

The Other Israel

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for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

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NO TO THE WAR!

As this is being written, the whole world is following the news of the American air attack on Iraq. If there was room for hope that the crisis would not result in a shooting war, it was due to the irrefutable fact that this would be the most irrational war of this century.

Granted, Iraq had no right to invade Kuwait and must be forced to pull back its forces. This could certainly be the result of a consistent implementation of the economic sanctions against Iraq as resolved by the security Council. The lesson of South Africa is very clear: it takes time, but no country in the modern world can withstand forever such sanctions.

Yes, it might have taken several years, but eventually Iraq, being unable to sell its own oil or that of Kuwait, and coping with a paralyzed economy, would have had to give in. In the meantime—what is the hurry? As for the supply of oil, all is well on that front, except for the irresponsible and unjustified attempts of the oil companies to raise its prices artificially.

And as for the princes of Kuwait: they are not doomed to hunger or indigence. The billions of dollars they have accumulated in the world's biggest banks and the revenue they are still drawing from the oil fields would enable them to continue living for a long time to come in the manner they have been accustomed to. True, the Kuwaiti population did suffer at Iraqi hands, as evidenced by the Amnesty International report. But when tortures by secret police are a decisive reason to go to war, President Bush will have to fight against quite a number of countries—including some members of his present Gulf coalition.

What other urgent needs were there to precipitate Iraq's compliance with the wishes of the international community by means of military action? Can it be true that the desire of the military-industrial complex to revive discarded weapons' projects, or the wish of the Pentagon to boost up the morale of its armed forces as it began sagging with the termination of the cold war, are the real motives for the speed with which close to half a million American soldiers were hurriedly transported to the Saudi desert?

After all, when the whole international situation in the post cold war era is considered, there can be no

doubt that far greater and more urgent needs were awaiting the tremendous resources of the Western World, led by the United States, than the shipment and maintenance of a huge army on the borders of Kuwait.

It is time to look at the nature of the Gulf crisis in a more balanced manner. When the war between Iran and Iraq broke out—due to Saddam Husein's mistaken belief that he could take advantage of Iran's apparent weakness after the Khomeinist revolution and impose a border settlement, favourable to Iraq, in the Shat al-Arab region—the Western World and the Arabian oil princes welcomed it with relief.

By the time that long and indecisive war ended, eight years later, Iraq had lost a quarter million men, its economy was in shambles, and a huge debt of some eighty billion dollars threatened its ability to rehabilitate itself. The real benefactors of that war were Iraq's two major creditors—Saudi Arabia and Kuwait—whom Iraq had freed of the Khomeini-type revolution they had feared. Saddam Husein, realizing that Iraq could not possibly pay its tremendous debt, asked that a sizable part of it be forgiven. This demand was met with contempt by the very regimes who were saved by the war he fought with Iran.

Under those very severe circumstances the United States—which had by then already developed the notion of becoming the world's policeman—could have made a constructive contribution by urging the Arabian princes, in the interests of all concerned, to be more considerate of Iraq's demands. But preferring not to meddle in Arab affairs, it allowed the tension in the region to build up, failing to realize that its own diplomatic efforts to structure a more amicable relationship with Iraq were at stake.

Seeing his demand for a debt moratorium treated with utter contempt, Saddam Husein carried out what had been Iraq's dream ever since Kuwait was created by the British in 1899 and was attempted, without success, as late as 1961. The Iraqis have never acquiesced in the creation of Kuwait as a separate political entity. Whether under the Ottomans, the British, or as an independent state, they have always maintained that the territory of Kuwait was wrongly separated from theirs. But only under the present regime, Iraq had the power to challenge Kuwait's

separate existence by actually annexing it.

Clearly, the violent occupation of Kuwait, even if not entirely devoid of sense, could not and should not be tolerated. But the idea that American, British, French, Egyptian and many other soldiers should be sacrificed just to restore the corrupt family of Kuwait's princes is preposterous. Under the pressure of economic sanctions, Iraq would ultimately have had to give in. For the interests of the Kuwaitis and the other people of the region, the fate of Kuwait should be determined democratically by the Kuwaitis themselves. There is no justification to re-impose upon the people of Kuwait (those who survive this ordeal) the Sabah family, whose conduct of affairs has become synonymous with depravity and debauchery.

The story of the Gulf crisis has not yet ended. Saddam Husein seemed to be offering an opening for a negotiated settlement by tying the Kuwaiti question to the Palestinian. It never sounded sincere, but no harm would have resulted from calling his bluff by accepting his demand in return for an immediate evacuation of Kuwait. Anyway, the Palestinian issue is bound to be put on the international agenda once the Gulf crisis is put out of the way. The most significant lesson to be learned from that crisis is that regional conflicts should not be allowed to simmer underground—they may erupt all of a sudden as major international crises. But what will be the situation in the Gulf area? Has anyone thought through the aftermath of the military demarche?

According to Norman Schwartzkopf, general in command of the forces in the Gulf, it is possible to destroy Iraq, but not to foresee what will happen afterwards. President Bush may yet find out that he has a lot of explaining to do for having led his country – and the world – into a perilous undertaking of which the outcome is beyond anybody's control.

Matti Peled
January 1991

Adam Keller in Europe

Adam Keller will be staying in Europe from February 17 to March 17. Groups interested in his participation in anti-war actions can contact him at the following address: *c/o Cypres, Heemraadschapslaan 33, 1181 TZ Amstelveen, Holland*; phone: 31-20-410388.

War diary

by Adam Keller

Tel-Aviv, 20.1.1991.

No missiles have fallen last night, but I keep my gas mask handy as I write this. After three and a half days of war – is it only three and a half days? – I should put down on paper some thoughts and personal impressions, to be published when our printer resumes work.

Only rarely in history was the approach of a war as clearly visible: the date set months in advance, and the intended strategy and tactics minutely discussed in the world media.

It must be said that we, in the Israeli peace movement, did not do so much while the world stumbled into war. There were some articles by columnists and statements by a few organizations. The Israeli Committee to Prevent a Gulf War held one small demonstration in September, collected some signatures on a petition – and faded out of existence; and in December, the Professors' Petition – calling for an immediate Israeli peace initiative to defuse the Gulf crisis – got only marginal media attention.

In fact, many of us (myself included) did not really believe that a war would break out when its horrors were foretold in such detail. Up to the last moment, we placed too much hope in the diplomatic efforts. And meanwhile, there was so much else to occupy our attention: the cycle of Israeli-Palestinian violence following the Temple Mount massacre; the racist campaign against Palestinian migrant workers in Israel; or, on the credit side, the growing disaffection among Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip – where whole reserve companies, officers and men, started writing letters to the government with a call for Israeli withdrawal.

I recall the activities which took place as little as two or three weeks ago: a conference of Israeli and Palestinian women in Jerusalem; a large public meeting at Tel-Aviv University, addressed by Palestinian activist Feisal Huseini and Labor Knesset Member Yossi Beilin; a demonstration in solidarity with two reserve officers – a major and a captain – imprisoned for refusal to serve in the Occupied Territories; a march to protest the sacking of Arab workers in Jerusalem; the compilation and publication of a thorough report on medical conditions in the Occupied Territories. All of these were valuable

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actions in the struggle for Israeli-Palestinian peace – but they had little or nothing to do with the looming Gulf crisis.

On January 9 we waited for eight tense hours to hear the result of the Geneva talks; the dismal failure drove home, at last, the knowledge of the relentlessly approaching conflagration. The Professors' Petition was relaunched; the last minute call to stave off war gathered a growing number of signatories. A parallel petition of Arabs, launched by Dr. Ahmed Tibi, also received a great deal of media attention. But we were also confronted with many in the ranks of the peace movement who were opposed to the anti-war initiative. People whom we used to regard as our allies denounced the petition and openly called for war "to eliminate the Iraqi threat".

The following is the text of the petition, published in Ha'aretz on January 14, under the title Last minute before the war, and usually referred to as "The Professors' Petition".

Last minute appeal!

This war must be stopped! We live in terrible days, with the world hanging suspended between war and diplomatic settlement. We believe that this war – whose results are incalculable – can and must be stopped, before it levies a terrible toll upon us and upon all peoples in the region. We must not rely on either the Americans or the Europeans, who follow their own interests. Israel can hold the key to a diplomatic solution, averting war and safeguarding Israel's own interest.

We call upon the government of Israel not to wait for the missiles and the ABC to speak, but to proclaim out itself ready before war breaks for a comprehensive regional peace agreement. Such an agreement should make the region free of all chemical, bacteriological and nuclear weapons; establish peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. And it should guarantee the right of all peoples – including the Israeli, Palestinian and Kuwaiti peoples – to statehood, security and peace.

On January 12 Peace Now, in cooperation with the Arab Mayors' Committee, organised a kilometers-long living chain of Jews and Arabs along the Wadi Ara main road in the north of Israel, with signs calling for Israeli-Palestinian peace and coexistence. The number of participants was estimated at 15,000.

At any other time, this would have been a significant achievement; but on this date – three days before the Bush deadline – it was marred by deepening divisions. The issue of the Gulf appeared nowhere on the placards or in the organisers' leaflets; no consensus on that question could be reached. We were a small group distributing leaflets in Wadi Ara, calling for participation in anti-war vigils scheduled for January 14. Soon we found ourselves engaged in heated debates with fellow-demonstrators, who especially disliked the idea of a last minute Israeli peace initiative to avert war; according to them, this would amount to "appeasing an aggressor".

At the call of the "Women and Peace" coalition we stood on the afternoon of January 14, in vigils

scattered across the country – at the American embassy in Tel-Aviv, at the consulate in West Jerusalem, at the U.S. Navy liaison office in Haifa, and in the center of Nazareth – where a conspicuous U.S. presence could not be found. For hours we stood, with the signs calling No to the war! and **International peace conference** – now! We could hardly expect to halt the coming cataclysm – though many of us still hoped for a last-minute diplomatic breakthrough.

At a later hour, hundreds of us gathered at the Tzavta Hall in Tel-Aviv. Deep into the night, dozens of speakers spoke out against the coming war, with the keynote speech given by grand old Prof. Yesayahu Leibovitz – whose sharp criticism and somber prophecies have seldom been off the mark. (In 1967, Leibovitz was among the first to speak out firmly against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.) That "night before the war" in Tzavta was the last occasion where it was possible to listen to political speeches without keeping an ear cocked for the air-raid sirens – or to gather after sunset, for any purpose, in the heart of Tel-Aviv.

The following is translated from an advertisement published in Hadashot on January 17.

Stop the war!

Neither the people of Israel, nor any other peoples in the region have an interest in this war!

This war broke out because of:

- * A desperate attempt by the U.S. to reassert its imperialist role, and to defend – by spilling "blood for oil" – its economic interests and its status as the regional and worldwide *gendarme*.

- * The megalomania of the cruel and ambitious Iraqi dictator, who has dragged his people and other peoples into a bloody adventure.

- * The stubborn obstinacy of the governments of Israel to hold on to the Occupied Territories – even though this involves total degradation and moral corruption, and may irrevocably destroy any hope of our living in peace and freedom in this region.

We, together with many in Israel, see ourselves as a part of the worldwide movement demanding **an immediate end to the war!**

We warn against attempts by the government to exploit the situation by escalating the repression against the Palestinian people to the point of implementing the "transfer" plot.

We warn against plans to drag Israel into a World War of blood death and destruction.

Israeli Socialist Left (SHASI)

Jan. 17, 1991; Tel-Aviv P.O.Box 33076.

Contact: *Re'uvén Kaminer*, 972-(0)3-414632.

January 31.

The writing down of this retrospect has extended over a week and a half. Personal survival has become a time-consuming matter: apart from the need to be prepared all the time for the air-raid alert, with the gas mask always close, there is the heatedly discussed dilemma as to which precaution to take.

Against a gas attack, the best is to stay inside a room sealed with nylon and cellotape, preferably on top of the building since the dreaded gas is heavier than air. Against a conventional explosive, however, the best is to go to the basement shelter, which in most cases cannot be sealed. There is no way to know if the incoming missile carries a chemical or a conventional threat, until it has already exploded... The authorities, in their directives, give absolute priority to the gas peril; some people in Ramat Gan disobeyed the government and went to the basement – thereby saving themselves from certain death, when an Iraqi missile pulverised their third-storey apartment.

Statistically, there is only a very small chance of your particular building being directly hit in the "Iraqi Roulette"; but that is small comfort when you huddle under a table, beneath the rattling windows, and listen to explosions which seem very close by.

The actual physical damage from the missiles is limited; a casual stroll through the streets of Tel-Aviv does not reveal many ruins or bomb craters. (There are those who go sight-seeing to the afflicted neighborhoods, arousing the remaining inhabitants' intense displeasure.) Saddam was able to inflict upon Tel-Aviv only a minute fraction of the punishment meted out to Baghdad by the American bombers; but even this was enough to seriously dislocate a whole society. On the first three days, the entire population was ordered to stay at home. Thus, Israelis had their first experience of a way of life already very familiar to Palestinians – the curfew.

Thirty-eight year old Se'adya Talmid of Herzlia works in a bicycle factory. On January 20, Yediot Aharonot published an interview with him as "man in the street": *After three days I told my children that this is the way Arabs in the Territories have been living for years.*

After three days – once it was established that Iraqi attacks are to be expected mainly at night or early morning – Israelis were permitted to go back to work and move the wheels of the national economy. (Palestinians, for their part, are still kept under a curfew – the longest and most extensive since 1967.)

During daylight, some semblence of normalcy has returned. At dusk, the streets of Tel-Aviv are fast emptying, the shops close, and huge traffic jams appear on the outskirts; everybody seeks to be away from the city center by 6.00 P.M. – the beginning of Missile Time. Little is left of Tel-Aviv's bustling night-life; a large proportion of the city's population has fled to other parts of the country. Families and mayors in Arab towns offered to host Tel-Aviv families. Jerusalem was considered to be a particular safe site, which Saddam was expected to spare because of its large Palestinian population and the Muslim holy sites; this conviction, however, lessened since the Iraqi missiles proved increasingly erratic, with some of them falling in Palestinian-populated areas. Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories – who hitherto felt themselves immune – are now becoming apprehensive ...

In the midst of all this turmoil, a few of us continue to work for peace. We have to fit ourselves to Saddam's

timetable: all face-to-face meetings must take place in daylight; in the evenings, we are confined to the use of the telephone – before and after alarms. When the all-clear sounds, we first call friends and relatives, to make sure that they are "still there". Then we resume our telephone discussions of action plans, texts of anti-war petitions, locations for vigils, or contacts with Palestinians under curfew ...

On January 28, peace activist Shabtai Levy sent the following open letter to Prime Minister Shamir:

I am an inhabitant of Ramat-Gan, a city which already sustained two missile hits in this war, with the result that four of my fellow-townpeople were killed and dozens wounded. I regard you and your government as directly responsible for their deaths. You have been systematically foiling any attempt of reaching peace with the Palestinian people and their representative, the PLO. Had you not done so, we would now not be in a situation where Saddam Husein can use the Palestinians' plight for his despicable purposes.

In the present grave situation, which is daily worsening, you still have the possibility of significantly changing the Middle Eastern situation by announcing your willingness to start negotiations on the future of the Occupied Territories. However, you are doing the very opposite. You are using the victims' blood as a new excuse for preventing an International Peace Conference, and for denying the Palestinian people their elementary right for self-determination.

Should I be the next casualty, I hereby forbid you to send any representative to my funeral or make a speech at my grave.

Not yours, Shabtai Levy – Ramat-Gan

But more than the physical conditions, it is the political climate which makes life hard for peace activists. In all places and times, it has been the natural inclination of people under direct attack from the outside to forget their differences and close ranks behind their leadership. It is now happening in Israel – and in the Israeli peace movement, among both the leadership and the rank-and-file. In the week before the war, several Knesset members of Ratz and Mapam – Shulamit Aloni, Mordechai Virshovski, and Yair Tzaban – gave a wavering public support to the Professors' Initiative. Now, they and their entire parties, together with Peace Now, support Bush's war and issue blanket condemnations of the world anti-war movements. Even the more radical groups, such as Yesh G'vul and the Women in Black, are deeply divided between supporters and opponents of the war.

Just a year ago, we felt ourselves to be part of a vast coalition. The concept of the two-state solution and the idea of negotiations with the PLO were adopted by a growing part of the Israeli political spectrum. The U.S. administration's proposal for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Cairo was accepted by the PLO leadership on the one hand, and by the Israeli Labor Party on the other. But this coalition was extremely fragile; Shimon Peres' failure to form a "peace cabinet" knocked down its base. Then came the sequence of violent outbursts: the Rishon le-Tzion killings, the Abu-Abbas abortive sea-raid, the Temple Mount massacre, the Jerusalem knife murders, the kidnappings – with everything cul-

The following press release was distributed to the Israeli and foreign press on January 25.

With gas masks strapped to their shoulders - the normal precaution taken these days by Israelis who leave their homes - several dozen Israeli peace activists gathered opposite the U.S. Embassy in Tel-Aviv, where they held a vigil protesting the Gulf War. This was the first such manifestation since the outbreak of hostilities. The slogans on their placards - in Hebrew, Arabic and English - included: **End the War! / Enough with the Missiles, Enough with the Bombardments! / No to Saddam, No to Bush, No to War! / Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait; we Israelis - from the Occupied Territories! / Immediate Ceasefire! Immediate Negotiations! / International Peace Conference - Now! / The Patriot can save our skins - only peace can give us a future! / No to Israeli intervention! / No Blood for Oil! / Security = Peace! and We don't want to be your victims!**

The demonstration initially encountered opposition from police who claimed that the emergency situation makes all public gatherings forbidden. The demonstrators requested the help of Adv. Dan Yakir, of the Israeli Civil Rights Association. Also, Knesset Member Tamar Gozansky - who participated in the demonstration - called by telephone a senior police official, who confirmed that there was no change in the legal situation or a suspension of basic democratic rights.

The demonstrators dispersed in the afternoon, in time to gain the safety of their homes before the evening attack on the city by several Iraqi missiles.

The organisers of the demonstration sent a message of support and solidarity to the coalition of American peace organisations, due to hold a demonstration in Washington tomorrow, January 26. It stated: **For us, who live under the constant threat of the Iraqi missiles, the end of this mad war is not only a matter of political principle, but a matter of physical survival as well. We wish you success in your anti-war struggle, which we regard as our own.**

The Israeli press ignored the demonstration, though several of its reporters and photographers had been present. In Europe and the United States, however, the demonstration was mentioned in various newspaper reports and also got the attention of two television networks. This press release was copied on the leaflets distributed by "New Jewish Agenda" at the Washington anti-war demonstration. Also, a greeting from the Israeli demonstrators was read at the mass anti-war rally which took place - also on January 26 - in Bonn, Germany.

minating in the wave of anti-Arab racism. The Gulf War merely delivered the coup de grace.

Israelis - citizens of a country which subsists on an enormous American military, political and economic support - find it natural to follow the lead of the United States. Peace activists, too, tend to place their hopes in the Americans; they would like to see Washington use its enormous clout and bring the recalcitrant Israeli government to the negotiating table. Many of them now attach themselves to Bush's train, in the (far from firmly grounded) hope that a post-war Pax Americana will include an Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Palestinians - including those in close contact with the Israeli peace camp - fundamentally regard

America as their enemy, which finances and supports their oppressor. Arafat's attempts to court Washington, between 1988 and 1990, were regarded with scepticism by many Palestinians. The utter failure of all these diplomatic efforts drove the Palestinians into the arms of Saddam Husein - the only Arab leader who seems to put his military weight on their side of the scale.

For us, the few who do oppose Bush and Saddam and their war, it is easy to despair and feel that all is lost. Twice in the past year we saw a diplomatic process fail - the one to bring the Israeli government and a Palestinian delegation to the negotiating table in Cairo; and the one to solve the Gulf crisis. Now that this much dreaded war really broke out, dare we hope that diplomacy could cut it off? For any diplomatic initiative to have at least a chance of success, there should be a constant big pressure of the anti-war movement; and we in Israel, with our little numbers, must do what little we can as part of this world-wide movement.

Like everybody around us, we wish a quick end to this nightmarish war; but we just can't share the hope of too many of our friends that an early end to the war will be achieved through an overwhelming victory by "the allied forces" - an anachronistic term belonging to the previous world war. We definitely can't join Amos Oz and others - still claiming to be peace activists - in their appeal to the world's peace movements *to stand unequivocally with the forces who are now fighting to bring down the reign of Saddam Husein*. By publishing this appeal, the Tel-Aviv based International Center for Peace (sic!) in the Middle East sided with the hawks of this Gulf War, for whom the expulsion of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait is not enough.

The authors of the appeal have not even learned from their own recent experience. They still do not understand that the continued bombardment of Baghdad - rather than weakening Saddam's position - may induce the Iraqis (like the Israelis) to forget political differences and rally behind their government. Indeed, prominent anti-Sadam Iraqi exiles - who, unlike the Pentagon analysts, have personal knowledge of the Iraqi society - have warned of this possibility, long before the war.

With its back to the wall, Iraq under Saddam Husein may drag down many others - among them us here - in its ruin. We might expect the much talked-about poison gas attack, delivered either by missile or by suiciding airplanes; the burning of the Kuwaiti oil fields, with incalculable and wide-ranging ecological damage; and Saddam may well have some other unpleasant surprises up his sleeve. And how much will remain of Kuwait - the ostensible cause for all this - by the end of the war?

But even if breaking the resistance of Iraq would not be so costly, will it be desirable to live in a world dominated by an uncontrolled superpower which can afford - when it suits her politically or economically - to administer such blows to nations which are unlucky enough as to be made into an example? However nasty a character Saddam Husein may be,

once the example is established it may be used on all kinds of other occasions.

It is hardly surprising that, with every ton of explosive falling upon the Iraqi cities, Saddam's popularity is rising in the Arab world – to the extent that thrones and presidential palaces are shaking. The Palestinians and the downtrodden Arab masses have known for many years that Saddam Husein's iron fist is no better than that of anybody else – but now Saddam is being bombarded into the personification of very real and deep-rooted forces.

The Americans never appreciated the real power of popular movements; they could not understand how the Shah of Iran, with his large modern army, was overthrown by "ragged fanatics in the streets". Saddam, in his years-long struggle with Khomeini, learned to appreciate and make use of such forces. By now his image among the masses is assuming an existence of its own. Dead (or in the dock of an American "war crimes court"), *Sadam the Martyr* may still haunt the world for a long time to come.

It is particularly short-sighted of Israelis to encourage Bush into total war against Iraq. Though never thoroughly integrated in its environment, Israel did manage to create a certain *modus vivendi* with its neighbors: a formal peace treaty with Egypt; a long-standing though tacit agreement with King Husein of Jordan; even a well-kept quiet on the Syrian border.

The Gulf War puts all of these in jeopardy. Israel's isolated position and dependence on the United States have already become more sharply marked. The most right-wing nationalist government ever to rule Israel had to obey orders humbly and totally entrust the defence of its population to American-crewed ground-to-air missiles.

Whoever wins the war - Saddam and the popular movements, or the anti-Iraq coalition from which Israel was pointedly excluded – Israel is likely to be a loser. A war to the bitter end against Iraq is not in the Israeli national interest. For us – as for the whole region and the whole world – the best solution is that there will be neither victor nor vanquished; that the war ends with a negotiated settlement, which would get Iraq out of Kuwait, but leave changes in the Iraqi regime to the Iraqis themselves.

Such an agreement would tackle the huge Iraqi military apparatus – conventional and non-conventional – not through its physical destruction, but through a regional arms limitation treaty, also affecting other outside military machines (such as Israel's). Such a negotiated solution may re-create a climate favorable for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations – the only way for Israel to move on from contacts with Arab regimes towards true peace and integration in the region.

February 7.

For the fourth consecutive night, no missiles. People are beginning to assume that "Missile Time" is over – though we will have to carry our gas masks for a long time to come (just in case).

The Americans seem to be doing a brutally efficient job in the west of Iraq, destroying not only missile launchers, but "everything that moves" – as the

American general told us proudly on television. How many people died last night, that I may have a quiet sleep?

From all over the country, Tel-Avivians are coming back to their city. The pubs and restaurants are re-opening; the night life, Tel-Aviv's pride, is resuming. Soon, our "linkage" with the people of Baghdad will be gone; they will face all alone the relentless rain of destruction.

The "return to normal" does make political action a bit more easy. The Israeli papers gradually stop behaving like government propaganda sheets. Today's papers gave prominent coverage to our press conference. Just two weeks ago, the same papers totally ignored the anti-war vigils in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. The political system, too, is getting back to normal; gone are the cloying atmosphere of "national consensus", and the excessive praise showered by "the loyal opposition" upon Prime Minister Shamir.

This uncritical support encouraged Shamir to appoint Rehav'am Ze'evi – outspoken advocate of "transferring" all Palestinians – as a minister in his cabinet. Thereby, however, Shamir aroused strong protests: Peace Now, Mapam, Ratz and the Labor Party – while continuing to support the war – were willing to mobilise and hold demonstrations. The Knesset was sharply divided, and the appointment of the arch-racist was approved by a narrow majority. Outside the building there were violent clashes between anti-racist demonstrators and Ze'evi's supporters. The Communist KMs Tamar Gozansky and Muhammad Nafa'a were expelled from the hall, after waving at the new minister the historical symbol of racism – a yellow star. Divisions even appeared within Shamir's own Likud Party, with KM Binyamin Begin – Menachem Begin's son – demonstratively voting against the appointment, and two ministers being deliberately absent from the hall.

On February 8, the Women in Black vigils in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv resumed. Avoiding a clear-cut standpoint about the war, the women decided to use their old slogans – with the addition of Davka achshav! (Especially now!): Davka achshav: No to occupation! – Davka achshav: Talk with the PLO! – Davka achshav: International Peace Conference! In Jerusalem appeared also the slogan: No to occupation, and no to curfew!

Yesh Gvul resumed its vigils in Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem. The new slogans: No to Israeli intervention! and No to transfer!

Following the ministerial appointment of Rehav'am Ze'evi, the group published a statement in Ha'aretz reminding soldiers that: An order to deport people from their homes is manifestly illegal. Both under Israeli and international law, soldiers must disobey such orders. Moreover, soldiers should actively prevent others from carrying them out.

While the appointment of Ze'evi is an expression of the power of those for whom expelling a million and a

half Palestinians is at least a legitimate political option, it at the same time exposes the depth of the opposition to that idea, persisting even in times of war.

Thus, the possibility appears of a two-track peace strategy: working with small groups on conscience-raising against the Gulf War – and, at the same time, finding as much room as possible for cooperation with anybody who opposes the oppression of the Palestinians – whatever their opinion about the war may be.

On February 6, an anti-war petition, signed by 126 Israelis, was presented at a press conference in Jerusalem. The event got extensive attention in the Israeli newspapers, as well as on the radio. The following is quoted from Jerusalem Post (7.2.1991):

A group of well-known left-wing activists yesterday came out in opposition to the Gulf war as “motivated by the lust for power and oil, and not from the exalted principles voiced by President Bush.” They called for an immediate ceasefire under UN auspices.

The group, which included Prof. Yeshayahu Leibovitz, Maj. Gen. (res.) Matti Peled and MKs Hashem Mahameed and Muhammad Miari, presented a petition at a press conference in Jerusalem reportedly containing the signatures of 126 persons who condemn the Iraqi missile attacks on Israel, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and the Gulf war itself.

Leibovitz spoke out on the Palestinian issue, saying that Israel has two choices: to continue ruling in the Territories through the exercise of violence, in which case “Israel will turn into a fascist state ... fighting Arab countries from Morocco to Kuwait, or “to divide the land into two sovereign, independent national entities.”

Mahameed condemned the missile attacks and conquest of Kuwait, but also the war which he said the U.S. began “for its own interests.” He also spoke out against the continuing curfew in the Territories.

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Contact: Avishai Ehrlich, phone 972-(0)3-5411060.

■ On January 30, Palestinian activist Sari Nuseibeh was placed under a six months’ Administrative Detention, for which no charge in the court is required. In the media, however, government speakers accused him of spying for the Iraqis and helping them direct their missiles upon Israel. Under the war conditions, the government probably expected this charge to silence all public opposition to the detention.

However, Peace Now activists and dovish Knesset Members had maintained a dialogue with Nuseibeh and his friends for years; some of them visited his

home a few days before his arrest. Not intimidated by the war atmosphere, they came out in opposition to the detention, challenging the government – to either substantiate its allegations or release Nuseibeh. Eventually, Nuseibeh’s term of detention was halved from six months to three – a mainly political rather than judicial decision, owing to the public atmosphere created by the dissenting doves.

‘Low risk territories’

In the gas mask tragicomedy it was quite clear from the start that the Shamir government – already having trouble providing masks for millions of Israelis – was not at all eager to distribute them also to the Palestinians under its custody. In the beginning it was announced that whereas Israelis would get them for free, Palestinians would have to pay 40 Shekels (\$20) a piece.

When the 15th of January came nearer, the Occupied Territories were suddenly declared “low risk areas” which did not need protection against unconventional Iraqi air-attacks. For a moment the Israeli settlers seemed to be also excluded from the civil defence equipment – due mainly to a fit of puritanism on the part of Likud KM Benny Begin – but their political clout soon got them the masks.

Thereupon Miladi Murkus, a Palestinian woman from Bethlehem, lodged an appeal to the Supreme Court. The court proceedings – on January 14 – got wide attention. Anat Hofman, Jerusalem Municipal Councillor for the Ratz party, was photographed, in the court lobby, as she demonstratively gave her gas mask to a Palestinian friend. The proceedings were short – the court ordered the immediate distribution of gas masks to all Palestinians. When it turned out that the authorities had only 170,000 masks available for a Palestinian population of more than million and half, the judges ordered that the available masks be first distributed in the areas which are closest to Israel.

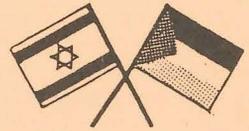
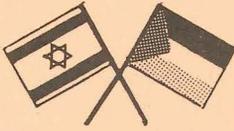
The court’s decision came as a good surprise, and was considered a moral victory with implications beyond the actual issue. But in practice, the gas mask distribution is proceeding very slowly; up to the time of writing, only some 40,000 were distributed.

■ Palestinian prisoners in Israel have been cut off from family visits by the curfew. In Hasharon Prison, the authorities would like to prolongue this situation: they claimed that “according to military instructions” only visitors equipped with gas masks would be allowed in.

On discovering this new restriction, the Women for Political Prisoners (WOFPP) approached the military authorities – who denied ever having made such a directive. The Prison Authorities had to backtrack.

On February 8, soon after the easing of the curfew in parts of the West Bank, some families succeeded to get to Hasharon prison – and have a glimpse of their imprisoned daughters.

At the beginning of the war, a total curfew was imposed on the entire population of the Occupied Territories (Israeli settlers not included).



The Day After

by Uri Avnery

After the first missiles hit Tel-Aviv little panic was shown in Israel; but there was a profound anxiety. Nobody knew when or where the next one would hit. Nobody could be certain that the next missile would not be armed with the dreaded gas. Nobody could be sure that the masks and the prepared rooms would be really effective, especially where small children are concerned.

Something basic in the Israeli attitude towards war is changing. Until now, our wars – except the first one – did not touch the civilian population. In this sense, they were “de luxe wars”.

True, our War of Independence, 1948, was long and cruel. It bore the character of a civil war, between two populations which were geographically interwoven over much of the country. During that war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced. In the process, more than 6000 Jews – out of a Jewish population then numbering only some 635,000 – were killed. The distinction between civilians and soldiers was blurred.

But all that happened long ago. Most of today's Israelis were either born after those events, or came to this country after independence. The memory has faded. And all the wars since – the 1956 Sinai Campaign, the 1967 Six Day War, the 1973 Yom-Kippur War, the 1982 Lebanon Invasion, and the little wars in between – left the civilian population untouched. Not a single bomb ever fell on an Israeli town. Certainly, relatives and friends lost their lives in the fighting, but that always happened far away, beyond our borders.

The result was that Israelis had a rather debonair attitude towards war. Nobody wished a war to happen, but neither was war considered a calamity – as it is regarded for example in Russia. Many saw it as an acceptable instrument of policy.

This attitude is bound to change now. Israelis will dread war like everybody else. This may benefit those who believe that Israel should be ready to pay a price for peace – such as giving back all the Occupied Territories in the framework of a general settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It may also strengthen those who believe that we must conduct a resolute peace policy, negotiate with the Palestinians and take part in an international peace conference on the Middle East.

But – and such are the vagaries of the human mind, both individual and collective – this new trauma, on top of the old ones, may also reinforce those forces who say: “You see, all the Arabs want is to kill us. Any compromise will weaken us. We must not give up anything.” This, of course, is the attitude of the Shamir government.

(Continued from Page Seven)

This curfew, unprecedented in its scope, imprisoned the entire Palestinian population in their homes. Only short breaks were given to enable women to buy food. After the first week, large parts of the population could no longer supply themselves for lack of money. Being unable to go to work, they no longer had money to buy food. Stories of extreme hardship started filtering out.

On February 5, an advertisement was published in *Ha'aretz* reading **End the curfew in the Territories! End the shameful hunger!** followed by the names of some 150 Israelis. KM Shulamit Aloni of Ratz joined the radical factions in speaking out against the curfew. The Association of Israeli-Palestinian Physicians for Human Rights (AIPPHR) held a press conference, presenting evidence with regard to kidney patients requiring dialysis, cancer patients and patients requiring respirators – all of whom were in life danger as the curfew prevented them from getting to the hospital for treatment. AIPPHR also presented an appeal to the Supreme Court, on this and other medical-related aspects of the curfew. (Report in English available from AIPPHR, P.O.Box 10235, Tel-Aviv 61101, phone: 972-(0)3-482913)

At the initiative of Kav Le'oved (Workers Hotline), the Mapam, Ratz and Communist-led factions in the Histadrut trade-union federation published a call for an end to the curfew and for payment of a full salary to the workers whom the curfew kept in their homes.

Meanwhile, the government was also placed under pressure from quite a different quarter: employers dependent on cheap Palestinian labor – especially farmers whose harvests are rotting away, and building contractors whose sites are totally deserted. This concern was reflected by the housing minister – none other than the hawkish Ariel Sharon – who called for an end to the curfew, so that construction workers may get back on the job (*Hadashot* 7.2.1991).

During the first week of February, the government announced measures aimed at “gradual easing of the curfew”. However, at the time of writing, the curfew still remains in force; moreover, it seems that even after it is lifted, the war will be used as a convenient excuse for the implementation of plans made already last year – aimed at limiting the number of Palestinians working in Israel, restricting and regimenting their movements, and preventing them from sleeping in Israel.

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Israelis Against the Gulf War

Address: POB 23649, Tel-Aviv; phone: Dr. Avishai Ehrlich, 972-3-5411060;
RE'UVEN KAMINER 972-2-414632

The following press release was distributed to the Israeli and foreign press on January 25.

With gas masks strapped to their shoulders - the normal precaution taken these days by Israelis who leave their homes - several dozen Israeli peace activists gathered opposite the U.S. Embassy in Tel-Aviv, where they held a vigil protesting the Gulf War. This was the first such manifestation since the outbreak of hostilities. The slogans on their placards - in Hebrew, Arabic and English - included: **End the War! / Enough with the Missiles, Enough with the Bombardments! / No to Saddam, No to Bush, No to War! / Iraq must withdraw from Kuwait; we Israelis - from the Occupied Territories! / Immediate Ceasefire! Immediate Negotiations! / International Peace Conference - Now! / The Patriot can save our skins - only peace can give us a future! / No to Israeli Intervention! / No Blood for Oil! / Security = Peace! and We don't want to be your victims!**

The demonstration initially encountered opposition from police who claimed that the emergency situation makes all public gatherings forbidden. The demonstrators requested the help of Adv. Dan Yakir, of the Israeli Civil Rights Association. Also, Knesset Member Tamar Gozansky - who participated in the demonstration - called by telephone a senior police official, who confirmed that there was no change in the legal situation or a suspension of basic democratic rights.

The demonstrators dispersed in the afternoon, in time to gain the safety of their homes before the evening attack on the city by several Iraqi missiles.

The organisers of the demonstration sent a message of support and solidarity to the coalition of American peace organisations, due to hold a demonstration in Washington tomorrow, January 26. It stated: **For us, who live under the constant threat of the Iraqi missiles, the end of this mad war is not only a matter of political principle, but a matter of physical survival as well. We wish you success in your anti-war struggle, which we regard as our own.**

The Israeli press ignored the demonstration, though several of its reporters and photographers had been present. In Europe and the United States, however, the demonstration was mentioned in various newspaper reports and also got the attention of two television networks. This press release was copied on the leaflets of 'New Jewish Agenda' at the Washington anti-war demonstration. A greeting from the Israeli demonstrators was read at the mass anti-war rally which took place in Bonn, January 26.

On February 6, an anti-war petition, signed by 126 Israelis, was presented at a press conference in Jerusalem. The event got extensive attention in the Israeli newspapers, as well as on the radio. The following is quoted from Jerusalem Post (7.2.1991):

A group of well-known left-wing activists yesterday came out in opposition to the Gulf war as "motivated by the lust for power and oil, and not from the exalted principles voiced by President Bush." They called for an immediate ceasefire under UN auspices.

The group, which included Prof. Yeshayahu Leibovitz, Maj.Gen. (res.) Matti Peled and MKs Hashem Mahameed and Muhammad Miari, presented a petition at a press conference in Jerusalem reportedly containing the signatures of 126 persons who condemn the Iraqi missile attacks on Israel, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and the Gulf war itself.

Leibovitz spoke out on the Palestinian issue, saying that Israel has two choices: to continue ruling in the Territories through the exercise of violence, in which case "Israel will turn into a fascist state ... fighting Arab countries from Morocco to Kuwait, or "to divide the land into two sovereign, independent national entities."

Mahameed condemned the missile attacks and conquest of Kuwait, but also the war which he said the U.S. began "for its own interests." He also spoke out against the continuing curfew in the Territories.

Peled said the U.S. had no justification for the war and insisted that sanctions could force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait. He also objected to the denial of linkage between the war and the Palestinian issue, saying this connection could bring about the convening of an international conference to solve the region's problems.

Following the press conference, an ad-hoc Israeli Committee Against the Gulf War was formed. The committee works under extremely difficult conditions and urgently needs support. Donations to account 286191, Bank Hapo'alim, branch 772; or checks, made payable to Yossi Koten, POB 23649 in Tel-Aviv. One of the initiators, Adam Keller, is a few weeks in Europe (until 17.3). He can be phoned at: 31-20-410388; letters to: c/o Keizer, Heemraadlaan 33, 1181 TZ Amstelveen, Holland).

The anti-war petition was published in Ha'aretz, on February 15, with the names of more than 200 signatories:

Enough!

As citizens of Israel, we are exposed to Iraqi missile attacks and condemn those who send these missiles. We also condemn the occupation of Kuwait and demand its independence. At the same time, we oppose the Gulf War.

Bush's war is not motivated by the high-sounding principles of his speeches - just as Saddam's aggression is not aimed at defending Palestinian rights. Both of them are motivated by desire for power and greed for oil.

The horrible price of their war is paid by ordinary people: Iraqis, Americans, Kuwaitis, British, Palestinians and - of course - Israelis as well. We Israelis have already paid our part. The price in blood will grow higher and higher, the longer the war lasts. We believe that this madness could and should be stopped, through the following measures:

- A ceasefire, agreed upon by both sides and monitored by the United Nations;
- Increased pressure by the international community to force Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, by tightening the economic and political sanctions upon Iraq;
- By convening, after the withdrawal from Kuwait, an international peace conference, in order to achieve Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian peace, and to ensure that the Middle East will become a zone completely free of nuclear, chemical and bacteriological weapons;
- With the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait, foreign troops will withdraw from the Gulf States.

We call upon the government of Israel not to join the war, despite the Iraqi provocations. The entry of Israel will only aggravate and complicate the war, and hamper the achievement of Israeli-Palestinian peace afterwards. The fate of Jews and Arabs is interlinked. Let us not wish each other's destruction. Only a just agreement between us can give both peoples a life of peace and security, one beside the other.

Israelis gegen den Golfkrieg

POB 23649, Tel Aviv; Dr. Avishai Ehrlich 972-3-5411060

Die folgende Presseerklärung wurde am 25. Januar an die israelischen und ausländischen Medien verteilt:

Mit umgehängten Gasmasken - in diesen Tagen eine normale Vorsichtsmaßnahme von Israel, die ihr Haus verlassen - versammelten sich mehrere Dutzend israelische FriedensaktivistInnen gegenüber der US-Botschaft in Tel Aviv, um eine Mahnwache gegen den Golfkrieg abzuhalten. Dies war die erste Demonstration dieser Art seit Beginn der Feindseligkeiten. Die Sprüche auf ihren Plakaten - in Hebräisch, Arabisch und Englisch - waren u.a. folgende: Stoppt den Krieg! / Schluß mit den Raketen, Schluß mit den Bombardierungen! / Nein zu Saddam, Nein zu Bush, Nein zum Krieg! / Irak muß sich aus Kuwait zurückziehen und wir Israelis aus den besetzten Gebieten! / Sofortiger Waffenstillstand! Sofortige Verhandlungen! / Für eine internationale Friedenskonferenz - jetzt! / Die Patriot kann uns vielleicht unsere Haut retten, aber nur Frieden gibt uns eine Zukunft! / Keine israelische Intervention! / Kein Blut für Öl! / Sicherheit = Frieden! / Wir wollen nicht eure Opfer sein!

Die Demonstration hatte zu Beginn einige Schwierigkeiten mit der Polizei, die argumentierte, daß die Ausnahmesituation alle öffentlichen Versammlungen verbieten würde. Die Demonstration bat Rechtsanwältin Dan Yykir von der israelischen Bürgerrechtsbewegung um Hilfe. Außerdem rief Knessetmitglied Tamar Gozansky, der an der Demonstration teilnahm, einen höheren Polizeibeamten an, der bestätigte, daß die rechtliche Situation nicht verändert sei und demokratische Grundrechte nicht außer Kraft gesetzt seien.

Die TeilnehmerInnen lösten gegen Nachmittag die Demonstration auf, gerade rechtzeitig, um sich zu Hause gegen die Abendangriffe mehrerer irakischer Raketen in Sicherheit zu bringen.

Die OrganisatorInnen der Demonstration schickten eine Solidaritätsbotschaft an die US-Demo in Washington mit folgendem Wortlaut: Wir, die wir unter der konstanten Bedrohung durch irakische Raketen leben, betrachten das Ende dieses verrückten Krieges nicht nur als eine Angelegenheit politischer Prinzipien, sondern auch als eine Frage des nackten Überlebens. Wir wünschen Euch viel Erfolg in eurem Kampf gegen den Krieg, den wir auch als den unseren betrachten.

Die israelischen Medien berichteten nicht über die Demonstration, obwohl mehrere JournalistInnen und FotografInnen dabei gewesen waren. In Europa und den USA gab es jedoch Berichte in verschiedenen Zeitungen, außerdem zeigten sich 2 Fernschgesellschaften interessiert. Diese

Presseerklärung wurde für die Anti-Kriegs-Demo in Washington auf die Rückseite eines Flugblattes der 'New Jewish Agenda' abgedruckt; eine Solidaritätsbotschaft der israelischen DemonstrantInnen wurde auch auf der Anti-Kriegs-Demo am 26. Januar in Bonn verlesen.

Am 6. Februar wurde auf einer Pressekonferenz in Jerusalem eine Anti-Kriegs-Petition, unterschrieben von 126 Israelis, vorgestellt. Verschiedene Zeitungen und das Radio berichteten darüber. Im folgenden ein Zitat aus der 'Jerusalem Post' vom 7.2.1991:

Eine Gruppe prominenter linksgerichteter AktivistInnen veröffentlichte gestern eine Stellungnahme gegen den Golfkrieg. Motivation für den Krieg sei "die Gier nach Macht und Öl und nicht die edlen Prinzipien, von denen Präsident Bush immer redet". Sie forderten einen sofortigen Waffenstillstand unter UNO-Aufsicht.

Die Gruppe, zu der auch Prof. Yeschayahu Leibovitz, Maj.Gen (res.) Matti Peled, MKs Hashem Mahameed und Muhamad Miari zählen, präsentierte auf einer Pressekonferenz in Jerusalem eine Erklärung, die von 126 Personen unterzeichnet worden ist, und die sowohl die irakischen Raketenangriffe auf Israel, den irakischen Einmarsch in Kuwait und den Golfkrieg selbst verurteilen.

Zur Sache der PalästinenserInnen sagte Leibovitz, daß Israel zwei Optionen habe: weiterhin die besetzten Gebiete durch Gewaltausübung zu beherrschen, was dazu führen würde, daß "Israel sich zu einem faschistischen Staat entwickelte, ..., der die arabischen Staaten von Marocko bis Kuwait bekämpfen würde", oder "das Land in zwei souveräne, unabhängige Nationalstaaten aufzuteilen".

Mahameed verurteilte die Raketenangriffe und die Besetzung Kuwaits, aber auch den Krieg, den die USA seiner Meinung nach "aus eigenen Interessen" begonnen hat. Außerdem sprach er sich gegen die fortgesetzte Ausgangssperre in den besetzten Gebieten aus.

Peled sagte, die USA hätte keine Berechtigung, diesen Krieg zu führen und vertrat entschieden die Meinung, daß Sanktionen Irak aus Kuwait vertreiben könnten. Er beklagt auch die Verweigerung, die Frage des Krieges mit der Palästinafrage zu verbinden; diese Verbindung könnte zu einer internationalen Konferenz führen, um die Probleme der Region zu lösen.

Nach der Pressekonferenz wurde spontan ein 'Israelisches Komitee gegen den Golfkrieg' gegründet. Das Komitee arbeitet unter äußerst schweren Bedingungen und benötigt dringend Unterstützung. Spenden bitte auf: Kontonr. 206191, Bank Hapo'alim, Zweigstelle 772; oder Schecks an: Yossi Koten, POB 23649 Tel Aviv.

Eines der Gründungsmitglieder befindet sich derzeit auf einer Rundreise durch Europa.

Folgende Erklärung gegen den Krieg wurde am 15. Februar mit mehr als 200 Unterschriften in Ha'aretz veröffentlicht:

Genug!

Als BürgerInnen von Israel sind wir Angriffen von irakischen Raketen ausgesetzt und verurteilen diejenigen, die diese Raketen losschicken. Wir verurteilen auch die Besetzung Kuwaits und fordern seine Unabhängigkeit. Gleichzeitig sprechen wir uns gegen den Golfkrieg aus.

Die Gründe für Bushs Krieg liegen nicht in den wohlklingenden Prinzipien, die er in seinen Reden zitiert - genausowenig wie Saddams Aggression auf die Verteidigung der Rechte der PalästinenserInnen gerichtet ist. Beide sind von der Gier nach Macht und Öl getrieben.

Den schrecklichen Preis ihres Krieges zahlen einfache Menschen: IrakerInnen, AmerikanerInnen, Kuwaitis, BritInnen, PalästinenserInnen - und natürlich auch Israelis. Wir Israelis haben unseren Preis schon gezahlt. Der Blutzoll nimmt zu, je länger der Krieg dauert. Wir glauben, daß dieser Irrsinn durch folgende Maßnahmen gestoppt werden könnte und sollte:

- * ein Waffenstillstand, dem beide Seiten zustimmen und der von der UNO überwacht wird;
- * ein wachsender Druck durch die internationale Gemeinschaft, um den Irak zum Rückzug aus Kuwait zu zwingen; dieser sollte durch verstärkte ökonomische und politische Sanktionen erfolgen;
- * eine internationale Friedenskonferenz nach dem irakischen Rückzug aus Kuwait, um einen israelisch-arabischen und israelisch-palästinensischen Frieden zu erreichen und sicherzustellen, daß alle ABC-Waffen im Nahen Osten beseitigt werden;
- * mit dem Rückzug Iraks aus Kuwait werden alle fremden Truppen aus der Golf-Region abgezogen.

Wir fordern die israelische Regierung auf, trotz der irakischen Provokationen nicht in den Krieg einzutreten. Eine Beteiligung Israels wird diesen Krieg nur verschlimmern und komplizieren und die Möglichkeit eines nachfolgenden israelisch-palästinensischen Friedens behindern. Das Schicksal der Israelis und AraberInnen ist miteinander verbunden. Daher sollten wir uns nicht gegenseitig die Vernichtung wünschen. Nur eine gerechte Lösung kann beiden Völkern nebeneinander ein Leben in Frieden und Sicherheit geben.