

DIALOGUE

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE
IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR ONE STATE SOLUTION
END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, HEBREW AND FRENCH**



Homage to Mahmud Darwich, Palestinian poet—Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition—A Refugee's Open Letter to Mahmoud Abbas—The Shministim Letter 2008—Georges Habache 1926 - 2008—Ali Abunimah : One Country—There is hope in Gaza—Let Justice be the Salvation of Israelis and Palestinians. The Hope of a Victimized People—Readers' column. Reactions about Waltz With Bashir, the film by Ari Folman.

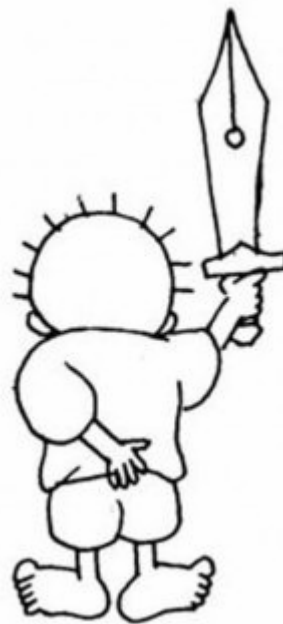
3 €, 3\$, 2 £

Review Dialogue, n. 21— September 2008

www.dialogue-review.com

Contents

- p.3* Introduction
- p.4* Homage to Mahmud Darwich, Palestinian poet. By François Dominique.
- p.6* Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition – Press release.
- p.7* A Refugee's Open Letter to Mahmoud Abbas. By Abdelfattah Abusrour.
- p.10* The Shministim Letter 2008.
- p.13* Georges Habache 1926 – 2008. By Rachid Akel.
- p.15* Ali Abunimah : One Country. By Sam Ayache.
- p.17* There is hope in Gaza. By Miko Peled.
- p. 19* Let Justice be the Salvation of Israelis and Palestinians
The Hope of a Victimized People. By Georges Bisharat.
- p. 21* Readers' column. Reactions about Waltz With Bashir, the film by Ari Folman.



Hanthala, Palestinian child, by Naji Al Ali.

Introduction

The publication of this issue of Dialogue has been somewhat delayed and we apologise to our readers.

Sixty years after the partition of Palestine, which a few months later was to trigger Nakba, i.e. the mass expulsion of 800,000 Palestinians; after dozens of “peace plans”, which resulted in extorting one-sided concessions from the Palestinians, we are still stuck in a dead end. Today, the Middle East people, threatened by the permanent war that the US administration has vowed it would pursue, are in a quandary.

At that point, a question is raised: what is the solution based on political democracy and the right of every one of the region’s peoples to live in peace? Do the items published in this review not show that a solution can be found? Indeed, is there another solution that constituting a single State in which the Arab and Jewish components would enjoy the same rights? Faced with US strategy, relayed by the European Union, whose purpose is to incessantly spark new wars to destabilise the States and lay their hands on wealth, especially oil resources, is the alternative raised by this debate not fully relevant?

In this issue, you can read the declaration of the “Shministim 2008”. For the third time in the space of a few years, a group of Israeli teenagers “refuse to join the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)”. They state: “We want to end occupation, we want to change the face of the militaristic Israeli society to make it a better place, WE WANT PEACE.” Their denunciation - that is part of a current, though still a minority in the State of Israel but that has been highlighted by films (titles such as *Walz with Bashir* or *The Lemon Trees* spring to mind) – sharply counters the much publicised image of a country struggling for survival. Do those kids not raise the right questions? How can one accept measures that are allegedly taken in the name of protecting the Israeli Jews when they wall in the Palestinian people within what boils down to open sky prisons (which some would have coined as a “State”)?

The New York Times itself recently worried that the Palestinian Authority’s influence is crumbling even inside the Fatah, the party of its president Mahmud Abbas. In this issue, we are publishing a few of the reactions following a declaration by Abbas in which he challenges the refugees’ right to return.

For those teenagers who refuse “to join the IDF”, for those activists who demand equal rights, for those millions of refugees who want their right to return complied with, this debate on the question of democratic solutions must continue and reach out as broadly as possible to the international labour movement. That is the objective of our review.

Homage to Mahmud Darwich, Palestinian poet

By François Dominique

Mahmud Darwich died on August 9th, shortly after sustaining an open-heart operation. As his body was being carried in the streets of Ramallah, it was saluted by dozens of thousand people. Writer Rasim Obeidat conveyed the feelings of those who read or listened to him with those simple words: “*He is and will remain the poet of the nation and of the revolution, the poet of land and life.*”

Mahmud Darwich was born in 1941 in Birwa village, Galilee which then was under British dominion. He was seven when his village was assaulted by the Israeli army. His family had to flee into exile to Lebanon. When his father came back to Birwa a year after, he found his house occupied by colonists. He then settled in Deir El-Assad, “*a refugee in his own homeland*”; this contradiction is central to the entire work of the future poet, just like the category of “present-absentees” that, according to him, Palestinians are in Israel.

Darwich published his first volume of poems in 1960. He went to university in Haifa, North of Israel and joined the Communist Party of Israel which, at the time, regrouped Jewish and Arab activists. He founded and ran the literary review *Al Karmel*. Within a short lapse of time, he gathered an audience in Palestine and across the entire Middle East after he published the poem *Identity card* – an excerpt of which you can read below – in 1964.

In 1973, in Beirut, he was an official in the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) but, in 1993, he resigned from the PLO to protest the Oslo accords that negate the principle of the “*right to return*” for Palestinian refugees. Two years later, after a thirty year long exile, he was granted a visa to come back and see his mother and managed to settle in Ramallah.

Though Mahmud Darwich always refused to give his responsibilities in Palestinian resistance primacy over his work as a poet, some public statements strongly express his political convictions. (read *Il Manifesto* 22/10/2006)

Against imperialist war in Iraq

“I cannot make out what Bush says but I can make out his actions: I consider that he has destroyed Iraq (.). If the New Middle East follows after the Iraqi model i.e. a totally fragmented and dismembered state (.). it will revert to stone age Middle East (.). Bush is driving the world to the abyss.”

For Palestinian refugees’ right to return

“Israelis are just like Whites in South Africa and we are the Blacks. We have accepted to be their Blacks but that is not enough; in their eyes we can neither be Blacks nor Whites: what do they want? (.). They are afraid of peace.”

“Why are the Jewish refugees who left 2,000 years ago permitted to come back to Palestine and why are the Palestinians expelled in 1948 banned from doing so? (.). Why do they oppress two million Palestinians on the West Bank?”

Against the Wall separating Jews from Arabs.

“The entire world greeted the collapse of the Berlin wall (.). How can that same world accept the 600 km wall that Israel has built around the Palestinians? (.). Not only are we living in a state of occupation but we are living in prison cells in a state of occupation. Do you know how many people

die at check points just because they cannot reach the hospital? How many women have had to be delivered right in front of check-points?"

Poetry as an act of resistance.

Mahmud Darwich repeatedly opposed those who, in the name of militant art, wish to enlist literature. Despite his huge success that made him one of the best attended Palestinian voices, he modestly asked that his work should be read "as a poet's" and not "as a cause" (Arles 2005).

He experiences his relation with Palestine in a poet's mode, he misses it and at the same time it is a source of inspiration. Sometimes (alluding to the Trojan War in Homer's Iliad) he defines himself as a "Trojan poet", "one of those even robbed of the right to sing their own defeat", sometimes he compares himself to an American "red-skin" who affirms his relationship with the land as a defence of viable man-nature harmony.

He also proposes to us to read his work with an "innocent eye": "If we win, we will hang our black banners on clothe-lines and we'll make them into socks. I am not devoting my life to a flag."

(Among the most recent publications: *The earth is a narrow space for us* and other poems, Gallimard Poche Pub. 2000; *State of Siege*, Actes Sud Pub. 2004. *Do Not Apologise*, Actes Sud, Pub. 2006.)

Translated from the French.

Identity (1964, excerpt, About an Israeli form to be filled)

Write down!
I am an Arab
My hair ... Coal black
My eyes... Coffee brown
Distinguishing marks:
A keffiyeh head-gear tightly bound with a band
The palm of my hand is stone hard
It hurts whoever squeezes it
My choice food:
Olive oil and thyme

My home address
A remote village...
Where the streets bear no names
And all the men . . . in the stone quarry or in the fields
Warm to communism
I am an Arab
That is what makes your mad!

One who loves Palestine (1966, Excerpts – For my mother)

I yearn for my mother's bread
... ..
For my mother's coffee
Give me back the childhood constellation
Of my mother's soothing hands on me
So I can spread my wings with the young birds
And fly back home
The child in me is growing
In the nest of your waiting
I like my age but if I die,
I shall shame over my mother's tears.

Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition

September 14, 2008

For Immediate Release

According to several recent reports of an interview with the Ha'aretz newspaper (<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1020471.html>), Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas is quoted as indicating that he is willing to negotiate away the rights of millions of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and lands of origin. This outrageous statement, which has not been denied to date, comes on the heels of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's latest visit and attempt to squeeze a 'peace agreement' from both the PA and 'Israel'.

ACTION REQUESTED

In keeping with the brief scenario outlined in the 6th issue of Until Return <http://www.al-awda.org/until-return/danger.html>, Al-Awda, The Palestine Right to Return Coalition, is calling on all its members, supporters, and all people of conscience to respond to the current increased attempts to 'negotiate' away the inalienable right of Palestinians to return to their homes and lands of origin.

Please write to President Mahmoud Abbas c/o of the PLO Office in Washington, D.C. and The Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations

TALKING POINTS

*President Mahmud Abbas' statement as reported in the Ha'aretz interview is at complete variance with the Palestinian people's inalienable, natural, legal, historical, individual and collective right to return to their homes and lands of origin, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Law and UN Resolutions 194 and 3236.

*According to international law, no agreement, negotiations or parties which purport to trade away the right to return or any other inalienable rights can have any legal basis and cannot bind or compel the Palestinian people to end the struggle for the fulfillment of their rights.

*Any attempt to abrogate the rights of Palestinian refugees would set a disastrous precedent in international human rights law. It would provide a clear signal that any invaders who expel civilians from their homes, steal their property, and prevent them from returning for long enough can expect to have their illegal territorial conquests blessed with international legitimacy.

*Implementation of the right to return as spelled out in UN resolutions is the core to a just resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

*Mr. Mahmoud Abbas should resign as president of the PA and chairman of the PLO forthwith. His statement as reported in the Ha'aretz, and which he has not denied to date, is outrageous and disregards the rights of 7.2 million Palestinians living in forced exile.

A Refugee's Open Letter to Mahmoud Abbas

By Abdelfattah Abusrour

Dear Mr. The President of the Palestinian Authority,

My name is Abdelfattah Abdelkarim Hasan Ibrahim Mohamad Ahmad Mostafa Ibrahim Srour Abusrour. I was born in Aida Refugee camp, on a rented land for 99 years by UNRWA from Palestinian owners of Bethlehem. My two eldest brothers as well as my father and his father and all those who were born before them, originate from Beit Nateef, a destroyed village on 21 of October 1948. My mother was born in Zakareya village, destroyed as well in 1948 by the Zionist bandits. These were 2 of 534 villages destroyed by these Zionist bandits

I grew up in Aida refugee camp. When I was 4 years old, I remember most of the people in the camp hiding in a cave behind our house. I remember the old people talking about the war. I remember the sky full of planes, and all of the young children covered by black blankets, and cherished by their mothers. I remember the first curfew after the Israeli occupation in Aida camp in 1968. I remember the first Israeli soldier, who was an old Iraqi Jew of about 60 years old who took position in front of the door of our house. I remember the day my second brother was invited for an interview by the military occupation administration in 1972, and never returned back to the house. I remember that he was exiled 6 months later, without any confession, without any judgment or court sentence.

I remember the first collective water distribution point in the camp. There were four points with four taps each for the whole population in the camp. I also remember the first collective WCs in the camp. There were 4 points. Each point was composed of one for males and one for females. I remember the field around the camp, where we used to play, to perform our plays in the open fields. I remember the big holes in the ground, when they were filled with water, they became our swimming pools.

I remember the first colony around us, the Gilo colony... the cranes are still working in it since the early seventies. I remember the Jewish worshippers coming to the Mosque Bilal ibn Rabah, which was transformed into Rachel Tomb Synagogue to pray their prayers. We were no more allowed to wash our deads and to make last prayers for burying them in the cemetery next to it.

I remember the first Israeli checkpoint between Bethlehem and Alquds-Jerusalem. I remember the first permits requested by Israelis, and all the alternative roads and all the passages to go around the military checkpoints that we have to take since we didn't have permits.

I remember the evolution of the wall from the state of masses of dirt, to big holes in the roads and streets, to blocks of barbwire, or blocks of cement of 2 meters high, then 4 meters then 8 to 12 meters high. I remember all the times I was caught by Israeli soldiers on my way to my family in Alquds – my wife is from East Jerusalem-. I remember all those 6 years where I took every known and unknown road from Bethlehem to Alquds, by the East or by the West, on main roads or through valleys and hills.

I remember the space shrinking in the camp, and the population increasing to 5000 people now who originated from 41 different villages destroyed by the Zionists bandits, where 66% are under 18 years old, and the street their only space for play. Walls have been built, encircling the camp from the East, the North and part of the West.

I remember of this Jericho agreement, where the checkpoint at the entrance of Jericho should have been only symbolic because you accepted that it remains, and where we Palestinians are stopped for hours by any simple Israeli occupation soldier. And now, we discuss a passage to the old city of Jerusalem, under the control of this same Israeli occupation army.

I remember that we were fed the love of this occupied country, because it is ours. I remember the rusty keys of our houses in Beit Nateef, keys for doors that exist no more, but keys that have their doors in our hearts and our imagination... keys for doors that were real and have existed, for real houses that were built and have existed, in which real people lived in and brought up children. These rusty keys are still with me. I remember that we were brought up with this eternal belief that the right is the right, and nothing can justify ignoring it. I remember that our right of return to our original villages and homes is eternal, and nothing can change it, neither realities on the ground nor political agreement, because it is not only a collective right, but is as well an individual right... it is my right Mr. the president, and the right of my children and grand children and all those who come after wherever they are born.

Dear Mr. the President

I remember the death of my mother, on September 9th, 2003. She was 75 years old. I remember the death of my father on December 26th, 2006. He was 96 years old. My mother and my father were hoping to be buried in their village, where they got married, where they brought up their children, where they irrigated their land with their sweat, blood, and tears; where they filled their land with joy, happiness, laughs and whispers.

My parents are buried in the cemetery of Aida camp. My mother's tomb is next to a military tower, and surrounded by Israeli barbwire. My mother's tomb is not accessible... I can't visit it in a day of feast to recite on her tomb Alfateha or a surat of the Holy Coran.

Dear Mr. the President

I was full of hope that after 60 years of occupation, after 60 years of armed and non-armed resistance we could achieve something other than shallow promises. I was full of hope that we will never give up our rights, these rights which are recognized by the whole world, even if the whole world remains complicit with injustice. I was full of hope that nothing can justify giving up such rights, with all the realities on the ground as they say...otherwise what heritage we are leaving to our children and the generations to come. Should we say to them: Go to where the wind takes you... never stand up and resist the oppression... the importance is to stay alive even if it is a life of humiliation and non recognition of belonging to a human race?

Where are you talking us Mr. the President? To what desert are you leading us? To what catastrophe? How dare you deciding how many refugees can or cannot return? Who gave you permission to speak in my name, and in my children name? Who asked you to make sales on our rights? What is the price for such sales on people's rights and sacrifices for 60 years?

Where UN resolutions talk about Right of Return AND Right of Compensation for all this suffering in exile and refuge, for all this exploitation of lands and properties, for all this humiliation and torture that worsens every day, you dare to say that not everybody wants to return? Even if this is the case, they have their right to their homes and lands, whether they want to return or not. They can sell it to others if they want, but it is not you or anyone else besides them who decide who want or not to return. It is not your right or anyone else to say "those who don't want to return should be compensated". Every single refugee and son of a refugee and grand son or daughter of a refugee have to be compensated for these 60 years of Nakba, those who left or forced to leave; those who are owners of lands, those who had their fields and oranges and fruitful trees. Yes, the oranges of Jaffa were before Israel and they will stay after Israel, if they don't end by destroying them, as they dead with the olive trees old of thousands of years.

You were not elected Mr. le President to give away our rights... to give away the hopes and dreams and rights of people who are still in refugee camps, living on rented lands, refugees in their own country or outside their own country, and who still wait to return to their original homes and lands for the past 60 years.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, we are living in lies... and broken promises of change... well, change comes but to the worse and not to the better. Nothing improves with all these negotiation Mr. the President? Should we undress ourselves and show our nudity so that Israeli leaders and occupation forces be satisfied that we have nothing to hide?

Yesterday, Israelis have distributed papers in East Jerusalem using the Holy Koran and their Bible to say that they are fulfilling the promise of God to populate Israel and chase away every other non-Jewish. And we should understand that and help them, by leaving the country because we have so many other Arab countries for us? And after that we can live in peace and our children will be happy with their children, and things will be great. Is this the next step Mr. the President? Is it because colonies on the ground are expanding, and that we can't force our presence on Israel, and that we should be nice so that the whole world be sympathetic to us, that we do whatever Israel wants us to do? And then we talk about horrible compromises and difficult solutions, so we should be the nice ones who make the compromise, who forgive, who forget, who give up, who leave or die because that would solve it for all?

Mr. the President

I am not ready to leave. I will never leave, even if it is the only way to earn a living. I will never give up my right to return to my village, even if I have a castle in UK, and a chateau in France, and chalet at the red sea, and a property in Bahamas. My right is mine, and neither you nor anybody else have the right to erase it and exchange it or play with it.

We were hearing RED LINES that will never be crossed. What remains from these red lines Mr. the President? We heard about the green line... it became the gray line of the separation wall. Red lines became pink, and they were mixed with white till they became invisible. Is this what remains of our struggle history, and all the blood of martyrs and years of imprisonment?

I do hope that you leave your tower of ignorance to the needs of your people and descend a little bit on the ground and look in the eyes of those who still have a passion for this country despite the disasters that we sank in with such futile and fruitless negotiations, while the Palestinian blood is shed daily by those with whom you negotiate. Have we no more shame to stop such circus from going on?

I would have loved Mr. the President that such energy in negotiation with Israelis be invested among Palestinians who are still in dispute, and because of such stubbornness from our political leaders, it is not you leaders who suffer, but your people. Are we in such a way so worthless that we do not deserve your time and energy to stop this circus and unite your people instead of searching always what divides such tortured spirits? Is it not enough that we are considered only as a humanitarian case, that worth no more than a sack of flour or a bottle of oil or an expired medication? Is it not enough that a whole population is transformed into beggars and put in poverty, depending on charity rather than helping them to be producers and keep up their dignity? Isn't the humiliation by the occupation enough that we are forced to have more humiliations to come?

I am full believer in peace and non-violence. I am a full believer in hope and right and justice. I am a full believer in the values that make of the humanity what it is. I never learned to hate. I never hated any one. My parents were full of love and peace. They never taught me or my brothers anything other than respect of others and endless love to give and help the others. They taught us that when you practice violence you lose part of your humanity. But in the same time, they taught us to defend what is right and to stand against what is unjust and wrong. Therefore, Mr. the President, I do dare to say that you have no right, even as president of an authority which has no authority on anything- except maybe on us- which cannot protect us or protect itself even in front of any male or female Israeli soldier, to give up our rights, the rights of two thirds of your people to return in dignity to their destroyed lands and properties and to be compensated for all this suffering and exile, and the use of their lands and fields and the stealing of their funds in British banks or other banks by the Zionists.

Mr. the President

I don't know if you will read these words or not... If I will stay alive when you read them or not... but I do hope that such words which come from the heart, reach your heart Mr. the President, and you can find the hope and strength our people still have in him. We do not give up our rights. We will never give up our rights. Peace can be built with justice. Real peace can be built with real justice... anything else is just a joke in the face of history.

My name is Abdelfattah Abdelkarim Hasan Ibrahim Mohamad Ahmad Mostafa Ibrahim Srour Abusrour. I am still a refugee in my own country with 2 rusty keys in the house.

The Shministim Letter 2008

— document —

Introductory call to others to join shministim Refusal

Description: We are a group of Jewish- Israeli teens who are refusing to join the IDF for it has been occupying the Palestinian territories since 1967.

In Israel, the law ruled that every 18 year old- healthy, Jewish, Israeli, teenager is to join the military (this varies between 2-3 years and sometimes more). Our group is refusing for political reasons, standing up against the occupation and declaring: we will not support it!

The Six Day War broke out on June 5th, 1967 and Israel has not left the West Bank since. Gaza strip was conquered too, and military forces still rule the place.

We are saying END THE OCCUPATION IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES.

Join our struggle and support our cause. Here we will be available to provide you with more information about the subject. We want and need your support. Sign the petition, join and support us and spread the love we are trying to promote!

We want to end occupation, we want to change the face of the militaristic Israeli society to make it a better place, WE WANT PEACE.

This is our letter :

The Shministim Letter 2008

We, high-school graduate teens, declare that we shall work against the Israeli occupation and oppression policy in the occupied territories and the territories of Israel. Therefore we will refuse to take part of these actions, which are being done under our name as part of the IDF.

Our refusal comes first and foremost as a protest on the separation, control, oppression and killing policy held by the state of Israel in the occupied territories, as we understand that this oppression, killing and routing of hatred will never lead us to peace, and they are all contradictory to the basic values a society that pretends to be democratic should have.

All the members of this group believe in developing the value of social work. We are not refusing to serve the society we live in, but are protesting against the occupation and the ways of actions which the militaristic system holds as it is today- crushing civil rights, discriminating on a racial base and acting opposing international laws.

We oppose the actions taken in the name of the “defense” of the Israeli society (Checkpoints, targeted killing, apartheid roads-available for Jews only, curfews etc.) that serve the occupation and exploitation policy , annex more conquered territories to the State of Israel and tramples the rights of the Palestinian population in an aggressive manner. These actions serve as a band-aid covering a bleeding wound, and as a limited and temporary solution that will accelerate and aggravate the conflict further.

We expostulate the plundering and the theft of territories and source of income to the Palestinians in exchange to the expansion of the settlements, reasoning to defend Israeli territories. In addition, we

oppose any transformation of Palestinian cities and villages to ghettos without minimal living conditions or income sources enclosed by the separation wall.

We also protest the humiliating and disrespectful behavior of the military forces towards Palestinians in the West Bank; violence towards demonstrators, public humiliations, arrests, destruction of property regardless to any safety or defense needs, all of which violate global human rights and international law.

The wall and blockades surround the Palestinian Territories and serve as a halter around the Palestinian's neck. The soldiers who commit crimes under the patronage and protection of their commanders reflect the image of the Israeli society; a destructive and surprising society that is incapable of accepting its neighboring nation as a partner and not as an enemy.

In order to hold an effective dialogue between the two societies, we, the well-established and stronger society, have the responsibility of establishing and strengthening the other. Only with a more socially and financially established partner could we work towards peace rather than one-sided retaliation acts. Rather than supporting those citizens who have hope for peace, the military cast sanctions and pushes more and more people towards acts of extreme violence and escalation.

We hereby challenge every citizen who wonders if the military's policy in the occupied territories is conducive to the progression of the peace process, to discover by himself/ herself the truth and to lift the veil which distorts the reality of the situation; to verify statistical data; to look for the humane side in him/her and in the society which stands in front of him/her, to disprove the myths that were routed within us regarding the necessity of the IDF's in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, and to stand up against every action which he finds irrational and illegal.

In a place where there are humans, there is someone to talk to. Therefore, we ask to create a dialogue that goes beyond the power struggle, the retaliation and one-sided attrition actions; to disprove the "No Partner" myth, which is leading to a lose-lose situation of an ongoing frustration, and to move to more humane methods.

We cannot hurt in the name of defense or imprison in the name of freedom; therefore we cannot be moral and serve the occupation.

Signed
Members of the Shministim Letter 2008.

Sahar Vardi is among the 12th grade ('shministim') signatories of the open letter to Israel's Prime Minister and Defense Minister stating the reasons of the signatories for refusing to conscript in Israel's military.

On Monday, August 25, 2008 Sahar will arrive at the induction center where, instead of enlisting as Israeli law demands, she will state her refusal to enlist in the Israeli occupation force on grounds of conscientious objection. For her refusal to obey the order to conscript, she will undoubtedly be sentenced to imprisonment in a military facility. Of those who have signed the letter stating their refusal to take part in the occupation forces and their opposition to the violence that the Israeli military uses against the Palestinian civilian population, she will be the third to be imprisoned.

In her letter to the Minister of Defense Sahar writes:

'I have been to the occupied Palestinian territory many times, and even though I realize that the soldier at the checkpoint is not responsible for the wretched policy of the oppressor towards civilians, I am

unable to relieve that soldier of responsibility for his conduct . . . I mean the human responsibility of not causing another human being to suffer.

The bloody times in which I live (consisting of assassinations, aggression, bombings, shootings) results in increasing numbers of victims on both sides. It is a vicious circle that emanates from the fact that both sides elect to engage in violence. This choice I refuse to take part in.'

On Monday, August 25, 2008 at 8:00 AM, when Sahar is sent to imprisonment, we shall all stand in solidarity together outside the entrance of the induction center at Tel Hashomer. There we shall demand of the Israeli government to end the evils of the occupation.



Georges Habache 1926 – 2008

By Rachid Akel

Article published in issue N° 107 of the
Review of Palestinian Studies, French version – Spring 2008

A great man has passed away. A long standing revolutionary, untiringly in the service of progress, an inflexible activist. A *hakim*, as people respectfully used to call him in reference both to his medical training and the wisdom that people recognised in him; he consistently and at all times, through his fight, adjusted his guidelines and corrected his mistakes. A key figure who affirmed his specificity, that specificity that picked him out as a striking person.

In 1948, his older sister died and, because the family had to leave in a rush under Zionist bombings, she was hastily buried in the garden of their home in Lydda. His entire life was determined by that profound injustice. He studied at the Beirut American University and rubbed shoulders with a generation of nationalists who, like him, wanted to make public opinion aware of the consequences of the Nakba and organise the fight-back before launching a large scale popular action when they created the Movement of Arab nationalists. The founding stone of his project was laid: the Palestinian issue is basic. The liberation of the homeland needs first and foremost the liberation of the entire Arab world.

Already, entire attention was focused on the mobilisation of the Arab peoples wherever they were, whatever the reservations of the governments that he coined as reactionary and with whom he long played the catch me if you can game.

Only a massive popular movement could change the layout. With Wadie Haddad, his brother in arms, Georges Habache tackled the task of tending the refugees in camps and educating them. Shortly after the June 1967 debacle, with other comrades that shared his vision, he founded the Popular Front of Liberation of Palestine, a movement that he wished to be both organised and ideological. He was the general secretary of the PFLP and, in time he was the one who decided to end his tenure; through the PFLP he wanted to refocus revolutionary action on Palestine; he wanted that action to be uncompromising till total liberation and the return of refugees were secured. But he also wanted to strengthen the democratic current within the PLO and weigh on its internal working to avoid the deviations that loomed over the Palestinian central. He achieved all that with unity constantly on his mind as that was the indispensable element of final victory.

His disappointment with Nasser's doctrine opened his eyes to class struggle. When he was jailed in Syria, he read Marx and discovered Mao. The same Mao who affirmed that "*the masses are the true heroes*". So, little by little, the PFLP tried to draw a line between itself and the patriot bourgeoisie in order to achieve socialism. Meanwhile, the effort to focus international attention on the Palestinian cause was launched with makeshift means even through dramatic plane high jacking. But the hurdles were numerous: set up by the opportunists on the left, unkept budget promises by conservative Arab regimes plus the temptation of Yasser Arafat led PLO to cut corners. Georges Habache's guideline in the following conflicts was to refuse confrontation and to stand firm: during the tragic events of Black September and the need for Palestinian factions to remain tightly united; Anwar el Sadate's treacherous drive, the growing hegemony of the USA in the region and Arab interventionism into PLO's affairs; Israel's invasion of Lebanon, siege of Beirut and ban on armed resistance; stone throwing revolt and the surge of solidarity it triggered around the world and the hope it renewed within the PLO.

And then Oslo. The point of no return, the concession too many. Georges Habache considered that Yasser Arafat was too much in a hurry to set up a Palestinian State and such hurry undermined the

Palestinian position and led to the results anticipated by the *Hakim*: Israel's intractable attitude about Jerusalem and the issue of the refugees, unashamed US unilateralism. The rift between the two analyses could not be bridged. As the collapse of the Soviet bloc had rocked the world left on its bases, Georges Abache became an all-out opposer, which some thought was a fruitless attitude. He witnessed the officials of his party go to the territories run by the new Authority and he resigned himself to pass on his responsibilities. That was just what Israel was expecting to take on his successors at the head of PFLP; Abu-Ali Mostafa was assassinated and then Ahmad Saadat was kidnapped.

If he "retired" it was only to question his own convictions. Why did Arab nationalism not achieve the building of socialism? Why was the Palestinian revolution's project of liberation defeated? To answer those questions, Georges Habache started a research centre which proposed to pass on his experience to the new generation. This new generation, headed by the Hizbulah shows that one should not lose hope and that Israel's conditions must be turned down. "*Power is at the end of the gun*" Mao again. But, to reach that aim, a united command body of the resistance must be set up. Political Islam can be a circumstantial ally. Georges Habache, though a democrat in his very bone marrow, accepts alternation because he is convinced that Islamic radicalism will eventually melt down against a backdrop of true democracy.

To sum it up, the fight of Georges Habache is situated in a historic prospect. If, as the *Hakim* always proclaimed, the first step towards the liberation of the entire territory was to set up national authority over any liberated spot of land without giving in to the Israeli dictate, his final goal finally meets his fellow country man's Edward Said who, however, was long reviled by Arab nationalists because he advocated peace and coexistence with the Jews: the creation of a democratic and secular State on the territory of Historic Palestine. A crazy dream. An utopian idea. The future will decide.

Fayard (French publisher) has just published a fascinating volume of interview of Georges Habache with Georges Malbrunot: Georges Habache, Revolutionaries never die. Conversations with Georges Malbrunot (Paris 2008 326 p)



Ali Abunimah: One country

By Sam Ayache

Ali Abunimah's book was published in 2006 in the United States. The author was born to a Jaffa – Palestine - family and is living in Chicago. His book is both an autobiography and a political essay on what he coins: “*a bold proposal to end the Israeli-Palestinian impasse*”.

In the very first pages, the author reminisces on an event that left a deep imprint on him as a child: “*Before I was old enough to go to school, I remember, regularly accompanying my mother to the Safeway in Ealing Broadway. One day we were buying oranges and I pointed at some big, beautiful-looking ones "No, not those," my mother said, "they are from Jaffa, they are our oranges". This made no sense to my five-year-old mind. If they were our oranges, why couldn't we have them? My mother explained to me that the citrus groves of Jaffa belonged to Palestinians, to people like us, until the Israeli took them over*”.

Is it not how the issue of Palestine is first posed? Does the recent history of Palestine not essentially boil down to dispossession of the land? Ali Abunimah quotes some figures that shed light on the debate: in 1947 1,293,000 Palestinian Arabs – Christians and Muslims were living in the country and 608,000 Jews. The Jews, mostly recent immigrants were one third of the total population and owned only 6% of the land: the United Nations resolution on the Partition of Palestine however granted them 55% of the whole country. In order to comply with that resolution, two thirds of the inhabitants – who therefore owned 94% of the lands – should have accepted to own 45% of their own country. Such unfair deal could only lead to conflict.

Actually it was a partition that was still more heavily loaded against the majority of the population, which was imposed by the force of arms. The 1947-1948 war created a State of Israel that occupied 78% of the Palestine under British mandate and only left 22% for the majority of its inhabitants dispossessed of their national sovereignty. Ali Abunimah explains how Palestine's people were split off and broken up into at least four sections: the Jews occupied the State of Israel and less than 180,000 Palestinians remained in the new State under military administration, while some 700,000 to 900,000 people were displaced and split into two entities: on the one hand the Gaza Strip administered by Egypt and on the other, the West Bank under Jordan's administration. Numerous inhabitants were exiled to neighbouring countries (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon). Ali Abunimah's family left Jaffa, went first to Jordan then settled in Britain and finally to the USA for good.

In order to illustrate that dispossession, Ali Abunimah quotes “legendary general” Moshed Dayan when, in 1969 at the Technion of Haifa he declared: “*Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You don't even know the names of these Arab villages, and I don't blame you, because these geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books no longer exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahalal arose in the place of Mahlul, Gvat in the place of Jibta, Sarid in the place of Haneifa and Kfar Yehoshoua in the place of Tel-Shaman. There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population*”.

On the basis of that situation where the majority of the population was expelled and dispossessed of the sovereignty over their own country, Ali Abunimah draws a stinging balance sheet of the various “peace plans” and other such “road maps”. According to Ali Abunimah, all those plans failed because they were all crafted taking the division of the country as their basic paradigm, which implies the negation of the right to return for all the refugees. Instead of bringing peace, all those partition plans cannot but generate new wars. There is no evading the rationale: if peace is to prevail and if the right to return is to

be complied with, one must first get away from the framework of partition which Ali Abunimah terms “*An impossible Partition*” and set up a single State that would be “*united and democratic*”

The author even proposes a few prospects for reflection. Ali Abunimah considers that the first thing should be not to reject the Jewish population from Palestine’s territory. According again to Ali Abunimah, Palestinians should take into account the Israeli “return” law that guarantees each Jew, whatever his initial nationality, the right to claim for Israeli nationality and own land in Israel. In the same way, on the point of the actual right to return of all the refugees, his basic view is that compensation in money could be negotiated and that only the elderly refugees would really wish to return to their old homes. Those are highly controversial points, just as his analysis of the agreements passed in North Ireland.

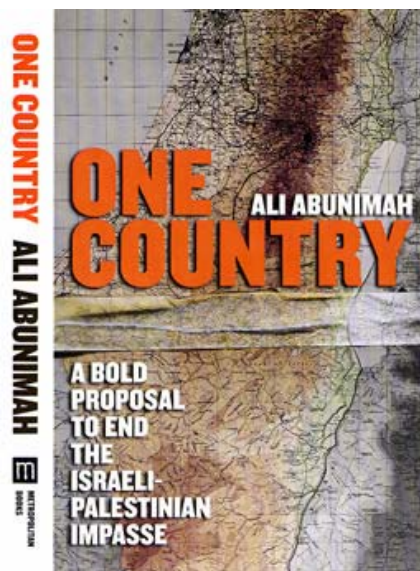
But Ali Abunimah proposes other lines that are much better backed up. So he very relevantly draws the lessons of South Africa. He quotes F. W. De Klerk, the last leader of Apartheid regime who drew the balance sheet of his policies’ failure: the resistance of the Black people could not be defeated; the white minority was compelled to inflict ever more sufferings to keep its ever threatened domination. Escalating violence simply led to an impasse, including for those who supported apartheid; other options had to be chosen. The attempt at setting up “Bantustans”, hemmed in pseudo “independent states” entirely subordinated to the whims and wish of the apartheid regime was in keeping with that desperate attempt at perpetuating apartheid.

Ali Abunimah explains: “*Indeed, it has become increasingly common for Palestinians to refer to the “state” that Israel may be prepared to grant them in small, disconnected, walled-in ghettos as a Bantustan*”. And he quite timely recalls Mandela “*who preferred to stay in prison rather than grant legitimacy to the Bantustans*”. Of course, Ali Abunimah does not miss the opportunity to compare Mandela’s attitude with “*the desperate, foolish, self-serving decision of Yasser Arafat to accept Israel’s proposal as a tinpot ruler of a Trankei on the Mediterranean*”.

The main interest of the book by Ali Abunimah focuses on that powerful demonstration: the political solution cannot be found with the formation of a pseudo “*Palestinian State*” that would be nothing more than “*Transkei on the Mediterranean*” at the mercy of the State of Israel.

On the opposite of what the powers that be are trying to force on the Palestinians, the solution is the formation of a single State on the “Israel Palestine” entity, founded on common citizenship for the Jews and Arabs and equal rights for all the components of the population guaranteeing everyone freedom of conscience.

On that point, Ali Abunimah’s demonstration leaves no space for controversy.



There is hope in Gaza

Miko Peled (5 May 2008)

Israel's assault on the people of Gaza is so horrendous that it will not soon be forgotten. This vicious attempt by Israel to destroy an entire nation has tipped the scales for good and Zionism will forever be remembered as a blemish in the history of the Jewish people. The people of Gaza, however, give us hope and they will forever be remembered for their courage and resilience during these trying times.

The people of Gaza, while being deprived of rights and resources, still find the inner strength and the belief in their destiny to send their children to school. There are close to 800,000 children living in Gaza; they make up more than half of the population. The mothers and fathers and teachers of Gaza are creating hope where others see none, and they are building a future where some would claim there is none. But the price of education in Gaza is dear as the number of children targeted by Israeli violence rises continuously.

In a previous article ("It's time to visit Gaza") I quoted from journalist Charles Glass' *The Tribes Triumphant* and I wish to do so again here. Glass, unlike CNN or any other news agency is not obsessed with violence but is impressed as we all should be by the children: "Thousands and thousands of children's feet padding the dusty paths between their mother's front doors and their schools ... Beautiful youngsters so innocent that they could laugh even in Gaza." One can only imagine the mothers preparing lunches for these children, and making sure their clothes are ready and clean as they send them off to school. But the road to school in Gaza is an uncertain one, and risk of death by Israeli death squads is imminent.

I was deeply moved by Ramzy Baroud's recent piece about his late father ("There are no checkpoints in heaven"). Clearly the man was head and shoulders above most people and clearly he recognized the need to defy the occupation and maintain his dignity as a man and as a Palestinian. He paid dearly for this, because there is nothing more threatening to Israel's occupation than a man who would defy its brutal force.

Ramzy's story is similar to that of another friend of mine who is also from Gaza and who was also prevented from visiting his dying father. This gentleman is a physician and is devoted to saving the lives of children. He is an inspiring man of deep religious conviction and optimism. When I visit Gaza, as I am determined to do before this year is out, I hope that they will be able to join me. In fact, I hope to be able to go with a delegation.

For over 60 years Gaza has proven itself to be an endless source of optimism and courage. Even with a population density that is among the highest in the world, and a lack of resources that seems hopeless, and even with a brutal occupation and severe restrictions that have been part of life for Gazans since the destruction of Palestine some 60 years ago, still Gazans fight on. Resistance to the occupation, education and steadfastness are only a few of the hallmarks of the people of this ancient land.

I recall the first time I heard first-hand about the type of torture that is the daily bread of people in Gaza. It was more than 20 years ago, while I was living in Japan as a student, a young Israeli who I mistook for a friend shared the following story from his days of service as an officer in Israel's "glorious" naval special-forces, or as Israelis call it, "The Commando." He told us how, as a matter of routine he and his unit would patrol the Gaza coast aboard their naval warships. As they came upon a Gazan fishing boat they would stop the boat and force the fishermen to jump into the water. Then, they would blow up the boat. Once the boat was blown to bits, the Israeli sailors would shift their attention to the helpless fishermen in the water. Under gunpoint, one by one, they would force the fishermen count from one to a hundred. One by one these men, who eventually could no longer hold themselves above water, drowned

to death. This, the young Israeli officer said, was done "to instill fear in the Arabs, and to teach them who was boss."

This young Israeli officer was one of Israel's "finest," the product of the finest Zionist education system. He saw no wrong in letting men drown in front of his eyes, and felt no urge to save a helpless human being from certain death. But he is not alone in his disregard for human life.

The Israel newspaper Haaretz's online edition recently published that "[Israeli] Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni on Wednesday defended the Israel Defense Forces' operations against Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip as necessary for the advancement of peace negotiations." According to Haaretz, Livni said: "I would expect that when civilians are harmed by deliberate terrorism, people won't make a comparison between them and Palestinian civilians that are harmed during Israel's defense operations." Furthermore, according to Haaretz: "Livni expressed concern at what she termed a growing trend of delegitimization of Israel in world public opinion. Livni does not see the connection between Israeli actions and the reaction of the world community."

Livni is no different than the young officer who murdered Gazan fishermen. She and other members of the Israeli cabinet along with the military top brass see no problem with Israeli forces killing Palestinian children, and they seek and often receive the support of the world community. In their minds, Palestinians do not deserve the same rights as Israeli Jews, and therefore it is permissible to torture them and murder their children. What is not permissible is to criticize Israel for the killing innocent Palestinians. Livni and her comrades are disturbed that the rest of us do not see this as clearly as they do.

But rather than give attention to the lies and accusations of Zionist militants, we would do well to focus our attention to the people of Gaza and in particular to the children who are forced to live in this concentration camp. These children and their brave and caring parents represent hope in its truest form. They need courageous people who, like Ramzy Baroud's late father, are willing to defy the brutal Zionist regime but who unlike him are free of the restraints of that regime. People who live in Israel and the US need to stand by the people of Gaza and help them to tear down the walls of this ghetto.

Miko Peled is an Israeli peace activist and writer living in the US. He is co founder of the Elbanna Peled Foundation in memory of Smadar Elhanan and Abir Aramin. Peled is the son of the late Israeli General Matti Peled.

Let Justice be the Salvation of Israelis and Palestinians The Hope of a Victimized People

By Georges Bisharat, June 3, 2008.

I am the son of a Palestinian father. Through countless stories about his family, I absorbed the ethic that the strong must help the less fortunate.

My grandfather, Hanna Ibrahim Bisharat -- "Papa" to us -- was fluent in Arabic, English, French, German and Turkish and had studied agriculture in Switzerland before World War I. He began introducing mechanized farming to Palestine and dreamed of establishing his own agriculture school. During World War I, our family harbored Australian and New Zealander soldiers who, while fighting the Turks in Palestine, were caught behind enemy lines. They offered refuge to a Syrian sheik who was fleeing powerful enemies. During the riots in Palestine in 1929, Papa sheltered Jewish friends in his stately home in the Talbiyeh quarter of West Jerusalem. Little did he expect that this home would be expropriated in 1948 and serve as the home of Golda Meir -- she of the famous quip that the Palestinian people "did not exist."

Christian soldiers, a Muslim sheik, Jewish neighbors -- they were all human beings in need, and we were blessed to be able to help them.

My Palestinian family, in its tradition of compassion and hospitality, is not exceptional. During my last trip to the West Bank, I met a man whose parents had been driven out of what became Israel in 1948 and had settled in the Balata refugee camp outside Nablus. The Friday before, as he was taking his son to prayer, an Israeli tank suddenly wheeled into their empty street, spewing heavy machine-gun fire. The man saw his son stumble, then plunge face first into the stairs ahead of him. When the father reached him, the boy had swallowed his teeth and blood blossomed across his shirt. Within minutes he turned blue, his internal organs destroyed. Amid Abu Sayr, age 7, died before reaching the hospital. No protests nor disturbances had preceded this incident, and no one could explain the tank gunner's zeal.

As the father related this to me and my companions, he saw my eyes film with tears. Then this humble man -- a mechanic, as I recall -- embraced me and patted my back. Two days after the most searing experience of his life, he offered comfort to me. "Just tell the world how they stole my heart," he whispered gently. I was reminded, yet again, of the deep courage, resilience and magnanimity of the Palestinian people.

I am also the son of an American mother, who is from an early settler family. Our ancestor, Samuel Johnson, participated in this country's constitutional convention. From my mother's side I took the ethic of civic responsibility -- the conviction that in a democratic society, we are the government and that when we fail to exercise true popular sovereignty (by educating ourselves, voting, challenging political leaders and speaking out) we lose the right to call ourselves a free people.

Both of these family traditions meld in my concern over Middle East peace.

I have already suggested that the United States should respectfully counsel Israel to abandon ethnic separatism and embrace equality. Not the equality and pluralism among Jews from different origins that Judea described the other day, but equality between Jews and Palestinians and among all human beings, regardless of religion, race or ethnicity.

I understand why some Jews turned to the vision of ethnic separatism that Zionism offered, particularly after World War II; the reasons are obvious. But Zionism has been a tragic deviation from Jewish

universalist ethics, a never-ending nightmare for Palestinians and a source of tension and instability in the Middle East and the broader world. A growing number of Jews and even some prominent Israelis -- like Avram Burg, Meron Benvenisti and Daniel Gavron -- concur in this assessment.

What does it say that the most prosperous and secure Jewish community in the world is here in the multicultural United States, flourishing under a regime of equal rights, while the Jews of Israel, armed to the teeth, live in chronic insecurity and are fortifying an apartheid wall?

Those who have dominated others always resist losing their monopoly of power and fear vengeance from those they have oppressed. White South Africans defended apartheid on just those grounds. But as South Africa has shown, a blood bath need not ensue, especially when the movement for political change is firmly committed, as was the African National Congress, to equality and reconciliation. If Israelis could muster the courage to admit moral responsibility for the injustices they have inflicted on the Palestinians, they could not find a more forgiving and generous people.

Israelis have comforted themselves over time with a series of myths, among them: that Palestine was a "land without people for a people without a land;" that the indigenous Arabs they encountered upon arriving in Palestine were little but a scattering of individuals with no sense of collective identity (as Judea [Pearl] put it a few days ago, peasants who had never heard the word "sovereignty"); that the settlers' European outlook and culture made them superior custodians of the country; that Jewish settlers knew the country's landscape even better than the Palestinians who had cultivated it for centuries; and that Palestinians loved their fields, orchards, villages and towns less than Zionist colonizers, and thus, fled in 1948 not in response to the massacres, rapes and systematic campaign of terror mounted by Jewish militias, but simply walked away from them to mysteriously disappear. The first step toward genuine equality between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs involves liberation from this colonialist mind-set.

I am impelled in equal parts by foreboding and hope. Far from modelling equality for Israel, the United States instead is following the Israeli model of a permanent "war on terror." Now, like Israel, we have our military occupation of an Arab country. Israeli jurists counsel our State Department on the legal justifications for targeted assassinations. Israeli colonels train our Iraq-bound Marines in urban warfare tactics developed in the Jenin refugee camp. Israeli security contractors teach American police chiefs and airport personnel how to racially profile Arab and Muslim travellers. Israeli policymakers -- who strongly supported the Iraq invasion -- now egg our leaders on to a new confrontation with Iran.

There is only pain ahead for everyone on this path of confrontation and violence. We must find a way back from the brink and guide Israel back with us. Nothing could enhance the security of the United States more than a just and therefore durable peace in Israel and Palestine.

I am hopeful. In the West's shame over the Nazi Holocaust, we relaxed our normal skepticism and, deferring to Zionism's demands, accepted principles we would have denied anywhere else. But more people are recognizing that a Jewish state built on expulsion, repression and ethnic privilege will never know rest. Justice, equality and mutual respect are the salvation of both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. Ahead, perhaps distantly, a bright future awaits them.

George E. Bisharat is a professor of law at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco and writes frequently on law and politics in the Middle East. Published in DIALOGUE with the author's permission.

Readers' column

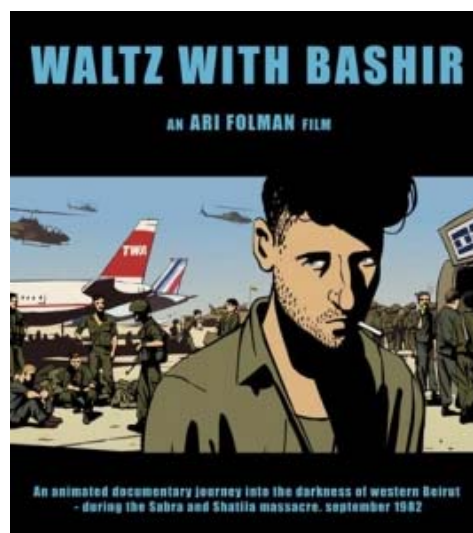
Reactions about *Waltz With Bashir*, the film by Ari Folman.

Waltz With Bashir is quite overwhelming. Director Ari Folman chooses to deal with the 1982 slaughtering of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Lebanon under the stark form of an animated film. An option for an uncomplicated medium that pushes the drama backstage to highlight the content.

This Israeli film does not conceal responsibilities: the top military and the government are pointed at as the inspirers and organisers of those slaughters carried out with the protection of Israeli armoured tanks by Phalangists (Christian Lebanese militias) wearing Israeli army uniforms. The whole film is shown as a quest: twenty years after the slaughters, an Israeli who was serving in the army at the time is trying to pick up the threads of his recollections of those obliterated events which he however participated in.

Interviewing one witness, then another, he patches his memories together. But the events of one day are missing. A friend of his, a psychiatrist asks him "Isn't it because those (Palestinian) camps bring back the memory of other camps which are a feature of your own personal history? Where were your parents during the war?" "Auschwitz" he replies. Further on, the film shows those women, children, old people with their hands up, driven out of the camp by the Israeli-Phalangist soldiery. A journalist friend asks our former soldier: "Doesn't this picture ring a bell? Doesn't this Palestinian child with his hands held up remind you of the Jewish child in the Warsaw ghetto walking with his hands up?" The former soldier's blotted out memories come back when he stumbles on the missing jigsaw piece: those Palestinian women screaming in agonised grief when they come across the mutilated and ripped bodies of their families, dashing towards an Israeli roadblock held by a soldier who faces them. He is that soldier. Those are the only images where, for a few seconds, the film shows actual pictures of those Palestinian women rushing out of the slaughtered camps back in 1982.

That is the end of the film. That is the point where the spectator starts thinking: can the children who escaped the camps in their turn become slaughterers in other camps without qualms? They cannot, the director answers; he does not – and it is not his role – articulate any political solution. That is what the spectator must set to thinking about for himself. What is the political solution which would once and for all prevent yesterday's victims from being today's butchers and enable all the components of the regions to live freely in a free country with equal rights.



DIALOGUE

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE
IN DEFENCE OF THE RIGHT OF RETURN, FOR ONE STATE SOLUTION
END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, HEBREW AND FRENCH**

www.dialogue-review.com

**Dialogue, 87 rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis—75010 Paris (France)
Editor : Jean-Pierre Barrois.**