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The tenth issue of *Just Voices* focuses on Israel/Palestine. We continue to oppose Israeli military crimes against humanity, the imprisonment of Palestinian children and other civilians without charge, the ever rising number of house demolitions, and racial discrimination and incitement to violence by the far-right Israeli government. It is now Ramadan and while the Middle East undergoes another scorching summer many Palestinians have been left without water as Israel cut supplies in the West Bank. We witness all this and respond with greater resolve to speak out, take action, and do all we can as Jews and Israeli Australians to make change and empower global allies.

That is why in May we took part in a global week of action and education about the Jewish National Fund (JNF), entitled *Cultivating Justice*. As a central vehicle of the Zionist movement, both at its inception and today, the Jewish National Fund is responsible for land theft, environmental degradation, and the destruction of villages and communities. Add your voice to our ongoing campaign and learn more about the JNF at [whatsbehindjnf.org](http://whatsbehindjnf.org). And read on to see the JNF’s projected landscape from a Palestinian point of view, in Umar al-Ghubari’s piece.

Some of these questions were to be discussed at Limmud Oz this month in a session organised by Sivan Barak and Bassam Dally, though the conversation was shut down by the event organisers. Our statement about the disinvitation explained: “Barring people from a conference because they promote a strategy of non-violence as a response to decades of violence is extremely counter-productive. Such censorship limits the already miniscule number of Palestinian voices that mainstream Jews hear. It is also out of step with the increasing support at home and worldwide from Jews themselves.” Read the full statement at [ajds.org.au/2016/06/limmudoz/](http://ajds.org.au/2016/06/limmudoz/). If you attended Limmud, I invite you to tell us about the reflection of Israel/Palestine there. We are convinced there are progressive voices to be heard and many who will listen. Looking forward to hearing from you and seeing you at an AJDS event soon,  
Keren Rubinstein, AJDS Content Editor



Remnants of the Palestinian village, Umm Burj. Found at <http://www.zochrot.org/en/booklet/49836>.

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## **49 Years of control without Human rights of the Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem - What has changed?**

By The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI)

At first glance, it may seem that the condition of the Palestinians who live in the territories occupied by Israel in June 1967 has changed little, despite the passing decades. Yesterday's headlines are the same as today's: confrontations, arrests, military rule, terror attacks, house demolitions, land confiscation. It's easy to gain the impression that there is nothing new under the scorching sun of the Middle East.

However, closer scrutiny reveals new paths and markings on the familiar map. New headlines have been added throughout the years: Settlements and outposts. The Palestinian Authority. The Disengagement from Gaza. Prohibited roads. Walls and fences. Checkpoints and permits.

Israeli control of the Territories changes over time, assuming and abandoning new forms. After almost three decades of exclusive Israeli rule, the Palestinian Authority was established. A decade later, Hamas consolidated its control of the Gaza Strip. Yet for all these changes, Israeli rule over the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean remains the most influential force shaping the everyday lives of all those who live in this area. Israel's power imposes a heavy responsibility.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) is publishing this document at the beginning of the 50th year of occupation. The paper

outlines the changes that have transformed the Territories into a divided and dissected area. The different degrees and forms of Israeli control that apply in this area create systemic violation of the basic human rights of millions of people. Control without human rights – for 49 years.

### **The Fragmentation of the Territories**

We tend to think of the "Territories" as a distinct area or entity. However, over the five decades since 1967, a dramatic process of division has occurred in the area, causing grave damage to Palestinian residents on the individual, community, and national levels:

East Jerusalem was annexed officially by Israel in June 1967, in violation of international law and without granting full rights to the residents of the city. The Israeli policy that developed isolated and devastated East Jerusalem, which had previously functioned as an economic, political, social, and religious power base.

In addition to the annexation, which created a legal separation between East Jerusalem and the West Bank, the two areas were physically divided a decade ago with the construction of the Separation Barrier. The route of the concrete wall divides communities and disrupts the natural connection between the Palestinian population in and around Jerusalem.

The gradual expansion of the settlements, together with the roads leading to settlements and outposts, have over the years created new and large areas in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in which Palestinian movement or

residence is limited, restricted or prohibited, while Israeli citizens enjoy access to the same areas. This too is carried out in violation of international law.

Closed areas in the West Bank and Jerusalem from which Palestinians are excluded have also been created by declaring areas firing zones for training exercises, closed military zones, archaeological sites, and national parks. These measures force Palestinian communities to live under a regime of prohibitions that prevents normal life and leads to the forced or coercive eviction of families and communities.

The Oslo Agreements led to a significant change with the division of the West Bank into Areas A, B, and C, and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The division was made along artificial geographical lines that separate areas that are actually closely connected, such as between the major cities and their satellite villages. Its negative ramifications are strongly evident in the city of Hebron, where part of the city is under Palestinian control and the other part under Israeli control. Residents of the Jordan Valley also suffer from the serious consequences of Israel's policy of separating the area from the remainder of the West Bank. The most extreme form of separation exists in the Gaza Strip. (The unique situation that was created in Gaza is briefly addressed at the end of this document.)

The establishment of the Palestinian Authority changed the scope and nature of the powers exercised by the Israeli authorities, and particularly by the military. However, the Palestinian Authority's power is limited, and



even in the areas where it operates, a great degree of control continues to rest with the Israeli military commander.

The construction of the Separation Barrier inside the Territories, which began in the early 2000s, led to additional dissection of the area. The barrier created isolated Palestinian enclaves and facilitated the expansion of the settlements in the name of security. While Israelis are allowed to cross through it freely, the checkpoints and gates established along the barrier/fence restrict or prohibit passage for Palestinians, despite the fact that they are travelling within the Territories (rather than entering into Israel). A "seam zone" has been created to the west of the barrier and to the east of the Green Line in which Israelis and foreign citizens can move freely, whereas access by Palestinians for the purpose of residency or farming is restricted and complicated. Even Palestinians who have lived in this area all their lives are forced to cope with a complex bureaucracy of permits and to face humiliation and violence.

The regimenting of movement of Palestinians across the seam lines between these different areas is a key preoccupation of the military, the Israel Security Agency, the police, the Interior Ministry, and additional authorities. Technological advances have created "sophisticated" tools for policing that are implemented inside the West Bank, at the entrances to settlements, between the barrier and the Green Line, along the dividing line between East and West Jerusalem, between Jerusalem and the West Bank, and between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and Israel. Over the years, the sanctions and periods of imprisonment imposed on those found without the appropriate permits have grown stricter, as have the penalties imposed on those who transport, house or provide them with accommodation.

This regimentation is intensified during periods of escalation. In some cases, new steps introduced during such periods remain in force even after the situation has calmed. An example of this is the temporary order amending the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law. Adopted at the height of the second intifada with the goal of reducing the scope of family unification across the Green Line, this order has since been renewed on an annual basis. The result is that thousands of Palestinians living in Israel and in East Jerusalem have been transformed into illegal aliens or have become dependent on permits from Israel in order to move and to reside in their homes.

The fragmentation of the Territories and the accompanying regimentation have serious ramifications for the freedom of

movement of Palestinians and for a long series of rights that depend on the ability to move, including the right to family life, health, and education. The Palestinian economy and trade are dependent on daily decisions by military commanders who determine when and how goods and people are permitted to pass, whether restrictions will be imposed on the development of entire industrial sectors, and so forth. The various prohibitions imposed by the military have expanded the circle of poverty and deprivation in the Territories.

### **Creeping Annexation**

Full Israeli military rule in Area C, which accounts for some 60 percent of the West Bank, together with the imposition of Israeli law in East Jerusalem, have created distinct areas in which Palestinians and Israelis live under direct Israeli rule. Over the years, diverse policy tools have been developed in order to intensify Israeli control of these areas, thereby facilitating the pushing out of Palestinians from areas in which Israel is interested and into areas that Israel does not wish to rule or annex.

The pushing out of Palestinians from various parts of the West Bank and Jerusalem has been achieved mainly by means of a policy based on a stubborn refusal to promote planning and development; to connect Palestinian communities and neighbourhoods to the water grid; to permit access to farmland, develop industrial zones, and so forth. The restrictions are accompanied by harassment: demolition of homes built without a permit, confiscation of

equipment, sealing of wells, blocking of roads, and heightened military and police presence.

The military regime in the West Bank has developed a legal construction of one rule, two legal systems – one system for Palestinians and the other for settlers - which enable the actions outlined above. In East Jerusalem, Israeli law imposed on the area permits similar measures that limit and harm Palestinians. At the same time, these same authorities apply planning laws in Area C and in East Jerusalem that facilitate the development and flourishing of settlements, neighbourhoods, and agricultural areas for the benefit of the Israeli population.

Over the past decade, efforts to reinforce Israeli control of Area C and the affinity between the area and Israel have intensified. The steps taken to this end are often referred to as creeping annexation, de facto annexation, or "legal annexation." A committee established on the government's initiative and headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Edmund Levy, determined that the West Bank is not an occupied area, and accordingly the settlements are legal. The committee recommended policies for approving and regulating construction in the Israeli settlements and outposts. In addition, the Knesset and government have discussed several proposals to impose Israeli law directly on settlers, and the justice minister recently announced the formation of a joint team of the Justice Ministry and the Defence Ministry to discuss this issue. Members of Knesset have tabled bills applying specific laws that do not currently apply fully beyond

the Green Line, including the planning and building laws, the youth labour law, and the Women's Employment Law.

These steps toward annexation are sometimes facilitated by Israeli bodies established in the West Bank to mirror Israeli institutions. Although they are theoretically under the authority of the military commander, these institutions effectively function independently. For example, the declaration of Ariel College as a university was made contrary to the opinion in of the Council for Higher Education in Israel, by means of the "Council for Higher Education – Judea and Samaria," a body that is formally subject to the authority of the military commander. In most cases, such steps are justified in terms of a desire to improve the settlers' lives and ensure their rights, supposedly without any connection to the Palestinian population and with no implications over their lives. In reality, there is an unbreakable connection between the two. The realization of Israel's interests in areas earmarked for annexation inevitably causes grave damage to the human rights of Palestinians. The establishment of a new settlement or the expansion of an existing one may lead to the confiscation of land through an official proceeding or to the effective denial of access by Palestinians to farmland and local natural resources; the closure of the main entrance to a Palestinian village, forcing residents to use side roads; intensified military presence, frequent clashes with the army and an increase in military raids and detentions; acts of violence by settlers against

Palestinians and their property; and so forth.

In some instances, steps taken to strengthen Israeli law beyond the Green Line have led to an improvement in Palestinians' rights. A key example of this is the ruling granted by an extended bench of the High Court of Justice establishing that Israeli labour laws that apply to the settlements also apply to Palestinian workers employed on the settlements, who are entitled to claim their rights from Israeli employers. The number of examples of this kind is limited, since changes to Israeli policy do not seek to narrow the gap between the two legal systems.

### **Occupation and Annexation – Without Human Rights**

On the formal level, Israel operates in the West Bank in accordance with international humanitarian law applying to an area occupied in wartime. These rules are defined as "temporary belligerent occupation," and seek to ensure that the residents of the occupied area can continue their routine lives while under temporary military occupation, and to grant them the protection of basic human rights given the absence of such protection under state law.

The Israeli authorities responsible for implementing these rules have failed to do so. They do not observe many of the basic obligations established in the laws of occupation, and violate the prohibition in the law against the transfer of residents of the occupying power to the occupied area. Israel uses the force granted to it in accordance with the laws of occupation in order to extend its ostensibly temporary control, and

to create hardships for Palestinian living in areas it wishes to annex – now or in the future.

Israel also exploits the natural resources of the occupied areas to the benefit of the Israeli population on both sides of the Green Line. Once again, this is prohibited in accordance with international humanitarian law. It does so while restricting the Palestinians' use of the same resources. For example, Israeli companies operate quarries in the Territories and gain profits therefrom, whereas the military closes quarries operated by Palestinians. Palestinian access to water sources, such as cisterns, wells, and the mountain aquifer, is limited, whereas Israel exploits these sources both for the settlements and for communities inside Israel.

In summary, Israel exploits the legal framework of the rules of occupation in the West Bank in order to exercise control over the population and the area. It does so without accepting the responsibility inherent in these laws and while systematically violating human rights.

Similarly, in East Jerusalem the framework of Israeli law is used to exercise control over the population and the area, without accepting the responsibility inherent in law, and while systematically violating human rights.

In theory, the application of Israeli law in East Jerusalem and the granting of Israeli identity cards to Palestinian residents might have ensured that they enjoy rights and liberties guaranteed by the laws of the State of Israel that are not included in the laws of occupation. However, the policy that has developed toward East Jerusalem

is similar, though not identical, to the treatment of the Palestinians who live under military occupation in the West Bank. The Palestinians neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem are neglected in every aspect of life and suffer from poor infrastructures, a failing education system, and a lack of development. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem are forced to confront an often-hostile bureaucracy and severe police violence.

The Jerusalem neighbourhoods that have been left on the other side of the Separation Barrier, on the seam line between Jerusalem and the West Bank, provide the most extreme example of the failure of annexation. Although these areas are ostensibly subject to full Israeli sovereignty, the Israeli authorities have abandoned any responsibility for their residents and created a new no man's land in which there is no municipality, police, or any other authority.

The Territories are currently subject to a hybrid condition of "occunexation" – a combination of occupation and annexation. Despite the differences between the various types of control in different areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Israeli control – in all its forms and variants – is not accompanied by the responsibility incumbent on those who hold power. For 49 years, this control has prevented the Palestinian residents, as individuals and as a collective, from realizing their basic rights.

### **The Gaza Strip**

The scope and depth of Israel's control of the Gaza Strip have changed over the years. Since the Disengagement in 2005, Israel no

longer maintains physical control inside the Gaza Strip. However, it continues to exercise control in various areas, particularly through the control of the passage of people and goods; airspace and maritime space; the Population Registry; and the customs system.

Israel's control of the borders of the Gaza Strip causes extreme harm to the basic human rights and liberties of over one million residents of the area, and has a significant impact on the economic situation and the poverty levels suffered in Gaza.

While the legal status of the Gaza Strip is the subject of impassioned debate, no-one disagrees that Israel's control has a broad-based impact on the area. This control creates responsibility – a responsibility that Israel is currently shirking by imposing a policy based on the extreme isolation of the Gaza Strip.

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Originally published at <http://www.acri.org.il/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/49years2016-en.pdf>

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### **Attempts at “Fighting for co-existence” at Limmud Oz 2016**

Following is an edited transcript of an ad-libbed talk with Sivan Barak at Limmud Oz and the ensuing Q&A, June 26, 2016. The session was originally meant to include Bassam Dally, who was disinvited. Go to [ajds.org.au/2016/06/limmudoz/](http://ajds.org.au/2016/06/limmudoz/) to read the AJDS statement about Dally's disinvitation.

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My name is Sivan Barak, I'm from Melbourne. I know some of you,

not all of you. This session was going to be a conversation with a Palestinian person who lives in Australia, in Adelaide, his name is Bassam Dally. We're not very good friends, but have come across each other a few times over the past few years. We emailed each other and thought about having a conversation, and I explained what Limmud Oz is. He'd not heard about it but thought it was a really interesting idea. He's all about ideas.

So we submitted, and thought about what we'd discuss as two people who have a lot of agreement but also a lot of disagreement. We wanted to just sit and have the conversation with the people around us, because we don't get a lot of opportunities to do that, certainly not here. A lot of it is one person in front of a screen, debating and wordsmithing the debates, and looking up facts and backing them up. To have a relaxed conversation with each other and be comfortable with our own views to be able to have this kind of conversation. He agreed to do this.

Our proposal was accepted. We sent in our bios, they were uploaded to the event website, then a few days later we received an email saying that unfortunately Bassam was disinvited because of his public political stance. And that it was against the submission policies of Limmud Oz. When you submit to present at Limmud Oz there is a hyperlink with terms and conditions – and I'm sure you all always click on those hyperlinks and read them thoroughly, as I do. Well We didn't, just assuming that we are law abiding citizens and we don't have to do that. Some of his public stances are unacceptable in

this privately run organization and therefore he was disinvited. I was allowed to continue with my session, while he wasn't, though in that same email he was offered to attend the conference at a concession rate. And he did plan to fly here from Adelaide and attend, having already arranged his academic schedule, but decided not to in the last minute.

He did say to me that I should go ahead, and gave me names of 'appropriate' Palestinians that could pass the terms and conditions and that I should contact them and ask them to participate. I didn't feel very comfortable doing that, as an Israeli person, to pick my opponent, I didn't think that was the right role for me.



*Sivan Barak at Limmud Oz 2016*

Bassam and I will have this conversation when he next comes down to Melbourne, and we'll forward it. So if anyone is interested, it will be available.

By the way, this is Bassam's chair [empty chair].

What we planned was actually not to plan it, but to prepare difficult questions for each other, questions that are usually asked of one's opposition. But we wanted to have this amongst people who are not so opposing of each other but still have huge disagreements about certain serious issues. And so we had planned to prepare the questions and do the hard talk. But because he's not here I can't really ask those questions.

He did prepare something that I could read out, but I feel that that wouldn't be a conversation, nor a dialogue, nor would I learn from it.

From the day I formed myself as a thinking being, having conversations was about having my own opinions and relying on my common sense, my sense of right and wrong, my capacity to listen, learn, and find myself sometimes wrong, and find myself sometimes arguing to change someone's opinions. It's confronting and difficult but it's a lost art. I think we don't do that very much anymore. We are always so terrified of conflict, and not knowing enough, and not being in our zone of specialised information.

I'm not an academic, so I can't cite endless treaties and histories. But I do know that since I came from Israel back to Australia (I came back 15 years ago, after having lived in Israel for 15 years and growing up in Israel) it was only here, for the first time, that I actually met Palestinians, and it was only here that I started actually hearing a narrative different to my own. It was only here that I started rethinking my own narrative and getting into robust discussions. And they have been really robust, with my Palestinian friends, who within their own groups have huge debate. We think we're special, but we're not. Every community has this going on, and in every community there are people struggling to sound their voice and to be heard and not to be frightened away by conflict, experts, and really strong language of victimhood.

The kinds of conversations we need to have both in Israel and here amongst our communities, are the ones that shift the fear of

the other, and shift the completely separate nature of the two narratives that are living side by side.

This is not unique to Israel or Palestine. It's everywhere. We're just not having conversations. And regarding the idea of being tolerant to each other as an Israeli in Australia, I feel sometimes that everyone's talking so quietly and it's not heated, and anyone who's lived in Israel understands that there's a lot more hand gesturing and lot less personal space in which to engage. This, here, is so civil and lovely and polite, but we need to engage with less fear and more openness.

After Bassam was disinvited people started commenting on social media, and within the so-called Left, saying that they don't support disinviting Bassam, because we think it's okay to host this kind of discussion, we can withstand it. But, we don't agree with a lot of what you're saying, though we support your right to say it. None of these people have ever had a conversation with me, nor have any of them ever had a conversation with Bassam, so how would anyone know if they agree with us or not, unless we have these kinds of conversations?

People said they'll come to support the session, because they believe in creating opportunities for speech. A lot of them are not here. maybe that's because its 9:30 on Sunday morning. but I wonder how many people have genuinely come here to have a discussion, haven't made up their minds, or are sure that they know 100% how they feel about the Israeli Palestinian coexistence question? Is it possible? It's a question that I think about a lot. Does anyone

here have anything to learn about this, do we know everything? I find that I learn something every single day. Not because I'm not strong willed or opinionated, just ask my mother. I don't lack capacity to argue, I'm not uninformed, but I learn all the time.

Every Friday night I leave work and drive from Carnegie up to Broadmeadows to the MITA Detention Centre. I sit for four hours with detainees and asylum seekers. There's a group of us and we welcome the Sabbath there. Interestingly enough, there are two Sudanese asylum seekers there that spent a substantial amount of time trying to seek asylum in Israel and so a lot of them know a few words in Hebrew. One of those Friday nights was the first night of Passover, so they said, bring some matzah with you. So there I was, at the top end of Sydney Road, with lots of food, dipping matzah into some hummus, the guys speaking to each other in *Fusha*... I thought that that was astonishing and surreal. These are the conversations that actually challenge me, and teach me a lot. That happens to me all the time when I talk to Palestinians.

Sometimes it's really disappointing, sometimes it pisses me off no end, because often I don't agree with them, but it informs me about how I feel, and if I'm not present in those discussions I am not informed enough to make a decision about things. So that's my introduction... But what I would like to hear from people, is, do you have questions you want to ask of each other, or of me?

*Q. Can you tell me what it is that Bassam said that was cause to be disinvited?*

Well I'm not friends with Bassam personally, and I don't hang out with him. I guess the terms and conditions relate to public statements he's made. It would be really good if Bassam was here to explain it himself. I feel it would be like an Australian white person answering for an Indigenous person who was disinvited from a discussion about our joined history. It's completely inappropriate for me to speak as an Israeli about Bassam and his opinions.

This session was meant to cover a lot of topics, not one particular thing. I'm not really sure what his views are on a whole range of things that are important to me, such as refugees, same sex marriage, religion, Israel, the solution. The idea for the session started when we realised we're both born in 1964, have a lot of the same childhood memories, both grew up in Israel, both speak Hebrew and have a lot in common, as you would, with music, and

***"It's completely inappropriate for me to speak as an Israeli about Bassam and his opinions."***

different kinds of life experience. So that was where we'd start, with our commonalities, and find out more. I would like to know a lot more about his views.

*Q. Given the radical opinions that were disallowed, I can always Google him and find out what he says. Other than Google, what can I do?*

Unfortunately, a Google search is very shallow and superficial. when we do have our conversation, I'll invite you, if you're interested, and we'll put it online so it's available for people to hear. But that's the

problem with searching for people and finding out what people think and feel through Google and online archives. They don't necessarily represent the whole scope of what a person thinks. I can't imagine that if anyone googled me they'd know anything about how I feel about particular things.

...I grew up on a kibbutz called Nahal Oz, and it's right on the border of Gaza, and in the years when I grew up, the border was open, and on hot days my parents and I would go to the beach, which was down the road in Gaza, safely. I kind of grew up around Palestinians coming to visit us, and we went to visit them. Beyond that I didn't know very much... I finished high-school here and then returned to Israel. I did the army and lived in lots of different places, first on kibbutz and later in Tel Aviv.

It was only during the last part of my army service that I actually met a Palestinian person, who was my age. We met in a joint theatre group in the neighbourhood. It wasn't in the context of demonstrations. His name was Mustafa. He was pretty much the only Palestinian I knew, and at that time we'd just have tea at his house, or a coffee at our house. It didn't shift a huge amount for me, except that I had met a Palestinian. It was really only here that I got to know Palestinians. And I didn't meet them for the purpose of doing so. I was invited to be part of a group discussion. The first thing that came to my mind, and this is something that maybe people who grew up in Israel would understand, was a concern about body smell. Because the only Palestinians I had seen in Tel Aviv were labourers, working on

building sites, where they would stay and live, so had no access to showers. I could walk past and smell them. And so when I first met Palestinians I was worried about getting too close because I thought about that. I also wondered whether they'd be violent, or whether they would hate me.

First time I met another Palestinian, who was a friend of a friend, and we were waiting for the common friend, but we'd never met and were sitting in a church, talking about religion or something, waiting for guests. He introduced himself and I introduced myself, and he said, oh you're Israeli... You're a Zionist. And I said – Are you a terrorist? And he looked at me, and said, why would you say that? And I said, why would you start like that? You don't even know me. I was getting a grasp on how I frame myself, how I feel about talking to Palestinians.

I started understanding that there is huge array and difference within the Palestinian community. Not just in their views on Palestine but also in the way that they live. Some of them are bad drivers and what have you. I guess the shift created in me was seeing the differences and the humanity in the other person. And that it's okay for me to not like all Palestinians, and to disagree with some of them.

It made me question how I come with so much prejudice to almost every type of encounter. Even coming here, I was thinking about who hates me, who's come here to prove me wrong, who'd disapprove of everything this woman is saying.

*Q. What is the nature of the meetings you started going to, were they political meetings?*

There was an art exhibition I went to, a poetry reading, a whole range of things. Not necessarily political.

*Q. If Israeli children truly never engage with Palestinian children, how plausible is it that there will ever be coexistence?*

That's really challenging. It's not just every Jewish Israeli that doesn't meet a Palestinian, but also every Palestinian child will never meet an Israeli, except under very narrow circumstances. I first met Palestinians when I was in the army. It was in the West Bank in an army post. How could I possibly know anything about the other and how could they possibly know anything about me? That's the thing. We need to have these kinds of conversations, we need to meet, and I imagine, and I'm not saying this in a disparaging way, that most of you didn't come to hear me speak, but to hear Bassam, and that's great. Because I think if Bassam was coming, or if we had a session outside of Limmud, we would get triple the number of people, because people want to hear and it's okay. There's nothing wrong with listening to each other, nothing will happen to us, it won't make us weaker. My resolve and opinions won't completely change. I might learn something, but that's about it.

*Q. I met Bassam at Womadelaide, when he was on a stand for a Palestinian organisation in Adelaide that he's active in. Bassam is Israeli born and I think the problem is that when we think of Israel we think of Jews but 20% of Israelis are not Jewish and I'm very sad that we are denied the opportunity to hear an Israeli voice, a different Israeli voice. I*

*feel it's really important that we hear all Israeli voices and I think we're all diminished by what's happened here today.*

*Q. Is he Israeli or Palestinian?*

He's Israeli Palestinian.

*Q. Isn't it the same thing?*

Not necessarily. He was born just north of Haifa, and grew up in Haifa, went to Haifa university for his first degree. In Hebrew we'd call him an Israeli Arab, but he's an Israeli Palestinian.

*Q. Seems like there's been a boycott of your efforts, which is a systemic thing... What would be the one question that you would want to ask the person that would have been sitting in that chair? What was the first question that sprung to mind?*

What I was going to ask him? I was thinking about whether I should reveal that...

*Q. For our benefit. What would have been the first question. Secondly, with the work that you do, you're working within systems, but the system restricts your ability to pursue what you're passionate about. What is it that the system needs to review, apart from its own power base, in order for things to move forward for better, healthier interaction between communities?*

I would have begun by seeking his opinion on a project that I worked on here in Melbourne that started in 2008 with a group of volunteers.

First, some background: during the War of Independence, the Iraqi army was situated in Haifa and the local Arab citizens that fled hid behind it. 500 of the citizens of Haifa retreated with the Iraqi army. These were mostly older people women and children. They retreated to Baghdad, and of course never came back.

That community grew to 30,000 and then the Iraq war broke out, the Gulf War, and Palestinian Iraqis fled as well, since the bombs were not discerning. But they couldn't go anywhere, not to Jordan, Turkey, Iran or Syria, so they got stuck in camps on the border between Syria and Iraq. Just the Palestinians.

In 2008 a group of us applied for resettlement to Australia on behalf of Palestinians living in those tents along the border. Bypassing the system, we downloaded a form, translated it into Arabic, sent it to them, applied on their behalf and we were successful in resettling at first 150 people and later 200 more. Resettling Palestinians to Australia, which means they were getting citizenship.

There were Israelis and Palestinians involved in this group of volunteers. Throughout the project I know that there were quite a few Palestinians living in the diaspora who were very critical of us doing that, of offering resettlement and citizenship for Palestinians, that this would do a disservice to their cause.

We are still in contact with many of the people who resettled in Melbourne, and I asked them how they felt about it. These are Palestinian Iraqis who have been basically displaced since before 1948, who have had no citizenship for over 60 years. I said, how do you feel about that? They said, you know what? What about we swap? We've done 60 years, how about they go there and we'll just sit here and rest in the suburbs. That's something that I feel that I can actually ask today. I've earned my right to ask that of a Palestinian. That's not an easy question. Because they have huge debate

within their community about this. But that would be something I would consider asking, especially because Bassam is part of a group of Palestinians who immigrated here; they didn't flee, but migrated here for academic reasons.

*Q. I lived in Israel for 4 years and had very much the same kind of experience as you. I've had a Palestinian student in the same dormitory who's had to leave because other Israelis didn't want them there. But I'll skip over that experience. What strikes me is the similarity to South Africa and the United States, where I've lived and worked. A continuing divide between African Americans and American Whites, and for all of the liberalism there's still an incredible psychological gap and fear. And it was only when I began to work with African Americans that I really began to transform, and they transformed as well. So we need to talk. There are things you agree or disagree on, there are people who are jerks, and it's clear there are people who are not jerks. It seems what's happened a few times now here in Melbourne, is that there's such a need for control and management based on stereotyping. And I hate to say it, but the only acceptable Negroes are tame Negroes, or niggers, and I'm really using that term advisedly, but that's the kind of attitude that I feel is completely out of date.*

On that note, this Friday, I was driving from Carnegie to Broadmeadows, I took with me a Sudanese man who has been released into community detention and is living in Keysborough. He's a Sudanese Muslim, who's spent some time seeking asylum in Israel, was sent back to Sudan, and made his way here. He was in MITA for 34 months and was released two

weeks ago into community detention. So we're driving. It's an hour and a half of intense conversation in traffic. This time, we're joined by my 17-year-old nephew, visiting from San Francisco over his summer break. He goes not to a Jewish school but to a state school there, and has a lot of friends who are asylum seekers from Arab countries. So the two boys, as boys do, were bonding, as I was driving, and my Sudanese friend said to him, that as they're closing down detention centres around Australia, he came down from Darwin with a whole bunch of others. One of them, Ahmad, who's just turned 20, comes from a region called Ahwaz, which I'd never heard of until I went to Broadmeadows. It is a small region in the south of Iran (Palestinians say that Ahwazis are even more oppressed than they are). So he says that the Sudanese boys, who've taken him under their wing, call him Ahmad the Nigger. And my nephew says, yeah, we say that about each other all the time.

So there's a conversation between this young Jewish American boy and a Sudanese refugee, about niggers, in my car headed to Broadmeadows or Sydney Road, which my parents call the Gaza Strip, and I'm just thinking, this is amazing. It's a really great learning experience. When I hear the N word I cringe, but only because I know it's not politically correct, it's inappropriate, it's got a history. But that's all theoretical to me. I was driving the car and could have told them, you can't use that word in my car. But they've reappropriated the word, and they're using it, and who am I to tell them not to.

*Q. Is there something similar to Limmud Oz but for Palestinians, with debate and exploring and learning about Israel? Or Israelis? ... If I compare sizes, Israel and the Jewish people are small, and there's a lot of Arab and Muslim countries. I don't know if they have the same conversations, if they think about, let's stop the violence, let's stop educating the children to hate, and not to be a shahid?*

I understand what you're saying, and I'm no expert on what Palestinian people do within their communities. I have been to conversations, it's a very small community in Australia. I think there are a lot more supporters who are non-Palestinian than there are Palestinians in Australia. Maybe 4000 5000, of whom 350 are people we brought through, and a lot of the people who have resettled here are completely disinterested in engaging in any level of politics. They are so scarred from living it that they just want to live quietly and never engage. But it's important that we have these kinds of conversations because in my experience most of the times I've had conversations and participated in community events in which there are Palestinian people, people come up to me afterwards and say, are you Israeli? Yes. Were you in the army? Yes. I've never met anyone who's done that. Then we started having a conversation, and obviously I don't necessarily want to have conversations with all of them, but these opportunities happen when you engage.

We call ourselves tolerant, and aspire to that, but what we are doing is disengaging. Being tolerant today is allowing someone to sit next to us, as on Q&A, people with

very opposing views, but we let each other talk in a very civil way, all within the Australian civil engagement. But we don't actually engage. We are being intolerant, waiting for an opportunity to say our thing, to negate what they're saying, and it's not actively listening and hearing the other person, knowing that you don't actually hold absolute truth and you can learn from interaction with anyone. In many ways we're intolerant, indifferent. Not engaging in the terms of what tolerance was originally, which is learning from each other and engaging in conflicting opinions, sometimes in a scary way, sometime with people who have been preaching hate to their children. Those are the people you should have a conversation with.

*Q. When your neighbour calls for the obliteration of all Jews, who's to talk to? And it's all good to have a cup a coffee and see their point, but does it work the other way too? When 360 million people all around you don't want you there, who's to talk to?*

*Q. That was my question too. Who comes to this dialogue? Where do you find them? Do you really want to make a first step, a little one, a drop in this ocean of enemies surrounding us?*

That's why I decided to do this. When Bassam was disinvited I was offered a chance to have a session and I thought, what am I going to do? It was just after Lag Ba'omer, and I thought maybe I'll talk about cats in Israel. Maybe that won't be a problem here, for the dialogue. That's not going to challenge anyone. Then I thought of bringing the Greens representative of Melbourne Ports to come and speak here, who agreed, but we'd missed the deadline.

The way to have these kinds of dialogues is to initiate them and come to them. Even if what's being said is really challenging. Because you are voicing genuine fear and a reality. It is hard.

*Q. Are there any Palestinians here? There should be.*

No, they were disinvited!

...I think there is a shift here, as in Israel. There's a shift everywhere. Every time I've participated in forums with Palestinians and Israelis and Jews spoke together, there's been this almost roadkill

fascination with the Palestinian there, because we don't actually engage, and it's important to do it. To bring a token Palestinian or to bring my Palestinian buddies to sit here and mingle with the Jews is... well it's important to do, but this is not the place to do it. I don't think so. Not for many reasons. Perhaps because of Ramadan, or because it's early on Sunday morning, or a sense of not being welcome.

*Q. But it's important. Early on Sunday morning or not...*

For a Palestinian person to come here, when they're one of the people disinvited because of their personal opinions. It's not dialogue here. This is a festival of Jewish ideas. This is not a place for dialogue. Limmud is not set up for as a framework for dialogue. Only one that is very superficial. It needs to be had in a safe place and there's definitely a desire for it but it's got to be organised.

—

## 6 myths of the Left, by Idan Landau



*The Social Protests in Tel-Aviv, 27 August 2011.*

Translated by Moriel Rochman-Zecher

The following analysis of the Left by Idan Landau is drawn from the Israeli context in which he finds himself, though as Moriel Rochman-Zecher points out, having translated it for his blog, The Leftern Wall, it is applicable elsewhere.

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You can relax: This is not another fiery tirade against about “the problem with the Left.” Even during the periods in which this blog was more active, “the problem with the Left” didn't concern it. From my perspective, the major problem with/for the

Left has been and remains the nationalistic-capitalistic regime of privileges in Israel. Denunciation and public crucifixion of “traitors to the cause” does not constitute a political agenda, regardless of the spiritual needs it may satisfy.

My goal in this piece, as such, is not to wag my finger at anyone; not to dictate, and not to admonish. My goal is more modest: to try to free the imaginations (and through them, the actions) of those on the Left who are chained by certain ways of thinking, among them—myself. Therefore, these ideas are directed not only toward you, but also toward me. In the practice of engaging in politics, and more so, in the practice of struggle, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. It is easy to forget what is more important and what is less. What we want to work and what actually works. It can be said that I tried to answer [the Israeli rock band] Mashina's piercing question, “Why should I deal with politics now?”, in a non-polemical manner, even as answers [to Mashina's question] will be happily received. Experience shows that few will budge from their opinions.

And also this: I did not try to sew despair, or to inspire hope. These will be, at the most, by-products of the analysis.

And so, the six myths that I will present here are aimed at the beliefs and behaviours of — let's say cautiously — certain segments of the political Left in Israel, without committing to a singular meaning of “Left.” Toward those who are convinced that in order to fulfil the Left's political goals...

*1. “We need to achieve a political majority.”*

This is the most basic and most damaging myth. There is no basis for the claim that “only a camp that turns into a political majority can fulfil its goals.” Buried within this naive belief, taken directly from seventh grade citizenship textbooks, is a paradox: A camp cannot become a political majority as long as it cannot present to the public achievements that will convince them that it is worth voting for this camp. But if its impossible to achieve anything without a majority, then how is it possible to obtain a majority?

In practice, it is very much possible to achieve without a majority. It is also possible to manoeuvre the majority from the sidelines. The founders of the settlements of Kfar Etzion and Sebastia, Hana Porat and Moshe Levinger, did not stand at the head of any political camp when they created facts on the ground right after the Six Day War. It is doubtful if they had more than 100 people on their side. The “Gush Emunim” movement, which was founded after the Yom Kippur War, represented a tiny minority of the religious public, and certainly of the general public. On the subject of their achievements in the years that followed, to the point of no-return, there is no need to elaborate.

Many less dramatic examples exist, too. The Refusenik protest movement during the First Lebanon War, “Four Mothers,” social and ecological movements about specific issues — sexual harassment, minors’ rights, sub-contracted teachers, pollution on the beaches, oil shale, public housing — none of these struggles represented the “majority.” They represented small parts of the public, aware and informed about the ways in which politics impact their fates, dedicated and committed to their goals, in a long term sense, unafraid of personal sacrifices. These struggles reaped successes, despite the fact that large parts of the public were not even aware of them.

What, anyhow, is the “Majority” in modern society? Faceless, identity-less masses; clay in the hands of propagandists and creators of cheap entertainment. The Majority does not take part in the political process, either due to apathy or

exclusion. The vote cast every four years does not create change for the future, but rather, at most, ratifies political change that has already taken place, if even that.

As such, leave the Majority alone. The Majority will never be in your pockets. The convergence of a developed set of values and mass political action by the Majority, is an extremely rare event. It is called a Social Revolution, and in the history of each nation, there are no more than two or three such moments. Most of them end in a bloodbath. Regular democracies, which celebrate “majority rule,” in practice actually function as brutal battlefields for united interest groups, each of which represents a minority, and each of which alternately succeeds and loses. The real majority, i.e., the population, yawns in apathy at the spectacle. In shaky democracies like Israel, in which large segments of the public are excluded, either economically or ethnically, from the centres of power, it can be ruled conclusively that “the majority does not rule.”

The most determined minority rules.

2. *“We must win hearts and minds over to the values of equality, justice and humanism.”*

Yes, for sure. Sometime. No doubt. Very important.

But actually, not urgent. In fact, in the short term — this goal is superfluous. “Values education” is not an easily-digestible kit distributed by the Pedagogical Centre in the Education Ministry. Values, as a way of life and not simply as rhetoric, are something that is built over many years. What happens between the walls of the schools is just a small part of this

process, which is, more than anything, influenced by the general public environment in a society, by conversations with friends, by newspaper headlines. And we must admit that in the current period, this environment in Israel is poisonous and the polar opposite of equality, justice and humanism. To reverse it would be a project that would take decades, just as bringing it about took decades of increasingly extreme indoctrination. If anti-black racism in the United States hasn’t evaporated decades after it was made illegal, there is no reason to think that Israel will turn into a progressive society in our lifetime. It won’t happen. Wake up.

These are hard truths to digest, but an open-eyed political struggle cannot allow itself to ignore them. Such a struggle must internalize their meaning, and divert its limited resources, growing smaller and smaller each day, to effective political horizons. What do we want to achieve? To eliminate the regime of apartheid in the Territories? To return to every Palestinian sovereignty over her life, her income, her place of living? These are difficult goals to achieve, but they are feasible. To create a value-change in a society in which half of its population supports the expulsion of Arabs? That is not a feasible goal.

Conclusion: We should adopt an approach that focuses on behaviours, and not on mentalities. We should try to shape deeds and not beliefs. Fortunately for us, the path toward changing behaviours need not run through altered beliefs. Criminals of every sort cease their crimes not because

they have been convinced that they are wrong, but rather because they did a simple act of arithmetic: The price became greater than the profit. This basic ability, to calculate price versus profit, is much more widespread than are humanistic values. This is an advantage that we should not disregard.

To be clear, there is nothing wrong with educating for humanist values. My claim is that in the short term, it has no impact. It has supreme importance in the long term, in that every achievement obtained by the Left through “effective politics” will not last long in a society that is still tainted to its core with racism and xenophobia. Education professionals tasked with educating for values know this well. My argument is not geared toward them, but rather toward those on the Left who are still trapped in the illusion that in order to create meaningful change here, we need to “convince” as many people as possible that justice, equality and human dignity are more important than the sanctity of the Nation and the Land.

Effective politics, on the other hand, recognizes the sensitivities of the regime, and focuses its efforts on them. The boycott drives the government (and its media mouthpieces) crazy? Excellent. Exposure of the crimes committed by the Civil Administration embarrasses the “only democracy in the Middle East?” Excellent. Cross-Wall cooperation between Jews and Palestinians enrages the Commissars? Excellent.

How do we discern what is a sensitive point for the government? As in a body: when you press on a such a point, out

comes a yell. We simply have to see what works. Here it is important to distinguish between a yell for the sake of propaganda, and a genuine yell. The government will frequently fabricate an enraged response to meaningless, fangless actions by the Opposition, in order to distract attention from real and severe crimes. Almost all of the Israeli political system, with its false dichotomy between “Left” and “Right,” is based off of this game. If so, how can we know that our action is effective against the regime — the system of apartheid and oligarchy — and not just against whoever is currently at its head? It is simple. If the Opposition attacks you as well, then your action has threatened something bigger than the distribution of political wealth between the two camps. In summary: If you anger [MK Isaac] Herzog and [MK Yair] Lapid (or whoever replaces them), you are on the right path.

Once again, this is not to argue against the importance of the dozens of organizations who act to minimize the suffering of the Occupation’s victims: in documenting, in helping with the olive harvest, in medical care, in escorting children to school, in legal representation. These victims cannot wait patiently for the Israeli boot, which has been resting on their necks for almost half a decade, to decide to remove itself. Humanitarian action, which disgusts the hearts of certain “strategic” radicals (some of whom blame it for the “eternalization of the Occupation”), is in fact the basic human obligation toward people who are injured, starved and impoverished at the hands of all of our emissaries.

3. *“The Left needs to transcend all of its internal divisions and unite into a single political body.”*

And then what? If we combined one one-thousandth and another one-thousandth and another one-thousandth, let’s say 100 times, what would we end up with? One hundred one-thousandths, a tenth. Still a tiny minority. Still far from “tipping the scales.” And anyway, what coalition would agree to the participation of Arab MKs, and what sort of Left can we have here without the participation of Arabs?

The entirety of the Left today — depending on how you define “Left” — is no more than one quarter of the population. And that is a very generous estimate, which includes many who hate Arabs, despise organized labour, and are just chauvinists. So what, precisely, will we gain when this entirety unites? What will we be able to do after the unification that we were not able to do before? Cut down administrative budgets?

The argument that “our power is in our unity” [Hebrew link to an Op Ed by former Meretz MK Nitzan Horowitz, which I couldn’t find in English – MRZ] rests on the illusion that “quantity creates quality.” Reality is much more complicated. Often times, quantity diminishes quality. The Left in Israel, minuscule and divided as it is, is struggling on dozens of difficult fronts simultaneously, and it’s difficult to see how exactly the unification of all of the Left’s bodies and organizations will advance these struggles, which demand expertise, Sisyphian documentation efforts, mastery of different public spheres (the courts, the media, Knesset

Committees), and the building of trust and connections with oppressed groups. Large parts of these groups, by the way, are hostile toward one another. The demand to “unify at any price” ignores each oppressed group’s natural preference to firstly achieve its own goals, before fighting others’ battles, let alone the battles of the Others that they abhor. Is it right to sacrifice the just struggles of each community in the name of “education” toward universal rights?

Here is some startling news for those who are not meaningfully involved in the efforts: The Left is not “divided.” “The internal divisions” are not substantial. Members of Btselem do not spend their time engaged in battles against Yesh Din, and ASSAF does not put sticks in the wheels of the Hotline for Refugees and Migrant Workers. The good people active in these organizations understand very well that they are part of the same wide political-social-cultural front fighting for radical changes to the current regime. Everyone in his or her limited power is trying to chip away at the wall that is slowly closing around us all. Everyone is worried, and rightly so, that if she or he were to stop cracking away in her corner and would instead join some amorphous “unity” effort, the wall in that corner would grow thicker, and flourish, and the people she cares about would be crushed underneath it. Every day brings with it new injustices, new dangers; living as a Leftist in Israel today is like standing straight in a great muddy deluge rushing down a steep slope. If the Leftist stands with a few other companions, they may be able to defend those standing

behind them. If they were to stand in a single, united front with all of their partners, they would be able to watch as the flood swept down all of the other slopes on which no one remained.

However you count the Left, it is small. So small that a thought of “how to turn into a majority in our time” is but a sad joke. When you are small and forced to struggle against forces greater than yourself, you do not waste your time on calculations of size and quantity, but rather focus your thinking and efforts on those action-horizons in which quantity does not matter. One camera in Hebron, one document leaking from a secret meeting between a Minister and an Oligarch: these can be “game changers” no less than a demonstration of hundreds of thousands (which is not going to happen anytime soon, at least not concerning the issues that actually matter).

4. *“We must not cooperate with anyone who serves the existing regime.”*

Nu, this sort of fastidiousness is a privilege reserved only for furious armchair-Leftists; and let’s be honest, if these armchair-Leftists were to take a look in any direction outside of their armchair, their gaze would fall upon someone who is serving the existing regime. The only logical conclusion of such a purist axiom is that no one should cooperate with anyone else, except for their own bellybuttons (and it wouldn’t hurt to be suspicious of your own bellybutton too, from time to time).

Here’s a recent example. After a long and Sisyphean struggle, the

current Knesset passed The Amendments to the Public Housing Transparency Bill [Note: Landau again linked to a Hebrew Haaretz article which I could not find in English; I chose to link to Rabbis for Human Rights’ website, as the organization has been involved in the aforementioned efforts -MRZ] which obligates public housing companies to regularly update the tenants in regard to their rights, their obligations, and every process ongoing in their cases. The law also obligates the companies to update those who are eligible for public housing—who have been waiting for years [Hebrew] for housing—about every decision related to their cases. In a civilized country, such a law would not be thought of as an “achievement” [Hebrew]. After all, we are talking about the most basic obligation of a government toward its citizens; prior to the obligation to fulfil citizens’ rights stands the obligation to not hide from them the information needed in order to obtain their rights. But in Israel, as we know, the government has neglected its obligation for years, and exploited the tenants’ and eligible tenants’ lack of information in order to dispossess them of their legal rights.

The Amendments to the Public Housing Transparency Bill seems to be one of the most important achievements by the Left in recent years. Not incidentally, media coverage of this achievement and its implications was pushed into the margins. Behind this Bill stand two legislators: MK Dov Khenin and MK Orly Levy-Abekasis. The latter is known as a member of a radical right-wing party, which possess fascist traits (such as

advocating stripping citizenship from Arab citizens of the Triangle). The Minister Miri Regev, not exactly a human rights warrior herself, advanced this Bill.

And so, was it a mistake to cooperate with MK Levy-Abekasis and Minister Regev? Let's recall that the role of Members of Knesset in such struggles is important but not central. Members of Knesset are the "finishers" of a relay race, those who translate the fruits of ongoing public struggle to an act of legislation. The struggle itself has been coordinated for years in the civil sphere, by the Public Housing Forum and other groups of dedicated activists, who were the only ones on the Left to show signs of life [Hebrew] during the last elections. These activists correctly identified their partners in struggle in the Knesset, and created an ad-hoc coalition with them. Do the Public Housing activists vote for Hadash or Yisrael Beitenu? An irrelevant question. From an ethical, political and economic perspective, their struggle was a Leftist struggle par excellence. The fact that the parliamentary Left in Israel did not place public housing at the forefront of its agenda is a testament to the emptiness of the categories of "Left" and "Right" in Israeli politics.

In summary: In just, principled, correct political struggles, there is no place for taste and smell. A partner in struggle is tested only on the basis of his or her actions — not on the basis of declarations, political identifications, skin colour, race or sex. This is all the more so in regards to a small, weak Left, which is not able to enlist a wide

coalition with the stroke of an SMS, and thus does not have the privilege to rummage around the drawers of any potential partner.

This does not mean that cooperation on one political front should lead to agreeing with or forgiving the same partners on others. It certainly does not mean that the Left has to "soften" or "Centerize" its messages in order to suck up to the Centre. This losing strategy has never given a thing to Leftist struggles, and one need to do no more than recall the names Haim Ramon, Benyamin Ben Elazar and Haim Herzog in order to illustrate this point.

We should struggle against racists when they advance racist policies, but there is nothing preventing us from working with them when the result is egalitarian policy (and even in cases in which this was not their intention; results are more important than intentions). This is not easy. Truly, it is easier to stay by ourselves in the playground and build imaginary friends in the sand. You don't have to strain and make sacrifices for the sake of a just political struggle. There will always be other who will struggle for you. But you do owe them respect. Sit quietly, don't interrupt, don't disdain.

5. *"The Left needs to reach out to ... and not to ..."*

For example: The Left needs to reach out to an Israeli audience and not to an international audience. For example: the Left needs to reach out to the Periphery and not to the Centre. To Arabs and not to Jews. To the heart and not to the brain. Truly, there is no end to such recommendations.

So perhaps one last recommendation: Enough of the recommendations of "this yes, that no." Such recommendations undermine the most fundamental basis of the Left — the universal value of human beings, as they are. Political proclivities based on fences and exclusion do not advance the values of the Left. And they don't work. Yes, it is extremely important to speak with Mizrahim and the Periphery, but how does this negate turning to international bodies, as the Israeli regime silences and foils all criticism? Must the just struggle of a handicapped Jewish person from Be'er Sheva for his right to housing — a struggle that has a chance of succeeding through intra-Israeli means — come at the expense of a no less just struggle of Bedouins in the Negev whose village is not recognized, and against whom the State has enacted policies of discrimination and theft for five decades, and for whom the chances of success without international support are virtually none?

Must solidarity with Jews exclude Arabs? Must solidarity with the LGBT community exclude the religious community? The accelerated of Israeli society, to the point of general fragmentation, is not a "natural" phenomenon; it is the result of an ethnocratic regime of privatization, based on the principle of "divide and conquer," which advocates sectoral politics at the expense of the greater good. It is the result of the sacrifice of rights discourse — or, more precisely, discourse concerning the obligations of the State to its citizens — at the altar of identity discourse. Does the Left need to take these sectoral buffer-

zones as facts, as the topography of the political field to which we must adjust ourselves, or can we challenge them? And is there a better way to undermine the “sectoral cages” than to adopt pluralistic, heterogeneous, multi-dimensional politics, which lay wreckage to current orders?

Leftists, and also other general kibbitzers, tend to give out advice to the Left about how it should and shouldn't carry out its struggles. The recommendation to avoid such advice-giving is not simply another act of such advice-giving: Simply, it is a call to return to goals

and basic values their birthrights, and to recognize this: different are the pathways and methods and communities needed to get to each goal and each value.

6. “*The Left has already lost*” / “*In the end, the Left will win.*”

Meaningless myths. Define “already,” define “end,” define “Left,” define “loss,” define “victory.” You can't, and even if you could, you won't agree with each other [Hebrew] about the definitions. So what can we agree on? That there is suffering in the world, that much of it is

unnecessary suffering, and that we are responsible for a small part of this unnecessary suffering, and that we have the tools to prevent it. It is enough to know what to do in this life, without knowing how it will end, and who will win in the end.

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*A Persian turpentine tree, or Elah, in the Elah Valley.*

## Walking in the Elah Valley

By Timetraveller (pseud.)

Some decades ago I lived in Israel at a time when the country was less densely populated, when the annexation of the West Bank was such a new fact on the ground that the Palestinian population had not yet understood the real ramifications of this new reality. Thus the hopelessness for a just solution had not yet lead to the radicalisation of the population that we see today. As a result, it was quite easy and relatively safe for an Israeli to drive to the outskirts of many townships in the “shfelah” (the coastal strip), park her car, then wander off over the fields,

exploring the broad open expanses.

Living at the time in the academic town of Rehovot, some 30 km south of Tel Aviv, enabled me to escape the urban environment and walk in many places, from the beaches to the sloping hills leading up to Jerusalem. It so happened that I - a new immigrant - was able to walk with native-born Israelis who had served in the Army. Their experience serving in the Army over the decades taught them where the really special off-the-beaten-track locations were.

So I developed a love of walking in Israel. An easy and especially beautiful walk was to a place called Emek Ha Ela - the Valley of Terebinth - named after a species of Pistacia local to that area. My companion and I would drive south, out of Rehovot, through the township of Gedera and moshav Tirosh, heading east towards Jerusalem. The road was narrow and winding, through the undulating fields of olive groves etc., slowly heading east towards the hills surrounding Jerusalem. As we travelled to our destination, the land became less and less obviously populated and stands of trees became more frequent, creating dark patches in the otherwise open and lightly coloured stony landscape.

Emek Ha Ela was always a special place to walk. The remains of abandoned Arab villages had not yet faded into the landscape, and it was particularly beautiful in Spring, to wander amongst the mix of the rubble of the villages, through the stands of old fig and olive trees, and the magnificent

proliferation of wildflowers and terebinth trees. Our walks made me aware that there was an entire population missing from the environment, while at the same time there was an implicit promise that nature would heal all wounds.

Israel is sandwiched between the continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. Thus Emek Ha Ela is ideally placed to enable a magnificent variety of plants from distant lands to grow and flourish there. The lime-rich soil enables good drainage and plants thrive. In Spring one could admire purple lupins, white daisies, pink cyclamens and red anemones and many other wildflowers, growing in joyous profusion whilst overhead the white delicate flowers of the almond trees lost their petals in the breeze.

One day, however, while walking through this wildflower wonderland, our enchantment was abruptly fractured as the valley's violent past was exposed. As we strode through a cool, shady grove of trees, we came upon many large flat rocks overgrown with rank weeds. On further investigation these rocks turned out to be the remnants of a Palestinian graveyard. Graves had been torn open and the headstones moved so that the remains of those long-interred were exposed. It was a disturbing reminder that in the idyllic beauty of this place a long history of plunder and violence also coloured the scenery.

The website [jerusalem.com/articles/travel/the\\_elah\\_valley-a2119](http://jerusalem.com/articles/travel/the_elah_valley-a2119) presents a brief portrait of this lovely place:

Valley of Elah (Emek HaEla) is a region to the west of Jerusalem. Valley of Elah, named for the Terebinth (Pistacia) trees local to the region, is a beautiful countryside region known as 'The Tuscany of Israel'.

The Valley of Elah is also filled with history. It was populated in biblical times by several peoples, and it is the place where the battle of David and Goliath took place. In this battle, Goliath of Gath, a Philistine giant, was defeated by young David, who later became the king of Israel. The valley is 330 meters above sea level, and enjoys views of the Judean Mountains and the coastal plains.

During biblical times, Valley of Elah was a strategic holding ground, and much trade was carried out through its cities and towns. Many battles to control this region took place here, some of which are recorded in detail in the bible. In 2008, the Valley of Elah Fortress was discovered by archaeologists. In it, an ostrakon dating back to the tenth century BCE was discovered. It is considered the most ancient Hebrew writing ever discovered. The text refers to widows and orphans, and is written in ancient Hebrew typical of the time. In the Roman Empire period, a Roman town called "Beit Latfa" was located in the Valley of Elah, and it was used mainly as a stop for

pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem or Hebron. .... (Today) The region of the Valley of Elah is a beautiful place to visit for archaeology, a day in the country, hiking, food and wine, and much more. At Beit Govrin, originally a Jewish biblical settlement at least 3,000 years old, the sprawling city over time became home to Byzantine Christians and later Muslims. Bell-shaped caves and underground chambers were hollowed by hand out of the soft chalk bedrock, creating an entire underground city in the Valley of Elah. Visitors

wander through the subterranean columbaria, where carrier pigeons were raised, and see mosaics, ancient churches and Byzantine tombs.

On reading this extract from the tourist guide, I am aware of the limited historical description. Ancient Hebrew artefacts were found pointing to a long period of ancient Hebrew habitation; but where are the records of those generations of Palestinian farmers who tilled the fields and orchards of Emek Ha Ela for centuries prior to the current occupiers? Nearly gone is evidence of their lives, and where, today, do their

descendants live? Do they too pine after the beauty and fecundity of the Valley? Are the only records of their lives locked away in dusty files in some Municipal office? Today, as I reminisce about those walks through the beautiful landscape of Emek Ha Ela, knowing what I know now, this place holds a particularly poignant place in my memory. I cannot but empathise with the loss those Palestinian villagers experienced as their lands were overtaken and lost.

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Send in your story, picture or poem to [editor@ajds.org.au](mailto:editor@ajds.org.au)



Canada Park. Image by Umar al-Ghubari.

**Turning entire Palestinian villages invisible: the JNF’s “Canada Park”**

By Umar al-Ghubari  
Published June 19, 2016, in Haokets and at 972mag.com/turning-entire-

palestinian-villages-invisible/120293/.

The destruction and emptying of the Latrun villages took place 49 years ago this month. The Israeli army had occupied Imwas, Yalo and Beit Nuba on June 5, 1967,

expelled the residents of all three villages to the Ramallah district and prevented them from returning after the war, which lasted only six days. Bulldozers and soldiers began demolishing the homes, and razed the three villages. The State of Israel erased the names of the

villages from its maps, and of course from traffic signs, as was its practice since 1948.

Years later, the Jewish National Fund (JNF) created “Canada Park” on top of the Latrun villages. There are many signs up inside the park, but none of them mentions the names of those villages — except for one, which Israeli organization Zochrot compelled the JNF to erect to avoid legal proceedings. About a year ago the JNF put up new signs throughout the park, which erase Palestinian-Arab history altogether. It goes without saying that the entire park is located in an area occupied in 1967, that is, in the West Bank, but not one sign mentions this.

Erasing any textual remnant of the Palestinians is a familiar means of also eradicating them from the Israeli collective consciousness. Signs have the power to shape knowledge, to make an imprint on one’s awareness, to consolidate the name and identity of a place. The sign controls the kind of information that reaches the public, and the kind made inaccessible.

In the Palestinian context, the information and names conveyed in Israeli signs are of critical significance. One of the signs in Canada Park demonstrates that in addition to the past, the present reality can also be erased from the text and from public awareness. Both are absent from the text, though they straddle the hills across from it. And even if past and present do exist, they do not deserve mention.

To those wishing to better understand what it is to be “transparent,” I recommend visiting a specific hill in Canada

Park, inside the occupied, destroyed and ethnically cleansed village of Yalo, to understand the way in which the transparent is made (in)visible, and to witness first-hand the brainwashing and efficiency of this powerful stance.

As mentioned in the heading of the sign there, the JNF decided to name the hill the “Ayalon Valley Lookout.” After a thorough explanation about the topography and geography comes the explanation of the demography: one and a half lines, including the mention of three Jewish settlements: the city of Modi’in, Kibbutz Shaalabim, and Mevo Horon, a communal religious settlement. Incidentally, this comes without mention of the fact that Mevo Horon is located in the West Bank, just like the signpost itself.

Naturally, it is unsurprising that an Israeli sign should fail to mention the Palestinian villages erased in 1948 and replaced with Modi’in, such as al-Burj, Barfiliya, Kharuba, ‘Innaba and Kunayyisa, or the village of Salbit beneath Kibbutz Shaalabim. But failing to mention the Palestinian villages still visible across “the stunning surrounding landscape” is an upgraded form of racist erasure, laced with arrogance and contempt for people’s intelligence.

Standing on the “Ayalon Valley Lookout,” the villages of Beit Sira, Beit Liqya, Kharbatha, Beit Ur al-Fuka, Beit Ur al-Tahta and Safa are in front of your eyes on the opposite mountain range. They are visible even more clearly than are Modi’in and Shaalabim, which you can see only by craning your neck to the north and to the south. The colonizer fails to see the natives,

even though they are right there before him. The sign tells you to look at the view, and to fail to see the Palestinian; to see a purely Jewish landscape. Ignore the rest. Or better yet, make it unseen.

A sign is testimony. In this case, it is false testimony. A sign is also a document. Perhaps one day it will make it into an archive, and will be used by researchers. Here is proof, the sign will tell them, that not only were there Jews here, but that they were the only ones, and there was no other man or woman there, except for them.

There is no doubt that the process of Judaizing the space, including the Judaizing of names and knowledge, has been progressing rapidly and aggressively for decades, and continues still. It is a process that correlates with other Zionist modes of occupying land.

The example of the sign in Canada Park is one of diluting Arabic names even inside the West Bank, similarly to the process of occupation, settlement, annexation and forced expulsion of Palestinians in other parts of the territory. In this way the signs serve as a means of occupation, oppression, and erasure. Palestinians come upon these signs and feel helpless, made to understand that they are absent, erased. From a Zionist viewpoint, they are devoid of value and lacking existence.

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Umar al Ghubari is group facilitator, a political educator, and he documents and photographs the Palestinian Nakba. Translated from Hebrew by Keren Rubinstein. Originally published at Haokets in Hebrew, and at <http://972mag.com/turning-entire-palestinian-villages-invisible/120293/>.

## Petty Corruption

By Uri Avnery

Published June 16, 2016, in [uriavnery.com/he/hatur](http://uriavnery.com/he/hatur)

MANY YEARS ago I received a phone call from the Prime Minister's office. I was told that Yitzhak Rabin wanted to see me in private.

Rabin opened the door himself. He was alone in the residence. He led me to a comfortable seat, poured two generous glasses of whisky for me and himself and started without further ado – he abhorred small talk – "Uri, have you decided to destroy all the doves in the Labor Party?"

My news magazine, Haolam Hazeh, was conducting a campaign against corruption and had accused two prominent Labor leaders, the new president of the Central Bank and the Minister for Housing. Both were indeed members of the moderate wing of the party.

I explained to Rabin that in the fight against corruption I could make no exceptions for politicians who were close to my political outlook. Corruption was a cause in itself.

THE FIRST generation of the founders of Israel was free of corruption. Corruption was unthinkable.

Indeed, purism was carried to extremes. Once a prominent Labor leader was criticized for building for himself a villa in a Jerusalem suburb. There was not the slightest suggestion of corruption. He had inherited the money. But it was considered scandalous for a Labor leader to live in a private villa. A "comrades'

court" decided to expel him from the party, and that was the end of his career.

At the same time, an official residence was built for the Foreign Minister, so he could receive foreign dignitaries in decent surroundings. The minister at that time, Moshe Sharett, believed that it was wrong to hold on to his own private apartment, so he sold it and donated the money to several charitable associations.

THE NEXT generation was quite different. It behaved as if it owned the place by divine right.

Its most typical representative was Moshe Dayan. He was born in the country and David Ben-Gurion appointed him Chief of Staff. In this capacity he directed several "retaliation raids" across the border and then the 1956 attack on Egypt which ended in a resounding victory (helped by the Franco-British invasion of the Suez Canal area behind the back of the Egyptian army.)

Dayan was an amateur archaeologist. He stuffed his private villa (by that time, villas were already allowed) with ancient artefacts that he dug up all over the country. That was strictly illegal, since unprofessional digging destroyed historical evidence, making it impossible to define the date. But everybody winked. After all, Dayan was a national hero.

Then my magazine published a shattering revelation: Dayan did not just keep the artefacts in his garden. He sold them all over the world, with a personal signed note that shot their price up. This revelation triggered a huge scandal and inflamed a lot of hatred – towards me. In a public opinion

poll published that year I was chosen as "the most hated person" in the country, beating the chief of the Communist party to the title. (Such polls have since been discontinued.)

Dayan's brother-in-law was Ezer Weitzman, the general responsible for the air force that won the fabulous victory in the 1967 Six-day War. It was an open secret that Weitzman was kept by an American Jewish millionaire and lived in a luxurious villa in Caesarea, the most prestigious place in the country (where Binyamin Netanyahu now has his own private villa.)

FOR SOME years this has been a general fashion. Every Jewish millionaire in America had "his" Israeli general, whom he kept in style and who was his pride and joy. For rich Jews, having an Israeli general at family feasts was an obligatory status symbol.

Ariel Sharon, for example. The son of poor parents, inhabitants of a cooperative village, he finished his army career and lo and behold – he suddenly was the owner of a huge ranch. It was given to him as a present by an ex-Israeli American multi-millionaire. (Rumours had it that the millionaire deducted the money from his US taxes.)

That was at a time when Israeli generals were not only heroes at home, but all over the world. Moshe Dayan, easily recognizable by his black eye-patch, was a hero in Los Angeles no less than in Haifa.

All these generals (except Ezer Weitzman, who came from a rich family) grew up in very straitened circumstances. Their parents were members of kibbutzim (communal

villages) or moshavim (cooperative villages), all of which were at the time extremely poor. Sharon, a moshav-boy, told me that he walked every day for half an hour to his high school and back to save the bus fare.

That was true for the next generation of leaders, too. Ehud Olmert, the ex-prime minister - now in prison for corruption - grew up in a very poor neighbourhood and became obsessed with owning expensive things. The ex-president of the state, Moshe Katzav, who shares a prison with him, was sentenced for rape, not corruption, but also grew up in poverty as a new immigrant.

(The current joke has it that after a concert in prison the warden announces: "Everybody remain seated until the President and the Prime Minister leave.")

Ehud Barak, a former Chief of Staff and Prime Minister, is now amassing a large fortune by "giving advice" to foreign governments. He grew up in a poor village.

I myself was spared this craving for money, though I, too, lived in utmost poverty after coming to Palestine at the age of ten. Luckily, before that I grew up in very well-to-do circumstances in Germany. Since my family and I were much happier in Israel than in Germany, I learned that happiness has nothing to do with riches.

ALL THIS crosses my mind because we are bombarded almost daily with accusations of corruption against Binyamin Netanyahu and his highly unpopular wife, Sarah.

Sarah'le, as she is commonly called, a former air stewardess who met her husband on a flight, seems to

be a shrew who tyrannizes the staff of the official residence. Some of these have sued her. They revealed that she pilfers the public purse for her private needs.

But what is really disturbing is that Sarah Netanyahu, who was not elected by anyone, seems to be in charge of all senior public appointments. No one can reach these heights without being interviewed and approved by her personally.

She has appointed all three senior law-enforcement officials: The Legal Advisor (actually the Super-Attorney General), the powerful State Comptroller and the Chief of Police.

If so, this was an act of foresight. Because now the three of them are sitting day and night and consulting each other about what to do with the flood of disclosures about the Netanyahu family's financial affairs. They desperately want to avoid indicting the Netanyahus for anything, but that becomes increasingly difficult, since they are subject to the supervision of the Supreme Court.

I have already reported on some of these disclosures, but new ones pop up every week. It has become a kind of national sport.

It began with the disclosure that before becoming Prime Minister, at a time when he was in and out of government, Netanyahu used to be paid twice or thrice for his first-class air tickets by different unsuspecting institutions, without declaring that as income. This is now called in Israeli slang "Bibitours".

Since then he has been involved in all kinds of affairs bordering on criminal corruption which are in

various stages of "examination". New ones are added to the list all the time. The three Netanyahu-appointed legal officers are in constant consultation about whether to order a criminal investigation, which might compel him to leave office at least temporarily.

The climax was achieved when a Jewish financier accused in France of colossal fraud disclosed to the court that had had privately donated to Netanyahu a million Euros and paid Bibi's extremely expensive hotel bills in many cities, including the French Riviera. The exact sums are in doubt, but it is not denied that Netanyahu received from the man, who was already under suspicion of corruption at the time, large sums of money.

The generous Israeli taxpayers (including me) paid for the five days of Bibi's stay in New York last fall, to the tune of some 600,000 dollars. This sum - more than 100 thousand dollars per day - included the payment for his private hairdresser (1600 dollars) and his make-up woman (1750 dollars). The purpose of the trip was to address the UN General Assembly. I wonder how much each word cost.

The information was disclosed by order of the court under the Freedom of Information Law.

The Israeli public laps it all up. No one seems to get angry. Jokes abound about the "royal couple".

For many of Netanyahu's own voters, mostly poor people of Oriental Jewish origin, the disclosures only show that he is a clever person, who knows how to

exploit opportunities, as they themselves would love to do.

HOW TO treat these disclosures, which dominate so many TV news programs and newspaper headlines?

I must admit that I treat them with some disdain. What are these instances of petty corruption compared to Netanyahu's actions and non-actions which have a direct influence of the fate of Israel?

I consider Binyamin Netanyahu as the grave-digger of our state, the

man who sets the course towards catastrophe, the man who obstructs any chance for peace. Just this week Netanyahu proudly told his party colleagues that he will "never" agree to conduct negotiations based on the Arab 2002 peace initiative, which includes the end of the occupation, the setting up of the State of Palestine and the evacuation of settlements. Many people believe that this refusal is fatal.

Facing these calamities, why get excited about some little corruption?

But then I remember the case of Al Capone, the gangster who was responsible for huge crimes, including the cold-blooded murder of many people, but who was finally convicted and sent to prison only for income tax evasion.

If Netanyahu can be convicted of petty corruption and compelled to resign – isn't that just what the country needs?

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## **Coexistence, normalisation and the struggle for Justice in Palestine and Israel**

By Yael Winikoff

Journalist Omar H. Rahman has said "the topic (of normalisation) is reaching a fever pitch within Palestinian society."<sup>1</sup> The issue is most certainly pertinent in Palestinian discourse, at times very divisive, and clearly an issue relevant to AJDS's stance on Israel/Palestine. Further to arguments and counterarguments around the normalisation debate, how can we implement some of these lessons into the work that we do?

The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) has defined normalization specifically in a Palestinian and Arab context "as the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions)

without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination and oppression against the Palestinian people." This definition is also endorsed by the BDS National Committee (BNC). PACBI's website further states: "Normalization is the colonization of the mind, whereby the oppressed subject comes to believe that the oppressor's reality is the only "normal" reality that must be subscribed to, and the oppression is a fact of life that must be coped with."

The anti-normalization movement is in close quarters with the BDS movement in that it has called for an end to all interactions between Israelis and Palestinians that do not subscribe to the same three key tenets: ending the occupation; equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians; and the right of return for Palestinian refugees. The movement has much traction in Palestinian communities, with virtually the entire political spectrum of Palestinian youth, student organizations and unions in the occupied Palestinian territory

supporting anti-normalisation.<sup>2</sup> The radical arm of the Palestinian anti-normalisation movement occasionally rejects any interaction with Israel and Israelis, and is also the subject of robust debate.<sup>3</sup>

The discourse of coexistence echoes the same tensions implicit in normalisation. Coexistence projects and initiatives tend not to highlight the power imbalances present between Israelis and Palestinians and as such seek to foster a seed of hope for both peoples living together side by side in a peace that does not recognise the core demands of Palestinian civil society.

Palestinians and Jews holding hands around Jerusalem, or attending hug rallies, may make us feel optimistic and guilt free inside, but does little to challenge the very real conditions of occupation and oppression that is daily lived by Palestinians. It does little to illustrate the differing lives lived by participants, by oppressor and oppressed, when they go back to their homes and privileges after a well photographed snapshot of coexistence. What it says, is both

parties can rise above the social stigmas and national narratives that give fuel to the intractability of the conflict, without ever actually addressing the conflict itself. It occurs within a vacuum, whereby celebrations of the act of a Palestinian holding hands with a Jew is excised from the very real subject of power that exists in that space. While a Jewish Israeli has more rights and privileges, including freedom of movement, safety from the violence of the occupation, access to State delivered services derived from contested land and water resources, etc., a Jew and Palestinian holding hands in Jerusalem are existent in very differing spaces.

The arguments against coexistence seek to posit a framework where these injustices and power imbalances are addressed rather than normalised and obfuscated. Coexisting means life as usual, no matter how unjust it is. It is easy for

injustices that are being committed by their society.

This is exemplified by the fact that almost all coexistence groups in Israel are run by Jews, with funding coming often from Jewish donors abroad or locally. These groups have also received criticism for engaging a “token Arab as co-director.” The post-Oslo period saw an explosion in normalisation programs, which gained credibility and funding when words such as “joint” or “coexistence” were used. The Israel Palestine Center for Research and Information estimates that between September 1993 until September 2000 US\$20-\$25 million was allocated for funding people-to-people projects.<sup>4</sup> Coexistence programs became lucrative while the issue of the deteriorating conditions for Palestinians under occupation remained undealt with, leading to a growing anti-normalisation movement.<sup>5</sup>

negotiations detrimental, such as the staged and now iconic image of coexistence.

In Australia, while some Jews may feel no connections to Israel, we still possess more rights via the Law of return than Palestinians. According to this law we can enter and live in Israel and automatically be assigned the same set of privileges enjoyed by Israeli Jews. So too, coexistence and normalisation projects in Australia serve the same asymmetrical power imbalances existing in Israel.

While anti-normalisation discourse has gained much traction, there is also rigorous critique of its ideologies and methods. Some argue that shutting off to individuals and organisations plays into the hands of the status quo, and is not an effective means of achieving Palestinian rights and self-determination.<sup>6</sup> Joel Braunold and Huda Abuarquob, two leaders of the Alliance for Middle East Peace, an umbrella group of civil society activists in Israel and Palestine assert:

“In their effort to delegitimize coexistence programming, anti-normalization activists lampoon people-to-people activities as Israelis and Palestinians coming together to eat hummus then go home. This is an utterly false representation of the people-to-people movement today. Look at the thousands engaged by Parents Circle or Combatants for Peace, the farmers whose crops have not wasted thanks to Olive Oil Without Borders or the communities receiving fresh water owing to the work of EcoPeace. These are just a sample of thousands of people whose lives have been changed through joint programs.”

Interviews and discussions with dissenting Israelis and Jews has found that many individuals who in time challenge the occupation rather than



*The original photo was taken by American photographer Ricki Rosen for a cover story about the Oslo peace accords for a Canadian news magazine.*

an Israeli who participates in normalisation projects to feel that they are not part of the problem. That because they have Palestinian friends or colleagues they have surpassed the oppressions designated within society, even if they are doing nothing to address the

The peace movement has long been dragged along a never ending process of dialogue which has led Palestinians further away from goals of self-determination and achieving statehood. It has done this with the help of projects, rhetoric and images that have fuelled the propaganda required to render the process of

following the status quo began questioning their position after interpersonal interactions with Palestinians. This must in part be credited to the work of person to person coexistence projects. Anti-normalisation beckons the question where is the room for debate, for discussion, for convincing someone who doesn't subscribe to your own view?<sup>7</sup>

However, these counterarguments articulating the gains of coexistence and normalisation projects are increasingly being met with dialogue which addresses the complexities of the issue and attempts to etch out ways of working that subvert normalisation. For example, there are a number of organisations that have undergone self-reflection and restructured their organisation and programs to deliver more shared decision making structures and moderation, and altered their discourse on dialogue and co-participation. The principles espoused in the anti-normalisation camp does not posit a complete disengagement of Israelis and Palestinians, but rather a reflection

on the work and outcomes that are achieved by such relationships, with a focus on ending the occupation, solidarity and “coresistance.”

Whilst various bodies have provided parameters of ant-normalisation, likening it to BDS demands, the critique of normalisation stands on its own merit as a valid deconstruction of the impact of normalisation projects. In campaigning for justice for Palestinians, we can unpack the work that we do and ask ourselves whether we are fostering a “life as normal” paradigm implicated in coexistence projects, and whether we are explicitly or implicitly endorsing the status quo. We can actively seek to become aware of the privileges that we have as Jews or Israelis.

And in addressing the question of where the room for debate and discussion is within the disengagement of anti-normalisation, in the Australian context there is plenty of room for establishing these spaces for discussion within our own Jewish communities. Whilst Palestinian stories, narratives and lived experience is central to the

occupation, the occupation itself, as a policy of the Israeli State is something that can, and should be discussed within Jewish, Zionist, and Israeli spaces.

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## IN MEMORIAM

It is with sadness that we farewell two AJDS members, both inspiring and progressive activists and great women.

**Liz Brumer** (1941-2016) worked for much of her life supporting Indigenous rights and the reconciliation movement. Daughter of Holocaust survivors, Liz found her personal history leading her to advocacy, especially through the Port Philip Citizens for Reconciliation. She proudly witnessed her son co-found the Belgrave Survival Day. Almost a year ago Liz answered my questions for new-ish AJDS members:

*Where is home?* My home is where my values are being shared and affirmed.

*What is your passion?* I am passionate about reconciliation and social justice.

*What is your favourite avenue for expression?* Exploring common humanity.

*How do you practice progressive values in your everyday life?* By not allowing conservative belief systems and cultural constructs to dominate my thinking.

*Name someone who has changed the way you think.* Gandhi has changed the way I think through his philosophy “change starts with me”.

*Describe something you do that you consider Jewish.* I take non-Jews for a synagogue experience.

*Have you or your close family ever experienced restrictions on your freedom of movement?* My parents were victims of the holocaust. As a result, they encouraged me to

ignore my Jewish heritage, but at the same time, they emphasised how I should embrace Judaism. For example, they wanted me to marry a Jewish man. This dilemma has created an enormous internal conflict throughout my life.

*Describe your relationship with Israel.* Israel to me is like a family, I love it but I don't accept her bad behaviour.

*Are you politically active outside the AJDS?* Yes, I do attend protests and I am involved in indigenous reconciliation activities and strongly oppose any abuse of human rights.

*How would you like to contribute more, or engage with other members?* I would love to assist in practical ways and engage in the planning of events when required as part of my desire to support the mission of this organization. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to share myself with AJDS and look forward to our future engagement.

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**Pauline Butler** (1914-2016) was motivated to help others throughout her life and was one of the first graduates of Social Work at Sydney University. She went on to work in several fields, also helping her mother assist Jewish refugees, and later supporting Indigenous rights, as well as advocating for people with intellectual disability. Tirelessly dedicated to progressive causes, Pauline was also a beloved mother and auntie whose caring nature will have changed the lives of many.

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### UPCOMING EVENTS

July 3-10 – NAIDOC Week

July 19 – AJDS Executive Committee meeting

August 7 – Immoral Detention: the fundamental flaws in our asylum policies

August 7 – “Ana min al-Yahoud” by Almog Behar, at the AJDS Reading Group and Potluck

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