



# Citizens for **Justice** in the Middle East

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## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Kansas City Peace Conference Focuses on Palestinian-Israeli Conflict - Twelve U.S. and international Mideast experts will address conference for 300 area residents**

**August 30 – Kansas City, MO** - A regional peace conference will be held October 20-21, 2006 at Village Presbyterian Church, 6641 Mission Road, Prairie Village, Kansas. The Kansas City Sabeel Conference is a two-day educational and advocacy conference on the conflict in Palestine-Israel. The conference titled "Ending the Silence: Voices from the Holy Land" will draw on a remarkable list of speakers, all experts in Palestine-Israel matters, who will address a range of topics on current Mideast politics. Conference organizers expect 300 people to attend.

After the latest crisis between Israel and Hezbollah, Republican Senator Chuck Hagel from Nebraska urged the Bush administration to revive the Beirut Declaration of 2002, which promised peace with Arab nations in exchange for an Israeli return to 1967 borders. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor during the Carter administration, argued in August 2006 on National Public Radio that a fair, even-handed resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essential to long-term Mideast stability. Former President Jimmy Carter has repeatedly said that the root cause of the crisis in the Middle East is the unresolved Palestinian-Israeli conflict. These prominent US officials all claim that a negotiated solution to the conflict is the best means to solve the problems in the Middle East.

Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu Akel, one of the conference speakers and moderator of the 214th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church USA, stated the purpose of the conference is to seek "a just peace based on a two-state solution as defined by international law and United Nations resolutions. Sabeel promotes theological, moral, ethical and legal principles for peace." The conference will include major presentations from invited speakers, as well as workshop sessions on history, theology, politics and advocacy. In the area of conflict resolution and human rights, for example, noted experts include:

- Dr. Mubarak Awad, a psychologist in Washington, D.C., is the founder of Nonviolence International, which advocates for peaceful solutions to the Palestine-Israel conflict.
- Cindy and Craig Corrie are parents of Rachel Corrie, a young American woman who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in the Gaza Strip on March 16, 2003. The Corries continue their daughter's work through the Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace and Justice.
- Mohammed Zeidan is Executive Director of International Advocacy for the Arab Association for Human Rights in Nazareth. He has a BA in geography from Hebrew University and interned at Amnesty International's General Secretariat Middle East Research Department, and at the Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights at the United Nations.
- Jonathan Kuttab, a leading human rights lawyer in Israel and Palestine. Mr. Kuttab was born in West Jerusalem and co-founded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence, Al-Haq (lawyers and others who assist with human rights issues), and the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners. He is licensed to practice law in Palestine, Israel, and New York.

Other speakers will address the religious aspects of the conflict, including the impact of the occupation on the lives of Palestinian Christians. These speakers will discuss ways for churches to work for a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Ginger Kenney, a KC Sabeel conference organizer, who attended a Sabeel peace conference in Iowa in 2005, said this year's conference will present "the facts not demonization of any of the parties involved, more importantly, give concrete steps all people can do to address the situation."

- Rev. Sandra Olewine was appointed as the United Methodist Liaison to Jerusalem in 1996 and served in that capacity for 9 1/2 years. Having returned to the US last spring, she continues to write and speak with authority about life under occupation and its effects on both Palestinians and Israelis.

- Rev. Don Wagner, a cofounder of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding, is professor of religion and Middle Eastern studies at North Park University, Chicago. His most recent books include *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost 2000*, and *Anxious for Armageddon*.
- Rev. James M. Wall is the senior contributing editor for *The Christian Century* magazine. From 1972-1999, he was the editor of the magazine. He writes and speaks frequently on Palestinian and Israeli relations.

A range of Israeli Jews or Jewish Americans will address the costs of the occupation on the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, as well as talk about ways to advocate for peace in the region.

- Phyllis Bennis, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, helped found the U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation and wrote the widely-distributed booklet "Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer." Her most recent book is *Challenging Empire: How People, Governments and the UN Defy U.S. Power*.
- Dr. Jeff Halper is Coordinating Director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and a 2006 nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. He is an Israeli-American peace activist, professor of anthropology and internationally acclaimed speaker. He wrote *Obstacles to Peace: A Reframing of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (third edition, released 2005).
- Refuser Solidarity Network supports young people in Israel whose consciences will not allow them to do their obligatory military service in the occupied territories. A speaker from this group will address the growing number of Refusers at all levels of the Israeli military, many who have faced imprisonment.
- Anna Baltzer, is a Jewish-American, granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, Columbia University graduate, Fulbright scholar and volunteer with the International Women's Peace Service. Anna's presentation covers checkpoints, settlements, demonstrations, Israeli activism, environmental issues, the Separation Wall, and more. She is author of *Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories*. Anna was in Kansas City in May 2006.

To learn more about the conference, visit the Kansas City Sabeel Conference web site at [www.kcsabeelconference.org](http://www.kcsabeelconference.org) or call one of the conference organizers: Andrea Whitmore at 913-236-9825 or Janet Baker at 913-649-9439. For interviews with conference speakers either before or during the conference, call Andrea at 913 236-9825 for arrangements.

The conference schedule is Friday, October 20, 12 noon to 9:00 pm and Saturday, October 21, 8:00 am to 5:00 p.m. The cost for the two-day conference is \$75, which includes three meals, snacks and attendance at all talks and workshops. A limited number of student and clergy scholarships are available. Reduced cost conference registration is also available.

The conference hosts are Justice, Peace and the Environment Committee of Village Presbyterian Church; Citizens for Justice in the Middle East (Kansas City); and Friends of Sabeel--North America. Several area churches, peace groups and businesses are sponsoring the conference.

**Information about Citizens for Justice in the Middle East – <http://www.cjme.org>**

Kansas City-based Citizens for Justice in the Middle East seeks to educate the American public about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group believes U.S. policy should recognize the rights and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians, only by respecting the need to provide both parties in the conflict with security and self-determination can a viable and just peace be assured.

**Information about Friends of Sabeel-North America – <http://www.fosna.org>**

Friends of Sabeel-North America works in the U.S. and Canada to support the vision of Sabeel, cultivating the support of American churches through co-sponsored regional educational conference, alternative pilgrimage, witness trips, and international gatherings in the Holy Land. Sabeel is an international peace movement initiated by Palestinian Christians in the Holy Land who seek a just peace based on two states-Palestine and Israel-as defined by international law and existing United Nations resolutions. Sabeel promotes theological, moral, and legal principles for peace.



# MIDDLE EAST PEACE CONFERENCE

The Kansas City Sabeel Conference is a two-day educational and advocacy conference on the conflict in Palestine-Israel.

## Ending the Silence: Voices from the Holy Land

### October 20-21, 2006

Village Presbyterian Church

6641 Mission Road

Prairie Village, Kansas

#### CONFERENCE SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

- **Rev. Dr. Fahed Abu-Akel**, Palestinian-American and moderator of the 214th General Assembly, Presbyterian Church U.S.A.
- **Dr. Mubarak Awad**, a psychologist and director of **Nonviolence International**, advocating peaceful solutions to the Palestine-Israel conflict.
- **Anna Baltzer**, Jewish-American and volunteer with the **International Women's Peace Service** and author of *Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories*.
- **Phyllis Bennis**, a fellow at the **Institute for Policy Studies** and author of *Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict: A Primer*.
- **Cindy and Craig Corrie** are parents of Rachel Corrie, a young American woman who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in the Gaza Strip on March 16, 2003.
- **Dr. Jeff Halper** is Director of the **Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions** and a 2006 nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize.
- **Jonathan Kuttab** is a leading human rights lawyer in Israel and Palestine and co-founded the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence.
- **Rev. Sandra Olewine** served as the **United Methodist Liaison** to Jerusalem between 1996 and 2005
- **Refuser Solidarity Network speaker**, who supports young people in Israel whose consciences will not allow them to do their obligatory military service in the occupied territories.
- **Rev. Don Wagner**, a cofounder of **Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding** and author of *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000*
- **Rev. James M. Wall** is the senior contributing editor for *The Christian Century* magazine, who has made numerous visits to the Middle East since 1973.
- **Mohammed Zeidan** is Executive Director of **International Advocacy for the Arab Association for Human Rights** in Nazareth.

**Conference Hosts:** Justice, Peace and Environment Committee of Village Presbyterian Church; Citizens for Justice in the Middle East; and Friends of Sabeel—North America

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## POINTING THE WAY TO PEACE



To **Mubarek Awad**, the inside of an Israeli jail cell was nothing new. He'd been in many. What was new in 1988 was that outside that jail an Israeli man had joined him in his hunger strike.

He found it baffling. Awad, who was (and is) by no means thin, says he feared for the health of the 'skinny' Israeli. Though at first angry, he gave up his strike so this stranger could give up his.

Once free, Awad, a Greek Orthodox Christian from Jerusalem, met the Israeli, Edward (Edy) Kaufman. They've been warm friends ever since, working non-violently for peace. For many years Kaufman has been Executive Director of the Harry S Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace in Israel (although he took leave from 1991-1996 to head the University of Maryland's Center for Development and Conflict Management). Awad, now an American citizen, is national director of the Washington DC-based National Youth Advocate Program and teaches the theory and practice of non-violence at the American University. At a recent event organized by the Nonviolent Peaceforce in Washington, he described how his friendship with Kaufman began.

The event celebrated the departure of eight women and six men for Sri Lanka, where an uneasy ceasefire exists after many years of civil war between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil minority. This 'peace force' has undergone intensive training in Thailand and will be led by William Knox, a British national with eight years' experience of peace work in Sri Lanka. Between them, the team members, who come from 11 countries, speak 21 languages. They are to be a model for similar groups Peaceforce will send to other parts of the world. They won't take sides. They won't try to negotiate or advise any side what to do. They will be there to aid and comfort civilians, often war's greatest casualties, and model peace in any way they can. Peaceforce's own model is Mahatma Gandhi.

'The dream of a large-scale international force to enable peaceful solutions to conflict, held by so many people over so many years, is becoming reality,' enthused Mel Duncan, Peaceforce's Executive Director, in their newsletter. Sri Lanka was chosen over the Middle East for the first experiment because peace seemed nearer there. But barring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a team may one day be in the Middle East.

One of the best-kept secrets is the extent to which many strong friendships between Jew and Arab continue despite the area's violence. I'll never forget the young hitch-hiker our press bus picked up in 1980. A corporal in the Israeli Defense Force, she told me: 'I grew up in Tel Aviv and never knew any Arabs until I joined the

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army. Now something has happened to me that I thought could never be possible: I've come to love the Arabs.'

Clearly attitudes can change when people get to know each other. They dump stereotypes and regard each other simply as members of the human family. For example, a *Washington Post* photographer recalls how she had a Muslim interpreter accompanying her in Afghanistan. At one point, she put her camera down and went to help several Afghans in need. The astonished interpreter confessed after-wards that he never knew an American could be humane.

Awad says most Palestinians and Israelis want peace. But he feels they need to become a lot more active. Many observers may say peace there is impossible. But if it can happen between individuals on opposite sides, why not between peoples? Awad cites his and Kaufman's example, noting his Israeli friend 'was even a Zionist!' But that Zionist was willing to risk his health, maybe his life, to move peace forward.

*This is the last in this series of columns by **Robert Webb**, a former columnist and editorial writer with the 'Cincinnati Enquirer'. Look out for a new writer in our next issue!*

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## WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Washington Report, April 2006, pages 67-68

Waging Peace

### Nonviolent Resistance Conference Held in Bethlehem

PEACE activist Jim Vitarello, who attended the International Conference on Nonviolence in Bethlehem, spoke Feb. 5 at the Peace Cafe held at the Bus Boys and Poets restaurant in Washington, DC. According to the conference organizers, about 460 participants attended the Dec. 27-30, 2005 event, including 250 Palestinians, 35 to 40 Israelis and 176 internationals.

"Nonviolent resistance has been practiced in every corner of Palestine for many years," Salan Ta'mari, Palestinian Authority (PA) governor of the Bethlehem District, told the attendees at the conference's opening dinner. The media rarely reports these acts of resistance, Ta'mari went on to note, so the West is unaware of such actions.



*Peace activist Jim Vitarello  
(Staff photo J. Najjab).*

According to Dr. Mustafa Barghouti of the Palestinian National Initiative, Palestinians conducted a nonviolent mass popular struggle in the 1920s and continued doing so during the 1936 Palestinian strike, but were violently suppressed by the British, who ruled the region at the time. The media's failure to cover acts of nonviolent resistance, Barghouti told the group, means their presentation of the struggle solely as a conflict between the Israel Defense Forces and Islamic militants is a profound contradiction with what is really happening between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

**Mubarak Awad**, founder and director of Nonviolence International, suggested a nonviolent plan in which the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon would be burned, with the refugees marching toward Israel and demanding their legal right of return. According to Vitarello, Awad sees Palestinian youth as far more determined to secure their rights than they were even 10 years ago, and the international community as more supportive of the Palestinian nonviolent struggle. In Awad's opinion, the Palestinians must take charge of their own destiny and have a plan of action to serve as their own road map for the next 10 years.

Vitarello told the audience of a workshop he attended on "Nonviolence within Palestinian Society," conducted by Palestinian nonviolence activist Zoughbi Zoughbi. Discussing the many challenges facing the Palestinian nonviolent movement, Zoughbi acknowledged the perception that Hezbollah threw the IDF out of Lebanon and that Hamas forced the Israelis to dismantle their settlements in Gaza.

Israel's separation of Palestinian communities from one another makes it very difficult to discuss strategies and develop consensus concerning nonviolent tactics, he noted. If Israeli nonviolent groups want to make a difference, Zoughbi argued, they need to focus on transforming Israeli society to become less violent, and not worry about changing Palestinian society.

During his talk, Vitarello continued, retired Harvard professor of nonviolent theory Gene Sharp stated that history has shown that the tools of liberation were not violence. "Violence is counterproductive," he stated. "It is what our enemies want us to use." Noting that the Nazis and Communists planted agents among nonviolent demonstrators, inciting them to use violence against their oppressors, Sharp said that the IDF has used this same strategy recently in the Palestinian village of Bil'in, where the local population has been employing nonviolent actions to

resist the building of Israel's annexation wall through their farmland. Israeli undercover agents threw stones at IDF soldiers in order to provoke a violent confrontation, Sharp said.

Vitarello said he was very impressed by Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, who advised the attendees that any nonviolent actions or strategic planning must be based on six factors. First, any activities to be undertaken must be grounded in reality. Second, all activities must be connected to the larger goal of ending the occupation. Third, the development of a strategy is critical. Fourth, the relationship and trust between the Palestinian leadership and people have been delegitimized and must be repaired. Fifth, the Palestinian infrastructure has been destroyed and must also be repaired. Finally, Halper said, the focus should be on human rights and international law, all within the framework of a progressive agenda.

The conference's last speaker, Vitarello said, was Prof. Mohammed Abu-Nimer of the American University in Washington, DC, who stressed that discipline and patience are the keys to successful nonviolent resistance. However, Abu-Nimer cautioned, there is a large gap between these ideals and the reality within the Arab world, due to several external and internal factors. For one, he said, colonialism and Zionism have oppressed the Arab people for a long time. Another factor is the Arab world's economic dependence on other nations. Within the Arab world, Abu-Nimer continued, a system of technocracy and loyalty has replaced accountability and professionalism, and corruption is pervasive throughout the region. A heavily male-dominated society prevents women from participating in positions of leadership, he noted, and, he added, while self-examination and critical reflections are key to building a nonviolent movement, little of this is occurring in the Arab world.

Abu-Nimer went on to cite several myths about nonviolence within the Arab world, such as that nonviolence is a tool of cooperation with those in power, that violence eventually can end any conflict, that nonviolence is too slow and too costly, and that occupation is brutal and thus defies a nonviolent approach.

—*Jamal Najjab*

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## WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Washington Report, July 2006, pages 66-67

### Waging Peace

#### Author-activist Anna Baltzer's Book Tour Arrives in Ames

AUTHOR, Fulbright Scholar, Columbia University grad, and International Women's Peace Service (IWPS) volunteer **Anna Baltzer** brought her book tour to Iowa's Ames Public Library's Farwell Brown Auditorium on May 2.

Discussing her experience in the occupied Palestinian territories in 2003 and 2005, Baltzer explained, "I was working with IWPS documenting human rights abuses in the region as well as supporting non-violent resistance to the occupation."

Baltzer's presentation highlights the events she has written about in her book, *Witness in Palestine: Journal of a Jewish American Woman in the Occupied Territories*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder, 2006.



*Author Anna Baltzer ponders a friendly question from Samil Sermet, a Turkish-American resident of Ames, during her presentation (Photo M. Gillespie).*

"I talk about the structures of the occupation, restricted movement, settlements and outposts, the wall, imprisonment," she said, "and after [audiences] have a general understanding of the system itself, I talk about how the people are reacting to it, nonviolent resistance, demonstrations, and Israeli activism."

The nonviolent resistance movement naturally is led by Palestinians who are living under occupation, she elaborated, but it enjoys the active support and participation of both Israeli and international activists.

"Many people don't realize that there are a lot of Jewish Americans and Jewish Israelis who are against what the Israeli government is doing," said Baltzer, citing Jeff Halper of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and Rabbi Arik Ascherman of Rabbis for Human Rights, as well as IWPS colleagues including Hannah Mermelstein and Kate Raphael.

Baltzer is an intelligent, articulate, and credible advocate for peace and social justice in Palestine, and her book, *Witness in Palestine*, is a compelling record of her work there for IWPS. Its 228 pages contain dozens of high-quality photographs, three maps, a glossary, and a resource guide, which provides a wealth of information activists here in the States and abroad will find useful.

One measure of the Jewish American activist's credibility is the attention she and her book are receiving from friend and foe alike as she crosses the country on the nearly 100 presentation book tour. The *Ames Tribune*, like newspapers in several other cities on Baltzer's itinerary, published an informative article announcing her presentation. During a sometimes tense question-and-answer session following her presentation, feelings ran high in the crowded auditorium as

several pro-Israel activists vehemently defended Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and sought to challenge Baltzer's narrative and analysis.

A clear majority of the Ames audience supported Baltzer and their own right to hear her presentation. Baltzer surprised Ames resident Samil Sermet when he introduced his question by saying he was from Turkey. She responded in his native language.

Library interim co-director Lynn Carey, who moderated the question-and-answer period, invited Baltzer's opponents to meet with her to plan their own events to inform library patrons about their views on the crisis in Israel and Palestine.

The Ames Public Library regularly sponsors presentations by local and touring authors as part of its public information mission, but does not endorse partisan political views.

—*Michael Gillespie*

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## **Anna Baltzer speaks about Palestinians living in the occupied territories**

### **Anna Baltzer speaks about Palestinians living in the occupied territories**

**Date** Apr/12/2006 | **Topic:** NATION/WORLD

**Anna Baltzer**, a Jewish American, Fulbright Scholar, graduate of Columbia University and Women's Peace Service volunteer, talked about her experiences during a five-month stay in the West Bank at an event hosted Tuesday by Students for Justice in Palestine.

"I'm simply here to tell you what I saw during the five months I lived in Palestine/Israel," Baltzer said.

According to Baltzer, the Palestinian/Israeli conflict is not about war or religion but land, water and other resources.

"This isn't about Judaism or Islam; it's about humanity and standing up for what's right," she said. She said the majority of Israelis are against settlements and the occupation.

Baltzer presented the audience a slide of the United Nations recognized borders and pointed out that the occupation is illegal according to international law and in direct violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242.

"We never hear about the resolution. In the media we hear about war and Israelis dying," she said.

She also said that, according to [www.mepc.org](http://www.mepc.org), 999 Israelis and 3863 Palestinians have died between September 29, 2000 and April 8, 2006.

"The Palestinian roads are often unpaved and beat up, while the Israeli roads are more modern," she said. She also said Palestinians are not allowed to use the Israeli roads unless they have a permit to do so.

"The roads are segregated," she said.

Baltzer also talked about the "Flying Checkpoint" or "Surprise Checkpoint." She said Palestinians in the occupied territories are issued a green license plate while the Israelis are issued a yellow license plate.

Baltzer presented the audience with a slide-show picture of a checkpoint where some Palestinians had to wait two-and-a-half to three-and-a-half hours to get through. From time to time, the Palestinians are pulled over and searched.

"They'll pull over anyone with a green plate. It could take a Palestinian two or three hours or more to travel one mile," she said. "The Israelis don't have to wait at a checkpoint while the Palestinians do."

Baltzer said the checkpoints make holding a steady job difficult and impossible for those who are seeking an education to go to classes consistently. She also said it's difficult for a Palestinian living in the occupied territories to hold a job and get an education.

"Imagine that every time you wanted to go to class or visit your family or go to the hospital, you get held up and screened two to four times," she said.

Baltzer said that men between the ages of 15 and 40 weren't allowed through the checkpoint she documented while women and children were allowed through. She then presented a picture of Palestinian men in a ditch, and said she witnessed the events in the picture as they took place.

"The Israeli soldiers told the men that if they were able to fill up their bags with trash, they would be allowed through the checkpoint," Baltzer said.

Baltzer said ambulances were not allowed through the checkpoint between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. in the Palestinian town of Deir Bellut. She said that outside of these hours, ambulances would be held up longer than civilian automobiles. She also said Israeli's fear stems from the use of ambulances to smuggle weapons in the past.

Baltzer said many of these ambulances were not traveling from the occupied territories to Israel, but from one part of the occupied territories to another. "Hundreds have died at the checkpoints due to this," she said.

Baltzer said that while in Israel, she witnessed several acts of cruelty on behalf of the settlers in the West Bank. She presented a picture of one of the settlers pointing a gun at a Palestinian farmer to coerce her to leave and said Palestinians often get beat up by settlers. She also said that sometimes settlers have urinated in Palestinian water sources and have even swam in it with their dogs.

She has pictures that indicate that settlers have taken barley seeds and soaked them in poison; soon after, they dispersed the seeds throughout the Palestinian farmland as a means of killing the sheep on Palestinian land.

She also said the wall infringes on religion as it cuts off the West Bank Palestinians from Jerusalem, which is a holy place for Muslims, Christians and Jews.

Baltzer said that 60 to 80 percent of the most fertile land and water resources in the region are being annexed by Israel through the wall/fence. The Israeli government claims the fence/wall is intended to protect the citizens of Israel from the Palestinians.

Baltzer said \$3 to \$5 billion worth of American taxes go to Israel each year.

"We are responsible as to how our tax dollars are being used," Baltzer said.

"The Palestinians don't need people to feel sorry for them—they need people to take action."

This article comes from The South End Newspaper

<http://www.southend.wayne.edu>

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<http://www.southend.wayne.edu/article.php?storyid=2478>



*Published on Tuesday, July 25, 2006 by CommonDreams.org*

## Washington's Latest Middle East War

by **Phyllis Bennis**

The Israeli war against Lebanon and Palestine, euphemistically depicted as “self-defense” against Hezbollah and Hamas, is simultaneously an Israeli war for domination, and a regional war to “remap” the contemporary Middle East. In this context it is as much a US as an Israeli war. The immediate trigger has its roots in the extraordinarily hypocritical US-led boycott and international sanctions against the Palestinians that started after the democratic election of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority government in January 2006. And beyond the specific trigger, this new war was set in motion by the example presented in Washington’s Iraq-centered efforts at militarized regional transformation in the guise of “democratization.”

It must be stated unequivocally that this is a war against civilians – there is nothing “collateral” about it. And Israel is responsible for this war. Hezbollah’s July 12 raid across the Israeli border may have violated the 1949 armistice agreement between the newly created state of Israel and Lebanon, but it was limited to a military target. The only Israelis killed or captured were soldiers. Given the human devastation of the predictable Israeli response, the raid may have been what French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy called it, an “irresponsible act.” But it did not violate international law. According to Human Rights Watch, “the targeting and capture of enemy soldiers is allowed under international humanitarian law.” It was Israel’s response, on the other hand, that escalated to a full-scale attack on civilians and civilian infrastructure starting with the bombing of the Beirut international airport. That act was what Douste-Blazy, distinguishing it from Hezbollah’s raid, called “a disproportionate act of war.” The Israeli attack stands in stark violation of the Geneva Conventions prohibitions against collective punishment, targeting civilians, destruction of civilian infrastructure and more. The attack was – and remains – a war crime.

The distinction is important. The Hezbollah attack on the Israeli army post and the failed Israeli attempt to grab back the captured soldiers, constituted a border skirmish. Such cross-border clashes happen around the world on a daily basis; certainly the Israeli-Lebanon border itself has seen more than its share. But a border skirmish is not a war – it’s a border skirmish. It only becomes a war if one or the other party wants it to escalate. In this case, there is no question that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and his government wanted a war. The San Francisco Chronicle and other mainstream media have highlighted the fact that Israel had had this strategic plan in place since at least 2004, perhaps having started it as early as 2000 when Israeli troops pulled out of Lebanon. Israel was waiting for an appropriate time – or an appropriate pretext – to launch it. This moment, this pretext, they deemed, was the time.

### US and Israeli Goals

It is telling that both Israel and the US have admitted they do not want a ceasefire. Their goal is an unequivocal military victory, not a diplomatic solution, regardless of the human consequences (and for Israel, regardless of the fate of their iconic but now much more-endangered captured soldiers). Israel appears to believe that it is possible to defeat a popular insurgency with conventional military means, despite a century of colonial history proving precisely the opposite for the US in Viet Nam, the French in Algeria, the British in India, and so many others.

Tel Aviv’s goals are to establish unchallenged and unchallengeable military control on all its borders, perhaps including a direct on-the-ground occupation, to wipe out all existing or potential resistance to its domination, and to transform the strategic map of the Middle East. Sound familiar? The approach was first articulated in 1996 when a group of former US officials drafted a strategy paper for Bibi Netanyahu, then running for prime minister in Israel. The paper was titled “Making a Clean Break: Defending the Realm,” and it essentially proposed for Israel a Middle East regional version of what the neo-conservative Project for a New American Century, and more importantly the Bush administration’s 2002 National Security Strategy, envisioned for the US on a global level. The essence of all these plans called for the dominant power to establish such overwhelming military control that no existing or future resistance could ever even imagine a challenge to that domination.

In the first few days of the crisis, a potential crack appeared between the Israeli and US aims. Israel’s goals were (and remain) primarily military, focused on wiping out any remnant of Hezbollah’s and Hamas’ power and influence across Lebanon, Palestine and the region. Simultaneously it hoped to bring the fragile holding-on-by-its-fingernails Lebanese government, already in thrall to Washington since the US-orchestrated departure of Syrian troops last year, even more completely under Israeli control. In Gaza Israel was trying to diminish even further the capacity of the already

weakened Palestinian Authority. Parts of the Bush administration at that time, at least briefly, seemed to place a higher premium on maintaining the fiction that the Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon had set the stage for real “democracy” there, and maintaining something resembling stability in Lebanon remained a crucial propaganda goal. That led to the slightly mixed messages of the first couple of days, in which “Israel has the absolute right to defend itself” was tempered with “but they should be careful not to weaken the Lebanese government.” That ambiguity, however, did not last. By the third day or so, the Bush administration had largely abandoned any claimed concern about Lebanon’s fragile “democracy,” (there was never any concern expressed for Lebanon’s people) and had moved into full-scale unequivocal embrace of Israel’s aggression, rejecting calls for a ceasefire as “untimely.”

### **What Does Washington Want?**

The actual US goals do not include a rapid ceasefire. Rather, Washington is committed to the same kind of regional remapping of the Middle East that Israel’s military assault aims for. The Bush administration began this process through its invasion and occupation of Iraq, and its support for Israel’s crusade reflects the same disdain for civilian casualties that the US has shown in Iraq. While some of the Iraq War’s key neo-con players are now out of the White House (Paul Wolfowitz at the World Bank, Douglas Feith at Georgetown, Scooter Libby on trial, etc.), it is clear that at least part of their intellectual legacy – the unilateralism, disdain for diplomacy, assertion of military power over all – remains in place. What Israel is doing now, with full US support through military and economic aid, diplomatic protection, and political support, aims to remap a “new” Israeli-dominated Middle East. That goal is fully in synch with the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, which aims to reconstruct a region without a hint of resistance to absolute US control.

For Washington, Israel’s war escalates the pressure on Syria and Iran, and it is likely the US will continue to take a direct role. There were complaints that the US evacuation of American citizens was slow; that may be less about inefficiency than about a US insistence on bringing warships up to the Beirut coastline to “escort” the evacuation ship. We may see those ships remaining off the Lebanese coast for quite some time, as an additional message to Syria and Iran, as we may see a longer deployment of the marines currently on-shore inside Beirut, assisting the evacuation.

### **At the United Nations**

Also indicative of Washington’s strategy was the US veto of a ceasefire resolution at the United Nations, squelching any possibility of an early international call for an end to the killing. At this point, despite extensive discussion and widespread calls for a ceasefire, the US opposition to a ceasefire has largely paralyzed the Security Council. The secretary general has presented a set of recommendations that, while flawed in some respects at least begins with a call for an immediate “end to hostilities,” even if not an official ceasefire. Other UN officials, including humanitarian Jan Egeland and High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour have spoken of war crimes being committed, and called for an immediate end to hostilities. Several leading Non-Aligned countries have indicated other international initiatives might be under consideration as well, perhaps leading to a call for creation of an international “Coalition of the Willing to Stop the Killing.”

The US and Israel appear to be considering a UN proposal that would send international troops – “not UN Blue-helmets,” according to US Ambassador John Bolton – to the region. While the call for international protection is a longstanding regional demand, the version under discussion now would be far too one-sided to answer the real need. It would essentially impose a new occupation of south Lebanon, albeit by international, rather than Israeli troops, its mandate would include forcible disarming of Hezbollah while doing nothing to rein in Israel’s attacks, and it might even be based on NATO, rather than UN troops.

### **Regional Implications**

It is clear that Hezbollah’s role in the crisis is leading to a qualitative escalation in regional support for the organization. Inside Lebanon that translates to greater support for Hezbollah’s social and political program, and its electoral role in the Lebanese parliament, as well as wider backing for the idea that maintaining Hezbollah’s militia separate from Lebanon’s national army might just be a good idea. In the region as a whole, Hezbollah is gaining popular acclaim for its role in supporting the Palestinians (specifically in trying to improve Hamas’ chance for a prisoner exchange) and most importantly, in challenging Israeli military domination. At a moment when Arab governments across the Middle East remain feckless and silent in the wake of escalating attacks, and people across the region grow increasingly angry about their own governments’ seemingly complicit silence, the ability of Hezbollah to go head to head with the Israeli military inevitably brings supporters and converts. This shift in regional consciousness is also reflected in what some Arab analysts are identifying as an “end to fear” among Arab populations,

The Bush administration, seeming to recognize this, has reportedly based the plan for Condoleezza Rice’s July 23rd trip to the region on the launch of an “Umbrella of Arab Allies” in explicit opposition to Hezbollah. The rising influence of the Lebanese resistance movement, along with that of Hamas, has created serious challenges for pro-US Arab

leaders, who are already viewed with scorn by significant sectors of their population. With the televised images of the Hezbollah guerrillas taking on Israel, and the dramatic scenes of Palestinian and Lebanese victims of Israeli bombings fresh in people's minds, the unwillingness and/or inability of Arab governments to do anything to help the Palestinians and Lebanese, let alone to challenge Israel on their own, stand as a sharp indictment of those regimes throughout the Middle East.

A consequent problem, of course, is that the current scenario also encourages a widespread belief – a dangerous illusion, in my view – that it is possible for the resistance movements overall to actually defeat Israel militarily. Certainly it is true that 18 years of Hezbollah's resistance to Israeli military occupation in south Lebanon did force an Israeli withdrawal. But that example had many particularities that no longer prevail – not least that it took place before September 11, when the US regional involvement was very different, and that Israel's commitment to Lebanon never matched that of its strategic dedication to Palestine.

The Iraq war has already begun to transform political and social consciousness in the region, and there is the potential that some in the region would look at how resistance forces there have fought the US military to a standstill, and imagine that small independent groups of militants might follow that "model" to win against Israel in Palestine as well. Again the distinctions – including the fact that the Iraqi resistance inherited the disparate weaponry of an entire army – outweigh the similarities. What remains similar is the increasingly parallel level of destruction in both Lebanon and Iraq.

### **Washington's Arab Allies**

On a political level, the current war in Lebanon is also transforming the region, to the detriment of the existing Arab governments. It is remembered with pride and anger across the Middle East that in expelling the Israeli troops from Lebanon, Hezbollah was the first Arab resistance movement to force Israel to retreat, something no combination of Arab governments could ever do. At least as of the third week of July, there is a widening and increasingly visible divide splitting the Arab states.

On the one hand are those governments who see Hezbollah's rising influence as a threat to their own power and are willing to condemn Hezbollah and at least tacitly support the US-Israel alliance, including Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. On the other hand are those governments more worried about losing power and control of their own populations who are all adamantly anti-Israel and pro-Hezbollah, who are claiming (disingenuously or not) to support the Palestinian and Lebanese against Israel. Those include Syria of course, whose government has remained quiet and largely afraid to move because of US threats even while public pressure mounts demanding public support for Hezbollah and the Palestinians. That group also includes non-Arab Iran, whose government has been very careful in its response, claiming that it would respond to an Israeli attack on Syria, but remaining conspicuously silent about its own role vis-à-vis the attacks on Lebanon.

A recent and surprising addition to the critic-of-Israel contingent is Iraq's President Nouri al-Maliki. The defection of the Iraqi leader from the US camp represents a significant defeat for the Bush administration's Lebanon plan. Chosen in a US-orchestrated election held under continued US military occupation, al-Maliki had earlier promised to demand a timeline for withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, but he never made good on that promise. Ironically, even Lebanon's own Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, long understood to be a product of Washington's anti-Syria "democracy" crusade, seems to have moved out of the pro-US camp, taking a clear we-will-fight-alongside-Hezbollah position in response to the Israeli threats of a massive ground invasion of Lebanon. Other powerful Lebanese parties have also announced support for Hezbollah, undercutting longstanding efforts by successive Lebanese governments to suppress its influence. Elsewhere in the region, individual politicians in pro-US Arab states including Saudi Arabia have begun efforts to distance themselves from their own government positions.

### **And For the Palestinians**

In Gaza, the potential importance of the Hamas-Fatah unity process in the Palestinian Authority, shaped by the June acceptance by all sides of the "Prisoners' Declaration," has largely been diminished. Certainly the unity process remains important. But with one-third of the Palestinian Authority's cabinet members and many of the Hamas members of the Legislative Council held in Israeli prisons as potential bargaining chips for a future prisoner exchange, and the US-Israeli orchestrated international isolation and sanctions of the PA still in place, the PA itself is barely surviving, hardly able to help its population cope with the ravages of the Israeli assault, and certainly not doing much governing. The Hamas-led government in the occupied territories also faces a political and credibility challenge from the external, Damascus-based leadership of the divided organization, who some believe have been more supportive of Hamas' renewed military activity than the Hamas representatives in the internal government in Gaza and Ramallah.

In the meantime, the link between the Gaza crisis and the still escalating Lebanon/Hezbollah crisis, has brought Palestine back to the center of regional politics, away from its Oslo and post-Oslo identity as a narrower issue limited to the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza Strip alone. In the process of raising the profile and credibility of Hamas as the

centerpiece of Palestinian politics, however, this trajectory has largely sidelined the importance and legitimacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization, or PLO. Hamas has never been a member of the PLO. As Hamas' prestige, both within Palestine and internationally, rises, there is a danger that the PLO could be left behind – and with it, the representation of those components of the Palestinian nation who do not live in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, most importantly the Palestinian refugees and exiles who now number more than 3 million spread around the world.

### **The Gaza-Lebanon Crisis and the Iraq War**

How the new Lebanon crisis (Gaza and the rest of Palestine was of course already in crisis) is affecting the way the US is carrying out its war in Iraq remains uncertain. But its impact on the wider militarization of the region has already become clear. The US has ratcheted up its provision of both emergency (jet fuel), and regular military equipment (including a batch of replacement “smart” bombs) to Israel. A New York Times article noted that analysts recognize US support for Israel in this war as equivalent to Iran's support of Hezbollah. And the Bush administration just approved just \$6 billion worth of new US arms sales to the nervous Saudi government, including Black Hawk helicopters, armored vehicles and other military equipment. The administration justified the sale to Congress claiming that the sale would help strengthen Saudi Arabia's military and its ability to help the US fight terrorism around the world.

It is also clear that the murderous Israeli assault in Lebanon and Gaza, and their proud endorsement by the US, is ratcheting up even further the already sky-high Iraq-fueled levels of anger towards the US. This may lead to another shift in the military situation inside Iraq, with US troops becoming even greater immediate targets. To the degree that sectarian considerations are shaping military outcomes in Iraq, it will not go unnoticed that while all of Lebanon has been made victim of this war, Lebanon's Shi'a and the Shi'a-majority towns and cities of the south, already the poorest of the country, are suffering the most. Also, Hezbollah, now seen regionally as defender of not only Lebanon but Palestine and Arabs in general, is a Shi'a movement. However, the sectarian considerations are likely to remain secondary to the much broader concern that all Lebanese, including Sunni, Christians and all others, and all Gazans, who are overwhelmingly Sunni (as well as West Bank Palestinians, still suffering under occupation and international sanctions), have been made victims by a US-Israeli policy of all-out indiscriminate war against entire peoples.

Israel's ground invasion of Lebanon, whether it becomes a permanent occupation or not, will certainly escalate the crisis further. This is particularly true of Israel's declared intention to establish what Tel Aviv calls a “buffer zone” inside southern Lebanon. Israel has adopted the racist language of the Pentagon in Iraq, describing their goal being to “clean out” Hezbollah strongholds in south Lebanon, and then “hold” them to prevent a return. As Kofi Annan said on July 21, even if Israel “plans to say it's a ‘security zone,’ for others it will be an occupation.”

### **The New War and the US Peace Movement**

There is no question that overall, the escalation of the regional crisis to include all-out war in Lebanon and Gaza will make some work of the peace movement more difficult. It will be harder to call for bringing home all the troops from Iraq now, while the media propaganda focuses on “Israel under attack.” This is certainly true in terms of influencing congress or other policymakers, where the focus on Israel is escalating the existing Democratic Party leaders' embrace of the Iraq war. And at a moment when key Republicans appear to be distancing themselves from the Bush administration's war strategy, if not from the war itself, the new crisis is giving Republicans an opportunity to welcome the Bush administration's position, while competing with Democrats over who can be stronger supporters of Israel. The unanimous Senate vote and the near-unanimous House votes supporting Israel's war unequivocally and enthusiastically give some indication of that.

But we must never lose sight of the value, the legitimacy, the importance of non-violent struggle. As Americans our own history has seen our most important social victories – against slavery, for voting rights, for civil rights – won by mass mobilization and education. We can't stop now.

We need to recognize and figure out why popular opinion has not matched the uncritical pro-Israeli cheerleading that has characterized mainstream politics. Higher percentages of the public are rejecting the close public embrace of Israel by the Bush administration, urging that the US “not engage” in the war. For many this means opposition to the US reengaging in active Middle East diplomacy. Missing, of course, is the broader understanding that uncritical US diplomatic and political support for Israel's wars and occupations, along with more than \$3 billion each year in military and economic aid, is the default position of US politics – whether or not the US leads the diplomacy, it is certainly “engaged” in the issue.

Polls indicate the public has a far more nuanced understanding than the politicians, with significant percentages critical of Israel. There is a small group of congresspeople, reflecting that more nuanced position, who have taken the [in this context] courageous decision not to join the groundswell of pro-Israel cheerleading, and voted no or present on the

resolution. Many of those members and others are also supporting a new bill introduced by Dennis Kucinich calling for an immediate ceasefire.

One reason for the public willingness to recognize the devastation being caused by Israel's war may, ironically, be mainstream television coverage. Despite the jingoism of many newscasters (though many TV journalists on the ground in Lebanon and Gaza have often been surprisingly even-handed), the graphic horror visible in the pictures is having a much bigger impact than the commentary.

The nature of the crisis, and the response to it demonstrates once again the need for education as the fundamental strategy of our movement. Certainly we have to engage with those in power, and immediate protests are important – bird-dogging Bush, Rumsfeld, Rice and other members of the administration to demand a ceasefire; sit-ins in the offices of pro-war members of congress; demonstrations against war crimes at Israeli consulates or the White House; informational picket lines outside media outlets perpetrating lies. Those demonstrations are also important as a message to people in the Middle East, especially in Lebanon and Palestine, just as has been the case in Iraq, that there are Americans who say no to the Bush agenda, who reject the militarism and unilateralism and lack of democracy that give rise to these wars.

And we must do more. We are faced once again with an American public willing to accept a media-driven definition of the crisis – accepting that it began with Hezbollah's July 12 raid to capture two Israeli soldiers. Most Americans do not recognize that even this very specific crisis began much earlier, with the US-led international isolation and sanctions against the entire Palestinian people after the election of Hamas, with the Israeli missile assault killing a Palestinian family on a Gaza beach, with the "targeted assassinations" that have killed more than 125 non-targeted civilians, with the assassination of the newly-nominated deputy minister in the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. Certainly most Americans do not root this crisis in the seizure of the latest of 9,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, or the legacy of 38 years of occupation of Gaza, or the consequences of 18 years of Israeli occupation of south Lebanon.

We face an American public lacking the information to challenge the reversed chronology of the crisis that has become the assumed wisdom. Even though the New York Times' own July 19 chronology and a July 24 article finally told the truth, almost no one in the US seems to grasp the actual sequence of this particular set of events. Hezbollah crossed the Israeli border and captured two Israeli soldiers – an attack on a military target. Israel responded with a failed attempt to get the soldiers back, and then escalated immediately to massive airstrikes on Lebanese civilian targets – first the southern bridges, then the Beirut international airport. Only then, after Israel had transformed a border skirmish into a war and escalated from military to civilian targets, did Hezbollah begin its own illegal firing of rockets against civilian targets, Israeli cities.

Instead the majority of Americans – steeped in longstanding beliefs that Israel is always in the right – remain convinced that Israel's attacks in Lebanon were only in response to Hezbollah's rockets hitting Israeli cities. As a movement we need to take responsibility for a broad campaign of popular education that will make it impossible for such widespread misinformation – let alone the even more profoundly missing historical context – to gain and keep its foothold in public consciousness.

This is a moment for the broad anti-war and anti-empire movement to strengthen its ties with the longstanding movements for Palestinian rights and against US support for Israeli occupation, for human rights and a just and comprehensive peace in the region. That collaboration will also insure, among other things, that we do not allow the absolute horror and the more visibly international character of the Lebanon war, to push the Gaza crisis and the continuing horror of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem off the top of our agenda.

We have an especially difficult challenge ahead as we look at how the Israeli "axis of terror" framework is reviving the popularity of the "war on terror" framework in the US. While opposition to the war in Iraq continues to rise, there is a danger that the Bush administration's claims – that the war in Lebanon is against global terrorism escalating against the US and our friends – could reverse that trend. We need to take on the work of educating people about the nature of US policy, how it leads to war, and how the current horror in Gaza and Lebanon is very much Washington's war. We have to remind ourselves and others how the illegal US war in Iraq is encouraging the view that invading and occupying another country is a perfectly legitimate replacement for diplomacy and negotiations.

This is an extraordinary moment of crisis, but also a moment of opportunity. The UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Louise Arbour, has told the world that war crimes have been committed on both sides, and warned that political leaders of supporting countries could be held personally liable. Human Rights Watch investigators in Lebanon told NPR that they are investigating Israeli war crimes. We should take advantage of that opportunity to press for accountability of our own government for its complicity in Israeli war crimes by providing the military hardware, fuel and weapons to Israel, knowing that they are being used in violation of international and US domestic law. It is also an opportunity for us to build our ties with our counterparts in Europe, Latin America and elsewhere, as we press for international charges to be brought against top Bush Administration officials who may be complicit in Israeli war

crimes; the model of Belgium, France, Brazil and other countries prohibiting accused war criminals from entering their countries should be something we struggle to apply to US leaders involved in backing the current war.

### **Our Country, Our War?**

At the end of the day this is a moment we must acknowledge and come to terms with a great sadness. What does it say about the state of our nation that our top officials have abandoned diplomacy with such certitude? That they are building a culture that welcomes unimaginable violence? That they are using their military and economic power around the globe to kill, dispossess, impoverish, and disempower people, isolating the US people from the world by taking our nation to war and standing as an unaccountable Colossus astride the entire world? That they have abandoned international law in favor of the law of empire? What does it say about us, as a people?

And what does it say about our movement, and what we have to do?

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## WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Washington Report, May/June 2006, page 61

Waging Peace

### Sabeel DC Conference Calls for Nonviolent Actions

SABEEL, THE ECUMENICAL Liberation Theology Center based in Jerusalem, held a conference March 3 and 4 at Washington, DC's New York Avenue Presbyterian Church. In her opening keynote address to the conference, the theme of which was "Pursue Justice, Seek Peace," Sabeel Vice President Jean Zaru noted that times were very hard in Palestine, as Israel continues to build more settlements and its wall, U.N. resolutions and international law gather dust, and humanitarian aid is used like a playing card without regard for ordinary Palestinian families just trying to earn their daily bread.

Some Palestinians have opted to withdraw from society, Zaru said, others have chosen to comply with or manipulate the system, but most have chosen to resist as the only way to transform the structure of oppression. Focusing on nonviolent resisters, Zaru said Palestinians need to engage more of the world community in the struggle, and urged building a global movement for peace and justice with a vision including diversity and excluding exclusivity. The only possible peace, she emphasized, was one based on justice.



*Sabeel Vice President Jean Zaru (Staff Photo M. Horton).*

Interestingly, when asked how she—as a woman and a Quaker—felt about the recent Hamas electoral victory, Zaru answered that she did not see a problem for either women or Christians based on prior experience and the fact that Palestinians form a pluralistic society.

In an afternoon plenary address, Jeff Halper, coordinating director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, emphasized the need to globalize the movement to resolve the Palestine/Israel issue, because of its impact on the world. The issue can be seen, Halper said, as a battleground for human rights and international law involving Muslim and Jewish communities, the U.S. and, in fact, the entire global community. Discussing the foreign policy ramifications of the role played by Israeli-centric neocons in the U.S., Halper said he regretted U.S./Israel's policy effects: a "Crusader Empire," massive power vs. ordinary people, and the erosion of Jewish life due to policy toward Israel.

Halper described Israeli strategy as based on controlling the entire land area in three stages: creating facts on the ground for a matrix of control, securing U.S. approval for annexation of said facts, and unilaterally declaring permanent borders and the "end of occupation." With the first two points accomplished, Halper noted that the "element of Zionism that ruined everything was the doctrine of exclusivity."

A just peace was possible, according to Halper, if civil society mobilized in an urgent and effective campaign, calling for the use of boycott, divestment and sanctions. He concluded with a brief outline of his vision of a broad federation of Middle East states, including Israel and Palestine.

A number of workshops and open plenaries followed on topics ranging from Plymouth Congregational Church's Rev. Graylan Hagler's talk on "The Black Church, Liberation and Palestine" to Boston University School of Law Prof. Susan Akram's presentation on "The Right of

Return: A Framework of International Law."

—Sara Powell

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## Inside Israeli Apartheid

An interview with Palestinian Christian  
**Jonathan Kuttab.**

by Jim Wallis

**Jonathan Kuttab**, a leading human rights lawyer in Israel and Palestine, was born in West Jerusalem and raised there and in Bethlehem. After the Six Day War, Kuttab's family moved to the United States, where he graduated from Messiah College and earned his law degree from the University of Virginia. After practicing with a Wall Street law firm for several years, in 1980 Kuttab returned to his homeland where he continues to handle cases that have both Israeli and Palestinian officials squirming.

Kuttab co-founded the Jerusalem-based Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence; the West Bank affiliate of the International Commission of Jurists, Al-Haq; and the Mandela Institute for Political Prisoners. He was interviewed earlier this year in Jerusalem by Sojourners editor Jim Wallis.

**Jim Wallis:** People who support the Palestinian cause have also supported the Oslo peace process. Now it has fallen apart and there's a second *intifada*—this one more wild than the first. What are we to make of this?

**Jonathan Kuttab:** Everyone thought that the Oslo process, despite its goblins, would lead to a Palestinian state—a two-state solution. The reality, however, was the opposite. The Oslo process created an alternative to international law, to the mechanisms of the United Nations, to international solidarity, and to a genuine struggle for justice. It created a crazy partnership between the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli occupation forces, whereby the Palestinian leadership was given the task of maintaining peace and order for the Israeli settlers and the state of Israel in return for privileges that were doled out a little at a time. In the end, Israel had all the power on the ground. The Palestinians either had to accept the Israeli structure or simply suffer with no recourse.

**Wallis:** U.S. opinion pages blame Yasir Arafat for the breakdown of the peace process and the resulting violence. They say Oslo was the best agreement Israel has ever offered. Why didn't Arafat accept this?

**Kuttab:** Very few people understand the structure of the Oslo process. It cut the West Bank into three zones. The map showing these zones is almost never shown in the United States because it reveals small enclaves of Palestinian control within an overwhelmingly Israeli-controlled area.

With the zones, Israel has the capacity not only to control entry and exit into Palestine and Israel, but also to control movement between and within Palestinian villages, towns, and refugee camps in the occupied territories. Under this system simply going to work or school, to church or the hospital is an absolute nightmare. Palestinians are effectively denied taking their cars on roads in the West Bank. We must either go by donkey or on foot, otherwise we risk violating the law and being shot. Israeli settlers on the other hand, have bypass access roads that link them directly to Israel and to each other.

Palestinians are supposed to accept this as a permanent state of affairs. Under this structure, it doesn't matter what percentage of land you turn over to the Palestinian authority. The question is no longer about true sovereignty, but rather about administering real estate on behalf of an overarching occupation. That is why Arafat rejected the offer. He was faced with signing something that was totally unacceptable to the Palestinian people, that would deny their right of return, that would turn them into a Vichy-type regime. That agreement would have legitimized the illegal settlements and made the Palestinians permanently under an occupation and domination—all approved and legitimized by their own leadership. And all this would have been called a "separate state."

**Wallis:** Was the Oslo arrangement worse than what preceded it?

**Kuttab:** Over the last few years Palestinians have seen enough of what Israel had in mind when it talked about statehood. Human rights violations have increased, as have the stealing of land and the expansion of settlements. International solidarity and support for Palestinians has been utterly neutralized because everybody is supporting the peace process. I mean, how can you be against the peace process? Under Oslo, the day-to-day life of the Palestinian has become worse.

I don't want a passport that is invalid unless it is entered into an Israeli computer. I don't want a Palestinian airport that you must travel to in a sealed bus, which takes you first to the Israeli checkpoint to be examined, questioned, and maybe arrested. A passport is supposed to allow you to travel freely. If I can't travel, what is the use of a passport?

**Wallis:** Oslo led to a apartheid-like situation, making life for ordinary people a nightmare, and the violent revolt began. Now, because of this violence, people elsewhere are withdrawing support from the Palestinian cause and blaming the breakdown on the Palestinians.

**Kuttab:** The brilliance of the Israeli occupation has been in the battle of images. They present their occupation as the acceptable status quo, while any attempt by the Palestinians to resist it is shown as violence, terrorism, disruption, and opposition to the peace process. The peace and justice community has been also trapped into this method of looking at things.

We have drifted away from what we know to be true. The settlements are illegal. They are built on stolen property. They are racist because only Jews can live in them. Jews in the settlements live under their own regime—separate courts, separate roads, separate health system, separate economic structures—yet they are portrayed as civilians whose security and protection is an absolute value. If the Palestinians resist them, then it is Palestinians who are disrupting the peace process.

**Wallis:** Many people don't understand the politics of the settlements. They are self-contained compounds with beautiful green grass, swimming pools, and shopping outlets that include stores like Burger King and Home Depot. They are upper-middle-class, First World enclaves surrounded by desert and Palestinians who can't even access their own water.

**Kuttab:** The most extreme example is the Gaza Strip. It is about seven miles wide and 20 miles long. There are 1 million Palestinians who live there, and about 2,000 Jewish settlers. These 2,000 settlers live in small, scattered communities, but they control about 40 percent of the land and 30 percent of the water of the Gaza Strip.

One thing must be clear: Settlements are illegal under international law. They are morally indefensible. They have no religious justification whatsoever. As Christians committed to peace with justice, we must say that settlements must stop. As long as there are settlements, the occupation is going to continue. A concerted effort at boycotts and sanctions linked to settlements and settler activities can be very effective and successful. Ultimately it's better for Israel to be rid of the settlements, and many Israelis are opposed to them. The problem is that any Israeli leader who wants to dismantle settlements, or even stop their growth, has had to pay a heavy political price. There was no international solidarity movement demanding that the settlements be dismantled. Still there is no political price Israel has to pay for continuing with the settlement policy—no embarrassments, no boycotts, no demonstrations, no challenges to Israeli policy.

**Wallis:** You have said that you think Israel is more vulnerable to economic, social, and political pressure than South Africa ever was.

**Kuttab:** Apartheid South Africa had the internal resources to flaunt the rest of the world, and in fact did so for many years. Israel doesn't enjoy these advantages. It is a small country. It doesn't have many of the basic raw natural resources. It depends economically on tourism and on donations from the outside world, particularly Western Jewish communities. Its cultural, social, and economic life is linked to the West.

Israeli policy, particularly the settlement policy, must be put under genuine attack by the West. If Israeli aid, trade, and cultural life were made conditional on the dismantling of settlements, on creating a just peace, I don't think Israel could resist that pressure for very long. However, it would take a lot of courage and many principled people to carry out such a battle because it would be fought against the background of sympathy for the state of Israel and for the Jews that arises from the Holocaust. Individuals who undertake such a campaign may come under attack by those who support the state of

Israel without question.

**Wallis:** Would you see involving Christian churches as critical to this campaign, as was the case with South Africa?

**Kuttab:** Yes. There are Palestinian Christians and Palestinian churches that can speak to these issues. Unfortunately, many of the churches in the United States, particularly the evangelical churches, have allied themselves not only with Israel and its settlement policy, but even with extreme right-wing Israeli politics. Ultimately this policy calls for the expulsion of Palestinians. Ironically, the one community where this policy is most successful is the Christian community. Christians are leaving the country in large numbers. If we lose the Christian component, I think it will be a tremendous loss for all Palestinians.

**Wallis:** Can one support the state of Israel as a Jewish state and still say settlements are not only illegal, but are causing a brutal destruction of Palestinian life? Can one be against settlements and for a two-state solution without being interpreted as undermining the state of Israel?

**Kuttab:** That is the challenge. Israel has managed to blur the distinction between the issues of state security and the policy of domination. Any challenge to the policy of domination is viewed as a threat against the survival of the state of Israel. We need to uncouple these two things before we can be effective in a nonviolence campaign. As a Palestinian Christian, I can be for Palestinians, for the state of Israel, and for God—while at the same time be against the illegal occupation and the settlements.

**Wallis:** You would focus on the settlements as the primary target of a campaign of nonviolent resistance. If the short-term goal is to end the settlement policy, what kind of strategy or tactics would you recommend? Economic pressure?

**Kuttab:** Economic pressure is certainly one piece of the strategy, but moral pressure is also needed. We must win the battle for the hearts and minds of people, including the American Jewish community. In this respect we must be very careful to avoid any alliance with those who hate Jews because they are Jews, with people who are anti-Semitic. I have nothing to say or to do with those people. One must be clear that one is doing this out of concern for justice and for love for both people, not out of hatred for Jews.

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*Inside Israeli Apartheid.* by Jim Wallis. Sojourners Magazine, September-October 2001 (Vol. 30, No. 5, pp. 31-33). Cover.

(Source: <http://www.sojo.net/index.cfm?action=magazine.article&issue=soj0109&article=010911>)

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Phone: (202) 328-8842 • Fax: (202) 328-8757

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# Publications



A Publication of the North Texas Conference of The United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 516069, Dallas, TX 75251, 972-490-3438, 800-969-8201, FAX 972-490-7216

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## Feature Story

### Rev. Sandra Olewine speaks of Holy Land fears and insecurities

By **John A. Lovelace**  
*Special Correspondent*

ITwo peoples filled with fears and insecurities.

That's how **Rev. Sandra Olewine** describes the peoples she knows best, the Israelis and Palestinians of the perpetual war zone known to some as the Holy Land.

Part of her job since December 1996 as the United Methodist liaison to those peoples is to communicate the vision and concerns of the churches of Jerusalem and Israel/Palestine to The United Methodist Church worldwide as well as the peace and justice concerns of everyday Israelis and Palestinians.

The latter is where the fears and insecurities come in, and it's the core of the speech she made approximately ten times during her Jan. 26-30 stay in the North Texas Conference. By her count, she made her 120th speech while here, her only Texas stops on a seven-month, 17-state circuit.

#### The second intifada

She dates the beginning of the current era of mutual fears and insecurities to September 2000, when Palestinian extremists launched what is referred to as the second intifada. (She defined intifada as "rising up or shaking off the chains that bind you.")

"For these last three-plus years," she says, "Israelis have felt deep insecurities and have feared attacks. There's a sense of no safe public space, a vulnerability and disease. You eat out and wonder



**Bill Bache, left, NTC UM Volunteers In Mission coordinator, welcomes Rev. Sandra Olewine, UMC liaison to Jerusalem and member of California-Pacific Conference, to the Dallas area. Rev. Olewine has been at the Holy Land post for seven years.**

if it's safe to sit near the front door, where a suicide bomber might attack. You place your children on the bus, a public bus, because there are no school buses, and you wonder if you'll see them again."

In that time, she adds, approximately 950 Israelis have been killed, about one-fourth of them children. Palestinians, she continues, feel insecure in both public and private spaces because of four conditions:

1. Increased Israeli military checkpoints and 200 unmanned roadblocks. Roadblocks between Palestinian towns can turn what would normally be a 2½-hour trip into 12-18 hours. Also, travel permits and ID cards were required.
2. Tanks and machine gun outposts around major Palestinian cities, sometimes reinforced by helicopters and F-16 fighter planes. Tanks and Jeeps inside cities, notably in Bethlehem in 2002 during the so-called six-week siege of the Church of the Nativity. Shellings far into the night robbing sleep. A feeling of no safe place.
3. Twenty-four curfews, primarily during 2002. Not allowed to go outside one's house for 140 days that year, including one 14-day unbroken stretch. Reliance on early-morning television to learn what hours, if any, are "open" on any given day. Subsequent rushings during open hours for shopping, school, medical care, weddings ("Hurry to the church, get married, hurry back home.")
4. Israeli erection of an anti-terrorism combination wall and fence complete with ditches and razor wire. Some parts of wall/fence being built in Palestinian land. One result: Secondary walls surround some Palestinian towns, one as large as 42,000 population, with gates locked from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.

Palestinian death toll during those three-plus years: Almost 2,500, one-fourth of them children.

### **Hope abides**

"But," insists the UMC missionary following this sorrowful litany. "Hope abides on both sides. Many say, 'Enough already!' They are determined to keep a sense of humanity alive."

As an illustration, Rev. Olewine bridges from monologue to dialogue via an 18-minute video showing an American-born Israeli Jew leading a group protesting Israeli military destruction of Palestinian homes. See Website: [www.rebuildinghomes.org](http://www.rebuildinghomes.org).

### **Dialogue with her audiences in such places as Oak Lawn UMC, First UMC,**

Dallas, and First UMC, Coppell, almost always included a "what can Christians do?" question. Her answers were:

- Support your missionaries and missionary projects with prayer and prayer vigils.
- Financially support UM officially-recognized schools and health centers in Israel and Palestine. One NTC congregation was so moved by the presentation, they collected \$900 for her ministry.
- Study. "And the best way is to come see us." Grinning, she added, "We haven't lost anyone yet." She explained that part of the rationale behind creation of her office in 1986 was "to get people off the bus. They fly in, run where Jesus walked, shop, take pictures, take the bus back to the airport and fly home. We want you to see and hear and know these people who walk in solidarity with us."
- Hold interfaith discussions.
- Be an advocate with the media and with legislators.

"We live in a world that is not just," Rev. Olewine said in closing. "We have to work to make it just for as many as possible. Three million people live on occupied land, and they're not going anywhere."

It is my privilege on your behalf to stand with Christians there in a very broken community."

For more information, please e-mail: [solewine@annadwa.org](mailto:solewine@annadwa.org)

# REFUSER SOLIDARITY NETWORK

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## About the **Refuser Solidarity Network**

The Refuser Solidarity Network (RSN) was formed in April of 2002 to provide support for the growing Refuser Movement in Israel. The initial impetus for the establishment of the RSN was the publication in January 2002 of the *Combatant's Letter* by a group of 52 reserve officers, which later became Ometz Le'sarev or **Courage to Refuse**.

The overall objective of the RSN is to support all Israelis who refuse to serve Occupation. This means that we support the work of **Courage to Refuse**, but also **Yesh G'vul**, **the Shministim** and **New Profile**. We support reservists who refuse to serve over the Green Line. We support men and women conscripts who refuse to serve entirely in the IDF in their opposition to Occupation.

We work to build support for and visibility of the Refusers and their movement, because we believe that these voices, these courageous stands against the folly of Occupation, are crucial to convincing the people of Israel that a new course must be chosen if there is to be lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

We encourage you to spend time looking through the RSN website. We offer many resources, giving you background about the Refuser Movement and also materials you can download and use to educate others in your community. We help organize tours of Refusers all over the world. You can find out about tours in your area. You can also invite a Refuser to come to your city, town, community group or synagogue. We also make it very easy for you to take action to support the Refusers.

**Our deepest thanks in advance for your support!**  
**The Refuser Solidarity Network**

## The RSN issued the following "Call to Action" in April 2002:



Refuser Solidarity Network vigil for imprisoned conscientious objectors, NYC, January 2003.

entire people."

Their courage, their willingness to speak out publicly at great risk to themselves and their families, has breathed new life into the Israeli peace movement. Suddenly, there is hope that a broader, deeper conflagration can be avoided, to break the cycle of violence and find a way to a secure peace for both Israelis and Palestinians. But they cannot do it by themselves. They need the help of Jews from around the world, and especially American Jews. They need our voices of support and our material assistance.

**Yes, the time has come.** The time has come for us to listen closely to our consciences, to gather up our courage, and to publicly declare our support for the growing ranks of military resisters in Israel. Yet even that is not enough. It is time for us to publicly declare, with those resisters, that if there is ever to be security and peace, there must be an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.



Courage to Refuse members speak to soldiers at a Gaza checkpoint.

## Dear friend of peace in the Middle East,

**The time has come.** After months of intensifying violence, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of innocent Israelis and Palestinians, Israeli soldiers in increasing numbers are stepping forward to publicly announce their refusal to serve in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

With their own eyes, they have seen the reality of occupation. They have been confronted by "commands and directives that had nothing to do with the security of our country, and that had the sole purpose of perpetuating our control over the Palestinian people." And now these soldiers have declared that they will no longer help to "dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an

We believe that this is a crucial moment, a potential turning point. What we say now, what we do now, could help transform a "window of opportunity" (in an otherwise very grim moment) into an unstoppable momentum towards peaceful co-existence. We choose to stand with those Israelis and Palestinians who follow a path of peace, and we believe that it is necessary to stand with them publicly and proudly. We hope you feel the same way.

Our first step was to publish a full page [ad in the Chicago Reader](#) on March 14 announcing our campaign, and listing Chicago-area Jews who have joined the campaign. We will now embark on a series of ads, tours of Refusers (in May, in Chicago, the Midwest, San Francisco and New York City), and direct support for the Refusers. While this campaign has been initiated from Chicago, we fully plan to support activities around the country by providing high quality ads and other resources, and by acting as a "portal" for support of the Refuser Movement in Israel.

For a secure and lasting peace,  
The members of Refuser Solidarity Network

[\[CLICK HERE TO RECEIVE MONTHLY EMAIL UPDATES FROM RSN\]](#)



## **WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS**

Washington Report, May/June 2006, page 61

Waging Peace

### **Speaking the Truth**

At the March 3 **Sabeel** plenary panel entitled "Speaking the Truth, the Challenges Before Us," Susan Akram discussed maintaining a human rights framework for the Palestinian refugees.

Pointing out that "Palestinian refugees are one in four refugees," she noted that "the Palestinian proposal for the right of return reflects international law definitions for the refugees and it is consistent with the U.N. principles and practices of refugee rights." However, she added, "the Israeli proposal doesn't have a refugee definition."

Next to speak was Bill Fletcher Jr., president of the TransAfrica Forum, who talked about the "Apartheid South African Divestment" experience. There are two major ways in which the South African Divestment experience would be different from an Israeli one, he explained: "First, there was no Afrikaans population within the U.S. to push for policy," and "there was never a comparable situation to the Holocaust."

"In South Africa, blacks were faceless," he pointed out, "while Palestinians (like Arabs) are demonized." An important question to ponder, he said, is "What could 'we' do in the U.S. to go against the apartheid government [of Israel]?"

**Rev. Dr. Don Wagner**, professor and director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University, discussed morally responsible investment among the churches.

"Moral economic engagement or phase selective divestment is not a blanket boycott," Wagner said. "It just targets U.S. corporations that are targeted at the occupation." He wants to know he "is not profiting from some one else's suffering," Wagner added, and feels that is how everyone should feel.

Wagner termed it "moral blackmail" to call this plan of action anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic. Quoting Martin Luther King, he said, "A time comes when silence is betrayal."

Rounding out the speakers was Liat Weingart, director of campaigns and programs for Jewish Voice for Peace, who discussed the Divestment movement and how JVP was working to show that not all Jews are against a divestment movement.

"If you want to be the bearers of peace, you also have to be the bearers of justice," Weingart stated. Acknowledging that there are difficulties because of differences between some American Jews and the Jewish establishments themselves, she pointed out that "Half of American Jews opposed the Iraq war, yet not a single Jewish organization opposed the war in Iraq."

One of the most important challenges, she concluded, was for people to get educated and begin letter-writing campaigns to their congressmen.

—*Banafsheh Saifollahi*

**Find this article at:**

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## WASHINGTON REPORT ON MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS

Home > Archives > Jan\_Feb\_2004 > Waging Peace: Secretary's Open Forum Examines Public Diplomacy

January/February 2004, pages 75-82

### Neocons, Christian Zionists Assessed

The Palestine Center's annual conference, held Nov. 21 at its Washington, DC headquarters on the theme "The Middle East After the Iraq War," featured a panel on "The Contemporary American Political Landscape and the Middle East." As moderator Samih Farsoun of The American University observed in his opening remarks, "The political center in U.S. politics has shifted to the right over the last 20 years." Citing American neoconservatives and evangelical Christians in particular, he then turned the panel over to four experts on these increasingly influential movements: Jim Lobe, Joe Sobran, **Don Wagner** and Clifford A. Kiracofe, Jr.

Journalist Lobe, an Inter Press Service correspondent who has covered the neocons extensively for the Web site <[tompaine.com](http://tompaine.com)> and other outlets, noted that he is "about the same age as the second generation of neocons," Lobe, who is Jewish, explained that he was intrigued by how the neocon world view came to diverge so widely from his own.

Describing contemporary American neoconservatism as "a morally driven movement intent on gaining power," Lobe stated that neocons have a "Hobbsean view of nature" as "a war of all against all." According to this view, politics is a struggle of good versus evil that, in the words of leading neocon Michael Ledeen, "will go on forever." To the neocons, added Lobe—after modestly noting that he has been banned from all briefings at the neocon-stronghold American Enterprise Institute—Nazism and the Holocaust represent the absolute evil. "It's incredibly ahistorical," he pointed out, with "everything a replay of the 1930s," and historical references always in terms of "Munich, appeasement and failure of will."

Believing that "peace processes are for sissies and Europeans," neocons emphasize the role of military power, said Lobe, and see the U.S. as a force for good incarnate. In order for that to be meaningful, however, he pointed out, "there always has to be an evil, and you've got to find it." Before 9/11 that evil was China; now it is Islam. Conveniently to this latest battle, Israel and the U.S. are seen as moral equals. In the name of this greater good, Lobe added, tactical and strategic alliances, with, for example, Christian Zionists, are justified.

Before the national debate on the war on Iraq, observed nationally syndicated columnist Joe Sobran, neocons tended to be known only in conservative circles. Their defining trait, according to the former *National Review* writer, is "devotion to and often a personal connection to Israel, especially Likud." Indeed, Sobran stated, neocons could be considered "the intellectual wing of the pro-Israel party" in America. Moreover, he pointed out, if U.S. and Israeli interests are equal, there is no question of dual loyalty.

The "neocon" label is misleading, however, Sobran argued, because its adherents are only superficially conservatives. Traditional American conservatism advocated limited government and frowned on foreign aid—and, in fact, considered Israel and Zionism embodiments of socialism. Following the 1967 war, however, and the ensuing overt hostility between the Soviet Union and Israel, the neocons—many of them former Trotskyites—emerged in the guise of anticommunists. As such, they were welcomed by traditional conservatives, and the two currents merged—with "old conservatives doing most of the conceding," Sobran noted, "dropping their opposition to foreign

aid, for example, especially with regard to Israel.”

The neocons “swallowed up” the conservatives, he said, and proceeded to infiltrate the Reagan and the first Bush administrations. The fact that Israeli democracy is based on the denial of the principle that all men are created equal does not concern them, he observed, and they love huge military programs “as long as they kill Arabs.” The aim of the neocons “is not to conserve,” Sobran concluded, “but to destroy.”

**Don Wagner, a co-founder and past president of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding** and author of several books, began by noting that he had grown up in the evangelical Christian movement—which, he added, has been emerging for some time in this country. He cited a 1986 Pew Research poll which found that 26 percent of Republican Party members held Christian Zionist views; by 1999 that number had increased to 33 percent, Wagner said, and it continues to grow today.

Wagner characterized the Christian Zionist movement—which, he said, crystallized during the Reagan administration—as having a literalist interpretation of the Bible, a millenarian outlook and apocalyptic theology, and a radical commitment to Israel. It is not, however, synonymous with American evangelicalism, which he identified as a broad umbrella to describe historical Protestant theology, and which has left and center components.

Many of the traits Wagner ascribed to Christian Zionists echoed Lobe’s description of neocons, particularly the radical distinction between good and evil, and the consequent need for an enemy—in this case, the Antichrist, previously embodied in the Soviet Union, the U.N., the pope, and now Islam. Israel is central to the Christian Zionist world view as well, Wagner explained, because, following the Rapture, the church will disappear, to be replaced by Israel as the instrument of God. The Christian Zionist movement “really began to take shape after the 1948 and 1967 wars,” Wagner noted, “when many evangelicals began to believe that ‘the clock of Bible prophecy is ticking.’”

In fact, however, Christian Zionism is almost older than its Jewish counterpart, according to Wagner. He cited Lord Shaftsbury’s 1839 characterization of the Holy Land as “a land of no country for a people with no land,” and the first Zionist congress in this country, held in 1891. Organized by William E. Blackstone, author of *Jesus Is Coming*, it attracted “several U.S. senators, Supreme Court justices and congressmen” and called for the creation of Israel.

In Wagner’s opinion, it is unclear to what degree President George W. Bush’s adherence to Christian Zionism is based on belief or political expediency. (“The younger Bush may have more convictions than we know,” Sobran had commented earlier. “He is very guarded about revealing specific beliefs.”) George W. had been assigned to deliver the evangelical Christian and Zionist vote in his father’s bid for reelection, Wagner noted, and had failed to do so. Nevertheless, Wagner did not see the “unique convergence” of evangelical Christianity and Zionism changing in the immediate future.

Clifford Kiracofe, an adjunct professor at the Virginia Military Institute and a former senior staff member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, addressed the issue of “Christian Zionism as a Foreign Policy Challenge.” Noting that “confidence in America has collapsed since the invasion of Iraq,” he argued that “Christian Zionist influence in the executive branch is a danger to a well thought-out foreign policy.”

Christian Zionists and the Israeli right are allied to the most extreme right-wing in their respective countries, he noted, recalling that Washington’s first national prayer breakfast in 1985 had as its keynote speaker Binyamin Netanyahu, then Israel’s ambassador to the U.N. The government of Prime Minister Menachem Begin made a concerted effort to interface with Christian Zionists, Kiracofe said, and Israel’s tourism minister made a special trip to the U.S. to meet with their representatives.

Christian Zionists have infiltrated the Republican Party, according to Kiracofe, and their foreign

**Unilateral proposal. boycotted****James M. Wall**

ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER Ehud Olmert traveled to Washington in late May to tell President Bush about his plans for Israel's future. There is no indication that those plans offer a viable solution to the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian territories caused by the cutoff of funds to the Hamas government. Olmert blames Hamas for the crisis. Former president Jimmy Carter disagrees. In a column in the International Herald Tribune (May 7), Carter wrote:

Innocent Palestinian people  
are being treated like animals,  
with the presumption that they are guilty of some  
crime. Because they voted for candidates who are  
members of Hamas, the United States government has  
become the driving force behind an apparently effective  
scheme of depriving the general [Palestinian] public  
of income, access to the outside world and the necessities  
of life.

A Hamas pledge against the use of violence against Israel civilians has been in place for more than 18 months, yet both Israel and the U.S. continue to describe Hamas as a terrorist organization and refuse to talk with Hamas until it accepts Israel's "right to exist"-a diplomatic demand that Virginia Tilley, professor of political science and international relations at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, finds less than compelling.

In the online newsletter Counterpunch (May 12), Tilley identifies a logical flaw in the "right to exist" demand that has led to the international isolation of Hamas. "Diplomatic recognition of a state routinely requires one bit of vital information: 'right to exist' where? Israel's borders are not set. Even its plans for those borders are not known; with impressive brashness, Mr. Olmert has announced that we will not know until 2010."

Hamas and the international community have a right, as well as an obligation to all the people affected, to demand specificity about the borders within which Israel plans to exist. "Otherwise," says Tilley, "recognizing Israel's 'right to exist' could be construed to mean that Israel has a 'right to exist' within whatever borders it chooses in coming years."

On May 15, President Carter harshly criticized Olmert's unilateral proposal in USA Today:

The Olmert plan would leave the remnant of the  
Palestinian West Bank with the same unacceptable  
characteristics. Deep intrusions would effectively divide  
it into three portions. The prime minister has also  
announced that Israeli soldiers will likely remain in the  
Palestinian territory, which will be completely encapsulated  
by Israel's control of its eastern border in the Jordan  
River valley. It is inconceivable that any Palestinian,  
Arab leader, or any objective member of the international  
community could accept this illegal action as a  
permanent solution to the continuing altercation in the  
Middle East.

Because Hamas will not grant Israel the right to exist, Israel refuses to accept Hamas's right to govern the Palestinian Authority. By forcing this standoff, Israel presents itself to President Bush as a reluctant victim forced to determine its own borders without regard to international law or UN agreements. In this flawed logic, Palestinian suffering is viewed as self-inflicted. The international community knows this ploy is a sham, but an Israeli-friendly American Congress and national media shamelessly embrace it.

In the May 19 issue of the Guardian, Ronnie Kasrils, South Africa's intelligence minister, and journalist Victoria Brittain accuse Israel of using "collective punishment, an economic siege and starvation as political weapons" to force Hamas to accept its terms and conditions. "Never in the long struggle for freedom in apartheid South Africa was there a situation as dramatic as in Palestine today."

Brittain and Kasrils conclude that though the Palestinians are having sanctions imposed on them, it is Israel, which is "creating new facts on the ground to prevent the emergence of a viable Palestinian state," that should be facing UN sanctions.

Why is such criticism rarely heard in the U.S.? In the London Independent (April 27), Robert Fisk interviewed Stephen Walt of Harvard about a report on the Israel lobby that Walt coauthored with John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago. "We are not saying there is a conspiracy, or a cabal," said Walt. "The Israeli lobby has every right to carry on its work--all Americans like to lobby. What we are saying is that this lobby has a negative influence on U.S. national interests and that this should be discussed."

Fisk found that "across the United States, there is growing evidence that the Israeli and neoconservative lobbies are acquiring ever greater power." As one example, he cites the sudden cancellation by a New York theater company of a successful London play, *My Name Is Rachel Corrie*.

Corrie is the young American woman who was crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. Her death remains unexamined at the highest levels in Israel and the U.S.--the same two nations that continue to punish the Palestinian people for choosing Hamas.

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policy positions "are those advanced by the neoconservative network.

"We must return to our original principles," he concluded.

Responding to audience questions, Lobe saw some possibility for change in the fact that fundamentalist Christians, who tend to be concentrated in America's heartland and Bible Belt, "are the ones whose kids are dying in Iraq."

Regarding the misinforming of Americans, Sobran noted sarcastically that "according to the *New York Post*, the U.S. and Israel have never done anything to hurt Arabs."

Nor, he continued, could he see any principles held by neocons which they apply to themselves. "If you're moral," he argued, "you have to start with yourself."

—*Janet McMahon*