



The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace
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TIME FOR PEACE

December 9, 1989, the whole of the Gaza Strip and large parts of the West Bank were under curfew – imprisoning a million people in their homes – to prevent “disturbances” on the second anniversary of the Intifada. Fresh military forces were brought in, to help enforce the curfews; in Nablus, more than two thousand soldiers conducted house-to house searches. The police mobilised large forces to maintain control over the Arab part of “unified” Jerusalem – which is officially annexed to Israel.

The peace movement also mobilised: demonstrations took place in Nazareth, Kafr Kasm, Umm-el-Fahm and smaller Arab towns and villages in Israel. Hundreds of Jews and Arabs formed a human chain across downtown Haifa. In Jerusalem, five thousand marched under the slogan *Make Peace Now* – with the PLO! At the head of the march, 143 large photographs were carried – those of all the 143 children, Palestinian and Israeli, who got killed during the Intifada.

At about the same time that the Peace Now march ended in Jerusalem, an army patrol entered Bani-Na'im, forty kilometres to the south, where thousands of villagers were also holding a march. Those closest to the village entrance barred the soldiers' way, throwing stones and empty bottles; the soldiers opened fire, killing a young woman; more villagers came out of the village center and joined the struggle; one of them was killed, too. The following morning, a commentator on Israeli radio remarked: *We have entered the third year of the Intifada. So far, it looks pretty much the same as the previous two...*

In December 1987, Israel's military and political leaders were confident of ending, within a few weeks, what they then termed “the riots in Judea, Samaria and Gaza”. In December 1989, the most which the General Staff dares promise is “a reduction in the level of violence”. Little is heard any more even of Ariel Sharon's boasts that he could “do better”.

The Palestinians have shown themselves capable of endurance and persistence far beyond what anybody believed possible two years ago. The euphoria of the first Intifada months, or of the November 1988 Declaration of Independence, is long gone; every slow and agonising step towards the negotiations table is paid for with blood; yet the Palestinians continue daily their grim and determined struggle.

Intifada life includes countless deprivations and humiliations, in which the Palestinians are at the mercy of any soldier's whim. Most deeply distressing are the periodic raids in which large army forces descend upon a village or neighborhood at a late night hour. Operatives of the Shabak arrive at such raids with detailed lists of the local “subversives”, complete with their names, ages, physical descriptions and the location of their houses; they are taken off to detention, interrogation – often involving torture – and long terms of imprisonment, with or without trial. The Shabak lists are based on information compiled through its large network of spies and informers, who are often blackmailed into this role. The informers and collaborators are deeply hated. The Intifada's masked-faced “soldiers” are busy searching them out. Many of those discovered are

Stop Press!

Members of Kibbutz Ramot Menashe have taken the initiative to organise “a peace caravan” to Egypt. Hundreds of Israelis intend to meet at Cairo with senior PLO members and Egyptian statesmen.

In a meeting called at the Kibbutz Movement headquarters on December 13, four hundred peace activists turned up to express their support for the idea. The participants approved the idea of the peace caravan, in a resolution concluding: After the fall of the Berlin Wall, we can no longer accept the continued existence of paper walls preventing dialogue between peoples.

Also present were Mapam Knesset Member Chaim Oron, Labor KM Lova Eliav, and Science Minister Ezer Weitzman. KM Eliav came to the meeting directly from Cairo – where he had met with Nabil Sha'ath, Arafat's advisor.

killed; sometimes, their mutilated bodies are displayed in the streets, as a warning to others.

Palestinian leaders are aware of the grave dangers inherent in this practice, and the potential corrosive effects on the moral fabric of Palestinian society – effects which may outlast the occupation. Stating that the killing of collaborators should be a last resort only, the Intifada leadership has established a set of limitations: thorough verification of a person's guilt and discussion of each case in higher echelons, before action is taken; the use of lesser measures, such as social pressure, to make a collaborator mend his ways or leave the community on which he is spying. In the town of Beit Sahur, well-known for its dedication to mass non-violent struggle, no collaborators have been killed so far, though one was banished from the town.

The masked youths, however, do not always heed these limitations. In the much-publicised case of Nablus, two groups of Palestinian youths, known respectively as "The Red Eagles" and "The Black Panthers", ignored even the personal appeals of PLO leader Yasser Arafat, transmitted on PLO radio, to restrict their killings of suspected collaborators. A captured Red Eagle told Israeli television: "With all respect to Abu-Amar (*Arafat*), he lives abroad and does not know our local situation. Whenever we find a collaborator we deal with him, with no regrets."

A parade, organised by the Black Panthers in the Nablus Casba, was shown by foreign television networks, with the comment "it seems the Israeli army is losing control". The army command was put under strong pressure to "put an end to the embarrassment". Soldiers (disguised, according to the Israeli press, as Arab women) surprised the Black Panthers at their rendezvous, shot down four of them and captured the rest. The whole of Nablus was placed under curfew, and soldiers distributed at the houses leaflets reading: *Inhabitants of Nablus! The forces of Law and Order have liberated you from the Black Panther Gang. At your service, the Israeli Defence Forces.* Shortly after the curfew was lifted, hundreds of youths poured into the streets, chanting *We are all Black Panthers!* Throughout the Occupied Territories, three days of mourning were observed for the dead Panthers, now universally recognised as martyrs for the Palestinian cause.

It is entirely due to the Intifada that the government of Israel found itself obliged to offer some kind

of a peace plan, and to engage in some kind of negotiations on the Palestinian issue. It is entirely due to the Intifada that the United States recognised, at last, that the PLO speaks for the Palestinian people, and opened a process of indirect negotiations between Israel and the PLO. The reality of these negotiations is becoming more and more evident; on the same day, the Israeli cabinet in Tel-Aviv and the PLO Executive Committee in Cairo discussed the "five points" of U.S. Secretary of State Baker. Several Labor Ministers have already acknowledged that the government is, indeed, engaged in de-facto negotiations with the PLO. However, the Likud – which dominates Israel's foreign policy – continues to insist that *there are no negotiations with the PLO, and there never will be.* Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Arens made an embarrassing slip: he admitted to a Knesset Committee that, in his latest conversation with Baker, he had inquired about the PLO's positions...

Fighting every inch of the way, the government of Israel is being dragged to the negotiating table. At the time of writing, the scheduled pre-negotiations include a meeting of officials in Washington to prepare a meeting of the Israeli, Egyptian and American foreign ministers, which will lay the ground for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, with overt or tacit PLO participation. This Cairo meeting, in turn, is due to decide upon the modalities of elections in the Occupied Territories, after which the elected representatives will engage in negotiations for a peace settlement, to be implemented after an unspecified interim period...

Slow and exasperating as this process is, it still could – if continued long enough on its present course – arrive eventually at a point where official Israeli and PLO delegations will at last sit together, and at an even more remote point where Israeli forces will start evacuating the West Bank and Gaza. No one, however, can estimate the amount of bloodshed and human suffering still to come, or the number of scars permanently imprinted upon the young generation of both peoples.

While in Eastern Europe physical and psychological barriers fall literally overnight, and while even the South African government is now stating its willingness to negotiate with the ANC, the Middle East still seems doomed to move at a snail's pace towards its time for peace.

The editor

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Beit Sahur solidarity and dialogue

by Maxine Kaufman Nunn – based on comments by
Veronica Cohen, Stephanie Black and Jonathan Kuttab

During the recent spate of tax-raids on Beit Sahur residents who steadfastly refused to pay income or value-added taxes, solidarity actions by Israeli groups, though neither dramatic nor highly publicized, were non-the-less significant and appreciated. A number of demonstrations were held in Jerusalem, calling for an end to "Taxation without Representation" and for a halt to arrests and the confiscation of workshop machinery, furniture and home appliances, and merchants' goods. Participating organizations included 21st Year, Campus, Hal-ah Hakibush, The Committee for Beita, the newly formed Kav Yarok (Green Line – Palestinians and Israelis for Peace), and persons associated with an ongoing Jerusalem-Beit Sahur dialogue group. The latter two groups went beyond demonstrating in Jerusalem. Some of their activities are described below. Except where otherwise stated, information on dialogue-group activity is based on comments by Veronica Cohen and Kav Yarok information comes from Stephanie Black.

Dialogue groups with people from West Jerusalem and Beit Sahur were started about 18 months ago. Not in order to persuade each other, but to uncover things that either side couldn't have without this interaction... There, Israeli participants met Palestinians who were easy to speak with, who read the same books, to whom the same things were important, *but* with a totally different grasp of history. Only because of the commonalities was it possible to absorb this difference and to believe it was genuine. For example, at first the Palestinians didn't understand what it was that made Israelis afraid; as far as they were concerned, Israel's existence hadn't been in question for many years. Israelis, for their part, couldn't understand the Palestinians' view of them as strong and unthreatened...

The meetings continued with basically the same groups of people every two weeks, meeting alternately in Beit Sahur and Jerusalem except when prevented by curfews, etc. ...

Veronica stressed that they "are not meeting in order to know each other as human beings. That's understood. But rather to deal with the hard questions." For instance, the Israelis needed to explain that the Israeli Peace movement was not monolithic; they weren't all *Shalom Achshav*, and were not always united; and that the reason for their inaction was often this lack of unity and not other reasons Palestinians might assume.

They also needed to make it clear that Israelis were also frightened, and it was important for the Palestinians to learn the reasons why. The Beit Sahurians became very sensitive to this, though they had started out saying "you haven't a right to be afraid". She sees it as a sign of real friendship when people are willing to tell people on the other side that they are afraid.

The first broader activity took part in December of 1988. Members of the Israeli group and their friends were invited to a church in Beit Sahur. About 70

Israelis participated, and lots of press. The idea was to experience "what it would be like for Israelis to go to the territories as tourists and not as conquerors – to show how it could be in the future", that they could visit publicly (not just to a private meeting that non-participants wouldn't know about) and come and leave in peace...

The second activity also involved about 70 Israelis, mostly observant Jews, who brought their families to spend Shabbat (beginning before sundown Friday evening) with families in Beit Sahur. This was an experience which Veronica characterized as "like the world to come". In one way, she said, it was frightening to many of the Jewish participants: they and their children would be sleeping in an Arab town with the nearest Jew 40 or 50 minutes walk away. But the kids, though often lacking a common language, got together in five minutes. Suddenly the kids disappeared with their new friends (*see TOI 36, p.4*).

Palestinian lawyer Jonathan Kuttab remarked*: "The Israelis are always the ones insisting on talking and the Palestinians are always the ones insisting on action. When they can agree on a specific action, it becomes very beautiful. Beit Sahur I think is a very positive example of very positive dialogue. When Israelis come to Beit Sahur and stay overnight even though it is a closed military area or it's under curfew, that's a real dialogue. Whether they talk politics or not, they are really communicating and they are really working towards peace..."

The prayer for Peace

When one Beit Sahur member of the dialogue group was arrested for nonpayment of taxes, his group invited their Israeli counterparts to join them in a vigil at a Beit Sahur church. The army wouldn't let the Israelis in, but four were able to sneak into the church, where they were greeted with the announcement "the peace forces have arrived!"

The army hadn't disturbed the vigilers inside the church. The Palestinians were searching for ways to announce to the Israeli public that they want to exist in peace beside Israel... The idea of having a church service for peace was born.

This service was held in the Roman Catholic church on November 5, and was a success in that some 2000 people (almost all Palestinians) attended and the soldiers didn't enter the church. But it failed as well, since the press was not allowed in to Beit Sahur and therefore wrote instead about the Army roadblock and the largely Israeli and American happenings there. (There were about 60 Jews at the roadblock and about a dozen, who had spent the night in Beit Sahur homes, were at the church service itself). Thus the Palestinian message of peace was largely missed by the Israeli public, though the Jerusalem Post did report some of what happened in the church (at second hand).

"This was a *Palestinian* message to Israel", Veronica emphasized, "that they don't want to destroy Israel, but to live beside her. She feels strongly that "The activity at the roadblock was a mistake" because it led to journalists' not bothering to enter Beit

Sahur once it was opened, to interview people there.

The Beit Sahur people succeeded in setting up this prayer service despite the difficult circumstances of the 42 day curfew (which ended just a few days before) including no phone-lines and running low on food.

Despite that, a personal representative of Jimmy Carter, brought Carter's greetings, and the Mufti of Jerusalem attended and spoke, receiving a thunderous ovation. The Mufti's presence, a Muslim holy man in a (Catholic) church, was a particularly important victory because of Israeli administration efforts to drive apart Christians and Muslims in Beit Sahur during the "tax war".

Hillel Bardin was spokesperson for the dozen activists from Israeli peace groups who attended the service, having entered the town the previous afternoon, before the army closed it**. He addressed the congregants:

*As an Israeli I love my people and my country, and today was a chance for Israelis to learn that Palestinians want peace. (...) Unfortunately my government decided today to prevent the Israeli people from hearing you. They prevented the reporters from coming. They prevented the Israeli television from coming. They prevented the world press from coming. Why doesn't the Israeli government want the Israeli people to hear what you have to say?****

There is a group of Israelis here with me today who've known you for a long time; who've had the honour of meeting you, talking with you, learning about you in a way that few Israelis know. I think that those Israelis who have met you and heard you know that there's a chance for peace. They know that it's worth making peace and dividing the land between us – an independent Palestine and an independent Israel; each secure, each free, each independent, with justice and a settlement between the peoples.

There are some people missing here today who should be here, because they worked hard for peace. I don't see my friends here today. Ghassan Angoni, where is he? (audience: in jail); where is Salaam Hilar (aud.: in jail). (...) Their place is here, not in jail (drowned out by applause). Where are they, and where are the hundreds of other prisoners from Beit Sahur?

I admire the courageous people of Beit Sahur in coming together today to call for peace between our peoples. You should know that you have a tremendous power – the government of Israel today is afraid to let the people of Israel know what is happening here. And let me tell you that if you keep on doing what you're doing today, you will have an independent state soon.

Another expression of Israeli solidarity with Beit Sahur was the holding of a demonstration in Beit Sahur on November 10 by the new Israeli-Palestinian group, *Kav Yarok*: At a meeting in Beit Sahur on the subject of the tax raids, Beit Sahurians requested a solidarity action by the Israelis, in order to respond to those in Beit Sahur who were asking "what is the point of all this cooperation with Jews?" *Kav Yarok*

decided that there were two issues in Beit Sahur currently; the civil disobedience (tax resistance) and the struggle for Palestinian self-sufficiency and decrease in dependence on Israel; and that they would focus on the second.

They collected money in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, with help from *Hal'a Hakibush* and other groups, and bought a truckload of tree and vegetable seedlings, which were delivered to Beit Sahur on Friday, November 12, at noon.

Later in the afternoon 70 people in two buses entered Beit Sahur from West Jerusalem, evading a roadblock. Some of these had participated that morning in a small demonstration against the selling of the goods confiscated from Beit Sahur, which were taken to the Customs Authority's warehouse at Ben Gurion airport. Although the articles are being sold bit by bit at different times and are not identified as coming from Beit Sahur, Veronica said that she recognized some: for instance, the coolers taken from one man's grocery store, and machines confiscated from wood-working shops, which she saw standing outside the customs shed in the pouring rain...

When the demonstrators reached Beit Sahur, they were enthusiastically greeted by 350 or 400 townspeople. It took the army about ten minutes to get there and close the area. The Beit Sahurians wanted the Israelis to stay – and invited them to return at a later date to plant the seedlings. The whole group walked back very slowly to the buses, and Stephanie commented on the great feeling of togetherness during the demonstration.

I was impressed by the restrained behaviour of the military on this occasion – in the face of anti-occupation slogans in Hebrew and Arabic, and even the singing of the Palestinian national song *Biladi* (My Country). The presence of a visible contingent of Israelis may have contributed. I heard later that one Palestinian had almost been arrested, but when some *Kav Yarok* activists announced that "if you arrest him, you'll have to arrest all of us", the prisoner was released.

**From a recent interview for a book in progress by Danielle Storper-Perez and Maxine Kaufman Nunn*

*** During his reserve service in Ramallah Hillel Bardin organized a local 'cease-fire' with the inhabitants' and therefore had to serve a term in military prison (TOI 34, p.6).*

**** The soldiers at the Beit Sahur roadblock were specifically ordered not to let Jews come into the town. A Catholic priest was mistaken for a Jew and stopped, allowed to pass only after showing his crucifix.*

Still proud

On November 30, Communications Minister Gad Ya'acoby, of the Labor Party, visited a high school in Eilat and answered the pupils' questions. After being asked "Should our soldiers shoot Arab boys who throw stones at them?" the minister answered: *Forty-three years ago, I was myself an Intifada boy. I threw stones at British soldiers in the streets of Tel-Aviv. I was proud of it then, and, as a matter of fact, I still am.*

Closed zones

On May 26, 1989, 27 members of "Twenty First Year" were arrested by the army in the West Bank town of Kalkiliya, where they came to protest against the demolition of a Palestinian house. Their release followed several days in detention, with wide-scale protests. However, the public prosecutor opened proceedings against them on charges of "entering a closed military zone". The day fixed for the trial's opening was December 10 – which happens to be The International Human Rights Day.

On that day, defence attorney Avigdor Feldman brought the prosecution case into disarray. He questioned the validity of the military decree declaring Kalkiliya a "closed military zone", which was signed by a junior officer with no authorization to issue such decrees. Should this plea be accepted, the prosecution would be forced to drop all charges. Moreover, the military authorities would be hampered in their habitual ways of keeping peace activists – or journalists – outside "hot spots".

Contact: *The Twenty First Year*, P.O. box 24099, Jerusalem

Editors released

by Rayna Moss

Nitzotz editors Michal Schwartz and Assaf Adiv were released on October 26, and November 26 respectively, after serving their entire prison terms of 18 months. The last *Nitzotz* prisoner, Yakov Ben Efrat, sentenced to 30 months imprisonment, remains in total isolation in Ashmoret (Kfar Yona) prison.

Upon her release, Schwartz told reporters outside Neve Tirza prison that she continues to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories as the only road to Israeli-Palestinian peace. She sent greetings to Abie Nathan, also imprisoned for his struggle for peace.

Assaf Adiv was greeted by several delegations of well-wishers from all parts of the country, as well as from the occupied Golan Heights.

He told the many waiting reporters: *During my imprisonment the whole world has changed, but Shamir and Rabin are still the same.* Supporters of the *Nitzotz* editors held a picket outside the prison, protesting the isolation of Ya'akov Ben Efrat, whom the prison administration refuses to transfer to the political prisoners wing.

Ben Efrat will stay in prison till the end of his term in October 1990. He refuses to appear before the parole commission, following the commission's refusal to release Schwartz and Adiv after they completed two-thirds of their sentences. He wrote: *Since I am not one of the Jewish Terrorist Organization's prisoners and I was not accused of injuring or killing an Arab, I stand no chance of getting my sentence reduced.* Convicted of "membership in a terrorist organization", Ben Efrat's whole crime consisted in fact of editing and publishing a newspaper.

Contact: *Hanitzotz*, P.O. box 1575, Jerusalem.

'Negligence'

When the Intifada started, the Israeli government was "taken by surprise". In fact, anybody wishing to look could have seen that, already at the beginning of 1987, there was an increasing number of demonstrations by West Bank Palestinians heralding the coming outbreak of a popular revolt against the occupation. However, in the mainstream media coverage of the growing tension had been scanty and superficial.

The Alternative Information Center (AIC) – with a small office in West Jerusalem and a staff possessing excellent contacts in the Occupied Territories – did provide a constant stream of information. The AIC also gave typesetting and printing services to many Israeli and Palestinian (and Israeli-Palestinian) political groups. On February 16, 1987, large police forces descended upon the AIC office and closed it down. Many crates full of documents and computer diskettes were carted off to police headquarters – together

with Michael Warshawski, the AIC director (see *TOI* 25, p.4).

In the following days, a governmental smear campaign sought to portray the AIC as "a nest of PLO agents", with the intention of delegitimising and intimidating those Israelis who – like Warshawski – try to work for peace in cooperation with Palestinians.

This campaign backfired. The AIC and its director received wide public support from those who care for the freedom of speech. After several months, the AIC office was re-opened. Michael Warshawski was released on bail, but the prosecution opened judicial proceedings against him.

The charge sheet included nearly 30 separate charges. Most of them referred to leaflets and brochures in Arabic which the AIC had printed for various West Bank organizations. The prosecution claimed that all of these were "fronts for terrorist organizations" and that, therefore, in printing them Warshawski had "rendered services to illegal associations".

The trial dragged on for two and a half years. Warshawski's lawyers, Avigdor Feldman and Leah Tzemel, chipped away at the prosecution's case. Despite his efforts, Prosecutor Uzi Chasson was unable to prove that the West Bank women's and students' organizations, whose leaflets had been printed by the AIC, are indeed illegal organizations. All but one of the charges were dismissed by the court, which also strongly criticised the police for the manner in which it raided the AIC office and confiscated all papers and records, indiscriminately.

Warshawski was found guilty on one charge only – that of printing a brochure containing the testimonies of Palestinians who were tortured by the Shabak (*secret service*), and their advice to Palestinians who may in the future undergo Shabak interrogations. This brochure was compiled by the West Bank branch of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (the PFLP), one of the main PLO components and an organization declared to be terrorist by the Israeli government. However, the prosecution could not prove that

Warshawski knew of the Arab-language brochure's PFLP origin; he was found guilty merely of "negligence", as the court ruled that a printer or typesetter must check the legality of all materials submitted to him before accepting them for publication.

After Warshawski's acquittal on nearly all charges, the defence, the spectators in the courtroom – and even the prosecutor himself – expected a lenient sentence. The court, however, sentenced Warshawski to twenty months' imprisonment, plus ten months suspended and a fine of 10,000 Shekels (about \$5000).

The severity of the sentence is probably due to Warshawski's refusal to disclose the identity of the PFLP member who gave him the brochure. Warshawski, as he stated at the court, was brought up as an Orthodox Jew and – though having long ago lost his belief – does maintain the prohibition against being a "mosser" (informer), which has become ingrained in Jewish tradition since the period of Medieval persecutions. (Warshawski's father, the retired Chief Rabbi of Strasbourg, was present in the court and expressed approval of his son's steadfastness.)

The severe punishment meted out to Michael Warshawski brought him wide and mostly sympathetic coverage in Israel's main papers. A number of columnists cited the Warshawski trial as one more source of doubt as to the complete impartiality of the Israeli judicial system.

Warshawski has definitely ceased to be an unknown radical, isolated from the moderate peace camp. On October 10, a large protest meeting took place at the Reform Synagogue "Kol Haneshama" in Jerusalem. The 150 participants ranged from Ornan Yekutieli, Jerusalem municipal councillor for Ratz, to the Palestinian activist Feisal Hussein. A few days later, on October 14, many peace activists gathered at the "Russian Compound" police station, where Warshawski was due to present himself. However, less than two hours before he was due to start serving his prison term, the Supreme Court released Warshawski on bail until the hearing of his appeal; this hearing is set to begin at March 1990.

The Warshawski Solidarity Committee continues to gather support in Israel, and internationally, though its public activity is limited by the "sub judice" clause of Israeli Law of Courts, which prohibits any publication that might influence the decision of the judges in an impending trial.

Contact: Alternative Information Center, P.O. box 24278, Jerusalem – phone: (02) 2411159

Dangerous songs

On December 5, the Likud majority on the Board of Governors of the Israeli Broadcasting Authority decided to ban from the airwaves two songs which it deemed to be "damaging to national morale". Nurit Galron's "After us the deluge" is a song chiding the Tel-Avivian pleasure-seeking public for their indifference to the suffering of the Palestinians "around the corner" (*TOI 36, p.11*). The other song, Chava Alberstein's "Chad Gadya" is based on a traditional Passover ritual song: in the chain of "eating and being eaten" we (*the Jewish people*) have become the tiger.

The initiator of the motion was Shlomo Kor, a Likud hard-liner notorious for his crusade against "PLO sympathisers" in the radio and television. The Board of Governors' decision drew angry responses, not only from the peace movement. Labor's Communications Minister Gad Ya'akobi complained that *The Likud is trying to introduce in Israel the kind of censorship and thought-control which by now has become obsolete in East Europe*. Even Likud KM Uriel Lin dissociated himself publicly from Kor's act. The Labor members on the Board of Governors lodged an appeal to Education Minister Navon (in accordance with the Broadcasting Authority's by-laws). Navon ruled that, pending his final decision, the two controversial songs will continue to be broadcasted.

In the wake of this affair, the Association of Israeli Journalists sent a telegram to Shlomo Kor: *We herewith express our heartfelt thanks for your blatant attempt to ban these two songs. By so doing you refreshed our awareness that the freedom of*

speech should never be taken for granted; that we must always remain on the alert, in its defence.

Peace prisoner

Eyal prison – a small prison, tucked away in an inaccessible area near the West Bank border. Until recently few people in Israel had ever heard of it. Since its gates closed, on October 10, behind the "peace-sailor" Abie Nathan, the Eyal prison has become a virtual place of peace pilgrimage, for Israelis and foreigners alike. Nathan being a man with many friends and fans, the slogan "Free Abie Nathan" is a strong addition to the peace movement's repertoire. The imprisonment of a man like Abie – because of his public meetings with Yasser Arafat – shows the absurdity of the "Anti-Terrorism Act". His many years of philanthropic activities and of organising relief to countries stricken by famine or natural disasters won him respect even from those opposed to his peace stunts. Nobody really believes that putting Abie Nathan in prison has any connection to fighting "terrorism", however one defines it.

Week after week hundreds of people come on weekends to the gates of Eyal prison, singing peace songs. Sympathetic guards regularly bend the prison regulations by letting Nathan come up to the gates and talk, through the bars, with the crowds outside. On December 2, more than a thousand peace activists surrounded the prison with a human wall. Mapam K.M. Ya'ir Tzaban was allowed to enter the prison and greet Nathan in their name. One of the prison guards remarked: "There are always so many demonstrators around here that the guard dogs no longer bark at them."

Knesset members from a wide range of the political spectrum have come to visit the peace prisoner. KM Abd-el-Wahab Darawshé brought Nathan a personal letter from Yasser Arafat. KM Uzi Bar'am, former Secretary General of the Labor Party, expressed support in the name of the Labor doves. Abie Nathan's visitors also

included several Likud Knesset members, led by Herzlia Mayor Eli Landau – a close associate of notorious hard-liner Ariel Sharon. The Likudniks told Nathan that his continuing imprisonment is causing big embarrassment to the Israeli embassies around the world and expressed their willingness to support a request to the president for a pardon him. Abie Nathan, however, refused to make such a request, saying he would settle for nothing but the abolition of the law which brought him into prison. He further told his right-wing visitors: "After my release I will go to Tunis in order to meet Arafat again. I will continue doing so until there is peace. I will ask the prison authorities to keep my books and personal things here, as I will come back soon."

Letters to Abie Nathan via: "The Voice of Peace" radio station
P.O. box 4399, Tel-Aviv 61043

Letters demanding Abie Nathan's release and the abolition of the so-called "Anti-Terrorism Act" to: Justice Minister Dan Meridor, *Salah-A-Din St., East-Jerusalem*

The Abie Nathan case widened the debate on the issue of meetings with the PLO and the law prohibiting them. At a public meeting, organised by the International Center for Peace in the Middle East (ICPME), five prominent Israeli jurists condemned the law as being "absurd and anti-democratic". However, they asserted that, as long as the law exists, Israeli citizens must obey it, and confine themselves to parliamentary lobbying for its abolition.

David Libai, a Labor KM and former president of the Israeli Bar Association, did present a bill to legalise contacts with the PLO. Shortly afterwards Likud hard-liner Tzahi Hanegbi presented a counter-bill which would strengthen the existing law and close off its few remaining "loopholes". In consultations between the Likud and Labor parties – partners in the "National Unity Government" – it was decided to "freeze" the bills of both Libai and Hanegbi.

Meanwhile, however, members

of Mapam, Ratz and Peace Now, as well as some Labor doves, have developed a form of dialogue with the PLO which does not involve breaking – but rather "bending" – the anti-meetings law. On October and November various such contacts, in the context of international conferences, took place in Europe and North America. The largest was a conference in Milano, organised by the ICPME, at which there was – aside from the Israelis and Palestinians – a significant presence of American Jews. The legal rationale of this dialogue was set out by one of the participants, Ratz KM Shulamit Aloni, at a public meeting in Tel-Aviv. After describing the commitment to peace expressed by the PLO's organization's senior representatives, Aloni was challenged as to the legality of her contacts with them. In response, she claimed that no law-breaking was involved, since the Israeli and Palestinian participants in the conferences took care to address only the audience or the chairperson, rather than each other.

According to some reports in the Israeli and international press, Israeli peace activists and PLO delegates do occasionally encounter each other in lobbies or elevators. Some journalists have even seen them shaking hands... However, the police and public prosecution prefer to ignore such media reports and accept the Israeli participants' accounts, and no investigations or prosecution were initiated against them.

This ambiguous attitude by the law and order agencies is a reflection of the government policies of these days. In fact, the government itself is involved in indirect negotiations with the PLO, via American and Egyptian mediation. As long as the government refuses to acknowledge that this is what it is doing, anybody who *openly acknowledges* having talked to the PLO, thereby commits an unforgivable sin. That is why Abie Nathan has to stay in prison. That is why he may be soon joined by the "Romania Four", on whose appeal the Supreme Court is about to render its verdict.

A third "Anti-Peace" trial, the largest to date, is about to resume

in early 1990; it concerns the "Hungary Eight", who met with a PLO delegation at Budapest, in June 1987 (see TOI 28, p.3).

Contact: *The Committee to Save the Peace Dialogue*, P.O. box 20395, Tel-Aviv 61204

The following is taken from an appeal, published by the "Hungary Eight".

(...) We have been put on trial because of our participation, along with others, in a meeting with officials of the Palestinian Liberation Organization in Budapest, Hungary, about two years ago. In this meeting the official representatives of the PLO announced their acceptance of a mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO; their support for the idea of an International Conference; and their agreement to a mutual cessation of all hostilities with the commencement of negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

As the result of these activities we have been accused of "aiding a terrorist organization".

The legal expenses are extremely high. We would be deeply grateful if you could assist us in meeting these expenses. Several of us are kibbutz members; others are slum dwellers, students and salaried employees, who cannot possibly cover these high expenses.

Eli Teper (*Kibbutz Dalia*)
Shlomit Moshkowitz (*Kib. Masaryk*)
Nili Hartman (*Kib. Ha'ogen*)
Sheva Friedman (*Meitar*)
Doron Vilner (*Tel-Aviv*)
Hanna Ovadia (*Jerusalem*)
David Ish-Shalom (*Mosh. Beit-Zait*)
Alisa Barabi (*Beer Sheva*)

Contact: *The Hungary Eight*
P.O. box 4110, Tel-Aviv 61041

1990: Time for peace

■ As this issue goes into print, Israeli, Palestinian and European activists from a wide range of peace organizations are engaged in preparations for a series of joint activities entitled "1990: Time for Peace", scheduled to take place in Jerusalem over several days at the end of December.

The organisers – both in Rome and in Jerusalem – notified the Israeli government, which reacted

Women for peace

by Spike Pittsberg

The main energy of women's peace organizations has been taken up, for the last couple of months, in preparations for the massive European peace delegation which is to arrive here at the end of December. **Women and Peace**, the coordinating body of the many different women's groups across the country, has taken responsibility for the first day of the three-day solidarity event.

On Friday, December 29, a full day of activities in Jerusalem is being prepared for Israeli, Palestinian, and European women. We are expecting this to be the biggest women's peace event in the history of Israel. The last major conference of **Woman in Black** – only one of the groups constituting **Women and Peace** – drew 300 women. The thousand-strong European contingent will probably be half women, so it is likely that we will reach the figure of a thousand women protesting against the occupation.

At this point, the women's planning committee is still awaiting police permission for the various plans, so the following description of this important date must be seen as dependent on receipt of the relevant permits: The morning will open with a conference to address the question of women and peace. At 1:00 there will be an hour's united demonstration in Paris Square (site of the weekly **Women in Black** vigils), with the possible addition of women singers. From there we will march to East Jerusalem to meet with Palestinian women from the territories, and that evening the Palestinian women will present an artistic performance at the prominent East Jerusalem theatre, El Hakawati.

Inside both Israel and the Territories, women have taken a prominent role in fighting for an end to occupation. The collective structures the various women's groups have created, the high level of cooperation amongst them, and commitment to work by consensus have encouraged both the active participation of women new to the peace movement, and the ability

of veterans to resist the burn-out that too often affects Israeli peace forces.

Contact: *Women and Peace*, P.O. box 61128, Jerusalem 91060.

The following material was compiled with the help of Lilian Mo'ed and Spike Pittsberg

■ On November 30, a special meeting of **Woman in Black** (Tel-Aviv) discussed the deportations of Palestinian women (*see sep. article*).

□ Tel Aviv "Woman in Black" also participated in gathering winter clothes which were delivered to the territories at the beginning of December.

□ Additional "Woman in Black" vigils have cropped up in several places, bringing the number of simultaneous vigils held at Israeli crossroads every Friday to well over twenty, not including the many solidarity vigils held around the world.

□ "Woman in Black" of the Sharon area, including from nearby Arab villages, have so far faced heavy challenges. They are standing at the entrance of Kfar Saba. Despite an initial policy of non-cooperation and harassment from the local police, the women, two of whom were briefly arrested during the first vigil, have continued to stick out. Once the police finally recognized the legality of the vigil and reduced their level of harassment, a group of Techiya youngsters began to appear weekly in a hostile counter-demonstration. The women at the Kfar Saba junction, however, outlasted the right-wingers.

□ On Friday, December 8, the "Women in Black" vigil in Jerusalem had a peak participation of 130 women. The vigil was covered by Israeli television, and figured prominently on the night news – under the heading "two years of Intifada".

■ **Shani** (Israeli Women Against the Occupation) has launched a signature collection campaign, to endorse a document calling for peace based on the self-determination of both peoples. These "Seven Points" were originally

furiously. "Security sources" told the press that the whole initiative is "a PLO plot" and that "steps would be taken to prevent it from taking place". It will not be easy for the authorities to carry out this threat. About a thousand activists from many different countries are already booked to fly to Ben-Gurion airport, at their own expense. Identifying them among the many tourists of the Christmas season and turning all of them back – including church dignitaries, mayors of important cities, members of parliaments etc. – might prove quite embarrassing even for the Shamir government. Once in Israel, the Europeans and their hosts intend to engage in many activities that do not require a permit: conferences, meetings, prayers etc. The same applies to the planned visits to Israeli sites, such as Yad Vashem (the Holocaust Museum).

As to the West Bank and Gaza, visits as such do not require a permit, but freedom of movement is constantly subject to what the military authorities decide. They can close down an area, or place it under curfew for the specific purpose of stopping journalists, Israeli peace activists, or foreign delegations from entering the town or village concerned. However, since the activists will be travelling in very small groups and arrive at many different locations at the same time, it is unlikely that each single group will be stopped, or that the whole of the West Bank and Gaza will be placed under curfew simply to stop peace activists. Two planned events do require a police permit: the women's march, planned for December 29, and the "human chain" around the wall of the Old City of Jerusalem, on December 30. The responsible Israeli organizations – respectively, "Women and Peace" and "Peace Now" – are prepared to appeal to the Supreme Court, should the police permit be denied. And, if necessary, the organisers have alternative plans to visualize their message.

Contact:

Preparatory Committee
Via Giovan Battista Vico, 22 00196
Roma, Italy;
Phone: 0034-6-3610624/3601541

drawn up by Israeli and Palestinian politically active women, who met in May 1989 at the Women's Peace Conference in Brussels. The aim is to present 10,000 signatures to the Israeli government on Women's Day, March 1990. Along with the signing of the statement, house meetings and public meetings are organised for political discussion and education regarding negotiations for Israeli-Palestinian peace. The campaign will also be an opportunity to establish groups in localities around the country.

Shani continues to hold public meetings every three weeks. The December 7 meeting was a discussion with a Palestinian sociologist of the political developments within the Palestinian community since the Intifada. Approximately 30 women attended.

Contact: SHANI, P.O. box 9091
Jerusalem 91090; phone: 02-630759

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■ **Women for Political Prisoners (WOFPP)** continues to gather details about the prison conditions (often extremely bad) – coldness, bad food, totally insufficient medical care, sexist-psychological as well as physical violence during interrogation. It seems that the prison authorities have decided to harrass them in gathering facts. WOFPP activist and lawyer, Yosepha Pick, is often forced to wait outside the prison for extended periods, or is prevented from seeing the prisoners altogether.

A newsletter is available from WOFPP, P.O. box 31811, Tel-Aviv

■ On December 12, sixty women from Beit Sahur and sixty Israeli women from the **Israel Women's Network** formed a human chain in Jerusalem, from Mount Scopus to the Augusta Victoria Hospital.

Until this day only involved in purely feminist matters, the Network is now protesting the conditions at Anata Detention Center, where thirty-five Palestinian prisoners from Beit Sahur, who had refused to pay taxes, are held in sheds originally built to house trucks, which are open to the cold mountain winter.

Contact: *Israel Women's network, P.O. box 3171, Jerusalem 91037*

Deportation of Women

Rayna Moss and Adam Keller

Since mid-September, over 150 Palestinian women and their children have been deported from the Occupied Territories. The military authorities refuse to give resident status to women who marry Palestinian residents or to the children born to them. In many cases, the women themselves were born in West Bank villages, but because they were out of the country during the 1967 census they are considered to be "aliens", who are dependent on the authorities' favour for the "renewal of a visit permit". In the framework of more harsh measures against the Intifada, the permits are no longer renewed, and the women can expect to be awakened in the middle of any night, to be given only five minutes to collect their belongings and to be driven to the Jordan bridge. The number of Palestinians threatened by this new form of warfare is estimated at over 100,000.

At a special meeting of the Tel-Aviv Women in Black on November 30, Beth Goldring, an editor at Sanabel Press Services which has documented the deportations*, described the procedure: soldiers raid the village and impose a curfew, order all men to gather in the school yard or village center, collect taxes and arrest wanted youth; while the men are thus occupied, the women are taken from their homes. In many cases, women are not allowed to take all of their children with them; in others, even children registered as residents on their father's ID cards are deported and their documents destroyed.

Women have been deported wearing bedroom slippers. In one case, a deported woman's mother-in-law stood in the street asking passers-by for money to give her daughter-in-law, as they had no money in the house and were not given time to collect money from relatives. The deported women, some of them elderly and illiterate, have no legal standing, no citizenship. Now that Jordan has officially disengaged from the territories it is still unclear what happens to the women after they are deported.

The issue of the deportations, originally raised by Israeli women's organizations (*TOI* 38, p.9), is becoming more widely known. Members of the "Twenty-First Year" picketed the Defence Ministry, carrying placards with the words: *Rabin, don't deport my mother!* A strong protest was issued by the respected National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights.

The theme was also taken up by several newspapers. Over the past two months, *Chadashot's* Gabi Nitzan is devoting a large part of his weekly column to current details about "Rabin's transfer"; the paper also published an extensive interview with a young couple in Nablus, who went into hiding with their two children.

Due to the publicity and protests, the deportations are implemented less frequently but did not stop altogether. The basic problem cannot be solved as long as the Palestinians live under an occupation which regards them as foreigners in their own land. In the meantime, however, more pressure from inside Israel - as well as internationally - might help to stop this specifically tragic form of oppression.

* *The Sanabel Press Service's daily bulletin is available from: Columbia Building, room 11, Damascus Gate, East Jerusalem*

Judicial proceedings started against three well-known Israeli journalists

Joel Greenberg of *The Jerusalem Post*, Ori Nir of *Ha'aretz*, and Oren Cohen of *Chadashot* have entered Nablus on November 15, 1988, and remained there after the whole town was declared a "closed military zone" until arrested by soldiers. Adv. Yossi Arnon, the journalists' lawyer, intends to challenge the entire "closed zones" policy.

Academic upheavals

On November 15 – the day when Palestinians celebrated their Independence Day, in defiance of the Israeli army – Palestinian activist Feisal Hussein addressed a large gathering of students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This meeting, organised by the "Campus" student movement, was held despite the strong pressure of Likud Knesset members, who called upon the university administration to forbid it. The crowded students cheered Hussein when he stated that the PLO is willing to make peace. Outside, members of a right-wing students' group named Gilead vented their fury on Hussein's car, puncturing its tyres and smashing its windows.

The right-wingers' anger increased when it was announced that another Palestinian leader, Hana Siniora, was invited to an academic conference at the university. During the night the nationalist "Sicarii" underground planted a bomb at the front door of the university rector's appartement. Simultaneously an anonymous group in Tel-Aviv University pasted during the night a "black list" on the university walls, with the names of six lecturers who were accused of being "PLO supporters". Seniors' lecture in Jerusalem took place on schedule, under police protection. Two days later, right-wingers found a new target: economics students had asked their lecturer, Moti Peri, to be more lenient because they had done reserve military service in Gaza shortly before the examinations. The lecturer's answer was "Had you refused to go there, I would be more considerate..."

The Gilead group alerted its Likud patrons in the Knesset, who threatened to cut off the Hebrew University's funding. A few days later, the Sicarii set on fire the car and front door in the appartement of Gershon Shaked, head of the Hebrew University Literature Department, who had written an article against Likud hardliner Ariel Sharon.

The Hebrew University administration published a statement strongly condemning the attack on Dr. Shaked – but also prohibited a meeting organised by Peace Now

students, at which Palestinian activist Dr. Sari Nusseibeh and Ratz KM Yossi Sarid were due to speak, on the Intifada anniversary.

Dr. Nusseibeh did get to speak at a packed hall in Tel-Aviv University, where he and Labor dove Ya'el Dayan were in complete agreement on the need to open immediate Israel-PLO negotiations.

Diaspora dissidentials

In Holland, a reception for the Intifada anniversary, organized by PLO representative Afif Safieh, on November 23, got an unexpected amount of publicity in the Dutch media, due to a campaign by representatives of the Dutch Jewish establishment. The Jewish participants in the Jewish-Christian interfaith organization (OJEC) threatened to withdraw, should the Dutch churches take part in the Palestinian ceremony. Nevertheless, the church leader Ds. Mulder – who recently made a trip to the Intifada-stricken West Bank and Gaza Strip – did attend the reception, and his speech was broadcast by Dutch television.

The Amsterdam-based Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue Group* also decided to participate. Its representative Eddy Keizer, a 54-old Dutch Jew, welcomed the PLO's turn towards a two-state-solution and hoped that *next year in Yerushalayim-Al-Quds it would be possible to celebrate together not the Intifada but its end.*

Among the applauding audience, numbering more than a thousand, were most of the Palestinians living in Holland as well as the ambassadors of the Arab countries. Holland's main Jewish weekly - *N.I.W.* published a photograph of the event, showing Eddy Keizer and subtitled *not all Jews are against the PLO.*

*Address: P.O. box 16890, 1001 RH Amsterdam – Holland

550 Harvard students recently signed a petition circulated by a group of Jewish students*, condemning the Israeli government's deportation of Dr. Taysir Aruri (see TOI

38 p.11). *The petition was also signed by several Jewish faculty members: Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold, Prof. Nathan Glazer, Prof. Herbert Kelman, Prof. Zachary Lockman, Prof. Hilary Putnam, Prof. Benjamin Schwartz, Prof. Allen Steinberg. The students submitted the petition to Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir and to the Israeli consul in Boston, Ya'akov Levy, as well as to Dr. Arury himself. The following is taken from their press release.*

Aruri's deportation order was confirmed by the Israeli High Court of Justice, despite a lack of incriminating evidence brought before the open court.

Dr. Aruri has designed a five-point peace plan for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By deporting him and other Palestinians active in working for peace, *the Israeli government undermines the possibility of dialogue with the authentic leadership of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Territories*, students remarked.

Demanding permission for Aruri to return, the students further protested the policy of deportation in general, under which 57 Palestinians have been expelled since 1987. Contact: Harvard-Radcliffe New Jewish Agenda, Quincy 500 Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

Ongoing struggle

■ Gesher Leshalom (Bridge for Peace) is an Arab-Jewish peace group which has been founded 15 years ago, after the Yom Kippur-war. The aims are to further the understanding between Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews, to fight for equality for Israeli Arabs and to bring peace nearer to this part of the world. In general there is a meeting every six weeks, mostly at someone's home. At the meetings about 60 to 100 people are present. Usually there is an equal number of Jews and Arabs.

On October 26, there was a meeting in Jaffo at the home of Nassim Shaker, at which 71 people enjoyed Nassim's hospitality. As usual, everyone brought something to eat or to drink, so the burden of 'catering' was shared by all.

This time the subject was Jaffo itself: the deterioration of the Arab Jaffo and the deplorable state of the houses in the neighborhood of Adjami. There was a talk about the situation, and slides which illustrated the words of Nahle Shaker, an engineer and also active in Jaffo, like his brother Nassim. There was a long discussion afterwards about the absolute neglect of Jaffo's Arab neighborhoods by the Tel-Aviv-Jaffo municipality.

Contact: Bertie van Gelder
15 Borochoy St.

Tel-Aviv 63263 phone: 03-298277

■ In the second week of October, the East Jerusalem home of Palestinian peace activist Feisal Hussein became a television news item. Armed settlers had stationed themselves outside the gate shouting "Husseini is a terrorist!" and "Husseini to prison!". In no time the Peace Now "first-aid crew" appeared at the spot as well – after a phone-call by Hussein. Then also the police "joined the party". They intended to disperse both sides, but the peace brigade was standing inside Hussein's property, at his invitation. The police had no choice

but to order away only the settlers, who were on a public road.

■ **Twenty-First Year** held in October a week-long vigil in front of the Prime Minister's residence demanding that the peace process move forward.

House meetings are taking place, in an effort to reach more politically centrist sectors of the Israeli population.

On December 10, 27 members appeared before the Kfar Saba Magistrate's Court (see sep. article).

Contact: The Twenty First Year
P.O. box 24099, Jerusalem

■ On the night of December 7, seventy members of the Communist youth movement held a vigil in Nazareth in solidarity with the Intifada, holding torches and placards reading: *Rabin, how many kids did you kill today?* Police dispersed them by force, detaining eight of them. A similar vigil was dispersed at Kfar Yasif, where four demonstrators were arrested, including a young mother who was taken to the police station with her three-year old child.

■ During the past months the

Rabbinical Human Rights Watch held regularly services in front of the Prime Minister's residence protesting the violation of Palestinian human rights.

On December 14 a group of six rabbis took testimony regarding human rights violations at the Balata Refugee Camp. Several Israeli high school students, who had joined the rabbis, at the same time talked with the young of Balata Camp.

Contact:

Rabbinical Human Right Watch
P.O. box 32225, Jerusalem 91999

■ In Holon (Tel-Aviv area), the local branch of Peace Now together with The 21st Year organized on November 28 a house meeting. More than 30 participants, mostly teachers, met two West Bank Palestinians – a teacher and a surgeon – who described the situation of an educational system trying to operate under occupation. They also spoke of the Palestinian desire to make peace. One of the organisers said that rarely did he witness such a quick change of heart, with many hitherto uncommitted participants offering to help organise similar meetings in the future.

(Continued from p.12)

The requirement that U.S. aid be spent in America is, in fact, killing Israel economically. We would be better off accepting one billion dollars instead of two, and having them as loans instead of grants, if we could spend the money in Israel. Right now we are buying a lot of military hardware we don't need, just because the money is there.

This money gives Israelis a false sense of security. It is fueling the arms race in the Middle East and subsidizing American arms manufacturers. The one thing it does not do is make us more secure.

A further accumulation of sophisticated weapons would certainly not help Israel to confront the rebellious Palestinian population of the Occupied Territories. The only way out of that predicament is a political one – negotiations with the only entity capable of speaking for the Palestinians, the PLO.

This leaves, as the main rationale for increased Israeli armament, the military power of Syria – the state often regarded as Israel's most dangerous enemy. However, the arms race is bleeding the Syrian economy as much as it does the Israeli one, and Syria's Soviet patrons are more and more reluctant to foot the bill. Should Israel reduce its military budget, the Syrians would be happy at the chance to follow suit. As with the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, cuts on one side will lead to cuts on the other.

Aside from the purely economic aspects, the in-

flated military budget is turning the Israeli Defence Forces into a political factor and a separate social caste. This has disrupted the very delicate balance necessary in order to maintain a democratic society. It should be noted that in his time David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, had insisted that the military should never become an independent social force in Israel. One means of achieving this was keeping the standing army as small as possible and strictly subordinate to the civilian authority. This is now being threatened due to the size of the army and its budget.

Some people in the United States want to cut aid in order to force the Israeli government to change its policies. I do not agree with them. All that President Bush need do is to ask the Secretary General of the United Nations to convene an International Peace Conference and send invitations to Israel, the PLO, the Arab States and the Superpowers. No Israeli government, however tough its rhetoric, would risk the total diplomatic isolation attendant upon staying out of such a conference; there would be no need for the U.S. to cut aid to Israel, or even threaten to do so.

Being an Israeli and being concerned for my country, I do not want American aid to Israel to be cut as an act of punishment or coercion. I want aid to be cut in order to save Israel. If the American Congress really wants to help Israel, they should give us less military aid, but let us spend the money in our own country.



Too Much Aid

by Major General (ret.) Matti Peled

In American politics and public opinion, it is a widely accepted assumption that U.S. aid is an unmitigated boon to Israel. The very idea of reducing that aid, for whatever reason and by whatever amount, is rejected by nearly all those who consider themselves friends of Israel. Yet a more thorough examination may lead to the conclusion that there can be such a thing as too much aid, and that American aid, in its present form, is far from being the blessing it seems.

The United States currently provides over \$3 billion dollars a year in aid to Israel – \$1.8 billion for military aid, \$1.2 billion in Economic Support Funds (ESF) and some smaller additional funding. Economic aid was converted from loans to outright grants in 1981 while military aid has been provided in grant form since 1985.

The Israeli government is supposed to spend the ESF money within the internationally-recognised boundaries of Israel. This money is, quite definitely, not intended to be spent in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. However, this distinction exists only on paper. In practice, a sizable slice of the ESF funds are used for establishing and extending Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories.

The exact amount cannot be determined, this being about the best-kept secret in Israel. In the bulky volumes of the government budget, yearly presented to the Knesset, most expenses for implementing annexationist policies are hidden under seemingly innocent entries; opposition Knesset Members have to engage in quite a bit of detective work, in order to decode them. Roughly, it can be assumed that as much as \$500 million – nearly half – of the EMF

funds go to settlement activities in the Occupied Territories. This may explain why, in spite of all the American aid, there has been hardly any growth in the Israeli economy in the last fifteen years. Quite apart from being a major obstacle to the achievement of peace, many of the settlements constitute, from the purely economic point of view, a non-viable investment, maintained artificially for political reasons.

I would not like to see the United States making any cuts in the ESF aid to Israel. It would, however, be quite positive if this aid was explicitly earmarked for specific programs to help where help is really needed – for example, to provide some real economic development in the poorer “Development Towns” where Jews of Northern African origin were settled in the 1950’s. The unemployment rate in these towns has recently climbed to 15 percent, in comparison with an 8 percent rate nationally. An American emphasis on directing economic aid to the Development Towns would be in the immediate, direct interest of a large part of the Israeli population.

Of the \$1.8 billion in military aid, only a small part actually reaches Israel. Israel is required to spend all but \$300 million of this aid in the United States. The effect of this requirement is to place an enormous burden on the Israeli economy. Israel has a defence budget of around \$6 billion. Only about one-third of this sum comes from the U.S.; the rest has to be covered by the Israeli tax payer. Israel has to spend two dollars of its own money for every dollar it gets from America. We have to lay out enormous sums of money to absorb all the weaponry we buy. For example, when we get an F-16 jet which is paid for by American aid, we still have to pay ourselves for the spare parts and ammunition, for the pilots’ training, for the place where the plane will be kept, and for the maintenance crews. (Continued on p.11)

Soldiers’ protests

■ Yesh Gvul participated in the Israeli solidarity with the inhabitants of Beit Sahur. On December 1 and 2, many Yesh Gvul activists were stopped by army road-blocks at the entrance to Beit Sahur. However, hundreds of the town’s inhabitants arrived by sidepaths to greet the activists.

□ On December 13, Israeli television reported two more reserve soldiers imprisoned for their refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories. Yesh Gvul was quoted for the number of 95 soldiers having served similar prison terms since the beginning of the Intifada – including six conscripts.

□ In our last issue (p.12), we

reported the new call-up order issued to Rami Chasson, ordering him to report for reserve service as a prison guard over Palestinian prisoners. Chasson made clear his determination to refuse this order, and if necessary become himself a prisoner again. This statement was extensively reported in the press. The military authorities, fearing a repetition of the big campaign conducted during Chasson’s earlier imprisonments, backed out and cancelled the order.

□ Reserve soldier Yo’av Hess lodged an appeal to the Supreme Court, asking it to abolish the new military regulations, which authorise soldiers to shoot masked Palestinians on sight, and the regulations which permit practically

free use of the supposedly “non-lethal” rubber and plastic bullets. Hess argues that, since he does perform reserve service in the Occupied Territories, these new regulations may force him to become a war criminal. The Supreme Court ordered Defence Minister Rabin to give, before the end of 1989, his arguments for the legality of the regulations.

Meanwhile, a group of Yesh Gvul supporters picketed the Defence Ministry in support of Yo’av Hess. They carried signs with the words *Even the devil couldn’t revenge the blood of a child*; this quotation from Israel’s national poet, Chaim Bialik, is often used by anti-Arab demonstrators.

Contact: Yesh Gvul, P.O. box 6953, Jerusalem 31068.

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