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WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

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Waging Peace

Powerful New Film "Another Road Home" Draws Mixed Reaction

DANAE ELON, daughter of the famous Israeli writer and lecturer Amos Elon, took part in a post-screening discussion of her newly released documentary film "Another Road Home" at the Avalon Theater in Washington, DC on May 13. On the eve of the screening, *The Washington Post* declared the film to be unfulfilling, while *The New York Times* found it moving, illuminating and revealing.

As the title suggests, "Another Road Home" is about the sense of belonging the filmmaker shares both with her Israeli parents and with Musa Obeidallah, her Palestinian caretaker, who daily risked his life to care for her.



Director Danae Elon and Smai Obeidallah take audience questions following a screening of "Another Road Home" (Staff photo M. Abdul Rahman).

The film documents Elon's personal quest to find Obeidallah, who helped raise her from the time she was 11 months old, and whom she describes as a "little bit" more than a father. "Another Road Home" is an emotional journey of a Palestinian and an Israeli family whose lives intersect and forever bear the scars of the Israeli occupation.

Its Washington, DC screening drew a diverse audience that included Arabs, Jews, peace activists, former diplomats and members of the Obeidallah family. Elon confessed to the *Washington Report* that the film has been more endorsed by Arabs than other communities.

This was clearly demonstrated during the post-discussion period, when Howard Arenstein, a CBS bureau manager and former Israeli radio and newspaper correspondent, subjected Elon to a barrage of questions about her relationship to her father, her choice of English instead of Hebrew as the language spoken in the film, and her political views, pointing out that Elon's father has been highly critical of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians.

Smai Obeidallah, Musa's eldest son, told the audience that he and his family were very appreciative of Elon's relationship with his father and were pleased with the film. Throughout the discussion, Elon reiterated that her film is meant to be a human, intimate story of her personal relationship with Musa Obeidallah.

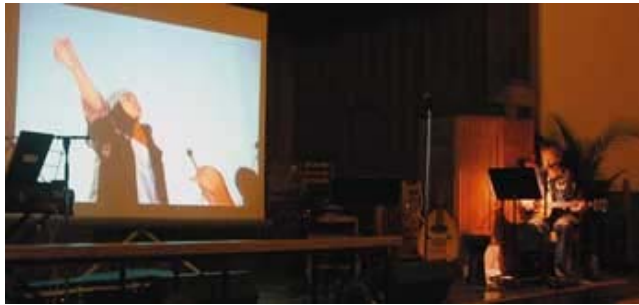
Also at the screening was former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Samuel Lewis, and a family friend of the Elons. He attributed the "tenderness and genuine emotional bridges that were portrayed by the movie to the special relationship that Elon and her family share."

The film highlights the love and regard shared between the two families without any political compromises. When asked by the Elons, Obeidallah openly shares with them the hardships he suffers on a daily basis as a Palestinian living under occupation. Obeidallah worries constantly about the Israeli occupation and its impact on his life and the lives of his family.

Noting that the film has touched everyone, regardless of their political views—"Israelis, Jews, Palestinians, and Arabs cry at the same moment"—Elon insists that her film is not a political one. "It is a film that uses language and memory to share and expose," she told the *Washington Report*. "It is a film that surpasses nationalism and looks for justice."

—Mai Abdul Rahman

Concert Features "Star of Goliath"



Dave Lippman performing his new multimedia piece, "Star of Goliath" (Staff photo M. Horton).

The U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation held a benefit concert on May 15 at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The event also marked the 57th anniversary of the end of the British Mandate in Palestine and the ensuing *al-Nakba* (great catastrophe), perpetrated by Zionist militias in their "War of Independence."

The concert included performances by George

Schrub, "the world's only known singing CIA agent," Foty Fusion, formerly the Foty Family Ensemble, and Dave Lippman, of recent *Wheels of Justice* tour fame, performing his new multimedia piece "Star of Goliath." The event was emceed by Campaign co-chair Nadia Hijab, who explained that the purpose of the event was to "show that national liberation can be fun."

George Schrub opened the event with his satirical portrayal of an arrogant CIA agent, complete with corresponding theme songs such as "Iraq Opportunity Theme Song," "The Sport Futility Vehicle Tango," and "Is it True What They Say About Dick Cheney?"

Foty Fusion, a local Palestinian-Egyptian-American family band, fused traditional Arabic music and hip-hop. The Foty family entranced the audience with traditional songs like "*Ya Ghusun Zeitun* (The Olive Branch)," "*Ya Rjel al-Nar* (Men of Fire)," and Fairuz's "*Al-Quds Medinat al-Salaam* (Jerusalem City of Peace)," as well as with original raps and world fusion. The Foty family can be reached through its Web site <www.fotyfusion.com>.

"The Star of David has become the Star of Goliath," Lippman explained before performing his latest project. "Star of Goliath," a multimedia performance inspired by a trip he took to Israel/Palestine in August 2004, seamlessly combines pictures and sounds from his trip with original folk songs and narrative. Boldly addressing the history of Zionism and anti-Zionism, the Wall, Israeli military incursions, and the Right of Return, Lippman attempts to understand his Israeli cousins by juxtaposing typical Zionist justifications with the brutal realities of the occupation. The presentation is a triumph and represents the leaps activists have made in developing creative educational tools. Lippman (and his alter ego George Shrub) can be contacted through their Web site, <www.davelippman.com>.

The U.S. Campaign is a diverse coalition of over 200 groups working for freedom from occupation and equal rights for all by challenging U.S. policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Campaign can be contacted through its Web site, <www.endtheoccupation.org>.

—Matt Horton

Imagine-Life Celebrates First Anniversary

Hollywood actor and director Danny Glover addressed more than 750 Imagine-Life supporters on April 17, at the Lafayette Center in Washington, DC. Glover, who is better known for his movie performances, is also a passionate human rights activist. He told the Gala attendees, celebrating the first anniversary of the Imagine-Life campaign, that he understands the suffering of the Palestinians and supports the efforts of Imagine-Life to educate and inform the American public about human rights violations. The gala was organized by Imagine-Life volunteers to raise funds and support their public campaign to educate and inform the American public about Palestinian suffering.

Imagine-Life coordinates and produces one-minute television ads that depict life under Israeli occupation. Aired on CNN, ABC and MSNBC, MTV and Fox News, these ads have reached millions of Americans in 80 cities around the country. Imagine-Life has produced public service announcements (PSAs) for partner organizations including Remember These Children, Jewish Voices for Peace, Coalition of Women for Peace, and the Israeli Refuser Network.

Needless to say, these ads have caused a stir among American Jewish supporters of Israel.

Boston's Jewish Community Research Council was the first in the country to oppose Imagine-Life ads. It mounted a letter, fax and e-mail campaign claiming that the ads being aired on Comcast Cable stations "depict Israel in the worst light."

Despite strong objections from Jewish groups, however, Comcast will continue to allow Imagine-Life to air ads about the cost of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian people, according to a report in the April 27 *Boston Globe*.

Organizers and supporters expect strong future opposition, including a court challenge of their non-profit status.

Imagine-Life is a 501(c)(3) organization formed in April 2004 by a group of diverse Americans who believe that human rights should apply to all. Supporters of this nationwide ad campaign have organized galas all across the United States to raise funds and support the airing of these ads on national, cable, and news networks. Imagine-Life can be contacted through its website <www.imagine-life.org>.

—Mai Abdul Rahman

Inheriting Syria: Bashar's Trial by Fire

"I think Syria inevitably is in second place or a back-burner position in the...hegemonical [sic] instincts" of the Bush administration, said Seymour Hersh at the Brookings Institution. In addition to the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and *New Yorker* staff writer, the April 25 briefing, sponsored by the institute's Saban Center for Middle East Policy, also included Saban Center senior fellow Flynt Leverett, *New York Times* feature writer James Bennett and moderator Martin Indyk, director of the Saban Center and former U.S. ambassador to Israel. The briefing's point of departure was Leverett's recently published book, *Inheriting Syria: Bashar's Trial by Fire*.



(L-r) James Bennett, Seymour Hersh, moderator Martin Indyk and Flynt Leverett discuss U.S. pressure on Syria
(Photo Brock Bevan).

Describing the present time as "a critical moment for Syria," Leverett said this extends both to Syria's awkward strategic situation as well as to U.S. policy toward Damascus. The current pressure on Syria, he stated, is the first "defining challenge" faced by President Bashar al-Assad gaining control of the country in the wake of his father's death in 2000.

In Leverett's opinion, Washington has lacked a policy toward Syria since the beginning of the first Bush administration. "We've had a long list of complaints," he noted, "but we've not had a policy—if by policy you mean an integrated set of public positions, diplomatic initiatives, [and] other measures all rooted in a strategy for changing Syrian behaviors that we think are problematic."

The purpose of his book is twofold, Leverett continued: "to provide an actionable analytic of Bashar al-Assad as a national leader" and to "draw the implications for U.S. policy."

"I don't think very much of the way that the Bush administration has gone about trying to deal with Syria," he confessed. "I think there is a smarter way of going about things."

Before joining Brookings in May 2003, Leverett spent a year as senior director for Middle East Affairs at the National Security Council. According to the May 27, 2003 *Washington Post*, Leverett left the NSC "after refusing an offer by [then-] national security adviser Condoleezza Rice to work on the road map under [Elliott] Abrams."

Leverett cited three views of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as dominating policy discussion about Syria: Assad as reformer, as part of the "old guard," or as a neophyte. Saying he opted for a "more nuanced and mixed picture," Leverett described the Syrian president as constrained by the system created by his father, Hafez Al-Assad. This "old guard," he argued, comprises bureaucrats and businessmen who benefit from the status quo and who are not eager to see what the harvest of reform will bring.

According to Leverett, Assad has attempted to bypass the old system by creating a new, "alternative network of technocrats." Leverett cited Assad's wife, Asma, a British-trained former investment banker, as proof that the Syrian president really has "reformist impulses."

As Hersh would echo, Leverett opined that "the [Bush] administration believes it can achieve regime change on the cheap" in Syria. This idea of "low-hanging fruit," he added, led to the American push to pressure Syria to withdrawal from Lebanon in the aftermath of the Feb. 14 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. However, said Leverett, "I actually don't think that's the case."

In Leverett's opinion, Assad may emerge from the Lebanon withdrawal a "stronger figure domestically and regionally"—if, in the coming months, he is able to "set the outer limits for Lebanese policy" on issues of importance to Syria.

"I think if we [the U.S.] were prepared to have a serious strategic conversation with Bashar and apply a carrot-and-sticks approach," concluded Leverett, "we could do much better at achieving our policy objectives than on the course we're embarked on now."

—Brock L. Bevan

Middle East Envoys Concede Past Mistakes, But Offer No Clear Path



(L-r) Aaron David Miller, Robert Malley, Dennis Ross, and Martin Indyk (Photo Najwa Saad).

An April 25 panel discussion entitled "Lessons of Arab-Israeli Peacemaking: A Look Back and Ahead" hosted by the Middle East Institute at the National Press Club featured four of the Clinton administration's top negotiators responsible for U.S. policy toward the peace process.

One might have expected to hear fresh, bold prescriptions from this panel of seasoned negotiators who'd had years to

reflect on their experiences. Yet, while the audience heard *mea culpas*, the envoys remained cautious in prescribing future steps, except to strongly urge American engagement.

Joining fellow envoys Dennis Ross, Robert Malley and former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk, Aaron David Miller, Ross's deputy, allowed perhaps the sharpest critique in his retrospective. He seemed genuinely troubled by the whole experience—and the lack of American even-handedness. Referring to American management lapses, he said: "We lost control of our policy. We surrendered the initiative to Barak too early."

Criticizing both sides, he said: "We were not nearly tough enough on settlements with the Israelis...we never had an honest discussion....we never set an economic cost." Regarding the Palestinians, Miller said: "We were too permissive, four bombs in nine days in 1996 should have convinced us....we coddled Arafat."

Miller also described Washington's Syria strategy as poorly handled, a distraction, and damaging to American credibility.

Former Special Envoy Dennis Ross ascribed the failure of the peace process in part to the U.S. effort to engage on what he called "existential issues" such as Jerusalem. "We often adopted the Israeli position and built from there," he explained, blaming the absence of a clear Palestinian position as the primary reason for the imbalanced approach. Ross also directly faulted Yasser Arafat, saying, "If Nelson Mandela had been the leader of the Palestinians, we would have succeeded."

Martin Indyk critiqued the American role, stating, "We do much better when we use our power to shape the strategic concept of peacemaking, rather than get down to the weeds of the process."

The Australian-born Indyk disputed Miller's assertion that the Clinton administration had been misled on the Syrian track by then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak, defending the benefit an earlier "Syrian deal" would have contributed.

According to Indyk, "The Bush administration has a preference for promoting democracy rather than promoting peace," warning that "If they do not find a way to see where the dots are connected, we'll likely end up without democracy and without peace."

Addressing the panel's theme, Robert Malley looked back and ahead, and concluded that the lesson is "it's better to be engaged than not engaged." One of the deeper remaining questions, he said, is why we were not tougher with both sides, expressing doubt that "the United States would ever condition aid to Israel or threaten to walk away."

Malley described the step-by-step process itself as inherently flawed, noting that it wasn't surprising to obtain minimal cooperation from people who lacked a sense of what was at stake. "Even at Camp David," he said, "you couldn't find two Americans who knew exactly where they wanted to end up." In Malley's opinion, "The most important lesson for this administration is you need to know where you want to go...what serves U.S. national interests."

Referring to the road map's premise of the two-state solution, he asked rhetorically: "How are you going to overcome Sharon and what political capital are you willing to use? How tough are you willing to be on settlements?"

The question-and-answer session focused on the importance of support for Palestinian President Abu Mazen to create an improved atmosphere on the ground before the July legislative elections, which Indyk predicted would be won by Hamas.

Commenting on the influence of American evangelical Christians, neoconservatives and Jewish community activists, Miller observed that in his 20 years of involvement, he has never seen "a domestic political environment more hostile to Arab-Israeli peacemaking."

Argued the more optimistic Ross: "The president has said twice that he intends to expend political capital on this...so that's good."

"The administration does not believe this is a strategic interest or worth pursuing for moral reasons," Miller countered.

Indyk alluded to the president's desire for a legacy as a peacemaker not just a maker of war—but noted his apparent ambivalence.

To the applause of many in the audience, International Solidarity Movement co-founder Huwaida Arraf asked why more wasn't being done to stop Israel's ongoing land seizures, home demolitions, etc., and how the United States could selectively emphasize United Nations Resolutions.

Having just outlined past mistakes and the need for U.S. negotiators to be tougher, the envoys deferred to former Ambassador Martin Indyk, who waded through an evasive answer.

This event was webcast to audiences in Texas and Ohio, courtesy of the Bilateral U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce, the Cleveland World Affairs Council and Case Western Reserve University.

—Najwa Saad

Catholic Worker Community Anti-war Protest Gathers Momentum

The Catholic Worker community of Des Moines, Iowa has made its protest against U.S. military action in Iraq and Afghanistan a continuing part of the community's life and of central Iowa's political landscape. Since long before the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began, Des Moines Catholic Workers have regularly taken their opposition to war to the public. At the Iowa Air Guard base in Des Moines, at STARC Armory, at the Iowa State Fair, when the president came to town during the 2004 general election campaign—at every opportunity—Catholic Workers find peaceful and effective ways to get their anti-war message to Iowans.

On the first mild and sunny day of May, they gathered as they do every Thursday at noon in Nollen Plaza in the heart of downtown Des Moines to display their banner, to leaflet, and to talk with passers-by.

"Twenty-nine Iowa military personnel have died so far—that's including National Guard, active military, and the military reserve," said Frank Cordaro, a former priest, veteran peace activist, and internationally recognized leader of the Catholic Worker Movement.

In the years before the current war, Cordaro recalled, the Iowa Air Guard's F-16s flew over Iraq as part of the U.S. military's enforcement of the no-fly zone. The Des Moines Catholic Worker community, he noted, took an active role in protests against the Air Guard's participation.

Americans hear a lot about Iraqis killed by insurgents, said Cordaro, but get very little accurate information about the large numbers of Iraqi civilians killed by the U.S. military.

"This darkness of the soul that has captured this nation, steeped in these lies and war crimes perpetrated in our name—it's really a disheartening time to be an American," said Cordaro.

Mary Ann Dorsett said she has reorganized her priorities and has recently become active in the anti-war movement.

"In the last couple of years I've realized that the way the country was going was very disturbing," she explained. "I've cut back on my hours in my business so I can get out and do the things I really need to do, politically and spiritually, and just really address myself to these issues, which are very important."

Dorsett, who is Catholic, said she is not a member of the Catholic Worker Movement but is actively involved in a number of organizations that oppose the Bush administration on domestic and foreign policy issues.

"Gradually, over the last year, I've become more involved," she said. "Here I am, standing on a street corner holding a protest sign."

Quaker activist Sherry Hutchison, a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and a regular at anti-war events in Central Iowa, is a woman of a few well-chosen words.

"We do our best," she stated.

Cordaro has been invited to The Netherlands to address the annual gathering in May of the



Sherry Hutchison at the weekly anti-war protest at Nollen Plaza in downtown Des Moines, Iowa (Photo Michael Gillespie).

Catholic Worker Movement in Europe. He also plans to visit Catholic Worker communities in England, Ireland, and Germany.

—Michael Gillespie

10 Plagues of the Occupation



On Passover, members of Jewish Voice for Peace hold signs depicting the 10 Plagues of the Occupation (Staff photo M. Horton).

A group of Jewish activists from the newly constituted Washington, DC chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) held a demonstration April 27 at Dupont Circle themed "10 Plagues of the Occupation."

The demonstration was planned to coincide with the Jewish holiday of Passover, which recalls the story of Moses and the liberation of the Jewish people from bondage in Egypt. Passover, one demonstrator noted, is "a perfect time to

remember that our own liberation is tied to the liberation of people everywhere."

Placards depicting "10 Plagues of the Occupation" made reference to the Plagues God unleashed on the Egyptian people in the Passover story.

Activists distributed flyers to passing DC professionals listing the 10 Plagues of the Occupation of Palestine: Home Demolitions, Uprooting Olive Trees, Blockades and Checkpoints, Destruction of Villages, "Administrative Detention," the "Security Wall," Theft of Resources, False Democracy, Erasing Histories, and War Crimes.

The flyer also listed the 10 Plagues of the Occupation on Jewish People: Distorting and censoring Jewish voices against the occupation, Denying the full civil rights of Mizrahim, Suppressing current radical and progressive Jewish cultures of resistance, Selling out the struggles of the Bund, Dishonoring the memory of our ancestors, Hardening the hearts of a generation of young Jews against Jewish tradition, Creating conditions that give rise to violent attacks, Manipulating Jewish persecution and genocide to justify persecution and genocide, Forcing Israeli youth to serve in the military, and Becoming the pawns of the U.S. government and corporations.

Jewish Voice for Peace is a national organization formed in response to Israel's election of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister in 1996, when the peace process came to a halt. Josh Ruebner, a founding member of JVP and grassroots advocacy coordinator for the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, described their efforts as fulfilling a "responsibility to change U.S. policy toward Israel-Palestine; to support a just peace based on human rights and international law rather than on military occupation." According to Ruebner, JVP represents "the thinking of more Jewish Americans than the organizations who purport to speak in our name."

The JVP-DC chapter was formed near the end of last year, when members of the group formally known as Jews for Peace in Palestine and Israel (JPPi) decided to merge their efforts with JVP. Jewish Voice for Peace can be contacted through its Web site, <www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org>. To contact JVP-DC, e-mail <forthewild@yahoo.com>.

—Matt Horton

Popular Resistance Against the Wall

Mansour Aziz Mansour, an activist with the International Solidarity Movement and particularly with the Northwest Jerusalem Popular Committee to Resist the Wall, (NJPCRW), visited Washington, DC the weekend of May 6-8 as part of a national tour organized through friends he met in Palestine. He spoke at two well-attended events: a screening of "Until When..." at the DC Palestine Film Festival at George Washington University, and at the Peace Café, a regular Washington, DC Sunday morning forum for discussing issues relating to the Middle East.



Palestinian olive farmer Mansour Aziz Mansour, speaking at the Peace Café, describes Israel's destruction of Palestinian land (Staff photo M. Horton).

Mansour identifies himself first and foremost as a Palestinian olive farmer from Biddu, a small village northwest of Jerusalem. Growing up among the olive groves his family has cultivated for hundred of years, he described the systematic destruction of his lands and of the olive trees he regards as "brothers" and "sisters." The terms are apt considering that olive trees take a great deal of nurturing—they don't even begin to produce their fruit until they are 50 years old—and that many of the olive trees on his family land are as old or older than he is.

Mansour recounted the struggles of the people of Biddu since Israel began constructing its wall. "We don't want to be gathered in small areas like a zoo," he explained simply. "We are not animals, we are human beings."

With the wall encircling the village and dividing the people from most of their 25,000 olive trees, the community regularly holds mass meetings to plan resistance. Attendees frequently number in the hundreds, and include all voices in the village from the children to the elders. "We have no leaders," Mansour said.

Through their meetings, the villagers decided to use nonviolent demonstrations to attempt to disrupt and block construction of the wall. Regular popular demonstrations began in Biddu on Feb. 26, 2004. By the following day, Israeli forces met the nonviolent demonstrations with force, killing three and injuring over 70 others. Zakariya Salem, 30 years old, and Mohammad Rayan, 27, were killed by Israeli gunfire, while Abed Arahman Abed, 70 years old, was killed by a gas-induced heart attack. The canister, when recovered, clearly read "not for use on civilians."

Many of the 70 wounded were critically injured, including Mohammad Badwan, 21, who was shot in the head with live ammunition and died the following Wednesday. Almost two months later, on April 18, Israeli forces killed a fifth villager, shooting Diya' Abd el Kareem Eid, 24, in the chest.

Recently, two cousins, 15-year-old Jamal Jaber Ibrahim Assi and 14-year-old Odai Mufid Mahmoud Assi from the neighboring village of Beit Liqya, were released from school only to find bulldozers demolishing their family's land. The two teenagers ran and started throwing rocks at the massive Caterpillar D9 bulldozers. Within 10 minutes they were fatally shot by Israeli soldiers, who argued that the teens posed a threat to the D9 operator.

The villagers have also exhausted all legal recourse available, Mansour said, recounting their pursuit of legal action through the Israeli High Court. After illegally crossing into Jerusalem to testify in the High Court hearing (the Israeli government makes it virtually impossible for a Palestinian to get the necessary permission to enter Jerusalem), the High Court found in favor of the farmers and ordered the government to stop construction.

Despite the decision, however, the work resumed a short time later. Why? Villagers believe that the original decision was favorable because it was handed down a few days before the International Court of Justice's hearing on the legality of the wall. The Israeli High Court, they suspect, was trying to influence the ICJ's decision by giving some superficial legal legitimacy to the process—but following the ICJ's strong condemnation on April 24, 2004, virtual legitimacy no longer mattered.

The community also has formed strong alliances with Jewish groups, Mansour said, many of whom, including Tay'oush, Israeli Anarchists, Rabbis for Human Rights and Gush Shalom, have joined in their demonstrations and taken beatings and gas as well. The people of Biddu even sent an invitation to the nearby settlers in Mevaseret Tzion, 30 of whom wrote a letter in support of their High Court bid to stop the wall. This, of course, has not stopped the continuing catastrophe.

"We are fighting for the simple things," Mansour said. "If there is only one Palestinian left in Palestine and one Israeli peace activist left," he concluded, "we will resist and we will win."

—Matt Horton

The Palestinian Nonviolent Movement

Sami Awad, executive director of the Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem, was in Washington, DC the last week of April speaking to NGOs, community organizations and universities. At the Carnegie Endowment, in a talk sponsored by the Foundation for Middle East Peace, he discussed "Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance: A Viable Option for Winning a Two State Peace."

Awad opened his presentation by reiterating that, with roots at least as old as the 1936 general strike against the British mandate, nonviolence was not a new strategy or concept to the Palestinian people. Comparing the current al-Aqsa intifada to the intifada of the late 1980s, he noted that, in contrast to the first intifada, the current one is largely fought by guerrilla cells using light arms.

The non-violent beginnings of the al-Aqsa intifada, he recalled, were brutally and systematically crushed by the Israeli military. This targeted attempt to destroy nonviolence as a tactic, coupled with the failure of the Oslo process, which Palestinians saw as the result of nonviolent struggle, has supported the logic of armed struggle, Awad said.

There are two benefits to nonviolence as the primary tactic of the Palestinian resistance, he argued, especially in the current situation. The first is that a nonviolent struggle will make the movement popular and involve the community at large, which presently is immobilized by the armed components of the current resistance. This democratization and popularization of the movement, Awad said, not only will utilize more of the community's human resources, but also will build community and momentum for popular participation in Palestinian society as a whole. This empowerment and participation ultimately will make a more accountable Palestinian government, as well as a stronger resistance.

Awad cited several victories for the non-violent movement. Because of the Israeli regime's vast military superiority, he said, many of the fighters have questioned the effectiveness of armed struggle. In fact, 15 fighters from Kata'eb Al-Aqsa (Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade) approached the nonviolent movement in Bethlehem for training, and now are dedicated to nonviolence. This, of course, has made them no less wanted by Israel, Awad observed, and many have been arrested because of their involvement in the nonviolent movement. The Holy Land Trust, he said, is focusing resources on working with the fighters and is initiating a program to train prisoners in nonviolent strategy upon their release.

The organization's primary focus, however, is on villagers, who are most affected by the wall. They are being systematically urbanized, Awad reported, because the wall is taking their land. The village of Qawawis, in the Al-Khalil (Hebron) district, he said, has been completely depopulated because of the conditions imposed upon its former residents by settlers and the IDF.

If this urbanization process continues and the wall is completed, Awad warned, Bethlehem will be more densely populated than the Gaza Strip. If plans for the E1 settlement are permitted to proceed, he said, settlements will sever the north and south of the West Bank from each other. Should that come to pass, Awad foresaw a landscape of densely populated prison-like cantons connected to industrial zones.

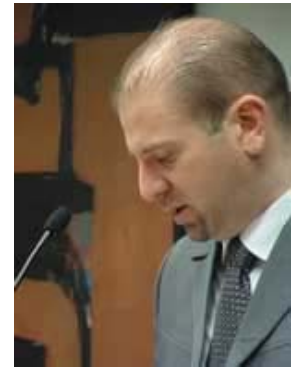
During the question-and-answer period, Awad addressed the common misperception that the nonviolent movement is a Christian movement, noting that the movement in Palestine is Muslim-led, with the majority participants Muslim. And just as the nonviolent struggle is certainly not a Christian movement, the armed resistance is not a Muslim movement, he added, citing a number of Christian participants in armed organizations. The disagreement on strategy, he said, has more to do with what people think will succeed than with religious affiliation.

Awad also said that while his organization has made attempts to involve internationals and Israelis in their efforts, the severe repression and hindrance to their presence has made it clear that "we are locked up in prisons," and that, in the end, the movement must be a Palestinian-focused initiative.

Awad questioned inflated visions of Israeli support for peace with the Palestinians, critiquing the oft-repeated statistic that 60 to 70 percent of Israelis support the creation of a Palestinian state. He cited a recent poll which asked Israelis if they thought Palestinians have the right to be there. Fewer than 5 percent of respondents agreed that the Palestinian people had these rights. "Our goal," he concluded, "is to get Israelis to recognize these rights."

To help sponsor nonviolence training of a village, contact the Holy Land Trust's fiscal sponsor, Non-Violence International (<nonviolenceinternational.net>), for more information.

—Matt Horton



Sami Awad, executive director of the Holy Land Trust, discusses Palestinian nonviolent resistance (Staff photo M. Horton).

Wheels of Justice Roll Through Iowa



Human rights activist Ed Kinane describes the invasion of Iraq (Photo Michael Gillespie).

Human rights activists Ed Kinane and Mazin Qumsiyeh spoke to large and receptive audiences when the Wheels of Justice Tour bus rolled through Iowa in April. Kinane, who worked in Iraq with Voices in the Wilderness before, during and after the 2003 U.S. invasion, spoke at the Ames Public Library on April 22.

"The building would shake during 'Shock and Awe' bombing," recalled Kinane, who, along with dozens of other activists, sheltered in the Al-Fanar Hotel, directly across from the Palestine Hotel, during the invasion.

"This may have been the first time in history an invading army encountered its own nationals protesting the invasion," he added.

Describing his first encounter with U.S. troops in Baghdad, when he and other Voices in the Wilderness activists approached the invading troops outside the hotel to offer them bottled water, Kinane said, "I had so much anger that I couldn't hand them the

water. I just stood there." At the time, Kinane said, he was wearing a black T-shirt with the statement WAR IS NOT THE ANSWER emblazoned in bold white letters across the chest.

Kinane told the *Washington Report* that one of the unit commanders later said to him, "Don't blame these kids. I give the orders. I know we've killed civilians, and I can't sleep because of it."

A New York-based activist, Kinane modestly described himself as "the warm-up act" for Palestinian-American university professor and activist Mazin Qumsiyeh.

Qumsiyeh, widely recognized as an authority on Palestine and the history of Israeli occupation, told his audience that the Wheels of Justice Tour mission encompasses not only the crisis in illegally occupied Palestine, but similar human rights issues in Iraq and beyond.

"Half of the people in Iraq and half of the people in Palestine are children. And half of the Palestinian refugees are children," Qumsiyeh pointed out.

"Of the 8.5 million Palestinians in the world, two-thirds of them are refugees and half of these refugees and half of the Palestinian general population are children," he continued, noting that, in the past four years alone, Israeli forces have killed at least 750 Palestinian children.

Qumsiyeh humanized the Palestinians and their plight by relating the stories of two Palestinian children wounded by Israeli sniper fire who have been brought to Connecticut for medical care that is not available in occupied Palestine.

Using maps and photographs, Qumsiyeh offered his listeners a compelling picture and informative narrative of the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Palestine, where he recently visited with members of his Palestinian Christian family in Beit Sahour (house of the shepherds) and with Palestinian and Israeli human rights leaders. His book, *Sharing the Land of Canaan: Human Rights and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (available from the AET Book Club), is a comprehensive examination of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and a call for a shared state.



Author-activist Mazin Qumsiyeh discussed ethnic cleansing in Palestine (Photo Michael Gillespie).

Driving the Wheels of Justice Tour bus is Vietnam veteran and peace activist Bill Hill, who contributes significantly to the jaunty and defiantly good-natured rolling protest against war and occupation.

The Wheels of Justice Tour event in Ames was co-sponsored by the Ames High School Progressive Club, Catalyst, and the Ames Public Library. For additional information on the tour, visit <http://www.justicewheels.org/>.

— Michael Gillespie

Weir Presents "Off the Charts" Study



Alison Weir speaks to a reporter following her presentation on Capitol Hill (Staff photo D. Hanley).

Journalist Alison Weir described "Off the Charts," her explosive new study of the coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by major U.S. media, including *The New York Times*, in a public hearing sponsored by the Council for the National Interest on Capitol Hill on May 9. Ambassador Peck, former chief of mission to Iraq, introduced the speaker and moderated the presentation.

Weir revealed that the *Times* reports Israeli deaths at rates up to seven to ten times greater than Palestinian deaths. Weir, executive director of If Americans Knew, a nonprofit organization that specializes in media analysis, was mentioned in a *New York Times* column by the paper's public editor, Daniel Okrent, regarding the *Times*' own coverage of the Israel-Palestinian conflict (see p. 47). For some reason Okrent did not mention

Weir's study, she said, which looked at headlines or first paragraphs describing conflict deaths and, as a sub-category, children's deaths in his newspaper.

Weir's Powerpoint presentation also examined network news coverage of Israeli and Palestinian deaths on "ABC World News Tonight," "CBS Evening News," and "NBC Nightly News." She passed out another report, compiled by Remember These Children, see (<www.rememberthesechildren.org>), listing all the Israeli and Palestinian children killed in the first year of the intifada, from Sept. 29, 2000 to Sept. 28, 2001.

In the first year of the conflict, she stated, *The Times* reported Israeli deaths at a rate 2.8 times higher than Palestinian deaths, and in 2004 this rate increased by almost 30 percent, to 3.6. Moreover, Weir said, *The Times* coverage of children's deaths was even more skewed. In the first year of the current uprising, Israeli children's deaths were reported at 6.8 times the rate of Palestinian children's deaths. In 2004 this differential increased, with deaths of Israeli children covered at a rate 7.3 times greater than the deaths of Palestinian children. Given that in 2004 22 times more Palestinian children were killed than Israeli children, this report is particularly damning.

Despite skewed reporting in the mainstream media, Weir is optimistic that things are changing for the better. As she travels to college campuses and speaks around the country, she said, she has found people across the political spectrum who are waking up and discovering that although at one time the mainstream media had a monopoly on news about the Middle East, the Internet has opened up new, unbiased sources of information.

To view the complete report, visit <www.ifamericansknew.org>.

—Delinda C. Hanley

Assessing U.S Public Diplomacy

The United States-Egypt Friendship Society (USEF) hosted a May 9 panel discussion at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC on "Assessing U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab World: Is It Working?"

Moderator Mohamed Hakki, USEF advisory committee member and former chairman of Egypt's State Information Service, welcomed guests to the event which, he noted proudly, was the 19th function hosted by the USEF since its inception in October 2003.



(L-r) Hala Kotb of Zogby International, Al-Jazeera Washington bureau chief Hafez Al-Mirazi, Tamara Cofman Wittes of the Saban Center, and moderator Mohamed Hakki assess U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab world (Staff Photo J. McMahon).

First to address the panel's topic was Hala Kotb, director of international marketing and communications for the polling firm Zogby International. She reviewed the methodology and results of a May 2004 survey commissioned by Prof. Shibley Telhami of the University of Maryland on Arab perceptions of the U.S. Among the significant findings were that Arabs get very little of their news (as distinct from entertainment) from Al-Hurra television and Radio Sawa, the U.S. media outlets to the Arab world which replaced the Voice of America. While respondents had favorable views of U.S. science and technology, Kotb continued, their view of American foreign policy was overwhelmingly negative, with U.S. policy on Iraq rating "rock bottom." Those Arabs who had visited the U.S. or had had personal contact with Americans, she noted, tended to have

more favorable views of this country.

Tamara Cofman Wittes of the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy posited that Washington's credibility problem in the region cannot be attributed solely to U.S. policies, on the one hand, or values on the other. Neither perspective tells the whole story or serves as a useful guide, she argued, in countering the "diffuse" sources of the Arab world's mistrust.

Wittes proceeded to advocate a policy of complexity and honesty, rather than presenting a packaged view of the U.S. While her analysis appeared sophisticated and inclusive, in fact its lack of historical grounding enabled her to evade key questions of U.S. policy. For example, she described the problem of Arab perception of the U.S. as a "longstanding one," predating 9/11 and the war on Iraq. But, she failed to ask, does it predate 1948, 1967 or 1973? Or does it somehow have no origin? While Dr. Wittes proceeded to make some pertinent observations and recommendations, her mystification of the basic issue, deliberate or not, served to undermine her credibility.

The final speaker was Hafez Al-Mirazi, Washington bureau chief of Al-Jazeera Television, who wryly noted that the question "why do they hate us?" is one he and his fellow Al-Jazeera journalists often ask themselves. Declaring that public diplomacy is "good," not a waste of tax dollars, Mirazi described anti-Americanism as a global problem, as evidenced by the fact that one sees Osama bin Laden T-shirts in Buenos Aires. But the Arab and Muslim world has specific grievances, he explained, namely the U.S. bias toward Israel and Washington's appearance of supporting dictatorships and oppressive regimes in the region. "We know what U.S. values are," Mirazi stated, "but we're disappointed by U.S. hypocrisy."

A former Voice of America writer, editor and broadcaster, Mirazi was highly critical of the dismantlement of the U.S. Information Agency, which, among other attributes he cited, was "staffed with experts, translated American literature" and oversaw Fulbright Scholarships and the VOA. He called for re-establishing the USIA and for making U.S. officials available to the Arab media. "Use us as part of the solution," he urged, "not part of the problem."

—Janet McMahon

ABA Conference Features Panel on Israel's Wall, Hague Ruling



Pieter Bekker discusses the ICJ ruling on Israel's apartheid wall (Courtesy ABA).

At its spring meeting held April 13 to 16 in Washington, DC, the American Bar Association (ABA) Section of International Law featured a panel on "The ICJ's Advisory Competence and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: Legality of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory." Appearing on the April 14 panel, moderated by Judge Stephen M. Schwebel, a judge (1981-2000) and past president of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), were Pieter Bekker, senior counsel for Palestine before the ICJ; Tal Becker, legal adviser to the Israeli U.N. Mission in New York; Mahmoud Hmoud, first secretary and legal adviser to Jordan's U.N. Mission; and Geoffrey R. Watson of Catholic University Law School in Washington, DC.

Bekker began by explaining that the ICJ case represented his "inaugural involvement in the Middle East crisis." Describing himself as "neither pro-Palestinian nor anti-Israeli," Bekker, who took a leave of absence from the White & Case law firm to work on the case, said his motivation was "to uphold the primacy of international law."

Acknowledging the "fear and reality" of suicide bombings and terrorist attacks, Bekker summarized the ICJ ruling as being not about Israel's right to protect itself with a wall, but its obligation to do so *on its own territory*. In fact, Bekker pointed out, aerial photographs show that the wall is intended to protect and expand illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Adding that, rather than saving lives, the wall has taken lives and destroyed property, Bekker dismissed Israel's description of it as a temporary measure as "not a credible claim, given its \$1.4 billion cost."

The Australian-born Tal Becker emphasized what a pleasure it was to be "*here*"—i.e., not at the U.N.—eliciting sympathetic chuckles from many audience members. He proceeded to focus on what he called the "sense of nuance and debates underlying this issue." Completely ignoring Bekker's point that the issue was how, rather than whether, Israel could legally protect its citizens, he faulted the ICJ for not addressing the reasons necessitating Israel's response; pointed out that not all parties to the case (i.e., Israel) had consented to its being brought before the court; described the ICJ's advisory opinion as an "end run around Israel"; and cited the "divisiveness of the question itself."

Responding to his Israeli counterpart, Hmoud stated that the process was a legal, not a political one, and that Israel had been given every opportunity to present its case. The court distinguished between occupation and self-defense, he said, and ruled that Israel must abide by laws regarding

occupation. Israel's recent announcement regarding the expansion of the illegal Ma'ale Adeumim settlement, Hmoud concluded, "shows that the court reached the right decision."

Watson, the final speaker, echoed the Israeli's argument that the wall should be considered on a "case-by-case"—read inch-by-inch—basis. Criticizing the court's "sweeping opinion" and "sloppy fact-finding," he concluded by cavalierly observing that it wouldn't be the end of the world if the wall does, in fact, become the final border between Israel and a Palestinian state. "It's probably here to stay," he acknowledged, "but it's not an insurmountable barrier to peace."

In fact, Watson confided, some of his "liberal Israeli friends" thought the wall really had made life better. He neglected to divulge the opinion of his "liberal Palestinian friends."

—Janet McMahon

Basra Prosthetics Project Needs Donations

Rotary International District #7620, in partnership with Physicians for Peace (PFP), has launched a prosthetics project in Basra, Iraq as part of their "Friendship in the Arab World" initiative.

Tax-deductible donations will be used to help send medical staff, equipment and supplies to Iraq and, even more importantly, help train Iraqi nationals. There are nearly 5,000 known amputees in the Basra area alone, and the number grows monthly. Many are children who have been injured by landmines or other consequences of war.

This worthy project also is collecting used prosthetics devices, which are also tax-deductible. For more information call (301) 816-5776 or visit the Web site <www.mvrotary.org/Basra_Project/basraproject.htm>. Contributions should be made payable to Montgomery Village Rotary Foundation and mailed to Linda Smythe, 19205 Jericho Dr., Gaithersburg, MD 20879.

—Delinda C. Hanley

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