
DIALOGUE

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE**

IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR THE ONE STATE SOLUTION

END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW AND FRENCH

Appeal to an international conference

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Presentation

At the moment this issue of the DIALOGUE review is published, an unprecedented summit has just met in Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt under the aegis of the US State Department. Are the violent fights between the militias in power in the territories occupied since 1967 by the Israeli army, and especially in the Gaza Strip, not the outcome of past accords? Were the seeds of the present situation not contained in them from the very onset? We intend to propose the widest discussion on the root cause of this chaos and on the method to be implemented to work out a democratic solution for all the peoples. Is the only solution to achieve peace across the entire region not the immediate ending of Israeli military occupation, the right of refugees to return to the towns and villages where they originated from? Is the solution not putting an end to the partition of historical Palestine, setting up a single State that would guarantee its Arab and Jewish components the recognition of equal rights?

In the present issue of DIALOGUE, you can read the international appeal that has just been launched to organise a conference during the first quarter of 2008, i.e. a pivotal period between the commemoration of two events: November 29th 1947, the date when the partition of Palestine under mandate was voted by the United Nations, which marks the beginning of Nakba which continued till after May 14th 1948, the date when the Hebrew State was proclaimed; the intent then was – and still remains – to put an end to any Arab presence on the land of Palestine. The coming issues of DIALOGUE will publish the first contributions to the discussion that will be sent by the endorsers of the appeal.

This issue of DIALOGUE publishes two articles on the situation of Palestinian refugees. For 60 years Palestinian refugees have been forced to live in the most insecure conditions; they are under direct threat of extermination in Iraq. In Lebanon, because of the American political agenda geared on achieving the dismantlement of the nation – just as of any other State or nation in the region – Palestinian refugees find themselves on the front line of a conflict that recalls the worst moments of the civil war. Iraq, Lebanon, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip what other solution than the right to return for these hundreds of thousand women, men and children?

In the present issue, you can also read the article by Miko Peled, which is part of this discussion as he considers that: *“Only once the occupation is dismantled and the continuous threat of Israeli attacks is lifted, can Israelis and Palestinians work together and resolve the conflict peacefully.(.) Dismantling the PA and establishing a democratic, secular state in all of Israeli/Palestine that will protect the national rights of all its citizens and will focus on human rights.”* We are also publishing an article by Georges Bisharat, published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* showing how crucially important Nakba is in Palestinian collective memory. Though it was written before Tony Blair was appointed as the US “government official” in the Middle East, the article by Avi Shlaim sheds a sharp light on what such a choice means. Finally, we propose to the discussion the contribution of a reader on the correspondence and similarities between South-African apartheid and the Israeli policy against the Palestinian people.

Support the appeal to the international conference organised by DIALOGUE!

The editorial board.

Palestine : Appeal to an international conference

2007 marks 60 years since the UN voted in favour of the partition of Palestine.

At the same time as the 60th anniversary of the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1947-8 is being commemorated, reminding us of the partition of Palestine that saw hundreds of thousands of Palestinians driven from their lands and villages, the 40,000 refugees of the Nahr el-Bared camp are under fire from the Lebanese army as it pursues its conflict with the Fatah el Islam group.

Once again, the Palestinian refugees are being forced to flee and seek refuge in other camps. Is this not a clear reminder of the scenes that took place in 1948, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven from their homes to become refugees?

Since Palestine was partitioned in 1947-8, there has been nothing but one war after another, one wave of repression after another, a succession of killings and cease-fires, and yet more explosions.

How is it possible for millions of children, women and men to live like this, facing the permanent threat of death? For decades, we have heard talk of peace, of peace-plans, of a route-map for two states to co-exist. But what has been the result? Yet more dead and wounded everywhere we look. How can this go on?

Is the solution supposed to lie in building a wall that destroys villages and crops in its wake, splitting up hundreds of thousands of people, confiscating their lands and creating new refugees?

Is the solution supposed to lie in the 75 permanent checkpoints, 150 temporary barriers and 400 roadblocks that exist in the West Bank? Is the solution supposed to lie in the fact that 75 percent of the Palestinian population are refugees or displaced persons, creating a diaspora of 6,400,000 people?

Is the solution supposed to lie in the fact that within the 1948 borders, the number of people living below the poverty threshold has increased from 1.1 million in 2000 to 1.6 million in 2005, while unemployment benefits have been reduced by 47 percent?

Is the solution supposed to lie in the pursuit of all those “peace” policies that have simply resulted in an increasing number of conflicts?

For our part, we think that the broadest possible discussion should take place, so that we can all contribute, together, to the search for a solution. We must debate all of these questions freely, without any preconditions.

As part of that discussion, we submit this question: For peace to be re-established, is there any path other than that of the constitution of a single state covering the whole territory of Palestine, a free, secular and democratic state that will guarantee equal rights for all its citizens, whether Arab or Jewish? And to achieve this, is it not necessary to guarantee the right of return for all Palestinian refugees?

We put this question forward because it involves the future of millions upon millions of human beings.

This is why we propose that an International Conference be held in the first quarter of 2008, 60 years after the Nakba, to discuss these questions and to define a perspective that is in keeping with the demands of peace and democracy.

Daniel Gluckstein Review Dialogue
Salah Salah Chairman of refugees standing
committee - Palestinian National Council

Initial endorsers:

ALGÉRIA : **Hacène Djemam**, General Secretary International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU); **Louisa Hanoune**, General Secretary Workers Party ; **Mahieddine Khelifa**, lawyer ; **Tahar Ouettar**, writer ; **Ramdane Taazibt**, vice president of the National Popular Assembly.

BRAZIL : **Misa Boitto**, member of the Workers party 's executive committee State of Sao Paulo, deputy member of the Workers Party's National executive committee; **Julio Turra**, member CUT national executive committee .

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A Letter from Lebanon

by Salah Salah (28.05.07)

Dear Friends. Thanks to you all especially those who phoned or sent emails to express their solidarity and how much they are worry about what is going on in Nahr El Barid Camp.

It started when terrorists belonging to Fatah El Islam attacked the Check points of the Lebanese military forces that are based around the camp. The Lebanese forces were not expecting this attack, so, many soldiers (27) were killed, 14 of them were slayed by knives, because they were not in service, going or coming back from their vacation.

The reaction of the army would be acceptable and reasonable against the terrorists of FI, but instead of that, it was against the Palestinians in the camp. The Lebanese army cannonaded to all directions in the camp, causing much damage in the houses, taking in consideration that the buildings in the camp are not strong, very close to each other, and crowded with the inhabitants.

The bombardment continued for two days everywhere in the camp, where no there are shelters. The buildings in the northern part (which is proximately 20% of the camp area) has been completely destroyed. No one can give an exact figure about how many had been killed or injured, (estimate 430 injured 14 killed). Many corpses are still under the heap. There are, almost 40 thousand living in the camp, not less that 60% percent of them had left to safe places mainly to El Baddawi Camp, the others who are still there don't have electricity, no clean water, no food, no first aids, etc...

They are facing real difficulties. The Lebanese army check points at the entrances of the camp encourage everyone to leave the camp, but none is allowed to enter. They permitted once (Tuesday) to UNRWA tracks carrying food but it was bombarded, and UNRWA never repeated sending anything even though there is a truce. Hardly the International Red Cross

(IRC) permitted some times to enter ambulances and not enough quantity of bread, water and medicine.

I tried many times on Wednesday to enter Nahr El Barid Camp, but no way. Then I passed a long time with the displaced that crowded in the schools of Nahr El Barid. Can you imagine how is a camp with 15 thousand residents living in area not more than 1 km² had been doubled suddenly in two days? I heard many stories, but the most impressible is to listen and look to a young woman moving here and there complaining, crying for her 4 years lost son. Her husband still in side the camp trying to find his child, she looked for him everywhere in El Baddawi, called by loud speaker if anyone had found him, but there was no answer.

It is a disaster what is happening in Nahr El Barid, much similar to that happened and still occurs in Gaza and West Bank.

These events take place during the memorial time of the Nakba to give us a life example to what happened that year 1948 to the Palestinians to be obliged to leave their home land and become refugees.

Who are Fatah El Islam ?

There are many stories, might make you lost listening them all. So I tell you the one I believe and have information emphasize it : The leader (Ameer) of this extremist Islamic group (a Jordanian named Shakkir Absi) was a pilot officer in Fatah Intifada, pro-Syrian faction splited from Fatah Arafat 1983. He was detained by the Syrians because he was in contact with a religious order group, criticizing the Syrian regime and they put him in jail for 3 years. The prison was a good opportunity for him to get acquainted with Islamics in relation with groups in Iraq, close to Al Qaeda.

Later, after Absi being out of prison he made contact with Abu Khalid El Amli, the second

man in Fatah-Intifada, (but the strongest) and succeeded to convince him that he and a group with him want to join the military bases of Fatah Intifada and flight against the Jews under their umbrella, and gave a commitment to pay monthly installment to El Amlı. The Syrian intelligence service (Al Mokhabarat) agreed with Abu Khalid El Amlı to deal with them but: not to stay inside Syria, and not any Syrian to be with them. After this agreement Shakir and his people went to stay in a base in Al Bikaa, near the borders with Syria.

In 2006 a clash happened between them and a Lebanese patrol. One of them was killed. Then Al Amlı ordered them to move to Nahr El Barid Camp to stay in the empty offices of FI, to get benefit of all the properties and weapons which belong to them.

At the end of 2006 the Lebanese army, cooperating with militants belonging to the Palestinian factions in El Baddawi camp, arrested 4 persons were renting a house near El Baddawi trying to gain persons from the camp to be disposed to Shakir Absi.

After this event Al Amlı decided to take off the cover of his faction (FI) and advised Al Absi to leave the camp with his group. Absi considered that Al Amlı had betrayed him, so he decided to split out of FI and declare the new name Fatah El Islam and Shakir Absi their Ameer, giving themselves the right to stay in the offices of Fatah-Intifada and to dominate everything belong to FI.

The representatives of all the Palestinian factions in Lebanon held a meeting to reject this phenomenon of Fatah-Islam, and send them a delegation to tell them that they are not wished in the camp and have to leave and give back to Fatah-Intifada their offices, properties and weapons. Fatah-Islam had refused these conditions, and continued in the camp, with mysterious circumstances.

Tayar El Mostakbal (the Hariri family led Party) entered on the line of the Islamic Sunnite forces including the extremist to use them in the internal game (contradiction between Sunnites and Shiites).

Seymour Hersh and Patrick Seale wrote what was well known about the support which Tayar

El Mostakbal (Hariri) gives to the extremist Islamic terrorist organizations (including Faheh-Islam/Nahr El Barid, Jond Sham, Osbat Ansar/Ein El Helweh Camp).

People from Nahr El Barid and Ein El Helweh Camps give many examples how the terrorists of the extremists; were passing through the check points, enter the camps and go out without any problem. This why there number had been increased from almost 50 persons when they declared themselves to 200-250 now.

Tayar El Mostakbal (Hariri) adopted the extremists financed them, facilitated their movement from place to another, supported them as a part of the Sunnites to face Shiites in Lebanon.

Now, (what is happening in Nahr El Barid), notify that he is using them for other aims:

1- To involve the army in a new war against the camp; because the army concerning the inertial contradiction is in the block of the president Lahoud, covers the resistance of Hezbollah, and the leader of the army General Suleiman is one of the strong candidates to be the coming president. All these are against the wish of 14 march block.

2- To be practical step to take off the weapons from the Palestinians in the camps, and then put military check points at the entrances of all the camps to be under the army control form outside and the secret service from inside.

3- What might happen to the Palestinians in Lebanon would make more reflex actions at the Palestinians in west Bank and Gaza, which might help Israel to fulfill its plan against the Authority (NPA).

4- To give a reason to the government to say: you see, the Palestinians are trouble makers, Lebanon can't bear them any more, so they should be migrated any where (No right to return).

Expectation :

1- All the block of 14 March trying one of two alternatives:

- A. Pushing the army to enter Nahr El Barid and finish with Fatah-Islam; to kill, to arrest, to do anything to put an end to them, no matter would be the reaction in the other camps.
- B. Pushing the Palestinian factions (any of them) to finish with Fatah-Islam, from inside the camp backed by the army from out side the camp.

2- The other option that the Palestinian factions and the opponents (8 March block) prefer is to find a way to deal with Fatah-Islam peacefully with out military actions, to avoid losing more civilians and more damage, by sending them to the court or to the countries where they came from to be judged there as terrorists.

Now there is truce. The army and the terrorists are exchanging fire from time to time. Since Thursday very few Palestinians leave the camp. The majority of the public opinion believes that the army is encouraging the Palestinians to leave the camp, to be easier for him to offense Fatah-Islam without losing civilians, but a lot of damages and destructions will happen.

The ambassador of Saudi Arabia announced Thursday that his country is ready to rebuild and compensate for any demolitions.

May be the common sense of the publish opinion will be the 3rd option.

What about Social Communication Center ?

Zeidan / the director of our center SCC in Nahr El Barid and all the activists of Ajial are safe, and helping with a coalition of NGOs to relief the displaced in El Baddawi. R. and others with him went from Beirut to El Baddawi.

Any how the activists of Ajial are working in four groups:

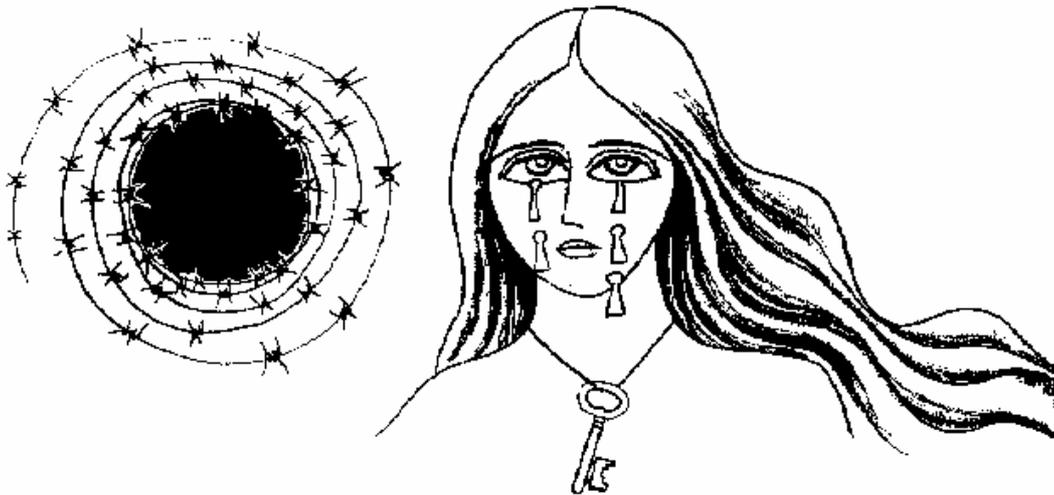
1- Zeidan and others in the group of relief. They are responsible to distribute BREAD to all the families in El Baddawi.

2- A., M., F. organizing the displaced inside the schools.

3- R., K. putting a program for the children.

4- I. and R. trying to find supply, food, finance, etc...

Hoping that I could give you an idea about what is going on in Nahr El Barid. If you need more information or you would like to give help don't hesitate to contact us or any of your Palestinians partners in Lebanon.



Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: Missing Protection

Report and Recommendations

Workshop organized by *A'idoun* Group (Syria – Lebanon),
Damascus, March 5th, 2007.

Since the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Palestinian refugees living in the country are subject to an organized campaign of violence, persecution, and repression led by militias, sectarian groups, Iraqi security forces and US occupation troops. The oppressive acts perpetrated under this campaign against Palestinians came, as mentioned in several reports prepared by relevant international organizations, in multiple forms: expulsion from residential areas and homes, imprisonment, torture and even liquidation. This tragic situation led a number of Palestinians either to flee the country and seek asylum in other countries, including neighboring ones, or find shelter in camps on the borders with neighboring countries where they live under harsh and inhuman conditions. Those who stayed in Iraq lack any personal, social and psychological safety. They live in constant fear. Despite the efforts of concerned international organizations urging Iraqi government to provide proper protection to Palestinian refugees living in the country, and the numerous official Palestinian appeals addressing Iraqi government and Iraqi president, Jalal Talabani, to stop this campaign; the awful situation of Palestinians in Iraq remains the same.

Most estimates indicate that of the 35,000 Palestinians present in Iraq in 2003, only 15,000 remain in the country nowadays.

Hundreds of Palestinian refugees, who fled Iraq in search of a secure refuge in neighboring countries, live in a bunch of temporary camps inside these countries or are stranded on the borders with Iraq:

- **Al-Hol camp:** located near Al-Hassaka province in northern Syria. This camp was setup in May 2006 when the Syrian

government allowed a number of Palestinian refugees (around 260) to enter its territory, provided them with temporary shelters in the mentioned area, and granted them the necessary human assistance.

- **Al-Tanaf camp:** located in the neutral area on the Syrian-Iraqi border. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 356 Palestinians are now stranded in tents prepared specifically for that purpose and they live under harsh living conditions. Those Palestinians never got the permission to enter Syrian territories.

UNRWA and UNHCR work together to run the two camps and provide basic humanitarian aid for refugees. The Syrian government as well, along with some Syrian and Palestinian NGOs operating in Syria, provided both camps with several kinds of services. UNRWA has issued temporary registration cards for those refugees, but this does not mean they are counted as part of the Palestinian refugees registered before the Syrian General Authority for Palestine Arab Refugees (GAPAR).

- **Al-Walid camp:** located to the Iraqi side of the Iraqi-Syrian borders. It provides shelter to nearly 420 Palestinians who started to fill it up as of December 1st, 2006 according to UNRWA. Refugees living in this area are denied any access to Al-Tanaf camp and UNRWA is unable to reach them. It is the UNHCR and the International Red Cross that offer the Palestinians of this camp some livelihood services, next to the assistance they receive from the chiefs of some tribes residing nearby.

- **Al-Ruweished camp:** located on the border with Jordan. On the eve of the war on Iraq, the residents of this camp accounted for

2000 Palestinian and non-Palestinian refugees. In January 2007, only 119 were still living there including 97 Palestinians only. In fact, the UNHCR made sure to settle the majority of those Palestinians in other countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Next to the UNHCR, a Jordanian governmental charity organization offers humanitarian assistance to those refugees. Lately, the Jordanian government extended the deadline granted to the UNHCR in order to find a permanent solution to those refugees through their settlement in other countries.

To discuss the situation of Palestinian refugees in Iraq and how to provide them with proper protection, A'idoun Group (Syria/Lebanon) organized on the 5th of March a one-day workshop under the theme "Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: Missing Protection," supported by the Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in Lebanon and University of Damascus. The workshop, held at Rida Said Conference Center - University of Damascus, gathered around 120 participants coming from Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq to represent different international organizations concerned with this issue (UNHCR, UNRWA, Refugees Affairs Department in the Palestine Liberation Organization (Jordan and Lebanon), the Syrian General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees (GAPAR), the Iraqi Network for Culture of Human Rights and Development, the Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights (Bethlehem/Palestine), the Norwegian People's Aid, the Coordination Forum of Palestinian NGO's working in Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon, in addition to other civil society organizations and activists from Palestine, Syria and Lebanon.

Below are the papers and presentations made during the three sessions of the workshop:

- Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: Whose Responsibility? Muhammad Abu Baker, Head of Refugees Affairs Department in the Palestine Liberation Organization (Amman/Jordan).
- Perspectives of the General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees towards the Problem of Palestinian Refugees in Iraq; Ali Mustafa, General Director.

- Palestinian Refugees in Iraq and the role of UNHCR; Mu'tassim Hayatli, legal consultant to the Commission's Protection Department/Damascus Office.

- The Role of the Iraqi Network for Culture of Human Rights and Development in Preserving the Rights of Palestinian Refugees in Iraq; Dr. Karim Al-Aboudi,

- Palestinian Refugees in Iraq: An Iraqi Vision, Dr. Abdul Hussein Sha'ban, International Law and Human Rights Expert.

- Towards a Civil Campaign to Protect the Palestinian Refugees in Iraq (Position Paper of A'idoun Group); Dr. Mahmoud Al-Ali.

During the workshop, participants had the chance to listen to live and touching testimonies about the suffering of Palestinians in Iraq, made by people who managed to escape from the living hell of Iraq and arrive in Syria.

The last session, during which the "A'idoun Group" paper was presented, was dedicated to a general discussion among participants in order to draw conclusions and put forward some recommendations based on this paper and other ones. The discussion revolved around two main points: first, the current tragic situation of Palestinians in Iraq in comparison with their situation before the U.S. occupation; and second, the ways to protect them and the meaning of the temporary protection they need urgently and pressingly, without prejudice to their inalienable right of return to the homes they were expelled from in 1948. In fact, this temporary protection must be provided while putting in mind that those Palestinians constitute an integral part of the whole Palestinian refugees and Diaspora who hold to their right of return guaranteed by the principles of the International Law and all UN relevant resolutions, namely resolution № 194.

I. The current situation compared to the previous one:

Before 2003, Palestinian refugees in Iraq enjoyed an acceptable status of social, economic, and cultural rights. Successive Iraqi governments granted Palestinians residential units, job opportunities, education and health care with some constraints on their right to property. Some people tend to compare the situation of Palestinians living in Iraq to the

situation of those living in Syria. In 1956, the Syrian parliament passed law № 260 on the necessity to treat Palestinian refugees on the same footing as Syrian citizens regarding their rights to work, recruitment, trade and free businesses, education, health services, and even military services, without compromising their right to maintain their Palestinian nationality. In this context, one should mention resolution № 202 promulgated by the Iraqi Revolution Leadership Council in 2001 calling for equality between Palestinians living in Iraq and Iraqi citizens with respect to all the rights Iraqis enjoy with the exception of the right to acquire Iraqi nationality.

As a matter of fact, Iraq refused from the beginning that UNRWA takes care of Palestinians living on its territory, as it does in neighboring countries.

After the US occupation of Iraq and the overthrowing of the old regime, the situation of Palestinian refugees changed dramatically. The rights they once enjoyed no longer existed.

In this regard, the Iraqi Interim Government took a series of discriminative procedures against resident Palestinians in Iraq, the most important of which were:

- Making Palestinian refugees in Iraq the responsibility of the Ministry of Displacement and Migration and no longer the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; this meant denying them the right to residency. A new procedure was put in place: Palestinians now have to observe periodical identification verification procedures; i.e. they have to visit the Ministry's offices regularly to identify themselves; and one cannot disregard the huge life threatening danger they are risking during that process.
- Imposing a series of oppressive conditions and constraints on every Palestinian who asks for a new travel document. Accordingly, only a small number of Palestinians who filed visa applications got their request answered positively.
- Ceasing the issuance of Identification Cards to all Palestinians born since 2003, and refusing to issue replacement cards in cases of loss or damage, which resulted in a great number of Palestinians having no identification papers- Non ID's.

- Putting constraints on the free movement of Palestinians by preventing them from travelling abroad, and by arresting and even killing them as they passed by Iraqi Army checkpoints and Interior Ministry commandos during their daily commuting.

- Subjecting Palestinians in general to intimidation, arrest and detention at the hands of some militias, national security guards and US occupation troops, without putting them on trial or filing any specific charge against them.

- Subjecting Palestinians to arbitrary lay off from work and depriving them from food shares and health care. Palestinians are even scared of going to hospitals and health centers because of the risks they might face only because they carry the Palestinian identity.

II. The required protection: meaning and limits

Participants in the workshop agreed on the description and diagnosis of the situation of Palestinians in Iraq. They also agreed on a number of general recommendations on how to deal with this situation. However, their opinions diverged as to the meaning and limits of the preferred temporary protection and the solutions involved. The opinions they expressed can be summarized as follows:

- Rejecting any solution that calls for sending the Palestinians of Iraq to neighbouring Arab countries such as Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia; or to the Palestinian Authority's territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. And in consequence, rejecting UNHCR solution which suggests the settlement of Palestinians in foreign countries outside Iraq. People upholding this opinion argue that such solutions do not only lead to the eradication of the Palestinian Refugee society in Iraq, but also constitute a dangerous precedent that paves the way for conceding the right of return and ultimately losing this right definitively. On the other hand, they find that the best solution is that Palestinians stay in Iraq while the Arab League and relevant international community organizations apply pressure on the Iraqi government to provide Palestinians with safe haven and humanitarian aid in compliance with the pledges of the Iraqi State by virtue of the Casablanca Protocol, issued by the league of Arab States Council of Foreign Ministers in 1965.

- Refusing to transfer Palestinians to the Iraqi Kurdistan under the claim of providing a safe shelter for them temporarily; a point that was the subject of discussion between the official Palestinian delegation that visited Iraq and the Iraqi President, Jalal Talabani. This refusal finds its roots actually in the fear that this might be a prelude to reviving the projects of settling Palestinians in northern Iraq.

- Calling upon Arab states, especially Syria – known for its good hosting of Palestinian refugees – to receive all the Palestinians of Iraq temporarily until the Iraqi problem is resolved. In fact, the most important and urgent thing right now is to save their lives because their current situation in the country will not make them hold on until the right of return is fulfilled.

In this respect, the director of the Syrian General Authority for Palestinian Arab Refugees, related to the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, made clear that Syria does not want to be the only one to apply a solution based on hosting the Palestinians of Iraq. However, it supports any collective Arab decision under the framework of the Arab League, agreed upon by hosting Arab countries.

Participants also called upon the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization to provide Palestinians in Iraq with Palestinian passports; and work quickly and efficiently to receive them in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and overcome all the obstacles hindering such step, including its rejection by Israel.

- Calling upon the Palestine Liberation Organization to adopt UNHCR solution upholding the settlement of the Palestinians living in Iraq and border camps in foreign countries – that accept to host them – considering that moving Palestinians from one refuge country to another or settling them in foreign countries does not necessarily mean relinquishing the Palestinian identity or giving up the right of return. Only a few number of participants had this opinion. Nevertheless, we do observe to mention it in this paper out of objectivity and faithfulness to the content of our workshop.

III. General recommendations and suggestions

First, participants in the workshop held the Iraqi government, the militias connected to it and, of course, the US occupation troops, responsible for the suffering of Palestinians in Iraq and Iraqi civilians. In fact, these authorities must ensure first and foremost the protection of civilians during war, according to the principles of the International Humanitarian Law, and more specifically the 1949 Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocols of 1977 concerning the protection of armed conflict victims.

Participants stressed on the following points:

1. The need for a Palestinian action mostly at the level of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the National Authority, the factions and the civil society in Palestine and outside. The Palestine Liberation Organization must assume, namely through its international and Arab relations, its responsibility to find practical solutions for Palestinian refugees in Iraq; solutions that guarantee their personal, economic and social protection without compromising their legal status as refugees and their right to return, considering them as an integral part of the whole Palestinian refugees and Diaspora.

2. The need for the Palestine Liberation Organization to consider Palestinian victims in Iraq as martyrs of the Palestinian Revolution and entrust their children to the competent Palestinian institutions.

3. Urging Palestinian parliamentarians to take quick and efficient action amongst Arab parliamentarians, especially the Human Rights Arab Parliamentary Body in order to raise the Palestinian Refugees problem in Iraq at the international parliamentary level considering it as a human rights issue.

4. Activating urgently the role of Palestinian civil society organizations and bodies and establishing a relief committee with the aim of organizing the relief efforts in border camps offering the Palestinian refugees the necessary assistance in collaboration with the concerned Syrian bodies and Syrian civil society organizations.

5. Increasing people's awareness regarding the suffering of Palestinians in Iraq through Palestinian mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television channels, websites, etc...) and through the mobilization of western public opinion by addressing Arab and Palestinian communities in Europe and North America in order to defend the rights of Palestinian refugees in Iraq on the basis of the respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law Principles, especially the 1949 Geneva Convention.

6. Establishing an Iraqi-Palestinian civil committee from Iraqi and Palestinian civil society bodies, and coordinate to that end with the Iraqi Network for Culture of Human Rights and Development. This committee shall take on the responsibility of following up the dossier of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, update it with all documented information, and establish contacts with the competent international law bodies in order to raise this issue at the international level and file lawsuits against US occupation troops and some officials in the Iraqi government and the militias connected to it charging them with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

7. Submitting a petition to the Arab League concerning the tragedy of Palestinian refugees in Iraq, and exhort it to call upon

hosting Arab states, especially Iraq, to respect their commitments made by virtue of the 1965 Casablanca Protocol and all other relevant resolutions.

8. Urging UNHCR and UNRWA to activate their roles and reinforce their coordination in order to register, help and protect the Palestinian refugees inside Iraq and in border camps until the Iraqi problem is resolved and they return to their original homeland by virtue of resolution № 194.

9. Launching an Arab civil campaign to protect Palestinian refugees in Iraq. Arab NGOs networks shall be urged to participate in this campaign which shall adopt a realistic plan of action setting the strategies that are to be followed and the public to be addressed. A website for the campaign must be created to constitute a tribune for dialogue and opinion exchange between different parties.

Finally, for the recommendations of this workshop not to go unheeded, the A'idoun Group (Syria/Lebanon) supports the establishment of a follow-up committee gathering a number of active organizations in this workshop. This committee shall adopt the recommendations concluded in this report as its general framework as of the moment it starts to function.

The Writing on the Wall

by Miko Peled

As I write these words, I realize it is 5 June 2007. I remember that day in June 40 years ago vividly; I was five years old and my father, Matti Peled was a general in the IDF, my brother a lieutenant in the armored corps. We believed that they were part of a long line of Jewish heroes that includes Joshua, King David, the Maccabees and now the IDF; they all had God on their side and were destined to be victorious. Today people around the world talk about the day that the war "broke out," as though war is an entity with a life of its own. But wars rarely break out; they are meticulously planned and carried out by people with the worst intentions. This particular war completed Israel's domination over Palestine, domination for which there seems no end in sight. And today, as my father and several other concerned Israelis predicted forty years ago, young Jewish boys who were raised on the principles of the Jewish democracy, willingly carry out the despicable duties of an occupation army.

The difficulty a writer faces in writing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that it is buried in decades of mythmaking. Most writers and readers are still in awe of the Zionist narrative and are either afraid or lack the tools with which to challenge it. Even people with experience in Mideast politics like Zbigniew Brzezinski and Dennis Ross, still claim that if only America pursued the right foreign policy or the Palestinians had different leaders then the Palestinian people would have a state of their own and Israel would be living in a state of peace and security. Clearly they do not see the writing on the wall.

Jamil Hilal's book *Where Now for Palestine, the Demise of the Two State Solution* (published by Zed Books) is like the biblical Daniel interpreting the writing on the wall. Thorough and compelling, this book contains eleven illuminating essays with razor sharp analysis on the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the demise of the two-state solution.

"The policy imperatives of political Zionism have been oriented towards occupying land with no, or the minimum of, Palestinians." Hilal writes, and indeed, from the earliest days of the Zionist enterprise Zionist strongman David Ben Gurion made it clear that this was a zero sum game: Us or them, there will be no compromise on the issue of land. To guarantee the success of his plan to win the land and get rid of its people he orchestrated Israel's massive military buildup.

Today's policies of aggression and expansion are part of the legacy of Ben Gurion, and as Ilan Pappé writes: "occupation proceeds from the same ideological infrastructure on which the 1948 ethnic cleansing was erected." The last 40 years have provided ample opportunities to move forward with the creation of a viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, but no Israeli government was ever willing to give up the land. Instead, Israel continues to allocate massive resources to further its military buildup and expand the settlements in the West Bank. Jamil Hilal sums it up when he writes: "Israel's policy has amounted to a systemic negation of the basic conditions necessary for a viable and sovereign Palestinian state." As the layers of myth are uncovered we are struck by the realization that it is inconceivable that a Zionist government will be willing to share the Land of Israel.

The debate regarding the future of Israel/Palestine is becoming more widespread but unfortunately this is happening mainly outside of Israel. In as much as any discussion exists within Israel it is on the fringes of the Israeli left and among Palestinians, but rarely together. The recent debate between historian Ilan Pappé, who also contributed to this book, and veteran peace activist Uri Avneri, is noteworthy. During the debate, Pappé argued that the two-state solution is neither a viable nor a desirable solution and that effort needs to be exerted to create a secular democratic state in Israel/Palestine. Avneri, in an effort to

support his claim that Israelis and Palestinians cannot possibly live as citizens with equal rights under one democratic state resorted to the following argument: "The inhabitant of Bil'in will pay the same taxes as the inhabitant of Kfar-Sava? The inhabitants of Jenin will enact a constitution together with the inhabitants of Netanya? The inhabitants of Hebron and the settlers will serve in the same army and the same police force, shoulder to shoulder, and will be subject to the same laws? Is that realistic?" If history has shown us anything it is this: It is not realistic to expect that any Zionist government will ever give up land, so we find the two people living in one state but governed by very different laws.

To gain control of the enemy and rally its own troops, so to speak, Israel set out and accomplished two major tasks: The fragmentation of Palestinian society on the one hand and the alienation of Israelis towards Palestinians on the other. Sharif Elmusa explains it like this: "Rationalization of the necessity for a Jewish majority in Israel requires the Arabs to be pictured darkly, bent on the annihilation of the Jews, and as culturally incapable of forming democratic, pluralistic systems". Indeed, recent research by Nurit Peled Elhanan substantiates this claim. She has shown that the trend in Israeli textbooks is to show the "Arabs of Israel" as the Palestinians are called, as poor, uneducated, untrustworthy and bent on killing Jews.

However, the reality is that the Palestinians in Israel, as in other countries, have always been peaceful, hardworking, educated, and socially and politically active. For decades Palestinian leaders have repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to reach a negotiated agreement with Israel; Palestinian democratic institutions have proven themselves effective and representing the people's wishes both before and after Oslo; and the most striking example to contradict the stereotype of Palestinians in Israel is Gaza: 80 percent of the people live below the poverty line, the government is incapacitated, and with little help from the outside world the literacy rate remains well over 90 percent.

For several decades Israel has been using extrajudicial assassinations and other, less

lethal means to destroy and to delegitimize the Palestinian leadership. One of its biggest achievements in this regard is the Oslo agreement. Karma Nablusi writes that prior to Oslo the PLO represented Palestinians who live within Palestine and those in Al Shatat, outside Palestine. Today there is no representation and no body within which Palestinian voices outside of Palestine can be heard. By containing the PLO within the PA, Oslo succeeded in diminishing the representation for Palestinians outside Palestine and by doing so in effect took the refugee problem and the right of return off the negotiating table. Now the very future of the PA is unclear and Israel is on the verge of yet another victory: the complete destruction of Palestinian political representation.

One point which all the contributors to this book raised is that the so-called peace process, rather than lead to a resolution, is enabling Israel to destroy Palestine. So the question that begs to be asked is what now for Palestine? Hilal writes: "Neither Fatah nor Hamas has put forth a strategy for a national struggle that deals with the situation after the collapse of Oslo." According to Ziad Abu Amr: "The PA is becoming a facade hiding an actual Israeli occupation, and a tool helping Israel regulate its occupation." These are serious charges and they are being laid at the feet of today's Palestinian leadership. Jamil Hilal further suggests: "The Palestinian movement should articulate a detailed proposal for a bi-national state, and begin to canvas for such an idea among Palestinians, and, more importantly, among Israelis." But, in its daily struggle to stay alive, the Palestinian leadership too fails to see the writing on the wall.

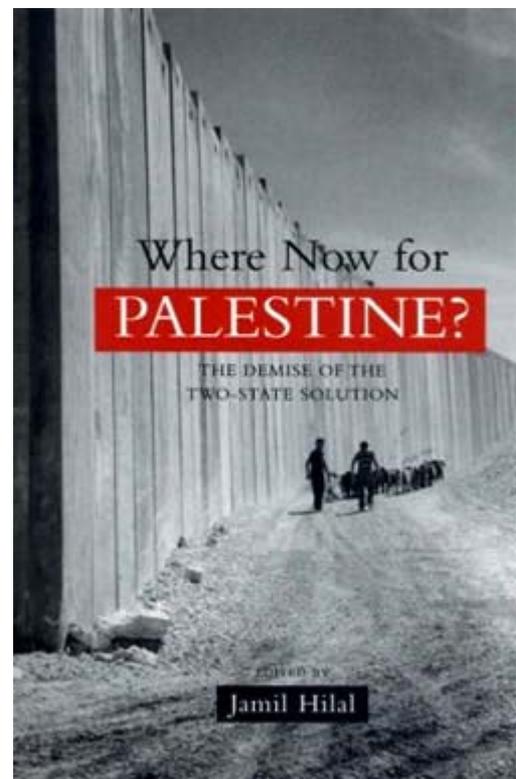
People in the West buy into the Israeli narrative because Israel has created an almost fool-proof system that keeps it in control of the Palestinians and of the media. As Husam Mohamad states: "The present peace efforts lay most of the blame for the violence on the victims rather than the perpetrators." Israeli violence is never seen as the cause for the impasses. Qassam rockets falling in Israel are terrorist attacks that cannot be tolerated, whereas the devastation caused by Israel in Gaza and the loss of innocent Palestinian lives is reported as justifiable retaliation. As long as the relations between the two sides are

characterized by the imbalance of power, there can never be meaningful negotiations. Only once the occupation is dismantled and the continuous threat of Israeli attacks is lifted, can Israelis and Palestinians work together and resolve the conflict peacefully.

If Israel has its way things will get progressively worse for the Palestinians as well as the Israelis. This book suggests a clear and courageous direction by which both people should move forward together: Dismantling the PA and establishing a democratic, secular state in all of Israeli/Palestine that will protect the national rights of all its citizens and will focus on human rights.

Miko Peled is an Israeli peace activist and writer living in San Diego, and co-founder of the Elbanna Peled Foundation. He is the son of the late Israeli General Matti Peled. First publication : The Electronic Intifada, 12 June 2007. Published in DIALOGUE with the author's permission.

For sixty years Israelis have been living as occupiers in Palestine. From the day it was established, Israel has been governed by an extremist, uncompromising political movement with a colonialist agenda. In this book, Jamil Hilal and ten other brilliant writers offer Israelis a way to be liberated from the daunting, self-destructive task of policing an occupied nation: "A secular democratic state with no distinctions between citizens according to religion, ethnicity or national origin."



Memory as a blueprint for the future

by George Bisharat

Why do some people have the power to remember, while others are asked to forget? That question is especially poignant at this time of year, as we move from Holocaust Remembrance day in early spring to Monday's anniversary of Israel's declaration of independence on May 14, 1948.

In the months surrounding that date, Jewish forces expelled, or intimidated into flight, an estimated 750,000 Palestinians. A living, breathing, society that had existed in Palestine for centuries was smashed and fragmented, and a new society built on its ruins.

Few Palestinian families lack a personal narrative of loss from that period -- an uncle killed, or a branch of the family that fled north while the others fled east, never to be reunited, or homes, offices, orchards and other property seized. Ever since, Palestinians worldwide have commemorated May 15 as Nakba (Catastrophe) Day.

No ethical person would admonish Jews to "forget the Holocaust." Indeed, recent decades have witnessed victims of that terrible era not only remembering, but also regaining paintings and financial assets seized by the Nazis -- and justifiably so.

Other victims of mass wrongs -- interned Japanese Americans, enslaved African Americans, and Armenians subjected to a genocide that may have later convinced Hitler of the feasibility of mass killings -- receive at least respectful consideration of their cases, even while responses to their claims have differed.

Yet in dialogues with Israelis, and some Americans, Palestinians are repeatedly admonished to "forget the past," that looking back is "not constructive" and "doesn't get us closer to a solution." Ironically, Palestinians

live the consequences of the past every day -- whether as exiles from their homeland, or as members of an oppressed minority within Israel, or as subjects of a brutal and violent military occupation.

In the West we are amply reminded of the suffering of Jewish people in World War II. Our newspaper featured several stories on local survivors of the Nazi holocaust around Holocaust Remembrance Day (an Israeli national holiday that is widely observed in the United States). My daughter has read at least one book on the Nazi holocaust every year since middle school. Last year, in ninth grade English literature alone, she read three. But we seldom confront the impact of Israel's policies on Palestinians.

It is the "security of the Jewish people" that has rationalized Israel's takeover of Palestinian lands, both in the past in Israel, and more recently in the occupied West Bank. There, most Palestinian children negotiate one of the 500 Israeli checkpoints and other barriers to movement just to reach school each day. Meanwhile, Israel's program of colonization of the West Bank grinds ahead relentlessly, implanting ever more Israeli settlers who must be "protected" from those Palestinians not reconciled to the theft of their homes and fields.

The primacy of Jewish security over rights of Palestinians -- to property, education, health care, a chance to make a living, and, also to security -- is seldom challenged.

Unfortunately, remembering the Nazi Holocaust -- something morally incumbent on all of us -- has seemingly become entangled with, and even an instrument of, the amnesia some would force on Palestinians. Israel is enveloped in an aura of ethical propriety that

makes it unseemly, even "anti-Semitic" to question its denial of Palestinian rights.

As Israeli journalist Amira Hass recently observed: "Turning the Holocaust into a political asset serves Israel primarily in its fight against the Palestinians. When the Holocaust is on one side of the scale, along with the guilty (and rightly so) conscience of the West, the dispossession of the Palestinian people from their homeland in 1948 is minimized and blurred."

What this demonstrates is that memory is not just an idle capacity. Rather, who can remember, and who can be made to forget, is,

fundamentally, an expression of power. Equally importantly, however, memory can provide a blueprint for the future -- a vision of a solution to seek, or an outcome to avoid. My Palestinian father grew up in Jerusalem before Israel was founded and the Palestinians expelled, when Muslims, Christians and Jews lived in peace and mutual respect. Recalling that past provides a vision for an alternative future -- one involving equal rights and tolerance, rather than the domination of one ethno-religious group over others.

Thus, what Palestinians are really being commanded is not just to forget their past, but instead to forget their future, too. That they will never do.

George Bisharat is professor of law at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. He writes frequently about the Middle East. This article originally appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle and is reprinted in DIALOGUE with the author's permission.



It is not only God that will be Blair's judge over Iraq

by Avi Shlaim

His cravenly pro-US policy on the Middle East misunderstood Bush's real agenda and resulted in catastrophic failure

Tony Blair's opposition to an immediate ceasefire in the Lebanon war last summer precipitated his downfall. Now that he has announced the date of his departure from Downing Street, his entire Middle East record needs to be placed under an uncompromising lens.

Blair came to office with no experience of, and virtually no interest in, foreign affairs, and ended by taking this country to war five times. Blair boasts that his foreign policy was guided by the doctrine of liberal interventionism. But the war in Iraq is the antithesis of liberal intervention. It is an illegal, immoral and unnecessary war, a war undertaken on a false prospectus and without sanction from the UN.

Blair's entire record in the Middle East is one of catastrophic failure. He used to portray Britain as a bridge between the two sides of the Atlantic. By siding with America against Europe on Iraq, however, he helped to destroy the bridge. Preserving the special relationship with America was the be all and end all of Blair's foreign policy. He presumably supported the Bush administration over Iraq in the hope of exercising influence on its policy. Yet there is no evidence that he exercised influence on any significant policy issue. His support for the neoconservative agenda on Iraq was uncritical and unconditional.

Blair failed to understand that America's really special relationship is with Israel, not Britain. Every time that George Bush had to choose between Blair and Ariel Sharon, he chose the latter. Blair's special relationship with Bush was a one-way street: Blair made all the concessions and got nothing tangible in return.

American policy towards the Middle East was doomed to failure from the start, and the end result has been to saddle Britain with a share of the responsibility for this failure. The premise behind American policy was that Iraq was the main issue in Middle East politics and that regime change in Baghdad would weaken the Palestinians and force them to accept a settlement on Israel's terms. The road to Jerusalem, it was argued, went through Baghdad. This premise was wrong. Iraq was a non-issue; it did not pose a threat to any of its neighbours, and certainly not to America or Britain. The real issue was Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and America's support for Israel in its savage colonial war against the Palestinian people.

When seeking the approval of the Commons for the war, Blair pledged that after Iraq was disarmed, he and his American friends would seek a solution to the Palestine problem. He has utterly failed to deliver on this promise.

True, Blair was the driving force behind the "road map" that envisaged the emergence of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel by the end of 2005. But Sharon wrecked the road map. In return for the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, Sharon exacted a written American agreement to Israel's retention of the major settlement blocs on the West Bank. Blair publicly endorsed the nefarious Sharon-Bush pact. This was the most egregious British betrayal of the Palestinians since the Balfour declaration of 1917.

Blair and Bush have also betrayed the Iraqi people. To begin with, there was much brave rhetoric about bringing democracy to Iraq and turning it into a model for the rest of the Arab world. But the rhetoric was empty. The neoconservatives who drove American policy were interested in overthrowing Saddam Hussein and in nothing else.

The allied invasion of Iraq was not an isolated episode but part of the so-called global war on terror. But the overthrow of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq only exacerbated the problem of terrorism. The invasion of Iraq has given a powerful boost to al-Qaida and its confederates by damaging Britain's reputation and radicalising its young Muslims. The London bombs may not have been a direct result of the Iraq war - but they are indisputably a part of the blowback.

What we have in Iraq today is chronic instability, an incipient civil war, endemic violence and anarchy, an upsurge of terrorist activity of every kind, and a national insurgency to which the allies have no answer. The neocons did not bother to plan for postwar reconstruction. Occupation was accompanied by devastation and destruction on a massive scale and a civilian death toll estimated by one source at 655,000.

The allies pride themselves on having brought democracy to the Iraqi people, but they have failed in the primary duty of any government: to provide security for the civilian population. The upshot is that America and its pillion passenger in the "war against terror" are now embroiled in a vicious, protracted and unwinnable conflict.

Blair has the audacity to say that God will be his judge over the Iraq war. This is a curious attitude for a democratic politician to adopt. History will surely pass a harsh judgment on Blair. He has the worst record on the Middle East of any British prime minister in the past century, infinitely worse than that of Anthony Eden, who at least had the decency to accept responsibility for the Suez debacle.

Avi Shlaim is a professor of international relations at St Antony's College, Oxford, and author of The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World. Published in The Guardian, May 14, 2007. The author gave us permission to publish this article.

Readers' correspondence:

Fighting the Israeli apartheid ?

by J.W.

I should like to go back to the question of the similarity between Apartheid and the situation where Palestinians are in the control of the Israeli army.

On the Nakba anniversary, at the same time as the Israeli army resumed bombing the Palestinian population in the Gaza strip and on the West Bank, Lebanese artillery showered a hailstorm of fire and mortar on the 40 000 Palestinian inhabitants of the Nahr El-Bared camp near Tripoli: 20% of housing was destroyed. Nobody has any idea of the number of victims. The bombing has been going on for 24 days.

The president of the South African Union Congress (COSATU) Willie Madisha observed a few months ago that *"the Israeli apartheid is worse than the apartheid that was imposed on South Africa ... Israel attacks the Palestinians with heavy artillery and tanks which are only used in time of war. This never happened in South Africa ... Israel's apartheid should meet with the same boycott sanctions that South Africa came up against..."*

But an effective boycott is in fact in operation. Not against Israel, but on Israel's initiative, With the help and participation of the USA and the European Union, the Palestinian population of the West bank and the Gaza strip is reduced to utter poverty. To bring it to its knees, to break and punish the Palestinian people, for having expressed in a majority vote that it does not recognise the Zionist State. For having showed that it continues to demand the right for refugees to return and equal rights for all Jewish and Arab parties, which implies, as your review so rightly underlines, the setting up of a one Palestinian, democratic, secular State.

But should comparisons stop there? From the beginning of the XXth century, the founders of Zionism denied the existence of the Palestinian

people, in particular with the formula of *"a land without people for a people without land"*. The Europeans who colonised South Africa in the XIXth century never denied the massive and very much earlier existence of Black populations. For the Europeans it was a question of reducing the Blacks to slavery, of using their labour force while forbidding any political liberty. For the Zionist the Palestinian population has always been too much. As for the State of Israel, it was founded on an act of ethnic cleansing: massacres, destruction and the massive expulsion of 800 000 Palestinians out of a population of about 950 000 who lived in the present territories. It is to be noted that since then, none of the successive Hebrew governments – whether left or right – have neither set nor recognized the territorial boundaries of the Zionist State.

This time again, after 60 years of repression and resistance. In spite of heavy artillery, of tanks, the dead end into which the carving up of Palestine by the UN in 1947, plunges the whole area into bloody chaos. Piloted by imperialist and Zionist "democracy" everything has been "tried"; the Transjordan separated from Palestine with the setting up of the Hashemite monarchy. The Palestinians chased out of the 1948 territory to set up the Zionist State. The West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza were supposed to constitute Palestine: the West Bank was occupied and attached to the kingdom of Jordan. Gaza was occupied by Egypt. Then after the 1967 war these same territories were occupied by Israeli military forces. Finally, with the Oslo agreement, their "autonomy" under Israeli control is proclaimed which entails the multiplication of Jewish colonies, of Palestinians being expelled ... and the building of the wall. Each new try has provided the Hebrew State with the opportunity of taking over a larger portion of Palestinian land and of stifling the populations even more. Each new try has led to new massacres. On the Israeli agenda it is not a

question of implementing a local apartheid system but of pursuing an ethnic cleansing policy begun in 1948.

French newspaper *Le Figaro* observes that, “...settlements, presented first of all as a security necessity, then as an instrument for negotiation, have in fact led to Israel swallowing up the West Bank”. And the head of the UN Office for humanitarian affairs, declares, “if the present situation is prolonged, any attempt to create a Palestinian State will end up in the birth of a rump State doomed to failure”. Is this an admittance of the UN’s failure?

Is it possible to really fight the Israeli policy, without characterising the Hebrew theocratic State, its institutions founded on racial and religious segregation, its discriminatory Zionist laws which pound the Palestinian people to dust in the mesh of the pseudo “two States”? Is there any other solution apart from a secular, democratic Palestine on the whole territory of Palestine? But can that solution be compared

to what happened in South Africa? If Apartheid as an institution has disappeared, South Africa remains a White Republic, but with Black ministers, where the immense majority of the population has still not recovered land nor in effect, the most elementary rights. The fight for a Black Republic, headed and governed in view of the satisfaction of the needs of the overwhelming Black majority and in which the Whites who wish to, could find their equal place, is that not still on the agenda ?

The national question in Palestine cannot and will never be solved by the artificial creation of a so-called “Jewish nation” or “Israeli nation”, separated from a so-called “Arab nation”. And so the question that is put and remains on the agenda to-day, is indeed that of the forming of the Palestinian nation, oppressed and restricted to-day by Zionism, but also by reactionary States, like Jordan or others, instruments of American imperialism, which forbid the Palestinian people to set itself up as a nation.

DIALOGUE

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