

Al-Aqsa

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WE WELCOME

Papers, articles and comments on any issue relating to Palestine and the Middle East conflict. We especially encourage writings relating to the History, Politics, Architecture, Religion, International Law and Human Rights violations. The word count should not exceed 2,000 words. Reviews of Books relating to the issue of Palestine are also welcome and should not exceed 1,000 words. Letters on any related topics can also be sent and the Editor reserves the right to edit letters for the purpose of clarity. All contributions should be in Word format, Times New Roman font size 12 and sent to the Editor either via email or on a disc at the above address. It must include the author's full name, address and a brief curriculum vitae.

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PALESTINE

Ramadan Appeal

Ramadan Karim to all our donors, to the Imams and Mosque Management Committees for your assistance and cooperation. Your contributions last year helped to ensure the success of Interpal's Ramadan Appeal 2004. We hope for your continued support this year. *Jazakum Allahu Khayran*, and may Allah SWT accept our fast and *Ibadah* during this blessed month of Ramadan.

The building of the Separation Wall has ensured that:

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- 83,000 olive trees have been uprooted.
- 30 water wells, producing 4 million m3 per year have been confiscated.
- 35,000 meters of water infrastructure have been destroyed by bulldozers.

[Source: Bswalem 2002]

In the last few years the Palestinian economy has all but collapsed, the unemployment rate now stands at about 70% in some areas and poverty has doubled leaving more than 2 million people living below the poverty line on less than \$2 a day. [Source: ESCWA 2002]

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The Wall... destroying hope and creating misery...





Allah has purchased of the Believers their lives and their possessions; For theirs (in return) is the garden (of Paradise). They Fight in his cause, And slay and are slain, A promise binding on Him in truth through the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which you have concluded; that is the achievement supreme.

May Allah's blessings be upon all His Prophets from Adam to His final Messenger, Muhammad (saw).

As the Israelis close the gates of Gaza behind them, and bathe in the glory of the 'unilateral disengagement'; Sharon is being publicly 'embraced' by so-called Muslim leaders of the world and calls for diplomatic and economic ties with Israeli are reverberating around the Middle East. The reality on the ground for the Palestinians is, however, worse than ever.

As the eight thousand illegal Israeli settlers were dramatically evicted from Gaza in a stage managed fashion more attuned with Hollywood; few of us noticed twelve thousand Israeli's move in to occupy more of the fertile land of the West Bank. As the emotional ploys of the ex-Gaza settlers continues, over a land to which they have no claim, Sharon is silently continuing with his plans to link the Ma'ala Adumin illegal settlement with Jerusalem, thereby isolating Jerusalem and the Masjid Al-Aqsa from the Palestinian heart land of the West Bank. Sharon's clear strategy is to create irreversible 'facts on the ground' which can then be used as leverage when the border discussions finally come around, however many years in the future that may be. Bush's 2004 promise of taking account of demographic realities means Jerusalem may never revert back to the Palestinians if Sharon successfully isolates it. A plan that is well under way.

On the political front a new horizon is dawning. Of the many limbs that have spawned out of the Gaza pullout, one was to provide Mahmud Abbas, the Palestinian President with much needed credibility of getting Israelis to deliver. Since his virtually unchallenged leadership contest, Abbas and the PLO's popularity have dwindled. The main causes being pointed to include nepotism, corruption, racketeering and the most serious charge of collusion.

The accusation of crumbling authority under Abbas showed its real colours on 7 September 2005, when scores of men stormed into the house of Musa Arafat and carried out a mob-style execution. The murder of Musa Arafat, one time head of Military Intelligence, was claimed by the Popular Resistance Committee, a break away faction of Fatah.

What this single incidence indicates is the failing grip of Abbas over his security apparatus and the crumbling of Fatah. Fatah is not only being split on the traditional fault line of the old guards from outside against those from within; but the young cadre want a stake, and soon – they are not prepared to wait. With Fatah fractured from within, failing to capitalise on the Gaza disengagement and its show of poor governance; to Israel's despondence, Hamas is emerging not only as a credible party but a government in waiting. The political reality in Palestine today is that Fatah may have to join Hamas to form a government rather than the age old assumption that Hamas will have to join Fatah.

With the pending election in January 2006, all the indications suggest, if Israel does not interfere, that Hamas should secure a victory. With this in mind and the drive by the west and in particular America to hail democracy to the world, it is now imperative – no! A moral obligation – for the West to talk with Hamas. Those seeking a solution to the conflict in the Holy Land must realise that Hamas is a significant player soon to take centre stage.

The phobias spun around Hamas need to be unwoven and the organisation needs to be evaluated in a realistic and true light. Hamas has carefully avoided getting involved in internecine violence. It has at all times been reconciliatory to other Palestinian factions. It has avoided targeting foreign nationals within the occupied territories and never acted against any other foreign governments or nationals. It is true they use the 'bullet' to defend their land against Israeli occupation, but even if this is not palatable to us; international law gives them the mandate.

Although it is in its infancy; there are early encouraging signs that the west is waking up to the reality of the need to talk with Hamas. Many western media outlets including the Independent of London stated, "arguably, the absence of contact between Israel and Hamas makes careful overtures from outsiders more important". The European Union's position is clear and it is well known that they regularly make contacts with Hamas leadership. The prudence of talking to Hamas was also exhibited by the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw when he admitted in June 2005 that British officials had met with Hamas members who are elected municipal officials.

The biggest player in the field is America, and as Bush has stated his ambition of democracy for the world, then it is perhaps time for America to talk with those seeking democratic means to govern their people.

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4. Al-Aqsa and those worshipping within it have been victims of numerous attacks since the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem began.
5. Several tunnels dug under the Al-Aqsa sanctuary is undermining the structure of the mosque and scientists claim the slightest earth tremor is likely to bring the mosque down.
6. Extremist Zionist organisations have openly declared a desire to destroy Al-Aqsa mosque.
7. The Palestinian people have suffered tremendous human rights abuses and at the same time made many sacrifices in defence of Al-Aqsa.

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American Media Coverage of Palestine: Distortion Through Omission

Alison Weir*

I suspect that very few people know how misinformed the American public is on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. As I've looked into American media coverage of this issue over the last five years, I have discovered deeply troubling patterns of omission, distortion, and systemic manipulation. Given that this is an issue of life-and-death importance to Americans, to people of the region and to citizens throughout the world, it is profoundly troubling to find U.S. press coverage that is so consistently and pervasively flawed.

Because of this situation, Americans are tolerating and, at times, actively supporting governmental policies regarding the Middle East that are not only acutely injurious to the region and its peoples, but are also intensely detrimental to the United States and American citizens as well.

To determine how well the American media are fulfilling their critical function, our organization has conducted statistical studies of media coverage on this issue. Our methodology is to examine clear, significant categories that are as impervious as possible to subjective bias. It is our view that the media's job is to report as accurately as possible the facts on a topic. Indications about the extent to which the press is accomplishing this can be objectively measured. Our findings have been staggering.

We have looked at the extent to which certain media outlets, for example, *The New York Times* or ABC World News Tonight, cover the deaths of Israelis and Palestinians in the conflict. This approach allowed meaningful statistical analysis that would be impossible in a qualitative study and provided a yardstick by which to determine whether media demonstrate even-handed respect for human life, regardless of ethnic or religious background. We calculated the number of

reports of deaths for each side during a given period, and then compared these to the number of people actually killed.

Reliable data for both populations is available from the widely respected Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem.¹ In our studies, we only included Israeli deaths directly caused by the actions of Palestinians and vice versa. In addition to analyzing coverage of all deaths, we specifically examine reports on children's deaths. These tragedies represent an especially human side of the uprising and one that lies outside most people's views of acceptable violence in armed conflict. The killing of children is especially repugnant to most people and these deaths elicit extreme disfavor for those responsible for them. For this reason, studying how the media covered the death of children is particularly significant.

In spring 2005, we completed studies of *The New York Times*, the "newspaper of record," and three of the major television network evening news shows; ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, and NBC Nightly News. Not only are these news media the major sources of information for millions of Americans around the country, they are also the windows through which editors and producers of smaller newspapers and broadcast news stations throughout the nation view the conflict and gauge the accuracy of their own coverage. Their significance in the formation of American views on Israel/Palestine cannot be overemphasized.

For each of these media outlets, we examined coverage of deaths over two separate year-long periods. First, we analyzed coverage for the first year of the

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* ALISON WEIR is the Executive Director of 'If Americans Knew', an organisation whose mission it is to educate and inform the American public on the issues of major significance that are unreported, underreported, or misreported in the American media. Alison Weir is also an independent journalist.

Our findings are disturbingly decisive as they reveal a pervasive pattern of distortion. For every time period, for every news source, for every category, except one, one population's deaths were covered at significantly higher rates than the other – in one case 13 times greater. The favored population was the Israeli one

In 2004, a phase that the media reported as a period of decreased violence, 107 Israelis and an enormous 821 Palestinians were killed. In other words, the media were using a highly Israeli-centric index for measuring calm/violence

current uprising, September 29, 2000 through September 28, 2001. This period was selected for study in order to evaluate viewers' and readers' first impressions, which are crucial as they continue to try to make sense of the conflict. Coverage of this year set the context within which all subsequent reporting on the conflict is viewed, forming viewers' and readers' opinions as to who was initiating the violence and who was retaliating.

Second, we studied the coverage for 2004 to discover whether the patterns we found for the first year had continued, diminished, or increased several years into the intifada.

We looked at two types of reporting on deaths. The first and major focus of our study was on timely/specific reports and mentions of deaths; e.g. 'four Palestinians/Israelis were killed yesterday.' It is this ongoing reporting of deaths that provides people with their impression of a conflict. We also calculated follow-up stories so that, in theory, numbers of death reports could surpass actual number of deaths, giving percentages that exceed 100 percent. We were surprised to find that this frequently occurred – but only for one population.

Secondarily, we examined cumulative reports, e.g. 'The violence has left 200 Palestinians dead' or '200 Israelis have been killed in suicide bombings.' While we believe that such summaries of deaths can provide useful information, especially when numbers for both populations are given in the same report (which, sadly, rarely occurred), it was our view that such mentions are not the equivalent of 200 individual reports on each of these deaths, and needed to be enumerated in their own, separate category.

For *The New York Times* we studied prominent reporting on deaths, i.e. deaths reported in headlines and/or lead paragraphs, and then conducted a month-long sub-study on deaths reported in the entire article. (Interestingly, we found that the patterns discovered in our study of prominent reporting essentially held true.)

For the television networks we studied transcripts of the full newscasts in addition to introductions by anchors. Our findings are disturbingly decisive as they reveal a pervasive pattern of distortion. For every time period, for every news source, for every category, except one, one population's deaths were covered at significantly higher rates than the other – in one case 13 times greater. The favored population was the Israeli one. We found that the only category in which

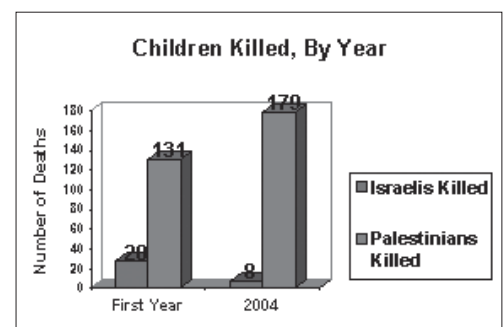
Palestinian deaths were reported at similar rates to Israeli deaths was in cumulative reports, '200 Palestinians/Israelis have been killed', and that this occurred only during the first months of the first year. After that, even cumulative reports disproportionately covered Israeli deaths over Palestinian deaths.

In addition, we were startled to find that not only was daily reporting profoundly skewed, but that in 2004 not a single network even once reported the kind of full, two-sided cumulative one would expect to be a regular feature of news coverage – the number of people killed among both populations since the intifada had begun.

A clear picture emerges when we consider what was actually going on and then at how events were reported. In the first year of the current uprising, 165 Israelis and 549 Palestinians were killed. In 2004, a phase that the media reported as a period of decreased violence, 107 Israelis and an enormous 821 Palestinians were killed. In other words, the media were using a highly Israeli-centric index for measuring calm/violence. A thread that our findings showed to be common.



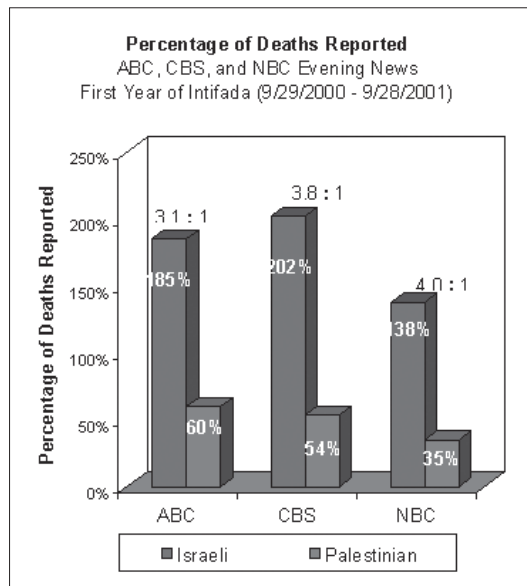
This pattern was found to be even greater for reports on children killed in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. In the first year, 28 Israeli children and 131 Palestinian children were killed. In 2004, eight Israeli children and 179 Palestinian children were killed. In other words, during our second study period, over 22 times more Palestinian children were killed than Israeli children.



Many people have the reverse impression of these death rates and of their trends, with many Americans believing the chronology of deaths in this conflict to be the opposite of its reality. A survey two years after the intifada had begun found that 90 percent of respondents either had no idea which children were killed first in the conflict or thought them to be Israeli children, despite the fact that at least 82 Palestinian children were killed before a single Israeli child died, and that this killing of Palestinian children had gone on for three and a half months before a single loss of life occurred among Israeli children. The largest cause of death of Palestinian children was gunfire to the head.

Our studies show why so many Americans have such diametrically incorrect impressions.

In the first year of coverage, the *New York Times* headlines and first paragraphs reported on Israeli deaths at a rate almost three times greater than Palestinian deaths. This 2.8 to 1 ratio was the closest to parity that we found in all of our studies. Perhaps that is why some pro-Israeli groups allege that the *Times* is “pro-Palestinian.” ABC, CBS, and NBC covered Israeli deaths at rates 3.1, 3.8, and 4.0 times greater, respectively, than they covered Palestinian deaths.

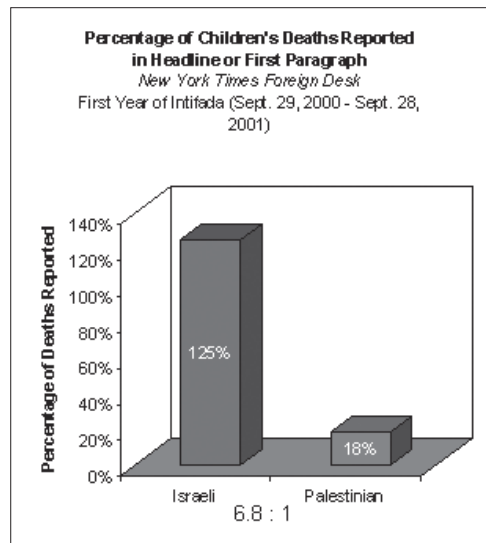


Those who rely on these sources for their understanding of the conflict are left with an illusion that approximately the same number of Israelis and Palestinians have died in the conflict; as all of the media outlets reported similar numbers of deaths on both sides. ABC reported on 305 Israeli deaths and 327 Palestinian deaths. *The Times* reported on 197 Israeli deaths and 233 Palestinian deaths in headlines and first paragraphs. CBS and NBC

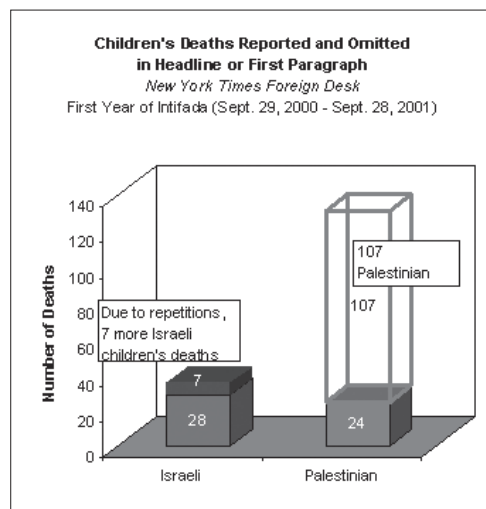
both reported on more Israeli deaths than Palestinian deaths. Hence, they were all giving the impression of balanced coverage of a balanced violence during a time when 3.3 times more Palestinians were being killed.

For children, the disparity in coverage was even larger for all four outlets.

The New York Times reported prominently on Israeli children's deaths at a rate almost 7 times greater than Palestinian children's deaths.



Significantly, we found that while the number of *New York Times* prominent reports on Israeli children's deaths, through follow-up stories, exceeded 100%, prominent reports on the death of Palestinian children represented a small fraction of the number actually killed.



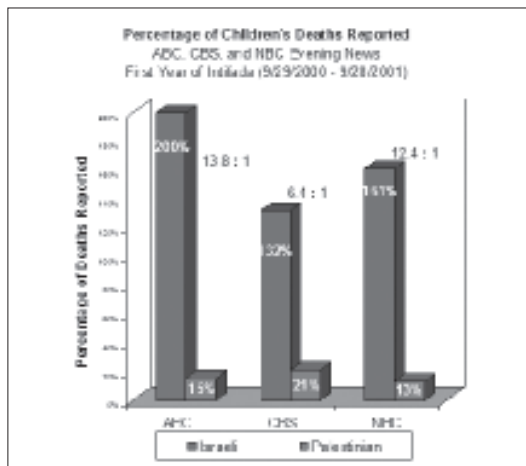
As a result, *Times* coverage gave the impression that more Israeli children were killed than Palestinian children during a time when 4.7 times more Palestinian children were actually killed. Most of the networks

The largest cause of death of Palestinian children was gunfire to the head

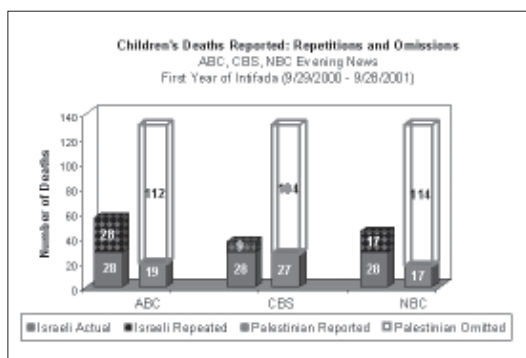
Times coverage gave the impression that more Israeli children were killed than Palestinian children during a time when 4.7 times more Palestinian children were actually killed

were even worse: ABC reported Israeli children's deaths at a rate 13.8 times greater than Palestinian children's deaths, CBS at a rate 6.4 times greater, and NBC at a rate 12.4 times greater.

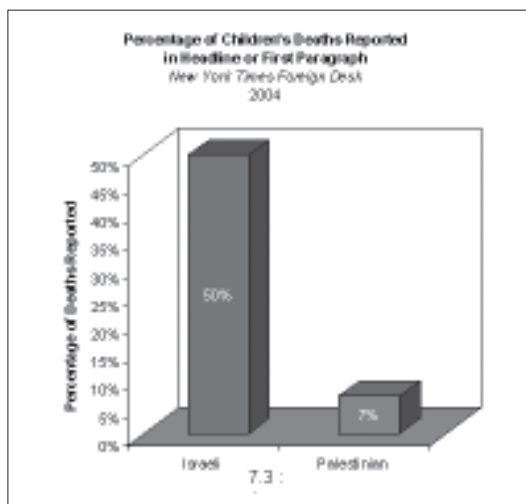
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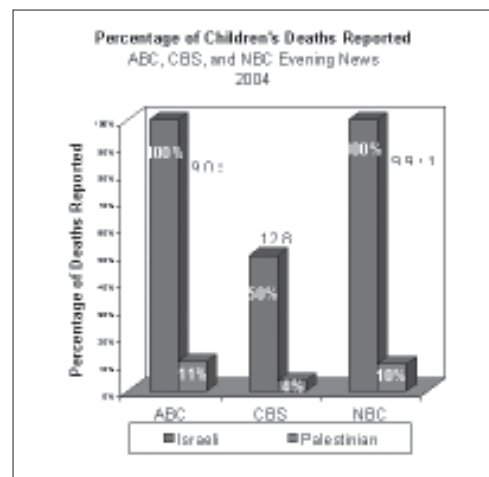
Again, we saw a pattern among the networks in which there were numerous follow-up stories on Israeli deaths, while only a small fraction of Palestinian deaths were being similarly covered:



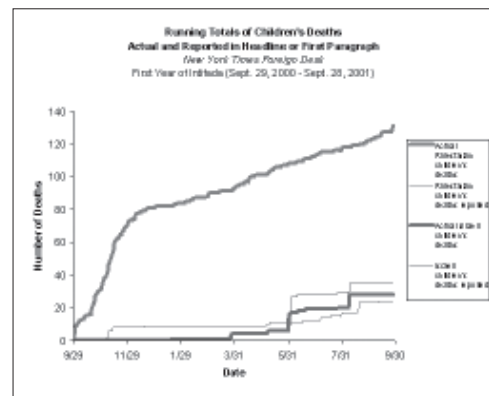
In 2004, these distortions were amplified. *The New York Times* reported prominently on overall Israeli deaths at a rate 3.7 times greater than Palestinian deaths, and on Israeli children's deaths at a rate 7.5 times greater than Palestinian children's deaths.



ABC, CBS, and NBC reported Israeli children's deaths at rates 9.0, 12.8, and 9.9 times greater, respectively, than Palestinian children's deaths.

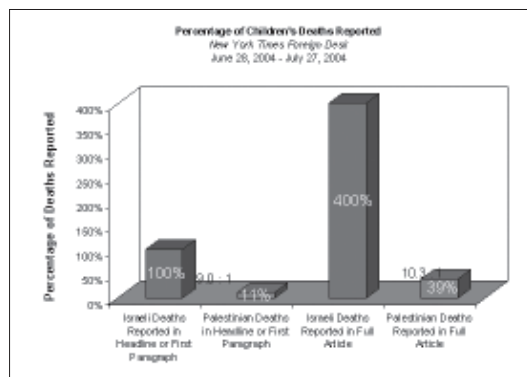


If graphs of these deaths and reports are drawn chronologically for all four news outlets for both years of study, Palestinian deaths are shown along a curve that closely resembled the Israeli death rate, when in reality the actual curve for Palestinian deaths is far higher and slopes upward far sooner. This provides a striking visual illustration of the difference between the reality, in which deaths are heavily concentrated on one side, and the impression created in the major American media of a balanced conflict.



The greater-than-100% figure for reporting on Israeli deaths is explained by the fact that many Israeli deaths were mentioned in multiple articles or newscasts, and Israeli deaths often generated follow-up stories, whereas Palestinian deaths, when they were mentioned at all, were usually only mentioned once. There were, however, interesting exceptions to this rule. In 2004, for example, two Palestinian leaders of Hamas were assassinated within a month of each other. All four news sources reported each of these for multiple days.

In our one-month sub-study of deaths reported in full *New York Times* articles (as opposed to the headlines and lead paragraphs), we found that the disparity in reporting grew even greater. The number of Palestinian deaths that were reported increased when the entire articles were studied. Ten Palestinian deaths were reported for the first and only time in the last two paragraphs of articles, but reports of Israeli deaths increased also, and at an even greater rate, due to the repetition of reports on Israeli deaths that had occurred in previous days.



Balance

The phenomenon of achieving a deceptive appearance of reportorial “balance,” achieved through actual enormous imbalance, was documented first by analyst Seth Ackerman of the media monitoring organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR). Ackerman conducted a study of National Public Radio’s coverage of Israeli and Palestinian deaths during the first six months of 2001, and entitled his report “The Illusion of Balance.” Ackerman found that NPR, which was being accused by Israel partisans as being “Pro-Palestinian,” had in reality reported Israeli deaths at a rate almost two and a half times greater than Palestinian ones and Israeli children’s deaths at rates almost four and a half times greater than Palestinian deaths. (For his study, Ackerman considered each reported death only once. If follow-up reports had been included, it is possible that the disparity would have been even larger.)

Moreover, Ackerman’s study included an additional and extremely interesting category: a comparison of reports on deaths of armed combatants amongst both populations. He found that while an Israeli civilian victim was more likely to have his or her death reported on NPR, Palestinians were far more likely to have their deaths reported if they were security personnel than if they were civilians. Such

distortion, of course, gives the impression that the Israelis being killed are civilians, and that the Palestinians being killed are armed fighters. The reality is that large numbers of civilians are being killed on both sides and that far more Palestinian civilians have been killed than Israeli civilians.

Such distortions on a national scale often grow even greater on a local level, as news stories are cut to fit smaller editorial holes and editors choose which to place on front pages. For example, a six-month study of the *San Francisco Chronicle’s* coverage of children’s deaths during the first six months of the intifada found that they had reported Israeli children’s deaths at a rate 30 times greater than Palestinian children’s deaths. A similar study by Stanford professor John McManus of media monitoring organization Grade the News found that *San Jose Mercury News* front-page headlines had reported on Israeli deaths at a rate 11 times greater than Palestinian deaths.

The U.S. Connection

Finally, in some way of even greater significance, American connection to this conflict is virtually never reported to the American public. This, while much of the rest of the world is aware that American citizens are enabling Israeli actions, Americans have no idea of this fact. More American tax money goes to Israel than to any other nation on earth, accounting for upwards of 30 percent of the entire US foreign aid expenditure. When one adds the amount of aid sent to Egypt, disbursed as part of an arrangement in which the Egyptian government reduced its support of Palestinian rights, the amount of US tax money expended overseas on behalf of Israel increases to over fifty percent of all US tax money sent abroad.

Despite the considerable significance of this information, analysis of the first six months of extensive reporting on Israel in the *San Francisco Chronicle* revealed that the *Chronicle* had never once reported the total amount of US money being sent to Israel. In fact, in only three stories out of 251 did the newspaper even mention that US money goes to Israel. Similarly, a study of the *Mercury News* found that only 1.1% of the articles on Israel/Palestine contained information that the US is providing aid to Israel and that the paper had *never* reported to readers the full amount of

More American tax money goes to Israel than to any other nation on earth, accounting for upwards of 30 percent of the entire US foreign aid expenditure

Americans are often unaware of even the simplest facts of the current uprising, and while the rest of the world understands the American responsibility for Israeli human rights violations, most Americans do not

money that American taxpayers are giving to Israel.

What do all these case studies tell us about American coverage in general? Let us imagine what would have happened if a newspaper's headlines had reported a sports event, for example the World Series, backwards; that the score had been reversed, the winning team declared the loser. The paper would have been the laughing stock of the country.

Yet, in the reporting by all of these news organizations there is an equivalent error in a situation involving life and death, literally, and virtually no one noticed. Why? The logical conclusion is that the entire environment of news that Americans were accessing; television roundtables, radio talk shows, magazine articles, etc., all communicated similar inversion.²

As a result of such patterns of omission, the American public is deeply misinformed. Americans are often unaware of even the simplest facts of the current uprising, and while the rest of the world understands the American responsibility for Israeli human rights violations, most Americans do not.

While we have not yet conducted the kind of in-depth study necessary to answer the question 'what is causing this distortion and omission in the American media?'; we have stumbled across incidents that may provide clues. Following is some anecdotal information to consider.

FILTER #1:

Problems with the Associated Press in Israel

The Associated Press is the oldest and largest wire service in the world and is the major source of foreign news for American newspapers and television stations throughout the country. It is also a major source of the problem.

Last fall, during a visit to the West Bank, we stumbled upon two highly revealing incidents. The first took place in Balata Refugee Camp outside Nablus, where we were told of an incident that had occurred approximately two weeks before. There had been one of the regular Israeli "incursions" into the camp, in which Israeli armored vehicles drive down the narrow, densely crowded main street of the camp, asserting their control. The vehicles had stayed there for twenty minutes and there had been no resistance against them. At one point an Israeli soldier poked his gun

out the porthole of his vehicle, aimed at a boy nearby and pulled the trigger. The boy, who looked to be about 13, was shot in the lower abdomen with a metal bullet coated by rubber. A Reuters photographer had photographed this incident and an Associated Press cameraman had filmed it. We were told that the video of the incident had been sent to the AP bureau in Jerusalem and that it had been erased.

We were shocked that this footage was not considered newsworthy and decided to look into the incident further. In Balata, there were a handful of international peace activists, several of whom had witnessed the event and described it to us in detail. They had recorded the number of the Israeli armored vehicle and had written down the names of the two photographers who had filmed the incident. We talked to both photojournalists, who confirmed the facts. We found the hospital where the boy was still being treated, interviewed the boy himself, his father, his older brothers and the doctor who had treated him. All the facts confirmed what we had been told. The boy was named Ahmad Mohammed Karan and it turned out that he was actually 14, though he looked considerably younger. He had been shot with a rubber-coated steel bullet, which had penetrated his bladder. He had undergone an operation and was still recovering.

The boy told us he was afraid of Israeli soldiers. He showed us a scar on his leg, where he had been shot previously. While we were in the hospital, we came across several other youths who had been shot. One had a fractured femur. He said he hadn't even been throwing stones, but that next time he would. Another boy had been shot in the chest. The doctors had barely saved him. Another boy, a visitor, showed us a scar where part of his lip should be and missing teeth that had been shot out. We had a video camera along and filmed all of this.

A few days later, we traveled to Jerusalem and went straight to the AP bureau. We questioned the bureau chief, Steve Gutkin, about this incident and why the tape was erased instead of broadcast. He became flustered and said he wasn't allowed to say anything and that AP requires its Corporate Communications office to respond to all requests for information. In other words, AP had video footage of an Israeli soldier specifically and

intentionally shooting a young Palestinian boy who was not attacking them and they erased it. I wonder how often they do this.

Misleading Bylines and Datelines

While we were still in the West Bank, we decided to investigate further. Months earlier I had heard that AP had a bureau in Ramallah in the West Bank, but when I had phoned AP in Washington DC and New York about this, no one seemed to have heard of it. AP receptionists kept trying to look it up and then would give me the number for the Jerusalem bureau, saying that was the only one listed.

We traveled to Ramallah, phoned a Palestinian agency and asked if there was indeed an AP bureau in the city. They said there was and gave us the phone number. We called this and were readily given directions to the bureau. When we arrived, we found a fully-staffed, professional bureau. While the Jerusalem bureau, which is in Israel, had appeared to be largely, perhaps exclusively, staffed by Israelis and Jewish Americans, this office appeared to contain highly trained journalists of Palestinian ethnicity.

We spoke to the bureau chief and an associate at length. They described how their news process worked. They and other correspondents throughout the Palestinian territories would cover events that took place in the area then send or call their reports to editors in the Jerusalem bureau who would write the actual article.

While we were there, they received a phone call from a correspondent in Nablus. A 12-year-old boy had just been killed. The boy, Bashar Zabara, had been throwing stones toward Israeli forces approximately 300 meters away. He had been shot in the throat with live ammunition. The bureau chief immediately phoned the Jerusalem bureau with all the details. He told us that journalists in the Jerusalem bureau would then write up the story and send it out to the many worldwide papers that subscribe to AP's services.

The fact that everything reported by the West Bank bureau was vetted by the Jerusalem bureau flagged our attention. AP Jerusalem was the bureau that had recently erased footage of a similar incident. We asked the Ramallah bureau journalists if they could send out wire stories themselves. They said no, that all reports went through the Jerusalem bureau.

We remembered the Ramallah bureau chief's name from having occasionally seen articles with his byline in the past. Confused,

we asked him if he ever wrote news stories himself. He said no, that he always called the information into Jerusalem and that they then wrote the stories there.

We were surprised and concerned to learn that the bylines and datelines of stories were being misrepresented in this way. Given the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the fact that the two ethnicities live and suffer in two different (if neighboring) locations, both the location and ethnicity of journalists writing about the conflict are particularly relevant. While it is certainly appropriate to give full credit to journalists who gather information for a story, it was highly misleading if stories with a Palestinian byline and West Bank dateline are actually being written by Israeli and Jewish correspondents living in Israel.

If such a situation is, for some reason, necessary it would seem important to disclose this fact with more accurate attribution. Instead, we have articles containing a spin that I suspect the authors cited in the byline would often be displeased to see, much less to receive credit for writing.

Back in the US, I looked up AP coverage of the 12-year-old who was shot in the throat while we were in the Ramallah bureau, and found no story. The Jerusalem bureau had not sent out a story on the incident. I found an AP photo on the internet but could not find a single American publication that printed it; perhaps because there was no connecting story. In addition, AP Jerusalem had sent out no reports about any of the children with shattered bodies that we had visited in the Nablus hospital, despite the on-the-scene presence of paid AP journalists.

Finally, I also phoned AP Corporate Communications and asked about the missing videotape. I gave all the details to the director who, when I phoned him a few days later, said that he had looked into it, and that this was "an internal AP matter," and that he could tell me nothing about it.

FILTER #2:

Associated Press in the U.S.

Flaws with AP coverage are not restricted to this and another example is news reports on the death of Admiral Thomas Moorer, a four-star admiral and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

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Israel committed acts of murder against American servicemen and an act of war against the United States

Staff, the highest ranking military position in the United States.

For many years Moorer, a World War II hero, had strongly condemned Israel's 1967 attack on the *USS Liberty*,³ a virtually unarmed US Navy intelligence ship. Israeli forces had killed 34 American servicemen and injured 172; stretcher-bearers were machine-gunned and lifeboats were shot out of the water. Following the attack, crew members, surrounded by blood and body parts, had been ordered by the Government not to speak to anyone about what had just been done to them and were dispersed to new postings around the world. One critically injured crewman, who had been evacuated to a hospital in Germany, woke up to find military policemen on either side of him and an identity band on his wrist with someone else's name on it.⁴

Moorer had been outraged both at the attack and at the U.S. government's cover up of Israel's actions, both regarding the *USS Liberty* and elsewhere, once stating "If the American people understood what a grip these people have got on our government, they would rise up in arms. Our citizens don't have any idea what goes on".⁵

Moorer had long called for an investigation and, a few months before his death, he had chaired an independent commission on the incident, reading a report on Capitol Hill that said, among other things: "Israel committed acts of murder against American servicemen and an act of war against the United States."⁶

A few months later Moorer died. The first quick AP obituary that came out about him contained one sentence about his statements on the Israeli attack. It was minimal, but present. Within a few hours, a longer obit came out containing a great deal of additional information about Moorer, but someone had removed the sentence on the Israeli attack.

Leaving Americans Out of the Loop

Further to the above, there have been incidents in which news reports were sent out on AP's international wire but were not distributed to American newspapers, or were only sent after long and perplexing delays.

On September 29 2004, two American Christian nonviolent protestors walking Palestinian children to school were beaten brutally by Israeli settlers using chains and baseball bats.⁷ There were reports of this incident by Reuters and AFP but nothing by AP. It was extraordinary that an attack on US citizens was not covered by the largest and

oldest US wire service. After phoning various AP desks in Washington and New York asking about the story, finally, a day and a half after the world media had covered it, AP ran a story.

On October 5th, a 13-year-old girl was killed in Gaza, her body riddled with at least a dozen bullets reportedly shot from close range by an Israeli platoon commander. There was an AP story about it, which was on the *Ha'aretz* website. The story, once again, had been sent around the world, except to US newspapers. After more phone calls demanding an explanation, that evening, approximately 12 hours after the report was sent on the international wire, AP sent the report to US newspapers.

The next day a 10-year-old girl was shot in the chest while sitting in a school in Gaza. Again, the story was sent worldwide. Again, it was not sent to US newspapers. Again I phoned and phoned. This time the story came out on US wires.

My findings are that the determination of where to disseminate AP's news stories is made by its international desk in New York. I have been unable to learn on what basis these editors considered the above stories newsworthy in Norway but not in New York.

FILTER #3:

Local Newspapers

Near the beginning of the current Intifada I was in the West Bank as a freelance journalist and visited the home of a nine-year-old boy minutes after he was killed by Israeli forces, shelling the neighborhood in which he and his family lived. Two days later I was at the funeral of a mother of three who had been killed by Israeli fire as she returned from the market. A few days later there was a suicide bombing in Israel. I happened to visit a hotel in East Jerusalem and saw that the *New York Times* had published a front-page story about the Israeli deaths.⁸ The paper had not run similar headlines about the two Palestinian deaths, but the article about the suicide bombing had contained some information about both: one phrase each, in the second paragraph. Near the end of the article, which was full of graphic descriptions of the Israeli tragedies, there were a few paragraphs about Israeli

crowds beating random Palestinian-Israelis to a pulp and chanting “Kill Arabs.”

In the San Francisco Bay Area library, while checking the *San Francisco Chronicle* coverage of the events, it was apparent that this paper also had neglected these deaths at the time. It had, however, carried the *New York Times* article about the suicide bombing that had followed. However, it was astounding to see that someone had surgically excised the sentences near the top of the story telling of the Israeli killing of a nine-year-old Palestinian boy and a mother of three. The person had also deleted all information about the Israeli mob violence.

While such groups as Amnesty International have condemned Israel for its routine torture of Palestinian prisoners for decades⁹, coverage of such abuse virtually never appears in American media.

In sum, Americans relying on their media for information on the current situation in Israel and Palestine have little idea that Palestinian civilians are being killed in far greater numbers than Israeli civilians, that Palestinian children are being killed in far greater numbers than Israeli ones, that Palestinian casualties began significantly sooner than Israeli ones, that Palestinian prisoners are routinely abused and that Americans are directly involved in this conflict. We have just touched the tip of the iceberg of this pattern of distortion and omission.

Why Does This Matter?

American citizens have the power to overturn governmental policies with which they disagree. When large numbers of Americans became convinced that the Vietnam War was wrong, they ended it. When growing numbers of Americans opposed U.S. support for South Africa’s system of apartheid, this support was eliminated.

Interestingly, despite the pro-Israel distortion sketched above, American support for Israel is already less whole-hearted than one might expect. In fact, according to dozens of opinion polls conducted over many years, three-quarters of Americans think the United States “shouldn’t take sides” on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In other words, Americans already oppose the massive amounts of their tax money being sent to Israel and the consistent intercession of the U.S. on behalf of Israel in the international arena, they just don’t know these things are going on. There

is no doubt that when Americans learn these facts, as well as additional information about how Israel is using the power handed it by the United States, they will exert their electoral power to revamp U.S. foreign policy once again.

At that point, the power dynamics in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will change drastically and Israeli leaders will finally, for the first time in its history, be forced to begin to adhere to international law and morality. We urge anyone who seeks justice in Palestine, peace in the Middle East, and the creation of the kind of world *all* our children deserve, to help in our efforts to overcome the information blockade on Palestine. I am convinced that with unified and unwavering efforts we will succeed in this quest. We must.

Notes

1. For more information, visit www.btselem.org. Because of conditions in the Palestinian Territories, confirmations of deaths often lag behind their occurrence. Thus, B’Tselem’s statistics for Palestinian deaths tend to increase over time. For this reason the numbers on Palestinian deaths in this study slightly exceed the numbers noted in our previous studies.
2. Richard Curtiss, “The Cost of Israel to US Taxpayers, *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Dec. ’97, pp 43-45, <http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/1297/9712043.html>
3. For more information about the attack on the *Liberty*, visit http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/ussliberty.html
4. *Assault on the Liberty*, James Ennes (Random House 1980; Ballantine 1986; Reintree Press 2002), <http://www.ussliberty.org>.
5. *They Dare to Speak Out* (Lawrence Hill Books, 1989), Paul Findley, p. 161.
6. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/us_ints/ul-commfindings.html
7. http://www.ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/heroism.html
8. Deborah Sontag, “Suicide Bomber Kills 3 Israelis,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2001; it’s interesting to see how this situation was reported elsewhere; for example, the *Houston Chronicle* carried Sontag’s story under the headline: “Palestinian suicide bomber kills 3 Israelis: Attack gladdens West Bank mourners as conflict grows”
9. Neve Gordon & Ruchama Marton, *Torture: Human Rights, Medical Ethics and the Case of Israel*, Zed Books, London; See for example, Amnesty International Report, “Israel and the Occupied Territories: Mass detention in cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions”, May 23, 2002, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde150742002>.

While such groups as Amnesty International have condemned Israel for its routine torture of Palestinian prisoners for decades⁹, coverage of such abuse virtually never appears in American media

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The World Bank, International Aid and The Ghettoization of Palestine

The Grassroots Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign

Every day in Palestine, entire villages actively protest against the Apartheid Wall and the Occupation that has stolen their land, demolished their houses and imprisoned them in ghettos of poverty and oppression. They demand that the Wall and the Apartheid infrastructure of Jewish-only bypass roads, military zones and settlements are torn down. Not “modified” or made more “tolerable,” but dismantled entirely, a demand that is supported in international law, including the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and a number of UN resolutions. However, the complicity of the international community in the crimes of the Occupation is impossible to hide.

Against a reality where children participating in demonstrations are shot dead simply for defending their own right to exist, it seems absurd to talk about ‘development’ without first addressing the racist, colonial Occupation that perpetrates such destruction. Yet the prevailing discourse of economic “development” for Palestine chooses not to challenge this reality, but actively embrace it. Far from confronting the Occupation’s existence, it seeks to sustain it and the total Israeli control over Palestinian life.

The guiding document in this respect is the World Bank’s latest report on Palestine: Stagnation or Revival? Israeli Disengagement and Palestinian Economic Prospects. It outlines the mutual interest of global capital and the Zionist occupation, vigorously promoting a vision of “economic development” that legitimizes, relies on and provides financial support for the long-term Apartheid system on which the Zionist project of expulsion is based.

The very framing of World Bank policy is rooted in its explicit support for the parameters set out by Israel’s “disengagement plan” – a warped term that in reality means increased Israeli engagement in its control over Palestine through the finalization of the Apartheid Wall and connected measures of land grab and ghettoization. The Bank

describes the “disengagement” as providing Palestinians with a “significant amount of land” and an ideal environment for development. In fact, Gaza will be totally imprisoned, surrounded by a second eight metre high iron wall, with all borders, coastline and airspace controlled by the occupying power. In the West Bank, just four tiny settlements are being disbanded, while simultaneously 46% of the West Bank is annexed through the Apartheid Wall and infrastructure, which is facilitating the expansion of settlements such as Ma’ale Adumim and the Gush Etzion bloc.

Against the ICJ’s instructions to the international community “not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created by (the Wall’s) construction,” the Bank formulates its entire plan around “borders” of the Palestinian prison-state as defined by the illegal Apartheid Wall. It accepts that settlements, military zones and any “areas in which Israel has a vested interest” will remain under Israeli domination. The Wall annexes the Palestinian capital of Jerusalem to Israel, and so the Bank follows suit and removes Jerusalem from its plans.

While Palestinians are imprisoned, facing continued denial of their rights and aspirations, the Bank portrays a golden economic opportunity of a cheap, controlled labour force. The Bank’s blueprint for a new export-based economy, subservient to the strategic needs of Israel and global capital - with Israeli/foreign investment creaming off the profits - merges with the Occupation’s destruction of Palestinian farmland and local markets. Indeed, the Bank’s reports hardly refer to agriculture at all, traditionally the core sector of the Palestinian economy. Instead, imposing Israeli-run industrial zones, military checkpoints and Jewish-only road systems onto the West Bank are policies that reflect

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While Palestinians are imprisoned, facing continued denial of their rights and aspirations, the Bank portrays a golden economic opportunity of a cheap, controlled labour force

The Bank insists that Palestinians must not only be willing to accept brutal military occupation, dispossession and expulsion, but must also sustain their oppressor's economy through primary goods and industrial output

the Bank's overall strategy for a Do-It-Yourself Apartheid Guide for the 21st century.

As with any other "Third World" population that the World Bank subjugates into the global economy, the role assigned to the Palestinian people is simple: to cheaply produce goods for export to wealthier countries, strengthening economic dependency on global capitalist systems. The Bank insists that Palestinians must not only be willing to accept brutal military occupation, dispossession and expulsion, but must also sustain their oppressor's economy through primary goods and industrial output. Furthermore, walled-in Palestinians are marked as a captive audience, forced into a system of dependency upon the Occupation for even the most basic needs. Israel has drained Palestine of her natural resources, stealing around 80% of Palestinian natural water outputs on an annual basis. Now, in Gaza, the Bank states Palestinians who have been robbed of their water for decades should enter into trade agreements with Israel whereby they can buy back – "at Israeli commercial rates" – the same water stolen by the Occupation.

The convergence between Zionist actions and World Bank economics is clear, with international investment transforming the destruction and dispossession caused by the Israeli colonization policies into the Bank's new showcase project: a series of massive Israeli industrial estates built on annexed Palestinian land. The so-called Tulkarem Peace Park, for example, is to be built on farmland stolen from the village of Irtah; land that sustained 50 families for generations and formed an integral part of community and family life. Now their only source of employment will be as an exploited worker on an Israeli industrial estate surrounded by walls, checkpoints and prison gates.

The World Bank ignores the inherent illegality of such estates and instead celebrates that they will employ cheap labour "with a minimum of red tape," i.e. the absence of trade unions, health regulations and other worker's rights. Israel's most toxic and environmentally destructive forms of industry will be transferred to the West Bank, where Palestinians work for around a quarter of the wages in Israel (though even this is still too high in the opinion of the Bank's reports). They may try and dress these sweatshops up as liberation and independence, but they represent nothing more than a devastating system of racial capital not seen since the days of Apartheid South Africa.

Such plans demand that goods and limited numbers of Palestinians are "allowed" to move within their own land, between the isolated ghettos carved out by the Wall and the Apartheid network of Israeli-only roads. High-tech military gates and checkpoints are proposed, through which Palestinians can be herded and controlled. What the Bank terms "alternative transportation systems," including walled roads and tunnels that can be opened and closed at the whim of Israel, will provide a transfer system for the imprisoned Palestinian population, enabling movement between ghettos without access to the land around them.

In order to circumvent international law and whitewash their crimes, the World Bank and Israel have created another euphemism behind which to hide their own interests: "for the benefit of Palestinians." The Bank justifies its collusion with the Zionist project by claiming that financing the same Occupation checkpoints which have imprisoned Palestinians and meted out daily humiliation and violence for years; in fact serve the needs of Palestinians. The US has already provided Israel with \$50 million to construct these prison gates; the French government has followed suit offering \$120 million to Israel, "for the benefit of the Palestinian families in Gaza," so that the Occupation can modernize checkpoints. Included among the "modern" systems utilized by the Occupation are naked spy machines which take photographs penetrating through clothes. As well as being demeaning and degrading, many experts believe the radiation involved will cause serious long-term health problems. That governments are claiming to help Palestinians by giving money to the regime at the very root of Palestinian suffering is not only preposterous but shows their denial of any Palestinian right to self-determination.

Such support is making the World Bank an increasingly powerful player in Palestine. Outgoing President James Wolfensohn has been named as international coordinator of the "disengagement process" and has already stated that his work will be based upon World Bank policy; a policy which does not consider the Apartheid Wall, Israeli occupation and colonization, or Israel's numerous breaches of international law to be of concern. Nor is it just the

World Bank. The acceptance of Israeli crimes is influencing NGOs at all levels, in projects that seek merely to adapt to the Wall and the Occupation rather than work for its removal, which must be the first and foremost priority. Any genuine form of development can only come when the Wall and settlements are dismantled, the Occupation ended and a truly independent and sovereign Palestinian state is established. One wonders what kind of dream world the World Bank and the Zionists are living in if they believe that Palestinians will simply sit back and accept this annihilation of their past, present and future.

In the reality that is slowly being shaped on the ground, the role assigned to the Palestinian Authority is that of prison guard, preventing the Palestinian people from defending their lands and rights in the interest of creating “an attractive environment for investors.” Acting in the name of the Palestinian people means that it is necessary for the Palestinian Authority and civil society to stand up against these projects - not by “modifying” or “only partially backing” them but by completely refusing and opposing them.

Palestinians are not looking for economic models of subservience, or ways in which to make the Wall and the Occupation more “bearable.” Palestinians want genuine liberation. That this is ignored by the World Bank is not accidental. It reflects the Bank’s conscious choice to support the needs and vision of the Occupation. That vision is the expulsion and ghettoization of the Palestinian people and in this crime the World Bank is a more than willing accomplice.

The partnership between Israel and the World Bank highlights the extent to which international support sustains the Occupation. Without the \$5 billion of annual US aid, the World Bank investment and the contributions of countless governments, corporations and organizations, the Zionist project is simply not sustainable. Individuals and civil society the world over have the responsibility of building a movement to pressure and isolate Apartheid Israel while supporting the Palestinian struggle for justice and liberation.

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Al-Aqsa

Editor

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How 'Jewish' is the State of Israel?

Mohammed Seddon*

Introduction

'It [Israel] will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the Prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the Charter of the United Nations.' [Declaration of the State of Israel, 1948]¹

When the state of Israel was established in the aftermath of the Second World War, it granted rights of return to all dispersed Jews throughout the world: claiming Palestine as the Jewish spiritual homeland. Although a product of Zionism, a secular political Jewish movement, the modern state evoked the teachings of the ancient Biblical Prophets as the inspiration for its self-proclaimed egalitarianism.² For its national language it adopted Hebrew; associated with the Torah and Judaism. But, despite the inclusion of symbolic religious motifs into the identity constructions of the new state, does this in fact make Israel 'Jewish'? This question has produced a plethora of dichotomous responses, from those lauding the 'Jewish' exclusivity of the State to criticism for not being 'Jewish' enough. The exhaustive discussions on this contested subject are beyond the scope of this paper; instead the aim is simply to focus on a few pertinent points in order to explore the historical constructions of 'Judaism' and 'Jewishness' in the context of the modern State of Israel.

The Origins of Judaism

Born out of the Israelite faith (*Yahwism*) predominantly from the teachings of Moses, the Hebrew people or *Ibrim* originate either

from the legendary figure, Eber, or from the fact that they as Arameans migrated from "beyond the Great river" (*Eber ha-Nahar*), the Euphrates. Perhaps the most eminent of all the Arameans was Abraham, considered to be the founder of the Jewish religion.³ Judaism as a distinct religio-ethnic phenomenon, however, does not appear until the split of the Israelites into two distinct kingdoms within the Semitic lands after the time of Solomon.

In the North, the Kingdom of Israel was created culminating with Samaria established as its capital; the South saw the emergence of the Kingdom of Judah (Judea).⁴ After the Babylonians defeated the Southern Kingdom around 586 BC Solomon's Temple, which was within the domain of the Kingdom of Judah, was demolished and the elite of the Southern Kingdom were taken into exile in Babylonia.⁵ The invasion of the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, was seen by the Judeans as punishment for breaking the Covenant with God after entering the Promised Land under the guidance of Moses (Deuteronomy, 1: 35-5). Despite a succession of prophets and reformers, the nation had remained unfaithful. Jeremiah beseeched the people to repentance but, as Ninian Smart comments, 'his call remained unanswered then inevitably the destruction of the land was assured.'⁶

It was not until Persian leader Cyrus the Great in 538 BC ordered the restoration of the Temple that the Judeans exiled in Babylonia were permitted back into Jerusalem. Ezra, their sage, reinstated the teachings of the Torah and undertook the reformation of the people who had remained in Jerusalem. Temple worship was re-established along with fasting and the observance of *Shabbat*. Ezra's reforms

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The implications of the dual definitions of Judaism are essential to understanding the national identity constructions of the modern State of Israel, particularly in relation to the question of its perceived “Jewishness”.

in the fourth century BC brought in the Judeans from the other regions of the Diaspora, namely Babylonia and Egypt. This convergence saw a conglomeration of various interpretations of Hebrew traditions, all born out of the ‘oral Torah’ handed down from the teachings of Moses. It is at this point that we begin to see the origins of Rabbinical Judaism.⁷ Although Ezra is attributed with the re-establishment of the Temple at Jerusalem, the disintegration of the Northern Kingdom of Israel is held in contrast to the continuance of Hebrew tradition within the Southern Kingdom of Judea, which claimed descent from David. Hence, Cecil Roth concludes that the political and spiritual identity of the Northern Kingdom waned as the influence of the Kingdom of Judea took prominence in the character and national consciousness of the emerging “New Israel”.⁸

However, whilst it might be argued that Judaism derives from the religion developed among the Hebrews of the Kingdom of Judea, we could equally contend that Judaism is located in the ancient traditions of the Semitic peoples existing as a nation in Judea (Palestine) from 6 BC to 1 CE. The contending historical interpretations present two definitions of Judaism; one based on religion, the other on race. In other words, in relation to historical constructions of Judaism there are two fundamental questions: ‘who is a Jew?’ and ‘what is a Jew?’ - a dialectic that has been explored in an interesting and detailed discussion by Manfred Vogel.⁹

The implications of the dual definitions of Judaism are essential to understanding the national identity constructions of the modern State of Israel, particularly in relation to the question of its perceived “Jewishness”. For example, if Judaism is primarily a religion, then the validity of Israel’s sovereignty and legitimacy rests on its religious scriptural edicts. That is, the ‘where, why, when and how’ of Israel should be established according to the Biblical text.¹⁰ If on the other hand, Judaism is defined racially, how then does the nation-state determine and define its national identity particularly in terms of citizenship, the inclusion and rights of indigenous, ethnic and religious others and their Human rights? Some suggest that Judaism is a combination of both religion and race, firstly as a religion based on the teachings of the ancient prophets descending from Abraham and Moses. This is manifested through the Scripture and laws of one God by revelatory means of a Covenant, the adherence to which is fulfilled

in God’s promise of land - The Kingdom. And, secondly, as a nation born out of the Semitic races principally emanating from ancient Judea or Palestine, who are historically linked to the revelatory Covenant and promise of God, hence, the formulation of ‘people and land’.¹¹ The connection of ‘people and land’ is intrinsic to modern day Judaism and, perhaps more importantly, to the State of Israel’s historical claim as a sovereign nation-state. However God’s promise of land, kingdom or state is conditional to the people’s religious fidelity and adherence to their oath. In Hebrew these terms are known as *Teshuvah* (returning to righteousness) and *Ge’ulah* (redemption through ‘Zion’, the Promised Land).¹²

It could be argued that the ‘religion or race’ debate is both over-simplified and reductionist. The reality is that Judaism has been largely shaped by diasporic and exilic Jewish experiences that reflect the diverse civilisations and different cultures of historical settlements. The Hellenisation and Romanisation of the Jews are two classic examples.¹³ However, whilst it is true that the diaspora has impacted on Judaism, resulting in a religious pluralism and diversity of doctrines based on central tenets and teachings, in recent times the assimilation disintegration of European Jews gave birth to political Zionism as a reassertion of Judaism. Theodore Herzl (1860-1904), the person accredited with the birth of the modern Zionist movement, conveyed his fears of Jewish assimilation and appealed to the ‘national character’ of historical Judaism in order to redeem Jews from ‘every degradation’ as a community that he believed was ‘too noble to make destruction desirable’.¹⁴ The fact that Judaism could give rise to the birth of Zionism as a political expression outside of the realm of Messianic eschatology is perhaps further evidence of the diversity of Judaism. However, many Jewish scholars agree that Judaism is neither monolithic nor homogenous and Jacob Neusner’s explanation of ‘Judaisms’ is:

‘Judaic systems that explained the social order formed by Jews with an account of a coherent world-view, way of life, and theory of the Jews’ social entity or the ‘Israel’ that they constituted.’¹⁵

As a ‘Judaism’, political Zionism constructed its own particular ‘Israel’ in the

form of a modern secular nation-state. But then how 'Jewish' is the state of Israel?

Zionism as Emancipation

The establishment of the Zionist movement took its inspirations from the malaise of the nineteenth-century European Jews and its desire for the creation of Zion (the land of Israel). The situation of European Jews in that period was that of polarisation. They were either socially segregated into *ghettos* where their somewhat introspective Talmudic observances detached them from their non-Jewish counterparts, or they were completely assimilated into the European way of life and disconnected from their own community, religion, and culture.¹⁶ These responses were a reaction to the legacy of intolerance and oppression of the Jews that had existed for centuries, manifest in brutal *pogroms* occasionally incited by papal edicts.¹⁷ David Vital asserts that emancipation from the status of 'European underclass' and a desire to freely express Jewish beliefs and traditions, through the concept of a Jewish homeland, became possible as a result of the Enlightenment. He claims that the Enlightenment's 'draining away' of the power of organised religion to uphold the traditional forms of authority made possible an assertion of Jewish national consciousness.¹⁸

Zionism as a religious expression has always been a part of the Messianic religious teachings of Judaism and *Ge'ulah* represents salvation for the dispersed Jewish nation as an eschatological understanding of Deuteronomy, 30:1-5.¹⁹ The advent of *Ge'ulah* is generally believed to be preceded by the appearance of the *Mashiach*, or the 'Anointed One'. The chronology of events, according to Hebrew tradition, teaches that 'Zion' will be established only by the coming of the *Mashiach*, who will then gather the dispersed Israel and lead them into Zion.²⁰ However, the arrival of the *Meshiach* is conditional to Israel's *Teshuvah*, only then will Israel achieve *Ge'ulah Shelemah* or 'complete redemption'.²¹ Political Zionism, urged on by the rise of anti-Semitism and the problem of Jewish assimilation, wanted to make religious utopia a political and social reality. Herzl (1860-1904), the son of a Hungarian Rabbi, was a prolific mobiliser and proselytiser for the creation of a Jewish homeland, which he perceived as a 'solution to the Jewish question'.²² He was disturbed by the devastating effects of secularisation and assimilation on Judaism and the Jewish people. As a result, he saw political Zionism as an

ideological alternative to Messianic emancipation.²³ Thus, the World Zionist Organisation that he and like-minded others established transformed their Jewish nationalism²⁴ in order to appeal to religious Jews holding Messianic beliefs. Ben Halpern claims this transformation was achieved, firstly, by actively assisting Jews from the Diaspora in turning to Israel; secondly, by not proposing any 'new Judaism' or opposing any religious expressions; thirdly, the Zionists insisted on a rational solution to the problem of Jewish exile, presented as a re-affirmation of the religious eschatology that had largely been abandoned as a myth or disregarded by western Jews. Finally, they emphasized an equal regard for the Hebrew language and Jewish religious education as traditional forms of Jewish culture.²⁵

Herzl's Zionists, however, were unable to convince all Jewish factions that a Jewish homeland through a secular state was a workable solution to their religio-ethnic and cultural problems. Despite some opposition, the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel in 1897 and was eventually able to enlist the help of many wealthy western Jews including the banker, Baron Edmund de Rothschild, whilst also evoking the sympathies of western politicians and leaders.²⁶ The organisation debated at length where the location of the new Jewish state would be: Uganda, Argentina, or Palestine. But Herzl had previously written that, 'Palestine is our unforgettable historic homeland.'²⁷ However, Palestine was then ruled by the Turks and the Sultan had already limited Jewish immigration into the region.²⁸ Herzl made an open bid to the Caliph by offering to bankroll the failing Ottoman Empire saying:

'If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could, in return, undertake the complete management of the finances of Turkey.'²⁹

The offer was swiftly and flatly declined. However, fortunes changed after the First World War, when Palestine came under the rule of the British government as a result of the Arabs (who were British Allies) revolting against their Turkish leaders. As anti-Semitism raged through Western Europe, the rise of National Socialism gave birth to Germany's Nazi Party, eventually leading to the formation of a fascist state. The diabolical rise of Nazism witnessed

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the most atrocious acts of genocide and the Jews received the brunt of Hitler's 'ethnic cleansing' of Europe. A Nazi holocaust ensued whilst Europe waged war. Alexander contends that the massacre of millions of European Jews was 'another demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in *Eretz* – Israel the Jewish state.'³⁰

Jewish immigration into Palestine increased and civil unrest between the new settlers and the indigenous Arabs escalated as the Zionists continued their political lobbying for a Jewish homeland. By 1937, a form of partition was enforced by the governing British, effectively a precursor to the Jewish state, splitting the two Semitic communities (Jews and Arabs) by creating two satellite states.³¹ This mandate was preceded by the Balfour Declaration of November 1917, which called upon the British government to recognise the TransJordan (land west of the River Jordan) as a 'national home' for the Jewish people.³² In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine and on the 15th May 1948, the State of Israel was declared.³³ Political Zionism had superseded the aspirations of centuries of Jewish dispersion and, although the *Messiah* had not come, for many the Messianic 'era' had begun and the Jews finally had their state.

Israel: between Secularism and Judaism

It would appear that Herzl's vision of a model state was as much inspired by the class struggle of revolutionary Russian peasants as by the aspirations of dispersed and assimilated Western Jews. The spread of socialism ran parallel to the emergence of Zionism in the nineteenth century and many Jews were not only influenced by socialism, but were actively engaged in the Socialist Revolution. Although Herzl's political ideas were mild, progressive and largely based on state and democratic socialism,³⁴ Vital asserts that convergence of these two ideologies did occur and the needs of the Zionists were sympathetic to the 'all-Russian revolutionary struggle.'³⁵ Although ideologically it may be argued that Herzl's dream for a Jewish homeland relied less upon the tenets of Judaism than it did on the principles of Socialism, it is true that the state of Israel has provided an ideological and political identity for Jews globally. However, the secular socialist principles fall short of fulfilling Talmudic law as a complete way of life but Herzl had mused positively about the

creation of a Jewish state inspired by the recent creation of the revolutionary Soviet State; he commented,

'To create a new sovereign state is neither ridiculous nor impossible. We have seen it happen in our own day, among peoples who were not largely middle class as we are, but poorer, less educated, and hence weaker than ourselves.'³⁶

These secular influences perhaps shaped the laws of the State of Israel as identified in its Declaration (1948) which, whilst clearly defining Israel as a Jewish state, also states that:

It [Israel] will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the Prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the Charter of the United Nations.³⁷

Orthodox Jews holding Messianic beliefs would perhaps be even less inclined to a 'kingdom' without a king that not only recognized the beliefs of religious 'others' but also the sanctity of those who preferred atheism. Reform Jews; however, appear to be more accepting of the secular Jewish state and Michael Prior asserts that whilst Jewish religious establishments were initially reticent in embracing Zionism, today it fully supports its achievements. He cites Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks as stating that Israel is "the most powerful collective expression" of Jewry and "the most significant development in Jewish life since the Holocaust".³⁸ Prior also points us to the contradiction of the idealism of Israel's egalitarianism, cited in its Declaration, and the actual reality in respect of its now displaced indigenous Palestinian people. Further, he sees the destruction of Arab villages and the continued disproportionate use of force through wars and military operations as 'state terrorism'.³⁹

Prior's criticism of Israel's failure to implement its Declaration of State Principles; egalitarianism based on basic human rights, highlights Israel's problems as a multicultural, multi-ethnic and religiously plural society. In addition to the existence of cosmopolitan and multi-diverse communities already indigenous to

the region before the creation of Israel, the influx of Russian, American, western European, African, Middle Eastern and Indian Jews has added extra tension to the region's fragile ethno-religious balance. Each new migrant sub-group has brought a diversity of 'Judaisms' and the hope of creating a monolithic 'national' Judaism from the converging traditions will perhaps depend on how Israel accommodates religious multiplicity in a modern secular setting. The first edict of the State of Israel's law is the principle of *Oleh* (immigration) as a right for every Jew. However, as a result of their exile experiences, the immigrant Jewish communities to Israel are either advantaged or disadvantaged by their relative cogency of secularism. As political Zionism was conceived in a Western secular setting, European Jews appear as the advantaged group in Israel. Western émigré Jews are generally thought to fit more readily into the state's socio-political framework largely because the Judaic systems they developed in exile were a response to Europe and America's secular environment. The Sephardim or Oriental Jews as more 'traditional' communities emanating from Arabia, Africa and Asia are less able to integrate.⁴⁰ This does not mean that other 'Judaisms' are not entitled to claim Israel as theirs, rather they have yet to orientate themselves within the state. This is not an easy process, for example, hundreds of Yemeni Sana'ani Jews along with large numbers of Ethiopian Falasha Jews have returned to their original countries after their unsuccessful migration attempts.

Is Daniel a 'Brother'?

In a strange circumstance that required the secular Israeli law to define a 'Jew' in religious terms; the Law of Return (1950) came under scrutiny during the 'Brother Daniel' case of 1962.⁴¹ As a Jewish convert to Christianity, 'Brother Daniel' applied for nationality under the Law of Return, raising the age-old debate of 'who is' and 'what is' a Jew. 'Brother Daniel' was indeed a Jew by virtue of his matriarchal lineage in accordance with the Law of Return, Clause 4B, which states that, 'for the purposes of this law, "a Jew" means a person who was born of a Jewish mother.'⁴² However, because of 'Brother Daniel's' religious conversion his rights of return and citizenship were vetoed and consequently revoked by a judicial verdict. 'Brother Daniel's' case is interesting and offers a partial

answer to our inquiry of the 'Jewishness' of the State of Israel. If Israel is simply a modern secular state for Jews, then 'Brother Daniel' would meet the criteria of 'Jewish' by race or lineage. However, Clause 4B continues '...or has converted to Judaism and is not a member of another religion.'⁴³ Judge Silberg, the presiding judge in the case, revealed some interesting Talmudic evidence which from a religious perspective appears to support 'Brother Daniel's' claim to be Jewish. One *Halakab* edict reads,

For even though he has converted to another religion he, none the less remains a Jew, as it is written, 'Israel has sinned'; though he has sinned, he remains a Jew. (*Prisha*, Commentary on *Tur*, *ibid.*, note 22.)⁴⁴

Judge Silberg, after carefully scrutinising rabbinical laws which included laws of marriage and divorce, had to make a clear distinction between Jewish religious law, which supported 'Brother Daniel's' claim to be a Jew, and secular law, which it was ruled denied his claim. Ironically, Jewish Rabbinical law ruled that 'Jewishness' was by blood or race, rather than by religious profession, whereas the secular state law ruled in opposition to the claimant, instead defining 'Jewishness' not by ethnic origin, but by religion. The implications of the 'Brother Daniel' case is that the question 'what is a Jew' (*vis-à-vis* beliefs) is certainly not the same as 'who is a Jew' (*vis-à-vis* lineage).⁴⁵

Another point of contention in respect of Israel's 'Jewishness' is the issue of its sovereign borders, particularly those agreed by the United Nations (UN) which excluded specific territories. The disputed territories were already within the borders of existing sovereign states before the creation of Israel. However, the designated UN borders do not correspond to the ancient Biblical descriptions of Israel. Although a detailed archeological discussion falls outside the parameters of this paper, we might still raise the question - how 'Jewish' is today's state of Israel in the light of biblical geography?⁴⁶ The resulting wars with neighboring states had a profound effect on Jews living outside Israel, especially those who had perhaps never really identified themselves with the state of Israel. In particular, when the Six Day War in 1967 seemed to spell the destruction of the State of Israel by an allied-Arab force, American Jews, who had formed

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their own Judaic system unique to America's secular political framework, began to forge strong sympathetic and supportive links with Israel.⁴⁷ Before the war, young American Jews were strangely introspective and apparently disconnected from recent Jewish history. For example, the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel were events with which young Jews in America did not associate.

Nathan Glazer attributes the Six Day War with the re-awakening of the American Jews to the idea of the Land of Israel. Jewish American youth, whose views before the war were generally inclined towards socialism, realised that promoting such ideas was in fact counter-productive to the cause of Israel. Glazer further asserts that young Jews less influenced by the New Left were torn between their Jewish feelings and the hostility towards Israel by the communist bloc realising they were more Jewish than they had suspected.⁴⁸ The 'Jewish feeling' soon transformed into mobilization, via support of Israel, anti-Soviet activities and demonstrations, and large numbers of Jewish American immigrations to Israel. A reaction of extremism was employed by some young Jews through militant organisations like the 'Jewish Defence League' in which hijackings, bombings, and assassinations were used as terror tactics to counteract Soviet anti-Semitism.⁴⁹ Further, the wave of new immigrants into Israel from America saw a resurgence of the *Kibbutz* movement. This movement, seen by many as either religious fanaticism or extreme nationalism, has been responsible for the increased border tensions, working mostly in opposition to the Israeli state in its efforts to expand Jewish territories.⁵⁰ Thus, it would appear that whilst the secular Israeli Government upholds agreements on disputed borders with other states, many of its citizens believe that the state boundaries should be those of the biblical description. Genesis, 15:18, reads, 'Unto thy seed I have given this land, from the River of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates.' (The Bible also contains other descriptions of Israel in, Numbers, 34:2, and, Ezekiel, 47:15-20.)

As a result of their territorial activities, the ultra-religious, nationalist *Kibbutzim* believe themselves to be truer to biblical Israel than the state itself. Yet it would seem that their expansionist aspirations seriously undermine the peace and security of the State, which allowed them the opportunity to settle in the land of Israel in the first instance. We might

therefore argue that for the *Kibbutzim*, the State of Israel is not 'Jewish' enough. But, the fact that Judaism is neither monolithic nor homogenous has caused it to continuously manifest throughout history in many varied forms and this prompts some scholars of Judaism to speak of 'Judaisms' which have responded to their particular socio-political environments. Therefore, at times 'Judaisms' have retracted into microcosmic communities, cutting off from the outside world as a means of self-preservation. Conversely, they have interacted unconditionally whilst participating fully within the dominant culture and society. This, it seems, has been the historical experience of the Diaspora - ghetto or assimilation.

Conclusion

Before the creation of the Zionist state of Israel, for most Jewish theological expressions, emancipation only occurred with *Teshuvah* and *Ge'ulah* via the *Mashiach*. The unifying eschatology of Judaism is inextricably linked to the land and when Jews speak of 'Israel' they mean both 'people and land'. Expulsion is the price of religious infidelity and impiety, Salvation and redemption takes the shape of the *Mashiach*. Years of exile for the Jewish people had led to mythologizing Israel - the land. As their diasporic experiences became increasingly dire, the hope of mythological Israel intensified and political Zionism eventually realized these aspirations. Europe did not want the Jews, the Jew's did not want Europe and the Zionist movement demythologised Israel through an ideological construction in the form of a nation-state. But is this 'national Jewish homeland' Jewish? If the premise of multiple forms of Judaism or 'Judaisms' is accepted then Zionism, despite its politicization, can be described as a 'Judaism' even though in its early conception of a Jewish state, it was not overtly Judaic. However, once the State of Israel materialized, most Jews made a spiritual, political or metaphysical link with it as the State of Israel declared itself a Jewish homeland for the Jewish people. By its own choosing the state connected itself to the ancient Jewish Prophets and established itself within the Biblical Jewish homeland. Do these symbolic claims then make the state of Israel 'Jewish'? Perhaps

the nearest answer to this question is: not entirely. This is because the essential element in the fulfillment of Israel as a 'Promised Land' is the *Mashiach*. The raised religious consciousness and awareness of belonging to a Jewish nation from around the world is one of Israel's achievements. However, its major failing has been in the physical gathering of diaspora Jews into the Zionist entity of a nation state 'homeland'. We could therefore argue that its disputed existence has actually been a major contribution to Judaism globally, but at what price? Finally, the problem of Israel's exclusivity in defining 'a Jew', highlighted in the case of 'Brother Daniel' and its expulsion of large numbers of indigenous Palestinians from the land, gives us a negative view which reflects a policy of racism. Through such acts Israel seems to be saying 'a land *only* of the Jews, *only* for the Jews.' If Israel is making ancient Biblical claims for itself in connection with Judaism, then how can we as non-Jews dictate whether it is or is not? This leaves us to conclude that the Zionist State of Israel is *only* one of many 'Judaisms'.

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Notes

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3. See Roth, *A history of the Jews*, 1989, pp3-4.
4. See Smart, *The World's Religions*, 1989, pp.208-209.
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8. Roth, op. cit., p.36.
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40. See Neusner, op. cit., pp.1-18.
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45. See Kassim, in Kayyali, (ed.), *Zionism, Imperialism and Racism*, 1979, pp.109-117.
46. For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Isaacs, op. cit., pp.20-44.
47. See Neusner, op. cit., p.6.
48. Glazer, in *ibid.*, p.225.
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The Third Category and the Palestinian Solidarity Movement

Gilad Atzmon*

As far as self-perception is concerned, those who call themselves Jews could be divided into three main categories:

1. Those who follow Judaism.
2. Those who regard themselves as human beings that happen to be of Jewish origin.
3. Those who put their 'Jewishness' over and above all of their other traits.

Obviously, the first two categories specify a harmless group of people.

We tend to respect religious people as, generally, they are expected to be living a life inspired by their beliefs and abiding by some sort of a higher spiritual code.

We have no problem with the second category either; one cannot choose one's origin and people must be respected and treated equally regardless of their origin or their racial and ethnic belonging.

However, the third category is largely problematic. Clearly, its definition may sound inflammatory to some and yet, bizarrely enough, it is a general formulation of Chaim Weizmann's view of the Jewish identity as expressed in his famous address at the First Jewish Congress:

"There are no English, French, German or American Jews, but only Jews living in England, France, Germany or America."¹

According to Weizmann, a prominent Zionist figure, Jewishness is a primary quality. You may be a Jew who dwells in England, a Jew who plays the violin or even a Jew against Zionism but, above all else, you are a Jew. This is exactly the idea conveyed by the third category: it is all about viewing Jewishness as

the key element in one's being and any other quality as being secondary.

Early Zionists were interested in promulgating this message. For Weizmann, Jewishness is a unique quality that stops the Jew from assimilating within the nation that he is a citizen of. He will always remain an alien.

This is a line of thinking that was more than apparent in most early Zionist writings. Jabotinsky, the founder of right wing Zionism, takes it even further. He is more than firm in asserting that assimilation is impossible due to some biological conditioning. Here is what he had to say about the German Jew:

"A Jew brought up among Germans may assume German customs, German words. He may be wholly imbued with that German fluid but the nucleus of his spiritual structure will always remain Jewish, because his blood, his body, his physical racial type are Jewish." (Vladimir Jabotinsky, 'A Letter on Autonomy', 1904).

The reader may notice that these outrageous racist ideas predate Nazism. Jabotinsky was, however, not alone. Even the Marxist Ber Borochov, who refers the Jewish condition to some historical and material circumstances, suggests a remedy that is particular to Jewish people: Jewish Nationalism, in which Jews will practice some proletarian activity, namely production. As it seems, Borochov lets Jews be separated from the international proletarian revolution. Why does he do this? Because Jews are uniquely Jewish, or at least the Zionists tend to believe they are.

However, one may rightly ask whether it was the Zionists who invented this third category? In fact, it is not that way at all.

This is exactly the idea conveyed by the third category: it is all about viewing Jewishness as the key element in one's being and any other quality as being secondary

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The sayanim are basically third category Jews, people who regard themselves primarily as Jews. The sayan is a man who would betray the nation in which he is a citizen just to satisfy a bizarre notion of a clannish brotherhood

Zionism appears to be an international movement that is fuelled by the solidarity of third category subjects. To be a Zionist means to accept that, more than anything else, you are primarily a Jew.

Seemingly, Shakespeare had noticed this very pattern three hundred years earlier. Shylock, the famous moneylender in *The Merchant of Venice*, was a proper third category Jew. He clearly admits that more than anything else he is a Jew who possesses many human features and is, essentially, similar to the entire humanity.

“I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is. “If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?”²

Noticeably, according to Shylock the Jew is as vulnerable as an ordinary human being and yet he is primarily Jewish.

This is, indeed, the essence of Zionism: the Zionist is first and foremost a Jew. He cannot be just an ordinary British citizen who happens to be of a Jewish descent, he is rather a Jew who dwells in Britain. He is a Jew who speaks English, he is a Jew who gets his health services from the NHS, and he is a Jew who happens to drive on the left side of the road. He is the ultimate Other: always somewhere at the margins of, or apart from, any given human condition or human landscape.

Zionist Agents

As it seems, Shylock was a Zionist and he fitted perfectly into Weizmann’s model. He was a third category Jew, however, Shylock did not make it to Palestine. He did not engage himself in confiscating Palestinian land. He was not even an Israeli soldier.

In fact, the third category Jew does not have to move to Palestine. Apparently, dwelling in Zion is merely just one possible practice within the Zionist philosophy and, in order to become a proper Zionist, you do not have to wander. Sometimes it is actually better if you stay exactly where you are. Victor Ostrovsky, an ex-Mossad agent, made the following comments on the third category Jews:

The next day Ran S. delivered a lecture on the sayanim, a unique and important part of the Mossad’s operation. Sayanim - assistants - must be 100 percent Jewish. They live abroad, and though they are not Israeli citizens, many are reached through their relatives in

Israel. An Israeli with a relative in England, for example, might be asked to write a letter telling the person bearing the letter that he represents an organization whose main goal is to help save Jewish people in the diaspora. Could the British relative help in any way?.....There are thousands of sayanim around the world. In London alone, there are about 2,000 who are active, and another 5,000 on the list. They fulfil many different roles. A car sayan, for example, running a rental agency, could help the Mossad rent a car without having to complete the usual documentation. An apartment sayan would find accommodation without raising suspicions, a bank sayan could get you money if you needed it in the middle of the night, a doctor sayan would treat a bullet wound without reporting it to the police, and so on. The idea is to have a pool of people available when needed who can provide services but will keep quiet about them out of loyalty to the cause. They are paid only costs.³

The sayanim are basically third category Jews, people who regard themselves primarily as Jews. The sayan is a man who would betray the nation in which he is a citizen just to satisfy a bizarre notion of a clannish brotherhood.

Zionism, An International Network

We are now starting to realise that Zionism should not be seen merely as a nationalist movement with a clear geographical aspiration. It is not a colonial movement with an interest in Palestine. Zionism appears to be an international movement that is fuelled by the solidarity of third category subjects. To be a Zionist means to accept that, more than anything else, you are primarily a Jew.

Ostrovsky continues:

You have at your disposal a non-risk recruitment system that actually gives you a pool of millions of Jewish people to tap from outside your own borders. It’s much easier to operate with what is available on the spot, and sayanim offer incredible practical support everywhere....

Now one might suggest that, for example, Great Britain could use a similar system and recruit among WASPS around the world. But they don't, because they can't. It takes an extraordinary degree of racial solidarity and racial motivation to develop and maintain such a "non-risk recruitment system" and see to it that it works properly. Remember, all of these activities are spying, with long prison sentences if caught. Americans of English, Irish and Italian ancestry may have some residual loyalties to the old "mother country." But this residue is nothing like the racial solidarity of the Jews. Such racial feelings are so strong and so pervasive among Jews that the Mossad knew in advance that their recruitment system was "non-risk." Britain, Ireland, Italy and the Vatican know better than to try to implement such a thing.⁴

Ostrovsky is talking about 'racial solidarity'; however, Jews are in fact far from being a single race. As funny as it may sound, most Palestinians are more racially Jewish than the Ashkenazi Jews.

So if it is not racial solidarity, what is it that leads the sayan to run the risk of years of imprisonment? What did Jonathan Pollard have in his mind when he clearly betrayed his country? What do those 2,000 sayanim here in London have in their minds when they betray their Queen? I assume that we are left here with one possibility: the solidarity of third category Jews who regard themselves primarily in terms of their Jewishness.

I tend to regard Ostrovsky's testimony as a very reliable report. As we know, at the time, the Israeli Government was using every possible means to stop the publication of his books. In fact, this strange Israeli activity was more than an affirmation that Ostrovsky was indeed a Mossad agent and that the story that he is telling is genuine.

In a radio interview Joseph Lapid, at the time an Israeli senior columnist, opened his heart and told the world what he thought of Ostrovsky:

"Ostrovsky is the most treacherous Jew in modern Jewish history. And he has no right to live, except if he's prepared to return to Israel and stand trial."⁵

Valerie Pringle, the journalist on the other side of the line asked Lapid:

"Do you feel it's a responsible statement to say what you've said?"

Lapid: "Oh yes, I fully believe in that. And unfortunately the Mossad cannot do it because we cannot endanger our relations with Canada. But I hope there will be a decent Jew in Canada who does it for us."

Pringle: "You hope this. You could live with his blood on your hands?"

Lapid: "Oh no. It's to...only it will not be his blood on my hands. It will be justice to a man who does the most horrible thing that any Jew can think of, and that is that he's selling out the Jewish state and the Jewish people for money to our enemies. There is absolutely nothing worse that a human being, if he can be called a human being, can do".

Lapid, later a member in Sharon's cabinet, makes it more than clear: to be a Jew is a deep commitment that goes far beyond any legal or moral order. It is far more essential than any universal ethical perception. Clearly for Lapid, Jewishness is not a spiritual stand; it is a political commitment. It is a world-view that applies to the very last Jew on this planet. As he says: the Mossad can't really kill Ostrovsky, thus, it is down to a 'decent Canadian Jew' to do the job. As is evident, a Zionist journalist is expressing here the most outrageous of views. He encourages a fellow Jew to commit a murder in the name of the Jewish brotherhood. In short, not only does Lapid affirm Ostrovsky's report about the world of sayanim, he also confirms Weizmann's view that from a Zionist point of view, there are no Canadian Jews but only Jews who live in Canada.

I think that the above leaves us with enough room to conclude that, at least in the Zionists' eyes, Jewishness is basically an international network operation. Ostrovsky calls it 'racial solidarity', I call it third category brotherhood and Weizmann calls it Zionism. But it all means the very same thing. It is all about commitment, a global agenda that pools more and more Jews into an obscure, dangerous fellowship. Apparently, Zionism is not about Israel. Israel is just a colony, a territorial asset violently maintained by a mission force composed of third category Jews. In fact, there is no geographical centre to the Zionist endeavour. It is hard to determine where the centre of Zionist decision-making is. Is it in Jerusalem? In the Knesset? In

As funny as it may sound, most Palestinians are more racially Jewish than the Ashkenazi Jews

The Palestinians, for instance, are not just the victims of the Israeli occupation; they are rather the victims of third category Jews who decided to transform Palestine into a Jewish national bunker

Sharon's cabinet? In the Mossad? Or maybe in the ADL offices in America? It might as well be somewhere in Wall Street! Who knows!

But then, it is of course more than possible that there is no decision making process at all. The beauty of a network operative system is that not a single operator within the network is fully familiar with the network but is only aware of his personal role within it. This is probably the biggest strength of the Zionist movement.

Looking at Zionism as a global network operation would determine a major shift in our perspective of current world affairs.

The Palestinians, for instance, are not just the victims of the Israeli occupation; they are rather the victims of third category Jews who decided to transform Palestine into a Jewish national bunker. The Iraqis are better seen as the victims of the those third category Jews who decided to transform the American army into a Jewish mission force. The Muslim world should be seen as a subject to some neo-conservative third category tendency to make Nathan Sharansky's Democratic ideology into the new American Bible for the third world.

It is pretty depressing indeed.

The Jewish Humanist

The Palestinian activist Reem Abdehadi, when asked for her opinion about Jewish anti Zionist campaigners, said sarcastically: "they are very nice, all fifteen of them..."

We must admit that not many Jews are there to fight against Zionism. However, amongst those few who engage themselves in this battle we find some people who insist upon doing so under the Jewish banner, e.g. Jews Against Zionism, Jews for Justice for Palestinians, etc.

While writing this paper I have started to ask myself what category those Jewish leftist groups belong to.

Clearly, they do not fit into the first category. Jewish left is a 'religious' atheist tendency. They really do not like to involve God in politics or in anything else. In most cases they are hostile to Judaism and even to those Orthodox Jews who happen to stand up to Zionism, but it isn't only Judaism that they dislike. They aren't fond of Islam or Christianity either. Those amongst them who endorse the idea of a one state solution insist that the future Palestine must be 'a secular' and a democratic state'.

I am not in any position to suggest what the future Palestine is going to be, however, I

would try to propose that it must be down to the citizens of this future state to decide what type of kingdom they prefer to live in.

Those Jewish leftists fail to fit into the second category as well. They do not regard themselves as ordinary humanists who happen to be of Jewish descent. If they were, they would simply join the Palestinian Solidarity movement like other Jews who prefer to act mainly as humanists. Instead, they form some exclusive political cells that allow them to operate under the Jewish banner.

Consequently, we must admit that they all belong to the third category. In fact, they prefer to regard themselves as 'Jews who hold some leftist views'. Clearly, amongst those groups you will find some wonderful people who genuinely believe that Zionism is wrong, that Zionism is racist and nationalist. But, in fact, these people are themselves operating as third category Jews as they all act politically under a Jewish banner. In practical terms, they all follow Weizmann's school, rather than being Humanists who happen to be Jewish (second category) they are Jews who happen to be Humanists.

Since acting politically under a Jewish banner is in fact the very definition of Zionism, it is reasonable to deduce that all Jewish left activity is in practice not more than a form of left Zionism. One may ask whether it is really possible to be a left Zionist? Is there left and right in a network group that is set primarily on a racial category and clannish brotherhood?

The answer is no: there is no left and right within Zionism but rather different right wing political apparatuses. Some Zionist political calls are adopting the shape of left discourse. I had noticed, for instance, that Jewish Marxists insist upon calling each other comrade. In fact, they are mainly engaged in Marxist verbal rituals. But, apparently, this isn't enough. Ideology is more than a mere language game. In reality, those Jewish left clubs are operating as the body shield of the third category identity. This may explain the fact that as far as the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign is concerned, those groups are primarily engaged in guarding some third category Jewish interests that have very little to do with the Palestinians and their daily misery.

To be more precise, those Jewish left groups are engaged mainly in searching for

anti-Semites, Holocaust deniers and Jew haters. Somehow, they always find them amongst the most active and devoted second category Jews. As it seems, to me at least, for these Jewish sporadic cells Palestinian solidarity is just another instrument to draw attention to the myth of Jewish humanism.

I will try to be very clear and transparent here: there is no Jewish secular humanism. No doubt many humanists happen to be Jewish and yet there is not a single Jewish secular humanist theorem or text.⁶ This is mainly because Jewish secularity is not a philosophical position; it is rather a complete abandonment of God. Jewish secularity is a form of ethnicity based merely on some exclusive tendencies and a vague collective memory of some ritual heritage.

So, is there a Jewish Conspiracy to run the world?

Not really. First it must be clear that first and second category Jews have nothing to do with all the above. For first category Jews, being Jewish means practicing Judaism. To follow a spiritual call and to obey God's law. As we know, Zionism is still far from being popular amongst ultra orthodox Rabbis. However, I must admit that some would rightly argue that following the teaching of the Talmudic law many religious Jews do regard themselves as a chosen category. For me, this simply means that they fall into the third category rather than the first one. This probably applies to the orthodox sects that allied with Zionism throughout the course of time.

The second category Jews have no intention of taking part in any global Jewish networking. They regard themselves as ordinary and liberated human beings with no special privilege. Amongst the second category Jews we find the most enlightening emancipated humanists, those very great intellects that contributed to 20th century liberal and humanist thinking. As we all know, hardly any of them came from Israel or a Zionist faction.

When it comes to the third category, we are faced with a slight problem. I tend to believe that the third category Jews are mutually acting together. But then, whether they are fully aware of it or not is a big question. Throughout the years they have formed a network that operates as a global Zionist body shield. They simply act in harmony and protect each other. Even when they fight against one another, they depict an image of pluralism. I

think that this is the essence of Zionism's miraculous success.

A week ago I read a brilliant insight by Rowan Berkeley on Peacepalestine website. Rowan, a Londoner whom I know vaguely, had been flirting in the past with the idea of becoming a Jew. In the following comment he is aiming to explain the common Jewish take on Zionism. In fact, without realising it, he describes the third category tactic:

First they ask, do you believe that (Jewish) Nationalism is a Good Thing, or a Bad Thing?

If you say it is a Good Thing, they will direct you to the Jewish Right, which will tell you that Jews have as much of a right to be nationalistic as anybody else does.

If you say it is a Bad Thing, they will direct you to the Jewish Left, which will tell you that you are not allowed to protest against Zionism on any basis other than Marxist or Anarchist Proletarian Internationalism – thus disqualifying almost all the actually existing anti-Zionist movements in the Arab world.

They can get away with this ideological shell game because each individual discursive arena is controlled by one or another Jewish faction.⁷

I believe that Rowan's insight hits the nail right on the head: he is absolutely correct. But then, unlike Rowan, I do believe that Jews Against Zionism are genuine. They simply fight Zionism without realising that they themselves are Zionists and without realising that they are the most orthodox followers of Weizmann's school. If they are really interested in bringing Zionism down, their tactics are obviously wrong.

I wrote to some of them about the subject before, I have seen some discussion about my views in many different Jewish left circles and, yet, I have never come across any argumentative response from any of those sporadic exclusive groups. Rather than being confronted with my thoughts, they are solely engaged in labelling.

I have already been: 'a self hating Jew', 'a Christian fundamentalist', 'a Holocaust denier', 'an apologist for Holocaust deniers', 'a neo-nazi', 'a Stalinist', 'a Zionist agent', 'an anti-Semite' and many more.

Two weeks ago, a small group of Jewish leftists picketed against me in front of a Marxist bookshop. I tried to write to

them arguing that if Palestine is on top of one's agenda, a protest in front of the Israeli embassy or any other third category Jewish institute would be far more effective. They dismissed my call.

I am fully aware of the fact that crucifying me and burning my books is no doubt a proper third category practice but, unfortunately, it isn't going to help the Palestinian at the checkpoint. It isn't going to help the millions of refugees who have been living for almost six decades without elementary rights.

Israel is an inhuman political setup and we therefore must fight it as human beings rather than as sporadic ethnic or religious groups.

Notes

1. (Chaim Weizman, First Zionist Congress 1897).
2. (A3.S1.L53-60, The Merchant of Venice, William Shakespeare).
3. "By Way of Deception", Victor Ostrovsky, St. Martin's, 1990 pg 86-7
4. Ibid pg 87
5. <http://www.washington-report.org/backissues/0195/9501017.htm>
6. If anything, Zionism in its early days was aiming towards the establishment of such a philosophy, a form of Jewish secular ethics. Obviously such an attempt was doomed to failure. Just because Zionism is unethical by definition, being that it engages in the continual ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinian people.
7. <http://peacepalestine.blogspot.com/>



Information on Palestine

www.aqsa.org.uk

Journal – Referenced articles from previous issues of Al Aqsa.

Newsletter – Quarterly printed by Friends of Al Aqsa.

Publications – History of al Masjidul Aqsa and Guide to al Masjidul Aqsa.

Flyers – On Jerusalem, Refugees, al Masjidul Aqsa, UN Resolutions and Much More.

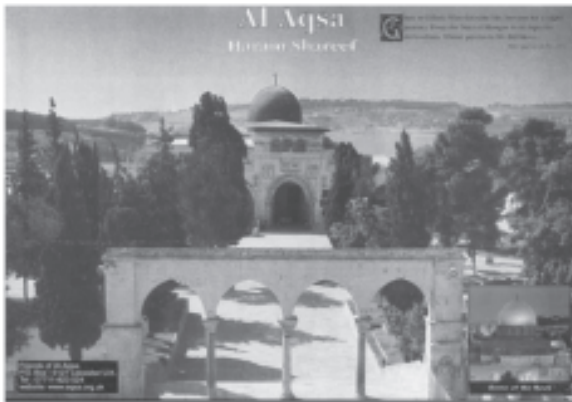
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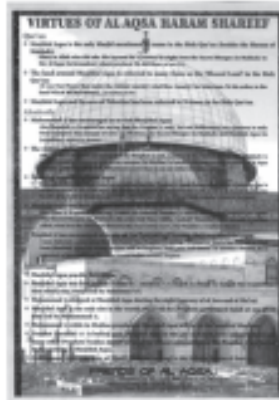
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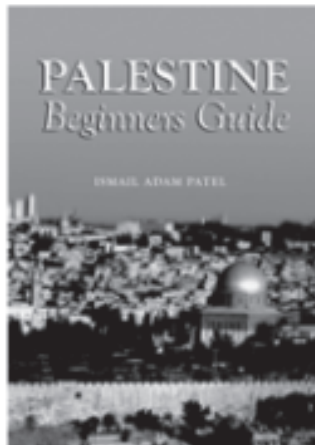
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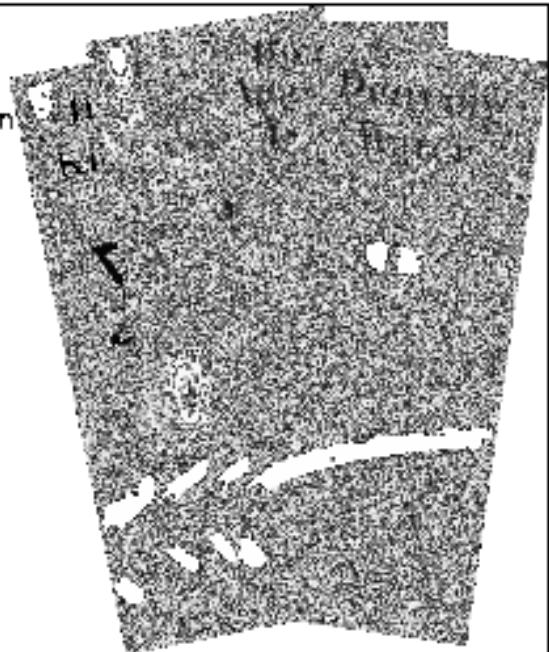
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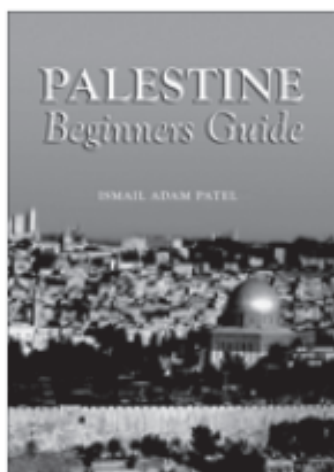
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Palestine Beginner's Guide

BY ISMAIL ADAM PATEL*, Al-Aqsa Publishers (2005), ISBN 0953653013 (PB), 234 Pp, £9.95



Palestine *Beginner's Guide* is intended to be a simple history of the Holy Land which is so fiercely contested today in a battle ground of faith-based sectarianism. It chronologically traces back to the claims made on the land by all three monotheistic faiths, spanning the period from 6,000BC to 2004. While the history of Palestine is full of conflicting stories based on different scriptures and religious beliefs, Ismail Patel has concentrated on the facts arising from modern day findings on historic civilisations, verses from the Bible and the Qur'an for narratives of the ancient, Islamic traditions for relaying the stories of prophets, and independent facts for the contemporary issues arising from the creation of Israel and the occupation of Palestinian land.

The book is divided into 32 short chapters, briefly and succinctly looking at the major aspects and influences in the history of Palestine from 6,000BC to the 19th Century in the first 10 Chapters; covering the ancient civilisations and superpowers, the Christian era, the Islamic era, the Crusades, the Mongol Invasion, the Mamluk period and the Ottoman Empire. The remainder of the book is concerned with the Zionist movement, the establishment of Israel and the Occupation.

The author sets out the events that eventually culminated in the birth of Israel, clarifying the role of the British in promising Palestine to the persecuted Jewish people of Europe and the UN accomplice in this. The founding of the Zionist movement and its somewhat secular ideology is explained and the major players in the movement, including Herzl, Weizmann and Lionel de Rothschild, are placed in their respective roles.

Israel's birth was not a spontaneous event in 1948, but a long thought out process spanning the first half of the 20th century. The book traces the gradual migration of Jewish people to Palestine and the build up of resources for the eventual war of 1947-1948, for which the Arab natives were very ill prepared both in combat skills and weaponry. This state of affairs has persisted to this day for the Palestinian resistance.

The key to Zionist domination in Palestine was the fleeing of the native population and mass executions, such as the symbolic Deir Yassin massacre, and these are discussed to explain why the Palestinians fled their homes in panic and fear for their lives. Ismail Patel suggests that this was a deliberate ploy adopted to frighten the natives into leaving their homes and taking flight, not the oft-repeated myth that Palestinians fled their homes of their own accord with the encouragement of Arab leaders. To combat this 'official Israeli account', a number of well-documented massacres are listed and explained.

The book then moves to the political strategies adopted during Israel's early years, its involvement in terrorism against Western states and its continuous expansionist ideologies. The major power shift in the Middle East was set in motion by the Israeli-Arab 6 Day War, after which Israel began its occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai Peninsular, the Golan Heights and parts of Southern Lebanon. It was following this event that the UN Resolutions against Israel began in earnest, corresponding to Israel's breaches of International Laws.

The book then goes on to cover other major events including the Yom Kippur War, the war on Lebanon and the first and second Intifadas and the failed peace processes. Ismail Patel uncovers some mistaken beliefs about the Peace Processes, such as the reality of 'Barak's Generous Offer' and the reason Yasser Arafat rejected it. The use of maps and images help the reader to understand the fallacy of the Israeli offer and the continued Palestinian resistance against yet more of their homeland being conceded.

The book concludes with a list of facts regarding Palestinian life under occupation, including a refugee count; prison populations, land confiscations and UN Resolutions against Israel.

With over 100 images and 50 maps, the book is an easy read for people of all ages providing easy reference for teachers and researchers due to the simplified accounts of significant events. Although some images are poor in quality, the overall effects are not lost and the wealth of facts offered depicts an immense depth of knowledge. The straightforward language also aids understanding of a long and sometimes complex history for the universally accepted Holy Land; ideal for beginners.

University of Nottingham

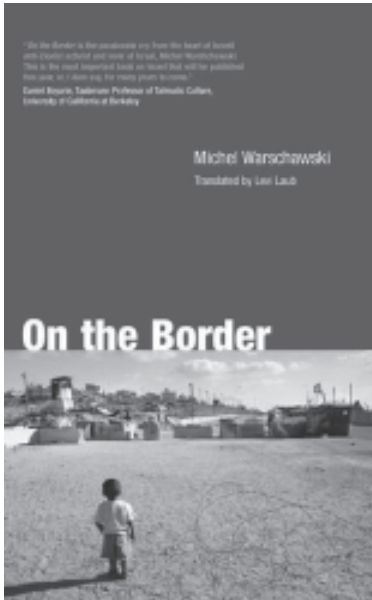
Rajnaara Akhtar**

* Ismail Adam Patel is a writer, speaker, and activist on the question of Palestine and has contributed to the debate since founding the Friends of Al-Aqsa organisation in 1997. His attachment to Palestine and Jerusalem stems from first hand witness of the occupation and its resultant destruction of the Palestinian way of life.

** Rajnaara Akhtar is a researcher with Friends of Al-Aqsa, and a Masters student in Human Rights Law at the University of Nottingham.

On the Border

BY MICHEL WARSCHAWSKI*, Pluto Press (2005), ISBN 0 7453 2325 1, 240pp, £14.99.



The border that surrounds Israel on all sides captivates Warschawski. His own experience on the Franco-German border in Strasbourg has trained him in the nuances of border living. The border evokes a sentimental affection on the part of most Israelis who see their country as a small oasis in a sea of Arab 'Otherness'. The Author, in keeping with his own ultra-leftist leanings, draws on reflections that he has had with Israel's Jewish Arab minority, a people not often portrayed in the Israeli media with sympathy. Warschawski's reflections on Jerusalem are also very illuminating. He loves the city precisely because it often reflects the opposite of his own identity as an Ashkenazi Jew, albeit a secular one. As a young theological student in Jerusalem under the dispensation of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the Author grows to love Jerusalem much as any long-term resident of Jerusalem, Jew or Arab might feel.

The Author dedicates considerable space to a description of the Alternative Information Centre; the NGO set up by him and other likeminded Israeli and Palestinian activists to campaign for withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories and the establishment of a legitimate Palestinian state. The Author has the distinction of being a non-academic writer who can be said to cater for academic audiences as well. Undoubtedly, his many years of research activities as part of the Marxist -NGO that he headed has

helped to hone his academic skills. For Warschawski, the border was a place of confrontation, "a sinister place of domination and of terror". (Intro. p.17). He took pride in being what he called a border runner, implying that he preferred to live in the twilight zone between Israel and Palestine, but not necessarily in this order alone as the border could run within the state of Israel itself, between different groups and sects, religious and secular, Ashkenazi (Jews of western origin) and Sephardim (those of Eastern, predominantly Arabic origin). The Author mentions his strong 'résistance' credentials having had a father who fought in the French Marquis. He describes how he was converted to the radical pacifist (within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict) ideology of Marxist-Socialist internationalism while a student at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Warschawski takes special pains in the first part of this book to blame all that has happened in Israel/Palestine, post 2000, the outbreak of the al-Aqsa Intifada and the rapid expansion of the settlements coupled with the wanton pre-mediated destruction of the Palestinian Authority and its institutions that culminated in the massacres of Jenin and Nablus, on a clique of former and serving Generals of the Israeli Army led by the arch-villain 'butcher of Beirut', Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

He quotes from various Israeli sociologists and political philosophers to show that the Zionist endeavour as they understood it and the Zionism of the founders of the Israeli state was now in its death-throes.

He also documents the development of Matzpen, the revolutionary socialist movement that he and his fellow comrades had formed. This movement advocated a single state for both Jews and Arabs and thus was in opposition to the publicly acknowledged position of even the Israeli communist party (PCI). Warschawski's book serves an important purpose by bringing to light the work that Matzpen carried on from the 1960s to the present time; that does not get much reference in any standard work on Israeli political movements. The Author makes some startlingly controversial statements, like in p. 63, he states that it's almost impossible for Israeli's and Palestinian's to form real friendships. This is a peculiar statement given the Author's background as a known ultra-liberal and anti-Zionist internationalist. One is led to wonder whether the Zionist virus of divisiveness has not unknowingly entered its most committed opponent without him being aware of it at all.

The Author continually refers to a border, that border might be one between Israel and Palestine or between different segments within the state. The Author states quite clearly in his book that there was much evidence to doubt that the Oslo accords would be carried out in all good faith as the Palestinians hoped that it would be. He quotes

* MICHEL WARSCHAWSKI is director of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem, an Israeli-Palestinian NGO that serves to promote cooperation and co-habitation between Palestinian and Israeli societies and the simultaneous mitigation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is a movement dedicated to the de-Zionisation of Israel and the integration of the state of Israel into the greater Middle East. His books include *Israel-Palestine: le défi binational* and an award-winning memoir, *Sur la frontière*. The Author is a native French as well as Hebrew speaker and so we must credit the impact of the book on the English speaking world to the excellent translator, Levi Laub. The Author is a well-known Israeli anti-Zionist activist who was born in France and migrated to Israel at the age of 16 for the purposes of Jewish theological education. He however later turns against his theological upbringing and joins the Israeli left, becoming a passionate advocate of peace with the Palestinians and a determined critic of the Zionist lobby in Israel that dominates the political discourse in that country.

in particular from Rabin to show that the General was not to be trusted when he signed the Oslo Accords with the PLO. (p.146) Again the Author refers to the Camp David farce that was created by the right-wing media to discredit the Palestinians and the whole left oriented peace establishment. (p.152). This resulted in the collapse of the whole peace camp and propelled the state of Israel into the state of war that is prevalent today. The Author's relationship with his wife Lea Tsemel is very awe-inspiring, one wonders at the verve of such a woman, and the sacrifices necessary to stay married together, especially in the light of the experiences detailed by the Author vis-à-vis his children in the Israeli state.

The Author has divided the book into three sections based on his personal experiences in the field of the peace movement in Israel. He exposes the new wall of separation being built between the Israelis and the Palestinians for what it really is, namely a fence that's main purpose is to create walls of hatred and increased xenophobia between Jew and Arab. He goes on to quote Ehud Barak who makes a very racist statement that, 'we are a villa in the jungle', meaning off-course that the Israelis alone were civilised in a flood of Arab barbarism (intro. p.10).

Warschawski goes on to detail his experiences of meeting up with Palestinian as well as other leftist activists from the Arab as well as European worlds. One gets an idea of how clandestine such meetings had to be in those days, in striking contrast to the present day when anti-globalisation and anti-establishment behaviour is acceptable political practise. The first part of the book is actually a study of the inherent contradictions within Israeli society that have come to the open during recent decades in spite of the best efforts of the Israeli authorities to gloss over them.

The second part of the book titled 'cracks' is about the above-mentioned contradictions that surfaced in the late 1970s and 1980s. He deals in detail with the Israeli 'refuseniks', as they are known now, those who refused to fight in Lebanon and later in the Occupied Territories. He encloses much information on this issue from previous wars, in particular the 1967 war, as well as the events following the Yom Kippur war, the Lebanon war and the Intifada. The Author gives us insight into the minds of the refuseniks, the reasons for their refusal to serve in the Army, etc. He goes into some detail about his own necessity to serve in the Army, given the known 'dissident' stand that he has adopted, which in turn reflected the contradictions inherent in Israeli society and the necessity for even dissidents to serve in the institutions against which they fought. Moreover, this part of the book reveals the workings of the Israeli internal secret service agency, the 'Shin Beth'. He details the methods of interrogation followed by the Shin Beth against the Author in opposition

to the method followed by them against Palestinian activists as well as the sentence finally handed down to him by an Israeli court that saw 'Mikado' as more important to be punished, being an Israeli in league with the 'enemy' (the Arab-Palestinians).

The Author sincerely prays that a time will come when the Israeli state will realise the utter futility of building 25 foot walls and trying to insulate themselves from their surroundings when the actual way forward would be to engage courageously with the 'enemy', even at the cost of certain fondly held 'myths' of national reconstruction.

The third part of the book, moreover reflects on the internal conflict taking place within the state of Israel between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim, between those who want to maintain their privileges within the state of Israel and those who now form a majority, but are curtailed from realizing the full extent of power and privileges in their own country. These people, so-called 'Oriental Jews', often see themselves as the 'Palestinians' of Israel. Their 'Arabness' was often a source of contempt for the Israelis of European origin.

To conclude, the Author believes in a world without borders. The Israelis must see through the artificially created border between them and the Palestinians. As he states "It is only by rediscovering its Jewish roots and opening itself up to the Arab dimension of its identity and its environment that Israeli society will be able at last to live normally and plan the future of its children with serenity." (P.214).

This book, more than any thing else, is meant to act as an encouragement to the peace movement that had been sabotaged by the hawks in the Israeli establishment, post-Barak and Sharon. In fact, the Author ends his introduction to the book with an encouraging reminder that there are thousands of peace activists on both sides of the borders that were willing to fight for liberty and brotherhood. (Intro. p.15) These people were more than enough, in the Author's opinion, to keep the flag flying. Michel Warschawski's book fills an important hole in the literature about joint Israeli-Palestinian peace movements. The reviewer himself, despite a decade spent in analysing Arab-Israeli affairs, had never heard of 'Matzpen' until reading this book. This reflects the veritable lack of information and material on the peace movements outside the region, where much more attention is spent analysing the negative aspects of the conflict than debating positive movements like that detailed above. This memoir will hopefully go a long way towards filling that gap and motivating many interested young people to search out the true way forward as far as Arab-Israeli reconciliation is concerned.

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Palestine & Palestinians: Guidebook

Published by the Alternative Tourism Group (Beit Sahour, 2005), 436 Pp. & Index & xxviii plates, ISBN 9950319013, £22



During the first Intifada the city of Beit Sahour made a reputation for itself by the creative methods it used to resist Israeli occupation' (p.206). This guidebook illustrates that spirit: it was produced by the Alternative Tourism Group (ATG), a Palestinian NGO based in Beit Sahour near Bethlehem which was founded as a non-profit tourist agency in 1995. To quote the book's cover, the ATG 'specialises in tours that present a critical look at the history, culture and politics of Palestine and its complex relationship with Israel'. Their approach seeks to move away from traditional tourism towards what is characterised (p.5) as 'cultural tourism, which shifts the emphasis from merely visiting sites with a purely historical and impersonal narrative to creating opportunities for establishing contact between visitors and the local population'. The ATG's own website (www.atg.ps) presents *Palestine and Palestinians* as 'the first comprehensive Palestinian guidebook to Palestine [...] In defiance of, and precisely because of, the current situation, it encourages people to come to Palestine and invites them to enjoy discovering many unknown facts about Palestine and the Palestinians. Furthermore, it is an important reference for anyone who wants to know more about Palestine, its culture, history or the situation today. The book marks an important turning-point in presenting Palestine fully to potential visitors instead of relegating it to a small section or an abbreviated chapter at the end of a guide to the area.'

This, in short, is no ordinary guidebook. Judged purely as such it is of a high standard and makes a very good read - a polished work, attractively produced and printed (in Ramallah) with plentiful and often striking illustrations, informative, detailed and thoroughly up-to-date (the latest references are to January 2005, pp.206, 417). But it is so much more than a standard guidebook with the usual information on the sites and landscapes of any tourist destination, rather like a historical document on everyday life in contemporary Palestine. It is thus in the nature of a manifesto and an act of defiance on the part of a people under military occupation who are still denied a state of their own, many of them refugees abroad or in their own country. To have produced such a work in these

circumstances is a remarkable achievement for which the authors deserve the highest credit.

As the title implies, the perspective throughout is deliberately Palestinian and thus a challenge to the dominant Israeli viewpoint. The largest section of the book, Itineraries (pp.80-404), organises the coverage in the sequence: Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Territories of '48 (with special emphasis on those areas which still have a significant Palestinian population), and the Occupied Syrian Golan. Palestinians figure prominently in the text and illustrations, whether as notable figures of the past and present (cf. the list of biographies, p.12), or as ordinary people of every age and in every walk of life. By contrast, the face of Israel is predominantly military, whether the ubiquitous soldiers (no less than fifteen different pictures) or the settlements strategically placed on hilltops (half a dozen pictures). The one Israeli personality shown in a photo is Mordechai Vanunu (p.390), while Ariel Sharon only appears in a cartoon (p.73). Specific mention is made of those Israeli individuals and organisations who have consistently championed Palestinian rights, such as Uri Avnery (p.40, in relation to Yasser Arafat), or the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD; pp.167f. 209). Their writings and web sites figure prominently in the bibliographical section (pp.431-6).

A theme that runs through the book is the constant tension between normal and abnormal conditions, as the Palestinians struggle to maintain a normal life despite impossible circumstances. The sites and curiosities that attract tourists for their monuments or historical associations receive full treatment in their own right, but they are set in the inescapable context of the occupation. The historical perspective stretches back to the remote past of biblical and ancient times, but forward also to the violent and shifting present. The Nakba and its fateful sequels obtrude at every point. The hideous Wall (pp.72f., 213, 227f.; pl.XI) has itself become a tourist attraction (p.137). Yet as the preface says (p.6) 'in the midst of the conflict you will discover a truly warm and hospitable people inhabiting a fascinating and significant country, ingeniously finding ways to live in the midst of conflict'. At Hebron, 'in spite of the tense situation, foreign tourists receive as warm a welcome here as in all other Palestinian cities' (p.219).

A future edition might consider some small improvements to enhance the book's usefulness and facilitate reference: a list of illustrations, a general synoptic map showing all the main places mentioned, more internal cross-referencing, and a fuller index. The English version generally reads well (the book first came out in French in 2003), though a few oddities should be corrected (e.g. change 'Ptolemites' on pp.295, 359, 378 to 'Ptolemies'; for 'anaesthetic' on p.386 substitute e.g. 'unsightly'). One misses a reference in the bibliography (p.434) to Ghada Karmi's remarkable personal narrative, *In Search of Fatima. A Palestinian Story* (London, Verso, 2002).

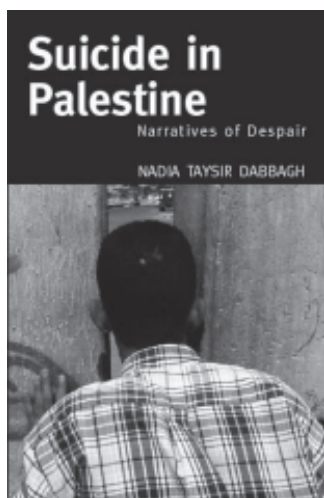
The book deserves to be widely known and read, not least by the many Israelis who remain blind to the realities of Palestinian life. For those who do not know Palestine and the Palestinians it will be an eye-opener and an encouragement to go and visit the country and see for themselves.

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Suicide in Palestine – Narratives of Despair

BY NADIA TAYSIR DABBAGH, Hurst (2005), ISBN 1566566037, 265pp, £16.95



A distinction is made at the very outset in the book between suicide, which is a private act of despair and forbidden in Islam, and Martyrdom resulting from acts of Jihad and which is considered an Islamic duty. It is important to bear this in mind as the book, as the title suggests, discusses the act of suicide and attempted suicide in Palestine with reasons stemming from the feeling of despair.

The book is not about suicide bombers although this relatively modern phenomenon is discussed in the political and social context of Palestine. The book offers an insight into whether suicide itself within Palestine is actually a phenomenon. The private and public sphere is discussed as well as the reluctance of people to admit they have attempted suicide or that their family member has committed suicide. It also considers the cultural and religious view of suicide and how it is considered that Muslims should not feel despair as Islam is a religion of hope. The issue of suicide has slowly moved with time into the public arena. It is not necessarily that more people commit or attempt to commit suicide now; rather it is simply reported and discussed more.

The author used her PhD thesis as a basis for the book, which focuses on the 'suicide phenomena' in Palestinian society. The book is more in the tone of a report with discussions and individual case studies pertaining to reasons giving rise to private acts of suicide. The book is interesting, albeit upsetting because of the subject matter, and it attempts to explain suicidal behaviour within its social, economic and political context. The only solution that is offered is that it is these very contexts that need to be addressed if people are to stop feeling despair.

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