
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

The democratic State is the ultimate solution
for the Jews and the Arabs, *by Salah Salah.*

Apartheid and Palestine, *by Tiyani Lybon Mabasa.*

A Review *by J. Werschtein* of "Notes on occupation"
a book by Eric Hazan published in France in October 2006.

The Israeli Dilemma in Palestine, *by Ghada Karmi.*

Palestine, Peace, not Apartheid!

About the book by Jimmy Carter, *by Francesca S. Rosa.*

International Day of Women: *Marie-Claude Schidlower's*
intervention at the March 8th UGTA meeting in Algiers.

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Introduction

For many years now, discussion has been going on in the democratic and working-class movement at international level. This discussion aims at working out a solution that might put an end to a situation that no democrat can tolerate, the situation of the Palestinian people, of those millions of men, women children, deprived of every right and who for about sixty years now have been living like pariahs.

It will be clear to all who read this issue of Dialogue that, irrespective of their political opinions, they can in no way sit back as spectators and resign themselves to the ongoing hardship and misery that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people everywhere.

Some of our readers have sent contributions and reflections, which we add to the debate and which remind us that a people that oppresses another people can on no account be a free people.

The objective of Dialogue is that the fundamental interests of all the populations living on the historical territory of Palestine should prevail. Through the discussion that is taking place in this journal, is it not true that Arab and Jewish activists prove there is a way out, that in spite of the countless difficulties that keep arising, it is possible to work towards a solution whereby Jewish and Arab workers in Palestine will be able to live as equals, on the same land and in the same State?

The democratic State is the ultimate prospect for Jews and Arabs*

By Salah Salah, a member of the Palestinian National Council and President of the Committee of Refugees

Yaacov Sharett, the son of the second Prime Minister of the State of Israel, has published a book, called *And Old and New land*. It is clear that this Jewish/ Israeli/ Zionist laments the State of Israel on the basis of a few arguments, the most important one being in his opinion that *"the State of Israel masks its fascism and injustice with a curtain that will not forever be of iron and which is bound to come down very soon."*

The former Israeli Minister of Justice Tommy Lapid, has written an article in the *Ma'ariv* daily entitled *The Dance of Ghosts*, which adds renewed strength to Sharett's predictions. He writes: *"In no other democratic State has a President been charged with rape, a Prime Minister indicted, the Minister of Finance charged with bribery, the Minister of Justice indicted, the Chief of Staff forced to resign – just like the Police High Commissioner(and doubts have been raised about his successor's sincerity). The man in charge of the Treasury has been obliged to step down after being found in breach of the law and both the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the president of National Security have broken the law."*

That is the situation that led the famous Israeli commentator Sever Plocker to say in *Yediot Aharonot* that *"today when you travel to a foreign country it is difficult to say you are an Israeli. You are no longer held in high esteem as a result, especially after the war that ended in defeat, the administrative and moral corruption of the leadership, the emergence of the police mafia, the collapse of the values connected with social justice and finally the privatisation of the Degania kibbutz, which was regarded as the gem of the Zionist occupation plan."*

That probably led the former President of the Knesset, Abraham Burg, to state that: *"The State of Israel has become a State of settlers led by a gang of corrupt people."*

Professor Israel Aumann and Professor Aaron Ciechanover sum up their opinion on *"the collapse of values in Israel"* in the following way: *"Israel is going in the wrong direction, sinking into obscurity and probably heading towards destruction. Not because of its foreign enemies but because of us, the people, and because of those who govern, or rather claim to be governing."*

Zehava Galon *"distinguishes three kinds of corruption: benefits derived from government, bribes and political appointments. This corruption involves first the Head of Government, then Ministers, and spreads to the members of Knesset and finally to top-ranking civil servants."*

Suffice it to mention the evidence above. I will add that last year, at the annual Congress of Herzliya – whose purpose is to define Zionist strategy – voices were raised for the first time questioning the future of Israel.

The elements I have mentioned highlight the moral side – the corruption and fascist aspects that threaten the Zionist entity and society from within, while playing down the danger from outside.

Israel, supported by the capitalist system led by the USA, relies on its invincible strength and therefore refuses any political solution that might give the Palestinians some of their rights.

– It will not abide by UN resolutions, especially resolution 194, which demands for refugees the right to return to their homes and land from which they were evicted in 1948; resolution 181, the so-called partition plan, which gives Palestinians the right to create a State on 46% of the historical land of Palestine; resolution 242, which bans the occupation of someone else's land by

force and asks Israel to stick to the 1967 borders.

– It will not implement the Oslo accords, even though they include unjust provisions against the rights of Palestinians. On the contrary, since 2002, Israel has completely reneged on the accords and reoccupied the zones under the control of the Palestinian Authority, cut off Jerusalem from the West Bank and is still building the racist separation wall in defiance of the resolution passed by the International Criminal Tribunal of The Hague. Israel is separating Jordan from the West Bank through the military occupation of the border, thus imposing a cruel economic and financial embargo leading to unemployment, poverty and diseases spreading. Thanks to its collaborators, it incites Palestinians to kill one another. Israel imposes measures that deprive the Palestinian State of any meaning and wreck any prospect of a political solution.

– It refuses the Arab initiative put forward by the Congress of the Arab Summit in spite of it containing attractive elements which Israelis had never dreamed of so far.

The military superiority and the invincible strength of Israel stimulate the racist tendency of Zionism embodied in Israel. The history of Israel abounds with racist attacks. It reveals its racism and the massacres that punctuate its record. Here I will content myself with one voice, one cry, which denounces the racist policies pursued by the State of Israel; I am referring to Amira Hass, who wrote in Haaretz: *"Where are you? And what about you, who carry out research into Nazism, the Holocaust, the Soviet Gulags, where are you? Could you possibly all support the laws enforcing systematic discrimination? (...) Could all of you possibly support the racist law on Citizenship, which forbids an Israeli Arab to live with his family in his own house? Could you possibly condone the renewed expropriations of land and the subsequent demolition of orchards, which allow settlers to establish new settlements and open up another road to be used exclusively by Jews? Could you possibly support the shelling and the firing of missiles, the killing of old and young people in the Gaza strip?"* She concludes by saying: *"Israel is a democracy for its Jews."*

There are other truths that Jews, not only in Israel but everywhere in the world, should know. Such truths should give serious cause for concern about the future of Israel and its existence as a Zionist project aimed at creating a racist Jewish State to the detriment of another people, and on a land which is theirs, only because of a divine promise, dating back thousands of years. Those truths show that the "invincible" military power" has suffered many ordeals and setbacks, confirming that it can be defeated, for example:

– During the 1973 war, when the Egyptian forces crossed the famous and magnificent Bar lev line and the Syrian forces reached the outskirts of the city of Tabaria. It is only thanks to the collaboration between Egypt and the USA that the two Arab armies were unable to win back at least Gaza and the Golan and force Israel to negotiate on its existence.

– Israel held out for quite a long time in Southern Lebanon as its occupation relied on a local militia, but it was forced to withdraw its Lebanese collaborators in 2000.

– When the Israeli forces attempted to crush resistance in the Lebanese territories, it was this resistance movement that inflicted a bitter defeat on them in August 2006. The consequences are still sending tremors through every structure of the Zionist entity, whether political, military or judiciary and in each case at the highest level.

– In Palestine, in spite of a ruthless occupation, of crimes, just as appalling as those committed by the Nazis, carried out by the armed forces, and a form of Apartheid even more horrendous than the one implemented in South Africa, the resistance is still alive. It might subside or recede for some time but it keeps coming back. In 1967 there was *"the Guevara revolution in Gaza"*, which started after the Israeli invasion of the Gaza strip and lasted for 3 years. Later on there was the 1987 Intifada and the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2000, which is still going on despite the truce and the internal disagreements between Hamas and Fatah. And before that, the Palestinian revolution, which began in the sixties, was able to foil all the plans promoted by

the USA and some European countries with a view to liquidating the Palestinian cause. It forced Israel to recognise the Palestinian people and the PLO leadership, which was then granted observer status at the United Nations. Those gains were made after the PLO had been able to overcome the security measures taken by the Israeli army and mount bold operations in the air, at sea, on land, thus proving its capability, that it could not be defeated by the Israeli army. Israel was then obliged to compromise with the PLO, which became a partner that could help bring about peace, that the Oslo accords were not able to achieve.

And there are changes which Jews in Israel and throughout the world have to take into account:

- The changes that are occurring in the world are not going to help the USA remain the only dominant power. They are in an abyss in Iraq and Afghanistan. They will not be able to pull through as they did in Vietnam. That is what led them to resume talks with Syria and Iran. And yet the USA had so far continued to refuse to meet them because they were part of the "axis of evil that supports terrorism" in the world.
- The number of rebel States keeps increasing, especially in what the USA considers its "backyard.", Latin America, Cuba is no longer the only country. There are already Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia and other countries. China and Russia have broken their isolation to play an active role in the face of the USA's roguish and unilateralist attitude to peoples.

Those changes encourage several European countries to give up an attitude to the USA, dictated by clientelism. That will also help pave the way for multi polarity and weaken the US stronghold on international institutions such as the United Nations.

Changes in public opinion at the international level should also be taken into account. An opinion poll shows 50% think Israel represents the greatest threat to international peace. Churchill, in a document that has been published recently, stated that the Jews were responsible for some of the treatment the Nazis inflicted on them. A large organisation has been created in Britain that denounces blind clientelism towards Israel, the extreme brutality Palestinians have to suffer

and the fact that the rights of the Palestinian individual are denied. In France a petition has been signed against Sarkozy, as he lumped Jews together as being right-wing, which is an attack on their French citizenship. In Spain, the municipality of Ciempozuelos has decided to "*commemorate ethnic cleansing directed against the Palestinian people instead of commemorating the holocaust.*" Let us add to this the creation these past few years of dozens, or most likely hundreds, of committees and associations which all over the world support the Palestinian people, endorse and defend its cause and condemn Israeli policy. All these factors are not going to force all those who feel concerned about the future of Israel to reconsider their losing strategy, based on the injustice endured by the Palestinian people.

With respect to what has just been said what are then, the options regarding the future of Israel?

The first alternative: the factors that threaten the existence of Israel are going to increase. Either the internal factors mentioned by Israeli Jews or external factors which might result from unexpected changes and which are far from impossible, at the Arab or international level. In both cases the existence of the State of Israel, according to the evidence given by Jews, Israelis, Zionists, is threatened.

The second alternative: Israel goes on with its racist policy towards Palestinians and refuses the return of refugees to the land and properties they have been deprived of since 1948, while thwarting any opportunity to create a sovereign Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza strip. The government and the Israeli leaders do not realise the seriousness and the impact of this racist policy, which will bring about:

1. The development of patriotic feelings within the Palestinian people, even inside Israel; on the Palestinian campuses, in Arab countries and everywhere in the world. I am referring in this respect to 10 million people who have shown their patience and their determination to conquer their rights. No Palestinian leadership, no Arab or international pressure, not even the repression and massacres they are subjected to, can force them to give up their objectives. It means the conflict will last even longer and Israel will suffer even heavier losses. Israel should entertain no illusion as to its relationship with Arab countries or its embassies and representation in some

Arab countries. History has proved that no one can predict the power of revolutions.

2. The birth of Jewish movements and tendencies which refuse to be involved in Israel's action, either for ethical reasons or because they consider that the racism used by Israel contradicts universal values and human rights, or because they are persuaded that the Palestinian cause is a just cause, or to preserve their citizenship in their country, or because they are clear-sighted, and therefore able to realise how dangerous this racism is for the Jews and for the existence of the State of Israel.

The third alternative: is put forward by the historian Benny Morris: *"Either the Arabs will throw all the Jews into the river, or the Jews will throw all the Arabs into the sea."* His prediction is based on a religious belief that condemns Ben Gurion on the grounds that he did not drive out more Palestinians, and blames the Palestinians for the failure of peace negotiations and the failure of the two-State solution. In short, he demands a State for the Jews and proposes driving out the Arabs.

The fourth alternative: is the acceptance of a secular and democratic State. This possibility is the least popular with political circles. However many Arab and Jewish Palestinians, together with

many of their sympathisers, think it is the most just solution and the one that best meets the aspirations of both sides.

This solution satisfies the determination – demonstrated by both sides – to live in a non racist democratic State, a State that is safe for its children, who could live together in peace in a society where all citizens are equal, where there is no racial or religious discrimination. That State would establish good neighbourly relations that would promote development and common interests, without any conflict or hostility. It would provide refugees with a safe place and allow those who want to return home to do so and would also let Jews decide whether they wish to stay within the framework of the democratic State or return home with their possessions, to the country they left.

Jerusalem would be the capital of that State; that town is so important to the three religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism. Believers have the right to practice each religion in mutual respect.

That is a choice that puts an end to the conflict, halts the war, protects life and property and makes it possible to develop a region that has all the necessary assets. It is a double AA choice that establishes peace in the country of peace.

** Translated from Arabic by A.M.*

Apartheid and Palestine

**Speech made by Tiyani Lybon Mabasa, President of the Socialist Party of Azania
at the International Conference in Solidarity
with Palestinian Women.(December, 9, 10, 11, 2006)**

Ms Louisa Hanoune, Secretary General of the Workers Party of Algeria, His Excellency, the Ambassador of Palestine, Trade Unions Leaders, the National Peoples Assembly and All protocol observed, I greet you all!

My name is Tiyani Lybon Mabasa, I am President of the Socialist Party of Azania, better known as South Africa, the land of former President Nelson Mandela. I come from a country that introduced Apartheid to the world that obnoxious system that institutionalised white racism. I have personally lived and suffered the full impact of the indignities of the Apartheid system. No human being deserves to live under such conditions or under such a system, a system that takes and destroy all the human rights and dignity of an individual and reduce one to nothing more than a beast of burden.

In South Africa, Black people, the overwhelming Black majority were expelled and herded into 13% of the land, the most arid and unproductive land, the small White Minority, all of them of European descent, took for themselves everything, they took possession of 87% of the most productive and wealthy land. They stole the land with great wealth and Natural resources. Black people were dispossessed of the land and everything in order to make them an ever available pool of cheap labour with no rights or recourse at all.

The 1913 and 1935 Land Acts made sure that Black people could not own land except limited access to the designated 13%, which were Bantustans where people were divided according to languages spoken and ethnicity, thus even the 13% was all also balkanised lands of people who had lived, shared and married among themselves, were thus divided by Apartheid Laws.

The concrete result of that division, is that today, even under new conditions, the land question in Azania/South Africa has not been resolved. The

Governments Agrarian Land Reform has only impacted on 4% of the total land. White people, 62 000 white families, farmers, institutions and interests, own more than 80% of the land in South Africa, this is according to a report given at the Government Land Summit in August 2005. This was the direct result of the negotiations of the CODESA (Conference for a Democratic South Africa) Agreements at Kempton Park (1990-1994). White people won at those negotiations a great concession for land, wealth and sovereignty.

Black people in South Africa lost everything through the Property Rights Clause. Thus white property became sanctified and Black poverty became a true legal reality. It is from this perspective that white people are unwilling to let go of all stolen lands. This is what makes the so-called South African miracle so base-freedom without, ownership of land wealth and sovereignty. Those who own these things, naturally control the politics of the country, any country for that matter.

It is from these shared experiences that we as South Africans are in full positive solidarity with the people of Palestine. What we know though is that the Apartheid, framework, no matter how many military tanks, and military prowess it possesses how many powerful friends, it has it can be divided. The struggle for social justice and peace will undoubtedly triumph over the scourge of injustice.

When we see children and woman being killed or herded into prisons, we are reminded of our pain, the same happens when we see them being driven from their homes and lands into arid and useless land. We do not believe that justice and peace are possible without Palestinians returning to their historical homes. There can be no real lasting peace without a single, state where Arabs and Jews can leave side by side with full and equal religious rights.

There can be no development, stability and security without Palestinians being allowed to organise their independent trade unions in order to defend and advance their democratic rights which are the basis of civilisation as we know it. The struggle of the Palestinians Worker within the 1948 borders like those of woman of Nazareth is not a simply a workers struggle, or a civil rights struggle but like in Apartheid South Africa is human rights struggle. This struggle put into sharp focus the struggle for self determination.

The World cannot remain neutral or impotent in the face of a malady of such enormous proportion. It is a malady we have to mobilise in the same way or even more that what we did against Apartheid Regime in South Africa. It is not a magnanimous or benevolent gesture but it is the struggle in defence of humanity, a struggle to defend all the gains made by workers through struggle and for civilisation as we know and

appreciated it today. We cannot “stand by and watch as the tears go by”. We all have to take a stand against powerful monsters of capital and markets that want to sink the World into Barbarism as we today watch what is happening in Palestine, Iraq, Sudan or any other place in the world that is caught in the spiral of capitalist inspired war and conflict.

In South Africa, we all have stated our position on Apartheid Israel or all the machinations of the Hebrew state. Nelson Mandela, Archbishops Desmond Tutu and Njongonkulu Ndungane, Cosatu, our party, The Socialist Party of Azania and many other organisations. We call for solidarity with the people of Palestine, particularly woman and children and mobilise against any form of Apartheid any where in the world. We know that victory is certain for civilisation, victory is certain for the people of Palestine and victory is certain for the workers in the world.

A review of "Notes on the occupation – Nablus, Qalqilyah, Hebron" by Eric Hazan

By J. Werschtein

In October 2006, *Notes on the Occupation*, written by Eric Hazan, was published by *La Fabrique editions* (in french), of which he is the editor and founder. It is the result of his month-long visit to the West Bank and includes 120 pages of precise descriptions, interviews, personal accounts and also sketches, photographs, that depict the implementation of the "two-State policy" that has been imposed by the Israeli State, the USA and the European Union since the Oslo accords.

From the outset, the author introduces: "*Michel Warschawski (who) encouraged me to undertake this task and organised my trip with his customary care ...He reread the manuscript (...) the final text owed a lot to (his) critical and friendly suggestions (...)*" We could therefore expect *Notes on the Occupation* to promote the prospect — as Warschawski does — of "*the recognition of a Palestinian State having the use of an unbroken territory within the 1967 borders.*" (Which de facto legitimises the Zionist State) as the inescapable future for the Palestinian people?

Eric Hazan has published a book by Michel Warschawski, and also other "dissident" Israeli authors such as Amira Hass, Ilan Pappé, Tanya Reinhart, Ella Shohat and the great Palestinian writer Edward Said.

He has this to say about the moment when he made his trip: "*These notes were written in May and June 2006, a calm period in the West Bank when no more than half a dozen young men were killed each week ...*"

In fact, on May 25th 2006, as Eric Hazan was in the West Bank, press releases reported that Ehud Olmert was coming back to Israel from a visit to Washington, where Bush had congratulated him and pledged his support. Eric Hazan writes: "*There is no such thing as a conflict between Israel and Palestinians. There is a people*

standing up as best it can to the settlers and the occupation army, in spite of complicity from 'Western democracies', all Arab governments and some of its leaders. The dominant discourse seeks to make the real situation impenetrable."

Then, on June 26th, Israel's artillery and jet fighters were unleashed on the people of Gaza. Civilian infrastructures were bombarded: the main power station was razed to the ground. The hospital and the people had to live without electricity or water. Dozens of people were dying. Tanks stormed into Gaza. A third of the members of the Palestinian parliament were arrested and thrown into jail. A few days later, the Israeli war machine pounced on Lebanon, which it pounded with bombs. Hundreds of people died. On July 21st, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice commented: "*What we're seeing here, in a sense, are the growing, the birth pangs of a new Middle East and whatever we do, we have to be certain that we're pushing forward to the new Middle East not going back to the old one.*"

It is in such a situation that Eric Hazan decided to publish his *Notes on the Occupation*, which he wrote during the "*calm period*" that preceded. In them he exposes the barbarous situation imposed on an entire people, the complete deadlock into which it was cornered, the speedy establishment of Zionist settlements, the cantonisation of the pseudo "Palestinian State", the confinement of Palestinians and the annexation of their land as a result of the building of the wall and the integration of the Palestinian Authority into this political set up. He describes the Palestinian roads closed off by checkpoints, the concrete blocks, the security barriers as Palestinians are not allowed to travel on Israeli roads and motorways. Military presence can be felt and seen everywhere: in the camps around the cities, in the guardrooms. Not to mention the night raids on houses, the police checks, the people missing,

being abducted, assassinated. The author describes "family lives": only grandparents and very young children are left; the parents, sisters and brothers, have either been sent to prison or killed. And then there are the incredible acts of violence committed by fanatical settlers, who are sure not only of never being punished but also of being protected by the army, and who use violence against the Palestinian children going to school, against the shopkeepers and the passers-by pelted, with beer bottles or paving stones. They set fire to the poor crops, pollute the springs with their garbage. In a photograph, there is graffiti written on a door, it reads: "GAS THE ARABS."

When approaches are made to the armed forces asking that they protect the population, the reply is that they are there *"to protect the settlers."* Not the Palestinians (...). *"Lots of Buildings are razed in all places. It is the most vulnerable buildings that are blown up with dynamite (...). In fact buildings are being destroyed every day: each time the army carries out a raid at night (...). The extent of the damage, the bullet holes, can be seen everywhere. The walls are covered with portraits of 'martyrs.'* —The author adds: *I don't like this word —. The old town is a constant target for the army. You don't have to be a political activist to become involved in resistance, it goes without saying ..."*

One must read these notes written without any pomposity, as if they were in a way the trivial pieces of a puzzle which, once they are fitted together, make up a real indictment, of barbarism of course, and of the *"war on terror"* waged by Bush. Bush uses his *"two-State policy"* with the Palestinian Authority to erase any future for the people that has been fighting for fifty-nine years, to stifle its legitimate desire to build at long last *"a single State on the territory of historical Palestine, an idea which has now become almost self-evident"* Eric Hazan concludes on the basis of the many testimonies he gathered. Women, men, local councillors, Fatah and PFLP activists, were interviewed about their lives, prison, torture, the Oslo accords, the Palestinian Authority, resistance, collaboration ...

The author has collected the memories of a *"hero of our time"*, Bassam Chaaka, who was the Mayor of Nablus in the 70s and who, *"after the occupation forces had tried everything to make him submit, eventually planted a bomb in his car. This attack made him world-famous but cost him his two legs."* He gives an account of the struggle he has been engaged in since 1948 in support of Palestinian fighters *"Since 1967, I have always*

campaigned for the unity of Palestine, for the recognition of the PLO as a representative body, and against what the Israelis were proposing, in other words, a Palestinian protectorate that would implement Israeli policy in the West Bank, which was what the Oslo accords were about — a Palestinian government to carry out Israeli policy — that is something I have always refused. All over the West Bank and Gaza, we won (in municipal elections) a certain number of towns; we had put forward lists of candidates calling for national unity and the rejection of collaboration (...). We did our best here to organise an economy that would not depend on Israel: we launched a campaign aimed at bringing electricity to Nablus, and the region, we created our own water company (...). We had not been allowed to build schools: we did build schools. The money should have gone through an Israeli bank (...), not a penny went to Israel. At the time of Camp David, in 1978, when Sadate visited Jerusalem, we detected the first signs of an agreement between some Palestinian leaders and the Israelis.

But they were still forced to hide, because the PLO Executive Committee was opposed to such contacts (...). In 1982, after Lebanon was invaded, the signals were clearer: the idea was to give Palestinians some autonomy, and in exchange Israeli policies would be implemented (...). Neither the PLO leadership, nor even the Fatah leadership, were informed of the Oslo negotiations. They were secret accords, reached at behind the backs of the Palestinian people and for that matter of the Arab peoples. When Eric Hazan asks: "What should have been done then?" He gets the reply: "No concessions should have been made, we should have kept to our path. As we threw in the towel, we got nothing, no wonder. The alleged peace process speeded up the colonisation of the West Bank and increased repression (...), negotiations like those held in Oslo can lead nowhere, even if some people still cling to them; they forget our people rejects the idea of negotiating, as was obvious in the result of parliamentary elections...we have resistance with no policies. Before Oslo the world understood our position because resistance and policies went together. Now we've got to deal with, not only Israel and the Americans, not only all Arab countries, but also some of the Palestinian leaders."

Eric Hazan asks: *"If you had to give a political definition of yourself, which word would you choose?"* The former Mayor of Nablus answers: *"A citizen."*

From Nablus, Qalqilyah, and Hebron, the author shows the diverse tools of *"the great military and bureaucratic machine, called in a rather arbitrary way, occupation (...)"* For instance the wall *"is not a way of protecting the settlements. It serves another purpose: it is a question of locking the Palestinians into its mesh, enclosing them in enclaves where life will no longer be possible — and it is already so —"*. He draws a sketch: *"there you can see the way things evolved, the three stages and aims of annexation: to isolate, to enclose, to empty"*. One of the settlers' best jokes is to pollute Palestinian land. From a hill at the top of a settlement such as El kana, they pour their waste water down below, towards Beit Amin, where there is an overpowering stink...

Who can honestly suggest that for Palestinians the future lies in "Two States within the 1967 borders"?

Eric Hazan continues his description of the local situation: *"Hebron is divided into two parts: Hebron 1, 18 km², 100 000 inhabitants, vaguely under Palestinian control and Hebron 2, 5 km², 30 000 inhabitants plus the settlers, under total Israeli control...400 settlers are protected by the army and make life impossible for 130 000 people...And here the army is at home: each night soldiers raid some house or other to arrest 'suspects'. Is it not a case of the Israeli State trying to establish Bush's new Middle East? The main wall is going to be extended and encircle the West Bank first in the south, then in the east. The whole Jordan valley will remain on the Israeli side. When the Olmert plan is completely implemented, the West Bank will be divided into fifteen territorial units (...) six groups of Israeli settlements and a number of isolated settlements that will be connected to one another, situated in places that make it possible to control the area (...) On the other hand there will be eight centres for the Palestinian population, with no territorial continuity, linked together by a network of secondary roads and tunnels, totally controlled by the Israelis thanks to walls, gates in the walls, "terminals" and checkpoints."* That, Eric Hazan concludes, will be called the *"Palestinian State."*

During a programme on the ARTE TV French channel devoted to Michel Warschawski, the latter claimed to adhere to the principles of *"a Trotsky who is dreaming, dreaming of what the world could be like (...) with this determination to move forward beyond the present and reach*

Utopia, at the moment when you are in fact overwhelmed by daily reality" and he then goes on to say about Palestine: *"There are some anti Zionists. The Palestinians for instance are by definition anti Zionists since Zionism is the negation of their people. They are anti Zionists but they accept the reality of the State of Israel. Out of sheer pragmatism, they say to themselves: OK, that is a reality. To distort, de structure, destroy that reality would be too difficult and would require great sacrifices from everyone (...)"*. That is the way Warschawski talks about the painful fight, the relentless resistance which has been put up for fifty-nine years by the Palestinian people, a people which, under the worst circumstances, continues to claim the right to return to their land for the refugees, equal rights for both Jews and Arabs within a single democratic and secular Palestinian State, on the whole territory of historical Palestinian, including its two components... Eric Hazan denounces the daily barbarism which the State of Israel, the Americans, the European Union, the Arab States and the Palestinian Authority, each in their own manner, inflict on the Palestinian people. He also highlights the resistance mounted by this people, its refusal to die, to give up, its struggle, its dignity, despite the betrayals.

Warschawski, during that TV programme about himself, went on to say: *"There is a metaphor I like very much, even if, like all metaphors, it has its limits: I have a Palestinian friend (but isn't he rather talking about his own shadow?) who compares the State of Israel to a child who would be born of rape. A rape is a rape. It is intolerable. It is a crime. But the child is a child. And supposing I am his mother, the land, I am the mother of this child, should I love him less because this child is the fruit of rape? (...) Somehow, it is true, the State of Israel is the product of the rape of Palestine, of its destruction, of the negation of the other. But this national community ought to be accepted for what it is, that is to say a child born of rape. By the way it is to some extent the position I advocate."* That is what Warschawski dared to say on the ARTE channel, misrepresenting the State of Israel as a poor child, as a victim (whose victim by the way?) at the very moment that the State of Israel — which is in no way metaphorical — together with Bush, unleashes this bloody chaos on Palestine and the Middle East! Is it possible to just stand by and let this allegedly "anti Zionist" metaphor juggler give a hand to *"the dominant discourse (...) in order to make the real situation impenetrable?"* as the author quite rightly says?"

To conclude his book Eric Hazan writes: *"During the month I spent in the West Bank, each day brought its share of amazement, but what astonished me most was to find that the idea of a single State on the territory of historical Palestine is now almost self-evident. To most of the dozens of people I spoke to, all from various backgrounds, the Palestinian State is something they have resigned themselves to forgetting or to put it another way, they can no longer stand pretence (...). On the other hand, they do not regard the prospect of living in the same country as the Israelis in any way extravagant. 'We have nothing against the Jews as such': I've often*

heard such sentences, even from those who personally had to suffer from the occupation (...)."

Read the *Notes on the occupation* by Eric Hazan.

(to be published by New Press in nov. 2007 – regarding this article, we translated the English version directly from the French version of Eric Hazan book).

Israel's dilemma in Palestine

By Ghada Karmi

Everyone's attention today is concerned with the minutiae of internal Palestinian politics. Will a Palestinian unity government be formed? Can it stop Palestinian factional fighting? Will Israel and America deal with it? Will Hamas recognise Israel? In this flurry of activity, Israel's occupation has almost been forgotten and the origins of the conflict have totally disappeared from view. And yet, it is only by returning to the roots of the problem, by reminding ourselves how flawed the Zionist project always was, that the solution can be found.

When the Zionists resolved in 1897 to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, they were aware that it was already home to an indigenous non-Jewish population. How to create and maintain a state for another people in a land already inhabited? Squaring that circle has been the essence of Israel's dilemma ever since its establishment and the cause of the Palestinian tragedy that it led to. It could not have been otherwise, for what the Zionists envisaged was a project that was bizarre and, on the face of it, unworkable, namely to set up an ethnically defined, Jews-only collective existing on a land belonging to another people and to their exclusion. Moreover, this new creation was supposed, irrespective of native opposition, to prosper in perpetuity. It was inevitable that a project necessitating the appropriation of a land already inhabited by a people defined as ethnically unacceptable could only have been realised by a mixture of force and coercion. To have any hope of long-term success, the new state thus created would have to maintain itself through constant military superiority and powerful backing by its creator, the West. The corollary to this was that the Arabs would have to remain too weak and disunited to offer much resistance, with the calculation that Israel's powerful army would swiftly despatch any that arose.

This, in substance, is the Zionist project, whose main aims came to be realised in the creation of Israel in 1948, but which was never able to resolve the problem of how to get rid of the Palestinians. Not that the Israelis didn't try in every way they could to make it happen. They expelled or caused the flight of three quarters of

Palestine's inhabitants in 1948, a black event in Palestinian history, called by them the Nakba or catastrophe ever afterwards. From 1948 onwards, Israel made every attempt to erase all traces of the Arab presence in the country so as to destroy the Arab character and distinctive history of the old Palestine. Villages were demolished and place names changed throughout Palestine to new Hebrew ones, in an effort to eradicate the memory of the original inhabitants. No Palestinian was ever allowed back to reclaim his home, and Israel's policy of not repatriating the refugees was never reversed, irrespective of the demands of international law, morality and common humanity. On the contrary, in the last six decades, Israel has taken every opportunity to expel more Palestinians -- during the 1967 war, when 250,000 people were displaced and from East Jerusalem when more were expelled through a variety of bureaucratic devices and tricks. Since the second Intifada, Israel has made life in the occupied territories a living hell, in the hope that the Palestinians will be compelled to leave.

Yet, these unrelenting efforts to eradicate the Palestinian presence in a country that Israelis considered to be Jewish and wholly theirs have still not succeeded. The number of Palestinians has only grown over time, such that by 2020, according to some estimates, they will form the majority in Israel/Palestine. Though occupied and oppressed, their political presence on the world stage is more firmly established than ever before. The idea that Palestinians should have their own state is universally accepted, even in Israel, and even though the Palestinian state's exact borders and other features have not been agreed. Israel's only answer to this situation has been more violence and more 'facts on the ground'. Half the territory of the West Bank is in Israeli hands, Jerusalem is judaised beyond recognition, most of its land expropriated by Israel, and the scope for instability and increasing violence between the two sides is an increasing danger. No one is willing or able to control Israel's behaviour, and so the problem seems to be insoluble.

For decades now the two-state solution has been offered as the only way forward for Israelis and

Palestinians. Those who continue stubbornly to advocate this solution have obviously never looked at a map of the occupied territories, or learned anything about the nature of Zionism. Israel's policy of 'creating facts' on the ground has put the creation of a sovereign, viable Palestinian state out of reach, and thereby spelled the end of the two-state solutions. Israeli colonisation and segmentation of the West Bank proceeds unimpeded and the Palestinian territories supposed to form the state are now a jigsaw of Jewish colonies, bypass roads and barriers. Jerusalem is beyond the possibility of forming a Palestinian capital, and Gaza is stranded in an Israeli sea, unconnected to anywhere.

How to resolve this impasse? There is only one way: The key date in the genesis of this conflict is not 1967, as the two-state proponents implies, but 1948. Israel's occupation of the 1967 territories is a symptom of the disease, not its cause. The obvious way to treat the cause is to create one-state in Israel/Palestine, to try and reverse the damage that Zionism did. Formidable as the difficulties will be of applying this solution, it is undeniably the only equitable and realistic way of sharing a land that both Israelis and Palestinians consider their own.

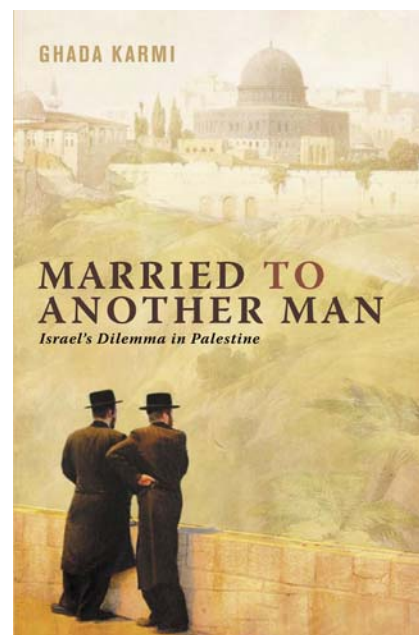
In a single state, no Jewish settler would have to move and no Palestinian would be under occupation. The country's scarce resources could be shared without Israel stealing Palestinian land and water or the Palestinians left starving and thirsty. Jerusalem would be a city for both peoples, not the preserve of Israel to the anger of Arabs, Muslims and Christians and the detriment of international law. The Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return to their original homeland, if not to their actual homes. Their long exile and blighted existence would end, and the states that had played host to them could be relieved at last of a burden they had carried for more than fifty years. The long-running sore of dispossession that has embittered generations of Palestinians and perpetuated their resistance could heal at last. With the outstanding issues thus resolved, no cause for conflict between the two sides would remain, and the Arab states could then accommodate the Israeli presence in their midst with genuine acceptance.

Such an outcome would by extension also dampen down the fires of Islamic rage against

Israelis and Jews that have come to fuel violence and terrorism. The Arab hostility, real or imagined, which Israelis constantly faced and which forced them to maintain their state by superior force of arms and American patronage would end. Israel, which has become the unsafest place on earth for Jews, when transmuted into the new, shared state, could be a place of real refuge for them. A normal immigration policy, once the returning Palestinian refugees had been accommodated, would operate under which Jews and others who wanted to live in Palestine/Israel could do so according to fair and agreed rules.

The one-state solution is the most obvious, direct and logical route to ending an intractable conflict that has destroyed the lives of so many people and damaged the Middle East region so profoundly. It is not, as people think, a revolutionary idea, but rather more a way of going back, of restoring a land, deformed by half a century of division, colonisation and plunder into the whole country it had been before 1948. It is a healthy rejection of disunity in favour of unity and a humane desire for a life based on co-operation rather than confrontation. How much better for Israeli Jews to learn to live together with Palestinian Arabs in a relationship of friendship and collaboration that has the potential to be excitingly productive, rather than be condemned to the barren and dangerous dead-end future that Israel was driving them towards.

Ghada Karmi's new book, 'Married to Another Man: Israel's Dilemma in Palestine', will be published by Pluto Press in June.



Palestine : Peace, Not Apartheid

By F.S. Rosa

Those looking for a clear analysis of what goes on inside the 'Green Line' will not find it in Jimmy Carter's book, *Palestine: Peace, not Apartheid*. Some may be dismayed that he praises democracy inside Israel, and the rights that all citizens supposedly enjoy. This might come as a surprise to Palestinian citizens—they are not allowed to own land in many areas, are barred from certain jobs, can't bring spouses from the Occupied Territories to live with them inside Israel, and have great difficulty visiting family or conducting business in the West bank or Gaza despite longstanding ties to those regions, and are largely marginalized in Israeli society. As George Bisharat writes: "*Palestinian Children in Israel attend 'separate and unequal' schools that receive a fraction of the funding rewarded to Jewish Schools, according to Human Rights Watch. Many Palestinian villages, some predating the establishment of Israel, are unrecognized by the government, do not appear on maps, receive no running water, electricity or access roads.*"

Others might be disappointed that at times Carter notes that a 'cycle of violence' begins with a violent action initiated by Palestinians, with Israel 'retaliating'. While a case might be made regarding violence against unarmed citizens, especially children, whether Israeli or Palestinian, one might have thought the daily violations of International Law by the Israeli military, including roaming Israeli death squads (armed with U.S. weapons), land and aquifer confiscation, home, orchard and business demolition, ongoing arbitrary arrests, detentions and torture, checkpoints severely limiting movement inside the O.T.s, were themselves an ongoing cycle of violence and to note only Palestinian initiated events as a starting point for violence is an odd way to view things indeed, although such an attitude is common practice in the U.S.

But there is no question that despite its shortcomings *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* is a very important book, and a courageous one too, and one that very much needed to be written by

someone like Jimmy Carter: a mainstream, high profile U.S. political figure with a sterling reputation—someone willing to challenge the U.S. media blockade around Israel/Palestine where even mild criticism of the Israeli military and government is taboo. Carter has not only broken through the taboo, he has catapulted right over this third rail of American politics. His colleagues in the Democratic Party have scattered like frightened gazelles at his landing, "*with incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi stating that 'Carter does not speak for the Democratic Party on Israel,'*" and both the Clintons engaged in their usual genuflections before the AIPAC, the right wing American Israeli Political Action Committee.

This is not to disparage the work of progressives such as Norman Finkelstein, Ali Abunimah, or the late Edward Said, or in Israel Tanya Reinhart, Amira Haas, Gideon Levi, Uri Avnery and Ilan Pappé to mention just a few. Their work is ground breaking and of inestimable value. But Carter was once president of the United States. At the helm of power (at least to the untrained eye) in the belly of the beast, and as such much harder to ignore and slander since he commands a far larger audience. He negotiated the only lasting peace treaty between Israel and another Arab nation (Egypt), and his opinions of world leaders in the Middle East are based on direct experience and contact over extended periods of time, rather than speculation, no matter how well informed that speculation may be. His analysis of the character and motives of various Israeli or Arab heads of state and politicians are candid and sometimes surprising, with Menachim Begin coming off by far the worst of the lot.

While Carter's record as president might have been spotty, there is no question he has done some excellent work post presidency—his Carter Center has monitored numerous elections: he monitored the Hugo Chavez referendum in Venezuela and pronounced it one of the fairest he had ever seen. As he writes in *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, he and his wife Rosalynn monitored the elections in Palestine, declared

them fair although he notes instances, especially in East Jerusalem, where the Israeli authorities made it virtually impossible for the local population to vote. He urged the U.S. and Israel not to isolate Hamas when they gained the most seats in the Palestinian assembly, or seize Palestinian assets, and he strongly criticized the Israel and American governments for their behavior post election, urging them to respect the results and work with the new government. He strongly recommends the implementation of U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338.

He also, and most importantly, describes the situation in Israel/Palestine for what it is: apartheid. An exact replica of South African apartheid? No, of course not, no system of oppression is ever identical to another, but anyone who been to the Occupied Territories and has even half an eye open can not help but notice it, it is all around, just like Jim Crow /Lynch Law was all around the South from the end of Reconstruction up until the Civil Rights movement, and just like apartheid defined South Africa until the release of Nelson Mandela and the elections in the early 90's. To quote Saree Makdisi, *"the only thing wrong with using the word apartheid to describe such a repugnant system is that the South African version of institutionalized discrimination was never as elaborate as its Israeli counterpart—nor did it have such a vocal chorus of defenders among otherwise liberal Americans."* Willie Madisha, president of COSATU, Congress of South African Trade Unions, declared last year that next to Israel/Palestine, South African apartheid was 'like a Sunday picnic', and surely he is in a position to know.

But in the U.S., as Carter notes, it is not possible to talk about Israeli apartheid without accusations of anti-Semitism, since one of the main and most successful projects of the hard right Zionist lobby in the U. S. has been to make Zionism synonymous with Judaism and conversely to make Anti-Zionism synonymous with anti-Semitism.

This, despite a growing number of American Jews and progressive Jewish organizations—Jewish Voice for Peace being a prime example—that are strong critics of the Israeli government, and the numerous Israelis and Israeli human rights organizations that routinely monitor and speak out about the abuses of their government, including Gush Shalom, B'Tselem and Ta'ayush to name just a few.

Most cynically, the U.S. and Israel Zionist right wing tries to hide the growing mountain of human rights abuses and atrocities committed by the Israeli government and military since 1948 against the indigenous Palestinian population, behind the six million bodies of the Nazi Holocaust against Europe's Jews in the 1930's and 40's, an undertaking explored in Norma Finkelstein's *The Holocaust Industry* and *Beyond Chutzpah*. Any discussion of the massive ethnic cleansing at the foundation of Israel, and the subsequent treatment of the remaining indigenous Palestinian population has been off limits in U.S. politics, in labor unions and most educational institutions (where scholars like Finkelstein exist under a kind of state of siege, with their tenure and free speech rights in the classroom constantly challenged, among other indignities). According to the conventional wisdom, Palestinians and all Middle Eastern Arabs must be portrayed as potential Nazi proxies, and brown savage Nazi proxies at that, ready to 'Push the Jews into the Sea' at a moment's notice, thus justifying any and all abuse by Israel against the indigenous Palestinian population, 48% of whom in Gaza are under 14 year old, and 43% of whom in the West bank are under 14 years old. A war then, in large part, against children.

But as Carter notes in the book, *"When I met with Yasir Arafat in 1990 he stated: 'The PLO has never advocated the annihilation of Israel. The Zionists stated the 'drive the Jews into the sea' slogan and attributed it to the PLO. In 1969 we said we wanted to establish a democratic state where Jews, Christians and Muslims can all live together. The Zionists said they do not choose to live with any people other than Jews. We said to the Zionist Jews, all right, if you do not want a secular democratic state for all of us, then we will take another route. In 1974 I said we are ready to establish our independent state in and any part from which Israel will withdraw...'"*

But in the U.S media we must not hear any of this, only that Holocaust survivors and their descendents remain under constant threat of a new holocaust, and the only antidote is extreme violence and force. Never negotiation and diplomacy. Never cultural exchange or constructive debate.

Here is an excerpt from a post to the Houston Chronicle critical of Carter's book by Deborah Lipstadt: *"His [Carter's] book, which dwells on the Palestinian Refugee Experience, makes two fleeting references to the Holocaust. The book*

contains a detailed chronology of the major developments necessary for the reader to understand the current situation in the Middle East. Remarkably, there is nothing between 1939 and 1947. Nitpickers might say that the Holocaust did not happen in the region..."

The italics are mine, of course. If the circumstances were not so dire, I would find it hilarious that Ms. Lipstadt considers the small matter of which continent the Holocaust occurred on to be 'nitpicking'. Apparently she also feels it beneath her dignity to note that the Holocaust was perpetrated by Europeans against other Europeans (in Europe), and ended in 1945. She implies that Carter questions and endangers 'Israel's right to exist'. In fact Carter states over and over that he 'believes in Israel's right to exist' within its pre 1967 borders, goes onto praise the 'democracy' inside Israel and is a strong advocate of a two state solution. The simple fact is, of course, that this is not a book about the Holocaust, and despite the emphatic wish of the hard right Zionist lobby in the U.S. that every book about Israel/Palestine be a book about the Holocaust, it is a book about what is happening now, every day in Israel and Palestine: apartheid.

A few issues ago, the New Yorker magazine's cover was an illustration of President George W. Bush standing behind a podium emblazoned with the Seal of the United States. He is dressed up as the Roman Emperor Nero with a laurel wreath on his head, and is fiddling while flames burn all around him.

Just outside of the picture frame, at least in my fevered imagination, a bucket brigade of water carriers, determined at great risk to themselves to put out the fire, have taken instead to beating each other over the head with their empty buckets, since they can not agree on the best route to pass the buckets from the water to the fire and have decided it is just easier to bludgeon those who disagree with them into submission first before they commence to douse the flames, which grow higher and larger, and ever closer.

On my sourer (not all) days, this is how I picture the Palestine Solidarity movement in the U.S., engaged in factional fighting and arguing over tactics and strategy, and hurling various accusations at each other while every day, the conditions get worse and worse in Palestine, and

the Israelis grab more land and water as the death toll mounts: 'One State-ers' emphatically refusing to work with 'Two State-ers' and vice versa. Full sanctions boycotters grappling with those who champion strategic selected divestment. Full and unconditional Right of Return-ers versus limited Right of Return-ers. Demand full reparations? Partial reparations? No reparations? We can fight with each other as much as we want over these things and more, but the truth is, we will never have direct influence over them, since we will not be sitting at the negotiating table. But we can have direct influence, just as ordinary U.S. students and unions member and progressives did during the South African struggle, over whether or not this country, in its labor union and universities, through the decisions of congress and allocation of citizen tax dollars, funds or de-funds Israeli apartheid. That this will be a much harder campaign than South African divestment is obvious, but it will be even harder if we don't get working now and stop fighting with each other.

To indulge in yet another overblown metaphor, it is as if we are visiting a critically ill patient who is in the Intensive Care Unit at the hospital. The enemies of this patient are trying to cut off life support and intravenous lines, and are violently shaking the bed hoping to make the patient fall off, when they will then commence to jump up and down on him in their big boots.

Various friends, family members and neighbors (that would be us), are meanwhile ignoring all this activity, and are out in the hallway arguing whether it is best for the patient to have a private or shared room when he gets out of intensive care, and who should foot the bill. If the patient is dead by the time our argument stops, then all of these questions will be mute.

This is not to say that organizations can not maintain a commitment to such concepts as one secular state with democratic rights for all; full right of return; full sanctions and boycott (perhaps initiated by strategic selected divestment); and full reparations. However, if we continue to refuse to work with or vehemently attack those who don't always share our beliefs, and insist that we speak only to each other in our own hermetically sealed politically correct and often very small organizations, then we will never have influence over the larger society, or be in a position to not only educate others on these issues, but enlist their support in ending U.S. funding for Israeli apartheid.

It is imperative that the U.S. Left support Carter and *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* and focus on its enormous strengths, rather than its flaws and those points that we may disagree with, even as we comment on these flaws and include them in our analysis within the context of constructive criticism and respectful debate.

A very rare window of opportunity has just opened up, and we all need to move through it in Carter's wake and work toward educating the American public about Israeli apartheid and its extreme brutality, a brutality paid for with our U.S. tax dollars, university endowment investments and the pension fund investments from U.S. labor union dues. *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid* should be required reading for anyone

interested in a just solution in the Middle East and it is imperative if we plan on talking to anyone other than ourselves, that we all urge others to read it too, and do as much as we can to support Jimmy Carter as he takes on Israeli apartheid and American right wing Zionism.

*F.S. Rosa is a rank and file member of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1021 and a member delegate to the San Francisco Labor Council. In Fall, 2003 she spent six weeks on the West Bank with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). In 2006 she published a work of fiction: Post War and Other Stories with Ithuriel's Spear press
<http://www.ithuriel.com>*

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International Women's Day- March 8th 2007

**Speech made by Marie Claude Schidlower
On behalf of the *Dialogue Review* at the
UGTA meeting in Algiers on March 8th.**

I am very proud and very happy to be with you, my brothers and sisters from Algeria, on this day, March 8th, an international day of struggle for women's rights. All women's rights have been won with and within the working-class movement. I extend my greetings to you, who are present in this hall where the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) holds its meetings, at this rally organised by the UGTA and the Workers party of Algeria.

We all know, men and women, that women are the first victims of exploitation and oppression, of privatisation and unemployment. They and their children are the first victims of the devastation caused by war. But among all the women, the Palestinian women in the territories that have been occupied since 1948, the Palestinian women of Nazareth are victims among victims, pariahs among pariahs. And this meeting is being held in solidarity with the Palestinian women who are fighting for their rights, against discrimination, against the Wisconsin Plan.

At this very moment, the trade union organisation *Sawt el Amel*/The Laborer's Voice, is holding a rally in Nazareth, outside the Wisconsin Centre. Their appeal says:

"We, the men and women of Nazareth, demand freedom for our wives and husbands, for our mothers and fathers who are in the Wisconsin Centres. No more Wisconsin Plan in Nazareth, East Jerusalem, Hadera and Ashkelon or in Wisconsin, USA. No, more exploitation of the workers and the poor. A job for everyone! We are gathering against the Wisconsin Plan, against the war on the poor."

We are with the women of Nazareth!

The *Dialogue review*, a "bulletin of free discussion between Arab and Jewish activists, for the right to return, for a one-State solution", as soon as it was informed by *Sawt el Amel* of the disastrous situation inflicted on the Palestinian

women of Nazareth, decided to launch an international campaign.

In this very city, in Algiers, at the National Popular Assembly, under the patronage of the President of the Republic, a Conference in Solidarity with the Palestinian Women of Nazareth was held on December, 8th, 9th and 10th, 2006, following an appeal by Louisa Hanoun and the parliamentary group of the Workers Party. The conference was preceded by a preparatory session in Paris, organised by the *Dialogue Review*. It was attended by Palestinian women and by many trade unionists from France and various other countries.

In Algiers, at the international conference, following the initiative of Mr. Sidi Saïd, General Secretary of the UGTA, all the delegates from many countries, who were present, after having heard reports and evidence, decided to take their responsibilities, to form an *International Committee in Solidarity with Palestinian Women* and to appeal to the international working-class movement and to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, in order that they support the just demands of Palestinian women and that ILO conventions be applied to them.

Both in Paris and in Algiers, it was found that the reports, accounts and facts were indisputable. The situation inflicted on Palestinian women is in contradiction with basic rights and all the ILO conventions. They suffer a twofold discrimination as Palestinians and as women, which is made even worse by the so-called "welfare-to-work" Wisconsin Plan, a plan that originated in the USA and was condemned by the American trade union movement.

- The Wisconsin Plan was launched in August 2005. 18 000 Arab people in Nazareth, Hadera, Ashkelon and East Jerusalem are involved in this so-called "welfare-to-work" programme

- The lack of services, infrastructures, means of transport, child care facilities, education, job opportunities, leads to continuous discrimination that affects Arab workers and prevents them from enjoying steady employment. This plan extends and worsens all those forms of discrimination.
- As they are under the threat of cuts in the welfare payments to which they are entitled, Palestinian women are forced to go every day to the Wisconsin centres where they have to spend 40 hours, where they do nothing. They have to leave their children alone.

As women they suffer a twofold discrimination and constant humiliation. Officials at the centre tell them: *"If you want to find a job, wear "sexy clothes."* A woman who was worrying about her four-year-old daughter was told: *"Buy her a mobile phone and you'll know where she is."*

This is discrimination based on membership of an ethnic or national minority, on the fact that you are a woman and this is in contradiction with ILO convention 111 which bans all discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national extraction or gender. And we demand the implementation of ILO convention 111.

The Wisconsin plan is strongly reminiscent of forced labor :

- Mothers and housewives, who are in some cases 50 or older and have never worked, who have devoted their life to bringing up their children and are sometimes ill, are overnight forced to, go Wisconsin centres. For instance, a mother of seven said: *"It is like being in prison."*
- The Wisconsin Plan sends women who are considered "not job-ready" to do volunteer work in non-profit institutions as potato diggers, prison cleaners, or garbage collectors for 150 dollars. Some of them produce traditional Palestinian embroidery which is then sold, but no one knows where.

Sawt el Amel asks the question: *"Is the Wisconsin Plan an employment service agency or forced labour?"* It is

unquestionably forced labour and this is in contradiction with ILO conventions 29 and 105 which ban any use of forced labour.

- Wisconsin centres are run by private multinationals with the avowed intention of saving 35% of their welfare expenditures .

Sawt el Amel rightly says that in the end the Wisconsin Plan consists in privatising the public employment service, in delegating this service to profit-making companies, which make money each time they cut — "save" according to the government — welfare payments.

This situation is in contradiction with ILO convention 88 which specifies that the employment service must be a public service provided free of charge, under the direction of a national authority, with the aim of helping the unemployed to find work (not to cut their unemployment benefit).

Many other examples of violation of basic rights and ILO conventions could be given, for example the fact that the companies that implement the Wisconsin Plan do not have to account for working conditions: an 11-hour workday is not uncommon, without wages being paid or with wages well below standards.

To conclude I shall deal with a specific violation of women's rights and democracy, the violation of trade union rights: 12 women were penalised for having taken part in a demonstration, the Palestinian women who attended the Paris session of the international conference had their welfare payments cut.

For all those reasons, after the Algiers conference, the International Committee appealed to the ILO, asked to be received so as to report the situation of women from within Palestine, ask for help from the ILO, so that the rights of Palestinian women be respected and ILO conventions implemented.

Today, on March 8th, we can only answer the message sent by Palestinian women and *Sawt el-Amel*. We shall continue to act in support of solidarity with the Palestinian women of Nazareth, for the withdrawal of the Wisconsin Plan and the implementation of ILO conventions.

DIALOGUE

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

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

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