

The Link

Published by Americans for
Middle East Understanding, Inc.

Volume 30, Issue 2

April-May, 1997

1967	
April	AMEU Founded
June	Six-Day War
June	USS Liberty Attacked
Nov.	UN Resolution 242
1973	The October War
1975	Civil War in Lebanon
1979	Camp David Accords
1982	
June	Israel Invades Lebanon
Sept.	Sabra and Shatila
1987	Intifada Begins
1990	Iraq Invades Kuwait
1991	The Gulf War
1993	The Oslo Accord
1994	Hebron Massacre
1995	Rabin Assassination
1996	Qana Massacre
	Israel Announces 6,500 New Homes in East Jerusalem
1997	

About This 30th Anniversary Issue

The Link goes to more than 1,900 public and school libraries, where it is read by a wide audience. Particularly effective issues often bring letters that start out, "I came across your publication in our library"

In the past five years, several issues have elicited large responses from regular as well as casual readers. As a way of observing AMEU's 30th year of service, we have invited some of these authors to tell us what has happened since they wrote for us.

Dr. Rosina Hassoun's article led to her co-authorship of a book, participation in a conference at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and inquiries from environmentalists in the West Bank and Jordan.

Grace Halsell's article went into three printings, including a special mailing to every Methodist and Catholic church in the United States. It also came to the attention of Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem and led to her meeting the head of the Jerusalem office of the largest U.S. wholesaler of religious tours to the Holy Land. The discussion dealt with the travel agency's stated policy of not bringing U.S. Christians into contact with local Palestinians. As a follow-up to Ms. Halsell's findings, AMEU assembled and published its *Authentic Holy Land Travel Directory*.

Kathleen Kern's article went into two printings. Ms. Kern says her *Link* issue is given as a reference to journalists from all over the world who come to Hebron. (We also learned that it was instrumental in

securing a major grant for Hebron from the Canadian Government.)

Prof. Daniel McGowan told us that his article brought moral and financial support for his Deir Yasin Remembered project from various parts of the world.

And at least 100 readers that we know of sent their copies of **Prof. James Graff's** "Open Letter to Mrs. Clinton" to the First Lady. The issue was widely distributed among church groups, and we're told that many more copies reached the White House.

Dr. Norman Finkelstein, Rev. Donald Wagner, and Advocate Lynda Brayer are our other contributors. Each of their issues brought numerous requests to our office for additional copies. I recall Dr. Finkelstein telling me a few months after his issue came out that he had received more responses to his *Link* article than to all his previous articles combined.

The unsung heroes of these efforts, and of all our efforts over the past 30 years, are our subscribers, nearly half of whom give more than the annual \$35 subscription. That's what makes the second and third printings possible. That's what makes the distribution of *The Link* to church conferences and academic symposia possible. That's what puts *The Link* on so many library shelves across the country.

To them, and to all our feature writers, we at Americans for Middle East Understanding, directors and staff, extend our full gratitude and appreciation. — **John F. Mahoney, Executive Director**

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In 1992, at a \$250-a-plate pro-Israel fund-raising event in New York City, former U. S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made the remark that "you can't really believe anything an Arab says." Another speaker, Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins University, argued that Arab nationalism is "the most deadly ideology in the world . . . infected with German notions of nationalism," in contrast to Israel, a democracy. Dr. Norman Finkelstein's "Reply to Henry Kissinger and Fouad Ajami" appeared in our December, 1992 issue, in which he argued that the Germanic notions of nationalism that culminated in Nazism are, in fact, the same as those that infuse Zionism. Since then, he has authored two books. [See AMEU book list on page 15.] Finkelstein, whose parents were Holocaust survivors, finds his worst fears coming true in the events of the past five years.

Since Israel's conquest of the West Bank and Gaza in June, 1967, the "peace process" has moved along two distinct tracks. Largely unreported in the U.S., the first was supported by almost the entire international community. In accordance with U.N. Resolution 242 and subsequent U.N. resolutions, this "peace process" called for Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state there in exchange for Palestinian recognition of Israel's sovereignty within the pre-June, 1967 borders. A 1989 United Nations General Assembly resolution to this effect was backed by 151 nations with only three dissents, the U.S., Israel and Dominica.

The other version of the "peace

process" was advanced by Israel with crucial U.S. backing. Having long coveted the West Bank, Israel did not intend to relinquish control. Yet it was faced with the same dilemma it confronted in the early part of the century. Palestine was a land with a people. In accordance with Zionist ideology, Jews wanted the land but not the people.

After June, 1967, the range of options for resolving this dilemma was narrow. Extermination, the classic method of

conquest, was plainly not a viable alternative. Neither was expulsion: what was done in 1948 could not be easily replicated. That left the standard last recourse of conquest: encirclement.

In the American case, encirclement meant native reservations; in the South African case, bantustans. Israel mapped out a strategy similar

to that of the racist regime in South Africa. In the late 1960s, the Labor party formulated the Allon Plan, which called for Israel's retention of half the West Bank and ersatz self-determination for the Palestinians in the areas of "dense Arab settlement."

For nearly 30 years, Israel kept the Allon Plan under wraps. On the one hand, there was no particular urgency. Israel's U.S. sponsor deflected international pressure. On the other hand, there were no takers from the Palestinian side. No credible Palestinian leadership was willing to play the role of a Chief Buthelezi. Reflecting the

Norman Finkelstein received his doctoral degree from Princeton University for his dissertation on the theory of Zionism.

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THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

DARKNESS AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

BY NORMAN G. FINKELSTEIN

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aspirations of its Palestinian constituency and in accord with the international consensus, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) called for Israel's full withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza and full rights, not merely trappings, of self-determination.

Beginning in the late 1980s, a series of developments spurred Israel to dust off the Allon Plan. Although ultimately successful in its drive to crush the *intifada*, Israel was forced to pay an onerous price, both domestically and internationally. It was obvious that the status quo ante the Palestinian uprising could not endure. Some resolution of the Palestine question was inevitable. On the other side, a concatenation of events brought the Palestinians to a turning point—Iraq's destruction in the Gulf War, the demise of the Soviet bloc, the open alignment of the Arab regimes with Israel, the PLO's rapidly declining fortunes. Arafat was constrained to reconsider Israel's standing offer.

The Oslo Accords mark the triumph of Israel's long-standing encirclement strategy. Israel will eventually relinquish direct control of perhaps half the West Bank, keeping an enlarged Jerusalem and crucial water resources. In the meanwhile, a bantustan-like administration is being set up in the fragmented areas of "dense Arab settlement." Like the bantustans, it will no doubt be granted statehood eventually. Palestinian and Israeli entrepreneurs will jointly exploit dirt cheap Palestinian labor in "industrial parks," an updated version of the South African "growth points" strategy.

A bloated bureaucracy, accounting for perhaps one quarter of all employment in the West Bank and Gaza, is totally in thrall to Arafat. To subsidize this bureaucracy, Arafat is totally in thrall to the United States and Israel. Thus Arafat keeps the Palestinians in line and the United States and Israel keep Arafat in line. In the technical literature, that's called bringing democracy to the Third World. For Palestinians who look askance at this arrangement, Arafat's manifold security forces, also acting at the behest of the United States and Israel, are at the ready. Indeed, with even the minimal restraints imposed by international human rights organizations now lifted, Arafat's hand is freer than his Israeli predecessors to terrorize and torture Palestinians—a development which cannot but bring smiles and nods of approval from his benefactors.

It must be said that in these matters, subjective intentions count for little. Whether acting from noble or

ignoble motives, Arafat is locked into an institutional arrangement that allows precious little room for maneuver: Either he does the masters' bidding or he is left out in the cold. Recall that Chief Buthelezi also started out a fiery nationalist, enjoying the support of the African National Congress and even the more militant South African Students Organization.

For the foreseeable future the Oslo strategy probably will work. With the defeat of the *intifada*, and the betrayals and gross opportunism of the leadership, most ordinary Palestinians have given up on politics. Filled with cynicism, they seek personal salvation amid the surrender of collective rights. It is every man for himself. Who can blame them?

Ultimately, however, it is unlikely that the Oslo arrangement will prove stable. It is only a matter of time before the population between the Mediterranean and the Jordan will be half Israeli Jewish and half Palestinian Arab. It also will be half free, half slave. As Lincoln long

The "musht," which Rosina Hassoun wrote about in the May-June, 1992 Link, is a fish that swims in the Sea of Galilee. Its fame derives from its association with the fisherman disciple of Jesus, hence often it is called St. Peter's fish. As Dr. Hassoun wrote in her very popular issue, the musht is in big environmental trouble, its plight emblematic of all the land of Palestine. What's happened to the musht in the intervening five years? It's still swimming; what it's swimming in, however, is another story.

The musht is not the only ominous sign of environmental peril and unresolved political conflict in the troubled Middle East. Scientists have now confirmed the death of the Dead Sea.

For the last 10,000 years, the Dead Sea has been a stable body of water where unique life forms (brine shrimp and bacteria) evolved to survive in the highly saline water. Since the Israeli government

diverted almost all the inflow to the Dead Sea in the 1970's, the sea's surface area has shrunk by 21 percent.¹

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Warnings
Of the Musht
And a Truly Dead Sea

By ROSINA HASSOUN

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Its upper layers became saltier than lower layers and a mixing of the salt layers occurred that effectively killed all life in the water. If any life on earth held the secrets of survival in increasingly saline environments, like those now created in the Middle East, it was those now extinct life forms. The rapidly disappearing Dead Sea constitutes a warning that it is time to put aside differences in order to preserve human and non-human life.

When my *Link* article appeared five years ago, the environmental aspects of the Arab/Israeli conflict were not widely publicized. Now information is available via the Internet from Israeli and international institutions and new sources of information are appearing daily.

In 1992, Israel was enduring a drought and the Oslo agreements had just been signed. Since then several critical events have occurred. The region experienced a few unusually wet years between 1992 and 1994.² The Jordan River basin had a short reprise from the environmental onslaught caused by over utilization and over-pumping of water resources. In the Sea of Galilee, the unusual rainfall levels replenished falling water levels, diluted high pesticide and salinity levels, and—for a couple of seasons—reduced the severity of algae blooms. The musht and the other native species of fish in the Sea of Galilee got a brief reprieve.

The people of the region did not experience the same benefits. The additional rainfall served to underscore the reality that the people of the Jordan River basin—both Arabs and Jews—have a severe water problem, something that a few years of above normal rainfall will not solve. In the meantime, the people of Gaza already are experiencing an environmental crisis. "Autonomous rule" has not improved their quality of life which, if anything, has worsened. The majority of Gaza's Arab population is still, after 48 years, living in their own waste-sewage and uncollected garbage.

In addition, the people of Gaza are facing the imminent loss of their only source of water in the aquifer underneath Gaza. Due to over-pumping, salt water from the Mediterranean is seeping into the aquifer, along with chemical and sewage contamination. The salinity of the water in Gaza has been measured at 400 parts per million chloride. Most bottled water in the United States has zero. Researchers report that drinking water with this high salt content increases the risk of kidney disease, heart disease, fetal damage, and other illnesses.³

In Gaza, the Palestinian Authority inherited a serious

Dr. Hassoun is currently working on an anti-smoking grant with Hispanic and Arab youth in Flint, Michigan.

environmental problem that is well beyond their capabilities and resources to ameliorate. The fragile water-bearing clays and limestone in the aquifer have been damaged by salt and can never be repaired. Due to years of severe water restrictions on the Palestinians, the Palestinian Authority has allowed what Israeli sources characterize as almost unlimited drilling of shallow wells in Gaza. Israeli sources claim this is only increasing the damage to the aquifer and the soils in the region.⁴ The Palestinians blame the Israeli settlements with their massive deep well extraction of water.

The Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority are about to enter the final stages of negotiations in which the water and environmental problems are to be discussed. The Palestinians are requesting greater access to the major aquifer under the West Bank. As the major source of water for both Israelis and Palestinians, the West Bank aquifers are being pumped at or above the recharge levels. Palestinian access to that water has been frozen at 1967 levels, despite population increases. Some Arab villages still have water allotments below what the United Nations considers to be the minimum necessary for human life. There is no relief in sight. The Israelis have shown a reluctance to increase Palestinian quotas or to limit their own utilization of water.

The problem of too many people and not enough water is intensifying. A major component of that dilemma is the lifestyle people choose, which is often culture-based, and its impact on water usage. The fragile environments of the Middle East present a severe challenge to the modern westernized lifestyle that Israel enjoys and that Arab states are trying to acquire.⁵

The ultimate question determining long-term peace between Arabs and Israelis is whether Israelis will be willing to alter their lifestyle and modify their expectations so that Palestinians and neighboring Arab countries can have greater access to water. Will they find a compromise in time? The water resources do not conform to political boundaries—they are shared resources to which shared solutions will be needed.

ENDNOTES

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2. Libiszewski, S., "Water Disputes in the Jordan River Basin Region and their Role in the Resolution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict," ENCOP Occasional Paper No. 13 (1995), Center for Security and Conflict Resolution/Swiss Peace Foundation, Zurich/Berne. INTERNET version <<http://www.fsk.ethz.ch/encop/13/en13.htm>>.
3. Bellisari, A., "Public Health and the Water Crisis in the Occupied Territories," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 23, No. 2 (1994), pp. 52-63.
4. State of Israel, Ministry of Environment: Jerusalem. URL: Gopher://israel-info.gov.il.
5. Hassoun, R. J., "Water Between Arabs and Israelis: Researching Twice Promised Resources". in *Water, Culture, and Power*, edited by John M. Donahue and Barbara Rose Johnston, Island Press, Washington, D.C. and Covelo, Ca., 1997.

The New York Times reported on February 18, 1997, that the Israeli military had evicted Jahalin Palestinians from their homes and relocated them next to a garbage dump in order to expand a sprawling Jewish settlement five miles east of Jerusalem. What the Times did not report was the name of the lawyer who has been tirelessly defending the Jahalin in their desperate efforts to cling to their family homes. She is Lynda Brayer, a Jewish convert to Catholicism, who founded the St. Ives Society to provide legal aid to Palestinians. She first told her story in our July-August, 1996 Link. Since then, much has happened.

On a misty Monday morning in January, the air wet from a continuing drizzle, the Israeli Military High Command decided to remove and relocate a scattered Jahalin Bedouin community whose presence was interfering with expansion of the Jewish colony of Ma'ale Adumim in the Occupied West Bank.

This was an army action in all of its details, although the police carried it out. The Israelis wanted the forced expulsion to look like a civil action taken by ordinary civilian authorities against civilian "lawbreakers," rather than as an illegal military action against defenseless, unarmed people. The authorities also wanted no critical witnesses and kept the media, foreign delegations, peace activists and other observers at a safe distance from the bulldozers and their dirty work. I slipped through the roadblocks on the strength of my fluent Hebrew and the policemen's assumption that I was a lawyer on the government's side.

At the first encampment, a resident resisted the destruction of his family's shelters, only to be surrounded, forcibly subdued and arrested. Jahalin youngsters attempted to come to his defense, but they were met by police and soldiers with shoves, kicks and truncheons and driven away.

I came in time to watch and photograph the destruction of the central tent/tin shack that had formed the heart of the compound I had visited on several

occasions. Trucks had been brought in to gather up the most meager of belongings, which did not include building material for new shelters—neither the traditional woven cloth nor metal sheeting. Shanties and tents had been demolished with no thought of saving anything for the relocation site. The inhabitants already had been removed and had no say in what might be salvaged for future use.

It was so pathetic. Ordinary human beings, whose only crime was that they were not Jewish, had all traces of their decades-long habitation removed in less than one hour. Operations at a second site were brutally efficient as well. It was here that a man and wife in their eighties were evicted, their living quarters laid waste, and their sheep and goats loaded onto trucks by foreign workers from Rumania. Within 10 minutes, the dazed couple and their animals had been dumped on a rocky hilltop 500 yards from a massive garbage dump, the cold wind howling around them. An Israeli coordinator promised to provide the frail, bewildered pair with a tin shack, but offered nothing to

five other families evicted from the first encampment.

Having seized the Jahalin land and cast out the occupants, the authorities had no further use for their earlier promises of humane treatment. As Paul says in the New Testament, "By their fruit ye shall know them." There is no Israeli fruit, only a sterile, uninhabitable rocky protuberance whose perimeter road serves 800 garbage trucks arriving daily from Jerusalem.

This "alternative site" follows the model of apartheid South Africa's squatter townships. These are the dwelling places for the less-than-human. Jewish authorities do not believe the Jahalin need the kind of housing that Jews need. This line of thinking was demonstrated by a Supreme Court justice considering the case of Palestinian villagers who demanded that their water supply be restored and at volumes comparable to those of the neighboring Jewish settlement. "I am not interested in what the Jews receive," said the judge. "What did [the Palestinians] receive before the water was cut off? That is what they must get. You cannot compare Jewish and Palestinian consumption."

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By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them

BY LYNDA BRAYER

Lynda Brayer is the Executive Legal Director of the Society of St. Ives located in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Professor James Graff never did receive a reply from Mrs. Clinton to his "Open Letter" issue of May-June, 1993. Neither did we. Nor, as far as we know, did our numerous readers who sent their copies to the First Lady. Prof. Graff will send his follow-up letter to Mrs. Clinton. So will we. So, we hope, will our readers. Why? Because every village needs to know how its foreign aid dollars are being spent.

April, 1997

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mrs. Clinton,

As you argue in your book, for children to thrive, to develop their talents, to create a decent society for themselves and their children, it does take a "village"—"the network of [humane and caring] values and relationships that support and affect our lives."¹

Hundreds of thousands² of Palestinian children were assaulted and terrorized by Israeli soldiers and settlers during the *intifada*. Palestinian mental health professionals credit the traditional village ethos, the extended family and the community network of support and affection given to children as major reasons why fewer children than expected suffer major psychiatric problems. Others explain that many children

understood their suffering in terms of their roles in a community struggle to end the Israeli occupation and replace it with a democratic Palestinian society. They were simply striving to become the caring and committed citizens in the type of "village" you want the U.S.A. to become.

As you wrote, "Just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes children to raise up a village to become all it should be."³ Has the "peace process" freed Palestinian children to "raise up the village" they had dreamt of and struggled for?

Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles at the White House in 1993, Israel has virtually sealed off the roughly 60 percent of the Gaza Strip it had not already reserved for the exclusive use of 4,000 Israeli settlers and the soldiers who protect them and control the movement of an estimated 825,000 Gazans. Since early 1994 this policy of isolation, interrupted only occasionally by partial

relaxations, has been devastating for children and their already impoverished families in Gaza. Hundreds of millions of dollars were lost as unemployment soared, agricultural goods for export rotted, and supplies needed for local businesses and construction were prevented from entering the Strip.

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It Takes a Village, Mrs. Clinton, Not a Bantustan

BY JAMES GRAFF

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The forced eviction has been in the cards since the High Court ratified the state's claim that the land is "state land" and therefore forbidden to be used by the native population—this despite the state's lack of supporting documents and its admission to having destroyed the relevant files. When Palestinians claim to own land, they must prove ownership by Israeli standards. When the land is conveniently confiscated by the state, it becomes a market commodity that can be traded—except, of course, it cannot be acquired by Palestinians or other non-Jews.

The destruction of the Jahalin of Ma'ale Adumim is part of a continuing Zionist policy of expulsion. I predict that in the very near future their relocation site will be reclassified unilaterally by the Israelis as an area under

Palestinian control in order for the Israelis to relieve themselves of any responsibility to them. This would continue the ethnic cleansing of the land area that remains under exclusive Israeli control, leading towards the final solution of the Palestinian problem.

The Oslo process is enabling Israel to stabilize permanent control of most of the land of the West Bank except for land-locked, non-contiguous Palestinian villages and towns. These scattered blocks are ceded to a Palestinian "authority" which has neither the means nor the authority to do the job of governing. The tragedy of this arrangement is that it will spell either the death of Palestinian independence or the beginning of a new round of hostilities and warfare.

The tightened closure in February, 1996, drove up the percentage of Gaza families living below the poverty line to an estimated 25 to 30 percent. Israel even reduced the flow of food, forcing Palestinian authorities to institute rationing in 1996 and increasing the prevalence of malnutrition. Essential medical supplies also were prevented from entering Gaza.⁴

Children are particularly vulnerable to food shortages, lack of medicines, and sealed borders that deny them and their family members medical care beyond Gaza and the West Bank. Israeli officials refused to permit two year-old Mohammad Khawalda, who was suffering from a liver disease, to travel to Jerusalem's Maqassad Hospital for his regular treatment—treatment not available in Gaza. Mohammad sickened and died on February 29, 1996.⁵ Bassem Shawahneh, 21 days old, was being rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment because of difficulty in breathing and died March 9, 1996, when Israeli soldiers held up his ambulance for hours at a checkpoint.⁶

There also is the widely-reported case of Hanan Zayid, who was forced to give birth to twins in the back seat of the car carrying her to the hospital because Israeli soldiers refused to allow the car through a checkpoint near Bethlehem. The soldiers laughed at Hanan and her husband after the first birth, and held all of the occupants inside the car until after the second birth. Then the driver, Hanan's brother-in-law, risked gunfire and sped away to the Holy Land Family Hospital. There the twins were pronounced dead and Hanan was told that she, too, could have died if she had been further delayed.

Israeli redeployment around the most populous 4 percent of the West bank towns (excluding East Jerusalem) has not put an end to Israeli soldiers and settlers killing or seriously wounding Palestinian children. Almost a third of those shot to death last September in Gaza during clashes and demonstrations protesting the opening of the "archeological" tunnel were minors, and half of the 1600 wounded throughout the Occupied Territories were under age 18.⁷ Many of them were seriously injured by high velocity bullets that exploded inside their bodies. These projectiles, which are internationally prohibited, were fired by Israeli soldiers, snipers and hovering helicopter gunships well beyond the range of their victims' stones.

Young Palestinians in particular risk savage beatings as routine, extra-judicial punishment from Israeli

soldiers or police should their desperation for work or peddling opportunities compel them to sneak into occupied, illegally-annexed East Jerusalem, or to Jewish-only West Jerusalem.

Thirteen-year-old Mahmud Jamil, for example, has seven brothers and seven sisters. He must help his father, an ice cream vender, support the family. Like many others, he found work at a construction site inside the "Green Line" border of Israel. Mahmud was caught with others going to work early last July 9. A red-headed Israeli soldier kicked him in the head, forced him to stand facing a supporting wall, and smashed his head repeatedly against the wall. Then he pushed Mahmud down a slope into a sewage pit and hurled stones at him.

An Israeli passerby described another incident in West Jerusalem: "I saw a municipal inspector lifting a child into the air. The child appeared to be about 10-12 years old. He looked like a rag doll and appeared to be unconscious. His head was falling to one side and his legs to the other, and the inspector was holding him at the waist, shaking him. He threw him to the ground several times."⁸

Palestinian children continue to be targets of Israeli settler terror. A widowed mother of six whose poverty forced her to live in the still Israeli-controlled center of Hebron knows what settler terror means—and so do her children. The family can afford only a few rooms in a house whose courtyard is used by settlers from Kiryat Arba and soldiers as a shortcut. The family is under an Israeli military order to stay inside whenever settlers or soldiers decide to use the shortcut. Children found playing in the courtyard by Israeli Jews are routinely beaten. The family is also under a military order not to use metal cutlery or glassware—for "security reasons."⁹

The mother's eldest son was abducted twice by settlers who beat him so brutally that he lost the vision in one eye and suffered first a broken arm and later a broken leg. Not content with having partially blinded the boy, over the past two years the settlers have smashed six pairs of his reading glasses. The same child was at the Al Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in 1994 when American-born Baruch Goldstein massacred 29 worshippers, including six children. He escaped being shot because he was covered by the dead body of an old man praying beside him.

The recent agreement over Hebron implementing the Oslo II Accord leaves not only the fanatical 400 Jewish settlers in the center of Hebron, but thousands more in Kiryat Arba, whose cemetery boasts a shrine to mass murderer Baruch Goldstein. Settler terror against Palestinian children will continue as long as these Israeli

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versions of the Ku Klux Klan and Aryan Nation are allowed to remain in their illegal colonies in the West Bank and Gaza.

It was clear from the very beginning of the "peace process" that those settlers and their colonies would remain as Yitzhak Rabin expropriated yet another 12,000 acres of Palestinian land to build roads linking settlements to major Israeli centers and to complete the "Judaization" of occupied East Jerusalem.

Now new Jewish-only roads and two new tunnels connect Kiryat Arba and other settlements to Jerusalem and the Netanyahu government seizes even more land for new and expanded settlements. Palestinian children are being robbed of their birthright in order to provide space in Palestine for Americans, Canadians, Russians and others who either profess Judaism or can demonstrate the "right" lineage. If those children do not live in the 14 percent of occupied East Jerusalem still reserved by Israeli authorities for "Arabs," they cannot even worship at Islam's third holiest place or celebrate Christmas and Easter in the Old City's churches unless their parents are among the fortunate few granted permits to visit the Holy City. No, they must stay in the 4 percent of the West Bank or 40 percent of Gaza assigned to them so far.

The events of last September demonstrate how each Palestinian enclave can be isolated and surrounded by Israeli troops, how easily Palestinian children can become targets once again of lethal Israeli gunfire, and how devastatingly they find themselves prisoners within the borders of their own Palestine.

Peace does not consist of fewer child deaths from Israeli gunfire, fewer children savagely beaten by Israeli soldiers and settlers, or of the replacement of direct military rule by an apartheid system managed by a rights-violating, anti-democratic "native" regime dysfunctionally dependent on the overwhelmingly superior power of its colonizing "partner." But that is precisely what the so-called "peace process" has turned out to be. What future does this process hold for Palestinian children?

Perhaps that future is not yet sealed. Perhaps, Mrs. Clinton, you can persuade your husband and his AIPAC-trained Middle East advisors that apartheid is not peace and that the U.S. has a special responsibility for the future of Palestinian children because U.S. tax dollars helped to build those settlements and to rob those children of their childhood during seven years of the *intifada*.

Perhaps you can tell him that U.S. citizens should not be compelled to fund another apartheid state, and

that U.S. aid should be used to improve the education and health of those state-battered children, not to fund the nine or more security services Arafat employs to contain legitimate dissent as well as real threats to security. Perhaps you can remind him to make good the promises of prosperity that peace was supposed to bring to the de-developed and embattled Palestinian economy. Maybe you could sum all this up by saying: "Bill, it takes a village, not a bantustan."

Sincerely,
Prof. James A. Graff
Toronto, Canada

ENDNOTES

1. Clinton, Hillary Rodham, *It Takes a Village and Other Lessons Children Teach Us*, Touchstone Books, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1996, p. 13.
2. According to United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) statistics for the *intifada* period of approximately 6-1/2 years, 28,753 Palestinian children 15 years old or younger were medically treated for injuries inflicted by Israelis, including injuries caused by gunshots, beatings, tear gas, explosive devices, being run down by military vehicles, being thrown onto burning tires, etc. Of these, 23,802 were suffered by children in Gaza and 4,951 by children in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem. UNRWA statistics for the West Bank are less comprehensive than those for Gaza. Statistics for Gaza show totals of 6,767 children treated for wounds from high velocity bullets, plastic covered metal balls, plastic tipped bullets and regular bullets, 1,166 of whom were 10 years old or younger, 12,726 were treated for beatings, 4,783 of whom were 10 years or younger, including 1,000 under age 6, and 3,444 were treated for the effects of asphyxiating tear gas, 2,426 of whom were 10 years old or younger. Two surveys of children between 8 and 15 years of age conducted by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programming in 1992 showed that 42 percent had been beaten by Israeli soldiers, 55 percent had witnessed Israeli soldiers beating their fathers, 85 percent had experienced Israeli night raids on their homes, 50 percent had suffered degrading or humiliating treatment at the hands of Israeli soldiers, 19 percent had been detained (and invariably beaten during arrest and detention) by Israeli soldiers, 28 percent had a brother in Israeli prisons/detention camps, 24.7 percent had been struck by rubber-coated bullets fired by Israeli troops, 4.5 percent suffered broken bones from Israeli beatings, and 92.5 percent had been exposed to Israeli tear gas. Based on available statistics and extrapolations from the GCMHP surveys, my claim that Israeli soldiers and settlers assaulted or terrorized hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children is no exaggeration.
3. Clinton, *op. cit.*, p. 318.
4. For details, see *The Israeli Policy of Closure: Legal, Political and Humanitarian Evaluation*, produced by the Palestinian Centre for Rights (PCHR), Gaza.
5. PCHR, p. 6 of "Closure Update No. 3."
6. Defence for Children International—Palestine Section (tel. 972-2-654- 2963, fax 656-2962) documented this and other cases. Such cases also are published in B'Tselem's "Without Limits: Human Rights Violations Under Closure," April, 1996.
7. Cf. January 28, 1997, "Press Release" by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, tel/fax 972-7-824-776/825-893.
8. Both accounts are published in B'Tselem's "Beatings, Maltreatment, and Degradation of Palestinians by Police During June-July, 1996." Following pictures telecast in Israel of Israeli border police beating Palestinians who had tried to enter Israel for work without permits, B'Tselem issued a press release on Nov. 20, 1996, which described the beatings and degradations as "routine and not unusual."
9. Details are available from Defence for Children International—Palestine Section.

On June 25, 1996, at the United Nations in New York, the North American Non-Government Organizations on the Question of Palestine announced an unprecedented award. For the first time, said the chairman, they wanted to recognize a non-member organization, the Christian Peacemaker Team, for its extraordinary service to the people of Hebron. And the chairman recommended that those unfamiliar with CPT's work should read Kathleen Kern's January-March, 1996 issue of The Link. CPT members are still in the historic center of Hebron and, indeed, the historic center of Hebron is still under Israeli military occupation. The fact is, so desperate has the situation become that recently the Christian Peacemakers, who were invited to Hebron by its Muslim mayor, have engaged in a very dramatic protest. Ms. Kern explains:

On March 1, six members of the team currently in Hebron began a 700-hour fast due to end on Easter Sunday. Three members are taking liquids only and three are fasting during the daylight hours as Muslims do during the month of Ramadan. The purpose is to draw public attention to the 700 houses that the Israeli government plans to demolish to facilitate settlement expansion and bypass road construction in the West Bank.

Several hundred people a day are visiting the tent which the fast participants have set up in Hebron near the Red Cross headquarters. Some Israelis and Palestinians already have spent a day fasting with the team to express their solidarity. "We feel our witness for peace and justice needs to reach a new level of spiritual nonviolence," the team wrote in a press release. "We profoundly feel the evil of the Israeli occupation [and] we understand our fast as a form of spiritual resistance to one expression of this evil—house demolitions."

CPT's first effort to save a Palestinian home from demolition by Israeli authorities was on February 28, 1996. I joined other team members in trying to prevent the destruction by standing on the roof, but we were dragged away by soldiers and two of our group were arrested, Dianne Roe, an artist from Corning, NY, and

Bob Naiman, a graduate student from Chicago.

Their arrests led to our involvement with Peace Now and the Meretz party, which were able to pressure Shimon Peres to grant "amnesty" to 60 more houses scheduled for demolition in the Hebron area. Although authorities said the houses were to be removed because they were built without permits, the truth is that they stand on Palestinian land that the settlers of Kiryat Arba and Givat Ha Harsina want for expansion.

In accordance with our mandate to oppose all violence, we notified the local media, including Arab papers, that for three hours on March 10, 1996, team members would ride Jerusalem's #18 bus—the route targeted by suicide bombers on two previous Sundays. A number of our Palestinian friends from Hebron said they would have accompanied us to demonstrate sympathy for the dozens of Israeli victims and abhorrence for the senseless murders had they been able to obtain permits to enter Jerusalem.

In the spring and summer of 1996, we became involved with a Hebron University professor whose family owned land next to Susia, a Jewish settlement south of Hebron. Although Musallem Shreateh had documents proving ownership, the settlers of Susia had repeatedly tried to confiscate his

land and prevent its cultivation. As settlers shouted death threats, our team helped him harvest wheat.

After settlers trespassed and planted olive trees on Shreateh's land, four team members tried to transplant the trees back to settlement property. All four were arrested—Bob Naiman for the second time; Wendy Lehman, a full-time member of the Christian Peacemaker Corps, Kidron, OH; Randy Bond, an architect from Grand Rapids, MI; and Tom Malthaner, an accountant from Rochester, NY. Eventually, Rabbis for Human Rights learned of Musallem's case through us and took over much of the work we had been doing.

Nonviolent resistance, which is at the core of the CPT program, was demonstrated in an exemplary manner in December at Hebron University. Israeli authorities closed the university in March, 1996, after the second suicide bus bombing in Jerusalem, although no

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Kathleen Kern is a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams headquartered in Chicago.

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one connected with the school was ever accused of involvement.

When the Israeli Civil Administration extended the closure in December without giving a reason, the students, staff and faculty decided to protest. On December 9, the students came to the campus with their books and announced they would remain until the closure was lifted. We entered a classroom where the students had expressed their views, in Arabic and English, on the chalkboard. One slogan in particular caught our attention: "We did not kill Yitzhak Rabin," a reference to Yigal Amir, a student at Bar Ilan University, which was not closed after he shot and killed Prime Minister Rabin.

The administration and Palestinian Authority persuaded the students to leave the grounds, but for the next two and a half weeks, students, faculty and staff appeared in silent protest outside the gates. Professors began teaching courses in the street outside of the campus and sympathetic Israeli groups came to express their solidarity with the students. On December 28, the university reopened.

In Hebron, the settler harassment of the Hebronites on Saturdays, which I reported in the earlier *Link*, has more or less come to an end. Much of that activity had been organized by Yigal Amir and his brother Haggai, according to *The New York Times*. Both men are now in jail.

But little else has changed, even in the aftermath of the recent Hebron Agreement. The re-deployment still leaves the core area where settlers live under Israeli control. Thus, the Palestinians who suffered the most from the Israeli occupation—the ones whose homes are adjacent to settlements—are the very people whose situation has not changed.

If Arafat had asked our opinion on the Hebron deal, we would have counseled him to insist that the Palestinians remaining under Israeli control be given exactly the same police protection, the same water supply, the same electricity and the same phone service enjoyed by the Israeli settlers in Hebron. Had Arafat insisted on these basic amenities, Netanyahu would have been in the awkward position of saying that Palestinians do not have a right to them—which is the tacit assumption of Israeli policy.

But equal rights and equal treatment under the law would go a long way toward making coexistence possible. R

On April 9, 1948, two Zionist groups, the Irgun and the Stern Gang, massacred 254 men, women and children in the village of Deir Yassin. Some villagers were driven in a truck through the streets of Jerusalem in a "victory parade" before being taken back to the village and shot against a wall. On April 9, 1998, a 50th anniversary conference will be held in Palestine to commemorate the massacre. As Professor Daniel McGowan notes, his September-October, 1996 issue of *The Link* has played a role in remembering Deir Yassin.

The Link was the first publication to report in depth on the work and objectives of Deir Yassin Remembered. It described DYR's quest to create a memorial to the Palestinians of Deir Yassin murdered by Jewish terrorists and to build it at the site of the massacre. Deir Yassin, located in an orthodox Jewish neighborhood in West

Jerusalem, is in the shadow of the famous Holocaust memorial at Yad Vashem.

The article sparked letters of encouragement from all over the world. The late Colin Edwards, a broadcast journalist and Middle East correspondent for 40 years, had made a taped documentary of the Deir Yassin story. His wife, M a r y ,

resurrected the tape and gave it to DYR, which makes it available to interested parties.

Descendants of the Swedish Colony in Jerusalem sent a generous contribution and related the colony's experiences in Jerusalem at the time of the massacre. Sizable checks came from Saudi Arabians, Germans, and Arab-Americans, including radio celebrity Casey Kassem. Other support has come from whom I refer to as "righteous Jews," meaning those who recognize the suffering inflicted on the Palestinians through the creation and expansion of the State of Israel.

Roni Ben-Efrat, the Israeli editor of *Challenge Magazine*, wrote to express her admiration for DYR's

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THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

DEIR YASSIN:

REMEMBRANCE

AND

FORGIVENESS

By DANIEL A. MCGOWAN

aims. In December she accompanied me to Deir Yassin, walking through the site for the first time and viewing it from Yad Vashem. Through her I met an American author and tour guide who emigrated to Israel; he promised to include Deir Yassin on his tours of Jerusalem.

Birzeit University has linked the Birzeit website to ours (<www.deiryassin.org>) and distributed copies of *The Link* and our brochure to students. We are jointly planning the April 9, 1997, conference to commemorate the anniversary of the Deir Yassin massacre. The conference coordinators are Sahar Ghosheh, wife of Samir Ghosheh, Minister of Labor in the Palestine National Authority, and Khairieh Abu Shusheh, a primary school teacher in the Old City. Speakers will include Marc Ellis, a Jewish theologian; Saleh Abdel Jawad of the Center for Research and Documentation of Palestinian Society; Mahara Dajani, director of Dar El Tifl El Arabi, founded by the late Ms. Hind Hussein as an orphanage for surviving children of Deir Yassin; Mahmoud Darwish, Palestine's "national poet;" and a representative of the Survivors of Deir Yassin.

Meir Pa'il, an Israeli Jew who witnessed the Deir Yassin massacre, also read *The Link*. A former military historian, he is now retired and living in Tel Aviv. Two members of DYR visited him there and, with his permission, recorded his account of the events on those fateful days in 1948. That tape and its transcript also are available to members of DYR.

DYR has agreed to underwrite the first book to be published on the Deir Yassin massacre. It is being written by Sherry Al Mufti and will be published in time for the 50th anniversary remembrance ceremonies in 1998.

In its December mission to Israel, representatives of DYR met with Knesset members Talab Elsana, Hashem Mahameed, Nawaf Masalha, and Tamar Gozansky. They promised to put Deir Yassin on the Knesset calendar for discussion on April 9, the day of our conference at Birzeit University. We have met with several members of the Palestinian Authority and President Arafat has endorsed our project in writing.

DYR also met with Michel Sabbah, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Jerusalem. While giving our project his full endorsement, he counseled us not to create a Holocaust-style memorial, but rather one which demonstrates Christian forgiveness, even to the murderers who committed the massacre. His point was well received and will be incorporated into the specifications for the memorial design competition.

Much has been accomplished by DYR in the past two years. However, the critical phases are before us. We have artists and sculptors eager to compete to design the memorial; we have people ready and willing to petition

Israeli governments have long cultivated American Christians who believe that the return of Jews to Palestine signals the Second Coming of Christ. And Rev. Donald Wagner has long engaged these Christians in dialogue. His October-November, 1992 Link was followed by the publication of his 1995 book "Anxious for Armageddon." Now, as we approach the millennium year, Rev. Wagner finds that the anxiousness is growing – in ways we might expect, and in ways we might not expect.

Two incidents in the Fall of 1996 underscore the priority the Netanyahu Government will give to the evangelical Christians. The first occurred on October 4, 1996, when Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu chose the convention of the International Christian Embassy – Jerusalem (ICEJ) as his venue for a hard-line defense of

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Evangelicals and Israel: Pointing to the Third Millennium

BY DONALD WAGNER

Israel's right to open the controversial tunnel in Jerusalem's Old City. Netanyahu's remarks were broadcast on CNN and many international media outlets with the Christian Embassy's name on the rostrum, implying that despite an outpouring of international criticism, his policies had the support of this so-called "Christian" organization.

ICEJ spokesman Charles Levine noted the

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importance of Christian Zionist support for Israel's hard-line policies: "We're talking about hundreds of millions of people out there whose Bible beliefs can be translated into support for Israel." Like his Likud mentors Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, Netanyahu will increasingly utilize the services of Christian Zionists to enhance and justify his government's political and public relations needs in the United States, particularly as controversial issues like Jerusalem, settlements, land confiscation, water, and political sovereignty rise to the foreground during negotiations with the Palestinians.

Three weeks later, the Israel Christian Advisory Council was born in Tel Aviv's Panorama Hotel, apparently having been conceived and underwritten by Israel's Ministry of Tourism. Participants included the Rev. Dr. Don Argue, president of the influential National Association of Evangelicals, which represents approximately 25 million Christians in 49 denominations and 50,000 U.S. congregations; and the Rev. Brandt Gustavson, president of the National Religious Broadcasters, under whose auspices the sizable evangelical television and radio networks function. Dr. Argue, addressing the Israelis, stated: "Your best friends in the United States are American evangelicals. . . . We are a 'people of the book' first, and Israel is the land of the book. . . . We were taught at our mother's knee to love Israel."

North Americans can expect more visible support for the Netanyahu Government's political agenda from Israel's old evangelical friends like Pat Boone, Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, plus new evangelical leaders who view the modern state as a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. At the same time, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism is making a major investment to promote Holy Land tourism in North America, South Korea, Europe, and other markets. Israel hopes to revitalize its slumping tourism industry, which saw a 25 percent decline in the last quarter of 1996.

Themes to be emphasized in the tourism and public relations campaigns are Israel's sovereignty over Jerusalem, its 50th anniversary, and the countdown to the year 2000 with its various "Armageddon" end-of-time prophecy sub-themes. In all planning and programming, the missing element will be the Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians, who will be bypassed by the new roads built on confiscated land

Rev. Dr. Donald Wagner is Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at North Park University in Chicago and Director of Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding.

for settlers and tourists, and new luxury hotels, such as those being constructed in "Upper" Nazareth and the Israeli settlement districts near Bethlehem. At least three recent tour groups have told me that their Israeli guides encouraged them to "avoid Bethlehem" because it is more dangerous now that it is under the Palestinian Authority. These are but hints of what is to come.

The American evangelical community is far from a monolithic and unified body. Numbering between 65-75 million, there are several traditions, sub-communities, and organizations that constitute this group. The term "evangelical" denotes an umbrella category that is nearly impossible to define in present-day American Christianity. One can find the fundamentalist-oriented Christian Coalition on the far-right while Jim Wallis of Sojourners Magazine and President Clinton's advisor, Dr. Tony Campolo of Eastern Baptist College, represent a politically liberal wing.

The evangelical "center," largely disengaged from Middle Eastern issues, represents perhaps 40 percent of American evangelicals, and is vulnerable to persuasion from a number of directions. Included in the evangelical community are growing numbers of ethnic minorities, especially African Americans, Hispanics, and Koreans. Added to the evangelical equation are the Orthodox evangelicals, who recently have affiliated with the Antiochian (Arab) Orthodox Church, and are sympathetic to the justice concerns of the Arab world.

A significant new area of growth in evangelical Christianity are the megachurches of 5,000-20,000 members as well as evangelicals within mainstream Protestant denominations (Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopal, Methodist, etc.). These new tendencies of American evangelical growth could represent as many as 25 million people. Many churches and leaders within these new constituencies are not of the Christian Zionist orientation and some are acquainted with the grievances of Arab Christians. While there is a resurgence of Christian Zionist themes within the fundamentalist and Christian "right" wing of evangelicalism, the impact on the remaining 75 percent of evangelicals will be minimal.

One example is Willowcreek Church in South Barrington, Illinois. Organized as an independent mission to reach the "unchurched" in Chicago's suburban northwest corridor, Willowcreek began in the 1970s with home meetings of a few dozen participants. Under Pastor Bill Hybels, Willowcreek is now the most influential "megachurch" in the world with 15,000 members and a multi-million dollar budget. Its vast mission arm reaches around the world. While the Middle East is not at the top of Willowcreek's agenda, the issue receives balanced and fair treatment. There is

no hint of a pro-Zionist perspective to Willowcreek's Middle East work. Annual trips to the Middle East include work projects in the West Bank and Galilee with Palestinian Christians, often led by Dr. Bilezekian, an Armenian Christian born in Beirut.

Another example is World Vision International, a prominent evangelical organization and the third largest non-governmental relief and development agency in the world. World Vision's projects in Lebanon, Palestine, and Israel serve the poorest of the poor, regardless of their religion or political affiliation. Projects near Hebron and the Gaza Strip have supported families of Palestinian prisoners, victims of Israeli house demolitions, and farmers who lost their land to illegal Israeli settlements.

The December, 1996 *Link* ["Slouching Toward Bethlehem"] told the story of World Vision's appeal on behalf of George Ghattas, a Palestinian Christian from Beit Sahour, who lost his land and business when Israeli bulldozers cut down his olive trees during the seizure of the Abu Ghneim Mountain. World Vision—Jerusalem, in cooperation with the Palestinian Land and Water Establishment, appealed to the international community to take action on behalf of the Ghattas family.

Several other evangelical relief agencies and large churches increasingly are becoming involved in issues of Middle East justice. Through these efforts, thousands of North American evangelicals are now aware of the suffering that Palestinians, Lebanese, Egyptians, and others face daily. Both churches and individuals send personal financial support to projects in the West Bank and Gaza, pray regularly for the situation, and receive updates and personal letters from their new Middle Eastern friends.

There are numerous strategies and programs already being planned for the year 2000. While the majority of the strategies are being coordinated between large evangelical agencies and the Israeli government or its subsidiaries, there are some refreshing alternatives on the drawing board. One evangelical initiative, Holy Land 2000, is conducting its planning in full cooperation with Palestinian Christians, Muslims, and Jewish human rights agencies.

Whether these and other new efforts will gain more support and have a more constructive impact in the Middle East and among the broad and diverse American evangelical community remains to be seen. Clearly, the

major "right" wing evangelical organizations have considerable funding, control of most electronic media outlets, and the full support of the Government of Israel. Also, there will be little political impact from the new developments as the moderate evangelicals will be less likely to engage in lobbying efforts for Middle East peace with justice. One can only hope that the gradual process of awareness will translate into some immediate and

Why do Christian Palestinians continue to leave their homeland? And what can U.S. Christians do to help their co-religionists? Grace Halsell's December, 1995 issue "In the Land of Christ Christianity Is Dying" received the widest circulation of any recent Link issue. Here she answers some of the questions prompted by her article.

Since the Christmas 1995 *Link* issue, Palestinian Christians—called the Living Witnesses to a faith born of their soil some 2000 years ago and now embraced by a billion adherents—continue to flee from oppression.

Formerly the population of Jerusalem, in Christian tradition "the mother of all churches," was half Christian. And Bethlehem was 90 percent Christian. Now, in what is left of Palestine, Christians number less than 40,000. They are only 10 percent of Bethlehem, and even less than that proportion in

Jerusalem.

What has caused the forced exodus of Christians?

While Muslims and Christians generally have suffered equally under Israeli occupation, Christians have been more dependent on jobs in Jerusalem and are disproportionately affected by the Israeli tactic of denying access to the Holy City to virtually everyone except Jews and foreign visitors. Christians frequently were employed in public services, including education, health and tourism, and frequently lived in urban centers around Jerusalem, such as Ramallah and Bethlehem.

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The Death Watch Continues

BY GRACE HALSELL

Without access to their work sites, they increasingly emigrated.

Last year I again traveled to the Land of Christ, and found the Palestinians under greater oppression than in any of my previous visits. They bear the burden of being made invisible people—not only by Israeli Zionists, but also by U.S. Christian Zionists who refuse to recognize them as co-religionists.

Even President Bill Clinton, who prides himself on being very "Christian," went to the Holy Land and chose not to worship with Arab Christians or to visit the sites where Christ was born, crucified and buried. Rather, he donned a Jewish skullcap, or yarmulke, and engaged exclusively in Judaic religious exercises.

In 1996, a total of 440,000 Americans visited the Holy Land. Unlike President Clinton, most of them got to Bethlehem. But most, like Clinton, did not meet any of their co-religionists. Typically, they stayed in Israeli hotels, ate exclusively in Israeli restaurants and were shepherded about entirely by Israeli guides.

On one tour, an Israeli guide told his Christian tourists: "Our bus will not stop in Nazareth." None of the Christians objected. Bused to Manger Square in Bethlehem, they were given a few minutes to view the traditional site where Jesus was born, then herded back on the bus and whisked out of town. Such visitors typically are not given the opportunity to meet co-religionists such as Elias Chacour, author of the compelling book, "Blood Brothers," or the brilliant Palestinian Christian, Hanan Ashrawi, often seen on American television screens.

And these Christian pilgrims were never told that they could go to the Land of Christ and eat and live and worship among followers of Christ who have lived there since the inception of Christianity. Now, a growing number of U.S. religious and academic leaders, working with Palestinian Christians, offer tours that put pilgrims in touch not only with holy places but also with their fellow Christians. The Middle East Council of Churches, through its Ecumenical Travel Service in Jerusalem, furnishes a carefully-balanced program for groups and individuals seeking an in-depth experience in the Holy Land.

Christians around the world are becoming more organized in efforts to save Jerusalem as a sacred site for three faiths. Sabeel, a Christian organization in East Jerusalem headed by Canon Naim Ateek of St. George Episcopal Church, has taken the lead in this development. In early 1996, Sabeel brought together 300 Christians representing more than 30 countries for an international ecumenical conference on "The Significance of Jerusalem for Christians and of Christians for

Jerusalem." One central theme emerged: "In any final solution, there must be international guarantees for peaceful coexistence in Jerusalem."

In an unprecedented display of ecumenical unity on Jerusalem, 600 Christians and Christian organizations signed a full page advertisement and petition published in *The New York Times* on December 21, 1996. Sponsored by Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), the advertisement stated that Jerusalem "cannot belong exclusively to one people, one country or one religion," but must be shared by "two peoples and three religions."

The ad was angrily denounced by The Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, which demanded a retraction and apology from the National Council of Churches, one of the signers of the ad. Neither was offered. CMEP chairman Terence W. Miller told the *Los Angeles Times*, "I think there is a real need for a recognition that Christianity, as one of the three faiths involved in the future final status negotiation on Jerusalem, does have a right to call for a shared Jerusalem."

Muslims and Christians are increasingly speaking from the same platform and with shared objectives regarding Jerusalem. Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., has been particularly active in sponsoring such programs. Next June, the university's Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding will host a conference on "The Future of Arab Christians and Christianity in Jerusalem."

On my 1996 visit to Jerusalem, Patriarch Michel Sabbah, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Jerusalem, spoke to me about the link of a Catholic ecumenical committee with a Muslim committee preparing commemorations for the birth of Christ in Bethlehem. Asked if joint meetings of Catholics and Muslims to plan for the Year 2000 celebration might disturb the Israelis, he responded, "It is perhaps very human to be bothered when you see the other side growing." He pointed out that "for Muslims, Christ is a prophet. For Israeli Jews, Christ is a negative."

Grace Halsell's latest book "In Their Shoes" recounts her experiences living with Navajo Indians, Mexican migrants, Afro-Americans, Peruvians, Chinese, Japanese and Bosnians . . . among many others, including Palestinians and evangelical Christian supporters of Israel.

The original *Link* issue used this page to list books being offered for sale at discount prices by Americans for Middle East Understanding. Please consult AMEU's book catalog elsewhere on this website.



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