

# Palestine Focus

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## Editorial:

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# PNC Declares Independent Palestinian State

An independent Palestinian state has been declared, an historic milestone in the long and arduous Palestinian quest for fulfillment of national rights and aspirations. The Palestine National Council (PNC), the legislative body of the Palestinian people (the Palestine Liberation Organization is their representative and executive body) met in Algiers November 12-15 and declared a Palestinian state on the final day of the meeting.

The declaration of independence is clearly a product of the Palestinian uprising (Intifada), which has now lasted for a full year. The Intifada has focused the energy of Palestinians throughout the world on the themes of unity, resistance, and independence. The intifada has established institutions which are the nucleus of a state: medical care, food production and distribution, popular tribunals, security, etc.

The declaration of a Palestinian state is a major landmark in the process of achieving a just peace in the Middle East. A Palestinian state not only fulfills the primary aspiration of the Palestinian people, but also addresses the needs of the people of the region, especially the Arab people, for justice. A diplomatic campaign is already under way to convince the world's governments to recognize the new state and to press the United Nations to take steps to implement its 1947 partition plan (resolution 181) by securing the territory of the new state from Israeli occupation and thereby extending protection to the Palestinian inhabitants.

As U.S. citizens, we particularly call on the



*Palestinian women on a West Bank mountaintop raise the Palestinian flag. Palestinians throughout the occupied territories and the world celebrated the PNC declaration of an independent Palestinian state on November 15. This photo (by George Azar) along with the two used on pages four and five are from a photography exhibit produced by the Palestine Solidarity Committee titled, "Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising." Photographers featured in the exhibit are George Azar, Neal Cassidy, Adam Kufeld, and Barbara Lubin. The exhibit is being shown at galleries and college campuses throughout the country. For more information, call the New York PSC office at (212) 964-7299.*

U.S. government to recognize the new Palestinian state and to cease its pro-Israel role—especially more than \$3 billion in military and economic aid which Israel uses to bludgeon the Palestinian people living under occupation. For too long, the United States has been a principal obstacle to peace and to self-determination for Palestinians. For too long, the United States has taken a partisan position on the side of Israel, to the detriment not only of the Palestinians but of Israelis who want peace as well. The immediate reaction of the State Department was to dismiss the declaration of independence as a "unilateral" act. Was not the 1776 declaration of independence unilateral, too? Should our founding fathers have gained the agreement of King George first? Is not the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza a unilateral act?

The PNC addressed long-standing U.S. government demands by accepting UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, in the context of the rights of Palestinian self-determination, as the basis for the holding of the UN international peace conference. It is time for the United States and Israel to drop their unreasonable opposition to the United Nations peace process. These resolutions are still defective—because they address Palestinians only as refugees and ignore their national identity—and Palestinian acceptance of them must be seen as a willingness to go considerably more than half way toward initiating a genuine peace process. However, the U.S. government still

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## Editorial:

# U.S./Israeli Elections and Palestinian Statehood

The rightward trend in the Israeli elections and the lack of an indication of change by President-elect George Bush has hurt immediate prospects for peace in the Middle East. However, international opinion and the will of the Palestinian people, expressed in the uprising, are likely to force a change.

There were few differences between Michael Dukakis and George Bush on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. The new Bush administration will continue what appears to be an establishment consensus: Continued support to Israel as a "strategic asset," while exerting some pressure that the status quo of endless occupation, Intifada, and regional uncertainty has to change. However, the change advocated includes neither recognition of the newly declared independent Palestinian state nor negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization. King Hussein remains the favored partner. In other words, the Bush administration, while uncomfortable with the situ-

ation, shows no prospects of doing anything decisive to change it; in effect, it would continue to pay Israel to maintain its policies of expansion and repression.

Many have noted the way the candidates avoided dealing with real issues in this campaign, and the identical position of both contenders' positions contributed to such a malaise. Despite the fact that public-opinion polls consistently show Americans are opposed to increases in U.S. aid to Israel and are willing to support a Palestinian homeland, no real alternative was presented by either Dukakis or Bush. Only Jesse Jackson, who electrified the nation during the primaries with his vision of peace, justice, and jobs, presented an alternative Middle East policy which supported Palestinian self-determination.

The contradictory stance of the incoming Bush administration has been highlighted further by the results of Israel's elections. The Israeli vote indicated a continuing stalemate between the main con-

tenders, Likud and Labor, with a distinct shift toward the right. At presstime, haggling over any future coalition government continues with a probable Likud-led coalition in the cards (although the possibility of a new national unity coalition between the two major blocs cannot be eliminated).

No matter the exact contours of the future ruling government, the shift even further toward the right is significant. For

example, a new party, Molodet, which advocates "transfer," the mass expulsion of Palestinians, won a place in the new Knesset and is slated to join the Likud government. At the same time, the increase of support for the orthodox religious parties has allowed them to call the shots in any coalition government, creating an opportunist marriage of convenience between par-

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## Interview with Reuven Kaminer

# Israeli Politics in Crisis

Reuven Kaminer is an Israeli peace activist. He, along with three others, was convicted of the "crime" of meeting with PLO representatives in Romania to talk about prospects for peace. The "Rumania 4" are appealing their conviction. Reuven Kaminer's remarks were recorded during a conversation with Hilton Obenzinger of Palestine Focus and Gus Newport, former mayor of Berkeley, California, and president of the Board of Advisors of the Middle East Children's Alliance in West Jerusalem in August 1988. Although Kaminer's observations were made two months prior to the Israeli elections, his analysis of Israel's political crisis remains current.

### The Good News: Intifada

I'd like to give you the good news, then the bad news. The good news is the Intifada, the struggle of the Palestinian people. Something very big is going on. It has moved the Palestinian struggle for national self-determination off dead center from a relative deadlock; it has made it an urgent, moving issue for all concerned. You cannot walk away and ignore it without a dire danger of your interests suffering. The Palestinians unfroze the deadlock; that's their job and they're doing it.

None of us knew how long they could keep it up. As a matter of fact, we have had great fun over the year mocking Rabin and the others in the regime who kept on saying they would put the uprising down in a couple of days, but we in the Israeli peace movement also did not believe it would last. We did not understand the state of the masses. In our conversations we would ask, "How long can they keep this up?"

The way we understand it, Palestinian society has become a uniquely structured kind of society, before and during the Intifada. Israel took a highly political society and they cut off the political head, so to speak, by saying, "Your leaders cannot be here, and you cannot engage in party politics." Well, the Palestinians did something very good—they sent the cadres to the masses. They said, "Stop your in-fighting and stop your posturing; go start working with the masses." And they did. Everyone went to work with the masses, together and as organizations. They organized the masses in other things besides the political groups, more women's organizations, trade union organizations, etc.

Palestinian society had this sort of implosion of structural organizations and got more and more organized. So when the uprising started—and it was spontaneous—it was

sitting on a large degree of political unity which had been forged in Algeria previously and on a lot of real structure in the society.

Then they turned this thing into a way of life. Over the period of the Intifada there have been more and more organizations, more and more popular committees. Rabin's thing to get the popular committees is ridiculous. Maybe Sharon is right; maybe if they went looking for the popular committees after the first month, they would have stopped it. Maybe if the Czar had gone after the Soviets earlier ... but at a certain point it is too late. Now it is too late because the whole thing has turned into one big popular committee. And these popular committees are a model for other national liberation struggles.

### Israeli Protest Movement

The uprising has given a new life to the protest movement inside Israel. The protest movement includes the left, but it is not only the left and it is much more than

the left. The Israeli left is relatively weak and isolated, but protest politics are significant.

The classic scenario is what we did in regard to the war in Lebanon when we had a successful impact on society. We turned the country around, not only us of course—there were the difficulties in the war and other circumstances—but there was a very active protest movement which seized on these failings of the government and its contradictions, so they took political action very quickly. I think that kind of chemistry is developing again in the progressive and humanistic part of this society, the more conscious people who can understand, more or less, what's going on, and I think we've made big progress.

However, the impact is not what it was in Lebanon for two reasons. The first reason—and this is very sad to say, but it has to be said—the cost in Israeli lives from the Intifada has been very low. We hope it will stay that way. The

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May 28 Peace Now convoy into the West Bank to protest Israeli military occupation and to show solidarity with the Palestinians living under occupation. Photo: Andre Brutmann/New Outlook

## FOCUS ON ACTION

By Steve Goldfield

In 1988, three Palestinian celebrations occur almost at the same time: On November 15, Palestinians celebrated the declaration of an independent Palestinian state by the Palestine National Council; November 29 is the United Nations-declared International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; and December 9 is the first anniversary of the Intifada.

The General Union of Palestinian Students held independence celebrations across the United States on November 15, and many community celebrations were held the following weekend in at least twelve cities. In San Francisco, 150 cars caravaned through the city festooned with balloons to a rally of 500 people.

In the North American community, many events were already planned for December 9, and these naturally combined energies with the independence activities. In New York, for example, the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) planned an evening program on November 30 to host the PLO delegation to the United Nations, along with a PLO support demonstration on December 1. A coalition was formed to demonstrate in support of the uprising on December 9.

Concerts to celebrate the anniversary of the uprising and the declaration of independence were planned by PSC chapters in Washington, D.C. (with Puerto Rican singer Roy Brown, Rumisonko, Alicia Portnoy, and others), Sacramento, Houston, San Francisco (featuring the Dance Brigade), and Chicago. Most of these events also featured Palestinian cultural groups. The Chicago concert, billed as

"Live Aid Palestine!" was scheduled to feature Gil Scott-Heron, the A.N.C. Sechaba Singers, Al-Watan Palestinian Folklore Troupe, and New Concept Theater of Chicago. The Chicago event, like most of the others, helped raise medical aid for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

In Ann Arbor, the PSC held a forum in September with Dr. Ali Mazrui, host of the BBC and PBS series on Africa, on the ideological and material relationship between Israel and South Africa.

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We'd like to call your attention to two groups protesting Israeli occupation. A number of academics, including Naseer Aruri, Richard Falk, Elizabeth Fernea, Robert Fernea, Mary Gray, Ruth Hubbard, Robert Lange, Cheryl Rubenberg, Edward Said, Philippa Strum, George Wald, and Nicholas Wolterstorff, from universities across the United States have formed the Ad Hoc Committee to End Israeli Expulsion of Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. The committee is circulating a petition and can be reached at P. O. Box 102, Waverly Square, MA 02179.

Pioneer Valley War Tax Resisters (P. O. Box 227, Greenfield, MA 01301) has been refusing to pay taxes for forty years because of their opposition to the military. Twelve from the group issued a statement in September supporting refusal to pay taxes in protest of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Contact them for more information.

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Israeli troops shot and wounded Neal Cassidy, a free-lance photojournalist with *Frontline* newspaper, while he was photographing them in Nablus in October. Cassidy was hit by a plastic bullet in the leg, the first foreign journalist to be shot while covering the Palestinian uprising. Cassidy was taken to a Palestinian hospital in Nablus. When Israeli soldiers arrived to take him to an Israeli hospital, Cassidy declined, saying, "I've had enough of your

hospitality."

On his return to the United States, Cassidy spoke and showed slides at an event in Berkeley, California, in support of City Council candidate Maudelle Shirek and Measure J, the initiative for a sister city with Jabalya. Among other evidence, one of his slides, taken shortly before he was shot, showed that there was no activity of any kind in the vicinity, discounting the Israeli army story that Cassidy was shot during a violent protest.

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Trials continue in two important Israeli cases in which the defendants are progressive journalists. In the Nitzotz trial of four editors of the Hebrew/Arabic newspapers *HaNitzotz/Sharara*, a judge ruled the defendants should be released on bail during their trial. The state prosecutor appealed to the Supreme Court, which rejected their release for a second time.

The trial of Michel Warshawski and the Alternative Information Centre, which publishes *News From Within* and was closed by authorities for six months in February 1987, has also begun. The centre called for an international solidarity campaign with the slogans, "No to the political trials against Israeli-Palestinian cooperation"; "No to repression of freedom of information"; and "Lift the accusations against Warshawski and the AIC." For more information or to send contributions: Hanitzotz/Sharara Publishing House, POB 1575, Jerusalem and Alternative Information Centre, POB 24278, Jerusalem.

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An important recent development came also in the case of the Los Angeles 8, Palestinians whom the Immigration and Naturalization Service is trying to deport because of their legal political activities. A federal court judge refused to throw out the case in spite of government misconduct and sent the case back into the INS hearing process. Subsequently, the immigration judge dismissed two of the eight cases. The other hearings are postponed until the spring. □

Voters in Cambridge and Somerville, Massachusetts, made history in the 1988 election by becoming the first constituency in the United States to approve a pro-Palestinian initiative. Winning by a 52.7 percent margin, the victory turned around decades of assumptions that the electorate would not challenge the traditional pro-Israel bias of our government's foreign policy. From now on, no pundit can declare that Palestinian rights cannot be brought to the public, much less win elections.

Three other initiatives joined the electoral fray—in Newton, Massachusetts, San Francisco and Berkeley, California—and, although only the Cambridge/Somerville battle won, each campaign made significant inroads, raising Palestinian rights and peace in the Middle East to voters in an unprecedented fashion. While the Newton, San Francisco, and Berkeley initiatives were all defeated by about the same margin, with roughly 30 to 32 percent voting in favor, nearly 100,000 citizens ended up voting "Yes" on Middle East peace and justice—a stunning accomplishment.

### Cambridge/Somerville: Question 5

The Cambridge/Somerville measure, Question 5, was placed on the ballot in state legislative districts encompassing 44 precincts in Cambridge and six in Somerville. Question 5 called on state representatives to send a message to the Congress and president "to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East by: 1) demanding that Israel end its violations of Palestinian human rights and its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; 2) stopping all expenditures of U.S. taxpayers' money for Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; 3) favoring the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, with peace for all states in the region, including Israel."

The Cambridge/Somerville area is very diverse, encompassing not only the Harvard and MIT student and faculty communities, but also a wide variety of income brackets and racial and ethnic groups. While popular Congressmen Barney Frank and Joe Kennedy lined up against it, the Coalition for Palestinian Rights, which mounted the campaign, put together a highly effective, classic, low-budget, door-to-door grassroots drive. For example, on election day, every polling place had a volunteer stationed throughout the balloting to convince the voters.

According to Kathryn Silver, coordinator of the Coalition for Palestinian Rights, the key to the success of the measure was "the tax dollar issue. People were seeing the Palestinian uprising on the TV, but they felt that there wasn't anything they could do about it. Most felt powerless. But once we connected the human-rights abuses to money we pay to continue the occupation, voters were able to connect themselves to the issue."

Matthew Gordon, campaign coordinator, agreed, saying that "we focused on the right dimensions: Human-rights abuses and U.S. taxpayers' money." This approach resulted not only in a vote of 22,784 in favor, with 20,456 against, but in producing a majority in 42 out of 44 precincts in Cambridge. Initial postelection analysis indicated that the issue was equally popular in low- as well as middle-income neighborhoods, while the pro-Israeli opposition concentrated on mobilizing Harvard Square.

### San Francisco: Prop W

The San Francisco initiative, Proposition W, called for the U.S. government to recognize "the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza side by side with the State of Israel with guarantees for the security of both states."

The campaign involved progressive Jewish organizations, such as New Jewish Agenda, and major sections of the Arab-American community, such as the National Association of Arab Americans and the Arab American Institute.

Because of the size and significance of San Francisco, this campaign became the major battleground for all four initiatives (and, in part, deflected attention from the victorious Cambridge/Somerville campaign). Pro-Israel forces raised over a million dollars and massed incredible political pressure against every elected official. Both California senators, Democratic Alan Cranston and Republican Pete Wilson, united against W, as did the city's congressional delegation. Mayor Art Agnos, despite initial attempts to at least stay neutral, was eventually pressured to join the No on W campaign. The entire political establishment, mostly Democratic, came out against what was, in essence, the minority plank which had been offered by Jesse Jackson forces at the Democratic National Convention.

The No on W forces sent out numerous slick mailings, each targeting different constituencies. With the slogan, "Because we want peace," the opposition literature featured the icons of progressive politics, such as Martin Luther King, Harvey Milk (the slain gay San Francisco supervisor), photos of antiwar demonstrations, etc. Even Nobel Prize-winning Costa Rican President Oscar Arias was exploited, using his plea for peace in Central America as a reason to vote *against* peace in the Middle East! (President

## Victory in Cambridge

# Palestinian Rights in the Voting Booth

Arias protested, but, in the tradition of dirty politics, the deed had been done.)

Despite this incredible onslaught, the Yes on W campaign was able to field an impressive, grassroots effort. A professional campaign manager was put on staff, and a sophisticated approach was taken to reach out to the varied constituencies of San Francisco. Church groups, such as the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese and the San Francisco Council of Churches, came out in favor, as did significant groups within San Francisco politics, notably the Harvey Milk Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club, the Black Leadership Forum, the Filipino American Democratic Club, the Roots Democratic Club, the Mexican American Political Association, and the Rainbow Coalition, along with the liberal *Bay Guardian* and gay-community *Sentinel* newspapers.

**YOUR TAX DOLLARS PAY FOR ISRAELI VIOLENCE AGAINST PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA**

**FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE VOTE YES ON 5**

**On November 8th**

*Brochure used by the Coalition for Palestinian Rights for victorious Cambridge/Somerville initiative.*

© George Azar 1988

The campaign placed much emphasis on the fact that Jews and Arabs were working together for peace. Many voters realized that if people from both communities could unite in San Francisco, peace was not an impossibility in the Middle East. On the other hand, this strategy placed the vast bulk of voters into an ill-defined "other" category.

In the end, big money and the Big Lie tactics of the opposition smothered the issue. Yet more than sixty thousand voters did come out in favor of Proposition W, and San Francisco debated Middle East peace as never before, with ramifications for future struggle.

### Berkeley: J for Jabalya

Similar tactics were used by the opponents of Measure J in Berkeley. This initiative called for a sister-city link between Berkeley and Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza. Berkeley has had an ongoing battle since Councilmember Maudelle Shirek returned from a February delegation to the occupied territories and presented the sister-city proposal to the City Council. The council voted it down after heated debate, but the controversy re-emerged with Measure J.

Berkeley, long a bastion of left-liberal politics, had its progressive establishment split over the issue. Mayor Loni Hancock and state Assemblyman Tom Bates lined up against the proposal, with County Supervisor John George, former Mayor Gus Newport, and former Board of Education President Barbara Lubin joining the campaign for Jabalya. Berkeley Citizens Action (BCA), to which most of the above belong, was unable to agree on a position, demonstrating that support for Palestinian rights had not been sufficiently addressed by many progressives.

The No on J campaign employed its own series of dirty tactics. A campaign mailer with a photo of the Vietnam memorial on its cover and asserting that voting for the sister-city relationship was "intervening" in the Middle East conflict outraged Vietnam veterans; the memorial is

supposed to be nonpolitical. The mailer also had photos of Mayor Hancock and Assemblyman Bates, who were forced to disavow its content. In addition, pro-Israel forces ignored their progressive allies and joined forces with conservative anti-rent control groups and opponents of the BCA candidates for City Council, causing further embarrassment for Hancock and Bates.

As the campaign neared its end, No on J forces resorted to outright bigotry, asserting that Jabalya refugee camp is controlled by Moslem fundamentalists not suitable for a sister city. Ironically, PLO supporters were portrayed as "moderates" who have lost control to the crazed fundamentalists—all this would be news to the residents of Jabalya. The history of Jabalya—where the current Intifada began—is quite clear: Jabalya has always been one of the

staunchest pro-PLO resistance camps throughout the Israeli occupation! The blatant racist appeal tarnished the "progressives" even further, though it had its intended effect.

The Yes on J campaign, centered by Friends of Jabalya, put out effective literature, highlighting Berkeley's tradition of twinning with cities in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and South Africa. But with most energy diverted toward the San Francisco effort and with almost no money (the opposition spent over \$100,000), they could only rely on the controversy in the media and precinct walking to get the message out.

Although Measure J garnered only 30 percent of the vote, more than 13,000 votes, the "unholy alliance" between pro-Israel and conservative forces was unsuccessful in attempting to swing all of Berkeley's politics to the right. In particular, Councilmember Maudelle Shirek, targeted partly because of her pro-Palestinian stance, handily defeated her opponent, with significant help from the Palestinian community and the Middle East peace movement. Still, the ugly campaign continues to reverberate throughout Berkeley's political community.

### Newton: Opening Debate

The initiative in Newton, Massachusetts, formulated along similar lines as Proposition W in San Francisco, calling for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza and "security for Israel and the Palestinian state," was perhaps the most unusual of the battles because of the constituency it targeted. Newton is an affluent Boston suburb with a large percentage of Jewish residents, between 40 and 50 percent of the city.

The campaign was spearheaded by the Newton Committee for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, according to coordinator Andrea Barron, because, despite "the shift of public opinion on a solution to the conflict, there is no debate among public officials." The fact that 32 percent, about 4,600, voted "Yes" is a considerable achievement. Significantly, about 14 percent of those voting abstained, a very high percentage, indicating that many were torn by conflicting sensibilities.

According to Barron, "We were so happy to see how well we did. We did not expect to win, but we sought to open up the question for public discussion among all Americans, but especially among American Jews. In this sense, we won." Indeed, the Newton attempt showed that the debate could even be taken deep within the base of pro-Israel politics in this country and yet achieve respectable results.

Naturally, pro-Israel organizations were shaken by all these campaigns. Castigating them as a "conspiracy," the pro-Israel lobby is beginning to realize that it is facing a grassroots movement that challenges U.S. foreign policy as never before. In this light, the victory in Cambridge is particularly important.

Certainly, the movement for Palestinian rights has a new weapon in its arsenal, the ballot initiative, but it is by no means the only way to present our views in the electoral process. These campaigns emerged out of the success of the Jesse Jackson campaign, and the Rainbow Coalition is sure to be a major factor in the next four years. In addition, eleven state Democratic conventions adopted pro-Palestinian resolutions, and battles will continue within these state party structures to maintain and expand these positions.

Now the movement for Palestinian rights needs to summarize the lessons from these initiative campaigns. Simply getting them on the ballot was a victory in itself, and the fact that one carried a majority is an accomplishment no one could have imagined just a few years ago.

But among all the lessons, one from the Cambridge campaign seems to stand out: *Voters can be convinced to challenge the political establishment once they realize that we are paying for Israel's human-rights abuses.* Many have argued that, in calling for cutting aid to Israel which funds the occupation, many voters would be alienated. "We were criticized for being too 'hard' in our approach," says Matthew Gordon, "but it seems that by targeting the aid issue and talking very directly, we were able to reach people. Plus we out-hustled the opposition."

Indeed, the Question 5 experience seems to argue strongly that voters are ready to make the connection between the suffering of the Palestinian people, our country's responsibility, and their pocketbooks. The victory in Cambridge/Somerville heralds a successful strategy that should reach millions of Americans in many battles to come. □

By Riyad Khoury

## The Significance of the Uprising

The past year has proven to be momentous for the Palestinian people everywhere, especially those under Israeli occupation. The Palestinian uprising against that occupation and for freedom and independence rekindled strong and passionate hopes in Palestinian society that freedom is attainable and independence is not some distant and unrealizable dream. This strong passion for human and universal aspirations has been met with utter denial and severe repression unmatched except perhaps in South Africa. It is after all a denial of both humanity and national identity when Israel attempts to prevent the realization of statehood which is the immediate objective of Palestinian nationalism.

The Palestinian uprising has proven to the whole world that this denial is both unjust and undemocratic, coming particularly from a country which has long lectured its neighbors and the rest of the world on principles of democracy, freedom, and independence. Yet the uprising has shown us more than ever before the extent to which Palestinians are ready and willing to individually and collectively sacrifice for the sake of living in freedom in their own state of Palestine.

After enduring twenty years of occupation and repression and one year of even more brutal repression as the price of rising up, the Palestinians have sent the Israelis and unmistakable message: Things are not going back to pre-December 9, 1987, freedom and independence are on the agenda of practically every Palestinian family, and no matter what Israel will devise to put down this collective national effort, occupation cannot be tolerated any longer.

A visitor recently returned from a delegation to the West Bank and Gaza and remarked about the level and readiness of Palestinian resistance to the occupation. A Palestinian family was asked how long could they continue their resistance? The whole family started to answer at once. The translator said, "They all said the same thing, basically. The main thing is that we get to the point where we make the decisions, not when they make the decision. Even if they kill us one by one, we will not stop until we make the decision. As long as they keep doing what they are doing, the resistance will get stronger. They do not understand, they cannot understand that their methods in fact increase the resistance. For example, when they are walking on the street and they stop kids and just start beating them, aren't they human beings? Don't they have bones and flesh like us? Of course, the kids immediately turn against them."

This point of view reflects the overwhelming majority

# The Palestinian First Ann

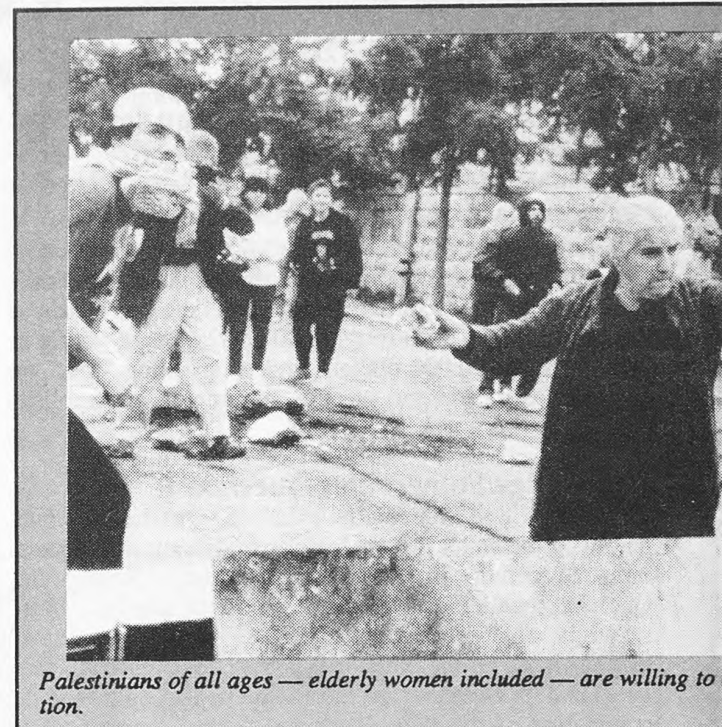
of Palestinians under occupation. It is not a radical or a fringe opinion by an elite group of people, but rather a natural and historic buildup of both resentment and intolerance to continued occupation of their land and of their destiny by a military power. This Israeli military power, under its stated Iron Fist policy and now the famous policy of Might, Blows, and Beatings, wants to rule indefinitely an entire nation, tear down its institutions, kill, maim, imprison, torture, and expel its leaders. This power wants to suffocate every voice of resistance under the convenient cover of "security," dry up the people's agriculture, steal their trade, and, not least important, rob them of their Palestinian culture.

The past year is also momentous and significant in the Palestinian calendar, probably exceeding the historic and tragic years of 1948 and 1967. Those years brought the destruction of modern Palestine and the building of Israel in its place and the completion of the seizure of the remainder of Palestine by Israel. The significance of this year is that it is a serious attempt to rebuild part of what has been destroyed and lay the foundation for the Palestinian state.

## Frustrating the Enemies of Palestinian Independence

The uprising has brought with it the affirmation of Palestinian nationhood, that force which seeks its place among nations in defiance of the intransigence and rejection of Israel. This goal has never been any closer, given the mountains of difficulties and obstacles that have historically blocked the achievement of independence. These difficulties are varied in origin but share the aim of denying the Palestinians what is rightfully theirs. In this respect, the United States plays the role of financial backer of Israel's actions and policies. On the other hand, many Arab governments complement this effort by a consistent policy of aborting any genuine Palestinian movement toward achieving the dream of statehood. Jordan, in particular, plays a very significant role in this effort.

In a few very important months, the uprising has dealt a severe blow to the hopes of the Jordanian king to hijack



Palestinians of all ages — elderly women included — are willing to

tion. His objective was to deliver the Palestinians in a joint settlement with Israel, in which the Palestinians would have no say in their own future. They were to be governed by both Israel and Jordan, and it was hoped such a "solution" would resolve the question once and for all. The larger version of this strategy is the infamous Camp David accords, in which the United States brokered a plan that totally negates any human or national rights for the Palestinian people. Camp David—in which no party represented the Palestinian people—presumed to establish so-called autonomy for the Palestinians rather than national independence through statehood. It is also clear that such a scheme is no longer on the agenda of the anti-Palestinian coalition thanks to the uprising.

## Unity and the Intifada

The Palestinian national movement, represented by the

By Bill Hofmann

Bill Hofmann was part of an eight-member delegation, organized by the Palestine Solidarity Committee and primarily made up of PSC activists, which visited the West Bank and Gaza in September 1988. He is also coordinator of the San Francisco chapter of the Palestine Solidarity Committee.

## Across the River Jordan

We arrived in Jerusalem on Sunday, September 4. We had come from Jordan by way of the Allenby Bridge, an experience in itself. We had our first taste of Israeli racism when we watched a British-born woman of Arab descent have her luggage taken apart by soldiers, as we passed through with barely a question. When we arrived in East Jerusalem, the streets seemed strangely empty for a working day. It was our introduction to the universal adherence to the program of the Unified National Leadership, the local, youthful leadership of the uprising, or intifada. The commercial strike is the most obvious action of the Palestinian intifada, though it is only one aspect of the resistance.

Merchants all over the West Bank and Gaza open only limited hours, in most places from 9am until noon. A sign of the practical and inventive strategy of the leadership is the list of merchants exempted from the strike. Bakeries and street-produce vendors remain open their normal hours, providing the staples the Palestinians need. Pharmacists' committees decide which of their members will stay open so that people can get needed medicines.

The closing of the shops is a wonder to behold. Walking through the covered market in old Jerusalem near noon, you have to fight your way through a throng of people hurrying about making last-minute purchases. As the church bells ring noon, almost as one the merchants close their gates, and by 12:30, the narrow streets are as empty as they might be at 3 in the morning.

## The Neighborhoods Organize

The key feature of the intifada is its local character. Each community has its own needs and problems. Each community organizes to fill them, using the resources it has available. This community-based organizing began before the intifada. We visited a neighborhood in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem, Aqbat Al Khaldiya, and talked with people organizing to meet the needs of the community.

Aqbat Al Khaldiya's popular committees formed in December, 1986 to fill several urgent needs. The first was security. Families in the neighborhood were under siege by militant Jewish settlers, and already one elderly woman had been killed by a young settler. These settlers, operating under the guise of religious students, have displaced dozens of Palestinian families by harassment, trickery, and outright attack.

Aqbat Al Khaldiya responded by forming three committees: a security committee, a fire brigade, and a relief committee. The security committee used lights and whistles to warn of an impending settler attack. Many houses had been damaged by fire bombs, so people in the community organized to be ready to put out the fires, and to provide grates for windows to protect houses. The relief committee provided material aid for poor and besieged families to enable them to stay in their homes.

This organizing had the effect of reducing the level of confrontation, which allowed the committees to refocus their efforts on the real needs of the neighborhood: how to isolate settlers and prevent their spread, how to upgrade living conditions and provide jobs, how to provide social and medical services, and, especially since the beginning of the intifada, how to provide legal services, advice, and referrals.

We visited a popular clinic in the neighborhood. This

# Eyewitness to

small facility serves 18 to 20 patients each day, filling the needs of the community in internal medicine, pediatrics, and gynecology. They hope to be able to provide dental services soon. This clinic is an important resource since the major health-care facility in East Jerusalem, (the Hospice Hospital) was closed by the Israelis in 1986.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, recognizing how important these committees are to the resistance of Pales-

## Soldiers Seize De

On September 18, the day after the anniversary of the 1982, five members of a Palestine Solidarity Committee-sponsored women marching in Ramallah, singing protest songs in Arabic, cres.

As members of the delegation watched in horror, truckloads of tear gas and rubber bullets at the gathered women, and brutally, members of the delegation, and ordered him to tell the women in Er his M16.

Meanwhile, an officer demanded to see the passports of the delegation. He chose to produce their passports. What ensued was a small taste of, in violation of Israeli law. In an attempt to set a dangerous precedent at the notorious Moscoviya Police Compound in Jerusalem.

The reason for this new move by the Israelis was immediate: to cover the West Bank and Gaza, and to cut off the last remaining link to the outside world is the increasing isolation and hearing their stories. By confiscating the five's passports, they hoped to intimidate future delegations from coming to see the increasing repression.

Members of the delegation realized the danger, not to their own safety, but to the exposure of the repression of the uprising, and refused to submit to immediately called press conferences in Jerusalem, and exposed to the world this drew was combined with rapid organizing in the US. After days of threats and final offers from the Israelis, they finally prepared to walk across the Allenby Bridge into Jordan, was to be allowed to return. This final act culminated a delegation in which the real face of Israel's response.—B.H.

# an Uprising: iversary



armed Israeli soldiers to bring an end to Israeli occupa-  
Photo: George Azar

uprising is not a military operation in which it has the upper hand given its military might. Israel has to fight practically the entire Palestinian population in many places at the same time. Israel is not facing the "terrorists," as it describes PLO fighters, but a civilian and unarmed population. Israel's will to repress the population and to hold onto its occupation has been matched by an even greater will and determination not to accept the logic of occupation any longer, regardless of the sacrifices. To this end Palestinians are devising imaginative ways every day to make occupation an unworkable enterprise for the Israelis. The Israeli army has not been able to put down the uprising, and there is no indication that it could.

## Dual Authority in the West Bank and Gaza

The uprising means the tearing down of the repressive institutions of occupation, and the building of institutions of the new Palestinian state. For the last year the Israelis have watched helplessly the unraveling of their networks of control and occupation and, at the same time, the unfolding of Palestinian national institutions and infrastructure, represented by thousands of popular committees. These committees are gradually proving to be one of the most significant developments which are contributing to weakening the grip of the occupation. Defense Minister Rabin outlawed the committees, but the Palestinians no longer need the permission of the Israeli defense minister to conduct their daily lives, let alone their resistance to his occupation of their country.

What has been created, therefore, is a dual authority, in which the authority of occupation has been reduced to the mere physical and passing presence of a military patrol, since it is inconceivable to have the Israeli army everywhere and anywhere all the time. At the same time, the new authority of the Palestinian movement is taking hold and is being strengthened every day. This dual authority in fact confirms what the people in Jabalya refugee camp told the visitor: "The main point is that we make the decisions, not when they make the decision."

The initiative of this Palestinian unarmed popular

uprising and the articulation by the Palestinian movement of a political agenda based on peace with justice has been answered by guns and bullets. The Palestinians have shown the world and, most of all, the Israelis, their serious quest for peace using all the means available to them. It is Israel which stands against the wishes of the world community which desires a just solution for the Palestinians. Israel stands unwilling to address any Palestinian concern. Most importantly, when Israeli rhetoric about peace is set aside, the only invariant truth is Israel's intention to hold onto Palestinian land as long as there is a senior partner in Washington ready to finance these policies. In essence, Israel and the U.S. government will always try to find new ways to undermine and dehumanize the Palestinian people and their quest for independence and freedom.

## Israeli Response: Violence and "Transfer"

The Israeli elections signaled an extreme rightward trend in Israeli society. This trend represents even more harsh and violent policies against the Palestinians and their aspirations than those used to date. Ideas formerly considered extreme are becoming acceptable and part of the mainstream. The question of mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland, or "transfer," has moved up on the agenda of Israeli politics. The voices of extremism and militarism are demanding to inflict more pain on the Palestinians in order for them to surrender.

In contrast, the Palestinian people have presented their program and agenda for peace to the world by announcing the founding of their independent state. The Palestinian state is not tied to Jordan, since Jordan severed its ties to occupied Palestinian territories, nor is it a condominium shared by the two archenemies of the Palestinian spirit of independence: Israel and Jordan.

Israel's violent and dangerous course calls on Palestinians to persist and persevere against these intermediate obstacles. And it requires that the world community increase its work to achieve a just peace, by pressuring Israel to come to terms with reality. In the United States, the issue of the open and unquestioned support for Israel, right or wrong, is a failed and unjust policy that must be addressed, debated, and corrected. Many Jewish voices for peace, both in Israel and the United States, are openly questioning this unqualified support for occupation. They join millions of Americans who are voicing their opposition to this injustice and to our government's support for it. The real challenge is to translate this sentiment into ongoing activity that brings both the president and the Congress into step with the wishes of the majority of the American people. □

# he Intifada

tinians to government and settler attacks, has declared them illegal. Now, for example, meeting to provide health care or to plant a garden for your neighborhood is illegal, punishable by a ten-year prison term. But this has not stopped the organizing. As many Palestinians say, if Rabin wants to stop the popular committees, he'll have to put all the Palestinians behind bars.

## ation Passports

of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila camps in Lebanon in legation were watching a group of about fifty Palestinian trying signs in English and Arabic condemning the massa-

eli troops pulled up and blocked off the street. They fired several of them. Soldiers then approached one of the mem-disperse, "or we'll have to use these," he said, holding up

Rather than risk their film and notes, delegation members Palestinians face every day. The passports were confiscated, the Israelis demanded that the five submit to interrogation for the return of their passports.

arent. For months, Israelis have made it increasingly difficult for foreign fact-finding delegations meeting with Palestinian demanding that they submit to interrogation, the Israelis of Palestinian resistance and organization in the face of in-

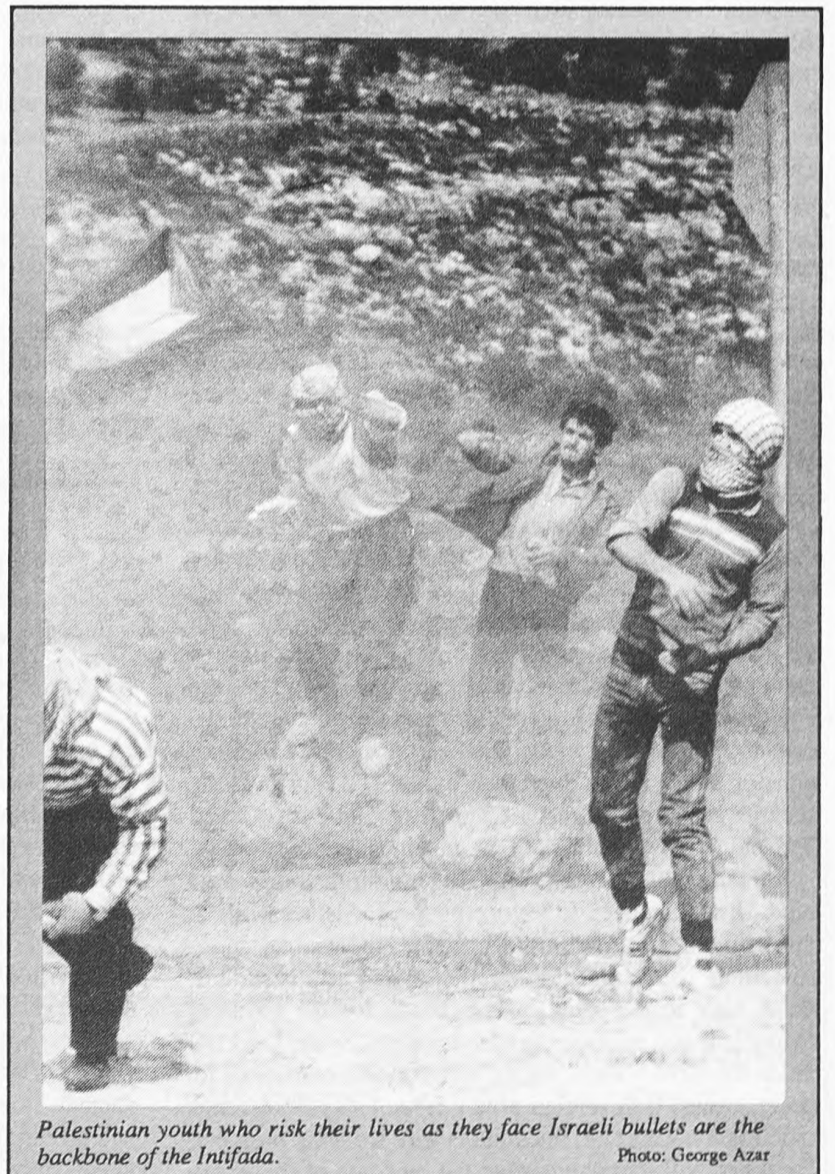
but to the important role that foreign delegations play in conditions for the return of their passports. Members im-medial media these attempts to muzzle the truth. The atten-re the US and Israeli governments to return the passports. in and returned the passports. Their parting gesture, as we five (three of whom are Jewish) that they would not be al- low both the strength and organization of Palestinian resis-

## Popular Committees

The popular committees are the key to the Palestinian strategy of civil disobedience. By organizing to serve the needs of the community, the committees lay the foundations of a new society. By organizing to serve the needs of the community, the committees make the Israeli infrastructure irrelevant. The goal of the Palestinians is to boycott as many Israeli and foreign products as possible, to make themselves self-sufficient.

The Israeli authorities are frantic about the popular committees. Kalkiliya, a militant town in the West Bank, was put under siege while we were there. Israeli television was full of footage of house-to-house searches, and the IDF claimed to have arrested over 200 activists, breaking the back of the committees in Kalkiliya. The town was under total curfew during the raids. But only a half hour after the curfew was lifted, there was a large, organized demonstration.

Like the institutions in any true mass insurrection, the popular committees are an organic part of the community. In Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza, one of the poorest and most densely populated spots in the world, we had a glimpse of how a key committee works. The security committees, known by the Palestinians as the "striking forces," are responsible both for coordinating actions against the military and for filling police roles in the community. We spoke with Mohammed, a member of the coordinating committee of



Palestinian youth who risk their lives as they face Israeli bullets are the backbone of the Intifada.  
Photo: George Azar

the popular committees in Jabalya.

He told us that each block in the camp has its own committee. This committee coordinates relief efforts, making sure that no one does without while another has, and

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## Israeli Politics in Crisis ...

Continued from Page 2

fewer people killed the better, Jews or Arabs, but if you analyze things, the Intifada in that sense has been relatively cheap for the Israelis. In Lebanon there was a body count.

The second thing is that the connections and associations with the West Bank—not so much with Gaza—is stronger with the Zionist ethos, the national ethos, and it is also closer to home. It is a little bit more complicated in terms of thinking of getting out.

But aside from that, the peace movement has done a tremendously good job. It has done a lot. There has never been more contact between Palestinians and Israelis on a person-to-person basis, people getting to know each other, to understand each other, forging all sorts of connections.

There has also been a weakening of the hegemony of Peace Now, the organization which was previously hegemonic in the peace movement. Peace Now is the big, respectable, centrist organization, which you could join without going too far out on a limb. The problem with Peace Now is that it was wedded to the Jordanian option and to the American Middle East policy. They were in Shultz's camp and they rooted for Shultz, but the Shultz train never left the station.

All of that is important to discussing the elections. What Shultz did by coming and saying, "OK, now we're going to do something," and not following through was to literally build Shamir. Shamir is a guy who eats little Shultzes for breakfast. That made Shamir.

Most Israelis are very pragmatic, and they are trying to figure out what is happening. America is critical. It has reservations, and they see this scene with Shultz coming in like a big wheel. After three visits, Shamir says, "We talked to this guy and we showed him where to get off." That has to have an effect on the masses. "Is this guy leading us down some dangerous path that would isolate us, endanger us, or is he the type of guy who can stand up to the Americans, maintain American support, and shape it the way we see it in terms of our interests?"

So there is no question that America's vacillation—it is not really vacillation because behind it comes the con-

stant flow of money and ammunition and a political umbrella for Israel—has created a situation in which the middle section of Israeli society continues to see that Shamir is the viable alternative for protecting Israeli interests. That, along with what the masses *think* they have learned over five-and-a-half wars over the last forty years creates a deep nationalist brew and a psychology of hostility and belief in force.

### "Kick them out" or "Negotiate"

To this point the masses have been trying to figure out "if force is the name of the game, why are we not using more force to end this thing?" That factor is polarizing to the right. The responsible, so to speak, decision-making element in the Israeli establishment understands that it costs a tremendous amount, whether economically or politically. It is very dangerous to be on page one or on prime time, so they want to be on page 15 or page 8. They want to maintain low-intensity warfare. The right does not understand this objective, and the masses find it hard to understand. They say, "Let's end this thing if we can. Why do our boys have to have stones thrown at them if we can end it?"

There is an interesting double current. Along with more support for the right, polls show more people saying, "Let's talk with the PLO," and more people saying, "Let's kick them out." "Let's do it this way or that way; we cannot continue the way it is." There is a certain logic in that. If we can end it, let us end it, but if we cannot, let us negotiate with them. That is a source of hope, even though things are very dangerous. At a certain stage it will become clear to people that there is no way they can end the Intifada with repression. Or, if they can, they will only have a bigger one a year from now.

### Strategic Parity

The Israelis are trying not to get into mass execution, mass expulsion, because it would be unsuccessful. They cannot stop this thing with repression. And the Palestinians are also keeping it at a certain level, not giving the Israelis an excuse for mass outbursts. Now that sounds very complicated. You have this level of violence and clashes, which have been more or less stable. It is no longer the Israelis over the Palestinians, but the confron-

tation is taking place on the basis of a kind of strategic parity. Rabin is looking for the point at which he could apply a little bit more pressure, and he will break the strategic parity. The danger is that he will not find that place, and he will go for more.

The contradictions are so intense that Rabin himself does not know what he is going to do every 24 hours. He keeps looking, almost berserk, for this thing that will stop it. If kicking out ten people did not do it, maybe kicking out 25 will. If arresting seven thousand was not enough, maybe arresting ten thousand will be enough. There are mass expulsions, one big pogrom, a short way down the road. He is on a very slippery slope. What is holding him back is the international community.

These are the factors. As long as there is no clear indication to the Israelis that more force cannot succeed, they are going to opt for the easy option that does not cost them so much in terms of concessions and so forth as long as they are under this illusion. That is where we are now, two months before the elections. It is a valid analysis to think that we are going to get an increase in the vote for the right, broadly speaking, and a drop for the Labor party with some polarization to some of the parties to the left of Labor. But on the whole, I think we are going to see more votes to the right.

### Will America Pay?

At the same time the economy is suffering, but nobody knows whether the Americans are going to pay for it or not. That is the big question. Fighting the uprising is costing about a billion dollars a year at this stage, although it is very hard to calculate precisely how much it costs. In itself, such figures are not unmanageable, but Israel has a sick, weak, and doddering economy anyhow. So when you deduct this billion dollars from this economy, you get all kinds of effects.

A billion dollars is still small potatoes for the United States. Make no mistake. In terms of the service they are getting out of Israel, the strategic interest, another billion dollars is no big deal, and money has been thrown at Israel all the time. If you can promise me that you will prevent your government from giving this additional billion dollars, then I will say I am going to turn the Israeli electorate around, if not this year, then at the next election. □

## U.S./Israeli Elections ...

Continued from Page 1

ties with extreme expansionist agendas and orthodox parties with narrow religious priorities.

While a secondary factor, a possible government with the orthodox parties has thrown Israeli society and world Jewry into turmoil. The orthodox parties, some of whom are only nominally pro-Zionist, have raised visions of a fundamentalist-dominated government in a Jewish society which is about 80 percent secular. Because the Israeli state was a human rather than a divine creation, the orthodox parties view the Israeli government only as a means to spread their version of religion rather than as the fulfillment of Jewish aspirations.

The end result is an Israeli government that shows no indication of withdrawing from the West Bank and Gaza. Veering even further to the right, Israel promises even more harsh repression against the Palestinians. The policy of "population transfer" as the solution to the crisis will continue to gain credibility.

At the same time, the Palestinian people have had their own election—and this gives hope. Those living under military occupation in the West Bank and Gaza have voted with stones, popular committees, and general strikes. With the declaration of independence of the Palestinian state by the Palestine National Council on November 15, the Palestinian people have voted for their freedom and independence. Presenting a conciliatory stance that addresses most of the concerns expressed by the U.S. government, such as accepting Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, the PLO is reaching out for genuine peace.

All this puts the incoming Bush administration in a bind. Unwilling even to lessen support for Israel while at the same time unwilling to accept the status quo—something has to give. Israel, long touted as a bastion of democracy in the Middle East, heads for the abyss of extremism and religious fundamentalism, while the PLO holds the olive branch. As the international consensus for peace grows, U.S. foreign policy cannot stay dead center indefinitely: This U.S. dilemma is why we think prospects for peace will improve despite the outcome of the Israeli and U.S. elections.

The Palestinians are in a position to press their Intifada until the differences between the United States and Israel and within Israeli society emerge more sharply. Now, with the enhanced credibility and morale of their declaration of independence, the Palestinian people can make further dip-

lomatic gains, isolating U.S. support for Israeli intransigence further.

In this regard, the final "vote" of U.S. public opinion has yet to be cast. A loud, clear, and decisive movement needs to pressure Congress and the Bush administration to recognize the new independent state of Palestine and to seek genuine negotiations with all the parties concerned, including the PLO, for withdrawal of the occupying army. At the same time, we must demand that our government cut the aid to Israel which funds the occupation. Our tax money continues to support the violations of human rights and the expansionist policies of the Israeli government.

As events unfold, U.S. voters will increasingly decide that enough is enough, and they will insist that our tax money no longer be used to support occupation. Only in this way can we exert enough leverage on Israel to get serious about peace. Such was the verdict reached by voters in a Cambridge/Somerville, Massachusetts initiative (See article this issue). We think other constituencies will think the same way. □

## Eyewitness ...

Continued from Page 5

visits families of prisoners and martyrs. Young men in the committee are responsible for the block's security. Each committee designates a representative to the coordinating committee. The coordinating committee is composed of experienced activists, representing all factions of the PLO, and in Gaza, the progressive Islamic bloc. This is the core of the Unified National Leadership. This structure provides maximum flexibility on a local level, and provides a high level of security, because no activist in one section of the camp knows who the activists in another section are.

This was graphically illustrated for us one morning when we were walking from one section of Jabalya to another. Dozens of small children surrounded us, chanting and posing for photos. Our guide tried to get them to disperse, since groups of children attract soldiers. But children, more than anyone, know who has authority. Our guide was from another section of the camp, and since they didn't know him, they ignored him. But in the space of fifty feet, things changed. We were in his neighborhood, and children knew who he was.

The striking forces fill the gap that was left when the

## PNC Declares State ...

Continued from Page 1

insists that the Palestinians have not conceded enough. Israel outright rejected the PNC decisions and launched a diplomatic campaign against them.

The Palestinian declaration of independence is a unique opportunity to promote the peace process by recognizing that the achievement of the national rights of the Palestinian people in an independent Palestinian state is indispensable to a just and lasting peace. The independent Palestinian state is the only possible way out of decades of war and intense human suffering.

Now that a Palestinian state has been declared, a just and lasting peace can be achieved through the United Nations international peace conference with the participation of all concerned parties, including the Palestinian state represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

On the ground, the Israeli reaction to the Palestinian declaration of independence has been the further escalation of violence—which began even before the declaration of independence. The massive and systematic violations of Palestinian human and political rights by the Israeli government will increasingly be an important focus of protest. We especially note the dangerous shift of the Israeli government toward the right and its talk of "transfer" of Palestinians from their homeland. Yitzhak Shamir's recent announcement that he will "empty" the refugee camps is an ominous warning at this time of joy and celebration.

Solidarity means support for self-determination. We fully support the Palestinian declaration of independence and the new Palestinian state. We fully support the new Palestinian peace initiative. November 15 has been designated as the official day of Palestinian independence. Celebrations took place around the world, wherever Palestinians and their friends live. We join in the celebrations and extend our sincere congratulations to the Palestinian people. □

Palestinians who worked as police for the occupiers resigned at the beginning of the intifada. Mohammed gave us an example of how they work. Two families in the camp were fighting, and one member of a family was accidentally killed. Normally, this would have resulted in a long feud, lasting perhaps years. The striking forces received word of the fighting, and intervened immediately. They separated the families, and posted guards to ensure

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Mahmoud Darwish is one of the leading Palestinian poets. Four months after the Intifada began, he wrote a poem, "Those Who Pass between Fleeting Words," which expressed the rage of Palestinians and their rejection of Israeli domination. The poem struck a chord among Palestinians, but among some in the Israeli peace movement and in the West, it was too frightening in its anger. Darwish is also a member of the executive committee of the PLO, so much was made of the poem. (Darwish authored the recent PNC's Declaration of Independence). The furor revolved around whether the poem represented a political position rejecting coexistence with any Israelis, although Darwish responded that a poem was a poem, and his political views called for ending the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

In fact, the poem was yet another rock in the Intifada, articulating the pent-up frustration and rage of Palestinians. This comes as a surprise? That a visceral cry could be an anthem of the uprising, a basic statement of determination? Palestinians do not want to live their lives defined by the culture, history and rules of a colonizing power because, as Darwish says, "We will live as we wish."

### Those Who Pass between Fleeting Words By Mahmoud Darwish

Oh you who pass between fleeting words  
Carry your names and go.  
Get rid of our time from your clocks  
And steal whatever you want from the blueness of the sea  
and the sands of memory.

# GETTING IT ALL IN Focus

By Hilton Obenzinger

Take whatever photos you want, just so that you know  
That you will never know  
How a rock from our land builds the ceiling of the skies.

Oh you who pass between fleeting words  
From you the sword—from us our blood  
From you the steel and fire—from us our flesh  
From you another tank—from us the rain  
And the wind and the skies cover both of us.  
Take your share of our blood and go.  
Party at a banquet and go,  
For we will guard the flowers of the martyrs  
And we will live the way we wish.

Oh you who pass between fleeting words  
As bitter dust, go where you may but  
Don't pass among us as flying pests,  
For we have work to do on our land.  
And we have wheat to grow, irrigated with the dew of our

bodies.

And we have here what does not please you:  
A rock ... Or a partridge.  
So take the past, if you wish, to the antiquities market  
And return the temple of the hoopoe bird if you wish  
On a ceramic plate.  
We have here what does not please you: we have the future  
And we have work to do on our land.

Oh you who pass between fleeting words  
Stick your fantasies in an empty pit and go.  
And return the hands of time to the law of the sacred cow  
Or to the time of the music of revolvers,  
For we have what does not please you here, so go.  
We have what you don't: bleeding homeland,  
bleeding people,  
A homeland fit for forgetfulness or memory.

Oh you who pass between fleeting words  
The time has come for you to go.  
Live wherever you like, but don't live among us,  
For we have work to do on our land.  
We have the past here.  
We have the first voice of life.  
We have the present, the present and the future.  
We have this world here and the hereafter.  
So get out of our country  
From our desolate land ... from our sea  
From our wheat ... From our salt ... From our wound  
From everything, just get out  
From the memories of memory.  
Oh you who pass between fleeting words! □

## Eyewitness to the Intifada...

Continued from Page 6

that fighting wouldn't break out again. With the support of the neighborhood, they announced that they would appoint a committee to judge the families' grievances. They posted a set of conditions of behavior for the families involved.

In the meantime, the Israeli military appeared. They announced over bullhorns that they were there to "solve" the family dispute, and asked a representative of each family to step forward. The striking forces responded in Hebrew, telling the military to go away, since they were taking care of the problem, and told the youth to attack the military to drive them away. While we were in Jabalya, the appointed committee was still deliberating, but peace was maintained. How did the popular committees get this degree of legitimacy? They showed that they were honestly interested in the peoples' welfare.

### Building the National Economy

The Israelis have deliberately suppressed the development of local productive capacity in the West Bank and Gaza, for their own benefit. The West Bank is Israel's second-largest export market. Palestinians are organizing to change that. We met with members of a women's production cooperative in a small West Bank village and spoke with them about their work and how it serves the needs of the people.

The cooperative was founded in June, 1986 with the help of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC). It produces plum jam, juice and pickled cucumbers, eggplants and peppers in natural, traditional methods from local produce for local markets. Before the cooperative was formed, the village offered little opportunity for women outside the home. Nearly 20 women began a 9-month training course in first aid, math, and health, and as they neared completion, experimented with different production methods, and began production by July 1987. Already, demand has outstripped their production capacity.

The women in the cooperative work flexible hours, so that each can fulfill her duties at home while still earning money. The cooperative pays each woman based on each month's sales. As a backhanded compliment to the success of this cooperative, the Israelis have refused to license any other ones.

When asked if they had any message to send to the working women of the United States, the women replied, "We ask all women workers to give us your moral and financial support, especially the Palestinian women in the United States. We hope that everyone in the United States knows that here there are a people who have a right to exist—here is a

state which has decided to destroy us as a people, to destroy every project we start. We ask people in the United States to stop and think for a minute about oppressed people everywhere."

### Palestinian Women Play a Central Role in the Intifada

Women are active in all phases of the struggle against the occupation. In villages and refugee camps, many of the martyrs are women. In towns and cities, nearly 90 percent of the demonstrations are organized by women. All across Palestinian society, women of all ages are participating in politics.

We sat in on a regular meeting of a women's committee in one West Bank town. They meet weekly to discuss problems, talk about new projects, and share suggestions and ideas. Not all of the communities are the same: class and other differences between neighborhoods means that what works in some communities won't work in others. One problem that all neighborhoods face is the closure of all the schools and the prohibition of education by the occupation authorities. The women are organizing to fill this important need. Other projects the women are engaged in are medicine and health care, food distribution, and food and water stockpiling to prepare for curfews and for civil disobedience.

The women we met were all young, committed activists, most of whom had been members of women's committees before the intifada, either from high school, college, or their communities. One woman told us how she viewed the liberation of women in Palestinian society. "It isn't separate from the liberation of society. We don't minimize the need for liberation of women, but we feel the social, economic and national oppressions of women are all related."

Many of the projects of the Women's Committees are directed at the direct, material concerns of Palestinian society. The Union has organized over 32 kindergartens, nurseries, and day-care centers in the West Bank and Gaza, with plans to open 22 more. These centers now serve over 1,500 children. We visited a typical one in the town of Issawiya, near Jerusalem. Children from 3 to 5 years are taught arts and arithmetic, and engage in creative play, including theater, story telling, and movement. Tuition is free, but families who can are encourage to pay 10 shekels each month, much lower than the fees in government-run kindergartens, where they exist. There are regular monthly parent-teacher meetings, and the voluntary health workers committee gives free monthly check-ups to the children.

As one teacher put it, "Children are our future; we want them to grow up proud to be Palestinian." But the intifada has had a major impact on children. In a real sense, there are no children now, just small adults. Every child has been affected by the intifada. Small children set up barricades in their houses from their toys, or flash "V" signs at soldiers. Slightly bigger children are often victims of Israeli soldiers. Two members of our delegation watched as a twelve-year-old girl, Nahil a-Tuhi, was shot in the head with a plastic bullet by a sniper in Al Amari refugee camp on September 17. In Jabalya camp in Gaza, we met a fourteen-year-old who had been shot in the abdomen by soldiers just 25 days before while trying to get milk for his young sister. He was wearing a shirt with the colors of the Palestinian flag, which guaranteed he would be at the very least harassed if soldiers saw him. When we asked him about it, he said, "I'm not afraid. All they can do is kill me." □

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*Palestine Focus* is the national newspaper of the Palestine Solidarity Committee (formerly November 29th Committee for Palestine). The newspaper is an activist vehicle tied to an activist movement, yet aimed at a general audience with little background knowledge. We report on activities, not only of our Committee, but of other groups; and we provide consistent commentary and analysis of events in the Middle East.

The Palestine Solidarity Committee's task is to spark and support consistent, far-reaching, and effective activity which brings the issue of Palestine before the American people and builds a growing and deepening base of understanding. Our Committee organizes to stop U.S. intervention in the Middle East and to cut off U.S. aid to Israel. We educate Americans on the need to support the Palestine Liberation Organization, which is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and to oppose Israeli policies of discrimination which deny the Palestinian people their rights.

Signed articles are not necessarily the opinion of the Palestine Solidarity Committee. Letters, opinions, and other contributions are welcome.

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# Join the Palestine Solidarity Committee!

The Palestinian uprising, or Intifada, enters its second year, and the Palestine Solidarity Committee (PSC) continues to educate more and more American people about Palestinian rights. The lesson the Palestinian people are teaching the Israeli government is that after 21 years of living under Israeli military occupation, they will take it no longer. More than ever before in our seven-year history, PSC members are bringing that message to people across the United States.

The Intifada has generated and sustained public opposition to Israel's brutal policies against the Palestinian population and questioning of continued U.S. funding of these policies. Palestine solidarity activists have a real opportunity to harness that opposition and channel it into a stronger, more effective movement for Palestinian rights.

## What PSC Does—One Year's Work

When the Intifada began, the Palestine Solidarity Committee organized pickets, vigils, car caravans, sit-ins and other forms of civil disobedience, and other activities. On Christmas Eve 1987, midnight vigils were held outside churches in more than a dozen cities. Israeli consulates and missions were picketed and picketed again. As the uprising continued, we sent delegations, raised material aid, and held report-back educational forums.

In a bold domestic initiative, hundreds of PSC members from around the country marched in the snow in April 1988 to the Federal Labs plant in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania, where tear gas was manufactured and shipped to Israel to be used against Palestinians. Thirteen marchers, a majority PSC members, chained themselves to the fence and were arrested. Stung by publicity generated by the protest, Federal Labs suspended shipments.

At the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, PSC members distributed more than 17,000 pieces of literature and erected a tent to symbolize Palestinian statelessness. The debate on Palestinian rights reached the floor of the convention, thanks to activists in the Jesse Jackson campaign. And PSC activists worked hard to pass ballot initiatives which promoted Palestinian rights in San Francisco and Berkeley, California, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. (See article this issue.)

PSC delegations to the West Bank and Gaza proved concretely our commitment to facing the fact of occupation firsthand and witnessing the profound changes in Palestinian society which have come with the Intifada. A recent delegation of PSC activists briefly experienced the kind of arbitrary Israeli treatment that Palestinians live with every day. While observing a peaceful Palestinian demonstration and the violent

*Democratic Convention in Atlanta flooded with literature on Palestinian rights!*

*Live Aid Palestine concert draws thousands and benefits uprising!*

*PSC delegation passports confiscated by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank town of Ramallah!*

*Hundreds picket Federal Labs in Saltsburg, Pennsylvania, to stop tear-gas shipments!*

*PSC activists campaign for four ballot initiatives in favor of Palestinian rights!*

Israeli response to it, they were surrounded by armed Israeli soldiers who confiscated their passports. (See article this issue.)

In another grassroots action campaign, PSC has produced and distributed thousands of postcards addressed to Rep. Gus Yatron, Chair of the House Subcommittee on Human rights, to protest the inhumane conditions and violations of international law at Ansar 3, the latest detention camp set up by the Israeli authorities. The postcards urge him and his committee to pres-

With a national and international circulation of more than 20,000 per issue, the *Focus* has been an important educational tool for PSC activists for nearly six years. Our newspaper foreshadowed the Intifada with reports of increased Israeli repression and increased Palestinian resistance and has published many articles reporting on and analyzing the uprising. PSC's other major publication is *Noticiero Palestino*, a biannual Spanish-language magazine produced by PSC's Latino Task Force. *Noticiero*



*PSC members and friends demonstrate in front of the Federal Labs in Saltsburg, Pa. to protest the use of tear gas against Palestinians in the occupied territories.* Photo: Steve Goldfield

sure Israel to close the facility.

A current major PSC activity comes in response to a communique of the Unified National Leadership of the Intifada, which called for events commemorating the first anniversary of the beginning of the uprising on December 9. Among the concerts and other celebrations around the country is the Chicago "Live Aid Palestine" concert with Gil Scott Heron which will raise material aid for Palestinians. In addition to the Intifada anniversary, the PSC will also be celebrating the recent Palestine National Council declaration of the independent Palestinian state.

PSC also publishes *Palestine Focus*, the highly regarded bimonthly newspaper.

emphasizes the Latin American connection to the Palestine issue. We also produce brochures, broadsides, timely bulletins, and other materials, including *Garrison State*, a book on Israel's global activities by *Focus* coeditor Steve Goldfield.

PSC is active at the national and international level through its participation in United Nations-sponsored networks and conferences for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) on the question of Palestine. NGOs, including solidarity organizations from many countries, work together to promote cooperation and exchange experiences. PSC National Chair Jeanne Butterfield chairs the North American Coordinating Committee of the NGOs.

The Palestine Solidarity Committee is a key part of the movement for Palestinian rights. Our chapters organize educational forums, action campaigns, and demonstrations. PSC publishes educational materials and provides qualified speakers who articulate the message of Palestinian rights. We work with many allied constituencies,

linking the issue of Palestinian rights to related peace and justice issues.

Major PSC themes include the injustice of Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza; U.S. funding of the occupation; the Palestinian people's right to choose their own leadership, the Palestine Liberation Organization; their right to an independent state; the injustice inherent in an exclusivist Jewish state; and the U.S. government's destructive interventionist role in the Middle East.

The PSC has more than 25 chapters and affiliates in cities across the United States: San Francisco, Sacramento, Portland (Oregon), Seattle, Denver, Boulder, Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, San Diego, Tucson, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, Lansing, Youngstown, Cleveland, Ann Arbor, Athens, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, New York, Boston, New Jersey, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and other locations. We maintain national offices in San Francisco and New York City.

## PSC and You

The Palestine Solidarity Committee has clearly built a solid record of achievement over the years. And we expect our work to intensify in the coming months and years. As the uprising stimulates growing domestic support for Palestinian rights and opposition to U.S. and Israeli policies, more and more people are asking what they can do to help.

We invite you to join the Palestine Solidarity Committee and participate in the kinds of activities you have just read about. We welcome and encourage members to participate in one of the many local PSC chapters if you can, but you need not be active in a chapter to be an active PSC member. Either way, you can be part of a national solidarity organization with an established record of activism and advocacy for Palestinian rights.

As a member, whether you affiliate with a chapter or not, you will receive *Palestine Focus* six times a year. You will also receive *PSC Members Update*, a regularly published newsletter for PSC members which highlights PSC campaigns, activities, and concerns, and other special mailings.

The home front is where the fight for Palestinian rights begins. Funding for Israel's occupation and the political consent to use those funds for "force, might, and beatings," come from the U.S. government. The tax funds come from here and from us and so must the fight to redirect those funds into more constructive and humane uses.

You can join the Palestine Solidarity Committee. You can contribute to changing U.S. policy. However you choose to participate, you will be helping Palestinians to achieve their rights and strengthening the movement for Palestinian rights. It is up to us—and you—to ensure growth of that movement and its eventual success. It is up to us—and you—to build upon the Palestinian people's momentum, their hope, their courage, and their enormous sacrifices. The Palestinian uprising and the Palestinian people deserve no less. □

## Speakers Bureau

The Palestine Solidarity Committee now has a speakers bureau, a national pool of speakers from PSC and other organizations, who have recently been on fact-finding delegations to the occupied territories sponsored by different national organizations. If your group or organization would like to engage one of these speakers to address the subject of Palestinians living under occupation, we invite you to contact either of our national offices: New York, (212) 964-7299; San Francisco (415) 861-1552. □

## Yes! I Want to Join The Palestine Solidarity Committee!

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