

# The Other Israel

**TOI-picks - January 2010** <http://toibillboard.info>

*A choice of texts in print, selected from what was distributed electronically on the dates appearing. (Service started after termination of the printed newsletter.)*

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*Adam Keller comments on the news/ Action reports Roy Wagner & Gush Shalom/ Call for action-Amos Goldberg & David Shulman/ Gaza demo speech-Nurit Peled-Elchanan/ Naomi Reichman on outspoken school principal/ Erella Dunayevsky on donkey/ Uri Avnery on Egypt/ Henry Siegman on intervention*

## *Crazy Country* (Adam Keller's blog)

From <http://adam-keller2.blogspot.com>  
November, December, January

### **One day in the eternal capital**

November 18, 2009

- The plan to defy the whole world and build 900 Jews-only housing units in the Gilo Neighborhood (which was built – though many have forgotten it – on confiscated Palestinian land).

- The inauguration of Irwing Moskovitz's new provocation in east Jerusalem ("Nof Tzion").

- The demolition of a Palestinian house in the Issawiya Neighborhood, a house built "without a permit" because the Jerusalem Municipality just does not give building permits to Arabs, nor does it provide itself for their housing needs.

Everything was done today, really every conceivable thing, to make clear to the whole world what policies the government of Israel is implementing in the place which it calls "capital".

Policies which no country calling itself "a democracy" would dream of implementing even in a godforsaken province.

### **On whose hands?**

November 24, 2009

During the Gaza War, in January this year, the IDF forces attacked the compound of the extended Samouni family in the Zaytoun neighbourhood of Gaza. Twenty-nine members of the family, all of them civilians, were killed - 21 during the shelling of a house where IDF soldiers had gathered some 100 members of the family a day earlier.

Salah Samouni told Amira Hass of Haaretz: "I asked Judge Goldstone to find out why did the army do this to us. They have taken us out of the house, one by one. The officer talked in Hebrew with my father, and confirmed that we were all civilians. Why, then, did they shell us? Why did they kill us? That's what we want to know".

He recounted that his father Talal – one of the 21 killed - "had been employed by Jews" for nearly 40 years. Whenever he was sick, "the employer would call, ask after his health, and forbid him to come to work before he had recovered."

On January 4, under orders from the army, Salah Samouni and the rest of the family left their home, which had been turned into a military position, and moved to the southern side of the street.

The fact that it was the soldiers who had relocated them, had seen the faces of the children and the older women, and the fact that the soldiers were positioned in locations surrounding the house just tens of meters away, instilled in the family a certain amount of confidence - despite the IDF fire from the air, from the sea and from the land, despite the hunger and the thirst. Nothing prepared him for the three shells and the rockets the IDF fired on the house which they thought safe.

"My daughter Azza, my only daughter, two and a half years old, was injured in the first hit on the house," Salah told Haaretz. "She managed to say, 'Daddy, it hurts.' And then, in the second hit, she died. And I'm praying. Everything is dust and I can't see anything. I thought I was dead. I found myself getting up, all bloody, and I found my mother sitting by the hall with her head tilted downward. I moved her face a little, and I found that the right half of her face was gone. I looked at my father, whose eye was gone. He was still breathing a little, and then he stopped."

From this horrific story alone, there are a lot of people in the State of Israel with blood on their hands. The soldiers who pulled the trigger, and their commanders, and the commanders of the commanders, and the minister who sent the soldiers and called the Goldstone report a lie. At least under Israel's criteria all of them have blood on their hands. According to such criteria Marwan Barghouti and Ahmed Saadat (to mention a few conspicuous examples) were sent to multiple terms of life imprisonment,.

Had any of those involved with the killing of the Samouni family fallen into the hands of Hamas, the State of Israel

would have firmly demanded their release and spared no effort to get them free. After all, they are "our boys."

### **Reciprocity**

November 4, 2009 (Anniversary of PM Yitzchak Rabin's murder)

It turns out that there are now in Gaza missiles which can reach all the way to Tel Aviv (at least, they can get to the city of Holon, to this house where I am just now sitting at the computer). Rather unpleasant.

It is already known for a long time that in Tel Aviv there are fighter airplanes which can reach all the way to Gaza. That, too, is quite unpleasant – especially to the inhabitants of Gaza.

What now? Perhaps it is worthwhile to ensure that there will be no new war? No bombardment – either of Tel Aviv or of Gaza? Perhaps it would be good to include in the peace negotiations – if and when there will be negotiations – also the Hamas? As the late Yitzchak Rabin said, peace is something which you make with your enemy.

### **An automatic majority**

November 9, 2009

The Arabs command an automatic majority in the UN Assembly General. The resolution to adopt the Goldstone Report was preordained. Israeli speakers could only praise the few Member States which voted against Goldstone and call them "The Moral Minority, those who were not intimidated".

Israel commands an automatic majority in the US Congress. The resolution to condemn the Goldstone Report was preordained Arab speakers could only

praise the few Representatives who voted in favour of Goldstone and call them "The Moral Minority, those who were not intimidated".

### **Extremist weeds in the settler garden**

November 2, 2009

It is true, not all settlers are like Yaakov Teitel. Not all of them go out at night to kill Palestinians indiscriminately. Not all of them go to burn their neighbours' olive groves. Many of them are honest and law abiding people, who are content to let the army do their dirty work for them.

It is the army which declared land which had been Palestinian for generations to be "state land" and passed it on to settlers. The soldiers keep tight guard all around when the settlement is being built. And if one of the people whose land it was tries to come near, it is the army which shoots tear gas and rubber bullets and sometimes also live bullets which kill. And the army continues to guard the settlement day and night, and if its inhabitants decide to create outposts and take over some more hilltops, the army guards the outposts day and night, too. (Even when it is an outpost which had been declared illegal).

The army also creates Jews-only roads for the settlers' private use. And if a Palestinian on whose land the road passes tries to drive on it, soldiers remove him from the road immediately (and sometimes beat him up for good measure).

Yaakov Teitel is really a fool. He could have trusted the army instead of getting his own hands dirty. Then, he would still sit safe and sound in his home at the settlement of Shvut Rahel, a respectable

and law abiding citizen.

### **Another day in the Eternal Capital**

December 1, 2009

This morning, Israel's Foreign Ministry came out with a great outcry about the European Union's intention to proclaim that Jerusalem should be the capital of two states – West Jerusalem the Capital of Israel and East Jerusalem the Capital of Palestine. The Israeli ambassadors at all 27 European capitals were asked to approach the governments and make a sharp protest.

While the angry retorts of Lieberman and his officials continue to reverberate through air waves, at noon today extreme right settlers took over the home of the Al-Kurd Family at the Sheikh Jarah Neighborhood in East Jerusalem and expelled by force the family members. This is the fifth Palestinian house in this neighborhood to be taken over by settlers, with the approval of the Israeli courts and active participation of the Israeli police. So far, some sixty inhabitants were literally thrown out into the street. Now they live in tents outside what were their homes. The settlers live in them, and the Blue-and-White flags fly proudly from the roofs.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile for the Foreign Ministry to invite European representatives to tour Sheikh Jarah and see with their own eyes Israel's eternally unified capital.

### **Exactng a Price**

December 8, 2009

Enabus. I was there two years ago, to help with the olive harvest. A Palestinian village south of Nablus. Industrious, lively and hospitable inhabitants. A very steep mountain terrain. Not the most

ideal of agricultural lands, but the people of Enabus do their best. They build terraces on the mountainside, plant olive trees even on the most tiny plot available.

This week uninvited guests arrived in Enabus. Settlers. They arrived in Enabus in the middle of the night, burned cars and also a tractor, tried to set a house on fire, threatened inhabitants with their guns. (The guns which had been provided to them by the army for "self defense").

This was not because of something which the Enabus villagers had done. It was because the settlers are angry at Netanyahu's "settlement freeze". When settlers are angry at something which the Government of Israel is doing (or pretends to be doing), they are quick to "exact a price" from the first Palestinians they happen to encounter.

In fact, this is not the settlers' own invention. This method is already centuries old. Historically, in quite a few countries people who were furious with the King's latest decree took out their anger on the nearest Jews. In such places, this was called simply "a pogrom".

### **In those days and in this time**

**December 15, 2009**

An interesting coincidence. Exactly the time when Jews, in this country and world-wide, are celebrating Hanuka, was also when Israeli soldiers were sent to capture Abdullah Abu Rahme of Bil'in Village and bring him into detention. Already for years Abdullah Abu Rahme is organizing the people of his village to a persistent struggle, with no weapons in their hands, about the theft of their lands

and livelihood – supposedly for erection of the "Separation Fence", in fact in order to extend the giant ultra-Orthodox settlement Modi'in Illit.

Abdullah Abu Rahme is leading the struggle of villagers who defend their land with courage and determination. The soldiers who are sent by the State of Israel come to oppress these villagers by brute force, use again and again their full might – and the villagers remain unbroken.

Two thousand years ago there lived in exactly the same region villagers, not so different, who bravely resisted the brutal soldiers sent by a king named Antiochus. The victory over occupying soldiers won by these ancient villagers led by the Maccabees, is the event which the Jewish religion sought to commemorate by instituting the holiday called "Hanuka"...

I host here the report of Roy Wagner, who every week reports on the struggle of Palestinian villagers whose lands are stolen, and on the activists who come to support them.

"A total of about 25 Israelis and internationals joined the Palestinians of Bil'in for a relatively small demonstration against the wall. The focus of the protest was the arrest of Abdullah Abu Rahme, a member of the popular committee, whose prominent presence in demonstrations and attempts to curb the use of stones and gas canisters made him such a dangerous person, that the Israeli army had to break into Ramallah in the middle of the night to abduct and arrest him. The new border police soldiers were very eager to spend gas canisters, and the wind made it difficult to maintain steady presence near the gate, which was nevertheless opened by the demonstrators. Many

suffered from gas inhalations, some were bruised, and some went on to get arrested in the demonstration in Sheikh Jarah, just in time for the lighting of the first Hanuka candle. May the occupiers be defeated as was the evil king Antiochus."

### **Villain of the week**

**December 19, 2009**

First we were angry with Turkey and announced a boycott of tourism to Antalya.

Then we were angry with Sweden and announced a boycott of IKEA.

This week it is Britain's turn to be the target of Israeli national outrage.

If this continues in this pace we will soon only be doing business with Micronesia.

### **As we already talk to Hamas...**

December 22, 2009

Yesterday night, Prime Minister Netanyahu and his senior ministers discussed the proposals made to them by the Hamas leadership, and after long deliberations formulated a counter proposal, to be passed back to Hamas. This evening, Netanyahu's proposals will be on the desk of Ismail Haniye in Gaza and that of Khaled Mashal in Damascus. The Hamas leaders will draft their answer and send it to Netanyahu in his Jerusalem office. A regular process of negotiations, even if Netanyahu and Mashal are not sitting at the same table but corresponding via Egyptian and German mediators.

The government of Israel is negotiating with Hamas – openly, in the broad sight

of all, with details of the proposals and counter-proposals leaked daily to the Israeli and international media. It is already going on for years. But the negotiations are on one subject and one only – an exchange of prisoners, Gilad Shalit for x Palestinian prisoners.

Why, in fact? When we talk anyway, why not open comprehensive negotiations between the government of Israel and the leadership of the Hamas movement – which won the elections three years ago and which undoubtedly represents a significant part of the Palestinian people? Negotiations with the Palestinians can only succeed when they include Hamas, too. Negotiations aimed at achieving peace, or at the very least a stable, long term cease-fire. (Among other things, it would be the best way to ensure that the Palestinians about to be released in exchange for Shalit will not engage in new acts of violence.)

Undoubtedly, the mediators – Egyptian as well as German – would be ready to pass Binyamin Netanyahu's offers to the Hamas leadership. If he has anything to offer.

### **A war is going on there**

December 29, 2009

Last week Rabbi Meir Abshalom Chai of the Shavei Shomron settlement was killed in a Palestinian ambush, while traveling in his car on the roads of the West Bank. All press reports emphasized that he was the father of seven. His fellow settlers made shrill demands to increase the roadblocks and prevent Palestinians from traveling on the roads, "so that they could not harm settlers".

"Nobody talks about the fact that we live in a war, here" complained Menorah Hazani, Rabbi Chai's neighbor at the Shavei Shomron settlement, on the pages of the extreme right "Makor Rishon". Indeed, the settlers live in a war, a ceaseless daily war. To rob the land of another people, trample on them and deny them the basic hope of being free in their own land is certainly an act of war. Meir Abshalom Chai was a soldier in the settlers' army, the army which in the name of God and the Bible conducts a war against the Palestinian people – a war to which most citizens of Israel are not party and don't want to be. A settler army which has made the whole of the Wild West Bank into a big battlefield. But why did this soldier have to travel on the battlefield in a vulnerable civilian car?

And why did he have to bring his seven children to live in the middle of the battlefield?

### **Memories from Jenin**

January 8, 2010

In the past year we have heard and argued so much about what happened in Gaza, about the killing of civilians and the Goldstone Report and what this report has done to Israel's standing in the international community. Who could find time and energy left to remember civilians being killed at the Jenin Refugee Camp in April 2002? Courtesy of the Attorney General of the State of Israel, we have all gotten a reminder that also before Gaza, the Israeli Defense Forces did all kinds of highly controversial things.

On this occasion it might be worthwhile to give some recognition to one of the unsung heroes of Jenin 2002, who for a single moment blazed into limelight in

an extensive interview to Tzadok Yehezkeli of Yediot Aharonot, only to sink back into obscurity, with his heroism forgotten by an uncaring country. The Jerusalemite Moshe Nissim, better known by his nickname "Dubi Kurdi", was at the time 40 years old, a very staunch supporter of the Betar Jerusalem Football Team and a veteran employee of the Jerusalem Municipality's Enforcement Department – the department known for its diligence in destroying Palestinian homes in the Eastern part of Jerusalem, the eternally unified capital of Israel. However, exactly in January 2002, he lost his job upon being investigated on charges of taking bribes from merchants and business people.

Not all was lost, however. Less than three months passed, and lo and behold! Our glorious army set out on the offensive operation called "Defensive Shield". Dubi Kurdi hurried to join his military reserve unit, and got in time to Jenin where he got the assignment of his dreams, tailor-made to fit his inclinations and aspirations: to get aboard a D-9 bulldozer and embark on destroying the Jenin Refugee Camp. He hoisted the flag of the Betar Jerusalem Football Team on his bulldozer and got to work. In his own words:

"Was it difficult to demolish houses? Are you kidding, what kind of stupid question is that! I wanted to erase everything, everything! I was begging the officers on the radio to let me smash everything, top to bottom. When they told me to destroy a [particular] house, I took the opportunity to destroy several more, all around. Believe me, we destroyed too little. (...)

For three days I destroyed and destroyed. The whole area. Every house

from which there was shooting I would smash down, and on the way I would smash several more. On the loudspeakers they were warned to get out before I come in, but I gave nobody a chance. I did not wait. I would give the house a big blow, to let it fall down as quickly as possible. Others perhaps restrained themselves. At least they said they had restrained themselves, let them stop telling stories. There were a lot of people inside the houses which we started to destroy. I did not see living people on whom the house fell down. If there were, I would not care in the least. I am sure people died inside these houses, but it was difficult to see, there was very much dust in the air and much of our work was at night. I had great pleasure from every house which was taken out. I knew that these people don't care about death, but losing a home is more painful. If I regret something it is that we did not totally raze the entire camp.(...)

I had a lot of satisfaction, I enjoyed myself enormously. I could not stop. I wanted to go on working, on and on. I drove the Golani Brigade liaison officer crazy. After the fighting was over, we got the order to remove our D-9's. The army did not want the journalists and photographers to see us working. I quarreled with them, I wanted to destroy more. I had a lot of satisfaction in Jenin. A lot of satisfaction. Eighteen years I was called to reserve service every year, and I did nothing all these years, nothing. And then I got the chance to squeeze all these eighteen years into three days, to make up for the lost time. The soldiers came to me and said "Thank you, Kurdi, thank you!"(...)

About two months after Dubi Kurdi was there, film director Muhammad Bakri arrived in Jenin, spoke with inhabitants

of the refugee camp, heard and recorded their testimonies. For example, the story of the man in a wheelchair who did not succeed to get out of his home in time and his family and neighbors saw him being smashed to death.

Bakri included the testimonies in the film "Jenin Jenin" which was shown in cinemateques and aroused a great controversy. Extreme right thugs rampaged outside the screening halls, and the film censorship board banned the film, charging it with "incitement". The court removed the ban, but a group of soldiers who had fought in Jenin presented a libel suit against Bakri, accusing him of having defamed them. The judges rejected their suit, asserting that the film did not mention any soldier by name. The Palestinians who fled their demolished homes did not know the exact name of the bulldozer driver (and it is not sure that they were especially interested).

But the soldiers from Jenin did not give up the campaign against Bakri and his film, and presented an appeal to the Supreme Court. They feel very insulted and hurt because they recall how humane and considerate they had been during the war in Jenin, and consider Bakri's film to be nothing but a pack of propaganda lies. They also convinced Attorney General Menny Mazuz to join them in their suit, so as "to defend the army's good name".

And so, in about two months – at the time when the UN Assembly General would convene to discuss again the Goldstone Report and ask Israel all kinds of delicate questions about what happened in Gaza – there will come, out of the halls of the court in Jerusalem, also a reminder of the events of Jenin 2002.

*Perhaps Dubi Kudri should also be invited to testify and have a reunion with the appellant soldiers. They are, after all, his comrades in arms.*

### **Liebermania**

January 9, 2010

In an opinion poll among Israeli citizens, more than 90% said that the state of Israel is suffering from a negative image in the world.

Also Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman thinks so, and he came up with a good solution. This week Lieberman convened all the 150 ambassadors who represent Israel throughout the world and sharply berated them for not defending adequately Israel's National Honor. He instructed the gathered ambassadors to respond from now on with great firmness whenever anyone voices a criticism of Israel (which is as you know happening more and more often all over the world).

Some of Lieberman's listeners, professional diplomats with many years' experience, wanted to express some reservations about the words of the minister, but were given no chance. After reprimanding them for being too servile Lieberman departed, leaving no time for questions or remarks.

As is well known, Avigdor Lieberman started his career as a bouncer in Jerusalem night clubs, throwing out anyone whose behavior displeased the owner. By all accounts, he was effective and successful in this job. It might be a good idea for the Foreign Minister to locate among his former colleagues in the night club scene those most fitting to guard our National Honor. These should be appointed ambassadors and replace the flaccid, timid diplomats who now fill

these positions. Anytime when a word of criticism is heard, our ambassador will roll the bastard down the stairs. No one will dare any more to impugn Israel's National Honor!

### **Who cares?**

Jan. 10, 2010

Last Thursday, the planning committee of the Jerusalem municipality decided to approve construction of a new settlement enclave in a Palestinian area, near Mount Olive. Like its predecessors in the neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, also this settlement will be surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards.

By coincidence – or not – on the very next day George Mitchell, President Obama's envoy, made a far from veiled threat. He mentioned that under American law, the government of the United States has the right to suspend loan guarantees given to Israel, and that one president – George Bush Senior – did exactly that in reaction to conspicuous settlement construction under Israeli PM Yitzchak Shamir.

"We can do without the American loan guarantees" hurried Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz to say. Is that really so? So then perhaps Israel also does not need the three billion dollars which it gets annually. And the constant stream of fighter airplanes and helicopter gunships and tanks and military supplies of all types and kinds - all superfluous. And the American veto at the UN Security Council, where the Goldstone report will be presented for renewed discussion within two months...

What do we care as long as we have an alliance with the Settler Council?

## **The Cream Commission**

January 12, 2009

"Investigators of the IDF's Military Police Investigative Section have compiled a report with a clear conclusion: most of the Goldstone Report's charges, regarding the army's conduct in Gaza, are completely baseless" (Amir Buchbut in Ma'ariv, January 12, 2010).

Thus spake the cat: You demanded an investigation – you got one! I appointed a commission of veteran investigators from the Investigative Cat Police and they reached a clear and unequivocal conclusion: I did not eat the cream, there had never been any cream to begin with, and besides - the cream is still right there on the plate. Enough with all the lies and fabrications of these anti-Semitic mice!

## **This Xmas in Bilin**

*Roy Wagner, 25 Dec 2009*

Some 30 Israelis and 15 internationals celebrated Xmas (and the 42nd anniversary of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) in Bilin today. They joined the weekly local demonstrations against the wall with St. Nick and Mrs. Claus (how come she hasn't got her own name?) costumes and toys for the kids. The soldiers were offered a Xmas tree decorated with used gas canister baubles, and reciprocated with brand new gas canisters for the demonstrators and village youth. But since collecting and displaying used army projectiles is grounds for arrest and indictment (as shown by the case of

Abdullah Abu Rahme), the good boys of the local shabab politely returned the army's spent ammo. High level Fatah officials joined to congratulate and show solidarity. The demonstration ended with no casualties, and most Israelis continued to Sheikh Jarah.

## **This New year's day in Bil'in**

*Roy Wagner, 02 Jan 2010*

Some 30 Israelis and 25 internationals (including a group of Italian photography students) joined the weekly Palestinian demo against the land appropriation wall in Bil'in. This demonstration also marked the Fatah anniversary, and included a prominent presence of the Palestinian Popular struggle Front. When the demonstrators reached the gate, they found it open, and the soldiers wasted no time before they started flooding the area with tear gas. The wind made it difficult to maintain the demonstration at the gate area, and the soldiers, who slowly crept across the fence, put demonstrators who remained at the gate area in danger of arrest. The demonstration dispersed without injuries other than tear gas inhalation.

## **“The Blockade is Terrorism!”**

*Gush Shalom - 02/01/10 report on demo of the Coalition against the Siege*

On the first day of the Gaza War, one year ago, activists of Gush Shalom and other peace organizations demonstrated against it. Today (2.1.10), many of them took part in a large demonstration, whose main demand was to lift the siege of Gaza.

Some 3000 demonstrators gathered in Tel-Aviv's Rabin Square and marched to

Museum Square, where a protest rally was held. The demonstrators, activists of a wide range of peace organizations and other citizens, chanted in unison (in Hebrew) “Gaza, do not despair / We shall put an end to the occupation!”, “Israel, we are ashamed – the blockade is inhuman!” and more.

The demonstration was accompanied by large police forces, including a helicopter which from time to time lit up the area with a huge projector. However, there were no incidents.

Apart from the Gush Shalom posters “The Blockade is Terrorism”, there were the posters of the “Women’s Coalition” which said “Women cross borders – Freedom and Justice for Gaza”. One demonstrator brought a personal poster: “Mubarak is a War Criminal” – as a protest against the steel wall now being built by the Egyptians along the Rafah border. Many carried the Gush Shalom flag, which combines the flags of Israel and Palestine. A band of drummers, some of them women, enlivened the march.

Nurit Peled-Elchanan, a bereaved mother (and the daughter of the late general and peace activist Matti Peled), said at the rally: “I wonder about the astonishment voiced by the media at the violence in the schools, the clubs and the street. Our children are just absorbing the message conveyed by parents, elder brothers, the media and the war criminals in uniform who come to the schools and make speeches about the heroism of the army in Gaza.” [Full text after this report.]

Uri Avnery called upon President Obama, the European Union and the peoples of the world: “Help us to end the cancerous occupation. For peace and

reconciliation between the free State of Israel and the free State of Palestine!”

Eilat Maoz of the Women’s Coalition said: “All around us in this city we see war criminals who have committed these acts in Gaza. They live their lives in peace, without fear of investigation and punishment.”

Special applause greeted Nasser Rawi, the father of one of the families that were evicted from their homes in Jerusalem’s Sheik Jarrach quarter, who called upon the government in pure Hebrew “to stop the Judaization of Jerusalem and stop sending us the settler who beat people up and drive them out of their homes.”

Other speakers included MK Hanin Zuabi (Balad): “Denial of flour and sugar is a method of blackmail, but the Palestinian people is not broken”; Yael Ben-Yaphet (The Mizrahi Rainbow): “Sderot was the excuse for war, but who now remembers the poor in Sderot?”; Abir Kopti (Hadash): “I congratulate the British government for marking products of settlements – this is part of what gives hope.”

The high point of the evening was the band of “Raging Grannies”, five elderly women who – on the model of the Canadian original – sang “modified” children’s songs. They concluded the evening with the slightly modified text of a popular Hebrew children’s song: “Mother said to Ahmed / My son is hero / My son never cries / like a little stupid boy. // He had a house in Gaza / And a father, a mother and a brother / Gaza was bombed / And the house is not there anymore. // I do never cry / I am not a cry-baby / But why, mother, why / Do the tears come by themselves?”

## **A year after the Gaza War - Speech at the protest rally**

Nurit Peled Elhanan

Tel Aviv, January 2, 2010 [translated by  
Adam Keller]

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 assassinated 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

{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.jpost.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..."

## **Sheikh Jarrah, Jerusalem- What Can Be Done From Abroad**

*Amos Goldberg & David Shulman*

**15.12.09 - a call for action**

*Dear friends,*

As many of you know from our recent reports, rather terrible things are happening in Jerusalem. The Israeli government is pursuing a policy of forcing Palestinian families from their homes in East Jerusalem and handing over their properties to Jewish settlers. The guiding idea is to plant colonies of fanatical Jewish settlers in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods. Israeli courts have recently sanctioned such a move in Sheikh Jarrah, where three Palestinian families have now been evicted from their homes; another 28 homes are under a real threat. Needless to say, only Jews are allowed to reclaim property from before 1948 (in the case of Sheikh Jarrah, from Ottoman times, over a hundred years ago); Palestinians have no hope of reclaiming any of the hundreds of homes in West Jerusalem that once belonged to them.

Last Friday, December 11, the police violently broke up a peaceful, non-violent protest by Israeli and Palestinian activists and ordinary citizens against what is happening in Sheikh Jarrah. The police were exceptionally brutal, as described in some detail in our report. Twenty-four activists were arrested and held for 36 hours.

The police asked that several of them be remanded in custody until the end of the legal procedures against them (possibly a matter of weeks), and they also attempted to evict three international volunteers who had been arrested in Sheikh Jarrah. Fortunately, the court did

not grant either of these requests, and all those arrested have now been released under various restraining conditions, including forbidding them to enter Sheikh Jarrah in the near future. Many will likely be charged, entirely falsely, with assaulting a policeman. We do not believe that any such charges will hold up in court□there is excellent video footage disproving them□but the ongoing harassment of key civil rights activists does exact a price.

It is very clear that the government wishes to silence democratic protest against its policies of theft and eviction and that it is determined to use the considerable means at its disposal to achieve this goal. The only significant check on their power is pressure from abroad.

If you would like to help, please consider sending an email or fax (the latter is said to be more effective in winning attention) to one of the Israeli diplomatic representatives close to your place of residence (see list below) or to the Mayor of Jerusalem, Mr. Nir Barakat, ([lishka@jerusalem.muni.il](mailto:lishka@jerusalem.muni.il) Fax: 972-2-6296014) protesting Israel's policy in East Jerusalem. Even a note of a few short lines can make a difference. You might ask them: Why are discriminatory policies the norm in Jerusalem? Why are only Jews allowed to reclaim their pre-1948 property? Why is the right to protest being suppressed in Jerusalem? Is Israel still a democratic state?

In the past, such protest from abroad has been effective where all other measures failed.

*With thanks to all of you for your support,*

*Dr. Amos Goldberg and Prof. David Shulman*

## **Students, the occupation must be opposed! - highschool principal speaks out**

Naomi Reichman

Yediot (Y-net/My-net) –Jan. 3, 2010  
translated from Hebrew for Occupation  
Magazine & TOI- Billboard by Adam Keller

‘When you join the army, go to the checkpoints. You will see what happens there, bring a spirit of moderation, help create a different situation, and eventually you will reach the conclusion that the occupation should not go on. Military service is a duty - but service in an army which guards the borders and protects the country, not in an army concerned with occupation duties’.

Wednesday, 8:15 am, at the auditorium of Tichon Ironi-Alef (Municipal Highschool-A) in Tel Aviv. Principal Ram Cohen calls upon 17-year old students to join him in struggling against the occupation.

‘I need water, I must have water,’ says Ram Cohen, director of Ironi-Alef, upon returning on Wednesday morning to his office, after addressing the 11th grade students [17-year olds] in the school’s old auditorium. And he definitely does need water. Not only to moisten his mouth after speaking very long, but also to help put out the flame which the words he said to the students might have ignited.

Cohen is neither naive nor innocent. He knows that a school principal is bound to come under fire when talking openly against the occupation in the Territories, calling for the release of Gilad Shalit in exchange for a thousand prisoners and propping that this prisoner exchange might be used as the starting point for a

deep and genuine reconciliation process with the Palestinians.

Even before taking a moment to quench his thirst, he says: ‘Rabbi Melamed of the Yeshiva in the Har Bracha settlement and his ilk should know that the secular public which they contempt has had enough of their refusal. We will no longer tolerate their ‘Jewish’ casuistry and deviousness, their incomprehension of what democracy means, and their disrespect for elementary human dignity. I call upon all sane Israeli educators, whether religious or secular, to say openly to their pupils that the occupation is a curse, to educate them to values which don’t include trampling upon others.

You can’t brutally trample upon values, as the State of Israel is doing for the past 42 years, and still claim that we are educating our children in the spirit of democracy’.

- Isn’t what you are doing illegal, or at least contrary to the Ministry of Education regulations? Do you have no apprehension?

‘No, I have no apprehension because I do not introduce politics or educate in favor of a specific political position. I don’t tell the students which party to vote for. I make statements solely on moral values. If somebody thinks that you can rule over four million people in a moral manner, let them stand up and explain how to do it. You can’t talk of Human Liberty when you deny Liberty. So, I say you can’t maintain a moral army when some of its units are engaged in brutal repression.

- Are you holding regular discussions with students?

Periodically I meet with groups of students, because it is important to me to convey messages such as [the need for] military service. The kids don't want to serve in the army, certainly not undergo officers' training. They leave the command positions in the hands of a very specific section of the population.

I'm very concerned about that. A hundred thousand people in the Territories {i.e. the settlers} make the decisions for ten million people.

- I'll ask again - do you have no apprehension of being fired?

No, I'm not afraid of that. I would even like a public debate to start on whether or not it is my duty as an educator to say such things. For a long time I avoided speaking out, because of being a school principal. But I came to the conclusion that [saying such things] is not being political. It is just referring to subjects on Israel's social agenda which it is impossible to ignore.

Some time ago I visited the Wailing Wall Yeshiva and had a meeting with a group of their educators. We talked about the occupation. I said we can't go on living as we are and that we must decide: either to properly annex and make the Palestinians into citizens or to separate from them. The Yeshiva teachers told me: we should annex, but without giving rights. I left that meeting with a feeling of great anxiety, with the understanding that some groups in the Israeli society just don't understand what a democratic state is, and that the educational system has failed in properly explaining this and instilling the understanding in its graduates.

Parents did not like my decision

On the way to the auditorium Cohen already related that he decided to cancel the school day trips to the Shiloah Tunnel [in East Jerusalem], a place which a large part of the Israeli public regards as a national symbol [because it was dug by an ancient Judean King in Biblical times].

- Why?

Because it's a scandal how [the settlers] are digging under the homes of Arab residents in order to locate archaeological finds, and the state does not care if houses collapse as a result. So it's true that the Ministry of Education pays for some of these trips there, but I do not want to take part in it. Some parents did not like my decision, but I stuck to it.

A packed auditorium. Considering that it is 8:15 and the students seem alert. It should be noted that Cohen did not block them from speaking their minds, also when their views were completely contrary to his. One girl student was outspoken about 'bleeding hearts talking high-brow nonsense'.

The Shalit Deal is shaking this country for a considerable time already' was how Cohen opened. 'Today we were informed that Hamas had not yet given a final answer to the Israeli proposal. There is a possibility that this dialogue will in the end lead to acceptable solutions, solutions which can somehow be lived with. To understand how we got to this point we should go back.

Some areas of what is now ruled by the State of Israel were occupied in 1967, and they are not under Israeli sovereignty. From the moment when they were conquered, Israel entered a new era - a very problematic one, in fact an impossible situation. At the immediate beginning of the occupation

was a mood of euphoria on the Israeli side, because we were able to liberate a region to which we had a historical affinity. The entire Bible is overloaded with references to places in this region: Hebron, Nablus, Elon Moreh, etc. etc. Along with that euphoria there began to be heard the voices of intellectuals calling for settling this region with Jews. Some groups argued that these places belonged to us and that we should create a new reality on the ground.

What does all this have to do with Gilad Shalit? Because one of the regions occupied then was Gaza. Four years ago we left Gaza, you probably saw on TV the painful process of that departure and the dilemma with which it faced Israel. So we went out, but in Gaza there is a Palestinian leadership which is determined to bring home the prisoners held in Israeli jails. Some ten thousand prisoners are held in Israel, some of them with blood on their hands - which means that they participated directly or indirectly in the murder of Jews. Gilad Shalit provides radical organizations such as Hamas with the hope of gaining the release of these prisoners. For us, they are terrorists; for the other side, they are fighters who struggled for the liberation of Palestine.

And there is another thing. The State of Israel departed from Gaza, - but continues to maintain a tight siege around it. At present, you can

get into Gaza virtually nothing but elementary basic commodities. So, in order to make daily life possible, smuggling tunnels were dug through which everything comes in: beef, food, women, drugs and weapons. Egypt, which sees the smuggling tunnels as dangerous also to its own interests, began to dig a deep and wide trench in

an effort to prevent the further digging of tunnels.

In the present situation, 1.5 million people are living in Gaza in very great distress. Most of them, I suppose, have had enough of such a life and they would like to see a real change. To them should be added the Palestinians who live in Judea and Samaria under a far more moderate Palestinian leadership, which understands the democratic way.

Israel is in a complicated situation. On the one hand there is a desire to end the occupation after 42 years. On the other hand - how do we do it? Is it at all possible to end the occupation? Are there groups in the population which do not want to end the occupation? These questions are scary and far from simple. So, what do you say, are there groups in the population which do not want to end the occupation?

Don't say nothing can be done

The answer is not late in coming: the settlers. Cohen: Yes. This is about people with a religious outlook, according to which these territories are ours since Abraham. And they have another argument: We are living here in order to protect Tel Aviv and Kfar Saba. If the Palestinians were to get to the [pre-'67] border, the center of the country would be under a permanent threat.

With your permission, I would like to go back to Gilad Shalit. If we want to get him released, we are required to release a thousand prisoners. One of the strongest arguments deterring Bibi Netanyahu from signing this agreement is that after the release of Gilad Shalit the [suicide bombing] attacks will start again, and then Netanyahu would have blood on his hands. That is the Prime Minister's dilemma. Can I release such

prisoners to their home, when they might then plan the next terrorist attack in Tel Aviv?

There is also the basic issue of whether or not to negotiate on the release of prisoners. The United States, for example, does not hold such negotiations at all. Would the attitude change also here, once Gilad Shalit is released? But to me the most important question is what will happen after the release of Gilad, which I hope will take place soon. Do we, Israel, want to go on with the mad cycle of bloodshed, with them hitting us and we hitting them back and so on and on and on. Or do we want to talk peace?

I am well aware that in the prevailing public atmosphere, the word 'peace' had become despised. I want to talk about reconciliation. Peace means to sign agreements, reconciliation is among people. Reconciliation can come through Gilad Shalit. Let's extend our hand to a process of dialogue, we take a commitment to return to the 1967 borders and they give up violence. Extremists there are on both sides. We are neither the Bad Guys in this story nor the Goodies. But we should enter into the mode seeking reconciliation.

The Palestinian Authority is going through a fantastic process. A state is in the process of arising, with institutions, police, a developing economy, medicine and what not. People there start wanting to live. Very much unlike Gaza, where the situation is very difficult and it is impossible to rebuild the destruction of Operation Cast Lead. There is a bad sanitary situation, they are under siege. The development of Gaza is a clear Israeli interest, but if implemented now it might be interpreted over there in the wrong way.

Today there were headlines in the papers about the Supreme Court ruling that Route 443 will be open from now on also to Palestinian motorists. Until now, they were forbidden to use it. Why were they forbidden? Because there were terrorist attacks. And why were there such attacks? To understand why, think about it yourselves. What would you have done, had you found yourselves living under occupation and denied the right to study in a school, denied even the most basic living conditions?

I do not justify attacks and violent acts, but I can understand what causes them. They are the result of pressure that accumulated over 42 years. The people there want to have civil and national rights. This obliges us to embark on a process of reconciliation. If Gilad Shalit is returned and a momentum is launched, we will know that we have done more than just release prisoners. If we actually go back to the 1967 borders and develop the region, it would be wonderful.

So, I am asking you to listen carefully to the news and be aware of the implications. Ask yourselves who wants to continue the occupation and why, and who does not. You can make your voice heard. Talk among yourselves, talk with your parents, go to demonstrations, contact Knesset Members on social issues to which you are sensitive, talk about it in your internet chats. Don't succumb to despair. Do what your parents were not able to do. When you join the army, go to the checkpoints. You will see what happens there, bring a spirit of moderation, help create a different situation, and eventually you will reach the conclusion that the occupation should not go on.

Don't leave the army and the command functions in the hands of small sectors of

the population. Military service is a duty and a necessity - but service in an army which guards the borders and protects the country, not in an army concerned with occupation duties. Don't say that there is nothing to be done or that there is nobody to talk to. Peace and reconciliation are carried out with enemies. There will be no dialogue between lovers. What would take place is a dialogue between two peoples which want to live in peace, in two neighboring countries. Express hope! Only with hope you can problems be solved.`

I will continue to talk and speak out

The conversation ends with the applause of the students. Cohen invites pupils to open a discussion. The first three students say that the situation can not be helped. Let them stop using terrorism, then we will talk with them - that was the bottom line.

If Cohen is discouraged to hear this, you do not see it on his face. He does not seem excited or annoyed. Any such `nothing to be done` puts a question mark. Here and there, an occasional different kind of statement slips in the students' discussion, those who say that we must take responsibility because we are stronger, that we must start a process of reconciliation. Also statements of this kind do not elicit a visible change in Cohen's attitude. At most, he nods slightly in agreement.

`Sometimes I do feel a bit discouraged when I hear the students talk in this way, that they feel there is no way out and that the situation will go on as it is indefinitely` he says at the end of the hallway conversation. `But this kind of discouragement soon goes away. I will continue to talk and speak out. I am convinced that these conversations affect them. For the better`.

## **Pity God Didn't Make Me a Donkey**

By Erella Dunayevsky

December 27th, 2009, afternoon. A workday nearly over. A year nearly at its end.

One donkey nearly shot, Khadra from Umm al Kheir nearly killed, the words I hear from Id on the phone about this can hardly contain his surging shock, anguish and rage. Barely managing to keep my own feelings at bay, I start the Opel Astra bound for the South Hebron Hills, to Umm al Kheir.

In the 50 minutes separating my home in Shoal from Umm al Kheir, Khadra has managed to come to, realize she is alive, and accompany the policemen to the station at the large Kiryat Arba Settlement, her neighbors have managed to control their anxiety, and I manage to arrive. I asked Id to see precisely where the donkey had gone, where did Khadra end up when she followed it, and from where the shots were fired. Everyone respected my request and helped Id and Na'ama reconstruct the event:

“Khadra's donkey went out walking. Usually it is tied up like all the other donkeys when they're not working. But apparently he wasn't, this time” says Id in his fluent Hebrew.

The donkey took a stroll along the five-meter wide path between the top row of tents of Umm al Kheir and Carmel settlement.

The donkey that has not yet learned to tell apart the settlement and the Bedouin locality of Umm al Kheir, has learned not to enter the old Carmel settlement built in 1981 simply because it has a fence. But new Carmel has been appended to it three years ago, and has no fence. So when the donkey reached the no-fence it simply strolled on. When Khadra, owner of the strolling donkey, realized the rascal was proceeding towards the new settlement, she hurried followed to get it back.

The donkey stood on the army patrol track that is very close to Umm al Kheir and a bit further from new Carmel. Aware of the catastrophic implications of the donkey's entry into the settlement area, Khadra steps on the sacred dirt of the patrol track, intending to teach her donkey its missing lesson in the political understanding of the area. Alas, that was a fateful step. Four bursts of M-16 rifle-fire just missed her head, in the direction of Umm al Kheir. Khadra fainted on the spot. She lost consciousness out of sheer fright. Id, then seated at the door of his home, ran towards the source of fire and saw Khadra flat on the ground and the donkey galloping in panic in the absolutely forbidden direction. Bilal immediately called the police. Id had seen the shooter. He knows him. "He's the man living in the southern-most house of the new part of the settlement. He is always making trouble", says Id. "Just this morning he pestered Taref who was out grazing. Not all the settlers here are the same. Those in the new part are more violent, and he's the worst of the lot", he points out.

"If there are peaceful residents in Carmel, as well, why don't they control these hooligans? What's this, shooting just like that – is this a game?!" Id is furious. "And before the police arrived", he says, "I saw the shooter removing the magazine out of his weapon and hide it". "How come he has a weapon to begin with?" I asked. And if he possesses one, how did he manage to go and get it and shoot Khadra from such close quarters?" Id gave me his pained smile and said: "They possess weapons and carry them at all times".

The police and army arrived about fifteen minutes after the shooting. In the meantime the local women looked after Khadra. When the police arrived, she was still lying on the ground, motionless. "Her voice is very weak" Id answered the policemen who asked if she could already be questioned. After a while Khadra got up, helped by the women, and Yasser helped her reach the police jeep. She was then taken with Yasser

to the Kiryat Arba police station for questioning. The shooting settler, on the other hand, went there driving his own private vehicle, accompanied by a policeman.

As I stand at the edge of Umm al Kheir, concentrating on Id's reconstruction of the incident, I observe the scene. The longer I look, the more stunned I become at the short range from which the man shot at Khadra, and the much greater distance between Khadra and the settlement houses, posing no threat whatsoever, let alone when the issue is to retrieve a stray donkey...

Dusk enveloped us softly.

Pink skies and a cool breeze of a warm winter day caresses upset faces. The village women and children gather around me. Everyone is glad to see me. Once again they can tell me exactly how the shots met each of them. How lovely eight-year old Rima, Khadra's daughter, thought her mother was dead, and she is still coping with the death of her father five months ago. How others fell on the ground because the bullets had hit so close to them. How Amne saw a settler from old Carmel descending from his home with a gun. How the babies cried and the toddlers were dumbstruck with fright.

They tell, and I contain them lovingly. I look at their faces and see through them. I see them bewildered and perplexed. Their bewilderment helps the people of Umm al Kheir to see clearly. With precision, in all its dimensions – the width of the path trodden by the donkey and its owner, the length of the trajectory of the four bullets into the village, the height of these when they flew over the woman's head, and the death of the abyss that lay between Khadra's action and the surreal reaction of the shooter.

Seeing all these things – that is probably why God separated light and darkness.

I look at their faces and see inside. I see how they differentiate between those who are

violent and harass them, and those who are not. “The people of Carmel are not all the same” they say.

An Israeli passing by told them they’re cowards. Otherwise they would enter the settlement and throw their weight around. They did not respond. I said, then, that they are strong for just that reason. They still did not respond.

Then it was almost dark. Khadra had not yet returned from her police investigation at Kiryat Arba. Rima is concerned. So am I. In the failing light I see a man from fenced-in old Carmel speaking with Suliman, Id’s father. They stand there on both sides of the fence, talking about what had occurred here just a short while ago.

I join them. “This is a good man, he is” says Id’s father in his raw Hebrew. I ask Haj Suliman permission to join their conversation. I told the man they must extend the fence to surround the new part of the settlement and thus avoid unnecessary incidents. I asked who was responsible for this. “The Ministry of Defense” he told me. We agreed to set a meeting with the secretary of Carmel and himself, and with Ehud, Boaz and myself, in order to move the matter of the fence and get them involved in preventing acts of settler violence against the villagers.

“Somewhat bizarre, us talking here from both sides of the fence” I said, after a long pause. “I forgot to bring the key” he replied, slightly embarrassed. I bade farewell to my dear friends and went home before Khadra’s return. Only late that evening did Id call and inform me that she was back. The police did not take the trouble to bring her home respectfully. At the of the interrogation she and her escort were driven to the eastern entry of Hebron and were left there. “You’ll manage on your own” the policemen said, and left. The shooter drove back home in his own car.

Failing to fall asleep, I ponder how the wheel turns – how in a state whose law forbids civilians to possess weapons at home, let alone use them, a civilian is allowed all of this when he is an occupier? How a hate-criminal shoots and is then home free, while his victim lags behind, having to manage somehow. Where the injured find the strength not to injure, while the perpetrators will perpetrate again in a day or two. They will throw stones at them from behind the fence, and flee. Their acts will not be counted. Only the stone-hurlers and shooters of the inferior nation will be considered outlaws.

But after all, I am lucky – even the donkey cannot fathom all of this.

## **The Iron Wall**

*Uri Avnery 02/01/10*

SOMETHING ODD, almost bizarre, is going on in Egypt these days.

About 1400 activists from all over the world gathered there on their way to the Gaza Strip. On the anniversary of the “Cast Lead” War, they intended to participate in a non-violent demonstration against the ongoing blockade, which makes the life of 1.5 million inhabitants of the Strip intolerable.

At the same time, protest demonstrations were to take place in many countries. In Tel-Aviv, too, a big protest was planned. The “monitoring committee” of the Arab citizens of Israel was to organize an event on the Gaza border.

When the international activists arrived in Egypt, a surprise awaited them. The Egyptian government forbade their trip to Gaza. Their buses were held up at the outskirts of Cairo and turned back. Individual protesters who succeeded in reaching the Sinai in regular buses were

taken off them. The Egyptian security forces conducted a regular hunt for the activists.

The angry activists besieged their embassies in Cairo. On the street in front of the French embassy, a tent camp sprang up which was soon surrounded by the Egyptian police. American protesters gathered in front of their embassy and demanded to see the ambassador. Several protesters who are over 70 years old started a hunger strike. Everywhere, the protesters were held up by Egyptian elite units in full riot gear, while red water cannon trucks were lurking in the background. Protesters who tried to assemble in Cairo's central Tahrir (liberation) Square were mishandled.

In the end, after a meeting with the wife of the president, a typical Egyptian solution was found: one hundred activists were allowed to reach Gaza. The rest remained in Cairo, bewildered and frustrated.

WHILE THE demonstrators were cooling their heels in the Egyptian capital and trying to find ways to vent their anger, Binyamin Netanyahu was received in the president's palace in the heart of the city. His hosts went to great lengths to laud and celebrate his contribution to peace, especially the 'freeze' of settlement activity in the West Bank, a phony gesture that does not include East Jerusalem.

Hosni Mubarak and Netanyahu have met in the past – but not in Cairo. The Egyptian president always insisted that the meetings take place in Sharm-al-Sheikh, as far from the Egyptian population centers as possible. The invitation to Cairo was, therefore, a significant token of increasingly close relations.

As a special gift for Netanyahu, Mubarak agreed to allow hundreds of Israelis to come to Egypt and pray at the grave of Rabbi Yaakov Abu-Hatzeira, who died and was buried in the Egyptian town of Damanhur 130 years ago, on his way from Morocco to the Holy Land.

There is something symbolic about this: the blocking of the pro-Palestinian protesters on their way to Gaza at the same time as the invitation of Israelis to Damanhur.

ONE MAY well wonder about the Egyptian participation in the blockade of the Gaza Strip.

The blockade started long before the Gaza War and has turned the Strip into what has been described as "the biggest prison on earth". The blockade applies to everything except essential medicines and the most basic foodstuffs. US senator John Kerry, former candidate for the presidency, was shocked to hear that the blockade included pasta – the Israeli army in its wisdom has designated noodles as a luxury. The blockade is all-embracing – from building materials to school children's copy books. Except for the most extreme humanitarian cases, nobody can pass from the Gaza Strip to Israel or the West Bank, nor the other way round.

But Israel controls only three sides of the Strip. The Northern and Eastern borders are blocked by the Israeli army, the Western border by the Israeli navy. The fourth border, the Southern one, is controlled by Egypt. Therefore, the entire blockade would be ineffective without Egyptian participation.

Ostensibly, this does not make sense. Egypt considers itself as the leader of the Arab world. It is the most populous Arab country, situated at the center of the Arab world. Fifty years ago the president

of Egypt, Gamal Abd-al-Nasser, was the idol of all the Arabs, especially of the Palestinians. How can Egypt collaborate with the “Zionist enemy”, as Egyptians called Israel then, in bringing 1.5 million brother Arabs to their knees?

Until recently, the Egyptian government had been sticking to a solution that exemplifies the 6000-year old Egyptian political acumen. It participated in the blockade but closed its eyes to the hundreds of tunnels dug under the Egyptian-Gaza border, through which the daily supplies for the population were flowing (for exorbitant prices, and with high profits for Egyptian merchants), together with the stream of arms. People also passed through them – from Hamas activists to brides.

This is about to change. Egypt has started building an iron wall – literally - along the full length of the Gaza border, consisting of steel pillars thrust deep into the ground, in order to block all tunnels. That will finally choke the inhabitants.

When the most extreme Zionist, Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky, wrote 80 years ago about erecting an “Iron Wall” against the Palestinians, he did not dream of Arabs doing just that.

WHY DO they do it?

There are several explanations. Cynics point out that the Egyptian government receives a huge American subsidy every year – almost two billion dollars – by courtesy of Israel. It started as a reward for the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. The pro-Israel lobby in the US Congress can stop it any time.

Others believe that Mubarak is afraid of Hamas. The organization started out as the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, still the main opposition to his autocratic regime. The Cairo-Riyadh-

Amman-Ramallah axis is poised against the Damascus-Gaza axis that is allied with the Tehran-Hizbullah axis. Many people believe that Mahmoud Abbas is interested in the tightening of the Gaza blockade in order to hurt Hamas.

Mubarak is angry with Hamas, which refuses to dance to his tune. Like his predecessors, he demands that the Palestinians obey his orders. President Abd-al-Nasser was angry with the PLO (an organization created by him to ensure Egyptian control of the Palestinians, but which escaped him when Yasser Arafat took over). President Anwar Sadat was angry with the PLO for rejecting the Camp David agreement, which promised Palestinians only “autonomy”. How dare the Palestinians, a small, oppressed people, refuse the “advice” of Big Brother?

All these explanations make sense, yet the Egyptian government’s attitude is still astonishing. The Egyptian blockade of Gaza destroys the lives of 1.5 million human beings, men and women, old people and children, most of who are not Hamas activists. It is done publicly, before the eyes of hundreds of millions of Arabs, a billion and a quarter Muslims. In Egypt itself, too, millions of people are ashamed of the participation of their country in the starving of fellow Arabs.

It is a very dangerous policy. Why does Mubarak follow it?

THE REAL answer is, probably, that he has no choice.

Egypt is a very proud country. Anyone who has been in Egypt knows that even the poorest Egyptian is full of national pride and is easily insulted when his national dignity is hurt. That was shown again a few weeks ago, when Egypt lost

a soccer match with Algeria and behaved as if it has lost a war.

“Consider that from the summit of these Pyramids, forty centuries look down upon you,” Napoleon told his soldiers on the eve of the battle for Cairo. Every Egyptian feels that 6000 - some say 8000 – years of history look upon him all the time.

This profound feeling clashes with reality at a time when Egypt’s situation is getting more and more miserable. Saudi Arabia has more influence, tiny Dubai has become an international financial center, Iran is becoming a far more important regional power. Contrary to Iran, where the Ayatollahs have called upon families to limit themselves to two children, the Egyptian birthrate is devouring everything, condemning the country to permanent poverty.

In the past, Egypt succeeded in balancing its internal weaknesses with external successes. The whole world considered Egypt as the leader of the Arab world, and treated it accordingly. No more.

Egypt is in a bad situation. Therefore, Mubarak has no choice but to follow the dictates of the US – which are, in fact, Israeli dictates. That is the real explanation for his participation in the blockade.

WHEN I spoke today at the demonstration in Tel-Aviv, after we had marched through the streets to protest against the blockade, I refrained from mentioning the Egyptian part in it.

I confess that I liked the people I met during my visits to Egypt very much. The “man in the street” is very

welcoming. In their behavior towards each other there is an air of tranquility, an absence of aggression, a particular Egyptian sense of humor. Even the poorest keep their dignity in crowded and often miserable conditions. I have not heard them grumble. In all the thousands of years of their history, Egyptians have risen in revolt no more than three or four times.

This legendary patience has its negative side, too. When people are resigned to their lot, this may prevent economic, social and political progress.

It seems that the Egyptian people are ready to accept everything. From the Pharaohs of old right down to the present Pharaoh, their rulers have faced little opposition. But a day may come when national pride will overcome even this patience.

As an Israeli, I protest against the Israeli blockade. If I were an Egyptian, I would protest against the Egyptian blockade. As a citizen of this planet, I protest against both.

### Imposing Middle East Peace

*Henry Siegman*. The Nation, Jan. 7, 2010

Israel’s relentless drive to establish ‘facts on the ground’ in the occupied West Bank, a drive that continues in violation of even the limited settlement freeze to which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu committed himself, seems finally to have succeeded in locking in the irreversibility of its colonial project. As a result of that ‘achievement,’ one that successive Israeli governments have long sought in order to preclude the possibility of a two-state solution, Israel has crossed the

threshold from 'the only democracy in the Middle East' to the only apartheid regime in the Western world.

The inevitability of such a transformation has been held out not by 'Israel bashers' but by the country's own leaders. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon referred to that danger, as did Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, who warned that Israel could not escape turning into an apartheid state if it did not relinquish 'almost all the territories, if not all,' including the Arab parts of East Jerusalem.

Olmert ridiculed Israeli defense strategists who, he said, had learned nothing from past experiences and were stuck in the mindset of the 1948 war of independence. 'With them, it is all about tanks and land and controlling territories and controlled territories and this hilltop and that hilltop,' he said. 'All these things are worthless. Who thinks seriously that if we sit on another hilltop, on another hundred meters, that this is what will make the difference for the State of Israel's basic security?'

It is now widely recognized in most Israeli circles--although denied by Israel's government--that the settlements have become so widespread and so deeply implanted in the West Bank as to rule out the possibility of their removal (except for a few isolated and sparsely populated ones) by this or any future Israeli government unless compelled to do so by international intervention, an eventuality until now considered entirely unlikely.

It is not only the settlements' proliferation and size that have made their dismantlement impossible. Equally decisive have been the influence of Israel's settler-security-industrial complex, which conceived and

implemented this policy; the recent disappearance of a viable pro-peace political party in Israel; and the infiltration by settlers and their supporters in the religious-national camp into key leadership positions in Israel's security and military establishments.

Olmert was mistaken in one respect, for he said Israel would turn into an apartheid state when the Arab population in Greater Israel outnumbers the Jewish population. But the relative size of the populations is not the decisive factor in such a transition. Rather, the turning point comes when a state denies national self-determination to a part of its population--even one that is in the minority--to which it has also denied the rights of citizenship.

When a state's denial of the individual and national rights of a large part of its population becomes permanent, it ceases to be a democracy. When the reason for that double disenfranchisement is that population's ethnic and religious identity, the state is practicing a form of apartheid, or racism, not much different from the one that characterized South Africa from 1948 to 1994. The democratic dispensation that Israel provides for its mostly Jewish citizens cannot hide its changed character. By definition, democracy reserved for privileged citizens--while all others are kept behind checkpoints, barbed-wire fences and separation walls commanded by the Israeli army--is not democracy but its opposite.

The Jewish settlements and their supporting infrastructure, which span the West Bank from east to west and north to south, are not a wild growth, like weeds in a garden. They have been carefully planned, financed and protected by successive Israeli

governments and Israel's military. Their purpose has been to deny the Palestinian people independence and statehood--or to put it more precisely, to retain Israeli control of Palestine 'from the river to the sea,' an objective that precludes the existence of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state east of Israel's pre-1967 border.

A vivid recollection from the time I headed the American Jewish Congress is a helicopter trip over the West Bank on which I was taken by Ariel Sharon. With large, worn maps in hand, he pointed out to me strategic locations of present and future settlements on east-west and north-south axes that, Sharon assured me, would rule out a future Palestinian state.

Just one year after the 1967 war, Moshe Dayan, then defense minister, described Israel's plan for the future of the territories as 'the current reality.' 'The plan is being implemented in actual fact,' he said. 'What exists today must remain as a permanent arrangement in the West Bank.' Ten years later, at a conference in Tel Aviv whose theme was finding a solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, Dayan said: 'The question is not, What is the solution? but, How do we live without a solution?'

Prime Minister Netanyahu's conditions for Palestinian statehood would leave under Israel's control Palestine's international borders and airspace, as well as the entire Jordan Valley; would leave most of the settlers in place; and would fragment the contiguity of the territory remaining for such a state. His conditions would also deny Palestinians even those parts of East Jerusalem that Israel unilaterally annexed to the city immediately following the 1967 war--land that had never been part of

Jerusalem before the war. In other words, Netanyahu's conditions for Palestinian statehood would meet Dayan's goal of leaving Israel's de facto occupation in place.

From Dayan's prescription for the permanence of the status quo to Netanyahu's prescription for a two-state solution, Israel has lived 'without a solution,' not because of uncertainty or neglect but as a matter of deliberate policy, clandestinely driving settlement expansion to the point of irreversibility while pretending to search for 'a Palestinian partner for peace.'

Sooner or later the White House, Congress and the American public--not to speak of a Jewish establishment that is largely out of touch with the younger Jewish generation's changing perceptions of Israel's behavior--will have to face the fact that America's 'special relationship' with Israel is sustaining a colonial enterprise.

President Barack Obama's capitulation to Netanyahu on the settlement freeze was widely seen as the collapse of the latest hope for achievement of a two-state agreement. It thoroughly discredited the notion that Palestinian moderation is the path to statehood, and therefore also discredited Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, moderation's leading Palestinian advocate, who announced his intention not to run in the coming presidential elections.

Netanyahu's 'limited' freeze was described by the Obama administration as 'unprecedented,' even though the exceptions to it--3,000 housing units whose foundations had supposedly already been laid, public buildings and unlimited construction in East Jerusalem--brought total construction to

where it would have been without a freeze. Indeed, Netanyahu assured the settler leadership and his cabinet that construction will resume after the ten-month freeze--according to minister Benny Begin, at a rate 'faster and more than before'--even if Abbas agrees to return to talks. In fact, the Israeli press has reported that the freeze notwithstanding, new construction in the settlements is 'booming.' None of this has elicited the Obama administration's public rebuke, much less the kinds of sanctions imposed on Palestinians when they violate agreements.

But what is widely believed to have been the final blow to a two-state solution may in fact turn out to be the necessary condition for its eventual achievement. That condition is abandonment of the utterly wrongheaded idea that a Palestinian state can arise without forceful outside intervention. The international community has shown signs of exasperation with Israel's deceptions and stonewalling, and also with Washington's failure to demonstrate that there are consequences not only for Palestinian violations of agreements but for Israeli ones as well. The last thing many in the international community want is a resumption of predictably meaningless negotiations between Netanyahu and Abbas. Instead, they are focusing on forceful third-party intervention, a concept that is no longer taboo.

Ironically, it is Netanyahu who now insists on the resumption of peace talks. For him, a prolonged breakdown of talks risks exposing the irreversibility of the settlements, and therefore the loss of Israel's democratic character, and legitimizing outside intervention as the only alternative to an unstable and dangerous status quo. While the Obama

administration may be reluctant to support such initiatives, it may no longer wish to block them.

These are not fanciful fears. Israeli chiefs of military intelligence, the Shin Bet and other defense officials told Netanyahu's security cabinet on December 9 that the stalled peace process has led to a dangerous vacuum 'into which a number of different states are putting their own initiatives, none of which are in Israel's favor.' They stressed that 'the fact that the US has also reached a dead-end in its efforts only worsens the problem.'

If these fears are realized and the international community abandons a moribund peace process in favor of determined third-party initiatives, a two-state outcome may yet be possible. A recent proposal by the Swedish presidency of the European Union is perhaps the first indication of the international community's determination to react more meaningfully to Netanyahu's intransigence. The proposal, adopted by the EU's foreign ministers on December 8, reaffirmed an earlier declaration of the European Council that the EU would not recognize unilateral Israeli changes in the pre-1967 borders. The resolution also opposes Israeli measures to deny a prospective Palestinian state any presence in Jerusalem. The statement's endorsement of PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad's two-year institution-building initiative suggests a future willingness to act favorably on a Palestinian declaration of statehood following the initiative's projected completion. In her first pronouncement on the Israel-Palestine conflict as the EU's new high representative for foreign affairs and security policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton declared, 'We cannot and nor, I

doubt, can the region tolerate another round of fruitless negotiations.'

An imposed solution has risks, but these do not begin to compare with the risks of the conflict's unchecked continuation. Furthermore, since the adversaries are not being asked to accept anything they have not already committed themselves to in formal accords, the international community is not imposing its own ideas but insisting the parties live up to existing obligations. That kind of intervention, or 'imposition,' is hardly unprecedented; it is the daily fare of international diplomacy. It defines America's relations with allies and unfriendly countries alike.

It would not take extraordinary audacity for Obama to reaffirm the official position of every previous US administration--including that of George W. Bush--that no matter how desirable or necessary certain changes in the pre-1967 status may seem, they cannot be made unilaterally. Even Bush, celebrated in Israel as 'the best American president Israel ever had,' stated categorically that this inviolable principle applies even to the settlement blocs that Israel insists it will annex. Speaking of these blocs at a May 2005 press conference, Bush affirmed that 'changes to the 1949 armistice lines must be mutually agreed to,' a qualification largely ignored by Israeli governments (and by Bush himself). The next year Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was even more explicit. She stated that 'the president did say that at the time of final status, it will be necessary to take into account new realities on the ground that have changed since 1967, but under no circumstances...should anyone try and do that in a pre-emptive or

predetermined way, because these are issues for negotiation at final status.'

Of course, Obama should leave no doubt that it is inconceivable for the United States not to be fully responsive to Israel's genuine security needs, no matter how displeased it may be with a particular Israeli government's policies. But he must also leave no doubt that it is equally inconceivable he would abandon America's core values or compromise its strategic interests to keep Netanyahu's government in power, particularly when support for this government means supporting a regime that would permanently disenfranchise and dispossess the Palestinian people.

In short, Middle East peacemaking efforts will continue to fail, and the possibility of a two-state solution will disappear, if US policy continues to ignore developments on the ground in the occupied territories and within Israel, which now can be reversed only through outside intervention. President Obama is uniquely positioned to help Israel reclaim Jewish and democratic ideals on which the state was founded--if he does not continue 'politics as usual.' But was it not his promise to reject just such a politics that swept Obama into the presidency and captured the amazement and respect of the entire world?

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