

# CORNERSTONE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY SABEEL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER

## Forty Years and Beyond



Artwork: Nabil Anani

### The Great Deception What must Palestinians do?

*A reflection on the 40 years  
of Israeli Occupation*

*by: Naim Ateek*

Our experience with Israel over the last 40 years tells us that Israel is not interested in peace on the basis of international law but on the basis of its own terms and political objectives. Were Israel interested in peace, many opportunities could have been seized. In fact, it was not the Palestinians that “did not miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity for peace”, but Israel.

After 1967, UN resolution 242 specified that since Israel had illegally acquired territory through war, it must withdraw from all the occupied territories. With cleverly concocted justifications for its refusal to withdraw, Israel today stands in violation of over 60 UN General Assembly and Security Council Resolutions and the international community has failed to demand compliance. In fact, Israel and its many friends around the world have convinced many people, especially in western countries, that Palestinians are the guilty party rather than Israel. The oppressor is perceived as oppressed, the occupier is perceived as occupied, deceptions and falsehood are perceived as truth and the truth is perceived as falsehood. Israel speaks of peace but practices aggression. This is the great deception.

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Many of us remember when Israel insisted that the PLO must change its charter and recognize the right of Israel to exist, and we supported that idea because we believed that if the PLO did so, a peace agreement would be forthcoming. The PLO recognized Israel implicitly when it recognized UN Resolution 242 and the PLO Charter was changed but no peace ensued. This was another great deception. In 2002, at a summit meeting in Beirut, all the Arab leaders agreed to make peace with Israel provided that it would implement UN resolutions regarding Palestine. Had Israel accepted this, all of us - Palestinians and Israelis - would already be enjoying the fruits of peace. But Israel is not interested in peace. Israel has been masterful at deceptions and at creating misperceptions.

Geoffrey Aronson, who has monitored Jewish settlement activity from its inception, has summarized the situation in this way:

Living without a solution, then as now, was understood by Israel as the key to maximizing the benefits of conquest while minimizing the burdens and dangers of retreat or formal annexation. This commitment to the status quo, however, disguised a programme of expansion that generations of Israeli leaders supported as enabling, through Israeli settlement, the dynamic transformation of the territories and the expansion of effective Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan River.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Henry Siegman, former head of the American Jewish Congress, calls the Middle East peace process, "the most spectacular deception in modern diplomatic history."<sup>2</sup>

Those of us who live day in and day out under the occupation have observed this Great Deception. For 40 years we have

heard Israel speak the language of peace while on the ground it was entrenching its occupation, confiscating Palestinian land, building and expanding illegal settlements, and solidifying its control over the occupied areas.

“Living without a solution, then as now, was understood by Israel as the key to maximizing the benefits of conquest while minimizing the burdens and dangers of retreat or formal annexation.”

For most of the last 40 years, Israel was opposed to the emergence of a Palestinian state. When it became clear, however, that the international community would not endorse illegal Israeli expansionist policy and that, as voiced by President Bush, the creation of a Palestinian state was required for a viable solution, Israel started to change its strategy and to favor the two-state solution. However, it is clear to many of us that Israel is making sure that the future Palestinian state will be void of genuine viability and will be subservient to Israel. In other words, many fear that Israel will not allow such a state to emerge without Israeli military and economic control over it.

The time for peace has not yet arrived for Israel. There are still more objectives that must be reached beyond those already accomplished. To begin with, by terminating the presence of Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip, Israel has effectively made Gaza a big prison, a Bantustan, in which it is systematically

assassinating its leaders and reducing its people to abject misery and poverty. The firing of the *qassam* rockets provides Israel with an excuse to keep oppressing the Palestinians in Gaza, making people wonder whether collaborators are behind some of the launching of the *qassams*. Be that as it may the Israeli lid is on Gaza, imprisoning one and half million people.

In the West Bank, Israel apparently still has two major objectives: The first is the confiscation of more Palestinian land and the completion of its separation (Hebrew: *hafrada*) wall. Furthermore, Israel seeks not only separation but the dispossession (Hebrew: *nishool*) of Palestinians, so these two Hebrew words are essential in describing Israel's goal of apartheid. Under the guise of security, Israel continues to grab more Palestinian land and expand its settlements. There seems to be no end to its rapacious lust for Palestinian land.

The second objective is to establish a foothold on the Haram Al- Sharif area in Jerusalem. Some Jewish religious fanatics and millions of Christian Zionists have been clamoring for years to control this area. Even a small foothold would eventually give Israel greater control over the whole area. Such a move would likely produce a wave of violent Muslim reactions around the world. But once quiet is restored, Israel would have reached another important goal and established another fact on the ground.

The pursuit of such plans enables Israel to circumvent UN resolutions and create a Palestinian state that can never be independent, sovereign, or viable. Thus, Israel would have reached its major objectives and would be ready to leave to the Palestinians a series of Bantustans

separated and controlled by the settlements.

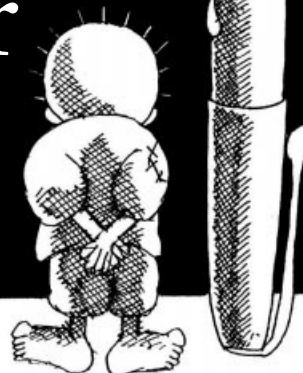
If this analysis is even partially true, the dangers are immense because justice would have been trampled upon and international law would be a mockery. Any ensuing peace would leave the region in limbo without rest or tranquility, awaiting the emergence of a strong Palestinian leader to lead a guerrilla war against Israel producing great suffering for people on both sides. For the sake of justice and peace for all, the Palestinians must not allow such a scenario to take place.

1. Palestinians need to communicate to the US that the Washington conference next November 2007 must be the final test for US and Israeli serious commitment to resolving the conflict on the basis of international law.

2. If that does not happen, the Palestinians must turn the conflict over to the Security Council of the United Nations and continue to demand the implementation of UN resolutions. It is clear that the United States is unable to be impartial in finding a solution based on international law. It is the responsibility of the Security Council to find the way out of this impasse. The rights of Palestinians to their land must not vanish nor should they be further compromised.

3. While the UN is compelled to assume its rightful responsibility, no matter how long it takes, the Palestinians must look inward and with the help of other nations that believe in the justice of their cause, adopt a national strategy of peaceful resistance against the Israeli occupation. A national campaign of education and training must be embraced. It must aim at strengthening the moral fabric of the

# Forty Years After



Artwork: Naji Al-Ali

Palestinian community and help them reject violence and build a culture of peace and nonviolence. Through such a strategy, the Palestinians will win the empathy and support of many nations to their cause and expose the racist nature of the Israeli occupation and help bring it to an end.

As people of faith who believe that God calls us to do justice and make peace, we clearly testify that the road Israel is walking will not lead to a genuine and enduring peace. Any peace that is not built on justice as articulated by international law is not peace. It inevitably carries within it the seeds of rebellion, violence, and bloodshed. Israel's concept of peace will lead to further oppression and suffering for all and especially for the oppressed Palestinians. We believe that God cannot be pleased with the suffering and humiliation of any of God's children. As Kathleen Christison, a former CIA

political analyst wrote,

"...Gandhi very clearly did not struggle for peace at the price of injustice, for peace at any price. He already had that; India was peaceful under British rule, but it was not just. The essence of Gandhi's satyagraha, and of King's civil rights movement, was resistance to injustice through nonviolent civil disobedience – precisely, in other words, to disturb the peace by conducting direct nonviolent action against unjust laws."<sup>3</sup> Justice must be achieved before peace can be realized. To lift the banners of peace and still commit injustice is the height of deception. Peace without justice is an empty word. We are working for the achievement of a just peace. It is only such a peace that can bring true security to Israel and true peace for the Palestinians. It is time to expose the deception and re-dedicate ourselves to genuinely work for justice and peace and in this order.

*The Rev Dr. Naim Ateek is the Director of Sabeel*

1 Harry Siegman, "The Great Middle East Peace Process Scam," *London Review of Books*. Vol. 29 No. 16. 16 August 2007. Available from <[http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n16/print/sieg01\\_.html](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n16/print/sieg01_.html)>

2 Siegman

3 Kathleen Christinson, "Whatever Happened to Palestine?" *Counter Punch*. 20 September 2007. Available from <<http://www.counterpunch.org/christinson09202007.html>>



Photo by: Pablo Pitcher

# Celebrating Injustice

by: Pablo Pitcher

The sun had slipped beneath the hills; a soft enveloping glow grasps the quiet streets, hushed as the minutes drift away drawing closer and closer to sundown and the breaking of the fast. The Muslim holy month of Ramadan sheds a gentle peace over the side of the WALL that Zeynab approaches, her body tired and her stomach rumbling from the hours of fasting. Yet as she moves closer and

closer to this concrete monster, the energy surrounding her shifts.

As the last rays of light tickle the setting, Zeynab cautiously steps over crumbling rocks and pieces of garbage to stand beneath the stone cold WALL. On the other side of this human made barrier it is a time of celebration. This year, 2007, marks 40 years since the reunification of Jerusalem. The streets of West Jerusalem are lit up with strings of

glowing lights; promotional materials proclaim this glorious year filled with activities each month; and scores of people flock to her embrace to remember 1967.

From 1948-1967 Jerusalem was a city divided. Jordan controlled East Jerusalem which included the Old City and many religious shrines while Israel controlled West Jerusalem. Access to these holy sites was restricted and the city was divided for the first time in its history. A no-man's-land of debris and barbed wire separated East from West Jerusalem. In 1967, after the Six Day War, Israel conquered and declared the annexation of a large area including the eastern part of the city into Jerusalem, proclaiming it a unified city under the control of Israel. Not

only were the two parts of the city reunited but access to religious sites such as the Western Wall was regained by those living in West Jerusalem and the rest of Israel.

But there is another population who is left out of this equation and who was denied access to holy sites inside Israel. What does the word unified really mean for the Palestinians forced to leave their lands and barred from returning? What does it mean for the youth whose history is wrapped around a different word, a word closer to the opposite of unified?

Now a huge WALL and several checkpoints make up no-man's-land. For many Palestinians their world ends at the base of that WALL, a WALL that holds in 60 years of conflict and holds up 40 years of occupation even as a joyous moment for Israel is celebrated.

Zeynab cannot see any of that from this side of the WALL. At 15 years old she has been to Jerusalem once, escorted in by international volunteers because before the age of 16 she is not required to have a Palestinian ID and thus, will not be stopped at the checkpoints. She was taken through Jerusalem and, for the first time, to see her family's ancestral village of Zakryya, a mere 25 kilometers from where she now lives in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp. For

her, it is not a celebration as her heart longs to be reunited with her own heritage and her own history.

She reaches out one hand, then two to touch the icy concrete plastered with graffiti calling for peace. Her eyes lift from the bottom of the wall

to the tiptop, meters and meters above her. Zeynab's small frame clad in a simple white t-shirt and khaki pants is dwarfed by the WALL. Dark wisps of her pulled back hair curl around her face as, eager for the feast to begin, she tries to capture any bit of light that she can while telling her



Photo by: Pablo Pitcher

version of what a celebration in Jerusalem means.

Her gaze reaches the peak of the WALL and she begins to speak, "I can't see the sun. I can't see the trees, I can't see my land..." Her words, spoken in Arabic are quiet at first, gradually with each word her voice grows louder, "I can't see my land." It is not quite dark on her side of the WALL, the calm cool tones of dusk enclose the spot where Zeynab stands. Her statement, "I can't see the sun" seems not to refer to its physical presence but to her eyes being blocked, the shadow closing in on her spirit. This dark silent side of the WALL in stark contrast to the light and celebration just a few feet away.

Zeynab falls into a silent moment of contemplation, her eyes sinking to the ground beneath the wall, her feet shuffling to kick a lone rock on the ground. The seconds slip by. In this stifling silence the mind creates its own noises, it is almost as if you can hear the cheers, laughter and music of celebration on the other side of the wall.

Suddenly her head snaps forward and she blurts out, "They are celebrating what they took from us, they don't care about us, they are celebrating injustice. I don't understand... Why?" This one simple three-letter word carries behind it an indescribable weight.

Zeynab is not the only Palestinian child who hears the word reunification and raises a questioning

eyebrow but her voice speaks for so many, so many who cannot travel past the WALL and see their ancestral villages, so many who aren't celebrating.

Haitham is another of these children. At 14 years old, he labors with the word reunification, flipping the unfamiliar word around in his mind and struggling to form his response. "Jerusalem is maybe 5 minutes that way," he gestures with his hand from his seat in a restaurant of Dheisheh towards the WALL.

“ They are celebrating what they took from us, they don't care about us, they are celebrating injustice. I don't understand... Why? ”

"You hope that you can go there and you can't...your friends there...your family there... your grandfather, your sister. Why?" Haitham's simple broken English words paint the division of the Palestinian families in the air around the table.

His voice charged, his hands spinning the words out of his mouth as he continues "If I go there, maybe they will take me to the prison...but why? This is our land, I have a village

(Girash), I can't go there...Why?" Haitham glances out the window, pulling in with his eyes the cramped rectangular buildings huddled together. This is the only home he has ever known. Girash, his original village seems thousands of miles away.

Zeynab stands under the WALL, Haitham stares out over the refugee camp, each toying with the word reunification and the idea of 40 years of celebration. Their hearts feel no joy as this anniversary lights up many parts of the rest of the world. The tales of violence, pain and occupation have been passed down to these two children by their grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, all who lived in this world of containment, of division, of the opposite of unification. For them there is no celebration, not just yet...and their hearts cry out...Why?

That one word echoes off the WALL, it floats in the air above Dheisheh and so many other refugee camps, it reverberates back around the streets and off the buildings, making no sound but carrying with it the weight of the voices of more than six million Palestinian refugees since 1948, refugees who are all but forgotten on the streets of Jerusalem where reunification is celebrated, a word that has quite a different meaning on this side of the WALL.

*Pablo Pitcher has been working in marginalized communities for over 10 years now, and is currently pursuing his Masters Degree and working in the West Bank. He is an accomplished writer, having published his first book, "When Necessary...Use Words" in January 2007 and has displayed his photography from Guatemala in several gallery shows.*

Artwork: Ahmad Canaan



# Never Cease Dreaming

By: *Samia Costandi*

I miss Birzeit, my mother's village in the West Bank...I miss my childhood, I miss climbing my favorite fig tree and picking the honey-dipped fruit. I miss my secluded moments perched up on my tree watching the sunset and articulating my first words of poetry. I miss playing with my cousins who have now become fathers and mothers like me all over the world, in multiple continents. When did we grow up? Where have the years gone? Why did we not spend some time together sharing anecdotes, cups of tea, and jokes about rearing children? We stand dispersed, frozen in time, ashamed of the loss of innocence, ashamed of our unrelenting yearnings for a homeland that is so vividly portrayed in our memories.

I need permission to visit my grandfather's house in Birzeit. I need permission to take my children, my

grown children to see their grandmother's house where my grandfather, the mayor of Birzeit, conducted the affairs of the village. I speak to my sons about their grandmother's and grandfather's childhoods more than I speak of my own. It is as if mine was an ephemeral childhood, full of love, but shifting in terms of place and time, in terms of the legitimacy of it all – it felt transitory, we were simply waiting in Lebanon, in Beirut, to all go back. My father refused to buy land in Lebanon, "What heresy!" he would say to my aunt when she suggested it. We will go back to our own lands eventually. We are all in transition here, just give us a little more time, it is going to be resolved, and the negotiations seemed to be taking off!

*Samia Costandi holds a PhD from McGill Faculty of Education, Montreal, Canada; her areas of research (and teaching) are: philosophy of education, feminist epistemology and pedagogy multicultural education, mythology, culture, and values in education.*

As a child, I wavered and hesitated before divulging that I was Palestinian. I was ashamed of our refugee status. Then came the Palestinian revolution and I was filled with pride. I began to announce it to the world at large in a strong and loud voice: in 1969 at Hyde Park, and later at the Institute for Palestine Studies, and later on in Canada as a Canadian activist for human rights, for the rights of Palestinians and Lebanese and all oppressed groups. Later, I became more nuanced and sophisticated; I began to choose my battles, to couch the facts and feelings in academic and "appropriate" language.

The reality is that I cannot and will not fight this anymore; whether I am a citizen of Canada, a citizen of the world, an educator, a writer, a feminist, or an activist, whatever, wherever and whoever I am. As I grow older I yearn more for my childhood, for my beautiful, colorful, happy moments in time and place, in an un-occupied Birzeit, in a peaceful Beirut, with my maternal and paternal cousins, with my brothers, with my parents, uncles and aunts. I will never cease yearning... I will feed my shameless nostalgic, passionate and powerful yearning... I will never cease dreaming of my homeland, and when my children fulfill my wish and carry me there in a casket, my soul will dance as my body embraces the earth and the wildflowers. Millions of others share that with me, for another generation, and another, and another...

# The Golan Heights Freedom Will Come

By: Amali Qadamani

*The Golan Heights is an Arab Syrian territory located along the southwestern Syrian border. The area is estimated at around 1,800 square kilometers along its borders with Syria with its rectangular shape extending from the north to the south with a distance ranging between 75km to 85km and average width ranging between 18km and 20km on a plain. The Golan high ground overlooks the Huleh Basin and Sea of Galilee. The Golan is a basalt plateau which rises in the northeast to an average altitude of 900 m (3,000 ft) above sea level. The Golan Heights is bordered by Mt. Hermon on the north and the Yarmuk River on the south.*

The June 1967 defeat can be described as a historical landmark in the life of our Arab nation, discharging several negative results that run deep in the Arab realities and conscience. The ramifications and impact of this defeat are still affecting us with the images of war in the field and its psychological results. Forty years have passed and still it remains present and live in the Arab collective memory in general, and in our memory as Golan people in particular. In a fortnight, we found ourselves forcibly separated from the natural extension of our homeland and nation. Thus, we needed to meditate seriously within our “defeated” self and open a transparent dialogue to address our individual and collective feelings of defeat. We launched the struggle to protect this territory after it fell into the hands of the occupiers, and worked to maintain and support the small number of residents who remain steadfast in confronting the Occupation schemes and settlement plans.

The nationally and politically aware sector of our society has realized since the

early days the danger of surrender to the Occupation which would be another defeat building on the first defeat. We realized that the authentic indigenous Golan society is largely faithful and able to turn the defeat into a victory and can say a collective NO in the face of the occupation. Our young people have shown that they are patient, confident, and ready to sacrifice everything for the dignity of their homeland. Our Arab Syrian identity helped us to reproduce this collective NO in the face of the occupier despite all oppression and anger. In fact, this identity transformed the fall of martyrs and the long years of prison, deprivation, and house arrests into additional fuel to keep the spirit of resistance burning. Yes, they have not succeeded in subjugating or containing our society. On the contrary, our young people who were born after the Occupation are even more enthusiastic about their cause and many of them received and served long prison sentences.

This is what the residents of the Golan Heights have been able to achieve although the world does not know of

this non-violent resistance. The brightest image of the Arab Syrian Golan people was achieved in the historical victory over the occupier in the “battle of the Identity Cards” during the protests against the Israeli Knesset’s decision to annex the Golan Heights and force the Israeli citizenship on its Arab residents. The famous struggle phase then produced the “National Document” and the “Big Strike” in 1982 which lasted six months and which ended with the victory of the residents.

Yes, the feeling of defeat in 1967 was transformed into victory through the national awareness of young people wise enough to choose means of struggle that matched their relatively small numbers; counting first and foremost on loyalty to the homeland and love of Pan-Arabism. Freedom will inevitably come no matter how long the Occupation persists.

*Mrs. Amali “my hope” Qadamani is a member of the Druze community living in Majdal Shams, in the Occupied Arab Syrian Golan Heights.*



# The Right of No Return

By: *Abla Aranki*

My older brother and my parents lived in Ramleh when I was born in 1947 in a Jewish hospital in Rehovot. At that time, both Ramleh and Rehovot were part of Palestine. When war broke out in 1948, my father, to get us out of harm's way, took us to my grandmother's house in Birzeit, located about twelve miles north of Jerusalem. Unfortunately we were never allowed to go back. My sister and two of my brothers were born in Birzeit.

In 1967 when Israel occupied the rest of historic Palestine including Birzeit, my older brother and I were pursuing our college education in Lebanon and the US respectively. Therefore we were not the lucky recipients of the Israeli identity cards that were granted to residents of the West Bank and Gaza after these territories were occupied. When one of my younger brothers left for the US at the end of 1967 for his college education, he was asked to sign a paper saying that he gives up his right to return to the West Bank. My sister married an Israeli Arab citizen and acquired Israeli citizenship. My youngest brother remains the only one of the five of us who holds a West Bank residency identity card.

I have twice gone through the painful

process of applying for 'permanent residency' status in the place where I grew up and lived for 18 years, only to be rejected both times. I was very humiliated when I was asked why I was requesting such a status. I wanted to shout and say that this is my home and I should not be asking for residency in the first place. But I knew that answer would not work in my favor. Instead, I gave what I thought was a good reason. I pointed at my 78-year old mother at the time, and said that she had a heart disease and I might have to stay with her beyond the 3-month visitor's visa I am given.

The Israeli soldier looked at my mother and said she looked healthy to him. When I got upset that my credibility was being questioned and said that I will bring him my mother's medical records, he nonchalantly said that I should take her with me to the US! Had I been Jewish, from anywhere in the world, I would probably have been begged by the government of Israel to become a citizen!

*Abla Aranki is a member of the Palestinian Diaspora currently living in the United States.*

**All** the art found in this issue of Cornerstone was provided by Resistance Art, a Toronto based distributor of "The Colors from Palestine" art wall calendars. The calendars are used to support the work of Palestinian cultural organizations in Palestine and Diaspora.

The 2008 Calendar is dedicated to the Memory of Naji Al-Ali and will mark the 60th commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba (catastrophe). The proceeds from the calendar sales will support Kanafani Cultural foundation and to build a memorial for the 60th commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba in Toronto. The memorial will be designed and crafted by the Palestinian artist Ahmad Canaan who lives and works in Tamra, Galilee.

To learn more about Ghassan Kanafani Foundation Please visit

[http://www.kanafani.dk/gkk\\_main\\_eng.htm](http://www.kanafani.dk/gkk_main_eng.htm)

You can buy the calendar on line:

<http://www.resistanceart.com/calendars.htm>



Artwork: Abed Abdi

# The Transformation

*By: Dorothy Naor*

What brings about change in someone's thinking, especially a drastic change that makes someone's views diametrically oppose their former ones? In my case, I know the answer.

My spouse and I are both of the Holocaust generation. He, his parents, and a younger brother escaped from Nazi Austria in 1938, arriving in Palestine in 1939 when he was eleven years old. The remainder of his extended family perished in the camps, except for one uncle who survived Auschwitz and later came to Israel. I was born and raised in the

United States, but was shocked by the pictures of the camps. During my teens, I met Jewish survivors of WWII and heard their stories. These events impacted our thinking, and led each of us to believe that indeed the Jews needed a country of their own. Neither of us knew the facts. Neither of us questioned, not even my spouse though he had lived here in Palestine/Israel, and fought in the 1948 war.

Our former views are reflected in our conduct in 1967. My husband had been called to reserve duty about a week before the war broke out. I had no objections, apart from concern for his safety. During the waiting period before the war, our two oldest children

dug ditches for the elderly and incapacitated in our community, should the need arise for these. I stocked up on a few basic goods so that our three children would not starve in case of a prolonged war, and pasted black paper on the windows to prevent light from shining through at night. I totally and unquestioningly trusted the government's analysis of the situation and its decision to act. At the end of the war, I, like most Israelis, was elated by the victory, and by the opening of Jerusalem and the West Bank.

But I strongly opposed Israeli settlement in the West Bank, and Israel's refusal to agree to peace

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Gradually, as our understanding of the history of this blood-soaked land increased, as our knowledge of what Israel had done to the Palestinians increased, as our friendship with Palestinians we'd met grew, so also our views changed.

”

overtures. Israel's conduct in the West Bank caused me to question, but not yet to seek answers. I was busy those years teaching, raising children, and living abroad a good part of the time due to my spouse's job.

Not until October 2000 did we begin to actually study the situation. We were horrified by the 1994 massacre of 29 Muslims at prayer, and the injury of many more, by Dr. Baruch Goldstein. Also by the government's action following the massacre, imposing closure on the Palestinians, on the families who suffered from the massacre rather than punishing the victimizers. But we still did not seek answers.

The final nail came in October 2000 when the Israeli police shot and killed 13 Palestinians who had been demonstrating, 12 of them were Israeli citizens. Never before had the Israeli police used live ammunition on demonstrators, no matter how violent they might be. Nor should the police do so. Police should not kill citizens who are protesting. It was immediately clear to us that this killing was a racist act.

This event motivated research and activism. Research began with the

history of Zionism, and continued with the history of Palestine and Israel. The journey was traumatic. The findings made me ashamed that I had not seriously questioned before. My activism, which at the beginning was mainly in organizations, brought me and my spouse into contact with Palestinians for the first time in our lives. Gradually, as our understanding of the history of this blood-soaked land increased, as our knowledge of what Israel had done to the Palestinians increased, as our friendship with Palestinians we'd met grew, so also our views changed. I am tremendously grateful that my spouse and I took this journey together. Though we do not agree on everything, we are close enough in our views to be able to continue living together another 55 years.

Today I know that the Jews not only do not need a state of their own, but that the establishment of Israel has been detrimental to the Jews, certainly to Israeli Jews. Not only has separatism encouraged and promoted

racism, but also due to Israel's governments' continuous desire for expansionism -from the beginning till today- and ridding the land of Palestinians, neither Israelis nor Palestinians have experienced security, peace, or a future. They are not able to. Not until Palestinians have security and justice will Israelis have the same.

Israelis and Palestinians can live together in peace. In much of today's world Muslims, Christians, Jews, seculars, and others live together in peace. And in Palestine, prior to the advent of Zionism, from the time of the Crusades, Jews, Muslims, and Christians lived together in peace. In fact, from the time of the Inquisition, Jews were far better off in most Muslim countries than in most European countries. Therefore, there is no question that we can co-exist. But to do this we need a single state with equality for all its citizens. My dream is to achieve this before generations more of Israelis and Palestinians suffer and die.

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*Dorothy Naor is originally from California and she met her Israeli husband when he came to study at UC Berkeley in the early 1950s. They and their three children made Israel their home in 1958. Dorothy earned a Ph.D. in English Literature from Tel Aviv University in Israel, and has been an English teacher for most of her professional life. For more than seven years much of her time has been spent in activism against Israel's Occupation of Palestine.*

# One Woman's Story

## A Testimony

### from June 1967

By: *Georgette Rizek*

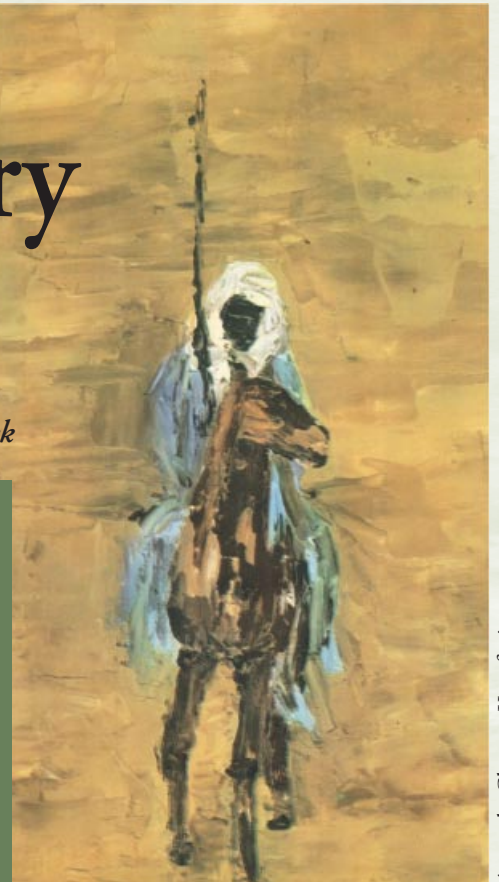
It was Monday morning on the 5th of June, when we felt something was wrong... The schools started closing and my husband had to go and get the children from school. The Arab radios started giving updates on the move of the army troops. It was a day of fear and terror. My mother, sister, and I started filling sand bags to close the window of the basement and when my husband arrived we started moving mattresses, food and candles to the basement. We decided that we would not leave our houses. We were fooled when we thought we would come back to them in 1948, and we lost them forever.

It took us 20 years to re-establish ourselves, our business and our residence. We could not afford to lose our houses again.

We heard some shelling and bombing but it sounded far away. The Arab radio channels claimed that the Egyptian, Jordanian and Iraqi armies were advancing inside Palestine and the whole Arab world was rejoicing. In spite of the fear we were rejoicing, too! On Monday morning, we saw what we assumed to be Iraqi army tanks, jeeps and trucks coming down. It was only when they started shouting that we realized that this was the Israeli army.

On Thursday the Israeli army, who by that time was controlling all of Jerusalem, started announcing that people could come out of their homes.

My husband and I decided to walk downtown from Beit Hanina to see what happened to our garage on the border between East and West Jerusalem. There were many people in the streets walking downtown. When we got to Shu'fat, we heard someone calling our names. It was our family doctor, Saliba Saeed. He took me aside and said: "Georgette, your husband should not see the garage now... it is completely damaged and it will be too much for him to handle. I think you should go back home." Finally, we convinced my husband to stay with Dr. Saliba, and I continued my walk downtown toward the Infant Welfare Center- the clinic which I had been managing for many years. As I walked I



Artwork: Ghassan Kanafani

saw young men injured on the roads and I felt the urge to open this clinic to do first aid.

I walked about seven kilometers under the burning sun and finally got to the garage. The offices were demolished, all the furniture was broken, all the tools were stolen, and all the cars were damaged or had been stolen. There was blood all over the floor and walls. Children's school bags were thrown all over the garage. Oil, from our stock of oil barrels, was seeping all the way to Damascus Gate. The account books and ledgers were all over the place and the cash register was broken into pieces. I stood there crying and crying.

This was the business that my husband worked all his life to establish and it was all gone now. This was the business that

# Forty Years After

*By: Ibrahim Dakkak*

has been supporting many families, and it was gone now. For the second time in my life, I could not bear the pain of starting all over again. It was too much... Oh God, it was too much. I started thinking about how to break the news to my husband, so he would not have a heart attack when he saw it...

Then I proceeded to the Old City to check on the Infant Welfare Center. On the way, I met our staff nurse Theresa Azraq and we went to the center together. There was so much damage around but our center was untouched. The next day I got in touch with our general doctor, Subhi Ghosheh, and we started planning how to prepare ourselves to receive the injured and the sick.

In the Center we had food supplies, so we started distributing food and milk for children. The shops were only open a few hours a day, and many people did not have cash to buy basic food. A week before life had been so normal... Here we were again, no lights, no electricity, no gas, and no water. Overnight, our lives were turned upside down. We did not know where we were heading or what the future was holding for us.

We began receiving dozens of patients every day. As we were working, a foreigner came into the clinic and asked us who we were and what we were doing. He asked

us if we had enough medications and first aid supplies. He talked and talked... We were just so engrossed in our work, with so many patients lying around, that we hardly looked up at him. After he left, I ran down the stairs to ask who he was. He answered: "it's not important" and gave me his card. He was Mr. Ott, the Lutheran World Federation representative.

That same night, at 7:45 pm, as we were having dinner by candle light, someone knocked on our front door. We were very frightened, but my husband went to open the door. It was Mr. Ott standing there with an envelope in his hand. He came in and said: "this is our contribution to you so you can continue doing what you are doing. The UNRWA clinics have been paralyzed, and your clinic needs to continue to operate, so please use this money wisely." I stood there in shock and told him that I did not have the receipt book with me. He looked at me and laughed and said: "keep it with you to encourage you to proceed."

When our treasurer came to the clinic and told me that we would have to close down because we had no money. I looked at him, laughed, and asked "where is your receipt book? Please give me a receipt for this money." He could not believe it. Our work at the Center continues even now.

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*Georgette Rizek is the Director of the Infant Welfare Center of the Greek Catholic Society*

Three thoughts come to my mind when I am reminded that Israel has been occupying the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the last forty years. First it reminds me that I spent more than half of my life under Israeli occupation. Second, I became - by the virtue of the Israeli occupation - stateless like the rest of the Palestinian Jerusalemites. Third, it reveals that occupation has been termed a "problem" in the international political language! However none of these ideas ever occurred to any Palestinian living in Jerusalem in June 1967. But forty years made the difference.

1967 is a land mark in Palestinian history; it is also a land mark in the annals of the international community. Palestinians still yearn for exercising their right for self determination; and the international community is failing to compromise the items of its charter and the Israeli claims. The result was disappointment and dismay.

Resistance became the order of the day. There was genuine worry about the Holy Places and there was a boycott of the Israeli-run schools. In the meantime Israel displayed unexpected efficiency in confiscating Palestinian land and building new settlements in Jerusalem and around. On his part, Moshe Dayan, as Minister of Defense, ordered the Jordanian border open for the outgoing Palestinians. The spokeswoman of the Ministry of the Interior declared that Israel annexed the land of Jerusalem and not its people. Thus the problem for the Palestinians was how to discourage the Palestinians from leaving the country, and how to encourage them to stay put in their houses. The Palestinians responded positively. They are, to the surprise of the Israelis, still there after forty years, increasing in number and insisting on defending their rights.

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*Ibrahim Dakkak is an engineer, writer and political commentator. He is the co-founder of several Palestinian institutions including the Council for Higher Education and the National Guidance Committee.*

# Forty Years and Counting

*By George Sabhar*

Many years have passed since Palestine, as known by the generation of our forefathers, was the land where Christians, Muslims, and Jews lived together as neighbors, business partners, and as human beings who shared bread and whose children played and grew up together. I am not part of that generation. I was born in Jerusalem, but it was long after the great psychological, emotional, and political divide that set people apart from each other, not long after the onset of Palestinian dispossession. I belong to a generation that only knows the Occupation. Forty years and counting, in the wilderness. Forty years and counting is way too long and far too deeply entrenched in the heart and mind. Forty years and counting reminds me of the cry of the crucified Lord Jesus, "Father, why have you abandoned me?" But I remember quickly that the glorious resurrection and the triumph of life over death and justice over evil was only days away. There is the Occupation, but there is always tomorrow. There has to be a life after the Occupation and light at the end of the tunnel.

Many other Palestinians were infants when our nation fell under Occupation, and Jerusalem succumbed to yet another foreign conquest. So my narrative tells the experience of that generation. It may be the voice of a single person, but it is the cry of an entire generation: Open the doors of Jerusalem so the future can be ushered in! Enough pillage, theft, and disobedience of God's will. End the Occupation now!

I am simply a person like many others who wants to live normally. So far, my journey in life has gone from one chapter to another, but it was all in the same book called the Occupation. Now that I have three wonderful children, I am adamant that they will have a happy life, with equal opportunity, democracy, and justice.

When I look at my two little daughters in first and fourth grades



Symbol developed by the Jerusalem Church Related Organizations (CROs) to mark 40 years of Occupation

as they are about to go to school in the morning, I know that they are already learning to take their responsibilities seriously. As I stand by the window watching them get on the school bus, I am aware that this time will be their good old days. Because they mean the world to me, it is up to me as their father to decide how I will be remembered, as what type of father. When they grow up and start looking back, they will say their father used to... Now it is up to me to fill in the blanks. It is not late yet for their generation to lead a normal life. Maybe for my generation it is already too late, and we are living our life like someone who dreams of playing soccer only to find out there is no game or that he is excluded from playing.

Sure every generation lives in the middle of dynamics unique to the era, but here I must wonder whether humans shape the era, or the era shapes us? The Occupation is such an evil era, that however we go around living our lives, watching the sunset and sunrise, and struggling to make ends meet, we cannot escape that reality no matter how hard we pretend or how much we seek to create an impression of normalcy.

## Jerusalem, 2007

Blinding in the noonday sun,  
thick-set limestone walls reflect white light,  
hum with heartbeats of the living stones  
interned both inside and without— a shelter, yet a prison.

Rock by rock, layer upon layer,  
a thin veneer upon the ruins of the past,  
one people treads upon another,  
stumbles over guile and greed,  
then seeks redemption promised here.

Tears wash the streets of the market place;  
Few come to buy nowadays.  
Those who cannot pay their tax  
nail shutters on their shops.  
Produce stands stay open  
selling Caesar's fruit.

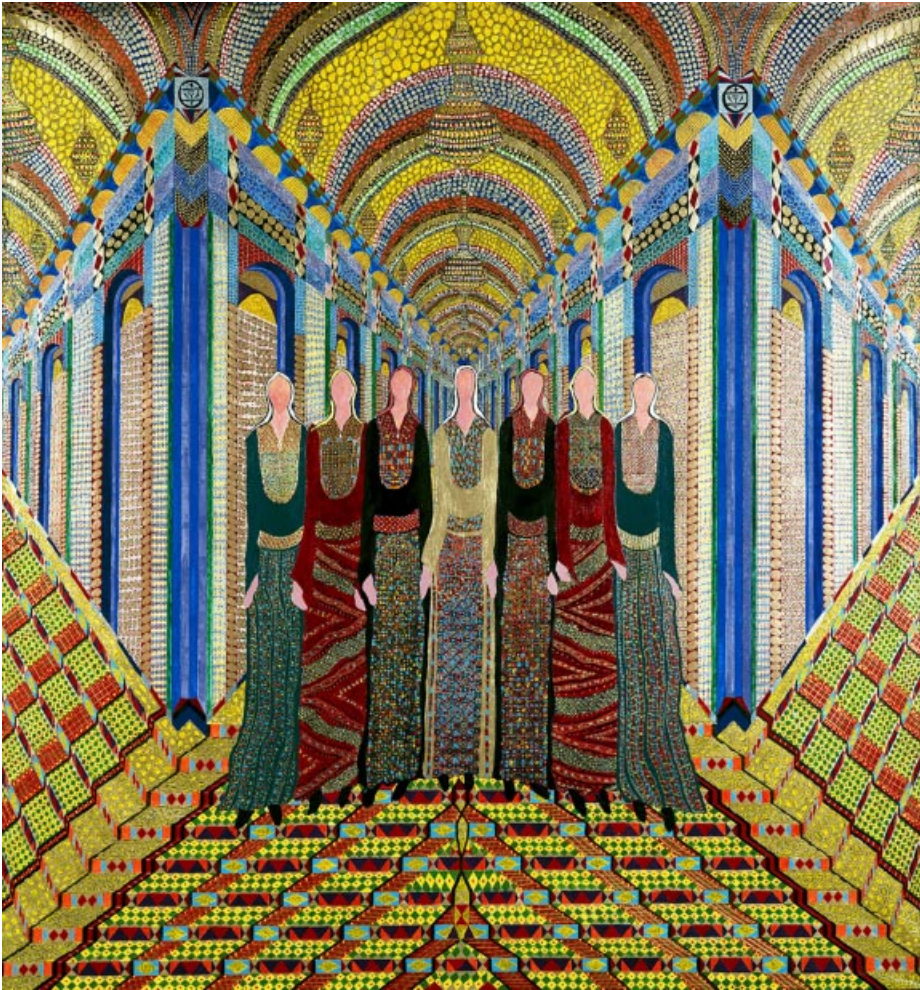
Mary Pneuman  
June, 2007

There is something inherently evil taking place when nations are denied their liberty. One can never accept these conditions. We all have an inalienable right to live in dignity and pursue our dreams. It may be too late for my generation, but it is not too late for the young children of Palestine.

I realize that dwelling on the past will make a hostage out of me. First I must break the mental shackles, so I can smash through the present and

arrive at the other side towards that long-awaited Easter. Yes, there has to be light at the end of the tunnel, not only for my generation, hoping for that long-overdue normality in our lives, but also for all the children of Palestine when the Occupation ends.

*George Sabhar lives and works in Jerusalem and serves as a member of the Sabeel Board and the Cornerstone Editorial Committee.*



Artwork: Ibrahim Nashshibi

## From Depression to Hope

*As the Deer Pants for Streams of Water,  
So My Soul Pants for You, O God* (NIV Ps 42: 1)

By: *Hanna Katanasho*

**H**as the Psalter anything to say to Palestinian refugees? Is it relevant to their loss of land and continual struggle against oppression? The simple answer is yes. In the following short essay, we will explore an ancient voice that addresses a contemporary problem.

It is the voice of Psalms 42 and 43. These two Psalms should be read together for both psalms have a similar refrain (42:5, 11; 43:5) in which a Korahite exhorts himself to move from depression to hope, a topic that is so intriguing to Palestinians. In his despair, the

Korahite Psalmist is full of questions. He passionately asks God: when will he be able to be in Jerusalem again (42: 2)?

The Psalmist's proximity to Jerusalem is a theopolitical concern i.e. to lose Jerusalem is to lose God as well as to be bereft of home. Thus, the enemies of the Psalmist taunt him saying, "where is your God?" (42: 3, 10). They ridicule the Psalmist and his seemingly impotent God. Clearly, his present sufferings and his nostalgia indicate a despondent situation. In addition, his tragic sociopolitical reality has theological implications. What should he do and where is his God? The Psalmist rightly thinks of his sociopolitical struggles in a theopolitical framework. In this framework, God is interested in all the affairs of human beings and their psychology is a theological concern (Terrien 356). Consequently, the Psalmist unapologetically, audaciously, as well as sincerely presents his case to God. He is interested in transforming his attitude and emotions towards God in order to restore the peace of his soul and to go back home.

Just like the Korahite Psalmist, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are depressed refugees. Moreover, they fight against injustices and seek to go back home. Perhaps, the Korahite Psalmist and his



theopolitical approach can inspire and empower them. Perhaps, they can learn from his insights. So let us contemplate the divine prudence embedded in his poem. Through his words and attitude, the Psalmist communicates two insights that might help Palestinian refugees in their struggle with despair.

First, having the right theology transforms our psychology. The label “theology” is not only associated with orthodoxy (right doctrine) and orthopraxis (right practice) but also with orthopathos. Orthopathos is the kind of human suffering that becomes a source for liberation and social transformation. In his suffering, the Psalmist thought that God has forgotten him (42: 9) and even rejected him (43: 2). But in fact, his ordeal made him thirst for God and prompted him to pour himself in prayer. It led him to an intimate relationship with God, the source of true happiness. His heartrending prayer went up to God as a human lament but came back as the message of God to all those who suffer for God’s sake. His fervent prayer became God’s inspired word. In fact, God made the Psalmist an identification figure whose suffering is a divine “megaphone” that “shouts in our pain” (Lewis 91). God is not silent during, what Anderson calls, the “eclipse of God” (Anderson 67), or during the catastrophe (Al Nakbah)

in which hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced to leave their homes. God speaks words of comfort to the oppressed and sends messengers personified as light and truth (43: 3) in order to lead those who trust him home and quench their thirst. God will not abandon those who seek him.

This leads us to the second insight: having the right theology or more specifically the proper view of God alters the focus of our eschatology. God speaks in and through our pain. In effect, he is transforming the pain of Palestinian refugees into a divine message that reminds the world of the difference between heartless or hardhearted eschatocentric eschatology represented by some Christian theologies, and merciful Christocentric eschatology. The former focuses on “God’s agenda” or the so called prophetic programs

while the latter reveals God’s heart and nature.

In his search for hope the Psalmist discovers the God of hope. The Psalmist mentions God or one of his epithets 22 times (Schökel 9). He calls him the living God (42: 2), the God of my life (42: 8), the God of my rock (42: 9), the God of my stronghold (43: 2), and the God of my exceeding joy (43: 4). He finds his hope in an acting God who can be trusted. Thus, the Psalmist decides to pray seeking a just God who will plead his case and prosecute his cunning and wicked oppressors. He wants God to vindicate him (43:1) and he wishes God to be his lawyer who will present his case and defend him before an ungodly nation. The Psalmist no longer seeks to go to Jerusalem to find God but seeks God to find Jerusalem. The light and truth of God will guide him to God’s holy mountain.

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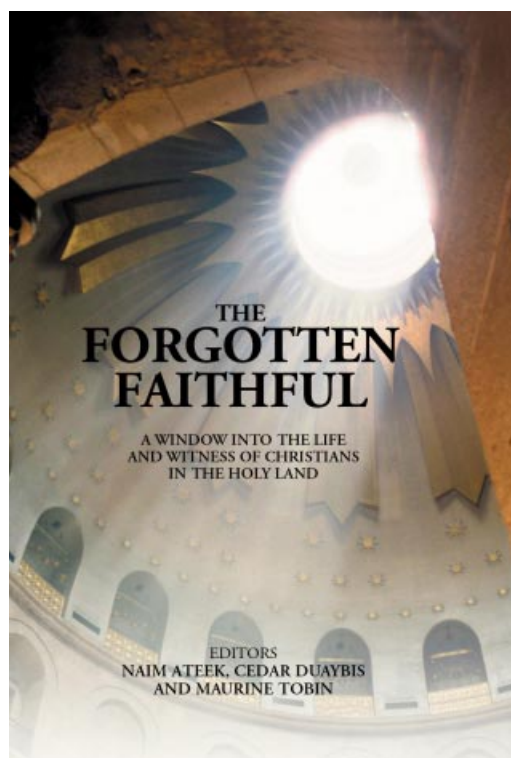
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*Sabeel* is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. *Sabeel* strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

*Sabeel* also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

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