

AL-AWDA العوده the RETURN

Voices of Resistance and Liberation

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STOP THE SIEGE!

The War on Gaza - The US/"Israeli" Assault on Palestine

by Charlotte Kates

On June 27, 2006, a new phase of the war against Palestine, and specifically against the people of Gaza, began, when Zionist forces invaded, striking from ground and air, destroying homes, ravaging infrastructure, demolishing bridges, and killing Gaza Palestinians. This invasion followed weeks of assaults upon Gaza that saw a family massacred as they visited the beach, homes and lives shattered by missiles, and repeated assassinations of Palestinian political leaders and resistance activists. Scores of Palestinians have been killed and many more injured, and 64 Palestinian legislators, democratically-elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, city mayors, and cabinet members, seized and held prisoner, joining over 9,400 of their fellow Palestinians as political prisoners held in Zionist jails. This brutal assault of missiles, bombs, tanks and bullets upon the people of Gaza is, however, only the latest step in a long line of genocidal



Palestinians in Ramallah protest the military assault on Gaza and the imprisonment of elected legislators, June 28, 2006.

Zionist attacks upon the Palestinian people, and the most recent intensification of the siege of Palestine by the Zionist state, its ally and patron, the US, and their international cohorts.

Since 1948, in one form or another, Palestine has been under siege. In the West Bank and Gaza, in the refugee camps, in Palestine '48 - Palestinians have been targeted for violent assaults and attempts to isolate them as a people. In Gaza itself, nearly 80% of the population in the small, crowded territory are refugees of 1948 and their descendants, continuing to demand their right to return to their homes, lands and properties from which they were expelled. It has been a long continuation of al-Nakba, inside and outside Palestine. Nevertheless, Palestinians have continued to survive, to struggle and to resist. Against overwhelming military force and a campaign to destroy Palestinian existence, Palestinians have organized, built political institutions, maintained their culture and identity, and refused to relinquish their rights and their identity. In recent years, the assault on Palestine has only escalated, in various guises - through the mass imprisonment of the false "peace" of Oslo, to the rending of Palestinian land in the West Bank through the construction of the massive apartheid wall, to the criminalization of Palestinian organizing and Palestinian resistance by Western governments. Since the Palestinian Legislative Council elections on January

25 and the Hamas victory, the Zionist regime and the US have strikingly intensified their war on the Palestinian people.

International aid - a lifeline in the economically isolated West Bank and Gaza - has been conditioned upon Palestinian acceptance of the unacceptable - the so-called legitimacy of an occupier state built on the dispossession of Palestinian land and the expulsion of the Palestinian people; the relinquishment of the right to resist occupation and oppression, and the one-sided acquiescence to previous "agreements" that have meant nothing but danger and destruction for the Palestinian people. Hamas' victory itself was, in large part, a reflection of the mass rejection of such defeatism among the Palestinian public in the West Bank and Gaza. The overwhelmingly democratic elections have been followed by an onslaught of demands that Palestinians relinquish their rights to resist, to exist, and to reject their dispossession. In addition to the freezing of aid, "Israel" has refused to

turn over taxes collected from Palestinians and belonging to the Palestinian authority; meanwhile, banks, under orders from US and EU governments, have refused to do business with agencies or individuals interacting with the Palestinian Authority, ensuring a cash and financial crisis within the West Bank and Gaza.

As the Zionist military drops its bombs and shoots its missiles into Gaza, the US and its junior partners internationally have joined hand in hand with the Zionist state in an attempt to starve Palestinians into submission through economic isolation and attempts to destroy Palestinian political structures. Those armaments are, by and large, produced in the US and sold by the US to the Zionist military; this military support is part of the \$15 million daily in aid provided to "Israel" by the US. The US has used its international economic and political power to implement the economic siege upon Palestine. Without US economic, military and political support, the siege would, at this level, be impossible. It is the role of the US that renders the situation for Palestinians on the ground so severe and dangerous. Palestinians holding foreign passports are now routinely denied access to the West Bank and Gaza, including those who have lived there for decades; Palestinian Authority officials are forced to bring cash on their persons from Egypt in order to pay the most basic of

salaries. All of these attempts at starvation and at international economic and political isolation have continued as the Zionist state attempts to create a civil war among Palestinians, providing political support to any and all forces who would relinquish Palestinian national rights while claiming to represent Palestinians, and encouraging armed conflict between Palestinian political forces while seeking to bolster right-wing Palestinian political forces, like those within the Fatah party under President Mahmoud Abbas who were willing to accede to Zionist demands. Thus, the siege of Palestine has been multifaceted - political, economic, and military - to devastating effect on the ground.

Despite the assault, Palestinians have continued to resist and to struggle for survival. Palestinians have held fast to their national rights - to return, to resistance, to liberate their land. Yet the effects of the siege are severe; the dead in Gaza and the West Bank, the ongoing assassinations and imprisonment of political activists and leaders, the rising levels of malnutrition and the numerous Palestinians living in poverty, their economic ties to Palestinian communities and families in exile abroad threatened by policies of isolation. As this war on Palestine has continued to rage, international agencies have, by and large, stood aside and allowed the siege to continue, despite the massive humanitarian crisis threatened as a result of economic strangulation and military assaults. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has cautioned "Israel" to "exercise restraint," yet rarely has an international agency questioned the legitimacy of the war on the Palestinian people.

On the contrary, it has been the Palestinian resistance - an indigenous resistance of a nation held under a brutal occupation, of millions forced from their homes and lands, of a people subject to colonial aggression and imperialist war - who have come in for attack. In fact, the state of siege only highlights the heroism of all forms of Palestinian resistance, from the mothers who brave starvation to raise Palestinian children in Palestine, to the demonstrators who march against the apartheid wall tearing through their land, to the freedom fighters who take up arms in defense of their land and their people. On June 25, 2006, in retaliation for the repeated attacks on Gaza that killed 21 Palestinians, Palestinian resistance forces raided a Zionist military outpost,

Al-Awda Convention Comes to San Francisco

Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, and the General Union of Palestine Students at SFSU are proud to announce the Fourth International Al-Awda Convention on July 14-16, 2006 in San Francisco, CA. It will be a strategic planning conference focused on adapting to shifting realities and rising to meet the challenges of our era. In working for return, we will highlight two main themes:

- *Political and material isolation of the State of Israel,
- *Political and material support of the Palestinian refugee population.

The opening program and dinner will be held on Friday night with keynote speakers Dr. Salman Abu Sitta and Prof. Rabab Abdulhadi. The conference will be devoted to political assessments, breakout sessions on organizing of refugee support, divestment from Israel, and planning for the coming year as well as workshops on organizing in different sectors, and arriving at concrete resolutions recommended by the separate breakout sessions. We intend to make Return-to-Palestine central to all aspects of pro-Palestine organizing.

Confirmed speakers at the convention include Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, Michel Shehadeh, Rabab Abdulhadi, and Asaad Abu Khalil. Workshops will include discussions of the important advances in Palestinian community organizing, divestment for the right to return, solidarity organizing, and labor movement solidarity with Palestine, as well as sessions focusing on youth work, gender justice, student organizing and political prisoners. Our songs of resistance and dabkeh will be featured by Al-Juzoor band.

About the Convention

Fifty-eight years have passed since the great catastrophe (al-Nakba) that resulted in the imposition in Palestine of 'Israel', one of the most exclusionary-racist states in modern history, and the displacement of the largest and longest suffering refugee population in modern times. Despite the passage of time, the resilience of our people succeeded in internationalizing our struggle and accumulating a number of important victories. With continued proper and expanded coordination and participation, perseverance will lead to a qualitative shift in public understanding and political balance of power in our favor.

As Palestinians, we are tasked to link the narratives of our parents and grandparents who grew up in the shade of an orange or olive tree in the coastal towns of Yafa, Akka or Haifa, or driven out of Lifta, Ramle, Deir Yassin or Lyd carrying their house keys close to their hearts, to the generation that witnessed unspeakable atrocities under the tin roofs of Shatila, Bus, Jenin, Jabalia and Dheishah, to our generation and our struggles. We are tasked with materializing return to our homeland and dismantling the racist-exclusionary character of the state imposed in our land by its foreign occupiers. Despite the continued expansion of this catastrophe beyond Palestine, we stand at a critical turning point in history afforded to us by the unshakable perseverance and resilience of our people. That we now represent a "demographic threat" to

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A Historical View: "Israeli" Arms Sales to Latin America

("Israel" has long been a supplier of arms to oppressive states, specifically other US client states. As the US arms its client state, the Zionist entity in Palestine, in turn, "Israel" arms others. The following article, from the Palestine Information Bulletin issued by the P.L.O., was printed in 1981 and presents a historical view of "Israeli" practices. Source: Palestine: P.L.O. information bulletin 1-15 September 1981, Vol. 7 No. 15)

The Israeli arms industry is older than the state itself. One can trace its beginnings to the small underground workshops that, before and during the 1948 war, manufactured and repaired various types of light arms, ammunition, light aircraft armoured cars and many types of military hardware used in the initial conquest of Palestine and the eviction of more than a million of its Arab population.

These workshops were incorporated after Israel's creation into the military concerns. The Israeli plants concentrated initially on the production of small arms, mainly Uzi sub-machine guns and ammunition, and on the upkeep of the weapons that Israel bought from other countries, after the 1967 war. But to some extent before that, Israel decided to channel its resources into the development of original weapons systems or obtaining the necessary data to build weapons systems developed by other countries.

The Kfir plane, for example, is a pirated version of the French Mirage 2000 (with a U.S. engine). The Galil gun is an improved copy of the Russian AK47 Kelashnikov. Most of Israel's missiles use pirated U.S. technology, while some of U.S. naval systems are pirated from British designs. Israel now designs and constructs a wide range of weapons.

It makes small arms, mortars, air-to-air, sea-to-sea and surface-to-surface missiles which can be altered to accommodate nuclear war heads, armoured personnel carriers, gun and torpedo boats, Kfir combat planes and Merkava tanks.

Such a large arms industry cannot survive on local consumption, and since Israel cannot compete with U.S. and European manufacturers in the so-called legitimate arms market, it had to sell its weapons to those states which found it difficult to buy arms from the other manufacturers. These states are mostly headed by the brutal and reactionary regimes in the world.

El Salvador: The present regime in El Salvador holds on to power through the organised terror of its army and gangs of murderers who carry out massacres.

According to the Stockholm Institute for peace studies, and opposition sources in El Salvador, Israel has been sending military experts and advisors to aid the regime.

Guatemala: The Guatemalan regime is infamous for completely destroying demonstrating stu-

dents as its method of social control. Following reports on atrocities, the Carter regime in the U.S. removed discontinued arms shipments to Guatemala. Following the U.S. move the Guatemalan Chief of Staff, accompanied by an Israeli arms dealer, Marcus Katz, arrived in Israel for a visit.

On his return home, he assure his government that its "arsenal will be refilled by Israel" according to foreign sources. International reports reveal that 38 percent of Guatemala's arms imports come from Israel.

Nicaragua: Somoza, semi-feudal dictator of Nicaragua whose regime was toppled in July, 1979, after a long and bloody civil war, was one of Israel's best customers. The full extent of the Israeli deals there only came to light after his fall. According to one Israeli source, Israel supplied Somoza with 98 percent of his military imports and continued to send him arms until the last days before his fall. A series of articles in Davar in November 1979 by Nahom Barnia and Jozef Prial exposed Israel's links with Somoza. The two journalists were more concerned

with Israel's image abroad and large commission paid to death dealers.

On May 8, 1978, they quoted, a letter from Elhanan Har-Lev, representative of the Israeli army in South America to Yaakov Shapira, deputy director of the Israeli Ministry of Defense for Military Exports stating that Galil guns were supplied directly to special terror units under the leadership of Somoza's son and are used to kill worsen and children.

Colombia Seeks Arms in Israel

The Colombian Defense Minister General Carlos Camacho Leyva was on a visit to Israel on January 16, 1981. He was said to have inspected the production line for manufacture of the Kfir fighter aircraft. Three of Israel's generals were revealed to have some connections with Chile and Argentina. This was in an article in Ha'aretz

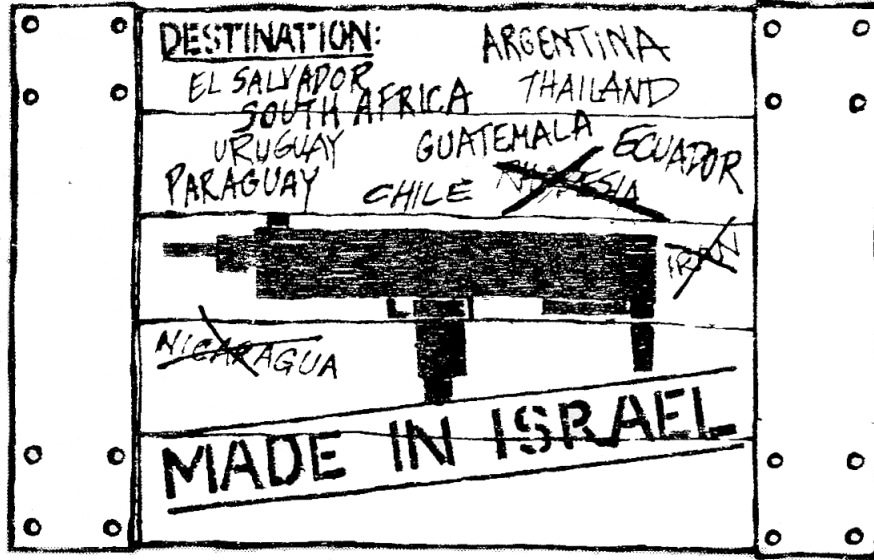
(an Israeli newspaper) an August 10, 1978. The first general was ex-Chief of Staff, General Haim Laskov who visited Buenos Aires in May 1978. He met with the Argentinean Chief of Staff and had talks with him and other high ranking officers. The second general was Mordechai Hod, former commander of the Israeli air force, and the third general was Mordechai Gur, former Chief of Staff who went to Argentina directly from Chile where he had met with the dictator, Pinochet. The article states that these visits resulted in Israel winning arms sales contracts.

A series of articles published in March 1977 in Ha'aretz dealt with Israel's arms sales to Ecuador. The usual array of weapons ranging from small arms to Kfir fighters was on offer. A group of Israelis, headed by General Rehava'am Ze'evi, then Prime Minister Rabin's adviser on counter-insurgency warfare, were said to have offered to supply Ecuador with advanced equipment and personnel for counter-insurgency services.

Israel Now No. 5 in Arms sales

Israel's \$1.6 billion arms sale last year (1980) made it the fifth largest military exporter, according to a recent CIA report. Nevertheless Israeli sales are expected to increase in 1981, because of Reagan's relaxation of restrictions on sale of Kfir fighters to Latin America. The Reagan administration argues that permitting the sales of Israeli weapons with US engines or components helps Israel pay for its American debts - and reduce its huge outstanding debts to the U.S.

On July 8, 1981 the New York Times reported that an international panel selected by UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim concluded that Israel can make nuclear weapons "within a very short time". The panel named in 1979 calculates that Israel may already have obtained weapons-grade material for making several bombs comparable to the bomb dropped on Nagasaki in 1945. The panel estimates that Israel's Dimona reactor, which is not subject to international inspection, could have produced enough weapons-grade platinum for 10 or 15 atomic bombs.



New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine: Who We Are

New Jersey Solidarity--Activists for the Liberation of Palestine is a grassroots organization dedicated to resistance and action in support of the Palestinian struggle for justice, national liberation, human rights and self-determination. We are dedicated to building coalitions, educating the public, spreading awareness, and organizing actions and events that highlight the pressing need for justice and spotlight ways in which we may take part in securing meaningful justice in Palestine. We are committed to standing in solidarity with the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people, supporting Palestinian resistance, and developing a strong and united resistance movement in the United States in solidarity with the liberation of Palestine.

As a movement, we are committed to standing firmly against racism and all forms of oppression, and to working in solidarity with liberation struggles of people around the world against imperialism and colonialism. We draw lessons and inspiration from earlier and continuing movements for liberation within the United States and around the world, and from the history of Palestinian resistance. Within the United States, we are committed to acting against all forms and structures of oppression, standing in solidarity with all movements for justice, and securing a foreign policy that rejects imperialism and embraces international human rights and economic and social justice. We are dedicated to exposing and highlighting the role of the United States in furthering injustice and oppression in Palestine, and call for an immediate end to all U.S. aid--political, military and economic--to Israel. We recognize our natural solidarity with all anti-racist struggles and the struggles of indigenous peoples and will work to expand our links of solidarity.

We are committed to several primary principles of unity to guide our organizing. We call for an immediate end to the Israeli occupation of all Palestinian territories, the recognition of the full, non-negotiable human right of return for all Palestinian refugees, and full political, social and economic equality under law for all people in historic Palestine. We are opposed to the existence of the apartheid colonial settler state of Israel, as it is based on the racist ideology of Zionism and is an expression of colonialism and imperialism, and we stand for the total liberation of all of historic Palestine. As an anti-racist, anti-imperialist movement, we support equality and justice for all peoples and all religious identities.

As a solidarity movement, we are committed to working fully in support of the Palestinian people's resistance movement. We unconditionally support Palestinians' human right to resist occupation and oppression by any means necessary. We are committed to building unity at local, national and international levels in order to provide the international support needed by the Palestinian people in their struggle for liberation, and we invite all that share this commitment to join us in struggle. For more information, please see <http://www.newjerseysolidarity.org/>.

Al-Awda is published monthly by New Jersey Solidarity-Activists for the Liberation of Palestine. We welcome submissions, letters to the editor, cultural works, and other proposals for publication.

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Our editorial collective is responsible for editing, laying out and developing this publication. We are open to new members who are in accord with the mission and principles of this newspaper.

Please contact us about your upcoming events and activities of interest to readers of this publication.

Please contact us for advertising rates and information, or for material on becoming a distributor.

Balata Film Collective: Resisting Occupation through Film

by Noel Winkler

Balata Refugee Camp is one of the most hard-hit communities in Palestine's West Bank. The over 30,000 residents, refugees of the 1948 Nakba, live in a heavily militarized zone where tear gas, gunshots, and military searches are a part of everyday life. Full scale invasions by Zionist militant forces disrupt daily life regularly in Balata. In 2006 alone, Balata has endured incursions in February and May.

But the people of Balata continue to struggle against occupation and oppression. They have built community organizations and centers which allow them to celebrate and defend against the extinction of their culture. One such community project is the Balata Film Collective.

The Balata Film Collective describes its work as an important means of both resistance and communication. The collective was initiated to enable young Palestinians from Balata to break their isolation, challenge their oppression and represent their lives to the world.



A still from "Nour's Dream," the new film from the Balata Film Collective. (Balata Film Collective)

In May 2006 solidarity activists in the U.S. worked with members of the collective to arrange a visit and tour of three collective members. New Jersey Solidarity hosted stops on the tour at the New Brunswick Public Library in New Jersey, and at The Bridge Gallery in New York. The latter event was co-sponsored by Al Jisser Group and Al-Awda New York.

The tour was organized nationally by a collective of activists who have spent time in Balata and worked with the filmmakers. Over the course of months, they labored to raise the funds for travel expenses to the U.S. and arranged for events in Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, Minneapolis, New Jersey and New York. The collective's new film, "Nour's Dream" produced by the Yafa Cultural Centre, was shown at the events, including at the renowned Chicago Palestine Film Festival.

The tour was to have featured Balata Film Collective members Ruby Said, Mohammed Hajhamad and collective co-founder Mohammed Farraj. But the Zionist occupier, bent on controlling every aspect of Palestinian existence, refused to allow Mohammed Farraj to travel, even after he secured a visa from the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem.

Even so, audiences across the U.S. were treated to the opportunity to view and discuss the work of the Balata Film Collective with Ruby Said and Mohammed Hajhamad.

Ruby became active in the Balata Film Collective in Spring of 2005. Since then, she has participated in the making of 5 short films and the documentary film "Nour's Dream".

Detroit Declaration: Organizing the Palestinian Community in the US

June 25, 2006 - Thirty-two Palestinian organizers and activists from across the U.S. gathered in suburban Detroit, Michigan on the weekend of June 23rd-25th 2006, marking the first politically diverse national meeting of Palestinians in the U.S. since 1988. This grouping is NOT a new organization, and in no way intends to become one. It is a loose network of activists and preexisting groups and in no way seeks to take the place of already existing groups. The meeting participants agreed, by consensus, to issue the following statement reflecting the results of the meeting.

The Detroit meeting comes at a critical time when Palestinians are facing a political impasse and a political and economic siege. It also comes in response to a call issued by participants of the Palestinian Shataat (Exile) Conference in Geneva held in December 2005. At the Shataat conference, Palestinians gathered from Europe, North and South America, Australia and the Arab World to discuss the need to re-invigorate grass-roots organizing and rebuild community-based institutions within the framework of a reformed, democratic, inclusive and genuinely representative Palestinian National Council.

The Detroit meeting sought to gather Palestinians, irrespective of political affiliations or community and organizational membership, with a focus on developing ways to mobilize the Palestinian community in the US to affirm our Palestinian narrative and assert our rights to:

- * self-determination and equality,
- * return of the refugees to their original homes, lands, properties and villages (a natural right supported by international law and UN Resolution 194); and
- * End of Zionist occupation and colonization of Palestine, including Jerusalem.

The participants who hailed from California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Virginia and Washington D.C., represented the entire Palestinian political spectrum, several generations of Palestinians in the US, and a rich pool of organizing experience.

After a weekend of intense deliberation, brainstorming, and strategizing, the participants have committed to:

- 1) Empower the Palestinian community and its existing grassroots organizations across the U.S. We believe that empowerment of our community hinges on its ability to live in relative security and safety. For this reason, we seek to address the community's interest as

Ruby is also a women's rights activist and a secretary at the Yafa Cultural Center where she coordinates children's activities.



A still from "Nour's Dream," the new film from the Balata Film Collective. (Balata Film Collective)

Mohammed Hajhamad, director of "Nour's Dream," has run many drama programs and summer camps for children in Balata Camp, and he is the head theater trainer of A'edoon ("We Will Return") Dabke and Art Theater group in Balata Camp's Yafa Cultural Center.

Many of the short films produced by the collective are available for download at <http://www.balatacamp.net>. The films serve as a powerful tool allowing the Palestinians of Balata to present their struggle to the world in their own voice.

The May 2006 tour aimed to raise funds to help the collective with its ongoing projects, including the building of a theater in Balata, training children, youth and adults on how to make documentaries and how to use cameras to deliver their ideas. They look for-



A still from "Nour's Dream," the new film from the Balata Film Collective. (Balata Film Collective)

ward to being invited to participate in future film festivals to deliver their ideas to the world.

Ruby and Mohammed suggested that one of the best ways for individuals and organizations in the U.S. to assist them in their work is to secure recording equipment, such as cameras, film and digital media for them. Al Jisser Group, co-sponsor of the New York tour stop, has committed itself to raising funds for this purpose.

members of the Palestinian national body as well as its particular concerns as activists, organizers, recent immigrants, youth, women, and workers who face particular challenges in the US. We seek to accomplish this by establishing a loose network of Palestinian activists and organizations at a national level and focusing on three campaigns in the US—BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions), breaking the siege, and media advocacy.

- 2) Build for the US Popular Palestinian National Conference to take place no later than 2008—the 60th Anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. We seek to make the Conference as inclusive as possible—shaped by input generated amongst local Palestinian communities across the U.S. as well as a preparatory meeting set for November 2006.

Many similar initiatives have already started in Europe, with incredibly successful results, including a conference held in Sweden in May 2006, attracting 5,000 Palestinians. We believe we have the ability to convene a similar conference in the US and that it is our duty to help shape our national ambitions as Palestinians, given our unique posture as US citizens and residents who are part of the social fabric of the immigrant community in the U.S. In addition to our national struggle, which seeks to triumph in an existential battle against Israeli colonialism and occupation, Palestinians in the U.S. are also struggling against racism, discrimination, political repression, and anti-immigrant policies. This community must rise up once again as it did in the heyday of the Palestinian American activism and organizing of the late 70s and 80s. Although we have faced serious blows and attacks, we should note the victory of Aiad Barakat as a turning point in our activism. After a lengthy 19 year court battle in the landmark case of the L.A. 8, which sought to persecute Palestinian activism, Barakat can finally live his life in relative normalcy after being granted U.S. citizenship against all odds.

We are calling upon our community to celebrate this landmark victory by revitalizing our grassroots activism, speaking confidently for ourselves, and maximizing our potential as the agents of change in our collective struggle for justice, return, and liberation.

Join us in rebuilding Palestinian activism in the US and building for the US popular Palestinian National Conference in 2008.

For information re the proceedings in the June 23-25 Detroit meeting, please send an e-mail to Munadel al-Abed mmonadel@yahoo.com or Noura Erakat noo194@yahoo.com.

Does the Tail Wag the Dog?

Why the US is hell-bent on supporting "Israel", Part 1

by Bill Cecil

Here's a bit of Palestinian history. It begins in Clermont, a city in France. The year is 1095, and nobles and clerics are gathered to hear the words of Pope Urban II. He tells them a lurid tale. Christians in Muslim-ruled Palestine are being forcibly circumcised and their blood spilled on the tomb of Christ. He urges the Christians of Europe, "rich and poor," to take up arms and free the "Holy Land" from a "base race that worships demons," as he calls Muslims.

Like Bush's tales of Iraqi WMDs and Qaeda connections, the Pope's story was a complete invention. Christians and other religious minorities in the Muslim Middle East enjoyed much more freedom than did non-Christians in feudal Europe.

It didn't matter. The assembled lords and clerics ordered, "God wills it," and the Crusades began. Four years later Christian knights seized Al Quds (Jerusalem) and massacred its Muslim and Jewish inhabitants. The pious knights also grabbed all the gold and silver they could find. For the next two centuries, generation after generation of European knights "took up the cross" to kill and be killed on battlefields from Akka to Edessa.

It could have been called a quagmire. Irrational. Religious zeal gone mad. But for the European feudal order and its political party, the Catholic Church, the Crusades were needed. The feudal lords of western Europe were running out of land. Because of the law of primogeniture--inheritance by the firstborn male--the country was filled with landless junior knights and nobles, and they became armies of plunderers. Constant wars and raiding hurt the incomes of kings, lords and bishops.

At Clermont the Pope made direct appeal to these disinherited parasites: "Let those who for a long time have been robbers now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians. Let those who have been serving as mercenaries for small pay now obtain the eternal reward."

The medieval Church, by the way, didn't only launch Crusades against Muslims. Saxons, French "heretics", Lithuanians, Latvians and Eastern Orthodox Slavs were also butchered in the name of Christ. The leaders of the Fourth Crusade (1204) decided it was too much trouble to go all the way to Palestine and looted Greek Orthodox Constantinople instead.

THE NEW CRUSADES

Today, many people feel that US policy in the Middle East is irrational. Decades of support for Israeli racism has antagonized Arab and Muslim lands, which hold the largest known oil reserves. And it is said to have made the US a target for "Islamic terrorism."

In the 1973 war, Nixon's backing of Israel brought the US and USSR to the nuclear brink. It led to the OPEC oil embargo and price hikes that (bad) economists say caused a global recession.

Now, Bush's occupation of Iraq is wearing down the U.S. military and running up the deficit. But instead of pulling out, the Bush regime--in concert with Israel--is planning war against Iran. A war that would likely coincide with an Israeli attack on Syria and the Palestine Authority. A war that could mean confrontation with Russia and China. A war that could turn nuclear.

What could possibly explain such madness? Bush's alleged stupidity? Die-hard Christian fundamentalist Armageddon ideology, which includes a strong belief in Israel? Or the decades-long influence in Washington of the American Israeli Public Action Committee, the notorious Israel Lobby.

The latter view has gained increased attention because of a widely circulated paper called "The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy."

It is written by professors John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago Political Science Department and Stephen Walt of the JFK School of Government at Harvard. Their conclusions are supported by progressive writers like James Petras. But they are wrong.

The paper accurately details the vast financial and political support that the US has lavished on Israel. "Washington has provided Israel with a level of support dwarfing that given to any other state. It has been the largest annual recipient of direct economic and military assistance since 1976, and is the largest recipient in total since World War Two, to the tune of well over \$140 billion (in 2004 dollars). Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct assistance each year, roughly one-fifth of the foreign aid budget, and worth about \$500 a year for every Israeli. ...

"Other recipients get their money in quarterly installments, but Israel receives its entire appropriation at the beginning of each fiscal year and can thus earn interest on it. Most recipients of aid given for military purposes are required to spend all of it in the US, but Israel is allowed to use roughly 25 per cent of its allocation to subsidise its own defence industry. It is the only recipient that does not have to account for how the aid is spent, which makes it virtually impossible to prevent the money from being used for purposes the US opposes, such as building settlements on the West Bank. Moreover, the US has provided Israel with nearly \$3 billion to develop weapons systems, and given it access to such top-drawer weaponry as Blackhawk helicopters and F-16 jets. Finally, the US gives Israel access to intelligence it denies to its Nato allies and has turned a blind eye to Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons."

It asks, "Why has the US been willing to set aside its own security and that of many of its allies in order to advance the interests of another state?" It concludes that the Israel Lobby "has managed to divert US foreign policy far from what American national interest would otherwise dictate."

What the professors fail to understand--or at least pretend not to--is that the US is not "one nation, indivisible." It is a class society. As President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed, "The business of America is business." When politicians, Republican or

Democratic, speak of "our national interest," they mean what makes Wall Street richer. And U.S. actions in the Middle East--from arming the Israeli war machine to invading Iraq--have made Wall Street, especially Big Oil, very rich indeed.

Yes, the Israel Lobby does exist. So do racist cops. But it is not the bigots on the beat who make the decisions that cause mass unemployment in Black communities and the mass imprisonment of Black youth. That is done by people of wealth and power. The police are among their enforcers.

The board members of AIPAC may be wealthier than the average cop. But they are small fry compared to the Rockefellers, Morgans, Duponts and other corporate dynasties who own the real wealth of this country. AIPAC and other Zionist organizations are powerful. But their power rests on their utility to Corporate America and the Military-Industrial Complex.

THIS GUN FOR HIRE

From its inception in 19th-century Europe, Zionism was a mercenary movement. While brave Jewish workers fought and died for socialist ideals, the founders of Zionism shopped their services to competing colonial powers. The offer: You sponsor our settlements, and we will defend your colonial interests.

In 1902, Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, wrote in his diary, "The figures in my chess game now are Cecil Rhodes (with whom I am to meet after his return from Scotland); Roosevelt, the new President (through Gotthiel); the King of England (through the Bishop of Ripon); the Czar (through General Von Hess), etc."

To Rhodes, the British plunderer who created Rhodesia, Herzl wrote, "You are being invited to help make history. That cannot frighten you nor will you laugh at it. ... It doesn't involve Africa but a piece of Asia Minor, not Englishmen but Jews. But had this been on your path, you would have done it by now. ... How then do I happen to turn to you? Because it is something colonial."

Herzl also wrote to Lord Rothschild: "You may claim high credit from your government if you strengthen English influence east of the Mediterranean by a great colonization of our people at a middle point of Egyptian and Indo-Persian interests."

Herzl may have thought he was manipulating captains and kings. But the Zionist project in Palestine only became reality when the British crown found it useful to, in the words of U.S. agent William Yale, "introduce another power in opposition to Islam, a power that would be a protection to the Suez Canal, a people under eternal obligation to the British." Eliazer Liebenstein of the Zionist Labor Party wrote in 1934, "England needs the Jews in order to prevent the Arabs from becoming too strong and in order to have protection against an Arab movement which aims at emancipation of a united Arab Middle Orient from English domination."

Vladimir Jabotinsky, founder of the terrorist Irgun Zvai Leumi and forefather of the Likud Party, also put it clearly: "Should Palestine remain Arab, Palestine would follow the orbit of Arab destinies--federation of Arab countries and elimination of all traces of European influence. But a Palestine predominantly Jewish, Palestine as a Jewish state ... will in the interests of its own preservation always

seek to lean upon some powerful Empire, non-Arab and non-Mohammedan ... This is an almost providential basis for a permanent alliance between England and a Jewish (but only a Jewish) Palestine."

Socialists of the time understood the game. At its 1918 conference, the British Socialist Party called the Balfour Declaration a "veiled attempt at the annexation of Palestine and also a means to enlist the assistance of Jews the world over for the imperialist ends of Great Britain and its Allies." The resolution warned that "the conversion of Palestine into a Jewish State would mean the Jews would be used as a tool by the capitalists all over the world."

British troops and British-armed and -trained Zionist settlers worked together in the '20s and '30s to drive Palestinian peasants off their land and suppress the Arab independence struggle. The Haganah, Israel's future army, was armed and trained by the British to protect the British-owned pipeline that brought Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean. If insurgents attacked the pipeline, the Haganah would strike the nearest village.

It took 40,000 British troops and terror bombing by the Royal Air force to crush the 1936-38 revolt in Palestine. But facing war with Germany, Britain felt compelled to try and limit Zionist settlement. This concession to the Arab struggle led some Zionist groups to attack British targets--a limited struggle that could be compared to contradictions between Britain and white settlers in Rhodesia or the Unionist gangs in northern Ireland. But by this time powerful forces in the U.S. were supporting the Zionist project. As early as 1918, Yale had predicted, "A Jewish state in Palestine will inevitably fall under the control of American Jews, who will work out along Jewish lines American ideas and American civilization; a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine will develop into an outpost in the Orient."

Said David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister: "The center of gravity of our political efforts had shifted from Britain to America, who was making sure of being the world's leading power."

In 1945, Walter Lippman, who coined the phrase "American Century," wrote, "We must be present in the Middle East--present somewhere, for example, at the port of Haifa, exercising influence not only from the distance of Washington, but influence radiating from some local point of actual American power."

The timing was no coincidence. The U.S., victorious in World War II, was moving to replace Britain, France, Belgium and Holland as the economic overlord of Africa and Asia. The 1945 Quincy Agreement between President Roosevelt and Saudi King Abdel Aziz had guaranteed the Rockefeller-owned Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAM-

(continued on pg. 5)



Inside the Lines: Dawud Assad

by Nazreen Cama

It was well before sunrise, early in the morning of April 9, 1948. Dawud Assad, like most everyone in the peaceful village of Deir Yassin, was asleep. Deir Yassin was at the time surrounded on all sides but the west by Zionist occupiers, but a sort of gentleman's agreement existed between them and the native Palestinians of Deir Yassin; neither side wanted to engage in armed struggle. The Zionist occupiers had left westerly passage through which the Palestinians of Deir Yassin could enter and leave their village unharmed.

Dawud, age 17 at the time, shared a bedroom with his grandmother, his six-year-old sister, and his two-year old brother. At approximately four in the morning, the family heard shooting outside. Dawud and his grandmother assumed that it was the Zionists shooting at each other. What else could it be? Fifteen minutes later, when more shots rang out, the family became worried and looked out the window to the west. All that could be seen was fire.



Dawud Assad, speaking in New York City April 9, 2006. (Photo: Noel Winkler)

Dawud and his family ran upstairs to the roof and saw how close the fire actually was. As the shooting continued, it became clear that the village was under siege. This was not Zionist attacking Zionist; it was a deliberate attack on the peaceful village. From the rooftop, Dawud and his family could see what would later be confirmed as commandos sent in from the Irgun and the Stern Gang storming their sanctuary, at the orders of Menachem Begin.

The Zionists were attacking from all sides. There appeared to be no means of escape, and Dawud's family, in the darkness of the early morning broken only by hostile fire, became deathly afraid. Dawud's uncle, a medaled officer from the former Ottoman military, was on the roof shooting back, desperately trying to protect what was rightfully his. Dawud stood by his uncle and watched the scene unfold with utter horror and disbelief.

In the house, confusion ensued. At the village border, armored cars were trying to scale two ditches surrounding the village. The ditches had been built by the Ottomans to protect Deir Yassin. Attempting to keep the Zionist commandos and their tactical vehicles out of Deir Yassin, villagers had left piles of dirt on both sides of the two ditches, hoping to render them impassable. But the Zionists went underneath and filled in the gaps with dirt, allowing their armored cars to pass into the village.

Dawud and his uncle, alone on the roof, went back downstairs into their house. Dawud's grandmother and two younger siblings were already there. By this time, however, two Zionist commandos, both female, had entered the house. Suddenly, Dawud's uncle fell to the floor. He was too old to out outrun the commandos. One of them shot at him and he went down. To add to the insult, the second female commando fired a round of shots into Dawud's dead uncle. Dawud, his grandmother, and his sister and brother witnessed all of it.

Dawud ran as fast as he knew how. He ran towards the west, the only possible route of escape he could think of. He got low to the ground and dragged himself on his

belly and crawled westward. Suddenly, a deafening noise stopped him. A Zionist had just shot at him, aiming to kill. Fortunately, Dawud was close enough to the ground that only some of his hair got shot off. By this time, Dawud was beyond fear.

It soon became clear that the Zionists were taking captives. Dawud's mother and six-year-old sister were both taken captive and brought into the house where the Zionists were holding all of their prisoners. But Dawud's two-year-old brother wanted some bread to eat. Their grandmother took the small child to the center of the village, in search of both bread and the boy's captive mother.

Suddenly, Dawud's grandmother and two-year-old brother fell to the ground. The Haganeh, which had slated the removal of Palestinians from Deir Yassin as part of Plan Dalet, had shot them in cold blood. Dawud's six-year-old sister had been quick enough to move out of the way when she saw her approaching grandmother and brother crumple to the ground. The Haganeh gave her some sugar and took her to the house being used to hold captives, and she was reunited with her mother there, who had already been captured.

Dawud's mother desperately wanted news of her family. Dawud's six-year-old sister told their mother that her grandmother and little brother had been shot and were lying in the middle of the street. Dawud's mother begged an officer to take her to see for herself. The officer brought her to the bodies, and she saw Dawud's grandmother covered in blood. However, there was no blood on her two-year-old son. Could he be alive?

Dawud's mother reached down to take his little hand to see if he was still alive. The officers told her to put his hand down or she would be shot. She was taken back to the captive house, never knowing if her son had still been alive. Inside the captive house, children were screaming because they were scared of the grenades the Zionists had begun throwing at them. Why grenades? Surely this was too much. Dawud's sister explained that since some Zionists had been killed by the villagers defending themselves, the Zionists responded by lobbing grenades at everyone and everything.

The Zionist officers then told the captives to take all their clothes off so that all of their jewelry could be removed and stolen. For many of the women forced to strip, wearing jewelry had always been a way to carry one's wealth wherever one went. Now even this was being stolen. The naked captives were then paraded through the Zionist settlements surrounding Deir Yassin on all sides but the west.

As news of the massacre, al Nakba, spread, family from other parts of Palestine desperately tried to enter Deir Yassin to find their loved ones. Dawud's father, who had been in Gaza, made it to the house of captives, which was near the Jaffar gate. Anyone who was still alive from the village was in that house. Relatives came and cried the names of those they hoped to find. "Fatima! Maryam! Ali!" called Dawud's father. But only his wife, Dawud, and six-year-old daughter were left alive.

In a Red Cross report which the Zionists tried to destroy, it was noted that at least 250 villagers had been brutally murdered, and their bodies had been stuffed down a well. The British, who were supposed to be a protective force in the area, had been too afraid of the uncontrollable invading Zionists to even dare come near the village and help their Palestinian protectorates.

Today, Dawud Assad lives in Edison with his wife, and is very active in the Arab-American community. His story is one we must never forget. It reminds us that the Zionists lied when they claimed there was no one living in the land they had slated to steal. To this day, Zionist expansion continues, and Palestinian villages are destroyed home by home, tree by tree. We must not sit by and complacently allow this brutality to continue. We must remember al Nakba and the precedent it set for future generations of Zionists.

Dawud still holds firm to his belief of the right to return. It is something that will never die in the Palestinian diaspora, and must not. The genocide practiced by the Zionists even before the divisions of Palestine 48 was left unchecked by the British out of fear for their own lives. After all, even though Palestine was still under British rule until May 1948, the Zionists were killing the British in Palestine and hanging them from trees. We must not let the memory of the Deir Yassin massacre fade. Every Palestinian has the right to return to his or her original homeland, no matter how brutally it was originally seized and occupied by the Zionists.

(cont. from page 4)

CO) a stranglehold on Arabian oil.

But no more than in Latin America could Corporate America depend on the good will of the people it was robbing or the stability of hated regimes. U.S. plunder of Latin America was backed up by the U.S. Marine Corps. In the oil-rich Middle East, Corporate America needed an enforcer on the spot. One that could serve U.S. interests with what covert-operations types call "plausible deniability."

President Truman strong-armed the UN General Assembly into partitioning Palestine for the same reason he created the CIA, launched a genocidal war in Korea and helped Winston Churchill massacre Greek Resistance fighters. It was all part of building a global empire for U.S. monopolies.

The Israeli state owes its existence and power to U.S. dollars and political support. And virtually everything it has done, every war it has waged, has directly benefitted Big Oil, Wall Street, the Pentagon and the U.S. Military-Industrial Complex.

Yes, Israel has its own wishes--so does an attack dog on a leash. But it cannot realize those wishes without its master's approval. The Israeli newspaper Haaretz summed up the relationship in 1953: "Israel is to be kind of a watchdog. Israel's job is to punish one or a number of neighboring countries whose lack of politeness to the West becomes too much." The article continued, "One must not fear Israel will use a violent policy against the Arab countries if this would be clearly against the interests of America and Britain."

Of course, to understand how Israel serves U.S. corporate interests it is necessary to understand what those interests are. And that is something both media and politicians do their best to obscure.

BLOOD AND OIL

There is a slogan in the antiwar movement: "No blood for oil." It's a catchy chant, but it's misleading. U.S. corporations covet Middle East oil primarily as a commodity--a source of profit. Long before the U.S. imported a drop of oil from the Middle East, seven U.S. and British firms monopolized the world oil market through their ownership of Arab and Iranian fields. Iraqi crude, which cost 7 cents a barrel to produce in 1960, was sold by the oil majors for the same price as oil from the U.S., which averaged \$1.73 a barrel to produce.

Such practices brought U.S. oil companies \$13 billion in profits from their Middle East holdings between 1948 and 1960. That was half the return on all overseas investment by U.S. companies in those years.

But this lucrative arrangement was jeopardized by the anticolonial tide sweeping Asia, Africa and Latin America, including the Arab world. The 1952 Egyptian Revolution, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, toppled a British-imposed king, nationalized the Suez Canal and used its income to set up an institute to help Arab countries develop their own oil resources. (Nasser, whose government brought health care and education to the masses of Egyptians for the first time, was called "Hitler on the Nile" by U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, a former oil company lawyer whose brother headed the CIA. Dulles failed to mention that he himself had supported the real Hitler, the one on the Rhine, before World War II.)

In 1958 a popular revolution in Iraq threw out the British-created Hashemite monarchy and challenged Western ownership of that country's oil. Abdel Karim Kassem, the president of the new Iraqi republic, pioneered the creation of the Organization of Oil-Producing Countries (OPEC) to demand a bigger share of oil revenue for the producing countries. Said Kassem: "We are not fighting the oil companies to get an additional 7 million dinars. We are fighting for the industrialization of our republic and an end to our dependence on the sale of crude oil."

In 1961 Algeria won freedom from France after seven years of war and the murder of over 1 million Algerians by the French army. In 1962 a popular revolution overthrew the feudal regime in North Yemen on the Arabian peninsula, posing a direct threat to the Saudi royal family and ARAMCO's \$400-million-a-year oil fields. The same year a guerrilla war for independence began in British-ruled southern Yemen. In 1966 the left wing of the Baath Party came to power in Syria and nationalized ARAMCO's Trans-Arabian Pipeline that carried Saudi oil to the Mediterranean. Under these circumstances, even pro-U.S. regimes were forced to demand more from the oil companies.

The U.S. did what it could to counter these developments. In 1953 a CIA-organized coup in Iran overthrew the popular government of Mohammed Mossadegh, which had nationalized that country's British-owned oil fields. A grateful Shah cut U.S. companies in on Iran's reserves, and CIA operator Kermit Roosevelt was made a vice president of Gulf Oil. U.S. Marines landed in Lebanon in 1958 to protect a French-installed Christian minority regime, and the CIA helped engineer the overthrow and assassination of Abdel Karim Kassem in 1963. The U.S. also joined with Saudi Arabia to try and overthrow the new republic in Yemen. However world geopolitics--the growing U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia and global confrontation with the USSR and China--did not allow the U.S. to directly commit large military forces to the Middle East. It was then that Israel bailed out U.S. oil interests and proved its worth in gold to the U.S. corporate empire.

This article will be continued in the next issue of *Al-Awda* newspaper!

Ismail Shammout: A Monument of Palestine, A Monument of Palestinian Art

by Samia Halaby

Ismail Shammout died on July 4, 2006. How painful that Palestine was not there around his bed; but all he worked for lives.



"The Olive Tree," Ismail Shammout, 2005

Born in Al Lydd in 1931, Ismail Shammout had the good fortune as a youth to study with Dahoud Zalatimo. Amazingly, at the age sixteen he persuaded his reluctant father that he could earn a living making art. His father, even more amazingly, provided him with materials and a space to work. It was then 1947, only one year before the Nakbe.

Shammout was seventeen when, on July 13, 1948, he was evicted from his home along with the majority of the population of Al Lydd. They were ordered at gunpoint to leave their homes, surrounded by armed Zionist gangs and overseen by sharpshooters on roofs. They

were herded into the town squares and thence forced eastwards into the wilderness. On the way, they were molested by Zionist thugs who at gunpoint stole their valuables and confiscated the little water or food some of them had. The painful march took three to five days to complete. Many died. With his family, he ended up in the refugee camp of Khan Younis where he painted the suffering of women and children, and the agonies of long lines for food and water. Shammout organized his first exhibit in 1950 in this very refugee camp.

Shammout's career as an artist and popular hero of Palestine began with his 1953 exhibition of paintings of the catastrophic march through the wilderness. This was an exhibition of oil paintings held in Ghazze. The exhibited paintings objectify and socialize a pain that had simmered on a private level. Refugees of Ghazze saw themselves mirrored and felt relief. An immense attendance of the general population including refugee camp dwellers of Ghazze overwhelmed Ismail Shammout, still then a student in Egypt. This stunning response to the show was a hint of the bottled up hope for liberation. In response, Shammout committed his life's work to Palestine and the art of liberation.

His life and that of his wonderful wife Tamam Al Akhal, spiraled around Palestine. With every move forced on them by Zionist aggression, they relocated somewhere not far from the center of their love. This



"The Olive Branch," Ismail Shammout, 1962.



"Roots," Ismail Shammout, 1993.



"Life Goes On," Ismail Shammout, 1976.

denied center of the heart, Palestine, was finally visited years after the Nakbe. Of the many people who remember this visit, a most touching one was a description of Shammout meeting with Zalatimo, his first teacher and inspiration. In June of 2002, Fadwa Zalatimo, Daughter of the great artists Dahoud Zalatimo, said to me that when Zalatimo was near death, 47 years after their involuntary separation, Shammout traveled to Al Quds to visit Zalatimo. She remembers it as an event of great emotion. "It was mutual admiration between them, said Fadwa. "They -- Ismail and Zalatimo -- met after the long separation. He [Shammout] kissed his hands and thanked him and they both cried."

We all remember Shammout's studio as the place we went to as one goes to the source, a storehouse of information and documents, a place of quiet, a place for thought and art, a place of gentleness, and above all a cultural storehouse of Palestine. Shammout is the builder of the Union of Palestinian artists, the builder of international exhibitions, the builder of young artists, the builder of galleries, and not least of all the historian of the liberation movement of Palestinian art.

He always lives in my memories as that young tall man with intense eyes whom I first met in 1979 on the streets of Beirut. An image of night black hair flying in its own revolution impressed visually his intense message on my thoughts. Now that he is gone, his burden weighs on us, mine and all Palestinian artists, that we too shoulder the art and culture of Palestine, even as we are scattered and even now as we suffer the news of Zionist genocide in his Ghazze.

Ismail Shammout is dead! LONG LIVE ISMAIL SHAMMOUT!



"Tel Al-Zaatar 1976: The Sun," Ismail Shammout, 1976.

An Evening in New Jersey with Palestinian Prisoner Artist, Zuhdi Al-Adawi

by Nancy Olszewski

On Monday, March 13, Zuhdi Al-Adawi - a former Palestinian political prisoner and artist whose work is exhibited in the "Made in Palestine" exhibit in New York - spoke at the New Brunswick Public Library about his life and experience as a Palestinian political prisoner.

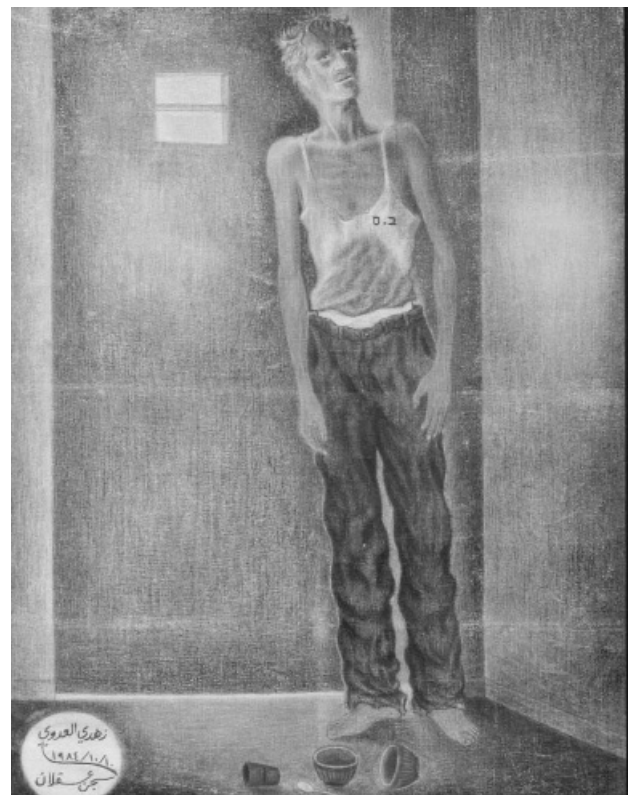
His parents were from Al-Lidd. After they were forced out in the Nakba of 1948, they settled in the Nusairat Refugee camp in Gaza where they were forced to march through the wilderness to by the Zionist gangs. In 1952, Zuhdi was born. He lived in the refugee camp until it was destroyed by a hurricane and the 1967 war. At that time he became a freedom fighter. He saw buildings destroyed and devastation everywhere during the occupation. His own mother was beaten by soldiers. One could get arrested or killed if they refused occupation. In 1970 he was captured and imprisoned at Ashkelon Prison He was the youngest of the political prisoners.

In prison he discovered that prison becomes school where the prisoners would change their lives. Some of them were poets, artists, educators, etc. Artists taught themselves the arts, so Zuhdi was a self-taught artist. Most of his drawings were on cloth - pillow covers or handkerchiefs. Art supplies were prohibited, but he received colored pencils, pastels, and the like during the monthly visits he was allowed. He drew in secret away from the guards. but the guards found the smuggled materials and he spent 2 weeks in solitary confinement, where it was much harder to receive visitors. Other prisoners had more freedom. Still the guards could not stop him from painting. His paintings show different themes such as confiscation of land, imprisonment, patriotism, and Sabra and Shatilla. Still he was optimistic.

After 50 years in prison he was released. He was exiled to Lebanon and later moved to Damascus, Syria where he lives and works today and where his art work was exhibited one month after his release. He continued to educate himself after his release.

He said that he was happy to talk about the Palestinian experience here in America. He also said that Palestine was like a beautiful flower. Young people there want to live without oppression. He says no to occupation, yes to Palestinian liberation

His art work was a part of the "Made in Palestine" exhibition, alongside fellow political prisoner artist Mohammed Al-Rakouie, and 21 other Palestinian artists.



The US Role in Darfur, Sudan

by Sara Flounders

What is fueling the campaign now sweeping the U.S. to “Stop Genocide in Darfur”? Campus organizations have suddenly begun organizing petitions, meetings and calls for divestment. A demonstration was held April 30 on the Mall in Washington, D.C., to “Save Darfur.”

Again and again it is said that “something” must be done. “Humanitarian forces” and “U.S. peacekeepers” must be deployed immediately to stop “ethnic cleansing.” UN troops or NATO forces must be used to stop “genocide.” The U.S. government has a “moral responsibility to prevent another Holocaust.”

Outrage is provoked by media stories of mass rapes and photos of desperate refugees. The charge is that tens of thousands of African people are being killed by Arab militias backed by the Sudanese government. Sudan is labeled as both a “terrorist state” and a “failed state.” Even at anti-war rallies, signs have been distributed proclaiming “Out of Iraq—Into Darfur.” Full-page ads in the New York Times have repeated the call.

Who is behind the campaign and what actions are they calling for?

Even a cursory look at the supporters of the campaign shows the prominent role of right-wing evangelical Christians and major Zionist groups to “Save Darfur.”

A Jerusalem Post article of April 27 headlined “U.S. Jews Leading Darfur Rally Planning” described the role of prominent Zionist organizations in organizing the April 30 rally. A full-page ad for the rally in the New York Times was signed by a number of Jewish organizations, including the UJA—Federation of NY and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

But it wasn’t just Zionist groups that called it. The rally was sponsored by a coalition of 164 organizations that included the National Association of Evangelicals, the World Evangelical Alliance and other religious groups that have been the strongest supporters of the Bush administration’s invasion of Iraq. The Kansas-based evangelical group Sudan Sunrise helped arrange buses and speakers, did extensive fund raising and co-hosted a 600-person dinner.

This was hardly an anti-war or social justice rally. The organizers had a personal meeting with President George W. Bush just before the rally. He told them: “I welcome your participation. And I want to thank the organizers for being here.”

Originally the demonstration was projected to draw a turnout of more than 100,000. Media coverage generously reported “several thousands,” ranging from 5,000 to 7,000. The rally was overwhelming white. Despite sparse numbers, it got wide media coverage, focusing on celebrity speakers like Academy Award winner George Clooney. Top Democrats and Republicans gave it their blessing, including U.S. Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), House minority leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer and New Jersey Gov. Jon Corzine. Corzine, by the way, spent \$62 million of his own money to get elected.

The corporate media gave this rally more prominence than either the anti-war rally of 300,000 in New York City on the day before or the millionfold demonstrations across the country for immigrant rights on the day after.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Bolton, former Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Gen. Wesley Clark and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have all argued in favor of intervention in Sudan.

These leading architects of imperialist policy often refer to another model when they call for this intervention: the successful “humanitarian” war on Yugoslavia that established a U.S./NATO administration over Kosovo after a massive bombing campaign.

The Holocaust Museum in Washington issued a “genocide alert”—the first such alert ever issued—and 35 evangelical Christian leaders signed a letter urging President Bush to send U.S. troops to stop genocide in Darfur. A special national curriculum for students was established to generate grassroots support for U.S. intervention.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) have embraced the campaign. Liberal voices such as Amy Goodman of Democracy Now, Rabbi Michael Lerner of TIKKUN and Human Rights Watch have also pushed the campaign to “Save Darfur.”

Diversion from Iraq debacle

The criminal invasion and massive bombing of Iraq, the destruction of its infrastructure that left the people without water or basic electricity, and the horrible photos of the U.S. military’s use of torture at Abu Ghraib prison created a world outcry. At its height, in September 2004, then Secretary of State Gen. Colin Powell went to Sudan and announced to the world that the crime of the century—“a genocide”—was taking place there. The U.S. solution was to demand the United Nations impose sanctions on one of the poorest countries on earth and that U.S. troops be sent there as “peacekeepers.”

But the rest of the UN Security Council was unwilling to accept this view, the U.S. “evidence” or the proposed action.

The campaign against Sudan increased even as evidence was being brought forward that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was based on a total lie. The same media that had given credibility to the U.S. government’s claim that it was justified in invading Iraq because that country had “weapons of mass destruction” switched gears to report on “war crimes” by Arab forces in Sudan.

This Darfur campaign accomplishes several goals of U.S. imperialist policy. It further demonizes Arab and Muslim people. It diverts attention from the human rights catastrophe caused by the brutal U.S. war and occupation of Iraq, which has killed and maimed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.

It is also an attempt to deflect attention from the U.S. financing and support of Israel’s war on the Palestinian people.

Most important, it opens a new front in the determination of U.S. corporate power to control the entire region.

U.S. interest in Sudan

Sudan is the largest country in Africa in area. It is strategically located on the Red Sea, immediately south of Egypt, and borders on seven other African countries. It is about the size of Western Europe but has a population of only 35 million people.

Darfur is the western region of Sudan. It is the size of France, with a population of just 6 million.

Newly discovered resources have made Sudan of great interest to U.S. corporations. It is believed to have oil reserves rivaling those of Saudi Arabia. It has large deposits of natural gas. In addition, it has one of the three largest deposits of high-purity uranium in the world, along with the fourth-largest deposits of copper.

Unlike Saudi Arabia, however, the Sudanese government has retained its independence of Washington. Unable to control Sudan’s oil policy, the U.S. imperialist government has made every effort to stop its development of this valuable resource. China, on the

other hand, has worked with Sudan in providing the technology for exploration, drilling, pumping and the building of a pipeline and buys much of Sudan’s oil.

U.S. policy revolves around shutting down the export of oil through sanctions and inflaming national and regional antagonisms. For over two decades U.S. imperialism supported a separatist movement in the south of Sudan, where oil was originally found. This long civil war drained the central government’s resources. When a peace agreement was finally negotiated, U.S. attention immediately switched to Darfur in western Sudan.

Recently, a similar agreement between the Sudanese government and rebel groups in Darfur was rejected by one of the groups, so the fighting continues. The U.S. poses as a neutral mediator and keeps pressing Khartoum for more concessions but “through its closest African allies helped train the SLA and JEM Darfuri rebels that initiated Khartoum’s violent reaction.” (www.afrol.com)

Sudan has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world. Over 400 ethnic groups have their own languages or dialects. Arabic is the one common language. Greater Khartoum, the largest city in the country, has a population of about 6 million. Some 85 percent of the Sudanese population is involved in subsistence agriculture or raising livestock.

The U.S. corporate media is unanimous in simplistically describing the crisis in Darfur as atrocities committed by the Jan jawid militias, supported by the central government in Khartoum. This is described as an “Arab” assault on “African” people.

This is a total distortion of reality. As the Black Commentator, Oct. 27, 2004, points out: “All parties involved in the Darfur conflict—whether they are referred to as ‘Arab’ or as ‘African,’ are equally indigenous and equally Black. All are Muslim and all are local.” The whole population of Darfur speaks Arabic, along with many local dialects. All are Sunni Muslim.

Drought, famine and sanctions

The crisis in Darfur is rooted in intertribal fighting. A desperate struggle has developed over increasingly scarce water and grazing rights in a vast area of Northern Africa that has been hit hard by years of drought and growing famine.

Darfur has over 35 tribes and ethnic groups. About half the people are small subsistence farmers, the other half nomadic herders. For hundreds of years the nomadic population grazed their herds of cattle and camels over hundreds of miles of grassy lowlands. Farmers and herders shared wells. For over 5,000 years, this fertile land sustained civilizations in both western Darfur and to the east, all along the Nile River.

Now, due to the drought and the encroaching great Sahara Desert, there isn’t enough grazing land or enough farmland in what could be the breadbasket of Africa. Irrigation and development of Sudan’s rich resources could solve many of these problems. U.S. sanctions and military intervention will solve none of them.

Many people, especially children, have died in Sudan of totally preventable and treatable diseases because of a U.S. cruise missile attack, ordered by President Bill Clinton on Aug. 20, 1998, on the El Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum. This plant, which had produced cheap medications for treating malaria and tuberculosis, provided 60 percent of the available medicine in Sudan.

The U.S. claimed Sudan was operating a VX poison gas facility there. It produced no evidence to back up the charge. This simple medical facility, totally destroyed by the 19 missiles, was not rebuilt nor did Sudan receive a penny of compensation.

UN/NATO role in Sudan

Presently 7,000 African Union troops are in Darfur. Their logistical and technical back-up is provided by U.S. and NATO forces. In addition, thousands of UN personnel are overseeing refugee camps for hundreds of thousands dislocated by the drought, famine and war. All of these outside forces do more than hand out needed food. They are a source of instability. As capitalist would-be conquerors have done for hundreds of years, they consciously play one group off against another.

U.S. imperialism is heavily involved in the entire region. Chad, which is directly west of Darfur, last year participated in a U.S.-organized international military exercise that, according to the U.S. Defense Department, was the largest in Africa since World War II. Chad is a former French colony, and both French and U.S. forces are heavily involved in funding, training and equipping the army of its military ruler, Idriss Deby, who has supported rebel groups in Darfur.

For more than half a century, Britain ruled Sudan, encountering widespread resistance. British colonial policy was rooted in divide-and-conquer tactics and in keeping its colonies underdeveloped and isolated in order to plunder their resources.

U.S. imperialism, which has replaced the European colonial powers in many parts of the world, in recent years has been sabotaging the economic independence of countries trying to emerge from colonial underdevelopment. Its main economic weapons have been sanctions combined with “structural adjustment” demands made by the International Monetary Fund, which it controls. In return for loans, the target governments must cut their budgets for development of infrastructure.

How can demands from organizations in the West for sanctions, leading to further underdevelopment and isolation, solve any of these problems?

Washington has often used its tremendous power in the UN Security Council to get resolutions endorsing its plans to send U.S. troops into other countries. None were on humanitarian missions.

U.S. troops carrying the UN flag invaded Korea in 1950 in a war that resulted in more than 4 million deaths. Still flying that flag, they have occupied and divided the Korean peninsula for over 50 years.

At the urging of the U.S., UN troops in 1961 were deployed to the Congo, where they played a role in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the country’s first prime minister.

The U.S. was able to get a UN mandate in 1991 for its massive bombing of the entire Iraqi civilian infrastructure, including water purification plants, irrigation and food processing plants—and for the 13 years of starvation sanctions that resulted in the deaths of over 1.5 million Iraqis.

UN troops in Yugoslavia and in Haiti have been a cover for U.S. and European intervention and occupation—not peace or reconciliation.

The U.S. and European imperialist powers are responsible for the genocidal slave trade that decimated Africa, the genocide of the Indigenous population of the Americas, the colonial wars and occupations that looted three-quarters of the globe. It was German imperialism that was responsible for the genocide of Jewish people. To call for military intervention by these same powers as the answer to conflicts among the people of Darfur is to ignore 500 years of history.

Canadian Union Takes Step Against “Israeli” Apartheid

by Adam Hanieh

At the annual convention of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario, held 24-27 May 2006 in Ottawa, the union passed a resolution of historic importance. Resolution 50—adopted unanimously by the 900 delegates at the largest convention in the union’s history—expressed support for the global campaign against Israeli apartheid. The union stated that it would educate its members on the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and Canadian political and economic support for these practices. It also declared that CUPE Ontario would participate in the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until the realization of Palestinian self-determination. Most importantly, the union highlighted the significance of the right of return of Palestinian refugees as a critical component of Palestinian self-determination.

Resolution 50 is a vital step for both Palestinian rights and the North American labor movement. CUPE Ontario is the largest public sector union in Ontario and represents over 200,000 workers in the most highly populated province of Canada. The resolution represents the most powerful statement in support of Palestinian rights ever made by a North American trade union.

Two days after Resolution 50 was adopted, another boycott resolution was passed by the largest union of university teachers in Britain, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE). NATFHE, representing around 70,000 members, declared its active support of boycotts against Israeli academics and academic institutions that do not publicly take an explicit stand against Israeli apartheid and Israel’s discriminatory educational system.

These two resolutions represent the latest in a snowballing movement to isolate Israeli apartheid in the manner of South African apartheid. A long list of institutions, city councils, religious organizations, political parties and unions have endorsed the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (see below for a selected list of these initiatives). Two weeks ago, the Green Party of the United States issued a powerful policy statement that supported “divestment from and boycott of the State of Israel until such time as the full individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people are realized.” In February 2006, the Church of England’s general synod—including the Archbishop of Canterbury—voted to disinvest church funds from companies profiting from the Israeli occupation. On 16 December 2005, the regional council of the Sor-Trondelag in Norway passed a motion calling for a comprehensive boycott on Israeli goods to be followed up with an awareness raising campaign across the region. Sor-Trondelag was the first Norwegian county to boycott South Africa and is now the first to boycott Israeli apartheid.

This growing movement has provoked a widespread crisis within the Zionist movement. The Israeli press is full of stories, editorial comment and debate about the boycott, divestment, sanctions campaign. No other international solidarity effort has so dominated the Israeli debate. Underlying most of this commentary is a deep fear that the identification of Israel with apartheid is reaching a critical mass within popular consciousness world-wide. The response of the Zionist movement has been strikingly incompetent and reflects their inability to deal with the charge of apartheid.

Take for instance the Canadian Jewish Congress’s (CJC) “action alert” against the CUPE Ontario decision. The alert raises three questions that the CJC urges its supporters to raise with CUPE Ontario leaders:

*Last summer, Israel withdrew its settlements from Gaza and the northern West Bank. A new Israeli government has just been elected on a platform of continuing this disengagement process. Why would CUPE Ontario call for a boycott that will punish Israelis just as these important steps are being taken?

*The Palestinian election of a Hamas-dominated government that supports terrorism and is committed to the destruction of Israel has led to an economic crisis; international aid has correctly been denied to this recognized terrorist organization. Concerned Canadians should be looking to offer humanitarian help to the Palestinians, not to punish Israelis. Why would CUPE Ontario fail to use its voice in a constructive way?

*CUPE Ontario’s resolution calls for the unlimited return of refugees to Israel. It is well recognized that this approach would spell the end of a Jewish state. Why is CUPE Ontario adopting this extreme position?

The most striking feature of the CJC alert is that it completely avoids any mention of the question of apartheid. The word itself does not appear at all in the entire statement. This is a most remarkable omission and can only be considered deliberate given that the main thrust of the CUPE Ontario decision (see below) is the comparison with South African apartheid. Indeed, the first item of the CUPE resolution is to conduct an “education campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state”. Only one conclusion can be drawn from this omission: the CJC is neither able nor willing to argue against the charge of Israeli apartheid.

The three points raised by the CJC confirm this conclusion. While the CJC praises Israeli “disengagement”, this so-called concession is widely accepted as the final step in the construction of an apartheid solution. Apartheid-era South Africa placed the black population into territorially disconnected areas called Bantustans. Bantustans appeared to give blacks control over their own municipal affairs while denying them self-determination and any real or effective control of their lives. Movement in and out of the Bantustans was controlled by permits and pass cards. Economic control remained in the hands of the white apartheid state. This is precisely the situation that ‘disengagement’ is meant to formalize in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

All informed commentators agree that Olmert’s disengagement plan is aimed at leaving the major settlement blocs in the West Bank intact. Olmert himself touts this as the major plank of his plan. The aim is to win international acceptance for Palestinian Bantustans – the Palestinian population crowded into isolated and divided cantons separated by settlements, Israeli-only roads and military checkpoints. This is not a new strategy; it has been the clear intention of Israeli leaders since the occupation of these areas in 1967.

The current situation in the Gaza Strip is a powerful illustration of this apartheid reality. Israel completely controls the economy and borders of this tiny area that constitutes the most densely populated place on earth. Israeli missiles can be dropped on Gaza day and night, with the population starved from all work, outside supplies and possibility of travel. This is what ‘disengagement’ portends for the West Bank.

Precisely because Israel controls all flows of funds, people and goods into the isolated Palestinian Bantustans the CJC is able to champion the severing of aid to the Palestinian Authority. In the last month, this has led to deaths of at least four hospitalized Palestinians who were unable to obtain dialysis treatment due to Israeli control of what goes in and out of Palestinian areas. A few weeks ago, Palestinian prison guards were forced to appeal to relatives of inmates to provide food because there was not enough to feed pris-

oners. Enforced mass starvation of a civilian population is quite simply a war crime. An important statement signed two weeks ago by ever major Palestinian organization in Canada put it this way: Palestinian right to life should not be conditional on acquiescence to Israeli apartheid.

Finally, the third CJC talking point reveals the crux of the debate. The CJC states that the right of return of Palestinian refugees “would spell the end of a Jewish state.” Israeli apartheid is founded upon the notion of an exclusively Jewish state that denies equal rights to everyone else. In 1948, 80% of the indigenous Palestinian population were driven from their homes and land and became refugees. The Israeli state guarantees any person of a Jewish background, anywhere in the world, the right to become a citizen of Israel yet the indigenous population is refused their right to return. The right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and land is not simply a legal question (although it is guaranteed under international law). Most significantly, it points to the fact that we should oppose any state that operates on the basis of one religious or ethnic exclusivity. The central goal of the anti-apartheid struggle is a state in which anyone can live, regardless of their religious or ethnic background. This unquestionably means the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes and lands from which they were expelled in 1948.

Jonathan Cook, an outstanding journalist for the British newspaper, The Guardian, recently discussed how Olmert’s disengagement plan confirms the basic premise of the current anti-apartheid struggle:

“Olmert outlined to Israel’s Haaretz newspaper the most serious issue facing Israel. It was, he said, the problem of how, when the Palestinians were on the eve of becoming a majority in the region, to prevent them from launching a struggle similar to the one against apartheid waged by black South Africans. Olmert’s concern was that, if the Palestinian majority renounced violence and began to fight for ‘one-person, one-vote’, Israel would be faced by “a much cleaner struggle, a much more popular struggle—and ultimately a much more powerful one”. Palestinian peaceful resistance, therefore, had to be preempted by Israel. The logic of Olmert’s solution, as he explained it then, sounds very much like the reasoning behind disengagement and now convergence: ” formula for the parameters of a unilateral solution are: to maximise the number of Jews; to minimise the number of Palestinians”. Or, as he put it last week, “division of the land, with the goal of ensuring a Jewish majority, is Zionism’s lifeline”.”

Both the CUPE Ontario and NATFHE resolutions are big steps forward in the struggle against Israeli apartheid. They confirm that recognition of Israel as an apartheid state is now approaching a stage of popular acceptance. This victory was not achieved overnight but is the culmination of the work of many activists worldwide who have persevered with the ongoing tasks of leafleting, posterage, teach-ins, demonstrations and many other activities. Most of all, it is testament to the unbelievable endurance of the Palestinian people on the ground in Palestine and in refugee camps throughout the region. Our challenge is to continue to deepen the confidence among wider layers of the population in Canada and elsewhere in arguing for and becoming active in the struggle against Israeli apartheid. The resolutions of the last week have made this task much easier.

Full Text of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario Resolution:

CUPE ONTARIO WILL:

1. With Palestine solidarity and human rights organizations, develop an education campaign about the apartheid nature of the Israeli state and the political and economic support of Canada for these practices.
2. Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194.
3. Call on CUPE National to commit to research into Canadian involvement in the occupation and call on the CLC to join us in lobbying against the apartheid-like practices of the Israeli state and call for the immediate dismantling of the wall.

BECAUSE:

*The Israeli Apartheid Wall has been condemned and determined illegal under international law;

*Over 170 Palestinian political parties, unions and other organizations including the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions issued a call in July 2005 for a global campaign of boycotts and divestment against Israel similar to those imposed against South African Apartheid;

*CUPE British Columbia has firmly and vocally condemned the occupation of Palestine and have initiated an education campaign about the apartheid-like practices of the Israeli state.

A Selected List of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Initiatives Globally Since March 2005

May 29, 2006: Members of Britain’s largest college teachers’ union agreed on a boycott of Israel over what members called apartheid policies toward Palestinians, saying union members will refuse to cooperate with Israeli academics who do not “disassociate themselves from such policies.

May 27, 2006: CUPE Ontario declares that it will “Support the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions until Israel meets its obligation to recognize the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.”

May 14, 2006: Green Party of the United States calls for “divestment from and boycott of the State of Israel until such time as the full individual and collective rights of the Palestinian people are realized.”

February 7th, 2006: The Church of England’s general synod—including the Archbishop of Canterbury—voted to disinvest church funds from companies profiting from Israel’s occupation of Palestine.

16 December 2005: The regional council of the Sor-Trondelag in Norway passed a motion calling for a comprehensive boycott on Israeli goods to be followed up with an awareness raising campaign across the region. Sor-Trondelag has a population of 270,000 out of Norway’s 4.6 million. Trondheim, Norway’s third largest city, forms part of the region and will participate in the boycott initiative. Sor-Trondelag was the first county to boycott South Africa. Upholding this good tradition, the County council, as the first in the country, has decided to boycott Israeli goods, by not buying Israeli goods

(cont. on Page 9)

Globalizing the Occupation: Two Years after the ICJ Decision

by Jamal Juma'

This year the 9th of July is a bitter day for Palestinians. The Occupation Army besieges Gaza, massacres its people and attacks its infrastructure. The ghettos of the West Bank take shape as the Apartheid Wall edges closer to completion and the Palestinian exodus from Jerusalem has begun. Over 9000 Palestinians sit in Israeli prison cells whilst Palestinians who remain on their 1948 lands do so under the subjugation of the most vicious and discriminatory Apartheid system.

The brief euphoria of two years ago, following the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the Wall, is a distant memory. Some hailed a victory for international law in Palestine when the ICJ ruled the Wall illegal and condemned the Occupation along with other Israeli crimes. It asked the international community to enforce the IV Geneva convention and "not to render any aid or assistance to the Wall and the associated regime".

Two years later, as the Palestinian people prepare to march to the UN offices, they know that nobody has taken up this latest verdict to stop the escalation of the Occupation in Palestine. The Apartheid Wall scythes through the landscape as it nears completion, forming part of an intricate system of control with the fortified settler-only roads to steal 48% of lands in the West Bank. Palestinians in Gaza, 80% of whom are refugees from the lands they were expelled from in 1948, are imprisoned behind two Walls. Cut-off from the rest of the world, their privilege after the Israeli sham of "disengagement" is to starve in the world's largest open-air prison, subject to continuous bombings, sonic booms and service cut-offs.

In front of these crimes, at a time when Palestinians struggling for their freedom call for increased ties of solidarity, the reaction of the international community and member states of the UN is to show their disdain for Palestinian efforts to shake off the shackles of Occupation. The global community pleads for the release of one Israeli taken from a tank, stationed outside the Gaza ghetto, whilst Palestinians are taken from their beds and killed in the streets and half of their government and 1/3 of the Palestinian Legislative Council are taken hostage. They beg for his return whilst ignoring the 9000 Palestinians rotting in Israeli jails, over 400 of whom are children.

Global agencies confine their operations to fact-finding missions on the "Palestinian situation" speculating endlessly on humanitarian issues as if Palestine were in the throws of some natural disaster. Reeling off further UN humanitarian reports are not asked for. Palestinians don't need to be told by the World Bank about their own poverty and they don't need the hollow rhetorical support of governments which fail to follow up words with deeds. The facts on the ground in Palestine are there for all to see. We need action. We need political pressure on the Occupation. We need freedom.

The manner in which the international community has dealt with the ICJ decision (and indeed with any other UN resolution including the refugees' right of return) shows the UN as an impotent and discredited institution where the unity of the powerful in the Security Council continues to oversee and comply with the expulsion of our people.

The General Assembly resolution, which endorsed the ICJ decision, only asked the General Secretary to build up a registry for damages and losses from the Wall. The absurd-

ity of building a registry of the ever-rising damages, instead of preparing concrete measures to pressure Israel to dismantle the Wall is evident. Worse still, the General Secretary has refused to even visit the Wall, preferring not to provoke his masters in Washington and New York who pull the strings. And now, it would appear that registry might not complete any evaluation of losses, effectively ensuring that no reparations will ever be requisitioned from the Occupation. This ensures the criminal doesn't stop its war crimes, but moreover, that it will never be held accountable.

While the silence of the international community might be shocking, Palestinians and their supporters are well aware of the deft machinations of global powers complicit with their Occupation. Increasingly they have witnessed global government abscond from the responsibilities of international law and pursue the globalization of the Occupation. Now the international community, together with Israel, places sanctions on the Palestinian people for having conducted the democratic vote the world asked them for.

They aim to topple a Palestinian leadership which refuses to be compliant with the wishes of the Occupation. With that goal comes the vision of creating new mechanisms of control to bypass the Palestinian Authority and any source of democratic accountability to the Palestinian people. The result is the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM), the new structure proselytised by the EU to ensure political and economic control for the World Bank to rule and subjugate the Palestinian people. The mechanism is apparently set out to destroy the PA administrative structure (excluding the Presidential Office) while international banks are to distribute money for the starving. \$40 million - roughly a third of the money made available to create this International Mechanism of support for the Occupation - goes directly to Apartheid Israel to pay its companies for fuel and other basic supplies. This comes as the Occupation continues to steal some \$75 million every month of Palestinian tax money and from which such expenses were previously covered.

While Israel controls us militarily, confines us behind Walls and carves out our ghettos, powerful global agencies take over the administrative and financial burdens of the Occupation seeking minimum subsistence for the people imprisoned in the Bantustans. Any glimmer of hope that the UN, the EU, the ICJ or the "Free World" might work towards implementing Palestinian rights appears more distant than ever. Latin America negotiates Free Trade Agreements with the Occupation and Asian countries display overtures of normalization with Apartheid Israel as our people are massacred in the streets.

Our hopes thus rest with the people themselves, to accelerate boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) to isolate apartheid Israel and punish it for the war crimes it pursues against us. It is our supporters, amongst the millions of justice seeking people across the world that we look to in pushing forward solidarity actions and restoring some dignity to international law.

We urge the implementation of the ICJ, we urge the signatories of the Geneva Convention to fulfill their commitments, and we call for immediate measures to ensure that all UN resolutions are carried out, that the Occupation ends and our refugees return home. While the World Bank, the United States and the Occupation itself may be powerful, they will continue to find an unwilling subject in the Palestinian people who stay steadfast to the greater ideals of freedom, justice and liberation.

What is the objective of the new US/"Israeli" assault? by Richard Becker

The intensifying U.S.-backed Israeli assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank is aimed at dismantling the recently elected Palestinian National Authority (PNA) government and forcing the Palestinians to accept an Israeli-dictated "peace settlement." The Israeli government is utilizing the capture of one of their occupation troops as the pretext to carry out a multi-faceted attack on both Palestinian governmental institutions and the population as a whole. At least one-third of the PNA cabinet and many members of parliament, mayors and other officials have been imprisoned by Israel. Altogether, more than 9,000 Palestinian political prisoners, all abducted from their homeland, remain behind the walls of Israeli jails.

The operation currently underway has been preceded by several years of economic strangulation, which was turned into a near-complete blockade imposed on Gaza after the January 2006 Palestinian elections.

The victory of the Hamas party in that election was followed immediately by a cut-off in most trade as well as international assistance from the European Union, U.S., Canada and other countries. International assistance became critical due to the deliberate destruction of the Palestinian economy by Israel.

The Israeli government under the notorious racist Ehud Olmert (who succeeded the even more notorious Sharon) has been tightening the screws on the Palestinians in Gaza for months, causing widespread shortages of medicine, food and other necessities preventing supplies or funds from getting in to Gaza. Israel cut off tax payments of \$55 million per month owed to Palestinians.

The racist apartheid character of the Israeli state is made clear by statements from Israeli leaders themselves. Over nine days in mid-June, 14 Palestinian civilians were killed in Gaza by Israeli missile strikes. The last one killed Fatima Ahmed, the pregnant 37-year-old mother of two young children, and her brother, Zakaria, while wounding 13 other members of the family and destroying their home.

The new Israeli offensive launched on June 27 began with the destruction of Gaza's only power plant, water facilities and the main roads connecting the north and south. The Israeli Air Force has carried out many air strikes, and constant sonic booms over heavily populated areas. Israeli heavy artillery barrages are continuing around the clock. On July 1, the office of the Palestinian Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh was destroyed by an Israeli bombing.

As of July 5, 11 Palestinians have been killed and many more wounded. Israeli troops, tanks and helicopters have re-invaded Gaza, surrounding the northern towns of Beit Hanun and Beit Lahiya, and the southern city of Rafah.

In the face of the massive and pre-meditated destruction inflicted by the Israelis, Washington has shown complete backing for Israel's crimes against humanity. Underlining that the assault has full U.S. backing, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice today said only that it is

"high time" the Palestinians release the captured soldier, Gilad Shalit. While attempting to create a global hysteria about North Korean Scud missiles test-fired into the sea, neither Rice nor any other Washington official has uttered a word of criticism of the countless high-tech missiles Israel has fired into populated Palestinian areas.

The U.S.-Israeli strategy against the Palestinians is similar to the one used against Iraq: years of enforced economic hardship, followed by a massive military assault.

As the Palestinian Prime Minister has stated, "the total war is proof of premeditation." There can be no doubt that this offensive has been in the works for a considerable period of time. Nor can there be any doubt that an operation of this magnitude and potential political consequences could have been undertaken by Israel without close consultation and approval from Washington.

There is a possibility that what is unfolding in Palestine may turn into a wider, regional war. The over-flight of Syrian President Bashir-al-Assad's residence in Latakia, Syria on Wednesday was met with Syria anti-aircraft fire. Both the U.S. and Israeli ruling classes are seeking "regime change" in Damascus.

A key element in the U.S.-Israeli strategy inside Palestine is to seek to demoralize the Palestinian people. The Israeli government is openly trying to show the Palestinians, by inflicting maximum misery on the entire population, that their elected government cannot provide for their basic needs and never will as long as it maintains a posture of resistance. The central message is: All resistance is futile. You (the Palestinians) must either accept your status as a subordinated, enslaved people, or you can (preferably) leave.

Both Tel Aviv and Washington hope that the new Israeli offensive will crush the Palestinian resistance, a key goal of the U.S. and Israel for nearly four decades.

There is, however, no indication, despite all the indescribable suffering imposed by colonial occupation, that the Palestinians are any more ready to surrender today than they were in 1987 or 1967 or 1947. The remarkable fighting spirit of the people despite the immense odds they face appears very strong.

But the Palestinians, who have held out for so long, cannot win by themselves. The forces arrayed against them are too powerful for them to overcome alone. What is needed now more than ever is international solidarity, especially here inside the imperialist state that really constitutes their main enemy.

**STOP THE U.S.-ISRAELI ASSAULT ON THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE!
END ALL U.S. AID TO THE ISRAELI APARTHEID STATE!
SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE INCLUDING
THE RIGHT OF RETURN!**

(cont. from Page 8)

and through awareness raising efforts.

December 8th, 2005: The Socialist Left Party, a member of the center-left Norwegian government launched a solidarity campaign for Palestine beginning in the New Year. The campaign focuses on a consumer boycott of Israeli products and will push for a ban on any arms trade between the Norwegian government and the Israeli regime.

November 28th, 2005: The city council of Arbizu, in the Basque country, declared they will: "call for boycott, will support and execute it. The boycott consists of a consumer boycott of Israeli products as well as a boycott of all the firms, Basque or not, which make business with Israel, and non-cooperation with Israeli initiatives on the field of culture, education and sports."

August 8th, 2005: The Presbyterian Church (USA) published its divestment list that singles

out Caterpillar, IIT Industries, Motorola and United Technologies as concrete measures towards economic pressure against Apartheid Israel and its accomplices.

July 27th, 2005: A resolution passed by the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham, England, urged Anglican churches around the world to divest from companies whose activities profit from the occupation of Palestine.

July 16th, 2005: The UN International Conference of Civil Society for Peace in the Middle East unanimously adopted the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

March 2005: The World Council of Churches urged its member churches give "serious consideration" to pulling investments out of Israel and endorsed the 2004 decision by the Presbyterian Church of the United States to seek "phased selective divestment" from Israel. "This action is commendable in both method and manner, uses criteria rooted in faith and calls members to do the things that make for peace," the WCC said.

"Made in Palestine" Concludes Historic Run in New York City

by Charlotte Kates

The "Made in Palestine" exhibition of contemporary Palestinian art celebrated its opening in New York City on March 16, 2006, to a packed gallery through which nearly 2,000 people entered during the evening. The exhibition, which features works by Palestinian artists in Palestine and in exile, including Rana Bishara, Mustafa al-Hallaj, Suleiman Mansour and Vera Tamari, premiered in Houston in 2003, at the Station Museum, the home of curator James Harithas. Harithas, who assembled the exhibition with the assistance of consultant and "Made in Palestine" artist Samia Halaby, was on hand with several of the exhibition's artists for the gala opening celebration. The exhibition ran in New York from March 16 to May 27, 2006. Its original run was set to end on April 22, but was extended following the immense response of the art, Palestinian and Arab, and solidarity communities of New York.



John Halaka, "Stripped of Their Identity and Driven from Their Land," from the series *Forgotten Survivors*, 1993/1997/2003.

The exhibition made its debut in New York's art world after two years of fundraising by Al Jisser Group, a committee working to promote Arab art and culture in New York. Spearheaded by Halaby, Al Jisser hosted a series of fundraisers and events that built excitement about and awareness of the exhibition among the city's Arab and Palestinian communities and their supporters and allies, and the city's art community. World-renowned musician Simon Shaheen donated a concert to the fundraising effort, and Nibras Arab American Theater Collective and the Kazbah Project organized a series of one-act plays to benefit the show. Students from Pace University performed plays by Betty Shamieh and Noura Erakat, and members of the New Jersey Palestinian community organized a large benefit for the exhibition as Friends of Al Jisser, among numerous efforts in support of the show.

The years of work paid off with the opening of the show at The Bridge gallery, a space rented by Al Jisser. Thousands viewed the exhibition during its run in New York, the closing city for the exhibition, which had traveled from Houston to San Francisco and Montpelier before its time in New York. During the show's time in New York, the Bridge Gallery became a center for artistic and political activity in the city, a hub of organizing and empowerment for the Arab and Palestinian communities. The gallery space hosted numerous events organized by activist groups, including Al-Awda New York, New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine, the New York Committee to Defend Palestine, the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, and the Culture and Conflict Group. It also was home to a number of cultural events, including poetry evenings hosted by Palestinian poet Suheir Hammad and a group of Arab slam poets, including Remi Kanazi and Tahani Saleh, a comedy night hosted by the Arab American Comedy Festival, and evenings of art and culture, featuring Samia Halaby's kinetic painting, musicians and panels for discussion of the art.

Events at the gallery included an evening of solidarity with political prisoners, organized by Al-Awda; Zuhdi al-Adawi, the Palestinian political prisoner artist, was the show's visiting artist and the guest of honor at the event, which also featured presentations by Ashanti Alston, and representatives of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, BAYAN/USA, ProLibertad and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement. Other events included a presentation by visiting members of the Ibd'a Health Committee from Deheisheh Refugee Camp; a memorial evening for Palestinian activist Ali Kased that also commemorated the Day of the Land, one year after his death; an event in commemoration of the Deir Yassin massacre, featuring survivor Dawud Assad; an evening of celebration of the life of Leonard Peltier; and film showings, including a visit from the Palestinian filmmakers of the Balata Film Collective, a showing of "Naji Al-Ali: An Artist with Vision," and numerous other events and activities. During its run, the Bridge was a vibrant center of Arab and Palestinian and solidarity activism in the city, as the historic art show brought Palestinian art and culture to the center of the Manhattan art universe.



Mustafa Al-Hallaj, "Self-Portrait as God, the Devil, and Man" (detail), 1994-2002

The work in the show is a catalogue of Palestinian history, creativity and expression. The prisoner art of Zuhdi al-Adawi and Muhammad Rakouie, Palestinian political prisoners who taught themselves drawing and painting in Zionist jails while under constant threat of solitary confinement and the confiscation of their materials if discovered, evokes traditional symbols of struggle for freedom and liberation and love for the land of Palestine, and evince a brilliant creative resistance that cannot be suppressed. Al-Adawi, who was freed in a prisoner exchange after fifteen years in Zionist jails and lives today in Damascus, Syria, attended the opening and visited the New York area as the exhibition's visiting artist and honored guest.

Tyseer Barakat's chest of drawers is burned with images that tell the story of his father's life through al-Nakba, the 1948 occupation of Palestine and expulsion of over 800,000 Palestinians, with each drawer unveiling another chapter of his father's Palestinian life. "Blindfolded History," by Rana Bishara, consists of glass panels silkscreened in chocolate with iconic images of oppression and resistance in Palestine; the chocolate appears like dried blood, and there are 57 panels in her series, one for every year since al-Nakba. Rajie Cook's "Ammo Box" provides an imposing reminder of the power disparity in Palestine; a huge NATO munitions box is full of rocks - weapons of Palestinian resistance that serve to highlight the massive military, political and economic aid provided to the Zionist occupation of Palestine.

In Mervat Essa's "Saffurya," a photograph of the village from which her grandmother was exiled during Al-Nakba hangs above ceramic sacks which appear to be yearn-

ing to return. Marked with numbers, the sacks mark the times the residents of the village have appealed to return to their homes and land, every time denied. A series of small blocks, each emblazoned with a donkey in a different situation or amid a different material, comprise Ashraf Fawakhry's "I am Donkey/Made in Palestine" series, a humorous piece identifying with the donkey, persistent in all situations. Samia Halaby's large wall piece, "Palestine from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River," is an abstract map of Palestine in colors that evoke gardens, mountains, and the varieties of the land of Palestine.

The photographic prints by Rula Halawani capture devastation in Palestine, produced as negatives in order to draw attention in a way news documentary photographs rarely do. "Stripped of their Land and Driven from their Homes," by John Halaka, is an iconic, massive mural rubber-stamped with the words "Forgotten Survivors," creating a portrait of refugees forced from their homes and seeking justice and return - an image that could refer to today's Katrina survivors, to Iraqis seeking refuge from occupation, or to indigenous peoples forced from their land in North America as well as it does to Palestinian refugees.

The massive print, "Self-Portrait as God, the Devil and Man," by Mustafa al-Hallaj, incorporates techniques reminiscent of ancient Egyptian art while exploring timeless themes, creating a fantastical modern mythological work that spans ancient themes and modern Palestinian life. Jawad Ibrahim's small, dense images of Palestinian martyrs evoke the horror of life under occupation, while Noel Jabbour's family portraits of Palestinian families who have lost fathers, mothers, and brothers to Zionist arms convey both the absence of the missing and the steadfastness of those who remain.

"Crossing Surda," an installation by Emily Jacir, combines video and sound to evoke the atmosphere of the checkpoint Jacir crossed daily on her way to work. Suleiman Mansour's large clay pieces, "I, Ismael," line a central wall of the exhibition, depicting the revered ancestor of the Arab people in a cracking clay. A series of pen-and-ink drawings by Abdel Rahman al-Mozayen depict the destruction of the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin in 2002, drawn into the embroidery of the dresses of Canaanite goddesses, making the images of destruction beautiful and referencing ancient Palestinian heritage.

Nida Sinnokrot's "Rubber-Coated Stones" ironically provide "rubber-coated" rocks to Palestinians as counterpoints to the Zionist military's "rubber-coated bullets" that have maimed many Palestinians while masquerading as humanitarian "alternatives" to regular ammunition, while "West Bank Butterflies," a piece mounted by Al Jisser Group based on Sinnokrot's work in progress, turn a map of Palestine's West Bank, marked by the apartheid wall, into butterflies ready to fly free.

Five massive, sheer silk dresses form Mary Tuma's "Homes for the Disembodied," evoking the simultaneous resilient, steadfast presence of Palestinian women and their absence from much public discourse about Palestine, while Vera Tamari's "Tale of a Tree" presents an image of the Palestinian olive tree, iconic yet endangered, in a large photographic print and small ceramic forms.



Mervat Essa, "Saffurya," 2000.

The exhibition, drawing together multiple styles, evinces the creativity and resilience of contemporary Palestinian art. It is an exhibition of revolutionary art, brilliantly expressive and committed to a Palestinian creative and artistic presence whose power, integrity and vision cannot be denied or suppressed despite nearly 58 years of Zionist colonialism. Embracing Palestinian artists throughout Palestine and in exile, it presented a museum-quality view of Palestinian creativity.

The exhibit's closing was an occasion for further celebration of the show, and for welcoming a new show to The Bridge: "Three Arab Painters in New York." Curated by Al Jisser member Maymanah Farhat, the show featured works by Palestinian artist Samia Halaby, Iraqi artist Athir Shayota, and Lebanese artist Sumayyah Samaha. A historic exhibition in its nearly unique celebration of Arab art in the New York art world, the show again featured important, moving and beautiful work. Halaby's pieces included her monumental abstract pieces, visions of Palestine pieced together of color, canvas, and flowing shapes, as well as her series of documentary drawings of the Kafr Qasem massacre. Halaby's drawings, some stretching from floor to ceiling, commemorated specific incidents in the massacre, committed in 1956 by Zionist forces against Palestinian villagers in Kafr Qasem, a village in Palestine '48. Halaby visited Kafr Qasem to speak with survivors and residents of the village, and brought their stories to visual life through her drawings, in which she sought to hew closely to the oral histories she received from the villagers. Shayota's works, largely portraiture, portray his Iraqi subjects confronting the viewer or going about their daily lives, the threat to their nation from US sanctions and war looming behind the surface. Samaha's work in the show reflected her newer, more political pieces, using paint, nails, wire and poetry by Palestinian poet Suheir Hammad to confront the war on Iraq and Palestine. During "Three Arab Painters," The Bridge continued to be a home for Arab, Palestinian and solidarity activism in the city, as AWAAM (Arab Women Active in Arts and Media), with the Arab American Family Services Center, the Arab American Association of New York and the Yemeni American Association celebrated the creativity and accomplishments of Arab youth in the city, and the gallery played host again to numerous meetings, events and film showings.

The accomplishments of Al Jisser and the Bridge Gallery were historic; the gallery presented a space, in the heart of the New York art world, that celebrated and welcomed Arab and Palestinian creativity, and became a living home to the ongoing art of liberation. The shows became a testament to the power of art and culture as part of a national liberation struggle, the gallery providing a home and a basis for community building, organizing and activism. The liberation art on its walls interacted with the activism for liberation in the space, producing an environment that inspired artistic and cultural accomplishment as well as political activism and community empowerment. It was a living illustration of the centrality of liberation art and cultural continuity to the Palestinian movement and the Palestinian nation. As Zionist forces have waged a political and cultural genocide against the Palestinian people, so Palestinians have resisted through all forms of resistance, including fully engaging in the cultural struggle. "Made in Palestine" was a testament to the power of Palestinian cultural resistance, its ongoing importance, and an inspiration to the future of the Palestinian movement for liberation and return.

(cont. from page 1) killing two soldiers and capturing a third, whom they took prisoner. This attack was unquestionably legitimate by all standards: a military raid, by the grassroots resistance forces of a people under occupation, against the military base of the occupier, taking prisoner a military combatant. Palestinian resistance forces demanded the release of Palestinian political prisoners as the condition for the release of this soldier. Despite facing an overwhelming military force - the Zionist army is often described as the world's fourth most powerful, a nuclear-armed military supplied with the most advanced US military technology and backed by the political, economic and military support of the most powerful military in the world - that of the US - Palestinians have continued to defend their land and their people, and fight for their freedom. While the resistance's capture of this prisoner has been subject to condemnation from the US government and international agencies - even some claiming to be otherwise neutral - that label the Zionist assault on Gaza as understandable, cautioning only "restraint," over 9,400 Palestinian political prisoners currently are held in Zionist jails, while these same agencies are silent. 20% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have spent time as political prisoners in Zionist jails, a category including numerous women and children. Palestinian children are regularly subject to political imprisonment - since September 2000, 4,000 Palestinian children have been detained. Palestinian political activists and leaders have been subject for generations to assassination and imprisonment; on March 14, 2006, Zionist forces attacked Jericho prison, where Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Secretary Ahmad Sa'adat and four of his comrades had been illegally held by the Palestinian Authority since 2002, raiding the prison and seizing Sa'adat and his comrades, kidnapping them and forcing them into a



Palestinians inspect the damaged school Dar al-Arkam following an Israeli air strike which targeted the school in Gaza City July 5, 2006.

Zionist jail.

The hypocrisy of the US government and its allies and proxies is only more apparent when the Zionist raid on Jericho and the abduction of an illegally-held Palestinian political leader and elected Palestinian Legislative Council member with overwhelming military force by a colonial occupier seeking to maintain its domination and control is condoned, while a military action, holding a soldier of occupation as a prisoner of war, by the resistance forces of an oppressed people seeking their freedom, and the liberation of their land, is condemned.

The war on Gaza and the siege of Palestine are part of the ongoing drive to destroy Palestine and smash Palestinian existence. Despite the devastation of 1948 and then 1967, the ongoing military assaults, and the fact that the Palestinian refugee population today numbers 6 million - the world's largest refugee population - at home and in exile, Palestinians have upheld their identity, their existence and their struggle for liberation and

(cont. from page 1) Zionists in our native homeland, is an urgent window of opportunity for our struggle, and must therefore be amplified by our unique position to rally solidarity among other struggles for justice worldwide in demand for the unequivocal implementation of our right to return. Only through implementation of our return and the dissolution of colonial institutionalized racism directed against the Arab people of Palestine and elsewhere will peace be achieved.

To that end, the Fourth International Al-Awda Convention, scheduled for July 14-16, 2006 in San Francisco, will focus on extending and developing new strategic directions with Palestinian community members and grassroots activists living in exile. It will evaluate the current status of the right-to-return movement, the objective realities pressuring this movement, as well as the Palestine liberation and solidarity movements as a whole. The convention will also evaluate successes and setbacks and conduct workshops to extend and develop new strategic vision and direction as needed. The convention will be a working, highly interactive meeting, resulting in organizational mechanisms for the implementation of resolutions and action plans.

Format

The convention format will include:

- *Political assessment and identification of priorities in light of the escalating situation.
- *Assessment of Zionist and US imperialist plans.
- *Assessment of the status of the PLO, The Palestinian Authority, and the return campaign, with emphasis on the unitary identity of the Palestinian people.
- *Assessment of the solidarity movement, with respect to advocacy for the Palestinian Right to Return.
- *Develop and extend plans for outreach to the Palestinian community and the adoption of the Right to Return campaigns as a central form of organizing in all related activism including but not limited to the media, congress, prisoner, and cultural awareness campaigns.
- *Develop a "Divestment from 'Israel' campaign" focused on the implementation of the Right to Return.
- *Develop and extend the Palestinian Refugee Aid and Support programs.
- *Milestones in recruitment, divestment, refugee support, related the Right to Return activism, and organizational infrastructure over the next year

Convention Location:

Jack Adams Hall
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Avenue,
San Francisco, CA 94132, USA

To register for the convention, sponsor the convention, download the full schedule, or obtain more information, visit the Al-Awda website at <http://www.al-awda.org/>.

return. Palestinian existence and Palestinian resistance has been a living disproof to imperialist control over Arab lands, and belies claims to Zionist colonial legitimacy on Palestinian land. From the earliest days of the Zionist presence in Palestine, Zionism and its imperialist backers have sought to force Palestinians from their homes. Nevertheless, Palestinians remain, and Palestine remains, highlighting the illegitimacy of the Zionist occupation of all of Palestine and refusing to allow their homeland to become merely a piece of land subject to imperialist control and colonial authority. It is clear that this current attack is meant to drive Palestinians from their land; Zeev Boim, a close aide to Zionist prime minister Ehud Olmert and former deputy defense minister, urged hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in northern Gaza to leave their homes and lands, in a threat reminiscent of the 1948 Nakba - "As far as I am concerned," he said, "the inhabitants of Beit Lahya and Beit Hanun should start packing right away."

This assault comes as Palestinians have rejected defeatism; the January elections were a clear rebuff to the so-called "peace process," which has, over the past fourteen years, brought nothing but further mechanisms of oppression to Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, while ignoring entirely the fundamental right of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands and never addressing the national rights of Palestinians in Palestine '48. The mechanisms of control, and of setting up a Palestinian force, in the Palestinian Authority, to carry out "Israeli" dictates and "security control" against the Palestinian population, failed in the face of Palestinian determination and commitment to national rights. As Palestinian resistance has been an inspiration to the world, and to their Arab brothers and sisters, so has imperialist control and domination faltered in Iraq. Despite the massive military presence arrayed against the Iraqi people, Iraqis have refused to accept US colonial domination of their nation. Attempting to crush Palestine is a necessary part of ensuring imperialist domination of the Arab world; the assault on Palestine goes hand in hand with the ongoing war on and occupation of Iraq. In addition, the Palestinian people of the West Bank and Gaza have been battered over nearly six years of intifada - six years of military invasions, an apartheid wall, the assassination and imprisonment of their political leadership, the impoverishment of their population, and the attempted destruction of internal Palestinian economic infrastructure and Palestinian political forces.

Nevertheless, despite the assault on Palestine - the military attacks from the Zionist occupier and the siege from the outside - Palestinians have continued to resist. However, it is imperative that people of conscience around the world act to support the Palestinian struggle. Palestinians, resisting occupation and oppression, have been on the front lines against colonial control and imperialist domination for over half a century. It is now critical that all stand alongside the Palestinian people, hand in hand with the Palestinian movement, to support Palestine, and demand an end to the war and an end to the siege. Grassroots direct aid to Palestine has perhaps never been more urgent. Medical facilities, such as Al-Awda Hospital in Gaza, face dangerously low stocks of medicine; food supplies are alarmingly short; and military attacks have concentrated on destroying infrastructure, from bridges, to electricity plants that also ensure the provision of clean water. Direct international provision of aid, and resources, on a grassroots, humanitarian and community level, utilizing principles of solidarity, is critical. Fundraising internationally can ensure the continued operation of hospitals, community centers, and critically important humanitarian institutions in Palestine; such fundraising is, in fact, a way to make solidarity materially manifest. In addition, while Palestine is targeted for international isolation, the call for international boycott, divestment and sanctions from "Israel" is now urgent. It is the responsibility of those active outside Palestine to demand that the US and other international governments and agencies cease their support to "Israeli" terror. There is a terrorist regime in Palestine that must be internationally isolated - the Zionist state - and it is incumbent upon people of conscience that we seek to break the siege through direct aid and through political advocacy. Solidarity is critical now for Palestine - as the US seeks to internationally isolate Palestine, it is to us to ensure that grassroots activism ensures that plan's failure, and that Palestine and Palestinians can never be cut away from the struggling peoples of the world, nor from movements for social justice.

The real end to the siege will not come until all six million Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homes, lands and properties in all of Palestine is recognized and implemented, and until all of Palestine is liberated. The Palestinian struggle for national liberation is a clarion call for justice, and the siege of Palestine is a desperate attempt to starve and isolate the Palestinian national movement. Nevertheless, Palestinian communities in exile around the world are organizing. It is the responsibility of all people concerned for social justice to stand hand in hand with the Palestinian movement, in Palestine and in exile, in full solidarity with the return of Palestinian refugees and the liberation of Palestine. Palestinian resistance has been showing for years that the most powerful of military threats is not invulnerable in the face of popular resistance. In the face of the siege of Palestine, it is more than ever necessary to globalize that resistance and to defend Palestine - to break the siege, stop the war on Gaza, and support the Palestinian people.

Demonstrations Around the World Support Palestinians Under Siege, Demand End to Gaza Assault

Demonstrations and activities around the world have brought thousands to the streets, demanding an end to the siege of Palestine and the assault on Gaza. In New York, successive marches to the United Nations and a spontaneous march through the heart of the Palestinian community in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn highlighted resistance to the siege, while in San Francisco, hundreds protested at the Zionist consulate against the



Demonstrators in San Francisco demand end to Gaza assault, July 3, 2006. (Photo: Bill Hackwell)

attacks on Gaza, and plan to protest again on July 13, immediately before the Al-Awda convention. In Atlanta, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington, DC, Chicago, Raleigh, NC and cities across the US, protests have brought together the Palestinian and Arab community and solidarity activists. Throughout Canada, from Vancouver, to Toronto, to Halifax, to Montreal, activists have organized actions against the siege of Palestine, while around the world, Ireland, France, Spain, Belgium, South Africa and many other nations have witnessed mobilizations. Across the Arab world, demonstrations, sit-ins and protests have brought many to protest the assault on Palestine. Further actions, events and activities to break the siege and support the Palestinian people are planned around the world.

PALESTINE LIVES! END THE SIEGE!

