

Mobilizing for June 10 -

MARCH FOR LIBERATION AND RETURN!

by Noel Winkler

In 1948, 59 years ago and the same year as the implementation of Apartheid laws in South Africa, Zionist invaders waged war against the indigenous population of Palestine, killing 13,000 Palestinians, displacing 750,000 inhabitants who would become refugees, depopulating and destroying over 400 villages, and illegally occupying the land of Palestine. To this day, this injustice has never been rectified, and today over 6 million refugees are prevented by Apartheid Israel from returning home.

In 1967, Apartheid Israel launched another all out war, expanding its occupation into Gaza, the Sinai, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and displacing another 200,000 Palestinians. Although eventually withdrawing from the Egyptian Sinai in 1979, the Zionist invaders illegally annexed the Golan Heights in 1982, and continue to militarily occupy the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem to this day.

The expansion of occupation in 1967 is certainly a significant and even standout event in the ever-growing list of Apartheid Israel's crimes. As a movement, it is appropriate for us to commemorate the 40th anniversary of this major invasion. However, we must always make clear that the military occupation that began in 1967 is in fact an expansion of the total occupation of historic Palestine which began in 1948. Even Apartheid Israel likely did not anticipate that its aggression in 1967 would win support for its initial injustice in 1948. But many groups and individuals working to support Palestine seem to suggest this effect by placing an emphasis on "40 years" rather than "59 years" of occupation. In many cases, this habit probably reflects nothing other than a lack of careful analysis, and comes about by mirroring what others say. But in some cases, this practice is intentional, whether it reflects outright support for a Zionist state, or a defeatist belief that the Right to Return is not "practical" and should thus be left out of demands, or for "negotiation."

Just as Apartheid Israel's many subsequent invasions, assassinations, abductions and expulsions have not made right the military occupation of 1967, neither did the 1967 invasion make right the conquering of the land and expulsion of its indigenous inhabitants in 1948. Justice in Palestine means liberation, and liberation begins with self-determination and the implementation of the Right to Return. We must challenge those who seek to mitigate the Palestinian struggle to an issue of 40 years of military occupation without unequivocally advocating for the core issue which is the Right to Return.

On June 10-11, the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation and United for Peace and Justice are sponsoring a "protest, teach-in and lobby day" in Washington D.C. According to UFPJ's email promotion on May 10th, the two-day mobilization is planned "to protest the 40th anniversary of Israel's illegal military occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip." The U.S. Campaign takes a more narrow approach in its May 8th email promotion, putting forward that the action is to "protest US support for Israel's 40 year-old military occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip." This nuanced difference of protesting U.S. support for occupation rather than protesting the occupation itself is actually reflected in the points of unity

for endorsement, as published on the U.S. Campaign website:

- * An end to US military, economic, diplomatic, and corporate support for Israel's illegal military occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.
- * A change in US policy to one that supports a just peace between Palestinians and Israelis based on equality, human rights and international law, and the full implementation of all relevant UN resolutions.

The success of the U.S. Campaign in winning UFPJ's co-sponsorship of the June 10-11 actions is notable. After all, UFPJ has a history of silencing and sidelining discussion of Palestine in the antiwar movement. In early 2004, UFPJ struggled long and hard to keep Palestine out of the March 20, 2004 mass mobilization in New York to mark the first anniversary of the expansion of U.S. war on Iraq. Even after agreeing to unite with ANSWER to organize one united march and demonstration, UFPJ organizers were seen ripping down Palestinian flags from the stage, and a senior member of UFPJ's leadership lambasted the speaker from Al-Awda New York for initiating chants of "Free Palestine!" during her speaking slot. Again in 2005 UFPJ battled the antiwar movement to keep Palestine, and specifically the central issue of the Right to Return, out of the September 24 mass rally and demonstration in Washington DC. After that, in part to avoid debates over including or excluding Palestine, UFPJ issued a proclamation that it would no longer work with ANSWER. In practice, UFPJ goes a step further by calling alternative/competing actions after ANSWER announces a national action that includes support for Palestine - a tactic most recently employed against the March 17th, 2007 march on the Pentagon.

In this context, it is therefore a positive development that UFPJ is lending its name to a demonstration that addresses an aspect of the Palestinian struggle. In fact, despite UFPJ's usual disclaimer that it "does not take a position" on the Palestinian right to return, the June 10-11 Call to Action acknowledges Palestinian refugees' "internationally guaranteed right of return." The action call additionally states: "Both in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Palestinians are subjected to a system of apartheid." These are advanced positions usually absent from UFPJ discourse.

It is thus commendable that the U.S. Campaign and UFPJ are organizing, regardless of nuanced points of unity wording, what many protesters will quite simply think of as a pro-Palestine demonstration. Although the organizers are planning two days of actions, the event logically likely to draw the largest numbers will of course be the rally and march on Sunday, June 10th. Palestinian and solidarity activists should mobilize to attend this demonstration and promote the Right to Return.

Right to Return activists are correct in their criticism of the discourse which seeks to place an emphasis on 40 years rather than 59 years of occupation. Similarly, Right to Return activists should also be cautious in their expectations of the discourse likely to be presented from the stage and at teach-ins on June 10th.

Despite the positive political advances suggested by the (continued on page 4)



Demonstrators at the April 7, 2001 New York City march for the right to return organized by Al-Awda.

A Palestinian Visiting Palestine... Impressions

by Mohammad Awadallah

The Zionist propaganda that Palestine was a "land without people for a people without land" was an outright lie. There were millions of Palestinian Muslims, Jews and Christians living in Palestine before the state of "Israel" was created. It was not an empty piece of land like the Zionists claim it was.

In Palestinian villages like Deir Yassin, and Beit Hanoun, large numbers of Palestinians were slaughtered by the Zionist forces. During the war of 1948, thousands of Palestinian civilians were slaughtered and nearly a million driven from their land and homes, becoming refugees in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, where, still, almost sixty years later, generations of Palestinian families still live. Palestinian refugees make up the largest population of refugees in the world; over six million Palestinians are waiting to return to their homeland.

Palestinians now live in horrendous conditions, often facing horrible treatment by Israeli soldiers. Some of the tactics that the Israeli government uses against the Palestinians are very similar to how Nazi Germany treated its Jewish citizens. For example, during Nazi Germany Jews had to wear stars of David, that were sewn on to their clothing, so they could be immediately identified as Jewish. In Palestine, the Palestinians must carry I.D cards, which immediately identify them as Palestinian, so they can be subjected to brutal treatment at Israeli checkpoints by the Israeli soldiers. Also Palestinians have different color license plates than Jews, so they can be stopped at checkpoints and wait hours, while Jewish settlers are allowed to zip right through without waiting.

The oppression and occupation of Palestinian land is funded by United States tax dollars; Israel receives more foreign aid money than any other country in the world, and has used its military aid to purchase weapons to wage a war against the civilian Palestinian population.

This past summer I went to Palestine for a month. I got to experience what it was like to (continued on page 3)

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HISTORY OF RESISTANCE: Voices of Struggle

Essays and materials from the history of the Palestinian revolution and international solidarity...

ZIONISM AND AFRICA

by Gora Ebrahim

This issue's historical essay is taken from the January 15-31, 1982 of Palestine: The PLO Bulletin, issued in the English language by the Palestine Liberation Organization. Gora Ebrahim was a member of the African National Congress Central Committee, South Africa.

President Mobuto Sese Seko of Zaire is reported (International Herald Tribune 4-12-81) to have said that his government was prepared to review diplomatic relations with Israel. He claimed in the report that Zaire "broke ties with Israel in 1973 in a show of support for Egypt and its lost territories," but now that the last of occupied Egyptian territory is scheduled to be returned in April 1982, the resumption of relations would not be a "difficult problem." However, whilst saying all this President Mobuto made an important proviso, namely that Zaire "will take no action (to restore diplomatic relations) until other Black African nations take a stand."

The fact that President Mobuto was specifically asked about this question and the report that the Zionist Defence Minister Sharon recently made a secret visit to some African countries, is an indication that the Zionists are desperately trying to make a political comeback in Africa and would employ everything at their disposal to ensure the success of this campaign. This is no longer a secret.

In this stepped-up "comeback" campaign the Zionists are employing a three-pronged attack. The first line of attack is through the United States. The Zionists have openly asked the Reagan Administration to "use its influence" in certain African countries to pressurise them into reestablishing diplomatic relations with Israel. This pressure, needless to say is being exerted.

Secondly, the Zionists are pressing the newly incumbent socialist government in France to use its influence in the former colonies in Africa. Since the new socialist government in France has pro-Zionist leanings, there can be no doubt that it will "talk" to some

of the pro-French African States.

Thirdly, the Zionists are making direct contacts with some African states with exaggerated promises of financial and military assistance.

The immediate question that comes to mind is whether this campaign has any chance of succeeding?

The fact that President Mobuto went out of his way to make it clear that any resumption of diplomatic relations would have to be a collective African decision, from the very outset sounds the death-knell of the Zionist campaign.

Although President Mobuto claims that he broke ties with Israel in 1973 to "show support for Egypt and its lost territories", the collective African decision to first condemn, and then call for the severance of diplomatic and economic relations was not based on showing support for Egypt alone. It was more comprehensive and based on fundamental principles.

It will be recalled that the Organisation of African Unity's (O.A.U.) first direct involvement in the Arab-Zionist conflict was when it set up a committee at its 1970 Summit to try and find a peaceful solution to the Middle East crisis. The chairman of this committee was the former President of Senegal, Leopold Senghor. The committee, comprising several African Presidents, visited the Frontline Arab States and occupied Palestine. The conclusion this committee came to, and this is stated in its report, was that the Zionists did not appear willing to vacate the territories occupied in the 1967 Arab-Zionist war. This continued occupation and obvious expansionist tendency, the committee felt, would constitute a dangerous precedent if gone unchallenged. In this the Committee members were not only reiterating universally accepted norms and principles, but also the very real danger posed by the South African racists. In the name of so-called "secure borders" nothing would prevent the racists from militarily occupying neighbouring territories. The 1973 war, however, was the last straw which broke the camels back!

The fact that the Senghor-led Committee visited other countries besides Egypt is proof enough that from the outset the O.A.U. did not intend to confine its support only to Egypt but to the very core of the Middle East conflict, namely (continued on page 8)

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.



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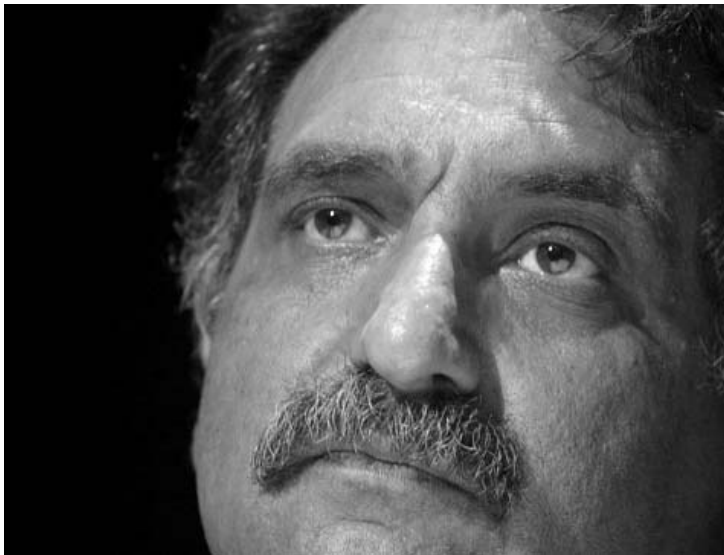


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Azmi Bishara and the Struggle in Palestine '48

by Charlotte Kates

On April 22, 2007, Azmi Bishara announced his resignation from the Knesset, the Zionist parliament. Bishara has long been a prominent voice of the Palestinian Arab community inside Palestine '48, a firm advocate of the Palestinian cause, and deeply engaged with the Arab movement. The representative of the Balad party, the National Democratic Assembly, he had repeatedly come under attack; however, this resignation indicated a new and changed situation - the pending entry of security charges against him, including charges of treason. These political charges, coming close in time to threats to ban the Islamic Movement within Palestine '48 and repression aimed at its leader, Sheikh Raed Salah, and the political imprisonment of Mohammad Kana'aneh, General Secretary of Abnaa el-Balad (the Sons of the Land movement), indicate a new drive against the Palestinian people within Palestine '48. Bishara's repeated call for the dismantling of the racist structures of the Zionist state, highly popular in Palestine '48, have challenged at the core the Zionist project in Palestine. It is to be noted that, as the Zionist militias engaged in their campaign of ethnic cleansing, dispossession and genocide in 1947-1948, driving out nearly one million Palestinian Arabs from the areas of Palestine occupied in 1948, they sought to render Palestine separate from the wider Arab nation. Nevertheless, approximately 150,000 Palestinians were able, through their resistance and steadfastness, to remain on the land, even as the "Jewish state" was proclaimed against their wishes and over their land. Many of these were "internal refugees," people who remained within the borders of the state of "Israel", yet had been forced from their original homes, villages and properties and were prevented from returning by the Zionist state. The Zionist state, based as it is on the dispossession of the Palestinian people and the occupation of Palestinian land, has always regarded these Palestinians as potential and actual internal enemies, threats, and a constant reminder of the illegitimacy of the Zionist occupation of Palestine and of the reality, that despite massive military presence, 59 years of occupation, and the political, military and economic support of the world's leading imperialist power, the United States, it had never been able to vanquish or eliminate the Palestinian Arab people in any part of Palestine.



Azmi Bishara

Palestinians within the boundaries of "Israel," often separated from their extended families and from their land, kept apart from those Palestinians who had been forced from the land, have been subject to 59 years of occupation and less than second-class citizenship designed to either encourage them to leave their land or to strip them of their Palestinian Arab identity. Within the Zionist state, there has long been a debate over how to handle the '48 Palestinians, dubbed "minorities" or "Israeli Arabs" by the state - with some Zionist forces pushing openly for "transfer" - the direct expulsion of Palestinians, the dispossession of their land, and a transfer of their citizenship to a proposed, powerless, Bantustan-ized "Palestinian state," and others pushing for the "inclusion" of "Israeli Arabs" into "Israeli society." While one is framed as a friendly approach to the Palestinians of '48, and the other is framed as a direct attack, both are, in fact, attacks against the Palestinian Arab identity and existence of the Palestinians of '48. Both share the same goal - eliminating the Palestinian people, as a nation, from Palestine '48. While the Zionists pushing for ethnic cleansing understand Palestinian Arab identity, believe it cannot be suppressed, and thus must be eliminated, the Zionist proponents of "loyalty" and "inclusion" refer not to including Palestinian Arabs as equal citizens, with national rights, rights in the land, their homeland, with ownership, self-determination and control, but rather, they seek to create a class of "Israeli Arabs" who will relinquish their interests, identity and ownership of their land, and their place in the Palestinian Arab cause, for a few crumbs from the Zionist table.

The Zionist state, at its core, is antithetical to the existence of Palestinian Arabs in Palestine '48. The mere presence of Palestinians undermines their narrative while proving a physical reminder of the temporary nature of settler-colonial conquest. In the 59 years of occupation that have followed Al-Nakba, the Palestinians of Palestine '48 have always remained, a constant reminder, a "time bomb," a "demographic threat," a "dagger in the heart of Israel." By their very existence, they illustrate and make evident the Palestinian Arab presence in the land, the commitment to stay with the land and not leave, and the crisis that settler colonialism faces when it can no longer maintain its power due simply to force of arms. Every Palestinian birth is seen as a threat to the Zionist state, and the state has poured funds into encouraging Palestinian women to bear fewer children, and "Israeli" Jewish women to bear more children. Every Palestinian child is seen as a threat, and indeed, in the twisted logic of Zionism, every Palestinian child is a threat, and a promise, that the project to destroy Palestine has not succeeded, that despite 59 years of occupation, oppression and apartheid, Palestinians have continued to live, and to struggle, and have not broken their connection to their land. The growing number of Palestinians, compared to decreasing numbers of Zionist immigrants from abroad, are a continuing reminder that the settler-colonial project cannot be sustained indefinitely.

Furthermore, Palestinians within Palestine '48 have rejected the attempt to deprive them of their connection to the Palestinian cause, and the Arab nation. The repression directed against Bishara, against Mohammad Kana'aneh of Abna'a el-Balad, a political prisoner in Zionist jails, against Ra'ed Salah and the Islamic Movement - mirroring the attacks on Palestinian political organizing in the West Bank and Gaza, have been directed at some of the most prominent and effective advocates for Palestinian citizens of Israel as

(cont. from page 1) live under a brutal Israeli occupation. It was not an uncommon occurrence to hear gunshots flying overhead. I had to pass through many different checkpoints, and I saw firsthand the harassment that Palestinians living under occupation face everyday from the Israeli soldiers. Practically every night, large Israeli tanks roamed the streets and entire towns were forced under curfew. After waiting over 6 hours in Ben-Gurion airport in Tel-Aviv and being questioned with the same set of questions three times, I was released. Upon leaving Tel-Aviv and entering Kalandia Checkpoint, the difference was like night and day. Tel-Aviv was a modern developed city and Kalandia looked like a bomb had been dropped on it. The streets were torn up and littered with garbage. The homes were riddled with bullet holes, and large piles of cement could be seen where homes once stood.

The Apartheid Wall was very visible throughout Palestine. The Israeli government practices apartheid; one aspect of this is its construction of an apartheid wall that will span the distance of over 400 miles when complete. This apartheid wall cuts off Palestinians from their families, jobs, and schools. Israel claims this wall is for "security;" however, it has used this wall to steal more Palestinian land and water resources. Some towns are entirely engulfed by the wall. The Israeli government also formed hundreds of checkpoints within

Palestinian Arabs, who have refused to delink the struggle of Palestinians "of the inside" from the broader Palestinian and Arab cause, and who have refused to concede to the Zionist definition of the land of Palestine as "a Jewish state." The popularity of that national democratic movement is indeed a threat to Israel.

A state like Israel - a settler-colonial entity that relies upon the military power of its settler population to keep its control and power over occupied land, defined as an ethnically-exclusive "Jewish state" - is, in fact, threatened by Palestinian Arab existence. There were approximately 150,000 Palestinians remaining inside the borders of the newly-formed Zionist state - despite the best efforts of the Zionist militias dedicated to forcing Palestinians from their land - in 1948. Today, there are over 1.2 million Palestinians in Palestine '48, citizens of a state that is based on the denial and suppression of their existence. The Zionist state has long claimed to be "Jewish and democratic," basing its claim of "democracy" on the denial of the rights of the Palestinian Arabs whose land was taken to create the state. There are, today, six million Palestinian refugees, continually denied their right to return to their homes, lands and properties, since 1948. Despite United Nations Resolution 194 - a resolution that has been reaffirmed by the UN General Assembly over 100 times, and the acceptance of which was a condition of Israel's admission to the UN - the vast weight of international human rights and humanitarian law, and the individual, fundamental, national and collective rights of Palestinian refugees, these refugees have been continually denied their right to return for one reason - because they are Palestinian Arabs, and their existence puts the clear lie to the claim of the Zionist state to be anything other than what it is - a racist, illegitimate, settler colony. By definition, "democracy" in Palestine must mean the end of Zionism, and the dismantling of all of its structures, because the Zionist state is, by definition, a state for settlers

and not a state for the vast majority of Palestinians. Nevertheless, by refusing Palestinians' right to return, denying the history of al-Nakba, justifying colonialism through racism and a false story of legitimacy that relies on the alleged right of the British Empire to deny Palestinian Arabs their right to self-determination in their land, Israel claims to be "democratic." The West Bank and Gaza - the remaining 22% of Palestine seized in 1967 - are "the territories." While, for many years, the Zionist state refused to recognize even the existence of the Palestinian people - Golda Meir, Israeli Prime Minister, said in 1969 that "There was no such thing as a Palestinian people...they did not exist," due to the Palestinian revolution and the ongoing resistance of the people of Palestine, it has become nearly impossible, even for the most extreme of Zionists, to perpetuate that fiction. Therefore, instead "the territories" are where Palestinians are, while within the areas of Palestine occupied in 1948, there are only "minorities," "Israeli Arabs," people with no connection to the millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza and the six million Palestinian refugees waiting to return home.

The Palestinian movement within the Zionist state, by its very existence, shatters this mythology. As the numerical population of Palestinians within Israel has grown, the advocacy of "transfer" that has always been part and parcel of Zionist ideology has come to the forefront once again. David Ben-Gurion, founder of the Zionist state, once wrote, "The Arabs will have to go," but one needs an opportune moment for making it happen, such as a war; he found his "opportune moment" in Al-Nakba. Nevertheless, despite rampant discrimination and oppression, those Palestinians who remained in the land refused to leave or to relinquish their rights and identity. Indeed, Zionist historian Benny Morris conveys his perspective that Ben-Gurion's ethnic cleansing did not go far enough: "I think he made a serious historical mistake in 1948. Even though he understood the demographic issue and the need to establish a Jewish state without a large Arab minority, he got cold feet during the war...my feeling is that the place would be quieter and know less suffering if the matter had been resolved once and for all...[Ben-Gurion] left a large and volatile demographic reserve in the West Bank and Gaza and within Israel itself." Morris elaborated further, "The Israeli Arabs are a time bomb. Their slide into complete Palestinianization has made them into an emissary of the enemy that is among us...In both demographic and security terms, they are liable to undermine the state." Morris's comments well illustrate why, rather than a "Jewish and democratic" state, Israel is better described as a "Jewish and demographic" state.

This type of commentary is rampant in the Zionist political scene. Gideon Ezra, the public security minister of the Zionist state, stated that "There are Arab citizens in the State of Israel. This is our greatest sorrow. Finish things in Gaza, finish things in Judea and Samaria [the Zionist term for Palestine's West Bank]. We'll be left with the greatest sorrow." Benjamin Netanyahu, former Israeli prime minister and still influential in the political scene, stated in 2002 that "if there is a demographic problem...it is with the Israeli Arabs who will remain Israeli citizens...We therefore need a policy that will first of all guarantee a Jewish majority. I say this with no hesitation, as a liberal, a democrat and a Jewish patriot." Avigdor Lieberman, Deputy Prime Minister in the current Ehud Olmert government and "Minister of Strategic Affairs," a Russian colonizer to stolen Palestinian land, stated in 2004 that 90 percent of the Palestinians inside the Zionist state would "have to (continued on page 9)

Palestinian territory. These checkpoints are used to humiliate and harass Palestinians on a daily basis. Pregnant women have been stopped while giving birth at checkpoints and forced to wait by Israeli soldiers, and many newborns have died because of lack of medical attention. Many people who have injuries are also forced to wait at checkpoints regardless if they are bleeding or nearly dying.

Living in Palestine is like living in an open-air prison. Your life is controlled for you by Israel. Since 1967 Israel has destroyed over 12,000 Palestinian homes, leaving thousands of families homeless. When you have nothing else to lose, there is nothing left to do but to resist. There is a direct connection between the occupation and the resistance.

If Israel continues to treat the Palestinians like animals and starve the entire population, Palestinians will continue to resist. Palestinians have the right to resist an illegal Israeli occupation. Many times, the resistance itself is demonized in U.S. media, or discussed as the subject of controversy - however, Israel dropping a bomb on a building full of innocent Palestinian civilians remains "uncontroversial" and unquestioned. The Palestinians are just like any other people; they want freedom and independence from their foreign occupier. You cannot oppress a people and expect them not to fight back. Without justice and the right of return for the Palestinian refugees there can never be peace.

(cont. from page 1) U.S. Campaign and UFPJ in the June 10-11 Call to Action, an examination of their public open letter exchange with Michael Lerner of Tikkun - a member organization of both the U.S. Campaign and UFPJ - reveals their willingness to retreat to a reactionary position. It also provides a demonstration of the role played by so-called "progressive" zionists in the movement.

Lerner initiated the exchange with his article "How the Anti-Israel Left Helps Perpetuate the Occupation" by speaking against the activities - and their organizers - planned for June 10-11. Speaking of political principle he writes, "It [unity] can't be around the dissolution of the State of Israel envisioned by many who are currently planning a set of demonstrations against Israel June 10-12 coordinated by the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation and the United for Peace and Justice." Lerner suggests that only a "two-state solution" ought to be promoted.

In less honest language, Lerner essentially points out that the oppressor apartheid zionist society really, really likes its privilege, really, really likes having a state on stolen land, really, really likes having economic and military superiority over Palestinians, and is not going to just want to give all of this up. Therefore, to follow this logic, advocating for a single democratic state with equality under law for all of its citizens is a bad idea, because that is not what zionists want. In fact, advocating for anything other than two states "plays into the hands of those who seek to perpetuate the occupation." This absurd logic could be used against any struggle for justice on the basis that those with power do not wish to relinquish it.

Of course, this is all a straw man argument on the part of Lerner, because the June 10-11 Call to Action says nothing about any number of states. However, Lerner probably did not believe his own mischaracterization of the political positioning of the rally organizers. Rather, he was setting them up, and they played right into his hands.

The U.S. Campaign and UFPJ issued a "Letter of Response to Tikkun" on April 30th. In it they remind Lerner that the June 10-11 points of unity specifically speak to influencing U.S. policy. They also rely on their "we don't take a position" approach to refute his assertion that "many" organizers are united around the "dissolution of the State of Israel". They take such strong exception to Lerner's claim, in fact, that they suggest that "powerful organizations on the pro-Israeli right - those organizations which actually are working to perpetuate Israel's military occupation - do not even go so far in their condemnations of this mobilization."

The problem with their response to Lerner is that they treat what is a mischaracterization instead as an allegation, and this serves his purpose. It is true that neither the U.S. Campaign nor UFPJ advocate for the dissolution of racist Apartheid Israel. However, just as many groups and individuals called for an end to the Apartheid regime in South Africa, so too do many today proudly and justly call for the same fate for Apartheid Israel. Zionists make many unfounded, intentionally misleading claims in their propagandizing against those who advocate for justice for Palestine. Lerner succeeded in prompting the U.S. Campaign and UFPJ to treat what is in fact a call for justice in Palestine instead as a position from which to vociferously distance oneself.

Having achieved more than he probably hoped for, Lerner posted a response "apology"/book plug to the Tikkun website. Ostensibly apologizing to June 10-11 organizers for "clumsy wording," Lerner instead digs in deeper, pushing his agenda of setting the discourse. Though placing U.S. Campaign and UFPJ outside of this attack, he accuses advocates of a "one-state solution" of anti-semitism. By the same logic, Lerner would argue that advocacy for the Palestinian Right to Return is anti-semitic. And given that every Palestinian has a Right to Return, it follows that Lerner would suggest that to be Palestinian is to be anti-semitic. Lerner includes this frightening advice for the organizers: "I think it is a huge political mistake to allow demonstrators to be portrayed as supporting (directly or indirectly) the elimination of the State of Israel as one of the possible options for speakers and for signs being carried and slogans being chanted."

Lerner should easily be dismissed as a zionist with no place in movements for justice. But instead he masquerades as a "peace activist" and is allowed membership to coalitions such as the U.S. Campaign and UFPJ. As a member organization issuing statements against the work of the coalition, it is clear that Tikkun does not benefit the U.S. Campaign, but instead plays a subversive role. Tikkun's self-serving aim within the U.S. campaign is to constantly push the discourse to the right, away from support for Palestinian justice. Lerner is lashing out because, fortunately, he is failing. The U.S. Campaign and UFPJ, regardless of any real or perceived shortcomings, have instead moved to the left. Perhaps Lerner's latest pronouncement will have isolated him to such an extent that the U.S. Campaign will revoke Tikkun's membership.



Demonstrators march for the right to return in a march commemorating the 58th anniversary of Al-Nakba in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn.

While many Right to Return movement activists may choose not to sign on to the narrowly defined points of unity for the June 10th demonstration, this important demonstration still must not be ignored. Most attendees will not be arriving with a preconceived notion that the correct resolution to the conflict is the establishment of a multi-bantustan state alongside - or surrounded by - Apartheid Israel. Therefore, Right to Return activists should mobilize to form "Liberation and Return" contingents.

There is no justifiable reason that the central issue to the Palestinian struggle for liberation, the Right to Return, be left out of the primary demonstration demands. The U.S. Campaign voices support for the right of return in the "Frequently Asked Questions" section of its website (and elsewhere if one spends enough time searching), and this is positive. Indeed, in a May 15th email announcement about its admirable Washington, DC Metro Station advertisement campaign, the U.S. Campaign states:

"May 15, marks another important date: al-Nakba Day, commemorating the 59th anniversary of the ethnic cleansing and dispossession that Palestinians suffered when Israel was founded. The effects of this catastrophe still linger today as Israel refuses to recognize the internationally-accepted right of return of Palestinian refugees who were exiled from their homeland."

Commendable language indeed, though the ads themselves make no mention of the Right to Return, nor of the original dispossession in 1948. Instead, the poster refers only to the "40th anniversary of Israel's illegal military occupation." The U.S. Campaign suggests that advertisements will be seen 9 million times over four weeks leading up to the June 10th march and rally. The execution of the ad campaign is quite remarkable, but an opportunity was missed to address the core issue.

It is time for the U.S. Campaign to unequivocally advocate for the Right to Return as a primary point of unity in all of its actions, and in its core "Principles and Purpose." They would be justified in doing so even within their limited scope and focus of working to affect U.S. policy. Indeed, they already do put forward support for the right of return. Now they must prioritize and emphasize the Right to Return. The U.S. Campaign should stand up to their internal detractors, taking from this experience that it is better to appease advocates for justice than defenders of Apartheid Israel.

Al-Awda New York, a chapter of the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, is sponsoring a bus organized by Palestinian youth in upstate New York. Other groups are organizing buses for activists leaving from the New York City and New Jersey area. The U.S. Campaign website promotes buses leaving from four additional states. And certainly the U.S. Campaign will be drawing out local DC area activists. Al-Awda New York and New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine call on Right to Return activists to march in a "Liberation and Return" contingent.

Let us carry signs and chant slogans, directly and indirectly calling for the elimination of apartheid, and for the unequivocal non-negotiable Palestinian Right to Return to original lands and properties!

Palestinian Popular Conference Preparatory Meeting Scheduled for Chicago

U.S. Popular Palestinian National Conference (USPCN)

Palestinians in the US: Reclaiming Our Voice, Asserting Our Narrative

Preparatory Meeting Chicago, Illinois June 15-17, 2007

We call upon Palestinians in the United States to join us on June 15-17, 2007, in Chicago to participate in a preparatory meeting for the historic Popular Palestinian National Conference, Palestinians in the US: Reclaiming Our Voice, Asserting Our Narrative. The Conference is scheduled to take place in May of 2008, to coincide with the 60 Year Anniversary of Al Nakba.

The U.S. Palestine Conference Network (USPCN) is not an organization. It is an open arena and network where Palestinian-American organizations, associations, village and town-based clubs and Palestinian individuals residing in the U.S. can come together. The purpose of the Conference is to empower us to assume a key role in realizing Palestinian national and human rights. We have an obligation to become full participants in the national struggle by developing a principled, inclusive and nonpartisan voice.

We pledge to ensure an inclusive meeting where all views are respected. We are aware of the diverse outlooks and opinions amongst Palestinians in the U.S. and we invite the participation of all community members who are willing to commit to making the Popular National Conference a reality. All participants must accept and support the Fundamental Palestinian National Principles (al-Thawabet al-Wataniyyah al-Filastiniyah):

*Self-determination and equality for the Palestinian people

*Return of all Palestinian refugees to their original homes, lands, properties and villages (a natural right supported by international law and UN Resolution 194)

*End of Zionist occupation and colonization of Palestine



Application Process

Please confirm your interest in attending the Chicago Preparatory Meeting by emailing your application to PalestineConferenceUSA@yahoo.com or by faxing it to 703-821-1874. Applications must be received no later than June 6, 2007.

You will receive a confirmation letter with your registration status within one week of submission. The confirmation notice will contain detailed logistical information, including meeting location, hotel rates, transportation, etc. A registration fee of \$50 will be collected onsite in order to cover meals and material costs. Please do not hesitate to contact us at PalestineConferenceUSA@yahoo.com if you have any questions. You may also take a look at our website, which is currently under construction, at www.palestineconference.org. We look forward to a successful meeting with your active participation.

In Solidarity, USPCN Chicago Host Committee and USPCN Coordinating Committee

Palestinian Flag Flies at Rutgers University

On March 9, 2007, Palestinian students and their supporters at Rutgers University-Newark celebrated a victory with "Palestine Celebrated," an event that drew a large crowd to the Multi-Purpose Room at Rutgers-Newark, marking the addition of the Palestinian flag to the numerous flags adorning the ceiling of the room. The Palestinian American Organization of Rutgers University - Newark, a new undergraduate student organization, petitioned for the Palestinian flag to be added to the room's display of flags. Initially, the PAO students faced opposition from the administration at the university, the North Jersey campus of the State University of New Jersey. One administrator stated his doubts that Palestine was a country. However, after months of student petitioning and a presentation to the administration, the Palestinian flag took its rightful place in the display of flags in the Multi-Purpose Room. At the March 9 event, PAO members presented about Palestine and their organization, while the Long Island debkeh troupe of the Ramallah Club performed, and Afif Safieh spoke as the evening's keynote speaker. The evening - and the flag - serve as a strong victory for the Palestinian students at Rutgers -Newark to celebrate Palestinian identity, culture and activism.

TAKAFUL Family-to-Family Sponsorship Program Launched

Support a Palestinian Refugee Family in Gaza today

For \$100 per month / \$3 per day

Your donations go directly to needy families as direct financial support

<http://www.refugeesupport.org/>

Through Family Sponsorship, your family now has the unique opportunity to help alleviate the suffering of impoverished families in Gaza Strip, Palestine, and show solidarity to those who are impacted the most by the dire humanitarian crisis.

Family sponsorship is a community development initiative that aims to change lives by delivering long-lasting, self-sustaining improvements to help lift generations out of poverty. Your sponsorship will empower parents and children caught in the cycle of poverty.

With your support of \$3 per day, delivered in direct monetary assistance (Cash), you are giving your sponsored family the option of sustaining essential life needs, be it food, health, education or merely coming out of crisis.

Your own family will experience the joy of building bridges with your sponsored family as you begin to build a relationship with them. Your children will learn invaluable lessons about caring, sharing and selfless kindness. You will have the option of contacting your sponsored family, and even visiting them as a show of your solidarity with their struggle for dignity, national and human rights.

Family-to-Family sponsorship aims to alleviate the suffering of impoverished families, and provide minimum support to the family unit to sustain itself.

The network also aims to help the families further by supporting education related projects that would provide an incentive for children and youth to continue their education with the Back to School Schoolbag & Tools program and the Kasid University scholarship program.

Please Visit Our Website for other Projects: Back to School Schoolbag, Kasid University Scholarship Fund.

ABOUT US:

The Palestinian Refugee Support Network is located in the US, Canada, Europe and Palestine.

The project is being launched in the United States & Canada by Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition - New York; Al-Awda Vancouver; New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine, and Palestinian Orphan Association in Germany. Both Al-Awda New York and New Jersey Solidarity are tax-exempt, non-profit organizations in the US. Al-Awda Vancouver is a non-profit organization in Canada. Palestinian Orphan Association is a registered organization in Germany (Weisen Kinder Hilfe Palestina e.V).

Our main goal is to develop the family-to-family sponsorship project (Takaful) in coordination with Al-Karmel Cultural and Social Development Association, and Hanan Cultural and Social Development Association in Gaza Strip, Palestine.

The network aims to work with civil organizations in the Arab world and internationally in order to support Palestinian refugees in their just struggle for independence, sovereignty, self-determination & the right to return.

The network aims as well to develop a solid basis for solidarity with the Palestinian people based on their national and human rights.

Al-Karmel & Hanan Cultural and Social Development Associations serve prima-

rily children, women, youth and the disabled, especially those in the most poverty stricken remote communities in Gaza. Since 1993, Al-Karmel's main work has been focused on the economic, education, cultural and social progress and the overall alleviation of suffering in marginalized and deprived communities.

Visit our Websites

www.refugeesupport.org

www.al-awdany.org

www.newjerseysolidarity.org

www.alkarmelgaza.org

www.hanancoo.org

Contact us: 1-800-856-8147 info@refugeesupport.org

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Al-Awda Chicago, USA

Palestine Solidarity Group, Chicago, USA

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Hanan for culture & Social Development

Association

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E-mail: hanan_association@yahoo.com



برنامج التكافل الأسري الفلسطيني Palestinian Family to Family Sponsorship



من أجل تعزيز صمود اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في قطاع غزة

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Palestinian Refugees in Iraq

by Rafeef Ziadah

On the border between Iraq/Jordan and Iraq/Syria today live hundreds of Palestinian families who fled the US war to find themselves stranded in no-mans land. These families live in tents, in squalor, with little certainty or hope for the future, like their parents and grandparents did after their expulsion from their own homeland in the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe) by the Israelis. The Al-Hol, Al-Tanaf, Al-Ruweished and Al-Walid refugee camps in the Iraqi desert are examples of the on-going Nakba that Palestinian refugees face. The fate of the 34,000 Palestinian refugees who once lived in Iraq can be added to the many tragic stories of the US invasion and occupation of that country.

There are Palestinian refugees all over the world, and every one of them is being denied their right to return to their homes and villages from which they were expelled. This is a right that cannot be cancelled and a right that doesn't have a statute of limitations. And while Palestinians continue to demand their right of return, other rights – to safety, to freedom of movement, to work and shelter and food – are violated as a matter of routine. The names of Palestinian refugee camps have become references to massacres and crimes committed against the Palestinian people: Sabra and Shatila (Lebanon), Jenin (West Bank), Rafah (Gaza) and today we add Al-Tanaf, Al-Hol, Al-Walid and Al-Ruweished.

Palestinians came to Iraq in several waves, each time fleeing a war. The first group is originally from villages around Haifa and Yaffa. They resisted the initial Israeli attacks on their villages, but were later forced to flee to Jenin where the Iraqi army was present. The women and children were evacuated to Iraq and all adult men were incorporated into a special unit in the Iraqi army, the Karmel Brigade. When the Iraqi Army left Palestine in 1948, these villagers (about 4000 in all) retreated with it. The next wave of Palestinians arrived in Iraq after the 1967 War and a third group arrived in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War when Palestinian refugees were forced to leave Kuwait.

Unlike Palestinian refugees in other parts of the world, those who lived under the Baathist regime did not fall under the jurisdiction of UNRWA and were not registered there. Palestinians in Iraq were issued special travel documents, had the right to work and were given full access to health, education and other government services. They were also provided with government-owned housing or subsidized rent in privately-owned houses. This was a source of resentment for Iraq's poor, mostly Shia' population, who believed that Palestinians were getting preferential treatment over Iraqis. Palestinians were not given citizenship, however, nor were they allowed to own assets such as cars, houses, or land. The precariousness of their situation was revealed starkly after the US invasion, and their preferential treatment, much of which was more apparent than real, made them targets for reprisals.

After the invasion in 2003, hundreds of Palestinian families in Iraq were evicted from their homes by landlords who had been forced to grant subsidized housing to them. They then had to go through a humiliating process of renewing their residence permits. These refugees were born in Iraq, lived their entire lives in the country yet had to apply for residency regularly with no guarantee of receiving it. A lack of valid residency documents in today's Iraq puts one at risk of arrest at checkpoints.

As the political situation deteriorated, Palestinians were harassed and threatened by armed militias who saw them as remnants of the Baathist regime. As the insurgency grew, there was a media campaign to connect Palestinians to the bombings. They were an easy target for a US occupation and a client regime looking for some 'foreign' element to blame.

Palestinian refugees that fled Iraq report arbitrary arrests, disappearances and torture. Sometimes they would be picked up by uniformed Iraqi secret service, other times people in civilian clothing would just knock down their doors and kidnap them. Those kidnapped would be found dead, thrown away on the streets after being tortured with electric drills, many times their limbs amputated. Those not murdered were held for ransom, forcing their families to sell all they owned to get them out. Armed men hand-delivered death threats to several Palestinians in Baghdad, setting off widespread panic among the Palestinian population.

Hoping to find safety in neighboring countries many families attempted to leave Iraq, only to find the borders to Jordan and Syria closed to them. Jordan initially admitted 386 Palestinian refugees with Jordanian family connections in 2003. Since then the Jordanian government has refused entry to other Palestinians from Iraq, and called on other nations in the region to offer them refuge stating that Jordan can not deal with the burden. To add insult to injury, the UNHCR has successfully managed to resettle some non-Palestinian refugees fleeing from Iraq to Jordan since 2003. Syria initially admitted 305 Palestinian refugees, but then placed them in Al-Hol refugee camp on the border. Since then, they too have closed down their borders to Palestinians crossing from Iraq. Once again, Palestinians

see how Arab regimes offer nothing more than the rhetoric of Arab summits. When it comes to protecting Palestinians these regimes consistently abdicate responsibility.

Border Camps

Palestinians fleeing Iraq have been stranded in several refugee camps. Al-Hol Refugee Camp located on the Syrian side of the border was originally set up by UNHCR in 1991 to host Iraqi refugees fleeing Iraq after the suppression of the uprisings in the aftermath of the Gulf War. The majority of Palestinian refugees in Al-Hol came in May of 2006. These refugees have no legal status, no freedom of movement or freedom to work – essentially they are prisoners in the camp.

Palestinian refugees seeking asylum in Syria since it closed its borders to them, have ended up in Al-Tanaf and Al-Walid refugee camps located in no-man's land on the border. There are 356 Palestinian refugees stranded in Al-Tanaf since May 2006. This camp is about 260 kilometers away from the nearest populated area. Conditions are deplorable, with inadequate medical and sanitation facilities. Al-Walid Refugee Camp is located on the Iraqi side of the border with Syria at the al-Walid border crossing. It was established on December 16, 2006, it now has a total of 340 residents. It is located in a remote area not far from al-Tanaf camp.

Jordan has its own refugee camp for Palestinians fleeing from Iraq. Al-Ruweished Refugee Camp is located on the Jordanian side of the border with Iraq. Jordan has essentially transformed it into a prison camp; refugees there are not allowed to leave and no one is permitted to visit without state issued permits. Currently, there are 148 Palestinians stranded there. Some have resided in the camp for the past three years. The children have had no access to education for that whole period. They regularly receive rotten food and are forced to consume it because there is no other source. The tents are highly flammable. One child has already died – when a tent caught on fire last year, a three-year old girl did not get out fast enough and died there.



A refugee sits near the fence of Rweished camp, 50 km off the Jordanian / Iraqi border. (Photo: Maria Font de Matas/IRIN)

Arrival in Canada

On November 1st, 2006, Canada granted asylum to 54 residents of Al-Ruweished camp. The families were only accepted after being scanned for health and political affiliation. The most vulnerable elderly residents were not admitted. The US, responsible for their displacement, has not offered to take any. No Arab states have offered to help either. The Palestinian Authority issued a statement saying they are happy to accept them, but the PA does not control its own borders and does not have the power to take these refugees in to another occupied territory.

When the families arrived in Canada they were sent to disparate corners of the vast country with no regard for their condition. Their hope to stay together for mutual support was not respected. Those individuals that 'made it' feel the responsibility to their families back in Iraq and in the camps, but cannot do anything to bring them to safety. The families currently in Canada are completely traumatized. After two months of being in Canada a father of six is still sleeping by the door of his house because the children are too afraid to go to sleep, afraid of attackers in the night.

Another 25 individuals from Al-Hol camp have been accepted to come to Canada under private, "group of five" sponsorship. This means that a group of five individuals are taking personal responsibility for them. Sponsors have to establish stability and income. This process of sponsorship does not entitle the refugees to any welfare services, as the sponsoring individuals need to cover the full expenses of the families for the first 12 months. For their first year in Canada, those refugees will not be able to access any of the services offered to the other 54 that were sponsored by the government. This is the privatization of the 'Palestinian refugee problem'.

But as a Palestinian woman from Al-Ruweished camp said recently at a meeting in Toronto "this is the continuation of 1948 – in Al-Ruweished we lived very harsh conditions, we were humiliated daily, but everyone knows how steadfast we Palestinians are – we made it, we need to work to get the others out."

Rafeef Ziadah is a third generation Palestinian refugee, a member of the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (www.caiaveb.org) and Sumoud (<http://sumoud.iao.ca>), and a political science student in Toronto.

Boston Commemorates the Nakba:

59 Years of Colonialism and Genocide in Palestine

New England Committee to Defend Palestine
(www.onepalestine.org)

For the past five years, Palestinians and their supporters have protested the "Boston Celebrates Israel" event held yearly by Zionists in Boston. As the crimes of "Israel" have been more exposed, it has become harder for Zionists to hold their celebration in the open. In the past five years, attendance for the celebration has dwindled from several thousand down to a few hundred people. This year, to avoid the political attention generated by holding their event in accessible public space, the organizers have moved the celebration out of Boston to Gillette stadium in the remote town of Foxboro, Massachusetts and renamed it "New England Celebrates Israel."

Gillette Stadium is owned by American/Israeli billionaire Robert Kraft of Brookline, who also owns the New England Patriots. His wife, Myra Kraft, is Chairperson of the Board of the openly Zionist Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Boston. Among many other activities in support of Israel, the Krafts endow a "Passport to Israel Program" to bring Boston teenagers to stolen Palestinian land. Combined Jewish Philanthropies has been involved in the attack on the Islamic Society of Boston and its newly constructed mosque in Roxbury.

According to the flyer for the Gillette Stadium event, registration and ID are

required to get in, indicating that people will be screened, just as they are at checkpoints in Palestine. In Jerusalem, Robert Kraft paid for the building of the Kraft Family Stadium, featuring American football under the Israeli flag - again using sports in the cause of colonialism.

At past "Israel Day" celebrations, it was clear that these were not grassroots events, that the festivities were organized and paid for from the top down. This year is the most extreme example - a large piece of private property has simply been provided by a single wealthy patron. In much the same way, the entire state of "Israel" has been bought and paid for with US dollars, and couldn't survive otherwise.

The New England Committee to Defend Palestine congratulates the supporters of Palestine who have protested this event since the year 2000 for finally getting "Israel Day" off the streets of Boston. "Israel Day" is political propaganda for the Zionist cause masquerading as a cultural festival. Its aim is to attract ordinary people - many with no particular commitment or connection to the Zionist project - and to present "Israel" as one more nation among the world's nations, with its own food, music, and culture (much of which has been - like the land of Palestine itself - quietly stolen from the indigenous people). As propaganda, it is effective to the degree that it does not call attention to itself as such. The lie comes in the form of silence - silence about the very recent ori-

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Day of the Land Marked in New Jersey

On March 31, 2007, New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine marked the Day of the Land with a teach-in and forum on the Palestinian struggle. The Day of the Land commemorates a 1976 general strike and demonstration by Palestinians inside Palestine '48, who were protesting the ongoing policies of land confiscation under the rubric of the "Judaization of the Galilee." Their demonstrations were brutally attacked, and six Palestinians were martyred. Since that time, the day is marked annually by Palestinians and their supporters in Palestine and around the world, drawing specific attention to the struggle of Palestinians in Palestine '48, and all Palestinians' commitment to the cause of liberating the land of Palestine from occupation and oppression. At the event, held at Old Bergen Church in Jersey City, Samia Halaby, Palestinian artist and activist, discussed the history of the Day of the Land, and drew connections between that history and the present time; Mae Ramadan, of the Palestinian American Organization of Rutgers University at Newark, discussed the student movement and the Rutgers - Newark students' struggle to raise the Palestinian flag on campus; and Noel Winkler, of New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine, discussed the comparison of the Palestinian struggle to the South African national liberation struggle against apartheid, and discussed actions that solidarity activists can take to support Palestine. A lively discussion followed the panelists' presentations.

Political Prisoner Resource Center Launched

On April 17, 2007, Palestinian Prisoners' Day, New Jersey Solidarity - Activists for the Liberation of Palestine announced its new Political Prisoner Resource Center. The resource center, available online at newjerseysolidarity.org, includes factsheets, posters, flyers, and other materials, as well as articles and reference materials focusing on the struggle of Palestinian and Arab political prisoners held in Zionist jails. Over 10,000 Palestinians are currently held prisoner, and one in every four Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been imprisoned during his or her lifetime. Currently, 41 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council are imprisoned, including PLC Speaker Aziz Dweik, Ahmed Sa'adat, General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti. The Resource Center provides easily redistributable materials designed to be used and adapted by local organizations, including spaces where groups can enter their local contact information. The site seeks to provide needed information and serve as a resource for activists and students, building and supporting solidarity work that focuses on the struggle of the prisoners for freedom and liberation.

Bishara Support Event Draws Crowd at NYU

An "Evening of Solidarity with Azmi Bishara," sponsored by twelve organizations in the New York/New Jersey area, drew a standing-room only crowd to the auditorium at the King Juan Carlos Center at New York University on May 3, 2007. Organized quickly to respond to the persecution of Azmi Bishara and to draw attention and support to the struggle of Palestinians within Palestine '48, the event featured speakers Elias Khoury, a professor, novelist and playwright; Professor Nadim Rouhana, director of Mada al-Carmel - Arab Center for Applied Social Research; Juliano Mer-Khamis, director of *Arna's Children* and cultural director of the Freedom Theatre of Jenin; and Yael Lerer, publisher, Andalus Publishing, and former aide of Azmi Bishara. The event was moderated by Jamil Dakwar, an attorney who formerly worked with Adalah, a legal center working for Palestinians in Palestine '48. The room was full of discussion and interest in supporting Azmi Bishara and defending Palestinians against repression.

Toronto: Reisman Publicly Confronted by CAIA Activists - "Cut the Ties with Israeli Apartheid!"

On Thursday May 10, activists from the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid confronted Heather Reisman, majority owner of Chapters and Indigo bookstores at a book signing for Ralph Nader's new book, *The Seventeen Traditions*. In the question and answer period, CAIA activists questioned Reisman about her support for the Heseg Foundation for Lone Soldiers, a program of financial support for former "lone soldiers" in the Israeli military. Reisman refused to answer the questions posed to her and instead, shut down the event and walked out.

CAIA reiterates its demand that Chapters Indigo should be boycotted until the majority owners, Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz publicly announce that they will cut all financial ties to Heseg. Reisman's refusal to answer the questions posed to her is absolutely unacceptable and indicates her culpability in Israeli apartheid. Her vocal support for Israeli war crimes will continue to be challenged whenever she appears publicly in Canada. On June 9th 2007, Chapters Indigo stores will be picketed across Canada as part of the national campaign against their ties with Israeli apartheid.

At its peak, Heseg will distribute up to \$3M per year to provide scholarships and other support to former "Lone Soldiers" in the Israeli military. 'Lone Soldiers' are individuals who have no family in Israel but decide to join the Israeli military. As Israeli soldiers, they participate in a military that operates checkpoints that restrict Palestinian freedom of movement, enforces the occupation of Palestinian land, and has a documented history of human rights violations. At any time there might be 5,000 'Lone Soldiers' in the Israeli military in all capacities including in combat units.

According to the Heseg website: "Canadian couple Gerry Schwartz and Heather Reisman established HESEG to express gratitude and provide support to the thousands of Former Lone Soldiers who serve annually in the Israel Defense Forces." Photographs and video from today's event will be released shortly. To get involved in the campaign, please visit the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (<http://www.caiaweb.org>) or email enda-partheid@riseup.net.

(continued from page 6)

gin of the "Israeli" settler state in genocidal militarism and colonialism.

For this reason, protest - even with limited number - has been able to defeat the purpose of the yearly "Boston Celebrates Israel" festival. The presence of Palestinian protesters, the massive security measures taken by the festival sponsors in reaction to this presence (a cordon of special operative police in riot gear and on horses, perimeter fences with metal detectors), and the mobilization of the most right-wing supporters of the Zionist cause, have unmasked the political nature of the festival, with the result that only hard-core supporters have chosen to attend for the last few years. Even before the sponsors moved the festival out of Boston and into a fully private arena, it had ceased to fulfill its original mission.

The creation of "Israel" in May of 1948 is called the Nakba (or 'catastrophe') by Palestinians. It is a time when more than 80% of the people of Palestine were driven from their land to make way for European settlers. We do NOT celebrate 59 years of racism, colonialism and land theft, the building of walls around human communities, military checkpoints, aerial bombardment, mass imprisonment, or the shooting of children.

We say that the people of Palestine have rights: a right to all of their historic land, and a right to resist colonialism and systematic genocide.

Picture Balata Youth Photography Tour Opens in New York City

The national tour of Picture Balata, a project designed to support photography and art by young people in the Balata refugee camp outside Nablus in Palestine's West Bank, launched on April 6, 2007 in New York City, at the Brecht Forum. Hosted in New York City by Al-Awda New York, the opening night for Picture Balata's photography exhibition and tour brought hundreds to the Brecht Forum to view the work of the young people who are part of the program, and to hear three young photographers from Balata speak about their experiences and their work.

The Picture Balata program began when Matthew Cassel, a photographer and solidarity activist from Chicago, worked with Mohamed Farraj, a community activist in Balata, to bring together young people with an interest in learning photography in Balata camp. Cassel worked with them, teaching photographic techniques and skills. The resulting photographic work was exhibited in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, Washington, DC, Pittsburgh and Youngstown as part of the tour, organized to raise money to purchase laptops, digital cameras, and other equipment that will enable Balata's young photographers both to continue their work and to communicate with the world, using blogging software and an Internet connection to upload photos.



Hadil, Sabreen and Taha of Picture Balata speak at the New York City opening event April 6. Randa Jamal (r) translated from Arabic to English. Some of the Balata photographers' work was displayed in a slideshow on the wall behind them as they spoke.

Sabreen, Taha, and Hadil, three of the young photographers, traveled to the U.S. for this tour, accompanied by Hadil's father, Abu Jobran. One of the other photographers in the program, Mohammad, or "Butch," was denied a visa to the U.S. shortly before the tour was to begin, and was unable to join the group. The Picture Balata group was enthusiastically welcomed to New York, their first stop on the tour, where they received widespread support, including a donation by New York University's Arab Students United of all proceeds from its Tarab cultural event, as well as support of the Arab American Association of New York for the housing and hosting of the Picture Balata group.

The Brecht Forum was packed with visitors eager to see the photography of the young people of Balata, as well as hear their stories and their experiences. The event brought in thousands of dollars to support the Picture Balata project.

This experience was repeated in every city visited by the tour, which concluded in San Francisco on April 15. Every event in each city was a strong success in fundraising and outreach for the project; the exhibition in New York closed on April 24, with a closing celebration that continued to raise funds for the project.

Al-Awda to Convene in Garden Grove, CA, May 25-27

The Fifth International Al-Awda Convention, "Uniting for the Return," will take place in Garden Grove, California, on May 25-27, 2007. This convention, the annual international gathering of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, will bring together Palestinian activists and their supporters from across North America and internationally, to build Al-Awda's organizing work and to strategize about building and supporting the right to return movement. The convention, originally slated to take place at the University of California at Riverside, was forced off-campus by Zionist attacks on the conference and University administration pressure on the student host group, Students for Justice in Palestine, including demands for tens of thousands of dollars in "security fees," demanding Zionists be allowed to not only attend the conference, but videotape and record, and other tactics designed to prevent the conference from happening altogether.

The new venue for the convention, the Embassy Suites Hotel - Anaheim South, 11767 Harbor Boulevard, Garden Grove, CA, will host a series of workshops and lectures from Friday through Sunday, as well as a major cultural event on Saturday, May 26. In addition, throughout the Convention, film showings will take place, featuring recent films focusing on the Palestinian cause. Speakers at the convention include Dr. Naseer Aruri, professor emeritus at the University of Massachusetts and author of numerous books and papers, and Dr. Jamal Zahalka, who will discuss the case of Azmi Bishara. Workshops at the convention include Refugee Support, Institutional Organizing for the Return, Boycott and Divestment for the Return, as well as workshops focusing on media work, student organizing, and writing for the return.

Friday evening's opening program will feature survivors of the Nakba, sharing their stories with convention attendees. The convention, which will mark the 59th anniversary of Al-Nakba, will be opened with these stories of survival, resilience and steadfastness in the face of the Zionist assault, and continue for 2 days of organizing and activism for the right to return to Palestine and for the liberation of Palestine. The Saturday evening cultural event, expected to attract many from the surrounding Arab and Palestinian community, will feature keynote addresses from Aruri and Zahalka, as well as music, dinner and much more.

This is Al-Awda's Fifth Convention; previous conventions took place in Toronto, New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Much more information about the convention, including detailed schedule, program, and speaker information, is available at www.al-awda.org, along with hotel and airline information, and details about registration for the convention.

New Pressure to Relinquish Palestinian Rights

Palestinians in our homeland and the diaspora remember the 30th of May as Land Day. On this day in 1976, six Palestinians were killed and a hundred injured by Israeli forces as Palestinians went on strike against a massive land confiscation scheme in the Galilee. Land theft and colonization continues in the Galilee, Naqab and the West Bank until today.

More than 30 years later, we will again be out on the streets and in the fields confronting the Occupation. Over 20 protests and demonstrations will unite the people in villages and cities across the West Bank in a week of continuous mobilization, while Palestinians on the other side of the Green Line will hold protests against the ongoing racism and colonization of their lands. But is the world willing to see our protests and the reality on the ground?



The Palestinian flag flies above occupation soldiers at a demonstration against the Apartheid Wall in the Palestinian village of Bil'in.

In the West Bank, including Jerusalem, the Israeli Apartheid Wall, settlements and their road systems are de facto confiscating over half of our land and most of our water resources and agricultural fields. Israeli apartheid is creating something worse than Bantustans: Palestinian residential areas surrounded by 8-meter high cement walls and sealed by gates, checkpoints and terminals.

(cont. from page 3)

the question of Palestine. That is why several African countries which severed ties with Israel following the 1967 war granted political recognition to the Palestine Liberation Organisation, as the sole legitimate representative of the dispossessed Palestinian people.

Today the PLO enjoys observer status at O.A.U. meetings and the granting of this status to the PLO signifies support to the just cause of the Palestinian people.

The O.A.U., therefore, has consistently viewed the Middle East conflict in its entirety and has never confined its support only to Egypt. There exists no O.A.U. document propounding this narrow sectarian view.

Moreover, there is a growing awareness among O.A.U. members of the close military, nuclear, political, economic, cultural and sporting links between racist South Africa and Zionist Israel. This is amply reflected in the various O.A.U. resolutions. These resolutions, therefore, show that besides the O.A.U.'s concern over the Middle East crisis, the O.A.U. is equally, if not more, concerned about the ever-growing nuclear, military and economic ties between these two racist entities.

In April 1976 John Vorster, the then racist Prime Minister of South Africa made a four-day visit to Israel. At a press conference in Jerusalem on April 12, Vorster announced the signing of an "Israeli-South African" agreement on "economic cooperation". Although they tried to deny that the agreement included military cooperation, the fact that South Africa's Defence Minister was to be a member of the ministerial joint committee set-up under the agreement, and that Vorster was allowed to tour "strategic" areas in Israel, including the naval base at Sharm-el-Sheikh where he boarded the Zionist made Reshef warship equipped with Gabriel sea-to-sea missiles, as well as the aircraft factory where the Kfir jet was being built, confirms the crucial military alliance concluded between the two racist entities. Moreover, it is an open secret that South Africa is building Reshef class warships under licence and that the Zionists are equipping them with Gabriel missiles.

The Zionist-racist agreement of 1976 was based on the exchange of Zionism arms and know-how for South African strategic materials in three clearly defined areas: conventional arms trade, nuclear collaboration and the sharing of Zionist "quick strike experience in the field."

According to a press report Zionist military industries had over US \$150 million in South African orders, including missiles, gunboats and fighter jets. Details on the sale to South Africa of 6 Reshef gunboats armed with Gabriel missiles, and the building of 6 Dabur coastal patrol boats in Durban, under licence from Israel were also confirmed.

Moreover, three Zionist companies - Tadiran, Elyit and I.A.I. - have been selling to South Africa equipment for the electronic "wall" namely electronic fences, anti-guerrilla infiltration alarm systems, communication systems and computer night-vision devices. The Zionists, at the same time are supplying the racists with 105 mm self-propelled howitzers, air-to-air rockets and anti-tank missiles for infantrymen. In June 1976, a Knesset member Mercia Freedom revealed that hundreds of Zionist soldiers were attached to South African army units as instructors and participants in training manoeuvres. In 1978, the New York Times commented that 5,000 Zionists had "migrated" to South Africa with "useful military skills and in June 1980, the London Sunday Telegraph reported that "volunteers" from Israel, Britain and while were serving with South African troops against Namibian freedom fighters in Namibia. In the last three years General Haim Bar-Lev, major General Alaron Yariv, Lieut. General Mordechai Gur, General Chaim Herzog and Ezer Weizmann have all visited apartheid South Africa "to discuss security matters."

By far the most omenous of all manifestations of Zionist-racist collaboration to



Never have Israeli crimes been so evident and well-known all over the world. To dozens of UN resolutions has been added the decision of the International Court of Justice calling for the Wall to be dismantled. Violations of human rights and international conventions are reported daily. Lately, high level officials and envoys from the UN, the US and European states have to line up if they are to receive appointments with the Fatah-wing of the new Palestinian authority "government". By now, they should be well aware of our ghettoization as well.

Diplomacy of the unipolar world focuses on Palestine, but with what purpose? The US-Israeli axis toed by Europe has never been willing to allow any of our rights to be implemented. Thus, skepticism shrouds whether the hectic diplomatic agenda in Ramallah is aimed at furthering our rights or justice in the region.

Rather than any concern for the Palestinian people, US elites are increasingly bound up in a discourse of "negotiation" in response to new realities. Iraq and Afghanistan have turned into veritable quagmires for the "alliance of the willing". Moreover, the mounting body tolls and expenses and never-ending scandals of corruption, outright lies and torture have convinced more and more countries to withdraw their troops. Oil profits are definitely flowing from Iraq but at the same time, the sectarian divides fuelled by the US turn against them as resistance movements. The lost occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan have put the US in the Middle East in the hands of Iran and Saudi Arabia, respectively the Shia and the Sunni regional powers.

While some still push to drive the madness further and to attack Iran, others look for diplomatic solutions. It is not only voices from the region that have suggested a move on Palestine as a pre-condition to get the US out of the Middle Eastern trouble; the home-made White House Baker report has stated the same. Our homeland and people have become the political card which is expected to save global imperialism from drowning in the Middle East.

If the US were willing to force Israel to grant us our rights, it would not require the current intense schedule of meetings. Our rights are internationally recognized and detailed; it only needs that the step be taken to implement them. The diplomatic traffic aims at finding a solution that appeases the Arab world and international public opinion without demanding anything from Israel. The question is how to coax the Arab world into normalization with Israel while bypassing our claims for our land and the right of our refugees to return to our homes. Not surprisingly, renowned experts of Middle East negotiations surface in the discussions as the neo-con strategy shows signs of strain. Baker's able "multilateral" policy that shaped a 34-member alliance in the first gulf war has definitely given greater benefit to US hegemony than the current US policy. At the same time, another expert of normalization between Israel and the Arab world, (continued on page 9)

have emerged over the five years since 1976 is in the nuclear field. Zionist technology was exchanged for South African enriched uranium. There is conclusive evidence that seven Zionist nuclear scientists are working at the University of Witwatersrand.

In September 1978 an explosion took place in the south Atlantic Ocean which was monitored by the United States VELA nuclear detection satellite. According to a report compiled by the British television programme "World in Action", the explosion was an Israeli-South African developed nuclear shell which can be delivered by a South African howitzer made from United States and Belgian components. At a range of up to 30 km it would kill unprotected human beings 100 metres from impact.

Moreover, economic co-operation between the two racist entities is fundamentally strategic and has three crucial elements:

Firstly, South African raw and strategic materials (particularly steel, coal and enriched uranium) dominate Pretoria's export to Israel, while technical expertise and military equipment and weapons in turn dominate Israel's exports to South Africa.

Secondly, particularly through joint investment projects, the Zionists are providing South African manufacturing industry with a channel for evading international boycotts of South African goods, especially in Africa, and also for penetrating the immensely profitable market of the European Economic Community (EEC) by the back door;

Thirdly, special trade credits, relaxation of the export of capital, income tax arrangements and favourable government contracts.

The real importance of Israeli-South African trade links was stressed by South Africa's most influential economic periodical, the Financial Mail, which pointed out in 1970 that:

- (a) "together with Switzerland, Israel is South Africa's fastest growing trade partner;"
- (b) if uncut diamonds and undisclosed defence force purchases are taken into account, Israel is already one of South Africa's biggest trading partners;"
- (c) "after 1981 South African sales to Israel would likely top R1 billion over US \$1.25 billion); and;
- (d) Israel "is ideal for joint manufacturing ventures and selective industrial investment, because it has a special relationship to the EEC and also exports a large variety of goods to the U.S. duty-free."

Thus it is obvious from the above facts that there exists very close cooperation between racist South Africa and Zionist Israel and the basic aim of this unholy alliance is to fight the national liberation movements in Africa, Namibia and occupied Palestine.

Since the O.A.U. is committed to the liberation of Namibia and Azania, the two last bastions of colonialism on the African continent, it can only ignore Zionist-racist cooperation at its own peril. Moves by the O.A.U. to have economic sanctions imposed on the racists will come to nothing if the link between Pretoria and Tel Aviv is not carefully studied and resolutely fought. The same applies with the arms embargo.

Given the fact that both are racist entities based on the dispossession of the indigenous population by alien settler minorities the fight against apartheid must, of necessity, include the struggle against Zionism, for both are two sides of the same coin. Consequently it is unconceivable how the O.A.U. can reverse its stand against Zionism which it took in the past... rather it is more national to further strengthen its support to the just struggle of the Palestinian people. It is this support and cooperation that will ensure the final defeat of apartheid and Zionism - the two ideologies declared repugnant to human conscience by the international community.

(cont. from page 3) find a new Arab entity" in which to live. "They have no place here. They can take their bundles and get lost," he said. Lieberman has repeatedly urged that Palestinians' homes and citizenship be transferred to some new entity. Rehavam Ze'evi, who referred to Palestinians as "lice," acted as tourism minister in Zionist Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government until assassinated by Palestinian fighters in 2001; Ze'evi ran for office under a platform urging the expulsion of Palestinians. In 2005, the Knesset passed a bill to memorialize Ze'evi by creating a national day of mourning and creating a school curriculum to celebrate the memory of this man, best known for his blatant, open, racism and urging of genocide.

Such repugnant racism is often explained away as the fruit of "fringe" or "extreme" elements, despite the fact that this "extreme" occupies major positions of power within the Zionist political system. However, in reality, it reflects the nature of the Zionist state itself, a racist state based on the denial of Palestinian Arab rights and existence, codified in a series of laws that create the institutional framework for Zionist racist rule in Palestine. The Indian Appropriations Act in the U.S. followed centuries of genocide and broken treaties; the 1876 Indian Act served much the same purpose in Canada. In Apartheid South Africa, the series of laws, from the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act to the Population Registration Act to the Group Areas Act, to the Pass Laws, passed to create the formal structures of apartheid, followed upon a long period of colonialism. In Palestine, these laws, enacted by the Zionist state immediately following al-Nakba, have provided a self-created "legal" justification for apartheid and colonization.

It is interesting here to note the role of British Lord Balfour in both South Africa and Palestine. In a British Parliamentary debate over the establishment of the Union of South Africa, Lord Balfour argued that they could not grant the indigenous African population equality with the white settler colonialists without "jeopardizing the whole structure of white civilization." Lord Balfour, of course, is infamous in the history of Palestine for his role in issuing the "Balfour Declaration," the 1917 statement of British colonial intent in Palestine. Anticipating the defeat of the Ottoman empire in World War I and envisioning the future partition of the Arab world between European imperial powers, Lord Balfour issued a declaration on behalf of the British government supporting the establishment of a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. The Palestinian Arab indigenous people were referred to merely as "existing non-Jewish communities." British colonialism, over the next thirty years, poured support and resources to the Zionist project, relying on Zionist militias to suppress repeated national revolts by Palestinian Arabs, seeking self-determination in their own homeland. Upon the succession of Zionist power to British colonialism in imperial authority over Palestine, the new Zionist authorities, relying solely upon their military power to prevent the return home of the country's rightful inhabitants, did not hesitate to create the legal framework for Zionist power that persists to this day: the Law of Return, the Absentee Property Law, the Nationality Law, and their successors.

The Law of Return granted Israeli citizenship to any Jewish person anywhere in the world who wished to claim it - while Palestinians were denied their right to even enter their own homeland; the Absentee Property Law declared those who had been forced to flee their homes "absentee" and confiscated their property, instantly seizing 90% of the area of Palestine occupied in 1948 as "state lands," then prohibited to Palestinian ownership or cultivation; the Nationality Law, while granting vast rights to Jewish settlers, placed stringent conditions on the citizenship of Palestinians. Far from being weakened over time, in 2003, the Nationality Law was amended to prevent the spouses of Palestinian citizens of Israel from becoming naturalized citizens, leading to the forced separation of a number of families. There are numerous internal refugees - 15% of the Palestinians of Palestine '48 are internally displaced, prevented from returning to their homes and villages due to Zionist expulsion and land confiscation. One-quarter of the Palestinians inside the Zionist state have recently faced land confiscation, property loss or home demolition at the hands of the Zionist state. Over twenty laws regulate the institutional and legal discrimination against Palestinians. Palestinian villages and towns, street names and locations were renamed to erase their Palestinian Arab content, as if altering names could eliminate a history and a people.

Just as the Zionist state has continued to wage war on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and has continued to deny the rights of the millions of Palestinians in exile, it has simultaneously done so to the Palestinians of Palestine '48. All three of these sectors of the Palestinian people have faced different aspects of Zionist racism, colonialism, apartheid and occupation, yet, centrally, they face the same enemy and the same fundamental contradiction with the Zionist state in Palestine. They are, fundamentally, three sec-

tors of one nation, one struggle, and one cause, and the liberation of Palestine means - just mean - justice, liberation and self-determination for the entire Palestinian nation, in all of its constituent sectors. Just as Zionism has waged war on the Palestinian people, it has attempted - and continues to attempt - to divide these sectors of the people from one another, place their interests at odds to one another, and promise concessions to one at the expense of another. In order to forward its goals, it has attempted to create an "Israeli Arab" identity that is separate from both the Palestinian people as a whole, and from the Arab people in their entirety. The "Israeli Arab" identity is one that is "Israeli" first, and only then Arab - even then, Arab identity is confined to a cultural or linguistic construct, without national rights, community identification, political meaning, or self-determination. However, the Zionist drive to redefine, narrow and debilitate Arab Palestinian identity has been, despite 59 years of occupation, deeply unsuccessful. And it is in this lack of success that the persecution of Bishara, Kana'neh, Saleh and the Palestinian Arab movement is rooted.



1981 Palestinian political poster marking Land Day

Israel has always been a settler-colonial project, defined by the creation of a so-called "Jewish state," based on largely European immigration and colonization of Palestine. In order to achieve this objective, Palestinians have been stripped of their land, citizens of a state that is defined in its very founding documents as being not theirs, their identity negated and their political activity circumscribed. However, none of this has been able to blunt the dedication of the Palestinian Arabs of Palestine '48 to their national cause. In 1976, the Day of the Land - a general strike and demonstration against the "Judaization of the Galilee" - the seizing of yet more Palestinian land for Zionist settlement - was first marked in a massive protest that saw six Palestinians fall as martyrs. Since that time, March 30 is marked as a national day of the Palestinian people in all of their sectors - in Palestine '48, in the West Bank and Gaza, and in exile - a day of celebrating Palestinian connection to the land and determination to resist its theft and exploitation. The Day of the Land in 1976 was a visible turning point; after generations of endurance and organizing, the resistance movement inside Palestine '48, alongside that in the West Bank and Gaza and in the diaspora, was visible and undeniable in its import, popularity and strength, in the face of ongoing land theft and confiscation - and it was met with brutal, and deadly, force. Nevertheless, this repression did not defeat the Palestinian movement. Said Salih Baransi, a Palestinian activist from Palestine '48, in 1981, "The overwhelming majority of the Arabs who stayed in Israel in 1948 have stronger patriotic and nationalist feelings than others...because their objective circumstances have created such feelings...My land is confiscated because I am an Arab. I am humiliated and despised because I am an Arab. This policy has strengthened their feelings of nationalism and Arabism and their attachment to these sentiments...An Arab child is taught that Israel is democratic, but sees that his father, his brother or his relative is humiliated and hit in the street...The consciousness of the Arabs in Israel of being Palestinian Arabs is powerful, committed and mature. Of this I have no doubt."

The Palestinian Arab movement within Palestine '48 had traditionally been concentrated in the Israeli Communist Party. The ICP, which played a critical role in organizing the Palestinian community and from which came many important leaders of the movement within Palestine '48, also accepted the existence of the Zionist state in Palestine, and frequently focused on parliamentary struggle and winning representation within the Knesset. A number of Palestinian organizations have arisen within Palestine '48, which have taken different positions on the question of parliamentary participation. Indeed, in response to the Knesset participation of Palestinian leaders such as Bishara, the Knesset Law has been amended several times; once, to affirm that all parties participating in elections must agree to the "Jewish and democratic" character of the Zionist state, and again, to require Knesset members to take an oath of allegiance to the "Jewish and democratic" state. Bishara and other Palestinian members of Knesset have faced disqualifica-

(continued on page 12)

(cont. from page 8) Jimmy Carter, has joined the debate with his controversial book on Palestine.

US policy might slowly move from the stick to the carrot again, but the final aims of control over the Arab world and support for the Zionist agenda to continue its racist control over all of Palestine are beyond doubt. Pressure on the upcoming Arab summit has thus far been unsuccessful in taking out the Right of Return from the Arab Peace Initiative. Now, efforts are being made to arrange direct meetings between Israel and leading Arab states. A new Camp David, a new "peace" between Israel and the Arab world on the back of our rights, is sought.

In the meanwhile, the newly formed Palestinian government has to be integrated into these plans to ensure it underwrites the formula. The ongoing sanctions against the Palestinian people represent the backdrop of international pressure and such efforts.

In this situation, it is neither Palestinians nor those in the Arab world that strive for justice and self-determination that need a deal. The ongoing resistance in Palestine and Iraq is the unpredictable factor that might change the cards on the table. It is time to underline the principles of our struggle and the baselines for peace and justice: the end of the occupation, equality for all of our people within our homeland, the right of return to their homes for our refugees, Jerusalem, home to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and cultural and economic center of Palestine as our capital, are integral parts of our right to self-determination. It is only when diplomacy is forced to see and change the reality on the ground in Palestine and accepts the pillars of our struggle, human rights and international law that justice comes closer.

The demonstrations and protests all over Palestine for Land Day are thus yet another call to our leadership and the wider region that they at least second, if not lead, the steadfastness and resistance of the people. Approximately 97 villages in the West Bank are completely isolated and slated for destruction or ethnic cleansing and some 4,500 houses are under demolition order to make space for Israeli colonization. Dispossessed farmers watch industrial estates growing on their land in a system designed to exploit and control. Six out of ten Palestinians live below the poverty line. Yet the calls that lead the demonstrations do not ask for food or survival. It is the calls for dignity and rights - the full implementation of our rights - that brings the people onto the streets. Another popular Intifada is inevitably building up as long as our rights are ignored and our future confiscated.

Palestinian Filmmaker Visits NY/NJ

by Nancy Olszewski

An outstanding Palestinian actor and filmmaker, Mohammad Bakri, visited the New York/New Jersey area from March 8-10, 2007, visiting New Jersey on March 8, and New York on March 9 and 10.

Mohammad Bakri directed *Jenin Jenin*, 1948, and *Since You Left*. As an actor, he starred in films such as *Private* and *The Olive Harvest*, for which he won an award for best actor. As a theatrical actor, he appeared in *Hedda Gabler*, co-produced *Romeo and Juliet*, and participated in many other productions. He also directed Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* and other plays, including a one-man play he authored, *Abu Marmar*, about Palestinian prisoners.

On March 8, the movie *Jenin Jenin* was shown in Jersey City, NJ. The film is about the 2002 massacre in the Jenin refugee camp. An elderly man, a twelve-year-old girl, and the mother of a son who was killed all share their reactions. *Jenin Jenin* won the Best Film award at the Carthage International Film Festival. The co-producer, Iyad Samoudi, was martyred on his way home after shooting; fortunately, the film was able to be produced.

1948 focused on the Nakba and the destruction of villages, such as Deir Yassin. Several Palestinians from different villages showed their reactions. Bakri's daughter sang the works of the poet Mahmoud Darwish between interviews and Bakri himself narrated. 1948 was presented at Alwan for the Arts in Lower Manhattan, in Arabic with English subtitles.

On Saturday, March 10, the documentary film *Since You Left* was presented at Symphony Space in New York City. Bakri produced, directed and acted in the film, about his visit to the grave of the Palestinian writer Emile Habibi, in which he tells him what took place in Palestine after his death. The film was screened in Arabic with English subtitles.

After *Since You Left* was shown, a play, *Almotashael*, was presented. Produced and directed by Bakri, the play was based on Habibi's novel, *Al Motashael*, about a Palestinian named Saeed who lost his land but not his determination. The play, performed in Arabic, symbolized the fate of the Palestinian people.

Since You Left and *Jenin Jenin* are available on DVD. More information about Mohammad Bakri is available at his website, www.mohammadbakri.com.

Criminalizing Solidarity: Sami Al-Arian and the War of Terror

Dr. Sami Al-Arian, Palestinian political prisoner, is held in a prison hospital, after a debilitating 60-day hunger strike seeking to draw the attention of the nation and the world to the injustice visited upon him, jailed for his commitment to justice and dignity for his homeland. This is not a scene from an Israeli jail, however, but from a U.S. prison in North Carolina. Al-Arian's hunger strike ended at the pleas of his family - yet without justice for Al-Arian, whose imprisonment is part and parcel of a U.S. government policy of targeting Palestinian activists, as well as the broader Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities, in an internal "war of terror" whose policies run parallel to that being waged abroad.

The case of Sami al-Arian is a story of persecution, perseverance, and, ultimately, the determination of those in power to criminalize resistance and punish Palestinian activism, subverting not only the principles of justice but also their own criminal justice system in order to do so. Sami al-Arian, 49, is a Palestinian refugee who has lived in the United States for over thirty years and has, for the last decade, alongside his prominent role as an activist and leader in the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities in the Tampa Bay, Florida area and nationally, his work as a professor of computer science at the University of South Florida, and his personal life as a husband and father to five children, waged a prominent battle to protect fundamental rights within the U.S. from an assault through secret evidence, racist detention policies, and an all-out assault on community organizing and solidarity work within targeted communities. Al-Arian has lived with over a dozen years of surveillance, and eight years of FBI agents shadowing his movements. Today, he is imprisoned, despite the fact that he was convicted of nothing by a jury, despite a parade of witnesses and years of harassment.

Dr. Mazen al-Najjar, Al-Arian's brother-in-law and a fellow professor at USF, was arrested in 1997, presumably for a minor visa violation, which, at the time, should have been a simple problem to correct. However, as a stateless Palestinian refugee, al-Najjar was instead imprisoned for three and one-half years on the basis of secret evidence to which Al-Najjar was never given access. Al-Najjar's case became a primary target of the then-Clinton Administration's demand to be able to hold and deport people on the basis of secret evidence, a case that is haunting today in its relevance to the thousands of men held around the world - and the nearly 400 held at Guantanamo Bay currently - imprisoned by the U.S. government with evidence they cannot confront and with no legal process to ensure any sort of real hearing. In the late 1990s, however, secret evidence had not yet assumed its terrifying and major place in the government's extra-legal arsenal of imprisonment and detention. Sami al-Arian played a leading role in the campaign to defend his brother-in-law and obtain his freedom - a fight in which, it seemed, they were victorious, as, in late 2000, Immigration Judge Kevin McHugh, describing the government's case - based on secret evidence - as "devoid of any direct or indirect evidence" to support Al-Najjar's detention, ordered his release. By mid-2001, a bill to restrict the use of secret evidence was progressing through Congress, all but one of the non-citizens held on secret evidence had been freed, and even George W. Bush had expressed, during his campaign, disapproval for the practice. (Bush's statement against secret evidence, in a twist that now seems bitterly ironic, helped to secure the support of many in the Muslim and Arab communities; in Florida, Al-Arian himself was key in mobilizing those communities to support Bush's campaign.)

Both Al-Arian and Al-Najjar were prominent activists in the Muslim community, deeply involved with the Islamic Community Center of Tampa Bay and the Florida Islamic Academy, as well as dedicated advocates for the Palestinian cause. The organizations Al-Arian co-founded at the University of South Florida, the World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE) and the Islamic Concern Project (ICP), produced volumes of educational materials and held numerous events and conferences, helping to link their Islamic work with the struggle to free Palestine from occupation and oppression, as well as providing educational perspectives often silenced or unheard within U.S. discourse around Palestine. Al-Arian was an exemplary founder and leader of community institutions that provided immense support to the strengthening of the Muslim community in Florida, as well as the national and international trend of Islamic work for justice in Palestine. Amidst the defense of his brother-in-law, he was also president of the National Committee to Protect Political Freedom.

For this work, Sami al-Arian was targeted for spying, harassment and intimidation - none of which silenced nor stopped his dedicated activism. Following the events of September 11, the repressive mechanisms of the state swung into action; Mazen al-Najjar was re-arrested, on the same immigration charges, and later deported. Al-Arian, prominent as a spokesperson and leader in the Muslim community, was invited to appear on notorious right-wing TV talk show host Bill O'Reilly's program. While Al-Arian was informed that he was to speak about the response of the Arab and Muslim communities in South Florida to September 11, instead, he was confronted with an ambush by O'Reilly based on his commitment to the Palestinian cause, a commitment that O'Reilly, working from a campaign based on the work of die-hard Islamophobes like Joe Kaufman and Steven Emerson - who sought to blame the Oklahoma City bombing on Muslims - sought to criminalize, attacking Al-Arian on the air. The response to the O'Reilly show on the part of the University of South Florida administration was swift, and in line with the repressive post-September 11 environment that saw thousands of Arab, Muslim and South Asian men rounded up, detained for little or no reason, and deported, as well as the passage of repressive legislation like the USA PATRIOT Act: Al-Arian was placed on leave from USF, which claimed that it could not ensure his security.

While al-Arian had campaigned for his brother-in-law's civil liberties for years, his were now under attack. Faculty unions supported him in his campaign to preserve his ability to teach and work. Nevertheless, the worst was still to come. On February 20, 2003, Al-Arian was arrested on the basis of an indictment that charged him, as well as three co-defendants, fellow community activists Sameeh Hammoudeh, Hatem Fariz and Ghassan Ballut, with various charges centered around the allegation that they provided "material

support" to Palestinian Islamic Jihad, a Palestinian resistance organization designated by the U.S. State Department as a so-called "Foreign Terrorist Organization."

Like the persecution of Mazen al-Najjar, this prosecution had its roots not solely in the post-September 11 repression of the Bush Administration, nor in the infamous PATRIOT Act, but rather in legislation passed during the Clinton Administration that has played a major role in the criminalization of resistance internationally, and the criminalization of solidarity within the United States - the 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act. This law, targeting international movements of resistance to U.S. imperialism, formalized two previous Executive Orders by President Clinton, creating a list of "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," to be designated by the U.S. State Department, to which "material support" was forbidden and could be criminally prosecuted. This list of so-called "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" was not restricted to Palestinian (or even Arab or Islamic) organizations and political movements - indeed, it has come to include such diverse examples of resistance to imperialism as the Communist Party of the Philippines and its associated New People's Army and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. However, its genesis was as part of the U.S. effort to enforce the Oslo process upon the Palestinian people.

The U.S. was deeply involved in the early to mid-1990s effort to destabilize the Palestinian movement and create a willing Palestinian security force for the benefit of their Israeli occupiers, a process deceptively titled a "peace process" that, nevertheless, brought little to no peace for Palestinians, no real autonomy, a deeper and wider network of Israeli control of the West Bank and Gaza, and no justice whatsoever for the millions of Palestinian refugees and exiles, who, after sixty years, continue to be denied their right to return home to their original homes, lands and properties, from which they were forced in the Zionist military campaign to conquer Palestine and ethnically cleanse it of indigenous Palestinians in 1948. Despite decades of valiant struggle by the Palestinian people within and without Palestine, as well as the vast weight of international support - outside that of U.S. imperialism, which heavily funded and armed Israel, as a Western settler colony within the heart of the Arab world - the post-Gulf War and post-Soviet international political environment, combined with an illusory promise of some relief for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, and accentuated by the political weakness of important sectors of the Palestinian leadership within the Palestine Liberation Organization at the time in their belief that making concessions to the occupying power would in some way help to obtain meaningful independence, or at very least, some form of Palestinian state, led to the ratification of the "Oslo Accords." The following decade brought nothing but more misery to Palestinians, as the assassinations of Palestinian political leaders, the military occupation, the tripling of exclusive Jewish-only settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, the introduction of closure and economic isolation, and a vast network of checkpoints and roadblocks failed to materialize anything like independence or a state, while Palestinian citizens of Israel continued to live under an apartheid regime as second-class citizens at best and Palestinian refugees continued to be denied their rights. It is not surprising, therefore, that many Palestinians and Palestinian political organizations rejected the Oslo accords as improper and destructive to the process of national liberation, instead creating a "Palestinian Authority" with no real power except for its authority to serve as a security force for the occupier and oppressor, in its assigned role to root out and suppress Palestinian resistance to occupation. The Islamic organizations in Palestine, Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) and Islamic Jihad, rejected Oslo, as did the Palestinian Left, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine. In time, the brutal realities of Oslo led to the Al-Aqsa Intifada, often termed the "Second Intifada;" however, this Intifada was far from only the second Palestinian uprising for national rights, but rather the latest in a long history of uninterrupted struggle for national liberation that had been proceeding since before the Zionist occupation of Palestine, from the time of British colonialism in Palestine in the early twentieth century.

In 1995, however, President Clinton sought to shore up an unjust process built on an attempt to make the national movement of the oppressed collaborate with its oppressor by issuing an Executive Order that declared a "national emergency" to deal with the "threat posed to the Middle East peace process" by Palestinian resistance - as well as Hezbollah, for continuing Lebanese resistance to the occupation of Southern Lebanon, and froze all transactions with twelve named groups, including HAMAS, Islamic Jihad, the PFLP, the DFLP, and Hezbollah. This Executive Order was soon followed by the push for the 1996 law, which went beyond freezing transactions to creating a criminal offense of "material support" to these organizations. This served an important objective in attempting to isolate Palestinian resistance and ensure Palestinian submission to Israeli rule. As a nation largely in exile, the Palestinian and Arab community in the United States - and around the world - was deeply involved in political and charitable activity to support its brothers and sisters inside the occupied land and living in refugee camps in the Arab world. In addition, the larger Muslim community was also actively involved in supporting Islamic peoples and movements against occupation in Palestine and elsewhere. The resistance organizations criminalized through this repressive legislation were not merely organizations engaged in armed struggle. On the contrary, they were - and are - engaged with all facets of Palestinian life. They are the political organizations of Palestine, and their activists are involved in social programs, community programs, unions, women's organizations, student organizing and all aspects of social and community life - and the U.S. government has been quick to deem large numbers of such organizations to be "front groups" for resistance organizations, which, if honest, completely ignores the way in which a national liberation movement functions. Such movements are grounded in the people - in grassroots organizing, social programs and community involvement. The resistance belongs to the people, and cannot be uprooted merely by a law prohibiting financial support. However, if observed through the lens of the U.S. government's political interest in aiding Zionist colonialism and repressing the Palestinian movement for liberation, it is clear that these laws targeted not "terrorism," but instead, the entire national liberation movement of the Palestinian people, criminalizing its institutions and its movements. (After all, if the U.S. was interested in securing peace and ending "terror," clearly the swiftest mechanism it would have for doing so would be to immediately end its billions of dollars in annual support - including its provision of the latest U.S. military machinery, from "Apache" helicopters to M-16 rifles - to the Israeli regime and to impose sanctions upon that regime for its conduct of terror against the Palestinian and Lebanese people.)

The criminalization of resistance should be seen within the context of the history of international solidarity inside the United States for national liberation movements, most of which are readily branded as "terrorists" by the imperialist forces opposing them. Take, for example, the movements in support of the people of (continued on page 11)



Sami al-Arian

(cont. from page 10) Nicaragua and El Salvador in the 1980s, or the movement against South African apartheid. Both the Sandinista movement and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) were denounced as "terrorists," as was the African National Congress - an organization with offices in major U.S. cities whose presence was able to lend vast coordination and strength to the anti-apartheid solidarity movement. In light of this repressive legislation and the U.S. government campaigns against these organizations in decades past, it is difficult to imagine that they would not be on the "Foreign Terrorist Organization" list of their day - leading to devastating and dramatic consequences for the solidarity movement of the time. The El Salvador and Nicaragua fundraisers of the 1980s branded illegal, would legislation to ban funding to the contras or the Salvadoran dictatorship ever have been passed? The ANC branded an "FTO," would, within the U.S., the anti-apartheid movement today be such a singular example of a successful solidarity movement? In the early part of the twenty-first century, when it is popular to declare that one opposed apartheid in South Africa all along, it is often forgotten that the U.S. government and its mainstream spokespeople for decades supported South African apartheid in all of its brutal settler-colonial horror, as today it supports Israeli apartheid in its own settler-colonial horror, and designated the African national liberation movement as "terrorists."

A vast array of charitable institutions and social organizations within Palestine has been branded fronts for the resistance organizations. In the post-September 11 atmosphere of repression, charities within the U.S., such as the Holy Land Foundation, were shut down and their assets frozen. Yet, even before September 11, the mechanism for the suppression of Palestinian community organizing in the U.S. was activated by the 1996 law and its executive order predecessor. The Oslo process itself was devastating to many Palestinian community institutions, as many fell victim to post-Oslo hopes for the end of the struggle and others sought to reestablish themselves despite the transformation of much of the PLO's national liberation structure to the new realm of the PA, limited in focus to the West Bank and Gaza, and with a newly circumscribed mandate that fell far short of national liberation. However, these laws were also laying the groundwork for repression of the community and creating fear of action and fear of supporting even purely charitable initiatives for their brothers and sisters in Palestine. Cases like those of Mazen Al-Najjar, combined with the existing immigration-based prosecution of Palestinian activists in Los Angeles, known as the Los Angeles 8, for their entirely legal activities in promoting the Palestinian cause, were part of creating fear in the community. Islamic institutions, which, outside the PLO, faced different post-Oslo challenges than their leftist and secular nationalist fellow organizations in the national liberation movement, yet had maintained a basic continuity of organization in the pre and post-Oslo era.

With the rise of the Al-Aqsa Intifada in Palestine, within the United States, Palestinian community as well as solidarity organizing rebounded in parallel to the upsurge in the movement in Palestine. New organizations were founded and existing organizations were inundated with support and volunteers. Despite repressive legislation, the obvious need of the Palestinian people suffering from the daily brutality of occupation combined with the inspirational example of their resistance inspired activism in the community around the world. Repression, however, fell harshly on these organizations and institutions. Charities that had received funds from thousands, if not millions, were shut down and attacked as "fronts for terror," while prominent community leaders faced insinuations and, at times, direct prosecution. While initially hailed as "terrorism" cases, in reality, these often revolved around minor immigration matters or financial matters with no relation to alleged "terrorism." The enactment and enforcement of this repressive legislation led to the defunding of Palestinian institutions, both religious and secular, as funding of the social and community institutions of Palestinian life, as well as for the financial welfare of Palestinian families, were directly impacted by both the freezing of funds and the repressive political climate that created a well-founded fear of persecution for any fundraising that would end up benefiting people outside the borders of the United States.

That so many organizations and institutions have continued to survive and in fact grow is a testament more to the creativity and commitment of the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities - as well as that of solidarity activists - than it is to the limitations of repressive legislation. Many organizations have focused on educating the public in the U.S. about the Palestinian cause, to win their support, while others have found non-governmental organizations and individual families to which funds can be safely distributed without fear of persecution. (It is also to be noted that the U.S., the European Union and others were instrumental in the Oslo era of promoting the rise of an NGO class in Palestine in an attempt to supplant the resistance organizations and the national liberation movement within the Palestinian social fabric, and that this repressive legislation can also be seen as a means of directing funding to approved institutions and attempting to undermine or separate the resistance from the people through this mechanism. However, such NGOs have not supplanted the resistance movements, and those NGOs, while independent of political affiliations with any organization, are often loyal to the Palestinian cause, rather than to the initiatives of the U.S. administration, and it is those NGOs that Palestinian and solidarity organizations in the U.S. have been able to safely support.) Just as the Oslo accords themselves had sought to segment out the Palestinian community - separating Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza from those within the borders of the Israeli regime and the largest Palestinian community, those in exile in the Arab world and internationally, the repressive legislation as well as the post-September 11 assault on the community sought to reinforce that division and ensure separation between Palestinians here and Palestinians there.

On March 21, the New York Times noted that UN officials were observing that Palestinians were "becoming increasingly dependent on humanitarian handouts." Given the amount of energy expended by the United States and Israel over more than a decade to defund, isolate and undermine Palestinian institutions rooted in the people, this can hardly be seen as surprising. Nevertheless, the United States has opted to continue its war on Palestine, side by side with the war of the direct occupier upon the Palestinian people, and alongside its own direct war on the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, and its threats upon Iran. It has done so not merely by imprisoning its own Palestinian political prisoners, alongside the 10,000 held in Israeli jails, including 41 members of the Palestinian Legislative Committee, among them Aziz Dweik, the elected Speaker of the PLC from Hamas, and Ahmad Sa'adat, the General Secretary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, kidnapped with four of his comrades in March 2006 when Israeli military forces stormed the PA prison in Jericho where they were being held at the behest of the Israeli regime. The United States - and indirectly, every U.S. taxpayer - funds the provision of military supplies to the occupier and other direct aid to the tune of over \$10 million daily. Meanwhile, the U.S., in collaboration with the EU, has imposed a devastating economic blockade against the West Bank and Gaza, in a new attempt to punish Palestinians for democratically electing a government committed to resistance and national liberation while demanding that government accept the "right" of the occupier state - built on stolen Palestinian land and created as an ethnically and religiously exclusive settler-colonial entity based on the denial of Palestinian rights - to exist as such a state and that the people of Palestine renounce their own right to resist against the occupation that has devastated their lives.

Despite the blockade, Palestinians have not acceded to these conditions, based, as they are, not on any concept of justice or legitimacy, but rather on the perpetuation of occupation without costs. In response, the U.S. administration, as it once attempted to criminalize resistance and demand Palestinians jail and imprison other Palestinians for the benefit of the occupier, has attempted to foment a civil war among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, seeking out willing collaborators for funding and military training. Nevertheless, the commitment of the Palestinian people in their entirety to resisting this attempt has carried the day, despite the best efforts of U.S. envoys. The U.S. government's war on Palestine, however, has not been limited to the massive support of the oppressor while attempting to isolate the oppressed - it has centered efforts on the Arab League summit in Riyadh taking place this week, attempting to pressure the Arab regimes taking part in the summit - many of whom maintain their power despite despotism and corruption through the support of the U.S. - to relinquish their support for the most basic of Palestinian rights - the right of Palestinian refugees expelled from their land to return to their original properties, homes and lands. The return of six million Palestinian refugees, of course, disrupts the Zionist project to create an ethnically exclusive settler-colonial state on Palestinian land, and thus, generations of Palestinian refugees have been forced to pay the prices of Israeli apartheid, racism and colonialism, kept from their stolen land at the behest of an occupying power, an apartheid state ruling by the gun. The United States government, seeing maintenance of the Zionist regime in Palestine as a primary goal, has devoted itself, through envoys such as Condoleezza Rice, to seek an Arab negation of this fundamental right. However, as much as many of the Arab regimes may be dependent upon U.S. support, they also have legitimacy to retain among their own people, and it is clear that the Arab people do not support the attempts to undermine Palestinian rights sponsored by the U.S., in an attempt to bring about Arab normalization with Zionism.

In the meanwhile, Sami al-Arian remains imprisoned. When his case, and those of his fellow activists, was brought to trial, despite a parade of witnesses including numerous Israelis, through the court, he was convicted of nothing, acquitted on eight charges, while the jury deadlocked 10-2 on nine others. This was the result of over a decade of FBI surveillance, under repressive legislation, in the post-September 11 political climate. It is no accident, however, that Sami Al-Arian was not convicted by a jury; in fact, it was so clear to his defense team that, rather than present their own defense, Al-Arian's attorney, William Moffitt presented only four words: "I rest my case," for Al-Arian's defense, after the close of the prosecution case, and ten of the twelve jurors wanted to convict al-Arian of precisely nothing.

Al-Arian's case is not an anomaly in this regard. Mohammad Salah and Abdelhaleem al-Ashqar, two Palestinian community activists who were tried in Chicago on "racketeering" charges revolving around alleged "material support" to Hamas, were acquitted of all "terrorism"-related charges in February 2007. As William Moffitt, attorney for both Ashqar and Al-Arian, told the New York Times, "the Bush administration cannot win this war by trying to make criminals out of people who are fighting for their freedom...and two American juries have said that." The Al-Arian and Salah/Ashqar juries made a very clear statement that the people of the United States are not interested in convicting Palestinian, Arab and Muslim community leaders of "terrorism" for aiding their community and supporting their people under occupation, which, despite the stand of the U.S. government, is not surprising.

While U.S. imperialism wages war on the Arab world, invades and occupies Afghanistan, continues an occupation in Iraq that has brought about the deaths of over 650,000 Iraqis as well as several thousand U.S. soldiers, funds a war on Palestine, funds and arms Israel's war on Lebanon, threatens Iran, and attempts to criminalize all resistance to its rule as it imprisons thousands around the world, kidnaps and "renders" people to countries where they will be interrogated under torture, and holds hundreds of men at Guantanamo Bay in an international symbol of the apparent impunity of U.S. imperialism and its brutality, the vast majority of people within the United States have seen only misery from these policies. The minimum wage - on which many are forced to subsist - is barely adequate for survival. Millions of people in the United States have no health care, and costs of education have been skyrocketing increasingly out of reach for many. Youth of color in U.S. cities are put on a fast track to criminalization, targeted by often-brutal police and introduced at a young age to the world's largest prison system. Women's rights are increasingly under attack, while women - and men - immigrants, who form a major component of the U.S. working class, have been targeted for severe repression. Within the U.S., around solely domestic issues, the right to dissent is under attack, as the administration seeks ever-increasing authority to spy on citizens, tracking everything from library books borrowed to wiretapping millions of telephone calls. Meanwhile, the power of major multinational corporations appears to grow, virtually unchecked. And yet, the administration attempts to sell its bankrupt policies to the people of the United States through scare tactics, racist manipulation, and repression. It deems resistance organizations "terrorist" and attempts to link the resistance of a people against occupation and oppression and for liberation to hatred of Jews - a deceptive attempt to obscure the reality that Zionism, a political ideology based on racism and colonialism, and the regime it has created, is neither representative nor equivalent to Jewish people or Judaism as a religion - while waging a bitterly racist "war on terror" that has been, in reality, a "war of terror" for its victims around the world, including those in the United States.

Despite the resounding defeat for the government in Al-Arian's case, it expressed its determination to re-prosecute Al-Arian. In this environment, with the stress of years of persecution wearing on his family, Sami al-Arian agreed to a plea bargain in which he would plead guilty to one count of "providing services" to "people associated with" Palestinian Islamic Jihad - the enumerated innocuous activities including hiring an attorney for his brother-in-law, Al-Najjar, and filling out immigration forms for a visiting Palestinian scholar - and swiftly be deported. However, despite the request made by the prosecution at the entering of the plea that Al-Arian be sentenced lightly, and primarily to time served, the judge on Al-Arian's case, Judge James Moody - who had shown immense bias during the proceedings of the case, allowing numerous Israeli witnesses to testify about the costs of Palestinian resistance to Israel while allowing no testimony about **(continued on page 12)**



Abdelhaleem Ashqar (Sh. Kifah Mustapha)

(cont. from page 9) tion challenges on the basis of their support for Palestinian rights and opposition to Zionism, and Bishara has, in the past, had his immunity as a member of Parliament stripped and been indicted for political charges related to his public advocacy (that were later dismissed, in 2006). Avigdor Lieberman, the advocate of transfer, has called for the execution of the Palestinian Knesset members. However, other Palestinian organizations, such as Abnaa el-Balad, and the Islamic Movement in the north, have refused participation in the Knesset, highlighting that accepting Zionist state structures, and placing the Palestinian Arab national struggle within the context of these state structures, has never - and cannot - succeed in dismantling those same structures, and instead promotes acceptance of the Zionist occupation of Palestine, normalization with that occupation, and defining the Palestinian national struggle as merely one of a minority, for civil rights, within the existing Zionist state, without challenging the nature and existence of the state itself.

Indeed, the recent charges against Bishara have demonstrated the accuracy of that critique. Bishara's unwillingness to speak and act within the prescribed boundaries of the Zionist parliament, and his use of the Knesset as a site for challenging the fundamentals of the state and for supporting the Palestinian and Arab cause, altered the rules of the game of Knesset participation. Rather than providing a pathway for normalization and the legitimization of the Zionist state, Bishara's participation was viewed as a threat to those goals, and thus became unacceptable. Nevertheless, Knesset participation itself as a political act is bound up with the requirements of acceptance of the Zionist state, its elections, and involvement in and identification with its internal political situation, rather than the development of the Palestinian Arab national movement - and Bishara's case is an example of the consequences of attempting to expand or subvert that role. Bishara, who refused to confine Arab identity to that of the "Israeli Arab," who was deeply concerned with the Arab people as a whole, and who advocated eloquently for Palestinian rights, including the right to return, was met with charges of treason, based on allegations relating to contact with "foreign agents." As in the case of Salah, who was imprisoned for two years on such charges, and Kana'aneh, currently imprisoned on charges related to contact with "foreign agents," active involvement on the part of Palestinian Arabs with the Arab world is criminalized and labeled as "foreign," "enemy," and a "security risk," by a state that is based on foreign settler-colonialism of indigenous Arab land! Journalists and activists throughout the Arab world are labeled as dangerous "foreign agents" and "enemies," and political participation by Palestinians of Palestine '48 with the broader Arab world is thus made criminal.

However, in a state that is based on the forcible dispossession of Palestinian Arab land and the destruction of the Palestinian people by a settler-colonial force, there is nothing more patriotic than "treason." Of course, the specifics of these allegations are highly unproven, and, indeed, deeply unlikely. The specific allegations are a political ploy and a means of repression against the Palestinian people. However, "loyalty" to the continuation of the Zionist state, its founding precepts, its racism and its settler-colonial apartheid nature, is directly contradictory to the interests of the Palestinian people within the Zionist state. It is impossible to both work for justice for the Palestinian people and to be "loyal" to a state that is based on their oppression, occupation and dispossession; to be loyal to Zionism is to commit treason against the Palestinian people. This repression is simply a testament to the refusal of the Palestinian people to relinquish their rights and identity. Indeed, even the most basic acts of self-defense are met with repression. For example, in Shafa'amr, where an off-duty Israeli soldier shot up a bus of Palestinians, killing four, during which he was subdued on the bus and was killed in the struggle, seven Shafa'amr residents, including Jameel Saffouri, a member of the Central Committee of Abnaa el-Balad movement, continue to be under investigation for allegedly defending themselves against a killer.

The importance of Bishara's rejection of the limited scope of "Israeli Arab" identity and involvement with the Arab people as a whole is reflected in the fact that his resignation was submitted from Cairo. Rather than accepting the Zionist definition of the Arab world as "foreign" or "enemy," Bishara, as a Palestinian Arab, stood with the Arab people as a whole in rejecting the machinations of the foreign enemies of the Arab people - Zionism, Israel and the United States. The allegations against Bishara, focusing on alleged

(cont. from page 11) the suffering of Palestinians, or Palestinian rights - sentenced him to an additional sentence while lecturing Al-Arian about his "guilt" in a manner that was, in fact, completely rejected by the jury in the case. Al-Arian and his co-defendants, like Salah and Ashqar, were not convicted, or even charged, with anything even related in the most remote degree to an attempt to harm anyone within the United States, or even the government or military of the United States - every charge against them pertained only to the Palestinian struggle for national liberation against Zionist occupation. Al-Arian was scheduled to be deported following his sentence, in April 2007. As part of his plea, Al-Arian secured a promise that he would not be called upon to cooperate in any additional government prosecutions. Nonetheless, Gordon Kromberg, a Virginia prosecutor who has assailed "the Islamization of America," targeted Al-Arian as part of his fishing expedition in Virginia targeting Muslim organizations there through a wide-ranging grand jury. Despite Al-Arian's plea, Kromberg has demanded Al-Arian testify before his grand jury - attempting both to lay Al-Arian open for charges of perjury and force him to serve as a witness against fellow community leaders and activists as part of a government witch-hunt.

Sami Al-Arian is far from the only political prisoner in U.S. prisons. From the many prisoners of the Black Liberation Movement, to Puerto Rican political prisoners, to Leonard Peltier, targeted for his work with the indigenous national liberation movement, to the new charges against Black liberation movement activists from the 1970's, the criminal justice system in the U.S. has always held political prisoners in its war against oppressed communities and oppressed nations within the United States. The Al-Arian case is representative of an internationalization of political imprisonment in U.S. jails, alongside the impunity of Guantanamo Bay and its "military commissions" and U.S. secret detention around the world.

However, Al-Arian's case is not only an urgent call for support for his case, which is in urgent need of public pressure to make it clear that people in the U.S. will not stand for this persecution in our name (and with our money - the prosecution of Al-Arian is estimated to have cost the government \$50 million of our tax dollars). Al-Arian, like his fellow political prisoners in U.S. jails, and his fellow Palestinian and Arab political prisoners in Zionist jails, is an inspiration to all of those who struggle for justice. Despite repression and despite the targeting of him and his family, Sami Al-Arian never ceased his work with the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities. While he was under investigation, being shadowed by the FBI and attacked in the press, he traveled coast to coast, continuing to speak



Muhammad Salah (Sh. Kifah Mustapha)

connections to the Lebanese resistance, including Hezbollah, and to Syria, indicate the failure of 59 years of attempting to separate Palestinians within the Zionist state from the Palestinian people and from the Arab nation. As the United States has been pressuring its client regimes in the Arab world to grant even further concessions to the Zionist state than they already have, threatening those states that defy U.S. dictates with war and destruction of the type it has visited upon Iraq, and attempting to give Arab legitimacy to a renunciation of Palestinian rights, this rejection of the separation of the Palestinian people from the broader Arab world, alongside the opposition in Lebanon, the national resistance in Iraq, and the ongoing commitment of the Arab people - despite the actions of their regimes - to stand against occupation, oppression and imperialism, indicates an alternative and necessary path to the Arab world that must be of deep concern not only to the Zionist state but to U.S. imperialism. At a time when the U.S. is attempting to push normalization, it is a clear indication that normalization means nothing but a subservient "Israeli Arab" or U.S. puppet identity for the Arab world as a whole. As the U.S. has attempted to exacerbate sectarianism in Lebanon, promote civil war in Iraq, and create a dangerous factional rivalry, with U.S. weaponry, in Gaza, the ongoing resilience of the people of Palestine '48 and their brothers and sisters in the West Bank and Gaza, and in the diaspora; the continuing resistance of the people of Iraq to occupation and to sectarianism; the rejection by the Lebanese opposition of U.S. control in Lebanon create a political alternative that, after years of imperialism, devastation, and brutality, has not been quashed.

The siege on the West Bank and Gaza, the attacks on the right to return, the demand that Palestinians "recognize Israel" and legitimize their dispossession, are all acts on the part of the U.S. to attempt to kill the Palestinian cause, and intersect with the repression directed against the Palestinian people within Palestine '48, a project with the same goal. As Condoleezza Rice demands that Palestinians cease their resistance against the occupier that steals their land, imprisons 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners, and kills Palestinians daily with bombs, bullets, helicopters and fighter planes made in the U.S. and paid for by billions of dollars in U.S. tax money annually, the U.S. continues its massive funding of the occupier and its vast political and diplomatic support for its aggression. Rice's concern is how to create a subservient population from a Palestinian people that, for 59 years, has engaged in a revolutionary movement, a vast resistance that has become a symbol to the world of the power of a people to stand on the front lines against imperialism, against all odds, experiencing great suffering, and yet retaining dignity and the promise of victory. It is quite clear from the people of Palestine '48, who have experienced just such attempts for over 59 years and continued to hold steadfast in their resistance, just how unsuccessful Rice's project will prove to be.

Solidarity now is desperately needed for the Palestinian people as a whole - in Palestine '48, in the West Bank and Gaza, and in exile. The Palestinian people within the Zionist state cannot be ignored. They are engaged in a struggle for existence - and that struggle is a key part of the struggle for the liberation of all of Palestine. In our events, activities, articles, speeches and demonstrations it is critical that the repression directed against the Palestinian people inside the Zionist state be challenged directly and repeatedly, in a context of international solidarity. Just as the solidarity movement must emphasize solidarity with the Palestinian people in exile, and with our own Palestinian and Arab communities facing repression within the United States, it is also deeply important that we publicize and draw attention to the war of repression being waged against the Palestinians of '48. The mythology of the "Jewish and democratic" state, that views the West Bank and Gaza as the main - or only - site of the war on Palestine - must be shattered; the Palestinians struggling for freedom, justice and liberation within Palestine '48 require that solidarity. Moshe Sharett, Israel's first Foreign Minister, wrote in 1948 that "the most spectacular event in the contemporary history of Palestine - more spectacular in a sense than the creation of the Jewish State - is the wholesale evacuation of its Arab population...I doubt whether there are 100,000 Arabs in Israel today. The reversion to the status quo is unthinkable..." It is all of our duty to do whatever we can, 59 years later, to render Sharett's prediction invalid, and instead render the continuation of the Zionist status quo unthinkable.

out for justice in Palestine and in support of the liberation movement of his people. He is an example of the courage, dignity and bravery of those who resist. Resistance takes many forms - including, for many, like Al-Arian and the others who have been so targeted in these prosecutions - speaking, writing, educating the public and building community-based institutions capable of mobilizing many for justice in Palestine, and it is that example that stands as a reminder of the tasks that are incumbent upon all of us that are also committed to that cause.

The U.S. administration engaged these prosecutions not simply to target a few prominent activists and leaders. Rather, a major goal of repressive legislation and prosecution has always been to silence the community of support for the targeted cause, to quiet activism, to press people to withdraw from their political work for fear of also becoming examples. However, the only successful response to repression has always been struggle and defiance in the face of repression and not allowing our legal and legitimate work to fall silent in the face of repression. The greater the level of activity, the stronger the institutions of the community, the louder and more visible the movement of solidarity, the stronger we are as a movement - and the more repressive forces are pushed back. Indeed, Sami Al-Arian's case is a striking example of repression, of the targeting of a community leader and - despite it all, his continued resistance and dignity in the face of attempts to force him to join the witch-hunt. With every event for Palestine, every act of solidarity and support for the Palestinian people, every Palestinian Arab community institution that is rebuilt, supported or encouraged, the criminalization of solidarity and the criminalization of resistance is pushed back. If that activism were not so crucial, vital and important, its leaders and activists would not have been targeted as part of the campaign against the national liberation movement. In much the same way, if the right to return were not the core and crucial issue in Palestine - the achievable, indeed, realistic, core issue in Palestine, it would not be under sustained and direct attack from the U.S. and its Zionist allies.

Therefore, in the face of repression, attempted isolation, and the war on Palestine, there is only one real choice and one real hope for those who seek justice in Palestine, and those who wish to build solidarity with Palestine within the United States - holding to the principles to which these political prisoners - those in U.S. and Zionist jails - have shown such deep and vigorous commitment - the right to return, the liberation of the land, the right to resist, the end of apartheid, the undoing of occupation, the freedom for the prisoners - and popularizing them as broadly, as clearly, and as visibly as possible, within all areas of society, while supporting the mobilization and organization of the Palestinian and Arab communities, as well as the organization of the Muslim community, wherever and whenever we can. In the face of such sacrifices, it is the least we can do, and a critical task not only for Palestine, but for all forces of liberation who stand in the crosshairs of imperialism, in order to achieve the decriminalization of solidarity and the empowerment of community organizing for national liberation.