

WITNESS MAGAZINE

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**THE
PALESTINIAN
STRUGGLE FOR
JUSTICE**

VOLUME 84

NUMBER 9

SEPTEMBER 2001

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REUTERS/Damir Sagolj/Hulton/Archive
 An elderly woman, a relative of killed Palestinian policeman Mohammed al-Masri, 20, covers her face with her hands as she cries in front of their home in the village of Beit Hanoun, near the border with Israel, before his funeral.

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Since 1917, *The Witness* has been examining church and society in light of faith and conscience — advocating for those denied systemic power as well as celebrating those who, in theologian William Stringfellow's words, have found ways to "live humanly in the midst of death." With deep roots in the Episcopal Church, we are a journal of spiritual questing and theology in practice, always ready to hold our own cherished beliefs and convictions up to scrutiny.

Manuscripts: We welcome multiple submissions. Given our small staff, writers and artists receive a response only when we are able to publish. Manuscripts will not be returned.

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Younger adults and callings of conscience

What a wonderful issue of *The Witness* this month (June 2001)!!! I have already gotten several hundred copies to share with NatGat attendees as well as our young adult and higher education ministries networks. I was especially moved by Julie Wortman's editorial about being part of the event and being in a ministry relationship with young adults. It's such a healthy image of mentorship having some quality of "learning the ropes together," as Sharon Parks Daloz has put it so well.

I am personally grateful to *The Witness* for being open to the invitation to be in community with us, but more importantly, those of us across the church who work with young people now have a fresh and current perspective of young adults in ministry, in action and in discernment for the voice of God.

Thomas K. Chu

Program Director

Ministries with Young People Cluster

Episcopal Church Center

New York, NY

Annual appeal thanks

Here is my special gift to help you with ongoing expenses over and above what is covered by subscriptions. I surely wish you well. Your publication gives urgent, fresh and well-written commentary on the current social scene while articulating the religious dimension. Thank you for your ministry.

Arthur H. Underwood

Cockeysville, MD

Choices, not merely 'churchpersonship'

Cosmic coherence! Just as I was appreciating the genetic modification issue (TW 5/01) — loaning it to my 16-year-old daughter as she prepared for a debate on gene patenting, as a matter of fact! — and I was longing to express my thanksgiving for *The Witness'* ongoing witness, lo, like an answer

to prayer, there arrived your solicitation letter!

I don't always agree with every assertion in *The Witness*. But issue after issue, it consistently provokes my thought. Moreover, it regularly swells my imagination and compassion until they burst the banks of their normal course and flood out into new areas of my consciousness, bearing rich nutrients to the soil of my commitments. I deeply appreciate *The Witness'* insistence upon understanding the life of faith in terms of ethical choices in the world, and not merely in terms of "churchpersonship."

The Witness continually invites me to be "missionary" in my preferred sense of that word: unwilling to let my faith puddle comfortably around me, but always pouring it outward in an effort to bring palpable healing, reconciliation and justice to situations in which fellow inhabitants of God's creation are broken, divided, oppressed. Add to that dedication a modicum of sheer beauty — photos, poetry, artwork and graphics, elegant prose — and *voilà*, the ingredients that inspire this gift of thanksgiving to you! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Holly Lyman Antolini

Cushing, ME

Gifts and edge

I must write to tell you how much we appreciate your magazine, which was given to us by Sara Owen from Atlanta, one of your faithful readers. You certainly take the lead in the gifts of the spirit; how to appreciate them and use them. You're also on the cutting edge of many concerns, even guiding us into a new and better future. God bless your good works.

Marilyn Clements and Lamar Clements

Clearwater, FL

Top priority

Many thanks for your excellent issue on climate (TW 4/01). Earth/Environment must be top priority!!

Barbara Potter

Falmouth, ME

When kids grow up with gunfire

by Ethan Flad

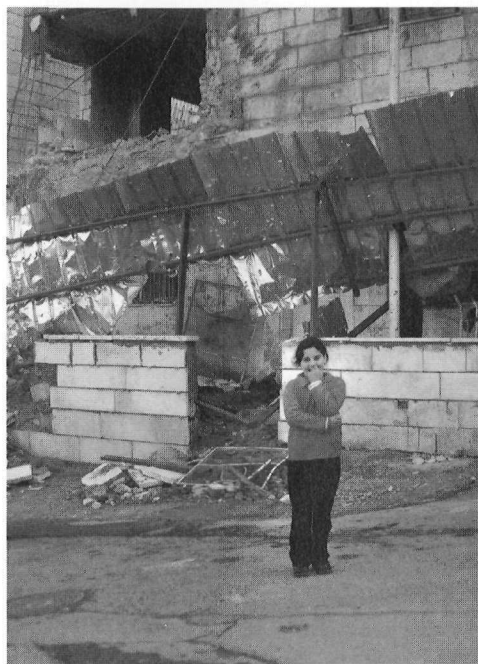
WHEN I WAS A KID, I considered Golda Meir one of my heroines. I remember writing a book report about the former Prime Minister of Israel, extolling the efforts of one of the first international women political leaders of the modern era.

Meir was to me a symbol of the oppressed Jewish people. I read about her work to help create a fledgling nation in the midst of what I understood was a hostile Arab region. My sense of justice was awakened by these stories.

Until just a few years ago, my analysis of the conflict between Israel and its neighbors was a fairly simplistic one: Jews were reclaiming their Promised Land, and Arabs were trying to stop them. It has taken me at least a decade of education about the region combined with two trips to Israel/Palestine and a greater understanding of our nation's role in the "peace process," to un-learn what I previously believed.

While I don't pretend to be an expert on Middle East politics, I do feel that I now have a more complex and nuanced view of that region than most North Americans. As a person who has been fortunate to travel to several regions of the world, I've felt it harder to describe the issues in Palestine/Israel than anywhere else I've gone. I've been especially frustrated by my increasing belief that the information we receive through our primary international media sources is incredibly biased.

As an example, earlier this year I met an Arab-American who told me how a couple of years ago he was placed on an e-mail list run by the Israeli embassy to the U.S. Every day, David received an e-mail from their DC headquarters with new information straight from Israel. After a while, he began to notice that U.S. newspaper articles on the following



Palestinian girl in Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip

day would be taken straight from those e-mail bulletins. Twenty-four hours later, members of our nation's mainstream media simply re-publish the "news," based on the Israeli state's communications machine.

As social justice advocates, how can we help achieve a greater balance in objectively representing the words and images that come from that tense region of the world?

In January 1996, I attended a conference in Jerusalem on the future of the dwindling indigenous Christian presence there. The event was convened by a group named Sabeel, an ecumenical Palestinian liberation theology center, whose founder and director is an Anglican Palestinian priest, Naim Ateek. I had met Naim in 1991 in Brazil at an Anglican Peace and Justice Network meet-

ing, and was captivated by his indigenous interpretation of justice. Naim's ability to contextualize a theology of nonviolence within a violent system drew me to travel to a region I had avoided to that point.

The trip, my first to the Middle East, was at once an exhilarating experience and a depressing one. A major highlight was the first Palestinian election, which was held the day before the conference — an extraordinary coincidence. I joined two other U.S. visitors — Patti Browning, wife of then-Presidenting Bishop Edmond Browning, and Jess Gaither, convener of the Episcopal Peace and Justice Network — as guests of Samir Kafity, then-President Bishop of the Middle East, when he voted for the first time in his life. That significant day offered a glimpse of hope for peace.

Conversely, I witnessed intense poverty in the Occupied Territories, I experienced the omnipresent Israeli security checkpoints, saw expanding Jewish settlements, and I encountered blatant racism directed toward an African American friend. Despite the brief euphoria of the Palestinian election, I left the region saddened by what I'd seen and doubtful that the peace process would move forward quickly. My visit also led me to begin to change my previous strong support of Zionism.

In February 2001, I returned to Jerusalem to attend Sabeel's fourth international conference: "Speaking Truth, Seeking Justice." This time an emotional high was not to be expected. The event was held one week after the election of right-wing hawk Ariel Sharon as Prime Minister. The mood was somber — almost five months had passed since the start of the "new" Intifada, the Palestinian uprising which commenced in the fall of 2000.

The conference had originally been scheduled to take place in Bethlehem, but security

concerns caused the organizers to move it to Jerusalem instead. Our visit to Bethlehem ended up being a few hours, rather than a few days, due to almost-daily violence between Israeli military forces and Palestinian militants. Our busses filled with international conference participants were not permitted to pass a checkpoint into Bethlehem, just 10 minutes south of Jerusalem. Instead, we walked across the checkpoint and took new busses. We almost didn't go there at all, since one of our group, a young Palestinian woman, had "Jerusalem Only" papers. Two hundred fifty people refused to go into Bethlehem unless she could go too.

In Beit Jala, a Palestinian neighborhood in Bethlehem, we saw the result of the violence that took place after dark each day. We visited a home where 18-year-old Osamah Quraby had died in bed three nights earlier. Tank fire from Gilo, the Israeli settlement at the top of the hill, had knocked in the wall of his room onto his bed, suffocating and crushing him. It was depressingly familiar. During the opening worship service of the conference, a screen projector slowly showed the name and age of each person who had died since September — Israeli or Palestinian, Muslim, Jew or Christian. The majority of names were under the age of 30; a frightening percentage of the victims were under the age of 18. Ghassan Andoni, a

Palestinian peacemaker working in Bethlehem, told us, "The kids can now tell the difference between different types of guns, just by the sounds."



Naim Ateek addresses protesting Bethlehem-bound Sabeel conferees at Israeli checkpoint.

With kids growing up knowing the sounds of gunfire as part of their daily existence, with restrictions on movement that some compare to the infamous Pass Laws of apartheid-era South Africa (except South Africans, like Muslim theologian Farid Esack, who said, "This is worse than what we experienced!"), with a belief that the news we get from the Middle East is prejudiced toward the U.S.' historical support of Israel, one could easily lose hope. However, there are causes for hope, as long as there are peacemakers. This issue of *The Witness* pro-

files some of those stories. The diverse voices in this issue — Palestinians, Israeli Jews, American Indians, U.S. Christians — give encouragement that together we will eventually create a just, lasting peace.

WHAT IS "A GLOBAL WITNESS"? In the short time since I've been working with *The Witness*, several folks have asked me what this "a global Witness" title means. As evidenced by this issue, one key aspect is our intention to increase the amount of material we receive from other parts of the world. While *The Witness* has always been attentive to international justice and peace issues, traditionally most of our content has been authored in the U.S. Over the coming couple years we hope to showcase more international writers in our print publication — but in the meanwhile, check us out online for articles from around the world. Our efforts with "a global Witness" will primarily be on the Internet, so visit www.thewitness.org/agw/ for original commentary and indigenous insights on a range of social justice concerns. [N.B. At press time, *The Witness* had just been informed we need to change the title of the web site project, "a global Witness." See our advertisement below for more information.] ●

Ethan Flad is editor/producer of "a global Witness" (see www.thewitness.org/agw/).

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... and help **The Witness** in the process

ENTER OUR CONTEST

Check out *The Witness* online by visiting our section of new social justice articles and affiliated content at: www.thewitness.org/agw/

Then send us a new name for our web site project, previously known as "a global Witness" (We can't use the name anymore – find out why on the web site!)

The winning submission will receive a lifetime subscription to *The Witness*. Visit www.thewitness.org/agw/ and enter to win!

www.thewitness.org

Notes from an execution

by Bruce Campbell

THE GURNEY was wheeled into the small, concrete room. A sheet was used to cover everything, nearly up to the neck. A patch of skin was prepped for the needle, which was then methodically inserted, empty but ready to deliver the poison. Following procedure step by step, at a command the assistant turned the small lever that sent fluid through the tubing and into the veins.

Knowing it was hopeless by this point, I still found myself resisting, resisting, but my pounding heart started slowing down. I yawned once and closed my eyes. When I awoke, feeling half-asleep, I could hardly breathe for the packing in my nose, and my eyes felt scaly and dry. I asked the nurse for water.

Two months ago. My 3-year old son got a little quieter as we entered the hospital lobby, then went completely quiet as the doctor examined his nose, his eyes, felt his small pulse. Going into the operating room, he clung to my neck ferociously and it was hard for me to peel him off to lower him to the table. Inches from his face, I still couldn't convince him everything was safe and going to be all right, and with some force I held his arms splayed down as the anesthesiologist struggled to keep the mask to his face. Not knowing what was happening to him, he resisted with muscular terror.

This week. The shortest route from the commuter train to my office in New York takes me through Rockefeller Center, and on most mornings I stroll past the plaza outside the Today Show and the myriad of people, mostly tourists, who gather there for a glimpse of the show and a glimpse of themselves on the monitors scattered about. Bar-

ricades hold everyone peaceably at the periphery of a large square of street which serves as the outdoor set. The mood is usually excited but quiet, until Al or Katie or Matt comes outside, when it erupts into squeals and flashes and frantic waving.

This time, a different scene. I round the corner of the building at 48th Street, and there is the customary square of spectators, but today they are lifeless, subdued. Live from Terre Haute, Ind., a procession of press people are filing past a podium and delivering their descriptions of the execution of Timothy McVeigh, which has occurred just moments before.

I move closer to a monitor myself. Around me, people stand holding poster boards with photographs of their babies or bearing the words "HELLO, MOUNT VERNON!!" or they stand in a loose knot of a dozen or so sporting college mascot baseball caps, or their T-shirts holler out party phrases or website addresses, but the people are very still, some slumped across the steel barricades in torpor, some standing and frowning with their arms folded, some looking at their watches, some trying to hold conversations about something, anything, else.

There are no protesters among the crowd nor death-penalty advocates, not one amid all of the posters and homemade banners and hats, no chants, no catcalls. When people speak to one another, they draw close and whisper or cup their hands conspiratorially. The entire mood is that of a party at which both band and bartender have flipped out the lights early in the proceedings and unceremoniously departed, leaving the guests adorned and mid-delight, but with nothing left to do.

I can only find one person trying something else. I hear a voice behind me, not loud but conversational, say, "It's just wrong. The whole thing is wrong, it's just the wrong thing to do, there's nothing right about it." I turn to see two working men leaning half-heartedly across a barricade, staring off, and speaking to them is one of the Rockefeller Center guards, dressed in a brown security suit with tan piping and a mock-policeman's cap, metal name badge, and drum-major sleeve cuffs. He is standing officiously, tall, in corporate authority, casually but deliberately scanning the crowd as he speaks softly and surely, "I'm sorry, it's just wrong." Black, his unlistening audience of two is white.

Standing together at an American epicenter of news and media activity, the people here are by now restless at the repetition of details from the press, the forced march through a numbing yet fatal government procedure. The show's almost over. We are dressed up and without a role to play any longer in what is happening.

But we are all resisting. We are resisting death, in all of its versions and preludes, every current that tries to drag us to shore, to shallows, no matter how we are reassured it is all for the good, that it is just. We are resisting in different ways, but we resist. We are helpless but to be taken in the flow of life. All discussions of what is moral must begin with the evidence of our resistance.

Resistance, itself, is our life. ●

Bruce Campbell, a media critic/editor for The Witness, has been a producer and film reviewer for National Public Radio affiliates and conducts community workshops on media literacy. He lives in Tarrytown, N.Y.

For I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy...

For I am about to create new heavens
and a new earth;
the former things shall not be remembered
or come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever
in what I am creating;
for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy,
and its people as a delight.
I will rejoice in Jerusalem,
and delight in my people;
no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it,
or the cry of distress.
No more shall there be in it
an infant that lives but a few days,
or an old person who does not live out a lifetime;
for one who dies at a hundred years will be
considered a youth, and one who falls short of a
hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them;
they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
They shall not build and another inhabit;
they shall not plant and another eat;
for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be,
and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
They shall not labor in vain,
or bear children for calamity;
for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord —
and their descendants as well.
Before they call I will answer,
while they are yet speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
the lion shall eat straw like the ox;
but the serpent — its food shall be dust!
They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain,
says the Lord.

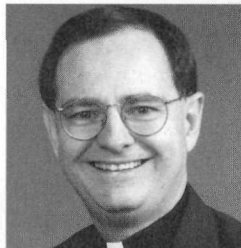
— Isaiah 65:17-25 (New Revised Standard Version)

A JOURNEY OF JUSTICE,

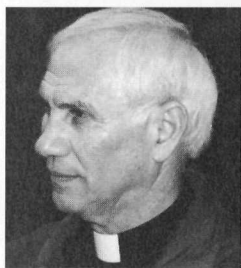
An interview with Naim Ateek

by Brian Grieves

A NGLICAN PRIEST NAIM ATEEK, a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, is founder and director of the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. Brian Grieves is director of the Episcopal Church's national office of Peace and Justice Ministries. We asked Grieves to interview Ateek for *The Witness* because of his many years of involvement with peace and justice advocacy in the Middle East and because of the two priests' longtime friendship. The interview occurred in New York.



Brian Grieves: Naim, it's wonderful to chat with you this afternoon. Our friendship goes back to our time together at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP) in Berkeley, Calif. I was a senior there when you were doing graduate work in 1971–72. Maybe a good place to start is to ask you to reflect on your journey as a priest and as a Palestinian since that time?



Naim Ateek: In 1966, I started my ministry as deacon in a small town near Nazareth. In 1967 I was ordained priest two weeks before Israel occupied the Gaza strip, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. So I was hit by the impact of the 1967 war. The whole community was also shocked. It brought back memories of the 1948 war, with

the continued dispossession and displacement of the Palestinians. Personally, I felt unable to cope with all the injustice. A few years later, I went back to CDSP. I needed to rethink my theology. God was blessing me through my parish ministry, but I also felt God was leading me to a ministry that would focus more and more on the justice issue. That was the beginning of a turning point in my journey of faith. Beginning to really see the deepening injustice of how

Israel was gradually increasing control over the lives of the Palestinians and oppressing them eventually led me to continue in graduate work and then to write the book, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Orbis, 1989).

B.G.: So many Palestinians have left their homeland — the diaspora of Palestinians extends all over the world. But you never left. You went away to study, but you've returned and you've stayed. That must inform your journey and what you've seen over these years.

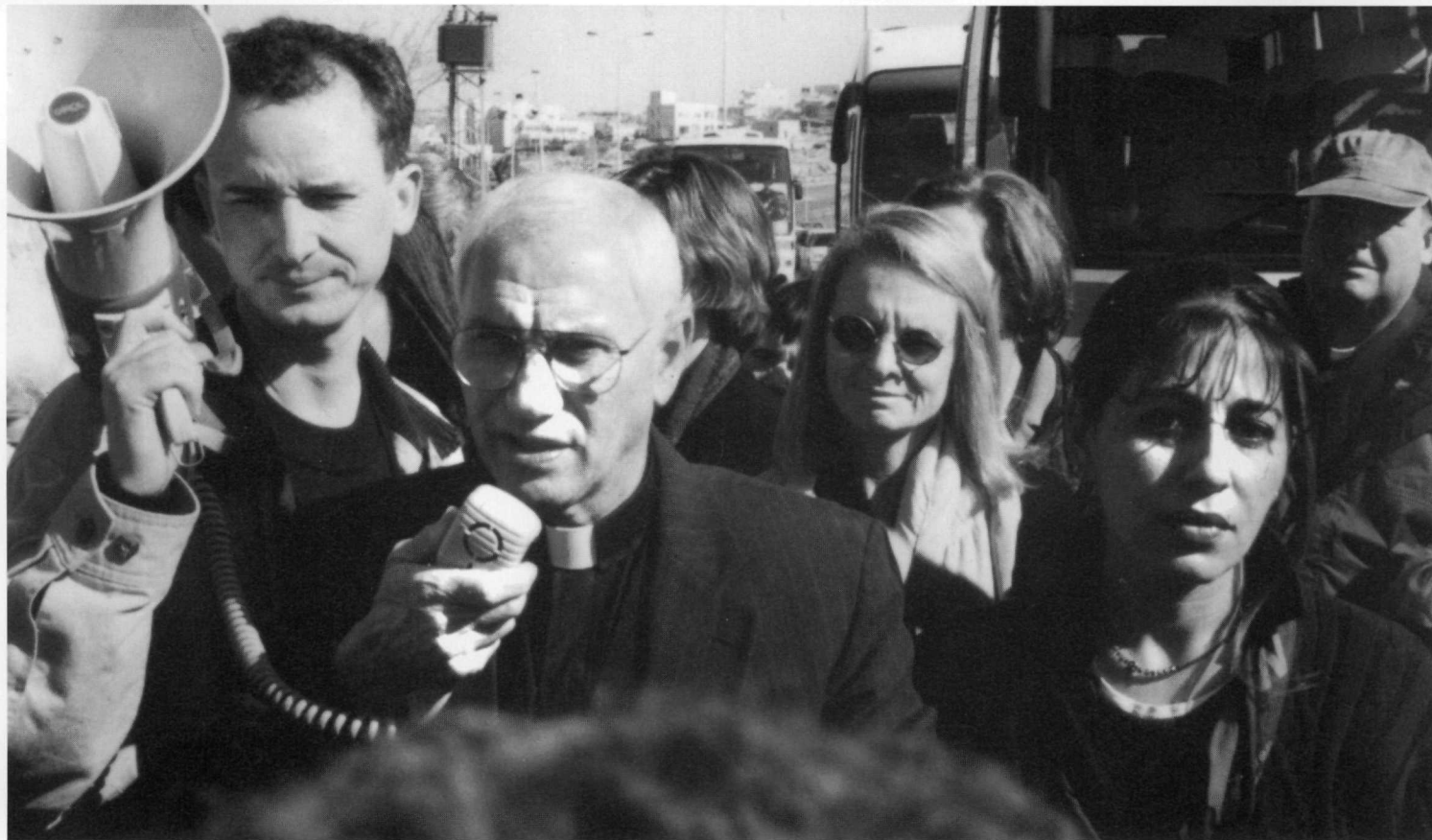
N.A.: I enjoyed the 10 years that I lived in the U.S. completing undergraduate and graduate work. I had many friends and had some work opportunities. But I always had that inner urge that I must serve my people. I was always caught between the comfort of being here in the States, away from the conflict over there, and the pull of knowing that I belonged back there. We all joke about it within the family because I helped my sister come here on a visit and then she ended up getting married to an American. Then she helped my brother and another sister, and so on. I have more family living in the U.S. now than I have back home. I was the only one who came and went back. It's unbelievable. But it was very clear to me that that's where I must be.

And now, reflecting on my ministry in Palestine and Israel, I am amazed at how God led me through a parish ministry of almost 30 years and then slowly guided me into a broader ministry of justice and peace.

B.G.: You mentioned *Justice and Only Justice*. It's a landmark book that is a reference for people who want to understand the situation there. Let's talk a little bit about the theology of the book and your evolving theology since then.

N.A.: Recently, we've been translating the book into Arabic,

A JOURNEY OF FAITH



Naim Ateek speaks to Sabeel conference participants at an Israeli checkpoint last February.

so I've been very much again involved in the book in a close way. The book was first published in 1989, but I have felt how relevant it is still for what's happening today.

In writing the book, I felt I needed not only to articulate for myself, but also to share with others, the background to the conflict and the challenges that are facing us today. To begin with, the problem of identity is still a very crucial issue for many of our people, especially the Christian community. It's a small community now, 2 percent of the total population in both Israel and Palestine. Although the commu-

nity in its roots goes back to the early Christian centuries, we have lost many people to emigration, and for many other reasons. There is a deep crisis of identity. We have to deal with the different aspects of our identity — what it means when we say we're Arab, Palestinian and Christian. Some of us are also Israeli citizens. We have been shaped by the different dimensions of our identity.

For me, all of these different aspects of my identity are also areas of responsibility. I have a responsibility to my Arab brothers and sisters, my Palestinian brothers and

sisters, my Christian community and my Israeli connections. In one sense, all of these different areas provide me with an agenda of ministry, whether through the Christian ecumenical work of Sabeel, or through interfaith work, because both are part of my identity. Arab and Palestinian Muslims are part of my community.

In the book I was also asking how can I, as a Christian Palestinian Israeli citizen, do theology in my own context? I immediately ran into the whole difficulty of how one interprets the Bible. The Bible has been abused by people who have wanted to sup-

port exclusivist Zionist claims to the land. What was needed was a theology of liberation, a theology of the land, that can help my people maintain and strengthen their faith in God. To help them be empowered to work for justice and peace by following Jesus in his nonviolent path. To have the courage to stand up and say that the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza must end, that there has to be a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel.

My concern about justice for the Palestinians comes from this basis of faith. I'm equally concerned about Israeli Jews who need to live in peace. But they cannot have security unless they give justice to the Palestinians.

B.G.: You speak of nonviolence. How do you address nonviolence in a region where the conflict is so violent?

N.A.: It is clear to me that we need an alternative to the violence, that we cannot allow the armed struggle to be the only way to resist the occupation. The violence is only increasing the number of people who are getting killed on both sides, but especially on the Palestinian side. Some of us have been talking and writing about nonviolence for many years. But there is now a new intention of trying to intensify a movement of nonviolence. This is the way Jesus lived and behaved, so we've been doing some reflection on the life of Jesus and nonviolence with our community. I'm thankful that there is enthusiasm about this.

Our concern is that Israel doesn't want the emergence of a nonviolent movement. It's easier for Israel to justify its violence when there is violent resistance on the Palestinian side. So Israel turns many demonstrations that begin nonviolently into violence by immediately throwing tear gas bombs or by somehow instigating or provoking incidents. But in spite of that violent reaction to the nonviolence of the people, I think we need to do everything we can so that a nonviolent movement will emerge. That's really the opportunity. There are Muslims and Jews who are participating in that kind of a movement. It is very exciting.



Jerusalem — Israeli flags and, in the distance, a mosque

B.G.: The violence against nonviolence certainly is not unusual in history — I think of the civil rights movement in this country, where they brought out the dogs and the tear gas and the hoses and so forth and people were killed. That movement was premised on the nonviolence and pacifism of Jesus. Are you finding a positive reception of that sort of nonviolence across the faith community — among Jews and Muslims as well as Christians?

N.A.: Yes. We've had several strategy meetings with different groups at Sabeel. When we are trying to think about examples, people are always mentioning the U.S. civil rights movement, South Africa and other places. So I am now trying to educate myself about what happened in the U.S. in the 1960s and about what happened in apartheid South Africa.

The feeling is that a paradigm shift must

take place. What can be done so that this paradigm of violence can be broken? If we can somehow push or effect a shift, the movement can contribute to the ending of the Israeli domination of the Palestinians. The mentality has to change so that the word "domination" becomes passé. The new word must be "partnership."

I think a nonviolent movement can spearhead that kind of a paradigm shift. But I don't believe we can do it alone. That's why I'm looking also to our friends in the States. Especially as the civil rights movement and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa are still within living memory. The hate, the resentment and the love of revenge is becoming deeper.

B.G.: When you talk about the need to have the involvement of those of us in the U.S. as partners in this kind of a movement, that weighs very heavily on us, because we recognize the role of the U.S. government in perpetuating the violence that's there. So we have to find a way to break through the voice that always says: Israel first and last. And, as this would be a grassroots movement, what are your hopes that the Palestinian Authority would help to promote a culture of nonviolence — or do you think it's just going to have to be from the grassroots impacting not only the Israeli situation, but also your own authorities there?

N.A.: It might prove to be a great waste of time if one is going to concentrate on changing the approach of leaders, on both sides, Palestinian or Israeli. I would like to begin with the grassroots in both communities because I believe there are people in both Palestine and Israel who are ready for this movement. These are people who have been doing a little bit here and there. So they are already conscious. They have analyzed the problem and their objective is very clear, that the occupation must end. I would like us to begin to work together on that level. Hopefully, as we are doing this, some of the leaders will begin to see the value and the wisdom in that kind of approach and strategy. That's my hope. But in order for it to be successful, the

Palestinians cannot do it alone. They have to be joined by Jewish and international groups. In one sense, these groups provide protection against Israeli reaction. Because in our experience with the Israeli army and settlers, the life of a Palestinian is very cheap, whether it's a man, a woman or a child.

B.G.: Let me shift a little bit and ask you to talk about Sabeel — how it was founded, its mission and how you see it moving forward in the context of the discussion that we're having?

N.A.: Sabeel is really an answer to prayer and a response to a dream that started with me when I felt that the church must become much more involved in justice issues. I was still working in the parish, loving and enjoying it, but at the same time feeling the limitations of that ministry in terms of the real issues affecting our community. *Justice and Only Justice* was the vehicle by which I was reflecting on what needed to happen. After the book was published I gathered a few people in Jerusalem to discuss how we could turn its ideas into reality. This *ad hoc* committee helped me to expose this theology of liberation to other people. So, through the help of some friends, we were able to put together a conference in 1990, which we now refer to as "the first conference." We did not call this movement Sabeel in the beginning, but simply PLT, Palestinian Liberation Theology.

B.G.: This was all in a Christian context?

N.A.: Yes, that's the way it started. I invited people from different denominations, like Fr. Elias Chacour, Jonathan Kuttub, Jean Zaru, Cedar Duaybis, Samia Khoury and others. So we had the Catholic, the Protestant and the Orthodox perspectives. We invited 10 theologians from different parts of the world, including Rosemary Ruether, to the conference. The conference was coordinated by Kathy Bergen, who was working at the Mennonite Central Committee in Jerusalem at the time. About 50 to 60 people attended from

Israel/Palestine and overseas. Out of that conference came our first publication, *Faith and the Intifada* (Orbis 1991). Then I asked the *ad hoc* committee if it would like to continue with me on a journey as we try to discern what God wants us to do. The members agreed. So we continued with some workshops in which we discussed the implications of a Palestinian theology of liberation.

In 1994, we adopted the name "Sabeel," an Arabic word that means "the way" — it reminds us of Christ being the way, the truth and the life. Sabeel also means "a spring of water." We felt this was a wonderful name, as it reflects our journey of justice and faith.

Our second international conference in 1996 focused on the issue of Jerusalem. As a result of the conference, we formed "Friends of Sabeel" so that internationals could be part of the ministry. In 1998 we had our third international conference which focused on the concept of Jubilee in light of 50 years of Palestinian dispossession. This past spring we held our fourth international conference with the theme "Speaking Truth, Seeking Justice."

We're now working on different levels and in a variety of areas. Sabeel's ministry is ecumenical. The Christian community is very small in the country, so in order to have a much better witness for Christ, we must be more united. We de-emphasize denominationalism and emphasize ecumenism. On a grassroots level, we work with clergy, women and young people. We have a branch of Sabeel in Nazareth that is carrying out our ministry in the Galilee. We're the only organization that's doing this type of ecumenical work.

Sabeel is a ministry of justice. From the position of faith, we are working for justice for the Palestinians and peace for all. Hopefully, this will lead eventually to reconciliation and healing.

More recently, we've moved into the third area of Sabeel's ministry, which is interfaith work. Unless there is also peace among religions, there cannot be peace among nations and peoples. So we have to work on the interreligious level.

B.G.: You've mentioned that the Christian population is 2 percent of the population of the country, both in the Occupied Territories and in Israel. The interfaith dimensions must be quite a challenge.

N.A.: The more interfaith work we do, the more we are breaking down some of the stereotypes that have hindered us. Some Muslims perceive the Christian community as standing on the side, while others know how much we are involved. As the percentage of Christians is so small, we are not so visible in the struggle. Not many Christians are getting killed, although many of their homes are being shelled. The Palestinian Christians and Muslims are one community. We must continue to work together for the achievement of justice. So interfaith work is a way, also, of entering into that kind of a relationship with some of the Muslim religious leaders, talking about some of the things that we can share.

B.G.: And the Jewish community?

N.A.: Our relationship with the Jewish community is basically with those secular Jews who are working for justice and peace. They like Sabeel's ministry. We still look for religious Jewish partners.

B.G.: Would you say that, even though it's only 2 percent of the population, that because of its ties to the West and the enormous support it receives from Western churches the Christian community functions as a bridge to the Arab world, the Islamic world?

N.A.: The Christian community has always served the wider community, especially through the many Christian institutions — schools, hospitals, clinics, orphanages, and so on. So the influence of the Christians has been much greater than their numbers. And it continues that way. The leadership of the Palestinian Authority knows our involvement very well. But in areas where there are no Christians, people don't know very much about us.

The following is a brief listing of helpful Internet resources for more information on current events in Palestine/ Israel, especially highlighting organizations that are working to enable peace there:

Organizations based in the Middle East:

APPLIED RESEARCH INSTITUTE – Jerusalem, a source of demographic, political, environmental maps and statistics: www.arij.org

BAT SHALOM, a feminist peace organization of Israeli women: www.batshalom.org

COALITION OF WOMEN FOR A JUST PEACE:
www.geocities.com/EndTheOccupation/

GUSH SHALOM, an Israeli peace organization with Jewish & Arab members: www.gush-shalom.org

ISRAEL MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: www.israel.org

THE MIDDLE EAST COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:
www.mecchurches.org

PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY: www.pna.org

THE PALESTINIAN SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS & THE ENVIRONMENT (LAW):
www.lawsociety.org

SABEEL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER:
www.sabeel.org

THE PALESTINIAN CENTRE FOR RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN PEOPLE: www.rapprochement.org

YESH GVUL, an Israeli peace group that supports soldiers who refuse repressive or aggressive assignments: www.yesh-gvul.org

News Sources:

ELECTRONIC INTIFADA, “a resource for countering myth, distortion and spin from the Israeli media war machine”:
www.electronicintifada.net

KOLISRAEL.COM, a website that provides access to a broad collection of media from Israel/Palestine in both Hebrew and English:
www.kolisrael.com

MIDDLE EAST REALITIES, an alternative media source:
www.middleeast.org

THE OTHER ISRAEL, a bi-monthly magazine published by the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace: other_israel.tripod.com

U.S. Based Organizations:

CHURCHES FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE: www.cmep.org

EMBASSY OF ISRAEL TO THE UNITED STATES: www.israeemb.org

FOUNDATION FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE: www.fmep.org

JEWISH UNITY FOR A JUST PEACE, an international gathering of grassroots Jewish activists committed to ending the Occupation:
www.junity.org

NOT IN MY NAME, a network of American Jews critical of the policies of the State of Israel: www.nimn.org

B.G.: Can you say why, in spite of this influence, Christians are still leaving the country?

N.A.: There has been a general emigration of Palestinians which is felt all the more acutely by our small Christian community. It has been easier for Christians to emigrate, because of their connections with people in the West. The number one reason for leaving is the political instability. There are some people, too, who feel they would like to be in a community where there are more Christians. And although I love for people to stay, I will never force anyone, because I know how difficult it is. When I think about people's concern with economics, good employment, making a decent living away from the humiliation and dehumanization of the occupation, I don't blame them. I hope and pray that when peace is established and there is a Palestinian state, that many people would come back. I meet people in this country who say: When there is peace, we want to return. But I'm never sure about the new generation, when they get used to life in the States, whether all of them would want to go back. It's probably easier for the older generation, because they still have the memories and connections with the old country.

B.G.: To many people in the U.S., the peace process of the 1990s seemed hopeful. Arafat was able to return from exile, for one thing. And yet, the year 2000 saw this whole thing just sort of get dashed on the rocks. You expressed a lot of concerns about the peace process while it was going on: What happened to that process? Was it flawed to begin with? Was it doomed to begin with? Is there any hope that it can be revived?

N.A.: Obviously, it's easier to talk about the past than the future. Palestinians were divided about the peace process. Some people said: The process is flawed to such an extent that it's wrong; the Palestinian leadership should have never accepted the Oslo peace process. A second segment, and I was one of those, said: It is flawed, but let's give it a try; let's see whether we can direct it. It might get us to a peace that is honorable and that is just. I was tired of saying no, no, no. I said, “Let's say ‘yes.’ And let's see whether Arafat and the Palestinian leadership are able to steer the process in the right direction.”

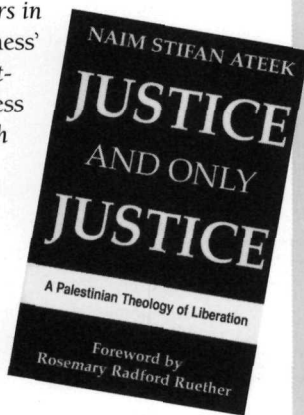
I think it is clear today that the first group could see from the very beginning that the peace process was not going to take us to where we would like to go. Looking back now, one can say: The peace process has failed and is dead. The situation is now worse. Whereas Barak said he is willing to give back 95 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Sharon will not return more than 42 percent. Some Jewish analysts have said that it was right for the Palestinians to reject the 95 percent offer. Some political analysts are saying it was never 95 percent that was offered, but between

80 and 85 percent. Still, whatever the percentage retained by Israel, it would have given Israel a matrix of control that would keep its domination of the Palestinians.

Now, I don't think Sharon is interested in peace. He's going to bide his time. I think he'd rather live with a low-intensity war with the Palestinians. In fact, that's advantageous for him. He's a general. He wants to manage the conflict militarily rather than solve it. That's what's really happening here.

Sharon thinks he can suppress the Palestinian Intifada. Some hope that his blunders would force the Americans and the rest of the world to see him in his true light and try to stop him. Our hope is that a miracle will happen and the paradigm shift will take place. Otherwise, the situation will deteriorate over the next three or four years with more people killed, settlement expansion and the entrenchment of the matrix of control. That's really the frightening part. We are looking for the time when the Israeli occupation of Palestine will end. Without this kind of justice there cannot be peace. ●

This interview appears in Spanish on The Witness' website, <www.thewitness.org>. The Witness began publishing each issue's lead article in Spanish with the Jan/Feb 2001 issue. These issues are archived on the website. Go to the end of the lead article to find the link to the Spanish translation.



Of land and belonging

By Harley Eagle

We need only to look at our own history between the Indigenous of North America and the more recent "settlers" of this land to see that the same situation is being played out in Palestine. Terms such as "Manifest Destiny" are replaced by "Zionism." The struggle over Jerusalem is the same as our struggle over our Sacred Black Hills of Mount Rushmore fame, to name but one of many sacred sites lost to the indigenous peoples of the Americas. During the fourth international Sabeel conference this past February, as I listened to the tragic stories being told of the horrors that the Palestinians face on a daily basis, it was clear to me that the similarities were profound. I could not help but wonder at the outrage of North Americans regarding the treatment of Palestinians, when many refuse to acknowledge the similar treatment of Native North American people that continues today. The process of land confiscation and genocide is very much alive and well on this continent.

We oppressed people find solidarity with each other and find the struggles we face as nations are not that different. I believe that this was the thinking of the Sabeel organizers in requesting the presence of an indigenous person from North America at the conference. Not only did we recognize our common struggles, but my mere presence made non-indigenous people, especially from North America, realize the connection. This identification helped people to realize that the situation in Palestine is following a pattern practiced and almost perfected, if you will, with the indigenous populations in their own countries.

Within our indigenous traditional cultural teachings we are taught the interconnectedness of all. We understand that the dominant culture's way is to separate, individualize and become detached from things. It is my perspective that when we realize that we actually do have a part in what happens to all of Creation it becomes more urgent for us as human beings to accept our responsibility to move to action in addressing justice issues.

A common theme that came out from the Sabeel conference was the hope in bringing both Palestinians and Israelis to the understanding that "the land does not belong to us but we belong to the land." This is essential to our world view as indigenous peoples. If this is hard to grasp for non-indigenous people of North America, I would suggest that you look to your own land holdings. I would suggest taking a journey into your own history to discover what this concept would mean to you considering your own property. If you expect the folks of the Middle East to accept this notion, you must first accept it in your own hearts and look into the issue of the inhumane treatment of the indigenous nations of this part of the world.

Harley Eagle, a Dakota/Saulteaux from White Cap Dakota Reserve in Canada, visited Palestine twice over the last three years. He was part of a Palestinian/Native North American exchange in 1998. This past spring he participated in the 2001 Sabeel conference. Eagle is Co-Program Coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee Oglala Lakota Nation service unit with his wife, Sue, and daughter Danielle, on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

SEE OUR WEBSITE

for a report about
last May's Fifth Christian
Conference in Baghdad
by Irene Voysey,

<www.thewitness.org/agw/>.

A L I F E L O N G



Patti Browning visits partially destroyed Palestinian farm in the Gaza Strip last December.

...to a people
and the soul of
a country

*by Patti Browning, with
Sandra J. Bright*

PATTI BROWNING AND I MET IN 1978 when my husband John was called to be the Dean of the Cathedral in Honolulu. Her husband, former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning, at that time was serving as Bishop of Hawaii. Through the years our lives took different roads, but we remained friends. In February 2001 Patti and I attended the Sabeel Conference in Jerusalem. It was my first visit to Israel/Palestine and was for me an almost Damascus-like conversion to the Palestinians' cause for peace. My experience was grounded in Patti's experience: What I saw, what I heard, what I learned and what I felt was through the love, faith and hope that Patti embodies for the people of Palestine. The following story is the combination of excerpts from my conversations with Patti and excerpts from her journals. The words are hers.

— Sandra J. Bright

I WAS 29 YEARS OLD when I first saw Jerusalem. It was in 1962. Ed and I were serving as missionaries in Okinawa and were en route to Canterbury, England, where he was enrolled in a summer program at St. Augustine's College. We had decided to break up the trip since we had four children under the age of 6 at that time. The first leg of the trip was to Bangkok. From Bangkok we flew to Beirut and from there into Jerusalem's tiny airport.

It was early June and the air was clear and cool, quite a contrast to the climate in Okinawa, and upon our arrival we instantly felt invigorated. We were staying at the YMCA, which was a small building that could sleep about 25 people, and arranged to have a guide show us around Jerusalem. He arrived and as we visited the holy places, I was drawn to his kind face and remarkable knowledge of the Bible. He began to talk about his life as a Palestinian Christian and refugee in his own country. He told how the Zionists had demanded that his family leave their home in one hour and take only what they could carry. I was stunned by his story and by my ignorance.

As the day continued, Palestinian adults and children gathered around us, no doubt attracted by my four very red-haired children, and began to tell similar stories of being dragged from their homes and scattered throughout their homeland. Later that evening at the YMCA, we listened intently to a Lutheran missionary couple talk about the occupation of Palestine after the proclamation of the new State of Israel in 1948. They pointed out the barbwire that rimmed No-Man's land only a few feet from our lodging and told of a nun that had been shot in the area a week earlier. I found myself identifying with the Palestinian story, perhaps because of my experiences in Okinawa. Even as an American missionary, I had felt the confinement, and often harassment, of living

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COMMITMENT

under U.S. military rule.

Before we left Jerusalem, I gathered all the material I could find about Palestine's story and carried it with me for years to share with others. These first questions and feelings of connection would grow into a lifelong passion and commitment to these people and to the soul of the State of Israel.

Israel/Palestine — and Intifada — 25 years later

It was 25 years before I returned to Israel/Palestine. They had been busy, exciting and productive years: Ed served as Bishop in Okinawa, Europe and Hawaii before his election as Presiding Bishop in 1985. During that same time we nurtured our one daughter and four sons to their independence. I never forgot my earlier experience and would frequently share the story of my oppressed sisters and brothers in Palestine, but often to unsympathetic ears.

I am not a one-issue person, but I am a staunch advocate for human rights and the Palestinians' suffering seemed so endless. At some point I took to heart a quote made by The Christophers, a Roman Catholic community, that said, "It's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness." Their belief that a single person's actions can make a difference helped me to continue.

In 1987, Ed and I flew into the international airport at Tel Aviv for his first pastoral visit to the Diocese of Jerusalem as Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, USA. We were greeted by Jerusalem's bishop, Samir Kafity, and John Peterson, who was then serving as the Dean of St. George's College. They had planned a full agenda, and I was eager to see Jerusalem once again and talk with the Palestinian community. The stories of the past 25 years were sobering: the crushing 1967 war, living in sewers, death of children, resignation to rootlessness. When our trip was over, I left once again with ques-

tions, deep concerns and a feeling that the Palestinians' identity was disappearing and no one cared.

It was just a few months later that the Intifada of December 1987 began. I begged Ed to include me in a small group of Anglicans being sent on a fact-finding trip to Israel/Palestine to show our solidarity with our sister church suffering through the conflict.

Since then I have returned to Israel/Palestine 15 times and I carry in my heart a litany of images, people and their stories. I especially recall many visits to the Ahli Arab Anglican Hospital in Gaza with my friend Suhaila Shawqi Tarazi, director of the hospital. There were stories of young men and teenagers being pulled off operating tables by Israeli soldiers; young girls injured by plastic bullets targeted at their lower abdomens; a small injured child raising her tiny fingers in the "V" shape for peace; entering the courtyard of the hospital to a scene of frantic activity of bed after bed with young people bandaged and bleeding, and carload

after carload of injured continuing to arrive. I saw the fear on their faces and could feel their fear in my heart. On my last visit this past February, amidst this recent Intifada, the situation was even worse; the Israelis had barricaded Gaza into three sections and many of the injured were not even allowed access to the hospital for care.

I remembered Najat Kafity saying to me, "We can no longer take life for granted. It grieves me to see Israeli children growing up to hate and fear Palestinian children and Palestinian children growing up to hate and fear Israeli children." And this reminded me of South African Allan Boesak's chilling statement that it pained him to see that a child's only role model for leadership in his country was violence.

What can I do to help?

One day in April 1991, I drove with Ed in the early morning to Nablus, a city in the West Bank. We had celebrated Easter in Jerusalem. The hills were green and bright, red poppies



Former Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning (left) and Riah Abu El-Assal, Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem and the Middle East, visit with Yasser Arafat in Gaza City last December.

were in bloom everywhere. That afternoon, listening to a group of Palestinian children singing during worship, I was awakened to the incredible bond of family and community, theirs and mine, both of us drawing strength from common ancestors dating back thousands of years before Abraham, and from our Semitic bond with their Jewish cousins.

I also remember attending church in Ramallah, a small town north of Jerusalem. That day I had entered the sanctuary seeking solitude and found a seat in the back of the church. Sitting there it somehow felt familiar. It called up once again my missionary years in Okinawa, where I sat in a church of a different country, a different culture, a different language, but where we held the same prayer in our hearts for justice and peace. I felt comforted. I felt a part of the context. I belonged there.

In March 1992, Riah Abu El-Assal, then an Anglican canon in Nazareth, spoke to a group I was with. "We have never had our land as our land," he said. "The British took us over and then left us to the mercy of the Jordanians, the Syrians, and the Israelis. The Anglican Church could be very powerful, but they need the truth. Get the information out to your country at the grassroots level. I don't want pro-Palestinian or pro-Israel. That is bad. We need a bridge between us. When will the U.S. help us who are helpless?"

We left without answers.

Before returning to Jerusalem, we drove to the Galilee Sea, and I eased down to a pool at the edge of the water. I left with a filled bottle for my next grandchild's baptism. I also pledged to myself and prayed that our church could be a bridge of reconciliation of the children of Abraham.

Truth + Justice = Peace

Through the years I have felt lonely periods of hopelessness. I remember in 1992 visiting the Jabala Refugee Camp, one of the worst in the whole country. The odors of the open sewers were overwhelming even in the cold weather. At one time there had been a huge pool of sewage where people were punished by making them stand in the pool up to their necks for hours. During that trip to Israel/Palestine, Ed and I met with Yasser Arafat. He told us about the deplorable conditions in Gaza: starvation as devastating as Somalia; the deliberate silence of the media

and Israel's blatant defiance of the United Nation's resolutions, especially the 4th Geneva Convention.

After the meeting, Ed and I went to have dinner. I tried not to get teary-eyed about the conditions of the Palestinians during the meal, but it was difficult to control my emotions. So we walked back to our hotel and that helped, temporarily, to get my mind off their concerns. But the Palestinian plight, with all their abuse, misery and discouragement, kept going through my mind and heart. Those of us who care and fight for them must remain strong, but what gives me hope is the hope I see on the faces of these people.

I wanted and needed to help the Palestinians and, as the wife of the Presiding Bishop, I knew I had an opportunity to share their story in a way I wasn't able to before. I was terrified of standing in front of people, let alone speaking. But one day during an airplane flight, I opened randomly to an article in one of those airliner magazines about the fear of speaking in public. It said that if you don't speak of your experiences you may deprive someone of the information they need to know. Then I remembered Palestinian human rights lawyer Jonathan Kuttab's "Equation for Peace: Truth + Justice = Peace." I understood the equation and believed it to be true. I began to understand how I could help. I could begin by sharing the truth as I witnessed it. It was time to bite the bullet!

When the Intifada began in September 2000, Ed, now in retirement, called Riah Abu El-Assal, now serving as Bishop of the Diocese of Jerusalem, to ask what we could do to help. Ed also called Brian Grieves, the Officer for Peace and Justice at the Episcopal Church Center. We were asked to join an ecumenical group to visit Israel/Palestine and assess the situation. We arrived in early December and found the conditions very discouraging. The construction of Jewish settlements was literally eating up the countryside. The airstrip of the tiny Jerusalem airport, that had welcomed Ed, me and our children on our first visit to Jerusalem in 1962, had been confiscated for use as a highway between settlements, while all Palestinian movement in Gaza and the West Bank was controlled by barricades and curfews. Palestinians were finding themselves sepa-

rated from their jobs, their hospitals and their families. This kind of "apartheid" was strangling the family unit and when we destroy the family we destroy the soul of a society. It is this kind of terrible oppression that breeds terrorism!

We returned from our trip bone-tired. But a few weeks later I turned to Ed and said, "I have to go back! I want to attend the Sabeel Conference in February. I want to talk and be with our dear friend Naim Ateek (Founder and President of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem), and support our friends there in any way I can." So Ed, when it was time, drove me to the airport.

When I arrived in Jerusalem the breeze was so invigorating that I was ready to step into its life with both feet. I felt like I was home again. I really could live there. I think I can truthfully say I feel at-one there, rooted in years of getting to know and love the people: laughing with them, weeping with them; learning and sharing their story, and valuing its truth at the core of my soul. I don't believe I will ever rest until there is peace in the City of Peace, Jerusalem, our Jerusalem: the Christian Jerusalem, the Jewish Jerusalem, the Muslim Jerusalem. ●

Patti Browning's "Jubilee Reflections on Mordechai Vanunu and Samuel Day" can be found at <www.thewitness.org/agw/>.

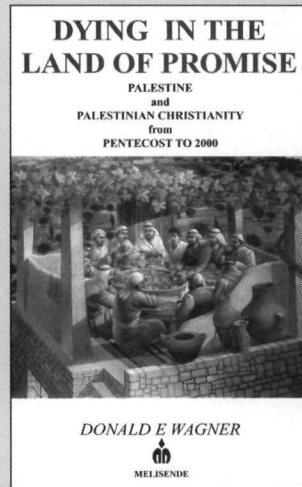


Sandra Bright at Women in Black protest in Jerusalem in February 2001

A much-needed ethical handbook

by Tom Getman

**Dying in the Land of Promise:
Palestine and Palestinian Christianity
from Pentecost to 2000,**
by Donald Wagner
(Melisende, London, 2001)



IT IS A TIME in the partially holy land when individual brutish criminal acts and mob violence seem to be determining the future. Into this present reality, Donald E. Wagner has provided a much-needed and long overdue service to the Body of Christ, and the wider faith community, with *Dying in the Land of Promise: Palestine and Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to 2000*. This extraordinarily comprehensive compendium of critical historical data — as well as of long-scattered, stifled, obscured or even censored materials — is particularly auspicious. It is a moment when concerned people are beginning to understand the crimes that have been perpetrated against the Palestinian community for half a century. This has been inflicted by a government of a people who should have a deep understanding and hatred for domination through occupation and apartheid.

Wagner's contribution is a much-needed ethical handbook. It is a readable combination of professional knowledge, personal experience, teaching skill and love for all the people of the Middle East. Theologians, development and advocacy activists, as well as laypeople struggling to understand the fairly straightforward issues of occupation obscured by media silence and effective propaganda, will use this tool with appreciation. The busy reader who will return to the book again and again will find particularly helpful the technique of the summary of highlights and critical data at the end of each chapter.

As I write this review, despite protestations of a "ceasefire," excessive use of force, tank shelling and brutal siege blockades continue the violence of military domination in Palestinian towns and villages — mostly out of sight of reporters. The terrible Tel Aviv suicide bombing has taken the lives of 20 young Russian immigrants to Israel. Citizens in both Israel and Palestine are sick at heart about how violence and vengeance leads to more and more mindless heavy-handed reaction.

Wagner's *Dying in the Land of Promise* is invaluable in providing a framework with which to understand how hopelessness leads to desperate measures. The combination of injustice unacknowledged and ethnically based colonialism, along with a mix of bad theology, is

tragic — and seems to be leading to mob rule. The chapter on the "Foundations of Injustice" especially drives the reader to serious reflection and intercession. Wagner's compelling style increases the desire to avoid the mistakes of the past by driving back the nightmare of the present. The book helps us to face the possible legacy of a horrific future without responsible participation. May grace and mercy abound to reverse the precursor decisions rooted in less than adequate biblical interpretation by the likes of turn-of-the-20th-century Lord Arthur Balfour, Lord William Shaftsbury and indeed Winston Churchill. These dispensational Christians supported the lie of a "land with no people for a people with no land," in spite of the appeals of anti-Zionist Jews such as Asher Ginzberg who wisely counseled, "Those who settle in Palestine must above all seek to win the friendship of the Palestinians, by approaching them courteously and with respect." How different things could have been. How different they might be if people in power began to act as good neighbors instead of cruel conquerors.

Dying in the Land of Promise raises the possibilities of brighter futures by outlining several hopeful scenarios, including the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theological Center's "Document on Principles of a Just Peace."

But a main theme that leaps from these pages is the essential need for people who embrace Scripture to focus on the far-reaching nature of decisions by single influential persons in times of crisis and change. If just principles are not adhered to, great heartache, pain and further injustice will follow. Whatever is hidden in the dark will inevitably come into the light, as Israeli "new historians" such as Benny Morris are proving.

Dying in the Land of Promise sets the record straight with factual historical and compelling anecdotal evidence from Wagner's wide experience in the Holy Land. Surely detractors will find enough minor contradictory details to attack the author and seek to discredit the book. Unfortunately the volume was so important it was rushed to print before a number of distracting typos were corrected and critical edits finished. But it should be stated that there is minimal inconsistency and emotional histrionics, which those of us who live in the region sometimes are tempted to use, to undermine the credence of this landmark publication. It will be a controversial book because it dares to be truthful. May I advise that you rush out and buy it before it is banned, discredited or removed from libraries. It will be a guidebook you will return to again and again. ●

Tom Getman is director of WorldVision's Middle East office in Jerusalem.

LAND FOR PEACE?

An analysis of what went wrong

by Jonathan Kuttab

**The first Intifada
in 1987 brought
the first rays
of hope for peace.**

**This largely nonviolent
popular movement called for
an end to occupation and
successfully challenged
the stereotypes
of Palestinians
as terrorists.**

THE COLLAPSE of the “peace process,” and the subsequent cycle of bloodshed and violence that is currently raking Israel/Palestine, has left many of us confused, bewildered and without a clue.

Yet this collapse of the peace process should provide an opportunity to reconsider the whole process and to ask some serious questions as to whether it was not based on flawed premises that were bound to lead to such an outcome. It is also important to ask whether the fevered attempts to revive that process by the likes of the U.S. State Department, the CIA, and indeed Ariel Sharon, are worthy of the support of people of goodwill who are concerned about peace, justice and reconciliation.

The greatest success of the Israeli occupation and the Zionist movement in recent years has been in redefining the reality of the conflict and in creating a new narrative that has obtained worldwide currency and is rarely challenged. Yet it is precisely this narrative which has led to the current confusion and paralysis of the peace and justice community regarding the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The process was thorough, pervasive, diabolical and ingenious, and successfully seduced, co-opted and neutralized the Palestinian leadership and most of the peace and justice community. It corrupted the vision of peace and justice and institutionalized a complex system for perpetuating and legitimizing continued oppression and occupation, with the acquiescence of the victims and their leadership.

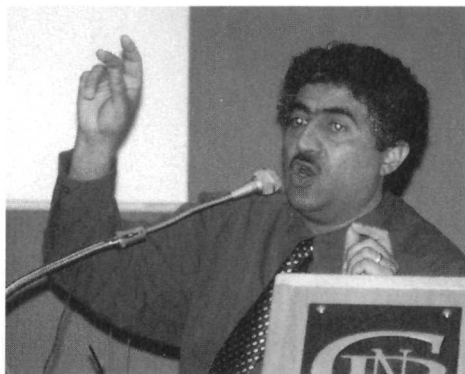
To understand how this occurred, it is helpful to take a quick look back at where things stood right after the June 1967 War. Israel had recently won a stunning victory over its Arab neighbors and gained control of all historic Palestine, including Jerusalem, the rest of the

West Bank, Gaza and other Arab territories from Egypt (the Sinai) and Syria (the Golan Heights).

Since that time, moderates on all sides developed the belief that a wonderful opportunity existed for ending the Arab-Israeli struggle through the formula of Land for Peace. Israel would return territory captured in that war in return for Arab acceptance and recognition of the State of Israel, which had been erected in Palestine at the expense of the local indigenous population. United Nations’ Resolution #242 enshrined this principle and further called for a just solution to the problem of refugees.

Arabs who had questions about the legitimacy of the state of Israel and the injustices done to the Palestinians in 1948 were urged to make a historic compromise and abandon their claim to 78 percent of historic Palestine in return for a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza; while Israelis were told they should give up the territories they conquered in that war in return for peace, legitimacy and genuine security. To be sure, there were plenty on both sides who resisted such a historic compromise, and some who actively worked to prevent it from becoming a reality, yet people of goodwill in both camps and throughout the world felt that only such a pragmatic compromise (the two-state solution) could address the equities on both sides and provide a meaningful outcome.

One obstacle to such a peace were people on each side who insisted on delegitimizing the Other and refused to recognize their identity or aspirations. There were Arabs who rejected Israel as an illegitimate racist state built by force of conquest on their land; and Israelis who denied Palestinians were a peo-



Jonathan Kuttab



Israeli border police struggle with Palestinian demonstrators during a demonstration against Israeli blockades of Palestinian towns and villages at the Al-Ram checkpoint near Ramallah.

ple, and who demonized their leadership, the PLO, and treated them as either nonexistent, or part of an amorphous Arab mass (who had 22 states anyway), or as being evil terrorists.

A second and more physical obstacle was the confiscation of Arab land in the Occupied Territories, and building therein exclusive Jewish settlements. Not only were these settlements illegal under international law (and as such constituted an unjust infringement on Arab property and rights); more importantly, they clearly undermined the possible pragmatic two-state solution, by dotting the very areas slated to become a Palestinian state with a hostile and intrusive permanent presence of continuously expanding Jewish settlements.

The first Intifada in 1987 brought the first rays of hope for peace. This largely nonvio-

lent popular movement called for an end to occupation and successfully challenged the stereotypes of Palestinians as terrorists. It obtained widespread sympathy worldwide, and even inside Israel. It led to the famous handshake on the White House lawn, when it appeared that the first obstacle listed above had been eliminated and mutual recognition had finally taken place. No longer was each side denying the existence or legitimacy of the other.

Yet behind the facade of reconciliation was a very devious plan to utilize the very language, slogans and ideas of peaceful moderates to confirm, legitimize and consolidate the occupation and domination over the Palestinians. To understand how this successfully occurred, it is important to understand the mechanisms of the “peace agreement” and the “peace process” to see

how it became the enemy of a genuine just peace and how it could never lead to the lasting peace and security that people of goodwill on all sides desire.

FIRST, the “peace” agreements effectively neutralized international law, the United Nations and the international community, by positing the peace agreements themselves and the procedures laid down in them as a substitute.

In fact, the agreements became the *only* permitted method for adjudicating the disputes between the parties.

SECOND, the agreements failed to provide a meaningful method for resolving disputes, but stated that both parties (the very powerful and the very weak) would resolve all disputes between themselves. If they failed to agree, they *may* refer their differences (but only if both agree to do so) to the U.S. —

Israel's benefactor.

THIRD, the agreements left all matters of the slightest interest to the Israelis exclusively in their own hands (including all matters pertaining to Israeli settlers, security, underwater resources, movement in and out of the area, etc.); while matters of interest only to the Palestinians were left in the hands of numerous joint committees, where decisions had to be unanimous.

In all these committees, Israel had a veto, and could paralyze the daily life of Palestinians simply by refusing to meet in the joint committees.

FOURTH, the Occupied Territories were divided into three types of non-contiguous zones, labeled A, B and C. Zone A territories were under Palestinian control, and composed primarily the dense populated city centers. There, Palestinians were supposed to be in full control — subject of course to the terms of the various agreements. Zone B territories were primarily the perimeters of villages, where Palestinians had civilian authority, but Israel had overriding “security control.” Zone C lands constituted the Jewish settlements, connecting roads and everything else. These were left under the exclusive control of the Israeli military government. Because the areas under Palestinian control were non-contiguous, Israel could at any time thoroughly paralyze ordinary life in the Occupied Territories by cutting off the different areas from each other, turning the West Bank and Gaza into over 60 isolated cantons.

FIFTH, the agreements left the most serious issues: Jerusalem, settlements, refugees, and borders, to be negotiated “at a later stage.” This, in effect, meant that until that time arrived, Israel continued to exercise full and unfettered control in those areas. When Palestinians made complaints or demands regarding those issues, they were told they were violating the agreements, and that as long as there were no restrictions in the agreements about them, Israel was perfectly free to do as it wished and was not restricted by international law or anything else. Yet each and every one of these difficult

issues continued on a daily basis to create problems and to rouse passions. The refugees stayed in their miserable exile, the settlements continued to flourish and expand at the expense of the local people and their land, Jerusalem continued to be under full Israeli control, illegally; and Israeli occupation continued with an air of legality, legitimacy, and even acquiescence by all who supported “the peace process,” including the victims themselves.

SIXTH, the agreements had no mechanism for enforcement or even monitoring of compliance. When Palestinians violated the agreements (for example, by not doing enough to prevent attacks by individuals within or coming from the areas under their control), Israel had a wide variety of sanctions to apply against them. When Israel violated the agreements or failed to fulfill its explicit requirements (for example, by failing to open free passage between Gaza and the West Bank, or failing to implement commitments for further redeployment — transferring areas by reclassifying them from Zone C to Zone A), Palestinians had no recourse whatsoever, and were prevented by the agreements from bringing the dispute to any other forum without Israel's approval.

SEVENTH, the Palestinian leadership was placed in a very uncomfortable position. It was constantly being pressured to act as the occupation's agent vis-à-vis its own people. As long as it did so, it enjoyed special privileges, freedom of movement for its senior personnel, money (taxes of Palestinian workers collected by the Israeli authorities and periodically transferred to it) to run its departments, and basic immunity from serious criticism for its inefficient and corrupt handling of the affairs of its own people. If, on the other hand, it insisted on representing their interests genuinely vis-à-vis the occupation, it came into direct conflict with Israel, was punished and sanctioned and ultimately told it could be “no longer viewed as a partner” and could face delegitimization again.

The sad thing is that many in the peace and justice community, who fought the demonization of the PLO and called for

direct negotiations between the parties, were now in a poor position to challenge the whole “peace process” or to effectively critique the Palestinian National Authority for its own shortcomings. We bought the lie that the Oslo process was the only game in town, and succumbed to the propaganda that the only alternative to it is Hamas suicide bombings and a return to armed conflict.

Yet the present crisis in the peace process and the tensions it has caused can also present us with an opportunity to reassert principled positions regarding the whole conflict and to organize again around a program of action and positions that do not necessarily reflect the balance of power between the parties, but the balance of equities and a commitment to human beings on both sides of the conflict. We do not need magic formulae for “solving the problem” but to perceive directions leading toward a just and lasting peace. These positions should be a reflection of our ethics, beliefs and faith commitments, not just political bias. As a committed Christian who believes in peace, justice and reconciliation, I believe the following elements should be included in such a position:

■ Giving greater weight to international law than to realpolitik. We must restore respect for things we hold to be universally true and applicable to friend and foe alike. They must include respect for human beings, collectively and individually, rather than respect for power and influence.

■ A reassertion of our commitment to human rights and freedoms of individuals, and rejection of torture, the killing of innocent civilians, collective punishments and other forms of inhumane actions, regardless of whether they are perpetrated by Israel or the Palestinian National Authority.

■ A rejection of violence and any policy aimed at finding a solution through military means, since this would only lead to loss of precious lives and an increase of bitterness and hatred, and will never achieve either jus-

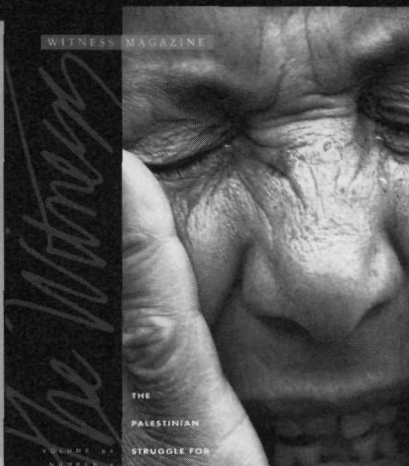
tice or security. More weapons, and greater reliance on them, are only counterproductive.

■ A uniform principled resistance to Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories as illegal and immoral elements that are not only unjust but also destructive for the possibility of a peaceful compromise. We must seek a united front of bringing international pressure to bear in the direction of a solution based on justice. This can include elements of boycotts, economic sanctions, nonviolent protests, and moral isolation of persons or institutions that support oppression and occupation. Israel is extremely sensitive to outside pressure, and often fancies itself as part of Europe and the Western world. It cannot tolerate for long being ostracized on moral grounds. Unlike the South African apartheid regime, it does not have the minerals and physical resources to withstand for long such ostracism. Yet in South Africa, it was precisely those sanctions, based on moral principles and international law, that brought the end to the apartheid regime; therefore those who are concerned with peace and justice should not belittle the moral power at their command if they seek a principled opposition to occupation, apartheid and repression as represented by the settlements.

■ Finally, we must not let the agenda of our struggle for peace and justice be set by others who do not share our values. We must create our own narrative and be ever skeptical of the "solutions" cooked up by those primarily responsible for the problem. We must find the courage to resist the accepted wisdom regarding the peace process and insist on genuine peace that conforms to our ethics and values, even if it means rejecting the "peace" process. ●

Jonathan Kuttab is a Palestinian human rights lawyer who is on the board of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. See: <www.fmep.org/images/maps/map0007_1.jpg> for a map showing the West Bank after the Second Israeli Redeployment (FRD), according to the Sharm al-Sheikh Memorandum.

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FINDING HOPE IN POLITICAL

Samia Khoury and Terry Greenblatt on peace and justice

*A conversation facilitated by
Gina Benevento*

SAMIA KHOURY is president of Rawdat El-Zuhur, a coeducational elementary school for the lower-income community in East Jerusalem, and treasurer of the board of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center. Terry Greenblatt is director of Bat Shalom, a national Israeli women's peace organization that is the Israeli partner in the Jerusalem Link, and co-founder and former director of Kol Ha-Isha, West Jerusalem's feminist center. Their conversation, held last May at the offices of the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem, was moderated by Gina Benevento, a filmmaker currently producing a documentary on Hayder Abd al-Shafi, chief Palestinian negotiator at the 1991 Madrid and 1992–93 Washington peace talks.

Gina Benevento: The conversation today is between a Jewish Israeli woman, Terry Greenblatt, and a Palestinian Christian woman, Samia Khoury, at a time of extreme political crisis here in Israel/Palestine.

Samia, a recent e-mail you sent out commenting on the crisis here opened with a quote from Mark 14:34: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death." What is the reality that you live today as a Palestinian?

Samia Khoury: Discouraged. For the first time since the occupation, I really feel



Samia Khoury (left), a Palestinian Christian, and Terry Greenblatt

scared. I am normally a very optimistic person, even since the 1967 war. And in all of my volunteer work, I have never given up hope on anything. I work with children, and I feel that it is very, very important to keep open and to look at the bright side of life, in spite of everything that's going on. Sometimes even my friends are surprised. I

walk in a room and say, "Good morning." And they say, "How can you be so bright this morning with all that's happening?" It's surviving. But these days I cannot help but be scared, be worried. Every day my grandchildren go to school, I pray for the day to end without any injuries or any drastic happenings. So it is this heavy burden on my chest.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN WOMEN

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an Israeli Jew, during their conversation in Jerusalem last spring

It just shuts you off, your imagination, your freedom, your thinking, everything. You cannot think to yourself, I want to go see my brother, see my sister, or see my relatives at a funeral. You realize, Oh, this needs a lot of planning! You have to call so many people to check whether the roads are safe or whether you can get there. So it's very dismal.

I personally have a share in all this suffering. One of my cousins was assassinated. My brother was deported. My son went to jail. At the beginning of the occupation in 1967, the Israeli Army took part of the Birzeit College buildings that my family had founded and owned before it was developed into a university. We gradually were able to get over these

things and forgive for the sake of peace. We made more and more concessions. But now it is as if they're telling us, "We just want to get rid of you and that's it."

The complacency of the world community is also unacceptable in this time. After the Nazi regime, when people used to say they didn't know, still we blamed them. Now it's happening again. Of course, the Jewish community always said, "Never again." But it should be never again for everybody. Everybody!

This desperation is what's worrying me. The desperation of people. When people become desperate it is catastrophic. You don't know what they will do. And this is why I say the world community is stretching their luck. And Israel is stretching its luck with these young, desperate people who have nothing to lose.

Still, I cannot lose hope. I keep having hope in the humanity of people.

Gina Benevento: Is there a difference between your generation of Palestinians and the younger generation of Palestinians?

Samia Khoury: I always feel privileged that I belong to a generation that experienced living in Palestine before 1948 as Palestinians, whether we were Christians, Jews or Muslims. When we were young people and children, we had Jewish neighbors, and they were very friendly. We were all the time taking back and forth plates of goodies. And these people even came and visited my parents after 1967. We were all moved by that gesture, but I was not at home to see them. My children and grandchildren don't know the Jews except as an Israeli occupying force. And it is very difficult to explain to them the difference.

Gina Benevento: Terry, what is your reality now as an Israeli?

Terry Greenblatt: It's probably better for me to address that on a few different levels: Terry the Jew, Terry the director of Bat Shalom, Terry the activist, someone who believes that it is my responsibility, it is my duty, during these times, to protest in whatever way I can what is being done in my name. As a Jewish Israeli living here for about 32 years now, I have to say that it has never been more difficult to simultaneously stay open-hearted and clear-sighted to what is going on and at the same time not become self-hating. I believe that if there are enough people like me who are willing to look at the truth with an open heart and mind, that we will eventually have some sort of an impact on the policies and the ideologies that seem to be driving our leadership and the majority of our population. But we have not found the way of challenging ourselves to accept that there is another story or another narrative. Nor have we been forced by the international community to maintain reasonable, responsible international standards vis-à-vis our behavior. So without generating internal pressure and unchallenged by external pressure, we can look at what's happening in Israel today and say, "No surprise."

We founded a country that was supposed to provide its citizens with all kinds of security. And those very seeds that were planted to begin this enterprise, were mostly planted by people who had come from outside of this region. So there was no real ethnic connection. There's a religious connection, there's a historical connection, there's a connection as a result of our historic persecution, but we're not of the earth. That became very clear, certainly, as the Palestinian dialogue became more articulate and more effective at pointing out the connection between people and land, the community and its land.

And the other thing is that we came very damaged. There's a whole psychology of Holocaust survivors and what that means. We never went through a process where we said, "Wait a second, we experienced a hell on earth. That had to affect us. That had to twist our ability to see, to hear, to do, to love."

Gina Benevento: Why would Israel ever make the changes you say are needed?

Terry Greenblatt: As you know, one of the political positions that Israel has taken for quite a while now is that without being forced to, we won't. Therefore we are turning to the international community and saying: You need to come, number one, to protect the Palestinians and, number two, to protect us against ourselves. So, no, I don't see the signs of Israel coming to some enlightened position and saying, "Wow!" But there are these small groups of people and organizations who remain committed to holding a clear vision of the possibility of a just peace and are using the almost insignificant power that they have for those purposes. So, even in these days, there's a voice coming out of Israel that will never allow anybody to look back and say: There was a consensus in the country that what was happening was okay. No. There were those who stood up and said, "Not in my name, not representing me," and who did whatever they could to try to stop it.

Gina Benevento: Should you two even be here talking to each

other? Samia, isn't there the whole question of not engaging with "normalization"?

Samia Khoury: Well, I don't think talking to Terry is normalization. I am a woman and she is a woman and we're both concerned about peace and justice. I think that's not creating an artificially "normal" situation. This is our duty, our responsibility as women to care for the human life.

Terry Greenblatt: Nobody likes to sit with the enemy. The only reason you do that is because if you don't, you'll die. There's no other choice. So I certainly appreciate the importance of dialogue, but the word is problematic. "Dialogue" has been co-opted to be a label on efforts that in the past have not challenged in the ways that they needed to challenge.

But political dialogue between women is where I find hope. This is because women bring ourselves to the table. We don't separate out the pieces that are inappropriate. We have fewer rules, we have fewer constrictions.

Gina Benevento: For the West and for Israelis, the Oslo peace process was great. There was peace, things were improving.

Samia Khoury: There was euphoria about the peace process on the Palestinian side, too. Of course, many of us realized that Oslo did not have the components for the just peace we sought. But people were so tired of the occupation, they felt maybe the peace process was a good sign. It was a start. I remember the first Christmas after Oslo, the euphoria. People went to pray in Bethlehem. There were no soldiers, Israeli soldiers, there was nothing. So the euphoria, I think, was in both places. But the disappointment for the Palestinians was much more than for the Israelis, because the Israelis were simply giving back what was not theirs in the first place.

Gina Benevento: From the signing of the Oslo accords up through October 2000 I moved between the two societies and it was clear to me that there was going to be an eruption, that Palestinians couldn't continue to live this way. It was also clear that Israelis were blissfully unaware of this, or they didn't want to be aware. So when the peace process fell apart, it didn't surprise me or other people, but it surprised Israelis. Terry, what is your recollection and experience of that?

Terry Greenblatt: During the peace process, you couldn't have listened to Palestinian women and remained inside of that bubble of: Oh great, the Palestinians are walking toward peace and soon we're going to have a peace and it's going to be over. But, you're absolutely right, that was the pervasive sense in the country. It was, of course, supported by and encouraged by the American and Western press. Meanwhile, the Palestinians were adding up another year of occupation, another year of occupation, another year of occupation and nothing was changing on the ground.

So, post-October Israeli Jews were surprised that all of a sudden we don't have a peace partner and the dream is gone. And the other surprise was what happened vis-à-vis Palestinians who are citizens of Israel, that moment in which Israelis felt an attack from inside. What that gave birth to was Sharon as our prime minister, with no effective political opposition inside of our government.

I read the other day that a survey of Palestinian citizens of Israel showed that only 32 percent considered themselves Israeli. So that means that 68 percent of Palestinian Israeli citizens living inside the country who are due equal rights and equal access don't feel identified at all with their nationality. And for the first time they were unequivocal, they were articulate, they said we will no longer accept second-class citizenship and we will no longer be forced to show our loyalty to this country by cutting off our connection and our solidarity with our people, with our brothers and sisters, which has been the "catch-22" that they have been in all these years.

Samia Khoury: How much can these women's peace groups make a dent on Israel? I read this item about the Israeli soldier who refused to serve and how supportive his mother was. Will the Israeli women be able to get their young men out of the Occupied Territories? This seems to be our only hope. Our hope and your hope.

Terry Greenblatt: Right now, I see three things that are happening — and happening dynamically. One is the women's protest movement. There is almost not a day that goes by that there isn't somebody somewhere out in the streets protesting something. Which is a new peace process — in other words, an energized anti-occupation peace process that acknowledges that when one country is occupying another, they cannot simultaneously sit down as equal partners in negotiations.

Number two is the effort of Bat Shalom and other groups to create as many opportunities as there can be for providing women — and men — with the opportunity to talk and learn.

And the third thing that is happening is that for the first time there is a willingness to consider as part of legitimate public discourse the issue of conscientious objection, which has been, as you know, a taboo in our society. While there is a women's group that has initiated support for conscientious objectors and is talking about the connection between militarism and feminism, militarism and peace, my sense is that this movement is being energized by young people.

Samia Khoury: Well, that's good.

Terry Greenblatt: Yes, but somehow we women forget that we still have no power and as wide as the circle has become, somebody has still created the circle. Otherwise, they would not let us be doing what we're doing. We need to be able to envision beyond the structures and the institutions and men's either/or. As women, the first thing we should think is: If he's saying there's only one option, there must be 20; now I have to think of those 20, and then make my decision. But I will not accept the proposition that I either love you or you're my enemy, you're either Israeli or Palestinian.



Women in Black: An International Movement of Women for Peace

by Gila Svirsky

THE INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT OF WOMEN IN BLACK began in Israel in January 1988, one month after the first Palestinian Intifada broke out, with a small group of Israeli women who carried out a simple form of protest: Once a week at the same hour and in the same location — a major traffic intersection — they donned black clothing and raised a black sign in the shape of a hand with white lettering that read "Stop the Occupation."

The idea spread quickly and spontaneously to other places in Israel. It was a simple form of protest that women could do easily. We didn't have to get to the big city, we could bring our children, there was no chanting or marching, and the medium was the message. Within months, vigils sprang up throughout Israel.

Several months after the first Women in Black vigil in Israel, "solidarity vigils" began in other countries: Initial reports came from the U.S. and Canada, and these later spread to Europe and Australia. Some vigils were primarily Jewish, while in other cities, the groups were mixed Jewish and Palestinian.

Around 1990, Women in Black vigils took off with a life of their own. They formed in many countries, and many of these had nothing to do with the Israeli occupation. In Italy, Women in Black protest a range of issues, from the Israeli occupation to the violence of the Mafia and other

continued in sidebar on page 26

organized crime. In Germany, Women in Black have protested neo-Nazism, racism against migrant workers and nuclear arms. Women in Black in Belgrade and Zagreb set a profound example of interethnic cooperation that was an inspiration to their countrywomen and men. And, in India, Women in Black hold vigils that call for an end to the ill treatment of women by religious fundamentalists.

Women in Black has become a movement of women of conscience of all denominations and nationalities who hold vigils to protest violence in their part of the world: war, interethnic conflict, militarism, the arms industry, racism, neo-Nazism, violence against women, violence in the neighborhoods, etc. Each vigil is autonomous, setting its own policy and guidelines, though in all the vigils the women dress in black, symbolizing the tragedy of the victims of violence. What unites us all is our commitment to justice and a world free of violence.

The movement of Women in Black in Israel won the Aachen Peace Prize (1991); the peace award of the city of San Giovanni d'Asso in Italy (1994); and the Jewish Peace Fellowship's "Peacemaker Award" (2001). In 2001, the international movement of Women in Black was honored with the Millennium Peace Prize for Women, awarded by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

On June 8, 2001, 150 groups of Women in Black from around the world (listed in the web site below) held vigils to protest Israel's ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories.

This international protest was initiated and organized by the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, an umbrella organization of 10 Israeli women's peace organizations.

Gila Svirsky is a peace and human rights activist in Israel. She is co-founder of the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, which has engaged in a number of acts of resistance to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. Svirsky was born in the U.S. and has lived in Israel for the past 35 years. For more information on the Coalition of Women for a Just Peace see <<http://www.geocities.com/EndTheOccupation/>>.

Samia Khoury: You're very right about this option thing. I mean, when people tell me: You have no other option, if you don't get on the train now, you'll miss the train; you'll miss the bus. Well, I'd rather miss a bus that's going to crash than get on that bus. Talking about the Palestinians inside Israel, have there been Palestinian women, from inside Israel, active with you in a large number?

Terry Greenblatt: Yes, they have been active. We have two centers, one in Jerusalem and one up North. The Northern region is more heavily populated with Palestinian citizens of Israel than Jewish citizens of Israel. However, if you're asking me if their agenda, if their political agenda, has informed Bat Shalom's policies and declarations, the answer is no. If Bat Shalom is an organization that represents Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Israelis, then it almost needs to have two agendas, two political understandings. That is something that we have been pushing for in the last year and a half, or trying to raise in whichever way possible. Because Bat Shalom's position, up until now, has basically been a Bat Shalom Jewish Israeli position.

As one of the Palestinian women on the board of Bat Shalom said to me two or three months ago, "Because I like you and respect you, I've got to tell you something." I said, "What?" She said, "I love that you brought more Palestinian women onto the board of directors. And I love that you keep pushing us to bring our agenda. But you have not heard our agenda yet, because we understand that the crisis, the critical situation, is with the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Once that is finished," she said, "I will blow you all out of the water. You need to know that there are mornings I wake up and before I open my eyes, the first thought in my head, I only wish God will only allow it, is that I will open my eyes and not see a Jew today."

Samia Khoury: My heavens!

Terry Greenblatt: This is somebody living as a citizen in this country, in Bat Shalom, continuing to work with Jews. You cannot say she is somebody who is a separatist. And to wish me good morning, to participate, she needs for me to know that that's what's going on with her. I need to be able to hear that. I can't invisibilize that. I can't say: "I love you when you come and speak with me to a group, but I don't want to hear that you can't see a Jew because of what the Jews have done."

That's the way we're trying to work. That's what it means to prevail.

Samia Khoury: This is the hurt of injustice. But I think the Israelis and the Palestinians are destined to live side-by-side. Even destined to live together. I always say it's like a Catholic marriage. I think there is so much animosity, though, that maybe there needs to be a break, a complete Palestinian state, and a complete Israeli state. And then, maybe, once there is peace, this eventually will go back to one democratic secular state because for both Israel and Palestine that would be much healthier and more viable.

Gina Benevento: I thought maybe we'd touch a little bit on what

kind of religious and philosophical basis you're working from. For me, as an international Christian, it is what Martin Luther King, Jr., said when he went to Birmingham: "I'm here because injustice is here." Unless the Israelis deport me, I will stay here until I can help make some change. I know that Sabeel also has a credo that: I will stand for justice, I can do no other. So, I was curious about the commitment that you have to justice, you as a secular Jew, Terry, and you, Samia, as a practicing Palestinian Christian?

Samia Khoury: As a mother, if you treat one child differently to the other, you know what that's going to do. That's going to bring trouble. That's going to have them at each other's throats. Even not in your internal family. On Sunday, if one aunt comes in and treats your son differently to your daughter, your daughter is going to say: Oh, that's a nasty aunt; why did she give him two pieces of chocolate when she gave me one? This happens every day in life. So, whether you're religious or not, this is the structure of life. If you want peace, you have to have justice. Justice is the code of life, I feel. It is basic in everything. It gives you peace of mind, it gives you peace of your home, peace of your office, and so it extends to peace of your society. People live equally. Justice prevails and everybody is happy. If only the world community can abide by the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you."

Gina Benevento: How do you, as a Palestinian, keep that belief and commitment to justice when every day, everything that you do, you're met with injustice?

Samia Khoury: I don't know. You just have to work at it and prove that if you don't have justice you're not going to have the security, you're not going to have the peace. And this is proven every day. You cannot really back up and say: Okay, I'll give up on justice. You cannot give up on justice, because it would be catastrophic. Of course, you can never talk about 100-percent justice, especially in terms of political issues. If I wanted 100-percent justice, I would say, "I want to go back to my house in Upper Baka'a in West Jerusalem, I want my house where I was living." This is 100-percent justice.

This is why I think the Israelis are scared of the word justice, because they feel that justice means annihilation of the state of Israel. But in my dictionary, justice does not mean annihilation. It has been very clear that what we are asking is for relevant justice. We have accepted to establish our state on 22 percent only of historic Palestine. We are saying that very clearly. When you want to make peace, everybody has to make compromises and we have already made ours.

Terry Greenblatt: I continue to work against injustice because it is intimately connected to my own freedom. As long as I understand the world in that way, if justice is the social contract, the ideological contract between human beings or countries, then that's the denomination that I deal in. As an Israeli Jew there's an element of undoing or redoing or feeling that sense of responsibility to do better, do different, to try and make an individual and a communal contribu-

tion to this land that is so very special and so unique, that does justice to this divine piece of land so that whatever history will remember, or whatever contribution the Jewish people will be able to make here, that it is one of honor and deserving of the other people who live here, deserving of the other religions that are here.

Gina Benevento: Terry, what do you expect of the progressive Jewish community? And Samia, for you, what do you ask of the Christian community in the U.S.?

Terry Greenblatt: For the progressive Jewish community to be a friend and an ally to me and what I'm trying to do here, I need them to understand that they are no longer supporting Israel, or at least the kind of Israel that I believe that they would like to see, by not doing whatever they can to pressure their own governments, their own communities, to hold us accountable in the same way that they themselves hold their own countries accountable. This separate, special standard that they have awarded us, if in the past it was believed that this was the way to show your love, solidarity, support for Israel, no longer is acceptable.

Samia Khoury: Well, I would say the same thing about the Christian leaders. If Christians had been more vocal in 1948 even, it would have made a difference. Now we are hearing more voices. We see church commissions coming and they're more interested. But interest is different from action. There has to be more action. If this is their duty as Christian leaders, as church people, are they willing to stand up in the pulpit and say: We have done these people wrong, we have to address this injustice and help force Israel, force the American government to stop sending aid to Israel to oppress people? Justice will liberate us and it will also liberate Israel from being an oppressor, because in the process of being an oppressor, you are being dehumanized.

Terry Greenblatt: I just want to add one thing. Many of the groups who have been coming since October have been Christian church-related, interfaith, and so on. Something I hear again and again is how difficult it is to try in America to present an alternative view because people are immediately labeled anti-Semites. So I think the Jewish community needs to serve as allies with the Christian community so that when they are attacked in that way, they are not left out there hanging.

Gina Benevento: Is there any reason for hope for the future?

Samia Khoury: That's just like asking us: Why don't you die tomorrow? Of course there's hope. As long as there is life there is hope. I continue to have hope as long as there are Terrys, and Samias, and Ginas in this world — and as long as there are children who come and say, "Good morning Grandma," there is reason for hope. ●

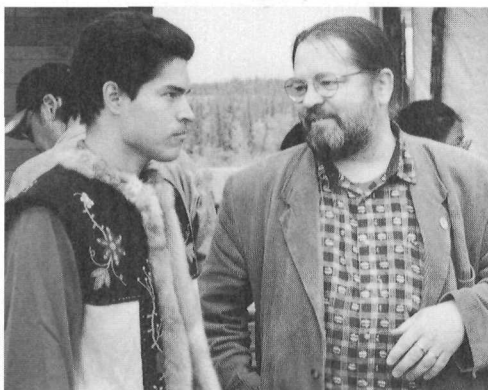
Human rights versus oil

By Julie A. Wortman

This past June 21–25, as small bush planes ferried pristine-wilderness-seeking eco-tourists in and out of the dirt landing strip on the edge of this South Slope Alaskan settlement, about 250 Gwich'in, along with an assortment of fellow indigenous-rights and environmental activists, were gathered in Arctic Village's (Vashraii K'oo) community hall to celebrate Gwich'in identity and achievement with dance and testimony.

Orchestrated by the Fairbanks-based Gwich'in Steering Committee, "Gwich'in Gathering 2001" was also aimed at spotlighting for outsiders the basis for Gwich'in opposition to opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) to oil drilling — because, as Episcopal Bishop Mark MacDonald pointed out to the largely Episcopalian audience, "the lobby for drilling has been communicating untruthful things about this issue."

"Drilling in the coastal plain of the Arctic Refuge, no matter how carefully, will substantially disrupt the birthing grounds of the Porcupine River Caribou herd," Steve Gin-



Evon Peter and Mark MacDonald.



Evon Peter presides at dedication of new solar panels for the Arctic Village washeteria.

nis, a Gwich'in Koyukon Athabascan born and raised in Fort Yukon, Alaska, told the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs last May. Ginnis is President of the Tanana Chiefs Conference, a consortium of 42 Interior Alaska Native tribes.

"Gwich'in people on both sides of the [U.S./Canada] border share these animals as a material resource and as a vital cultural component," Ginnis pointed out to the Committee. "Along with our cousins in the Yukon Territory, we consider the birthing grounds a sacred place. It is unacceptable to consider placing industrial development in this area."

Gwich'in Steering Committee member Sarah James reiterated this stance during one of the talk sessions this past June. "This is human rights versus oil," she stated flatly. "That's all it is."

But few non-Natives want to accept this simple formulation of the conflict.

Only a couple of days before Gathering 2001, President George W. Bush's Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, had flown into Arctic Village for a four-hour consultation with Vashraii K'oo Neets'arii tribal leaders. Norton, among whose official responsibilities is the protection of Native rights, was apparently unmoved by village elders' concern that opening the Arctic Refuge to

drilling would rob the tribe's children of their heritage and traditional way of life. Norton, who reportedly stressed the heating needs of the far larger number of children in the Lower 48, scolded villagers that they should "broaden your world view," a remark frequently repeated with head shakes during the gathering as participants reported on the tribe's participation in global solidarity campaigns and educational programs (a satellite dish at the village school makes internet access and telecommunications possible). The tribe's First Chief, Evon Peter, 25, college-educated and widely traveled, personifies this village's orientation to the future.

Ironically, those favoring drilling in the Refuge also seek to discredit the Gwich'in position by arguing just the opposite — that the Gwich'in world view is already so broad that Gwich'in objections to drilling in the Refuge based on the threat to their traditional subsistence lifestyle are disingenuous. James and others from the tribal villages in this region admit that progressive environmental degradation over the past generation has made it more and more difficult to find sufficient game to keep villagers alive. And modern village life runs on electricity for lights (a generator at the landing field produces it at 51 cents per kilowatt), gasoline for the four-wheelers most everyone uses for

Anne Cox

Julie Wortman

transportation (brought in by barge or airplane at a cost of \$4 a gallon) and heating oil for withstanding the Arctic's long, frigid winters (\$3 per gallon). Still, caribou and moose meat were prominent staples at Gathering 2001 meals and speaker after speaker stressed that outsiders are incapable of judging the boundaries of "traditional" and "non-traditional."

"Hunting and fishing rights are not just about food in your mouth, it's a way of life," said Deborah Vo of the Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, an Athabascan with marketing and business management degrees to her credit. "These things define our language, our songs, the roles we learn. Education is important, but where you are from is also important."

In downplaying such arguments, pro-drilling advocates say the Gwich'in are pawns of the uncompromisingly anti-development, presumably Anglo, conservation community which, they say, highlights the human rights angle only to further its own pro-wilderness agenda. Alaska's television and print media outlets are stuffed with oil company ads that counter conservationists' claim that oil drilling is bad for the environment — and downplaying the fact that in 1996 alone, for example, there were 427 substantial spills of either oil or other hazardous substances at Prudhoe Bay — by showing apparently healthy, contented caribou dotting the Prudhoe Bay oil fields.

"Some people use this as a pretext for suggesting that caribou are not harmed by industrial development," Steve Ginnis testified at last May's Senate hearing. "What you may not know is that caribou use the oil fields as a safe harbor from predators — wolves and bears. These high-food-chain animals are less likely to exist within the Prudhoe Bay industrial zone."

The Tanana Chiefs Conference is worried that drilling in the Arctic Refuge will affect many other animals than the caribou — polar bear, musk oxen, arctic fox and wolverine. The Chiefs also point out that little attention



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Eco-tourists use the landing field at Arctic Village as a staging area for expeditions into ANWR.

has been paid to the impact of the oil companies' dependence on ice roads and ice pads on the fragile hydrology of the region.

Environmental concerns, in fact, are a high priority for the Gwich'in and for other Native peoples, as Tom Goldtooth, Coordinator for the Minnesota-based Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) stressed during Gathering 2001. IEN has just approved a Native Energy Campaign to educate tribal leaders on renewable energy. During Gathering 2001 Evon Peter, in fact, presided over the dedication of a new solar-powered energy system (for the eight months of sunlight) for its "washeteria," which provides washing machines and showers for the 130 or so people who live in Arctic Village year round.

Andrea Carmen, of the International Treaty Council, emphasized that for Native peoples, the distinction between environmental and human rights is artificial — a product of the so-called "developed" world's compartmentalized mindset.

"We cannot just speak of the rights of humans," Carmen told Gathering 2001. "It is much better to speak of 'natural world responsibility.' Indian people are responsible for the idea of sustainable development. We're fighting for the entire world here."

Another complexity of the Arctic Refuge conflict which non-Native people emphasize is the distinction between tribal governments and the "corporations" set up under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971, a piece of federal legislation pushed by Alaskan legislators to make it easier for government to resolve Native claims to the state's mineral and surface rights.

"The U.S. government pulled off an amaz-

ing feat of assimilation by creating a corporate structure that undermines tribal governments," said Heather Kendell Miller, an attorney with the Native American Rights Fund. The Gwich'in, which already had a recognized "reservation" of land (which only partially covered the area of their traditional homeland), opted to have the "Village Corporation" created under the 1971 legislation give the land officially recognized as theirs back to traditional tribal control. This meant the tribe opted out of the corporation structure imposed by ANCSA, so that if ANWR's coastal plain is opened to drilling, they will not be a beneficiary as part of that structure. This has seemed to pit the Gwich'in, whose primary concern is the welfare of the birthing grounds of the Porcupine River Caribou, to which they have hunting rights, against peoples such as the Inupiat, who are part of the ANCSA corporation structure. The Inupiat, who do not object to opening the Refuge to drilling, are traditionally whale hunters who reportedly object to oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean, a stance which Gwich'in attending Gathering 2001 said they support.

Despite the apparent intricacies of the conflict, what remained clear as Gathering 2001 drew to a close is that the forces which favor opening the last remaining 5 percent of the Arctic coastal plain to industrial development are not intending to back down from this fight. Also clear is that Sarah James' succinct characterization of the dispute, "human rights versus oil," inescapably remains the very simple core issue. ●

Julie A. Wortman is editor/publisher of The Witness.

Rx: save the old-growth forests

Pet owners have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels than non-pet-owners and recover more quickly from surgery, according to a recent article by physician Howard Frumkin in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Frumkin also cites studies which indicate that gardening promotes mental health and reduces violence in prisons and other institutions; viewing natural landscapes reduces fear, anger and the incidence of headaches; and that wilderness experiences are therapeutic for psychiatric patients, emotionally disturbed children and adolescents, bereaved people, rape and



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incest survivors, patients with cancer and end-stage renal disease, post-traumatic distress syndrome and addiction disorders.

Frumkin, a doctor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at Emory University, writes that this evidence supports John Muir's declaration that "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."

In a commentary on Frumkin's article, Harvard zoologist Edward Wilson writes that "the engagement of the new forms of preventive medicine envisioned in Frumkin's essay will be welcomed by environmentalists for much the same reason that the intervention of physicians in peacemaking and the care of refugees has been rewarded by two Nobel Peace Prizes, thus far. One of the principal goals of environmental thinkers today is the formulation of a sound conservation ethic grounded in the deep psychological and spiritual needs of human beings. Dr. Frumkin has shown, among his other enlightenments in this essay, why it is wiser, for example, to save the last of the rich old-growth forests in the permanent service of preventive medicine

than to cut them down for the short-term purchase of more pharmaceuticals."

Fundamentalism and globalization

Religious fundamentalism can be a reaction to globalization, Indian author Arundhati Roy said in an interview with *The Progressive* (4/01). "Indian intellectuals today feel radical when they condemn fundamentalism, but not many people are talking about the links between privatization, globalization and fundamentalism. Globalization suits the Indian elite to a 'T.' Fundamentalism doesn't. It's also a class problem. When people stop some film from being shot or burn a book, it's not just that they are saying, this is against Indian culture. They are also saying, you Westernized, elite, English-speaking people are having too much of a good time."

Navigating like a man

Erin Swenson, an ordained Presbyterian minister who chose to undergo male-to-female sex-change procedures, writes in *The Other Side* (5-6/01) about experiencing patriarchy in a new way.

"In spite of ourselves, many — perhaps all — of us continue to hold the status of men above the status of women," Swenson writes. "Nothing has illuminated this for me more than my own transition from the social

role of male to female. During the first few months after I began living full-time as a female, I had a problem bumping into people. At first I thought it was simply a kind of emotional dizziness that had come from finally allowing myself full expression of my true identity. But I began to notice that my collisions were almost exclusively with men.

"It took much self-analysis before I realized that men and women navigate public spaces differently. Men tend to walk directly toward their destination, and women tend toward the more circuitous routes. I realized suddenly one day, after another such collision (again with a man), that men take precedence over women in public space. The same man who might hold open a door for me in one situation would walk right into me on the sidewalk. I realized that men have the right of way! Having navigated most of my life as a man, I simply was navigating like a man in public while men were expecting me to navigate like a woman. Hence we collided!"

Death penalty COs

The newsletter of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund reports that a member of the Illinois legislature has introduced a bill that would extend conscientious objector status to death-penalty opponents.

"The legislation would call on the state to redirect income taxes paid by people who hold religious, ethical or moral objections to the death penalty by putting the money into the common school fund. Arguments against the measure make points that are familiar to those of us who lobby for the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Bill: It would be too costly to carry out; the Illinois Department of Revenue cannot assume the unusual duty of certifying a person as a capital punishment objector; it can be very difficult to determine the sincerity of someone's belief; it would set a precedent that could open the door for other groups to set their own priorities for how they would like their income taxes spent.

"Rep. Mary Lou Cowlshaw, the bill's sponsor, says, 'The proposal does not call for

the objectors to pay less in taxes but gives them the comfort that taxes they do pay will be spent on something else.'"

"Erasing the life of a fellow human being is an issue of greater moral magnitude than other issues and so stands separate from others," the Peace Tax Fund newsletter adds.

'Torture trade'

An Amnesty International report on the "torture trade" provides "numerous examples of U.S. products being used by torturers overseas, as well as in the U.S.," *Multinational Monitor* (4/01) reports. "Amnesty has compiled a list of more than 80 U.S. manufacturers and suppliers of electro-shock weapons and restraints.

"Amnesty International is urging the U.S. and other governments to ban the use, manufacture, promotion and trade of police and security equipment whose use is inherently cruel, inhumane or degrading. The group includes leg irons, electro-shock stun belts and inherently painful devices such as serrated thumbcuffs in this category. Amnesty is also calling for a suspension of trade in equipment that has shown a substantial risk of abuse or unwarranted injury, including legcuffs, thumbcuffs, restraint chairs and pepper gas weapons."

'Jazz funeral'

Soulforce, an interfaith network of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals and their families, protested anti-gay Southern Baptist teaching at the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans, La., in June. The protest culminated in a jazz funeral procession carrying a coffin filled with letters from and about those who have been hurt by Southern Baptist teaching. Supporters tried to take the coffin into the Superdome, but were stopped by police and ordered to leave. Thirty-four people were arrested and charged with trespassing.

Volunteer opportunities

The Commission on Voluntary Service and Action's new 2001 catalog of volunteer oppor-

tunities, *Invest Yourself* is now available. It lists over 200 non-government agencies that seek volunteers. CVSA, P.O. Box 117, New York, NY 10009; 718-638-8487. ●

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Palestinian farmer Abu Houli lives near Dir El Balah in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip. His home, orchard and well house were bulldozed by the Israeli Army. (Photo by Mike DuBose, United Methodist News Service)

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