

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

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Women's Cooperative in the
Palestinian Refugee Camp of al-
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Introduction

This latest issue of *Dialogue* comes out a few days before the opening of the annual session of the UN and just after the publishing of the Goldstone Report on the extortion committed by the Israeli army during last winter's "Operation Cast Lead". Isn't there a connection between these two events? The US president Barack Obama is to deliver a speech and offer new proposals in order to re-launch the sacrosanct "peace process". The US, which is out of its depth in Iraq, losing ground in Afghanistan and becoming hated by an increasing majority of the Pakistani people, considers that a settling of what it has been agreed to call the Palestinian question is urgent.

But what can be expected of this new peace plan? Can peace be spoken of without the recognition of the equal rights of all the populations who live between the Mediterranean and Jordan? Is peace, as has been queried in several contributions to this revue, compatible with predatory Zionism? Can we speak of peace without the implementing of the Right of Return for all refugees, no matter where they come from, and the reconstruction of the villages destroyed in 1948?

For 20 years, from new peace plan to new peace plan, the «process» has never come to anything but a worsening of the situation. Worsening of the situation of the populations, acceleration of the stealing of land, of massacres, of the suffering of the Palestinian people and worsening in the degradation of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, as of the state of Israel, deep in corruption, in rising militarism, pushing a majority of the Jewish populations – especially the eastern ones –

to poverty. After recognizing the Israelis as "neighbours", the Palestinian Authority is accelerating the transformation of the territories that it is in charge of into "special economic zones", deregulated and controlled by an internal army of prison guards and flouting the Right of Return. This is what the future of the claimed "Palestinian State" looks like.

Can there be no other perspective for the Palestinian people? After 60 years of refusing a division, expressed by the inalienable claim to a Right of Return, will it have to be accepted?

Can there be no democratic perspective? Amongst the Zionist leaders and their allies, there are many who consider that the creating of two states has become urgent in order to save the essential of what exists. In a recent interview, Shimon Peres expressed his alarm over the fact that if the state of Israel "doesn't advance quickly in this direction, a time will come where the perspective of a two-state solution will topple into a single state for Israelis and Palestinians in which Jews will no longer dominate, (a perspective) which will effectively mean the end of the state of Israel" (*AP*, September 4). In an article published by the *Washington Post*, Jimmy Carter has stated as worrisome the fact that "many Palestinian leaders are seriously considering accepting the solution of a single-state between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea".

But isn't there another perspective, a democratic one? Don't the articles that are published here, meant by their writers as a contribution to the discussion, indicate that the debate needs to be pursued?

The editors

An interview with Sabah Abu Hudeid, head of Baqa'a Women's Cooperative in the Palestinian Refugee Camp of al-Baqa'a, near Amman, Jordan.

Baqa'a camp, which is 22 kilometres from Amman, is the largest in Jordan. It was founded in 1968 during the second wave of expulsions of Palestinians from the West Bank, the first having been in 1948. After the war of 1967, many of those who had been expelled in 1948 had to flee a second time, this time to Jordan. In 1950, Palestinians from Transjordan had acquired Jordanian citizenship, the object of that decision being to bottle the Palestinian question and to quell the conflict. It was also a way of providing cheap labour in order to help construct the Hashemite Kingdom.

Most jobs and administrative positions were occupied by Palestinians. The prime minister of Jordan, Ibrahim Hashem, was a Palestinian from Nablus. There were Palestinians everywhere at that time: civil servants, workers, teachers; many of them were leftist activists.

Very early on, there were Palestinians all over Jordan. They enabled the development of the kingdom, while the Hashemite tribe were essentially stock breeders, as was their tradition. This, consequently, caused a separation of roles early on, Palestinians being in administration and Hashemites in the military.

Before the Sykes-Picot agreement and up until 1967, there was only one single region in which people felt close. It was not difficult for Palestinians to get and to keep positions of responsibility. Real fraternity existed between the original native tribes and the Palestinians. Jordanians were

members of Palestinian political organisations. These elements must have stirred the fear of the Hashemite governments who saw them as a threat to their power. Still, it can be said that Palestinians were making the Jordanian economy work.

After Black September and the massacres of refugees organised by King Hussein, the Palestinian leaders left for Lebanon. Restrictions were imposed on Palestinians; police checks became more serious. The University of Jordan was still essentially made up of Palestinian students, but political and union activities were forbidden. During this period the policy of replacing Palestinians by native Jordanians was launched and Palestinian quotas were set up. "*Jordanization*" was established at any price, even with slackers and incompetents. This is the policy that is still applied today, whereby Palestinians, on top of these restrictions, are hard hit by unemployment.

It is in this context that the place of women holds all its importance. When the expelled Palestinians first arrived, the women were particularly oriented towards jobs in education and teaching. Schools were free, everyone attended them. From the beginning, it was the only occupation, but also the only way to evolve, to establish cohesion amongst ourselves. In 1950, the goal of the power in place was that all the resources of the country take part in the economic expansion and thus women were to benefit from it. With their high school *bachelor degree* diploma, women could work in hospitals, find jobs in some of the Gulf countries and especially in Saudi

Arabia as teachers. In my case, I got my "bac" in 1967 with high marks and so I, too, could have gone to Saudi Arabia but instead I preferred to stay with my father, a political activist, who was under house-arrest. In 1967, I was one of the first Palestinian women to enrol in university (studies often ended for women after the *bachelor degree*).

In the camps, networking was significant and taking shape, but nothing specific yet existed for women because of Jordanian refusal. The first organisation devoted to women's rights was made up of volunteers from the camps.

At the time of the mobilisations, especially before Black September, the situation of women was exemplary. Most of the women activists came out of this period. The situation worsened from 1970-1971 onwards.

Among the activities that developed, it became necessary to fight in order to have the right to play sports and to use the same infrastructures as men, and to provide a library for girls so that they, too, had access to culture. And after just one week, the authorities refused to maintain the library.

The women of the time came back from Saudi Arabia with money but in general brought nothing to the Palestinians in the camps.

It would be necessary to wait until 1989 to finally have the official authorisation to create a real association. A women's trade union was founded in 1974 but its scope of action was very limited. An association of Arab women also worked in the camps, but essentially to teach embroidery and sewing.

The 1989 reform did away with the ban on independent associations, the objective being to create a network of associations in Jordan for economic improvement. It was then possible to set up an association of

women volunteers who in the beginning concentrated on social activities, but little by little became more political, and to further the emancipation of women, through the setting up of "workshops on history", equally open to youth and to men, in order to help the refugees learn again and retrieve their own history.

This activity began in closed places but its expansion was quickly stopped by the Jordanian authorities.

The Palestinians who lived in the camp managed to keep up a very strong link with their past. They are still highly conscious of their situation as refugees and very attached to their Right of Return.

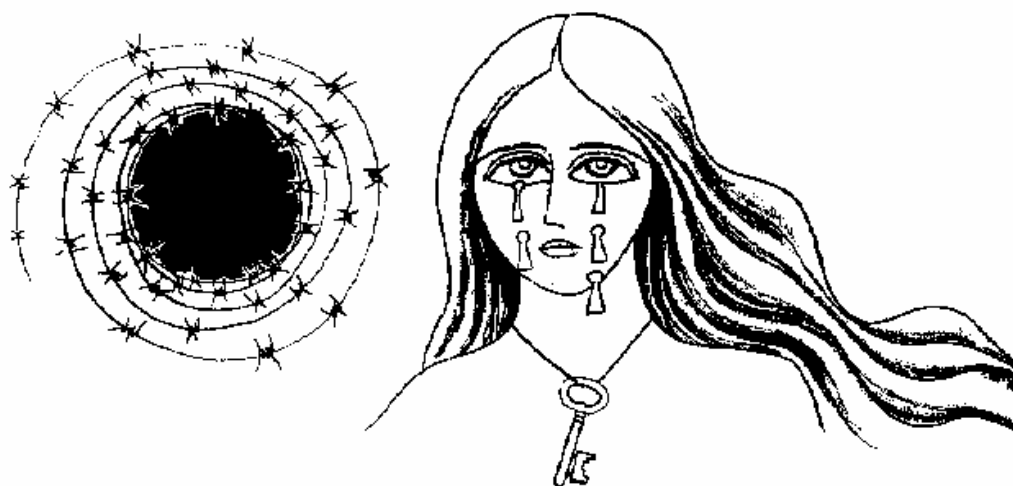
Before Black September, all the organisations were mobilised towards preparing the Return. The Right of Return, originally a real and compelling right, has turned into a question of principle, as the Palestinian organisations have had to take clandestine refuge. But once the raids and the incursions began, there were always demonstrations in the camps. Today, the Palestinian awareness of the Right of Return is very much alive. Resistance can only be built on education, on dawning awareness, even though all Palestinians are ready and willing to fight for it if necessary. My father, who was part of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, took part in a military operation in the West Bank in 1983. At 70 years of age, he was still ready to take arms. After the reforms of 1989, several Palestinian organisations were institutionalised into Jordanian political organisations. There was a lot of theorising. We actually saw an integration of these organisations into a reform that is called "democratic".

Your magazine defends the "one state" solution. The question of a single state should also remind us that the majority of Jordanians actually are Palestinians. There are two movements in Jordan, one is democratic and for Palestinians being able

to have Jordanian citizenship while still keeping their Right of Return, and the other a police state that refuses Palestinians the rights there are given to native Jordanians.

Today, the situation in the camps is better than that in Lebanon, but still in terrible

shambles. The question of education has become the first step of resistance. Palestinians need to re-learn and recapture their history in order to keep their demands alive.



Security - "The War is With the Arabs"

By Hannah Mermelstein

I saw this sign as I was entering Nablus last week, again on my way to Ramallah, and again near Bethlehem. The phrase is printed in Hebrew, presumably by Israeli settlers, on huge signs throughout the West Bank. Israeli racism rarely shocks me anymore, but its blatant display still makes me stop and catch my breath as I translate it into other contexts. Imagine driving through the middle of a predominantly black neighborhood in a US city or town and seeing a enormous sign that says, "The war is with the Blacks."

I think about security. Israel's abuse of the word has rendered the concept almost meaningless in the region, but the importance of security on individual and communal levels cannot be underestimated. However, most discussions I see in the media about security ignore the Palestinian people's right to security. "The war is with the Arabs" is a new sign, as far as I know, but for years in the West Bank I have seen stars of David scrawled on Palestinian shops and homes, and signs like "Death to Arabs" and "Kahane was right" (Kahane was an extremist political leader who promoted ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people; this sign is essentially equivalent to "Hitler was right" in the middle of a Jewish neighborhood).

But signs are not only created; they are also destroyed. Since 1948, Palestinian people inside Israel have experienced erasure and denial of their identities that is perhaps stronger than that of any other group of Palestinian people. I visited a friend in Lyd last week who lives on Giborai Yisrael ("Heroes of Israel") Street. Driving around the Palestinian neighborhoods in Lyd, we passed roads bearing the names of Herzl,

Jabotinsky, and other Zionist leaders. None of the old Arabic street names remain. Even large cities with considerable Palestinian populations are now seeing Arabic names officially erased from signs. In Arabic script, "Yaffa" will become "Yafo," "Nasra" will become "Natzeret," and "Al Quds" will become "Yerushalayim."

Lack of security goes beyond denial of identity and history as visually expressed through signs. A Palestinian friend with Israeli citizenship told me he has heard a rumor that a huge piece of land in Jordan is being cleared and built up for the eventual arrival of the Palestinian population of Israel after they are transferred from their homes. "It may be conspiracy theory," he said, "but I don't know."

"I'd like to think that Israel couldn't get away with that," I responded.

"Of course they can," another friend from Lyd said, "and if the conditions are right, they will."

Imagine living day to day thinking you might be expelled from your country in the near future. Or in Gaza, wondering if you will be killed tomorrow, or if you will ever be able to come in and out of your country at will. Or in the West Bank, if your son will be arrested, or if you will be able to get through the checkpoint in the morning to get to work. Or in Jerusalem, if your residency will be stripped or your house destroyed.

Imagine little correlation between choice and consequence, an arbitrary relationship between cause and effect. If you are just

as likely to get shot and killed sipping tea in your doorway, or sitting in your fourth grade classroom, or participating in a demonstration, or joining the armed resistance, is it any surprise that some choose each?

A friend of mine from the West Bank once told me that she never feels safe, so safety is not a consideration for her in making decisions. As much as I may try, I cannot truly imagine this lack of control.

I met a woman in Jerusalem who was displaced from her home by settlers, physically removed from her house by dozens of Israeli soldiers in the middle of the night. Twice a refugee (1948 and 2008), Um Kamel currently lives in a tent near her house that has been destroyed and re-pitched six times in the past six months. This

is perhaps the height of insecurity, yet Um Kamel stays strong and determined. Many in Palestine would call it *sumoud*, or steadfastness.

This kind of strength is seen remarkably often in Palestine, and indicates a deeper security that comes in part from faith. Faith in God, sometimes, but also faith in each other, in the justice of one's cause, in the tide of history that has shown that no single occupation in Palestine lasts forever. This, of course, is also Israel's deepest fear. That no matter how many walls they build, how many people they imprison, how many homes they destroy, how many signs they erase, and how many people they expel, true security will remain elusive, and eventually, Zionism will fail. As many older Palestinian people have said to me, with security, "We have lived through many occupations. This too shall pass."

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Dividing War Spoils: Israel's Robbery of Palestinian Property. By Dr. Salman Abu Sitta

While the news headlines were occupied with the freeze or suspension of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories or with the competition for positions in the sixth Fateh conference in Bethlehem, Israel is putting into effect the most devastating operation since the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in al Nakba of 1948. This new operation aims to eliminate irrevocably Palestinian rights and historical roots in Palestine.

Ironically, Arab and Palestinian leaderships remain oblivious to these cataclysmic developments. In particular, the Palestinian leadership, whose main duty is to defend Palestinian rights, is bogged down with the assignment of internal political posts and fighting what it sees as its primary enemy, Hamas.

The Zionist leadership in Israel felt bold enough to transform the ideological slogan of 'Jewish Israel' into a reality on the ground. The Knesset, the Israel Parliament, passed a law on August 3rd, 2009, after its second and third readings, which allowed the sale of "Absentees" Palestinian refugees' land to Jewish individuals and Jewish institutions exclusively anywhere in the world. Thus, the legal right of the original Palestinian owner to his land would be severed through creating a barrier between the owner and his property. The passing of the new law represents an audacious initiative by the current Israeli government that no previous Israeli government dared contemplate or venture into.

It will be recalled that the State of Israel was founded on the land it occupied in Palestine in 1948/49. The conquered area is 20,255 sq. km which represents 78% of the Mandatory Palestine. The land Israel occupied was delineated by the armistice

line defined in the Armistice Agreements signed with four Arab countries in 1949.

At the time, Israel contrived all kinds of intricate legal frameworks to make use of the absentee Palestinian refugees' land short of outright legal ownership of the land out of fear of international condemnation and accountability before international courts.

With the exception of 1,429,000 donums (one donum=1000 sq. meters or 24.7 acres) of Jewish land according to the British Mandate records, representing a mere 7% of Israel's area, the remainder of the land, amounting to 18, 826,000 donums, or 93% of Israel, is Palestinian land. This Palestinian ownership includes private and public land, land for common use or usufruct and natural resources in, above or below ground.

Israel reverted, after 1948, to premeditated acts of systematic destruction of Palestinian villages to the ground; burning of agricultural crops; and the poisoning of water wells; all with the intention that such acts would deter the Palestinian refugees from returning home.

On the political front, and following the first month after the expulsion of the Palestinian refugees in 1948, Israel declared that it would not allow the return of any Palestinian refugee back to his home on the pretext that refugees return would pose a security threat to Israel. However, for the Israelis, the remaining question was how to make use of the conquered vast Palestinian land and valuable Palestinian property in 14 different cities without invoking international condemnation that could lead to the return of the Palestinian

refugees and the reclaiming of their land and properties?

David Ben Gurion, Prime minister of Israel at the time, fearing that UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte would make recommendations, in the report he was preparing for the UN General Assembly, for the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes, resorted to a trick; he engineered a fictitious sale agreement with the Jewish National Fund, a tax-exempt world organization, of 2.5 million dunums of the most fertile and best absentee Palestinian land situated along the delineated Armistice Line. This way, Ben Gurion would be able to claim that the absentees' Palestinian land was no longer in the possession of the state of Israel and that Israel cannot be obliged to return it to the Palestinian refugees, the rightful owners of the land.

Count Bernadotte was assassinated by an Israeli zealot, and as Ben Gurion had predicted, the UN passed Resolution 194 that called for the return of the Palestinian refugees. Israel aborted the talks with Arab countries in Lausanne during 1949/1950 that were held to discuss the implementation of UN Resolution 194. With the failure of implementation of UN Resolution 194, Israel felt bold to dispose of the absentee Palestinian refugees' land.

Meanwhile, Israel issued the law of the Absentees' Property in 1950 that applied as well to the properties of the remaining Palestinians inside Israel who were given the oxymoron expression of Present Absentees. The law assigned the state as the bona fide Custodian in charge of all the absentee Palestinian land without the right of outright ownership.

In the same year, 1950, another law was enacted establishing the "Development Authority," with the mandate to take over from the Custodian. This authority has the power to use, rent and sell the land to Jewish entities only.

It took the Israelis the first ten years since the founding of the state to sort out the conflict

with JNF which wanted the Palestinian land to be registered in the name of "the Jewish people" in perpetuity, while Israel wanted it in the name of the state.

In 1960, Israel put an end to all the legal quarrel over confiscated property of Absentee Palestinians when the law of Israel Land Administration- ILA (which should have properly read: Israel Administration of the Lands) was passed. This law combines all lands under the control of JNF and the state of Israel under one management, ILA, and under the rules of JNF which stipulate that these lands are not to be used, rented, lived in or sold except to Jewish entities. Accordingly, 19 million dunums fell under the authority of ILA to this day.

The new law that just recently been passed by the Knesset on August 3rd, 2009, gives the authority for ILA to sell the absentee Palestinian refugees' land to Jewish persons that are currently leasing them and other Jews anywhere in the world. (...)

Concurrent with the enactment of the new law in the Knesset, negotiations are under way between the Jewish National Fund and ILA to swap lands. ILA is in need of lands owned by JNF in the central area of the country for the purpose of constructing new residential complexes. In return, JNF would receive land in the Galilee in the Naqab for the settlement of future Jewish immigrants. Clearly, neither of the two organizations possesses the unquestioned legal ownership rights of these lands.

Once the Fund acquires the lands in the Galilee and Naqab areas, the laws of the Fund restrict the use of the land to Jews and to the exclusion of the Palestinian citizens of Israel; a clear discriminatory ruling against the lawful owners of the land. The first outcome of the successful consummation of the land swap between the two organizations after the sanction of the Knesset will be the transfer to complete rightful ownership of 90,000 housing units to the current Jewish tenants occupying them.

Naturally, the usurpation of the absentee Palestinian land and its sale is in flagrant violation of the international law. Furthermore, it is in strict violation of The Hague's Regulations of 1907 and the Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 147) that forbids the "extensive appropriation of property". In addition, these acts are in contravention with the rulings of the Nuremberg Tribunal after the Second World War with regard to Case number 10 that prohibited the confiscation of private property.

Besides, the United Nation issued a number of resolutions in 1996, 1997 and 1998, for example resolution 52/62 entitled "Palestine refugees property and their revenues" , which obliges Israel to protect the refugees' properties, properly document them and provide regular information about them. UN Resolution 52/62 further stipulates that all income accruing to these properties since 1948 is the sole right of these refugees.

Israel is persisting in its defiance of the international law and even its American and European allies who are not taking any measures to deter Israel from the continued violations of the international law and human rights. Israel's defiance is reaching unprecedented proportions as demonstrated three weeks ago in the eviction of Arabs residents of Jerusalem from their homes before the very eyes of the whole world. This world did nothing other than whisper words of protest.

What's really stupefying is for Israel to flagrantly declare the annexation of the occupied West Bank without the awareness or opposition by any party. The significance of this move by Israel shadows the continuous expropriation of lands here and there to construct Jewish settlements on the top of the hills of the West Bank.

Unannounced, a new ruling stated that the Absentees Property Law of 1950 applies to any one in the West Bank who is defined as "Absentee" according to this law. According to Haaretz of August 2nd,

2009, the Judge of the Ramleh Court has issued a ruling that stipulates the application of the Absentees' Property Law in the West Bank as well, i.e. the confiscation by Israel of the possessions of Palestinian absentees. This ruling is in complete violation of UN Security Resolutions and the legal opinion of the International Court of Justice of July, 2004 that unequivocally states that the West Bank is an Occupied Territory that should neither be annexed nor usurped.

How disturbing that despite all these dramatic developments, not a single Arab or foreign body condemned Israel's new flagrant violations. Israel even went further by publishing an announcement in a Palestinian Jerusalemite daily ("Al-Quds") on June 28, 2009 declaring its intention to register 139,000 donums north and west of the Dead Sea area to its name provided no one contests this registration by providing acceptable proof of ownership rights. With such an announcement, Israel would deprive the future New Palestinian State of its sovereign rights over the waters of the Dead Sea, its beaches, mineral wealth and borders with neighboring Jordan. In short, Israel's confiscation of these lands is tantamount to Israel's official acquisition of most of the area of the Jordan Valley.

All this with every one acting the deaf-mute, not knowing anything and if one knows, one keeps silent and if one speaks one does nothing. What this signifies is that the whole Palestinian question has been reduced to the Palestinian people living in exile, and their land is open for sale or transfer to any Jew around the world.

That said, however, the rightful claims on the land remain valid regardless of the occupiers' laws or the passage of time. But it is incumbent on those defending those rights to stand up and do what is needed. First to ring the alarm of this ominous development was "Adalah," (Justice), the Nazareth-based Legal Center for The Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Adalah served the

Israeli General Attorney with a letter dated June 22nd, 2009 challenging the legality of the sale of the Palestinian possessions under international law and Israeli law. In its turn, "Itijah," another Palestinian organization based in Haifa, issued a general declaration condemning Israel's initiative to distribute, what Itijah termed "spoils of war" of 1948 on the World Jewry. Itijah called for Arab and international support to stop this most flagrant theft.

However, a great deal yet has to be done that has not really started. Foremost, it is incumbent upon the Arab League to draft a resolution for the next meeting in September of the UN General Assembly that would call for the condemnation, the annulment and immediate halt and reversal of the sale of Palestinian absentees' possessions. The draft resolution should call on the Secretary General of the United Nations to appoint a fact finding mission to visit Israel to collect information on absentee Palestinian refugees' possessions, ensure their proper due registration of titles to the rightful Palestinian owners, and establish estimates of the accrued revenues for 62 years from these possessions that are due the rightful owners (the subject that was called for by Palestinian refugees'

lands expert Jarvis, in 1964). The draft resolution must further call for the placing of the Palestinian refugees' possessions under international trusteeship.

It is the obligation of the Palestinian Authority, as it finishes from attending to the marginal issues of allocation of posts, to take the urgent diplomatic and the practical steps to addressing this problem, for, otherwise, it would find itself, in no time, without land on which it could one day found its new state.

As for the Palestinian people whose census has reached the 11 million count, scattered in all the Arab and foreign countries, they would never abandon their rights to their homes despite the fact that they have not been allowed to elect their own representatives to a truly new representative Palestinian National Council. Doubtless, the Palestinian people will ultimately create its true representative bodies that will defend its interests and put an end to the plundering of its legitimate property.

In the end, justice shall prevail with the eclipse of Zionism and the ultimate redemption of Arab Palestine.

- Dr. Salman Abu Sitta is the Founder and President of Palestine Land Society in London. He contributed this article to PalestineChronicle.com. This article was originally published in Arabic and was translated for PalestineChronicle.com by Rajai Masri. Full Report is available in English with maps and tables is available at the link : <http://www.hic-mena.org/documents/SellingRefugeesLand2009.pdf>.

The end of Israel?

By Hannah Mermelstein

I am feeling optimistic about Palestine.

I know it sounds crazy. How can I use "optimistic" and "Palestine" in the same sentence when conditions on the ground only seem to get worse? Israeli settlements continue to expand on a daily basis, the checkpoints and segregated road system are becoming more and more institutionalized, more than 10,000 Palestinian political prisoners are being held in Israeli jails, Gaza is under heavy attack and the borders are entirely controlled by Israel, preventing people from getting their most basic human needs met.

We can never forget these things and the daily suffering of the people, and yet I dare to say that I am optimistic. Why? Ehud Olmert. Let me clarify. Better yet, let's let him clarify:

"The day will come when the two-state solution collapses, and we face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights. As soon as that happens, the state of Israel is finished."

That's right, the Prime Minister of Israel is currently trying to negotiate a "two-state solution" specifically because he realizes that if he doesn't, Palestinians might begin to demand, *en masse*, equal rights to Israelis. Furthermore, he worries, the world might begin to see Israel as an apartheid state. In actuality, most of the world already sees Israel this way, but Olmert is worried that even Israel's most ardent supporters will begin to catch up with the rest of the world.

"The Jewish organizations, which were our power base in America, will be the first to come out against us," he told *Haaretz*,

"because they will say they cannot support a state that does not support democracy and equal voting rights for all its residents."

Perhaps Olmert is giving American Jews too much credit here, but he does expose a basic contradiction in the minds of most American people, Jewish and not: most of us -- at least in theory -- support equal rights for all residents of a country. Most of us do not support rights given on the basis of ethnicity and religion, especially when the ethnicity/religion being prioritized is one that excludes the vast majority of the country's indigenous population. We cannot, of course, forget the history of ethnic cleansing of indigenous people on the American continent. But we must not use the existence of past atrocities to justify present ones.

I am optimistic not because I think the process of ethnic cleansing and apartheid in Israel/Palestine is going to end tomorrow, but because I can feel the ideology behind these policies beginning to collapse. For years the true meaning of political Zionism has been as ignored as its effects on Palestinian daily life. And suddenly it is beginning to break open. Olmert's comments last week are reminiscent of those of early Zionist leaders who talked openly of transfer and ethnic cleansing in order to create an artificial Jewish majority in historic Palestine.

We must expel the Arabs and take their places and if we have to use force to guarantee our own right to settle in those places -- then we have force at our disposal. - David Ben-Gurion, Israel's "founding father" and first prime minister, 1937

So this idea of a "two-state solution" *a la* Olmert -- which I would argue provides neither a "state" nor a "solution" for the Palestinian people -- is the new transfer. It is no longer popular in the world to openly discuss expulsion (though there are political parties in Israel that advocate this), but Olmert hopes that by creating a Palestinian "state" on a tiny portion of historic Palestine, he can accomplish the same goal: maintaining an ethno-religious state exclusively for the Jewish people in most of historic Palestine. His plan, as all other plans Israeli leaders have tried to "negotiate," ignores the basic rights of the two-thirds of the Palestinian population who are refugees. They, like all other refugees in the world, have the internationally recognized right to return to their lands and receive compensation for loss and damages. This should not be up for negotiation.

So why am I optimistic? Why do I think Olmert will fail, if not in the short term, at least in the long term? There are many signs.

The first and most important is that Palestinian people are holding on. Sometimes by a thread, but holding on nonetheless. Despite the hope of many in Israel, Palestinians will not disappear. They engage in daily acts of nonviolent resistance, from demonstrations against the wall and land confiscation, to simply remaining in their homes against all odds. Young people are joining organizations designed to preserve their culture and identity. Older Palestinians have said to me, "We lived through the Ottoman Empire, we lived through the British Mandate, we lived through Jordanian rule, and we will live through Israeli occupation." This too shall pass.

In Israel, it seems that within the traditional "Zionist left," Jewish Israelis are beginning to have open conversations about the exclusivity of Zionism as a political ideology, and are questioning it more and more.

In the US, I have been traveling around speaking to groups about Palestine, and they get it. Even those whose prior information has come only from US mainstream media, when they hear what is actually happening, they get it. When we explain the difference between being Jewish (a religion or ethnicity), Israeli (a citizenship), and Zionist (an ideology), people understand.

"Does Israel have a right to exist?" people ask. What does that mean? Do countries really have rights, or do people have rights? The Jewish people have a right to exist, the Israeli people have a right to exist, but what does "Israel" mean? Israel defines itself as the state of the Jewish people. It is not a state of its citizens. It is a state of many people who are not its citizens, like myself, and is not the state of many people who are its citizens, like the 20 percent of its population that is Palestinian. So if we ask a Palestinian person, "Do you recognize the right for there to be a country on your historic homeland that explicitly excludes you?" what kind of response should we expect?

So when Olmert warns that we will "face a South African-style struggle for equal voting rights" and that "the state of Israel [will be] finished," I get a little flutter of excitement. I think of the 171 Palestinian organizations who have called on the international community to begin campaigns of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel until Israel complies with international law. This is already a South African-style struggle, and we outside of Palestine need to do our part. Especially those of us who live in the US, the country that gives Israel more than \$10 million every single day, must take responsibility for the atrocities committed in our name and with our money.

Ultimately, this is our role as Americans. It is to begin campaigns in our churches, synagogues, mosques, universities, cities,

unions, etc. It is not to broker false negotiations between occupier and occupied, and it is not to muse over solutions the way I have above. But one can dream. And as a Jewish-American, I know that while it might be scary to some, while it will require a lot of imagination, the end of Israel as a Jewish state could mean

the beginning of democracy, human rights, and some semblance of justice in a land that has almost forgotten what that means.

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The Real Roots of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

By Julian Kunnie

There is no question that the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict is now the most explosive in the world today. The violent incursions by the Israeli army into the occupied territories and the invasion of Lebanon in 2006 that resulted in over 240 deaths and 50,000 people fleeing their homes in south Lebanon, is yet another indication of the grossly violent nature of the Israeli regime, akin to the militaristic intransigent apartheid regime of South Africa of the 1970s and 1980s that terrorized the neighboring African states of Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. Factually, Israel is a full-fledged apartheid state, a settler-colonial outpost that essentially serves the designs of United States imperialist hegemony in that part of the world, home to the largest oil reserves on the planet. Israel is currently repeating its bellicose behavior of 1982 when it illegally invaded Lebanon to force out the Palestine Liberation Organization, killing close to 20,000 civilians in the process. In 1982, it laid siege to the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatilla, and under the watchful eyes of then Israeli defense minister, Ariel Sharon, gave sanction to the South Lebanese army that massacred over 900 Palestinian women, men, and children.

In 2004, once again, Israeli military forces pummeled the Palestinian refugee camps of Jenin and Balata resulting in the massacre of hundreds of women, men, and children. All of these acts are war crimes and constitute acts of genocide, given the intentional nature of the assassination of unarmed civilians. In Jenin, houses were razed to the ground by Israeli tanks with no prior warning. Accounts by journalists and Palestinians who survived described horrific accounts of executions of unarmed civilians, mothers shot as they attempted to rescue wounded children, elderly men

being stripped and humiliated in front of youngsters, and ambulances prevented from attending to the injured and wounded. U. S. supplied "Apache" helicopters deliberately targeted civilians according to numerous Palestinian witnesses. Ramallah and Jenin resembled places devastated by an earthquake, the stench of dead bodies rising under the rubble serving as a terrifying reminder of the carnage, all under the pretext of "combating terrorism." The bombing of offices of the late Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority and the sadistic and indiscriminate violence of the Israeli military against Palestinian civilians and the denial of food and water to thousands of people, triggered protests around the world, in places as far away as Indonesia. The U. S. government which supplied the helicopters and fighter bombers to Israel then tacitly endorsed support of the Israeli regime to protect itself against "terrorist Palestinians," asserting that Yasser Arafat had invited such reprisals because of his inability to curb suicide bombers. As with most colonial situations, the U. S. arrogated to one person among the colonized to be chiefly responsible for the actions of all who are colonized. In 2004, former U.S. president George W. Bush referred to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon as "a man of peace," the same man who supervised the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian refugees at Sabra and Chatilla in 1982. Today, Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu continues to defy the international community and even U.S. president Barack Obama's call for a dismantling of all Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, indications of the refusal to recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian statehood.

In July, 2006, the world witnessed the outrageous criminal acts of the Israeli

apartheid-like regime against the Palestinian people, who are surrounded by a towering wall around the West Bank and hemmed in by barbed-wire fences, with 10,000 people being held in detention in Israeli jails where torture and humiliation are widespread. Lebanon has borne time and again the brunt of Israeli military aggression, with the Israeli regime claiming that it's invasion of Lebanon is essential to the ousting of "militants" from Hezbollah, and in retaliation for the killing of eight Israeli soldiers and the abduction of two others. Israel's response is not mere overkill where hundreds of Lebanese and Palestinian lives are equated with those of two Israelis; it is also criminal in its intent and effect. Why is it that most of those killed in Lebanon are overwhelmingly civilian, including villagers with women and children, such as the eight in the village of Aitaroun on July 16 and families huddled in the basement of a building in Tyre on the same day? Why does the world stand by idly, observing daily pictures in newspapers of women and children standing outside the ruins of homes pulverized by Israeli bombs, as we did of a woman and her children in Beit Hanoun in the northern Gaza Strip on July 19?

In line with its overt support and maintenance of Israeli aggression, the U. S. government continues to threaten a veto of any resolution that condemns Israel's genocidal attacks on Palestinian and Lebanese civilians at the UN Security Council since the U.S. views the Israeli attacks as legitimate actions against "terrorists." How can one equate the actions of a small militia like Hezbollah or Hamas gunmen with that of a regime armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons that employs its massive airpower and military might to decimate and annihilate defenseless civilian populations? Following Hamas' victory in free and fair elections in the occupied Palestinian territories, the U. S. joined Israel earlier this year in punishing the Palestinians. It froze the funding of Palestinian civil service sectors through international donor agencies, causing

excruciating poverty and hunger for Palestinian families in the West Bank and Gaza, insisting that Hamas remained a terrorist organization. Such is the character of U.S. support for democracy among oppressed and colonized people like the Palestinians! This is precisely the reason that Palestinian women burnt Israeli, U.S., and European flags in an angry anti-Israeli protest in Gaza City on July 18—because Israel is viewed as an extension of U.S. and European Union imperialism and takes comfort in protection by these superpowers.

The pro-Zionist media establishment in the U.S. that exerts a stranglehold on news networks around the world continues to portray the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a tit-for-tat historical feud in which both sides are apportioned equal culpability in the supposed "endless cycle of violence," where Palestinian "suicide bombers" are viewed as the essential problem, provoking legitimate aggressive Israeli aerial bombings of civilian areas and targeted assassinations of Palestinian political leaders. Certainly, the killing of Israeli civilians is regrettable and tragic. Yet, what has gone largely unmentioned is the fact that over 2,000 Palestinian civilians were killed by the Israeli military between 2002 and 2004, most under the age of 15 years. Are youth under 15 the real terrorists who pose a threat to Israeli civilians? Over 25,000 Palestinian civilians have been wounded since the beginning of the second *Intifada*.

Owing to its ownership generally by mammoth corporations, including military industrial giants (the National Broadcasting Corporation in the U.S. is owned by General Electric, for instance), the press generally regurgitates the ideological position held by the White House, which justifies the huge infusions of military and economic aid to Israel, up to \$3 billion per year, for a population of just over 3 million people. Israel has the fourth most powerful military in the world, built with the technical and financial assistance of the U. S. over the

past 50 years. It possesses nuclear weapons, assisting the apartheid regime of South Africa to explode an atomic device in 1979.

It is critical that for any lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that the real roots of the situation be told. First, the roots of the conflict are not millennia old as we have been led to believe, but actually began with the rise of the modern Zionist movement in the late 19th century. After World War I, Jewish immigration to Palestine intensified through the 1920s and 1930s, prompting fears by the indigenous Palestinian Arab population of becoming a minority in their own land and resulting in outbreaks of attacks on Jewish settlers. By 1939, as World War I was launched, Arabs constituted 69% of the Palestinian population, and Jews were 31%. Notwithstanding this population disparity, the UN partitioned Palestine, allocating 55% of the land to the minority Jews who owned only 7% of the land. This action precipitated the opposition by Palestinians to what was perceived as an unjust distribution of land that significantly disadvantaged them and made them pariahs in the land of their birth. The establishment of the Israeli state subsequently in 1948 caused 700,000 Palestinians to flee from the war raging around them. Thousands saw their homes bulldozed and erased, forcing them to become refugees in occupied Palestine and exiles in other parts of the Arab world. The Palestinians did not leave Palestine volitionally because they were ordered to by Arab military commanders who wanted to “push the Jews into the sea” as is the popularly held view. Even noted Israeli historians like Avi Shlaim and Han Pappé confirm this fact of Palestinian dispossession and forced expulsion. It was not hatred of Jews that provoked Palestinian attacks on Jewish settlers, but the fact of losing homes and possessions, family, and land.

It is not the Arabs who generated hatred of Jews. The Palestinians are portrayed as

“violent terrorists” and demonized, principally because they have never agreed to surrender their national identity and right to their homeland in Palestine, even though they are the only people in the world living under direct military occupation for over 50 years. To depict Palestinians as an essential barbaric, savage and violent people by nature and culture is racist, and ought not be permitted in any information coverage because it distorts the existence of a people and perpetuates hatred and lies about them irrationally. During the presence of Moorish Arabs in Spain from the 8th century, it was in Andalusia where Arabs, Jews, and Christians thrived peacefully for centuries. It was Averroes, the Muslim scholar of the 12th century, who preserved the works of Aristotle in Arabic and subsequently made these available to the Latin speaking world, even though Christian emperors strictly prohibited such works. It was the Muslim intellectuals of Cordova and Granada to whom many Jewish intellectuals turned to for inspiration, all of which was stamped out, not by Muslim intolerance in the late 15th century, but by Christian totalitarianism under the Catholic sovereigns Ferdinand and Isabella. The Muslim world then provided refuge to Jewish communities seeking protection against Christian fundamentalist violence.

The prejudice against Palestinians and Arabs must stop. Today, in the land of Jesus’ birth, shortly after the commemoration of the passion and death of a Palestinian Jewish rabbi over 2,000 years ago, the war rages, predicated on colonial violence and the politics of occupation. Since the Oslo agreement of 1993, the construction of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories has intensified, igniting anger among the Palestinians who view such well-provided and resourced settlements as pockets of Israeli affluence amidst widescale Palestinian poverty. Just like the attempts to place arm bands with numbers on the arms of Palestinian youth, kindling pictures of Nazi Germany

(denounced even by an Israeli military general) these settlements are viewed as humiliating of an oppressed people. Young suicide bombers reflect the deep sense of hopelessness and despair of a people who have been refugees for over 50 years, and who view all negotiations as futile because their dream of a homeland fades daily.

The Palestinians need a homeland unconditionally, and have agreed to co-exist with an Israeli state so long as they have a portion of their homeland returned and can once more live as a sovereign people. Alternatively, why could not Palestinians and Israelis live in a secular democratic state where everyone's counted equally? Is it because the Israeli's fear the power of democracy where they would be a minority, just as whites feared

such in an apartheid-free South Africa? Is this too much for the Western world to accept? Must blood continue to be spilled, of a people whose only crime is that they are Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim, living in an area surrounded by massive oil resources needed for Western consumption? Is the real reason that the U. S. fears a Palestinian state because it could be a democratic and progressive state unlike most regimes in the region, and which could inspire the Arab masses to also agitate for true democracy and justice, where the billions of dollars of oil sale revenues could be used to fund the development of Arab peoples and not be re-invested in the West, as is currently the case? The truth cannot be suppressed forever. The occupation of Palestine must end now for a lasting peace to prevail in the region.

Julian Kunnie is Director and Professor of Africana Studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson, Arizona, in the USA and the author most recently of Indigenous Peoples' Wisdom and Power: Affirming our Legacy Through Narratives (Ashgate, 2006). His forthcoming work is Globalization and Its Victims: Wars Against Mother Earth and the Poor of the World (Palgrave-Macmillan).

Arno J. Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*

By Sam Ayache

Like Ilan Pappé or Shlomo Sand, Arno Joseph Mayer belongs to a recent school of historians of Jewish origin who call into question the founding myths of Zionism and the state of Israel. Arno J. Mayer is currently Professor of History, Emeritus, at Princeton University. He recognizes himself in "Isaac Deutscher's profile as a non-Jewish Jew". He was born (Luxembourg, 1926) into a Zionist family, his father "having embraced a left-humanist Zionism" while studying at the University of Heidelberg. In 1940, his family fled Luxembourg and "landed" in New York City in 1941. Mayer became a US citizen in 1944.

Violence as an instrument of sovereignty

In his first controversial book – published in 1999 – "The Furies – Violence and terror in the French and Russian Revolutions", Mayer argues that violence is an objective historical necessity, indispensable to every "founding act" in history. Following the same research, "Plowshares into Swords", his latest book, is a reflection on violence, terror, sovereignty, religion and resistance in the Middle East since the foundation of Zionism. The title comes from the Book of Isaiah 2.4: "and they shall beat their swords into plowshares". But whereas Isaiah had a peaceful vision of the settlement of the ancient Jews in the Promised Land, Mayer shows that Joshua prevailed over Isaiah in the founding of modern Israel.

He writes: "Like most other nation-builders before them, between 1945 and 1949, the Zionists used both violence and force to establish the state of Israel. Warranted by the U.N. General Assembly, its government claimed and exercised the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical violence following the 1948 war. But Israel did not so "within a given territory": to this day its borders – an essential criterion of the

sovereign nation-state – are neither demarcated nor recognized internationally". As a consequence, the State of Israel was established "as Joshua did in his days, with fire and sword" and that is why plowshares were turned into swords and not the contrary.

The Arab Question

One of the founding myths of Israel is the slogan: "A land without a people for a people without a land", denying the very existence of Palestinian Arabs in the eyes of western public opinion. Contrary to this slogan, Mayer explains that the "Arab Question" was at the heart of the debates within the Zionist movement: "By the mid 1920s, the Zionist stance vis-à-vis the Arabs became a public political issue. In the fall of 1925, David Ben-Gurion, speaking for the fast-growing labor movement, declared that, whereas Zionists had "completely ignored" the Arab community and proceeded "as if Palestine were uninhabited...the time for such naïveté had long since passed, never to return".

But whereas Vladimir Jabotinsky and the Revisionists – so-called because they wanted to revise the mandatory borders and include the east bank of the Jordan into Palestine – proposed to rely on the force of arms to secure Jewish dominance in Palestine, Ben-Gurion trusted in the force of economics and asserted that Zionism would realize "the immigration of masses of Jews to establish a new economy... designed to absorb a large Jewish majority". And since the Arabs were economically unfit, Ben-Gurion warned: "They must not be allowed to interfere with us".

Mayer is one of the first historians to understand the crucial role of the

Palestinian refugees in the Middle East: "The ordeal of the Palestinian refugees became the original sin of Israel's foundation and the curse of Middle Eastern politics and diplomacy... As a matter of course, the refugees have become the prime social carriers and moving spirits of the Palestinian resistance", he writes.

A terror or rogue State

Mayer's views are directly connected to those of Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, the first chancellor of the Hebrew University (Mont Scorpus, Jerusalem), who were in favor of a single bi-national state within the territory of Mandatory Palestine. Clearly, Mayer shows that the crucial opposition between Vladimir Jabotinsky (the modern Joshua) and Martin Buber (the modern Isaiah) led to the creation of the State of Israel as a military state. The question is raised: How did Zionism give birth to a political entity that became "a garrison state run by generals and imbued with a fortress mentality"?

According to Mayer, the creation of this "garrison state" began in the 1920s, when Jabotinsky's Revisionists started to gain ascendancy within the Zionist movement. Jabotinsky and his partisans proposed to build "an iron wall" of overwhelming military strength to break the Arabs and conquer Greater Palestine, including the east bank of the Jordan. Mayer reports that in September 1929, in the immediate aftermath of the first Intifada, Magnes wrote a letter to Weizmann, the leader of the Zionist Congress, warning him against this "imperialist, military, and political policy... based upon mass immigration...and the creation (forcibly if necessary) of a Jewish majority, no matter how much this oppresses the Arabs... or deprives them of their rights". Magnes noted that the "Jewish National Home" of the 1917 Balfour Declaration was "built on bayonets and oppression".

Embracing Buber's views on the establishment of a "Jewish spiritual and cultural home" – and not a Jewish State – in Palestine, Mayer comments Magnes's statement: "The last thing the Israelites needed, he insisted, was a "normal nation like any other" in Palestine – Herzl's notion – one that could not be born or survive except by the use of force, at inordinate human cost, for want of an agreement with the Arab peoples beyond its borders. That fall [1929] Magnes set about developing the idea of binationalism for a pluralistic civil and political society". In Magnes and Mayer's views, the creation of a Jewish State in May 1948 inevitably led to endless violence and war against the Arabs "at inordinate human cost".

Mayer writes: "One hundred years after the founding Zionist congress in Basel, and some sixty years after the Judeocide and Independence, Israel is arguably a terror or rogue state – no longer a beacon unto the world".

The Israeli armed forces

A major part of Mayer's study deals with the Israeli armed forces as "a pivotal institution of Israeli civil and political society". He writes: "The military establishment has also become closely intertwined with the universities, especially the faculties of physical, natural and computer sciences. The weapons industry in particular, is a large sector in the national economy, given its phenomenal budget; and the armed services, including the intelligence services Mossad and Shin Bet, are regular customers of nearly all other major sectors. Unsurprisingly, two-thirds of the aid the military receives from the U.S. must be spent on made-in-America ordnance. Naturally this proviso invites steady collaboration between Israeli and American arms firms, with active and retired senior officers on both sides trading on their access to the military and political corridors of powers".

As Israelis come to realize "the indispensability of America for the survival of the country", Israeli governments rely on Zionist lobbies in the U.S.: "The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is one of America's most powerful lobbies... It has a multi-million-dollar yearly budget and a large staff. Although not registered as an agent of the Israeli government, AIPAC is in lockstep with it".

Mayer notes that the Israeli military establishment is "barely subject to civilian control". It is a state within the state. Although Israel has free presidential and parliamentary elections, the electorate is always asked to choose between alternative military options: "High-ranking officers hold key political positions, from prime minister to the ministries of war, intelligence, and foreign affairs... Active, retired, and reserve officers form a cohesive and immensely influential corps with a shared temper and a way of thinking. The military's influence is all the greater because of the fundamental consensus of the political parties on major diplomatic and military issues".

And Mayer reports that Israel ranks first in the world in terms of per capita military spending with 10 per cent of GNP, ahead of the U.S. which ranks third. The outsized military outlays "squeeze social spending". In 2005, for instance, "roughly 34 per cent of Israelis, including Palestinian Israelis, earned the minimum wage or less". Moreover, the armed forces serve mainly as protector of the 450,000 settlers - nearly 10 per cent of Israel's Jewish population - in over 140 settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, in addition to the 17,000 settlers on the Golan Heights. "With compulsory military service for both men and women, and long-term reserve duty for men, hardly a family has not had a member or close friend helping to man roadblocks and border crossings, tear down houses...in the name of law and order" amid a population of irate and defiant Arabs.

Religious Zionism

Very few historians deal with the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel and their close links with U.S. Christian Zionists and Evangelicals, "an outreach publicly encouraged by Israel" Mayer says, adding: "...in 2004 Benny Elon, Israel's Minister of Tourism, presented televangelist Pat Robertson of the Christian Broadcasting Network with Israel's Ambassador Award".

Mayer reports that the Jewish ultra-Orthodox community makes up some 800,000 of a Jewish population of 5.4 million. With an average of close to seven children per family, "their offspring make up some 23 per cent of Israel's first-grade pupils, all of them in parochial schools". As for their religious leaders and chief rabbis, "they exert considerable power in society, culture and policy...The public exchequer substantially subsidizes the 60 per cent of ultra-Orthodox men who do not work in order to devote themselves to full-time Torah study. As a consequence, over 50 per cent live below the poverty line, yet they receive disproportionate welfare subsidies as well as grants from the yeshivas". As for the laws exempting them from military service, Mayer notes: "Between 1975 and 2007, the deferment of draft-age men for reasons of religious faith rose from 2.5 per cent to about 11 per cent, or 50,000, the equivalent of some four divisions - a striking increase given the hardline settlement and occupation policy championed during these same years by most ultra-Orthodox and religious Zionists".

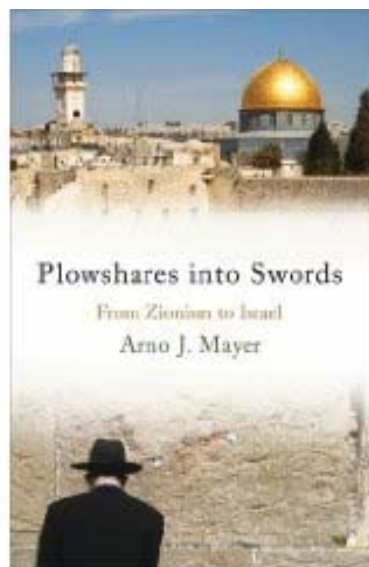
In the same manner, Mayer also examines the emergence of Muslim fundamentalism, Islamism and the Iranian issues. He says: "The defensive Islamism is not of a piece; relatively few of its votaries are fundamentalists or terrorists... To the extent that Islamism, in whatever guise, involves resistance, it is a product of pent-up anger and mortification...Not unlike President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, who, sworn to secular anti-Western nationalism, had

reached for hydroelectric power and threatened to close the Suez Canal, Ahmadinejad, wrapped in the mantle of Islam, reaches for nuclear power and threatens to block the Strait of Hormuz”.

Mayer concludes: “The religionization of politics and the politicization of religion foster growing social dissension and

political inconsistency in Israel”. His last chapter titled “The Wages of Hubris” is the narrative of a long series of daily violence between Israelis and Palestinians which calls into question the “two-State-solution”. Mayer’s implicit conclusion is: “why not go back to Buber’s solution of bi-nationalism in a single state?”

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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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