

The Link

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for Charlie

By Barbara Lubin

Israel's recent invasion of Lebanon brought back painful memories to me of its 1982 invasion for more reasons than one. While Israel's actions in 2006 were similar to 1982—widespread bombing of civilians and civilian infrastructure, the destruction of entire neighborhoods, and the indiscriminate killing of women and children—my reactions then and now were very different.

These opposite reactions tell the story of who I was and who I have become.

(Continued on page 2)

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About This Issue

On September 30, 2006, the American Muslim Alliance, at its 5th annual convention, awarded Barbara Lubin their Service to Humanity Award, citing her as a “unique individual with an inextinguishable love for fellow beings, children in particular, and for her capacity to transcend religious boundaries.”

Barbara Lubin is founder and executive director of Middle East Children’s Alliance which, since 1988, has delivered millions of dollars in humanitarian aid to children’s clinics, hospitals, schools and women’s organizations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Iraq. MECA is the nonprofit channel for Barbara’s “inextinguishable love.” Her capacity to “transcend religious boundaries” is reflected in her outreach as a Jewish American to Muslims in the Middle East.

In this issue of *The Link* Barbara takes us on her journey from California to a region half a world away.

Another Jewish American who spent much of his professional life challenging the media on its Middle East reporting is Ned Hanauer. Ned had a special relationship with AMEU, so it is with personal sadness that we note his death this past August. See In Memoriam on page 12.

Our book selections are found on pages 13-14, our videos on page 15.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

(Continued from Page 1.)

From Ozzie’s to Gaza

At almost the exact moment Israel was invading Lebanon in 1982 I was being elected to the Board of Education in the city of Berkeley even though I had never graduated from high school.

Locally, I was well-known as a political activist who took progressive—those days we called them radical—stands on many international issues, from El Salvador and Nicaragua to Cuba and South Africa, as well as local issues.

I had been a draft counselor during the Vietnam war and had counseled young men not to fight in the war. In fact, I remember the day when a young boy whom I had helped get into Canada and who was leaving that day came to see me. He brought me the notice he had just received to show up in a few days for his physical exam with the army at the induction center at 40 North Broad Street. I saw him off for his new life in Canada and on the day of his notice for his physical exam I dressed up in drag and showed up in his place. There were 250 of us and when we were all told to strip we all removed our clothes. I had stuffed hundreds of flyers in my pants encouraging everyone not to go to Vietnam, handing them out until I was arrested and taken off to jail.

I took public office with a group of other elected officials who promised to develop a “foreign policy” in Berkeley to challenge Ronald Reagan’s. So it seemed natural for a group of Lebanese and Palestinian

students from San Francisco State University to approach me and ask me to speak publicly against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

“But I’m Jewish,” I said, as if that explained everything. At the time, I had no idea that there were Jewish people who didn’t support Israel, blindly support it I mean.

I grew up in a Zionist home in Philadelphia in the late 1940s and 1950s; my father was a lawyer who raised money to buy guns for the Irgun and my mother was a member and local president of ORT, Organization and Rehabilitation through Training, an organization which, among other projects, helped raise funds to build Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

Ours was the immediate post-Holocaust era and my parents ingrained in me that “when they come for us here, we need Israel so we have someplace safe to go.” It was a running joke in my house when anyone asked to have something passed to them at the table like, “Would you please pass the salt?” the response would be, “Is it good for Israel?” We were not very religious, but I attended Hebrew school three times a week and attended services at least once a week. Our lives revolved around our synagogue and Israel.

I remember the day the United Nations voted to create the State of Israel. My family and our neighbors celebrated into the night.

It was not until recently that I found out that almost all of my father’s family who remained in Austria were killed in the Holocaust. This information, while horrible, in no way has changed my beliefs about the injustice done to the Palestinians from the beginning of the founding of the State of Israel until the present.

In 1982, to my shame, I remained silent about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacre at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. I simply could not believe that “my people” could have done the terrible things they were being accused of.

To their credit, the Arab students at San Francisco State refused to give up on me. Slowly they and my friend, then-Berkeley Mayor Gus Newport, began

my real education about Israel and Palestine. My final exam would come in 1988, with the beginning of the first Palestinian intifada.

I was retiring from the Board of Education and thinking about what to do next when I saw pictures of the intifada on CNN. Again, I thought something must be wrong, that “my people” couldn’t be behaving this way and CNN must not be telling us the whole story. I decided to see for myself.

In February, 1988, human rights attorney Jeanne Butterfield and I organized a delegation to go to Palestine and Israel as guests of the Palestinians. There were 11 of us. Two were Jewish, Osha Neumann and myself. Others included Fr. William O’Donnell, known for his tremendous sanctuary and social justice work, Councilwoman Maudelle Shirek, and other elected officials and activists, such as Mel King from Boston.

Though commonplace now, in 1988 we were one of the first groups of Americans to travel to the Occupied Territories. We met with Palestinians and with members of the Israeli peace movement who spoke fervently about the need for Americans to speak out against the occupation and demand the end of U.S. funding of Israel.

The Israelis and Palestinians whom I met in 1988 helped me understand Zionism and what had really taken place in 1948—the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population, the loss of lives and homes, the millions who would be forced to live the rest of their lives in wretched conditions in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

I was fortunate to have met Zakariah and Yacoub Odeh, Amani, Nasser and Qasam Ali, Alia Shawa, Raji Sourani, Ziad Abbass, Tikva Parnass, Mikado Warschawski, Leah Tsemel, Stan and Ruth Cohen, and Israel Shahak, a man who I will always consider a true hero. These are some of the best teachers I have ever had and they have remained close friends and allies to this day.

On that trip we were shot at, tear-gassed, and dragged out of towns by the Israeli military. Members of the delegation experienced first-hand what life was like under occupation—with the exception

that we were all traveling on American passports and could leave whenever we wanted to. I was shocked and appalled by the conditions the Palestinians were forced to live in, their treatment at the hands of the Israeli military, and the policies of the Israeli government. We saw Palestinian refugee camps with raw sewage running down the streets, demolished homes, people crammed together in some of the most densely populated areas anywhere in the world, short of food, water, medical care and sanitation.

We also saw the nonviolent resistance and how the Palestinians had organized themselves into health committees, education committees and women's committees. They were determined to win freedom and independence.

We were overwhelmed by the humanity of a people forced to live in inhumane circumstances, and we were deeply touched when people who had every reason to hate us for our government's complicity in their oppression instead welcomed us as friends.

We were visiting a home in Gaza City when the Israeli soldiers began a house-by-house search for us. They were approaching the house where we were when a group of young boys ran toward the soldiers, throwing stones so the soldiers would chase them and we could escape. Boys we had never even met had risked being beaten, arrested, even shot, so that we would be safe.

Everything I saw on that trip was the opposite of what I thought I knew. How could it be that I felt secure when I was with Palestinians and afraid of Israeli soldiers?

We experienced just a taste of the collective punishment that Palestinians live with daily—curfews, checkpoints, mass and random arrests, school closings, as well as the ongoing confiscation of land for new settlements. We witnessed the constant humiliations of a people forced to carry identity papers to move just about anywhere and whose cars were identified as Palestinian by the color of the license plates. We saw Israeli settlers who carried guns like they lived in the Old West instead of the West Bank.

The trip changed everything for me. I knew that

after seeing the horrible things I saw I would never be the same. What I didn't know is that 19 years later those horrible things would seem like the good old days.

We held a press conference at the San Francisco Press Club upon our return. One of the reporters there was my friend, Howard Levine, who was covering the story for the San Francisco Examiner. Howard and I went out for lunch and discussed the brutal effects of the Israeli occupation, especially on the children. It was at this lunch that the Middle East Children's Alliance (MECA) was born. We opened our office on May 1, 1988.

But before I write about MECA, I want to explain why this issue and the heroic struggle by Palestinian mothers and fathers for justice for their children struck such a deep chord in me.

I am 65 years old and I have four wonderful children and seven loving grandchildren. In 1969, my third child, Charlie, was born with Down Syndrome and I was devastated. The doctors, social workers and the rabbi who came to see us advised us to place Charlie in an institution. I couldn't do that. I was actually shocked at the response from everybody around us when Charlie was born—everybody, that is, except my own mother and family, who always believed that we would keep Charlie.

We traveled around in those early days looking at all these private institutions on the East Coast. At each one I saw a group of kids who were very happy, who really looked like they would be perfect in society—and these were kids with Down Syndrome. I thought, why are they here? Why aren't they at home with their families? I felt this was no place to put a child of mine, or anybody's.

If I returned to those places again, I would feel even stronger about this decision, and I would expand it beyond children with Down Syndrome, to all children, no matter what's wrong with them. All children deserve to be given as much as they can be given at home with their mothers and fathers and siblings, and to be loved.

We flew from Boston, where we were living, to Philadelphia to see Dr. Lewis Barness, who had been

my then-husband Dr. Bert Lubin's favorite teacher at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School. When Dr. Barness finished listening to Bert tell the story about our new son, he said, "Bert is this what I taught you? It's not as if you ordered a vanilla ice cream cone and they brought you chocolate and you can send it back. Charlie is your son and you must love him and fight for his rights."

We immediately returned to Boston, brought Charlie home, and for the last 37 years I have been helping to write the laws in this country around the rights of children regardless of their abilities, suing school districts and forcing them to close all public special education schools in order to integrate all children at the regular school site and, when possible, into the regular classroom. We fought so that our children could have as normal and productive a life as every other child.

From the time we moved to Berkeley in 1973 when Charlie was four years old, we lived around the corner from a soda fountain named Ozzie's. Every day for twelve years, Charlie could walk around the corner to Ozzie's late in the afternoon. He'd sit down on the same stool every day and he'd order the same thing: tuna, chips, and a Coke. It was the only place he could go by himself and it was two hours of respite I had every day. Any mother who has a child with a disability will know that there's nothing in life that you cherish more than respite time.

One day in July, 1981, Charlie came home and said, "Mom, Ozzie's has been sold." I jumped up and ran around the corner to Ozzie, and said, "What do you mean it's been sold?" He told me that a group of unscrupulous speculators had bought the soda fountain and three stores next to it for a very exaggerated price, and were going to raise the rent 400 percent. I asked Ozzie, "Are you gonna fight this with me, Ozzie? You can't leave this store." He said, "I'm in it with you, Barbara."

I ran home, called the speculator, and said, "My name's Barbara Lubin. I have a son who's disabled, he's just a little boy, and he eats at Ozzie's every day. I need this soda fountain to stay there." And I added,

"I will buy back the pharmacy. I understand you paid \$780,000 for the property. Tell me what you need to make a quick profit, and I'll raise it." Of course, I had no idea how I would do it, but I've done things before that I never thought I could, so I believed I'd just go out and get the money.

There was this silence. Then he laughed and said, "You must think I'm crazy, that I would give up a deal like this for some crazy woman and her retarded son." I then said, "Mr. Wright, you have just made the biggest mistake of your life. You will never develop that property, ever."

The next day I set up a table in front of Ozzie's, and two weeks after I had spoken to the speculator we called for a neighborhood meeting at my home. At 7:30 that night no one was there, and I said to Ozzie, "Well, I guess nobody cares." At 7:45, there were over 400 people on the front lawn of my house, and we had the first meeting of the Elmwood Preservation Alliance. For the next year we worked on saving Ozzie's. I was at that table seven days a week for a year, from early morning until seven at night. My kids and I and Ozzie leafleted our neighborhood of 5,000 homes about three times a month all year.

It became a big national thing. Midway through the year, Ozzie and I realized that even though we had gotten the City Council to pass a moratorium on unjust evictions and unfair rent increases, there was no way to save the merchants without commercial rent control. With the help of two consultants, we wrote the only commercial rent control law that America has had except in New York City during World War II. The landlords of Berkeley raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to fight us. But we beat them.

The Middle East Children's Alliance

I feel exactly the same way about the children I have met in Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon, and Israel as I do about Charlie. Every one of them is special and deserves a chance to have the best life possible. Every one has the right to enough food, proper medical care, a good education, and a life free of fear and filled with peace, justice and joy, just as the chil-

dren here in the U.S. have the same right. Unfortunately, our government has stolen the money that should go to provide health care, good schools, safe parks and playgrounds, and affordable housing here in the U.S. and sent it to Israel. Billions of our tax dollars are diverted to immoral wars that punish the children of Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon.

Until 1982 I was blind to the injustice around Palestine. Even in the early days of MECA I was not immune to feeling hurt by the criticism of the American Jewish community, especially from so-called progressives, who would express both admiration and concern about what I was doing. It was frustrating to be courted by such people and then condemned for “not having a balanced view,” for “not tending to both sides of the issue,” for “not seeing the complexity.”

But an enduring source of encouragement has been the continuing work of Israeli Jewish anti-Zionist activists, among them my close friend and mentor Tikva Parnass, who was born in Palestine, fought in the so-called War of Independence, and shortly after realized the disaster it had caused. Tikva, who lives in Jerusalem, taught me the deepest and most complex understanding of Zionist nationalist colonialism. She has been a constant source of inspiration.

In May 1988, at the start of the first intifada, I again visited Occupied Palestine. From the vigor and determination and, most importantly, the blooming sense of national pride I saw in the people, I felt that even if the Israelis successfully quelled the uprising, things would never be the same again. Everywhere I went, and from everyone I met, the message was the same: “We Palestinians have rediscovered who we are. We are proud of what we’ve found. This time there can be no going back.”

I wrote an account of this visit for the Oakland Tribune of June 17, 1988, and noted that medical clinics had opened in many Palestinian areas and that, though poorly equipped, they represented another significant break from the grip of dependence on the Israelis.

Likewise, Palestinians all over the West Bank and

Gaza Strip were turning their lawns, flower gardens and dirt yards into vegetable gardens, and agricultural cooperatives were being formed to make the gardens cost-effective. Leaders of the uprising were actually handing out pamphlets with gardening instructions—what to plant and when, how to make the best use of space, how to control pests, etc. And many Palestinians were refusing to pay taxes to Israel or to buy Israeli goods—which meant even more hardship for them. But as one 13-year-old Palestinian girl told me, “We must be ready to suffer to win our freedom. It’s OK and we will do it for as long as it takes.”

The history of the Middle East Children’s Alliance parallels the history of the turmoil in the Middle East in the past 18 years. Since its inception, MECA has been responsive to the ongoing crises in the region and has, in addition to sponsoring a number of specific projects, acted quickly to send emergency aid. We have sent more than \$9 million in much needed food and medicine to children in Palestine and Lebanon, as well as to the children of Iraq when draconian sanctions were being imposed on that country.

MECA is dedicated to working for a just peace as well as educating Americans about what is actually happening on the ground in Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Iraq. MECA has never supported the Oslo Accords, the Geneva Accords or any of the other pathetic “peace agreements” that so many people in the U.S. have so blindly promoted. There is only one path to peace and that is through justice. We will see peace only when every Palestinian and Israeli enjoys equal rights and when those languishing in horrible refugee camps and towns of neighboring Arab countries are not only allowed, but welcomed back, to a democratic state. Until then the Middle East Children’s Alliance will do whatever we can to ease the suffering of the children oppressed by occupation and war.

In the autumn of 1990, as the build-up to the first Gulf War was mounting, I went to Iraq with a delegation. We met with government officials, professors, university students, and doctors and nurses. On our last night in Baghdad I arranged for the group to have dinner with Yasser Arafat, who was in Bagh-

dad at the P.L.O. compound. I asked him the same question I had asked everyone I had met in Palestine during the three weeks before coming to Iraq as well as the people we had spoken to in Iraq: Would the U.S. bomb Iraq? He had the same response everyone else had: "The U.S. will never bomb Iraq. The U.S. has been a friend to Iraq."

I responded that the U.S. has had many friends on whom it had turned its back; some countries it had even attacked, in others the governments had been brought to their knees. I told Arafat that the U.S. was going to start bombing in one week and that he should leave as soon as possible. We did so the next day.

Some 500,000 Palestinians working in Kuwait and other Persian Gulf countries were fired from their jobs and deported for alleged pro-Iraq sympathies. The economic effects were devastating to families living on their remittances in Palestine and the diaspora. Workers returning to the Occupied Territories hugely increased the burden on the already failing economy there. The Middle East Children's Alliance responded, sending thousands of cases of infant formula and winter clothing through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) for distribution in refugee camps throughout Occupied Palestine.

In the winter of 1991, when the first Gulf War was fully under way, a United Nations report stated that Iraq had been relegated to "a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on intensive use of energy and technology."

Palestinian children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were confronting similar problems. Israel had imposed a "shoot-on-sight" curfew that had lasted 40 days and nights during the war. The curfew left thousands of acres of food rotting in the fields while children starved inside their homes. By the time the curfew was, for the most part, lifted, many Palestinians had lost their jobs. Even though food was available in the markets, most families could not afford to buy any. The entire Palestinian infrastructure that had been built during the intifada had been destroyed, just as it had been destroyed in Iraq.

Then there was the issue of water. United Nations documents asserted that the available water supply in Baghdad, as a result of the first Gulf War, had dropped to less than ten quarts per person per day and, even after some improvement, managed to reach only ten percent of previous consumption levels. Where generators had been destroyed or damaged, people were forced to draw water directly from polluted rivers and trenches, giving rise to serious epidemics.

Meanwhile, in the Occupied Territories, a new system of computerized ID cards had made it very difficult for Palestinians, especially men, to travel outside their villages or camps to other places in the Territories, rendering it nearly impossible for them to travel to work.

When the bombing ended I returned to Iraq with photojournalist George Azar. This time, instead of flying for an hour and a half from Jordan, we drove from Jordan to Baghdad and it took about 24 hours. There was no electricity or clean water. Life was almost impossible for the Iraqi people. We drove around Baghdad and were shocked by the extent of collateral damage. Entire neighborhoods had been obliterated. We would stop and help people as they dug through the rubble searching for loved ones, toys, or just something to remind them of what life was like before.

George and I went to the Amariya air-raid shelter where upwards of 400 Iraqi civilians sought safety when the sirens went off—only to be murdered by U.S. war planes. You can still see the shadows of the young people on the ceiling in the shelter much like we had been told happened after the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The mother of one of the victims has set up a museum with pictures of all the young people who lost their lives that day, including her son. She refuses to leave the shelter and says she will stay there for the rest of her life.

Over 220,000 people lost their lives in the Gulf War, but the worst was yet to come. Thirteen years of brutal sanctions on the people of Iraq killed over a million people, 500,000 of them children under the age of 5.

During the years of sanctions Voices in the Wilderness, churches, and organizations from around the world delivered food and much-needed medicines to the people of Iraq.

MECA was one of those organizations. Before the war, Iraq had one of the only bone-marrow transplant units in the Middle East whose services were made available for free to any Palestinian in need. This, along with clean water, medicine and adequate electricity, now no longer existed in Iraq. Childhood diseases that once had been eradicated were now back with no way to treat them.

The final insult was the residue of depleted uranium left by armor-piercing shells the U.S. used against Iraqi tanks. The depleted uranium caused an unbelievable rise in birth defects, and cancer rates went through the roof. Ingredients for chemotherapy treatments were deemed "dual use" under the sanctions and could not be imported. So on one hand we gave children cancer and on the other hand we withheld the drugs that could help and sometimes cure them. MECA decided it was important to provide chemotherapy to the children and took the necessary drugs to Iraq.

While there were some demonstrations against the sanctions here in the United States, most of the peace movement was indifferent to the suffering of the Iraqi people, especially if we tried link the war in Iraq and Israel. The peace movement continues to refuse to look at the role of Israel in Iraq and is quick to label those of us who understand what is going on as anti-Semitic or self-hating Jews.

Over the years, many noted intellectuals and celebrities have offered their support to the Middle East Children's Alliance. In the spring of 1991, Pete Seeger performed in Berkeley to benefit MECA along with Marcel Khalife, Holly Near and Ronnie Gilbert. Among others who have spoken or performed at MECA benefits are Noam Chomsky, Jessica Mitford, Gore Vidal, Howard Zinn, Michael Franti, Alice Walker, Edward Said, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Robert Fisk, Allen Ginsberg, Danny Glover, Martin Sheen, June Jordan, Anna Deavere Smith, Culture Clash, and Hisham Sharabi.

Once when Noam Chomsky came to speak at the Berkeley Community Theater for a benefit for MECA and KPFA public radio, the event was vehemently challenged by a group of 17 Bay Area right-wing Zionist academics led by Professor Robert Alter. The professors wrote a letter attempting to intimidate the bookstore owners, telling them that they should not support an event featuring "self-hating Jews" such as Barbara Lubin and Noam Chomsky, who "support terrorism."

The professors even accused Noam of denying the Holocaust. They wanted the bookstores to stop selling tickets to the event and to pull Chomsky's books off the shelves. The letter was filled with venomous lies and inaccuracies. Bullies prefer to act in the dark, believing the targets of their intimidation will keep quiet out of fear. We decided to drag them into the light of day, publicly challenging them on the facts of their letter and their attempts to threaten these bookstores. They refused to respond. We received a great deal of public support and we never heard from the professors again. Bookstore owner Andy Ross of Cody's spoke out, saying he was tired of people telling him what books he would be allowed to sell. (This was not long after Cody's was fire-bombed after putting Salman Rushdie's "Satanic Verses" in its window.) As for our event, I'm happy to tell you that it was totally sold out.

In 2000, we produced an event called The Children of Resistance honoring Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. The event was a benefit for both MECA and The Rosenberg Fund for Children run by the son of Ethel and Julius, Robby Meerapol. MECA is in the process of producing another major event with Howard Zinn, a performance of his "A People's History" with Marisa Tome, Steve Earle, Melonie Damore and many other wonderful performers.

Playgrounds for Peace

The Middle East Children's Alliance supports numerous projects in the West Bank and Gaza. One is Playgrounds for Peace.

In 1995, MECA teamed up with the Palestinian Welfare Association and drew up plans for a series

of children's playgrounds in the Occupied Territories. The project was driven by the belief that the ability to play, the *right* to play is crucial to the healthy development of children. Fundraising events were held, planners from Berkeley were brought in, and community design workshops were held in each of the towns selected.

Today there are playgrounds in Nablus, Al Bireh and Gaza City. Each playground was designed by local architects, inspired by Palestinian culture and tradition, and supported by international experts on design and child development. They were designed with the whole family in mind and are accessible for children and parents with all abilities and disabilities.

In Nablus, on the West Bank, MECA and the Palestinian Welfare Association joined with representatives from Al Najjar University's Architecture and Education Departments, the mayor's office, local teachers, parents and youths to create the park and playground. The plan they came up with reflects the cultural heritage of Old Nablus with courtyards and plazas, as well as a more contemporary area that reflects the future.

But plans for a brighter future are not always realized. In December 2003, a MECA delegation visited the park and the groundskeeper sadly informed us that, due to the intensification of Israeli military action over the last four years, the park and playground had become danger zones. Nablus is surrounded by Israeli military installations and illegal settlements and the area just above the playground became a shooting platform for Israeli soldiers and settlers with the playground as a target. For now, however, the attacks have stopped and children have returned.

In Al Bireh, MECA and the Welfare Association teamed up with city engineers, teachers, parents, disabled activists, architecture students from Birzeit University, social workers and young people to plan their park. The theme reflects the cultural and topographical terrain of Palestine, from the Galilee to the Dead Sea, the Jordan River to the Mediterranean, and was carefully constructed with the environment

and disability access in mind. Today the park is full of life, providing the children of Al Bireh and Ramallah with a safe and fun place to play.

In Gaza, MECA teamed up with the Gaza City mayor's office, the municipal engineering office, educators, teachers, parents and youth to build a park that reflects the historical heritage of Gaza as a stopping point for the caravans that traversed the Middle East. The park sits on 12,000 square feet and includes a shady area for infants, an amphitheater, a water-play area, and sports areas. Despite the intensified siege on the Gaza Strip since September 2000, children of Gaza City still flock to this park to play and expand their imaginations.

With "Playgrounds for Peace" Palestinian children have a chance to grow and play, take back their childhoods, and have a chance at life filled with laughter, fun, healthy development and peace—provided, of course, they have sufficient food, water and security.

MECA also has had a long-term relationship with Dheisheh Refugee Camp outside Bethlehem, where 12,000 Palestinian refugees are crowded into a square kilometer of land. This has been at the heart of our work. Members of MECA have spent weeks there, and our supporters have traveled there to make films, do media projects with the children, and work in specific health projects.

In the autumn of 1999, the IbdAA Dance Troupe, a group of 20 teenage dancers from Dheisheh who had learned traditional Palestinian debka dancing, toured the United States for the first time. There have been three more "generations" of IbdAA dancers since then, the younger ones taught by their older friends and siblings. Their dances, performed in traditional dress to traditional music, portray the story of their people, and illustrate once again the kind of pride the Palestinian people began to emphasize during the first intifada. In their first tour in the U.S., the IbdAA dancers performed in New York, Washington, D.C., the Bay Area, Detroit, and Chicago.

In 2002, just one week after I had left Dheisheh, Israeli tanks and helicopters invaded the camp and took over the guest house, where I had stayed. They

used the roof as a sniper's nest to shoot at children below them. Four small children were critically wounded. Then they destroyed the Cultural Center, the library, the computer center, the outer walls, even the few toys the children had—all donated by the Middle East Children's Alliance. One Palestinian, Ahlan Fara, was killed by indiscriminate shooting. The New York Times described the scene:

Two bullets struck him in the chest as he played with his small children in their room on Friday, his blood spattering his son's tricycle and his daughter's clothes.

I was so angry. We cannot bring Ahlan back to his family, but we rebuilt the center. And we will rebuild it as many times as the Israelis knock it down.

The Middle East Children's Alliance was one of the few organizations that kept watch over the situation in Iraq when it all but disappeared from the news during the years of sanctions, between the two Gulf Wars. I continued my visits there, reporting on the intense outbreaks of disease, the typhoid and cholera from the lack of clean water, the starvation, the effects on developing children of depleted uranium.

In 2001, we had the Omran Bus Tour, a tour of more than 5,000 miles through the United States made by activists from the U.S. and Canada. Our purpose was to defy U.S. policy and collect school supplies for the children of Iraq, and to support peace with justice for Palestine and Israel. At the time, U.S. sanctions on Iraq prohibited the importation of school supplies. Imagine, *school supplies!*

In 2005, a month before the so-called "disengagement" from Gaza, I visited Palestine with a MECA delegation. Again and again, delegation members passed the Separation/Apartheid Wall under construction all over the West Bank to divide Palestinians from one another, creating a series of little Bantustans to further cripple the Palestinian economy and morale. As I went through the checkpoint to Bethlehem on my way to Dheisheh camp, I saw a ghost town. Not that long ago, the area had been a vibrant town center filled with homes, shops, schools and bustling streets, where local residents

mixed with tourists from around the world. Now there is just rubble and the monstrous Wall.

I have no faith in yet another "peace process." Every day, children are killed and maimed, land is stolen, homes are destroyed. A fourth generation is growing up in refugee camps. Palestine and the Palestinians are in real danger of extermination. It is easy to feel hopeless and wonder if we're really making a difference. Somehow my perspective becomes more optimistic when I'm there and I see first-hand the strength and vitality of so many people.

This past spring, I traveled to Gaza to meet with Dr. Mona ElFarra and to plan a massive delivery of food and medical supplies to the children of Gaza, continually under siege despite the "disengagement" of a year ago. I recall sitting on a sunny beach with Dr. Mona, planning the distribution of the supplies, sharing dreams of further work together. Shortly after I returned home, the borders of Gaza were closed, the bombing by the Israelis was ever more relentless, and there was no possibility of bringing in the supplies for which the funds had already been set aside. The delivery would have to wait. Meanwhile the suffering continues unabated. [Editor's Note: For a recent statement on Gaza by United Nations humanitarian agencies working in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, go to www.ohchr.org/english/press/docs/unhaw.pdf]

Israeli historian Ilan Pappé calls what's happening in Gaza today a genocide. And Israeli journalist Gideon Levy, writing in Haaretz (Sept. 3, 2006), noted that in large swaths of Gaza there is no electricity and hardly any water. "Piles of garbage and obnoxious clouds of stink strangle the coastal strip, turning it into Calcutta."

Then there are the deaths. Always the deaths. Levy reports that in July and August 2006, Israel killed 224 Palestinians, 62 of them children, 25 of them women. In a crumbling hospital he saw children who had lost limbs, and others who were existing on respirators, paralyzed and crippled for life.

On July 31, 2006, over 200 children from the Cultural Center in the Dheisheh refugee camp protested U.S. support for Israel's aggression in Palestine, Lebanon, and Iraq. Carrying a child's mock coffin

representing the death of children's rights and the silence of world governments, they chanted, "From Gaza to Beirut, the resistance will not die."

What has it been like to work so continually for justice and for the welfare of children—to work so continually to sustain life—and to witness, over and over again, the dismantling of what has been built? A psychologist from the Palestinian Counseling Center addressed the Middle East Children's Alliance in October, 2004. She spoke movingly about the psychological effects of occupation on children: "We either resist or we perish."

And what about hope? I leave you with a final word about hope.

One night poet and MECA advisory board member Allen Ginsberg came to San Francisco for a book signing and later he dined with a small group of friends in North Beach. On this night, the last time Howard and I would see him before he died, we were going around the table talking about all sorts of issues including what was happening in Rwanda, Iraq and Palestine. None of the news was very good.

We were getting more and more depressed. I turned to Allen and asked "So, Allen, where's the hope?"

Allen jumped up, taking the table and the food with him. He was furious. "F... hope," he yelled. "It's not about hope.... You don't do what you do because you hope things will get better. It's about getting up every morning and asking yourself what's the right thing to do and doing it."

Allen Ginsberg taught me a great lesson that night. He was right. It is wonderful if one is hopeful in life, but I will not wait around trying to feel hopeful about what is happening to the children in Palestine, Lebanon and Iraq, or in poor communities here in America. I will continue to be angry and I will get up every morning and ask myself "What is the right thing to do?" and do it.

And I will never be silent again. ■

[Editor's Note: See page 12 for details on the work of the Middle East Children's Alliance and its website address.]

In Memoriam

Edmund R. "Ned" Hanauer

In 1972, Ned Hanauer started Search for Justice and Equality in Palestine (SEARCH). Its goal was to inform Congress, journalists, and other opinion makers on facts about the Palestine-Israel conflict that seldom made it into the political establishment or the mainstream media.

Thirty-four years later, right up to his death this past August, Ned was still at it, sending letters to newspapers, visiting their editors in person, and lobbying members of Congress.

Back in the 1960s, Ned had come to know John Sutton, a Methodist minister, who had been to the Middle East. When Ned heard that a start-up organization in New York was looking for an executive director, he mentioned it to John, who applied and served as AMEU's executive director for nine years. As fate would have it, I, too, knew John Sutton, so when he left AMEU in 1978, he recommended me for the job. Ned's influence touched many of us.

Ned's was a life-long quest for justice and peace. And, as the name of his organization always reminded us, that is the only order in which the two will be achieved.

John F. Mahoney

MECA Projects and MECA-Supported Palestinian Community Initiatives

► **The Elly Jaensch Memorial Scholarship.**

Established in memory of Elly Jaensch, a staunch advocate of human and civil rights, this scholarship is given to Palestinian refugees living in the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

► **Ibdaa Cultural Center.** This is a grassroots initiative of Dheisheh Refugee Camp to provide a safe and open environment where the children can develop their abilities, creativity and leadership skills through cultural, social and educational activities, while also educating the international community about the Palestinian refugee issue.

► **Ibdaa Women and Children's Center.** The Center provides a kindergarten and nursery, as well as a clinic, computer room, children's library, and after-school program.

► **Ibdaa Women's Embroidery Cooperative.** The Cooperative provides supplemental income to over 40 women through the production and sale of traditional Palestinian embroidery. These products will soon be available online.

► **Ibdaa Dance Troupe.** Begun in 1994, the troupe consists of 20 youth from Dheisheh, ages 14-17. The first troupe came together as part of a cultural exchange with France and for the past 10 years the troupe has been touring throughout Europe, the Middle East and the U.S.

► **The Palestinian Counseling Center.** This West Bank counseling and consultancy organization advocates for positive mental health and well being for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. It is one of the few professional and mental health organizations in the Territories today.

► **Addameer Prisoners Support and Human Rights Association.** Founded in 1992, this West Bank center offers support for Palestinian prisoners, advocates for the rights of political prisoners, and works to end torture through monitoring, legal procedures and solidarity campaigns.

► **Union of Health Work Committees.** Works to provide high-quality health care to population groups in Gaza that need it most: women, children, the elderly, those living in distant regions, and poor families.

► **Al Assria Medical Center and Children's Library.** Located south of Gaza's Jabalia refugee camp, it serves a community of 100,000 people and treats 6,000-7,000 patients a month. It also provides cultural activities to over 800 children, including a library, summer camps, arts, and training courses.

► **The Rachel Corrie Clinic and Children's Center.** Opened in 2004 in Rafah, in the southern region of the Gaza Strip, it treats over 5,000 people each month, as well as offering educational opportunities to the children of Rafah City.

► **Playgrounds For Peace.** This is a collaborative effort with the Palestinian Welfare Association to help give Palestinian children back some of their childhood. To date playgrounds have been established in **Nablus, Al Bireh, and Gaza City.** Each was designed by local architects, inspired by Palestinian culture and tradition, and supported by international experts on design and child development.

Middle East Children's Alliance

www.mecaforpeace.org

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Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Abdul-Rauf, F.	What's Right With Islam	2004	314	\$23.95	\$12.00	Author looks at Islam and modernity.
Ateek, N.	Justice and Only Justice	1989	227	\$13.50	\$10.50	A Palestinian theology of liberation.
Award, N.	Through the Eyes of the Victims	2001	118	\$15.00	\$13.95	Good background history; plus a CD with colored maps.
Bamford, J.	Body of Secrets	2001	721	\$29.95	\$19.95	New facts about Israel's attack on the USS Liberty.
Baroud, R. ed.	Searching Jenin	2003	286	\$17.95	\$16.95	Eyewitness accounts of Israel's invasion.
Beit-Hallahmi, B.	Original Sins	1993	227	\$19.95	\$12.50	Reflections on Zionism and Israel.
Bennis, P.	Calling the Shots	2000	368	\$18.95	\$13.95	How Washington dominates today's United Nations.
Bennis, P.	Before and After	2003	264	\$17.95	\$12.95	U.S. foreign policy before and after 9/11.
Boyle, F.	Palestine, Palestinians & Internat'l Law	2003	205	\$14.95	\$7.00	From the League of Nations to the present.
Burge, G.	What Land? Whose Promise?	2003	286	\$23.00	\$17.50	What Christians aren't told about Israel & Palestinians.
Chacour, E.	We Belong to the Land	1990	216	\$10.00	\$7.50	What Palestine means to its Christian population.
Chacour, E.	Blood Brothers	2003	240	\$12.95	\$10.95	Updated edition with introduction by James Baker, III.
Chapman, C.	Whose Promised Land	2002	329	\$17.99	\$12.75	Zionism and role of biblical promise; updated edition.
Chapman, C.	Whose Holy City?	2004	253	\$15.99	\$12.50	Jerusalem and the future of Middle East peace.
Chomsky, N.	The Fateful Triangle	1999	578	\$22.00	\$16.95	United States, Israel, and the Palestinians.
Christison, K.	Perceptions of Palestine	1999	380	\$19.95	\$14.95	How U.S. media influences U.S. policy.
Cooley, J.	An Alliance Against Babylon	2005	258	\$26.95	\$17.95	Traces the Israeli factor in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.
Dajani, S.	The Untold Story	2005	71	\$15.00	\$15.00	The cost of Israel's occupation to Palestinians.
Dwork & van Pelt	Holocaust: A History	2002	444	\$15.95	\$14.50	From failure of nations to rescues by individuals.
Eddy, W.	F.D.R. Meets Ibn Saud	2005	46	\$25.00	\$20.00	A reprint of the 1954 edition; limited number available.
Ennes, J.	Assault on the Liberty	2002	301	\$30.00	\$25.00	Updated edition.
Esposito, J.	Unholy War: Terror in the name of Islam	2002	196	\$25.00	\$19.95	Good study of militant Islamic groups.
Esposito, J., ed.	The Oxford History of Islam	1999	749	\$49.95	\$47.95	Illustrated history of Islam's faith and culture.
Faber, S.	Radicals, Rabbis, and Peacemakers	2005	252	\$19.95	\$15.95	Conversations with Jews against the occupation.
Falk, R.	The Great Terror War	2003	203	\$17.95	\$14.50	International lawyer looks at post-9/11 world.
Fayez, J. ed.	The Colonization of Palestine	1992	48	\$9.95	\$4.00	List & description of destroyed cities, towns, villages.
Findley, P.	Silent No More	2001	323	\$23.95	\$19.50	Confronts America's image of Islam.
Findley, P.	Deliberate Deceptions	1993	326	\$14.95	\$8.00	Former U.S. Congressman on U.S.-Israeli relations.
Finkelstein, N.	Beyond Chutzpah	2005	332	\$22.50	\$17.50	The misuse of anti-semitism & the abuse of history.
Finkelstein, N.	The Holocaust Industry	2000	150	\$13.00	\$12.50	Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering.
Finkelstein, N.	Image & Reality of Israel-Arab Conflict	1995	243	\$18.95	\$17.95	What the facts on the ground are telling us.

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Fishbach, M.	Records of Dispossession	2003	467	\$39.50	\$28.50	New facts and figures about the land "swap" of 1947-48.
Giladi, Naeim	Ben-Gurion's Scandals	2003	340	\$18.95	\$15.50	Updated and revised edition.
Grodzinsky, Y.	In the Shadow of the Holocaust	2004	280	\$19.95	\$16.95	The role of Holocaust Jews in Israel's founding.
Hagopian, E. ed.	Civil Rights in Peril	2004	322	\$22.95	\$15.50	The targeting of Arabs and Muslims in the U.S.
Halper, J.	Obstacles to Peace	2005	93	\$19.95	\$15.50	Camp David's ungenerous offer; 15 full-page maps.
Hiro, D.	Sharing the Promised Land	1999	400	\$18.95	\$16.95	Good history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.
Jayyusi, S.	Anthology	1996	754	\$22.00	\$17.50	Collection of modern Palestinian literature.
Karmi, G.	In Search of Fatima	2002	288	\$26.00	\$8.00	Poignant memory of Palestinian exile.
Khalidi, R.	Resurrecting Empire	2004	223	\$23.00	\$17.95	Analysis of the U.S. role in the Middle East.
Kimmerling, B.	Politicide	2003	234	\$22.00	\$8.00	Ariel Sharon's wars against the Palestinians.
Kushner & Solomon	Wrestling with Zion	2003	379	\$12.95	\$11.95	Progressive Jewish Americans on Israel-Palestine.
Maalouf, A.	The Crusades through Arab Eyes	1984	293	\$16.00	\$13.95	The event that shakes Arab and Muslim history.
Masalha, N.	Expulsion of the Palestinians	1993	235	\$11.95	\$9.50	Examines Zionist notion of "Transfer": 1882-1948.
Nathan, S.	The Other Side of Israel	2005	310	\$25.00	\$17.50	How non-Jews are treated in the Jewish state.
Neff, D.	Warriors Against Israel	1988	372	\$19.95	\$7.00	How Israel won the battle to become America's ally.
Petersen, E.	Israel and Palestine	2004	286	\$16.00	\$7.00	Historical timeline up to May 2004.
Prior, M.	Zionism and the State of Israel	1999	304	\$75.00	\$59.50	A moral inquiry.
Prior, M. ed.	Speaking the Truth	2005	254	\$17.95	\$13.50	Ilan Pappé et al. on Zionism, Israel, and Palestine.
Reinhart, T.	Israel/Palestine	2002	280	\$11.95	\$10.95	"Deserves to be read by every American."-- Ed. Said.
Said, E.	Culture and Resistance	2003	225	\$16.00	\$12.95	Author envisions a secular, democratic Middle East.
Shahak & Mezivinsky	Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel	1999	160	\$17.95	\$15.50	The roots of Jewish fundamentalism.
Shahak, I.	Open Secrets	1997	192	\$18.95	\$15.50	Israel's weapons of mass destruction.
Shlaim, A.	The Iron Wall: Israel & the Arab World	1999	448	\$17.95	\$14.95	Israeli historian reevaluates official Israeli history.
Simons, G.	Imposing Economic Sanctions	1999	212	\$19.95	\$9.95	Legal remedy vs. genocidal tool.
Simons, G.	Targeting Iraq	2002	274	\$22.95	\$9.95	Role of sanctions & bombing in U.S. policy.
Swisher, C.	The Truth About Camp David	2004	455	\$14.95	\$12.95	Why the peace process collapsed.
Terry, J.	U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East	2005	168	\$24.95	\$15.50	The influence of lobbies on government policy.
Wagner, D.	Dying in the Land of Promise	2001	300	\$18.95	\$8.00	Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to present.
Warschawski, M.	On the Border	2005	228	\$17.00	\$15.50	An Israeli looks at the forces destroying his country.
Warschawski, M.	Toward an Open Tomb	2006	250	\$12.95	\$10.95	Critical analysis of neoconservative propaganda.

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- AJPME, **Beyond the Mirage: The Face of the Occupation** (2002, VHS, 47 minutes). Israeli and Palestinian human rights advocates challenge misconceptions about the Occupation and Palestinian resistance to it. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- DMZ, **People and the Land** (1997, VHS, 57 minutes). This documentary appeared on over 40 PBS stations before pressure was brought to ban it. (See our Dec. 1997 *Link*, v. 30, #5, available on our website at www.ameu.org.) **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Howard Film, **The Loss of Liberty** (2002, VHS, 53 minutes). Updated account of Israel's 1967 attack on the *USS Liberty*. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
- Jones, R., **500 Dunams on the Moon** (2002, VHS, 48 minutes). Palestinians, expelled in 1948 from Ayn Hawd, see their village turned into an Israeli artist colony. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Jordan S., **Dispatches: The Killing Zone** (2003, VHS or DVD, 50 minutes). British correspondent Sandra Jordan reports on the violence by Israeli occupation forces against international aid workers and reporters in the Gaza Strip. Includes the bulldozer killing of Rachel Corrie. Widely shown on British TV, this powerful documentary has been shown on only a few public access channels in the U.S. To promote its distribution, AMEU is offering it for **\$10.00**. Please circle format choice above.
- Masri, M., **Frontiers of Dreams and Fears** (2002, VHS, 58 minutes). This documentary has appeared on several PBS stations across the country. It focuses on two Palestinian girls growing up in refugee camps in Beirut and Bethlehem. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Masri, M., **Hanan Ashrawi: A Woman of Her Time** (1995, VHS, 51 minutes). Palestine's articulate representative shows that Israel's occupation is far from benign. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Moushabeck, M., **Anatolia: The Lost Songs of Palestine** (2001, CD, 52 minutes). **AMEU: \$12.50.**
- Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, VHS, 38 minutes). A rare collection of Palestinian dresses presented with historical background and commentary. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- NEF, **Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land** (2004, VHS, 80 minutes). Excellent analysis of how the U.S. media slants its coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Pilger, J., **Palestine Is Still the Issue** (2002, VHS or DVD, 53 minutes). Candid assessment by an award-winning journalist of why there has been no progress towards peace in the Middle East. **AMEU: \$25.00.** Please circle format choice above.
- Real People Prod., **Sucha Normal Thing** (2004, VHS, 80 minutes). Six Americans document a "normal" day under military occupation in the West Bank.

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