
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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Introduction

This edition of *Dialogue* comes out a year after the last war waged against the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip. While all observers agree that since the cease fire, nothing has managed to be rebuilt, that living conditions for the vast majority of Gaza Strip inhabitants, especially children, get worse every day, Israeli attacks, whether sporadic or as intense as before, are still on the agenda.

In a letter a reader expressed his consternation at the situation: « Since the Gaza war, I think mainly of resistance but how to resist? Denouncing Zionist crimes appears to me to be a priority, making them widely known, in spite of the media support they get. The idea of one State alone, of the right to return seems to me a far off perspective, an idealistic debate ... whilst people are just at the stage of an everyday fight for survival. However I am conscious of the fact that, in the end, is there any other democratic solution?

The sole aim of *Dialogue* is to make this discussion possible, within the ranks of the labour and democratic movement as well as at international level. Isn't the daily battle for survival in the Gaza Strip as in West Bank outposts linked to the Palestinians fight within, for the recognition of their rights, to the refugees' vital demand for the right to return? It is the Palestinian people as a whole that is threatened in its very existence by an identical policy of oppression stripping it of its land and possessions. A policy based on lies and manipulation, which as this review recalls, condemns the Jewish population itself to uncertainty as to its most immediate future.

Shaken by the resistance of the Afghan people and mass rejection of its Middle East policy, the American government is increasing pressure on its ally to put a stop to further building of colonies in the West Bank, but this threatens to disturb social peace in Israel. This is the only perspective offered by those intent on maintaining world order as it is today, the only perspective capable of uniting in a Great Middle East, the so called « moderate » Arab allies and the Zionist State. At the same time the two main Palestinian political forces are fighting it out to see who will be at the head of the Palestinian Authority, anti chamber of the future rump state. Doesn't holding that only separate development within the framework of two respective States is possible, boil down in the end to defending a racist position, opening the door to populations being further expelled and to territories becoming more and more encircled and cut off? The so-called Palestinian State will be nothing more than an enormous « Indian Reserve » where the right to return for refugees will be just as much forbidden as impossible from a practical point of view. The discussion on solutions, beginning with the democratic solution, is deeply justified by reality on the ground.

Don't the articles published in this edition of *Dialogue* prove that this debate must be pursued in the widest possible circles?

The editors

A year after the Gaza War - Speech at the protest rally Tel Aviv, January 2, 2010

by Nurit Peled Elhanan

Good evening to all who came to mark the first anniversary of the Gaza carnage, and to protest on the comfortable complacency which inhabitants of this city and this country exhibit in face of the slow annihilation which goes on and on in Gaza and throughout Palestine. Had Israeli preschoolers been asked "What did you learn at school this year, dear little boy of mine?" there are all kinds of answers which we might have gotten. An enlightened and critical child might have answered: I learned that the sun is still shining, and the almond tree is blooming, and the butcher butchers, and there is nobody to judge him. {1}

And the child who is less used to theorizing might rejoice and say: I learned how to cheat Americans, deceive Palestinians, to kill Arabs, to expel families from their homes, and to curse whoever tells me that I am a nasty brat when I have been a nasty brat. And I learned that the Jewish People lives and that Gilad Shalit also lives. Still. {2}

And the new immigrant boy, who terribly longs to integrate and belong, might say: I learned whom to hate, I learned who needs to be killed and who should be spat upon, and I am ever ready for the task, whenever you call upon me.

The Religious-Zionist child, who attends the fenced and well-guarded kindergarten in the settlement, might say: I learned to be a good Zionist, to love the Land, to die

and kill for its sake, to expel from it the invaders, to kill their children, to destroy their homes, and never to forget that in each and every generation the persecutors arise to annihilate us and that all gentiles are the same and that they are all antisemites who must be annihilated. And the most important is that the sun is still shining, and the almond tree is still blooming, and soon we will go planting all over the mountains Samaria and Judea and guard well the saplings against the herd of sheep which invaded our country in the two thousand years that we have not been here to guard it.

In the past year our children have learned that to kill a non-Jew, of whatever age, is a great commandment. This they learned not only from the rabbis, but also from the soldiers who ceaselessly boast of what they have done. This was expressed well by Damian Kirilik, when the police arrested him and charged him with murdering the entire Oshrenko Family. {3} Quite coolly he asked the police investigators: why are you making such a fuss over the killing of children? Damian Kirilik is a new immigrant who does not understand the nuances and sophistry of the rabbis' command to kill gentile children. But this assassin from the outside quickly got the general idea - that he had arrived at a place where the murder of children is taken very lightly.

Our children have learned this year that all the disgusting qualities which antisemites attribute to Jews

are actually manifested among our leaders: deceit and deception, greed and the murder of children. While accused of trading in transplanted organs, the unperturbed Government of Israel is engaged in trading in whole humans - for the time being. It can be conjectured that for many years to come, when many cars would bear the bumper sticker "Gil'ad - born to be free" {4}, the captains of the pirate ship known as Israel will continue their scheming and still haggle over how many kilograms of Jewish flesh, which is probably shrinking, could be traded for how much Palestinian flesh which is also not all that it used to be, as we learned from the news item about theft of skin and corneas at the Abu Kabir Forensic Center {5}. And they will continue to kill in Gil'ad's name and starve and suffocate in Gil'ad's name and to annihilate the Palestinian people slowly but surely, and on the way encourage the flourishing of the Palestinian bad "weeds" {6} that always legitimize the ongoing killing.

As in every rotten and corrupt society, the word "values" recurs again and again in every speech of every politician, especially the wanted ones. The values of Zionism and the values of Judaism and the values of the IDF. The values of Zionism we have seen this year in their full glory at the expulsion of families out of their homes in Sheikh Jarrah. The values of Democracy and the Rule of Law are expressed in Palestinians who are suspected of a violent act being extrajudicially assassi-

nated in their homes, in front of their children, while Jewish terrorists enjoy to the full the amenities of the judicial system.

That is what our children learn in the Jewish democratic state. Therefore, one can wonder at the supposed shock expressed in face of violence in schools and nightclubs, in streets and on the roads. After all, this violence is nothing but practicing the values of the IDF, a course of basic training towards the activities and operations waiting for these youths on their horizon. This is these youths' way of showing that they have learned something from their parents and elder brothers, from their teachers and guides. The only problem which apparently disturbs the educational and law enforcement authorities is that there are no Palestinians in the Jewish schools and the Jewish night clubs and the Jewish streets. For lack of them, the young Jews direct their violence at each other – and that should not happen, a Jew should not harm another Jew. Violence should be disciplined and regulated, guided by blind obedience to the racial laws, directed only and solely at those who are not Jewish.

And we who demonstrate every week, every month, at every carnage, at every anniversary of a carnage – what is our power? Nothing. Bereavement and failure is our lot in this country. Last Thursday we all stood at the gates of Gaza, disciplined and obedient to the conditions of the police permit, happy to see each other and find out that we are still alive and chanted slogans loudly at an audience of robot-like police and soldiers, totally incapable of comprehending what we had to say. But we did not pull down the wall. We did not succeed in saving even one child from the plague of meningitis which infests Gaza for several months already.

What shall we do with our impotence and failure? What is left to be done about an educational system which demands of its graduates a

total identification with Jewish guerilla fighters who were before 1948 executed by the British on charges of terrorism – and at the very same time a total identification with their executioners? To identify with the victims of Auschwitz, and at the same to behave with cruel indifference to the suffering of anyone who is not a member of our race? What can peace seekers do in a country which is run by the army, whose schools are infested with war criminals coming to instill their teachings, where pupils are obliged to experience a week in the pre-military Gadna (Youth Squads) and listen to heroic tales by the criminals of the Gaza carnage, on whom all possible psychological and social and educational means are applied to make them part of the killing machine?

These are our sons and daughters – and we have no access to the system which guides their lives. Where is there space left for us to instill in them one or two of our own values? What values of beauty and goodness can we squeeze into such a sophisticated apparatus of brainwashing and reality distortion?

It seems that the only value which we still have the power and means to instill is the value of refusal. To learn to say no. To teach our children who have not been poisoned yet to resist the brainwashing, to reject the viruses with which their brains are being injected. It is a hard and sisyphic task, but it is the only way of reasserting our humanity. To say no to evil, no to deceit and deception, no to trade in human beings, no the racism which is spreading over here like wildfire, a racism which does not stop at the Kalandia Checkpoint nor at the Erez Checkpoint but spreads like cancer to the shameful immigrant absorption centers, to the schools which proclaim integration and practice segregation, to all cultures and all beliefs in this country. If we don't learn to refuse and reject evil,

to refuse the evil laws and regulations, we will find ourselves refusing and rejecting ourselves, our inmost truth. We must refuse to feel ourselves an extinct minority, refuse the fear and apprehension – and the alienation – which are imposed on us, refuse to be accomplices. Only refusal can save us from surrender, from bankruptcy, from despair. We stand here today as an alien and alienated minority, hated and persecuted. But together with our peace-seeking friends beyond the Wall, beyond the barbed wires, we might become a majority. Only the refusal to surrender to walls and checkpoints can open the gates of our ghetto so that we could pull down the walls of their ghetto. To see at last that there is an outside world, that there are regions around which the Jewish National Fund had not destroyed. That there is a culture and there are people whom it is worth living to meet, to know and make friends with, to learn from them about this place where we live as resident aliens and remember that this place can be a place of surpassing beauty. {7}

Notes of the translator [translated by Adam Keller].

{1} A reference to Bialik's famous poem on the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom.

{2} "Am Yisrael Hai" ("the Jewish People lives") – a traditional saying, often invoked in a nationalist context.

{3} [http://www.jpост.com/servlet/Satellite?](http://www.jpост.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1256799068438&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull)

[cid=1256799068438&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull](http://www.jpост.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1256799068438&pagename=JPArticle%2FShowFull)

{4} The slogan "Ron Arad - born to be free" refers to captured Israeli pilot Ron Arad, for whose release the government in the 1990's refused to release Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners, and who is widely considered to be irretrievably lost.

{5} See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/21/israeli-pathologists-harvested-organs>

{6} Settler leaders dissociate themselves from extreme acts of violence against Palestinians, defining the perpetrators as "the weeds in our garden".

{7} The Hebrew term used, "Yefe Nof", is taken from the poem of longing for Jerusalem written by the Medieval Spanish Jewish poet Yehuda HaLevi: "O Abode of Surpassing Beauty/Joy of the Entire Earth...".

Introduction for Dialogue: Letter to Gordon Brown by 565 Jews in the UK

by Haïm Bresheeth

This important letter, published in the London Times on December 1st, 2009, was signed by 565 Jewish intellectuals in Britain – academics, authors, filmmakers, musicians, lawyers, medical practitioners and media professionals – from all parts of the community. Its great importance lies in the fact that this UN report by Judge Richard Goldstone, an avowed Zionist and supporter of Israel, has clearly labeled Israeli atrocities as ‘war crimes’, for the first time. In view of the carnage carried out by Israel, in which over 1440 innocent Palestinians have perished (numbers supplied by B’Tzelem, an Israeli charity, and the UN), and in which Gaza’s infrastructure, housing and vital supplies were destroyed, not for the first time, it is difficult to imagine that Judge Goldstone and his team could have possibly reached another conclusion; Judge Goldstone has already proved his high legal and human rights standards at his home in South Africa, by opposing apartheid and supporting democracy. He could hardly overlook a mass massacre of civilians, in which more than 400 children were murdered. However, despite such important credentials, the Goldstone report has put the blame squarely on both sides, incredibly. It has considered the Qassam rockets sent from Gaza as a war crime against Israel. While not a jurist myself, I am aware of the UN Charter which includes the right of all peoples to struggle against oppression and occupation, and use arms in such liberation a

struggle. Leaving aside the question of the actual damage done by the rockets, which have killed 8 people in Israel in the eight years since 2001 – the average daily toll of traffic accident in Israel – and somewhat less than Israel killed in ten minutes of its attack on the police college, when 55 people were killed in ten minutes, one should consider the actual basis for the claim that the Qassam attacks are ‘war crimes’.

I personally do not condone attacks on civilians by any of the unequal sides in this conflict between occupier/colonizer and the people under occupation, and would indeed prefer that the Palestinian resistance would concentrate on the Israeli army. But this is a facile argument – there is no army in the Middle East capable of defeating the IOF (Israeli Occupation Army) militarily, as it was quite clear that the Algerian resistance could not, in itself, defeat the French army of occupation. The Palestinians would very much like to have some modern armaments to defend themselves, I am sure, as well as to support the resistance against the IOF and the settlers militias, but are hardly in a position to do so. The only ‘weapon’ they have managed to deploy are rusty bits of metal, hurled at Israel with little accuracy and no real power to cause serious damage to life and property, let alone change the situation in Palestine. Anyone who considers those antiquated rockets to be a serious threat to Israel is either naïve, or

lying knowingly. There is never any equality of force or moral reasoning between occupier and occupied, neither should there be, and this is confirmed by the UN Charter.

Therefore, that was very interesting in the Goldstone report as released by the UN, is the great care to present some kind of ‘equality of evil’, or a ‘balance of blame’ between the two sides. The official UN press release have presented the report with the following quotes:

“We came to the conclusion, on the basis of the facts we found, that there was strong evidence to establish that numerous serious violations of international law, both humanitarian law and human rights law, were committed by Israel during the military operations in Gaza,” the head of the mission, Justice Richard Goldstone, told a press briefing today.

“The mission concluded that actions amounting to war crimes and possibly, in some respects, crimes against humanity, were committed by the Israel Defense Force (IDF).”

“There’s no question that the firing of rockets and mortars [by armed groups from Gaza] was deliberate and calculated to cause loss of life and injury to civilians

and damage to civilian structures. The mission found that these actions also amount to serious war crimes and also possibly crimes against humanity," he said.

This aspect of the Goldstone report has been greatly worrying for all of us who are supportive of the rights of the Palestinians, not just for work, travel, study, or health services, but of their basic human right for freedom, and for their right, enshrined in the UN Charter, to liberate themselves and their country from an aggressive, oppressive and destructive military occupation. In that respect, they are no different from the European countries under Nazi occupation. Would it occur to any of us to deny the right of resistance to the French, Belgian, Polish or Dutch populations under the Third Reich? For that matter, most developed nations went to war against Iraq in 1991, after Saddam has occupied Kuwait, and this was also enabled by the UN resolution which allowed the attack. Similarly, but not with the UN blessing, NATO found it necessary to attack Serbia and bomb civilian populations after the incursion into Kosovo. In all those cases, the right of the population under occupation to resist was not in question, and actively supported by other nations joining to defeat the aggressor. In all those cases, the punishment came few months after the aggression in question. Yet, in the case of Palestine, the loss of country, life, freedom and property, legally confirmed by numerous UN resolutions, was never followed by ANY act, military or otherwise, against the occupier and aggressor, in the whole period following 1948, and certainly after Israel occupied not only the whole of Palestine, but parts of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, in 1967 and later.

For Goldstone to equate and com-

pare the meager ability to resist by the Palestinians a murderous attack by the fifth strongest army on earth, with the latest American technology, on a defenceless and starving population incarcerated in what is in effect the largest concentration camp on the planet, is preposterous, to put it mildly. In the press reports which followed the release of the report, were interestingly attuned to this aspect of the report, seen as a device to make the report more acceptable to the Western nations, a fact which was somewhat supported by the results of the debate at the UN and the resolution passed:

The council voted to endorse the report by a South African judge, Richard Goldstone, which accused both Israel and Hamas of committing war crimes and possible crimes against humanity during the three-week war in Gaza in January. Goldstone, whose work was hailed by leading international human rights groups, found there may be individual criminal responsibility over the killing of civilians.

The resolution not only dealt with the Goldstone report but condemned Israel's policies in east Jerusalem, particularly over access to Muslim holy sites, demolitions of Palestinian homes and excavation work near the Haram al-Sharif, also known as the Temple Mount.

It was passed with 25 votes in favour, six against and 11 abstentions. The US voted against the resolution, while Britain and France did not take part after failing to secure a delay. Neither Israel nor the Palestinians sit on the 47-member council,

which is dominated by countries in the developing world, but both worked hard to influence the outcome of the vote.

That Britain and other European countries did not find it possible or necessary to vote for this resolution, is evidence of their biased and unequal position vis Israel, and their continued inability not only to oppose Israeli atrocities, but also to contribute meaningfully towards a just and lasting solution of the conflict. Gordon Brown was, like Tony Blair before him, a prisoner of the Israeli lobby, and has attacked the Goldstone report in terms which sound as if written in Jerusalem rather than in Westminster. This was the reason that so many liberal Jews in Britain, deeply shocked by the senseless carnage in Gaza, became incensed by the position of the British government, which, all of them agreed, does nothing to advance the situation, but rather, assists the continued occupation and aggression by Israel. Too publish a statement clarifying this became quite crucial, even to those Zionists which were shocked enough by the attack, and wished to cure Israel of its madness by gentle shock treatment, and by insisting that the international community acts to support the Goldstone report and the UN Security Council resolution based on it.

Once it came to agreeing a common statement, it became quite clear that many of the people genuinely wishing to distance themselves from Israel's aggression, still feel that they cannot yet distance themselves from the whole occupation regime and its history. There was an 'aesthetic disagreement' with Israel, rather than a political and systemic one. What they really wanted is to tell Israel that such actions are 'not in its best interests', so their main motive was to assist Israel by harshly criticizing it – a kind of

gentle corrective punishment. It also became quite clear that for those people, the 'equality of guilt' enshrined in the original report, and further reinforced by the resolution, was the condition for many signing such a statement.

This can be easily understood from the most important section in the statement:

"We further note that the Report unequivocally condemns not just Israel's devastation of Gaza but also Hamas's indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israeli neighbourhoods and does not in any way deny Israel its right to legitimate self-defence. We fully support its recommendation that both parties conduct full investigations into the allegations of war crimes in the Report.

We believe Israel cannot afford, nor should it wish, to exempt itself from the scrutiny of the international community on these matters."

For many of the signatories, this was a very high political price to pay – describing Israel and Hamas as somehow equal parties at war, was, to my mind, similar to equating the Warsaw Ghetto fighters with the Nazi forces which exterminated them and the rest of the population, as somehow being 'at war'. For many of us, this was a very difficult decision to take: signing this statement as it was printed was supporting a flawed text, based on a simplistic political judgment. How could the Gaza carnage by Israel even be mentioned, in connection to 'self-defence'? I find this sentiment highly cynical.

However, the power of such a statement emerging from a large group of Jewish intellectuals, supporting

international law and the UN resolution was the argument which won the day for most of us who signed the statement. For Jews in the UK to be united not in support of Israeli war crimes, but in clear opposition to them, is a new and exciting position to be in, and offers the potential for such groups to act towards a just and lasting solution, one respecting the human, political and national rights of Palestinians, and their right for return or compensation. Such a future potential solution, made impossible by all Israeli governments to date, will strongly depend on international support through a campaign of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, similar to the campaign which helped to end apartheid in South Africa. Ironically, for Jews in Britain, USA, France or elsewhere, to support UN resolutions and the rule of international law is, in itself, quite a radical new development... until recently, nothing would have persuaded such large groups of Jewish intellectuals to support those obvious principles!

It may be too early to claim, or build too much on such singular actions, though. Such actions were not a result of continued and systemic political shift, I believe, but rather, of the great revulsion affected in ALL communities, Jewish and other, by the attacks on Lebanon in 2006, and on Gaza last year. It was Israeli brutality which brought this disparate group together, and the real test would be any future action which such a group, amorphous and transitory as it is, may play in assisting a long-term solution not based on the brutal power of the occupier, or as Azmi Bishara put it, a 'settlement between the horse and its rider'. The real advance will take place when all the signatories of such statements will not only accept the putative equality based on human rights rather than the racism-driven Israel, but will also act to bring this

about. That would be a real change! Change will not come without immense international pressure on Israel, and that is yet to start.

Professor Haim Bresheeth is an Anti-Zionist Israeli academic working and living in London. His books include *Introduction to the Holocaust*, and *The Gulf War and the New World Order*, and his films include *A State of Danger*.

Interview with single-state and BDS activist Dr. Haidar Eid

Dialogue : Could you speak to us about the origins and the objectives of the Boycott Divestment Sanctions ?

Haidar Eid : The BDS call originated in 2004 when the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel was launched. In 2005, the BNC, or BDS National Committee, was launched combining more than 170 Palestinian civil society orgs that endorsed the BDS call. Now, almost all Palestinian civil society networks, including Islamic and national political organizations, have endorsed the BDS call. The BNC acts as a representative for all these civil society movements that have endorsed the call.

The main objective behind BDS is first, putting an end to the Israeli military occupation of the Gaza Strip [GS] and the West Bank [WB], fighting against the policy of colonization and Apartheid as practiced by Israel against the indigenous population of Palestine of 1948.

Dialogue : All Palestinians claiming the right of return are, by this very fact, boycotting the state of Israel, founded on a policy of ethnic cleansing and purging which our paper, along with others, has tirelessly denounced since its beginning. However, among partisans of the boycott (institutions, certain states, religions), some wish to pressure Israel into becoming a democratic

state. Is such a perspective conceivable? You are a partisan of the single-state solution. How can the BDS campaign be associated with this demand ?

Haidar Eid : As a One Democratic State supporter, it is amongst the corollaries of such a belief that Israel is a settler colonialist, Apartheid state and the methods- or, tools of struggle- used against Apartheid South Africa can be used as a model in our struggle against Apartheid Israel. Transforming of Israel from an ethno-religious Apartheid state into a democracy should be the objective of every single person believing in liberal democracy in general. And, therefore, we think that the only solution to bring this conflict to an end caused by the establishment of a racist Apartheid state is only through democratic means by de-Zionising the state of Israel and making it a state for all of its citizens disregarding race, religion, ethnicity or gender.

With pressure imposed by the international community through a BDS campaign a la anti-Apartheid campaign which brought Apartheid South Africa to an end, we believe that Israel itself can be transformed into a secular democratic state after the return of 6 million Palestinian refugees who were ethnically cleansed in 1948, a state for ALL of its citizens.

Dialogue : A parallel is often drawn with South Africa. Yet, in South Africa, wasn't it fear of a popular

uprising, fear of a violent end to the apartheid regime that pushed the UN and largely the USA to demand reforms to save the essential, i.e. South African capitalism ? There are many South African activists who believe that the Kempton Park negotiations actually saved the economic power of the whites by putting some blacks in power. What is your view on this ?

Haidar Eid : I tend to agree with this analysis and I think that in South Africa we have witnessed an end to political Apartheid, but, unfortunately, we have not witnessed yet the end of economic Apartheid. I believe it is the task of conscious progressive powers in South Africa now to uphold the original principles defended by the Freedom Charter. Unfortunately, the struggle of the Black masses of South Africa had definitely been hijacked by Black fat cats. But, the agenda now is purely social. Whereas as the South African struggle has managed to bring Apartheid South Africa to an end, it has failed to come up with a new agenda that guarantees the socio-economic rights of the majority of Black masses of South Africa. In other words, yes South Africa has fallen within the trap of what Frantz Fanon calls the pitfalls of national (racial) consciousness, by prioritizing race over class.

Dialogue : We are asking these questions because in the west the most active partisans of the 2-states solution (a solution which we

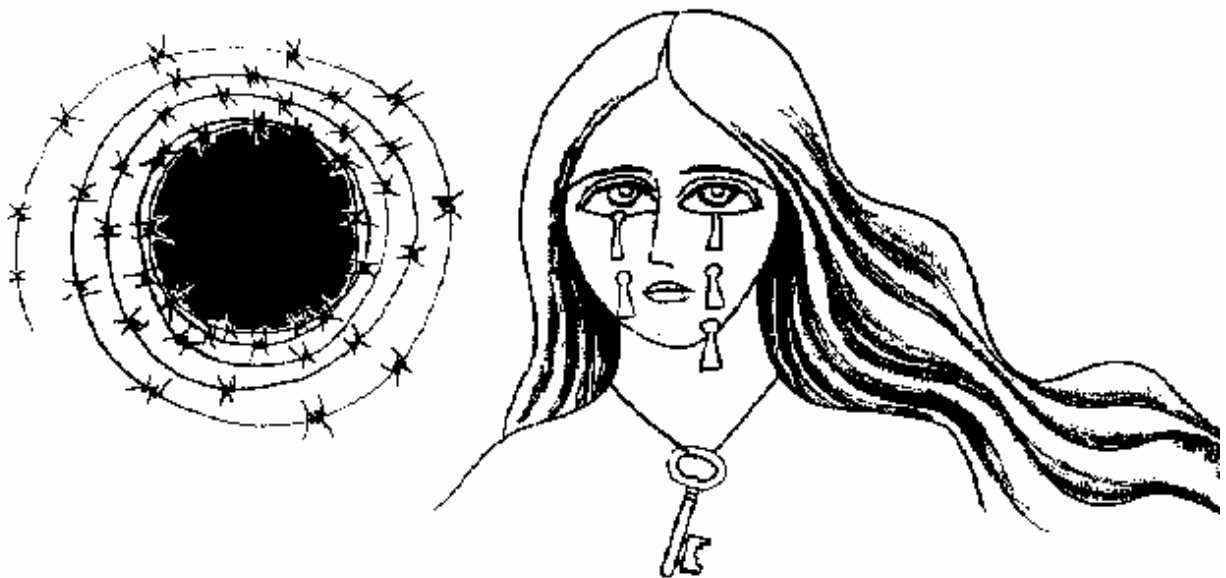
consider incompatible with the right of return) have made the BDS campaign their own. The professed 2-states solution would imply Israel's establishing of official borders, which is incompatible with Zionism, which by definition is predatory and expansionist. Furthermore, isn't the boycott question itself intended to lead to satisfying the democratic rights of the Palestinian people - including of course the Palestinians of 1948 - which is also incompatible with Zionism ?

Haidar Eid : Absolutely. I fully agree with this analysis and that is why one of the major slogans of the BDS campaign defended by all those who have endorsed the above mentioned BDS call in 2005, in fact call for the end of the policy of

Apartheid practiced against the Palestinians of 1948. More so, as One State activists, we strongly believe that the struggles of the Palestinian people whether in 1948 or in 1967, that is to say the WB and GS, or even in the Diaspora is inseparable and we believe that the contemporary Palestinian national project fails to address all these concerns. That is why we think that our alternative that can provide all Palestinians with a solution that guarantees the right of return and equality for the 1948 inhabitants, whether Jews, Muslims or Christians. The problem with the Oslo ideology is that it traces back the origin of the Palestinian question to the 1967 war which actually means establishing a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, a state fro

tion par excellence. And, therefore, we think that one of the major tools of the struggle towards a secular democratic state is BDS. But, BDS is only one form of civil resistance, which is one pillar of the four pillars of the struggle that the South African anti-Apartheid movement defended and defined eloquently in their literature.

Haidar Eid teaches at Al Aqsa University and is a member of the One Democratic State Group : www.odsg.org



Testimony

by Daniel Gamzon

A former Zionist and a regular subscriber of *Dialogue* ever since it started being published, I wish to take part in the discussion proposed by your review by explaining what brought me to embrace the proposal of a single State with Palestinian, Arab and Jewish components.

The prospect of a single State in the framework of historic Palestine, a secular State, making the right to return possible, has worked its way in my mind. I first considered it was outright Utopian and especially as to how this right to return could be reconciled with the existence of the Jewish population, how practical solutions could be found for the regrouping of Palestinian Arab families and the right of the Jewish population to live without the rights of some obliterating the rights of others. That obstacle should not be underestimated! But it is evident that solutions can be found through negotiation, though, in its colonialist way of arguing based on *fait accompli*, Zionism has, for decades, impressed on the Jews' consciousness that "it's either them or us" and that "if we give them back their land, we will just have to go packing".

I lived in the country for 7 years, between 1949 and 1956. After this experience, I became convinced that the leaders of Israel State were doomed to crossing swords with the surrounding Arab states because they negated the legitimacy of an independent Palestinian State (at

the time, the governments were already making this suggestion). The basic rights of the Palestinian Arab minority were flouted, as the people were living under a special regime, especially being restricted to menial jobs they had to have passes which they had to obtain from the army and lived under permanent police control. For security reasons, they were banned from any function in the public services except as local civil servants and teachers, which is still the case! Arab workers were not, and still are not permitted to join the Histadrut, the trade union reserved only to Jewish workers. At the time, I had joined the Israeli Communist Party (MAKI) which, following in the footsteps of the Kremlin, demanded a bi-national State for the Israeli portion and a Palestinian State on the Left Bank, which boiled down to promoting the two State solution, in which, even with equal rights for the Jews and the Palestinians, the framework remained "the Jewish State". Historical events have justified my fears of a permanent state of war: the war with Egypt in 1956 and the occupation of the Sinai, then, in 1967, the Six-Day War, then, the first war on Lebanon, the war on Hizbullah, in South Lebanon, in 2006 and now the threats of war with Iran, not forgetting the barbarous attack on the population of the Gaza Strip during the 2008-2009 Winter.

Over 50 years have gone by, with, for the Israeli population (including the Palestinian people) the huge

burden in money and human lives of sustaining one of the most modern armies in the world (the portion of taxes dedicated to defence economy ranks first in the world), offset by a policy of social regression that first hits the Palestinian population but also the Jewish population who are rapidly becoming impoverished, not to mention perpetual insecurity. By the way, during the recent electoral campaign against her rival Netanyahu, Tzipi Livni recognised that Israeli citizens were migrating away by the thousands because they felt their future was uncertain! Originating from a French Jewish family whose members, like many others, were persecuted and had to flee to the South of France, then abroad during the occupation, I feel all the more sympathy for the fate of the Palestinians. My father founded the Movement of the *EIF* (Israeli Scouts of France); as he also organised a self-asserting Jewish resistance movement (whose members were French citizens or migrants from Europe, especially from Nazi Germany) he was designated as a terrorist by the fascists when he and his comrades demanded the right to resist the occupiers and be free of them. That is the cruel irony of history! The Shoah has been branded in my brain and, for this reason, I cannot be reconciled with the fact that for 90 years, Zionism has been oppressing the Palestinian population, especially since 1967 and the occupation of the Left Bank and the erection of the Wall of Shame, the theft of land and persecutions. As the

Palestinians in occupied territories are prevented from living a normal life, poverty is mounting and with it, the feeling of being wronged. Now, Israel compares with apartheid South Africa and has even gone beyond it, as Gaza rivals the Warsaw Ghetto, even if the brutality has not reached the same magnitude. The Goldstone report refers to crime against humanity! This has been committed by the army of a country that claims to be a democracy! On the Gaza Strip, the people are submitted to permanent blockade, which makes it impossible for them to rebuild the homes; they have been turned into permanent homeless people living on the ruins of their own homes. They survive in suffering and have to face impoverishment that inflicts on them record high malnutrition, ruined sanitation, electrical power and healthcare networks. I feel that, what with the possibilities offered by modern economy, historic Palestine can accommodate everyone (the best proof is that the Zionists claim that, if all the Jews world-wide – numbering an estimated 10 million

– wished to come and live in Israel, they would gladly welcome them in the framework of the law on return while they have already integrated 3 million Russian Jewish migrants).

Taking into account the huge sufferings undergone by the Palestinians, and their rights and the human and economic cost of the wars at the expense of diminishing living standards, anguish and uncertainty for the future of the Jewish populations – in the face of that, what is the cost of inconveniencing some of them by potentially making them move if this makes an enduring solution possible? After all, in everyday life, one may have to move several times out of necessity. So, to live in peace, it is at least worthwhile discussing even if the way may be a long, uneven one with hurdles and stumbling stones, and reluctance from some or the others. Zionism, an ideology generated by the Western Jewish bourgeoisie, implies the refusal to coexist in peace because it is racist and colonialist by nature. The turnabout in my position came when I became aware

that its values negate solutions, i.e. that it brings wars and sufferings for all and that came as I read *Dialogue*; as I became aware of this space that undoubtedly is the first one that materialises the possibilities of an exchange between sides that are more or less involved, that offers a democratic alternative: the Single State solution.

Given the obvious historic failure of the pseudo-negotiating process, one can currently hear international political leaders raising the voices and advocating the Single State solution. In their minds, this should of course, for the time being, be realised within the framework of the “Jewish State” with all its contradictions and implying the oppression of the Palestinian minority. This however, invalidates the 2 State solution, a deluding policy that, up to now, has been pursued by all the Zionist governments with the support of Uncle Sam and of the European Union. Therefore, yes, a secular, Jewish-Palestinian state is the only solution for future peace guaranteeing the rights of all.

Palestine/Israel: A Single State, with Liberty and Justice for All, Regardless of Religion.

by Susan Abulhawa
with Ramzy Baroud

Prior to the establishment of Israel, Palestine had been a multi-religious and multi-cultural country. Christians, Muslims and Jews, Armenians, Greek Orthodox, to name a few, all had a place there; and all lived in relative harmony. Other nations fought wars and waged epic struggles to attain the kind of coexistence that was already a reality in Palestine.

Prior to the establishment of Israel, Palestine had been multi-religious and multi-cultural. Christians, Muslims and Jews, Armenians, Greek Orthodox, to name a few, all had a place there; and all lived in relative harmony. Other nations fought wars and waged epic struggles to attain the kind of coexistence that was already a reality in Palestine. But while the world strives toward the noble truths that we are all created equal, Israel legislates the notion of a Chosen People with exclusive rights and privilege for Jews. Where countries have worked to integrate their citizens to create the richness of diversity, Israel is working in reverse, employing racist policies to “Judaize” the land whereby property and resources are confiscated from Christians and Muslims for the exclusive use of Jews. Where there is consensus that certain human rights are inalienable, Palestinians have lived subject to the whims of soldiers at checkpoints; of airplanes and helicopters raining death onto them with impunity; of curfews and restrictions and denials; and of violent armed settlers who fancy themselves disciples of God.

Living under Israeli occupation, in refugee camps or in exile, we Palestinians have endured having everything callously taken from us – our homes, our heritage, our history, our families, livelihoods, freedom, farms, olive groves, water, security, and freedom.

In the 1990s, we supported the Oslo Accords two-state solution even though it would have returned to us only 22% of our historic homeland. But Israel repeatedly squandered our generosity, confiscating more Palestinian land to increase illegal Jewish-only colonies and Jewish-only roads. What remains to us now is less than 14% of Historic Palestine, all of it as isolated Bantustans, shrinking ghettos, walls, fences, checkpoints with surly soldiers, and the perpetual encroachment of expanding illegal Israeli colonies. While the Palestine Authority has led us into a shrinking land mass, less water, more restrictions, ominous walls and merciless slaughter, notable individuals and popular movements have mobilized for Palestine as once happened for South Africa. Moral authorities like former President Jimmy Carter, Nobel Laureates Desmond Tutu and Mairead Maguire, and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson have condemned Israeli Apartheid.

Organizations supporting the Divestment and Boycott Campaign against Israel include religious institutions such as the Presbyterian Church, The World Council of

Churches, United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church, the Federation of European Jews for a Just Peace, among many others. It includes civil and professional organizations such as the National Lawyers Guild, the Irish Municipal, Public and Civil Trade Union in Ireland, as well as labor unions in Canada, Britain, and other nations. An academic boycott of Israel has spread throughout the UK and other parts of Europe and taken root in US universities across the country. The International Solidarity Movement has seen thousands of individuals come to the Occupied Territories to protect Palestinians from the violence of settlers during the olive harvest; to protect children on their daring daily journeys to school; and to bear witness to the inhumanity of military occupation.

The Free Gaza movement has transported by boat hundreds of people willing to risk their lives to bring greatly needed supplies to the besieged people of Gaza. This Christmas, internationals will march to the Egypt/Gaza border to break this siege. These are but a few examples of growing popular support for the Palestinian struggle.

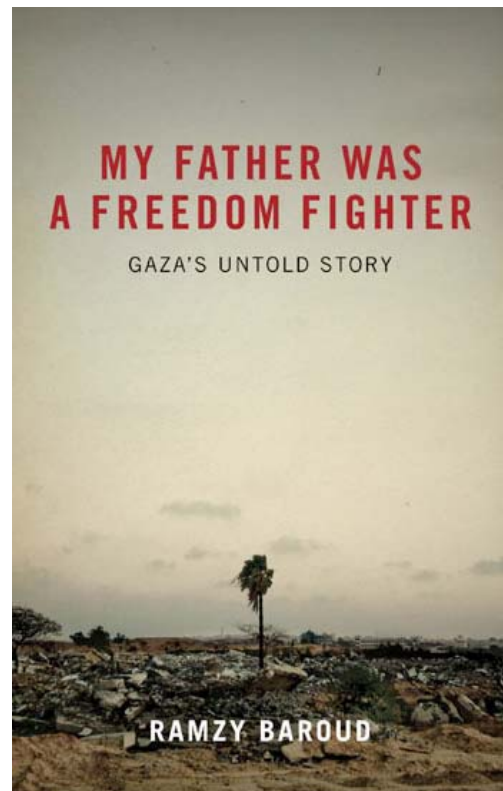
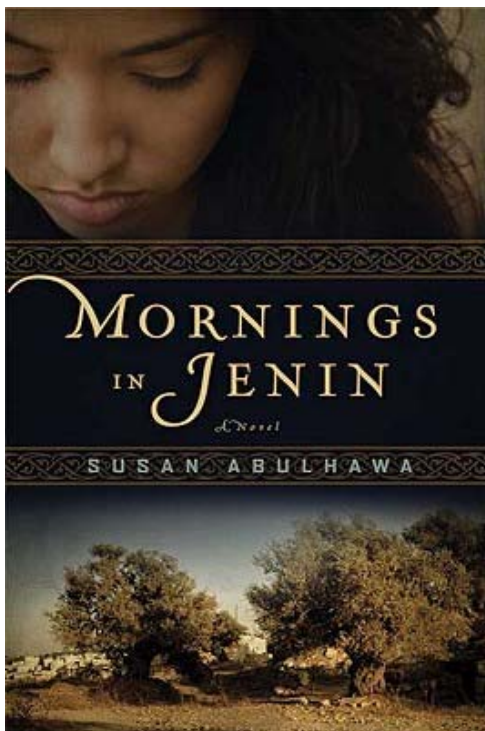
When compared with the accomplishments of these grassroots movements, the futility of “negotiations” becomes painfully apparent. It is clear that we cannot look to our leaders (elected or imposed) to achieve justice. Just as only the masses could bring South

Africa's Apartheid to its knees, it will be the masses who will also bring Israel's Apartheid crashing. The continued expansion of international action demanding the implementation of Palestinian basic human rights is inevitable. The notion of religious-ethnocentric entitlement and exclusivity for one people at the expense of another has been rejected the world over. Palestinians reject it and we assert that we are human beings worthy of the

same human rights accorded to the rest of humanity; that we are worthy of our homes and farms, our heritage, our churches and mosques, and our history; and that we should not be expected to negotiate with our oppressors for such basic dignities. The two-state solution was and remains an instrument to circumvent the basic human rights of Palestinians in order to accommodate Israel's desire to be Jewish. Polls show that Palestinians refuse to be

the enemies of our Jewish brothers and sisters anywhere, just as we refuse to be oppressed by them.

It is time for our shared land to be the inclusive and diverse country it had been. It is time for leaders to follow the people's determined movement toward a single democratic state, with liberty and justice for all, regardless of religion.



Zionist Mythology – Shlomo Sand’s « The Invention of the Jewish People ».

by Jacques Werstein

If the publishing of “The Invention of the Jewish People” in the spring of 2008 was greeted by critics with a wall of complete silence for 6 months, this historical essay dedicated to “... *all the Israelis and Palestinians ... wishing to live in liberty, equality and fraternity*” has nevertheless encountered the aspirations and the questioning of a large audience. In the face of dominating Zionism, in Israel itself, it has become a best-seller translated in all languages and engaging tempestuous debates and often threatening challenges. In fact, this book by Shlomo Sand which refuses and deconstructs the Zionist historiography aiming at prolonging the “endless war” against the peoples of the Middle East is remarkable and significant. This article does not purpose to start here a debate on the idea of nation that the author champions, but to encourage the reader of *Dialogue* to acquire and read his substantiated, captivating, vivid - and implacable - criticism of Zionism.

Again on the 29th of May 2009, the French daily *Le Monde* held forth on “*the wrong reasons for a book-selling success*” and on the 15th of November, the *Jerusalem Post* headlined : “*A University of Tel Aviv historian accused of anti-Semitism*” whilst others compared his book to the “*negativism of the gas chambers*.”

This essay cites each of its sources, the research of major anthropological, social and cultural archaeologi-

cal discoveries, scientific dating that has been done since the 1980s and the critical analyses of Zionist historiography.

Sand wrote in his preface: “*This text has been written by a professional historian... who has taken risks that are generally prohibited to the professional fields of the Jewish people...*” He reminds us that the “history of the Jewish people” is kept separate from “general history” in Israel and that any discovery that could possibly question Zionist historiography is silenced and covered up. “*The national imperative has kept a clamped jaw on any kind of contradiction to or deviation from the official story.*” Thus “*the problematic question ‘who is Jewish?’ – essentially of a legal order, for the recognition of rights - has not preoccupied the historians for whom the answer is self-evident : a Jew is a descendant of the people who were exiled 2000 years ago.*”

In his 2nd chapter, entitled “Mythistory”, Shlomo Sand highlights the first paragraph of the “*Declaration of Independence of the State of Israel*” which is the proclamation establishing the State of Israel. It is important to remember that this declaration was adopted on the 14th of May 1948 by the National Council representing the Jewish community of the future country as well as the foreign Zionist movement. It was solemnly pronounced by Ben Gurion the next day, as the eviction of the Palestini-

ans by force and by terror was being carried out, as well as the appropriation or the destruction of their towns and villages, of their lands, where many of them would be banned from returning. All of this with one single objective: the clearing of the future “Jewish State” of as many Palestinians as possible! ...which the “Declaration” justified in these words: “*Israel is the land of the birth of the Jewish people. It is the place where its spiritual, religious and national character was shaped. It is where its independence was realised, where a culture of both national and universal bearing, the one that gave the gift of the Bible to the entire world, was created.*”

It goes on thusly: “*Forced into exile, the Jewish people remained faithful to the land of Israel throughout all the dispersions, praying constantly for a return, forever in the hope of restoring its national liberty (...) the Jews endeavoured, throughout the centuries, to return to the land of their ancestors to rebuild their State (...)*” Shlomo Sand highlights this second paragraph of the “Declaration of Independence” in his 3rd chapter “The invention of the exile. Proselytising and conversion.”

This “*gift of the Bible to the entire world*” launched the Nabka and buried the Palestinian people (with the approval of the UN) in the legitimate name of the “Jewish people” whose origin and date of birth,

exile and “right of return” to the land are considered sacred!

The author rigorously presents notes and findings concerning historical and archaeological documents, works, datings which enable him to declare: “*I have put forth very little new data. I have simply order the existing historic knowledge differently*”. He goes on to criticise the Zionist historiography from the highest antiquity and recall the data allowing to assert that the 13th century BCE flight of Jewish slaves from Egypt led by Moses never happened, nor did the crossing of the desert and the conquering of Canaan, nor the genocide of the population accompanying him. The Promised Land that god gave to Moses for his people in order for them to flee Egypt ... was still part of the Egyptian kingdom and no trace of an event of such significance exists... The fabulous united kingdom of David and of Solomon never was united and none of the most exhaustive digs have unearthed the palace of the capital of Jerusalem, which was only a village. As for the exile which followed the destruction of the first temple, it never swept the people of Judea off to Babylon. Only an elite – still at that time pagan - left for Babylon where it drew the architecture of a first monotheistic Mosaic religion from its confrontation with the Persian culture. Just as the texts of the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey” the struck man’s imagination. But they have no historical value.

Yet “*in the imaginary history of Ben Gurion*” as Shlomo Sand reminds us, “the new Israel was the kingdom of the Third Temple and when for example the army of Israel conquered the Sinai during the war of 1956, gaining Charm El Sheikh, he addressed the victorious soldiers with a messianic-historical enthusiasm: “*And we will once again sing the ancient song of Moses and the sons of Israel (...) with the fervour*

of all the armies of Israel (...) You have renewed the link with King Solomon who made Eilat the greatest port of Israel 3000 years ago (...) Yotvata, nicknamed Tiran, which made up an independent Hebrew state 1400 years ago, will again become a part of the 3rd Kingdom of Israel.” His goal, proclaimed in 1956, was the conquest of the territories of the biblical “Great Israel.”

As for the destruction of the second temple by the Romans in 70 CE, which would have been the origin of the exile and the dispersion of the Jews of Judea, the Jewish population of Judea was not cast out. If the Romans did indeed ruthlessly execute those who combated them and enslave many of their prisoners, they still went on taxing the agricultural production of the population of Judea, which was essentially made up of farmers. The exile of the Jewish people never was. The “Jewish exile” was a Christian myth that depicted that event as divine punishment imposed on the Jews for having rejected the Christian gospel. Could the descendants of the ancient Hebrews indeed be the current-day Palestinian Arabs?

In asserting that there was no exile and that the populations who could be the “descendants of Abraham” at the time of the destruction of the temple are likely to be found in the present-day Palestinian population, Shlomo Sand has been accused by one of his disparagers of working for the Palestinians, against Israel. Sand passed on the compliment to the authors of that argument, which is not his own. The argument was stated in 1918 by the future head of the Zionist state Ben Gurion and by Ben Zvi, the future second president who, whilst the British Mandate of Palestine had not yet been formally established, came up with the idea of integrating the Palestinian fellahs (“peasants” – translator’s note) into the Zionist project.

The “Judaic descent” of these Palestinians continued to exist up until 1929 when these “ancient Judaic descendants” revolted in order to survive the occupation of their country by the British Empire and the appropriation of their lands by the Jewish Agency, charged with reinforcing the Jewish National Home in application of the Balfour Declaration of November 2nd 1917. After the brutal putting down of the fellahs’ revolt, Chaim Weizmann – one of the instigators of the Balfour Declaration, who was the first president of Israel and a president of the Jewish Agency – then described the Palestinians as a “backward population.” Thus the Zionists confiscated from them their ancient Judaic descent. They were no longer good for anything but being evicted from the “Promised Land.”

Zionism picked and chose, using and abandoning the different biblical stories that suited their policy of the moment. But the need to base its project on the legitimacy of the “return” from exile of the Jewish people to its land and to expel the Palestinians from it, led the Zionists to adopting the positions of the thinkers of the “Jewish Nation” of the 19th century, at the time of Gobineau, and not only to assert the common origin of all Jews but also to put forward the idea of a “people-race” (well before Hitler wrote “Mein Kampf”) which has not entirely disappeared in Israel where biological and genetic research programmes are still of late seeking the existence of a Jewish gene so far nowhere to be found.

Shlomo Sand has written that his decision to write this book came to him through his understanding that the Judaic population was not dispersed as a result of an exile. The historical documents allowing to assert that the Jewish communities and the Jews of the Mediterranean, of Yemen, Turkistan, Ethiopia,

Morocco, Spain, Germany, Poland and the very ends of Russia “were not forced into exile”: they were converted to Judaism, sometimes by force, more often by the impassioned proselytising of the Mosaic religion.

The author notably quotes a “History of the Berbers” written in 1396 which indicates “A part of the Berbers professed Judaism, a religion that they had received from their powerful neighbours, the Israelites of Syria. Among the Jewish Berbers can be distinguished the Djeraoua, a tribe which inhabited the Aures Mountains and that the Kahina (Dahia al-Kahina, the Berber Queen – translator’s note) belonged to, the woman who was killed by the Arabs at the time of the first invasions...” These Jewish Berber tribes took part in the conquest of the Iberian peninsula and contributed to the building of the brilliant Hispano-Arabic civilisation. There are numerous documents allowing for this understanding: “the deep-rooted source of the great Jewish community of Spain is the Berber soldiers converted to Judaism.” After their eviction from Spain, these Jews made up the Sephardim communities of North Africa, who therefore “descend” from the pagan Berber tribes converted to Judaism.

As for the Ashkenazi Jews of the countries of Eastern Europe, they do not come from the dispersion of the Judeans who, after the year 70 would have gone first to Rome then would have founded small Judaic communities western Germany before moving into the east of Europe! They were exiled from the powerful kingdom of the Khazars which extended from the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea, along the Volga up to the Northern Caucasus, whose king converted to Judaism in the 8th century CE. His “existence has been confirmed by specific evidence that is Arabic, Persian, Byz-

antine, Russian, Armenian, Hebrew and even Chinese. All the documents attest to his great power and several even give complete accounts of his surprising conversion to Judaism and the expansion of his religion which followed throughout his kingdom.” After a troubled and warring history which weakened it, the kingdom was totally broken up by the Mongol storm that swept across the 13th century, led by Genghis Khan. The destruction of the complex systems of irrigation set up around the great rivers, which allowed for the indispensable production of rice and wine, brought about a vast migratory movement of a huge part of the population over the following centuries, towards Russia and the Ukraine and as far as Poland, Lithuania and the edges of Germany. The official Zionist version which accredits a German origin is implausible. The few Jewish communities that existed at the time in Mainz, Worms, Cologne and Strasburg only contained a maximum of 2000 members. They could not have engendered the multitude of communities and the dense Jewish population that spread, the townships growing up around their synagogues. At the beginning of the 17th century; these Jews were still speaking dialects derivative of Slavic languages. But their commerce and intermediary relations with German settlements towards the east, during the 14th and 15th centuries and the founding of great cities of trade and crafts, where exchanges were dealt with in German, injected those expressions and vocabulary into the basic structure of the Slavic linguistics to the point of forging a new language: Yiddish. The Ashkenazi Jews are indeed descended from the Slavic populations and inhabitants converted to the Jewish Khazar empire. Zionist historiography had admitted this up until the Six-Day War which led the army of Israel’s occupying of Jerusalem, the “capital of the Kingdom of David” in 1967.

The hysteria of the conquerors then exacerbated their fear of having the so-called historical right of the “chosen people” to the biblical land contested. They fell back on their unique biblical origin and erased the memory of the horsemen of Khazar steppes, those proud pagans converted to Judaism, ancestors of the Jewish Ashkenazi. Khazaria was erased from Zionist historiography for the anti-Semitic cause. Nevertheless, as the author reminds us, “the Jews of today are descended from converts!”

These conversions brought about a great diversity in the Judaic communities, from Ethiopia, Kurdistan and Yemen to the edges of the Mediterranean, from Spain to the outer-reaches of Russia, where the cultures, the way of life, the languages, the customs, the dwellings and the architecture brought them closer to the population alongside whom they lived than to the members of the other Jewish communities. The links between these diverse communities was not of a national nature. The sole common point among them was their Judaic religion and a few cultural practices.

Shlomo Sand is able to assert that an international Jewish people does not exist. The “Jewish people” was invented. “The existence of a Jewish people is a fiction” but, he writes, “I do recognise a Yiddish people, who existed in Eastern Europe, who of course is not a nation but in which it is possible to see a Yiddish civilisation with a popular modern culture. I think that Jewish nationalism has blossomed on the compost of this ‘Yiddish people.’”

How to unify this diversity?

The young German Jewish historians at the beginning of the 19th century, having been forbidden access to university positions because of their “particular religion”, and in keeping with the values of the

French Revolution, extolled the political emancipation of young Germany, which necessitated its complete rupture with any religion. Religion should remain a question of private nature! Thus they baptised their religion, which they did not deny, the “Israelite” religion, in order to break free from the terms “Judaic” and “Jewish”, which had an ethnic and even a racial connotation. For these historians who associated their emancipation to the emancipation of all the German people, which they called for, the Bible was the Theological Book of the Jews and not a national historical Jewish document.

On the other hand and in opposition to this democratic orientation, in the second half of the 19th century, whilst the national question was being posed and is still posed in different countries like Poland, Germany, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Spain and so on, the German Jewish intellectuals and historians, who were confronted with violent anti-Semitic extortion and hostile to any joining with the developing socialist movement, asserted their “*national Jewish identity*”. Some went so far as to posit the existence of a Jewish “*people-race*”. According to them, “*Judaism carries a particular blood which differentiates it from other human groups (...) Zionism means to work towards the progress of the race and for a strong people-race (...) in keeping with the lineage of Abraham.*” It is on this soil where the demand for, the claim for a Jewish nation and a Jewish State for dispersed Jews was born. Zionism was born.

The author writes that : “*From 1987, the year of the meeting of the first Zionist congress, up until the end of the First World War, Zionism was a very minor and insignificant current within the world Jewish community. Zionist thought developed timidly, in the shadow of the German national idea.*” It did

nevertheless manage to penetrate the cultural centres of the Yiddish population. Hertzl, the father of Zionism, wrote in 1895: “*I will just say this: we are a historic entity, a nation made of different anthropological components. That point is sufficient to make up a Jewish State. No nation comprises a single race.*” He wished to reach his goal without having to go through a real in-depth historic research nor a mass of biological arguments. He disparaged Jewish features and declared he would readily cooperate with anti-semitic regimes. “*they are as interested as we Zionists are, to see the Jews leave in order to establish their own State!*” (Thus, in the aftermath of the first world war, Zionism was put in a situation a being an instrument for the British Empire which agreed to the setting up of a “*Jewish national nucleus*” in Palestine, which, with the State of Israel, was to become the American military arm in the region – it should be noted that Shlomo Sand never embarks on such an analysis. Ed. N)

The fifth chapter entitled “*The distinction. Political identifying in Israel*” highlights the twelfth paragraph of the “*Declaration of Independence*” : “*The State of Israel will be open to the immigration of Jews of all the countries where they are dispersed. It will develop the country to the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be founded on the principles of liberty, justice and peace taught by the prophets of Israel; it will assure a complete equality of social and political rights to all its citizens, without distinction of belief, race or sex, it will guarantee full freedom of conscience, of religion, of education and of culture*” Shlomo Sand questions “*can Israel be defined as a democratic entity?*” He answers: “*The freedom of expression and association within the borders of 1967 Israel were considerable, even in comparison to western democra-*

cies ...” but “*the undermining of the rights of citizens are routine in the Jewish State... there is no civil marriage, no public civil burial, no public transport on Sabbath or holidays, and the violation of the property rights of Arab citizens reveals an aspect of the legislation and the daily Israeli culture that can hardly be called liberal. In addition to a domination over an entire people, entirely deprived of their rights in the territories taken since 1967, that has now lasted over 40 years (...) and since the law of absentee ownership and those of the acquisition of lands for the creation of the State, including the laws and decrees allowing for the discrimination of Israeli-Palestinian citizens (ineligible for military service) – as much in what concerns their rights as in the distribution of resources, on the bias of the concept of “former soldier” – including the right of return and the matrimonial law, the State of Israel limits the essential of the public assets to its Jews, through the intermediary of its legislation.*” And the author adds “*the ‘new immigrants’ who benefit from a generous ‘welcome basket’ and the settlers in the occupied territories who participate in elections and receive significant budgets, although residing outside of the regions under Israeli sovereignty.*” And he concludes that “*the children of Israel, the ‘biological descendants’ of the ancient kingdom of Judea, openly benefit from the favour of the State.*”

Shlomo Sand recalls that in 1947, the General Assembly of the UN voted the majority of its voices for the creation of a “*Jewish State*” and “*Arab State*” on the land which was previously called “*Palestine/Eretz Israel*”. Those who voted were not particularly precise on the interpretation of the term “*Jewish*” and did not calculate the problem that this would pose in the building of the new State. Among the 900,000 Palestinians who were supposed to

stay in Israel, and in the supplementary territories that it added following its military victory, approximately 730,000 fled or were expelled, that is more than the entire Jewish population at that same time (640,000 people). By reason of the ideological principle according to which "Eretz Israel" is the historical land of the "Jewish people", it was possible, with no remorse, to prevent the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees to their home and their lands after the fighting. This partial cleansing did not totally settle the problems of identity in the new State. About 170,000 Arabs still lived there and many uprooted had arrived from Europe with their non-Jewish spouses. Under the pressure of the UN resolution, Israel had to accord citizenship to the Palestinian inhabitants remaining within its borders. And although it had made government expropriations of more than half of their land, and imposed a military regime and severe limitations on most of them, up until 1966 these inhabitants did however become legal citizens. It could be hoped that the legislation would eventually apply the principle of equality to all its citizens and not only to the Jews.

But if all of the citizens, be they considered Jewish or not, became Israelis, the State of Israel was not merely content with a Jewish hegemony; it refused to formally and concretely belong to all its citizens. From 1947, it was decided that the Jews could not marry non-Jews, in order to leave no gaps between lay and religious, and that the matrimonial jurisdiction of the future State would be left in the hands of the rabbis, who would submit matrimonial affairs to "biblical law". This was the first state expression of the cynical exploitation of the Jewish religion in the implementing of Zionist objectives. The difficulty in establishing a definition and the setting of the precise borders of an impossible Jewish lay identity were

insurmountable: that identity is condemned to abandoning itself to the "permanent suffering" of the rabbinic tradition. There is also a separation that is almost total in the national education system in Israel. There are practically no schools where Judeo-Israeli children study with "Palestino-Israelis". Segregation has always been the privilege of the kibbutznik movement, where Arabs have never been accepted.

The Zionist thinkers have always been careful not to qualify this new Israeli society as "people" nor obviously "nation". According to Shlomo Sand, the Israeli Jewish community began by adopting, by all possible criteria, the features of a people and even of a nation: a language, a common mass culture, a land, an economy, an independent sovereignty. The specific feature of what the author considers as a potential "new people" has systematically been impugned by the Zionist founders and representatives who consider it as a "non-people" and a "non-nation", but rather as a part of world Judaism, which is pursuing its climb towards Eretz Israel. Shlomo Sand has observed that Bernard Henri Levy and Finkelkraut, who have never even envisaged coming to do their aliyah, are more Jewish in the eyes of the State of Israel than their own colleagues at the University of Tel-Aviv. Religion is thus an ethnic reflection and the consolidation of religious bases within the policy of Israel "makes it become more nationalist and especially more racist."

In 1970, under the pressure of religious circles, the law of return received a new extension, endorsing the integral religious definition and specifying of the "authentic Jew": "A Jew is one born of a Jewish mother or converted and not attached to another religion." The instrumental link between the rabbinical religion and the national conception was finally knit! Golda

Meir was able to declare in 1972 that, in her eyes as lay Prime Minister of Israel, "*a Jew marrying a 'non-Jew' rejoins the six million victims of Nazism.*"

Furthermore, the policy of the massive settling of the West Bank and Gaza, openly in the framework of a system of apartheid, contributed to the implantation in these regions of a "*democracy of Jewish masters*", subsidised and maintained by the State, because the formal annexation of these territories after the war of 1967 would have led – without this time completely eliminating the Palestinian population – to the shaping of a bi-national entity which according to Sand would have cancelled all hope of the continuity of the existence of a State of Jewish majority. But the highest judges of Israel, whose judgements the author cites, assert finding no contradiction between the nature of this State and a liberal democracy. Yet no Jew living in a liberal western democracy could today accept the forms of discrimination and exclusion under which live the "*Palestino-Israeli citizens*" residing in a State which explicitly declares itself as not belonging to them. "*The mythology of the Jewish 'ethnic group' runs in the veins of the State of Israel and threatens to break it apart from the inside*" worries the author who goes on: "*the exclusion of the discrimination against a quarter of the civil population of the country, Arabs and other citizens who are not considered to be Jewish, according to the religious law and the 'History', creates endless tensions which, in an undefined future, are susceptible to turn into violent divisions which will be difficult to resolve.*" He continues "*that is why the rejection of the existence of Israel as an exclusively Jewish state took body and became radicalised among the Arabs in 1948 (and after in the two Palestinian up-risings of 1987 and 2000) and it is difficult to imagine*

the factors that could be capable of slowing down this process” as well as “the underlying danger in the potential for hate of the frustrated Palestinians who live within its borders.” And the author adds: “Although the neo-colonialism (...) which has been expressed in the invasions of Afghanistan and of Iraq has intoxicated the power elites of the Jewish State (...) the enormous military strength of Israel, its nuclear weapons and even the great cement wall that it has shut itself up behind will not help it to avoid turning Galilee into “Kosovo”. (“independent” Kosovo where the United States have built one of its largest military sites in the world?)

It is by depicting the utter dead-end and the constant humiliation in-

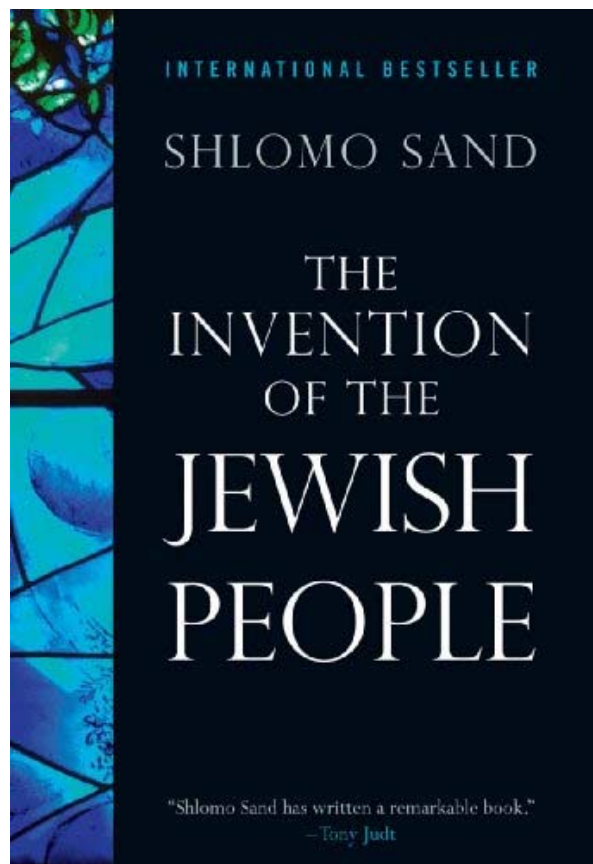
flicted on his own democratic ideal that Shlomo Sand raises the question of the “Jewish State: “Jewish and democratic – an oxymoron? (...) The same myths that proved their efficiency when the national state was being formed now threaten to contribute to challenge its very existence” And he articulates the democratic measures fitted to ensure the transition from the present Jewish State towards a genuine Israeli State belonging to all its citizens.

And the reader who has reached the end of this ruthless indictment against Zionism wonders: how can one honestly claim that the State of Israel can become democratic?

He finishes his work on a question: “It is logical that an essay which

page after page questions the Jewish past should end on a somewhat insolent questioning of a dubious future. And, when all is said and done, if an attempt can be made to so radically change the imagined history, why not also try to envision, with great inventiveness, a totally different future?” And he concludes “If the past of a nation amounts to onerous myth, why not begin to re-think its future, before the dream turns into a nightmare?”

The fraternal discussion between all those who fight for the political emancipation proposed by Shlomo Sand's book will certainly reach wider circles!



Reader's Letter

The claim for a democratic Palestinian State is anchored in the very formation of the Palestinian national movement as is shown by extracts from articles I came across in a text I read. I think the readers of Dialogue might be interested and it could highlight the fact that – as I understand things – equal rights cannot be considered outside the fight for secularism, against the religious State whose violence is only equalled by its sectarianism. (..)

B.H.

The excerpt from a dialogue between Abu Eyad and Lutji Khuli (Chief editor of al Tali'at) published in al Tali'at (Arabic – Cairo), June 1969 (A document from the book "Basic Political documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement", Leila S. Kadi, Centre of Palestinian Research, Beirut 1970)

Khuli: What does Al Fateh exactly mean when it speaks of a democratic Palestinian State?

Abu Eyad: We have always thought and stated and we shall continue doing so that armed struggle is not an end in itself. It is just a means in the service of a major humanist purpose. Since 1917, Palestine has undergone bloody wars, revolutions and fighting. Time has come for this land and its people to live in peace just as so many other human beings. We are using weapons to

obtain a truly peaceful solution to the problem and not a deceitful solution that imposes aggression and racism. Genuine peace cannot be materialised unless a democratic Palestinian State exists. As for the details, I think they will come up as the struggle and fighting evolve. I have given the general outline of our strategy that will comprise all those details.

Khuli: In the framework of this general strategic orientation, would the democratic Palestinian State accept the Jews as citizens in their full rights, just like the Arabs?

Abu Eyad: Certainly, we welcome the Jews as citizens in their full rights, fully equal with the Arabs. The meaning of the democratic Palestinian State is quite clear, it just aims at ridding Palestine of the racist Zionist entity.

Khuli: To make matters still clearer, would Al-Fateh in words and in deeds give citizen's right in the democratic Palestinian State to the anti-Zionist Jews who would publicly embrace Al-Fateh's goal to create a new democratic Palestinian society? Would citizen's right be guaranteed for those anti-Zionist Jews whether they had lived in Palestine even before 1948 or only afterwards?

Abu Eyad: I repeat that this right is guaranteed by Al-Fateh which is a liberation movement acting for humanist goals, not only to any anti-Zionist Jew but also to any Jew

whose mind would have been cleansed from Zionist ideas, I mean, any Jew who would have become convinced that Zionist concepts threaten human society with alienation.

Several articles on the relationships between Palestinians and Jews were published in the Al Fateh bulletin (English, Beirut) in January 1970. Excerpts:

January 1st 1970: A progressive liberation movement cannot be guided by revenge nor be contaminated by the racism that characterises the very enemy it tries to defeat. So the Jewish history, sufferings and achievements have been studied. The works of Jewish thinkers such as Buber, Ha-Am, Magnes, Rodinson, Deutscher and Menuhin have been read and read again. Serious discussions with progressive Jews in Europe and in America have contributed to outlining the general characteristics of the Jew, either the Zionist Jew or the Jew as a Palestinian citizen; in short, a man-size image, neither supermen, nor monsters, nor pygmies, but men who have been persecuted by the racist Nazi Europeans, then manipulated by the racist Zionist Europeans for the purpose of occupying Palestine and expelling its people. Escalating revolution will entail consequences. It is obvious that it will harden some Zionist Jews against the Palestinians, especially the oligarchy that would be the loser in an open de-

mocratic Palestine. But escalation will also cause shock. It will bring awareness that exclusivist Israel can also be a place of major insecurity and that it cannot last.

January 19th 1970: All the Jews, all the Muslims and all the Christians living in Palestine and all those who have been forcefully exiled from it will be entitled to Palestinian citizenship. That is the guarantee of the right for all the exiled Palesti-

ans to return to their homeland, whether they were born in Palestine or in exile, whatever their current nationality. By the same token, it means that all the Palestinian Jews – currently Israelis – have the same right, provided of course they reject racist Zionist chauvinism and accept to live alongside Palestinians in new Palestine. The revolution does not therefore make it a prerequisite that only the Jews who lived in pre-1948 Palestine and their progeny

may be admitted. To that effect, Jews and non-Jews will have the right to exercise their religion and to develop their language and culture as groups besides their political and cultural participation as individuals. For instance, it would be logical for both Arabic and Hebrew to be official languages, taught to all the Jewish or non-Jewish Palestinians in governmental schools.



Suffocating Gaza

by **Jean Pierre Barrois**
(University of Paris 12
Lecturer Emeritus)

“To suffocate”, says the Oxford English Dictionary is to “To kill or stifle or choke by stopping respiration.” Is this not the future the Zionist Israeli State has in store for the Palestinians of Gaza, in active complicity with Egypt, the USA and the “international community”, who remain silent and allow the crime to be committed?

In a recent article, our colleague Ziad Medoukh, who teaches French at Gaza University, had this to say:

“I can find neither the words nor the expressions to describe this entire population: women, youth, children, the elderly, patients, the unemployed, the sick, the injured, the disabled, all those who, through this surge of killing and destruction, have lost their homes, their possessions and above all their loved ones and who nevertheless still resist, on their land, in conditions so inhumane anyone not living there can imagine.

“I do not know which Gaza I am going to talk about: blockaded Gaza? Isolated Gaza? Resistance Gaza? Living Gaza? Suffering Gaza? Unwavering Gaza? Gaza the prison? Slowly dying Gaza? Sad Gaza? Dark Gaza? Oppressed Gaza? Gaza the choking? Helpless Gaza? Ill-fated Gaza? Hopeful Gaza?

It has been a year already ... Gaza in late December 2009: a year on, Gazans remember those events – how could they forget? They remember those 20 days of massacre, such as never seen since the Israeli

occupation of 1948. They remember first and foremost the number of martyrs, more than 1,400 killed by the bombs of Israeli aircraft or the soldiers' bullets: they remember the houses – more than 6,000 – the hospitals, the schools, the shelters where the population had taken refuge, destroyed by the indiscriminate bombing of the Israelis; they remember the passive complicity of the international community while those bombing raids were being carried out. How could this be possible in the world of human beings of the 21st century? A year has passed and nothing has changed in Gaza.... The inhumane blockade that has been imposed on Gaza for over 3 years still tightens its grip, and ever more inhumane is the situation Gazans find themselves in at the moment; the Israeli military allow only sporadic opening of the passages that connect Gaza with the outside world; 80% of civilians in the Gaza strip live on international food aid, when it is allowed to pass through; the wounded and the sick are dying or awaiting death, because they are forbidden to leave to get treatment, and the hospitals lack adequate facilities (...). A year on, more than 10,000 people are still living in tents next to the wreckage of their houses because all building materials are refused entry into the Gaza strip at the behest of the Israeli military.

In late December 2009, Gaza is still hopeful in spite of everything. (...) Gaza can't bear much more, Gaza survives on a day-by day basis; Gaza

is choking, Gaza screams amidst the silence of the international media, Gaza waits ... Gaza hopes ... hopes and claims... The Palestinians in Gaza are hoping for and claiming the reinstatement of their rights, their right to life, their right to peace through the implementation of justice.”

Akiva Eldar, a chief political columnist for the Israeli national daily Haaretz, wrote recently: *“Israel's compassion in Haiti can't hide our ugly face in Gaza (...) Only a little more than an hour's drive from the offices of Israel's major newspapers, 1.5 million people have been besieged on a desert island for two and a half years. Who cares that 80 percent of the men, women and children living in such proximity to us have fallen under the poverty line? How many Israelis know that half of all Gazans are dependent on charity, that Operation Cast Lead created hundreds of amputees, that raw sewage flows from the streets into the sea? The Israeli newspaper reader knows about the baby pulled from the wreckage in Port-au-Prince. Few have heard about the infants who sleep in the ruins of their families' homes in Gaza. The Israel Defence Forces prohibit reporters from entering the Gaza Strip (...). The missiles that Israel Air Force combat aircraft fired there a year ago hit nearly 60,000 homes and factories, turning 3,500 of them into rubble. Since then, 10,000 people have been living without running water, 40,000 without electricity. Ninety-seven per-*

cent of Gaza's factories are idle due to Israeli government restrictions on the import of raw materials for industry. (...) A few days before Israeli physicians rushed to save the lives of injured Haitians, the authorities at the Erez checkpoint prevented 17 people from passing through in order to get to a Ramallah hospital for urgent corneal transplant surgery. "

What I personally believe is that the crime being committed in Gaza is but the end result of an implacable logic arising from the eviction of the Palestinians from their land and the segregation that formed the foundation on which the Zionist State was created in 1947/48. I think that the January 2009 massacre is in keeping with the series of massacres that have punctuated the history of Palestine since 47/48 and that there will be no solution or real and permanent peace unless a single secular and democratic State is created that gives equal rights to the Arab and Jewish components on the whole historical territory of Palestine.

I do not know Ziad Medoukh or Akiva Eldar. I do not know if they share this position to any degree and – although it is a fundamental question– it is not the question I ask myself in reading their accounts. What I do recognize is that they have the courage to describe and denounce what has been confirmed by the Goldstone report, and by many other reports that have been published in the last few months (I) – the people of Gaza are being suffocated, slowly put to death by the formation of what must necessarily be called a Ghetto, which – and it is sad to say – is somehow reminiscent of the gruesome Warsaw Ghetto.

What I know, what we know, what is borne out by facts, is that Egypt is lending a hand to the Zionists by building a 30-metre high steel wall,

the purpose of which is to physically block any way out, any supply of the oxygen needed to avoid fatal suffocation.

What I know, what we know, what is borne out by facts, is that the wall in question is being built with the assistance of US funds and technicians.

What I know, what we know, what is borne out by the facts, is that the deadly trap in which the Gazans are imprisoned is the target of daily attacks. They are trapped, sealed off, kept from the slightest contact with the outside world – and to make sure the job is done right, they are ceaselessly bombarded..

An article from the Middle East Monitor gives the following account:

"1st January 2010: the Israeli Air Force bombed two tunnels in the Gaza Strip. Palestinians depend on the tunnels for food, medicine and other necessities. Because of the illegal blockade imposed by the occupier, the tunnels have become their main lifeline for survival.

2nd January: two tanks fired shells into the area east of the Shuja'iyya neighbourhood of Gaza City and north-east of Gaza City, while military tanks launched several artillery shells at the Shuja'iyya and Tuffah neighbourhoods simultaneously.

5th January 2010: an Israeli air-strike hit a group of Palestinian resistance fighters in Khan Younis, in south Gaza Strip, killing one and wounding four others.

7th January: Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) attacked the Rafah border area, killing three Palestinians, one of the casualties being a 14 year-old boy. Aerial strikes were also carried out in Gaza City, Khan Younis and Rafah, resulting in huge explosions. Earlier on the Israel Air Force dropped thousands of leaflets over Gaza, warning residents to stay away from the border with Israel and to avoid involvement in

'smuggling'.

8th January: Israeli forces completed large-scale military exercises in the Negev, the country's Channel 10 news reported these were in preparation for a military offensive against the Gaza Strip.

10th January : An IDF (Israel Defence Forces) strike east of Deir Al-Balah has left three Palestinians dead, and four others injured."

And this account only deals with the first 10 days of January.

In an other article Ziad Medoukh makes an urgent appeal: *"Let us join forces to have the prison gates opened (...) only one demand, only one goal: Open the gates!"*

This appeal must be heeded: we cannot allow this to be.

It is not my wish to argument against one initiative or another, although I must admit the fact that I am more than doubtful over the boycott campaigns (2) – given that some of them amount to nothing but unspoken political and diplomatic scheming, whilst others rest on the presupposition that the aggressor Zionist regime could indeed be democratized, and all of them boil down in the end to either removing responsibility from those who ought to act, or to using the Palestinian national movement as an instrument – but one thing remains sure: the people of Gaza are being sent to their death.

It is precisely because the situation inflicted on Gaza is the history of the series of massacres perpetrated on Palestine since the expropriation of 47/48 that, although solidarity is absolutely necessary, although it is absolutely necessary to break the wall of silence, the situation in Gaza is much more than just a question of humanitarian solidarity.

Gaza illustrates the fate that imperialism has in store for those who refuse to give up their sovereignty, their land, the fight against the theft

of their land, what it has in store for all the wretched of the earth.

In this respect, as one reads Ziad Medoukh's poignant appeal, one cannot help but remember another appeal, echoing it and made 60 years ago from the Warsaw Ghetto by the socialist resistance movement the General Jewish Labour Bund: "*We are fighting for our freedom, as well as yours, for our honour as well as yours, for our human, social and national dignity as well as yours.*"

This is what is at stake in Gaza. (3) Unless one believes there is no

other solution but to witness, for the sake of history, as the ashes of the Gaza ghetto cool, the fight to end the deadly trap of Gaza cannot be considered a strictly humanitarian question.

The gates must open, the siege of Gaza must absolutely be ended, the building of the wall must absolutely be halted.

Is it not exactly the responsibility and the task of each and every one of us, worldwide, committed to democracy and the working-class movement, to mobilise worker and democratic opinion throughout the

world?

(1) Concerning this, read the recent report published by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR <http://www.pchrgaza.org/>) and the report by Sawt el-Amel, an organisation of workers (<http://www.laborers-voice.org/>) on the campaign they have mounted against the constant violation of the workers rights in Gaza.

(2) The boycott campaign was launched in 2005, which gives substance to the fact that this action was not specifically connected with the present-day situation in Gaza.

(3) This article is devoted to the tragedy in Gaza itself, but is not intended in any way to play down the situation prevailing in the West Bank or in the 1948 territories.

DIALOGUE

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

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