

## FFIPP Winter 02-03 Delegation

Report by Robert Winston.

December 27, 2002

### **Bet Shean.**

There is no question that Israel airline security is ubiquitous and comprehensive, if somewhat intrusive. When I arrived at the El Al Airline check-in at JFK Airport, I was closely interrogated for about fifteen minutes as to the purpose of my trip and for information about the laptop computer that I carried, where it was bought, was it off the shelf or from the stockroom, had anyone had access to it beside myself, etc. This was to be expected of course, but I was also asked if I celebrated the Jewish holidays, which was the last one that I celebrated and how did I celebrate it (it was Chanukah, I responded, we had “dreidelach to play with and latkes to eat”), did I observe the Sabbath and how was it observed, could I recite the Sabbath prayers, for lighting the candles, for blessing the bread, could I speak any Hebrew, where did I learn it and what had I done on my visit to Israel two years ago, noting the previous visa stamp in my passport. Then, after I was released to go to the ticketing counter, the inquisitor ran over to me to say that she had one more question to ask: “If you are Jewish, why is your last name Winston”? “Weinstein”, I replied, “it used to be Weinstein and my father had changed it in order to increase his chances of being accepted into dental school at time of strict Jewish quotas for admission”. Welcome to Israel and the Right of Return, I mused, with a few qualifications, at the end of the year, 2002.

Before this period of the second Intifida, the drive from the airport to my son Micah’s kibbutz in the Jezreel Valley might have consisted of noticing the many changes since my last visit, a new shopping center here, a new office tower, there, etc. This time, however, Micah also pointed out the oil storage tank that was the target of an attempted terrorist bombing. The small bomb was detonated but the fuel was not highly combustible and now the government is trying to relocate the fuel stage facilities further from high-density residential areas. We then passed the site of a deadly suicide bus bombing last June at the Meggido Junction, which claimed the lives of 16 people. We drove near the city of Um El-Fahm, the scene of destruction and death at the start of the current two-year old Intifida. And, on the road to the top of the Gilboa Mountain range this morning, we passed the roadside shrine, cut from Jerusalem limestone, to the young teenage girls who were ambushed one evening a year ago; one was shot to death, another seriously injured. Now, new barbed and concertina wire fencing was evident everywhere and trees along the roadside bear a swath of red paint, marking those that had lower branches removed to take away cover from would be snipers. The fences keep the Palestinians out and/or keep the Israelis in. Razor wire cuts both ways. These are some of the constant reminders of the current war in Israel.

This morning I visited Neve Malkishua, a drug abuse rehabilitation village situated on Mt. Malkishua, the highest peak of the Gilboa Mountain Range, just northeast of the West Bank. Malkishua is the southern most Jewish community on Mt. Gilboa and sits on

the “Green Line”, the old borderline between Israel and Jordan. Directly across the border is the Arab village of Jileboon, which had maintained, until recently, cordial relations with the Jewish communities in the area. Below and spreading southwest is the city of Jenin.

Micah had arranged for me to visit his English class of about 14 teenagers and to share with them the purposes of the FFIPP delegation to Israel and the Territories. One resident asked if I was afraid to go the West Bank and Gaza and another wished success for my delegation. I asked if they could see themselves living peacefully among their Arab neighbors after the past two years of violence. I hope that our exchange left a few previously closed minds somewhat ajar. Before leaving I stopped in to thank the Principal of the school for allowing me to speak to the class. She told me that she had a son in the army special forces. She said that he was being trained to kill Palestinians and destroy their homes. With palpable sadness she concluded, “I did not raise my child to do this”.

This evening, after a bountiful Shabbat dinner of Moroccan style Nile perch, chicken in black bean sauce, basmati rice, olives and pickles, humus, and challah, we settled in to watch a show on television set in a staged nightclub filled with a young and spirited audience. The performers sang and swayed to songs that celebrated love and hope. Near the end of the broadcast there was a newsflash, reporting an attack on a yeshiva, a religious school, at Otni’el, near Arad and the Dead Sea. It reported that four students were killed, eight injured. In minutes we were shown the images of the latest Israeli victims of the Intifada. The nightly news had already broadcast today’s news of Palestinian casualties and a demonstration in Gaza.

As my 5 ½ year old granddaughter was being put to bed, she asked her mother where Grandpa Bob was going in the morning. She was told that I was going to meet with Israelis and Palestinians to talk about a peaceful solution to end the violence. “I know a solution”, she replied, “they need to talk and compromise”. As I prepare to get ready for bed myself, I wonder who will listen to the wisdom of a 51/2 year old Israeli child.

I planned to retire for the night but it is now 2:30 a.m. and I have turned on my computer, rather than lie in bed in a state of agitation. My mind is racing full speed. I wonder if I am able to grasp the enormity of this crisis so that I can comprehend and integrate it and intelligently report it in all of its complexity. It is a crisis of epic proportions; perhaps should I say of Biblical proportions? So much history, so much information to absorb and to analysis critically, so many emotions, so much pain, loss, and suffering. Must several generations pass before the wounds will heal or will they ever? “Where have all the flowers gone, long time passing” and “when will they ever learn, when will they ever learn?” Or is this the proverbial “conundrum, wrapped inside a riddle, within an enigma”? Is there a way back from the precipice? Will anyone listen to my granddaughter?

Tomorrow morning the FFIPP delegation gathers at Gan Shmuel, a 45 minute drive west of Bet Shean. I will be at the ready to leave at 8 a.m.

December 28, 2002

### **Gan Shmuel.**

Twelve members of the delegation gathered this morning at Gan Shmuel, located near the city of Hadera, midway between Israel's two major coastal cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa. Gan Shmuel is an old kibbutz, once quite ideologically left but now struggling to find a path between its early socialist roots and the demands of modernity and the effects of material success. The kibbutz economy is now partially dependent upon income from the lease of several retail stores in a nearby shopping mall and from two stores, which they operate directly.

The two speakers for the morning session provided a comprehensive historical context for understanding the present Intifada. The first from the perspective of Christian Palestinian Israeli poet, writer, and editor, Salem Jubran, who spoke of the restrictions of military rule imposed upon the Arabs living in Israel between 1948 and 1966, the confiscation of Arab lands, the restriction on new Arab settlements, which continues until today, and the widening social and economic gap between Jewish Israelis in professional, political, and administrative positions and the workforce of mostly Arab workers. He stressed the feeling of humiliation and marginalization experienced by Arabs in Israel and the momentous challenges they face in order to find a solution which assures mutual satisfaction and normalization of relations for both Arabs and Jews. He stated that there must be compromise, that both Jews and Palestinians are a fact, and noted the polls showing that 65% of Israelis will support the recognition of a Palestinian state.

The next speaker was Prof. Ilan Pappé, from Haifa University and author of several books on the history of Palestine and Israel. His tightly reasoned analysis, based on extensive research of official Israeli archive documents, deconstructed the traditional historical analysis and reframes it to present irrefutable evidence that the 1947-48 peace process to create the state of Israel was boycotted by the Palestinians because the principle of partitioning the territory of Palestine was not negotiable, only the percentage which would be allocated to the new Jewish state and that which would be relegated to the Palestinians, that there is no evidence whatsoever that there was a call from any Arab leader to Arabs living in Palestine to abandon their homes, and that 750,000 out of 900,000 Palestinians were expelled, at times brutally so, to become refugees. Pappé asserts that the greatest impediment to achieving lasting peace is the state of denial throughout the Israeli population that a historic injustice was done and that a truth and reconciliation process must be central to finding a lasting path to peace. That is to say, Israel must acknowledge the injustice done to Arabs living in pre-1948 Palestine, recognizing and accepting responsibility as a part of the peace and healing process consistent with United Nations Resolution 194, affirming the Right of Return, the right of the Palestinians to demand repatriation or compensation. His view may help to explain why the many attempts at crafting a lasting peace founders because Israeli negotiating positions offer to give back a portion of that land which was partitioned to the Arabs, the 22%, while the Palestinian view is that all of the West Bank and Gaza should be returned

to the Arabs because the historic partition already deprived the Palestinians of 78% of their historic lands. To express it in another way, the national mythology, deeply rooted within the Israeli and diaspora Jewish psyche, that the local Arab populations fled and were not forced out from their historic villages and fields, must be debunked and replaced by a new awareness based on fact, rather than myth. In just this way, the United States has had to examine its own national myth and confront the painful historic truths that native American land was confiscated and that one nation with liberty and justice, was not, and is not yet for all.

For lunch, the group drove to the Israeli Arab village of Ara, in the Wadi Valley, not far from Megiddo, the sight of Armageddon, the End of Days. There we heard from Azmi Beshara, a Palestinian member of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, who challenges the idea that a state which calls itself democratic can relegate second class citizenry to its Arab population. He illustrated this with the recent passage, by the Israeli government, of a law which says that any political party which does not recognize Israel as a Jewish state will be disqualified in national elections. That law is now being used to disqualify the Arab party of Azmi Bershara.

While we were digesting these bitter fruits of the recent Intifada, our hosts served us a generous twelve course meal and then took us on a tour of Wadi Ara , the Ara Valley, and explained the struggle to have the Israeli government move the location of the wall that is being constructed between the nearby Arab village of Meisser and its neighboring Jewish kibbutz, Metzger. It was at Kibbutz Metzger that one month ago a terrorist shot dead two of the children of the kibbutz along with their mother asleep in their apartment, a single women who had rented there because it was a nurturing community for her boys, age 4 and 5. They, along with two others of the kibbutz were killed, ironically, at a time when negotiations between the village and kibbutz were proceeding, the purpose of which was to convince the government to move the location of a permanent wall in order to preserve the integrity of the olive orchard and fields that are jointly cultivated and managed by both Jews and Arabs as well as to honor the historic good relations between the two populations. Residents of Metzger, as reported in the N.Y. Times in a front page article on December 17, believe that the kibbutz was a target “because it was an example of co-existence”. Under the present government, construction of a wall of nearly 70 miles is being erected to separate Jews from Arabs, in many instances moving the wall east of the Green Line, thereby enlarging Israeli lands.

That evening, at the home of a prominent member of Meisser, along with several Arab members of the village and their Israeli neighbors from kibbutz Metzger, we learned that every member of Meisser had volunteered to join the delegation to pay a condolence call at the kibbutz in the wake of the tragic attack. I was especially moved by the testimony from the teacher of the two young victims who had to provide succor to the classmates of the two boys while, at the same time, protecting the historic good relations and the strong ties to her Arab friends and neighbors. Her view and that of others in attendance provided our first glimmer of hope that peaceful coexistence was possible.

Before retiring to our hotel for the night, we visited the home of a resident of Zichron Ya'akov, a small hilltop Arab community which is not recognized by the Israeli government and which sustained the bulldozing of several of homes by the Israel army. I could only reflect on the disjunction between the two scenes, a teacher mourning the loss of the children and the villager the loss of his neighbor's homes.

December 29, 2002

### **Tel Aviv.**

Today was spent at the Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy at Tel Aviv University. We had been invited by the faculty of Social Sciences to participate in an intensive one-day workshop, "Israel at a Crossroads".

Before beginning, we formally introduced our diverse and interesting delegation. Our members include Arnon Hadar, our Israeli-American leader and professor of economics and finance at Dominican University in Northern California, Patrick Loy, computer software engineer, who teaches computer science at Johns Hopkins University, Suzanne Gardinier, poet and writer of essays on poetry and politics, who teaches writing at Sarah Lawrence College, Charlie Gross, professor of neuroscience at Princeton University, Adrienne Asch, who teaches bioethics at Wellesley College, Lawrence Davidson, professor of international studies and Middle East scholar from Westchester College near Philadelphia, Elizabeth Gillis, who is on the staff in the Chancellor's Office at UC Berkeley and the coordinator the UC Berkeley Arab and Jewish film festivals, Vasilis (Bill) Koulopoulos, professor at Columbia University where he teaches academic writing to international students, Katherine King, who teaches comparative literature and classics at UCLA, Ramon Greenberg, retired psychiatrist and psychoanalyst from the Harvard Medical School, Nancy Kanwisher, professor in the Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences at MIT, and Dan Burnstein, visiting scholar and lawyer at Northeastern University who teaches about negotiation, conflict management, and international relations. Also on the delegation is John Rubin, an independent documentary filmmaker who is filming and recording our trip.

The topics for the morning were "The Second Intifada and Israel's National Security", presented by Professor Isaac Ben Israel, Retired Major General and Head of the Morris Curiel Center for International Relations at Tel Aviv University, "Israel's Policy of Nuclear Deterrence: A Reassessment", presented by Professor Zeev Maoz, Head of the School of Government and Public Policy, Tel Aviv University, and "Uses and Abuses of the Holocaust in Israeli Public Discourse", by Professor Moshe Zuckerman, Head of the Institute for German History, Tel Aviv University.

The topics of afternoon sessions were, "Political-Economic Aspects of the Current Crisis", by Professor Michael Shalev, Department of Sociology, The Hebrew University, and "The Upcoming Elections", by Professor Michal Shamir, Department of Political Science, Tel Aviv University.

Although I cannot and need not report in full the totality of these scholarly presentations, which have been audiotaped for use by FFIPP, I will highlight just a few of the things that I culled from my written notes of the sessions. Professor Ben Israel argued that in the wake of the Oslo Peace Accords, per capita income has decreased for the Palestinians, the result of more closure days, casualties of Israeli soldiers have increased since the signing, as have acts of terrorism, and this he gave as proof that the efforts of the late Yizhak Rabin to move towards peace with the Palestinians is a failed policy. He voiced a strong defense of the current policies of the government.

Professor Maoz, in discussing Israel's policy of nuclear deterrence, noted that supporters of that policy claim that it has deterred Arab aggression and an all-out attack on Israel as well as helped to bring Jordan and Egypt to the negotiating table. He called the policy "inherently dialectic", i.e., that nuclear weapons can be bargained for arms control in exchange for all states in the region giving them up. He claimed that the Arab Israeli story is a "story of missed opportunities" in which Israel has played a major part.

Professor Zuckerman's passionate and scholarly presentation on the abuses of the Holocaust noted that just as the Holocaust was used as the argument for the foundation of the State of Israel, it is also used today in Israel to justify any means taken to prevent another Holocaust. He referred to this as the "paradigm of the victim".

Professor Shalev noted some of the negative economic effects of the present conflict: current income distribution is greatly unequal and comparable to that of the U.S., one third of the Israel's GNP was eliminated with the end of Arab employment in Israel, that new welfare cuts are being planned, that unemployment in Israel is more than 10%, and that Palestinian workers have been replaced by cheap immigrant labor from Thailand, Rumania, and the Philippines.

Professor Shamir noted the recent shift to the Right in Israeli voting patterns: 40% now define themselves as Right and 20% as Left, whereas only two years ago before the Second Intifada, half of the electorate identified itself as Left. She pointed out that 80% of the public think Oslo is invalid and reject peace with Yassar Arafat. She noted that Israelis don't trust the Palestinians or have faith that any agreement with them will be honored, that the Israeli dream of a "Greater Israel" as well as the peace movement in Israel is dead in the face of the suicide bombing, and that most Israelis have a perceived threat to their personal security, with gloomy expectations for their future. She stated further that while Israelis are now overwhelmingly hawkish in support of harsh measures, there is also support for moving ahead with the Bush Plan, called a "Road Map" and the recent proposals by Saudi Arabia. Her bleak assessment concluded that the desire for separation of Israel from the Palestinians is strong, evidence for that is that 70% support the construction of the separation fence. She showed poll results that the Palestinian state is no longer anathema, that the majority of Israelis support it as the lesser of evils, that dismantling of the settlements is gaining support, that 2/3 support a freeze on the expansion of the settlements, and that the division of Jerusalem can be intelligently debated. She concluded by saying that in spite of these profound changes in public opinion, the support for Prime Minister Arik Sharon and the Likud Party remains high.

We retired for the night at a kibbutz run hotel in Neve Ilan, near Abu Ghosh and not far from Jerusalem. Tomorrow we go through Jerusalem and into the West Bank. From my hotel window I can see the flickering lights in Arab East Jerusalem.

December 30, 2002

### **Ramallah.**

In stark contrast to the events of the day, I am sitting in the lovely Royal Court Suite Hotel near the center of Ramallah, a hotel as nice as any three star hotel in the U.S. It is close to midnight and I have just come back from an evening dinner party given for the delegation at the beautiful Ramallah home of Isla Jad and her husband Saleh Abdel-Jawad. Both of them are Birzeit University professors in East Jerusalem, she teaches gender politics and he, political science. Also at the dinner were several others of the Birzeit University faculty, including Dr. Salim Tamari, the Director of the Institute of Jerusalem Studies and his wife Suaz and Ghassan Abdullah of Birzeit's Institute of Law and his wife, Anita. The earlier meeting in the day with Ghassan, shortly after we arrived in Ramallah, was very special because I had been his host for some of the FFIPP sponsored tour of colleges and universities in the northeast several months ago and I was bringing, as a gift, the book that he had requested, Michael Moore's "Stupid White Men". The fact of giving the book to Ghassan became particularly poignant a little later on when we learned that bookstores in Ramallah cannot get many books, that Israel doesn't allow certain books to be sent at all, and that bookstore shelves are nearly empty. Had I known, I might have brought others as well. This encounter, however joyful, could not compare with my emotions at seeing Salim Tamari at dinner, after more than thirty years. I had known Salim at the University of New Hampshire, where I was a political science faculty member from 1968-70. At the same time that Salim was enrolled in graduate school at UNH. And, although I had followed his broadcast interviews on National Public Radio during the period of the first Intifada in the late 1980's when he was the official spokesperson from the West Bank and had sent regards to him during the past year through the visiting FFIPP professors from Birzeit, I was completely unprepared for his presence at the dinner and the pleasure at seeing him here in Ramallah after so many years. This was the emotional coda to a symphony of overwhelming emotional experiences at being in Ramallah.

At 10 a.m., we had entered the West Bank at the Qalandiya checkpoint, having passed through Arab East Jerusalem. Coming into the West Bank is like passing from The West to The East, from modernity to the third world. The assaults to my senses, the chaos and tangle of vehicles, dust, debris, barbed wire, together with a teeming sea of humanity, was overwhelming. We had to abandon our bus at the checkpoint because it bore Israeli license plates and hire several drivers of old beat up vans to transport us to the Israeli checkpoint.

These checkpoints are daily insults to those living in the Territories. Whether by foot or motorized vehicle, each day hundreds line up, sometimes for hours, to enter and leave the

Territories to work in Israel. Green internal passport identity cards are examined against a checkpoint computer database and vehicles are searched, sometimes randomly, other times systematically, for evidence of contraband. It is a humiliating, harsh and insensitive treatment and casts everyone entering or leaving each day in a suspicious light. There are 300-400 of these checkpoints in the West Bank, the first powerful symbol of a territory under siege, under army occupation.

After we abandoned our battered and dusty vans, we walked through the checkpoint, under the watchful eyes of the Israeli Defense Forces, regrouped, and reentered the vans on the other side. Our luggage was transported on pushcarts, which also had to navigate the debris, ruts, concrete barriers, razor concertina wire, and other obstacles along the roadway. All those factors considered we were, nevertheless, able to pass through without incident; we were not even asked to show our passport identification. At the terminus, I had a brief encounter with one of the checkpoint soldiers who had lived in the United States. He asked me “why you want to go there?” to which I replied, “I am going to see Israel’s other side” and took his photograph.

We came into Ramallah through Manara, the scene of recent bloody Israeli assassinations by a team of Israeli soldiers, apparently disguised as Arabs, in which a school boy was killed, as well as an employee of the customs department and two members of Fatah. There is no evidence that they were connected in any way with militant terrorist groups, in contrast to what was reported in the media.

We spent the morning at HDIP, the Health Development Information Project offices and heard from its Director, Dr. Mustafa Barghouthi as well as from Ghassan Abdullah and Prof. Khaled Al-Saifee, both of Birzeit University. From them we learned that since the last incursion by the Israeli Army, the IDF, there are no police, no prisons, no security systems, and no courts in Ramallah. Later, on our tour of Ramallah, we saw the bombed out remains of the Ramallah police station. Ghassan reported that in spite of this, there is little crime and joked that there may not be anything left in Ramallah to steal. There is, however, a strong family safety net and vibrant independent voluntary social organizations, which provide some support and relief to the multitudes. Although it may be true that no one sleeps on the streets in the city of 90,000, there are, nonetheless, great hardships. Ramallah is also the seat of the Palestinian Authority, the PA, and Fatah, its political arm. All of the PA ministerial offices and institutions are here, as well as the remains of the compound of the Palestinian Authority.

From our session, we learned that the use of suicide bombing is under discussion within the resistance movements, that there is a growing tendency to condemn them as being politically counterproductive, and that there is a feeling that Prime Minister Sharon is heightening the tension for his own political purposes before the upcoming election, i.e., that the military provocations are politically motivated. Cited as an example is Sharon’s recent announcement that Israel will not only kill terrorists but also those planning attacks and those supporting those planning attacks. There is also a clear and present foreboding about the anticipated U.S. war against Iraq which Sharon’s government might

use as an opportunity to transfer more Palestinians and seize more Palestinian land in the West Bank.

From our speakers we also heard that 75 % of the Palestinians support a political compromise and agreement with Israel as well as the existence of an independent Palestinian state. Director Barghouthi asserted that the public was misled by both the government of Barak and that of the Palestinian Authority as to what really happened at Camp David and that Oslo was a mistake because it avoided the main issues of borders, settlements, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem, opting instead for an interim solution. He stated that the newly constructed wall is taking away more than 10% of the West Bank and 42% of the agricultural producing lands of the West Bank. He argued that extremists on both sides use each other, that Israel is becoming a “colonial” power with the longest occupation in modern history, and that it is creating “an apartheid like regime”. He sees the occupation as a form of collective punishment which is not justifiable and gave, by way of example, the fact that the city of Nablus had been under 24 hour curfew for nearly three months, which means that people cannot leave their homes during the day or the night. He asserted that more than 80 people have lost their lives because they could not get to a hospital through the checkpoints.

After leaving the HDIP, we drove to the compound of Yassar Arafat. Now, I had seen the images of his compound under siege by Israeli army tanks and the destruction of what were once ten or more administrative buildings of the Palestinian Authority. But I was not fully prepared to stand in the center of this destruction, amidst the rubble of crushed buildings and piles of bulldozer-flattened vehicles. Yes, I had seen the photographs but now I was there. I was shocked and deeply saddened to be in that place at this critical moment in the history of the Middle East conflict.

To have them share my witness, I used my cell phone to call my family at the kibbutz from the compound’s remains. I wanted my wife to hear my sorrow and for my son to receive his first phone call from “Israel’s other side”. I then took some photographs and slowly and sadly walked away.

December 31, 2002

### **Bethlehem.**

I awakened in Ramallah to a short-lived feeling that, as the New Year approaches, I would someday or somehow see a sign of hope for peace in the future. I knew that later we would be traveling to Bethlehem to attend midnight mass at the Church of the Nativity and thought that perhaps along the way I’ll look to the eastern sky for a sign.

Our second day in Ramallah was first spent at a brief morning session with a member of the private sector, Zahi Khouri, Chairman of the Board of Jawwal, a major Palestinian telecommunications company. Mr. Khouri is intimately connected to major players both in politics and finance in the U.S., Europe and the Arab world. He told us that after the Oslo Accords, \$300 million dollars was raised to privatize infrastructure in anticipation

of a new Palestinian entity and asserted that there is enough Palestinian capital to make it a “great nation”. However, since the failure of the Oslo agreements, the private sector is now bankrupt and his company is doing all it can just to maintain full employment and to service bank debt. He asked “what is the real Israeli agenda? Is it against the Palestinian Authority or against the establishment of a Palestinian state?” He stated that what Israel is doing is totally illegal in the telecommunications field by setting up their own unlicensed cellular network, setting low prices to undercut his Palestinian company, and impounding their equipment in customs. So far, he has not been able to prevail in Israeli courts to challenge this policy. He gave evidence of other Israeli protectionist policies, which he called, “economic terrorism”.

Following this meeting we meet for a lively and informative session with PINGO, the Palestinian NGO Network, which is a voluntary cluster of over 90 Palestinian non-governmental organizations working in various humanitarian, social, and development fields, seeking to develop and strengthen Palestinian society. There we learned of the Palestinian National Initiative, which calls for “the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions requiring the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the West Bank and Gaza and safeguarding the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland”. It calls upon “all concerned parties to prevent the Israeli government from annexing the Palestinian territories and from consolidating its discriminatory policy of cantonization and the creation of an apartheid system in the West Bank and Gaza”. The National Initiative identifies sixteen objectives, among them creating a national leadership with a unified strategy based on the principle of full participation in decision-making and working for free democratic elections for all institutions and political posts, and developing and improving basic services in health, education, and social welfare. It also calls for “developing and expanding the international solidarity movement with the Palestinian people”. In our dialog with PINGO members, we came away with the distinct impression that Yassar Arafat and the Palestinian Authority have little or no credibility within the many sectors of the Palestinian population. In fact, at no time this past week, did we hear support for the Arafat and the P.A.

After lunch, Isla Jad took us on a walking human misery tour through the Am’ari refugee camp, administered by the United Nations organization charged with administering the camp. The camp has been in existence since the 1948 and many of the refugees came from Lod, the area of Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport. There, more than 9000 people are crammed into a filthy ghetto-like area about a half-mile square. I cannot begin to find the words to describe the indescribable squalor and human suffering; the images from Calcutta, as described in the book, City of Joy, came to mind. We walked for two hours along the narrow alleyways, visited numerous apartments of families who had lost children during Israeli incursions, met several refugees still recovering from their wounds, viewed the scars of shrapnel and bullets on the bodies of very young children, and saw the photographs and posters of the victims, which they call martyrs of this conflict. However, these were not the families of suicide bombers. In each home of those killed, large blown up photos adorn the walls and the tables bear makeshift shrines to the victim. For example, we visited the home of a family of one son recently shot to death and the other wounded. The injured son lost a leg and was blinded. We asked to go into

his room but we were told that he was too depressed and did not want anyone to see him. We also met a young man on crutches, who was shot from a helicopter that injured his leg and killed his friend. We saw an severely emaciated young deaf boy who didn't hear that shots from the Israeli army and therefore did not get out of the way in time before being shot in the back. Now he is both deaf and paralyzed. The single word that comes to mind is "abomination". The brevity of this portion of my journal is only because I am at a loss for useful descriptors. It's worth noting, however, that I am not a stranger to human suffering and despair. I worked in the South as a civil rights worker and lived there in and among an impoverished African-American community. I had also spent time as a community organizer in a part of Appalachia during the 1960s. However, today's trail of tears did not come close.

Later, arrangement had been made for us to have dinner at a restaurant with several members of the faculty and staff of Bethlehem University, to attend a New Year's Eve party, and to attend midnight Mass at the Church of the Nativity. Midway through our dinner, around 9 pm, we were informed that a curfew had just been imposed and that we had to leave right away. As we approached the doorway to go into out taxis, two IDF jeep trucks with search lights approached while blaring out the curfew orders to the streets of Bethlehem. Although it was intimidating to us, it was clearly routine for the other patrons of the restaurant and as the vehicles approached the front of the restaurant and our assembled group, they stopped and aggressively confronted us with drawn rifles. In fact, we were placed directly in their gun sights as they stood and knelled in the street with drawn weapons. Soon they got back in their jeeps and left and we were able to take cabs back to the hotel. I arrived with the second taxi and within a few minutes the area of the hotel was under siege. From out of nowhere young teens began throwing rocks at an Israeli army vehicle, rifle reports rang out, tear gas was fired and we withdrew from the front of the lobby as the tear gas wafted in. I called the kibbutz to report these events as they were happening and to assure my family that I was unharmed. A minute after finishing the call I received an incoming call from Angela Carbone at the Springfield Union-News and was able, therefore, to report these events contemporaneously and to share my thoughts while I was still digesting the events unfolding in front of me. It was both surreal and intense. I am still wondering why that call came at that very important moment. It was not the sign from the East that I had been expecting.

At midnight, I emerged from the hotel on New Year's Eve in the holy city of Bethlehem. Crowds of boisterous people celebrating were streaming into the streets in defiance of the curfew. May the New Year bring a lasting peace.

January 1

### **Neve Ilan.**

This morning we were ready but unable to leave because the curfew of last night is still in effect. We have learned that the curfew is not citywide but limited to our district where an apparent shooting had occurred sometime in the evening. It is evident that there is simply no way to get details about last night's incident, or even the verify that something

actually occurred. However, we did use the time to speak with Ghassan Ardoni, the Executive Director of PCR, the Palestinian Center for Rapproachment, which is coordinating the work of the International Solidarity Movement within the Territories. I recall seeing the CNN broadcasts of ISM workers during the Israeli siege of the Church of the Nativity in at which internationals brought food to those inside the church and also reported out what was happening and also performed the same functions during the siege of the Palestinian Authority compound in order to make sure that Yassar Arafat wasn't killed or deported.

The goal of PCR/ISM is to end the occupation in the Territories through non-violent direct action. The focus is to try to show the limits of occupation, by employing campaign watches at checkpoints to prevent harassment, placing themselves in the refugee camps, and in the homes of suicide bombers that are subject to demolition, and to conduct peaceful demonstrations. In March of this past year, the IDF opened fire at ISM demonstrators and 8 internationals were injured. They have established a presence in major villages and cities of the West Bank and have engaged in non-violent actions in defiance of closures and curfews. They argue that the new wall being built is self-destructive and have started an Olive Harvest Campaign because the trees have become inaccessible in many places due to intimidation or lack of access. They have also tried to get the IDF to stop the brutal attacks on olive grove harvesters by the Israeli settlers. Furthermore, they have been a presence for the protection of Palestinian children going to school, they accompany ambulances which are often stopped and prevented from giving medical assistance, and they have taken actions against the security fence, which, they argue, is turning Palestinian villages into refugee camps. The Olive Harvest Campaign has attracted many Israeli peace groups such as Rabbis for Human Rights, Women in Black, and Taisch.

The curfew is an interesting phenomenon. How people hear about it and when they hear is really very haphazard. It travels by rumor, official as well as unofficial news, and by IDF communication jeeps racing about the streets. Somehow, information about the curfew, where it applies, for how long, and when it is lifted, carries throughout the neighborhoods of the city, like the drumbeats of aboriginal villages. Because at first we were unable to find a cab driver willing to defy the curfew in order and take us from the hotel to the checkpoint, it wasn't until late morning that the cabs miraculously appeared. We still had not heard anything official, however, but we hurried to leave, stopping briefly to view the Church of the Nativity, which had been our planned destination for New Year's Eve. However, just as we alit at the church plaza, we heard the sound of a communication jeep and gunfire, and stood incredulously as people began to scatter in fear as the jeep approached the plaza at very high speed. I stood aside to watch it all unfold, like seeing a live TV news report. We soon learned that the announcement, blared in Arab, was that the curfew had been lifted. As the IDF jeep speed off, and from out of nowhere, teenagers ran into the plaza throwing rocks at the departing vehicle and, in a few minutes, people reappeared from their temporary hiding places. This, apparently, was business as usual, Bethlehem style.

We left the West Bank at a different checkpoint but this time our passports were closely examined by Israeli soldiers. Since we were running hours behind schedule, we had to forego until the next day a tour of East Jerusalem, arriving instead at the American Colony Hotel for a meeting with Machsom Watch. Checkpoint Watch, as it is called in English, is a grassroots women's and one of several against the Israeli Occupation. In attendance was Maya Rosenfeld, a women's peace activist and one of the founders of the organization, and Roni Hammerman, who is a librarian at the Hebrew University Central Library. The organization was formed shortly after the Second Intifada, in January 2001, and was organized by activist women and focusing on actions at the checkpoint into and within the Territories. The reason for doing it is that they feel that the closure policy is the primary means to "suppress and destroy civil life in the Territories". Their efforts are directed at the major checkpoint for Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jerusalem. The objectives are to be present to prevent harassment, violence, or detention of those not holding permits, and to have a mitigating presence. Each day teams of 3-5 of the 80-90 women monitor major checkpoints every morning and afternoon. Their presence is also used to document, in daily reports, what happens to Palestinians moving back and forth into the Territories. There are about 300-400 checkpoints between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza, however some of them are between villages within the Territories as well. Most of them are permanent but some are temporary so it isn't always possible for a Palestinian in transit to know if he or she will encounter one along the way. These checkpoints can be closed at any moment, sometimes because of the presence of Checkpoint Watch. The women said that the checkpoints have nothing to do with security, fosters resentment and anger, and serves as a "breeding ground for terrorism".

Following our meeting with Machsom Watch, we met with three members from the Likud, the party of Ariel Sharon. Present were Carolyn Glick, who was on the Israel negotiating team with the Palestinians from 1994-6 and the current Deputy Managing Editor of the Jerusalem Post, Israel's leading English language daily, writer Ayal Megeed, and journalist Amnon Lud. They presented compelling arguments why Israel must defend itself against "the enemy from within" and said that the Left is naïve because it's position encourages the terrorists. They stated that it is the Palestinians who "killed the peace" that Israel was prepared to make with the Palestinians and, instead, what Israel got after Camp David and Taba was terrorism. They feel that the failure of the Oslo Accords was the result of the abrogation of every agreement by the Palestinians and that the Palestinian Authority had no intention of upholding its commitment to stop terrorism, uphold the rule of law, and to protect Palestinian rights. They said that peace will come only if and when there is Palestinian leadership that Israel can trust and asserted the paramount right of Jews to live in peace in their own land.

January 2, 2002

### **Neve Ilan.**

This morning we had an interesting, albeit brief, meeting with Nadim Karkutli, the Second Secretary of the European Union, the EU. The role of the EU is to provide assistance to developing countries, to promote human rights and economic development.

The EU provides international development aid to Africa, Asia and elsewhere. The 1995 Barcelona Declaration provided a forum for a Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Palestinians are full partners with representation by the PA. Secretary Karkutli was highly critical of Israeli restrictions on Palestinian exports, which requires them to use Israeli agents and to go through Israeli ports. However, Israel exports things made in the Jewish settlements duty free, but doesn't apply to items made in the West Bank and Gaza contrary to the general rule of international trade and this makes the Palestinians uncompetitive. For example, Palestinian trucks have to be unloaded at checkpoints and then reloaded on to Israeli carriers.

The EU offers assistance to help Palestinian self-governance through support for institutions and NGOs, encouraging the growth of civil society by building institutions of self-governance and providing assistance to Palestinians to upgrade infrastructure, i.e., roads, schools and hospitals, etc., Through the Partnership for Peace Program, it offers grants to NGOs for emergency humanitarian relief efforts to address the real crisis of malnutrition of children in Gaza, which is reaching the level of some African states. Although there is food being produced in the Territories, there is limited access to it; people there have little or no purchase power and the closures, curfews and checkpoints limit the ability to find and sustain jobs. Hence the dire need for these relief efforts

From the European Union, we went to meet Dr. Sari Nusseibeh, the President of Al Quds University in East Jerusalem. Dr. Nusseibeh holds an Oxford University PhD in Philosophy and is a highly visible and prominent promoter of the peace process, at times at great risk to his own life. He is the co-author, along with Ami Ayalon,<sup>1</sup> of "Time for Peace", a proposal which has appeared prominently in the Arab and Israel press. The statement of goals calls for ending the violence and starting the negotiations and offers solutions to end the occupation, share Jerusalem, address the refugee Right of Return, and create an independent Palestinian state. Dr. Nusseibeh has been working tirelessly both here and abroad to mobilize support for this effort. On December 28, he organized an international forum and launched a campaign, called "Peoples Peace". At the ceremony, at which 800 signed the agreement, more than 500 people attended and more than 1000 more were outside in support. He has been working cooperatively with Israeli peace activists and sincerely believes that this is a critical time for a non-violent movement for peace. He recently issued a public call for a "Human Chain" of peacemakers to mobilize Israeli, Palestinian, and international supporters to stand in a line from the West Bank to Gaza. However, on that day, the IDF closed access to it and hundreds of supporters were turned back at Ben Gurion Airport and, therefore, the action could not take place. Nusseibeh has also called for an end to the suicide bombing, which caused a debate in the Arab communities both here and abroad. He recently met with Ami Ayalon to work on a plan at the grassroots level on both sides for an agreement and issued a joint statement calling for having Jerusalem as a shared capital for two states, with the Arab neighborhoods coming under Palestinian control and the Jewish neighborhood under Israeli jurisdiction. They also call for the return of the refugees only to the new

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<sup>1</sup> Ami Ayalon was the head of the Security Service (Shin Bet) in the late 80's and was also the commander of the Israeli Navy.

Palestinian state, for the demilitarization of Palestine, and for modification of borders only by mutual agreement.<sup>2</sup>

Nusseibeh's criticism extends to the P.A. leadership as well as that of the Sharon government. He stresses the failure of the P.A. leadership to explain the specifics of the Oslo Accords to the Palestinian people, especially on the matter of the right of the refugees to return to their ancestral homelands. He believes that there are reasons on both sides for mistrust, that both sides use a "market methodology", whereby one starts high and settles for something lower. He argues, instead, for a "fixed price" negotiation where each person knows where he starts and what he can expect. He feels that this is necessary in order to create faith among the people in the possibility of peace on both sides. He said, "I am not interested in winning them over, rather, I am interested in winning over them".

Al Quds University is one of the leading Palestinian universities with campuses in and around Jerusalem and on the edge of the borders. It has been difficult for students to get in and out of their villages in order to attend classes and at one time the IDF took over one of their buildings in Ramallah and used it as a center to detain Palestinians suspected of committing violence. There, all of the university's computer equipment was destroyed by the IDF. Furthermore, due to the deteriorating economy, students are not able to pay college fees and professors have not been receiving full salaries. In some cases curfews are lifted only for several hours, students have to rush to classes but are often held up at checkpoints and, when they do arrive, have to redirect their attention to their studies, a nearly futile effort.

In the evening we had a meeting with Yuval Steinitz, writer, intellectual and a Likud member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament. In the 1980's, he was a member of the Israeli peace movement and supported the 1993 Oslo Accords. Now, however, he believes that the peace process only exchanges land for terrorism and war. Although he was a peace activist, he moved from Left to Right when he realized that Yassar Arafat's rhetoric and acts of incitement showed that he was not serious about peace. He asserted that the PA has violated all arms control efforts since Oslo and has rearmed and smuggled armaments. He feels that the main problem is that the philosophy of destroying Israel is playing a major role, that there is no readiness to recognize the fact that Jews have basic rights to their own sovereign state, and that the physical dimensions of Israel is a core issue i.e., Israel's small size and lack of defensible borders is its "Achilles Heel". He feels that the Palestinian position of destroying Israel is still a fact and, therefore, he is deeply concerned about Israel's future. He did say, however, that he is ready to give back land for peace if the peace is genuine and if there is demilitarization of the areas bordering Israel. "We want land for peace," he stated, and "we are ready to give back lands and end the occupation, but we are not willing to commit suicide".

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<sup>2</sup> The Ayalon - Nusseibeh joint statement was sponsored by the Greek government and praised by Bill Clinton in summer 2002.

January 3

### **Gaza City.**

We entered Gaza Strip at the northern border checkpoint, encountered minimal delays and drove directly to Beit Lahiya, the first Gazan village. It was there, one night just two months ago that the Israeli army blew up a six story building of 11 apartments with nine families, a total of 56 people. We were told that the IDF ordered the residents to evacuate within ten minutes, with only the bedclothes that they were wearing. Ostensibly, a terrorist was from one of the nine families. As the terrified residents ran out, someone realized that a deaf person was still inside and unaware of the order to leave. However, the IDF refused to let anyone reenter and the building was blown up. It was two days before they were able to find and extricate the body. In order to house the now homeless refugees, the Red Cross provided several tents and a little food. We were invited into the largest tent and met with the several heads of households and then toured the ruins of collapsed concrete floors and household items. One woman became hysterical, beat her breast and screamed, “why why, why”, in Arabic. The victim’s son told us “we are not terrorists, we are like you, we want to see our children go to school and be not be afraid at night”. He described finding his father’s head crushed “like a chiccolet”.

Following that, we visited the Jabaliya refugee camp. Now, I think that I may have been a bit pre-mature in describing the Am’ari camp in Ramallah as similar to Calcutta’s “City of Joy”. So, in contradistinction, I would refer to Jabaliya as the “City from Hell”. There is block upon block of absolute devastation everywhere and only my photos can stand as partial witness to this scene. The scavenging of Jabaliya refugees evokes images of the devastation following the carpet bombings of World War II. There are one hundred thousand people living in Jabaliya, ten times the number as Am’ari and most of them are living below the poverty level of three dollars a day. Sixty percent of the children have diseases and suffer from malnutrition. Much of Gaza’s limited fresh water supply has to be augmented by sea water, well below WHO standards for human consumption. There are 4000 Jewish settlers in Gaza, 1000 in the north and the others in the middle, the only places of fresh water reserve

Later that morning, as if to have us experience just how utterly miserable is their condition and as we sat cold and huddled in a small trade union hall with more than a dozen unemployed workers, whose demands included opening of borders so that they could find work, torrential rains descended upon Gaza, flooding and leaving impassible, the already impassible roads. Then, on our way to our hotel in Gaza City, we were blocked by the funeral of three young boys, ages 13, 14 and 15, who were shot to death yesterday as they were trying to snare birds outside of the nearby IDF compound. Israel news reported that their behavior was suspicious.

At the hotel, one block from the near total destruction of Gaza’s port, once a major entry point for foreign commerce, we met with twelve faculty and three students from Al-Azhar University of Gaza and El Karzon University, among them three Fulbright

Scholars. When asked to summarize the situation, they informed us that Gaza is a very small area, which is divided into three parts but they are not free to travel from one to the other or to go to the West Bank. Unemployment is at 65%, there have been thousands of people either killed or injured, 38% under the age of 16, 30% of whom were handicapped, They call for an end to the occupation, respect for university education and academic freedom, and an immediate lifting of the curfews. They said that Israel has blocked, sometimes for weeks and months, the central area of Gaza where most of the universities are located. In fact, students were not able to complete the last Spring semester and they are experiencing the same disruption to their students as was reported by Dr. Neissebeh at Al Quds University in East Jerusalem.

In spite of all of this, they are open and eager for peace, they are have no hatred toward Jews and Israelis, and call upon their “Israeli brothers to work for peace” and still believe that if there is a will to make peace there will be a way to do so.

Later in the evening we met with Uri Saraj, the head of mental health programs in Gaza. He said that Arab dictators are the enemy of their own people but that they receive support from the United States. For instance, he cited U.S. support for the Saudi regime in the name of anti-communism. He stated that George Bush is “insensitive and impulsive with respect to which Arab leader should or shouldn’t remain in power. He presented a comprehensive explanation of the role of honor in Arab society, which is essentially tribal in nature. In that society, honor of the family is paramount, there is a duty to defend your honor, and the necessity to take revenge unless the offending family apologizes publicly and takes responsibility for the violation. If that is done, the other side must accept the apology or he will be dishonored. These are the tribal norms that govern Arab society.

He feels that the suicide bombers of today are children of the first Intifada’s humiliations who are taking tribal revenge. He said that the bombers “took into their hands that which was taken away from the helpless father”. He stated that every cycle of violence breeds a higher level of bombing, that inhuman environments produce inhumans and, therefore, “people don’t see each other, they see through each other”.

We also heard from Jamal Zakout, from the Political bureau of FIDA, the Palestinian Democratic Union, which is allied with Fatah and other factions active in civil society, and member of the Palestinian National Council. He stated that the Israeli government is trying to take by force that which they were not able to accept at Camp David, that Sharon’s invasion is not to defend against terrorism, but to “defeat the infrastructure of the peace process”. He feels that Sharon has succeeded in polarizing civil society, has pushed people to the Right, and deliberately provoked Hamas last July, which signaled its readiness to abandon suicide bombing, by the use of targeted assassinations against activists and by killing thirteen demonstrating civilians. In spite of this bleak picture, he said that FIDA, is still committed to finding peace groups as partners in Israel.

January 4.

### **Neve Ilan.**

Last night, while preparing my daily journal report, I received a phone call that I had a visitor waiting in the hotel lobby. I came down from my room to find Hekmat El Sarraj, who is the coordinator of Women and Children Programs in Gaza City. I had met Hekmat several weeks ago when, as part of a month-long speaking tour in the U.S., she spoke at the University of Massachusetts, along with the co-chairman of the Federation of Palestinian Trade Union Workers. It was an amazing and unlikely reunion for both of us and I was very happy that she had made the effort to meet me in Gaza and had agreed come back in the morning to share her views about her work for peace between Israeli and Palestinian women and to bring some handicrafts, made by poor Gazan women, to sell.

After breakfast with Hekmat, we received permission from the Palestinian soldiers to view the remains of the port. Much of the fill used to build or reinforce the long breakwater came from the demolished buildings in Gaza. An Israeli bombed and partially sunken ship lies akimbo in the harbor along with other detritus. Except for small Gazan fishing boats, nothing comes in or out of the harbor, which is patrolled by the Israeli navy.

We left the harbor for a meeting with Waleed A. Siam, of the P.L.O and PA's Ambassador to Japan. His summary of the current political situation, the first authoritative statement to us by a member of the Palestinian Authority, was that former Israeli Prime Minister Barak gave contradictory statements at Camp David about the proposed Palestinian state, the partition of Jerusalem, the divided use of the Temple Mount/Al Haram A Sharif, i.e., Palestinian control of the top and Israeli use of the ground underneath, control of the borders with Jordan, the return of the refugees to Palestinian areas without compensation, Israeli control of water, electricity, etc. and were not in the spirit of Oslo and, therefore, not acceptable to the PA. As a consequence, militant Islamic organization began bombing attacks, which were followed by daily Israeli assaults, closures, and the attack on Yassar Arafat's compound. He believes that Ariel Sharon has no agenda for peace. To the contrary, he cites assassinations, the demolition of homes, and the daily incursions into the refugee camps in Gaza. Yesterday, for example, 19 homes were destroyed in the Raffa camp, which, Siam claims, were not homes of the terrorists. "Both sides have committed many mistakes", he said, but "we are more open to any plan for peace", whether from the Quartet, the Bush "Road Map", or the proposal by the Saudis and Egyptians. The PA believes that the Bush plan can be implemented by 2005. He stated that two days ago Sharon said that he agreed, but the next day said that negotiations will have to wait until after the election. Siam jokingly remarked that they are always waiting for elections, PA elections, Israeli elections, and U.S. elections.

Siam went on to say that the Israeli government is “acting like a small and spoiled child of the U.S.” for which it receives support for settlement expansion and a large amount of military aid (in fact, there is currently a proposal before the U.S. Congress for \$12 billion in loan guarantees) . After citing many other grievances with Israel, he went on to speak about the refugee Right of Return, one of the most contentious and divisive issues which “we are willing to compromise if there is a positive result”. He finished by calling on international observers to stand between the border between Israel and Palestine and for elections, which are recognized, as legitimate by the international community.

Following lunch at Kibbutz Mordechai, we drove into the Bedouin lands near Be’er Sheva, the city of Abraham.

The Arabs living in the Negev Desert, the poorest region in Israel, are called Bedouins. In fact, the Bedouins are a tribal group who once lived as nomads, crossing freely the borders within the Sinai. When I came to Israel in 1964, Be’er Sheva was a very small village and the Bedouins were everywhere in seasonal tent encampments. I remember visiting the Bedouin market, their wares displayed on desert sand in front of their tents. Today, Be’er Sheva is a large metropolis and the Bedouins are being forced to give up their ancient ways and are being resettled into seven planned communities. Even there, the separate tribes live in distinct neighborhood; each apartment building has a large yard behind for sheep, goats, and vegetable plots.

Oren Yiftachel, of Ben Gurion University in Be’er Sheva and author of numerous scholarly works on the Bedouins, brought us to the Bedouin village of Elbad for a meeting with the Deputy Mayor of the Council of the 45 unrecognized villages. He is both a member of the Council as well as a member of the Central Committee of the Labor Party. At our meeting, we learned of the Bedouin struggle for recognition. They have been citizens since the state of Israel was established even though 90% of them were exiled after the 1948 war and only 16,000 remained. Now the Bedouin population is about 140,000, 45% of whom live in unrecognized villages. The state of Israel has built more than a hundred new municipalities but does not recognize the existing Bedouin villages, some of which have more than 5,000 inhabitants. Because they are officially designated “unrecognized”, they have no infrastructure and, therefore, in order to get services, they have to appeal to Israel’s highest court, even to receive basic services. There is not even one kindergarten and only one high school in the unrecognized villages and, therefore, the education level is low and the dropout rate is high. In fact, the Bedouins have the lowest education level in all of Israel. Yiftachel explained that the reason why services are denied is because Israel wants to uproot the Bedouins and move them into planned towns. Because the Bedouin have no direct connection to governmental authority, the IDF freely uses some area of the villages as live fire zones for army training and has instituted a policy of harassment, including house demolitions. They get water from water tank trucks; there are no health clinics. And, more significantly, there is no recourse. We heard the story of child who came home from school only to find his house demolished. In the pile of debris he found his yellow trousers, which he was accustomed to putting on after changing from school clothes. He found the tattered yellow trousers, put them on, and broke down in tears.

It is evident, according to Yiftachel, the Bedouin do identify with the Palestinian struggle but they are primarily concerned with their own issues. An example cited is the fact that the Israeli government has resorted to the use of chemical crop dusters to spray Bedouin lands that are in dispute, thereby making them of little agricultural value. All of this may help to explain why solidarity with the Islamic movement is very high.

Before going for dinner, we stopped in at the Be'er Sheva offices of Shatil, an organization funded by the New Israel Fund. Dr. Thabet Abu Ras, the Director of Shatil, the Empowerment and Training Center for Social Change, discussed the "Judaization of Palestine", the process of Israeli expansion into Bedouin lands in the Negev. He explained the concept of "mawat" going back to the Ottoman period, i.e., lands that are not occupied, when settled and cultivated, become owned. The British had given the Bedouins two months to prove land ownership and declared the remainder, "mawat". In 1949, the Israeli government passed a law which says that all unregistered land is state land and since most of the Bedouins knew nothing about the requirement to register during the British colonial period, they could not produce papers showing ownership, though the land had been theirs for generations.

Shatil's programs in the Negev include environmental justice, i.e., a recycling project, housing subsidies for permanent housing for Ethiopian immigrants, placing foreign volunteers with 300 social change organizations in Israel, support for anti-discrimination legislation, and women's empowerment, a radical concept in traditionally patriarchal Bedouin society.

As we drove back through Be'er Sheva, we encountered a peace demonstration at a major intersection. The banners called for ending investment in West Bank settlements and to invest, instead, in the Negev and another to "get out of occupied territories for the sake of peace".

January 5.  
**Neve Ilan.**

Today we drove in Jerusalem to the Alternative Information Center, a joint Palestinian-Israeli initiative and activist organization. AIC serves as a media resource center, which gathers and disseminates information, promotes advocacy and grassroots activism, and networks and conducts public education and outreach. The purpose of the meeting, with many academic and community activists was to discuss what we, as academics can do to share information about the current situation in order to promote peace and understanding. At that meeting we met the parents of a nineteen year-old math-physics student at the Hebrew University, Private Jonathan Ben-Artzi, who has been imprisoned five times for a total of 126 days for his conscientious objection, and whose case has been embraced by Amnesty International. There are also twelve 18-year-old "Refuseniks" or selective objectors, i.e., those who refuse to serve in the Territories, but do not refuse army service as such.

From the Hebrew University faculty present, we learned that universities in Israel have decided not to recognize Arab student organization; students cannot formally meet for political activities or to discuss the current situation. However, no official sanctions were issued to the Student Union at Tel Aviv University when they published a statement calling the Refusniks “a knife in the heart of democracy” and the universities give tuition reduction for one year to every student who served in the army in Jenin during “Operation Defensive Shield”.

AIC also is the headquarters of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolition. ICAHD claims that zoning laws confine Palestinians to certain areas and requests for new land permits are denied. If they attempt to build anyway, their homes are demolished and members of the organization conduct civil disobedience actions in order to prevent it. Since Oslo, settlements in the West Bank have doubled, making the proposal for a two-state solution problematic.

In Jerusalem itself, there is a policy of reducing the Palestinian population of the city. At time of the 1967 war which “unified” Jerusalem, nothing was actually reunified and according to AIC founding director, Michael Warschawski, “maximum territory and minimum Arab population” under the slogan of re-unifying Jerusalem, was the goal of Israel. Further, the boundaries of Jerusalem were expanded to include most of the West Bank land between Ramallah and Bethlehem and empty or low populated areas around East Jerusalem were consolidated into a “united Jerusalem”, thereby making it a largely Jewish city. The ratio of Jews to Arabs in Jerusalem is 72% to 28% and the government has established this ratio as policy in order to contain the Arab population, according to him. Since it is necessary but impossible for Arabs to obtain building permits, their so-called illegal homes were demolished and 70-90,000 Arab residents were pushed outside of the city. The policy of “Judaizing” Jerusalem also extends to denying residency rights to Arabs who were living outside of greater Jerusalem; over 100,000 residents have lost their residency rights. On the other hand, the Jewish population of East Jerusalem is increasing and the government has rezoned “green areas” in order to create twelve new neighborhoods on Palestinian land for the purpose of building new communities. Since 1993, there has been a Jewish majority in East Jerusalem as well.

Warschawki claims that Israel has created a “double wall” between Jerusalem as a whole and Jewish settlements built at the edge, a virtual human wall vis-à-vis the Arab population of the West Bank. He also claims that “closure was established in 1992 not as a result of suicide bombing but, rather, it was aimed at separating Jerusalem from the West Bank” and now, he says, East Jerusalem is dying. The geopolitical reality is the other actual physical wall or security fence and hilltop redoubts established within a corridor of Jewish settlements. The process goes something like this: a Jewish outpost is established on a hilltop somewhere in the West Bank, partially abandoned and then another hilltop outpost on another hilltop is established and somewhat abandoned and so on. Then a small settlement is created and roads are built to connect to the former outposts; confiscated land for these roads are justified as “expropriation for peace”. By this process, settlements are established and the area of the settlement expands. One of

these, Ma'ale Adummim, has an area larger than one and half times the size of Tel Aviv, extending all the way to the Jordan River on the east and deep into the desert to the south. Although Arab demography is often sited as a real threat to Israel, it is geography that will ultimately be a critical impediment to a final resolution of this conflict. To illustrate this, for several hours, we toured impressive new West Bank settlements all along the highway that bypasses Ramallah, including Kokhav Ya'akov and Ma'ale Adummim. In contrast, we saw impoverished Arab villages of resettled Arabs living in storage containers on the site of the former Jerusalem municipal dump. With the settlements, military camps and designated industrial areas, 50% of the West Bank is already annexed; these are the current facts on the ground.

Later this afternoon, we returned to our hotel at Neve Ilan in order to meet with Daniel Yossef, a West Bank settler and Chairman of Peace for Generation, a movement of West Bank settlers. It is a volunteer based advocacy network, unaffiliated with any political party, and was founded in 1994 in response to the Oslo Accords. Yossef described the current situation as a "war zone" which is deeply "troubling, sad, and painful". He summed up his feeling with one word, "anguish". He said that he was trying to figure out "how to get out of this mess and steer a different course" in what he described as the "conflict of the century" and he presented a series of preconditions necessary for a just settlement and a vision for the future. First, both sides must learn from the mistake of thinking win-lose. Israel's mistake was ignoring the presence of Arabs in the land of Palestine and now they are speaking about separation. The Palestinians, on their side have made the mistake of denying that the Jews are authentically connected to the land, too. He says that we cannot approach peacemaking without recognizing these two denials. Second, he stated that both sides have used "trickery" with regard to their real intentions. Third, quick fix solutions such as partitioning the land have been going on for decades, but both sides feel for the whole land. Yossef said that "we are an omelet and our dreams interact" and therefore, "we cannot just make one section Jew free or Arab free". Finally, he calls for thinking win-win, and for a new approach. He says that there is abundant living space for both sides and both sides have to stay together to figure it out. "We must find out how to allow for the dignity of both to come to the fore", he said, and it cannot just be security vs. a political victory or acceptance vs. addressing real grievances. With deep passion, which touched me so very deeply to the point of tears, he said, "we need to understand the other side before you can begin to talk peace, the essence of peace is to unite two opposites". He called for creating a new vision and for legal creativity to make it work together.

I sat stunned and I could see on the faces of many others in the delegation that he had touched them deeply as well. So, in order to speak more with him, I opted to skip the meeting in Tel Aviv with Beiga Shohat, the former Minister of Finance and the dinner in Jaffa. I also needed time to review the events of the past week and a half and write my journal entry for today. Therefore, after the group's departure, Daniel Yossef gave me the space to be in the moment and to feel my own deep anguish. He said that we must not despair, that peace must and will surely come to this "land for dreamers".

Later, while in my room I received a phone call from my son about the bombing in Tel Aviv. And, from the group, I learned that Former Minister Shohat was in the middle of a sentence when they heard the first explosion, less than a mile from the location of the meeting. I was told that he stopped in mid-sentence, said that he hoped that it was thunder, and continued to speak when a second percussive sound was heard. He then made a cell phone call and said that it was “nothing” but a moment later his secretary appeared with a note saying there had been a bus bombing in the old central bus station and that 23, mostly immigrant workers, were reported to have been killed and more than 100 injured.

The dream in the land of dreamers has turned into a nightmare.

January 6

### **Bet Shean.**

Today we traveled to Tel Aviv to meet with four very prominent Israeli national figures. First we met Ami Ayalon, who with Sari Nusseibeh, the President of Al Quds University, co-authored The People’s Campaign for Peace and Democracy, the comprehensive proposal that promotes a peaceful ending to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Ayalon, the former head of the Shin Bet, the Israeli intelligence service, has very deep roots in Israel; his parents came as illegal immigrants to create a safe and democratic homeland for the Jewish. This is a very common denominator for the first generation of Israelis who came before, during, and after the Holocaust. He is emphatic about the necessity of establishing a structure to enable Israel to leave the Territories but he also recognizes that to do so, it is very important for Israel’s to feel secure. Because they have lost a lot in the last ten years, any proposal has to be presented in a way that it can be accepted. He says that it would not be acceptable to most Israelis to “runaway like we did in Lebanon” and, therefore, “we have to get something in return and not make a unilateral withdrawal of the settlements”. He refers to this situation as a “vicious circle with no exit” and he believes that the international community will do nothing to save Israel, if it comes to all out war, hence, “we have to do it ourselves.” His words echoed the voices that I heard from many Israelis with whom I spoke at various off times during my stay here. Nevertheless, said Ayalon, we have to “try to create hope” and when you speak with Palestinians and Israelis about what they think about the future, there is mutual understanding about two states and the Right of Return. “We are much closer in the future, he stated, than in the present, and we shall discuss the past for the next 500 years”. He also says that the people are closer to what needs to be embraced for peace to be attained than are the leaders. He emphasized that we must “go back to the future, back to the future”, which is the place to start and then go backward to “create a possible present”. However, he also said that if Israeli leaders really say what they want, “they won’t be elected and hence, it is up to the people to decide”.

He proposed, with Sari Nusseibeh, an open debate in public forums. He rejects the solutions from the old Left, who are “connected to the failures of the past”, nor should it be a “continuation of Oslo, which never touched the future”. He wants to “start with the

present in order to deal with the present". He told us that the current election only decides "who will represent us at the negotiating table" and that most members of the Likud, the party in power, believe they can live with a Palestinian state and are willing to make real concessions. However, they want a tough negotiator.

In the People's Vote campaign, they will go door-to-door right after the election, in order to get signatures. And, although it is a "painful paper", for both Israelis and Palestinians, they will have to see each other to "break the paradigm in which they don't see each other". He predicts that "after the war with Iraq, in the Spring, Arab street action will be very violent against the United States and against American symbols" and that the Arab regimes of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan, will come to the President Bush to say they will only offer support if you "pay in a Palestinian coin", otherwise it will not be in their interest.

With regard to the settlers, he said it is necessary for them to see themselves as pioneers who will leave their homes in the Territories in order to make the "sacrifice for peace" and would be honored as heroes for doing so. "We have to go back to come back to the roots of Zionism" and we must "reinvent the state" and "overcome our anger and fear".

With regard to the suicide bombing, he says that they create mass suffering which creates a feeling of victory for the militants. And "what will be the result of this carnage", he asks? The "more Israel kills, the more Hamas flourishes and the more they suffer, the more they flourish".

Following our meeting with Ayalon, we heard from Uri Avnery, who is 79 years old, the founder of Gush Shalom, and the "dean" of the Israeli peace movement. He framed the issue of the Israeli and Palestinian struggle as a "conflict with two completely different narratives, two parallel lines that don't touch each other". He said that "if you listen to one side you, cannot see the other" and called upon peace activists to "write a narrative of the last 120 years that they both can agree upon". From the Israel narrative, yesterday's bombing in Tel Aviv was a terrible "terrorist outrage". From the Palestinian narrative, it was an "incredible story of ultimate sacrifice and heroism". He went on to say that it is impossible to comprehend the situation unless each tries to understand the basic hopes and historical experience of the other side. That is to say the Jewish historical experiences of Zionism and the Holocaust and the Arab history of the Zionist invasion and the colonial experience. He called this a unique situation, because both sides consider the whole land their own country and, until recently, even denying the very existence of the other side.

Avnery then proceeded to present a scholarly history of Zionism and Arab nationalism and demonstrated that these two national movements came into being at the same time but didn't know about the existence of the other, the one calling for a Jewish homeland of their own and the other, one big Arabic state or several states. Both are right but each says that "their right is bigger and therefore, they have to right to this country". He then went on to present and debunk the various current proposed solutions, i.e., Israeli transfer or ethnic cleansing of all of the Arabs out of Palestine, the "apartheid solution", which

would not be possible because no people will allow themselves to be oppressed forever, or the “bi-national” solution, which has nothing to do with the present reality, or partition into two states with open borders and slowly growing together like France and Germany, the solution which he thinks, is most possible and probable. His dream is for a Middle Eastern Union, modeled on the European Union. Avnery went on to say “we could make peace within a week or a month and the parameters of such a peace are already known and on the table”. He stated that the majority of Israelis are ready for far reaching compromise but they believe in Sharon’s policy, “the very opposite of peace”. Most Israelis, he said, are tired of war and ready to make sacrifices for peace. However, they don’t feel the other side wants peace, that war is inevitable and, consequently, they think that Sharon is best to lead it. He stated that no one has any idea what the Palestinians are really like or have ever had a real conversation with the one. It is, therefore, necessary to convince the public that peace is possible and that there already exists a document for a peace settlement. “Sharon does not want the peace that is possible,” he said, because he “embodies classic Zionism”. It is interesting to note that Avnery is Sharon’s unofficial biographer and from Sharon himself, he has learned that Sharon sees as his mission the creation of a historic Palestine without fixed border and if he could, would “clear a Jewish Palestine of non-Jews up the Jordan River”. “If Sharon can implement ethnic cleansing, he will”, said Avnery.

Avnery was a soldier in the war of 1948 and he attests that half of the Arabs were intentionally “driven out by order”, while others fled from the battles and at the time of the armistice found themselves on the other side of the border. He firmly supports the principle of the Right of Return because, he says, it is a “human right that cannot be given away by any leadership”; United Nations Resolution 194 speaks to repatriation or compensation as the choice of each Palestinian. He also believes that Israel must take back some refugees “in order to heal the psychological wound”. Nevertheless, he does recognize that the refugee problem is by far the single most difficult problem between the two nations. He noted that there have been several proposals to do just that, for example, take back 50,000 a year for ten years or another, from Yossi Bellin, to take 40,000 back altogether. In Lebanon alone, there are now a quarter of a million Palestinians refugees living in inhuman conditions. But, only an agreed upon solution to the refugee problem can be a “moral solution” and “we must make the peace ourselves”.

Our final meeting of the morning was the Retired Major General Danny Rothchild, the former head of intelligence and former head of the Armed Forces in Lebanon and the person in charge of the Territories. He also participated in all the negotiations from Madrid onwards. Gen. Rothchild is now the head of Council for Peace and Security- Tel Aviv. He said that what the Palestinians wish as their “peace dividend” is simply to wake up in the morning without seeing Israeli soldiers and to live their lives as they wish. He stated very emphatically that poor economic conditions are the “best fertilizer” for Islamic fundamentalism and reported that, at a meeting with one of the leaders of Hamas, he was told that Israel is their strategic enemy but the PLO is their immediate enemy. “We are not a gun type revolution”, he was told, “we want to recruit at the base”. Rothchild went on to say that the first Gulf War made the poor Arab states poorer and cited that Jordan, a Gulf War coalition partner, lost \$450 million the day they joined the

coalition, Egypt's 600,000 workers working in Iraq were sent back after Mubarak joined the coalition, and the PLO, too, had lost its source of funding from the Gulf States, who joined as partners with the U.S. Before 1992, Rothchild reported, all universities in the Territories were administered by the PLO, but after it lost funding from the Gulf States, its subsidies to university students ended. When the students went on strike, Hamas paid the students' tuition, and, for the first time, democratic elections took place among the faculties of the universities, Islamic faculty were hired, replacing those principally under the umbrella of the PLO.

The trend in the Middle East says Rothchild, is that poor countries are becoming more impoverished and the influence of Islamic movement is increasing as it invests in the welfare of the people. Egypt for example adds a million mouths to feed each month. And after Sheik Rahman issued a "fatwah" to attack tourists visiting Egypt, tourists stopped coming and the government of Egypt lost important revenue to invest in the people. Consequently, the Islamic parties have come into this breach. Another example is that Hizballah, the Shiite movement in Southern Lebanon, formerly under the influence of Hamas, purchased agricultural farms, operates clinics and provides food, medical, and dental care. This reminded me of the strategy of the Black Panther Party in the late 1960's to provide breakfast programs and other services to ghetto youth in order to gain their loyalty and support. For quite some time, it was an effective strategy.

And another factor, the issue of demography, looms large i.e., a Palestinian birth rate in excess of that of the Israelis and the fact that 50% of the Palestinians are under the age of 14 occurs at a time as aged survivors of the Holocaust are passing on.

General Rothchild has crafted the Council for Peace and Security Campaign, a unilateral initiative because, as he says, "there is no one else to negotiate with". The seven recent attempts at negotiating failed, he said, because negotiators are "afraid of the people's response". He noted that Fatah has been weakened and its security forces no longer exist because Israel destroyed the security infrastructure, leaving no one with whom to negotiate. Yassar Arafat, who Rothchild described as a "dictator", has been so weakened by Israel and, therefore, cannot negotiate anything.

Rothchild says that the way to stop "terror is by putting an obstacle in front of them, but deterrence doesn't work, and the obstacle, the security fence or the use of force, for example, is not enough." And, he feels that the weak link lies in the settlements. Therefore, he is campaigning to evacuate the settlements in Gaza and 40-50 isolated ones in the West Bank as an interim measure, not as a final status solution. He states that if Israeli withdraws from the Territories, "we will deter much more and when we are outside, it will be easier to make decisions to use the weapons that we have." He refers to the problem that Israel is currently facing as "multidimensional" and asserts that the Bush Administration has ceased to be an "honest broker".

Our final meeting of the day was with Benjamin Ben-Eliezer who, until he resigned from the government two months ago, was Minister of Defense. He had previous to that been the Military Governor of the West Bank and Coordinator of the Territories. "This is a

difficult day”, he said, referring to the suicide bombing of last night. “We need to overcome one big obstacle, Arafat himself” he said, and noted that Israelis will accept a solution if the violence ends. He also said, “we are living in an era of the end of dreams on both sides”, but he is strongly opposed to unilateral separation. Since it is not possible to guarantee security, he says that 97% of the Territories have to go back to the Palestinians in a Palestinian state. His reason for resigning was that the government is spending hundreds of millions to make life better for the settlers instead of where “we really need it”. What is important, he said, is how quick it will take for both sides to come to the table to resolve the issues. He stated that the majority of Palestinian desire peace and change.

And he went on to say “restrictions are a temporary necessity in the face of information about terrorism”, both sides are suffering, there is no military solution, and the “occupation is the worse thing”. “We want to negotiate,” he stated, “but no nation will sacrifice the lives of its citizens. The most powerful person on the Palestinian side, is Arafat”, he said, “but he is not willing to do anything”.

When we finished the group opted to stay in Tel Aviv for dinner. I, however, took the train to Hadera in order to visit with my kibbutz family. I purchased my ticket after spending several minutes opening my suitcase and knapsack at the station security check and was asked to turn on my computer to demonstrate that it was not a potential lethal device. I then boarded the 6 PM train and sat next to and across from three young Israelis, including Sigalit, a young women in the IDF. I asked each of them in turn about their views on the current situation and each expressed a similar point of view, i.e., we want peace, we need to feel secure in order to have a real peace, and Sharon is currently the only one who can possibly handle the present conflict. I also asked them if they knew any Arabs, had Arab friendships, or had discussed the current conflict with them. No, they said, they had not. “Either companionship or death”, I thought, either companionship or death.

January 7

### **Bet Shean.**

Ori, a friend of my son, drove me to meet the bus so that I could rejoin the group for the trip to Jenin. On the way he told me that before the second Intifada, he was accustomed to driving into Jenin, about 15 miles away, in order to have his car repaired. As a matter of fact, he and his wife often went shopping in Jenin because the prices in the Arab market were more reasonable than those in Bet Shean or Afula, the towns nearest to his kibbutz. He told me that he hoped that one day he would be able to resume that old routine and opined that both sides would have to find a way to live again as neighbors in peace.

Although Jenin is relatively close to the Green Line, the borders created after the 1967 War, and my son can see it every day on his way to work, it is now a very dangerous place for Israelis. As we approached the checkpoint in order to enter Jenin and the Jenin refugee camp, we encounter tanks and armored vehicles splayed across the road. After some discussion, we were allowed to pass, left the bus on the Israel side of the

checkpoint, and climbed into a white van bearing the symbol of the Red Crescent, the Arab Red Cross.

We were driven to the offices the UPMRC, the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees-Jenin, an NGO with offices in major cities in the West Bank and Gaza. The Committee provides comprehensive medical care, including school health, home visits to the handicapped, and first aid instruction; it also operates a mobile clinic. There, we were greeted by Dr. Jamil Al-Hada, who welcomed our visit and said that this would be an opportunity for us to see the real suffering, not through the media, but with our own eyes. He went on to say that, “everyone in the world must work for peace and justice” and that humanitarian work is the “responsibility of everyone who wants a just peace”. He told us that from month to month the situation in Jenin has gotten worse. Since Israel closed the borders to the entire city two months ago, which he described as a “new technique” and justified in the name of security, it is, nevertheless, a “weapon against the population as a whole” and it has created great suffering. Presently, it is even impossible to get to the hospital, in nearby Afula and the doctors have to pull up their shirts for inspection at the checkpoints into the city. When asked about the current health of the citizens of Jenin, he said that there are more heart and psychological problems. When discussing “terrorism”, a highly charged term that I tried to avoid using in my journals, he said that terrorism, from the point of view of the Israelis is the suicide bombing, but terrorism, to the Palestinians, he said, is the Israeli occupation and the destruction of houses. He told us that one-month ago the IDF broke into the offices of the Medical Relief Committee and prevented the doctors from entering for several hours during which some locals shot at the building. It was in Jenin last March, he reminded us, that the Israeli armed forces bombed an ambulance and a doctor was burned to death inside and he emphatically denies that ambulances are used to carry suicide bombers. Before we departed he said to us, in words that echo nearly all of the Palestinians and Israelis with whom I have met, “for everything there is an end, but it will take some time”.

From the UPMRC, we drove through Jenin on our way to the refugee camp on the outskirts of the city. Jenin reminded me of the casbah scenes from “Raiders of the Lost Ark”; a wild, crowded and bustling dusty frontier city with shops and outdoor markets, vehicles of every age, shape and size, donkeys carts, and feral dogs and cats, amidst a bustle of activity. There, we were welcomed by a member of the Legislative Council of elected officials responsible for the handling the administrative issues inside the refugee camp, who implored us to transmit the truth about the suffering in the camp, which was established in 1948. Today there are about 14,000 inhabitants. The Jenin refugee camp has been invaded many times by the IDF, the biggest one in last April when Apache helicopter gunships were used, resulting in the loss of lives, the demolition of many houses and buildings, and the total closure of the camp for two weeks. Even the Red Cross, the United Nations and other international agencies were unable to enter and the wounded were unable to reach area hospitals. We were told that the IDF used residents as human shields to go from house to house, medical emergencies were ignored, and there was a lack of water, medicine, and medical aid. And, we learned, 65 people were killed and 200 wounded, mostly civilians, including children and handicapped persons, whose houses were demolished. We heard described the strong smell of death in the camp, the

destruction of more than 500 houses that left 4,000 refugees to find housing outside of the camp. Also lost or damaged during that military operation were health centers, schools, cars, and shops. There was rocket fire into the camp for two weeks and it was during that action that Ian Hook, a United Nations official, was killed.

We walked into the camp via the Right of Return Street to witness the rubble and remains of part of the camp. I walked up the very edge of what was once a neighborhood of densely packed apartment building to get a panorama and perspective of the size of the destruction. From that point and lying before me I saw wasteland that was once the home to thousands and beyond to the Gilboa Mountains where my son teaches today. As I looked up I could see the bullet scarred facades and rooftops of the partially standing remains and I thought about the site of the former World Trade Center. As I stood taking pictures, curious children, jumping up and down in order to have their pictures taken, surrounded me. This scene had been repeated at the camps in Gaza and Ramallah and I marveled at how quickly scores of children would appear out of nowhere. I photographed two boys about nine or ten years of age, one of which was holding a handmade wooden machine gun, and I thought to myself, this is a future fighter for Hamas.

We were schedule to arrive at the Arab American University-Jenin for the afternoon, tour the campus, meet the faculty, speak with some students, and have lunch. In order to get there, we drove south from Jenin on the major connecting road, which goes through the Arab villages of Qabatiah, Zabadeh and Telfeet. What were encountered on this road, deeply cracked and pitted by Israeli armored tanks and vehicles, was an Israeli roadblock, or temporary checkpoint, less than a mile from Jenin. Our driver, accustomed to this situation, slowly drove past the two tanks, stopped and slowly backed up, and stopped and opened the back of the Red Crescent van for inspection. A soldier approached and asked for our passports and then we were given permission to pass. This was not only routine for the Medical Relief drivers, but for the many students from Jenin who attend classes at the University. One day, we learned later, the road was blocked at two in the afternoon for seven hours. Two weeks ago, students and faculty heard shooting at night at the campus main gate, apparently, the IDF used the gate for target practice.

The Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ) is a private institution accredited by the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education. AAUJ was inaugurated in September 2000 and offers an American university based curriculum leading to a BA and BS degrees in 17 Departments that are organized into 5 Colleges: Allied Medical Sciences, Administrative and Financial Sciences, Information Technology, and Dentistry. They have recently opened a Law School and will be adding new Colleges in Engineering, Pharmacy and Fine Arts. AAUJ is the only institution of higher learning in that part of the West Bank and most of the students come from Jenin. During the first year, 60% of the faculty were American professors but now it is difficult to attract them because of the Intifada. Outstanding high school students with, higher grade point averages, can receive lower tuition to attend, a strong incentive to excel. Funding comes from the companies which constructed the building, and every student receives money from Saudi Arabia for their third and fourth year. The range of student opinion about the conflict ranges from optimism to pessimism. Most feel that it will get worse but has to get better.

The President of the AAUJ, Dr. Waleed Deeb, told us that they are hearing and witnessing the growing frustration of the entire Palestinian academic community. He said that just one IDF soldier can stop and close the university and implored us to influence policy makers in the U.S. regarding this situation. He said that “something is going crazy with the American administration”, he can’t understand the issue of Iraq, and the unwillingness of the U.S. to enter into dialog instead of war. He said, “we are victims who cannot understand the level of U.S. support for Israel”.

After our campus tour we had a general session with a large number of faculties, ate lunch with them, and then had a chance to speak with students and faculty individually. I spent about 40 minutes with Prof. Ghassan Abu-Hijleh, from the school of dentistry. The resolution of these issues, I jokingly told him, between you and your Israeli cousins, is a lot like pulling teeth. What we need, I said, continuing my metaphor, is to build bridges and on this, we found common ground and we talked until the very moment that I had to leave. We embraced several times and as the van drove back past the tank roadblock and back through two checkpoints, I was thinking that Ghassan Abu-Hijleh, my new friend, the dentist, and Daniel Yossef, the Peace for Generations West Bank settler, would make wonderful dinner guests. We would speak together and find that we have much in common and we would make an honorable, last and just peace for all time.

January 9

Aboard El Al.

I am feeling not quite ready to go back to the quotidian and often mundane concerns of the everyday that cannot be circumvented, dismissed, or avoided. Tomorrow I will be going back to work and to the Springfield Union-News to meet Angela Carbone, return their Kodak digital camera, and to see what they reported about my trip.

I am a little wiser now than I was two weeks ago but much sadder and, at this very moment, I am also feeling a little fragile, my emotions rising to the surface unpredictably. I made a journey into the center of a major world conflict and another journey into the center of my being. I am deeply moved by all that I have seen and heard, and when I surface from this time of introspection and contemplation and from the depths of my feelings, I am sure that I will find some modicum of hope for the future in the essential goodness and wisdom of those people with whom I met, shared a cup of Arabic coffee, sweetened tea, or a meal. And, especially from the many people from whom I learned and whose personal narratives, as Uri Avnery would say, I have tried to understand. I have met both true mothers of the baby that is Palestine and Israel and which must now be shared and I have grasped the Gordian knot that remains unbound. And, I have heard the shared vision for the future, many times over and over these many days and it is quintessentially the same, to live and to live in peace. I find strength and hope that at some moment in history, peace will come, a lasting, just, and honorable peace for all time, perhaps even in my time. But I also understand that the suffering will have to

continue until the words of the late Yithak Rabin are on the lips of all Israelis and Palestinians, “enough, I say, enough!”

I know that some will read my reports with some skepticism, weighing each meeting location in Israel against those in the Territories and/or add up the number of Israelis with whom I spoke compared to the number of Palestinians. Or some will say that I only heard views from a certain perspective and not others. All of this may be true to a degree, but I used every opportunity, especially the off times in Israel and in particular with my extended Israeli family and their friends to share my experience and to get to their reaction.

I saw a great deal in the past two weeks but not everything; that would take many more months or years. In particular, I did not speak with extremists of the Right or the Left in either Israel or the Territories but, after all, those voices make front-page news anyway. What I have endeavored to do, however, is to give voice to the many in between and, especially, to those who haven't a voice. It was from those with no voice that I paid particular but not exclusive attention. And, it was from them that I received expressions of tremendous gratitude for my being there. Time and again, I heard that I was there on a sacred mission at some significant personal risk.

I have tried to chronicle suffering, terror and despair. But, I have also tried to chronicle hopes and dreams for peace. The present story of the Israel and Palestine is also about historical brutality, nationalism, human frailty, moral complexity, imagination, and the power of fear and love and aspiration.

I dedicate this journal to those innocents lost, to those struggling and suffering today and will tomorrow as well, and to my brothers and sisters who touched me these past two weeks: Arnon Hadar, who opened so many doors, Yoav Elinevsky and Hanna Knaz, for their efforts in behalf of FFIPP, and these leaders of a new tomorrow: Ghassan Abdullah, Salim Tamari and Isla Jad, from Birzeit University-Ramallah, Mustafa Barghouthi, at PINGO, Uri Avnery, Gush Shalom visionary for peace, Sari Nusseibeh and Ami Ayalon, for the People's Campaign for Peace, Ghassan Abu-Hijleh, at AAUJ, Safa Abu-Rabia, at Shatil, Adnan Musallam, at Bethlehem U., Yoav Peled, at Tel Aviv U., the faculty of PALISAD, and Eyad El Sarraj, Hekmat el Sarraj, and Aladdin “Ala” Saga, in Gaza. Also, to the brave members of Kibbutz Metzger and their Arab brothers and sisters at Meisser, the women of Machsom Watch, and conscientious objector, Jonathan Ben-Artzi. Thanks also to our skilled bus driver, Hasib, to Angela Carbone and the Springfield Union-News for their extraordinary interest and coverage, and my FFIPP traveling companions, especially Suzanne Gardinier at Sarah Lawrence, and, from my heart, to settler Daniel Joseph, of Peace for Generations, and to my loving and supportive family, my wife and life partner Janet, but especially to my son Micah and his beautiful family in Israel, for their love and courage.

“Who is mighty? He who makes of his enemy a friend”.

Peace, Salaam, Shalom  
Bob Winston.