

Justpeace

PAX CHRISTI

International Catholic Movement for Peace

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Apartheid at the Gates

Just a decade and a half after the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the spectre confronts us of a new apartheid regime emerging before our eyes, on the southern border of Europe, in the Holy Land of all places, and with the connivance of our political leaders. With unlimited resources at his disposal, Sharon set out to establish irreversible “facts on the ground” that would ensure permanent Israel control over the entire Land of Israel while foreclosing the emergence of a viable Palestinian state.

Today almost a half million Israelis live across the 1967 border, while 96% of the Palestinians are locked into what Sharon calls “cantons,” dozens of tiny enclaves, deprived of the right to move freely and now literally imprisoned behind concrete walls twice as high as the Berlin Wall. Although Israel has “disengaged” from Gaza, it has left behind a scorched earth. With the Palestinians - including those with Israeli citizenship - confined to just 15% of the country, redeployment from Gaza has meant strengthening the occupation on the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In order to secure permanent Israeli control, however, the “facts on the ground” had to be legitimized as permanent political facts. For this Sharon turned to Israel’s one and only patron in such matters, the US, which promptly obliged. In April, 2004, the Bush Administration formally recognized Israel’s settlement blocs - euphemistically called “major population centers” - thus unilaterally removing from the Palestinians 20-25% of the already truncated area in which they wished to establish a small state of their own. Still, Israel needs a Palestinian state in order to “get rid of” the almost four million Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories, to which it can neither give citizenship nor keep in a state of permanent bondage. What Sharon seeks, and what Bush will allow him to have, is a truncated Palestinian mini-state, a Bantustan, a prison-state on 10-15% of the country. This amounts to full-blown apartheid, the permanent and institutionalized domination of one people over another.

Sharon now needs the signature of a Palestinian quisling-leader agreeing to a mini-state. He is therefore priming Prime Minister Abbas for a set up, another “generous offer.” Take, Sharon will say, Gaza plus 70-80% of the West Bank plus a symbolic presence in East Jerusalem. True, the Palestinians would still be confined to five or six cantons on 15% of the entire country or less, with no control of their borders, their water, their airspace or Jerusalem. Israel would retain its settlement blocs and 80% of its settlers. But Sharon’s “generous offer” locks Abbas into a no-win situation. Say “yes” and you will be the quisling leader Israel has been looking for all these years. Say “no” and Sharon will pounce: “See?! The Palestinians have



Separation wall near Bethlehem taken by Ann Farr

refused yet another Generous Offer! They obviously do not want peace!” And Israel, off the hook, will be free to expand its control of the Occupied Territories for years to come, protected from criticism by American-backed annexation of the settlement blocs.

Israeli unilateralism means only one thing: it has nothing to offer the Palestinians, nothing worth negotiating over. The Road Map is moribund; a genuine two-state solution may already be dead; a two-state “solution” based on apartheid cannot be an alternative accepted by any of us. This is the crunch. Sharon must act fast to complete his life’s work before his term of office expires within the next year. It is either a just and viable solution now or apartheid now. In my view, the next three to six months will tell.

Jeff Halper is coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD). Contact icahd@zahav.net.il or www.icahd.org

Inspiration

‘Mighty’ God entrusts himself to us as a child. His gentleness is power. Do we believe that violence and injustice can be effectively opposed by nonviolent means, an opposition which includes love of the oppressor as well as love of the oppressed?

Gerry Hughes sj from *Letting the Word become Flesh* 1988

For over two and a half years now, I have been living and working in Jordan, co-ordinating the Mashriq programme of Pax Christi Netherlands. This programme aims to contribute to regional peace, covering Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel and Palestine. Since last year I have a Jordanian colleague, Rasha Yaish. Working for an international peace movement in this region torn by conflict and political turmoil is an interesting and rewarding experience. Rewarding because of the inspiring people we cooperate with and because every day we face and learn something new. But it is also quite a challenge to accept the limited steps we can take, one at a time.

The conflicts in this region fill the pages of newspapers worldwide: the occupation of Palestine, the war in Iraq, terrorism. But there are very important events that do not reach those newspapers: Young Israelis and Palestinians jointly demonstrating, week after week, against the separation wall. Activists who try to establish a regional nonviolence movement in the middle of all this violence. Dissidents who try to liberate Syria from within, hoping the country will not face the same fate as Iraq. People who have been struggling for years for more freedoms, and also a young, hopeful generation that has broken away from old ideologies. You probably do not read about those people, but we are lucky to cooperate with them, to support them in their work for a better future for their people.

Our role as Pax Christi Netherlands has different aspects. We support local initiatives for peace and human rights, with money, with advice, with moral support. Sometimes our support also has the form of very concrete help. For example, because of the conflict with Israel, it is impossible to make a phone call from Lebanon or Syria to Israel and the West Bank and Gaza. So when a Palestinian organisation in Syria wants to talk to a Palestinian organisation in the West Bank, we here in Jordan are the link between the two.

Partnership between us and local organisations has also enabled us to organise regional events, something that neither we nor the local organisations would have been able to do alone. In 2004, a regional workshop on nonviolent activism was held in Lebanon, with participants from Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Egypt. We have also been able to bring together university students from the whole region.

We also coordinate with Pax Christi International. Together we organised regional consultations in 2003 and in 2004. 5 new organisations from the region have become partners of Pax Christi International. The fact that our international president, Patriarch Michel Sabbah, is a Palestinian and has a good reputation, has added to our credibility in building up a network in the region. Pax Christi is Catholic and in this region Catholics are only a small minority. Our experience has been, however, that it is very enriching to cooperate with organisations with whom we share a mission with, but have a different identity. Most of the organisations we work with are secular, even though they have been started by a priest. This is to ensure openness to the whole society and as a counter-reaction to the lack of separation between state and church.

The news from the region is depressing and I must confirm that life here is depressing in many ways. But I am lucky to see and contribute to another side of this world: one of going against the mainstream, one of hope.

Marjolein Wijninckx has been working for Pax Christi Netherlands since 2000. She studied Arabic Literature/Middle East Studies and has studied and worked in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. She is married and has a 1-year old daughter.

Peacemaking Resources

At a recent Justice and Peace day, one of the workshop leaders provided the timely reminder how urgent it is to deal with injustices in the UK: it can be all too easy to strive for justice abroad and ignore issues much closer to home.

The Israel/Palestine issue does, however, feel close to home. Within families, there can be a tacit acknowledgement that Israel/Palestine shouldn't be discussed, the opposing opinions too painful to be revealed. Whole communities living in the UK can feel alienated as the UK government appears to stand by and watch injustice heaped upon a people. How to respond can feel overwhelming.

One response by a group of people in Manchester was to set up the Olive Co-operative. It's a workers' co-operative, whose members include Jewish, Christian, Muslim and secular activists. Since the end of 2003 the Olive Co-op has taken over 100 people, including journalists, on one week study tours to Israel/Palestine. The Olive Co-op works with its Palestinian partner, the Alternative Tourism Group, and also provides bursaries for its tours to individuals who couldn't otherwise go but who'll commit to raising awareness on their return to the UK.

Raising awareness is one way in which anyone in the UK can work for change, and being

informed and empowered in this is crucial; for example, the Pax Christi pack *Living under Occupation* is packed full of useful ideas and links. At the Olive Co-op, we sell resources which are produced by Palestinians; for instance, a wonderful book of short stories called *Small Dreams* written by Nassar Ibrahim and Dr Majed Nassar. They state in their introduction: 'our rationale for writing English is to reach beyond our borders which are becoming ever more constricting'.

Moral Stories from Palestine is an inspirational book produced by the Arab Educational Institute, a Pax Christi partner. This features traditional Palestinian stories focusing on cultural wisdom, on qualities such as forgiveness and generosity. Another hugely informative work is *Palestine and Palestinians* - ostensibly a guidebook, but much more than that. Its authors, who live and work in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem have documented much which has been lost and obliterated, such as villages within Israel.

There are also innovative resources put together by cross-community initiatives. For example, the Alternative Information Center is an organisation in which Palestinians, Israelis and internationals work together to research and publicise otherwise overlooked features of the occupation. Their useful books include *A Wall on the Green Line?* A further example of cross-community co-

operation is Challenge, a magazine published in Jaffa. Articles in the latest edition include 'Settler invincibility: a myth deflated'.

And finally, it can be really useful to link into a network in the UK. For instance, following a visit to Israel/Palestine with Olive Co-op, a group of individuals set up a UK support group of the joint Israeli/Palestinian initiative, *Windows*. This UK group is now making many people aware of the positive cross-community work that can be done in the UK and in Israel/Palestine to work for justice.

For more information on any of these resources, or to hear more about our work (which includes selling fairly traded Palestinian handicrafts and olive oil), please get in touch at info@olivecoop.com or 0161 273 1970.

Mary Horbury, Olive Co-operative

Useful Websites

www.olivecoop.com

www.alternativenews.org;

www.win-peace.org;

www.hanitzotz.com/challenge

Celebrating Peacemaking - Challenging stereotypes

As Christian-Jewish relations have picked up in recent decades, Muslim-Jewish relations have apparently nose-dived. However, the animosity has nothing to do with the respective religious beliefs or cultural traditions, which have much in common, but is a tragic offspring of the territorial clash in the Middle East.

Behind the disturbing headlines, there are various initiatives, in this and other countries, dedicated to breaking down stereotypes and promoting reconciliation, peace and justice. Within the British Jewish community, among the most prominent advocates are the Jewish Council for Racial Equality, the Jewish Forum for Justice and Human Rights, and Jews for Justice for Palestinians. In addition, World Jewish Aid and Tzedek (Justice/Charity) provide material support around the world to people in need regardless of origin or belief.

Increasingly, there are joint initiatives too. One of the earliest was a Jewish-Palestinian dialogue group initiated in 1984, which met clandestinely in London venues for the first seven years. Today, there are numerous others, now able to meet openly, including the Arab-Jewish Forum. Jewish-Muslim contact is promoted by the Calamus Foundation, the Maimonides Foundation and Alif-Aleph. The latter group has recently published a very useful survey, 'A Mapping Report of Positive Contacts Between British Muslims and British Jews' [www.aauk.org].

In Manchester, there is the Muslim-Jewish Association, while in the Stamford Hill neighbourhood of London, where the two communities live side-by-side, the

Muslim-Jewish Forum brings together devout Muslims and Orthodox Jews. In line with their respective beliefs, the Forum is all male, but there are plans to initiate a women's branch.

There is a Jewish & Muslim Youth Theatre Group at the Tricycle Theatre in London, an interfaith football programme for Muslim and Jewish children hosted by Arsenal and various other joint cultural, music and drama projects. The newly formed 60-10 Project commemorates both the Nazi holocaust and the massacre of Muslims at Srebrenica.

The Three Faiths Forum fosters good relations between Christians, Jews and Muslims. One view is that such broader interfaith projects are less likely to be confrontational than groups of just Muslims and Jews. But experience doesn't always bear this out.

Fierce differences over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are often played out on British campuses, where relations between Muslims and Jews are frequently the most fraught. However, this has sometimes given rise to grass-roots Muslim-Jewish dialogue groups and joint seminars, several of them women-only.

In Israel, there are over 130 groups active in the fields of peace, human rights and co-existence, including: the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, B'tselem (human rights in the occupied territories), Children of Abraham, Gush Shalom (Peace Bloc), Interfaith Encounter Association, Israeli-Palestinian Bereaved Parents Forum, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Palestine-Israel Journal, Peace Now,

Physicians for Human Rights, Rabbis for Human Rights, Women Against The Wall and Women in Black. Most have websites.

In the US, probably the most successful group of many is the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group, which started in California in 1993 and has spread through the country.

While all such initiatives contribute vitally to lowering barriers and enhancing understanding, there is a limit to what they can achieve on their own. There is no avoiding the conclusion that a fair and sustainable solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians would also help immensely to ease the tensions and repair the relations between Jews, Arabs and Muslims. This is a goal worthy of all our efforts.

Dr Tony Klug is a Middle East analyst, vice chair of the Arab-Jewish Forum and a founder member of the Jewish Forum for Justice and Human Rights. Contact tonyklus@compuserve.com



Richard Kirsch of Rabbis for Human Rights and Beate Zilversmidt of Gush Shalom meet with Pax Christi delegation in Jerusalem

Diary

6-12 November, Cambridge

The Pax Christi ICON will be in Great St Mary's church. Service of Dedication on 6 November at 18.30 with Bishop Simon Barrington Ward. Daily meditations between 12.30 - 13.30 led by representatives of Cambridge's religious communities.

12 November (Sat) London

Peace Matters! Annual meeting of Westminster Justice and Peace Commission. Keynote speaker: Pat Gaffney Our Lady of Victories, 16 Abingdon Rd. W8 details 020 7437 1525

13 November (Sun) London

'A Requiem for War' - Martin Bell will give Remembrance Day lecture, 2 pm at the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road SE1. All welcome.

15 and 17 November (Tues and Thurs) Leeds

Reflections prayer and music for peace 12 noon - 1 pm at Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane. Leeds Inter-Church Peace Group, Pax Christi and Prayer Link. Contact Margaret Scally 0113 225 6968.

16 November (Thurs) London

For Global Justice - Poetry, music and song by artists in exile from round the world. St James' Church, Piccadilly. 6.30 pm. Tickets £8/£6 concessions from 020 7250 1315 or email: info@therefugeeproject.org

19 November (Sat) London

AGM of Movement for the Abolition of War. Vaughan House, Francis St SW1 10.30 - 3 pm. Speakers: Louise Richards of War on Want, Stuart Gendell of the Royal British Legion.

26 November (Sat) London

Voices from Occupied Iraq: international teach-in 10 - 5 pm University of London Union, Malet St WC1. £7 / £3 unwaged. www.iraqoccupationfocus.org.uk

December - Liverpool

The Pax Christi Icon will be in Chapel of Reconciliation, Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral throughout Advent. Following 5.15 Mass there will be on each Wednesday of Advent between 5.45 - 7.00pm. Speakers as indicated: 30 November, Pat

Gaffney, Pax Christi, 7 December, Fr Tom Cullinan, 14 December Jan Davies of Friends of Sabeel and 22 December, Archbishop Patrick Kelly. Contact: Steve Atherton 0151 522 1080.

5 December (Mon) London

Pax Christi Advent Service 7.30 pm at St Aloysius Church, Eversholt St, Euston. Led by Bernadette Farrell. Followed by Christmas Market.

29 December (Thurs) London

Annual Holy Innocents Service, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square at 11.00am, Co-ordinated by the Network of Christian Peace Organisations.

15 January 2006 Peace Sunday

Resource materials on the theme 'In Truth there is Peace' available from Pax Christi.

27-29 January (Fri-Sun)

Weekend of Services for Peace and Disarmament. Resource pack £5 from World Disarmament Campaign, PO Box 28209 Edinburgh EH9 1ZR tel. 0131 447 4004.

Reflection - Facing fearfulness - a challenge to peacemakers

When we discuss conflict we tend to assume that even in the grimmest circumstances people choose rationally and that fear, anger, grief and hatred do not cloud their judgment in anyway. This is especially so when we discuss political and military leaders. We are aware of the suffering and injustice that can flow from their actions, and seek to steer clear of the perils of providing them with alibis at other people's expense. We have no wish to stand in their shoes, and do not offer them the empathy or understanding that is quite properly reserved for those who are suffering or afflicted.

But one can only enter into the depths of a conflict if the assumption of culpable rationality is set aside: a community that believes itself to be threatened from without, especially when such threat is rooted in the reality of daily experience, is not a rational community: such is the situation of many Israelis and Palestinians and even many of us who, albeit at a distance, feel close to one or other of the peoples concerned.

Conflict is a process that is psychologically transformative, to the point of altering our most elementary perceptions of what is happening to us. Our view of the situation is hardened, over simplified and vigorously excludes contrary information, which is perceived as both false and threatening, especially in circumstances when the taking of innocent life is a regular occurrence. The 'other' is perceived in abstract terms of unremitting evil: violence acquires the force of necessity and the sanctity of righteousness. Such is what happens when people know elemental fear as part of their daily existence, and it is intensified if they themselves have a tragic narrative of communal victim hood.

In extreme circumstances, world views are transformed. People suffer a meltdown of hope and reach the conclusion that the world is a dark and terrible place where pre-emptive violence and massive retaliation are the only ways to achieve any kind of security. This view has been periodically articulated by some Israeli politicians and is the national policy of America, post September 11th. For those who see the world in these terms 'peaceniks' are well intentioned but dangerous: they have literally failed to grasp

the nature of human realities, and their policies will leave the country vulnerable and exposed.

It makes little difference that their country is well-armed and its enemies are not: massive military strength does not protect us from suicide bombers and September 11th and was perpetrated with the most rudimentary weaponry at the heart of the world's only superpower.

For many Israelis apart from religious and historical affinities, the key point about the West Bank is that it is in missile firing distance of their country's main centres of population. Hamas, the best organised of the Palestinian groups whose political fortunes are currently in the ascendant in the West Bank clearly seeks the end of the state of Israel. Its members would not be assuaged by a return to the 1967 borders and it has not hesitated to resort to suicide bombing in order to further its objectives. If the West Bank is handed over to the Palestinians, the remaining Israeli territory looks - and feels - very fragile - at one point it is only 15 kilometers across and easily bisected by hostile forces. Jerusalem would be specially exposed by a return to the 67 borders and in the aftermath of the Al Asqa intifada such security concerns are upmost in fuelling right wing political responses.

None of this justifies any infringement of Palestinian human rights or in any way excuses the current situation of poverty restriction and daily trauma which is the lot of so many of the West Bank Palestinians. It is arguable that many have turned to Hamas out of sheer desperation, and certainly the Palestinian security situation is far more fragile than even that of the Israel. The West Bank is a mere 6000 kilometre in area. But if peacemakers are to make progress they must hear and work with the fearfulness of both sides, and understand the impact of a tragic conflict on the perceptions of all concerned. In Israel-Palestine such understanding is the sine qua non of working for Peace and Justice achieving it is indeed a very great challenge.

Jonathan Gorsky, is part of the Education Team of The Council of Christians and Jews. www.ccj.org.uk

Office Report

Anniversary celebrations in Belgium

Celebrations were held Brussels at the end of October to mark Pax Christi's 60th anniversary. The office team attended together with Stewart Hemsley our Chair and Bishops Malcolm McMahon our President. Part of the anniversary gathering included the presentation of the Pax Christi International peace award to Jacques Delors for his vision of the European Union as a peace project as well as helping to develop Europe's capacity to contribute to world peace. Mass was celebrated at the Church Notre Dame au Sablon in Brussels with Patriarch Michel Sabbah, current President and former presidents Cardinal Danneels from Belgium and Bishop Betazzi from Italy. Check the Pax Christi website for more reports on this and for photographs.

Peace Sunday 2006

If you have not yet placed your order for Peace Sunday materials please do so as soon as possible! Materials will be send out to all parishes during the last week of November, this might be a good time to contact your parish team and offer to help in promoting Peace Sunday. Materials will also be available on the website.

Membership to Pax Christi - an ideal Christmas Gift

If Pax Christi means a lot to you... why not share this experience with a friend a family member this Christmas by taking out a Gift Subscription. As a special offer this Christmas we will include with the subscription a copy of the Pax Christi Taste for Peace recipes and reflections from the Pax Christi family around the world. Just send us the subscription and let us know the name and contact details of the person and we will send them a welcome card and a Taste for Peace. Subscription rates are £8.00 low income, £18.00 individual and £22 family.

Keep Peace alive - leave a Legacy of Peace.

An opportunity for those who have supported Pax Christi during their lifetime to continue that commitment to peace after their death. Legacies can be made to Pax Christi to help expand and develop our outreach and our campaign work or to the Christian Peace Education Fund (charitable) to support Pax Christi's and other's peace education work. Please contact the office if you would like further information on legacies.

Keep peace alive. Remember Pax Christi when making or up-dating your will

Please send me information on

Membership Publications Legacy

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Tel: _____

Return to Pax Christi, St Joseph's, Watford Way, Hendon, London, NW4 4TY
Tel: 020 8203 4884 email: paxchristi@gn.apc.org www.paxchristi.org.uk

Pax Christi - Our Values

Pax Christi members live by the biblically inspired values of **Peace, Reconciliation, Nonviolence.**

These values are supported by the witness of peacemakers down the ages and the experience of the Pax Christi community.

Pax Christi is rooted in Catholic Christianity but is open to all who are in sympathy with its values and work.

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