

# The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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## ELECTIONS ROULETTE

On May 14, the Israeli cabinet approved the 'Peace Plan' presented to it by Prime Minister Shamir and Defence Minister Rabin, whose core is the holding of elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Shamir is officially committed to this plan, which bears his name; yet he would shed few tears should the envisaged elections never take place. Shamir's hope is that the plan will be rejected by the Palestinians, such a rejection would put the Israeli government in a strong diplomatic position, and secure the support of wavering allies in Washington and in the Diaspora Jewish communities. It would also free the government's hands to implement brutal measures of oppression in the Occupied Territories.

No effort was spared in order to make the proposed plan unacceptable to the Palestinians. It regards the elected Palestinian leaders as a substitute negotiating partner, and explicitly excludes the possibility of negotiations with the PLO. Also excluded is the creation of an independent Palestinian state. On many other vital points the plan is totally silent. No provision is made for the Palestinians living outside the Occupied Territories - who constitute half of the Palestinian people, and who are, in effect, doomed to eternal homelessness. Nor is there any mention of the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem (which was annexed to Israel) and of their right to participate in the elections.

The holding of 'free and secret democratic elections' is promised - but the plan does not mention any kind of international monitoring, nor does it guarantee the freedom of expression or association, during or after the election campaign. No promise is made to release the thousands of Palestinians incarcerated in Israeli detention camps, who include

many leading members of all the Palestinian political factions. Nor is there anything in the plan to prevent the Israeli authorities from arresting candidates for election or the elected representatives themselves - as already happened to the Palestinian mayors who were democratically elected in 1976. Indeed, Shamir explicitly stated that 'if it turns out that the elected Palestinian leaders are accepting instructions from the PLO, we will stop the negotiations and put the leaders in prison'.

After the elections, the plan envisages a five-year interim period in which the Palestinians will exercise 'self-administration' of 'their internal affairs' - with the Israeli government maintaining its monopoly over 'defence and security'. It could thus continue to employ its full panoply of repression. (Even the Camp David agreements provided for the 'redeployment of Israeli forces outside the population centres' and the creation of 'a strong Palestinian police force'. Nothing of the kind could be found in the Shamir Plan.)

After the interim period, the plan envisions the opening of peace negotiations between Israel and Jordan; Palestinian representatives are invited to join in - provided they accept the agenda of negotiations, in which the creation of a Palestinian state will, of course, not be included.

In spite of all the anti-Palestinian stipulations in Shamir's plan, Israel's rightist hardliners became quite alarmed when it was adopted by the cabinet. The settlers in the Occupied Territories expressed their opposition through violent anti-Arab provocations; Ariel Sharon has started to mobilise a considerable internal opposition to Shamir inside the

Likud party; the extreme right Tehiya party stated: 'Yitzchak Shamir has laid the cornerstone of the Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem for its capital.' (*Hadashot*, 15.5.89).

Clearly, these opponents are not reacting to the Shamir Plan as it now stands, but rather to the potential shape into which it might be transformed at the end of a long negotiating process - especially since these negotiations would take place under conditions of ongoing Intifada.

On the other side of the political spectrum, the moderate peace camp - Mapam, Ratz, Shinuy and Peace Now - decided to give the plan the benefit of the doubt, hoping that it would eventually develop in the very direction that the extreme right is afraid of.

Similar considerations also prevail in extensive parts of the international arena. In London, Madrid and Brussels, the Israeli government's proposals were not rejected out of hand; the U.S. administration welcomed the Shamir Plan, while asking for 'explanations' and 'clarifications' - in order to present these clarifications in Tunis. For its part, the PLO leadership - though emphatically rejecting Shamir's terms for elections - has shown itself willing to continue negotiations, in order to achieve more acceptable terms.

In dealing with the Americans, Shamir so far demurs, pointing to the difficulties he faces in his own party due to Sharon's determined campaign of opposition. The 3000-member Central Council of the Likud is due to meet on July 4 to vote on the Shamir Plan. A Sharon victory would smash the 'National

Unity Government' and the Shamir-Rabin alliance which is at its core; Israeli politics might be plunged into a savage power struggle. The more likely possibility, however, is a victory for the Prime Minister over Sharon and his allies.

Once having won this struggle, Shamir would not be able to delay much longer his Moment of Truth; he would have to choose. He could move forward, even if slowly, on the elections - which would, in the end, mean making substantial concessions. He would have to accept that indirect negotiations with the PLO have already begun and that - sooner or later - they will become direct ones.

As a matter of fact, Shamir's only other option would be digging in his heels and refusing to budge on any of the essential issues. Such intransigence might encounter opposition from Shamir's Labor coalition partners, who are more positively disposed towards the East Jerusalem franchise, international monitoring, 'redeployment' of Israeli forces, etc.\* Should the 'National Unity Government' survive a stalemate on these issues, it would face a growing isolation on the international arena, and an escalation of violent clashes and bloodshed. It may be assumed that, in these circumstances, the 'Shamir Plan' would be swept off the board, and that international diplomatic efforts would, once again, concentrate on attempts to convene some sort of a Middle East Peace Conference - an idea only momentarily eclipsed by the elections proposal.\*\*

One thing should be clear, even to the more optimistic supporters of Israeli-Palestinian peace: whichever scenario materialises, a hard struggle still lies ahead.

The editor

\* Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, for twenty years the champion of 'United Jerusalem', has already expressed his

support for the East Jerusalemites' participation in the Palestinian elections, as have Labor Party leaders Shimon Peres and Yitzchak Rabin - the latter being Shamir's co-author of the 'peace-plan'.

On June 14, Yediot Aharonot quoted Rabin's answer to a question about partial Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian population centres: 'When elections take place, the Territories will remain under Israeli control, but the deployment of Israeli forces in them is a technical question open to negotiations'

\*\* At the beginning of June 1989, Yossi Amitai and Canon Riah Abu-El-Asal, co-chairpersons of the Progressive List for Peace Executive met with Mr. Fowler of the British Embassy in Tel-Aviv, in the context of a series of meetings with Israel-based diplomats in which the PLP elucidated its positions.

Fowler, whose government was one of EEC members most enthusiastic about the Shamir Plan, reiterated that the Thatcher government remains committed to the idea of holding, sooner or later, an International Conference on Peace in the Middle East.

## Pendulum of violence

Since the beginning of the Intifada the political right has been increasingly on the defensive. Even before U.S. Secretary of State delivered his now famous speech, the dream of 'Greater Israel' had become undermined. The massive resistance of the Palestinian population, the concentration of the violence within the Occupied Territories, the conspicuous moderation of the PLO's positions, and the worldwide interest in the Intifada have had a cumulative effect.

Israeli public opinion has moved

significantly towards the positions of the peace movement. Many people are becoming resigned to Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. Thus, Likud columnist Nathan Bron wrote: 'Yasser Arafat and his advisers are more and more confident that they will get their Palestinian state (...) When I look around me and see what is happening in Israeli politics and in world diplomacy, and what is taking place on the ground in Judea and Samaria, I begin to fear that they have good reason to be confident' (Yediot Aharonot, 5.5.89).

To stem the tide, some factions on the right decided to launch a counter-offensive. A series of incidents in May 1989 played into their hands. In the main street of West Jerusalem, a Palestinian from Al Bireh stabbed and killed two old Israelis waiting for a bus, and wounded three others. According to Defence Minister Rabin, the Arab was motivated by Muslim religious fanaticism and by a desire to revenge his brother who was beaten by Israeli soldiers.

Within an hour Rabbi Meir Kahane and dozens of his rabid followers arrived on the scene and attempted to lynch two Arab by-passers. They were dispersed by the police and Kahane spent the next two nights in jail. On television Prime Minister Shamir practically endorsed the lynch call, stating: 'Murderers, such as this one in Jerusalem, should not remain whole after our citizens lay hands on them.'

A few days later, police discovered the sexually-mutilated corpse of a 13-year old boy from Bat-Yam (a Tel-Aviv suburb) and two Palestinians were detained and interrogated. A few days after this much-publicised arrest a Jew, escaping from a lunatic asylum in the mixed Jewish-Arab town of Acre, stabbed to death a 14-year Arab boy; he ran through the streets, waving the blood-spattered knife, shouting 'this is my revenge upon the Arabs!'

Before the reverberations had time

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The following information was provided on one of the inner pages of Ha'aretz newspaper of February 15, 1989:

Four soldiers were tried by the Northern Command's Court Martial. According to the charge sheet the four were in July, 1988, on duty in the Beit Sahur area of the West Bank, where they were left alone with a handcuffed and bound-eyed Arab prisoner. The soldiers started to beat and kick him, and one of them burned him with cigarettes, causing him severe burns.

In their verdict, the judges stated that the soldiers' crime was a grave one, that they have mistreated a helpless prisoner and, thereby, brought infamy upon the good name of all IDF soldiers. The judges imposed upon three soldiers a month and a half imprisonment each, and upon the fourth one, who used the cigarettes - three months. Supported by their parents the soldiers, who had hoped to get only a suspended prison sentence, decided to apply for a pardon.

The next day, February 16, Ha'aretz put the following in a similarly inconspicuous place.

The Haifa District Court tried two members of the Communist Youth League, both inhabitants of Haifa. The two had burned tyres, raised Palestinian flags and wrote graffiti whose content - as the charge sheet claims - was directed against the

## Contempt of Court

State of Israel. The presiding judge stated that, in this case he would be lenient and - rather than giving the maximum penalty, he sentenced the two boys to seven and nine months respectively.

For several years, the alert part of Israel's citizens is getting concerned at an increasingly obvious bias in the Israeli judicial system, whereby Arab defendants systematically get far heavier punishments than Jews accused of the same or graver offenses. However, no judges ever admitted using double standards; the Bar Association, too, always dismissed indignantly any accusations of discrimination before the law. Explicit discrimination of Arabs in court is not - as yet - legitimate in the juridical establishment. During the racist campaign of May 1989, however, the situation started to change.

*Judge Yitzhak Banai, of the Be'er Sheba District Court, refused to remand in custody Michael Maman, a Jew who threw a Molotov cocktail at an Arab car on the day when the kidnapped soldier's body was discovered. The prosecution pointed out that all Arabs suspected of throwing Molotov cocktails or stones have been remanded, and that judge Banai himself gave such verdicts quite often.*

*The judge replied:* These acts of the members of minority groups are part of the so-called Intifada which is a war declared against the State of Israel. No comparison is possible between such acts and the accused's ill-considered and un-premeditated act.

On the night following Judge Banai's verdict, two members of the Mapam Youth were detained by police, accused of having put, on the door of the judge's private apartment, a sign: HERE LIVES A MAN WHO GIVES LICENCE FOR MURDER.

Judge Banai's verdict did arouse a storm of criticism from Knesset Members, Jurists and journalists. The most sharply-worded attack came from the pen of writer and columnist Amos Keynan, who wrote an article entitled 'Contempt of Court':

*I feel a burning shame at needing to tell Judge Banai that Justice does not discriminate between human beings (...) Judge Banai does not deserve to be addressed as 'Your Honor' and is not fit to be a judge. He should be kicked out and sent flying, like a rocket, far out of the judicial system.*

Finally State Attorney Dorit Beinisch decided to appeal the verdict to the Supreme Court, which duly overturned it and extended Michael Maman's detention until the end of this trial. At the same time, she also ordered the police to start investigating Amos Keynan, on charges of ... *Contempt of Court.*

to die down the news of the disappearance of a young Israeli soldier on leave, while attempting to hitch a ride home, and the discovery of the dead body of another hitchhiking soldier, who disappeared two months previously, rocked the Israeli public.

Strictly speaking, the kidnap and killing of uniformed soldiers - even when not on duty - could be justified by the perpetrators as 'guerilla attacks on military targets'. Such terms were indeed used by Menachem Begin in 1946, when his Irgun underground kidnapped two British soldiers and left their bodies hanging on a tree, for the British Army to find.

Nevertheless, the Israeli Jewish public - in which nearly every family has one or more members serving as a conscript or reservist - reacts to the killing of hitchhiking soldiers, on their way home, far more violently than to their death in battle. In these

two particular cases, several additional factors exacerbated tensions and emotions: Ashdod and Ashkelon - the home towns, respectively, of the dead soldier and the missing one - are close-knit communities, and the two young men were known to many of the inhabitants. The two towns are situated in close proximity to the Gaza Strip and have felt the Intifada far more closely than other parts of Israel. In both towns there is significant unemployment; many jobless workers blame the Palestinians from the Gaza Strip who work in the town. A hard-core of extreme right activists has been formed in this region, especially by former North Sinai settlers who are now living at the north of the Gaza Strip.

With the disappearance of the two soldiers, the right-wingers were able to cash in and start a week of violent riots. At the dead soldier's funeral, a mob tried to overturn the car of

army chief-of-staff Dan Shomron, calling him 'The Intifada-chief-of-staff'. Shouting 'Death to the Arabs', the mob assaulted Arab workers on the streets. In a large Ashdod factory, Jewish workers declared a strike demanding the removal of all Arab workers. On the roads, a 'Jewish Intifada' - throwing stones on Arab cars - started; a Palestinian driver, on his way to his West Bank home, was hit by a big stone and died instantly.

The police was unable to find the killers. Indeed, with regard to Jewish stone-throwers, the authorities have been far more lenient than towards their Arab counterparts (see box). Moreover, the attacks on the Palestinian workers gained an official sanction when the military authorities imposed a curfew over the entire Gaza Strip, and ordered all Gazan workers to go home immediately. Police raided the workers' overcrowded flats, in the poorer areas of

the Israeli cities, and loaded them upon Gaza-bound vans; Israeli citizens were called upon to inform the police of the whereabouts of hiding Gazan workers.

The blockade of Gaza was intended to last for several weeks, until all Gazan workers employed in Israel were issued with new magnetic cards, containing computerised information on their past, which allegedly would enable the police to keep track of 'troublemakers'. However, within four days the government was forced to desist, after being flooded with protests by industrialists, hoteliers and – most especially – building contractors, who were suddenly deprived of their workforce. Even Ariel Sharon, the government minister most notorious for his bloodthirsty attitude towards Arabs – who also happens to own a large farm near the Gaza Strip – complained that 'Rabin gave the farmers no advance warning before taking away their workers'.

In Ashkelon – where Arab workers had been assaulted on the streets – inhabitants admitted that 'without the Arabs, the whole town is collapsing'. When the Gazan workers finally came back, none of them were molested.

Meanwhile, a number of mayors initiated local anti-Arab measures. The lead was taken by Ron Nachman, Mayor of Ariel – a West Bank settlement established in 1978 under Sharon's special patronage. At the end of May Nachman announced that 'for security reasons', Palestinians who are the menial workers in the settlement would be required to wear badges bearing the words 'Foreign Worker'. Two days later, on June 1, twenty members of the Mapam Youth arrived at Ariel and marched through its main street, wearing badges: 'I, too, am a Foreign Worker'. The protest spread quickly. Several days later, thousands of people participated in a march from Tel-Aviv to Jaffa, to mark the twenty-second anniversary of the occupation; practically all of the protesters wore 'Foreign Worker' badges, some of which were modelled on the Yellow Star that European Jews were forced to wear under Nazi rule.

On the following day, Ron Nachman officially canceled his 'badge-program' – but journalists found out that he had merely substituted a disk bearing a red triangle for the 'Foreign Worker' badge. A number

of Knesset Members demanded that the police investigate Nachman on suspicion of breaking the law against racism.

The police did investigate Nachman, but 'counterbalanced' this by raiding offices of the Communist Party and confiscating large quantities of the Yellow Stars. This was justified by the claim that 'a Holocaust Victims' organization had complained that the stars were hurting their sensitivities'. The police was not able to name this organization. Indeed, 'The Israeli Union of anti-Nazi combatants and victims of Nazism'\*\*\* actively participated in the demonstration at which the stars were distributed and published their own statement headed with two of the contested stars, one marked with 'Jude' and the other with 'Oved Zar' (Hebrew for 'foreign worker').

In Petach-Tikva – one of Israel's oldest towns, located east of Tel-Aviv – Giora Lev, the newly-elected Mayor and former military attaché in South-Africa announced that Arab workers in his town would be concentrated in 'pens'. He stated: 'We can't allow them to go around on the streets. They are defecating in backyards and attempting to rape women. They should be placed in pens with a fence around them. Their employers could take them from there, and bring them back there after they finished working.'

This statement caused a storm and polarised the town's local politics. The municipal council meeting exploded into a shouting match, after former Labor Mayor Dov Tavori compared Mayor Lev's proposal with the work camps in which Jews were placed by the Nazis. Nevertheless, the Mayor's proposal was adopted 14 to 9.

In face of the mounting controversy, Giora Lev tried to backtrack, changing the term 'Michla'ot' (pens) – normally used for cattle in a farm – to 'Ezorey Rikuz' (concentration areas) – but this term, too, was not free of reminiscences; finally, Lev settled for 'Sh'chachot Ma'avar' (transit huts). Lev further added that these 'huts' will not, after all, be enclosed by fences, and that their function would merely be to provide the Arab workers with shade while waiting to be hired.

All this failed to silence the opposition. A protest rally took place in front of the Town Hall, with a

conspicuous participation by the local branches of the Labor youth movements. On the morning when the 'huts' were due to start operation, a hundred protesters blocaded the site. These vigils have been going on daily, up to the time of writing. So far, the Palestinian workers have not explicitly been compelled to concentrate in the 'huts', but the police is harassing them in the other parts of Petach-Tikva.

During the twenty-one years of occupation the Jewish settlers in the Occupied Territories built up a considerable power base. They maintain veritable militias (supplied by the Israeli army) and possess a powerful lobby in the government, Knesset and army command. This power was exhibited in mid-May 1989, when Rabbi Moshe Levinger – leader of the Hebron settlers – stood trial for the killing of a Hebron merchant.

Levinger (who was released on bail immediately after the killing) let the court wait more than an hour for his arrival, claiming that he had been busy with his morning prayers. This explanation was accepted by the judge, who treated Levinger with deference and referred to him as 'the Honourable Rabbi' rather than 'the accused'. When asked whether he pleaded guilty, Levinger stated: 'I did not kill that Arab. I wish I had, but God did not see fit to grant me that privilege.' The trial's next session was fixed for several months ahead. Outside the courthouse, Levinger posed for photographers, waving the pistol with which, according to the charge sheet, he had committed the crime and which the police did not confiscate.

In the following weeks the settlers' punitive raids grew to an unprecedented scale. Hundreds of armed settlers descended upon Arab towns and villages, shooting at random, destroying shops and cars, and even setting houses on fire. Some soldiers who tried to restrain the settlers were themselves assaulted. Even the military governor of the West Bank, Brigadier-General Ophir, was insulted and assaulted by a bunch of settlers, who snatched his gun out of his hands.

On May 31, settlers carried out their most ferocious attack. In the village of Kif-Chares, a 16-year old girl was killed and dozens of the inhabitants wounded. The settlers shot several donkeys and set fire to

the village's fields. (The settlers' special interest in Kift-Chares stems from a tomb located in the village center. Muslims venerate it as the burial place of a Muslim saint, but the settlers believe that the Biblical Joshua is interred there. Many of the settlers regard the Bible story, describing Joshua's savage conquest of the Canaanites, as a source of inspirations.)

The Kift-Chares pogrom was the last straw, creating a wave of public outrage against the settlers. Not only was it sharply condemned by the peace movement, but Labor and Likud Ministers alike made statements against 'those who take the law into their own hands'. Even several Knesset Members of the extreme right, such as Rafael Eytan and Chanan Porat (himself a West Bank settler) felt compelled to condemn the pogrom and dissociate themselves from its perpetrators. About 30 settlers were arrested by the police, on suspicion of participation in the pogrom, though they were later released. The army also announced its intention to issue orders of 'town arrest' against some of the more turbulent settlers, thus confining them inside the boundaries of their settlement. These orders were hitherto used only against Palestinians.

On June 3 a mass rally, called by the moderate 'Peace Coalition' (including 'Peace Now', the Ratz, Mapam and Shinuy parties, and many prominent Labor Party members, such as the party's former Secretary-General, Uzi Bar'am) took place in Tel-Aviv. According to police estimates, 80,000 persons took part in the rally. The keynote speech was delivered by writer Amos Oz.

I want to tell Prime Minister Shamir and President Herzog: Stop talking about 'those who take the law into their own hands'. If you don't call crimes against humanity by their true name, we will all become accomplices.'

For the time being, the settlers seem subdued. They have ceased their large-scale raids on Palestinian villages; some of them even met with Mapam members, asking: *Why can't you dialogue with us, as you do with the Palestinians?*

\* On several occasions, Chief-of-Staff Shomron stated his conviction that it is impossible to put down the Intifada militarily. Under his influence the Defence Ministry translated a book about the

*Algerian War, which argues that the French Army's efforts in Algeria were doomed to failure; Shomron personally distributed copies to all the generals under his command.*

\*\* *The Union of anti-Nazi Combatants and Victims of Nazism - 64 Shlomo Ha'melech Street, Tel-Aviv 64511*

## The story of the Twenty-First Year

On Sunday, May 28, a small notice was placed on the billboard of the Tel-Aviv University's Philosophy Department; it informed Dr. Adi Ophir's students that his seminar on Thoams Hobbes will not take place. Instead the students got a practical demonstration in civil disobedience. Adi Ophir was one of a group of 27 imprisoned peace activists being taken in a police car to the Kfar-Saba Magistrate's Court.

The chain of events leading to this situation began in October 1988, when Israeli security forces detained Nabil Daud, a 15-year old boy from Kalkilya, on suspicion of setting fire to a parked Israeli car. After interrogation, the boy signed a confession; thereupon, and before any trial took place, the military governor issued an order for the destruction of the Daud's family's house, in which live his parents and his ten brothers and sisters. The family appealed to the Supreme Court. Its appeal was rejected, as 'the Supreme Court does not, other than in exceptional situations, interfere with the security forces' procedures in restoring order'; in this case there was, indeed, nothing exceptional: dozens of similar cases have occurred in the last year. In general the authorities let these doomed houses accumulate until on a certain day large military forces descend on a town, by surprise, to destroy all of them.

The Daud family's case came to the attention of the 'Twenty-First Year' - a group of Israelis founded after the 20th anniversary of the Six-Day War, seeking to go beyond the usual ways of protest and make opposition into a way of life.

On the morning of Friday May 26, about 40 members of the group arrived at Kalkilya, in order to express their opposition to the demolition of the Daud family's home.

In the outskirts of the town, they encountered a roadblock, and were informed that the town has been declared a 'closed military area'; the

military commander admitted that this was done specifically in order to bar their entrance. For two hours, they held a vigil at the roadblock, holding a single large sign, containing a quotation from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Israel is a signatory: 'A person shall not be arbitrarily deprived of property'.

Afterwards, 27 of the participants decided to enter the town through the orange groves on its edge, and try to get to the Daud family's house. On their way, however, they encountered a Border Guard unit and were ordered to leave the town immediately. While walking through the Kalkilya streets, surrounded by the Border policemen, a group of Palestinian children flashed a V-for-victory sign at them; in response, two members of the group replied with the same signal - and were promptly arrested for 'inciting to rebellion'. Thereupon, the rest of the group repeated the gesture - and were all taken off to detention. It seems that the police found it hard to deal with this sudden influx of prisoners; the nineteen women among them were placed in a narrow cell with only ten beds in it.

After spending the weekend in custody, the 27 were brought to the Magistrate's Court in Kfar Saba (the Israeli town closest to Kalkilya). The courtroom was full of family members, reporters and political supporters - many of whom could not find a seat inside. After long discussion - particularly on the fundamental political issue whether the V-sign stands for victory only or for peace as well - the judge decided to deny them bail.

The judge's decision was received with shock and fury, particularly as compared with the practice of granting bail to settlers charged with killing Palestinians.

On the morning of May 30, 500 Israelis demonstrated in Jerusalem against the arbitrary detention of the 27. The call for the vigil went out on the initiative of Peace Now and other protest groups; with less than 12 hours of preparation they succeeded in flooding the entrance to the National Police Headquarters with protesters.

In Tel-Aviv University, hundreds of students and lecturers marched through the campus, ending at the Law Faculty building; the faculty's dean, Prof. Uriel Reichmann, joined the marchers. In Haifa, the Israeli Society of Linguistics held its annual

convention; on the hour scheduled for a lecture by Prof. Tanya Reinhart – one of the 27 – the convention participants held a rally demanding her release. Meanwhile, in the Knesset, a petition to the Minister of Police was signed by 17 Knesset Members of the Ratz, Mapam, Shinuy and Labor parties; this action was, however, marred by decision of this 'peace-coalition' to exclude the Knesset Members of the non-Zionist PLP and the Communist Party (KM Muhammad Miari was first asked to sign, but then asked to remove his signature!).

Faced with the tide of public criticism, the police gave in and released the 27; they received a tumultuous welcome at a closely-packed public hall in Tel-Aviv. However, the police announced that the 27 will soon be prosecuted on charges of 'incitement to rebellion' and 'entering a closed military area'.

On Saturday, June 17, the Twenty-First Year's group returned to the site of their 'crime', accompanied by a large number of supporters including PLP and Ratz Knesset Members, and held a twenty-four hour sit-in strike at the military roadblock on the entrance to Kalkilya. The neighboring kibbutzim and Arab villages supported the action with food, drinks and tents; so did the inhabitants of Kalkilya itself.

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## Peace Day

On March 4, the Peace Now movement tried, for the first time, to hold a 'peace-day' of large-scale meetings between Israelis and West Bank Palestinians; however, army roadblocks at the West Bank entrances kept the peaceniks out. This prevention of peaceful dialogue drew strong criticism upon Defence Minister Rabin – including from within his own party – especially in contrast with the army's failure to stop armed settlers from entering and attacking the villages. Bowing to public pressure, Rabin indicated that the army would not interfere with the second 'peace-day', scheduled for May 27.

Nevertheless, the military authorities did attempt to sabotage the event: On May 15, one of Peace Now's main contacts and co-organisers of the 'peace-day', Dr. Rasan el-Hatib of Ramallah, was arrested. He

was released after several protests, including a press conference organised jointly by Peace Now and the el-Hatib family.

On the day itself, some two thousand Israelis traveled to four different West Bank villages, all of them recently raided by either settlers or soldiers. As defined by the organisers, the purpose of this action was to prove that peace-seeking Israelis can find welcome where their armed compatriots encounter a rain of stones.

The Palestinian leadership – with which Peace Now coordinated every detail of the operation – took care to prevent any kind of unforeseen incident; as several Israeli journalists remarked, it was an unusually quiet day all over the West Bank – a veritable one-day armistice.

Originally, the military authorities promised that they would let the Israelis enter the villages and receive the Palestinian families' hospitality. In the event, however, the army reneged on this agreement, only allowing the Israelis and Palestinians to meet on the outskirts of the built-up area. The Peace Now organisers accepted this, under protest – but only on condition that all military forces be withdrawn from the villages, until the meetings were over. This condition the army complied with.

At Turmus-Aya village, a thousand Israelis and Palestinians held an improvised rally, freely intermingling, chatting, listening to speeches in Hebrew and Arabic, and – at the conclusion – singing together 'we shall overcome' in English. The olive grove where the rally took place seemed quiet and peaceful, showing no outward sign of the incident in which, several weeks previously, a 18-year old shepherd was killed.

In a similar rally held at the long-suffering Nahalin village, the father of a boy killed in the bloody night of April 13 (see previous issue, p. 9) told the Peace Now members: 'I am willing to give up my desire for revenge, if only we could have peace and our own Palestinian state.'

The event turned out to be quite impressive: on television and on the front pages of the Israeli papers, many Israelis and Palestinians, young and old, could be seen jointly making the V-sign. As was predicted by some of the participating Palestinians, however, they had to pay a price for this success, too: during the following night, the army carried out a fresh series of raids, and arrested

dozens of people in Turmus-Aya and Nahalin.

## Food for the besieged

Since the beginning of the Intifada, Israeli individuals and groups have been sending food, medicines and clothes, concentrating on particular areas hard-hit by curfews and the Israeli Army's raids. Some of these relief convoys were blocked by the military authorities, such as the Gaza caravans organised by 'Stop the Occupation' in 1988 (see *The Other Israel*: 30, p. 6; 34, p. 5). But many food shipments got through.

Among the Arab citizens of Israel, such solidarity acts have become an expression of the Israeli Arabs' identity as part of the Palestinian people. The collection of contributions is carried out by the major political parties active among the Arabs, such as the Progressive List for Peace, the Communist Party, and Darawshe's Arab Democratic Party, as well as by the Arab Mayors' Committee, the de facto leadership body of Israel's Arab citizens. Organizations such as the Association of Arab Highschool Pupils take an active part in the fund raising, which is often carried out at social events such as weddings.

On a number of occasions, police attempted to disrupt these activities and arrest the activists; in one case, the police seized receipt books which were made out 'for support of the Intifada', which – it was claimed – constitutes under Israeli law 'support for terrorist organizations'. Until recently the authorities hesitated to make a systematic campaign to stop all of these activities, which would provoke a head-on clash with Israel's Arab citizens. However, the government has recently taken the ominous step of introducing in the Knesset a bill proposing to amend the (already infamous) 'Anti-terrorist Act', and add a new article which (among other things) defines 'support for terrorist organizations' in a way that includes practically any humanitarian aid to the Occupied Territories' Arab population.

Acts of solidarity for the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip have also given new momentum to joint Jewish-Arab action inside Israel. In the Western Gallilee, an area in which Jewish and Arab towns and villages are inter-

mingled, such activities were organised by the 'Red Line' group, headed by former lieutenant-colonel Dov-Yirmiah, and several food convoys were sent to the northern part of the West Bank.

In May 1989, the Gaza Strip was subjected to a series of curfews and punitive measures, apparently undertaken by Defence Minister Rabin in response to pressures from the extreme right (see separate article). Shabura, a refugee camp at Rafah (in the south of the Strip) was singled out for a particularly harsh treatment. Its 20,000 inhabitants were placed under continual curfew for 23 days. After two weeks, the food stores were running out. On Friday, May 19, hundreds of inhabitants poured out of their houses, breaking the curfew; the soldiers opened fire, killing five of them, wounding dozens and driving the rest back into their homes, for another week and a half of curfew. The news took several days to trickle out into Israel. They caused the formation of a wide coalition of Jewish and Arab groups, with the aim of sending a relief convoy – the largest to date.

The organizers included groups which had never before found themselves together: Ibna' Al-Balad (Sons of the Country) and Peace Now's Haifa branch; Hal'a haKibush (Stop the Occupation) together with Dai laKibush (Down with Occupation); the PLP and the Communists, side by side with Ratz and Mapam; representatives of kibbutzim as well as of Arab villages, and further the Druze Initiative Committee, Shuta-fut (Partnership), Red Line, Women in Black as well as Yesh G'vul.

A campaign was carried out to collect contributions and bring the situation at Shabura to the Israeli public's attention, through daily vigils at street corners. Despite several violent assaults the vigils succeeded in collecting considerable amounts of money. More money, food and clothing were collected at meetings of various organizations, with the total worth of all contributions exceeding, within a week, the amount of 10,000 Israeli shekels (\$5,000).

The action was coordinated in the Haifa region, where the largest mobilization also took place. The commodities procured consisted – besides some sacks of sugar, rice, and beans – of baby food, powdered milk, and medicines, particularly for

children's diseases. It was decided that the convoy would set out on June 2, the international 'Children's Rights Day'. Upon hearing of the planned convoy, the Israeli settlers in the Gaza strip vowed to 'block the leftists at all costs'. As a precaution, the convoy organisers decided to divide the food and medicines into two parts. One part was loaded upon about thirty private cars, which traveled from Haifa and Tel-Aviv and along Israel's main north-south highway, with each car bearing a sign in Hebrew and Arabic: 'Gaza Strip Food Convoy'. Simultaneously, an unmarked truck, with the larger part of the food, traveled unobtrusively through side-roads.

About a hundred metres before the entrance to the Gaza Strip, the convoy was blocked by the settlers' cars. The peace activists opened their cars and, bearing the food packages in their hands, set out on foot. Upon emerging from the cars the convoy members – among them Knesset Members Muhammad Miari (PLP) and Tufik Tubi (Communists) – were assaulted by settlers, brandishing sticks and shouting abuse, who seemed determined to wrest the food out of their hands. Several packages of rice were torn and their contents spilled on the road; but within a few minutes the peace marchers organised themselves, and unencumbered activists, among them many women, formed a cordon around those who carried the food.

Together, they broke through the settlers' blockade and reached the checkpoint at the Gaza Strip entrance. There it was the army which blocked their way – with Brigadier-General Poleg, governor of the Strip, commanding the soldiers in person. Poleg announced that the entire Gaza Strip had been declared on this occasion 'a closed military area' and anyone attempting entry in defiance of the army would be arrested; it soon became clear that the prohibition applied only to the food convoy, while the settlers were allowed to move freely in and out of the Strip. Thereupon, the peace activists piled the food on the ground near the checkpoint and started a sit-in strike around the pile.

For several hours the stalemate continued. The army prevented the settlers from further attacks on the food convoy, but did not interfere when the settlers started, instead, throwing stones at passing Gazan cars under the soldiers' eyes. One

Palestinian driver was hit and taken to hospital with a head wound; neither the army nor the police made any effort to find the stone-thrower.

After about an hour, General Poleg suddenly produced a Palestinian who was presented as the secretary of a Gaza orphans' support association, and proposed to the organisers that the food be given to his charge; the Palestinian turned out, however, to be a paid employee of the military government's 'civilian administration'. The organisers rejected this offer, and stated that they would give the food only to the representative of an organization which is totally independent of the military government, such as the Red Crescent Society or UNWRA (United Nations Relief Works Agency). To this the general was totally opposed.

Suddenly, a truck arrived from inside the Gaza Strip – the 'invisible' part of the convoy on its way back from Rafah. The peace activists on it reported that they had succeeded in delivering the food and that in the Shabura camp, children were already drinking 'the milk we have brought them'.

After consultation, it was decided that the action's aims were achieved – both to assist the Shabura population directly, and to mobilize public opinion – since, together with the settlers, the Israeli press and international TV-crews had awaited the convoy at the checkpoint.

The food was re-loaded on the cars, and the convoy set out, back to the north. A series of further initiatives is planned for the near future, in order to supply food and medicine to children and adults who are suffering from extended curfews.

Address: Food Caravan Coordinating Committee, c/o 'Shuta-fut', P.O.B. 9577, Haifa, Israel; contact: Daniel Padmes, tel: 04-660281.

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## Omar Al-Qasem 1941-1989

Few Israelis have heard of Omar Al-Qasem until the last month of his life. Among the Palestinians, on the other hand, he had long since become legendary. In 1968, Al-Qasem was involved in the PLO's attempt to start a guerilla war on the West Bank. Leading a group which intended to sabotage Israeli military installations, he was sentenced to a total of 113-years imprisonment - of which he served, until his death, twenty-one.

In prison, he became not only the most prominent leader of the prisoners belonging to the DFLP (Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), but also a respected leader and spokesman for prisoners of all factions. He was also active in education, as an English teacher and a writer of educational texts and literature for the prisoners. Several times, the authorities transferred him from one prison to another, but this served only to help spread his influence in ever widening circles. During the period of his imprisonment, several exchanges of prisoners between Israel and the PLO took place; but in all of them, the Israeli negotiators refused to include Al Qasem. He remained incarcerated, and became known as *'the Palestinian Nelson Mandela'*.

For years, Al-Qasem's health deteriorated; under the very rudimentary medical care provided in Israeli prisons, no adequate treatment was given to his failing kidneys. In May 1989, as his situation became critical, urgent pleas to release him from prison for medical treatment were made.

A number of Israeli lawyers and journalists have shown themselves sympathetic, and through them the general Israeli public heard of Al-Qasem for the first time. All pleas were, however, rejected by the authorities; before a big campaign could be mounted Omar Al-Qasem died, a prisoner, on June 4.

Following the news of Al-Qasem's death, a three-day commercial strike was declared in the Occupied Territories, and political prisoners around the country held a three-day mourning strike.

Omar Al-Qasem's funeral left from his mother's home in Sheik Jerah neighborhood, East Jerusalem, and continued to Al Aqsa mosque, where he was buried. For once, the police and Border Guards showed restraint, and, except for relatively minor incidents, did not interfere with the procession;

thus, wide-spread riots were averted.

Al-Qasem's funeral had many of the elements of a state funeral, held by the budding Palestinian state in honor of a man it considers a hero and a martyr. Leading the procession was a contingent of the Intifada's shock troops, dressed in red track-suits, followed by representatives of the Moslem and Christian clergies and well-known political figures, many of whom openly wept. Thousands of mourners chanted: 'There is no God but Allah and the Martyr is beloved of Allah' and also: 'Mother of the Martyr rejoice - all children are your children.'

A contingent of Israeli Jews and Arabs took part in the mourning. Writer Salman Natur and Adv. Felicia langer carried a wreath sent by the Communist-led 'Hadash' front, while dozens of other peace activists walked behind a wreath inscribed 'Honor and respect to freedom fighter Omar Al-Qasem', among them KM's Mohammad Miari, Tufii Tubi and Abd El Wahab Darawshe. Members of the 'Hafarperet' (Mole) Youth Movement also came from Tel-Aviv to participate.

### Gaza after curfew

*On May 25, the Gaza Strip emerged from a lengthy period of curfew. The first group of Israeli peace activists to enter the Strip, on the following day, was organised by the Communist-led Democratic Front for Peace and Equality ('Hadash') and headed by KM Charlie Biton. Rayna Moss participated.*

The group went to Shabura refugee camp, and visited the families of Fatme Al-Haide - aged 55, mother of seven as well as a grandmother - and of Ahmed Al-Arab - aged 34, father of six. Both of them were among the five inhabitants killed in the middle of the weeks-long curfew, when the people broke out of their homes in their collective effort to get food.

The delegation also met with local doctors, journalists and activists, and held short discussions with dozens of children and adults who gathered around them to tell the tales of the curfew. The group could also witness the newest form of harassment: the walls of the entire Gaza commercial center were covered with black tar. According to the official IDF version, a soldier was ordered to erase slogans, and had misunderstood the order. It was, however,

obvious that many soldiers have been working very hard to cover such a large area, which includes newly painted walls, religious inscriptions and commercial signs. In many places, the tar was covered with new slogans, painted in red and white.

In Al Ahli hospital we saw wards full of the Intifada wounded, many of them children. One ten year old boy had several rubber bullets removed from his stomach. Another boy, aged 12, had a bullet lodged in his lung, which the doctors could not remove. Several adult men had fractures in their legs, the result of beatings. Doctors showed us an X-ray of one man's chest which showed the effects of an exploding bullet - the internal organs were splattered with fragments.

On the way out, soldiers at a roadblock refused to let our taxi pass. KM Charlie Bitton got out to tell them who he is and where we were heading. One soldier picked up an iron rod and held it ready to strike, while another aimed his gun at Bitton. Then, they recognized him and laid down their weapons. A local resident might, in the same circumstances, already have joined the wounded we saw in Al Ahli.

### Dialogue update

*'I left my house in Jaffa. I am now leaving it to you, but don't ask of me to forget it.'* This statement, by Suad Amari of Bir-Zeit University on the West Bank, succeeded in breaking the deadlock, which threatened to wreck the women's conference held in Brussels; the participants felt that, from that moment on, a real dialogue had started. At the conference's conclusion, it was not possible to issue a statement acceptable to all participants - several of the Israelis present, such as Labor Knesset Member Nava Arad, did not accept the principle of complete Palestinian sovereignty. Nevertheless, organiser Simone Susskind regarded the event as a success, in the very fact that many Israeli and Palestinian women - some of them with no previous experience in such meetings - were brought together and had a chance to talk to each other for three days.

The Brussels meeting was followed by another conference on the other side of the Atlantic, at Har-

vard University. Among the Israeli participants were Shinuy Knesset Member Abraham Poraz, former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, and former West Bank governor Ephraim Shneh (Labor Party) as well as Labor's Yael Dayan, daughter of the late Moshe Dayan. The chief PLO representative at Harvard was Dr. Nabil Shaat, chair of the Palestinian National Council's Political Committee, who in recent months has been successfully touring the United States and presenting the PLO's new positions.

Such conferences are more than 'get togethers' of the already converted. The Israeli participants who regard positively the idea of elections in the Occupied Territories felt encouraged by the PLO position agreeing to the holding of such elections, subject to several conditions - the chief of them being an American guarantee that, at the end of the interim period, negotiations will start on the basis of 'territories in return for peace' (*Yediot Aharonot*, June 4, 1989).

A conference due to take place in July at the city of Toledo, Spain might add an entirely new dimension to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue; most of the hundred Israelis due to meet a high-level PLO delegation at Toledo are Sephardi (Oriental) Jews. The Oriental Jews are the main electoral basis of the Likud, and the peace movement has not, thus far, been able to gain a real foothold inside this community; therefore, the Toledo meeting might assume a vital importance. It should be noted that the choice of the Toledo venue is not accidental; during the Middle Ages, the city of Toledo - than under Muslim rule - was a major center of both the Arab and the Oriental Jewish cultures, which existed in close symbiosis.

During the first months of 1989, the Israeli authorities seemed resigned to seeing the anti-peace law becoming a dead letter, through the multiplication of Israelis' meetings with PLO representatives. Indeed, Labor KM David Liba'i introduced in the Knesse a bill for the law's abolition.

However, during May and June, charges were presented against several participants in meetings with the PLO. The first of the new trials, due to open at the second half of June, is that of the 'Peace Sailor'

Abie Nathan, owner of 'The Voice of Peace' - an extremely popular pirate radio station. His charge sheet enumerates four meetings with Yasser Arafat, seven meetings with other PLO officials and one telephone conversation with a PLO representative.

A second charge sheet concerns the June 1987 meeting in Budapest, Hungary (*see issue 28, p. 3*). Eight of the participants are indicted. The charge sheet accuses the eight of 'forming a conspiracy to meet representatives of terrorist organizations' and of having carried out the conspiracy's intent by 'meeting with representatives of terrorist organizations at the conference hall of a Budapest hotel, where the accused and the terrorist representatives were seated around an H-shaped table and discussed political issues'.

In addition to these cases, Attorney-General Charish instructed the police to start investigating the participants in further meetings, including Knesset Members, with a view to accumulating evidence leading to their prosecution, and to the removal of the Knesset Members' parliamentary immunity. The targets of this new investigation include all present and former Knesset Members of the non-Zionist parties\*, and a few less prominent members of the moderate peace camp - who participated in one or more meeting with the PLO in Cairo, Prague, Geneva or Belgrade, at various dates in 1988 and 1989.

These latest developments give a crucial importance to the hearings of the Supreme Court, which will convene on July 19 and 20 to decide whether or not to confirm the sentences passed by the lower courts upon Latif Dori, Yael Lotan, Eliezer Feiler and Reuven Kaminer, for meeting with a PLO delegation in Romania on November 1986.

Each of the 'Romania Four' was sentenced to six months' actual and twelve months' suspended imprisonment, and a fine of 4,000 NIS (above \$2,000). The Supreme Court's verdict in this case will - for better or for worse - set a precedent for all future cases. The following is taken from an appeal to the friends of peace, launched by Reuven Kaminer on behalf of the Romania Four.

*We remain in need of your material and moral support. If the sentences are not reversed, the defendants will have to leave their jobs for half a year, leaving their families with no means*

*of support. In any case, we face increased legal expenses, and would like to have the wherewithal for launching a wider information and educational campaign against the 'anti-terrorist' amendment.*

**Donations to the: Committee to Save the Peace Dialogue (CSPD), P.O.B. 20395, Tel-Aviv 61204, Israel; or to: Bank Hapo'alim - branch 772, account number 272166.**

**Letters of protest to: Minister of Justice Dan Meridor, Ministry of Justice, Salah Ha-Din Street, East Jerusalem; or to: nearest Israeli Embassy or Consulate.**

\* Among the cases investigated is included a meeting in Cairo on April 15, 1989 which constituted, in fact, part of an unofficial 'exchange of information' on behalf of the Israeli government itself: KM Darawshe obtained from Defence Minister Rabin details of Rabin's view on the plan for elections in the Territories; he transmitted them to PLO leader Yasser Arafat and his deputies Abu Iyad and Abu Mazen, and on his return transmitted to Rabin's aides a document detailing the PLO leaders' comments (*Yediot Aharonot*, May 31, 1989).

## Chasson's struggle

Rami Chasson - the 33-year-old owner of a small Jerusalem Sun-tan and Health Parlor - had never taken an active role in political activities before his refusal to participate in putting down the Intifada. The army chose to make an example of him, to break the resistance of one in order to deter all. Chasson, however, was not broken. The army did not create a deterrent, but turned Chasson - nilly-willy - into a hero.

In 1988 he - together with 800 other reserve soldiers - signed the Yesh G'vul petition. Unlike many of the signatories, he did not even refuse altogether to serve in the occupied territories; he told his commanding officer that he is willing to do his reserve service on the West Bank, as long as it does not involve direct contact with civilians.

This request, however, was not granted. Again and again, Chasson was ordered to participate in patrolling the streets of Palestinian cities or to stand guard over imprisoned Palestinians; he continued to refuse these orders and was imprisoned five consecutive times. With each new term of imprisonment Rami Chasson became more popular in-

side and outside the prison. Extensive articles appeared in the Israeli press; Chasson's statement at his trial: 'You, my judges, will yourselves be judged' was quoted again and again.

Rivka Chasson, his mother - herself a long-standing Likud supporter and a veteran of Begin's 'Irgun' underground - gave public backing to her son's struggle with the military authorities, and even tried to lobby Likud Knesset Members on his behalf.

The campaign reached its peak at a late evening hour on Thursday, May 11, when sympathisers filled to overflowing a public hall in Tel-Aviv, the audience expressing solidarity with Chasson - at the time imprisoned for the fifth time - and with six other imprisoned refusers. An impressive number of artists contributed to this alternative Independence Day celebration. Among the many speakers who addressed the audience was Maoziya Segal, who lost his right arm in the Yom Kippur War. Well-known in Israel for his activity on behalf of disabled war veterans, Segal had never before taken a public stand on such a controversial political issue.

The army command felt a growing unease at this publicity. On April 24, a high-level meeting was held to discuss the refuser problem. According to *Ma'ariv* newspaper, army Chief-of-Staff Shomron participated personally. At the meeting, the army authorities decided to ease up the pressure on reservist refusers and cease using the method of repeated call-ups.

Rami Chasson was allowed - as he had requested all along - to do his reserve service in the Jordan Valley, far from the Intifada 'hot spots'. Several other imprisoned refusers were also released, the most remarkable of them being Angelo Aiden, an inhabitant of a Jerusalem slum neighborhood. During his three months' imprisonment, Aiden got expressions of support from many of his neighbors ... including from some Kahane supporters!

It seems, however, that the army's new policy applies only to reservist refusers - not to conscripts, such as the signatories of the 'Highschool Students' Letter'. 19-year old Amit Lewenhoff, former spokesperson of the highschool group, has already spent three months in prison, and no end seems in sight. The campaign for his release goes on, through petitions and regular demonstrations

on the mountain overlooking his prison.

**Letters of encouragement to:** *Private Amit Lewenhoff, Military Identity number 4656570, military postal code 01527 (detention), Israeli Defence Forces, Israel.*

**Letters of protest to:** *Defence Minister Yitzchak Rabin, Defence Ministry, Kaplan Street, Ha-Kiryat, Tel-Aviv, Israel.*

**Contact:** *The Highschool Group, P.O.B. 33847, Tel-Aviv 61338; or: Yesh G'vul, P.O.B. 6953, Jerusalem 91068; or: American Friends of Yesh G'vul, 1678 Shattuck Ave., P.O.B. 6, Berkeley, CA 94709, U.S.A.; or: British Friends of Yesh G'vul, c/o 6 Endsleigh Str., London WC1, U.K.*

## People of the book

Since the beginning of the Intifada, all Palestinian universities have been closed down by order of the military government. In the West Bank (thought not, for some unclear reason, in the Gaza Strip) elementary and high schools, too, were kept closed for all but two months of the Intifada period; for several months, even the kindergartens were closed. The authorities clamped down on classes held in private homes, and teachers caught teaching such classes were arrested. Later, the military even ordered school principals to stop giving out homework and study packages for home use.

The slogan 'The People of The Book is condemning others to illiteracy' was first used by the religious peace movements, 'Oz ve-Shalom' and 'Netivot Shalom', in their demonstration at Prime Minister Shamir's Jerusalem residence. The organizers mentioned Jewish traditions dating back to the time of Roman persecutions in the second century, when Jews were forbidden to study their Scriptures; the Talmud hallows the names of the Sages who defied Emperor Hadrian's ban and continued to teach their disciples in secret.

The Student Union of Tel-Aviv University adopted a resolution calling upon the government to reopen the universities in the Occupied Territories. At a large solidarity meeting held on the Tel-Aviv campus, Dr. Azmi Bishara of Bir-Zeit University said: 'Our universities continue to function. Every day I am breaking the law by meeting my

students in private homes and teaching them, and all of Bir-Zeit's 200 lecturers are doing the same. If the army wants, they can arrest us for this. We have nothing to lose.' At the same meeting, the peace movement's 'Grand Old Man', Prof. Yesha'yahu Leibovitz, called upon Israeli citizens to learn from this example and manifest their opposition to the occupation by acts of defiance, such as soldiers' refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories and its civilian equivalents.

In Haifa, a group of Israeli teachers organised The Committee to Defend Children Under Occupation (CDCUO), which is actively involved in the clandestine teaching of Palestinian children, mainly in the geographically-close Jenin area of the West Bank. According to the group's organiser, 60-year old teacher Erna Mer, its activities are mainly concerned with children aged eight to nine, since these were due to start their schooling exactly at the time when the Intifada started and the schools were closed. Coming over to Jenin once a week, and providing the children with materials for self-study imported from the United States at the committee's expense, the groups members succeeded so far in avoiding arrest.

Meanwhile, the larger 'Teachers and Educators for School Re-opening' (TESR) started circulating a petition stating: 'As persons involved in education, we are not willing to accept the closure of schools and the deprivation of education as legitimate means of punishment. Collective punishment of children and youths is unjust, and is causing additional youths to revolt and enter the cycle of violence. Deprivation of education is in contravention of children's recognized basic rights and of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which the State of Israel is a signatory. We believe that opening the schools and providing education for all are essential prerequisites for building relations of peace and good neighborliness with a modern, enlightened Palestinian society.'

The petition was, so far, signed by more than a thousand teachers and educators, including Yitzchak Velder, chair of the Israeli Teachers Union. A similar petition, organised by a group of Jerusalem pupils, got 370 signatures; a third petition, also in Jerusalem, is being organised by parents who have children at the school-going age.

This public campaign inside Israel, together with pressures from outside, is beginning to have results. Education Minister Navon made public statements in favor of re-opening the schools. The Knesset Education Committee also debated this issue, with Labor Knesset members speaking out strongly. Representatives of the Military Government's 'Civilian Administration', who enjoy uncontrolled power in this matter, did appear before the committee; they indicated that the schools - though not the universities - might re-open in the near future.

**Contacts:**

*Oz ve-Shalom - Netivot Shalom, P.O.B. 4433, Jerusalem 91043*

*CDCUO, P.O.B. 44984, Haifa 31448*

*TESR, P.O.B. 7281, Jerusalem 91072*

*Pupils' Petition, P.O.B. 3742, Jerusalem*

## Confronting the prison

by Chava Cohen

HaSharon Prison is divided into two parts: one, the bigger, is a rather liberal prison for not very serious cases: most of its inmates are young boys, and there are the 'Jewish underground' prisoners, people with whom the prison authorities deal rather leniently. On the other side is the prison for the female political prisoners from the Occupied Territories, and here the leniency ends. On April 12 there was a visit of journalists in this part of the prison. Most of them found several things to criticize, but in general they saw it as a normal prison. Probably this was too much for the prison authorities; they started making it into an 'abnormal' prison.

The first step, taken without giving any reason, was halving the amount of money the prisoners can spend in the prison canteen. There you can get cigarettes, coffee, milk and sweets, and as the prison fare is very bad, the prisoners were rather dependent on additions from the canteen.

Next, there came to the prison a new prisoner, with a surprising sentence: one and a half month. The military courts very seldom give such short sentences to Palestinians, and the prisoners say that this girl is well known as a collaborator. Some days after coming to prison she complained to the guards that she was attacked by the other prisoners. There was no enquiry; nobody tried to find

out what happened. The prison authorities already knew all they wanted to know.

Three girls were put in solitary confinement, and all prisoners received a collective punishment - no books, no knitting, no radios, no meals in the mess hall, separate walks for every three women, so they won't be able to meet, and a drastic reduction in family visits. Before, the women waiting for trial or on Administrative Detention could be visited every week, and those after trial - every two weeks. Now, visits are allowed, respectively, every one and every two months.

Because of all these 'improvements', the Women For Women Political Prisoners (WOFPP) and the families of the prisoners decided to picket the prison on June 12, a Monday - which should have been the families' visit day. We stood there - ten women of the WOFPP, and some fifty family members, mainly women, mothers and children and a small sprinkling of men: fathers, husbands, brothers. We stood there quietly, with slogans in Hebrew, Arabic and English.

The police were not happy. They told us to move a bit farther from the prison, a bit farther from the road. We moved accordingly. Then they told us to disperse. The legality of this order is doubtful. In Israel - though not in the Occupied Territories - you are allowed to picket, as long as you don't shout or make disturbances. We agreed to disperse, if the prison authorities will receive a letter from the families and speak with a delegation of three mothers. In the beginning they agreed, but when the delegation came with the letter, nobody was ready to speak with them. The police threw the letter into a waste basket. 'Come tomorrow, with a lawyer.' 'We have a lawyer here. He can come with us now!' - 'No, disperse, disperse!'

We went on standing. The police arrested one of the Israeli women. By some strange logic, they chose one that didn't feel well, and sat on the ground. 'We shall take you to the hospital'. 'No thank you, there is no need.' During this conversation her shirt was torn. The rest of us tried to prevent her going, or at least to go together with her, but we were thrown out of the police car. (She was taken to the police station, interrogated and sent home, some hours later.) The police wanted to arrest some more people: they arrested the lawyer and a Palestinian taxi

driver, who brought some families from Gaza. This man, who didn't stand in the picket line, and simply waited near his car, was severely beaten.

Then, the police (with help from the prison guards) started pushing all of us into a Red Cross bus, that had brought the families from the West Bank. Saying that some people had private cars or taxis, or wanted to go in another direction, didn't help. With knocks, kicks and some use of tear gas we were all crowded into the bus. Then the Border Guards, who took over in the meantime, told the driver to drive backwards, told him to get out of the bus, counted the people inside, and gave him two fines: one for driving backward, and one for overcrowding. As a parting gift, they beat him, and told him to go straight to Ramallah, without stopping on the way or letting anybody off.

A military jeep went with us to guard against anybody getting off before Ramallah, and so the women of Tel-Aviv went home via the West Bank. The last time that some of us wanted to go to Ramallah, the army prevented us from entering; this time, they made us go there, against our will. For us it was an extraordinary experience. For the Palestinians, however, being at the mercy of the military authorities is part of daily life.

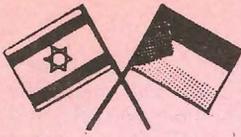
## Terry Boullata free!

by Rayna Moss

23-year old Terry Boullata from East Jerusalem was released on bail on June 14, as the result of a lengthy public campaign organized by her parents and several Israeli human rights organizations.

Boullata, who suffers from chronic hepatitis, has been repeatedly denied bail and, as a result of the conditions in haSharon prison, suffered a severe deterioration to the point that when brought to court she could not walk without help. On June 8, she sent a message through a lawyer, to whom she was brought bound hand and foot: 'Mother, save my life. I am dying.'

During the past months, the Women's Organization for Political Prisoners held a local and international campaign for Terry's release. The Association of Israeli and Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights sent numerous telegrams about her



case to the authorities. Prof. Emmanuel Theodore, a founding member of the Association and an expert on internal diseases, visited Terry several times in prison and submitted his expert testimony to the court. The Movement of Democratic Women in Israel and other groups also joined in the campaign; Ratz Knesset Member Shulamit Aloni appealed to Defence Minister Rabin for the release of Terry Boullata on humanitarian grounds.

Meanwhile Rabin, who was visiting France, encountered a request by Ms. Danielle Mitterand to let Terry Boullata receive treatment at a French hospital. On the day of his return to Israel he gave orders to release her on bail.

Terry is now at home with her family, and will soon leave the country for medical treatment abroad. Contact: WOFPP, POB 31811, Tel Aviv or AIPPHR, POB 10235, Tel Aviv 61101

## Campaign for Nitzotz prisoners

by Rayna Moss

Michal Schwartz, Assaf Adiv and Yakov Ben-Efrat, editors of *Derech HaNitzotz*, who were recognised as 'Prisoners of Conscience' by Amnesty International, have conducted a three-day hunger strike to protest the Prison Authority's vindictive policy.

The three have been designated 'security prisoners', because of having been convicted of membership in an organization defined as 'terrorist' by Israeli law - though nobody accused them of any act of violence, and their 'terrorist' activity consisted solely of publishing a newspaper. Because of their 'security' status, the Nitzotz prisoners are denied even the smallest favours which are from time to time granted to normal prisoners, such as: weekly telephone calls, math lessons, handicrafts, etc.

On the other hand, the Prison Authority turned down Michal Schwartz's requests to be transferred to haSharon prison, where other women who have the status of 'security' prisoners are held, and the similar requests of Adiv and Ben-Efrat for transfer to the male prisoners' Kfar-Yona prison's 'security' wing. The reason for this refusal is

the Nitzotz prisoners' being Jewish, while the other 'security' prisoners are Palestinians. As a result, Yakov Ben-Efrat and Assaf Adiv have spent 9 out of 13 months of imprisonment in total isolation, since the Prison Authority does not wish them to mingle, either with 'non-security' Jewish prisoners or with Arab 'security' ones.

After Michal Schwartz completed two-thirds of her sentence, she applied to have the last third deducted for good behavior. This was denied to her by the Prison Authority's Commission, despite positive reports on her conduct in prison and the humanitarian grounds of her being a widowed mother of two children. The official reason for refusal was that Schwartz 'presents a risk to state security'.

The denial of Michal Schwartz's release sharply contrasts with the treatment of three 'Jewish Underground' terrorists convicted of triple murder and attempted murder, whose sentences were reduced by President Herzog, from the original 25 to 10 years. The three are now due to undergo 'rehabilitation' - i.e. studying in a Yeshiva outside the prison and only returning at night to their cells, and are expected to get next year a third off their already shortened sentence - as did all of their 30 co-terrorists in the past.

An international campaign in solidarity with the Nitzotz prisoners has begun by the signing of the following petition:

*We, the undersigned, strongly protest the arbitrary return of Yakov Ben-Efrat and Assaf Adiv to the special isolation wing in 'Ashmoret' jail and the denial to Michal Schwartz of release within the framework of deducting a third of her sentence for good behavior. We view her remaining in prison after completing two-thirds of her sentence, while extreme right-wingers condemned for murder have benefitted from the same procedure, as a manifestation of discrimination and inequality before the law, and as an additional attempt to delegitimise all democratic and peace forces in Israel.*

*In our view the three prisoners' wish to spend the remainder of their sentence among prisoners who have been tried on charges similar to theirs should be respected, and they should not be forced into social isolation,*

*which constitutes an additional punishment.*

**Signed petitions and messages of solidarity to: HaNitzotz, P.O.B. 1575, Jerusalem, Israel.**

## A state to be proud of

*The following is translated from an interview with Prof. Ephraim Katzir, President of the State of Israel between 1974 and 1979 (Hadashot 19.4.1989). Since the end of his term, Prof. Katzir reimmersed himself in research at the Weizman Institute of Science.*

In this land there are Arabs who seek independence. We are not able to find, together with them, a solution - and this is partially our fault (...). The Zionist dream was not to create a Jewish state in which Arabs are beaten up; our dream was to have a state of which the Jewish people could be proud. Many of my friends were killed in the War of Independence. Was this only in order to make ourselves physically strong? I believe that the Jewish people and the enlightened world will not let us degenerate, and that we will ourselves get out of the present predicament (...).

*-What do you feel about events in the Territories?*

The thing which disturbs me above all is our killing of Arabs. We are sending a 19-year boy to kill a 13-year old kid... Being a biologist, I know how complex a human being is. Each one of us is a product of four billion years of development. I know how correct were our ancestors when they wrote (in the Talmud): 'He who saves a single human being is like one who saved the whole world'. I feel that we are corrupting our young generation. Anybody who kills a human being - and not in battle - is damaging his own mental make-up.

The main problem is that we don't make a real effort to talk with the Arabs. If they think we should talk to the PLO, than we have to talk with the PLO. In such negotiations we should not place a blind trust in the words of the PLO people, and we should continue to maintain and develop our armed forces. Any agreement should be implemented in stages, and only after the obligations of one stage are carried out should we go on to the next stage. Still, there is no other alternative. It is very difficult to find in the Territories a non-PLO representative.