly. I have taken only one shower in 10 days because I'm convinced that the moment I'm naked and wet, vulnerable away from my boots and backpack, that's when the soldiers will come in. I'm far less afraid when I'm out, in motion, in action. The fear is greatest when I'm sitting under siege, helpless, waiting, listening to sprays of gunfire or shelling.

The TV is always on for the latest news, except when the electricity is out. Deep, dark shots of astonishingly potent coffee alternate with glasses of sweet amber tea, seemingly all night and all day. The ashtrays are overflowing. Each man chain-smokes two to four packs a day. What else can you do to endure the monotonous tension of a siege? Intense, political debates rage all night, which I enjoy, at least what I can understand of them. My Arabic vocabulary increases daily,

causing much amusement to my entourage of little girls. I learn nouns by pointing to things, but my verbs are scanty. *Bread. Water. Coffee. Tea. Sleep. Army. Soldier. Martyr. Sun. Rain. Thank you. Good morning. Peace.* My Hebrew consists of one phrase: *lo lirot* [don't shoot].

I never leave the camp without two amulets: my passport and my white flag, ripped from a T-shirt I got at the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas protests last year in Quebec. Its sentimental value by now is immeasurable. It's gotten me through some tense moments, maybe even helped save lives. In an alternate universe without us there, would any given encounter have turned out any differently? I'll never know. But the Palestinians seem to place a high value on the precious *maybe* of our presence, and that'll have to be enough for me. They've had enough tragic experiences with Israeli military behavior, both with and without us, that the odds of the gamble seem worthwhile.

Riding in the front seat of the Red Crescent ambulance, I get a comprehensive tour of the local destruction. The empty streets are scored with tread marks of tanks and blurred with drifts of rubble. Buildings are pocked with bullet holes and rocket scars. Lightposts are bent over like stalks of overcooked asparagus, and the remains of cars line the road, crushed like tinfoil. Tanks have also crushed two empty ambulances in recent days to put them out of commission.

Supposedly when internationals are riding along, there's a better chance the ambulance won't be shot at. Even so, we're held up frequently throughout the day by troop movements, jeeps, APCs, tanks, and heavy-fanged bulldozers. Once we wait at an intersection while 11 APCs roar by, one after the other. Twice we have to get out of the ambulance and wait while a tank stands by and a soldier looks through our papers.

"Have a nice day," one of them says to me, handing back my passport.

It's scarier when night comes. Primal human fear of the dark is made more acute by real danger. The army likes to move then. "They've got infrared and radar; we don't," explains a young man in the camp. "Hear that?" The drone is high in the sky, invisible. "It can see you walking down this alley."

A bonfire blazes in the ruined street in front of Deheishe refugee camp as we drive past at dusk, with shadowy figures moving about

the edges. I spy a soldier poking around at the side of the road, so it doesn't surprise me when we're stopped a second later

"Quick, your passport," hisses one of the two Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) with us. He holds it up to the window of the ambulance. But the soldiers don't see it yet, kicking the door shut on us when we try to get out.

Three Palestinians are riding in the back: a young woman, a young man, and a doctor, slightly older. These passengers aren't wounded, just regular people who can't leave their homes safely for medicine and routine medical treatment.

First, the soldiers order the woman out and make her squat on the ground and empty her bag onto the gravel. One of them stands behind her and fires his gun over her head, again and again, impatiently. At each shot, she jerks sharply and gasps, finally starting to cry. Judging from the stories I've heard—and I have talked to no Palestinian whose personal story was *not* replete with deaths of family members, friends, and home invasions—I have no doubt that she associates such close-range gunshots with the "average" assortment of dire and bloody memories.

"You don't have to cry," reproaches a soldier.

Next they call for the young man and rough him up spread-eagled against the wall. When they call for the doctor, the EMTs and I exchange glances and seize the opportunity to scramble out of the cab. The Palestinians are lined against the wall with the soldiers stalking about, questioning them, dumping the contents of the ambulance on the ground, rifling through bags and medical supplies.

"Where are you from? Where are you going? For what reason?" the soldiers ask in English. This strikes me as odd and only later do I realize that English is the language they have in common. I stand slightly apart, alert and watchful, strangely calm. I'm directing a mental flow of Obi Wan Kenobi subtext at them: "*You don't want to hurt these people, they've done nothing to you, just let them go.*" But I'm unsure of what to do. How can I intervene without antagonizing the soldiers? The questioner calls out, "You are all from Bethlehem?" Seizing my chance, I brandish my passport and declare, "No! I'm from the United States of America!" I marvel in embarrassment at the involuntary note of arrogance in my voice. America indeed.

The soldiers stalk, confer, bluster. Then they load everything back into the ambulance and let us go. "We're very sorry," one of them says politely to me. "We have to search everything for security reasons. You understand?" Yes, I understand. Tom Ridge and John Ashcroft would be pleased.

The sun will set soon. Curfew will be officially reinstated in a few minutes. Three internationals are walking back to Al-Azza refugee camp when we notice an APC and an agitated tank buzzing threateningly at the corner above the hospital. We hasten to see what's going on. The soldiers have cornered a lone Palestinian man. Surrounding him, they force him to the ground, guns leveled at his head. We approach tentatively, hands raised. I feel like a hapless fool. What are we expecting them to do? Abruptly they let him go. I'm really not sure why. Did someone announce over the intercom that he isn't worth the bother with these international gadflies around? He's not on the wanted list after all.

We meet him as he walks away from the soldiers. Luckily one of my friends speaks Arabic: "Are you okay? What happened? Can we walk you home?"

"I'm all right. I didn't have my identification papers. I know the number by heart and I told it to them," and he tells it to us, "but they didn't believe me. They were going to shoot me." He's quivering with anger, a long and hard-pressed anger with no possible outlet. I perceive him as slightly unhinged, and I can't blame him. I feel feeble in my inability to make things okay.

But he agrees to an escort home. Since the APCs haven't given up on us yet, the three of us try to arrange ourselves around him as we walk to shield him from any lines of fire. Many troops are on the move, beginning the shift to the new configuration to which people will awaken tomorrow. Each time an APC menacingly approaches, my heartbeat peaks, then drops away when it passes.

He's from Ramallah, he says. He used to be a civil engineer. When we come to a place where a wall's been partially crushed, the man stops still, raging silently. *Yallah*, I think, glancing about, come *on*. But he's picking up stones and chunks of concrete from the ground, piling them back into the wall with methodical focus, repairing a tiny piece of the ruin of his homeland. So we help until it's done.

We continue on. It's a long way to where he's taking us, longer than we expected, and I'm getting edgy. Finally, we come to a high wall with intermittent gates. The first is locked; so is the second. The third screeches when he shoulders it open. Inside, the incongruous glimpse of another world: a tangled garden surrounds a building that looks like a rambling castle. He invites us in. We demur. He insists. Five minutes. Tea. Reluctantly we acquiesce. Just five minutes, no more.

As we approach the castle, a couple of doctors in white coats come out to greet us. An aide hustles our Palestinian companion off to his room. "Thank you for bringing him back! But how did you know he was ours?" We're at a hospital "for the nervous." The staff must have thought this man was a goner. "Oh, so you were held at gunpoint, and then you say some Americans appeared from nowhere to rescue you? Good, now take your medication." He must have been trying to get home to Ramallah, going north on the Hebron-Jerusalem road. It's no wonder he had a breakdown. Normalcy can be horrifying.

The first morning I wake up safely in my bed in New York City, I'm so disoriented that I literally don't know where I am or what I'm doing. The streets are full of glossy people buying shiny things, drinking Diet Coke in pleasurable oblivion. All of a sudden, normal seems so strange.

Sixteen Days in the West Bank

Nancy Stohlman

Building on campaigns in August and December 2001, internationals arrived in Bethlehem in March 2002 expecting to participate in nonviolent demonstrations and direct action with their Palestinian host communities. The schedule was abandoned, however, when Israeli tanks and soldiers invaded West Bank cities, forcing

Palestinian civilians to seek shelter and internationals to face the perilous work of physically protecting ambulances, hospitals, and homes from Israeli shelling.

"What is needed is very different now," Ghassan Andoni of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement explains to the group of jet-lagged international activists, sitting in a haphazard circle on the top floor of the Bethlehem Star Hotel. "We don't know when they'll strike, or where."

Human shields? I thought we were going to be planting olive trees, maybe confronting Israeli soldiers at checkpoints. My attention drifts in and out of surreal instructions on explosions, shellings, and what to do if a bomb hits the furnace of a home in the Palestinian refugee camp.

I touch the chunky black talisman around my neck. Around my wrist is a good-luck bracelet of plastic shells. In one pocket is an eagle carved out of tiger's eye, a dark green chakra rock, and a chunk of wax from a candle that once burned in the Church of the Nativity. In another pocket is a piece of aqua flint and a silver Hope coin that has been through the Gulf War. A goddess anklet makes a grand total of nine lucky charms.

The meeting adjourns. We have five minutes to pack overnight bags. I spiral down the tight, marble staircase to the third-floor room that I share. The beds are deserted, the curtains barely blowing in the drizzly, late evening air. I consider shutting the window and then decide against it. For days we have heard the shooting in the distance getting closer—no need to risk a sniper bullet in the head for shutting a window.

Keeping an eye on the blowing curtains, I crouch low with my backpack. What should I pack? Burn ointment and bandages. Antiseptic pads. My cell phone and passport. A notebook. Camera and extra film. Protein bars. A piece of onion in a baggie to neutralize tear gas. I double-check my forearm to make sure that the emergency phone numbers I have written are still legible.

The evening sky has darkened the windows of the hotel lobby when I join the others. International activists with multicolored backpacks buzz around the front desk, fueled by adrenaline and sleep deprivation. From among the jittery masses, someone shouts my name.

"Nancy, over here!" Ricardo, an Italian volunteer, removes the hood of his bright red raincoat and pulls me over to the rest of my affinity group. He waves a scrap of paper. "We are going to Aida camp."

My heart sinks. Aida refugee camp is nearest to Beit Jala—where the tanks are positioned.

The seven of us emerge from the hotel, heads and necks wrapped in red and black embroidered keffiyehs and bright vinyl backpacks. Drizzle moistens the dark spring night. We divide into two cars; nobody fights for the front seat. When I finally claim it, a bullet hole peeks at me from the windshield, level with my chin. A glass spiderweb fans from the vortex of impact, the broken shards still in place.

The nervous Palestinian driver motions with his cigarette: "You see what happened today in Aida?"

"Today?"

"Yes."

"This happened *today* in Aida?"

"Yes."

A sharp inhale responds from the backseat. I reach my arm behind me, and an anonymous hand grabs mine from the darkness. The headlights of the little white car whip around narrow, graffitied street corners.

"They killed five people today in Aida camp," the driver continues. The hand from the backseat squeezes tightly as I stare through the tiny peephole in the windshield.

The cars take us to the Children's Cultural Center of Aida refugee camp. Four of us are quickly grouped. We scurry down the dark, rubble-filled street. The ever-present eyes of the martyrs, those who have died at the hands of the Israeli military, watch from taped posters. The poster mosaics cover the sides of crumbling buildings that flank dirt alleys. I spot an image of a female martyr, her head covered with a *hijab,* baby in her arms. Underneath the picture are the words, "Sharon, When Will You Stop Killing Our Mothers?"

We are shuttled into the home of our hosts. Between the cheek kissing and hospitality, I notice the bullet-hole scars in the windows and walls. Automatic weapons rattle the dark night as we have tea. The four internationals look at one another nervously. The Palestin-

ians urge us to relax and finish our tea. The young mother asks me about my son, but my answer is interrupted by another round of firing. This one sounds even closer than before. *Rat-a-tat-tat-tat.*

The Palestinians exchange a knowing look. "Let's move."

We leave the dining room and enter the sparse living room. The gunshots and firing are all around us now. Our host, Nidal, passes out cups for strong, Arabic coffee and individual ashtrays. He says, "All the time we are afraid. It could be tomorrow." His face is weary from the responsibility of constantly protecting his family.

"The war is coming," he whispers. He quietly offers me a pack of cigarettes, a lone filter sticking up like a gravestone.

My cell phone rings like a screaming baby. US television stations want sound-bites. Exhausted, jet-lagged, and terrified, I halt in the middle of interviews to sputter, "Did you hear that? That one was really close."

Amid smoke rings and coffee we hear a loud banging from inside the bathroom. Elizabet from Russia has accidentally locked herself in. The Palestinians smile. We smile. Then we all begin laughing. Before I know it, I am laughing as hard as I have ever laughed. I know that if I were to stop laughing I would begin to cry.

I must have closed my eyes for a few minutes in the wee hours of the morning because I am startled awake by a voice through a loudspeaker. I am terrified that the invasion is beginning, but it is the Moslem call to prayer. The clock on the wall reads 4:30. I wonder how many others in the camp have not slept much either.

Our plan is to join other internationals in besieged Ramallah, so our group returns to Bethlehem to await the caravan.

At the hotel, my phone rings. It is Gary, calling from the street. "Tanks have completely surrounded Bethlehem," Gary shouts over the noise. "I just got a call from our lawyer friend who saw dozens of tanks and Armored Personnel Carriers moving in from the checkpoints."

"Have you been able to download any pictures?"

"No, but I found an Internet place that's open."

I look down from the fifth-floor windows and see Gary's small figure walking toward the hotel, his voice cracking in my ear.

"Gary, I can see you right now. I'm on the top floor." His small figure pauses and he waves in my direction. "Stay there, I'm coming

down." I think this might be my last chance to get a message to the activists back home.

Gary and I bolt down Bethlehem's narrow, frantic streets. Palestinian women, their heads draped in multicolored scarves, rush through the town with last-minute bags of groceries. Teenage boys cluster in front of metal-shuttered stores, pacing, talking in hurried Arabic. Golden sunlight streams through thick black storm clouds, swirling above the whitewashed town.

We enter the sparse Internet café. After only a few days in the West Bank, I understand the importance of writing journals and sending them back home. Without them, the American public will not hear about the tanks and Apache helicopters surrounding Bethlehem and the refugee camps. They also won't know about the machinegun serenade that kept Aida camp up all night, or the holes that score Aida's walls. Most Americans don't even know what a refugee camp is or that US tax dollars perpetuate the oppression of over three million Palestinians. The very presence of internationals makes these things "newsworthy," and our eyewitness journals are our actual experiences.

Gary and I pay for our computer time, and run back to the Bethlehem Star Hotel. The caravan to Ramallah has been turned away at the checkpoint—soldiers won't let anyone in or out of Bethlehem—so we're returning to the refugee camps. The internationals are gathering outside in the eerie quiet. Someone has already grabbed my backpack. Black storm clouds are hovering, surrounding the town like the olive green tanks that wait at every checkpoint into Bethlehem. Strange white flakes are settling on our heads like barely perceivable confetti.

"I wonder what that is?"

"I don't know," replies Shawn, a freckled American who has been living in Cairo. "Residue from shelling?"

I am suddenly not comfortable so exposed, and I look for the cars that will take us back to Aida camp. Will the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) attack from the air or the ground? I might be able to hide from a tank—but a helicopter?

Erik from Sweden pulls me away from the others. He is wearing a black and white keffiyeh around his neck. "They are afraid to drive

cars on the streets right now, so we are going to have to walk. It's only a mile or so."

Walk to Aida? This is not getting any better. We gather and then begin to silently plod the back roads toward Aida camp, skirting Bethlehem University.

"What's that?" Rob, a Jew from California, breaks the silence. He pushes his glasses up his nose and points at a huge blimp hovering in the air.

"Surveillance," Shawn answers. "I hear that they can see a bug on the street from those things."

"So they know we're here, then?"

"If they want to know, I'm sure they do."

That was little reassurance for me. "I think that we should call the embassies as soon as we get to the camp. I mean, if nobody knows we're there, then what good are we doing?"

We account for all our nationalities: US, Swedish, French, Italian, English, Irish, and Israeli. I try not to think about the surveillance blimp and instead I think of Van, my four-year old son. *I hope that I survive this night.* I check the time on my rented cell phone—only 5 pm. With the nine-hour time change, I'm going to have to wait until at least 6:00 before I can call him. I have to stay alive until 6 pm.

We round the first turn into Aida refugee camp. The sun-bleached, deserted buildings of Bethlehem become the slums of Aida. Brave children cheer and run out into the empty street to greet us with two-finger peace signs. I begin to cry; I don't feel like anyone's hero.

A child keeps up with me as I fumble for my camera. "What is your name?" she asks in surprisingly clear English.

"Nancy," I whisper, taking a deep breath.

The group winds through the tiny capillary streets toward Aida's children's center. Far away hums, squeals, and the ever-present sound of drones remind us that the invasion is coming. When we finally spill through the door, looks of relief and happiness welcome us.

"*Yallah, Yallah.*" The Palestinians hurry us into the cramped building. The walls of the children's center have been painted with murals of mountains, lakes, flowers, things that the children have undoubtedly never seen. One small room is crammed with computers. The muted TV screen displays the violent images of the day: Palestin-

ian men bleeding to death in Ramallah because ambulances haven't been allowed to retrieve them.

Several of the activists begin organizing. "Who is staying with whom? How many of us have cell phones? We need to make sure that every group has a cell phone."

"Nancy, do you have the number for the Indymedia Center?" Ricardo's eyes show urgency from behind his glasses.

I pull up my left sleeve and twist my forearm, looking for the inked number. At least a dozen phone numbers brand my arm, numbers I had written days ago, and which have not washed off because I am too afraid to shower.

"Should we make a list of our blood types?" Mary Kelly's normally rosy face is pasty.

"Great idea. I'm A-positive. Do you have the numbers to the consulate or embassies?" In her careful Irish accent, Mary reads off the number. Cell phones are ringing. Palestinians are pacing. Activists are giving phone interviews, their pupils dilated with shock. The muted noises in the sky above the tiny, two-room building pop and explode. A short line of people anxiously wait for one computer, desperate to type out last messages to loved ones.

I dial the number to the American Consulate. A woman with a bored voice picks up on the other end. I tell her our situation, and that we need her to inform the army and the media of our presence in the camps. All she asks is whether or not we want to be evacuated. I tell her we don't. She says to call back when we're ready to leave.

I hang up and glance at the clock. It is 6:18 pm.

Behind the tiny building is a small concrete slab. Laundry criss-crosses through the air on thin ropes. The purple twilight sky casts an ethereal glow on the faces of the Palestinians and internationals who are smoking cigarettes. I dial my ex-husband Brett in Colorado.

"Hello?"

"Hey, it's me. I need to talk to Van."

A pause. "How are you? Where are you? I've been so worried."

"I don't have much time. Can you put Van on the phone?"

"He's throwing a fit right now."

"Just put him on the phone anyway. Hold it up to his ear." A lump is working up my throat. My voice snags. "I need to talk to him right now." As my son gets closer to the phone, I can hear the esca-

lated screams of a tantrum in full steam. I shout over his screams and the drones flying above me.

"Hi Van, it's Mommy. I love you very much." He quiets for a moment. "I miss you very much and I think you're the best boy in the whole world." Van starts screaming again, louder than before. Tears roll down my face. "I love you, honey!" I blubber the words between his screams and the sounds of flying planes.

Brett returns to the phone. "Do you want me to keep him on longer?"

"No. Thanks." I sniff and swipe at my nose. "The tanks are coming. We're about to be invaded. I can hear them coming. I am pretty much fearing for my life." I can't help but cry now. "I have to get off the phone to conserve the batteries, in case we need to call ambulances, or the consulate, or anything. Make sure that Van knows that I love him."

I hang up and stumble around the corner to an olive tree, one of the few I have seen in the camp. I wrap my arms around the trunk while the sounds of large, flying machinery become louder.

Erik finds me in the dark, sobbing, hugging a tree.

"Nancy, we need to call the consulate."

"I already did." I smear my nose on my sleeve.

"What did they say?"

"They said call them when we want to get out."

Inside the building, food is set up on a long folding table. The spread of hummus, pitas, diced tomatoes and onions, shredded beets, a few slices of cheese, and a bowl full of jelly, served with typical Palestinian generosity, reminds me that the refugees' cupboards are not prepared for an invasion.

I eat my pita in front of a door plastered with martyr posters, some worn, some fresh and new. I look at each one of their faces, imagining who they used to be. A teenage boy notices me looking at the pictures and comes over. I realize he's deaf when he points to a picture, and then points to his temple. Then he points to another picture, and points to his gut. *He's showing me how they died.* This one got riddled with bullets from a helicopter. This one got it in the back. This one was my brother. My tears blur his pantomime until I can take no more and stumble out the front door.

The boys of Aida camp and a few internationals are playing an improvisational game of volleyball in the dirt alleyway. A wire dangles between two wooden streetlights. When the group sees me, they wave their hands in the air. Without hesitating I jump into position and watch the tattered ball sail over the wire in my direction. I pound all my fears into that ball, children cheer, and we spike and serve as if there are no tanks waiting at three of the entrances to Aida camp.

Hours later, I am staring wide-eyed at the ceiling when I hear the morning call to prayer. The internationals meet at the children's center by 8 am. None of us has slept.

More than half of the group decides to return to Bethlehem for supplies. We are dangerously low of battery charge and time on our cell phones. I opt to stay in the camp along with eight others—I am afraid that the army is just waiting for the internationals to leave so they can invade.

Shivering in the cold children's center, I wander outside to get some sunlight. A few flowers stretch through the cement yard. The deaf boy from the night before begs to use my camera. I oblige, and the boys run off clicking pictures at one another.

Gayle, a mother of three from New York City, pops her head outside and yells that my phone is ringing. I run inside.

"Hello?"

"Is this Nancy Stohlman?"

"This is she."

"My name is Chris Dilworth and I am calling from the US Consulate. I just received a phone call from Diana DeGette, informing me that you are in Aida refugee camp."

Diana DeGette, Diana DeGette, oh yeah, Colorado's congressional representative. Maybe the international presence is really working!

"She asked me to call and see if you want to be evacuated."

My hopes deflate like a tire over broken glass. "But I don't want to be evacuated. We are choosing to be here."

"We believe that you are in grave danger. We can come for you now, but if you wait, it might be too late. Are there others with you?"

"There are nine internationals, plus all the Palestinians."

"Nine Americans?"

"No, three are Americans."

"Do any of them want to be evacuated?"

"No, we *want* to be here. The army didn't invade the camp last night, and we believe that is partially due to our presence."

"I disagree with you. We believe that your lives are in danger. I admire your courage, but you realize that if you refuse evacuation now, we may not be able to get to you when you decide you want to get out."

"I understand."

There is a long pause. "Best of luck to you."

I hang up the phone and return to the back concrete slab, which has turned into an international yoga session. Stiff bodies twist and bend in the sunshine. Several of the Palestinian boys have taken off their shoes, and are good-naturedly contorting on towels with the Irish and French. I am reminded that I've been clenching my shoulders for five days. A hat is pulled over my greasy, unwashed hair. Water hasn't touched my body since I arrived in Palestine.

Walking the road outside the children's center, I notice fake plants and plastic flowers draping the balconies of the shabby dwellings. Painted murals depict sad-eyed Palestinians who look longingly at nonexistent villages. Colorful graffiti swirls through the stark, rubble-filled camp, and I don't need to be able to read Arabic to understand the sentiment: Free Palestine.

The teenage boys from the previous night's volleyball game scrounge up a guitar, badly out of tune. While I attempt to tune it, one of the older boys pulls a painting from behind his back and holds it out to me. A third boy translates.

"He painted this. He wants you to have it."

It is a bright watercolor of grass, flowers, and butterflies. I know now that real flowers and butterflies do not exist for these kids. He signs the picture "to Nancy—Issak."

The boys are setting up another game of volleyball. I'm still trying to tune the old guitar when Shawn comes to me with fear in his eyes.

"Four internationals were shot during the march from Bethlehem to Beit Jala."

Internationals shot? "Rubber bullets?"

"Real bullets." His face is pale.

The Palestinian news is replaying the events: a tank opened fire on a crowd of internationals as they tried to march to Beit Jala. The

internationals left in the camp crowd around the screen to see which of our friends were injured.

"I want to go back to the hotel."

"Me too."

"Me too." Voices echo on either side of me.

"What about the people here?" The teenage boys are watching us, confused. Our purpose in the refugee camps was to *protect* the Palestinians with our international status. But we now see that the Israeli military is unconcerned with our international status and our lives in the camp feel like logs on a fire.

"Put on layers and bright colors," I advise. We are ready to go in less than five minutes. I hardly notice that Rory has begun filming our departure. I call the organizers to coordinate. George Rishmawi of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement tells me there are seven shot, not four. He insists that we walk.

The Palestinian mothers, the doctor, they nod their heads, trying to be understanding. But beneath their wan smiles is disappointment, and beneath that is fear. I feel like a rat fleeing from a sinking ship. I am crying and ashamed. Through hot tears, I yell "tomorrow" to the group of boys halted in their tracks holding a volleyball. The makeshift volleyball net, a thin wire stretched across the alley, looks like a deserted IV tube.

Six or seven of the refugees escort us to the end of the camp and point the way. We hear gunshots. The roads are deserted; not even a scrap of paper floats by. More shots. We curse under our breath, "Oh fuck!" It seems like we're walking right toward the shots, but it's the only way we know to get back to the hotel. I imagine Israeli snipers all around us: atop buildings, from windows, taking aim between my shoulder blades. Different kinds of shots are firing: some booming, some single rifle shots, some *rat-a-tat-tat.*

I whisper under my breath, "Almost there, almost there." The sky is the color of oatmeal. Mysterious flakes of white are still falling like snow in the cool humidity. I can only focus on putting one foot in front of the other, constantly scouting for a place to hide with every step.

We round the corner onto Baba Skaak, the main street of Bethlehem. Bombs the size of small TVs litter the street, wired one to the next. I can't be sure when they will go off, but we have to cross that

street. Ahead I see a group of boys frantically motioning to us. I want to run as fast as I can, but Rory reminds us to walk. There may be snipers looking for panicked targets.

We have crossed the booby-trapped street. The next hurdle is a tower that looms above the town of Bethlehem. We're sure that snipers will be there, and for one complete stretch of road we're entirely unprotected.

I keep saying "Almost there, almost there" like a mantra. Roosters are crowing from all directions.

"I wonder why the roosters are crowing," Shawn says.

"The rooster crows three times because we've betrayed our friends," Claire answers.

We turn off the sniper street and duck behind the wall of Bethlehem University. The giant white walls would feel more secure if it weren't for the tank shell marks—big holes the size of grapefruits with charred black rings. We're 100 feet from the hotel. We peek around the corner, and I can see the building—a yellowed, stucco five-story with tinted glass doors and a red-tiled awning. I can't help but run now, and our small, traumatized group spills into the lobby of the Bethlehem Star Hotel.

The beige drapes are pulled shut. The lobby is swimming with press and medics. Bandages adorn the bodies of my international friends. Issa, a Japanese woman, has a leg injury from the Beit Jala shooting: a piece of shrapnel is still embedded in her thigh.

I sit down beside her and suddenly feel cold, *really, really* cold. My teeth start chattering and I am shaking with shock. I hardly realize that blankets are being piled over my shoulders and legs. *No, no, Issa has been shot, don't worry about me.*

The mayor of Bethlehem enters the lobby of the hotel. I recognize his big toothy smile and bushy eyebrows from the welcoming speech he gave to the internationals just a few days earlier. Amid the panic and the gunshots, he traverses the lobby with a sincere, grateful smile, shaking hands with as many of us as he can find.

He approaches me. I wish I had the strength to stand up. We shake hands. It is understood that we are all in grave danger tonight, and the fact that a Palestinian, especially a Palestinian *official,* wants to risk being out on the streets to shake my hand speaks to me of the courage of these people.

The sun has fully set. The darkness is a scary abyss that swarms with Apache helicopters, soldiers, tanks, and bombs. Nearly all the coordinating Palestinian leadership for the internationals has gone into hiding. Will the Israeli military storm the hotel and drag us all to jail? Will they shoot us? Will we get it from a sniper or a tank shell through the walls? A bomb? I don't know what to protect myself against.

I run up to the second floor, to the hallway between hotel rooms, and lie down on the floor, fumbling for my cell phone. The explosions outside sound like a Fourth of July fireworks show gone wrong. I start dialing every number written on my arm until I finally reach Georgie, an International Solidarity Movement (ISM) organizer from the UK, who is trapped in the media center desperately trying to send press releases before the electricity cuts out.

"Where are you?" she shouts over booming noises.

"I'm at the hotel."

"Who are you with?"

I list all the names of people I have seen hiding and pacing like zombies through the hotel.

"Are you all together?"

"No, I'm by myself right now. There is no organization. I've been trying to tell people not to go on the fifth floor, but I think a lot of people are up there."

"That's bloody dangerous. Tell them to get off."

"Georgie, I just walked from the refugee camp. I saw bombs all over the main street. What do we do if the soldiers come? Or if someone is hurt, how do we call the ambulances?"

"Well, if someone is hurt, there is no way that the ambulances are going to get into Bethlehem. So you should gather all your first-aid equipment, find out who has medical training, and have it all ready. We could also be losing power any minute. There are whole streets out of power."

"And what should we do if the soldiers come?" In our nonviolence training, we had discussed the proper protocol for dealing with soldiers, our legal rights as internationals, and material issues like designating a jail support person should someone get arrested. Now that seems ridiculous.

"Okay, here's what you need to do." Georgie's crisp British accent buzzes in my ear. "Are you in contact with the internationals still in the camps?" More internationals had gone back to the camps from the failed march.

"I have everyone's number in Aida camp. I can find the rest."

"Good. You need to make a list of everybody by nationality, names, and passport numbers. Then you need to designate a person to call each of the embassies. So for example, make a list of all the Brits, with their passport numbers, and designate someone to call the British Embassy the minute the soldiers come through the door. Do that for all of the nationalities, and don't forget the camps."

"Okay."

"Good. Keep in touch with me. Good luck."

How did I just get all this responsibility? I haven't slept for four days. I sit for a moment on one of the shabby couches in the cold-floor hallway and wish I could cry. I am afraid that every pop, every bullet, is the one that is going to sail through the walls and nail one of us in the heart. I gingerly place my phone in the cradle to recharge.

Rory comes around the corner, hair disheveled, still wearing his jacket. "Do you mind if I sit here with you?"

"I feel like such a traitor for leaving them there."

"How were we supposed to know what to do? It's not like we're any safer here, now."

I wipe at layers of tear streaks. "I just got off the phone with Georgie. She gave me instructions."

"Have we been in touch with Aida since we got back?"

"No, let's call." I pull out my notebook of phone numbers and dial Erik.

"Hello?"

"Erik, it's Nancy. How are you?"

"We are not good. Things are not good. We are very worried. We sent you a fax with all our passport numbers. You must call the embassies for us. We are almost out of minutes on our phone."

He was talking so fast! I could picture them back in the children's center, the drones circling above the roof.

"Erik, are you alright? How many went back with you? How is everyone?"

"We are very, very nervous. It is not good, not good." Cracking and crashing sounds in Aida temporarily drown out Erik's voice. "The army has just taken over the Paradise Hotel—you have to call the embassies for us. The numbers are all on the fax."

During the last three invasions, the IDF took over the Paradise Hotel in order to have a clear sniper post right into Aida camp.

"Arusha said that there were soldiers outside the family's house that she was staying in."

I can picture the army—green-clad soldiers, M-16s in hand, scuffing through the rubble-filled streets. I can picture the children crying, the family crouched by the thin dividing wall in the living room, the coffee and cigarettes.

"Erik, I'm going to go find your fax right now. We'll call you every hour."

"Yeah, that would be good." His voice cracked, and I could hear shouting behind him.

"You guys are going to be just fine."

"Okay." He didn't believe me. I wasn't sure if I believed me.

I find the fax, a handwritten, hastily scratched list of all the names, passport numbers, and nationalities of the internationals in Aida camp. Before long, people start to gather in the second-floor hallway. Mary begins collecting medical supplies. I start filling water bottles. "Any bottle you see lying around, fill it up. Who knows if we are going to lose water. The last time they invaded Bethlehem, they cut all the water mains. And we need to take inventory of any food anyone has stashed in their rooms. Let's put it all together."

Sharon, a dark-haired woman from Kentucky, suggests that we move down to the lobby. "We should be completely in the open if the soldiers come. Plus the hotel staff requested that we come downstairs. They are afraid to be alone."

The group grabs all the collected water, first-aid materials, blankets, pillows, flashlights, and cell phones, and descends to the lobby. The lights in the lobby are bright; the Palestinians are pacing.

The young Palestinian man who tends the small cocktail bar sits expressionless, chain-smoking to the empty barstools. "You are really scared," he says to me.

"Yeah."

"They won't do anything to you. But me," he points out the window, "if you are not here right now, they come by and shoot." He makes a gunshot sound. His eyes are ringed with dark circles; smoke floats around his head. "Did you see the Church of the Nativity yet?"

"No, not yet."

"It is very beautiful. I take you there tomorrow."

I start laughing. "I guess if we're not all dead tomorrow, I would love to go."

He starts laughing too. "Okay." The popping symphony continues outside. He turns up the radio behind the bar.

Awni, the only Palestinian coordinator left in the hotel, is sitting so he can watch the front door. He wears a bulletproof vest. His foot taps the floor. I sit beside him.

He begins talking without taking his eyes off the door. "To be arrested, I am not afraid. I have been arrested when I was 16. Jail is nothing to me." He waves his hand around in the air, then drops his voice. "I do not want to die."

I don't know what to do but put my arms around him. He hugs me without taking his eyes off the front doors.

"Awni, how old are you?"

"Thirty." He looks at me. "Nancy, you look very tired. You go sleep in my room. It is safe there."

I know he is lying—there are no safe rooms. "It's okay, I can't sleep."

"You are worried. You need to rest."

"Yeah right, in the middle of an invasion."

He smiles, nervously looking back to the front door.

Beyond the front door, the passion play that is the Middle East continues, scene after scene with no intermission.

In the days that follow, tanks will move in, bombs will drop in Manger Square, Dan Rather will show up in a helmet and flak jacket. We will live under curfew, without electricity, eating rations of stale pitas, the last meat in the freezers, then jars of olives, pickles, and jelly. A journalist on the fifth floor of our hotel will be hit by a sniper bullet. The IDF will turn Bethlehem University into a makeshift prison to incarcerate "terrorists." The mayor of Bethlehem will be trapped in the Church of the Nativity with the resistance.

I am writing now two months later, in a coffee shop in Denver. Nothing has made sense to me since. My real life has become surreal. My heart has been broken open.

In my apartment, I framed a picture of myself in Aida camp, holding a glass of tea. But to just look at the picture, you cannot hear the machineguns in the background, cannot see my fingers shaking around the generic Arabic cigarette, cannot smell the days of fear without soap, days of fear without hope, cannot feel the weight of good-luck charms clinking in my pockets like bones.

I still don't know which one did the trick.

Pregnancy

Paul Larudee

Pregnant: "Carrying a developing fetus within the uterus…fraught with significance or implication." —The Heritage Illustrated Dictionary of the English Language

The Palestinian city of Nablus dates to the Roman era and is the commercial heart of the West Bank. From April 3 to 21, 2002, the Israeli military bulldozed and shelled the historic Old City section as part of what was dubbed Operation Defensive Shield. The army sealed off the city, resulting in an almost complete media blackout. Ambulances were attacked, and Palestinians in need of medical care lay wounded in the streets or trapped in their homes under curfew. During this critical time, a small number of international activists managed to evade military checkpoints and enter Nablus.

The ambulance stopped and sounded two staccato bursts of its klaxon, the loud foghornlike blast used to warn traffic when the siren alone fails to clear the road. This time, however, there was no siren and no traffic—only two Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) on the side of the road. Yousef, our driver, was using the klaxon as a

way of asking permission to proceed. It makes a sound used only by emergency vehicles and is therefore a way of signaling without risk of misinterpretation. He knew it would be imprudent to do otherwise, as seven Nablus ambulances had been fired on in the last five days.

"What do you want?" A soldier shouted in Hebrew from inside the first APC, without opening the hatch.

"We have to pass," shouted Yousef, also in Hebrew. The soldier began talking on the radio. Then he shouted, "Wait."

Yousef turned off the engine. Yousef, Dr. Ghassan Hamdan, and I sat in silence.

In the last two days, my five colleagues with the International Solidarity Movement and I had had several encounters with soldiers beginning with the checkpoint into Nablus, where we had been refused entry. The city had been declared a "closed military zone," which meant "no observers welcome." We went into Nablus anyway, trekking in over steep hills under incongruously calm and beautiful skies, from the hills surrounding the city to our appointment at the Rafidia Hospital. The streets had been completely deserted since the onset of the 24-hour curfew several days earlier, but families waved to us from behind their windows, astonished at our bravado (or foolishness) for walking in clear view down the middle of the roadway.

We soon came across a group of soldiers who were equally astonished. Moments before, they had fired on a press vehicle that was carrying Suzanne Goldenberg of the *Guardian*. They didn't fire at us, but kept us at a distance while I brought them our passports. The soldiers inspected the passports and asked questions, most of which I answered evasively since they might have offered clues concerning our Palestinian contacts. The soldiers seemed satisfied with my answers, nevertheless, they still refused to let us pass. Instead, we were sent on a roundabout course that included a second encounter with soldiers, but eventually got us to the hospital.

Predictably, the hospital was besieged by wounded coming in from the areas of fighting, including a French photographer who had been shot in the chest by Israeli troops. I asked his colleague why the Israelis had fired at him.

"Because he was the first to get out of the vehicle," he replied.

"Was it a press vehicle?" I asked.

"Yes. I think that's why they shot at it." Apparently the military wanted the press there even less than they wanted foreign observers.

Five of us climbed into an empty ambulance and headed for the Amouth Mosque, which had been set up as a makeshift field hospital near the Old City. There we met Dr. Hamdan, who had volunteered to direct the field hospitals.

Dr. Hamdan, like all medical personnel and drivers at field hospitals, risked his life many times every day to bring medical care to patients who were not within reach of a hospital. Now his drivers were being arrested, the identity cards of his doctors were being confiscated, and his ambulances were being disabled by the military authorities. An international presence in the ambulances, which was advertised by phone calls to the military authorities and diplomatic missions, would hopefully reduce occurrences of this type. Now as I rode with Dr. Hamdan and Yousef, the theory was about to be put to the test.

Beyond the two APCs blocking the road was an apartment block. Three soldiers came out of the building and motioned to the ambulance to pull forward, as did the soldier in the APC, who popped up out of the hatch. Yousef quickly restarted the engine and pulled near the building.

They took my passport, and the identity cards of Yousef and Dr. Hamdan, and told us to wait there. We tried to relax as much as we could under the gaze of a machinegunner on the roof of the building. Soon they were back, and returned my passport and Dr. Hamdan's card, but said that they would need more time for Yousef's ID. "We're going to be here for awhile," declared Dr. Hamdan.

Yousef once again turned off the motor and we decided to step cautiously outside to wait. We observed the scene. The apartment block had two floors on the street, the rest cascading down a hill, along a stairway. Beyond the apartment block was an elementary school, and beyond the school were two more military vehicles. The school had been requisitioned for soldiers' quarters, and the apartment block for officers. Unfortunately, the residents of the apartment block were all still there, confined to cramped quarters while officers took over their homes.

One of the residents was a Palestinian woman who was five-months pregnant and in distress. She had placed a call to a medi-

cal facility. Three ambulances were coming from beyond the elementary school. The ambulances were made to wait on the road for a security check, despite pleas that the woman's life might be in jeopardy and that the vehicles had already been subjected to three checks.

After their identity documents were returned, attendants began searching for the woman in the apartment block. She was found in one of the lower units. As she was carried up the stairway on a stretcher, her mother followed with a clear, zip-lock bag in her hand. When they reached the top of the stairs, the mother handed me the bag, presumably thinking that I was a doctor because of the medical jacket that Dr. Hamdan had given me. In the bag was the fetus.

I stood on the road with the bag in my hand as Yousef moved our ambulance to make room for the others, and the attendants got the woman and her mother into an ambulance. I then handed the bag to Dr. Hamdan, who became aware of what I had been holding, and passed it into the ambulance as the vehicle was closing its doors. The three ambulances then left. All was as before, except for what had just happened, which meant that nothing was as before.

Dr. Hamdan broke the silence. "This is not unusual," he said. "It often happens in times of extreme stress."

Suddenly, another voice cried out from a window on the second story of the building. "Did the baby die?" it shouted in English. The face of a young soldier could barely be discerned in the shaded window against the bright sky.

"Yes, the baby died," replied Dr. Hamdan.

"Oh, the baby died, *boo-hoo.*" The soldier started to laugh.

"You think it's funny?" shouted the doctor. It was the only time I ever saw him show anger. Even then it was tempered by disgust, as if he was only mildly shocked.

"Oh, no! My friend here was just telling me a joke." The soldier laughed again. He was bored and wanted to talk. He asked Dr. Hamdan who he was, and what he was doing in this part of town. After a short conversation, he looked at me.

"Who are you?" he asked from the second-story window.

"I'm a peace observer and activist," I replied, looking up at him. "I'm with a group of international visitors, and we're riding with the ambulances."

"What for?"

"To observe. Lots of people want to know what's happening."

"Where are you from?"

"California."

"I have a cousin studying in California."

"Where?"

"I don't know exactly. In southern California somewhere."

"There are lots of Israelis in California. Lots of Palestinians too."

The conversation stalled. He wanted to keep it going. He decided to move to politics. You can always get mileage out of politics.

"Do you like Arafat?"

The street was deathly silent, no traffic, no pedestrians, not even radio. The whole community was listening. I didn't feel comfortable responding in that situation. "It doesn't matter whether I like him or not," I said. "He's not my president."

"Arafat is a murderer."

All right, I decided, let's test the water. "You're probably right," I shouted up to him. "He probably is a murderer. Is he the only murderer you know?" We both understood the reference.

"You don't understand," he said. "Nobody really likes Sharon, but he is the right man to deal with terrorism. That's why we came here, to stop terrorism. We don't want to be here."

"Who is 'we'?" I asked. "You're not speaking for the settlers, are you?"

"I hate the settlers," he answered.

"Well then, I have a suggestion for a better way to stop the terrorism."

"What's that?"

"Pack up the settlements and end the occupation. I think your terrorism problems will be pretty much solved."

Pause.

"My brother was killed as a soldier."

That hurt, and I wasn't afraid to say so. "That saddens me greatly," I said. "I'm very sorry you lost your brother. I didn't want your brother to die. I don't want you to die either. I also didn't want any of the people your brother may have killed to die, or the ones that you may have killed or are going to kill. I don't want anyone to die, and I don't think they have to."

"But why do the Palestinians have to send terrorists and suicide bombers to kill innocent women and children in our cities? What makes them do such horrible things?"

"I agree with you that these are horrible things. I don't agree with the killing of innocent civilians and even a lot of Palestinians don't agree with it. I am not Palestinian, but I will try to answer your question as best I can: You are a young Israeli man, but let's say you were a young Palestinian man instead. As a young Palestinian man, you have your whole life ahead of you. What would you like to do with it? Would you like to be a doctor, a teacher, an engineer?

"Let's say you want to be an engineer. To do that, you'll need a university degree. The problem is, although the university is only five miles away, you have to go through two checkpoints to get there. Sometimes they make you wait for hours. Sometimes they don't let you through at all. Sometimes the university is shut down and classes are cancelled.

"But let's suppose that you overcome all obstacles. You get your degree and become an engineer. Now what? The unemployment rate is between 50 and 80 percent. The economy is shrinking, not growing. Who can build anything? Where are you going to find work?

"Okay, maybe you don't have to be an engineer. How about being a farmer? Everyone has to eat. So you own a piece of land with olive or fruit trees on it. The problem is, like a lot of Palestinian land, your land is within sight of a settlement, and the settlers don't like Palestinians within viewing distance, so they shoot at you when you try to work your field. Then a bypass road is built for settlers only, so the only way to get to your land is to cross the road, which is forbidden. The army now considers your olive grove a security risk, so they come in one day and destroy all your 200-year-old trees with military bulldozers. So forget about being a farmer.

"Let's try something really simple this time. You can be a truck driver. You save and borrow, and you buy yourself a Mercedes truck like most of the ones around here. The problem is, in order to transport goods, you either have to wait for hours at every checkpoint or use the rough, illegal trails carved through fields to avoid the checkpoints. Either way, it takes you half a day to go 15 miles.

"Still, you persevere. You work 18 hours a day, take only two or three days off per month, and manage to make a decent living. Un-

fortunately, Israeli troops decide to occupy your town, and when they do, they run over nearly all the vehicles that are on the streets, as they have done here in Nablus. Your truck is gone. Now what?

"So you see, you really don't have a future. Your father is taken away for interrogation, and you have no idea where he is or when he is coming back. Your sister was an innocent bystander when a 'targeted killing' took her along with the intended victim. Your friends are beginning to disappear one at a time. You figure it's only a matter of time before they come for you. There must be someone you know who is on a wanted list, and then you will be called in for questioning. If you say anything you become a collaborator, and if you don't you get added to the list of troublemakers. So it's only a matter of time.

"You decide not to let it end that way. Your life is meaningless, but perhaps your death doesn't have to be. That's how you make up your mind to become a suicide bomber. It's really the only choice from your point of view. You strike a blow for your country and become a hero in your community. That's the logic of a suicide bomber."

Incredibly, the young soldier never interrupted me, although I expected him to at any time. I did have to pause once or twice near the end of my monologue, when he indicated that he had to step away from the window for a moment. After I finished, he stepped away again. When he came back, he said in a subdued voice, "My commander says I'm not supposed to talk to you." Then, in an even quieter voice, he asked, "What's your telephone number?"

I was stunned. I didn't know what to say or do. I had been unable to rent a cell phone since everything shut down as soon as I arrived. I explained that I could only give him my US phone number, to which he was agreeable. As I started to relay it to him by hand signals, however, his commander must have seen him writing it down and called him away again. When the soldier returned, he pulled the drapes so that only his face showed.

I had an inspiration. I pulled one of my business cards out of my pocket and showed it to him. He nodded vigorously, glanced away for a moment, and then stuck his hand through the drapes and pointed at the ground. I walked over to where he was pointing and dropped it on the ground where he could see. Then he closed the drapes completely.

As I returned to where Dr. Hamdan was standing, we looked at each other in disbelief. Was it really that easy to get through to someone? I forget what, if anything, we said to one another, but within a few minutes three soldiers came out of the building. One stood guard. The second hastily returned Yousef's identity card. The third went straight to the little white rectangle on the ground. He picked it up without even glancing at it, tucked it in his pocket, and headed inside.

"You'll let the other soldiers know that you've checked us," Dr. Hamdan called to the one who had delivered the ID, referring to the APCs at the other end of the street.

"Don't worry," the soldier called back. "They'll want to see your ID, but they won't keep you."

We stopped at the APC in front of the school, but the soldiers just waved us through. Our next stop was Dr. Hamdan's home, an oasis of calm and civility in the midst of catastrophe, much like the doctor himself. Yousef and I sat in the elegant Chippendale living room, upholstered in dark green velvet, while the doctor disappeared and returned with tea, which he served to us in a glass and silver set.

"Do you suppose he'll actually try to contact me?" I asked.

"I don't know," he replied. "It's not a situation to which I can easily speak from experience. But surprises seem to be the rule, and just when you think you've figured something out, something else makes you reconsider what you think you know. You need to tell this story because at least it lets us believe that there is reason for hope. Even if he never tries to reach you, it's a remarkable encounter."

"Like giving birth to something new?" I suggested.

"More like pregnancy than birth," he corrected. "Only the potential is there."

Juthith Means Corpse

Brian Wood

During the Spring 2002 incursions into Palestinian cities, the Israeli military met the most militant resistance in Jenin refugee camp. Fierce battles raged there from April 3 to 9, when 13 Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers were killed in an ambush. Fighting continued sporadically for two more days as Israeli forces bulldozed large swaths of the camp and maintained curfew and movement restrictions on journalists and medical aid workers. Aid agencies were not permitted entrance to Jenin until April 15. Brian Wood and Sofia Ahmed, volunteers with the International Solidarity Movement, evaded Israeli military checkpoints and were among the first internationals to enter the camp.

On April 15, 2002, when Sofia Ahmed and I snuck into Jenin refugee camp, several of the residents grabbed us and asked us to help them look for loved ones—people who were probably alive, but trapped under the rubble of their demolished homes.

As we approached the site where these homes once stood, the residents stopped and looked at us helplessly. "There are snipers all over; we can't go there or they will shoot us." Because the sun was setting and the light was limited, we chose to return, perhaps leaving the breathing to suffocate or the thirsty to dry up. At night, there is no telling what the soldiers will do.

When the Israeli military was physically in the camp, they shot at anyone trying to rescue the injured or recover corpses. From accounts of live persons exiting the rubble, one can only conclude that there were many others trapped alive who might have been saved.

Around 800 homes—30 percent of Jenin refugee camp—were completely destroyed in April 2002. Many more sustained structural damage and will need to be demolished. Even houses not directly hit had cracked walls from the mere sound of the shelling and Apache helicopter missiles exploding into neighboring homes. Survivors said these rocket attacks went on for eight days and eight nights.

Four thousand people were made homeless by this destruction; the majority were children. The residents of Jenin received no help from international relief agencies or even local organizations. Every-

thing they did to recover their dead, their memories, and their lives was carried out alone.

Initially, three bulldozers maneuvered from house to house, shifting large chunks of rooftops and entire house walls so that the people on the ground could continue digging with shovels and their hands. Three bulldozers—for 800 demolished homes. But after moving and reorganizing the endless piles of rubble, the bulldozer drivers became tired and largely disappeared from the scene.

The obvious question was, "Where were all the relief agencies?" It was evident that a massive disaster had struck the camp, equivalent to a horrible earthquake, only in this nightmarish disaster no international donations, not even skilled rescue personnel, could penetrate the barriers set up by the state of Israel. Even a UN fact-finding mission was denied entrance.

After the Israeli military moved from the center to the edges of the camp on April 18, the daily focus of the residents was to recover corpses—*juthith* in Arabic—under the rubble of the homes. In the first week alone, at least 20 corpses were recovered and buried. Over and over, the testimonies from the people in the camp confirmed the evidence: armored Israeli bulldozers leveled homes with living, dead, and injured people inside.

Jamal Fayed was a 38-year-old man who was physically and mentally handicapped. He was bound to a wheelchair, and was inside his home with his mother and sisters when the bulldozers came. The other men from the home had already been rounded up by the Israeli military, so the women were left to fend for themselves. They ran outside, hollering, crying, pleading with the metal beast and its operator to wait just a moment while they tried to move their handicapped son and brother from inside the house. It did not wait and the man's home became both his coffin and grave.

I will not forget the image of his short, plump, white-haired mother steadily digging through the ruins of her home with her hands, hoping to find her son. For over a week, every time I passed by the spot where her home once stood, she was bent over, her long face wrinkled but determined, digging, searching, hoping. The attempts to find his body under the concrete blocks and rebar revealed only his wheelchair. What happened to Jamal's body?

Shadi Nobani and three of his companions were killed when missiles from Apache helicopters struck another home. A fire was created on impact, and the entire roof and two walls crashed down on them.

We entered through the front door of what was left of the house, ascending a flight of 12 stairs. We turned right, then left, and there we found the black and charred corpse of Abed Ahmad Hussein. A colored blanket rested atop his corpse, barely recognizable as human except for the white toes.

When I came back to the site five days later, I learned that Shadi's body was still completely buried under the walls and roof, and I joined the retrieval effort. Like all of these recovery attempts, retrieving him was incredibly risky. Everyone was working under a partially collapsed and possibly shifting ceiling, digging frantically with small shovels and one pickax. We poured numerous bottles of perfume on our plastic surgery gloves and face masks, attempting to cover the pungent smell of death.

As the search came closer to Shadi's body, one of his brothers appeared. He watched for a moment, dug for another, then watched some more. The look on his face revealed that he was not only aware that his brother's life ended in a horrible manner but also that his brother's body was soon to be removed in parts: a burned, stinky mound of pieces small enough to fit in a sack.

Two gentlemen, both named Mohammed, dug ferociously at the rock and rubble hiding Shadi's body. One was using a pickax. The ax stuck into what appeared to be a piece of wood, which turned out to be a door. As he raised the ax for another swing, the door went up with it and there was Shadi's body.

The ferocious digging slowed to a quiet recovery. Both Mohammeds gathered rock and dirt by hand into a green plastic bucket, which was passed to various people and emptied away from the site. This process was repeated over and over and over, seemingly endlessly, due to a shifting ceiling and more dirt and rock falling on top of the area. After some time, the door was removed and the majority of Shadi's remains were visible. Calls for the press rang out, and photos were snapped. His body was burned and charred. The smell cannot be described. If you have smelled one-week-old death, you can neither describe nor forget it.

The lower half of Shadi came out over the course of a half-hour in pieces ranging from 18 inches to tiny. Every now and then a small pile of stuff would be held up for examination by untrained but empathetic eyes. The majority of Shadi's torso and skull was removed in one piece, after nearly an hour of cautious, loving work. It was a victory to remove Shadi's torso and skull together, rather than in pieces. The whole recovery process was a redemption of the life cycle of Shadi Nobani: recovering his remains, remembering his life, and preparing him for burial.

My friend Chivvis, the first international aid worker to enter the camp, discovered a foot. Based on its size, it must have belonged to a child of about six. No body of any six-year-old was ever found, so where did the foot come from? Was there a child walking around with only one foot? Chivvis also saw a torso of someone lying in the rubble. How was that identified and counted?

And what about the two unidentified and unasked-about corpses in the morgue of the Jenin Hospital? The head doctor, Mohammed Abu Ghali, suggested that neither had been inquired about because their whole families were probably killed or buried under the rubble.

People came out alive from under the rubble of their homes as late as Sunday, April 21, after spending weeks trapped and waiting for rescue. We can only speculate that more people would have survived had the Israeli military allowed people to search promptly for survivors. Since they did not, we must hold Israeli military responsible for unnecessary deaths and for the systematic denial of medical services to the injured.

Even after the Israelis moved to the edges of the camp, there were four or five explosions a day. Children amidst the rubble and people searching for their belongings tripped unexploded ordnance and booby traps in the camp. Usually the people involved were children and if they did not die, they lost part or all of a limb.

On Sunday, April 21, two boys were playing in an open field of tall grass when they stepped on what doctors at the Jenin Hospital identified as an unexploded Israeli tank shell. Sa'ed Sobhay Wahish, 12, was burned and cut all over the front of his legs, arms, and his face. His eyes were swollen shut for five days in the Jenin Hospital, and the heel of his left foot was blown off.

Sa'ed's father and brother tended to him day and night. The face of his father was always sunken and broken, but he slept at his son's bedside every night. When Sa'ed was moved to a hospital in Nazareth for further care—a city within Israel proper—Sa'ed's father was not allowed to follow. Sa'ed's friend 'Assad Ibrahim 'Irsal, 11, died from his injuries.

Sa'ed is the brother of Mohammed, and 'Assad was the cousin of Yousef. I met Yousef and Mohammed the first night I spent in the camp. I didn't have a mattress or blanket. Both of them shared a mattress barely big enough for one person, which they insisted I use. I refused for over 10 minutes, but their kindness finally won.

It is in the face of these and other difficulties that the people of the Jenin refugee camp—and all of Palestine—continue to strive for liberation from Israeli colonization. Despite the fact that they are forced to continue to recover their dead loved ones all over their land and from under their bulldozed homes, that their struggle for independence is labeled "terrorism," and that their colonizers receive billions of dollars annually from the world's only superpower, they collectively cling to an ever thriving love of freedom and independence, pushing them onward in hopes of fulfilling their dreams of national liberation. When this day arrives, the *juthith* will finally find their rest.

Searching For the Truth in Jenin

Kathy Kelly

One of the most serious human rights violations alleged against the Israeli military during the March–April 2002 invasion of West Bank cities was the use of Palestinian civilians as "human shields," forced to walk in front of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers to shield them from being shot at by Palestinian militants. Here Kathy Kelly, who volunteered with the International Solidarity Movement

(ISM) from April 12 to 17 in the Jenin area, documents firsthand accounts of this allegation and other atrocities.

When we first arrived at Taybeh, a village just a few kilometers west of Jenin, soldiers turned us back at the checkpoint. We quickly spotted a taxi driver, who drove us to a hilltop and then asked with a kindly smile, "Can you run?" We grabbed our gear, scrambled out of his car, and sprinted down the mountainside, across fields strewn with rocks. Thirty minutes later, relieved, exhausted, filthy, and grateful for cell phone contact, we were met by three residents of Taybeh at the foot of the mountainside.

Our hosts took us to a school in Taybeh, one of several centers set up in the villages surrounding Jenin. The centers were trying to house and feed Jenin's refugees. The men and boys we met in Taybeh had been captured by Israeli soldiers during the first days of the attack on Jenin, and were among the fortunate ones who had been released.

The dozen or so internationals who had been around Taybeh for several days assured us that it was impossible to enter the city of Jenin, much less get into Jenin refugee camp. Internationals told us of journalists who had been roughly turned back at the checkpoint or arrested. One reporter's passport had been ripped up. We decided to sit tight and take testimonies from the refugees.

Kamal Abu Mohammed gave us one such testimonial. On Saturday, April 6, at 5:30 am, the Israeli army broke his windows and entered his house. "I am peaceful," he said. "There are 13 people in my family." The soldiers phoned the helicopters, and the helicopters attacked his house from all four sides. Soldiers started shooting throughout the house; a fire started on the second floor.

After 10 minutes, soldiers allowed Kamal to take his children out of the house. But when he tried to step through the doorway, holding his two children, the soldiers started shooting again. "They ordered me to put my children on the ground. Next they made me take off my clothes. They handcuffed and blindfolded me." The soldiers tied Kamal to his 13-year-old son. They used the two Palestinians as human shields in order to enter further into Jenin refugee camp, stepping on bodies and corpses along the way.

After what seemed like two hours, Kamal, his son, and the soldiers went into a three-story house. Thirteen people were gathered in a dark room, among them Kamal's five brothers and three cousins. The soldiers told Kamal to sit down; he was still tied to his son. Outside, a resister shot at an Israeli soldier. In Hebrew, one soldier told another, "Kill one every five minutes and throw them outside in front of the fighters. Let's start with the boy."

The soldiers took Kamal's boy outside. Kamal heard shooting, and feared it was his child. But the soldiers didn't kill the boy, they just hit him.

From a second location later that evening, the soldiers again used Kamal and his son as human shields. The two were positioned at the front of the house, in front of each window, to protect the soldiers. They used Kamal's shoulder as a gun rest. (Kamal showed us his swollen shoulder.)

Kamal and his son stayed like that for an hour and a half. Afterward, they were retied by their hands and legs. The soldiers ordered them to sleep on broken glass. The son was weeping because his handcuffs were so tight. Kamal asked the soldiers to kill his son rather than keep him in that situation.

In the morning, all the people in the house were taken away—bound, handcuffed, in their underwear, and blindfolded. They were arranged like rows of schoolchildren, each with a soldier at his side. Soldiers used the rows of Palestinians as human shields.

The Palestinians were led far away from Jenin. They didn't know exactly where they ended up, because their eyes were covered. They slept on the ground until 11 that night, when soldiers put them in Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs). Kamal asked where his son was, but no one gave him an answer.

"We spent four days naked without food and water, in cold weather," Kamal told us. Soldiers wouldn't unbind them to relieve themselves, so they were forced to foul their bodies with their own urine and defecation.

After four days, the soldiers ordered them onto a bus. Soldiers entered the bus and threatened to kill all 38 people. From the conversations he overheard, Kamal wasn't sure if the group would be executed. Eventually, soldiers photographed them and brought them inside for a second interrogation.

At 9:30 pm, the Palestinians were again ordered to board the bus. This time they detained Kamal's younger brother. "They were negotiating our executions until 3 am," said Kamal. He heard one soldier say, "We have to kill them because if they go back to their camp, they will start shooting again." Another said, "They must die here."

The soldiers finally released the men, warning them not to go back to the camp. The Palestinians were not allowed to return there for three days, until after hearing that Israeli soldiers had withdrawn. Kamal walked to Rumani, where villagers gave him clothes, water, food, and shelter.

Kamal said that he saw the bodies of dead children in the street. Other children didn't know how to find their families. "My son," Kamal said, "is in bad shape psychologically; his nerves collapsed."

Kamal has been in Rumani for five days. He still knows nothing about the fate of his wife, his ten other children, or his three brothers. He knows that five of his cousins are dead.

We heard another testimonial from Rami Abu Ghalon, age 18. He was sitting in his home when an Apache helicopter attacked his house. His leg was injured by shrapnel. Rami and his family members sat in a corner of their house for almost an hour. "The Apache helicopter attacked us with another rocket. A woman was hiding with us. She lost her leg."

The young men of the house and the woman decided to surrender. They went out from the house and the soldiers ordered the group to take off their shirts and trousers. Hands tied, they were left standing there for an hour. Finally, they were told to walk toward the mosque, where they were met with tanks and loaded into APCs.

They were taken to Salem where they spent four days under the sun without water. "All the time, they tortured us and tormented us," said Rami. When it was Rami's turn to be interrogated by the Shin Bet, the military's intelligence unit, the soldiers hit him. "They ordered me to tell them who are the fighters inside the camp."

After recording more testimony from refugees in Taybeh and Rumani, we were eventually able to enter Jenin. On April 17, we entered the Jenin camp for a third time, accompanied by Thawra, a 23-year-old relief worker. She had slept very little in the past 10 days, working constantly to assist refugees from the camp. It was her first chance to find out what happened to her home. As we entered the

camp, we noticed some new spray-painted images. On the entrance gate to one building, in blue paint, was a stick-figure image of a little girl holding the Israeli flag. Next to it was a Star of David, with an exclamation point inside the star. The Israeli soldiers must have painted them the night before.

Most of the homes at the edge of the camp were somewhat intact, although doors, windows, and walls were badly damaged by tank shells and Apache bullets. Every home that we entered had been ransacked. Drawers, desks, and closets had been emptied. Refrigerators were turned over; light fixtures were pulled out of the walls. Women had told me stories, earlier that morning, about Israeli soldiers entering their homes with large dogs that sniffed at the children, while neighbors fled from explosions, snipers, fires, and nightmarish bulldozers.

We entered the demolished center of the camp, where the Israeli military had flattened about 200 housing units. Snipers began shooting at a small group of men who had come to pull bodies from the rubble. Covered with dust and sweat, and seemingly oblivious to the gunshots, the men, all residents from the camp, pursued their grim task. With pickaxes and shovels, they dug a mass grave. They pulled four bodies out of the rubble, including that of a small child. Little boys stood silently watching. One of the many soldiers who had stopped us when we walked into Jenin City had told us there were no children in the camp during the attack. That was a lie. But now I wonder if it may have become a strange truth. The concerned frowns on the little boys' faces belonged to hardened men. An older boy, perhaps 10 or 11 years old, helped carry his father's corpse to the mass grave.

Jeff, one of my companions, sat down on a rock and shook his head. "After September 11, I drove to New York City. All along the highway, carloads of volunteer firefighters sped past, coming from all over the country to help at Ground Zero. Here in Jenin, bullets paid for by US taxpayers are being fired on people simply trying to bury their dead."

Thawra led us to what was once her home. Her house was still standing, but every other house in the area was completely demolished. Outside Thawra's home, we met her neighbor, Mohammed Abdul Khalil. Mohammed is a 42-year-old mason, also trained as an

accountant. Having worked in Brazil and Jordan, he now speaks four languages. In Spanish, he told me that he built many kitchens in this area.

I asked Mohammed if he knew the man sorting through a huge mound of rubble next to where we stood. "He is my cousin. That was our home. He wants to find his passport or his children's documents." Mohammed's cousin then sat down on top of the heap that was once his home, holding his head in his hands.

"We are not animals," said Mohammed. "We are people with hearts and blood, just like you. I love my son. I want life for my family. What force do we have here? Is this a force?" He pointed to the wreckage all around us. "Do we have the atomic bomb? Do we have anthrax?"

As we walked away, Jeff pointed at a bone sticking out of the debris. We stepped gingerly around it. Thawra dipped down to pick up a veil lying on the ground, then paused a moment and placed it over the bone.

Tales of Terror in Palestine
Reliving the Events of April 2002

Ida Audeh

Acting as a witness during times of increased Israeli military violence is an important part of the work internationals carry out in the Occupied Territories. In the absence of media due to Israeli closures, internationals provide the only independent documentation of Israeli atrocities. As the Israeli military closed its most violent phase of the Spring 2002 reoccupation of Palestinian cities, Ida Audeh visited Ramallah and its twin city of al-Bireh, near Jerusalem, as well as Nablus and Jenin in the northern West Bank.

My reasons for going to Palestine in May 2002 were not typical of other internationals who went in the months that preceded and followed Israel's assault on the Palestinians. My mother lives in al-Bireh, and the city had been under siege for more than a month. I was unable to talk to her because the phone lines in her area were cut. I needed to see her, to be with her for a while.

I also wanted to document what it was like for ordinary people to live through this sustained assault, and so I arranged with the *Journal of Palestine Studies* to do interviews with survivors in Jenin refugee camp, Nablus, and Bethlehem.

I arrived in al-Bireh on May 5, just days after the 34-day Israeli siege of Ramallah and al-Bireh ended. Reconstruction had begun almost immediately; many people remarked that the municipality had clean-up crews on the streets at 1 am, as soon as the Israeli military withdrew. The doors of many homes had been dynamited open; streets, sidewalks, and brick walls between homes had been destroyed by tanks; so, too, had many commercial buildings in Ramallah. And everywhere were the piles of dirt and rocks that had been used as road barriers by the Israeli military or cars flattened by Israeli tanks.

During the two weeks I spent with my mother, a steady stream of relatives, neighbors, and friends came to call. People visited us because my mother was on the front line, as it were; they also wanted, I think, to commiserate with others, to compare who had endured the most hardships, to reassure themselves that they had all survived the calamity, and to assess the damage—psychic as well as physical and material—inflicted on them.

What is it like to be forced to remain in your home for weeks on end, to be able to leave home only for a couple hours every several days? For over a month, my mother had no phone, and for 18 days, no electricity and scant water. What is it like to be in the dark, with no news, and to hear shelling around you?

One business owner in Ramallah described it to me like this: "I walked down the street when the curfew was lifted for the first time after almost a week, and when I looked at people's faces, I thought that they looked as though they had just risen from the grave."

My mother said:

> I knew they would come to search my home because I saw the soldiers enter Abu Anis's house, and from there they went to Im Omar's house. They entered her house through the window. Later, someone asked her why she hadn't opened the door rather than have them break her window. She said she was never given the chance; she had her key in her hand, but soldiers in her house prevented her from getting up to open the door. They must have wanted to terrorize her.

Jenin Refugee Camp

After being home for four days, I made plans to go to Jenin refugee camp. The camp, which had been home to about 13,600 residents, had been invaded at least twice before the final assault on April 3, and the residents there saw some of the fiercest fighting that took place during the entire siege; by the end, about 56 Palestinians were known to be dead and 4,000 were homeless. An accurate count is unavailable because missing people might be either refugees or dead and earthmoving equipment was not allowed into the camp.

When we got to Jenin, we explained to our contacts from the medical relief committees that I wanted to do interviews with survivors of the invasion and that my friend Marilyn wanted to volunteer her nursing skills. They introduced us to Nawal, an 18-year-old camp resident, and she took us straight to her mother's house, the second story of which had been destroyed by a rocket.

I met Sitt Mariam more than a month after the events she described to me, but her continuing trauma was evident. She recounted disjointedly the search for her son, Mahmoud, who was injured during the third assault on the camp and was evacuated to various hospitals before finally being transferred for more specialized care in Amman. So focused was she on describing her concern for her son that it was not until we finished the interview and she got up that I noticed her limping. When I asked, she explained that she was hit in the leg by shrapnel.

> When the bombing started, we were asleep. I don't remember the date. The bombs fell on the trees and the garden. There was shouting: "Get out, get out." We couldn't. We moved from room to room. There were my son's nine children, all of them young, and

> my four daughters. For six days, there was shelling all around us. We couldn't leave. If we did, they would shoot at us. The soldiers passed right behind our house. At about 8 am, six or seven soldiers came to my house. I don't know what they did when they entered my house; fear overtook me. They went to my son's house and started firing. I thought they would tear down the door. I peed in my pants and my throat was dry. I had no idea what to do. I was afraid that all my children were dead and that only I remained.

The stories got worse and worse. Nawal took us to meet the father and stepmother of Jamal al-Sabbagh, a diabetic man who was taken from his home, executed for no apparent reason and then, incredibly, run over by a tank. The father began to tell the story, but he choked up when he recounted his son's intolerance for the cold (the Israeli soldiers were stripping the men they lined up in the streets) and was unable to continue. His wife, dry-eyed, resumed the story.

> After they killed him, they ran over him with a tank. What was left of him wasn't more than two kilograms. His coffin was small. Our boy is gone and our house is gone. They started to bulldoze it while we were still in it. Jamal was not even on a wanted list. He never was. He was sick, a diabetic. He was completely dependent on insulin.

We met with Ali Abu Sirriya and Khalid Abu Eita, who had been used as human shields. They were placed first in line when soldiers moved through the camp, in formation, carrying out their military operation. Abu Sirriya spent three days with the soldiers before he was shot by another group of soldiers who did not know he was being used by an army unit. It took him six days to make his way to the hospital, because ambulances weren't allowed into the camp. Using people as human shields and interfering with medical personnel and ambulances are expressly forbidden under the Geneva Conventions, but then so are so many other practices of the Israeli army—for example, bulldozing homes over the heads of their inhabitants.

Mahmoud Rashid Fayid described for me how he and others were prevented from rescuing a handicapped man trapped inside a home targeted for bulldozing. People saw the handicapped man scooped up with the masonry in the jaws of the bulldozer. Many people commented on this story, probably because it involved a handi-

capped person who never really had even a remote chance of protecting himself. To add to the poignancy of his fate, he had never spoken a day in his life, I was told, but when the bulldozer came for him, eyewitnesses who could not save him (because he was trapped by masonry) were nevertheless close enough to hear him call out for God three times.

I don't think I can ever forget Fathi Shalabi, who described how his 36-year-old son, Waddah, and their neighbor, Abdul Karim, were shot dead. Somehow Fathi was not shot, but he feigned death and lay beside them to survive; his clothes soaked up their blood. His dead son and neighbor lay outside in an alley for eight days before it was safe to remove and bury the corpses. I noticed that when he gave his son's age, he spoke in the present tense, as though time had not stopped for him.

Maybe it was fitting that I met Hind 'Oweiss as I was leaving the camp. She was sitting on the rubble of what had been her home, right across from where the worst damage occurred in the camp. I had read accounts from internationals describing the camp's ground zero, and so I thought I knew what to expect. But really, nothing prepares you for the mountains of rubble. You look at it and your heart stops for a second. You know you are staring at a mass grave. And then the rage hits—rage at the lives snuffed out, at the savagery of the attack against people who never really stood a chance.

Hind was furious too. She told me about the events she witnessed in the first half of April, both of us staring at the mountain of rubble. She was forced from her home by soldiers at gunpoint and saw her neighbors pulled from their homes and executed:

> So many men they couldn't be counted. They undressed them in the cold and then killed them. I saw this with my own eyes. When they killed and arrested all the men they wanted, they burned our house, they dynamited it, and then they bulldozed it.
>
> They bulldozed, and for sure they took bodies away, because there are people that no one knows where they are. There are missing people and no one knows whether they are martyrs or prisoners. People haven't yet had a chance to get back to their homes or account for family members. We are still dispersed. When people get back to their homes, they will eventually learn whether missing

people have been injured or imprisoned or killed and buried in the dirt. The butchery we saw here, your pen is incapable of recording.

They used tanks, they used planes, they used burning bombs, they used bulldozers, they used rockets, they used ammunition called "inergia," a type of firebomb. They used these weapons here. There is another kind of bomb they used here; I don't know the name of it, but it emits different colors. They used Apache and Cobra helicopters and Merkava tanks. The Apache helicopters shoot more when they are on the move. They used weapons against us that are internationally banned. They acted as though they were fighting a superpower.

We are steadfast on our land, and Jenin is going to be restored to what it was and to even better than it was. And its heroes will remain. I don't see this as ruin; this is our victory over Sharon.

I quote her at length because I think her words capture the sentiments of many and place the attack against the camp in context. In my mind, her indictment remains the most accurate: "What happened here defies comprehension. It is a historic crime."

When I listen to the tapes and read the transcripts, I am most struck by the generosity of spirit that allowed the people I interviewed to even agree to be interviewed. I was meeting them barely a month after the horrible events they recounted for me. Everyone I spoke with had either lost a family member or neighbor, and many had seen it happen; many of them assumed that they would not survive the cataclysmic events that destroyed the camp. And yet there they were, in house after house, greeting us and offering Pepsi and tea, willing to revisit yet again what must have been one of the most—if not the most—traumatic events of their lives.

On the day I returned to Ramallah from Jenin, we had to walk more than a mile in a thorn-filled field—a precaution that was necessary to get us off the road because the settlers were out and they were known to shoot pedestrians. The viciousness of the settlers really can't be exaggerated. My mother told me about the owner of an olive tree orchard who was taking his freshly pressed olive oil to the market. The settlers stopped him on the way and gave him a choice: he could spill his oil by the side of the road or be shot dead. Surely it was his rage at being forced to spill his family's income for a year that triggered his heart attack a few days later.

Nablus

Ammar Hindiyya told me in a telephone interview how the Israeli military destroyed his six-story building, which housed 22 commercial businesses and 15 apartments. He put everything he had into this building. When we spoke, he said he had pitched a tent in the wreckage. There was no apparent reason for the demolition. According to Hindiyya, no one in the building was wanted or pursued, and the building itself was far from where the fighting was taking place.

Naseer Arafat described leaving his home one day when the curfew was lifted and finding that a neighbor's home had been reduced to rubble. Other neighbors gathered, and an impromptu search for survivors was launched. As Naseer put it:

> The neighbors and people present started to dig through the rubble. Rescue squads were contacted. Meanwhile, we determined from arriving relatives and neighbors that 10 people lived in the house, and that all were missing. We also made a sketch of the house. We also learned that the demolition of the house was a surprise, all the neighbors were able to flee except the al-Shuabis family. Three neighboring houses were also partially or totally demolished.
>
> The rescue teams directed the digging operation. A few hours later and two meters into the rubble, we reached the ceiling of one of the rooms where, to our surprise, we found Abu Talal and his wife, Shamsa, in a hysterical state, but alive. They managed to survive in a small space without food, water, or fresh air for five days.
>
> By now it was nightfall, and the curfew was reimposed, and the 100 or so people present and helping with the rescue were ordered by the Israeli army to leave. But the rescue squad was allowed to continue the search, and I was permitted to remain.
>
> Hoping to find more survivors, we cautiously proceeded to dig until we reached two rooms that were mostly filled with rubble. After 10–12 hours of digging, we found the first body, which belonged to the wife of Samir—she was nine-months pregnant. In her embrace, we found her two children and to her side her father-in-law, her third son, and two sisters-in-law. All seven of them were gathered under an archway in front of the door through which they were hoping to exit in their flight from the Israeli bulldozer. But they couldn't open the door and were buried alive. It

was clear from Abir's [Samir's sister] corpse that she did not die right away and tried to use her mobile phone to call for help.

Immediately after the Israelis exited, the old town was a disaster area. The cobblestone streets and sidewalks were severely damaged by tank tracks or bulldozers. Drinking water and sewage were mixed on the surface of the streets. There were corpses, especially under the wreckage. People were at a loss. They were all in the streets searching for things, but they didn't know where to find food or medicine or doctors.

There were people going through the rubble trying to salvage some of their belongings. A horrible stench permeated the air, along with a state of confusion.

He ended with this observation: "A truly sad scene was that of women carrying their belongings but not knowing where to go."

Taking Leave

When I think about what we have gone through and what we can expect in the future, there is little reason for optimism. It is difficult to think of a more crushing combination of forces to contend with: Israel, a regional superpower, determined to maintain its colonialist hold on the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem, and indifferent to international law and voices that have taken it to task for its apartheid regime; the United States, the sole remaining global superpower, which has placed its tremendous military, financial, and political capital at the disposal of Israel, right or wrong; and the current Palestinian leadership, which is no match for Israel and its benefactor. The Palestinian cause is also threatened by a powerful public relations campaign conducted on behalf of Israel that tries to falsely subsume Israel's suppression of the anti–occupation movement under the "war on terrorism."

A few things sustain me, however. I know that our cause is just, that colonialism is a dead philosophy that cannot be maintained indefinitely. I am also sustained by my belief in the resilience of the Palestinian people and by the growing number of international activists, including Israelis, who refuse to give up the fight for an honorable cause.

Inside the Church of the Nativity

Kristen Schurr

Bethlehem is a Palestinian city six miles south of Jerusalem. The Church of the Nativity is located in the Old City section on a wide plaza called Manger Square. When Israeli tanks and troops stormed into Bethlehem during the March 2002 incursions, hundreds of Palestinians fled into the Church of the Nativity, a historic place of shelter in troubled times.

"Now we know that not everyone has forgotten the Palestinian people," I was told amid cheers and welcomes after sliding through the four-foot-high Door of Humility into Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. Twenty-two international activists and I had just outrun the Israeli soldiers in Manger Square who had been assaulting the church for a month. Ten of us stayed inside the church, while the rest were able to hand over their supplies of rice, sugar, lentils, tea, and salt before being dragged off by Israeli soldiers. A corporate media photographer followed us in. One of us had a video camera. I had a mini-disc recorder.

One hundred and fifty Palestinians had lived inside the church without proper water, food, electricity, or medical supplies for 29 days. The number was originally closer to 300 when Israeli tanks, Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), and soldiers first spread their attack of the Bethlehem area into Manger Square and the Old City. The number dropped throughout the 39-day siege as nine were killed and many injured were snuck out.

The Israeli government and military were reporting that the Palestinians had taken the priests inside the Church of the Nativity hostage. Inside the church, however, there were clearly no hostages. As a skinny man with deep circles under his eyes told me:

> There are many people injured or sick—today about four sick, one diabetic and another by nerves. We can't get them out of the church—only by the help of the fathers. The fathers carry them and open the door and get them out to the hospitals. We don't do anything without the fathers. They give us support and they stand beside us, helping us with everything. But they told us there is nothing to offer us; there is no food even for them.

Before my arrival, a man had been shot and killed by an Israeli sniper on the second-floor courtyard balcony. Israeli soldiers had snuck in, shooting and starting fires. One of the Palestinian police told me:

> The Israelis occupied the second floor here. They went around and opened fire on the church from each side. You can see the damaged rooms. This happened in the beginning, in the first few days we were here. The Israeli soldiers climbed the wall and entered from the window. They started shooting. There were blankets and many wooden things here, and the fire burned everything. After that they killed one of the Palestinian police here. And we try to put down the fire with some water from the well. Under shooting we did that. And in the end, we were able to calm down the fire.

The Israeli military invasion had driven many resisters—and grocery shoppers—to seek refuge in the church, built on the site where Christian tradition suggests Jesus was born. One man in the church, who on April 2, 2002, was on an errand from one of Bethlehem's refugee camps, said:

> I was in the street with my car. I went to buy something in Bethlehem in the Old City, and they [the Israeli military] were invading Bethlehem we knew, but we thought, they won't be entering all of the Old City, not for two days or three days. But the invasion, it was very hard; they are shooting everywhere, the mosque and the church and everywhere. I put my car in the parking lot and I see the people they are coming inside here in the church, and I go into this church.

When I first arrived in the church, there were bloody clothes with bullet holes lying around. A board soaked in blood was sitting on the floor in the middle of the basilica, lit by a late-afternoon, hazy sun. One man told me:

> Today they shoot two persons. One died and another injured. We tried to save them, but the Israelis continued shooting and we weren't able to save them, so one died and the other is terminal. We transferred him to the hospital. We asked the fathers to call to the Israeli side and tell them we want to help the injured persons on the step here. Even then they shoot at them. And as you see, this is our life here—between the Israeli lies and the American

> green light. This is our life here. And we hope a peaceful end for this problem. We didn't do anything, as you know. We were forced to come here [inside the Church] because we think this is the safest place in the world. But we're still here; we need help from the world.

International law, including the Geneva Convention, which bars armies from using starvation and prevention of medical attention as weapons of war, was essentially useless. Inside the church, many Palestinians were too ill from starvation and seizures, or too injured by Israeli bullets, to ever leave their makeshift bed of a blanket on the floor. Leaving the church would mean interrogation and arrest, probably torture, and possibly death.

Strands of smoke from candles—burned for light and heat—hung in the basilica. The Israeli military had cut the electricity at the beginning of their siege. A fresco toward the ceiling was damaged by Israeli sniper fire, as were windows, walls, and doors throughout the church compound and courtyards. The priests showed me their quarters: blown-out windows and bullets had been lodged in the walls. Near the priest's quarters I saw a statue of Mary, her eye shot out by a sniper.

The Israeli assault had been constant. Loud noises—recordings of grinding music and barking dogs—as well as concussion grenades, flares, and smoke were used by the Israeli military to rattle the Palestinians during the night. This ceased once we arrived. A man told me that the Israeli military wanted to appear "polite" to us.

It was precisely this sort of Israeli government duplicity that allowed the internationals passage through Manger Square and into the church, after several previous attempts. When the government permitted the media to conduct broadcasts from Manger Square one day in early May, reporters interviewed a soldier standing next to one of the many Israeli tanks clogging the square. The internationals came from three different directions and ran past the interview. Certainly it would have played poorly in the international press if the Israeli soldiers had shot internationals, carrying rice into a church, in the back.

Palestinians in the church were more concerned with my safety than with their own. So I was given the sweet spot to sleep, safe from Israeli sniper fire, tucked down inside the grotto. In the early morn-

ings, the priests sang low hymns and took communion amid golden red candlelight flickering on the ancient walls.

After the first couple of nights, I moved up the steps to where many of those who ended up on Israel's de facto "most wanted" list slept. Some were placed on the list because they dared to resist the illegal military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. One man found himself on the list because a friend of his was on it.

The list changed frequently. One man was added to the list only after he had beed shot dead in the church by an IDF sniper.

He had been a Palestinian police officer and had given me his keffiyeh to wear when I looked cold one evening. The next morning, he shaved his month-old beard and was smiling after talking to his wife and children via cell phone. He hoped to see them soon, anticipating a deal would be struck between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. That same morning, an Israeli sniper shot him as he was hanging up his wash. He bled to death within an hour. In an effort to legitimize the murder, the Israelis reported that he was armed and shooting at them. They added him to their list of the 13 most wanted.

By the end of the 39-day siege, nine Palestinians had been shot and killed inside the church. The Israeli soldiers shot at the building day and night. The Palestinians told me they only fired back when they needed to cover someone trying to help an injured person. A man whose cousin had been recently killed explained to me:

> We respect the holy place here. This is our church. This is our homeland. We will defend it, but we can't shoot from it. Never. We can't because it is a holy place. It is a place of prayer, not for war or for shooting. But the Israelis don't understand this meaning. Every night they're shooting toward the church. But we who are here, we all discussed not to shoot from the church. All the policemen agree. It is a most holy place. We understand the meaning of the Nativity Church. But the Israeli government must learn the meaning of the Nativity Church.

Corporate media also reported that Palestinians started a room on fire in the Orthodox section. "Why would we burn it when this is where we sleep? Who would make fire on himself?" asked one man.

Three Palestinians showed me around the burned-out Orthodox section. Part of a priest's quarters was completely black. "The fire was in two rooms. The Israelis were shooting many, many times at this room. They were throwing energy and sound bombs."

An Orthodox priest described the Israeli attacks as "wicked." He told me that the Israeli soldiers warned him against walking next to any Palestinians inside the church. The soldiers said they might "accidentally" shoot him while aiming for a Palestinian.

Hours before we had arrived, 40 of the starving Palestinians had been on the verge of giving themselves up. The food we had managed to bring in made only two small meals and several rounds of tea with sugar for everyone. In our previous month's attempts to bring food into the church, the Israeli soldiers always assured us that they were giving the Palestinians food while shoving us backward. It was always a lie. One man inside the church complained:

> They keep saying this day and this night, "We will give you food, we will bring you food" and this is only a promise. We didn't see anything. There is no food come here into the church. Today they promise us to bring us food with the Palestinian negotiating committee members when they enter, but we didn't see anything, only the food which you bring us yesterday. Even for the fathers, there is no food here.

At the beginning of the siege, after discovering that a 74-year-old Palestinian woman had snuck food through the south door, Israeli soldiers trashed her home and broke her hand. They blockaded that door for weeks. But the days when food arrived were celebrations. "It's sweeter when it's shared," someone said about the cup of tea passed around between 10 people.

For a few hours each morning, the Palestinians would wash clothes in the courtyard. One man slowly combed his beard every morning, after rolling up his pants and washing his feet. People prepared to leave daily, to move on. At the same time, they had given up caring what happened to them.

The stone courtyard on the other side of the basilica was open to the sun and fresh air, but it was not safe. Israeli bombs exploded just over the wall, and most days we could hear tanks grinding past, encir-

cling the church. A Palestinian man guarded the door every night, slumped in a chair with his legs kicked up.

It began to seem like many of the men had fallen prey to the psychological warfare employed by the Israeli military. Several of the trapped Palestinians told me they would rather be dead than inside the hell that the church became: living through dashed hope in the empty pit of a stomach.

Before the siege ended, several Palestinian women from Bethlehem were able to sneak food in again, this time delivering enough for a week. Palestinians were taking the food through a slot in the south entrance door and tossing it assembly line fashion from one person to the next into a storage room. Everyone was running to see; people were jumping up and down. One man, who was always depressed, later told me that his mother was among the women who had brought the food. Outside, Israeli soldiers began bombarding the door, throwing concussion grenades and shooting.

The deal that ended the siege was another in a list of horrific tragedies leading further toward ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people: exile. There were no real negotiations. Negotiations can only occur between equals. One Bethlehem man told me on the last night, as he burned candles in a can for heat, that they had to take the deal. "If they didn't," he said, "the Israeli military would never leave Bethlehem, curfew would never be lifted, and our families and town would be strangled."

I negotiated for the internationals inside the church, spending hours on the cell phone with the Palestinian Authority, our lawyer, our mediator on the outside, the priests, the Franciscan's lawyer, and through them, the Israeli government. Regardless of repeated assurances to the contrary, the Israeli military stormed the church. We had been told to stay put no matter what, to wait until the Israeli military pulls out of Bethlehem, for our own safety. More important, we were implored to stay by the Palestinians. They said, "Please wait for us to go first," and so we did. Still, the priests, the Franciscan's lawyer, and the Israeli military attempted to force us out.

When the last moment finally came, many weren't ready for it. After all that time, it came too fast. Most of them didn't have time to clean up their beds or dishes. People were sobbing, hugging one another goodbye, looking ashen and destitute in the last hours. The Pal-

estinians were leaving one at a time, first the 13 most wanted, then the 26 destined for Gaza, and then the remaining.

A bit of gray light shone through the Door of Humility, open to the Israeli military maze imposed on Manger Square. A man who hadn't slept in three days slumped and cried against a column in the basilica, awaiting his turn. He said, "The Israelis broke something unbreakable." His best friends, "closer than brothers," were torn from him. One was exiled to Cyprus, the other to Gaza, and he was to be interrogated before his release in Bethlehem. He wiped his tears and told me, "The Israelis kill everything that is alive."

The 13 Palestinians exiled to Cyprus and beyond are now under house arrest throughout Europe. The 26 Palestinians sent to Gaza are in effective exile. No Palestinian can travel between the West Bank and Gaza. One of the 26, a man who lived in Bethlehem, could not bear to tell his family when he found out that he was to be sent there. He cried on his blanket the night that he finally called his wife and children to say goodbye. "They are all sobbing, but what can we do? This is the life." His wife was about to have a baby.

The remaining Palestinians were sent to an Israeli military camp to be interrogated before they would be released to return home, if their homes still stood. After the Palestinians agreed to an Israeli request for a list of those inside the church, soldiers attacked many of their houses and family members. I was told of fathers and brothers being beaten. One man's house was bulldozed and flattened; another's was blown up.

Hours later, the internationals were dragged out by Israeli soldiers. They searched us and stole our film, videos, audio recordings, and cell phones—anything that could be used as proof of their heinous acts. This is a common practice among Israeli soldiers, prison guards, and airport security. But they did not find the three mini-discs full of interviews and sounds from inside the church hidden in the lining of my book bag, nor did they find one roll of film I wrapped up in used Kleenex. Instead, they ripped the roll of film from my camera and dumped me in prison.

First, I was put in a jail in the illegal Israeli settlement Maale Aduumin—stolen land that until 1996 was home to hundreds of Palestinians, who were forced to move two miles away to a garbage dump. Next, I was taken in shackles to Ramle Prison near Tel Aviv,

where Palestinian political prisoners, Israeli criminals, and former Soviet bloc sex workers now live. After a hunger strike and repeated strip searches, without access to phones, an Israeli judge accused me of conspiring with the enemy and signed my deportation order. On the advice of my lawyer, I told the Israeli judge and guards that I objected to the way I was being forcibly removed from the country, but if I were put on a plane, I would not physically resist.

The week spent inside the barbed wire of the prison, a world away from Palestine, was made far worse knowing that I was being well treated compared to the torture, humiliation, and beatings that the Israeli government inflicts on Palestinians. I also knew that eventually I would be allowed to leave the prison. But nowhere is safe for Palestinians, not even inside an ancient church in their town of Bethlehem.

Harvesting Olives in Yasuf

John Petrovato

As part of a Palestinian campaign to harvest olives in the Fall of 2002, hundreds of internationals arrived in the rural West Bank to accompany farmers to their neglected fields. Together, they defied settlers and military curfews to harvest the olive crop—the lifeblood of Palestine's rural economy and symbol of traditional Palestinian life.

At six in the morning, a group of Palestinians from the village of Yasuf, joined by 13 internationals from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), left to harvest olives in the orchards near Tapuac, an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. As we walked, we heard gunshots in the distance. We soon ran into Palestinian families retreating to the village—Israeli settlers had been firing at them from a nearby hilltop, they warned us.

Leaving the Palestinians behind, the internationals moved toward the sound of the gunshots. We saw a handful of settlers stand-

ing above us on a hill, heavily armed with automatic weapons. Unfazed by our presence, they continued shooting over the heads of the Palestinians harvesting in the fields.

"We are here in peace," we called to them, cautiously approaching.

"We are here in peace, too!" the settlers retorted, throwing large stones at us. In no time, they began firing shots over our heads as well.

When the Israeli military arrived, the soldiers tried to clear the area by declaring it a "closed military zone."

"But this is our land! We have the right and *need* to harvest our olives," the Palestinian villagers yelled to the soldiers. The soldiers responded by pushing and shoving the Palestinians out of the orchard. The internationals attempted to negotiate with the soldiers, but we were told to vacate the land, or risk arrest and possibly deportation.

One of the villagers had an idea: the internationals should sit on the ground and refuse to leave the area. We sat down, and the soldiers eventually tired of us and left. We then continued assisting families who were harvesting olives in fields farther away, safe from harassment.

That evening, we were invited to a large meeting with the Yasuf villagers, facilitated by the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS). We met with about 35 citizens and representatives of the community (including members of the peasants' union and village council) in a home on the village's northern fringe. Diverse villagers—young, old, university-educated, uneducated, middle-class, poor, those dressed traditionally, or in modern attire—all expressed the same deep frustration and anguish about their daily lives. They shared stories of the difficulties of travel since the Israeli military put up roadblocks on both sides of the village, and the economic hardships that the travel limitations had created. Yet the question foremost in all of our minds was *how* to work safely in the fields, especially those fields within sight of Israeli settlements.

The meeting began with introductions, followed by a recounting of the day's activities and aggravations. I was impressed by the level of honesty in the room. The Palestinians clearly articulated their continuing frustration at being prevented from harvesting their fields as well as the agony of economic loss and the symbolic violation of olive

harvesting, an important community tradition. One by one, villagers provided detailed accounts of the personal attacks inflicted on them by settlers and how the soldiers did nothing to prevent the attacks from happening. The biggest concern was that the settlers were increasingly encroaching on their land. Israeli settlers had been justifying land annexation by declaring that the Palestinians "were no longer using the land," denying the reality that Palestinian landowners were being violently chased from their fields at settler gunpoint.

Through hearing the villagers' impassioned concerns, it became apparent that Yasuf was at a historic juncture. If something didn't quickly change, the village of Yasuf, which has existed for over 1,000 years, was at risk of being expropriated out of existence.

Members of IWPS asked the villagers what they would like to see result from the internationals' presence. We assured them that international observers would not engage in any activities disapproved of by the villagers. They immediately became visibly and vocally concerned about our safety. After some discussion, the internationals agreed that we would be willing to risk injury or arrest. This commitment both amazed and inspired the villagers.

"We won't let you do this alone," they responded.

After a 30-minute discussion, the villagers decided on an action. They would gather as many people from the village as possible and go together to a certain olive field that hadn't been harvested in a couple of years (and was thus at risk of being annexed by the settlement). Hopefully, the sizable number of Palestinians, combined with an international presence, would discourage settler attacks. If the settlers attacked, however, or the soldiers tried to declare the land a "closed military zone," all the villagers in the field were to meet in one place and sit quietly. The internationals would surround the perimeter of the group, and we would all resist leaving the area in an act of nonviolent civil disobedience.

We began to devise the details of the plan. Ideas were traded back and forth between Palestinians and internationals. And though it appeared that many of the individuals at the meeting were inexperienced in organizing such a large nonviolent action, their commitment and skill was impressive. Some members of the village worried about their and the group's ability to stay nonviolent if attacked, yet in the end, it was unanimously agreed that the action would remain

nonviolent. The villagers were aware that they were running a great risk to themselves and their families, but they also believed the chances of success would be greater due to the presence of international human rights workers.

The meeting ended around 10 pm, but people lingered outside for another hour or so, talking excitedly about Thursday's planned action. An announcement was made from the loudspeakers of the mosque, in order to insure that everyone in the village was informed.

The next morning, 400 Palestinians from the village and 16 internationals gathered with 8 Israeli peace activists and a number of foreign journalists. The Israelis would be particularly helpful for negotiating in Hebrew with the settlers. It was hoped that such a large number of villagers would be able to carry out major harvesting work that day while being shielded from the settlers by the internationals and the Israeli peace activists.

There was enormous anticipation in the air, as it had been a long time since the villagers had been able to visit these particular fields. Trudging down the slopes into the fields, the villagers separated into their family plots. Though we had planned to stay together for safety reasons, the Palestinians must have felt, understandably, that this might be their last chance to visit their land.

We soon encountered a band of 16 armed settlers, and *no* sign of soldiers or police officers. The Israeli military and the local Israeli civil administration had previously made promises to the Palestinian district coordinator that settler violence would not be tolerated. These assurances now appeared to have been a hoax. The Palestinians, however, had learned from experience not to trust promises from the military. We quickly contacted the American Consulate in Jerusalem, but it took almost an hour before they said, "they had made calls to Israeli officials in the area." Presumably they made such calls.

Meanwhile, the settlers were firing shots from different locations. We could see them shooting and running toward the Palestinians. They looked like an army, heavily armed with machineguns, pistols, and large knives, and carrying walkie-talkies. The internationals and Israeli peace activists descended quickly onto the scene. We broke into small teams to follow the settlers as they ran around the orchard. The settlers fired shots over our heads, pointed their guns at

villagers and internationals, and hurled large pieces of rock. They were screaming at and pushing the Palestinians. They were pointing their guns at the internationals, shouting threats like "I will kill you!" They seemed most angry at the Israeli activists.

The teams (usually one international and one Israeli peace activist) were trying to shadow the settlers, following them wherever they went. In some cases, the settlers simply outnumbered us, but we did successfully divert their attention, thereby shielding the Palestinians and somewhat defusing the situation.

While all of this was happening, we noticed two Israeli soldiers standing some distance away, watching but doing nothing. Three soldiers finally arrived on the scene—a grossly inadequate number—and told the internationals to leave. We reminded the soldiers that none of us were armed and that we were there to harvest olives.

The settlers continued to shout obscenities and foul language at us such as "Bitch!" "Faggot!" and "Fuck you! Fuck your country!"

"You came with the murderous Arabs to our settlement to kill us," exclaimed one.

"Don't touch me, don't touch my gun. If you do, I'll kill you. Come on, touch my gun, touch my gun," another settler taunted us.

One of the internationals finally said to the settlers, "The whole world is watching you."

The reply from a settler: "The whole world hates us because they are anti-Semites, and these Jews that are with you—they are anti-Semites!"

About 15 minutes later, a dozen more soldiers arrived. Some shook hands with settlers, hugged them, or gave high fives. When the settlers started firing their guns, the soldiers said, not seriously, "Hey, hey, you can't do that."

At one point, a settler was aiming his gun at a crowd of Palestinians. "Why don't you arrest *him*?" I shouted to one of the soldiers.

"He is allowed to aim his gun at the Palestinians, as long as he does not shoot them," the soldier asserted.

So an elderly Israeli peace activist moved in front of the settler's gun. Every time the settler pointed his gun at someone, this 70-year-old man would block it, the barrel pointed at his chest. It was remarkable to see the Israeli military stand around and watch the violence as though they were spectators. When they finally realized that

the media was present and documenting the event, they told both the Palestinians and settlers to leave the area.

But the villagers were prepared with their civil disobedience plan. They gathered in an area between the fields and silently sat down. The message of their action was clear: "We are absolutely in control and unafraid."

"This is now a closed military zone and you all have to leave," declared the Israeli military commander.

Armed with a knowledge of the laws and processes required to enforce a "closed military zone," we argued that the Palestinians were within their rights to stay. The soldiers seemed stumped. Both the Palestinians and internationals negotiated with the soldiers. In the end, to our surprise and joy, the soldiers finally asked the settlers to leave instead. Some of the internationals expressed grave concern about the willingness of these armed and very dangerous settlers to comply and, ultimately, the soldiers agreed to move the enraged settlers up the hill toward the settlement.

The Palestinians were ecstatic to finally harvest, and the work continued throughout the day. Hundreds of olive trees were harvested. When we gathered together later in Yasuf, the villagers, internationals, and Israeli activists took time to acknowledge everyone's courage. "Even if we were only able to pick one olive and no one was hurt, it would have been a victory. But to harvest from hundreds of trees—this was incredible," one villager said. The news spread fast, and people from all over Palestine called to confirm reports of the day's success in Yasuf.

Israeli settlements are continuously built and expanded. The Israeli military provides protection to the settlers and support for the ongoing colonization of the land. Today, there are approximately 400,000 settlers in Palestine, who fall roughly into two groups: those who have come for economic incentives, and those who follow the ideological conviction that Palestine must be reclaimed for Jews as part of the historic promise of Israel.

Interestingly, many of the most fanatic and violent of these right-wing zealots come from places as close to "home" as Brooklyn. These people are granted a "right to return" by the state of Israel based on their Jewish identity, even if they are only recent converts to Judaism. The settlers don't question the historical spuriousness of

this right to return to a country where many have never lived, or challenge the policy that denies that Palestinian refugees a right to return to the specific homes or villages where they and their families had lived for generations—nor the second-class status of Palestinians who have lived their whole lives in Palestine.

The ideological settlers form militias for "protection" or expansion of settlement land with the blessing and back-up power of the Israeli state. The sole reason for a military presence in the West Bank and Gaza is for the protection of these Israeli settlements and the expansion of Israeli territory at the expense of Palestinians. The violence of the military and the settlers are not intended to protect the Israeli state from foreign operatives; the targets instead are those who resist the further expropriation or domination of Palestinian lives and land.

The Israeli government's support for expanding the settlements has been similar to what many governments throughout the world have done historically with "frontier" or ambiguously claimed territory: the mere physical presence of Israelis increases the legitimacy of the Israeli state's claim to the land. The settlements become "facts on the ground" to be brought to the negotiation table. In contrast to earlier examples of colonial domination, this particular conflict is aggravated by the fact that the Israeli government considers the land the settlers colonize to be a part of its historical and religious heritage, therefore denying its accountability as a modern, colonizing power.

This village of Yasuf, with its population of 1,700 people, has not had much success in resisting the violence of the settlers or stopping the annexation of their land. Many villages throughout the West Bank and Gaza endure attacks from the nearby Israeli settlers and harassment by the military. The unreported everyday violence against the Palestinian people continues systematically.

Palestinian life is woven with a seemingly inexhaustible energy to resist. Today, even as the brutality of the occupation rages on, the residents of this small village celebrate their victory.

Increased Targeting of International Solidarity Movement

Michael Shaik

The power of international solidarity is partially based on the assumption that the state of Israel is dependent on the good will of its international trading partners, in particular, the United States, and, as a result, will restrain the violence of its military when confronting Palestinian protesters who are accompanied by internationals. Likewise, it was assumed that foreign nations would protest if their citizens were threatened by Israeli officials. Both these assumptions began to look overly optimistic on February 14, 2003, as Michael Shaik, Media Coordinator of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), recorded two almost simultaneous crises in Rafah and Nablus. Both involved incidents where members of the ISM were in danger of being killed or seriously injured by Israeli soldiers.

At 2 pm, the ISM received word that Israeli military bulldozers were demolishing houses in the town of Rafah in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. This particular destruction is for the purposes of building Israel's "Apartheid Wall." Not unlike the Berlin Wall, the intent is to seal off Palestinian communities from the outside world by a massive series of walls, trenches, razor wire, and towers from which military sharpshooters can monitor Palestinian activities. The section of the wall under construction near Rafah stretches the entire length of the Gaza-Egypt border. To give the snipers clear fields of fire, the Israeli occupation forces in Gaza intend to demolish all the houses within 70 to 100 meters of the wall. The site of the current demolitions was in an area of Rafah known as Block O, overlooked by four of the wall's towers, including the infamous Saleh e-Deen Tower, from which Israeli snipers have murdered several of Rafah's residents in the past.

In response to the call, seven ISM activists (three each from the United States and the United Kingdom, and one from the Netherlands) went to Block O. There they saw a row of six houses being systematically destroyed by two Israeli military bulldozers guarded by a tank. As soon as the activists approached the bulldozers, soldiers from the towers fired warning shots toward them. The tanks fired rifle and machinegun rounds at their feet. Using a megaphone, the ac-

tivists clearly stated that they were unarmed, international peace activists. The tank and soldiers in the towers continued to fire warning shots, but the activists refused to submit to their intimidation and continued their approach.

The activists phoned the ISM media office to inform me of the dangers they were facing. I immediately made an emergency call to the US Consulate in Tel Aviv, requesting that they alert the Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip that international peace activists (including three Americans) in Rafah Town were coming under fire from Israeli troops and to please "exercise restraint" (the standard ISM procedure in such circumstances). After being put on hold several times, I had the following conversation with US Consulate staff:

An unnamed diplomat: I'm sorry, but it's Shabbat, and we can't contact anyone in the army because they're all on holiday.

ISM: On holiday? Then why are they demolishing houses in Rafah and shooting international volunteers?

Diplomat: I'm sorry, but we don't have anyone we can contact in the army.

ISM: Then phone the Department of Foreign Affairs and tell them to contact the army. [The standard protocol under such circumstances.]

Diplomat: Please hold a minute.... [Another diplomat comes on the line. She identifies herself as Ingrid Barzel.]

Barzel: How can I help you?

ISM: This is an emergency call about a group of international peace activists in Rafah Town being fired on by Israeli troops. I'm phoning you because I want you to get in contact with the army to advise them that there are US nationals in the area and ask them to please exercise restraint.

Barzel: Please advise your people there to leave the area.

ISM: Look, they don't intend to go anywhere. They're trying to stop houses from being demolished by military bulldozers.

Barzel: We have a travel advisory against traveling to the Gaza Strip, and if these people are there, they are there illegally. [This is untrue. To enter the Gaza Strip, one has to have a special authorization stamp in one's passport, which all the Rafah activists do.]

ISM: What if one of them gets killed? Will you hide behind your excuses then?

Barzel: They're not excuses. It's State Department procedure endorsed by the Secretary of State.

ISM: So what you're saying is that you take no responsibility for the welfare of your nationals doing peace work in the Gaza Strip—even if it means one of them gets killed?

Barzel: We do not accept any responsibility for anyone who ignores our travel advisories and illegally enters the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, amid tank fire and warning shots fired from the towers, the ISM activists had reached the building that the bulldozers were demolishing. Two of the activists stepped into the partially destroyed building, preventing the bulldozers from any further destruction. The tank fired its machinegun over their heads. The bulldozer retreated, but the tank rolled to within three feet of the activists, and an uneasy stalemate followed until the tanks finally backed away.

Then the bulldozer approached again and this time it didn't stop. Five of the activists were able to scramble away while the bulldozer trapped two others in a corner of the building. But the bulldozer found its path blocked by rubble, and the moment that it reversed, the two were able to escape. They stood on barrels next to the building in order to photograph and film the destruction, but the bulldozer then began ramming the barrels.

The tank began firing at some nearby houses that the activists knew were inhabited by families, so they stood between the tank and the houses. The tank resumed firing its machinegun at the feet of the activists.

At this point, a Palestinian militant threw a pipe bomb at one of the bulldozers. This increased the risk to the activists because now they could be caught in the crossfire, so they retreated to a nearby house to film the demolition. When the bulldozers finished demolishing the six houses, they withdrew with the tank.

The Palestinian community rushed out to the wreckage to help the former residents salvage what they could from what had once been their homes. Among the items they retrieved were a bicycle, a water tank, an electrical cord, and some planks of wood. After 20 minutes of searching the rubble, the soldiers in the towers began firing, forcing them to abandon the wreckage. A Palestinian man explained that this was the pattern of such salvage operations: The

sentinels generally gave the people half an hour to retrieve what they could before they began firing on them.

Success in Nablus

At 3:50 pm, just as the Rafah crisis was drawing to a close, 12 ISM activists in East Nablus were trying to deliver chocolates to the Abu Sanfar house. The Israeli military had been using the house as a firing position for 40 days, detaining the three resident families in two rooms.

When the activists approached the house, Israeli soldiers—commanded by Ariel Ze'ev, who is known by Palestinians and ISM activists to be an insane sadist—confronted them. Ze'ev and his men quickly became violent toward the activists. At 4:10 pm, they seized Hussein Khalili, a Palestinian member of the ISM, and dragged him back to the house while firing warning shots at the other activists.

As soon as the ISM media center was alerted to the situation, I immediately called the Hamoked and Gush Shalom human rights organizations (the ISM's allies in the struggle against the occupation), and a sympathetic, US-based journalist Denis Brenstein of Flashpoints Radio. I drafted an e-mail and circulated it to all our supporters. Through combined efforts, we were able to alert people around the world of Hussein's plight and issue a joint appeal for people to phone the District Coordination Office (DCO) of the Israeli army in Nablus to demand Hussein's immediate release.

Meanwhile, an Israeli member of the ISM and another activist returned to the Abu Sanfar house to negotiate Hussein's release. When Ze'ev realized that one of the activists was an Israeli Jew, he became furious and promised that he would make Hussein suffer even more because of her, and that he would arrest a Palestinian every time he saw her.

Ze'ev then took Hussein from the house and into the garden, where his men bound Hussein's hands behind his back and forced him to kneel on the rocky ground, in the rain, while Ze'ev kicked him in the back. Eventually, Ze'ev went inside and a new group of soldiers released Hussein's hands. They took him under a shelter where they verbally insulted him, telling him that "the only good Arab was a dead Arab" and that "he was just a fucking peacemaker." They also told him that the Israeli activist was a whore for helping the Palestin-

ians and that she should be kicked out of the country. When Hussein protested that the activists had only come to the house to comfort the children, the soldiers said that they did not care and that they were in Nablus to kill all the Arabs.

"Even the women and children?" Hussein inquired.

"Yes," they replied. "They throw petrol bombs and stones at us and threaten our lives, so we will kill them too."

While Hussein was being abused, the Nablus-area DCO was being inundated with phone calls. ISM activists watching the Abu Sanfar house saw an Israeli lieutenant colonel arrive in a hummer soon after the phone-in campaign began. He told the activists that Hussein would be held in the house until 10 pm and then released.

Shortly thereafter, I began receiving calls from people from around the world asking what more they could do. I said to forward the e-mail to everyone in his or her address book. One man told me that he had already forwarded it to over 200 people. A woman asked me if she should contact the US consulate in Tel Aviv, but I told her it would be futile since they no longer accept responsibility for their own nationals in the ISM.

At 8:50 pm Hussein Khalili was set free. He was afraid to go into the streets in the dark where he ran the risk of being shot by tanks and other soldiers, but he was told that all the soldiers in the area had been warned and he would be safe. Hussein then went across the road to a neighboring house, where he was given tea and water and phoned his companions in Nablus.

As soon as I received word of his release, I alerted his wife. I then sent an e-mail informing supporters of the success of our phone-in campaign. Even so, the Nablus-area DCO continued to be flooded with phone calls until midway through the following morning. Two supporters told me that as soon as they got through, the officer on duty said, "Hussein Khalili has been released" before they could even state the reason for their calls.

On February 14, 2002, the ISM's mission in occupied Palestine came as close as it has ever come to collapse. Though international activists have often encountered hostility, this was the first time a consulate has stated explicitly that it would take no responsibility for the welfare of its nationals performing peace work in the Occupied Territories.

Throughout occupied Palestine, but particularly in the Nablus area, ISM activists have come under increasing pressure from the Israeli military attempting to intimidate them into ineffectiveness through threats and low-level violence. We believe that this is part of an Israeli government plan to increase the campaign of terror against the people of Palestine in conjunction with a US invasion of Iraq.

But the remarkable effectiveness of the phone-in campaign to free Hussein Khalili has also demonstrated to the architects of this terror that the ISM can no longer be considered only a handful of brave activists scattered throughout the Occupied Territories. ISM has matured into a truly global movement, capable of mobilizing large numbers of people in defense of Palestinian human rights.

Rachel's Reports

Rachel Corrie

Rachel Corrie was 22 years old, a student at Evergreen College in Olympia, Washington, and a volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in Rafah when she was killed on March 16, 2003, while attempting to prevent a military bulldozer from destroying the home of a Palestinian family. Despite the fact that she was wearing a bright orange vest and had been clearly visible to the bulldozer driver before he drove over her, an Israeli military investigation absolved the demolition crew of all responsibility. The driver of the bulldozer was back at work in less than a month. In her e-mails to friends and family about what she was seeing and doing in Gaza, Rachel noted the anxiety that Palestinians felt in anticipation of the US-led invasion of Iraq, including the possibility that Israel would use that war as cover for "population transfer," that is, forcing a significant number of Palestinians to flee to neighboring Arab countries by escalating Israeli military attacks on Palestinian militants and nonmilitants alike.

February 7, 2003

Hi friends and family, and others,

I have been in Palestine for two weeks and one hour now, and I still have very few words to describe what I see. I don't know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls or the towers of an occupying army surveying them constantly from the near horizons. I think, although I'm not entirely sure, that even the smallest of these children understands that life is not like this everywhere. An eight-year-old was shot and killed by an Israeli tank two days before I got here, and many of the children murmur his name to me—*Ali*—or point to the posters of him on the walls. The children also love to get me to practice my limited Arabic by asking me, *"Kaif Sharon?" "Kaif Bush?"* and they laugh when I say, *"Bush Majnoon"* or *"Sharon Majnoon"* back in my limited Arabic. [How is Sharon? How is Bush? Bush is crazy. Sharon is crazy.] Of course this isn't quite what I believe, and some of the adults who have some English correct me: *"Bush mish Majnoon"* [Bush is a businessman]. Today I tried to learn to say *"Bush is a tool,"* but I don't think it translated quite right. Anyway, there are eight-year-olds here much more aware of the workings of the global power structure than I was just a few years ago.

Nevertheless, no amount of reading, attendance at conferences, documentary viewing, or word of mouth could have prepared me for the reality of the situation here. You just can't imagine it unless you see it—and even then you are always well aware that your experience of it is not at all the reality: what with the difficulties the Israeli army would face if they shot an unarmed US citizen, and with the fact that I have money to buy water when the army destroys wells, and the fact, of course, that I have the option of leaving. Nobody in my family has been shot, driving in their car, by a rocket launcher from a tower at the end of a major street in my hometown. When I leave for school or work, I can be relatively certain that there will not be a heavily armed soldier waiting halfway between Mud Bay and downtown Olympia at a checkpoint with the power to decide whether I can go about my business, and whether I can get home again when I'm done.

I've been having trouble accessing news about the outside world here, but I hear an escalation of war on Iraq is inevitable. There is a great deal of concern here about the "reoccupation of Gaza." Gaza is reoccupied every day to various extents, but I think the fear is that the

tanks will enter all the streets and remain here, instead of entering some of the streets and then withdrawing after some hours or days to observe and shoot from the edges of the communities. If anyone isn't already thinking about the consequences of this war for the people of the entire region, then I hope you will start.

February 20, 2003

Mama,

Now the Israeli army has actually dug up the road to Gaza, and both of the major checkpoints are closed. This means that Palestinians who want to go and register for their next quarter at the university can't. People can't get to their jobs, and those who are trapped on the other side can't get home; and internationals, who have a meeting tomorrow in the West Bank, won't make it. We could probably make it through if we made serious use of our international white-person privilege, but that would also mean some risk of arrest and deportation, even though none of us has done anything illegal.

The Gaza Strip is divided in thirds now. There is some talk about the reoccupation of Gaza, but I think the more likely thing is an increase in smaller, below-the-international-outcry-radar incursions, and possibly the oft-hinted population transfer.

I am staying put in Rafah for now, with no plans to head north. I still feel like I'm relatively safe and think that my most likely risk in case of a larger-scale incursion is arrest. A move to reoccupy Gaza would generate a much larger outcry than Sharon's assassination-during-peace-negotiations/land-grab strategy, which is working very well now to create settlements all over, slowly but surely eliminating any meaningful possibility for Palestinian self-determination.

Know that I have a lot of very nice Palestinians looking after me. I have a small flu bug, and got some very nice lemony drinks to cure me. Also, the woman who keeps the key for the well near where we still sleep keeps asking me about you. She doesn't speak a bit of English, but she asks about my mom pretty frequently—wants to make sure I'm calling you.

February 27, 2003

[To her mother]

Love you. Really miss you. I have bad nightmares about tanks and bulldozers outside our house and you and me inside. Sometimes

the adrenaline acts as an anesthetic for weeks and then in the evening or at night it just hits me again—a little bit of the reality of the situation.

I am really scared for the people here. Yesterday, I watched a father lead his two tiny children out into the sight of tanks and a sniper tower and bulldozers and jeeps because he thought his house was going to be exploded. It was our mistake in translation that caused him to think it was his house that was being exploded. In fact, the Israeli army was in the process of detonating an explosive in the ground nearby—one that appears to have been planted by Palestinian resistance. This is in the area where Sunday, about 150 men were rounded up and contained with gunfire over their heads while tanks and bulldozers destroyed 25 greenhouses—the livelihoods for 300 people. The explosive was right in front of the greenhouses—in the point of entry for tanks that might come back again. I was terrified to think that this man felt it was less of a risk to walk out in view of the tanks with his kids than to stay in his house. This happens every day, but just this father walking out with his two little kids, looking very sad, got my attention more, probably because it was our translation problems that made him leave.

I thought a lot about what you said on the phone about Palestinian violence not helping the situation. Sixty thousand workers from Rafah worked in Israel two years ago. Now only 600 can go to Israel for jobs. Of these 600, many have moved because the three checkpoints between here and Ashkelon (the closest city in Israel) make what used to be a 40-minute drive, a 12-hour or impassable journey. In addition, what Rafah identified in 1999 as sources of economic growth are all completely destroyed—the Gaza International Airport (runways demolished, totally closed); the border for trade with Egypt (now with a giant Israeli sniper tower in the middle of the crossing); access to the ocean (completely cut off in the last two years by a checkpoint and the Gush Katif settlement). The count of homes destroyed in Rafah since the beginning of this Intifada is up around 600. I think it is official now that Rafah is the poorest place in the world. There used to be a middle class here—recently. In the past, Gazan flower shipments to Europe were delayed for two weeks at the Erez crossing for "security inspections." You can imagine the value of two-week-old cut flowers in the European market, so that market

dried up. And then the bulldozers come and take out people's vegetable farms and gardens. What is left for people?

If any of us had our lives and welfare completely strangled, lived with children in a shrinking place where we knew, from previous experience, that soldiers and tanks and bulldozers could come for us at any moment and destroy all the greenhouses that we had been cultivating for however long, and did this while some of us were beaten and held captive with 149 other people for several hours—don't you think we might try to use somewhat violent means to protect whatever fragments remained? I think about this especially when I see orchards and greenhouses and fruit trees destroyed—years of care and cultivation. I think about you and how long it takes to make things grow and what a labor of love it is. I really think, in a similar situation, most people would defend themselves as best they could.

You asked me about nonviolent resistance.

When that explosive detonated yesterday, it broke all the windows in the family's house. I was in the process of being served tea and playing with the two small babies. I'm having a hard time right now. Just feel sick to my stomach a lot from being doted on all the time, very sweetly, by people who are facing doom. Honestly, a lot of the time the sheer kindness of the people here, coupled with the overwhelming evidence of the willful destruction of their lives, make it seem unreal to me. I really can't believe that something like this can happen in the world without a bigger outcry about it. It really hurts me to witness how awful we can allow the world to be.

All of the situations that I tried to enumerate above—and a lot of other things—constitute a somewhat gradual, often hidden, but nevertheless massive removal and destruction of the ability of a particular group of people to survive. This is what I am seeing here. The assassinations, rocket attacks, and shooting of children are atrocities—but in focusing on them, I'm terrified of missing their context. The vast majority of people here, even if they had the economic means to escape, even if they actually wanted to give up resisting and just leave (which appears to be the less nefarious of Sharon's possible goals), can't leave. Because they can't even get into Israel to apply for visas, and because their destination countries won't let them in (both our country and Arab countries). So I think when all means of sur-

vival are cut off in a pen (Gaza) that people can't get out of, I think that qualifies as genocide.

I'm witnessing this chronic, insidious genocide and I'm really scared, and questioning my fundamental belief in the goodness of human nature. This has to stop. I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop. I don't think it's an extremist thing to do anymore. I still really want to dance around to Pat Benatar and have boyfriends and make comics for my coworkers. But I also want this to stop. Disbelief and horror is what I feel. Disappointment. I am disappointed that this is the reality of our world and that we, in fact, participate in it.

When I come back from Palestine, I probably will have nightmares and constantly feel guilty for not being here, but I can channel that into more work. Coming here is one of the better things I've ever done. So when I sound crazy, or if the Israeli military should break with their racist tendency not to injure white people, please pin the reason squarely on the fact that I am in the midst of a genocide that I am also indirectly supporting, and for which my government is largely responsible.

February 28, 2003

[To her mother]

After I wrote to you, I went incommunicado from the [ISM] affinity group for about 10 hours, which I spent with a family on the front line in Hi Salam who fixed me dinner. The two front rooms of their house are unusable because gunshots have been fired through the walls, so the whole family—three kids and two parents—sleep in the parent's bedroom. I slept on the floor next to the youngest daughter, Iman, and we all shared blankets. I helped the son with his English homework a little. Friday is the holiday, and when I woke up, they were watching *Gummy Bears* on cable TV dubbed into Arabic. So I ate breakfast with them and sat there for a while and just enjoyed being in this big puddle of blankets with this family watching what for me seemed like Saturday morning cartoons. Then I walked to B'razil, which is where Nidal and Mansur and Grandmother and Rafat and all the rest of the big family that has really wholeheartedly adopted me live. (The other day, by the way, Grandmother gave me a pantomimed lecture in Arabic that involved a lot of blowing and

pointing to her black shawl. I got Nidal to tell her that my mother would appreciate knowing that someone here was giving me a lecture about smoking turning my lungs black.)

Nidal's English gets better every day. He's the one who calls me "My sister." He started teaching Grandmother how to say "Hello. How are you?" in English. You can always hear the tanks and bulldozers passing by, but all of these people are genuinely cheerful with each other and with me. When I am with Palestinian friends, I tend to be somewhat less horrified than when I am trying to act in a role of human rights observer, documenter, or direct action resister. They are a good example of how to be in it for the long haul. I know that the situation gets to them—and may ultimately get them—on all kinds of levels, but I am nevertheless amazed at their strength in being able to defend such a large degree of their humanity—their laughter, generosity, family time—against the incredible horror occurring in their lives and against the constant presence of death.

I am discovering a basic ability for humans to remain human in the direst of circumstances—I think the word is dignity. I wish you could meet these people. Maybe, hopefully, someday you will.

My love to everyone.

March 12, 2003

Hi Papa, thank you for your e-mail.

Don't worry about me too much; right now I am most concerned that we are not being effective. I still don't feel particularly at risk. Rafah has seemed calmer lately, maybe because the military is preoccupied with incursions in the north—still shooting and house demolitions—one death this week that I know of, but not any larger incursions. Still can't say how this will change if and when war with Iraq comes.

Thanks also for stepping up your anti-war work. I know it is not easy to do, and probably much more difficult where you are than where I am. I am really interested in talking to the journalist in Charlotte—let me know what I can do to speed the process along.

I am trying to figure out what I'm going to do when I leave here, and when I'm going to leave. Right now I think I could stay until June, financially. Now that I've crossed the ocean I'm feeling a strong desire to try to stay across the ocean for some time. Considering try-

ing to get English teaching jobs—would like to really buckle down and learn Arabic. Also got an invitation to visit Sweden on my way back, which I think I could do very cheaply. I would like to leave Rafah with a viable plan to return, too.

One of the core members of our group has to leave tomorrow, and watching her say goodbye to people is making me realize how difficult it will be. People here can't leave, so that complicates things. They also are pretty matter-of-fact about the fact that they don't know if they will be alive when we come back here. I really don't want to live with a lot of guilt about this place—being able to come and go so easily—and not going back. I think it is valuable to make commitments to places so I would like to be able to plan on coming back here within a year or so.

Let me know if you have any ideas about what I should do with the rest of my life. I love you very much. If you want you can write to me as if I was on vacation at a camp on the big island of Hawaii learning to weave. One thing I do to make things easier here is to utterly retreat into fantasies that I am in a Hollywood movie or a sitcom starring Michael J. Fox. So feel free to make something up and I'll be happy to play along.

Much love Poppy,
Rachel

Note:
For more information about Rachel's life and death, see www.palsolidarity.org/activists/rachelcorrie/rachel_Joe details.htm and www.omjp.org/rachel.html. About the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice, see www. rachelcorriefoundation.org.

Next Year at Mas'ha

Starhawk

Since July 2002, Israel has been building rapidly what it calls a "separation wall" in the West Bank. Planned to be four times the size of the Berlin Wall and

replete with guardtowers, trenches, and razor wire, the wall is being constructed along a path that expands the areas under Israeli control and cuts off Palestinian cities and towns from water resources and agricultural land. Israeli peace organization Gush Shalom has described the wall as "a death blow to any possibility of a viable Palestinian state." Here Starhawk describes her April 2003 visit to an encampment protesting the planned wall near the village of Mas'ha.

On the eve of Passover, after a month spent in the Occupied Territories of Palestine working with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM)—a month that saw one of our people deliberately run over by a bulldozer driven by an Israeli soldier, and two young men deliberately shot, one in the face, one in the head—I found myself unable to face the prospect of a Seder, even with my friends in the Israeli peace movement. I couldn't sit and bewail our ancient slavery or celebrate our journey to the promised land. I was afraid that I might spew bitterness and salt all over any Seder table I graced, and smash something. So I went to the peace encampment at Mas'ha. Mas'ha needed people, and the moon was full, and I thought I could just lay down on the land under the moonlight and let some of the bitterness drain away.

Mas'ha is a village on the line of the new so-called "security wall," where a peace camp has been set up at the request of the local people, mostly farmers who are faced with the confiscation of 98 percent of their land. Mas'ha, on one of the main roads into Israel proper, once had a thriving trade, until the Israelis closed the road. The farmers grew olives and figs and grapes and wheat—but now the land has been confiscated for the building of the wall, with no compensation offered.

In places, the wall is a 30-foot-high concrete barrier, complete with guard towers. Elsewhere, it is an electrified fence in a deep ditch surrounded by a swath of bare, scraped ground, flanked by roads to be continually patrolled by soldiers. It will soon separate the village from the neighboring Israeli settlement of Elcanah, with which it has always had peaceful relations. No armed resistance, no suicide bombers, have ever come from Mas'ha. Faced with this prospect, given only a few short weeks notice, the village council came to an amazing conclusion.

With every reason to hate Israelis, they decided to invite Israelis in, in company with internationals from the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS) and ISM. We set up an encampment on the edge of the bulldozers' route, to witness and document the destruction. To be at Mas'ha is to be on the absolute edge of the conflict. The road block that separates the village from the settlement is the divide between two realities.

I got to Elcanah from Tel Aviv on the settlers' bus, full of elderly women who could have been my aunts and old men that could have been my uncles and a few young people, everyone wishing each other *Hag Sameach* [Happy Holiday], for Passover, or in Hebrew, *Pesach.*

We drove through one settlement to let people off, and I got a tour of what looked like a transplanted Southern California suburb, complete with lush gardens and new houses, all with an aura of prosperity and complacent security—provided by armed guards and razor wire and the Israeli military. The landscaping featured olive trees in the street dividers (I suspected they had been transplanted from some farmer's stolen fields)—the Palestinians' livelihood turned into a decorative element of the settlements.

From Elcanah, I walked down the road a few hundred yards and climbed over the road block bulldozed to keep Palestinians out of Israel. I was in a dusty village of old stone and new cement houses and shuttered shops, backing onto open hillsides of ancient olives. The camp at Mas'ha is on a knoll, two pink tents set up in an olive grove on stony ground studded with wildflowers, yellow broom, and prickly pear.

The olives give shade and sometimes a backrest. If you look in one direction, the groves are spread out below the hilltop for miles of a soft gray-green with blue hills in the background and small villages beyond. But encircling the hill, and cutting a gray swath across the hillsides, is the zone of destruction: a wide band of uprooted trees and bare subsoil, where a giant backhoe is wallowing like some giant, prehistoric beast, grabbing and crushing stones, gouging the earth, filling the air with dust and the mechanical bellowing of its engines.

All the Israelis but one have gone to celebrate *Pesach* with their families. There are only two of us from the ISM and one woman from IWPS who stay over, along with two of the Palestinians, to guard the camp. As the full moon rises, I lie on the stones and medi-

tate. I am hoping to find some peace or healing, but the earth is tortured here and all I can feel is her anguish. Down and down, through layers and centuries and epochs, I hear the ancestors weeping. The land is soaked in blood, and generations have faced ruthless powers and been cut down, and why should we be any different? I am woken up at 3 am to take my shift on watch. I sit by the fire, exhausted, and finally drift back into sleep, waking again in the morning feeling sick at heart.

But people begin to arrive for a midday meeting. The women from IWPS, the men from the village, and dozens of Israelis. We sit under the tent with its sides raised, talking about building an international campaign against the wall. One of the men, a stonemason, makes miniature buildings out of the stones at our feet as we talk.

"Maybe we can't stop it here," one man from the village says, "but maybe we can stop it other places."

The Israelis who come are mostly young. They are anarchists and punks and lesbians and wild-haired students, and it strikes me that the mayor of Mas'ha and the village leaders in a very socially conservative society might actually have more in common with the Orthodox Jews who hate them than with these wild, social rebels. But the village accepts them all with good grace and a warm-hearted Palestinian welcome. One woman is from the group "Black Laundry," which requires a somewhat complicated three-way translation of a Hebrew play-on-words. She explains that it is a lesbian direct action group, and asks our translator if that's a problem.

"Not for me," he says with a slightly quizzical shrug, and the meeting goes on.

Later we meet with the village women, who want to know if we can help them. They are about to lose their source of livelihood, is there anything we can do? We have a long discussion about what we do in the ISM, and promise to research organizations that do community development work. They are excited to learn that we watch checkpoints and help people get through them. Students from the village who go to the university often get stopped at the checkpoints, or have to walk round through the mountains. Maybe we can help them.

Back at the camp, all the young *shabab*—the term for young, unmarried men—have come out for the evening. We sit around the fire while two of the men prepare us dinner, laughing and talking. And

suddenly I realize something wonderful is happening. The Israelis and the Palestinians can talk to each other, because most of the young men speak Hebrew. They are hanging out around the fire and talking and telling stories, laughing and relaxing together. They are hanging out just like any group of young people around a fire at night, as if they weren't bitter enemies, as if it could really be this simple to live together in peace.

So it was a strange Seder this year, pita instead of Matzoh, the eggs scrambled with tomato, hummus instead of chicken soup, water instead of wine, and instead of the *maror*, the bitter herbs which I have already tasted, a slight sweet hint of hope. I can't ever again say "next year in Jerusalem." I can no longer believe in the promise of a land which requires the building of concrete walls and guard towers and ongoing murder to defend it. Far better that we should abandon the old stones of Jerusalem than to practice torture in order to claim it. But I would like to believe in the promise of Mas'ha, in the example of a people who, faced with utter destruction of everything they need and hold dear, opened their hearts to the children of the enemy and asked for help. I would like to believe in the Israel reflected in the eyes of those who answer that call. That somehow, on this chasm between the conquerors and those who resist being finally conquered, the bridges and connections and meetings are happening that can tear down the walls of separation.

By next year, the camp at Mas'ha will most likely be gone. Already the contractors who work for the Israeli military have begun blasting a chasm that will soon cut the olive groves off from the village. An international campaign to stop the building of the wall has begun, but the reality is that they have the capacity to build it faster than we can organize to stop it. And yet I say it again, as an act of pure faith: Next year in Mas'ha.

Solidarity Movements

The Role of Internationals in the Palestinian Struggle

Interview with Ghassan Andoni

After the killing of Rachel Corrie on March 16, 2003, the Israeli military continued to escalate its repression of internationals. International Solidarity Movement (ISM) volunteer Brian Avery from New Mexico sustained serious, permanent injury when he was shot inexplicably by an Israeli soldier in an Armored Personnel Carrier in Jenin on April 5. British citizen Tom Hurndall, shot in the head by an Israeli sniper in Rafah on April 11 while trying to protect Palestinian children, has suffered severe brain damage and remains in a coma. On May 9, British TV cameraman James Miller was killed in Rafah by Israeli military fire. Also on May 9, Israeli authorities invaded the offices of ISM and the Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement in Beit Sahour, arresting activists and confiscating equipment. Despite these assaults and restrictions on the movement of internationals, the ISM's Freedom Summer 2003 commenced in June. This interview with one of ISM's cofounders was conducted by Ben Scribner in Beit Sahour on July 17, 2003.

Ben: Can you tell me about the strategy for Freedom Summer 2003 and the results so far?

Ghassan: The current campaign focuses on the freedom of movement with the checkpoints and the Apartheid Wall. This fits with the basic idea of the ISM—that you challenge the occupation by dismantling its ability to control people.

What makes the current campaign particularly significant is that it comes after a very hard hit by the occupation authorities: the killings of internationals and the raid on the ISM office. So far, the results have been encouraging. There are 60 internationals here, which means that the policy of denying entry to international ISM activists doesn't work. And we are challenging through legal action the attempts to deport activists. If we can make it difficult for them to deport people, the second tool for the Israelis to crack down on ISM is not there.

Another point of significance of this campaign is that there is more Palestinian participation in nonviolent actions than before, which is one of the main objectives of ISM. In the last two and a half years, we in ISM have tried to establish long-term relationships with different Palestinian grassroots activist groups and are in dialogue with them about how to increase Palestinian leadership in ISM campaigns.

We coordinate closely with local land defense committees, local village councils, and individuals who are hurt by Israeli procedures and have the urge to do something to defy them. The Land Defense Committee, for example, is a grassroots activist group that has the task of preventing settlement building. Groups like this are more open to the idea of direct action so they are natural partners. We also coordinate with women's groups. There are women's groups affiliated with the political (as opposed to armed) side of Fateh, the PFLP, DFLP. These are becoming active with ISM, particularly in the Tulkarem/Qalqilya area.

Most of these groups have national organizations but are more effective at the local level. We haven't yet arrived at the level of national planning for civil-based (nonviolent) resistance. We still lack the national Palestinian infrastructure needed to reach that point.

Ben: What do those Palestinians who aren't already involved in nonviolent resistance think of ISM?

Ghassan: At the beginning, many Palestinians were questioning: "Why are these internationals here?" Then they started to be more appreciative of the work the internationals were doing with us and were saying "Well done," and now we see desire for participation. We are still entering this third stage, which is broader Palestinian participation with ISM in civil-based direct actions.

Ben: What sectors of civil society—the unarmed part of the population—are most active in nonviolent resistance?

Ghassan: Wherever there is a hardcore militant resistance there is also a civil-based resistance, and both are sheltered within the poorest, less privileged, less structured Palestinian communities. Civil society as reflected in the NGOs in major cities involves middle-class, educated Palestinians, and has not contributed enough to the Intifada; they have been more detached than engaged. Their lack of participation definitely deprives civil-based resistance of a certain source of strength. But the less privileged community can develop and define its own structure and its own terms and can become effective. We should develop our stragegy in the future based on the fact that the vibrant side of resistance is in these communities. In order to engage in any form of resistance in the current context, you need a lot of determination, courage, and a readiness to sacrifice. That exists in the less privileged communities much more than it exists among middle-class educated Palestinians.

When the ISM decided on where to have a presence, we decided to shift to the most needy, most difficult Palestinian areas: refugee camps, the poorest parts of cities and targeted villages. By this choice, we defined our Palestinian allies automatically. This was a choice, but I would say if ISM had stayed in Bethlehem or Ramallah, it might have faded away or turned into the type of organization that brings people to encounter, express solidarity, and do advocacy at home, rather than challenge the occupation directly with nonviolent direct action. I think that was the right choice.

Ben: How are Palestinians judging the efforts of ISM?

Ghassan: Unfortunately, to be recognized as a partner in this area you need to struggle and sacrifice. When your blood mixes with the blood of Palestinians, you get recognition. And unfortunately this is what happened. ISM was boosted in the Palestinian community when the Israelis started killing ISM activists. ISM became an organization people respect and admire even in areas where it has never existed. Everyone knows who Rachel Corrie is.

You only earn the certificate of recognition in this complicated Palestinian struggle when you prove that you believe in the struggle to the point of being ready to die for it.

Ben: The ISM clearly has a lot of recognition now. Do you think this will create a broader nonviolence movement?

Ghassan: Recognition is different from participation. I can say, "What you do is good, but it's not suitable for me." We want to jump over this obstacle and reach the level of "What you do is good, and I'm able to do it with you."

The stage of wider Palestinian participation in nonviolent resistance is what we are trying to reach with this campaign. The first stage of ISM was to gain space to engage in the struggle. To gain space, you have to be very careful of how you define yourself in your environment, that is, with Palestinians. And this is why ISM was defined as a movement of internationals with Palestinian leadership. We are not a competing Palestinian group trying to recruit people. The long term vision of ISM is to offer international solidarity to a massive Palestinian civil-based resistance. If we are not moving to that end, then there is little point to the work we are doing.

Now the question is how to promote nonviolent resistance. One way is to preach it, and we realize that here preaching is out of the question. This is true for both internationals and Palestinians within ISM, but especially for the internationals. You don't come to people with a 400-year-old struggle and start preaching to them. You need to find a space to engage, and you need to engage in your way, and people will watch you. And then, after a while, people either will deny you space or appreaciate your work.

But that's not enough. You have to go to the level of broad Palestinian participation. When more and more sectors of Palestinians, in particular, the most active political groups, are convinced that your way is a good way to challenge the occupation, then ISM will be part of a mass-based, Palestinian-led movement.

We are moving into this stage now, of broader participation, and it is participation by integration, not by replacing Palestinian groups. We are promoting the idea of nonviolent direct action by example, not promoting ISM. Solidarity means internationals can come and participate and join, but in solidarity with, not in place of, the Palestinian movement. You cannot preach; you have to provide the example and inspire. I have seen so many people come and say, "Look, if you can gather 15,000 Palestinians and then go sit at a checkpoint, then the Israelis will be confused." Keep saying that for years,

nobody will believe you! But when a group of five or six internationals and twenty Palestinians go to a checkpoint and actually dismantle it, that is inspiring.

Ben: How has ISM weighed its actions against the likelihood of collective punishment against communities it is working with?

Ghassan: We have never done any activity without consulting with the immediate community and making people aware that they might experience consequences. And not in one single case have we had people say "No, don't do it."

The only way Israel can stop the resistance is if it suceeds in its collective punishment. Palestinians are very aware of this, and that's why they are willing to be adaptable and take more and more and more and not show signs of weariness or surrender. What we in ISM want is to stop the adaptability and start the defiance. Adaptability is saying, "Pressure me more, I'll take it." If you move into defiance, you are saying, "I'm not going to take it. You are going to have to adapt to my active resistance."

This is why defying curfews is important, why taking down roadblocks and checkpoints is important, because this is where ordinary Palestinians can find the space to resist. Internationals are important in this to lower the level of risk. With what's going on in this country, getting a group of Palestinians to go and remove a checkpoint might result in a few of them losing their lives and most of the others getting injured or arrested. You cannot build a massive civil-based resistance with this much risk; this much risk can destroy it. If the level of sacrifice is this high, the participants are fighters, not ordinary people. ISM is trying to work with ordinary people.

Ben: What sort of strategic thinking do you think needs to happen to go forward in the current political context?

Ghassan: I think we need to consider the Road Map, the role of the Palestinian Authority, and the possibility of an internal Palestinian crisis. The more there are internal political disputes, the more problematic things will be for ISM, particularly with the security partnership between the PA and Israel.

The other thing to consider is that the reduction of the level of violence in the region provides an opportunity. I believe that many of the active Palestinian resistance groups will see a value in civil-based resistance, and that this might be a turning point in the work that ISM

is trying to do. In the first Intifada it happened. Locals, without even the coordination of political groups, provided the example, and then everybody engaged in it, and it was great. Now the ISM, as a partnership of Palestinians and internationals, is trying to provide that kind of example.

Movement Building
Organizing International Solidarity with Palestine

Jordan Flaherty

Spreading the word is one of the key tasks of members of International Solidarity Movement (ISM). Participants have spoken out about what they've seen in Palestine at hundreds of protests, conferences, churches, synagogues, mosques, and other gatherings. Their stories have been seen in newspapers, heard on the radio, and broadcast on CNN, BBC, MSNBC, and Al-Jazeera, as well as on local and national news networks from Puerto Rico and Norway to Japan and New Zealand. Here Jordan Flaherty writes about his participation in the creation of an ISM chapter in New York City.

When George W. Bush began his crusade against the Arab world, I began to feel that I had to take more concrete action in opposition to our nation's unwavering support for the Israeli military occupation. In December 2001, I took a leap of faith and joined an ISM delegation in Palestine.

My first two days in Palestine were filled with trainings and affinity group meetings. The activists were ready to be tear gassed, arrested, fired at with rubber bullets, and attacked by armed right-wing Israeli settlers. As a global justice activist with New York City's Direct Action Network, I was excited to come together with Italians from Ya Basta, French anticapitalists, Brits from Reclaim the Streets, young Bethlehem residents setting up Indymedia Palestine, and the

Grassroots International Protection for the Palestinian People (GIPP), another Palestinian-led coalition organizing international solidarity delegations.

Every action was coordinated with those communities most affected. When internationals asked the Palestinians, "Is this action okay? Will you face increased oppression if we do this?" Palestinian villagers almost always replied, "It cannot get worse. We must try." They were living every day under the constant threat of harsh, humiliating, and arbitrary punishment. At least we offered the hope of something new.

Roadblocks

That December, we internationals spent several days in the village of Marda, in the Salfit region in the northern West Bank. Using Marda as a home base, we split into affinity groups and began clearing roadblocks: the 10-foot-high piles of dirt, mud, trash, and large rocks bulldozed into place by the Israeli military. Most of the work consisted of breaking or carrying huge rocks. At the Hares roadblock, we worked mostly with our bare hands. In Yasuf, the villagers were able to bring shovels and picks.

The army came immediately when we were working in Yasuf, but they didn't take action. Within a few hours, we were able to clear the road. One of the greatest thrills I've ever had was seeing vehicles go through the cleared roads, including ambulances and trucks bringing badly needed supplies. The road stayed open for almost three days.

Checkpoints

Israeli soldiers at military checkpoints are young kids with large guns and unlimited power, dealing with what they've been taught is a sub-human population. In just a couple of hours at a checkpoint, I saw soldiers shooting tear gas, sound grenades, and live ammunition into crowds. I saw a lifetime of humiliation and terror.

On December 29, at the request of Palestinian students, more than 100 European and US activists agreed to try to dismantle an Israeli military checkpoint on the road between Birzeit University and the Palestinian city of Ramallah. At 7:30 am, a backlog of nearly 1,000 local residents, faculty, and students were waiting to pass through the

checkpoint. As our group marched down the road, the soldiers abandoned their positions. We arrived at an empty checkpoint.

The US and British internationals blocked the military roads, while the French and Italians stayed at the checkpoint. Palestinians, with some help from internationals, proceeded to take apart the checkpoint. A sniper post on the hill above the checkpoint was toppled to the ground. Sandbags were emptied and torn up. Huge concrete blocks in the road were pushed out of the way by trucks. When the soldiers attempted to return, they fired several volleys of tear gas. We held our positions, despite a lot of threatening, some pushing, a few sound grenades, and a lot of tear gas.

We stayed until 5 pm, and hundreds of people were able to freely pass the checkpoint that day. I wish we could have come back the next day, and the day after that. It was a small, but beautiful moment of resistance.

International activists were not in Palestine to teach the Palestinians about nonviolent resistance, or to pass judgment on other forms of resistance. Palestinians nonviolently resist the occupation every day. During a second trip to Palestine in July and August of 2002, I witnessed nearly the entire city of Nablus engaging in nonviolent resistance, risking arrest or death by repeatedly defying curfew. After nearly 40 days of round-the-clock curfew, shop owners began opening stores, students began going to classes, and residents began walking down their streets. The response was more than 100 Israeli tanks entering the city, soldiers conducting house-to-house searches, mass arrests, home demolitions, and five assassinations in two days, including two children. This show of force is how the Israeli military reacts to peaceful resistance, and this is why an international presence is necessary.

Organizing in Your Own Community

Back in New York, I spread the word about my experiences in the West Bank. Within a month, I'd spoken at a Palestine conference, an anarchist convention, a film screening, a rave, a church, and a school. Every time I spoke, I passed around a sign-up sheet. I sent detailed information about ISM to everyone who signed up.

Soon we had enough energy in New York City to start a local ISM support group, called Direct Action for Justice in Palestine. We

began holding our own events, passing the hat to raise funds. Our mission was to recruit and train ISM participants, publicize their actions while in Palestine, and arrange speaking engagements and media interviews when they returned. We also raised funds to support participation by activists from under-represented communities, especially communities of color.

Our group held report-backs, film screenings, concerts, and parties. We worked closely with other groups, including Stop US Tax-funded Aid to Israel Now, Al-Awda, Palestine Activist Forum New York, and Jews Against the Occupation. We also connected to groups that organized on related issues, such as Desis Rising Up and Moving, a group of South Asians working against the immigrant detentions carried out by the US government; and the Student Liberation Action Movement, a mostly low-income, people of color-led student group.

In preparation for the Summer 2002 delegations, we prepared a 57-page information package with advice and guidance on direct action, cultural sensitivity in Palestine, talking to the media, setting up support systems at home, getting through Israeli airport security, and more. We had informational sessions and a two-day training.

From the beginning, we knew that building coalitions with anti-racist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonialist groups was vital. One group that formed in Spring 2002 was the New York Solidarity Movement for a Free Palestine (NYSMFP). NYSMFP began as a collection of organizers and activists with a long history of mobilizing around economic and racial issues including police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, political prisoners, the detentions and criminalization of immigrant communities, the bombing of Vieques, Puerto Rico, and support for queer youth. During the summer of 2002, NYSMFP sent a delegation of approximately 15 people to Palestine, primarily people of color.

Media

During April and May 2002, stories of international civilians living in Palestinian refugee camps and riding in ambulances briefly captured mainstream media attention. Two stories fueled the bulk of this coverage: Adam Shapiro, a Jewish American in Arafat's besieged Ramallah compound; and the 10 internationals who managed to en-

ter the Church of the Nativity during the 39-day standoff in Bethlehem. But a lot of behind-the-scenes hard work went into laying the groundwork for this. After many months of preparations, Indymedia Palestine went online in March, just before the Easter invasion (http://jerusalem.indymedia.org). This independent, grassroots news resource helped spread firsthand reports of life in Palestine. Overlapping with the Indymedia volunteers, ISM's own media team worked around the clock to help coordinate press coverage. Many of the support teams back home in the United States also wrote press releases, made phone calls, organized rallies and demonstrations, and kept the situation in Palestine both in the news and in people's consciousness.

In New York, our priority was always to keep media focused on the Palestinians, not ourselves. We would use the "hook" of the presence of New York activists in Palestine, but keep our message on Palestine. The media, even progressive outlets, were predictable. They would always ask about suicide bombers and terrorism. Our response was to keep focused on what we'd seen: a mostly unarmed civilian population living under military terror.

Funding

While our benefit events brought in only small contributions, they were some of the most important organizing that we did. By having regular events, we kept Palestine in people's minds while giving New Yorkers a way to plug in locally. In May and June 2002, our group had an event almost every week featuring well-known DJs, musicians, poets, painters, playwrights, and other performers. It was exciting to see artists who had never before taken a public stand on Palestine perform at our benefits.

And, with each event, we continued to grow. By the time of the Spring 2002 delegation, we had gone from a single New York participant to 10, and had raised enough money to send three activists to Palestine who otherwise could not afford to go. During Summer 2002, we sent over 50 people and gave financial support to more than 20 of them. By November, we'd raised more than $25,000 and had given financial assistance to almost 40 ISM participants.

Moving Forward

Our next step was to sponsor a speaking tour in Fall 2002. The aim of this tour was to bring firsthand accounts from the West Bank and Gaza to cities and towns across the United States, and encourage local activists to participate in future delegations. The tour reached thousands of people in the Midwest and South, raised thousands of dollars for ISM scholarships and grassroots projects in Palestine, recruited many new ISM recruits, and spurred debate and organizing in nearly every community it visited. It also presented audiences with video, slides, artwork, information sheets, and many ideas to encourage local organizing. In addition to information on future ISM delegations, the tour connected the work of Jews Against the Occupation, Al-Awda, Stop US Tax-funded Aid to Israel Now, Students for Justice in Palestine, and more, including the delegations to Iraq sponsored by Voices in the Wilderness.

On returning home, activists who have been to Palestine bring more knowledge, experience, and diversity to a growing movement. In its first year, the bold solidarity of a few direct-action activists in Palestine has grown into a wide network of individuals and organizations in cities across the United States and around the world. Some of them work with ISM or GIPP, and some of them work with other activists and organizations that they've built ties with. All of them contribute to a strong and vital movement for freedom and justice. The next step is yours.

Divestment Needed Now

Laurieann Aladin

When asked what visiting internationals can do to help, Palestinians often say "go home and tell people what you saw here." With the general acquiescence of the Western public, many Western governments and corporations, particularly in the United States, provide the military and economic support that Israel requires to

maintain its occupation and colonization of Palestine. That Palestinians often emphasize the importance of change in the United States and European countries highlights the necessity for campaigns like the divestment movement, now well underway on many university campuses.

A primary reason that the Israeli occupation of Palestine remains intact is due to the economic investments of US companies. While Israel continues to conduct one of the most prolonged colonial projects in contemporary history, hundreds of US companies are pouring millions and sometimes billions of dollars each into Israel's "economic growth."

Israel's military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is illegal under the UN Charter and fourth Geneva Convention, and as parties to the Geneva Convention, both Israel and the United States should be held accountable. The policy of US corporations to prioritize profits over basic human rights is abhorrent and unacceptable. By investing in Israel, US corporations bear a direct responsibility for making the illegal and bloody occupation of Palestine sustainable.

According to the Israeli Embassy's website[1], the following US corporations have invested in Israel. Applied Materials invested upward of $285 million into Israeli economic growth in 1996. That same year, Kimberly Clark Corporation invested $49.9 million. Tower Semiconductor invested $1 billion in 1997. In 1998, American Partners invested $370 million in a "new tourism project," and Lucent Technologies invested $117 million. In 1999, Intel Corporation opened a new $1.6 billion plant in Qiryat Gat. (Intel invested $1 billion, and the Israeli government contributed the remaining $600 million).

Within the last couple of years, a movement was initiated that is reminiscent of the 1980s South African anti-apartheid movement. In November 2000, Francis A. Boyle, professor of law at the University of Illinois, issued a call for the establishment of a divestment/disinvestment campaign against Israel. Soon thereafter, a similar campaign was launched by the Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of California at Berkeley. Since then, students, faculty and staff from over 40 US campuses—including Harvard, MIT, Cornell, Princeton, and Oberlin—have organized divestment campaigns against corporations doing business with Israel. In solidarity with

prominent figures such as Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, these groups have unwaveringly stated that they cannot be complicit in Israel's apartheid policies and illegal occupation of Palestine.

The petition for divestment circulating around an increasing number of universities calls on these institutions to divest from US companies doing business with Israel. Some campaigns specifically focus on companies selling arms to Israel. Citing deep concern over the use of Israeli military force to commit human rights abuses against Palestinians, more than 75 Columbia and Barnard faculty members launched a more targeted strategy in October 2002, limiting their divestment campaign to firms that manufacture and sell arms and military hardware to Israel. This strategy scrutinizes investments in such firms as Caterpillar, United Technologies, General Dynamics, Boeing, and General Electric. Caterpillar, for instance, sells the armored bulldozers that are routinely used by the Israeli army to demolish Palestinian homes and uproot olive trees. It was a Caterpillar bulldozer that was used to kill ISM volunteer Rachel Corrie in Gaza as she attempted to block the destruction of Palestinian homes. Boeing sells AH-64 Apache Helicopters, used to kill Palestinian civilians. General Electric manufactures the Apache Helicopters' engines. (Harvard and Princeton Universities invest $154.8 and $8.5 million, respectively, in General Electric.) General Dynamics makes 20 millimeter guns for the F-16 jets in Israel's air force.

In the University of California's divestment campaign material, a link between the university's investments and Israel's apartheid policies is illustrated:

> The UC invests $2,141,260 in United Technologies. In 1997, United Technologies sold 15 Blackhawk helicopters to Israel and [had] contracts for 25 helicopters in 2002. Along with this, United Technologies was charged in 1997 for diverting US aid to Israel into a slush fund for an Israeli Air Force officer. UC also invests over $262 million in Hewlett-Packard, which owns a part of Technion Institute in Israel. Technion is a prestigious college which has a disproportionately large Jewish population (few Arab students are admitted) and helps develop some of the high-tech military weaponry that Israel uses.[2]

As described in the campaign petitions, this divestiture should continue until certain conditions are met, including the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel's compliance with the fourth Geneva Convention.

University-based movements can carry great weight. During the former South African campaign, students, faculty, and community members forced universities to withdraw investments from companies doing business with the apartheid regime. The effects were so powerful that ultimately the US government followed suit by imposing sanctions on South Africa. This can be done again. Combining efforts exponentially increases strength. As Desmond Tutu asserts, "If apartheid ended, so can the [Israeli] occupation, but the moral force and international pressure will have to be just as determined."[3] Act now.

Notes

1. www.israelemb.org
2. www.ucdivest.org
3. Desmond Tutu, *Palestine Chronicle,* June 15, 2002.

Bearing Witness in the Promised Land

Rob Lipton

A significant proportion of the international volunteers joining Palestinians in resistance to occupation are Jewish. Jewish American Rob Lipton was in Bethlehem with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) when the city was invaded in March 2002, and continues to speak out and organize against the occupation.

I'm the "man bites dog" story: I'm an American Jew who thinks that Israel's occupation of the West Bank is a crime against humanity.

Why do I need to say I am an American Jew as a qualification? What is being done to the Palestinians is wrong; any person with eyes in their head can see this simple fact. For me to say, "it's really bad

and I'm Jewish" shouldn't matter. I did not have to be Jewish to march in September 2002 to the besieged Muqata'a where I witnessed hundreds of Palestinians spontaneously demonstrating in central Ramallah. My eyes were not somehow more acute in Nablus as a result of my being Jewish; any eyes could see Baha Al-baheishe's death as a cold-blooded murder committed by an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) sniper, any ears could hear the anguish in his mother's cries.[1] All people should call this for what it is: an occupation that is killing us all.

In Amira Hass's book *Drinking the Sea at Gaza,* Hass's mother, a Holocaust survivor, witnesses people standing by and watching as the trains went to the death camps. I am motivated by this legacy to "not stand by." I don't want the prosecution of this occupation to be in my name.

I have been called misguided, a traitor, and self-hating, and these soft words are from family and supposed friends. None of these people have been to Palestine. They have not witnessed the humiliation of checkpoints or seen tanks roaming the streets of densely populated cities. Most Israelis have never been to the West Bank except as soldiers, and many would be hard-pressed to know whether Hebron is north or south of Jerusalem. My brethren in the United States view the West Bank like a *terra incognita* on a pre-Renaissance map, "There Be Monsters," printed in bold letters.

It is easy to manipulate public opinion under this level of ignorance: If you are Jewish, then Palestinians will kill you or at least desire to do so—they are an unreasoning, pre-modern people who simply do not value life as more civilized people do. Such language is the love song of the occupier calling to its victims—the same tune sung in Algeria, South Africa, or Tibet. That Israeli and US Jews refuse to hear otherwise is not a function of them being Jewish and heartless; it is a result of them being locked into a small world of hysteria and doom. So here is the central question: Why do Jews in the United States believe so firmly in a historical and political narrative that, whether as the result of deliberate propaganda or ingenuous error, is so patently erroneous? Given the Jewish tradition of fighting against injustice and siding with the underdog, this unstinting support for Israel is troubling.

Unfortunately, determining an objectively correct vantage point from which to view this conflict is nearly impossible. Many Israeli and US citizens believe that Ehud Barak was generous in his Camp David offer; few realized it was an ultimatum and not an offer, and that what was offered was a rump state that did not control its own borders or air space or have territorial contiguity between its population centers—a territory that had been described as looking like the holes in Swiss cheese. The question of refugees was never discussed, and East Jerusalem was not to be put under Palestinian control. But what most Israeli and US Jews were told was that no offer would be acceptable by the Palestinians, who clearly only wanted the destruction of the Jewish State. That the Palestinians are essentially defenseless and at the mercy of one of the world's most sophisticated army is lost in the hysteria.

I am a member of Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), one of the largest and oldest progressive Jewish groups in the United States. JVP's main goal is to stop the illegal, US-supported Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Secondly, we are committed to not allowing the mainstream, pro-Israel Jewish community to speak in our name by providing a progressive alternative. We are composed of religious Jews, Zionist Jews, secular Jews, and anti-Zionist Jews, both Israeli and American (along with some non-Jews). We do not take a position of one or two states, and by virtue of such inclusiveness, we have drawn many previously unaffiliated and/or alienated Jews to our group. We have also provided cover for non-Jewish progressives who otherwise might be labeled anti-Semitic. (They will still be labeled anti-Semitic by some, but much less plausibly so.)

Until 2002 I'd never been to Israel or Palestine. Although I received my Bar Mitzvah in a conservative temple and was properly schooled in the requisite pro-Israel propaganda for most of my early life, I began in my mid-teens to feel unsure of my sentiments concerning Israel. At one point, I vowed to fight with the courageous IDF, whose mission was certain and righteous, unlike the morass of US military's activities in Vietnam that I read about every day in the early 1970s newspapers. On the other hand, as a child of the 1960s and a devoted contrarian, I was always on the lookout for the underdog, the forgotten minority.

In this way, I was first drawn to the Zionists' supposed long-odd efforts to establish a Jewish state in the Holy Land. This "pure" feeling lasted until I stumbled on the Palestinians, who by their very existence brought into question one of the central jewels of my proper Jewish upbringing, "a land without a people for a people without a land." After the most cursory and accidental of investigations, I found that historical Palestine, as ruled by the Ottoman Empire, was completely inhabited, and had been for hundreds of years, by a mélange of Christians, Druze, and Muslims loosely identified as Palestinians. Jews made up about 1 percent of the population as of 1900.

So I started poking around for more information and was met by virtual silence, both on the page and in dialogue with other Jews. If addressed at all, Palestinians were considered as an afterthought, as a marginal people who inhabited a nether region, or as the angry "A-rab" who irrationally harbored fantastic and anti-Semitic notions of destruction. Most of my brethren still consider Israel an embattled nation with its very existence always hanging in the balance. That Israel now possesses one of the most powerful armies in the world and has an estimated 200 nuclear bombs does not seem to have made much of a dent in these fears. Indeed, the typical response is, "Of course Israel has a large army, otherwise it would be wiped out." This historically inaccurate claim still carries considerable power for a people attacked in Eastern and middle Europe for hundreds of years, and who still have the recent memory of the Holocaust to recover from. But the trope of an embattled Israel standing up to the combined might of the Arab world, although quite compelling and another of the crown jewels of my upbringing, is historically unsupportable. Instead of David, Israel has almost always been a military Goliath in the region.

A good Jewish upbringing is hitched to the wagon of the Zionist state of Israel. A good Jew has no choice but to support Israel, it is his or her birthright and duty. Criticizing Israel is wrong. But to hold one's tongue, both as a Jew or an American, is to be complicit in supporting a state that routinely commits crimes against humanity as a function of officially sanctioned state policy.

In the United States, there is another myth, that all US Jews speak with one voice—the small minority who do not are considered

a radical, self-hating fringe. This supposed unanimity is fostered with almost scientific care by forces both in the United States and Israel. In the face of this contrived, monolithic Jewish support, most non-Jews, particularly progressives, have been cowed into sitting on their hands rather than speaking out. Jews who are against the massive human rights violations being committed by Israel have lived in a twilight state, often unaffiliated and alienated from typical American Jewish institutions. (It turns out that in the Bay Area, most Jews are unaffiliated, so "official" Jewish institutions such as the Jewish Community Relations Council, while claiming to speak for all Jews, are actually speaking for a minority.) Under such conditions, the role of an organization like JVP is essential if you are a Jew who believes in a just peace between Israel and Palestine.

In 2002, I traveled twice to the West Bank to participate in nonviolent civil disobedience. In September, I was able to observe how the occupation had changed since my previous visit in April. The Israeli invasion of the West Bank in April was the worst instance of destruction visited on Palestinians in recorded memory. No one thought conditions could get worse. But unfortunately, they could, and by September, three different war crimes were regularly committed by the Israel military against the Palestinian population: the use of human shields (using Palestinian civilians to shield IDF soldiers), the inhibiting or denial of medical relief, and, most callous of all, collective punishment.

As of this writing, most of the major population centers in the West Bank have been placed under some form of round-the-clock curfew, often more akin to house arrest. This curfew is arbitrarily enforced. Sometimes people go about daily life in an almost normal fashion, and at other times, the IDF may fire indiscriminately into a market crowd or chase (with 50-ton Merkava tanks) 10-year-old girls returning from school. This state of affairs has been in effect for months. Palestinian life in the West Bank is completely disrupted, and almost all economic and social activity hangs by a thread.

The September 2002 besieging of Arafat's compound was clearly meant to be symbolic of the besieging of the Palestinian people. Internationals attempted to bring food, water, and medicine to the compound. Although rebuffed and almost arrested within meters of the Muqata'a, this small gesture of solidarity was a piece of the inter-

national effort to stand with the Palestinians in nonviolent resistance to the occupation. Later that same night, also in Ramallah, I witnessed a spontaneous march by hundreds of Palestinians courageously violating the curfew. In this brave action, two unarmed, nonviolent protesters were killed and many more wounded by IDF fire. An ominously growing movement in Israel now advocates Palestinian "transfer" (ethnic cleansing); members of the current prime minister's cabinet actively support such a policy. Why doesn't the world act to stop this?

In my synagogue, when I heard the phrase "never again," I took it to mean that violence would not only never happen again to Jews, but that such massive crimes against humanity cannot be allowed in general. After my recent trips to the West Bank, where the black flag of IDF crimes[2] flew almost everywhere I went, this demand became more poignant and troubling than ever. Jewish Israelis, with US backing, are in the process of declaring an entire people illegal. Under such a threatening milieu, I am required, as a human being who happens to be Jewish and a US citizen, to speak out and act. That Jewish victims of one of the worst instances of carnage in recorded history are now oppressing Palestinians is, alas, quite predictable and all too human. The victims become the victimizers. My responsibility is to not let this occur in my name, to remind others that oppression and resistance are universals that are not reducible to membership in one group or another.

More to the point, my experience in the West Bank has taught me something profound, not just about my own limits and strengths, or my role as a Jewish American, but also about the amazing warmth, dignity, and perseverance of the Palestinian people living under the most oppressive of conditions. After I met Baha's father, a truly gentle and kind man who did not utter one word of hatred against his son's murderer, I felt a strange sense of optimism. Sincerely decent people live on both sides of this seemingly hopeless conflict. When the occupation ends, I am convinced that Palestinians and Jewish Israelis will quickly learn to live peacefully with each other. And as a Jew who is committed to our prophetic and cultural legacy of fighting against injustice and oppression wherever it may be found, let us allow the promised land to be promised to all.

Notes

1 For details about Baha Al-baheishe's death, see http://jerusalem.indymedia.org/news/2002/09/77384.php?l=ar

2 The term "black flag" is taken from the Israeli Supreme Court's verdict which found guilty the perpetrators of the 1956 Qafr Qasem massacre, rejecting their plea of following orders and ruling that a soldier has the right and duty of refusing "a manifestly illegal order, on which the black flag of illegality flies."

Image and Reality
The Role of the United States in the Middle East

Hanan Mikhail-Ashrawi

In this essay, Palestinian legislator Hanan Ashrawi lays out a "road map" for a more just involvement of the United States in the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Over five decades of dispossession and displacement, over three decades of military occupation, and over a decade of American involvement in the "peace process" have left the Palestinians more visibly victimized, with a daily loss of lives, rights, lands, and even the most basic human consideration.

Throughout, the United States has been the staunchest ally of Israel, supplying it with billions of dollars (estimated at $92 billion to date), sophisticated weaponry (used to shell, bomb, assassinate, and kill Palestinians on a daily basis), and with blind political cover (24 UN Security Council vetoes to date).

Turning a blind eye to the ongoing, extremely provocative, and illegal Israeli settlement activities, the United States also "sponsored" the Oslo peace process that gave Israel a free hand in acquiring more Palestinian land and in carrying out other "unilateral actions" (partic-

ularly in the illegal annexation of occupied East Jerusalem) with full impunity.

The post–September 11 world has signaled an end to American isolationism or to its selective intervention with no consequences. The question of the "responsibility of power" has become more compelling. However, the danger inherent in the concept is its exclusive translation into military power or negative intervention, while claiming sole rights on redefining friend and foe, ally and enemy, in accordance with temporary and subjective criteria.

Therein lies the difference between "responsibility" and "arrogance" of power. Its moral imperative lies in positive, constructive, and peaceful intervention that focuses on human, rather than on military, security. In the Palestinian-Israeli context, this requires a rapid and effective "interventionist" peace initiative to replace the current lethal dynamic and to provide the parties with a political alternative.

First and foremost, it should bring about a "separation" of the parties by lifting the Israeli siege and blockades on Palestinian areas and curbing Israel's brutal assaults against the Palestinians. Instead of adopting the "terrorist" label and repeating the "stop the violence" mantra, the United States, more than ever, is called upon to demonstrate its own distinctiveness and to carry out a parallel "separation" from the language, policies, brutality, extremism, and violations of the Israeli occupation.

As a major liability, Israel has done the most to discredit the United States and undermine its standing, not only in the region, but throughout the world. A courageous distancing (as well as a critical distance) is essential if the United States is seeking to address the causes of conflict and terrorism by adopting a responsible and long-term strategy. Pounding the Palestinians into submission, or de-legitimizing their leadership as well as their human reality, will succeed only in fanning the flames and discrediting the United States even further.

Restoring confidence and hope require the full mustering of US prestige and standing behind a legitimate and politically forceful peace offensive. Without the political will to stand up to Sharon and his occupation agenda of unilateralism, land confiscation, and military control, George W. Bush will not achieve the peace that his Roadmap purports to seek. For a US-brokered peace to succeed,

Ariel Sharon must understand that he does not own the agenda, but that the peoples of the region are in possession of their own futures through a legitimate alternative.

Clearly, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. All the building blocks of peace have been identified and are accessible. Colin Powell's speech of November 19, 2001, articulated the basic framework required for peace: ending the occupation, withdrawal of Israel to the June 4, 1967, lines, removal of settlements, establishing the independent and viable Palestinian state, and bringing about a just and equitable solution to the Palestinian refugee question—all based on the appropriate UN resolutions and the land-for-peace equation.

The road map must include the implementation of all agreements and of the Mitchell and Tenet plans immediately and without any preconditions or forced sequencing. Unconditional negotiations must also proceed immediately with full third-party participation and guarantees, including the United States, Europe, the UN, Arab countries, Russia, and Norway—among others. Mechanisms for even-handed intervention and arbitration must be in place, with the prior consent of the parties to ensure compliance.

On the ground, international monitors must provide the "quiet" and "ceasefire" conditions required for the conduct of the talks. Simultaneously, the reconstruction of all that had been destroyed by Israel must commence, while the Palestinians must commit to the nation-building process that would ensure a genuinely democratic state with full respect for the rule of law and human rights, and with accountable and efficient institutions.

The real need is for the political will on the part of the United States and the international community to stand up to Israel and liberate international policy from the militarism, greed, obstinacy, abuses, and arrogance of the Sharon government. That, in itself, is a good thing, with an intrinsic value. Its impact on peacemaking, on Palestine and Israel, and on the image and credibility of the United States will be beyond measure.

Acknowledgements

The essential movement of international solidarity and non-violent, direct action in Palestine is growing. *Live from Palestine* attempts to convey two tales that have become interwoven in the Middle East as a result of a 35 year-long military occupation: that of the Palestinians who have called upon the world's activists for protection, and that of the North Americans and other internationals who are, in many respects, placing their lives on the line answering that call. This anthology reflects the international movement's diverse influences and perspectives—through an array of narratives that are neither sentimentalized nor sugarcoated—and documents the voices of Palestinian nonviolent activists who have too often been censored from US mainstream media.

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—Laurieann Aladin and Nancy Stohlman
July 9, 2003

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ABDUL JAWAD SALEH is currently a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (Independent). During his 22 years in exile in Jordan he authored several books on the legal implications of Israeli administrative orders in the Occupied Territories. Since the Israelis allowed his return to the West Bank, he has received overwhelming Palestinian electoral support and was appointed the Palestinian Authority's Minister of Agriculture in 1996.

MARK SCHNEIDER is an organizer experienced with the struggles of the environment, poor people of color discriminated against by banks, homeless people asserting their rights, anti-war movements, and the two solidarity movements with the Palestinian and Iraqi people. As a member of the Colorado Campaign for Middle East Peace he joined the Winter 2001 ISM campaign in Palestine, and spent two weeks in Iraq in 2000.

KRISTEN SCHURR spent two months living and working with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza during the Israeli invasion of Spring 2002. She was deported after serving a week in an Israeli prison for delivering food to the Palestinians trapped inside Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. She is a freelance journalist for Free Speech Radio News and a contributor to Democracy Now, WBAI in New York City, and KPFA in Berkeley. Her writing has appeared in *Left Turn, ZNet's Mid-East Watch, CounterPunch, Ms. Magazine,* Cairo's *Al- Ahram,* and NYC's Indymedia.

BEN SCRIBNER worked as a union organizer with janitors in Denver before moving to Boston in 2002 where he helped found Bostontopalestine, a group that organizes activists to join non-violent direct action campaigns in Palestine.

MICHAEL SHAIK is an Australian activist who worked with the International Solidarity Movement in Beit Sahour in Spring 2003.

GHADEER SHAKA'A is a lecturer of Immunology at the Department of Medical Technology at al-Quds University in Abu Dis. She obtained her education at Najah National University and the University of Birmingham. Originally from Nablus, Shaka'a now resides in Ramallah.

ADAM SHAPIRO is an organizer and activist with the International Solidarity Movement. He holds Master's degrees in Political Science from NYU, and in Arab Studies from Georgetown. He is a Ph.D. candidate in International Relations at the American University. Before becoming active

with the ISM, Shapiro spent four years working with Seeds of Peace, a nonprofit, US-based organization working with youth in regions of conflict.

STARHAWK, a committed global justice activist and organizer, is the author or co-author of nine books, including *The Spiral Dance, The Fifth Sacred Thing,* and *Webs of Power: Notes from the Global Uprising.* She is a veteran of progressive movements, from antiwar to anti-nukes, is a highly influential voice in the revival of earth-based spirituality and Goddess religion, and has brought many innovative techniques of spirituality and magic to her political work. Her website is www.starhawk.org.

NANCY STOHLMAN is a Denver writer and the organizer for the Colorado Campaign for Middle East Peace. She was in the West Bank with the International Solidarity Movement during the Spring 2002 incursion, and her journals from Palestine were circulated internationally. She has been published in *Common Dreams, Counterpunch, The Palestine Chronicle, Snowline Poetry Journal,* and *The Bloomsbury Review.* She just completed her first novel, *The Lotus Eaters.*

LINDA WOLF is a social activist, distinguished writer and photographer. She is co-author of *Global Uprising: Confronting the Tyrannies of the 21st Century* and *Daughters of the Moon, Sisters of the Sun.* Wolf resides in Bainbridge Island, Washington.

BRIAN WOOD is a member of the Colorado Campaign for Middle East Peace. He has lived in the West Bank for a year and a half, acting as a witness to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine and as an active nonviolent resister in solidarity with the Palestinians. Immediately after the Spring 2002 incursion, Wood entered the Jenin refugee camp to assist with humanitarian relief efforts, and was part of a group that conducted 40 hour-long interviews with inhabitants of the camp.

Resource Guide

Amnesty International
Working to protect human rights worldwide
www.amnesty.org

B'tselem
Leading Israeli human rights organization
www.btselem.org

Bat Shalom
Feminist peace organization of Israeli women
www.batshalom.org

Christian Peacemaker Team
Full time presence in Al-Haleel (Hebron)
www.prairienet.org/cpt

Colorado Campaign for Middle East Peace
Activist peace and justice organization
www.ccmep.org

Divest from Israel Campaign
Information and links to various divestment campaigns
www.divest-from-israel-campaign.org

Grassroots Protection for the Palestinian People
A project of Palestinian Network of NGOs, with partnership groups in Italy, France and Belgium
www.pngo.net/GIPP

Gush-Shalom
Israeli group for education and action for peace
www.gush-shalom.org

Holy Land Trust
Solidarity with Palestinians for a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land
www.holylandtrust.org

International Solidarity Movement (ISM)
Nonviolent, direct action to confront the Israeli occupation
www.palsolidarity.org

International Women's Peace Service
Human rights advocacy in Palestine
www.womenspeacepalestine.org

Jewish Voice for Peace (San Francisco)
Human, civil and economic rights of all peoples in the Middle East
www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org

Jews Against the Occupation (NYC)
Progressive Jews advocating peace through justice for Palestine and Israel
www.jewsagainsttheoccupation.org

Not In My Name (Chicago)
Jewish peace group
www.nimn.org

Palestinian Centre for Rapprochement between Peoples (Beit Sahour)
Community service, youth programs, and nonviolent peace and justice advocacy
www.rapprochement.org

Palestine Return Center (UK)
Advocacy pertaining to the dispersed Palestinians and their right to return
www.prc.org.uk

Palestine Solidarity Campaign (UK)
Largest British solidarity organization
www.palestinecampaign.org

PEACE NOW (Israel)
Founded 1978 by reserve officers and soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces.
www.peacenow.org.il/English.asp

Voices in the Wilderness
Advocacy to end economic and military warfare against the Iraqi people
www.vitw.org

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Philadelphia)
Peace and justice advocacy since 1915
www.wilpf.org

Health, Family, and Community Development

Health Development Information and Policy Institute (HDIP)
Coordinates health care providers in Palestine
www.hdip.org

The Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC)
Founded in 1979 by Palestinian doctors and health professionals
www.upmrc.org

Humanitarian Aid Organizations

Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS)
Humanitarian services for Palestinians
www.palestinercs.org

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
Provides emergency medical assistance to populations in danger
www.msf.org

Doctors Without Borders
Emergency aid to victims of armed conflict, epidemics, and disasters
www.dwb.org

Media/Educational

Electronic Intifada
News, media analysis, and commentary
www.electronicintifada.net

MIFTAH (Jerusalem) The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy
Dedicated to fostering democracy and good governance within Palestinian society
www.miftah.org

Palestine Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA)(Jerusalem)
History, maps, analysis
www.passia.org

Palestine Chronicle
Independent internet magazine
http://palestinechronicle.com

Palestine Independent Media Center
News and comments
www.jerusalem.indymedia.org

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