

# The Other Israel

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## THE BETRAYAL OF HOPE

December 9 marked the fifth anniversary of the Intifada. During the preceding week, the Israeli media dealt with the topic extensively; several newspapers published Intifada supplements, giving interviews with politicians, with soldiers and settlers, as well as with prominent Palestinians. But the retrospective analyses of the past five years were soon replaced by dramatic, hour-by-hour reports of a massive new upsurge.

*During the month of December, we worked on issue 54, which was due to come out during the third week of that month. With the mass deportation of Palestinian activists, that issue, as we prepared it, became outdated overnight. Several articles had to be re-written, and many new ones were included. Nor could we undertake that work immediately: following the deportations, our entire staff was involved in mobilising protest actions. Nothing else seemed to matter. Only after a week were we able to return to our normal work.*

*At the time we go to print, the problem of the deportees' plight continues to overshadow the entire peace process. The analysis offered here is, of necessity, preliminary.*

The editorial board

The Israeli authorities expected trouble around the Intifada anniversary, and large military forces were put on alert; but they were not able to stem the tide as the Palestinian pent-up frustrations burst out. If anything, the soldiers' presence itself gave the riots more of a focus. Large-scale demonstrations, reminiscent of the Intifada's first months, broke out – particularly in the Gaza Strip. They went on and on; several demonstrators were shot to death and dozens wounded.

The television news – now less restricted than under the previous government – showed video shots of the heavy confrontations, including the beating up of a captured demonstrator by soldiers. (Such films are usually taken by Palestinian journalists living in the refugee camps.)

Simultaneously with the mass demonstrations, Palestinians staged a series of armed attacks on Israeli soldiers. The ambushes – termed “daring”

and “sophisticated” by Israeli army officers – left five Israeli soldiers dead within as many days. (In the whole of the previous five years, nineteen soldiers were killed in the Occupied Territories.)

At first, the Israeli right-wing had little success in using these attacks to whip up an anti-Arab frenzy; rather, the dominant mood was to question the usefulness of continued Israeli presence in the Gaza Strip – the poorest and most overcrowded part of the Occupied Territories, where Israeli soldiers face a duty more difficult, dangerous and demoralising than anywhere else. Indeed, More and more Israelis started to compare the Gaza situation with the hopeless guerilla war which Israel conducted in Lebanon ten years earlier (*see sep. article*). But the public atmosphere changed abruptly with a Palestinian attack of a different kind, which played into the nationalists' hands and precipitated a deep crisis.

At an early morning hour on December 13, armed members of the “ Hamas ” (Islamic Resistance) movement penetrated into the town of Lydda, at the heart of Israel, where they captured a member of Israel's paramilitary “ Border Guard ” – Master Sergeant Nissim Toledano, an obscure junior administrator whose name was soon to become known to the whole world. The kidnappers demanded the release of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the venerated Hamas leader, who is confined to a wheelchair, and is serving a life sentence in an Israeli prison.

The government did not make a serious attempt to establish a communications channel with the kidnappers; instead, a curfew was imposed over much of the Occupied Territories, and a massive manhunt was launched. Some 1600 Palestinians were detained within less than 24 hours. Among them were preachers, doctors, engineers, social workers and all lecturers of Gaza's Islamic University. The army had no information on the whereabouts of the kidnappers, or of other armed Hamas militants. Therefore, the crackdown was directed against the (hitherto tacitly tolerated) political wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement; also caught in the dragnet were many devoutly religious Palestinians who are not at all connected with that movement.

For several days the affair dominated the Israeli

media, to the exclusion of nearly anything else. Tensions mounted to a high peak, bursting out when the bound corpse of the kidnapped soldier was found.

The big daily papers whipped up the frenzy, with the banner headline *Murder in cold blood!* Normally-moderate politicians vied with each other in calling for revenge. Mobs, shouting *Death to the Arabs!* appeared on the streets of Lydda, one of the few places where Jews and Arabs lived on reasonably good terms over the past forty-four years.

Actually, the violence was far less widespread than on previous occurrences, such as the Bat-Yam riots of May 1992 (*TOI-52, p. 3-4*). Still, it was the first time that such a public atmosphere developed under the government of Rabin – whose election campaign centered on the promise of “restoring the security of daily life in Israel”, as the right-wing gleefully reiterated.

Moreover, on the same week another of Rabin’s elections promises was exposed as well – the promise to eliminate unemployment. With not a single job created as yet, the shrinking international arms market forced the Rabin government to lay off thousands of workers in the arms industry. (Plans to convert the factories to civilian uses were rejected out of hand.) While the cabinet deliberated how to revenge the killing of Toledano, a big crowd of furious workers demonstrated outside, shouting: *The Labor Party destroys our jobs! Rabin, go home!*

To regain popularity among Israelis, Rabin felt the need to undertake a very visible, very intimidating show of force against the Palestinians. He decided to revive the policy of deportations – and indeed, to implement it on a massive scale, far beyond anything attempted by any Israeli government since 1967.

By taking this decision, Rabin and his cabinet apparently succeeded in diverting the nationalist pressure upon the government. They did so at the price of undermining the already shaky moral foundations of the State of Israel, and further traumatizing the relations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Rabin’s *grand design* could have been expected to encounter strong opposition from the doves inside the government, and particularly from the Meretz ministers – representing a Left-Wing Zionist grouping with the preservation of human rights high among its declared principles. The Meretz ministers, however, gave their assent to the deportations even in advance

of the cabinet meeting. Their colossal betrayal of principles was later repudiated and condemned by their party’s institutions; the reasons why they did it will probably remain a source of controversy for years.

Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that Rabin succeeded quite easily in convincing the Meretz ministers – as well as most of the Labor “doves” – that a brutal act of some kind was needed for the government’s survival. The doves’ assent may seem a bit less strange, considering that already during the elections campaign they convinced themselves that they must support Rabin’s candidacy – because exactly Rabin’s record of brutality, as Defence Minister in the first years of the Intifada, made him the right leader to draw voters away from the Likud. Thus, at the moment of crisis, Rabin was able to demand that the doves help preserve his ferocious reputation. Moreover, Rabin seems to have threatened the Meretz ministers with bringing the right-wing Tzomet Party into the coalition, should Meretz oppose the deportations.

To their angry followers, the Meretz leaders explained that “deporting the Hamas extremists would strengthen the PLO, which wants peace”. (According to all observers, the actual result was the opposite.) They also claimed to have chosen deportations as the lesser evil, since the alternative would have been to give soldiers more authority to shoot Palestinians. But after the deportations, soldiers nevertheless became suddenly much more trigger-happy – and the protest of the Meretz ministers was not heard.

Most of the dovish Labor ministers followed the lead of their Meretz colleagues; the deportation was approved by the cabinet almost unanimously – with the single exception of Justice Minister Liba’i, who abstained. (Later he stated that he should have voted against.) Liba’i’s position reflected that of the State Prosecution establishment, which is traditionally opposed to deportations and which in previous years blocked several efforts in that field by the Likud government.

The law, as it stood till December 16, stipulated that a deportee must have the right to appeal, first to a military appeals committee, and should it reject his case – to the Supreme Court of Israel. This process almost invariably ended in the deportation being approved; but the government’s need to go through months-long judicial deliberations at least protected the Palestinians against abrupt overnight deportations.

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Moreover, since the state had to defend in court each deportation order separately, there was an effective barrier against indiscriminate mass deportations. All these limitations made the whole procedure worthless from Rabin's point of view; he wanted something which could be carried out on the spot.

In his additional capacity as Defence Minister, Rabin is the absolute ruler and single legislator of the Occupied Territories. With the cabinet's full backing, Rabin used this authority to promulgate new laws, which immediately went into force. These authorised the military authorities to carry out instant deportations, with appeal procedures taking place only after the deportation and in the deportee's absence. The only concession which Rabin made was to build into these instant deportations a time limitation of two years, after which the deportees could come back.

It was Rabin's intention that the Supreme Court – just like the public – would hear about this change of the law only after the army already completed deporting 415 Palestinians, against whom the new kind of deportation order had been issued. Therefore the military censorship was used, forbidding the Israeli press and electronic media to publish news items, editorials, commentaries or even cartoons hinting at the contents of the government decision; and the army went into a feverish effort to get the deportees across the Lebanese border before any judicial appeal could be lodged. In the hurry hundreds of prisoners were snatched – more or less at random – out of the Detention Centers, and loaded, bound and blindfolded, upon dozens of buses which set out northwards.

However, amidst all the hurry, the military authorities bungled many of the logistical details; the operation's timetable was not kept; and despite the heavy censorship, the news leaked to foreign journalists and was broadcast on Arab radio stations. It also got to the Jerusalem-based human rights organizations. The first to lodge an appeal, at a late night hour, was Adv. Lea Tzemel, a veteran defender of Palestinian prisoners. And after hurried consultations among its heads, the respected Association for Human Rights in Israel (ACRI) decided to take up what they knew would be a very controversial case. A temporary injunction was issued; the army had to stop the buses near the Lebanese border, and a special seven-judge panel convened at the unconventional hour of four (in the night).

While police arrested peace demonstrators who tried to enter the court building's lobby, a dramatic day-long session took place inside. The state was represented by Attorney-General Yosef Harish. It is extremely unusual for the Attorney-General to have to plead at court in person, but Harish had no choice: State Attorney Dorit Beynish – whose job it is – refused to take up defence of a procedure which she believed to be manifestly illegal.

The government used all possible means to overawe the court. The army Chief-of-Staff appeared before the court and warned the judges of "a total catastrophe", and of "rioting going out of control in the Territories", should the deportations not take place; Attorney-

General Harish followed with equally dire predictions of lynching mobs rampaging through Israeli cities, and a total breakdown of law and order, should the people's anger not be assuaged by the deportations. For his part, Prime Minister Rabin made a fiery speech on Israeli radio; ignoring all rules of *sub judice*, he called upon the judges to show "national responsibility" and warned of "grave dangers to state security" should the deportations not be carried through.

The massive pressure exerted by the government proved effective: five of the seven judges gave Rabin the desired green light to go ahead with the deportations, though the whole procedure sharply violated all precedents. Rabin got the loud praise of the nationalist opposition, and a hastily-conducted opinion poll, published on the following day, showed a staggering 91% of the Israeli Jewish population in support of the government decision.

So far, Rabin won, but it was not yet the end of the game.

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### The scapegoat

Following the deportations, ACRI (Association for Civil Rights in Israel) found itself the target of a quite vulgar campaign, initiated by the Prime Minister in person. During the fifteen years of Likud rule, human rights activists never experienced anything of the kind. Moreover, among Israeli human rights organizations, ACRI is the more cautious, more respectable one. Rabin defamed ACRI in a series of directly broadcast radio speeches: *All the troubles started when the "Association for Hamas Rights in Israel" appealed to the Supreme Court, giving the Lebanese time to block the border passes.* After this unequivocal signal, the ACRI Jerusalem offices were flooded with anonymous threatening letters and phone-calls.

At the Peace Now protest rally of December 26, Adv. Amnon Zichroni (ICIPP) who was one of the speakers, called upon the demonstrators to become all of them ACRI members.

You can support ACRI from abroad as well:  
**Protest letters to: Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin**  
*Hakiryia, Jerusalem;*  
**Letters (or money) in support to: ACRI**  
*P.O.Box 8273, Jerusalem 91082.*

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### The consequences

Rabin knew beforehand that the deportation would be condemned by the U.N. Security Council, with the support of the United States. But he was apparently correct in counting upon Washington to keep the condemnation verbal, and veto any hint of sanctions upon Israel. Indeed, the initial American condemnation of the mass deportation was in no way sharper than in cases when Israel deported five or ten Palestinians.

A key factor in Rabin's calculations was the interregnum at Washington, with the once formidable Bush-Baker team reduced to lame duck status, and the new Secretary of State Warren Christopher – whose reported devotion to human rights is a source of anxiety for the Israeli cabinet – not yet in.

Another predictable factor, from Rabin's point of view, was the outbreak of big riots in the Occupied Territories, once news of the deportations came out. Soldiers were told to *be alert and act firmly to put down any disturbances*. Rabin's orders were obeyed. During one afternoon hour on December 19, soldiers at Han-Una shot to death seven Palestinians, including a nine-year old girl. On the following days, the death toll continued to mount. Altogether, 23 Palestinians were killed in the month of December. (Later, Rabin claimed that the unit stationed at Han-Una had used "excessive force" and "would be replaced".)

### On a bus, or on a ship...

*Justice Minister David Liba'i was the single dissenter in the cabinet. Following the deportations he kept silent in public. But on January 5, he decided to speak out on Israeli Television.*

"In the past, the Supreme Court ruled that deportation from the Territories is permissible, because it is done according to the 1945 Emergency regulations, which were part of the legal system in the Territories when Israel conquered them in 1967. But the same Emergency Regulations provide every prospective deportee with the right to appeal.

According to the new regulations, the government has the right to take anybody – from the Territories or from Israel proper – put them on a bus, or on a ship, and deport them without checking if there is any basis for suspicion against them; without even checking their identity. Is this legal? That remains still to be seen."

The Prime Minister and his associates stated again and again their confident expectation that the Washington peace talks would resume in February, soon after the Clinton inauguration – in spite of the deportations. By then, Rabin reasoned, the deportees would be but a dim memory in the fast-changing Middle East. The Arab regimes – which themselves persecute Muslim militants – would return to the negotiating table after making some formal protests; and so would the PLO, whose big rival Hamas is.

Rabin may have been right with regard to the Arab states. In particular, there are increasing indications of an Israeli-Syrian understanding, possibly achieved at secret talks held in parallel with the official ones in Washington (*Hadashot*, 25.12.1992). And whatever the truth of such rumors, thus far Syria and the other Arab states seem reluctant to link resumption of the Washington talks with the deportees' fate.

While correctly estimating many of the factors, where the talks with the Palestinians are concerned Rabin made rather a miscalculation. He probably underestimated the deep emotional shock which the deportations would cause to the entire Palestinian people, regardless of divisions between political factions. The deportations re-opened a wound, a wound which never really healed: the wound of 1948, when the creation of Israel was accompanied by the massive uprooting of Palestinians from their homes.

The deportation of hundreds of Palestinians, visible on every television screen, was like a re-enactment of that tragedy; even the deportees' tent camp in no man's land looked very much like those where the 1948 refugees lived in their first years of exile.

Rabin said that the deportation was aimed to strike at the Hamas movement, and at nobody else. But even Hamas' most bitter Palestinian rivals share the fear that – after this precedent established by a supposedly "left-wing" government – there is nothing to prevent future Israeli governments from using the same arbitrary procedures for deporting Palestinians indiscriminately, in ever bigger numbers. Nor were Palestinians reassured by the Rabin government's assurances that the deportations are limited to two years only. In 1994, the Defence Minister might well use his same uncontested power to cancel that stipulation, "for security reasons".

Having earlier made a few half-hearted and ineffective "confidence-building" measures, the Rabin government more than nullified them by a big "confidence-destroying measure" which outraged all Palestinians – in the Occupied Territories, inside Israel itself, and in the Diaspora. Irrespective of political factions, Palestinians regard the deportees as victims and martyrs, which would make a resumption of the talks as if nothing happened incomprehensible for the Palestinian public. A member of the Palestinian negotiating team, quoted in *Hadashot*, stated: *If we go back to Washington after this, everybody will regard us as traitors – and they will be right!* (*Hadashot*, 17.12.1992).

The increased feeling of solidarity among Palestinians was expressed by a rapprochement between the PLO and Hamas, whose prestige in the Occupied Territories increased enormously as a result of the deportations. (The wily Arafat did, however, avoid giving in to Hamas' demand of making a total break with the peace process.)

Among the Palestinians holding Israeli citizenship, all political factions and personalities – including the Rabin government's two Arab deputy ministers – united in holding a one-day general strike in solidarity with the Hamas deportees and making unprecedented strong statements in support of the Intifada.

In planning the deportation, Rabin took for granted that Lebanon would absorb the deportees, as it did on previous occasions. But Israel had never before sent so many deportees across the border at once – and Lebanon is no longer the scene of total chaos, to which Israeli decision-makers got used in the past two decades. With Syrian backing, a fairly stable government was established in Beirut, headed by Rafik Hariri – a rich and ambitious businessman. Moreover, the Lebanese have their own trauma of 1948 – a year which brought a big wave of Palestinian refugees into their country, whose coming triggered the overturning of the traditional Lebanese demographic and political balance.

The Lebanese army's action in firmly refusing passage to the deportees was officially presented as

an expression of solidarity with the Palestinians. But behind this motive could be discerned an assertion of Lebanese sovereignty against both Israelis and Palestinians. Prime Minister Hariri's statement: *We will no longer be the dumping ground for Israel's garbage!* does not sound especially friendly towards Palestinians.

The deportees found themselves stuck in a makeshift tent camp in the middle of no man's land between the armies of two governments, both hostile to them and each seeking to shift responsibility for them to the other. As far as international law is concerned, it was the Lebanese who were in the right; one state may not deport people to the sovereign territory of another, without the consent of the latter's government. This point was argued eloquently by Adv. Avigdor Feldman, in a fresh appeal to the Supreme Court in Jerusalem; but the seven judges again chose to accept the Chief-of-Staff's version – which had it that “the deportees are in Lebanese territory, and Israel bears no responsibility for them.”

It was less than easy for Rabin to explain his case to international public opinion. Arguments about “the fight against terrorism and Islamic Fundamentalism” were powerless to counter the sight of the deportees in their snow-covered encampment, broadcast at Christmas time into every living room in the Western World. The Rabin government's international honeymoon seemed over.

Though most Israelis still support the deportations, cracks started to appear in the Rabin government's position, with the cabinet split down the middle on the issue of letting the Red Cross bring help to the deportees through Israel-held territory. This issue brought about the first open confrontation between Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres, Rabin's old rival who has kept quiet since the government was formed.

■ On December 29, Sephardi Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu declared himself in support of giving basic humanitarian relief to the deportees. *If they need clothes and blankets then we, the Jewish people – a people full of grace – must help them.* At a press conference held in Haifa, the Rabbi stated: *When we see a suffering person, we must help, whether or not the person is Jewish. We must help the deportees even if this help will be misinterpreted. If they lack food, we must give whatever they need.* Rabbi Eliyahu criticised the government for not consulting the Chief Rabbis before deciding on the deportations (*Ma'ariv*, 30.12.92).

The government was also forced to admit that ten of the Palestinians had been deported “by mistake”, and agree to their immediate return. But up to the time of writing they have not been able to actually come back: again, they were caught in the prestige struggle between the Lebanese and Israeli governments. The Israelis insisted that the returning deportees must return via a long and roundabout route, taking them through Lebanese territory. The Lebanese were equally determined not to admit any deportee into their territory, even for the few hours it would take to get back to the Israeli lines. Thus, the ten “reprieved”

deportees – including a 16-year old boy, whose freckled face appeared on innumerable television screens – continue, for the time being, to share their fellows' cold exile.

Meanwhile, the Meretz Ministers – desperately trying to re-establish their credibility among the party's rank-and-file – asked Rabin to open direct negotiations with the PLO. Rabin easily rebuffed this demand, by the three discredited ministers. He did, however, make some gestures at Meretz's request, such as canceling the intended demolition of a house in the Gaza Strip, and authorising the return home of a single Palestinian deported in 1970 – whom the security services pronounced to be harmless.

The call for direct talks with the PLO nevertheless gathered momentum. A poll conducted by Israeli Radio revealed that two-thirds of the Labor Party Knesset members support the opening of such talks – to the great discomfiture of Rabin, who seems determined to block any such move.

Even were the government to accept the idea of talks with the PLO, the Palestinian leadership would find it extremely difficult to proceed while the deportees remain at their tent camp in the barren mountains of Lebanon. Rasan El-Hatib, member of the Palestinian negotiating team, summed up the position when talking to a large gathering of Peace Now activists in Tel-Aviv (28.12.92):

*Until the deportations, we negotiators had the backing of a majority in the Occupied Territories. The opposition – including Hamas – accepted the legitimacy of our decision to go to Washington, even though they did not agree with that decision. The Israeli government's intervention in our internal debate, and their attempt to silence the Palestinian opposition by deporting its leaders, has upset the balance. We have lost our majority. Most Palestinians no longer believe that the Rabin government, which perpetrated this deportation, really wants peace. To convince them again, a very strong proof would be needed.*

The Editor

#### Postscript, 7.1.93.

As this goes into print, the Rabin government finds itself in an increasing predicament. Banner headlines in the Israeli press announce: *U.N. Secretary-General threatens sanctions.* Violent clashes in the Occupied Territories and the daring raids of Hamas continue, despite Rabin's assurances that “the deportations have dealt a blow to terrorism”. Such bodies as the Shabak Security Service and Military Intelligence try, via leaks to the press, to dissociate themselves from the decision to deport 415 Palestinians.

For all that, Rabin remains adamant in his refusal either to return the deportees, or to allow Red Cross relief convoys get to them. For the past two weeks, no public opinion polls were conducted to gauge how much support the deportation decision still enjoys in the Israeli public.

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## On the front line

by Yizhar Be'er

*Yizhar Be'er is the General Manager of the Jerusalem-based B'tzelem human rights organization. The following is translated from Hadashot, December 22.*

On the night of December 16, our suspicions that something very grave was about to happen became a near certainty. We, all members of the B'tzelem staff, gathered at the Jerusalem office to consider the situation and decide upon the steps to be taken. We knew already that things will never be the same again.

In the past, the most obvious step in such a situation would have been to call one of the Meretz Knesset Members, with the information that a mass deportation of Palestinians was going to take place within hours. On the night of December 16, this option was no longer available. The "human rights lobby" no longer existed. Gone was our wide backing, on which we had always relied to prevent the worst from happening.

In the post-elections euphoria, Knesset Member Dedi Zucker still announced: *The B'tzelem reports of yesterday are the government program of today.* We had the warm feeling that human rights and the rule of law were, at last, guaranteed.

Nevertheless, out of a healthy instinct of self-preservation, and in order to maintain our own responsibility and independence, B'tzelem did ask – a few months ago – for the resignation of the three Knesset Members on its board, who now accepted senior parliamentary or ministerial positions. Dedi Zucker, a founding father of B'tzelem, had accepted this separation in good grace.

It was in August 1988 that Zucker wrote a letter to Yitzhak Rabin, then Defence Minister: *I am sure that you do not realize how every deportation gives additional legitimacy to the idea of Transfer. (...) The deportation policy is both counterproductive and unjust!* This letter concerned a deportation of 27 Palestinians – a minor affair indeed, compared with the mass deportation which the Meretz ministers, with Zucker's backing, were to approve four years later.

■ The annual award of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) went this year to B'tzelem field worker Basam Id. Married and a father of eight, Basam Id lives in the Shuafat Refugee Camp. He has worked for B'tzelem since its foundation in the first year of the Intifada. In the ceremony on December 10, the words of the ACRI jury were read: *For several years, Basam Id stands at the front line of the human rights struggle. He is literally risking himself by investigating and reporting all complaints of human rights violations, never hesitating to challenge either the Israeli authorities or Palestinian organizations. The cases where Palestinians were hurt by Israelis, or where Palestinians were hurt by other Palestinians, such as the killing of people suspected of collaboration or of immoral behavior – he deals with them all.*

A week later, Basam Id coordinated the B'tzelem team researching on the deportation of the 415 Palestinians. On December 18, the team exposed the fact that the army did not publish the list of

deportees, leaving the families of all Palestinian detainees in anxiety; after B'tzelem threatened to appeal to the Supreme Court, the army published the list.

B'tzelem also collected information on Palestinians deported "by mistake". The authorities had to admit that in ten cases "the wrong people" had been deported, and announced that they could come back. On December 31, B'tzelem presented detailed evidence on several other similarly "mistaken" cases of deportation.

Contact: B'tzelem, 18 Keren Hayesod St., Jerusalem 92149; fax: 972.2.617946.

## The day after

The board of trustees of the International Center for Peace in the Middle East could hardly have held its annual meeting at a more inappropriate time. The day before, the Labor "doves" and Meretz leaders – who dominated the ICPME since its beginnings – had voted in the cabinet meeting in favor of the scandalous decision to deport 415 Islamic personalities. A few moments before the actual opening of the meeting, the radio announced that the Supreme Court had allowed the deportation to go ahead.

In the cold outside, protesters (among them members of TOI's editorial board) waited for ICPME's guest speaker... none other than Mr. Rabin; meanwhile, the Center started its proceedings in an acutely depressed mood.

All opening speakers – including Tel-Aviv Mayor, General (res.) Shlomo Lahat, a Likud member – denounced the deportation and called for negotiations with the PLO. Mr. Rabin, who was late because of his personal involvement in the deportation process, tried to justify this action, as well as his directives to the negotiating teams in Washington.

*When Rabin remarked that his proposals to the Palestinian delegation were quite different from those of his Likud predecessors, Uri Avnery (ICIPP) interrupted him with a mild request: "Would you please elaborate?"*

Rabin: *"That would take too much time. But I'll send you all the relevant documents."* He ostensibly asked his assistant to make a note. However, this promise, made in the presence of a hundred members and guests from Israel and abroad, has not been honoured – which is not really surprising, considering that these documents had not been shown even to members of the cabinet.

Mr. Rabin's speech did not change the mood of the meeting, which became even more pronounced the next morning, when three Palestinians from the Occupied Territories – including the journalist Ziad Abu-Ziad – described the shattering effect of the deportation on the "moderate" Palestinian camp. Dr. Mamdouh Aker from Ramallah proved convincingly that the Rabin proposals for autonomy are totally unacceptable, even as the most minimal basis for meaningful self-government.

After two days of discussion, ICPME adopted a set of resolutions, proposed by KM Yael Dayan, denouncing the deportation in strong terms and calling for negotiations with the PLO.

However, it stands to be seen whether ICPME will

be able to play an active role in the struggle for peace – against a government formed by its own best friends.

■ **IMUT** (Mental Health Workers for Peace) held, at December 18, its fourth annual conference under the title “Imagining Peace”. Part of the scheduled program was to have Israelis and Palestinians sharing their dreams. But, just before the conference started, dreams had turned into nightmares.

Only a few Palestinians arrived. The conference, which took place in a low mood, adopted a resolution condemning violence and deportation: *While acts of violence and murder arouse fears of extinction and helplessness, deportations arouse fears of total dispossession. We call upon the government to break through the cycle, cancel the deportations, and move forward to peace.*

## Rallying point

At the end of November, the **ICIPP** decided to hold a public meeting in Tel-Aviv, under the title “Crisis in the Peace Process”. An advertisement was placed in *Ha'aretz* and *Hadashot*, and invitations were sent by mail.

At the time, we already realised that the peace process was in serious trouble, and that the peace movement – in particular Meretz and Peace Now – did not provide an adequate answer. But we did not foresee how far things would escalate in just a few weeks' time. The meeting, scheduled for December 11, was intended to have a semi-academic format. With Haim Bar'am as chairperson, we featured two **ICIPP** speakers – Uri Avnery and Matti Peled – respectively expressing a relatively optimistic and a more pessimistic view of the peace process (*see the articles by Avnery and Peled in this issue*). In addition we invited Gadi Yatziv, a Meretz member (who, in the end, was pressured to cancel his participation) and Dr. Rehab Essawi of Bethlehem University, who gave a first-hand account of the Palestinian viewpoint.

At the time the meeting took place, the situation was fast escalating, and there was growing anxiety among peace-activists. As it turned out, the **ICIPP** meeting became a rallying point for many people we did not see before, who crowded into not so big a hall. We did hold the intended discussion on various aspects of the peace process; but the most pressing theme, which came out both in scheduled lectures and in questions and remarks from the audience, was dissatisfaction with the mainstream peace movement. In fact, the first contacts for what was afterwards to become the anti-deportation petition group started in this **ICIPP** meeting.

The Labor Party's newspaper *Davar* (13.12.1992) gave an extensive report on the meeting, entitled: *Criticism of Meretz at a meeting of left-wing activists in Tel-Aviv. and adding Meretz leaders accused of not keeping promises to their quarter of a million voters. Creation of a new movement contemplated.* A popular radio program then featured a debate between Uri Avnery of the **ICIPP** and Yossi Sarid of Meretz.

Avnery's strongest accusation was that Sarid – and the other Meretz leaders – were keeping silent in face of human rights violations. Nobody – perhaps not even Sarid himself – could have guessed that, within a bare three days, Sarid would be speaking very clearly and loudly, *in favor* of a major violation of human rights...

## The protest

by Adam Keller

It did not come as a total surprise. The word *Deportation* was in the air. But there was no clear information about what the cabinet decided at that closed session we heard about. Throughout that Wednesday I listened to the news every hour: nothing. When I went to sleep: still nothing. At that very time, the shameful caravan with its bound and blindfolded captives was already making its way northwards; and more or less at that same hour the human rights lawyers in Jerusalem started running to get an injunction.

The following morning we woke up into the new reality. We shared our panic in a series of frantic telephone calls; already, efforts were being made to organise something quickly. In front of the Supreme Court, some twenty demonstrators had been standing since the early morning, with old “**Stop the Deportation!**” posters hastily dug out of a cupboard in one of the activists' homes.

In Tel-Aviv, Rabin was due to speak at noon before the delegates to the Labor Party Convention. Some ten of us followed Hadash Knesset Member Tamar Gozanski, whose parliamentary immunity helped us get through the police barriers. We stood with our signs exactly where the Labor ministers alighted from their cars; some of the “doves” turned their heads aside. We could not get very close to Rabin himself, though; he was surrounded by bodyguards.

So it went on throughout the day: jumping from one place to another, vigils, small demonstrations – the dozens who could be mobilised at such short notice on a working day, and who were not stunned and paralysed by the magnitude of what was happening. During a freezing wait at the Plaza Hotel, another place where Rabin was also due to arrive (he didn't), we heard of the court's decision to let the deportations go through. We also heard the radio report on the protest at the Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem – the biggest on that day, about a hundred people.

Perhaps what shocked us more than anything else on that day was the vote of the Meretz ministers. It took some mental acrobacy to believe this of Shulamit Alloni – who but a few days earlier, on Human Rights Day, spoke to a gathering of school youth, asking them to *try to understand things from the point of view of a Palestinian youth*. It was in fact most shocking for Meretz members. The Meretz Youth were the first to react, greeting the ministers arriving at the Meretz headquarters with signs such as: *You have become Rabin's poodles!*

By the late evening, an emergency meeting was convened of the Council of Ratz – biggest of the

three parties constituting the Meretz Alliance. The result became front page news. *Hadashot* (18.12.92) opened with the headline: *A slap in the face to the Meretz ministers: the Ratz Council sharply condemns their vote for the deportation; by a large majority, a resolution was adopted, speaking of "a blunt violation of human rights"*.

We could see it all on television on that Friday evening: the shouting, the heated debates, the signs *Meretz supports Transfer!*, and KM Dedi Zucker sitting ashen-faced, burying his head in his hands. This televised report from Ratz came immediately after the first pictures of the deportees being loaded on trucks, which then disappeared in the dark. There was also an extensive interview with former Justice Minister Haim Zadok, who – in his calm, juridical, measured voice – tore the deportation decision to shreds, and expressed a contemptuous astonishment at the Meretz ministers' vote.

Tourism Minister Uzi Bar'am – a Labor "dove" who took upon himself to defend the deportations – sounded rather ridiculous when, with a cheerful face, he told the TV interviewer: 'I am for talking to the PLO, and the deportations will only help bring that about!'

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"Deportation is against the law, an immoral act. That has always been my opinion, and it remains so. Therefore, what has happened now is hurting me deeply."

*These words of the very old, respected former Supreme Court Judge Chaim Cohen, interviewed by Israeli television on December 22, added a strong voice to the anti-deportation minority.*

*A long-time opponent of deportation – having been a dissenter on that issue also in his time on the bench – Cohen remarked further:*

"Deportation is not less cruel than death. Socrates preferred to die, rather than to be exiled from Athens. They deport these people to a place where there is nothing for them, no roof, no food, nothing. I am no less sorry than the Prime Minister for the families that lost a beloved one. But by taking revenge on people, without trial, we adopt the standards of terrorism."

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Some Labor doves, however, did not share in this betrayal of principles. The weekend papers carried extensive quotations of KM Yael Dayan, who condemned "the hasty and stupid act, undertaken in response to the panic of street mobs". On the other hand, Peace Now published a watery text, entitled *Peace is the fitting punishment for the Hamas!* and carefully avoiding any condemnation of the deportation. (Four days later, at the meeting of the Tel-Aviv Peace Now branch, I heard the person who drafted that statement expressing regret about this initial hesitation.)

After reading the Peace Now statement of December 18, it seemed that any concerted action against the deportations must be undertaken by somebody else.

During the weekend several groups, at different parts of the country, started collecting signatures on different petitions against the deportations. At a hurried meeting in a Tel-Aviv apartment, some hours were spent on hammering out a common text; a lot of time was spent in debates over seemingly unimportant nuances, but after all a good petition was launched, which was published again and again in *Ha'aretz* – and thanks to financial help from solidarity groups could be published in other papers as well, with ever new signatures. By the end of December, more than two thousand people already paid to have their name in the paper, endorsing the call for the return of the deportees.

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### Bring the deportees back!

We, the undersigned, condemn the government for having perpetrated a mass deportation.

The deportations are a blatant violation of human rights, are contrary to Israeli and international law and offer no solution whatsoever to the problems of violence and terrorism.

The deportations sabotage the chances for peace in the Middle East.

**We call upon the government to respect human rights in the Occupied Territories, to put an end to the policy of collective punishment, to cancel the deportation orders and to bring the deportees back immediately.**

**Contact (also for contributions): Anti-Deportation Campaign, P.O.B. 41129, Tel-Aviv.**

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Another decision taken at the Tel-Aviv meeting was to obtain a police permit for a demonstration, to be held in Tel-Aviv on the following weekend. Peace Now was to be informed of that move, and invited to take over the demonstration – should that movement decide to change its position and take a firm stand against the deportations.

As we later found out, a fierce debate was going on inside Peace Now at the same time. After prolonged debates, Peace Now decided to adopt the slogan "No to deportation!" – and, in order not to appear too radical, also to express support for "the struggle against terrorism". On Sunday morning – three days after the deportations – Peace Now members picketed the Prime Minister's office, together with Meretz youths (who booed "their" ministers, on their arrival for the cabinet meeting).

Peace Now still had to decide about holding a major rally on the weekend. Such a demonstration would clearly be much smaller than in the times when Peace Now got the full backing of both Labor and Meretz, for demonstrations protesting human rights violations by a Likud government. Some Peace Now activists argued that "a small demonstration would be a show of weakness". Such arguments were ultimately rejected, the prevailing mood being: *In such a grave situation we must not remain silent, be we few or many!*

On December 22, a second Peace Now advertisement appeared, calling upon the public to join a torch-light march and a rally in Tel-Aviv.



## Peace Now

- No to deportations!
- Yes to talks with the PLO!

The deportation of hundreds of people who never stood trial, and therefore were never found guilty of any charges, constitutes a grave infringement of the basic principles of the State of Israel and of the basic freedom and rights of the individual.

The deportations are also a political mistake, and will in the long run bring severe damage upon Israel. The deportations will not prevent bloodshed, but will deepen the hatred and increase the state of war between the two peoples.

Already, the deportations have caused damage:

- uniting all Palestinians and all Arabs against Israel
- aborting the peace talks
- bringing sharp international criticism upon Israel.

The only way to fight terrorism is to isolate and weaken Hamas, precisely by making quick progress on the way to peace.

We call on the government of Israel:

- to bring the deportees back in order to have them stand trial
- to abstain in the future from collective punishment and from punishment without trial
- to start immediately talking to the PLO, in order to let the negotiations with the Palestinians progress.

Come and demonstrate with us on Saturday night. Share in our call upon the prime minister of Israel and his government:

- No to deportations!
- Yes to the war against terrorism!
- Yes to direct talks with the PLO and to making concessions for peace!

**Contact:** *Peace Now, P.O.B. 8159, Jerusalem 91081.*

Negotiations started between Peace Now and the petition organising committee (which, in its intense activity, never bothered to give itself a formal name). The petition committee agreed to give over the police permit, in return for its representative, poet Yitzchak La'or, being invited to speak at the rally. This was far from being a routine transaction. In fact, never before did Peace Now accept a speaker from a more radical Israeli group; but after seeing the text of La'or's speech, his participation was approved.

The week until the demonstration saw various new manifestations of protest: a student rally on the newly-built plaza in front of Tel-Aviv University; a well-attended vigil at the Defence Ministry in Tel-Aviv; a small demonstration by the Hadash Youth – planned two weeks previously as a protest against the transferist “Moledet” party, and hastily converted into a demonstration against the deportation “implemented by the Rabin government in the spirit of the Moledet ideology”.

At a popular TV talk show, the incomparable Prof. Yeshayahu Leibovitch – now ninety years old, and still going strong – lashed out at the Meretz ministers, calling them “a bundle of rags”, and for

good measure reiterated his call upon soldiers to refuse military service in the Occupied Territories, “now more than ever”.

Most opinions quoted in the press were critical; even commentators who initially supported the government now regarded the whole deportation operation as a fiasco. This assessment did not, however, penetrate very deep into the general population; also after a week, opinion polls showed an overwhelming majority of Jewish Israelis supporting a government measure which was praised by nearly all prominent politicians of the right and “left”.

The mood among Israel's Arab citizens, which constitute nearly 20% of the total population, was quite different. On December 22, the day of general strike proclaimed by their leadership, most of the Israeli Palestinians stayed away from their jobs.

The Arab Monitoring Committee – comprising Arab mayors, Knesset Members and heads of associations – organised other actions as well. A relief convoy, with food and blankets (collected in cooperation with the Jerusalem-based Rabbis for Human Rights) set out for the deportees' encampment – but was of course stopped at the Lebanese border crossing. The day after, an appeal was lodged at the Supreme Court, in order to let the supplies go through.

Another initiative was a solidarity visit to the deportees' families in Gaza – and to the families of Palestinians recently killed in confrontations with the army. The visit ended with a big rally, under the watchful eyes of nearby soldiers.

During the rally, an Israeli television camera caught KM Hashem Mahameed of Hadash saying: *The Palestinians should fight the occupation by all means – not only with stones!* The exact meaning of “all means” immediately became the subject of a controversy in the Israeli media and the Knesset. Mahameed refused to retract his Gaza statement: *Every oppressed people has the right to fight for its freedom.* He denied that he had meant armed struggle.

The right-wing KMs had found a new target. They succeeded, in the end, in removing Mahameed's parliamentary immunity, though in a narrow vote where some Labor hawks voted with the right-wing opposition.

Like KM Muhammad Miari in a comparable situation in 1985 (*TOI-18, p.6; TOI-28/29, p.6*), Mahameed intends to appeal to the Supreme Court. It remains to be seen whether once again the Supreme Court will overturn the Knesset majority's decision.

On December 24, a week after the deportation and two days before the scheduled Peace Now demonstration, the council of Mapam – another of the Meretz components – convened in Tel-Aviv. As in the Ratz Council, a week before, a resolution was adopted condemning the deportation. These condemnations reveal both the strength of the opposition inside Meretz, and its limitations. During the Mapam meeting, many leaflets and draft resolutions were distributed (they had a week to prepare them). Some

drafts were calling for the resignation of the party's leadership. The resolution adopted in the end did state that the vote of the Meretz ministers in the government was "erroneous, and not in accordance with the Meretz platform and the political principles of Mapam". However, Mapam's Minister Ya'ir Tzaban was not compelled to resign – even though he did not admit his mistake, but on the contrary repeated on television news his belief that the deportation was justified. The Mapam Council contented itself by requiring Tzaban, should a similar situation recur, to consult a ten-member Mapam Committee representing the spectrum of views inside the party.

Moreover, though the Council expressed its firm opposition to "any kind of collective punishment, such as massive deportations and deportations without trial", there was no majority for a call to return the deportees. As it turned out, many members took the position that "the deportations were a mistake – but returning the deportees now would be a second mistake".

For its part, the conservative leadership of the Mapam-affiliated kibbutz movement gave its support to the deportations, and invited Prime Minister Rabin as the guest of honor to its own conference, which took place on the following day. This ensured that – though individual kibbutzniks might still come to the weekend demonstration – there would definitely not arrive the organised busloads of kibbutz members, once the most faithful contingent at Peace Now demonstrations.

Friday and Saturday morning were quite rainy. All of us were anxiously listening to the weather forecasts (all the while telling each other *it should not matter; the deportees are day and night exposed to rain and cold*). Towards noon, the sky cleared – but about an hour before the demonstration, the rain started again. It was just a drizzle, not enough to douse our torches – but enough to give a handy excuse to those who were wavering anyway.

Gradually, people started to arrive at the march's gathering point – the steps of the Maxim Cinema. Members of the "petition group" arrived, with posters bearing the slogan *Return the deportees now!* Many of the arriving Peace Now supporters took up these, rather than the official placards:

*Deportation – No! Fighting Hamas terrorism – Yes!*

At a quarter past six we began to move out. It was not a big demonstration; our numbers could be measured in thousands – not the tens of thousands which one usually expects from Peace Now; certainly nothing resembling the by now mythical 400,000 of the September 1982 demonstration after Sabra and Shatila. We were walking against the current, against almost the entire political system – including our former allies. Yet, seeing and hearing it all – the long line of torches, moving across the night streets of Tel-Aviv; the rally outside the Tel-Aviv Cinematèque, with speakers defiantly reiterating the message: *Also when it is a Labor-Meretz government, we don't let deportation pass!*; the youths, who swiftly and efficiently expelled the right-wing provocateurs –

one could not help thinking: *The cause of peace may have suffered an enormous blow, but we shall overcome.*

## Don't count on us for the next elections!

*Under the above headline, the Meretz Youth announced its independence, in a letter distributed during several sessions of the councils of Mapam and Ratz, component parties of the Meretz Alliance.*

### *To the members of the Meretz organs*

The organization hitherto known as "Meretz Youth" informs all organs, Knesset Members and ministers of Meretz that it can no longer share in the responsibility for the actions of the party representatives, due to the latest developments. From now on, there is no connection between us and these representatives, just as there is no connection between the behaviour of these representatives and the principles on which they were elected.

While Meretz claimed to be *the force that brings about change*, today Meretz has turned into a force against change; a force that makes things worse, a force that brings about deportation.

Meretz Youth hereby announces the change of its name to **Meretz Program Youth**. We stand for the principles of Meretz and not for this bunch of *doormats* and *wretches*, into which the Meretz elected representatives have turned, so shortly after being elected.

Deportation is not humane, is not serving any purpose, is not Meretz.

Sincerely yours,

**Meretz Program Youth**

■ On January 3, Meretz ministers Aloni, Tzaban, and Rubinstein – who arrived at a public meeting organised by Meretz in Tel-Aviv – got a cold reception from the **Meretz Program Youth**. The youths, who were waiting on the steps of the Journalists House, greeted the ministers with shouts and signs calling them "chickens". Inside, the ministers were grilled by party activists, some of whom demanded they resign. The meeting often degenerated into shouting matches between supporters and opponents of the Meretz leadership. The main line of apology of the ministers was to claim that *they had also done many wonderful things*.

■ Student groups from the Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem universities, together with several of their lecturers, sent a letter to Prime Minister Rabin, drawing his attention to the fact that among the Palestinian deportees was the entire academic staff of the Islamic University of Gaza. In this way, the deportations *effectively destroyed the single academic institution in the Gaza Strip*. Thus, *they punish the entire population of the Gaza Strip, nearly a million people*.

The students call upon student organizations and academic institutions throughout the world to support the protests on behalf of the Gaza University.

■ On December 30, Prime Minister Rabin delivered a speech at the convention of the Labor Party's own Young Guard. His speech was interrupted by several delegates, who shouted: *Deportation is against the law!*

Rabin rounded on them, shouting back: *You are enemies of the party, internal enemies. Only enemies say such things!*

■ On January 5, a meeting of Jews and Arabs took place in the Arab town of Tira. In an effort to coordinate the protest actions against the deportation, various options for action were discussed: a big rally in Haifa (the city with the biggest mixed population); and the setting up in front of the Knesset building (in cold Jerusalem) of a solidarity tent, or tent camp, where some Jews and Arabs would be present day and night, emulating the conditions of the deportees (in cold Lebanon).

■ At a meeting held on January 6 in the Knesset House, Knesset Members from the Labor Party, Meretz and the Arab Democratic Party called upon the government to stop blocking Red Cross relief convoys. A brother of one of the deportees also participated in the meeting, thanking the Knesset Members for their willingness to help.

■ Some forty lawyers and jurists met in Tel-Aviv, on January 7, to discuss the legal struggle against the deportations. So far, about fifteen appeals have been filed, some calling for the return of all deportees, others dealing with individual cases or with the issue of the government's prohibition upon Red Cross convoys to the deportees.

It was decided not to lodge appeals to the special "Military Appeals Committees", which were established under the Deportation Decree. Appealing to them would concede the legality of that decree.

The participants also discussed ways of influencing the Israeli Bar Association to take a stand against the deportations.

■ Under heavy rain and near-zero temperatures, several hundreds of demonstrators marched through the center of Jerusalem, at noon on January 8.

The demonstration was swelled by participants in the annual **Women and Peace** conference, which took place that morning, and by the regulars of the weekly **Women in Black** vigil.

Bypassers, hurrying home with their Friday shoppings, stared in amazement at the marchers chanting loudly through the streets of downtown Jerusalem. *Peace - Yes! Deportations - No! / Return the deportees! Return the Territories! / Gazans, Gazans, don't lose hope! One day, this occupation will be over!*

■ This year's annual World Conference of Jewish Students, was held on the first week of January in the Negev town of Arad. The students invited, as one of the speakers, the Arab Israeli activist Ahmed Tibi, as an expert on the PLO. Tibi did not only tell them about his latest meetings with Yasser Arafat, but also expressed firm condemnation of the deportations.

Scheduled speakers representing the World Zionist Organization (which did not succeed in discouraging

the World Jewish Students from letting Tibi speak) expressed their condemnation of such a display of independence by canceling their participation in the students' conference.

## Hamas beyond stereotypes

by Pinchas Inbari

In the past, Israel attributed to the entire PLO the positions of its most radical groups. The mistake is now being repeated towards Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, towards Islamic Fundamentalism, or even towards Islam as a whole.

By such a mistake the positions of the Az Addin Al-Kasem Commando, which claimed responsibility for kidnapping and killing Sergeant Nissim Toledano, were attributed to the entire Hamas movement.

Historically, Hamas is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. In the Occupied Territories, the Muslim Brotherhood strongly opposed for years any confrontation with the Israeli authorities, fearing that armed struggle would jeopardise its network of religious and educational institutions. That was reason for the Israeli military authorities to covertly help the Brotherhood, hoping to turn it into a counterweight against the PLO.

Around 1985, the rival Islamic Jihad was founded, calling for armed struggle against Israel. Sheikh Ahmad Yassin was a dissenting voice in the Brotherhood's leadership; he sympathised with the aims of the Islamic Jihad, but was blocked by the other spiritual leaders. With the outbreak of the Intifada, however, Sheikh Yassin's militant position got new adherents, and the Muslim Brotherhood had to accept the formation of the Islamic Resistance Movement - Hamas.

Hamas took the position that "the whole of Palestine belongs to God" and carried out many attacks, including the kidnapping and killing of two Israeli soldiers. This led to its being outlawed and to the imprisonment of its founder, Sheikh Yassin.

Nevertheless, also Hamas made great efforts to preserve the network of Islamic institutions. And in the relatively calm period after the Madrid Conference, Hamas took an active role in elections to the Chambers of Commerce - elections held by a tacit understanding between Israel and the PLO.

It was also hinted that, should elections take place to a Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority, Hamas might participate in them - despite its present opposition to the peace talks. At least some circles in Hamas want to be represented in any Palestinian body to be elected - while others oppose the very idea of an interim solution, of which the elections would be part.

In an interview published shortly before the Toledano affair, Mahmud A-Zahar of Gaza - considered the unofficial spokesperson of Hamas - spoke for the first time in a positive way about the idea of Palestinian autonomy, as well as about the possibility of limiting the Jihad to a struggle against the occupation, rather than against Israel as such.

During the Toledano kidnapping, A-Zahar proposed a compromise: the kidnapped soldier would be released in return for the appointment of an international medical commission, which should examine the state of Sheikh Yassin's health and determine his ability to stand imprisonment. This proposal was ignored both by the Israeli government and by the kidnappers, who killed Toledano when the time limit they set for releasing Sheikh Yassin had expired. Moreover, the kidnappers also ignored an appeal by Sheikh Yassin himself, on Israeli television, to spare their captive.

As a result of the Toledano killing, many of the prominent Hamas pragmatists were deported or imprisoned, and the movement's religious and educational institutions were seriously disrupted. On the other hand, as deportees some of the pragmatists gained considerable exposure to the international media. Thus, the internal debate in Hamas is not ended, though it is now carried on under different conditions.

*(Adapted from two articles, published in Hadashot on December 17 and 30.)*

## Dialogue in crisis

Over the last months of 1992, contacts between Israelis and Palestinians were becoming fashionable. Israeli papers were outbidding each other in seeking interviews with PLO leaders – with *Yediot Aharonot* (Israel's biggest) publishing an interview with Yasser Arafat himself over three pages of its weekend edition (27.11.1992). In such interviews, as well as in messages transmitted through Israeli Knesset Members, Arafat reiterated his call for a direct face-to-face meeting with Prime Minister Rabin.

The law forbidding meetings with the PLO, even though still on the books, ceased to be enforced; the Labor majority on the Knesset House Committee rejected a proposal to remove the immunity of four Knesset Members who had met with PLO leaders. Numerous meetings between Israelis and Palestinians occurred – in Israel, in the Occupied Territories and abroad – to discuss various aspects of the peace process; and meanwhile relations of understanding and friendship were built up.

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*The guests at the wedding of Shai Dori, son of peace activist Latif Dori, were surprised by a large bouquet of flowers crowned by a white dove of peace that was accompanied by the greeting: To the Dori family and the young couple, a thousand greetings from the President of Palestine and Mrs. Arafat.*

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Initially, the fact that many Israeli veterans of the dialogue had become involved with the new government was regarded positively. The borderline between unofficial dialogue and official negotiations became blurred. Knesset Member Yael Dayan was part of the Israeli government's delegation to the U.N. General Assembly; with the tacit approval of Foreign Minister Peres, who headed the Israeli delegation, Dayan

maintained unofficial contacts with the Palestinian delegation – many of whose members were her old friends.

As the negotiations faltered and repression in the Occupied Territories intensified, the Palestinians discovered the obverse side of their Israeli friends' involved in government. On November 18, Meretz Knesset Member Dedi Zucker visited the Palestinian town of Beit Sahur, invited by the **Center for Rapprochement**. It turned out that Zucker – a founder of the B'tzelem Human Rights Organization – had become an apologist for the new government's human rights' violations. A newspaper report of the meeting was entitled "Israeli-Palestinian forum holds dialogue, but words fail to bridge the credibility gap" (*Jerusalem Post*, 20.11.1992).

Nevertheless, on November 28 the Palestinian negotiating team held a cordial meeting with the Meretz ministers and Knesset Members, at the Tel-Aviv house of one of them, Yossi Sarid. On the following days, the meeting was frequently mentioned by the Israeli press as the newest communications channel of the Israeli-Palestinian "smart set".

At that time, the reluctant Prime Minister Rabin gave in to the pressure of the doves: he authorised the presentation of the bill to legalise meetings with the PLO. Its passage was to be, in fact, more of a political than a legal act – since in any case the police ceased to enforce the prohibition. However, the bill's passage of its first parliamentary reading, on December 1, was more rough than could be expected of a bill presented by the Justice Minister on behalf of the government. The Prime Minister did not show up for the vote; neither did other Labor hawks. The bill passed only by a slender majority of 37 to 36, and went into committee.

On December 17, Palestinian leaders reacted with shock and disbelief to the news that the Meretz ministers gave full backing to the deportations. To add insult to injury, the Meretz leadership claimed that *the deportations would serve the PLO by eliminating the Palestinian opposition*. The PLO and the East Jerusalem Palestinian leadership announced the severance of contacts with "Our former friends from Meretz" – as Hanan Ashrawi, spokesperson of the Palestinian negotiating team, called them.

It will take a long time and much effort to repair the damage caused to all Israeli-Palestinian dialogue by the Meretz leaders' act of betrayal.

■ At the end of November, 15 Peace Now youths and 15 Palestinians from the Occupied Territories were invited by the Austrian government. Part of the program was a visit to the site of the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. Some Israeli participants were hesitant and some Palestinians had doubts, but the visit took place.

Oren Greenspan, one of the Israelis, told *Ha'aretz*: *Our guide was an old Communist, a former inmate of the camp. When we saw the barracks, the torture instruments, the gas chambers, most of us – Jews and Palestinians alike – couldn't help crying; and though*

*most of us are not religious, we prayed together – in English. One of the Palestinians took a book from his bag, and read aloud a story about Auschwitz.*

(Ha'aretz, 4.12.92).

■ During the first week of November, a remarkable meeting took place in London, at the initiative of the Jerusalem-based **Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information**. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss "Internal security and the role of a Palestinian police force in the interim period" – an issue which any interim agreement, to be workable, must address.

IPCRI succeeded in bringing together Israelis and Palestinians who, in one way or another, could be considered experts in this field. From the Israeli side, there came four academicians, two of whom were retired senior military officers, and the other two – former operatives of the Mossad Intelligence Service. Though the four came in their personal capacity, they did it with the knowledge of the authorities, to which they also reported in full about the London meeting.

From the Palestinian side, there were activists from both the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian Diaspora (the Israeli participants intervened to obtain an exit visa for one of the Palestinians). One of the Palestinians was a senior officer of the PLO's Tunis-based Intelligence Apparatus – a man whose attitude was described by the Israeli participants as "professional and businesslike".

The most detailed account was published by the Paris *Canard Enchaîné*, on December 16 (and received little attention, because on that day the Rabin government made its notorious deportation decision). According to this source, the participants discussed details of a possible agreement, by which the Palestinian police would be trained by France; Israel would agree to the Palestinian police including several hundred Diaspora Palestinians with "experience in security matters"; and in return, the Palestinians would agree that also in the interim period of Palestinian Self-Rule, the Israeli army will be in charge of the Israeli settlers' security. *Ha'aretz*, which published earlier (10.11.92) a less detailed account, also mentioned the idea of mixed courts, with Israeli, Palestinian and mutually-acceptable neutral judges, to rule in criminal and civil cases between Israelis and Palestinians.

The IPCRI Jerusalem office confirmed to TOI that the meeting did take place, but declined to give more details. Additional meetings seem to be planned.

**A brochure on the Palestinian police force is available from: IPCRI, P.O.Box 51358, East Jerusalem 91513; fax: 972-2-274383.**

■ In the beginning of December, about a hundred water experts – among them 25 Israelis, 25 Palestinians (including PLO representatives) and participants from other countries – met in Zürich for a four-day conference, to discuss the problems of sharing the Middle East's scarce water sources. The conference was organized by two Jerusalem-based institutions – the Hebrew University's Truman Institute, and the Palestinian Institute for Strategic Studies.

(*Jerusalem Post*, 16.12.92)

## December 9 – five years of Intifada

■ On Wednesday December 9, about a thousand Jewish and Arab Hadash supporters marched through the streets of downtown Haifa. They carried torches and banners calling for negotiations with the PLO. At a rally in the Arab Nisnas neighborhood, one of the speakers was Yusuf Mustafa Abu-Shara, a worker from Gaza whose 12-year old son was killed a week before. He said: *I was working in Israel when soldiers shot my son. I have lost what was most dear to me. People expect that now I want to have revenge. But revenge is not what I want. I wish that there would already be peace; that no more children will die.* (Zuhaderech, 16.12.92).

Contact: Hadash, POB 26205, Tel-Aviv 61261

■ On the same day, fifty members of the **Meretz Youth** held a vigil at the entry checkpoint to the Gaza Strip. Their sign *After five years of Intifada, Israelis still waiting for Rabin* was a reference to the Labor Party's election slogan. (*A week later these same youths would break away from Meretz.*) Other slogans protested against the "Special Units", whose special task is to hunt "wanted" Palestinians.

Other members of **Meretz Youth and Peace Now Youth** held similar vigils at Haifa and Herzliya.

■ At the Haifa, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem universities, vigils took place, organised by chapters of the **Jewish-Arab Campus** movement, in coordination with the **Arab Students' Committees**. There were confrontations with right-wing students, which were particularly violent in Jerusalem; there, a fist-fight broke out when the nationalists attempted to put out candles lighted to commemorate the Intifada victims. University security guards called in the police, which detained (of course) one Arab student.

In the Haifa University, Arab students were forbidden to distribute a leaflet, because of the university's legal adviser's claim that *expressions of identification with the Intifada are against the law.*

■ The following day, December 10: International Human Rights Day. In Jerusalem, university security guards confiscated and tore up brochures distributed by **Meretz Students**. Because of their "distributing political material on Campus without permit" the university authorities even suspended the activity of the **Meretz Students**. The *corpus delicti* turned out to be the official material published for this day by the Education Ministry...

## Soldiers' tales from Gaza

On Friday, December 4, reporter Yehuda Kaveh of the Israeli Television News brought a series of interviews with discharged conscripts, who spoke frankly about their experiences in Gaza. Similar interviews already appeared in the printed press (though mostly in papers with limited circulation). This was the first time television broke the taboo on this subject. On the following Monday, *Hadashot*, published the full text of the interviews, from which the following excerpt was made.

**Negev Achi-Miryam:** "The people in the Casbah were throwing big stones from the roofs. I sent several reservists into the alley as a decoy. I saw two figures on the roof with stones, and I shot them. Afterwards, when the guys heard about it, many came to congratulate me and slap my shoulder: *So, you have at last become a real killer. You can already mark two notches on the butt of your rifle.* But I thought they were fourteen years old, both of them..."

**Ran Elam:** "I am now playing the guitar in a rock band, it all seems far away, like a different world. People throw stones. You home in on one of them and chase him. A whole platoon is surrounding him, with very strong motivation. He is resisting, cursing, spitting; you silence him by hitting him in the face. You feel like beating him to the end, like killing him, because you had to chase him and his friends for ten hours already. You have a very strong feeling that you are on a vital national mission, to preserve the State of Israel, the whole Zionist Project. The Zionist Project! I want to tell you something: if chasing Palestinian children in Gaza and silencing them by hitting them in the face is the Zionist Project, then to hell with the Zionist Project!"

*Another discharged soldier asked to remain anonymous, and was shown on screen from the back:*

"I was a guard at the Detention Center on the shore of Gaza. One night the Border Guards and Givati Brigade people brought in a car full of children. I saw them from a distance; at first I thought they were unloading potato sacks. I asked one of the Givati soldiers what happened and he said: *We taught them not to throw stones again. Their mothers won't recognise them now.* Some of the children were stirring up, they were pleading and shivering with fear and cold. It was more than a year ago, but still I wake up and see it, and hear the crying and screaming from the Interrogation Ward."

*Publication of the soldiers' revelations marked the prelude to the escalating bloodshed around the Intifada anniversary, claiming both Israeli and Palestinian lives. The following monologue by a reserve soldier identified by his first name, Eitan, was published in Hadashot on December 11 – a few days after three soldiers of Eitan's unit run with their jeep into an ambush and got killed.*

"I have only one purpose, and that is to get out of here alive. I feel that they don't give us the least security. There are areas which the army does not enter at all, day or night. The orders are: *too dangerous, don't enter.* I think the orders should be different: we should go in there and whenever we see somebody with a gun we should shoot first. Aren't we soldiers? Isn't this war? For years, this was just an Intifada of a civilian population, rebelling with stones. It is not like that any more. I am afraid. I don't think there is anybody here who isn't.

I was a conscript in Lebanon, and I also did reserve service there, and now we have the same feeling here in the Gaza Strip. We were in Gaza four years ago and it was not like it is now. A year ago it started, but now it is much worse. We are patrolling in jeeps and light

cars, which are protected against stones – but they don't protect us against shooting. That is exactly how it developed in Lebanon. At first, after we came there in 1982, we were hitchhiking and traveling in civilian cars. Then, we started going home on trucks with our guns ready, and in the end – we were transported in armoured cars, and even that was not without danger.

It is going to be exactly the same here. There are armed squads going around, and you never know where it will come from. You are looking at every house you pass, thinking "Are they hiding there to shoot me?" And it doesn't make much of a difference how alert you are. At the minute when something happens you have only a limited chance. That's how it happened to those three guys who got killed in the jeep.

I consider refusing to serve in Gaza, next time. Once, such a possibility was unthinkable for me. It was clear that I would do my duty as a reservist, that there is no choice. But now, I am going to refuse. I prefer to sit in prison, rather than die here for nothing. It is clear that the government intends to give up Gaza anyway. Everything here is temporary. But meanwhile they continue to keep us here."

*Forty soldiers (out of forty-four) of the same reserve unit signed a petition to Prime Minister/Defence Minister Rabin.*

"We have become moving targets, with timing, initiative and daring all on the side of the terrorists. We ask you, Mr. Prime Minister, to take a clear decision now regarding the definite political solution – and the military means to be used in the meantime."

■ On December 29, the 35-year old Reserve Lieutenant Yuval Lotem, of Kfar Shmaryahu, told his commanding officer of his refusal to participate in acts of oppression, and was sentenced to 28 days.

Lotem's unit was due to be stationed in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. In the preceding week, eleven Palestinians were killed there by the army, including two children.

Lotem is the 171st imprisoned refuser since the Intifada broke out. Including Lotem, forty-two of them were officers.

**Letters of solidarity to: Lieutenant Yuval Lotem (reservist refuser), Military Postal Code 03734, Israeli Defence Forces;**

**Copies to: Yesh Gvul, P.O.B. 6953, Jerusalem 91068.**

■ During the funeral of the 23-year old Sergeant Udi Zamir, the Mayor of Rehovot – Zamir's hometown – cried out: "I call upon the government to pull out of the Gaza Strip. That is not our country. Why do young people like Udi have to die there? Stop this bloodbath!" (*Hadashot*, 9.12.92).

*The demand for withdrawal from Gaza is quite popular, and is periodically taken up by Israeli politicians of both two big parties. The last such proposal came from Health Minister Haim Ramon, in the 'hot days' of early December. But any serious discussion of such proposals ends up with the conclusion that a solution for Gaza alone is not viable.*

## 'Special Units' campaign

by Hanoeh Livneh

On October 29, the Yesh Gvul movement published a brochure on the Israeli Army's Special Units, whose members dress in Arab clothes while carrying out their manhunt against "wanted" Palestinians. It reproduced press reports and commentaries on these controversial units, plus excerpts from the reports of human rights organizations on their lethal operations, and testimonies by discharged soldiers who had themselves served in these units. The Israeli media gave much attention to the pamphlet's publication, not in the last place because Yesh Gvul's announced its intention to distribute it among highschool seniors, and call upon them not to volunteer for these units.

The IDF spokesperson felt obliged to make an official response, accusing Yesh Gvul of spreading "inaccurate information". Knesset Members from the right asked the Attorney-General to investigate the brochure, to determine whether its publication constitutes "incitement to mutiny". The KMs also registered a complaint with the police. However, it soon turned out that there is nothing illegal in calling upon future conscripts not to volunteer for a special kind of service, as long as the army leaves taking this duty upon themselves to the soldiers' free choice.

Moreover, though Israeli law forbids political activity inside schools, there was nothing to prevent the Yesh Gvul activists from standing outside the school gates and distributing the brochures to the entering pupils.

The week following the brochure's publication saw an enormous number of responses and articles from the entire political spectrum, and the brochure was a daily item on the TV evening news. The right-wing also attacked Education Minister Shulamit Alloni for having encouraged Yesh Gvul, since in the past she herself spoke out against the existence of the army's Special Units. Figures from the left defended the right of Yesh Gvul to distribute the brochure, whether or not its content was acceptable to them.

On November 9, Yesh Gvul members were invited to the Knesset Education Committee for a discussion on "politics in the schoolyard". KM Avraham Burg (Labor), the chairperson of the committee, said that it would be best for the schools to themselves invite Yesh Gvul activists - as well as representatives of other controversial views - and let them speak in an organized way.

Following the enormous publicity, many school principals did invite Yesh Gvul representatives to speak to their pupils, alone or in confrontation with opponents of "conscientious refusal".

A representative of Yesh Gvul was invited to the most popular interview show on television, hosted by Dan Shilon on Channel 2 - with some two million viewers. During the program, a Likud supporter ripped a copy of the brochure in front of the cameras. As a direct result of the television appearance and the ripping performance, the demand for the brochure among youths rose dramatically, and Yesh Gvul had to print a second, larger edition.

Meanwhile, Yesh Gvul continued to distribute the brochure outside highschools, mainly in the big cities. In Jerusalem, armed members of the racist Kach movement attacked Yesh Gvul activists. Three of the Yesh Gvul people had to go to hospital for treatment, and one of the racist leaders was later arrested by the police. On the following week, Yesh Gvul members, in greater numbers, arrived at the same school - but the racists did not show up again.

To start with, Yesh Gvul did not know how much effect the campaign was actually having on recruitment to the Special Units. After two months, the information was provided, by no other than the commander of one off these units. He confirmed that *since last November, when Yesh Gvul started spreading its brochure, the number of volunteers for the Special Units has fallen drastically* (Israeli radio, 9.1.93). Soldiers of the unit, also interviewed on the radio, said they feel demoralised, since *the state is sending us to do a hard and dangerous job, but our friends regard us as criminals and murderers*.

Several new facts regarding the Special Units appeared in the press while Yesh Gvul was preparing the brochure's third edition.

1) A Special Unit opened fire on a group of children throwing stones near Ramallah - a 12-year old boy was killed.

2) The former commanding officer of "Shimshon" (name of the Special Unit operating in Gaza) was convicted of issuing illegal standing orders, which led to a Palestinian youth being shot to death while writing graffiti. The officer was sentenced to a reduction in rank.

3) Near Jenin on the West Bank, paratroopers mistakenly opened fire on the soldiers of a Special Unit. The two units exchanged fire for several minutes. It was not the first time (*see TOI-53*) that the disguise method backfired. It was due to pure luck that this time nobody got killed.

Yesh Gvul intends to reach all schools in Israel until August 1993.

**A summary in English of the brochure can be obtained from: Yesh Gvul, P.O.Box 6953, Jerusalem 91068; phone: 972.3.434171**

*From the preface to the Special Units brochure:*

There are "legal" acts which, their "legality" notwithstanding, cannot be justified. A "vigorous and merciless" manhunt is one such "legal" act. Jewish folklore says of such deeds that "they might be kosher, but they stink all the same".

There are "legal" acts which decent people don't commit. There are units to which a decent guy does not volunteer.

■ Every Thursday, since the beginning of the Intifada, members of **Dai Lakibush** (Down with the Occupation) stand with their signs in the center of Tel-Aviv (*see TOI-49, p.7*). Several times, the vigil was harassed by municipal inspectors, who forbade the distribution of leaflets, under a municipal by-law against littering.

Moshe Goldschlager (68), the vigil organiser, was

prosecuted for breaking that by-law. He – as well as several activists of other groups who encountered the same problem – approached the Association for Civil Rights. Asked by ACRI to intervene, the Attorney-General informed the Tel-Aviv municipality, on November 12, that the by-law is invalid. Even the wish to keep the streets clean gives municipalities no authority to infringe the freedom of speech.

ACRI also foiled an attempt by the municipal inspectors to forbid the weekly *Yesh Gvul* vigil. In that case, the pretext was that the vigil's three-meter long banners constitute "advertisement", which requires a special permit.

■ On November 26, the state informed the Supreme Court that hundreds of spouses of Occupied Territories inhabitants, who were threatened with expulsion as "aliens", will be allowed to stay. Thus was crowned with success a struggle lasting two years, conducted with the help of five Israeli and international human rights organizations.

The source of the problem is the Israeli authorities' refusal to grant right of residence, as an inherent right, to spouses of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. The Palestinians themselves are treated as a kind of "foreign residents", and their spouses from abroad – many from the Palestinian diaspora – are classified as mere "visitors", liable to be expelled after six months. Once before, in June 1990, hundreds of appeals reached the Supreme Court, and the state allowed those who entered the Territories until then to stay. This pattern was now repeated – the permit to stay was given only to family members who entered the territories until August 1992. Thus, the human rights organizations expect that new appeals will have to be made again and again, until something basic changes...

**Contact:** *Center for the Defence of the Individual, 2 Abu Obeidah St., East Jerusalem; phone: 972-2-283555.*

■ At the end of November, the Peace Now Settlement Watch Committee presented its latest report, entitled "The real map". The result of half a year's intensive research, the report presents a demographic and geographic analysis of the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The report comes to the conclusion that decades-long efforts by successive Israeli governments failed to make a decisive shift of the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs in the Occupied Territories – with Israeli settlers still comprising only 6% of the total population. The report then goes on to analyse in detail the grossly discriminatory system whereby nearly all government spending in the Territories goes to the settlers, and where only 6% of the land is available for 94% of the population – for the Palestinians; the rest is either officially reserved for the use of settlers, or has a status prohibiting or severely limiting any Palestinian construction.

The survey bears direct relevance to the Washington talks, where the Rabin government offered the Palestinians autonomy over the same 6% of the territory, which would have them live in a series of narrow, non-viable enclaves cut off from each other.

The report in Hebrew and English – with a detailed map – is available from: *Peace Now, POB 8159, Jerusalem 91081; fax: 972.2.664716.*

## Ramiya update

On October 14, a new stage started in the two-year struggle of the unrecognized Bedouin village of Ramiya; all hundred inhabitants received a letter from the bailiff's office, ordering them to vacate their homes and lands within 20 days, so that the government plan, to incorporate the area in the Jewish town of Karmiel and build there housing for Russian immigrants, could be implemented.

Arab and Jewish supporters of Ramiya responded by holding a large public meeting at the village on October 18, where a series of protest actions – in Israel and abroad – were planned.

Meanwhile, negotiations with the government were opened. For the first time, government officials conceded the possibility that the Ramiyans could stay as part of Karmiel, though not necessarily in the place where they now live. They also promised not to implement the demolition orders, as long as negotiations continue. In return, the government demanded that all public protest actions be suspended.

The negotiations, however, got stuck on November 23. Mr Benny Shiloh of the Prime Minister's Office proposed that the Ramiya residents receive 18 lots (one per family) from the lands of Carmiel and will receive monetary compensation from the Israeli Lands Authority for their confiscated lands.

The Ramiya residents rejected this proposal on the grounds that it fails to take into account the future needs of the village's young people and children. They asked instead, that the number of lots equal the number of persons in the village, with a supplemental lot of land for public useage and further, that these be lots from the lands which they own. The villagers indicated that they are willing to give up the remainder.

Mr. Shiloh rejected the Ramiya proposal and the meeting ended in an ugly tone.

The Ramiya residents own about 100 dunams (25 acres). What their representatives demanded amounts to half of this (each lot is half a dunam), which does not seem to be an unreasonable demand at all. But the claims of the Ramiyans are not corroborated by the Israeli legal system – with its record of dispossessing Arab citizens. The only hope that the Ramiyans will get any kind of fair treatment is that public pressure – and not the least from abroad – will continue. Therefore, we call upon our readers to maintain their inquisitive correspondence.

### Letters to:

*Mr. Benny Shiloh, Prime Minister's Office, Hakiryia, Jerusalem; fax: 972.2.664838;*

*and/or: to the Israeli Embassy in your country.*

### Copies to:

*The Ramiya Solidarity Committee, POB 1575, Jerusalem 91094; fax: 972.2.251614.*

**N.B.:** Copies of answers from the authorities would also be appreciated.



## Tour in Germany

by Adam Keller

The German Peace Society (Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft) is one of the world's oldest peace movements. Having been founded in 1892, the DFG passed through an eventful career, including persecution and exile during the Nazi period. To mark its hundredth anniversary, the DFG decided to invite ten peace activists from different countries to tour Germany. I was invited from Israel, together with Nabila Espanyoli – who is active in the Haifa Women in Black as an Arab Israeli citizen.

Other participants were two activists from the Belgrade-based Anti-War Center, which organised mass demonstrations against the fratricidal Yugoslav war; a Native American former U.S. soldier, who underwent imprisonment for refusal to participate in the Gulf War; a representative of the South African End Conscription Campaign; and a 71-year old German who had deserted from the Wehrmacht in 1942 and barely avoided execution.

The initial meeting, on November 1 at Frankfurt, gave an opportunity to compare the typically Israeli experience of selective refusal – opposing military service in the Occupied Territories – with the total refusal of military service which is more common in other countries. Many similarities were found between the daily routine of working inside the Israeli Jewish population, and that of working among South African whites. It also turned out (to the surprise of Nabila Espanyoli as well as mine) that a Women in Black movement is holding regular vigils in various parts of the former Yugoslavia – based on an Italian example modeled by the Israeli one (which was itself inspired by Latin American groups...).

After the Frankfurt meeting, the international participants dispersed on tours throughout Germany. The DFG made for me a rather exhausting program, with several daily public appearances at big German cities as well as in smaller towns: Berlin, Stuttgart, Marburg, Wiesbaden, Vechta, Minden, Nurtlingen, Bad Oldesloe, Buxtehude... I spoke in public meetings of the DFG branches and other peace groups, I appeared for church groups, in highschools and at press conferences. I met with mayors and town councillors as well as with representatives of Jewish and Turkish communities.

The intention had been to let me speak on Middle Eastern and Israeli affairs, with special attention for my personal experience in Israeli military prisons. But as a Jew from Israel I was inevitably drawn into commenting on the current wave of racist violence and antisemitic manifestations in Germany. I participated in several anti-racist demonstrations. Having been involved in the struggle against racism in the Israeli society, I again and again declared my solidarity with all those, worldwide, who struggle against racism in their own societies. In particular, the Germans who confront racism in Germany deserve and need that solidarity.

*On his return, Keller was interviewed by some newspapers, and on Israeli radio, about 'the other Germans' he met.*

■ In the beginning of December, racism and antisemitism in Germany had become a central theme in the Israeli media. In Tel-Aviv a number of young left-wingers formed a new group: Anti-Fascist Action. They want "to stand up against racism in Israel and in Europe, with force if need be". One of their members was already arrested after a confrontation with right-wingers demonstrating in Tel-Aviv.  
**Contact:** *Anti Fascist Action, POB 26480, Tel-Aviv 61263*

## Pay now, get nothing later

*The following is based on an article by Rayna Moss and Chaia Amir.*

According to a government resolution of 1970, aimed at equalizing employers' expenses for Israeli and Palestinian labor, Israelis and Palestinians pay the same percentage for National Insurance. Israelis know that they will benefit from it in case they will be unemployed, disabled, or too old to work.

Palestinians who have been employed in Israel do not receive unemployment benefits or old-age allocations, even if they have worked for over twenty years. Of the 12% which is deducted from their salary for National Insurance, only one percent goes to the National Insurance Institute to cover them in case of work injury or employers' bankruptcy. The remaining 11% goes into the treasury, and is used in Israel, to serve Israeli needs. A sum of approximately NIS 1,000,000,000 has been deducted from the wages of Palestinians since 1970.

During November 1992, the Tel-Aviv-based Kav Le'oved (Workers' Hotline) heard about a bill, under the title "Equalization Levy Law (Employment) – 1992", which the Meretz ministers were going to present as a step towards "improving the level of life of the Palestinians". Kav Le'oved – which in the past worked closely with Meretz – asked for a copy of the bill, but the Meretz legal adviser refused to show it. In early December, a Meretz activist passed a copy of the bill to Kav Le'oved – and was afterwards sharply reprimanded.

According to the new bill money collected for National Insurance should be handed over to the military government's civil administration in the Territories, to be used to provide health and social services for the Palestinian population as a whole.

Uplifting as this may sound, social security payments are not supposed to be for the common weal but for the social security of the individual who has paid them. The Palestinians also pay income tax, municipal tax, health insurance, VAT and a variety of other taxes. Many consider the Palestiniansto be grossly overtaxed. To add individual National Insurance payments to the general treasury is simply a misappropriation of funds.

Kav Le'oved intends to launch a campaign, in Israel and internationally, to expose the true nature of the proposed bill.

**Contact:** *Kav Le'oved, POB 2319, Tel-Aviv 61022; tel: 972-3-5102266; fax: 972-3-5173081.*

## Mediterranean encounters

by Yossi Amitay

I've recently had the honour of representing the ICIPP at an encounter whose message, to my judgement, holds a promise for the peoples of our region. The event in question was a preparatory meeting of Solidarity Committees in the Mediterranean Basin, held at Athens on December 12, 1992.

The Organization of Afro-Asian Peoples Solidarity (AAPSO) came into being as early as 1957, as a by-product of the Bandung Conference of newly-independent non-alligned nations of the two interlinked continents. Its international Secretariat was located in Cairo – the capital of a country which was then an ardent advocate of positive neutralism. It rendered support to Third World peoples struggling for their national independence.

Circumstances have changed since then. Most of the peoples that were fighting for freedom during the 1950s and 1960s have won their independence, and are now facing the challenges of "the day after". Issues of development and co-operation, as well as ethnic relations, environment and disarmament of mass-destruction weapons, have undisputedly won priority. Our world is no longer bi-polar, as it used to be. Ideological differences have, to a large extent, lost their primacy, given the grave existential dangers facing mankind nowadays. The issue of international solidarity could no more be restricted to Asia and Africa only. Establishing networks between "north" and "south" has become the order of the day.

Last year in a Cairo AAPSO meeting, the idea was born to summon a Conference of Solidarity Committees (and other NGOs) of the Mediterranean Basin, to discuss the crucial issues facing the peoples of that area which is both a geographical and a cultural meeting point between three continents – Asia, Africa and Europe – and a mirror of all above-mentioned problems. The first Mediterranean Solidarity Conference was held in Athens at the end of February, 1992, and marked a success. All participants shared awareness of the changes that had taken place in our world and the current concerns they had produced. By inviting the ICIPP the AAPSO for the first time accepted an Israeli organization. Hitherto all Israelis far, had been excluded since their country was regarded as an "imperialist tool". Now, at long last, there is a growing awareness of the plurality of opinions in the Israeli society, and readiness to include Israeli organizations committed to the goals of solidarity and co-operation in the joint efforts to create a better and safer Mediterranean community of nations.

At the conference, it was decided to hold another Mediterranean Solidarity Conference in September 1993, which the Tunisian Solidarity Committee has kindly undertaken to host. It will be organized on a larger scale than the Athens meeting, in order to enable more interested parties to participate.

As representative of the ICIPP, I participated in the preparatory meeting, of representatives from 12 Mediterranean Solidarity Committees, held in Athens to prepare the agenda for the Tunis conference.

Again I encountered in Athens a spirit of understanding and co-operation. The attainment of a just and mutually acceptable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict – as well as to other national conflicts – was felt by everybody to be a *conditio sine qua non* for addressing the broader existential problems of the region.

I should particularly note the friendly and open-minded approach of the Arab representatives (from Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia and Syria). It seems they all were eager to learn about the features of Israeli public opinion. They want to hear about the Israelis who, while dedicated to Israel's security and integrity, are willing to respect the rights of their Arab neighbors and are open for a profound dialogue.

The concept of Mediterranean Solidarity is creating a very promising opportunity, which I hope will be wisely and firmly seized. The ICIPP is certainly willing to contribute to its success.

■ On November 4, the military government accepted a demand by ACRI to stop judicial proceedings against three Jericho inhabitants. The Palestinians' crime had been to organise an illegal demonstration, a few days after the Madrid Peace Conference. According to the testimonies appended to the charge sheet, olive branches and banners with *Yes to peace! Yes to coexistence!* had been illegally carried through the streets of Jericho...

■ On November 26, the Haifa District Court ruled that the poem "In praise of the Stone", by Shafiq Habib, does not express "identification with a terrorist organisation". Therefore, the judges canceled the punishment imposed on the poet by the Acre Magistrate's Court (*see TOI-53, p.10*).

On November 29, Adnan Ahmed was due to appear before the same Acre Magistrate's Court, because of a children's story he had written about cats and dogs, and which had not been properly presented to the military censor. But after the District Court's verdict in the Habib case, the prosecution dropped all charges.

■ In December the moderate religious movement *Memad*, headed by Rabbi Yehuda Amital, held a Refounding Conference in Tel-Aviv. In 1988, *Memad* split off from The National Religious Party (NRP), and run for the elections on a platform advocating *concessions in return for peace*, which was regarded as the true way of Judaism. After failing to gain a seat, the movement disintegrated.

At the Tel-Aviv conference, Rabbi Amital stated that among NRP supporters there is a growing undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the extreme nationalist line taken by its leaders. Many religious moderates are, however, intimidated by an atmosphere where any talk of compromise is regarded as treason.

*Memad* intends to present an alternative to the curriculum at the NRP-dominated religious school system, which *teaches simple-minded nationalism and hatred of foreigners, based on misquotation from the Scriptures and the Talmud*.

*(Rabin's politics of avoidance – continued)*

- should have a minimal power of legislation;
3. Such Authority should have power to enforce law and order over the territory under its jurisdiction;
  4. The nature of the next phase should be broadly outlined before the first phase is applied.

Theoretically these terms should not create any difficulty for Israel, because they are provided for in the Camp David Accords signed by Israel's Prime Minister almost 15 years ago. There, the section dealing with the Palestinian problem specifically states that the Palestinian problem should be solved in all its aspects, on the basis of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and that the future of the Palestinian people would be determined by themselves after an interim period of autonomy applied in the Occupied Territories for five years.

It must be admitted that the Palestinians made a mistake by consenting to attend the peace talks on the basis of the Israeli peace plan announced in May 1989. This plan, which clearly meant not to provide a solution to the Palestinian problem but to avoid a solution, has been accepted by the Americans and the Palestinian as the basis for the Madrid Conference. The principles of that conference brought in concepts which were not even suggested at Camp David, such as the distinction between Palestinians living in the Greater Jerusalem area and those living in the West Bank and Gaza; the distinction between Palestinians of the Occupied Territories and those of the Diaspora, or the prohibition of the issue of the Palestinian right of return being brought up in the talks. The expectation of the Palestinian negotiators that American assurances in secret memoranda would eventually take care of these limitations proved, as expected, worthless. But nevertheless, the commitment of the parties to UN Security Council Resolution 242 and 338, gives ample room for the Palestinians to insist on the four conditions referred to earlier.

But it should be realized that the question is not really a formal one. Rabin's strategy is clearly aimed at achieving a settlement with Syria and Jordan, leaving the Palestinian issue unresolved until the general situation of the Israeli-Arab relationships is materially improved. Then, he hopes, Israel would be able to impose its own terms on the Palestinians.

This line of thinking is attributed to Begin who agreed to conclude peace with Egypt in the hope that this would leave Israel free to deal with Palestinians any way it wanted. If indeed this was Begin's expectation, he clearly proved wrong. The Palestinian problem is practically unconnected to the other aspects of Israel-Arab relationship. In fact since the peace with Egypt has been achieved Israel's difficulties with the Palestinians increased. The intifada which broke out in December 1987 has now entered its sixth year. This was caused to a large extent by the preceding three years of Rabin's Iron Fist policy which he deemed necessary on account of the very disturbing situation in the Occupied Territories in 1984. All this history of Palestinian resistance to the occupation is due to Palestinian determination and the Arab countries contributing little or nothing to it.

So even if Rabin would succeed in achieving separate settlements with Syria and Jordan, this would not affect the situation in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Such separate settlements may alleviate Israel's burden in terms of its military posture for conventional warfare. But in terms of the exigencies of the occupation nothing would change. Death squads, torture chambers, anti-riot units etc. would all be still needed to suppress the Palestinians, and the risk that all this might rekindle a general conflagration would still hover above Israel's head.

So if Rabin's strategy is indeed what it appears to be, he is due for a big disappointment even if his schemes for Syria and Jordan proved realistic – which is very doubtful.

*(PLO Now! – continued)*

tions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be given to Palestinians while other functions – the key ones – would be retained by Israel.

Rabin is mainly advised on these matters by a group of actual and former military governors, many of whom also take part in the negotiations with the Palestinians – and whose attitude towards Palestinians is basically patronising and authoritarian. The Rabin concept of Palestinian autonomy does not include a defined territory, nor full Palestinian control of the land, water and internal security. Without these, "autonomy" is a sham.

I believe that the Madrid Formula has outlived its usefulness, unless the Americans prove ready to intervene with force and compel Rabin to agree to a real self-government. This seems unlikely.

Interim agreements make sense only if they lead to an agreed permanent solution. Madrid has already proved that no interim agreement is possible without prior agreement – at least in general terms – on the final status of the Occupied Territories.

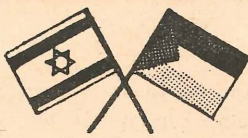
The time has come, therefore, to face the problem squarely:

- (a) To start direct negotiations with the top leadership of the PLO,
- (b) To negotiate a full and comprehensive Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty,
- (c) To work out interim stages.

Parallel peace treaties with Syria and Jordan should accompany the Israeli-Palestinian one.

The totally unacceptable deportation of 415 Islamic leaders must, of course, be reversed. But in a curious way, even this inhuman, immoral, illegal and incredibly stupid act by the Rabin-Meretz government has at least one positive effect: By demonizing the Islamic Hamas movement Rabin, against his will, made the PLO much more acceptable to most Israelis. (Ironically, it was the the Israeli authorities themselves who originally fostered Hamas – as a counterweight to the much-hated PLO.)

By mysterious ways and devious means, peace is moving nearer, in spite of everything. At the moment, optimism may seem crazy, but is still the realistic outlook.



## Rabin's politics of avoidance

by Matti Peled

Rabin's desperate measure of deporting more than 400 Palestinians has certainly been taken with the knowledge that this might abort the entire peace process which he purports to champion. But seen in the light of his overall tactics this last measure is perhaps not as inexplicable as it looks.

Israel's policy toward the Palestinians, as applied by Rabin's government, reveals a total muddleheaded thinking. Realizing that no progress in the peace talks is achieved, Rabin has begun to accuse Yasser Arafat of being the cause of this failure. "Analyzing" Arafat's fear that a success of the talks might lead to the PLO's loss of influence, Rabin went so far as to predict that, if the talks prove successful, the Palestinian organization would have the same fate as the World Zionist Organization - by which Rabin apparently meant that as the WZO lost in 1948 most of its stature and influence, which were transferred to the newly-created State of Israel, so would the PLO be dwarfed by the Palestinian Self-Governing Authority, once that is established.

Simultaneously with this Rabin statement, Israel's new Ambassador to the UN, Gad Ya'akobi, accuses the "extremist" Palestinian groups of impeding the process by attacking Arafat's envoys to the talks for following his instructions. In fact the rejectionist

There is a game, which has different names in different countries, in which a child faces a wall, while other children form a line at some distance. Their aim is to reach the wall, but every time the main player turns around, they must all be standing still. If a child is seen moving, he has lost the game.

The peace negotiations - particularly those between Israel and the Palestinians - resemble this game. It seems that in more than a year nothing at all has moved. Everything, everybody seems frozen. But in reality, very much has changed.

When the Madrid game started, the Israeli government - then under the Likud - was totally opposed to any negotiations with an independent Palestinian delegation. A so-called "Jordanian-Palestinian Delegation" had to be formed, in which the Palestinians were supposed to play a secondary role under Jordanian patronage. No connection at all between the delegation and the PLO was al-

lowed. A Palestinian negotiator who expressed openly his ties with the PLO was banned.

That was how it began. By the latest round of Washington talks, Israel negotiated with a Palestinian delegation which is independent in all but name. Its members consult openly with Yasser Arafat in Tunis.

## PLO Now!

by Uri Avnery

A member of the Palestinian diaspora has been admitted to a part of the negotiations. So was a member of the Palestinian National Council - after the Americans asserted, rather unconvincingly, that he has resigned from that institution. In Israel, the Knesset started to abolish the law which makes any meeting between Israelis and PLO officials a criminal offence. In a poll conducted by the Israeli radio, thirty out of forty-four Knesset Members of the Israeli Labor Party expressed support for direct negotiations with the PLO.

"Front of Ten", uniting the Palestinian opposition groups, has specifically accused Arafat of not heeding the growing popular sentiment that the peace talks have become an offence to Palestinian dignity.

Obviously, if Rabin had really wanted to see progress in the talks he would have encouraged Arafat by allowing some tangible achievements to the Palestinian delegation rather than accuse him unjustly for obstructing them.

But what really bothers Rabin is Arafat's rejection of the Israeli proposals concerning the interim phase of the so-called Palestinian autonomy as proposed by Israel. What Rabin hoped to achieve in the talks was Palestinian acceptance of a period of five years of continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, with unrestricted Israeli expansion, in return for a token self-rule. All this without promising anything that can be interpreted as an indication that the next phase would lead to self-determination.

Arafat's terms for an interim solution are very clear and were explained in great detail in the past few months to Israeli reporters who interviewed him and published his positions fairly accurately.

According to these reports, Arafat would accept an interim situation of Palestinian self-government provided four conditions are met:

1. The territory over which the interim situation would apply should be defined satisfactorily;
2. The elected Autonomous Palestinian Authority

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These details of the negotiations format are not matters of modality, but of substance. For a people in the circumstances in which the Palestinians find themselves at this point of their history, the standing of its national institutions is of paramount importance. De Gaulle understood this when he led the "Free French" during the Second World War, and so did David Ben Gurion during the Jewish struggle for independence.

On the other hand, barely any progress has been made towards agreement on the official subject of the negotiations: the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Arrangement (PISGA, which curiously enough means summit in Hebrew). There, the gulf between the concepts of the two sides has proved unbridgeable. PISGA is viable only as an interim agreement leading towards Palestinian statehood. Rabin, however, sees it only as a new version of "functional partition" - an old Dayan concept whereby some governmental func-

(Continued on p. 19)

We, Israeli and Palestinian public figures and representatives of organizations, call upon the government of Israel to bring back immediately all the Palestinian deportees, who are living in intolerable conditions on Lebanese territory.

Only the return of all deportees will make it possible to renew the peace talks between the authorised Palestinian representatives and the Israeli delegation.

We call upon the government to stop all practices violating human rights in the Occupied Territories, such as the killing of Palestinians, including children, the demolition of houses, the use of torture and other forms of oppression.

We call for the return of all Palestinians deported throughout the years of the occupation.

We condemn the murder of innocent civilians, on both sides, all of whom we regard as victims of the continuing occupation.

The Israeli representatives express their appreciation for the Palestinians and their solidarity with the just Palestinian struggle to end the occupation and to further the peace talks on the basis of recognising the national rights of the Palestinian people; these rights include the right to establish an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, side by side with the state of Israel, on the basis of peace and mutual respect between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples.

The Israeli representatives recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and call upon their government to conduct direct negotiations with the PLO leadership.

The Palestinian representatives express their appreciation for and solidarity with the Israeli peace seekers, who struggle for an end to the occupation, for Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1967 on the basis of two states for the two peoples, and for achieving peace, understanding and friendship between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples.

We are all convinced of the need to intensify our cooperation and our joint struggle for elimination of the occupation and for a just and lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.