

Americans Tortured In Israeli Jails

By Jerri Bird

“**T**he interrogation started.

W A N T E D



Artist's sketch of "Shawqi," the Israeli Security Service interrogator who has tortured American citizens in Israeli jails. The Council for the National Interest is offering \$1,000 for information on his true identity. Call 1-800-296-6958.

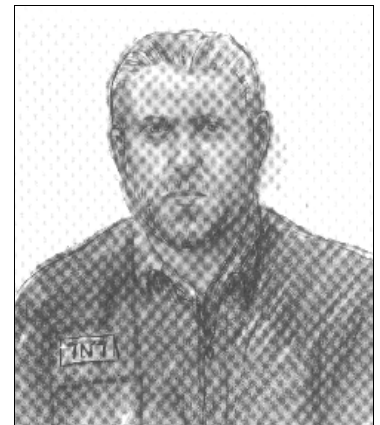
" I was hooded and tied to a chair.

" An investigator named Shawqi came and told me, 'Let me tell you something. Have you heard about a law called Emergency Law?'

"I said, 'Yes, I read about it in the newspaper.' He said, 'So if you are an American citizen that does not mean anything to us. We could do whatever we want with you. And let me tell you something. We are America, so whatever we want, we'll do it. Do you understand that?'

(Continued on page 3)

W A N T E D



Artist's sketch of the "prince of the jail," who was complicit in the torture of U.S. citizen Anwar Mohamed. The Council for the National Interest is offering \$1,000 for information on his true identity. Call 1-800-296-6958.

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About This Issue

Forty-five thousand United States citizens of Palestinian origin are living in or visiting the West Bank, according to U.S. officials.

Some of these citizens are imprisoned by Israel — without ever being charged with a crime; some have their U.S. passports taken from them — without ever being charged with a crime; all report that they were tortured.

These cases are being monitored jointly by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the largest Arab-American organization in the U.S., and by Partners for Peace, a Washington, D.C.-based organization founded in 1991 by Jerri Bird.

Jerri profiles several cases in this issue, relying on the sworn affidavits of the tortured. Also — at our urging — she tells why she feels so compelled to labor on behalf of Palestinian Americans who, shamefully, receive little support from their own government.

This is our second issue on this topic. Our January-March, 1990 Link by Albert Mokhiber, then ADC's Legal Director, documented several cases of Israeli human rights abuses against U.S. citizens.

Sadly, the number of reported cases has escalated over the past ten months.

Among the new books listed on pp. 14-16, is "Dying in the Land of Promise," by AMEU National Council member, Don Wagner. Don authored our October-November, 1992 Link "Beyond Armageddon," and served, for several years, as head of the Palestine Human Rights Campaign in the United States. His book provides a valuable survey of Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to the present.

Another new book, "Palestinian Women," comes from yet another Link writer, Cheryl Rubenberg ("The Middle East Lobbies," January-March, 1984, and "The Misguided Alliance," Oct.-Nov., 1986). Cheryl spent two years at Bir Zeit University researching her book.

Other new titles include: "Body of Secrets" by James Bamford (with new information on the U.S.S. Liberty); "The Ownership of the U.S. Embassy Site in Jerusalem" by Walid Khalidi; and two books on the biblical accounts of Israel's founding: "Ancient Israel's Faith and History" by George Mendenhall; and "The Mythic Past" by Thomas Thompson.

AMEU's video selections are found on page 16.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director



Jerri Bird

"They left me in there isolated for 18 days. There, in that cell, the smell. There is a bit of water in a little container. I was so thirsty. I told them, give me a cup. I start kicking on the door. He comes and he opens the little window and he says, 'What do you want?' I tell him, 'I need a cup so I can drink water.' They wouldn't give me.

"The second day they brought food in the morning and they put food in a plastic bag so I used that plastic bag as a cup.

ing to kill me inside that place.' He said he can't do anything about it because it'll be 'your words against their words.'

"Well, they took me back to the cell. My body was shaking constantly. Every single nerve in my body was shaking. I just wanted to die. And while they were leading me with the sack on top of my head in my chains the persecutor gave me a kick to my back and he started cursing me because I only got 15 days. He wanted more time for me. I swear to God that's what happened with those



Illustration by Human Rights Watch

"Kindergarten Chair" (in Arabic, the *shabeh* position)

"These six guys were in there and they gathered around me and put a plastic bag around my head. And they had a broomstick and they pushed it against my neck and they started to strangle me. Then they just let it go and they said, 'Well now you better listen to us. The prince of jail is not happy with you. And you have to tell us what you got. And if we tell you to write something you will do it. If not, we will kill you. Do you understand that?'"

"I mentioned that to the American consul in the second visit. I told him, 'They tried to kill me in that place. Why was the American embassy not doing anything about it? I almost got killed in there. I'm an American citizen. I need help.' I told him, 'Why don't you guys do something about it? They tried to kill me. They were go-

people. I was sweating. I had a fever. I was losing weight. I could see that. I was losing muscles. Fatigue. It was hard on me to breathe. He kicked me again.

"While they were tying me to the chair I felt such a pain in my hand. I told him, 'Listen, my hands are hurting.' He says 'That's good. It hurts, so you will talk.'

"They left me in that room, tied up against that chair. I could see people shouting, screaming from the torture. Such a terrible thing. And the voices were coming from the next room. And he came back after I don't know, one or two days. I was still on that chair. My body was shaking, cold. I could feel the coldness in my bones. And of course they leave the AC on. It's a way of torture. The

pain, the hunger, it came back. He said, 'You gonna talk?' And I didn't answer him.

"They took me outside. They tied me against the little chair. The small chair is supposed to be harder. They put loud music, big speakers right in front of my face. He told me, 'A lot of other guys won't understand what the music talks about, but you will.' It was American music, Rock and Roll and other kinds of music, very loud. They left me for hours and this music—boom, boom, boom. My ears were going to explode.

"I was getting crazy. I told the American consul, 'Please just tell them to put me in a better facility if you don't want to get me out.' He said the longest they could keep me in there was about 100 days. I told him I have been here for almost 40 days and you expect me to go on for 60 more. He said that is the most they could have me in here.

"I told him, 'Listen, you could just come back after a few days and pick up my body.' He saw the way I looked. He saw everything. I told him that I need help.

"So they took me outside. And then the security said, 'Okay, you will leave.' When they took the sack off they said, 'Get out of here. Don't make any trouble for us.' That was it. No apology, nothing. After 40 days, thank God, I could get out of there.

"I called the American consulate and I asked them, 'I want to speak to the consul, Mr. Abdel Noor.' So I spoke with him and I asked him, 'Is there anything you could help me with? I would like to be escorted to the airport or could you send someone from the consulate that could be with me while I am leaving the country?' And he said, 'No, don't worry, they are not going to do anything to you, and the only thing they could do, they could interrogate you one more time for 15 minutes to two hours, the maximum they have. And if anything happens to you, call us.' It was like, yeah right, are they going to let me make a phone call like the first time when they detained me? So I

said, 'Thanks a lot.'"

The narrative above has been excerpted from a lengthy recording made by Anwar Mohamed, then 27, within weeks of his release from detention in December, 1998. He had lost 40 pounds in 40 days. The trauma still causes him great distress. In the end, Israel never charged him with anything.



Partners for Peace Photos

Anwar Mohamed, before (left) and after (right) his torture.

of his aunt whom he had gone to visit on his vacation. Gene took a videotaped interview at that time and the first look I had of Anwar was of him seated in an enormous armchair that seemed to engulf his thin body.

It was some weeks later that he came to Washington and by that time he had regained some of the 40 pounds he lost during his almost six-week incarceration in the Moscobiya Prison (the Russian Compound). Since my husband's first post in the Foreign Service was Jerusalem (in 1956-58) I could immediately visualize the building where he had been held, only about two blocks from the American consulate general on the Israeli side. (At that time the city was divided by a no-man's land and there was a consulate on each side of the city to serve the two communities, Israeli and Palestinian.)

Anwar is even younger than my own children, tall, handsome, articulate, but clearly deeply shaken by his experience. I found it difficult to see in him the thin, tentative Anwar of the videotape. So we began the de-briefing process and carefully established the facts of the detention as well as his background. So began the methodology for the other cases I was soon to encounter.

In January, 2000, CNN producer Ted Rubenstein and CNN Middle East correspondent Charles Glass came to

my office to do a report on the abuse of American citizens in Israeli jails. Of the several cases we had documented by that time, the one they chose to feature in a 14-minute interview was that of Anwar Mohamed. By doing the interview Anwar was defying the warning given him upon his release not to make any trouble for his torturers.

The CNN report took months in the making and aired in September, 2000. It was viewed around the world, including the United States. I give CNN credit for doing the program, with particular credit to Charles Glass, who himself made news in 1987 when he was held hostage in Lebanon for two months. For its efforts CNN suffered nasty and sustained attacks from major Jewish organizations.

Why I Do It: The Case of Hashem Mufleh

I am 75 years old, the wife of a retired foreign service officer who became a specialist in the Middle East. Our first post was Jerusalem, and thereafter we spent almost 20 years in the Middle East and South Asia. We brought up four children while serving in posts from Cairo to New Delhi and I managed to be evacuated twice, and dealt with "hardship posts" for most of that time.

But why is this old woman spending her retirement years (when she should be baking cookies and enjoying grandchildren and leisure) researching torture cases? Good question, and one I often ask myself. My mother used to say that I was born with "fire in the belly," as she shook her head at my reaction to injustice. I remember when I was in high school a friend (a boy I probably had a crush on) suddenly disappeared. It was 1941, he was a Japanese American and he and his family had been picked up and placed in a detention center somewhere in the California desert. I remember my sense of outrage and my inability to do anything about it. I never heard from him again and the community seemed to accept the disappearance as a necessary part of war. I did not accept it and, according to my sister, continued to rage against the unfairness of it.

Years later, as a volunteer activist during the first intifada, I invited a group of friends to meet in our home around our dining room table to explore activities we might undertake in support of the legitimate demands of the Palestinian community for recognition and statehood. We decided that the Americans supporting this cause needed training on how to get their message out through the public media. This group became Partners for Peace

and impact through the media has been our goal from the beginning.

I certainly would never have guessed that I would find myself targeting the foreign service as complicit in neglecting the legitimate rights of American citizens of Arab origin in Israel. The foreign service had been my family while away from American shores for more than 20 years. I knew what care and concern foreign service officers took in defending the rights of Americans. They considered it a fundamental part of their role and even went beyond the requirements of the Foreign Affairs Manual to, at the minimum, ease the plight of incarcerated Americans, whether they privately thought they might be guilty or not.

My interest in the plight of Americans of Arab extraction in Israel was captured in September, 1998 when I received an action alert from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee about Hashem Mufleh. I decided I had to know more about his situation.

I managed to contact his sister, who is married and lives in Ramallah. I was also able to reach his lawyer, Jonathan Kuttub, and spoke with Hashem's brothers in the United States. What I learned was more than enough to send this American grandmother into a frenzy of activity.

Hashem, whose 18th birthday was the day before, was traveling with his mother and older brother to Ben Gurion airport to return to the United States, where he planned to enter the University of New Mexico. As a third-generation American citizen he had deep roots in New Mexico. His family owned property in the West Bank and he and his mother had returned to live there for several years to ensure that he acquired good Arabic. His father, who lived and worked in Gallup, New Mexico, returned at least annually for a visit with his family. Since Hashem was the youngest, the family could now be united in Albuquerque.

At the airport Hashem was taken out of the boarding line and his mother and brother were told to continue on. His mother became distraught and refused to go, but told his brother to continue since he was returning to university in Florida.

This was the beginning of Hashem's long ordeal that ended more than 18 months later when the Israelis took him from the prison directly to the airport. The money for his ticket was obtained from his family, and he returned to the United States wearing his prison clothes, totally disori-

ented and confused. His uncle who lives in Wisconsin flew to Chicago to be with him during a layover and told me that he was in no condition for me to talk with him. He said Hashem spoke mostly Arabic, seemed to think that the "Shabak" (the secret police) were following him, and clearly needed time to heal.

My efforts to obtain his release had been nearly fruitless. I remember my sleepless nights over the Labor Day weekend in 1998 when I had first learned of Hashem's plight; he was the age of my grandson. I was in frequent telephone contact with his sister and mother in Palestine, and we shared our grief at his incarceration. At that point I didn't know the torture he was to endure, but simply felt outrage that he was torn from his mother's side.

This time I was sure that I could do something. I called Senator Domenici's office and was told that I must contact the local (New Mexico) office about a "constituent" matter. When I spoke with a "case worker" she expressed astonishment at my request. She said, "But he is a Palestine" (she didn't even know the term Palestinian), completely ignoring his third-generation American status. She declared him a terrorist and refused to even look into the matter.

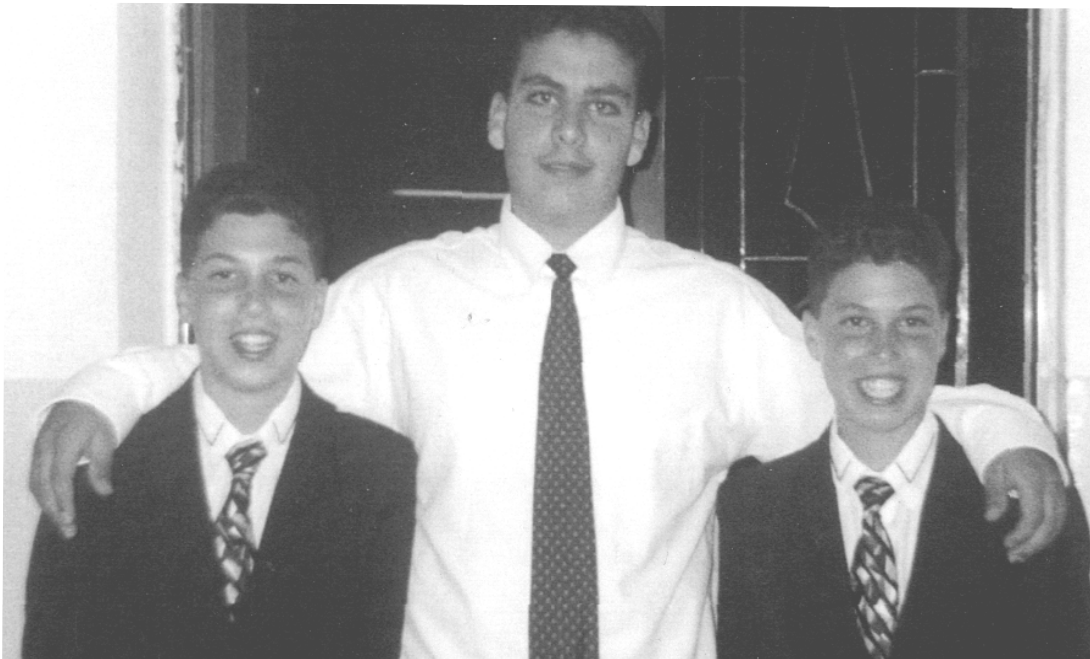
So I tried the office of Senator Bingaman. With some difficulty I was finally put through to a woman assistant who expressed similar reservations a little more subtly. I managed to appeal to her motherly instincts and she as-

sured me that when the senator returned to the office after the holiday I would have a chance to talk with him. She kept her word, and the senator did call me. She had briefed him so he knew about Hashem's background, his family, and the fact that he was being held without any charge. He asked what I wanted him to do. I asked for just one thing. Make a public announcement about the plight of Hashem Mufleh and call for his immediate release. He seemed shocked at the request. Nothing ever happened. No announcement was made and no further expression of interest in helping was offered.

I learned very early in this new project that elected officials were unlikely to be willing to take any serious, effective action.

I was similarly frustrated by the Department of State response. For example, in the case of Hashem Mufleh I had frequent phone conversations with the consul in our embassy in Tel Aviv. He admitted that the Israeli government had failed to notify the embassy of Hashem's detention, and an official letter of inquiry was sent to the Israelis about the case. Six months later I asked (as I had regularly inquired before) about the reply to that letter. The Israelis never replied. And there never was an official protest over the lack of a reply.

The consul found it quite startling that I should suggest that he ought to attend one of the many "hearings" scheduled for Hashem. He had never done that before, but



Partners for Peace Photo

Hashem Mufleh before his incarceration, with his cousins.

he agreed it might be worthwhile. I had alerted the media to the date of this hearing and both the consul and several television cameras and "pencils" (print media) appeared.

The hearing was held in a Jewish colony on the West Bank known as Beit El. A military officer served as judge and jury. When he saw the audience he announced that the case of Mufleh would not be heard. Everyone left, and once they were gone, the officer did bring the case up, calling a witness even though the accused was not present.

Hashem was not going to get an early release as I had hoped, and other cases were now being reported to me as the word spread of my interest.

My media consultant, Peter Wirth, and I decided to embark on a long-term media plan to accumulate solid facts about cases, be able to provide contact numbers for those individuals who could validate those facts and offer background information. Next we needed to get this information to the media and concentrate on developing contacts in the world of journalism and the electronic media for whom we would provide ongoing updated information. We knew it would be a long process, but we were determined to be persistent in adding new cases and new evidence to substantiate our claims.

My U.S. Department of State contact told me, "Nothing you can do will have any effect on what I do."

I had suggested that it could be embarrassing for the Department of State to have public awareness of the clear policy that governed the service provided to Americans of Arab descent.

His disdain energized me.

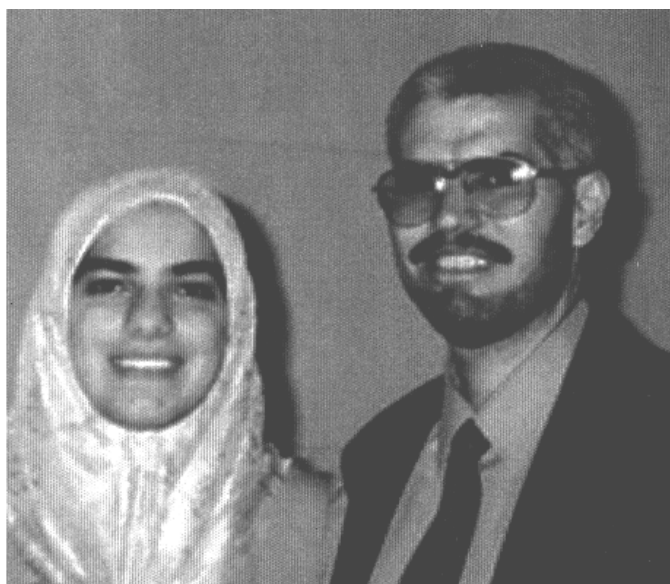
I only hope he saw the CNN report, and that the Department of State got many calls protesting our country's complicity in Israel's systematic torture of U.S. citizens.

Torture: In Their Own Words

The first and rather overwhelming barrier I faced with media, government officials, elected officials and the general public was doubt. Most thought I was exaggerating, that Israelis wouldn't risk their special relationship with the U.S. by torturing Americans, and what proof did I have anyway of my allegations? The fact is, torture's a lot like pornography: people know it when they see it. So, let us listen to the victims as they tell us what was done to them.

Yusif Marei, 44, a U.S. citizen, was arrested in April, 1999, when he returned with his wife to visit his 90-year-old parents. Forty days later, he was released without charges and ejected from Israel without being allowed to see his parents. He relates:

One interrogator used the method of *shabeh* against me for three hours to force me to lie against myself. *Shabeh* is the process of dehumanizing a human being. A single movement cannot be performed by any part of my body. During this dehumanizing process very loud music was blasting overhead. So many times they kept me for long hours in a small cell between the interrogations. That cell was the size of my body. I called it the living grave cell.



Yusif Marei and his wife.

Abbas Fawaz Na'ora, 16, an American citizen from Georgia, while with his family in Jerusalem, was imprisoned in Megiddo Prison in February, 1998. He was released in September, 2000. His account:

In the first two days of my interrogation they put me in the "closet" — a room a meter wide and about two meters high. I was seated in a small chair, my hands tied behind my back in tight handcuffs to the chair which caused my hands to swell. The position in which I was tied to the chair for 48 hours continuously was very painful. This position is known as *shabeh*. An in-

terrogator named Captain Omri began kicking me brutally in my testicles. I cried from the pain. The pain made me feel that I was going to die. They left me in the *shabeh* for a few hours, but my condition worsened from the beating and they returned me to the cell. I couldn't sleep [or] stand I was in so much pain.

Hanna Abu Khdeir, 29, was born in East Jerusalem and became a U.S. citizen in 1995. She returned to East Jerusalem with her husband and, on March 12, 2001, was arrested in her home at night by Israeli security forces. After 10 days, she was released without charges, but was required to surrender her U.S. passport. She relates:

On March 13, 2001, at 8 o'clock in the morning the interrogation started and lasted for three and one-half days continuously without sleep. One of my hands was chained to the back of an extremely uncomfortable chair and the chair was tied to the floor. Every time they took me in and out of the chair to go to the cell to use the bathroom (hole in the floor) they covered my eyes with completely black glasses so I could see nothing. A girl led me around while the black glasses were on.

Beshar Saidi, 31, a U.S. citizen from Michigan, was imprisoned in 1997 while attending a Christmas Day dinner in the Galilee. He was released 18 months later. He testifies:

I was hand- and leg-cuffed with a huge hood covering my head and face and I was taken to one of their torture centers nearby. In the following 24 days I was subjected to a severe process of psychological and physical torture. I was sleep deprived for periods of 48 hours at a time. I was threatened with being killed and eliminated physically by applying 240V electric shocks to my body. My wife was pregnant at that time; they convinced me that she was being subjected to the same process of torture in the next cell in order to drive me to confess. They threatened to strip me out of my American citizenship. "We run the policy of the U.S. in the Middle East and we will get you in Detroit if you cause us any trouble." They cursed me and my faith repeatedly [he is a Christian]. [They said] "Your only way out of here is to coordinate with us here and in Detroit and we put you on the first flight heading back to the U.S. with a promise of a good life in the future."

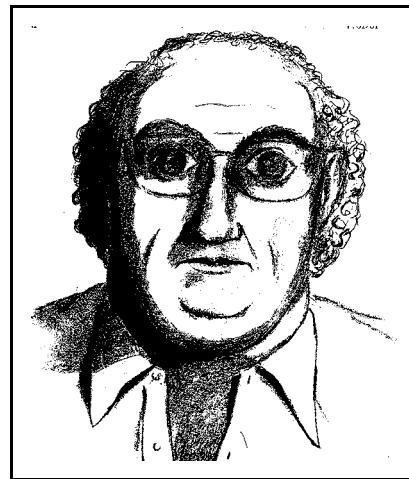
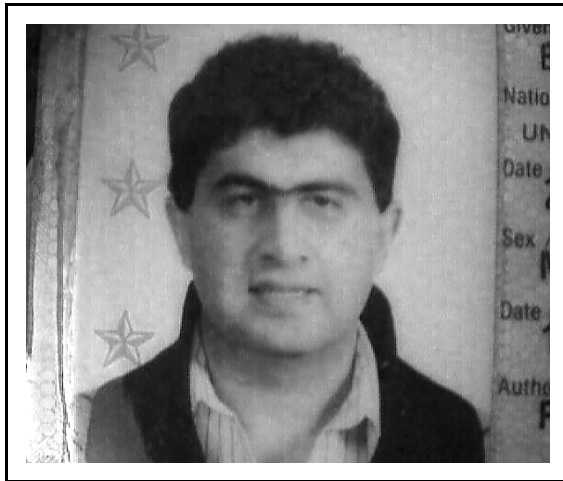


Photo and drawing provided by Mr. Saidi.

At left: Photo from the U.S. passport Beshar Saidi used to enter Israel in December, 1997. He was arrested on Christmas Day and subjected to 24 days of physical and psychological torture in a facility of the Shinbet, Israeli's internal security agency. His principal torturer was "Sammi," the head of the Kishon Unit of Shinbet in Haifa, whose likeness (right) was rendered by a sketch artist in Detroit using Saidi's description. Saidi's pleas for access to U.S. consular officials were rebuffed by his captors, who told him to "bang your head against the wall." Even after the U.S. Consulate in Haifa learned of his detention, 14 days elapsed before he was visited—during which the torture continued.

Luay Qasam Abdel Jaber, 20, engineering student from Chicago, Illinois, was detained in May, 1999 at the Tel Aviv airport on his way back home. He was released eight weeks later after his family paid a \$2,500 bond, but he cannot leave the West Bank. He testifies:

I was held in *shabeh* for five days. They didn't allow me to sleep for 36 hours and I was held under an air conditioner the whole time.

Steve Adams, 39, born Mohamed Blata in Palestine, is a naturalized U.S. citizen. He was arrested on December 27, 2000 by Israeli authorities as he was about to leave Gaza International Airport. He was held for 37 days at Ashkelon prison and finally released without charges brought against him. He says:

I was placed in isolation for more than 10 days. Every day the air conditioning was on 24 hours. Even when I was taken to various rooms and handcuffed to the chair by my wrists and legs they put the air conditioner on full blast. The chair was tied to the floor. When I wanted to use the bathroom, the soldier followed me to the bathroom and refused to let me close the door while standing there observing me. I refused and waited until I returned back to the cell at night.

All of the above citations are excerpted from sworn affidavits filed with the U.S. Department of State.

When I had the opportunity to interview these individuals I found it striking that their first accounts were always centered on the humiliation they had suffered. This was almost more important to them than the physical torture. They felt dehumanized.

Beshar Saidi first told me of how helpless he felt when the Israeli interrogator told him that his pregnant wife was in the next torture chamber and they would abort her baby if he didn't confess.

Yusif Marei said that the interrogator cursed with very profane language his father, mother and his family and (with great indignation) even his American citizenship.

Hanna Abu Khdeir was shocked that the Israeli interrogator knew that she had sought medical assistance because she had not been able to conceive and she and her husband very much wanted a baby. She said, "Goor [the Israeli interrogator] came back and without any preface

told me that I am a 'snake' and I am married to a big 'snake' and because of that God doesn't want us to have babies because God doesn't want more 'snakes' in this world. I was shocked. I could not imagine that there could be people in the world who feel happy because of other people's problems."

Steve Adams said they referred to him as the donkey or the cow.

And the accounts of the food they were given were almost identical.

Mohammed Sarsour, 39, a U.S. citizen from Wisconsin, after spending eight weeks in jail, said, "I was provided with disgusting spoiled food which was inedible. I could not bring myself to eat it and as a result I lost about 23 pounds."

Steve Adams said, "The food was no good. They put cucumbers with sand and jelly all together on the same plate with cut cheese. It was disgusting."

Yusif Marei said, "The food which was given to me should not even be called food. The boiled eggs, meat and other cooked foods were always spoiled. At one time after I tried to eat a boiled egg I had severe diarrhea. After that I couldn't eat the cooked food again. The only thing I survived on was bread and tomatoes."

Medical treatment, too, when given, was cynically inadequate.

Hanna Abu Khdeir suffered from a severe itchy rash all over her body and requested a doctor. She was taken to a Russian prison doctor who, according to Hanna, spoke very poor Hebrew, and the only treatment was for Hanna to be allowed to bathe. The rash became worse and they refused another consultation with a doctor.

Does the U.S. Consulate Know?

In 1999, the High Court of Israel heard another in a series of cases of alleged torture brought by Israeli Human Rights organizations. Much to the surprise of all, the High Court came down on the side of the litigants, admitting that Israeli authorities had been engaging in the use of torture during interrogation. Further, they outlawed several specific methods of torture commonly used.

But they left a loophole: they let the Israeli Knesset pass legislation that legalized the use of "moderate physical pressure," the euphemism used to describe the forms

of torture. The Israeli cabinet voted eleven to one to pursue that option. The U.S. government did send an official to suggest that such an action would be unwise, and the High Court decision prevailed for about a year. Then the Al Aqsa Intifada began in September, 2000, and the torture began again.

But the U.S. government did not have to wait for the Israeli High Court's admission to know what Israel was doing behind prison walls. It had Alexandra Johnson's report back in 1978. Johnson, a young vice consul at the American consulate general in Jerusalem, was processing visa applications when she discovered that many Palestinian applicants were ineligible because they had been charged by Israel with a felony. Johnson requested and got permission from the Department of State to examine their cases.

Her research resulted in a lengthy report on the use of torture by Israeli security forces. Titled the Jerusalem 1500 Report, it quoted from sworn testimony by numerous victims, including two American brothers, ages 15 and 16, and it even provided diagrams of the torture equipment used.

During the period that Alexandra Johnson was reporting on these cases, she received a commendation from Deputy Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and from Arthur Houghton, a senior officer in the Department of State, who called her report "excellent."

But for the past 23 years, despite knowing this, the U.S. Department of State has never remonstrated publicly with the Israeli government policy of using torture in a routine fashion in its interrogation of "security suspects." The U.S. government, however, did remonstrate against the author of the Jerusalem 1500 Report. Not long after she submitted her report, Alexandra Johnson was found to be an "inappropriate officer" and was forced out of the Foreign Service.

So what has the U.S. consulate been doing over these years to assist Americans who are tortured in Israeli prisons? The one word answer to that question is sympathize. In the words of the victims:

Yusif Marei: "Mr. Haskell (the American consul) told me that the security issue is 'a matter between you and the Israeli authorities,' and he couldn't get involved in that. He offered me two magazines together with some printed pages, but the guard didn't allow me to have the printed pages. Maybe they explained my rights as an American

citizen."

The case of Abbas Na'ora is particularly poignant. He tells of being visited by the American consul after about a week of torture and after he had signed a confession. "I sat with him for 10 minutes. He asked me what I confessed to. He asked me if I was tortured. I was afraid of him and I told him that I didn't confess and that I wasn't tortured." In a subsequent visit Na'ora finally told the consul about the torture and the "closet," but didn't reveal the kicking in the testicles because he was afraid the consul would tell his father and "I didn't want to worry my father." He says he was visited several times but "in all his visits he did not offer to help and/or ease my situation."

Beshar Saidi says the Israelis denied him the right to see a representative from the American consulate for some time. When the consul did appear he was so appalled at the smell that he cut the interview short and left. Beshar had been denied the use of the bathroom while being interrogated in the chair. The consulate appears to have assumed that Beshar was guilty of being a spy for Lebanon, a highly publicized case in Israeli newspapers, and took a hands off attitude. Beshar was egregiously tortured, threatened with the abortion of his wife's baby, denied the right to see an attorney or the American Consul within three days, and ignored by the U.S. government. In the end he was sentenced to five years in prison solely on the basis of his "confession" obtained under torture in a secret court session.

A woman consul who brought two English language magazines (which were confiscated by the Israelis) visited Hanna Abu Khdeir. This consul actually came to the court hearing but "they did not allow her to stay. They treated her with no respect. When my lawyer tried to make the point that she had the right to be there because this was a civil court proceeding and anyone can attend it, the judge ejected her."

This constitutes a damning indictment of the U.S. government in general and the Department of State in particular. The Foreign Affairs Manual often quoted by consular officials as demonstrating the limited role of the consular officer in cases of arrest states: "Neither arrest nor conviction deprives a U.S. citizen of the right to the consular officer's best efforts in protecting the citizen's legal and human rights." The "Arrest of U.S. Citizens Abroad" section of the Foreign Affairs Manual (7 FAM 400) goes into great detail to outline the responsibilities of the consular officer in such cases.

The American victims, Anwar, Beshar, Luay, et al. can verify that these responsibilities have been taken very lightly in their cases. Probably the words of State Department officials are the most effective way of conveying the attitudes that prevail there.

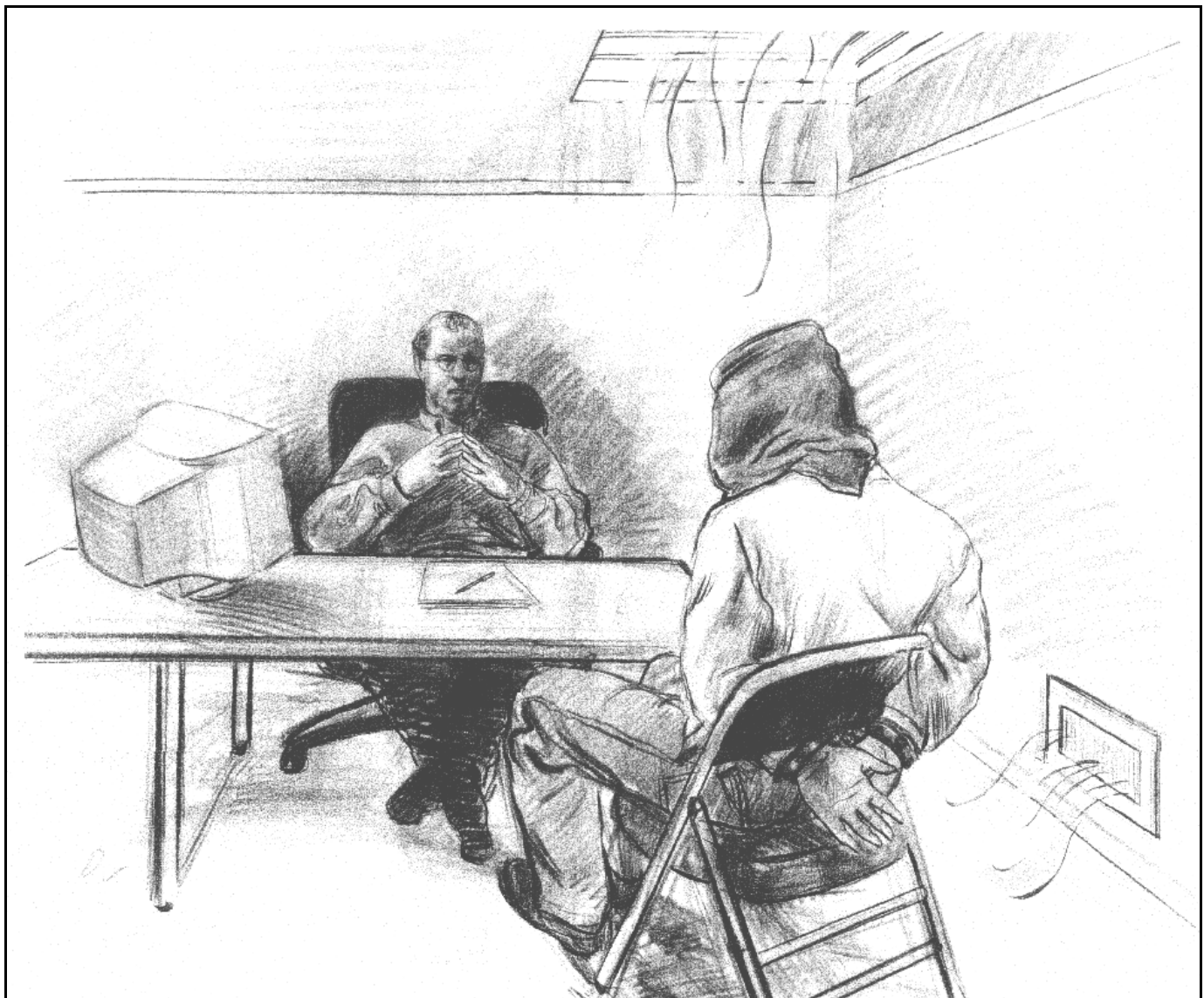
In the Spring of 1999, I called the consular officer to suggest that Arab Americans deserved to be warned about the dangers of traveling to Israel and to be told the limits of official U.S. reaction to their detention and abuse. I was told there was a warning in the "Country Information Sheet" that was available on the Department of State's website.

When I suggested that not all travelers had access to the internet, the reaction was disdain. I was further told

that it is the responsibility of the U.S. citizen to obtain such information before traveling.

I remonstrated with the consular officer over the interpretation of the "limits" on the consular service to aid a detained American and was told that if I wanted to speak about political matters I should contact the Israeli Desk officer.

So I called Matt Finston in that office. He told me that the Consular Information Sheet was adequate notification. He denied that this constituted a racist attitude as I alleged since it accepted that Americans of one ethnic background could be treated by Israel, our ally, in one way, totally different than other Americans. He furthermore said, "You should tell Arab Americans that their American passport



Source: Partners for Peace

Artist's sketch of Israeli interrogation. Often the chair is smaller and the legs of the prisoner are cuffed.

is no protection to them." He added, "If Arab Americans want to be safe they should stay at home."

In meetings with Maura Harty, deputy assistant secretary for consular affairs, she expressed regret that the American citizens had been "mistreated," but added that there was nothing she could do about it. "Surely you don't expect us to call in the Marines to get you out."

Four men, all victims of torture were there to make specific requests of the Department. For one thing they wanted to be assured that they could safely, without fear of arrest, go to Israel to visit aging relatives. Ms. Harty replied that they had explored this problem with the Israelis and were unable to get any assurances of their safety. In effect, in all of my contacts with the Department, both personally and in the company of victims of torture, we have received nothing more than sympathy.

Contrast this with the campaign waged by the Department on behalf of Professor Gao Zhan, a green card holder—not a U.S. citizen—who was detained in China. Even the President and the Secretary of State spoke out forcefully on the denial of her rights and called for her immediate release. Yet in 23 years, the Department has never made even one public protest over the Israeli practice of torturing American citizens.

As one Department official pointed out, "You have to understand that there is a 'special relationship' with Israel."

The 'Special Relationship'

In 1978, then vice consul Alexandra Johnson said, "Potentially, there are hundreds—even thousands—of Palestinians currently in the U.S. who have been arrested by the Israeli authorities for political reasons and interrogated under torture."

Currently we know that Amjad Farah Kur'an and Jamil Sarsour are still in prison. Kur'an was sentenced after a "confession" under torture. Jamil Sarsour has not been charged but has been held for two and one-half years.

Luay Abdel Jaber, Hanna Abu Khdeir, Mohammed Sarsour and Wael Hirabi are no longer in prison. Abdel Jaber, Abu Khdeir and Sarsour are refused exit visas. Hirabi's situation is unknown.

Johnson's report provides sworn affidavits alleging Israeli torture (1978 and prior years) so horrendous that one

has to conclude that the Israeli practice of torture today has moderated somewhat. No longer do we get reports of actual gang rape of female relatives of Palestinian detainees that they are obliged to watch. No longer do we have reports of Palestinian detainees being hung by their feet. The kinds of torture used today are more refined, do not leave marks, and emphasize psychological torture.

Should we consider this progress?

In May, 2001, the U.S. government is outraged at its elimination from the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. Press analyses suggest that this happened because we opposed environmental accords, or because we had no ambassador in place at the United Nations. The Financial Times of London suggested that Washington's vetoing of any resolution that alleges Israeli human rights abuse showed the U.S.'s inability to fairly and impartially work in the area of human rights. Secretary of State Colin Powell put it more graphically when he said that the vote reflected the fact that "we left a little blood on the floor" in votes involving the Palestinians. (New York Times, 9 May 2001, p. 1)

And the evidence is overwhelming:

Israel egregiously violates international law by using torture as a routine part of interrogation of security suspects. The United States has routinely accepted this practice. Israeli torture of Palestinians is a basic problem because we support Israel with arms, economic aid and our acceptance of these intolerable inhumane practices.

How can we expect the Palestinian people to make peace with Israel, with the occupation, the torture, the land confiscation, the house demolitions, the settlement building, and the humiliation continuing on an everyday basis?

What kind of long-term psychological trauma can we expect to see in the Palestinian community, and, indeed, in the Israeli society?

The children of the fathers who are tortured today are the Palestinians of tomorrow whose legitimate anger will no doubt result in extended conflict.

The 'special relationship' is shameful.

It must end.

Americans must demand that it end. ▼

Partners for Peace

Partners for Peace began as an ad hoc committee, dedicated from the beginning to finding ways to get our message beyond "talking to the choir" by accessing the media.

At first we concentrated on opposition to the loan guarantee program and on trying to mobilize the many organizations working on the issues. We very quickly learned that all of the organizations, large and small, lacked the ability to obtain media coverage for their events and issues. We decided to tackle this problem. We rejected the common notion that the press was owned by "the pro-Israel lobby" and believed there are reasonable journalists who want to hear all sides of the issues in order to cover stories without prejudice.

We obtained the services of Peter Wirth, a media consultant in Syracuse, NY, and, after devising a training model with his help, sponsored media training sessions coast to coast.

In January 1998, we launched a three-woman tour of the United States, "Jerusalem Women Speak: Three Women, Three Faiths, One Shared City." The first tour visited 10 cities in 17 days. We designed the project from the beginning to be "media friendly." We engaged Wirth to help us with the media contacts and his method clearly worked.

The media coverage was better than expected. By adding the circulation figures for the print media that covered the tour and the listenership figures for radio and television, we calculated over 210,000,000 contacts worldwide and over 80,000,000 inside the United States. We continue to sponsor a tour each year with amazing success.

When U.S. citizen Hashem Mufleh's case of torture by Israeli security forces came to my attention, I felt that I had to do something about this shocking violation of human rights, a violation that our own government was largely ignoring.

My concern, and indeed anger, intensified as the evidence piled up. The Alexandra Johnson Report, as viewed 23 years later, is a clear indictment of the U.S. government in general and the Department of State in particular, and this was especially galling to me given my own State Department ties.

Torture, of course, is torture regardless of the nationality of the victim. But it is much easier to get media attention if the victim is American. Few Americans knew about Israel's torture of American citizens and I set about to change that sorry fact.

To be effective, one must be factual and unemo-

tional — not an easy task when dealing with a system of organized torture of largely young American citizens who receive only nominal attention from consular officials. We seek to remove all emotional terminology from our press releases and simply relate the facts.

In order to be credible I have adopted the case work strategy. I methodically assemble detailed information about every individual who alleges torture, checking facts and searching for additional evidence. The next step is to put out a press release that not only narrates the details of the case, but provides the media professional with names and contact numbers of people who can offer their testimony. Then we telephone to be sure they received the release and offer any other information we can.

We identify certain key people and call them to offer additional information and continue to follow up with them as we learn new facts. It is absolutely essential to establish your credibility, your reliability and your willingness to be available at any time of day or night. Tenacity is our byword.

We invite readers of The Link to help us by sending a tax-deductible contribution, and by offering suggestions. Our budget is tiny. Most years we have a maximum of \$50,000 that has to cover rent, telephone, tour costs and, as of this year, a modest salary for an assistant.

Partners for Peace has five cases that remain open: three American citizens are denied exit visas to return to the United States and their American passports are either confiscated or not recognized as valid (Hanna Abu Khdeir, Luay Abdel Jaber, and Mohammed Sarsour). Two Americans remain in prison, one for more than two years with no charges filed against him (Jamil Sarsour), and one who was sentenced on the basis of a "confession" obtained through torture (Amjad Farah Kur'an). These United States citizens should be released at once.

The other issue that must be addressed is the relationship between torture and the hope for an enduring peace. Israeli Government torture is more accurately described as "state terrorism." As former CIA officer Frank Anderson said in a talk in Washington, D.C., "For every Palestinian tortured there are at least two potential terrorists created — the father and the brother of the victim."

The United States should demand an end to this practice of torture by the Israeli government.

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**AM EU 's Book Selections (See Videos on
Hand Column and Use Order
Form on Page 16.**

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.
Armstrong, K	Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths	1999	474	\$17.50	\$16.95	Well written; critically acclaimed.
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.
Bamford, J.	Body of Secrets	2001	721	\$29.95	\$19.95	New evidence Israel deliberately attacked USS Liberty.
Beit-Hallahmi, B.	Original Sins	1993	227	\$19.95	\$12.50	Reflections on Zionism and Israel.
Bilkadi, Zayn	Babylon to Baku	1998	224	\$75.00	\$59.00	Richly illustrated 40,000-year history of oil.
Chacour, E.	Blood Brothers	1984	223	\$7.95	\$7.50	Author is prominent Palestinian Christian leader.
Chapman, C.	Whose Promised land	1992	286	\$10.95	\$5.50	Examines meaning of biblical promises.
Christison, K.	Perceptions of Palestine	1999	380	\$40.00	\$29.95	How US media has influenced US policy.
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.
Esposito, J., ed.	The Oxford History of Islam	1999	749	\$49.95	\$47.95	Richly illustrated history of Islam's faith and culture.
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.	A Nation on Trial	1998	176	\$22.95	\$18.50	A critique of the Goldhagen thesis.
Finkelstein, N.	The Holocaust Industry	2000	150	\$23.00	\$16.50	Reflections on the exploitation of Jewish suffering.
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.
Giladi, N.	Ben Gurion's Scandals	1992	261	\$19.50	\$14.95	How the Haganah & Mossad eliminated Jews.
Haddad, Y.	The Muslims of America	1991	240	\$17.95	\$15.95	Articles by J. Esposito, G. Ahmed, B. Haines, J. Voll.
Halsell, G.	Forcing God's Hand	1999	100	\$14.95	\$9.95	Israel, the Rapture and Planet Earth's destruction.
Halsell, G.	In Their Shoes	1996	200	\$14.95	\$9.50	A memoir.
Halsell, G.	Journey to Jerusalem	1981	193	\$7.95	\$4.00	Moving expose of life under Israeli occupation.
Halsell, G.	Prophecy and Politics	1986	210	\$14.95	\$8.95	Militant evangelists on the road to nuclear war.
Hass, A.	Drinking the Sea at Gaza	1999	400	\$16.00	\$12.95	Israel's bureaucratic terrorism in the Gaza Strip.
Hunter, S.	The Future of Islam and the West	1998	208	\$17.95	\$15.50	Clash of civilizations vs. peaceful coexistence.
Jayyusi, S.	Anthology	1996	754	\$22.00	\$17.50	Modern Palestinian literature.
Khalidi, W.	Before their Diaspora	1991	351	\$29.00	\$24.95	Illustrated history of Palestine from 1876-1948.

Authors	Publication	Year	Pgs	List	AMEU	Summary
Koestler, A.	The Thirteenth Tribe	1976	255	\$15.00	\$11.50	The Khaza ancestry of Jews who settled Israel.
Khalidi, W.	Ownership of the US Embassy Site in Jer.	2000	63	\$5.00	\$4.50	Documents site as confiscated refugee property.
Mallison, W. T. & S.	Palestine Problem in Inter. Law	1986	564	\$49.50	\$19.50	An authoritative work; few copies available.
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.
Mendenhall, G.	Ancient Israel's Faith & History	2001	267	\$29.95	\$28.50	Author challenges misuse of biblical history.
Morris, B.	Birth of the Palestinian refugee problem	1987	380	\$25.95	\$19.95	Pivotal work on expulsion of Palestinians, 1947-49.
Morris, B.	Righteous Victims	2000	751	\$40.00	\$27.50	Traces Arab-Zionist conflict from 1881-1999.
Neff, D.	Warriors at Suez	1981	480	\$9.95	\$4.00	Eisenhower takes US into Middle East in 1967.
Neff, D.	Warriors for Jerusalem	1987	384	\$9.95	\$4.00	The six days that changed the Middle East in 1967.
Neff, D.	Warriors Against Israel	1988	371	\$19.95	\$6.00	How Israel became America's ally in 1973.
Novick, P.	The Holocaust in American Life	1999	380	\$27.00	\$21.95	How Holocaust influences US support of Israel.
Prior, M.	The Bible and Colonialism	1997	342	\$28.50	\$27.50	A moral critique by author of December 2000 Link.
Prior, M., ed.	They Came and They Saw	2000	302	\$22.00	\$19.50	Western Christian experiences in the Holy Land.
Prior, M.	Zionism and the State of Israel	1999	304	\$75.00	\$59.50	A moral inquiry.
Raheb & 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	\$7.95	Personal account of the Lydda Death March.
Rubenbery, C.	Palestinian Women	2001	318	\$59.95	\$49.95	"Groundbreaking investigation."--Hisham Sharabi.
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	\$17.95	\$14.95	Israeli historian reevaluates traditional Israeli history.
Simons, G.	Imposing Economic Sanctions	1999	212	\$19.95	\$9.95	A legal remedy vs. a genocidal tool.
Suleiman, M., ed.	Arabs in America	2000	360	\$22.95	\$19.95	21 scholars report on Arabs of North America.
Thomas, G.	Gideon's Spies	1999	354	\$25.95	\$21.50	The secret history of Israel's Mossad.
Thompson, T.	The Mythic Past	1999	412	\$17.50	\$16.50	Literary myth is basis of biblical land claims.
Wagner, D.	Dying in the Land of Promise	2001	300	\$18.95	\$17.95	Palestinian Christianity from Pentecost to present.
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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- ▶ 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.**
- ▶ Masri, M., **Children of Shatila** (1999, 58 minutes). The children 17 years after the massacre. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$39.50.**
- ▶ Masri, M., **Hanan Ashrawi: A Woman of Her Time** (1995, 51 minutes). One of Palestine's most articulate representatives shows that Israel's occupation is far from over – and far from benign. List: \$65.00; **AMEU: \$35.00.**
- ▶ 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.**
- ▶ Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (1990, 38 minutes). A rare collection of Palestinian dresses with accessories modeled against the background of Palestinian music, with commentary tracing the designs back to Canaanite times. List: \$50.00; **AMEU: \$12.50.**
- ▶ Studio 52 Production, **Checkpoint: The Palestinians After Oslo** (1997, 58 minutes). Documents the post-Oslo situation with off-beat humor and historical insights provided by Palestinian and Israeli activists like Naseer Arad and Hanan Ashrawi. **AMEU: \$27.00.**

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