

The Lydda Death March

*We will expel the
Arabs and take
their place.*

David Ben Gurion, Israel's first
prime minister, in a private
letter to his son, 1937

*In each attack, a decisive
blow should be struck, result-
ing in the destruction of
homes and the expulsion of
the population.*

David Ben Gurion, in

On July 12 [1948] Ramle and Lydda were occupied by Zionist forces and a curfew was imposed. At 11:30 a.m., many Lydda inhabitants, shut up in their houses, took fright at the sudden outbreak of shooting outside...Some rushed into the streets, only to be cut down by Israeli fire...In the confusion, many unarmed detainees in the detention areas in the center of town – in the mosque and church compounds – were shot and killed...At 13:30 hours, July 12, before the shooting had completely died down, Operation Dani HQ issued the following order to Yiftah Brigade: “The inhabitants of Lydda must be expelled quickly without attention to age.”

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About This Issue

This issue is about the document found in this column.

A birth certificate, it is dated 21 November 1936.

It belongs to Audeh G. Rantisi.

Note the place of birth: Lydda, Government of Palestine.

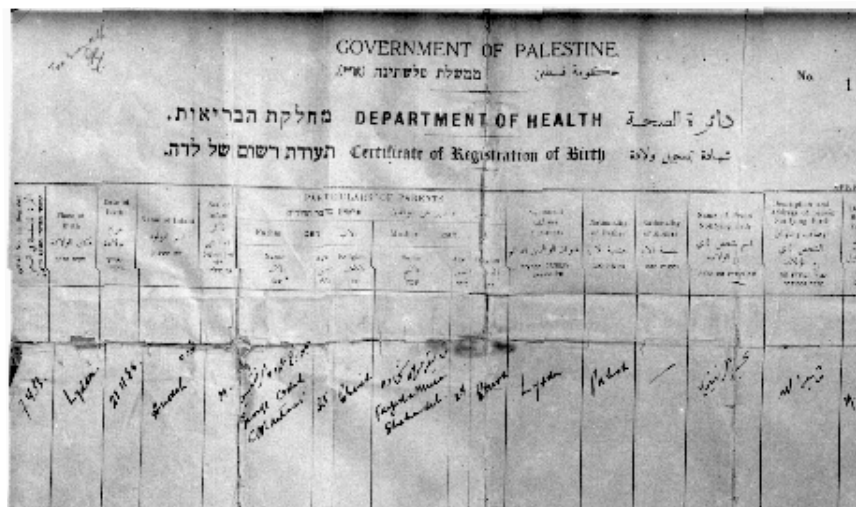
Audeh Rantisi and Charles Amash were evicted from their homes in Lydda in 1948. With thousands of their neighbors, they were forced to march for three days over rough terrain, under a blistering July sun. Many died.

We invited these two men to tell us

over 110 times. Even the United States has voted for it every year until the 1991 signing of the Oslo accords, which say nothing of a right of return.

Israel now adamantly opposes 194. Reportedly, it is willing for the refugees to be compensated, provided it doesn't have to pay the bill. The money, in the billions of dollars, would have to come from other countries, primarily the United States. Israel might agree to supervising the compensation.

That is not what 194 demands. Nor is it what the document below requires.



their experiences because it is their history, and for too long our mainstream media has turned their history on its head. Palestinians fled their homes in 1948, not because their leaders ordered them, as Zionist propagandists claim to this day, but because Israel's leaders made the decision to force them out at gun-point.

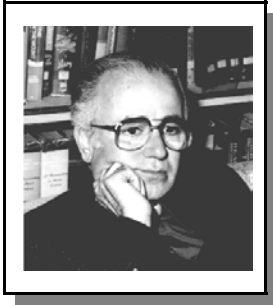
We invited them to tell us their experiences in order to put a human face on the number 194. This is the United Nations Resolution that gives Palestinians the right under international law to return to their homes. Israel agreed to 194 as a condition of its admittance into the United Nations. The U.N. has reaffirmed the Resolution

Many refugees still languishing in refugee camps want to go home.

Pages 11-13 offer excerpts from other writers, journalists and historians, including Israeli historians, who have provided accurate accounts of the death march.

Our book and video selections are on pp. 14-16. Copies of Audeh Rantisi's autobiography, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers", are available, but limited, because the book's U.S. publisher decided not to reprint it.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director



BY AUDEH G. RANTISI

Death March

DAY ONE

At 7:15, Monday morning, July 13, 1948, three Israeli soldiers came to our home in Lydda. I remember going to the door with my mother. I was 11 at the time. I heard the soldiers say in English: "Leave your house open and go outside."

We did as we were ordered. My father, George, 49, my mother, Fayqa, 38, my three younger brothers, Elias, 8, Philip, 6, and Mahfouz, 1, my two sisters, Adla, 14, and Sonia, 3, and my two grandparents—we all went outside and left our home unlocked.

At first my father thought the Israelis were doing what the British had done during the six-month strike in 1936, when they had everyone leave their homes and gather at the threshing-floor center in the city. Back then the British were checking for weapons and, once they had finished, they let the people return to their homes later in the day. We are Christian Palestinians, so my father thought we should wait in the compound of St. George's Church. Hundreds of people were heading in the same direction.

We never made it. At a turn in the road just before the church, Israeli soldiers directed us down a road that ended at a narrow gate that led into the mountains. By this time the number of people had grown and panic began to set in. Word had spread about the mosque. The Israelis had herded over 136 men into the Dahmash mosque, the smaller of Lydda's two mosques, and machine-gunned them. Not one person survived.

When we saw Tawfeeq abu-S'oud, the headmaster of one of our schools, he told us how the soldiers had come to his home and told him that he and his family had to leave in three minutes or they'd all be killed. And what made our fear so rational, if that's the word, was the fact that the soldiers were not forcing us out onto one of the main roads, where it would have been easier to walk, but out onto rough, hilly terrain, littered with rocks and boulders and clumps of bleached thorn, a place where they could kill us and leave our bodies for the wildlife.

By now the heat had reached a hundred degrees. The scene was chaotic. Women in black *abbahs* and heavily embroidered Palestinian dresses hysterically clutched their infants as they stumbled forward to avoid the ex-

pected spray of machine-gun fire. I remember holding the hand of my paternal grandfather, Audeh Rantisi, whose name I, as the eldest son, was given, as is our custom. In his other hand my grandfather held our only remaining possessions: a small tin of sugar and some milk for my aunt's two-year-old son Easa, who was sick with typhoid.

About a mile outside the city we came to a private vegetable farm, its entrance framed by a large gate. Atop the gate sat soldiers with machine guns, firing over our heads and shouting at us to hurry through the gate.

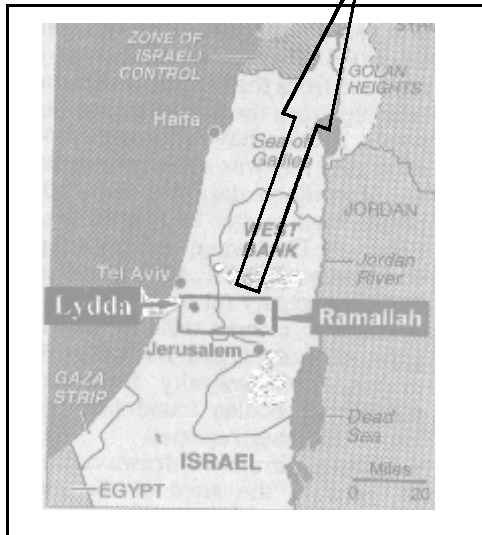
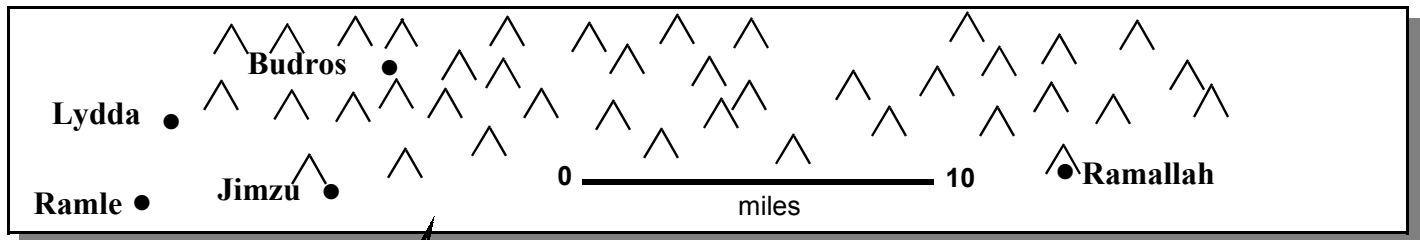
I did not know it at the time, but our death march had begun.

Behind us, forever, was our home, our family business, our clothing, our food, along with those possessions we were never able to replace. When the editor of *The Link* asked me for photos of our home in Lydda or of my childhood in Lydda, I had to say we had to leave all that behind. The one thing I do remember my father taking with him was the key to the front door of our home.

Our house was located in the new section of Lydda in the district of Haqouret Al-Qura. My father and his father, Audeh, built it with their own hands sometime in the 1920s. Prior to the new home, our family had lived in the old section of Lydda. There we can trace our family history back at least 1,600 years. My father, like his father, and his father before him, were soap makers. We made soap from olive oil. It was our family business.

In front of me, as we were prodded through the gate to the vegetable farm, an old cart on metal-rimmed wheels wobbled over uneven ground. Alongside the cart, a mother, clutching her baby, was being pressed by the crowd. Suddenly, in the jostling, the child slipped from its mother's arms and fell to the ground. I saw the cart's rickety wheel run over the baby's neck. The shrieks of the mother as she picked up her dead baby still ring in my ears.

Inside the gate, the soldiers had placed a blanket on the ground, and were ordering everyone to throw all of their valuables onto the blanket. This included money, jewelry, wristwatches, pens, even wedding rings. Amin Hanhan and his wife had only been married six weeks. When the soldiers demanded a container with money that he was carrying, he refused. One of the soldiers lifted his rifle



and shot him. He fell to the ground, his young bride beside him, screaming. It was the first time I had ever seen one human being kill another. I was so shocked and so afraid. It happened so fast, and so casually. I remember feeling I wanted to throw up.

Then the soldiers wanted to search my grandfather. He refused because he was afraid they would take the milk and sugar he had brought for Easa. When they pressed him, he held up his cane and shook it in their faces. They let him go.

Now the only thing that kept us going were the horrors we had witnessed. We stumbled on through the blinding sun, over stones and sharp undergrowth, placing one blistered foot in front of the other, the thirst within us growing.

Before we left the vegetable garden we picked some eggplants. The soldiers were telling us to "Go to Abdullah," that is, to the area of Palestine under Jordanian control. If we had to walk, it meant a march of some 25 to 30 miles. Eggplants might be the only thing we'd find to sustain us.

By the evening of the first day we stopped on a mountain top near the village of Jimzu. Once the sun went down, we had to cope with the severe cold, and we had nothing to keep us warm. Some of us gathered twigs and made a small fire. But the Israeli planes must have spotted the light and headed low towards us. Afraid they might fire on us, others in the group made us put out the fire, forcing us to use the precious little water we had left.

That night I cried myself to sleep.

DAY TWO

In the early hours of the next day, soldiers on horseback came riding at us shooting their guns. The soldiers were yelling for us to get moving. Everyone started running. It was a stampede.

At the time we were on a mountain, half way down into a valley. In the confusion I lost sight of my family. I went down the mountain and stood in the valley, asking about my family. Where I was standing there was a donkey behind me. Suddenly a bullet missed my waist and hit the donkey, immediately killing it. I began to run in fear of my life.

A short while later I saw my sister, Adla. She too was lost. We began to ask people and to look for the rest of our family.

Then we came across my uncle, Suliman, with his family. He told us our parents were behind us and would be coming along soon.

They never did.

As the sun went down, we stopped for the night somewhere in the mountains in a particularly rocky place that offered us some protection from the cold. I remember eating for the first time that day. A camel that was about to die was slaughtered and the meat was divided among all of us. Each of us got a very small bite.

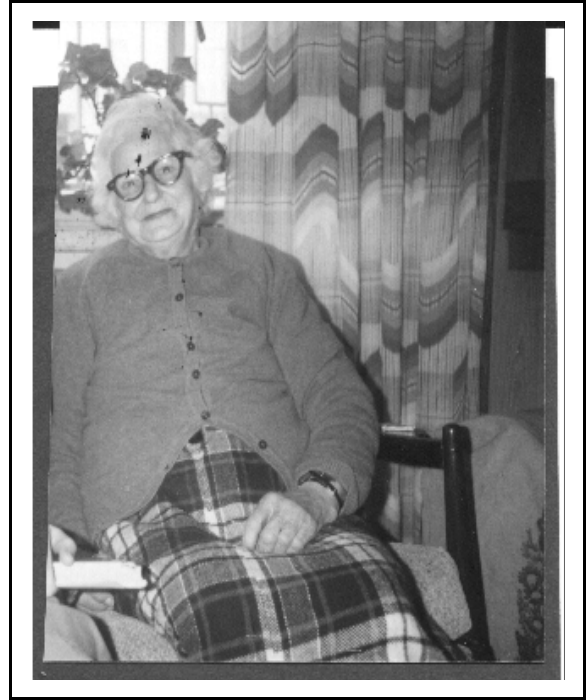
With the darkness came an awful loneliness and anxiety. In my head I heard my father telling us what the soldiers had recently done in the village of Deir Yassin, how they rounded up the men, women and children and killed them all in cold blood. I thought of the men in the Dahmash mosque. I thought of Amin, the young man shot in front of me. I thought of the bullet that almost killed me. Had the soldiers killed my family?

I had to know if they were still alive.

So, around 8 p.m., I got up and, without saying a word to my uncle, slowly began to retrace my steps down into the valley, in the pitch darkness, stumbling among the thousands of people on the ground. About 45 minutes went by when, in the distance, I heard my father's voice. I started shouting at him. Sounds carry long distances at



Audeh's father, George, with Audeh's first child, Susan, 1968



Audeh's mother, Fayqa, 1986

night in such places, and I could hear my parents asking "Are you safe?" and "Where is your sister?" I shouted back that we were both well. We kept shouting until we found each other. I will always remember that moment when he and my mother hugged me.

My father wanted to move that night to be with my sister and uncle. So he hired three donkeys for my mother and grandparents to ride.

I have been asked how he managed to hire donkeys in the dark out in the middle of nowhere. And where did he get the money, if he had to give it to the soldiers? As for the money, he never handed it over. I wonder had the soldiers found it would they have killed him, as they did Amin Hanhan. The donkeys belonged to local villagers along the way, who came out to see if they could help and also to see if they could make money. My mother and grandparents along with the youngest of the children rode the donkeys. The owners of the donkeys stayed with their animals until we reached the rocky area where my uncle and his family were. Then the owners took the animals back.

Reunited with my family, I went to sleep that night, feeling now I could face anything.

DAY THREE

This was the day most would die.

The heat felt worse than ever, and the lack of water began to take its toll. Many of us — 4,000 by my estimate — staggered and fell by the wayside, either dead or dying in the scorching heat.

Scores of pregnant women miscarried, their babies left for jackals to eat.

I can still see one infant beside the road, sucking the breast of its dead mother.

The wife of my father's cousin, Yacoub, became so thirsty she could go on no longer. She slumped to the ground and died. Not being able to carry her, we wrapped her in cloth and, after saying a prayer, left her body beside a tree.

Eventually, as we neared the village of Budros, north-east of Lydda, we found a deserted cistern. But we had no way to get the water up. So some of the men tied a rope around my father's cousin, Ibrahim Rantisi, and lowered him down, then pulled him out. Then we literally sucked the water from his clothing. The few drops helped, but the thirst still tormented me as we trudged along in the shadeless heat. Some people were so thirsty and desperate that they drank their own urine.

One of the people I saw on the death march was George Habash. George, then 23, was a medical student and, like me, came from a Christian family in Lydda. I've often thought of how this experience must have affected his life. As many know, he became a physician, graduating from the American University of Beirut. Brilliant as well as

eloquent, in 1952 he co-founded the Arab Nationalist Movement which, in 1967, merged with the Syrian-based Palestine Liberation Front to form the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. To this day George's organization is the only PLO splinter group that continues to reject the Oslo accords, claiming that they only sanction more Zionist expropriation of Palestinian land and expulsion of Palestinians from their homes.

By the end of the third day we had been forced to march for miles up rocky hills, then down into deep valleys, then up again, gradually going higher and higher. At long last, we reached a main road, where we were met by trucks that had come from Ramallah and other places the Israelis had not occupied. The truck drivers came to search for their family members and to help the people who had been evicted. A man who came to transport relatives evicted with us gave us a lift on his truck. There were over 50 persons packed like sardines on that truck. But it got us to Ramallah.

Our death march was over. Our life as refugees had begun.

DAY FOUR TO THE PRESENT

The 13 members of my family arrived in Ramallah carrying nothing but the clothes we wore. I lived in a refugee tent camp for the next three and one-half years. For the first three of those years I had no formal schooling.

We were not alone. Of the 1.3 million Arabs who lived in Palestine in 1948, between 700,000 and 900,000 of us lost our homes, some forcibly driven out, as we were, others fleeing to escape the terrorism of the invaders.

1948 was one of the severest winters on record. For the first time I saw snow on the ground. I looked out of the tent window one morning and found the whole ground completely white. It did not take long to discover the seriousness of such weather. Water began to bubble up from underneath our tents. In one tent there were my parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunt and her child and uncle.

My father died in 1979. He spent most of his 31 years in exile doing odd jobs. He always held on to the large metal key to our home in Lydda.

My mother passed away in 1987. She remained in Ramallah, traveling once with my father in 1975 to Toronto to see her sons Elias, Philip and Mahfouz. Her last years she lived with me and my wife.

My grandfather, Audeh, died in Ramallah. Every day he would go to the Orthodox Church for evening prayers. One day, in 1952, while waiting outside for the church to open, he died.

My three brothers, as I noted, ended up in Canada.

Elias works for a medical company. Mahfouz studied in Nova Scotia and is an architect. Philip is a carpenter, who worked for the Ministry of Education in Kuwait where he was responsible for all courses in carpentry; he moved to Canada after suffering a back accident, requiring the insertion of a steel plate in his spine.



Adla

My sister, Adla, lives in Bir Zeit, here in Palestine's West Bank. She has nine children, four of whom live in the United States.

My other sister, Sonia, lives in Ramallah. She has seven children, three of whom live in the United States.

My father's cousin, Ibrahim, the one they lowered into the well, has since died. He lived for a while in Ramallah, then moved to Amman. He had a daughter and two sons, both of whom are goldsmiths in Jordan.

My cousin, Easa, who had typhoid, still lives in Ramallah. He worked for a while as an X-ray technician, then worked for a Lutheran bookshop in Jerusalem. Presently he is unemployed. He has a daughter and a son, who studied in Germany.

Yacoub, my father's cousin, whose wife died on the march, died himself a long time ago.

I went on to study at the Bible College of Wales in Swansea, South Wales, and then attended Aurora College in Illinois. I served as a missionary in Khartoum, eventually being ordained a priest in the Arab Evangelical Episcopal Church. In 1965, I founded the Evangelical Home for Boys in Ramallah to care for Palestinian orphans. What motivates me, I believe, is the desire to give these youngsters the childhood I never had.



Sonja

Also, in 1965, I married Patricia Greening, whom I had first met in Swansea. The daughter of an Anglican clergyman in England, Patricia had gone on to work in Peru as a missionary nurse. We had kept in touch by letters, and in 1963, she visited Ramallah. Soon after, I asked her to marry me and we were wed in Shrewsbury, England. After a honeymoon in North Wales, we took a ship for the Gulf of Aqaba. There we were driven to Amman, and crossed the Jordan River to our home in Ramallah. Pat and I have been blessed with three daughters, Susan, Hilary, and Rosemary.



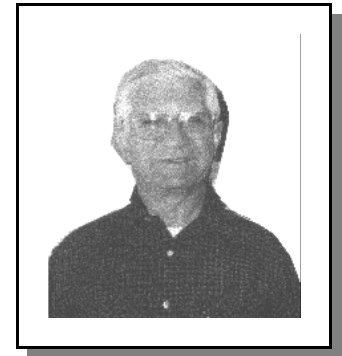
Patricia

In 1967, I again came under Israeli military rule, when Israel occupied Ramallah and all of the West Bank. In 1976 I was elected deputy mayor of Ramallah. In 1991, I wrote a book

about my death march experience, "Blessed are the Peacemakers: A Palestinian Christian in the Occupied West Bank," co-authored with Dr. Ralph Beebe, Professor of History at George Fox College, Newberg, Oregon. The first edition of the book faced a strong wave of criticism from the Zionist lobby in the United States. Zondervan Books, publishers of the book, eventually bowed to the pressure and decided not to reprint the book.

Death March

BY CHARLES AMASH



It was so hot, that July day in Lydda. At 7 a.m., three Israeli soldiers came to our home with guns, one pointed at my father's head. His name was Elias. My mother, Victoria, who was pregnant at the time, my four sisters, one brother and myself stood behind him. At 16, I was the oldest of the children.

The soldiers told us we had to leave before noon or else they would shoot us. *Yallah ala Abdallah*, they ordered, "Go to Abdallah (the King of Jordan.)" Today, a half-century later, whenever I hear the word terror or terrorist, I think of that morning.

At 10 o'clock, the soldiers returned demanding to know why it was taking us so long to pack and get out. Some of the soldiers spoke Arabic; they told us again either to get out or be killed.

I remember my mother made some dough and around 10:30 she had me take it to the bakery to be baked. When I got there, three soldiers appeared with Tommy guns. They aimed them at the baker and ordered him to leave his shop. The poor man did as he was told, without a word of protest. After he left, I went back in and baked my mother's dough. Later I learned that while I was at the bakery my parents had asked our local priest, Hanania Khoury, to intercede with the Jewish leaders to let us stay. The leaders said we had to go.

When I got back to our house, more soldiers were there. They wanted to take my father away as a prisoner of war. My mother was wailing so loudly it scared them. When they came to take me, my mother said they would have to kill her first.

They waited a few minutes, then urged us to leave

Soon after Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank, a group of us who had been driven out of Lydda took a bus trip back to see our former homes. I knew that two Jewish families were living in my father's home. As the bus drew up in front of the house, I saw a young boy playing in the yard. I got off the bus and went over to him.

"How long have you lived in this house?" I asked.

"I was born here," he replied.

peacefully before they had to use deadly force. My mother packed some cans of sardines and corned beef (or bully beef, as it was called) along with the freshly baked bread and a jug of water.

Only now, in retrospect, as an adult, can I fully grasp what it must have meant to my father to have to leave behind a house he had spent eight years building. Every year, from 1939 to 1947, he was either adding or finishing a room. I remember when they poured the concrete over the steel bars and mesh to make the roof, and how they celebrated the occasion by cooking a lamb and offering it to all who came by. That was in 1945. It would take two more years to install the doors and the windows and the floors and to do the painting. And my father did it all—only now to be driven out at gunpoint by strangers.

We started walking at noon. Others joined us, leaving their homes behind. There were no greetings, no hellos, just the sound of walking. It was the holy month of Ramadan and our Muslim neighbors were fasting. Like zombies we marched together, Christians and Muslims, with the soldiers prodding us to move faster.

Eventually we came to a square where two boulevards crossed north to south and east to west, with a traffic circle in the center. A soldier came up to us and asked my father if he had any money. When my father emptied his pockets of a few pounds, the soldier got angry and almost shot him. I told my father to give him his watch—it was a Swiss watch with a new incablock feature to regulate time more accurately. The soldier ripped it off my father's wrist, turned and went after someone else.

A week before all this happened, my cousin, Fayek, had entrusted my father with 1,200 pounds (about



—Popperfoto, London

Most of the people who were forced to march from Lydda were women and children.

\$3,600). On the day of the march, not knowing what might happen, he came and asked for his money back. My father gave it to him. Fayek was 22 at the time. Halfway home he was stopped by Jewish soldiers who searched him and took his money. Then they told him to run and began shooting at him between his legs. Fayek was so traumatized he fell to the ground and died shortly thereafter from a heart attack.

My sister, Leila, tired and weak, began lagging behind. I had to carry her on my shoulders while holding on to the food. By 3 p.m., with the heat as hellish as it was, we ran out of water. Some of our fasting neighbors had to lie down on the side of the road, gasping for air.

Soldiers on horses came along, firing their guns in the air. Some fired at the people to make sure we kept on moving.

Somehow, we did. Silently, save for the shuffling of feet, the feet of over 100,000 men, women and children, we kept on moving.

I know for a fact that before that black day we in Lydda had over 40,000 people from Beit Dajan, Sarafand and Jaffa, and from other small villages that had come seeking our protection. Lydda was jokingly called the eighth state in the then seven-state Arab League. The inhabitants of Lydda were proud of defending their city and sent many truckloads of *najda'i* or armed men to Al-Castal and to other locations in order to help in the struggle against the aggressors.

Then one day Jordanian army personnel came to Lydda and informed us that the Jordanian army was taking

over the defense of the city. They collected our weapons, including three tanks made of 1-inch thick steel plates, and cannons hijacked from the British army. When the Jewish forces came for Lydda, they came wearing Jordanian outfits and firing in the air, chanting *Khalliseif yugoul*, a familiar Jordanian chant. When they reached the center of town — coming in from the exact same direction the Jordanian army would have come — they began strafing people with their machine guns. Defenseless, Lydda fell through treason and deception. But this is a story for another time.

After the Jews took Lydda, they mined all the streets going in or out of the town, taking sofas, chairs, armoires out of homes to block all the streets, leaving only a small opening wide enough for one person at a time to pass. The people being marched out of the town, instead of walking on the roads, had to walk through the dirt fields that were strewn with sharp shoots from the recently harvested crops, and this very soon caused their feet to bleed and their toes to blister.

The soldiers couldn't have cared less. In addition to thirst, we now suffered hunger. The sardines and the canned English "bully beef" we had brought with us were useless, as we forgot to bring a can opener. Eventually we came to the village of Jimzu, which had two public water wells. Jewish soldiers there were having a great time going from one well to the other, urinating in them. You could hear their laughter for miles. Leila was faint from thirst. Carrying her in my arms, I approached one of the soldiers and begged him to give my sister some water from his canteen. He got his mess utensils and poured a teaspoon of water on Leila's tongue. When I pointed to my other sis-

ter, Ayda, he pushed me to the ground with the butt of his rifle and hit me on my back with it, saying he had given enough water for one day.

Our march continued. I remember how terribly slow it was and how hot our feet were, how very hot. We were so tired from walking. By now our caravan stretched as far as the eye could see: miles and miles of human beings trying to make it through the day in order to rest somewhere, anywhere in this unforgiving climate.

My father was getting especially tired, saying not a word, except every so often to utter the words *Ya rub lb-hamma*, "God have mercy on us." At one point he came to me and whispered "Khalil, take care of your mother and your sisters. Keep going and do not look back." I looked at him. He could hardly speak; he was faint, drained of energy, his tongue stuck to the inside of his mouth. I went nuts. I'm just a kid. How in God's name am I to do what he asked? I can't take care of myself. We are thirsty, hungry, destitute, humiliated by strangers. I was so mad. Why is God doing this to us, I thought? Why does He allow strangers to uproot us from our homes and push us into the wilderness to die?

I saw women carrying sewing machines, pillows, kitchen pots and pans. In time, they abandoned their treasures along the road. Water was the treasure we all sought. The two wells in Jimzu were dry when we got there; people were drinking mud mixed with urine.

My father couldn't keep going and I knew if I left him he'd die of thirst. I told the others to stop while I searched for water. Two young women came along with a baby carriage and two bottles of liquid in the carriage. I was told the bottles contained lemon juice for making lemonade, but the water intended for lemonade already had been drunk. I didn't care. All I knew was that I had to taste it — and it only made my thirst worse.

I walked on for another 50 yards or so to where an old man was lying on the roadside. His mouth was wide open, the sweat on his face had dried, and he was motionless. I asked if he could hear me. He nodded, but could not talk. Beside him was a basket of big eggplants, the kind you make baba ghannoug with. I broke one open and squeezed it into his mouth. Then I squeezed another and, by God, he was revived. I asked him if I could take some eggplants and I ran back to my father and did the same for him. He too revived and we all cried until the tears would come no more.

Night at last came and with it a clear, cloudless sky. In the distance we could hear the sound of big guns, while above us flew two small planes which dropped gasoline bombs that did little damage apart from terrorizing an already traumatized people. Someone said that meat was available in the village of Ni'leen, where a cow had been killed and where some people from other small villages were selling water at five pounds a gallon (about \$15). Some people could afford it; we couldn't since we had

been robbed of all the cash my father had on him. My mother, however, had stashed away a little money of her own and we used it to buy some water and meat.

We collected branches and dried weeds and made a fire. But the cow meat had been aged on the hoof and no fire would have made her tender. It was so tough no one could chew even a small piece. Early the next morning we found someone with a can opener and we shared our sardines and beef in exchange for the use of the opener.

That morning we moved on to Ni'leen, another village on the way to Ramallah, where most of the exodus survivors were headed. We arrived in Ramallah later that day, some 30 miles and a lifetime away from our home.

Three days later, my mother suffered a miscarriage.

My father passed away on November 5, 1975; it was my 44th birthday. My mother died on December 4, 1998.

My little sister Leila, whom I carried on my shoul-



Leila

Ayda

ders, is now married to an engineer who heads an oil company pump division. She has two boys in high school.

My sister, Ayda, to whom the soldiers refused to give even a drop of water, died in 1997. She left two boys and a girl, all of whom are now in college.

In 1958, I came to the United States. Two years ago I retired, having worked in real estate and the restaurant business. I have one daughter, Rosalinda. On May 21, 2000, I went to Boston to attend her graduation from Boston University's School of Law.

This has been a brief account of what happened to my family and our neighbors in Lydda. The town of Ramleh suffered a similar forced evacuation. The Jewish state has consistently denied expelling the people of Lydda and Ramleh — as well as Palestinians from hundreds of other towns and villages. But we are living witnesses to the terror inflicted on us by these strangers who came from

“The right of the Arab refugees to return to their homes in Jewish-controlled territory at the earliest possible date should be affirmed by the United Nations, and their repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation, and payment of adequate compensation for the property of those choosing not to return, should be supervised and assisted by the United Nations.”

—Count Folke Bernadotte, U.N. Mediator, Sept. 16, 1948



The women and children of Lydda, resting after their three-day march to Arab-controlled territories.

—Photo from John Glubb's book "A Soldier with the Arabs", p. 160

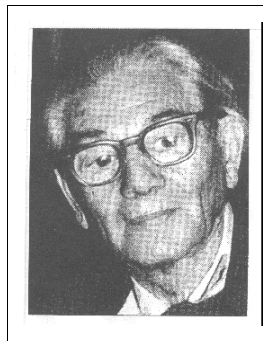
Other Death March Reports

Erskine Childers, British journalist and broadcaster, writing in *The Spectator*, May 12, 1961:

In their latest book, which has been publicly endorsed by Ben Gurion, Jon Kimche and his brother devoted considerable detail to the Zionist offensive against Lydda and Ramle. It was undertaken by official Israeli forces under Yigal Alon. And the immediately responsible officer was Moshe Dayan...Kimche has described how, on July 11, 1948, Dayan with his columns: "drove at full speed into Lydda, shooting up the town and creating confusion and a degree of terror among the population." Ramallah, on the road to which these particular Arabs — numbering over 60,000 from this one area alone — were herded, was up in the Judaeen hills, outside Zionist-held territory.

Simha Flapan, Israeli journalist and historian in "The Birth of Israel," 1987, p. 100:

The most significant elimination of these "Arab islands" took place two months after the Declaration of Independence. In one of the gravest episodes of this tragic story, as many as fifty thousand Arabs were driven out of their homes in Lydda and Ramleh on July 12-13, 1948...In Lydda, the exodus took place on foot...With the population gone, the Israeli soldiers proceeded to loot the two towns in an outbreak of mass pillaging that the officers could neither prevent nor control.



Fouzi El-Asmar, Palestinian writer, in "To Be An Arab in Israel," Institute for Palestine Studies, 1978, p. 13:

I was able once, with some other children, to sneak into the deserted city [Lydda]. I did this secretly as my father had forbidden me to do it. I was shocked on this visit by the sight of this large city completely deserted, the houses open, the shops broken into and the remaining merchandise rotting. We were

afraid of the trucks which were working every day without a break. The men who had come with the trucks would go into house after house and take out any article of value such as beds, mattresses, cupboards, kitchenware, glassware, couches, draperies and other such effects. When I returned home, I wanted to ask my mother, 'Why are they doing this?' ...But I was afraid to ask since she would then find out that I had disobeyed my father. The sight of the deserted city, the looting of its property, and the turmoil in my own mind in those days have haunted me for years.

Major Edgar O'Balance in "The Arab-Israeli War," Praeger, 1957, pp. 171-172:

Bluntly, the Arab inhabitants were ejected and forced to flee into Arab territory, as at Ramleh, Lydda, and other places. Wherever the Israeli troops advanced into Arab country, the Arab population was bulldozed out in front of them.

Kenneth Bilby, correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*, who entered Lydda the second day it was occupied, writing in "New Star in the New East," *New York*, 1950, p. 43:

Moshe Dayan led a jeep commando column into the town of Lydda with rifles, Stens, and sub-machine guns blazing. It coursed through the main streets, blasting at everything that moved...the corpses of Arab men, women, and even children were strewn about the streets in the wake of this ruthlessly brilliant charge.

British correspondent for *The Economist*, August 21, 1948:

The Arab refugees [of Lydda and Ramleh] were systematically stripped of all their belongings before they were sent on their trek to the frontier. Household belongings, stores, clothing, all had to be left behind.

British General John Glubb, Commander of Jordan's

Arab Legion, in "A Soldier with the Arabs," Harper, 1957, p. 162:

No sooner were the enemy in the towns [Lydda and Ramle] than they set about an intensive house-to-house search, all men of military age being arrested and removed to concentration camps. Then Israeli vans fitted with loud-speakers drove through the streets, ordering all the remaining inhabitants to leave within half an hour... Suffice it to say that houses were broken into and women sufficiently roughly handled to give point to the warning to be clear of the town in that time.



Perhaps thirty thousand people or more, almost entirely women and children, snatched up what they could and fled from their homes across the open fields. The Israeli forces not only arrested men of military age, they also commandeered all means of transport. It was a blazing day in July in the coastal plains — the temperature about a hundred degrees in the shade. It was ten miles across open hilly country, much of it ploughed, part of it stony fallow covered with thorn bushes, to the nearest Arab village at Beit Sira. Nobody will ever know how many children died...

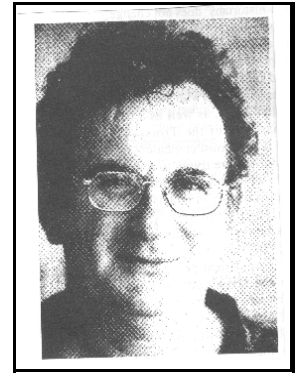
It is true of course that the persecuted Jews of Europe suffered far worse tortures, but these were not inflicted upon them by the Arabs of Palestine. One would have hoped that people who had suffered as much anguish as have the Jews would have sworn never to inflict on others the tortures which they themselves had endured. The Arab Legion endeavoured to fight the Israeli army but not to injure civilians. Perhaps nowadays such standards are obsolete.

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Palestinian Professor of Political Science in "The Transformation of Palestine," Northwestern University Press, 1971, p. 149:

The temperature was a hundred degrees in the shade. The Arabs had neither water nor food for three days... Small Israeli planes buzzed the long files of expellees as they trudged up into the hills. Countless children died outright of thirst.

Benny Morris, Israeli historian, in "The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949," Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 210:

All the Israelis who witnessed the events agreed that the exodus, under a hot July sun, was an extended episode of suffering for the refugees, especially from Lydda... Guttman [Israeli archaeologist and member of Kibbutz Na'an, part of the mainstay of the Palmach, including the 3rd Battalion that entered Lydda] described the trek of the Lydda refugees: "A multitude of inhabitants walked one after another. Women walked burdened with packages and sacks on their heads. Mothers dragged children after them... Occasionally, warning shots were heard."



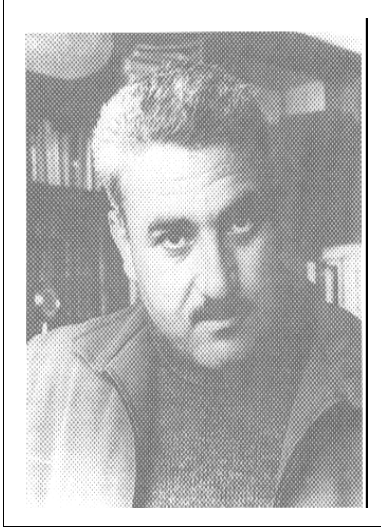
One Israeli soldier (probably 3rd Battalion), from Kibbutz Ein Harod, a few weeks after the event recorded vivid impressions of the thirst and hunger of the refugees on the roads, and of how "children got lost" and of how a child fell into a well and drowned, ignored, as his fellow refugees fought each other to draw water. Another soldier described the spoor left by the slow-shuffling columns [beginning with] "utensils and furniture and in the end, bodies of men, women and children, scattered along the way." Quite a few refugees died — from exhaustion, dehydration and disease — along the roads eastward, from Lydda and Ramle, before reaching temporary rest near and in Ramallah.

George Habash, a survivor of the Lydda death march, who went on to become a physician and later co-founder of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Reference to his presence in the march is made in Audeh Rantisi's account. Habash's account was given to Professor A. Clare Brandabur and appeared in *The Nation*, January 1, 1990, reprinted here with the publication's permission:

...In the spring of 1948 I was finishing my second year of medical school at the American University of Beirut. I had planned to return to Jaffa as soon as the semester ended. My family had been living in Jaffa for some time, although we were originally from Lydda. However, my mother wrote to me in early June advising me to remain in Beirut because the Zionist assault had begun, and she was concerned for my

safety.

I was determined to join my family and prepared immediately to travel south. I learned that Jaffa had fallen and that my family had gone to Lydda. Already the Israelis controlled the entire northern region of Palestine, which made travel through Naqura on the coastal road impossible. Therefore I made my way to Amman and crossed the bridge. As I approached Lydda I learned that the city was under heavy bombardment and was in the initial stages of siege.



Upon reaching Lydda I found my sister seriously ill with typhoid. She was my eldest sister, married, with six children. The curfew made it impossible to obtain medicine or even to move about. I found the clinic, which had been moved to what had been the hospital and was now barely a clinic. Nevertheless I felt obliged to stay there to take care of patients, because no doctors remained in the city to treat the sick and the wounded.

Someone managed to get to the clinic to tell me that my sister was dead. I had to go to her home, which was some distance from the clinic. Outside I saw terrible sights: Dozens of bodies lay in pools of blood, old and young had been shot. Among the dead, I recognized one elderly man, a neighbor who had a small falafel shop and who had never carried a gun. The Israelis were killing defenseless, unarmed people indiscriminately.

When I reached my sister's house I found that they had already buried her body. Almost at once the shouting and gunfire arrived at our neighborhood. My mother and the small children of my sister were very frightened. Everyone was ordered out of the house. Israeli soldiers banged at the door shouting, "Get out! Go to King Abdullah!"

We were herded like animals, rounded up and searched. You can't imagine the savagery with which people were treated. Everything was taken — watches, jewelry, wedding rings, wallets, gold. One young neighbor of ours, a man in his late 20s, not more, Amin Hanhan, had secreted some money in

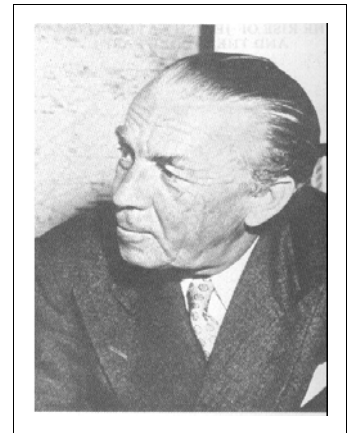
his shirt to care for his family on the journey. The soldier who searched him demanded that he surrender the money, and he resisted. He was shot dead in front of us. One of his sisters, a young married woman, also a neighbor of our family, was present. She saw her brother shot dead before her eyes. She was so shocked that, as we made our way toward the village of Bir Zeit, she died of shock, exposure and lack of water.

* * *

Count Folke Bernadotte, former vice chairman of the Swedish Red Cross, who, during WWII, successfully challenged Himmler's plan to deport 20,000 Swedish Jews to concentration camps. After WWII he was appointed Special U.N. Mediator to the Middle East. In September 16, 1948, he proposed that Lydda-Ramle should be part of an Arab state. On September 17, he was assassinated by Yitzhak Shamir, who would go on to become Prime Minister of Israel. The following is from Bernadotte's book "To Jerusalem," Hodder and Stoughton, 1951, pp. 200 and 241; it describes his reaction when he first saw the refugees streaming into Ramallah:

Before we left Jerusalem, I visited Ramallah, where thousands of refugees from Lydda and Ramleh were assembled. I have

made the acquaintance of a great many refugee camps; but never have I seen a more ghastly sight than that which met my eyes here at Ramallah...There were plenty of frightening faces in that sea of suffering humanity. I remember not least a group of scabby and helpless old men with tangled beards who thrust their emaciated



faces into the car and held out scraps of bread that would certainly have been considered uneatable by ordinary people, but was their only food... And what would happen at the beginning of October, when the rainy season began and the cold weather set in? It was a thought one preferred not to follow to its conclusion...

The right of the Arab refugees to return to their homes in Jewish-controlled territory at the earliest possible date should be affirmed by the United Nations, and their repatriation, resettlement and economic and social rehabilitation, and payment of ade-

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AM EU 's Book Selections (See Videos on

Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Aburish, S.	Arafat: From Defender to Dictator	1998	360	\$15.90	\$12.50	Good biography of Palestinian leader.
A.M.E.U	Holy Land Travel Directory	1999	18	\$10.00	\$5.00	Recommends travel agents, inns, guides, shops.
Amove, A., ed.	Iraq Under Siege	2000	216	\$16.00	\$13.50	Articles by Aruri, Chomsky, Kelly, Abunimah.
Abu-Sitta, S.	Palestine: 1948	1998	NA	\$17.00	\$15.00	Locates 531 depopulated towns & villages.
Armstrong, K	Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths	1999	474	\$17.50	\$16.95	Well written; critically acclaimed.
Ateek, N.	Justice and Only Justice	1989	227	\$13.50	\$10.50	A Palestinian theology of liberation.
Ateek, N. ed.	Holy Land, Hollow Jubilee	1999	314	\$25.00	\$24.50	Includes articles by Edward Said & Michael Prior.
Bailey & Hillard	Living Stones Pilgrimage	1999	132	\$15.00	\$14.50	Guide to Holy Land's Christian communities.
Beit-Hallahmi, B.	Original Sins	1993	227	\$19.95	\$12.50	Reflections on Zionism and Israel.
Benvenisti, M.	Sacred Landscape	2000	417	\$35.00	\$25.95	Israel's 50-year effort to change the landscape.
Bilkadi, Zayn	Babylon to Baku	1998	224	\$75.00	\$59.00	Richly illustrated 40,000-year history of oil.
Borne, J.	The USS Liberty	1995	318	\$20.00	\$19.50	Author challenges official US-Israeli accounts.
CAABU	The Arab World	1998	40	\$17.00	\$15.50	Excellent study guide for teachers.
Chacour, E.	Blood Brothers	1984	223	\$7.95	\$7.50	Author is prominent Palestinian Christian leader.
Chacour, E.	We Belong to the Land	1990	216	\$10.00	\$7.50	What Palestine means to its Christian population.
Chapman, C.	Whose Promised land	1992	286	\$10.95	\$5.50	Examines meaning of biblical promises.
Cheshin, et al.	Separate & Unequal	1999	288	\$27.95	\$19.95	Inside story of Israeli rule in East Jerusalem.
Christison, K.	Perceptions of Palestine	1999	380	\$40.00	\$29.95	How US media has influenced US policy.
Dallal, S.	Scattered Like Seeds	1998	335	\$26.95	\$19.95	Novel about Palestinian exile and return.
David, R.	Arabs & Israel for Beginners	1993	218	\$9.95	\$8.95	Illustrated history of Palestine & Israel.
Eady & Mast	Sahmatah	1998	40	\$10.00	\$10.00	One act play for two actors; see <i>Link</i> , Feb. 1999.
Ellis, M.	O Jerusalem	1999	187	\$17.50	\$16.95	The contested future of the Jewish Covenant.
Farah, N.	A Continent Called Palestine	1997	136	\$17.95	\$14.50	Palestinian from Nazareth tells her poignant story.
Fayez, J., ed.	The Colonization of Palestine	1992	48	\$9.95	\$3.00	Description of destroyed cities, towns & villages.
Findley, P.	Deliberate Deceptions	1993	326	\$14.95	\$6.95	Facing the facts about the US-Israeli relationship.
Finkelstein, N.	The Rise and Fall of Palestine	1996	152	\$18.95	\$15.50	A critical assessment of the peace process.
Fromkin, D.	A Peace to End All Peace	1989	635	\$15.95	\$14.95	Fall of Ottoman Empire & rise of modern Mid.East.
Gee, J.	Unequal Conflict	1998	146	\$15.00	\$13.50	Palestinian society versus European colonizers.
Giladi, N.	Ben Gurion's Scandals	1992	261	\$19.50	\$14.95	How the Haganah & Mossad eliminated Jews.
Halsell, G.	Forcing God's Hand	1999	100	\$14.95	\$9.95	Israel, the Rapture and Planet Earth's destruction.
Hero, D.	Sharing the Promised Land	1999	372	\$18.95	\$16.95	Author brings fresh insights to the conflict.

Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Hass, A.	Drinking the Sea at Galilee	1999	400	\$16.00	\$12.95	Israel's bureaucratic terrorism in the Gaza Strip.
Hourani, A.	A History of the Arab Peoples	1991	551	\$27.50	\$22.50	A definitive work by a distinguished scholar.
Jaber, H.	Hezbollah	1997	375	\$29.95	\$23.95	Well researched study of the Lebanese movement.
Jayyusi, S.	Anthology	1996	754	\$22.00	\$17.50	Modern Palestinian literature.
Kerr, A.	Come With Me From Lebanon	1994	322	\$28.95	\$22.50	Autobiography.
Koestler, A.	The Thirteenth Tribe	1976	255	\$15.00	\$11.50	The Khaza ancestry of Jews who settled Israel.
Macdonald & Bergin	A 16th Century Mosque	1994	48	\$18.95	\$16.50	How the great mosques were built; finely illustrated.
Mallison, W.T. & S.	Palestine Problem in Int. Law	1986	564	\$49.50	\$10.00	Definitive work from Balfour Declaration to 1986.
Masalha, N.	Expulsion of the Palestinians	1993	235	\$11.95	\$9.50	Examines Zionist notion of 'Transfer', 1882-1948.
McCormick, J.	Jerusalem and the Holy Land	1997	206	\$12.95	\$10.95	An ecumenical pilgrim's guide.
McGowan-Hogan	The Saga of Deir Yassin	1999	78	\$10.00	\$10.00	Response to Zionist revisionism.
Morris, B.	Righteous Victims	2000	751	\$40.00	\$27.50	The Zionist-Arab conflict from 1881 to 1999.
Morris, B.	Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem	1987	380	\$25.95	\$19.95	Pivotal work on expulsion of Palestinians, 1947-49.
Novick, P.	The Holocaust in American Life	1999	380	\$27.00	\$21.95	How Holocaust influences US support of Israel.
Nye, N.	The Space Between Our Footsteps	1998	144	\$19.95	\$16.50	Illustrated poetry from the Middle East.
Pappe, I	Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict	1994	324	\$24.95	\$18.95	Israeli historian covers years 1947 to 1951.
Rahab & Strickert	Bethlehem 2000: Past and Present	1999	160	\$34.95	\$32.50	Coffee-table history book with 130 color photos.
Rantisi & Beebe	Blessed Are The Peacemakers	1990	172	\$8.95	\$6.95	Personal account of Lydda Death March.
Said, E.	Out of Place	1999	295	\$26.99	\$15.95	A memoir.
Said, E.	The End of the Peace Process	2000	345	\$27.50	\$19.50	Author questions foundations of Oslo accords.
Shahak & Mezvinsky	Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel	1999	160	\$17.95	\$15.50	Focuses on roots of Jewish fundamentalism.
Shahak, I.	Jewish History, Jewish Religion	1994	127	\$17.95	\$15.50	Talmud morality and the peace process.
Shahak, I.	Open Secrets	1997	192	\$18.95	\$15.50	Examines Israel's weapons of mass destruction.
Shlaim, A.	The Iron Wall: Israel & Arab World	1999	448	\$32.50	\$24.50	Israeli historian reevaluates traditional Israeli history.
Simons, G.	Imposing Economic Sanctions	1999	212	\$19.95	\$9.95	A legal remedy vs. a genocidal tool.
Simons, G.	Iraq	1996	444	\$17.95	\$15.50	History of Iraq from Sumer to present.
Suleiman, M., ed.	Arabs in America	2000	360	\$22.95	\$19.95	21 scholars report on Arabs of North America.
Tamari, S.	Jerusalem 1948	1999	296	\$16.00	\$12.95	Fate of the Arab neighborhoods; with wall map.
Thomas, B.	How Israel Was Won	1999	346	\$19.95	\$18.50	Role of the Holocaust in Palestinian catastrophe.
Thomas, G.	Gideon's Spies	1999	354	\$25.95	\$21.50	The secret history of the Mossad.
Wagner, D.	Anxious for Armageddon	1995	354	\$12.95	\$9.95	Christian Evangelicals and Israel.
Whitelam, K.	The Invention of Ancient Israel	1997	281	\$20.00	\$16.50	Biblical scholarship and Palestinian dispossession.
Zed Publ.	The Spirit of Palestine	1994	244	\$50.00	\$50.00	Richly illustrated history; coffee-table size.

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DMZ, **People & the Land** (1997, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**

IRA, **Children of the Cradle** (1996, 30-minute report on embargo of Iraq). **AMEU: \$3.00.**

Kelley, R., **The Bedouin of Israel** (1998, 2 hours). Never-before-seen film of how Israel has treated its Bedouin citizens, including interview with the notorious Green Patrol. **AMEU: \$30.00.**

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Middle East Council of Churches, **Disabled for Palestine** (1993, 21 minutes). A Palestinian doctor shows cases of Palestinian civilians who have been maimed for life by Israeli bullets, beatings and tear gas. List: \$25.00; **AMEU: \$10.00.**

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