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ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL



OPPOSING THE BULLDOZERS, THE ARMY AND THE OCCUPATION
THROUGH DIRECT ACTION AND A JOINT POPULAR STRUGGLE

INTRODUCTION

The following texts, drawn out from the vast ocean of information about occupied Palestine, do not constitute an attempt to represent “Anarchists Against the Wall” the political entity, but rather the small-scale, particular contexts and realities in which it operates. And yet we hope that in shedding light on the latter, a great deal about the nature of the former will also shine through.

First and foremost, Anarchists Against the Wall is a banner under which actions are made that are diametrically opposed, not only to the occupation, but also to its root causes; to the personal perspectives and political systems within Israel that sustain it, military and civilian. AAtW sweats off the excess weight of thick, heavy ideological frames by making *practice* its center of gravity. This is not to imply that principled, theoretical analyses are not needed, of course - we certainly encourage applying them to deconstruct Zionist Apartheid myths; however, at this time, the individuals comprising AAtW would rather apply tugging ropes, bolt-cutters and ten-pound hammers to deconstruct Israel’s Wall and express their disagreement with IDF roadblocks.

Not only direct action, but also the joint struggle is at the heart of AAtW. In fact, the group’s inception can be traced back to the fusion of parallel undercurrents in Palestine and Israel during the al-Aqsa Intifada, the second Palestinian uprising. In Israel, the failure of the Oslo Accords resulted in a general nationalist entrenchment and a shift to the right, including within the so-called “Peace Camp”; however, it had an opposite effect on those at the far end of that spectrum, as the realization of *why* Oslo failed led many to permanently let go of the coattails of the Zionist left. Meanwhile, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, although significantly more militarized than the first, the second Intifada contained widespread instances of popular struggle and civilian resistance, such as direct actions, protests and demonstrations, NGO initiatives, independent information and media efforts, youth projects, boycott campaigns, and civil disobedience, usually led by local popular committees. Marginalized as they were by the levels of violence and increasing Palestinian Authority hierarchical centralization, these efforts nevertheless managed to put down roots, and eventually bear fruit.

AAtW was a product of those two undercurrents coming together in 2003 - one year after Israel began construction of the Wall - at a four-month long protest camp formed by Palestinian, Israeli and international activists in the village of Mas’ha, whose lands were being lost to the wall. This camp became a focal point for a new form of struggle: joint, civilian, directly-democratic, community based – a de-facto third Intifada, known as “the Intifada of the Wall”.

Although consisting of few Israeli activists, AAtW took part in this new development intensively, alongside an ever-widening number of Palestinian villages whose livelihoods were threatened by the wall: from Mas’ha to Budrus

possible to stand up to the injustice. Once the Israelis in solidarity understood all of this, they became dedicated to the work and became real warriors that earned the trust of all. They contributed much by revealing the true face of the occupation - its tactics, its lies and its organized terror against Palestinians - in opposition to those who attempt to normalize and whitewash the occupation.

These people were always willing to take upon themselves whatever was asked of them by the Popular Committee, and moreover, often took the initiative, offering ideas and suggestions. In this way, they demonstrated that they were true fighters - not only fans or friends, or cogs in the machine of the occupation. They are heroes in the non-violent campaign of the brave.

Honorable audience, recently a decision was taken by the body called the Israeli High Court of Justice, to cancel sections of the fence in Bil’in and to return a small amount of the stolen lands. This decision was taken after a long campaign with the participation of peace workers from every land, and the shooting injuries of almost a thousand demonstrators, in addition to tens of arrests and many more assaults.

We went to this occupation court not out of faith in it, but to prove that these courts are nothing but tools of the occupation. They are like a soldier that shoots you in the head and kills you, and then wraps your head in a white cloth, to be portrayed as a first aid worker. In its decision, this court proved to be cowardly and caused injustice, and we turn your attention to the fact that our campaign was against the principle of the wall and not in opposition to its specific route.

Therefore we will continue in our struggle, until the occupational government destroys the wall and the settlements in all of Palestine, and we will build together, with our bodies, real bridges of love and security and peace in order to conquer the wall, and we will crush all the occupation’s plans until we reach the ocean that knows no border - and on its safe shores, we will sing the song of freedom and peace, together - far from the injustices of the occupation and its roadblocks and barriers.

Blessings and respect to all of the Israelis, each and every one individually, that believe in peace and in our legitimate rights, and welcome to Bil’in.

(September 7, 2007)



VICTORY!

■ Basel Mansour

[The following are excerpts from remarks made in September 2007 by Basel Mansour, representative of Bil'in's Popular Committee, to Israelis that participated in the demonstration in the village following Israel's High Court ruling to change the route of the Apartheid Wall on Bil'in's lands]

Lovers of peace, friends of freedom and justice... our partners in the struggle and in the creation of this partial victory - I bless you in the name of our Palestinian people, in the name of the residents of Bil'in, that you came to know, and that came to know you, and by whose side you stood ever since they began their opposition to the fence and the settlement that squats on a large part of their land. You came to us without considering the consequences - the Zionist occupational government attempts to implant the deceptive and distorted idea that the Palestinians are your enemy and want to kill you. By way of this shared journey, we proved the opposite and together we demonstrated the truth: that Israelis can stand beside Palestinians and live with them in peace and security, and even struggle with them against injustice and occupation, on the fundamental basis that this occupation is an enemy of humanity.

You succeeded in overcoming the army's roadblocks in order to arrive here through a difficult, mountainous path, and were vulnerable to its shooting attacks. In this way many of you were wounded by bullets that originated from the merciless occupation army - and not from Palestinians, that the occupation attempts to distort and portray as a vicious animal that wants to devour Israelis or throw them into the sea.

You were braver than your fearful government. You participated in the struggle actively and in every way - morally, physically, in the courts and in the media. In the battlefield, you were on the frontlines, calling with us for freedom, in your belief that only the manifestation of justice will guarantee the creation of peace and security for our two peoples, and not the building of walls and the expanding of weapons warehouses.

You have been real partners - awake with us late at night, in confronting the almost daily invasions of village homes by the army; together with us you opposed many attempts to arrest, and you yourselves were injured and arrested - and you conveyed the true picture to the Israeli society. You disputed the positions of the government and the army in every arena - until the entire world was a witness to this special connection that was created on the land of Bil'in, that united conversations and meetings between cultures, creeds and religions. A connection like this must be victorious, history must immortalize it.

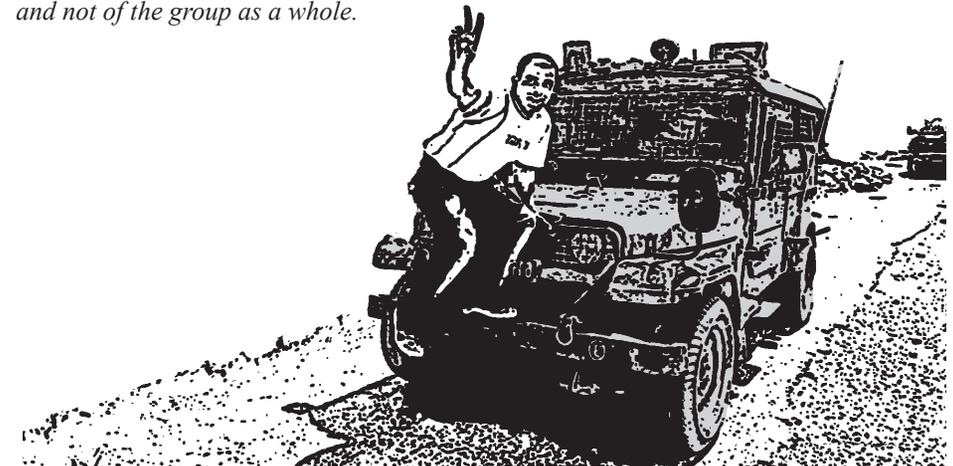
Honorable audience, one of the biggest difficulties in this campaign was how to organize and manage the connection with the Israelis in solidarity, after our Palestinian people have always suffered injustice from the Zionist occupation. This was done while Palestinians aspire to lives of freedom, respect, and culture, and the mobilization of the biggest number of Israelis and international representatives

to Bil'in to Jayyous to Ni'ilin to Um Salmuna, and so on, in a pattern of direct action and joint struggle which continues today. A key component of AAtW's mode of operation was and remains redirecting the racist privilege we enjoy under Israel's discriminatory policies, using it instead to decrease military violence at Palestinian protests by the mere act of joining them, as the army's rules of engagement are significantly different (particularly regarding live ammunition) when Israelis are present.

The Intifada of the Wall continues, of course, and at great human cost: as of February 2009, seventeen unarmed Palestinian protesters have been murdered by soldiers and border police at demonstrations against its construction, and thousands of others injured or arrested - Palestinian, international and Israeli. So far, AAtW members have faced over one hundred indictments (half of which are still pending), mostly for "bringing the war home" through protest actions carried out inside Israeli cities. Moreover, setting aside the operating expenses of everyday political work, such as transportation, phone bills, first aid or printing costs, AAtW legal debts currently stand at over 40,000 US Dollars, in fees owed to dedicated lawyers working tirelessly to represent us in the face of escalating legal repression from the police and the courts.

Obviously, AAtW does not receive funding from any official organization or association (state, governmental or NGO), nor do we pay salaries or maintain offices. We rely entirely on donations from people, all over the world, who realize the importance and wish to enable the continuation of our on-the-ground support for the Palestinian struggle. As the costs of our legal harassment by the state accumulate, we find ourselves in dire need of financial support, and therefore seek your help. If you are able to contribute financially in any way, please log on to <http://awalls.org/donations> for details on how to do so.

Editor's Note: *due to a wide variety of practical as well as principled political stances within Anarchists Against the Wall, we would like to emphasize that all content expressed herein, while well-reasoned and insightful, represents solely the opinions of the authors, and not of the group as a whole.*



* All graphics adapted from photographs by *Activestills*, www.activestills.org

ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL: A PARADIGM FOR DIRECT ACTION IN THE BELLY OF LEVIATHAN – YA BASTA / KHALAS!

■ *Bill Templer*

“A voice is crying out for justice, from every place where there is struggle... may all humanity hear itself in our cry.”

—Zapatista compañera Elena, Chiapas, 21 July 2007

Anarchists Against the Wall has become one of the major direct-action groups protesting against the multiple oppressions of the Israeli state. Their politics concentrate on radical confrontation, and they are one of the few tough bunches of comrades in Israel/Palestine facing the brutal power of the state in concrete solidarity with the oppressed, week after week, in a spirit of what is called in Arabic tsumud, persistence with grit, non-violent dogged resistance.

STOPPING THE GREAT WALL OF PALESTINE

AAtW activists are centrally involved in the struggle against the West Bank Barrier, the segregation wall being built by the Israeli political class. They are out there every week with the Palestinian popular resistance and village committees against the Apartheid Wall - known in Hebrew by the euphemism geder ha-hafrada (Separation Fence) and called by many Palestinians jidar al-fasl al-‘unsuri (‘Racial Segregation Wall’) - in diverse areas of the West Bank, including the villages of Bil’in west of Ramallah, al-Ma’asara and Ertas south of Bethlehem and elsewhere. Their demo at Bil’in on 3 August 2007 was number 130th. They are also helping to protect Palestinian olive trees from bulldozing as ever more land is expropriated. At the same time, they are engaged in a really major legal campaign in the courts to defend their right to join together with Palestinians to protect their land and protest state violence and oppression (see below).

FIGHTING HOUSE DEMOLITIONS

As AAtW broadens the interface of struggle, it became recently involved in direct action against house demolitions of Arab Palestinian and Jewish working-class Israeli homes inside the Zionist state, vicious urban gentrification and the resultant plight of the homeless, and wholesale demolition of homes of ‘resistant’ simple Bedouin, mainly ex-herders and marginal agriculturalists in the semi-arid Negev, now settled in permanent largely ‘unrecognized’ villages and gradually absorbed as wage slaves in the Israeli capitalist economy after most of their lands were literally robbed.

total. The Strip, however, is impenetrable for us.

This time, we could only demonstrate, shout slogans and read the news. There was a feeling of being imprisoned within Israel's borders. Though utterly different, I could suddenly understand, personally, what it meant to have my movement restricted.

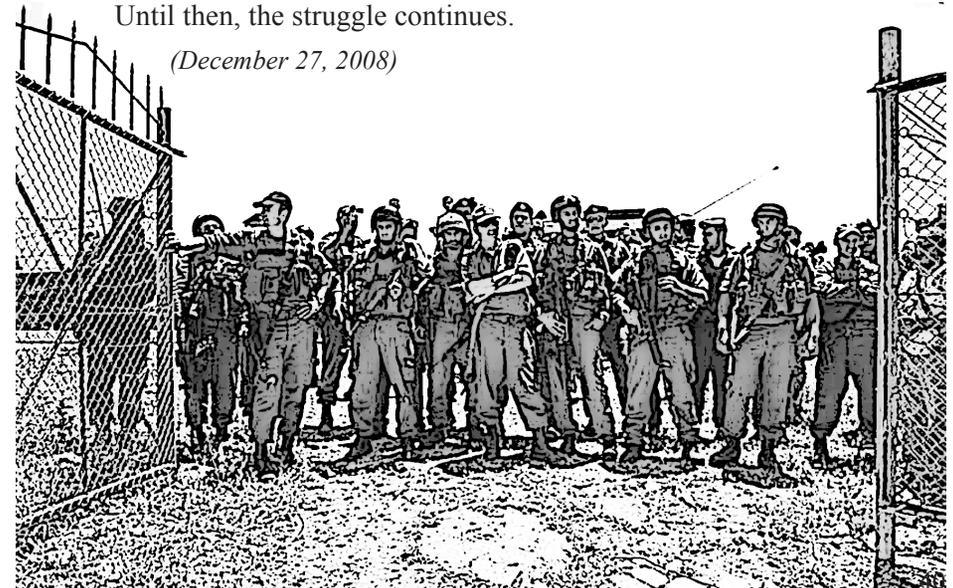
But perhaps we did manage to disrupt something, because the police and the Israeli secret service targeted Palestinians living in Israel, and to a lesser extent, activists in Anarchists Against the Wall. Many were arrested, interrogated for hours without any reason other than intimidation. In one of the court hearings, a prosecutor actually said that our actions “damage the morale of Israeli soldiers”. Indeed, the only democracy in the Middle East.

Personally, I do not think I will see the end of the occupation in my lifetime - I am 30 years old. Most Israelis do not care about Palestinians, or, for that matter, even about crimes against humanity committed against them. Palestinians are far too remote to be present in the pains and minds of most Israelis. Who needs to feel the occupation while sitting in a coffee shop or eating hummus in Jaffa? Israel exists in a bubble. When I see the path of the wall I ask myself, who is locking who in? Israel can only look towards the sea on its West, as it has locked shut all doors to the Middle East.

Though I believe that our work within Israel is crucial, I am also aware of the fact that our voice is faint and hardly heard. The occupation and Israeli Apartheid can only come to an end if such an end is forced upon it, mainly through boycott sanctions and other forms of international pressure. As the status quo continues, boycott - economic, academic, cultural - is the only effective way to pressure Israel. But I have no illusions; it seems as if the world has not yet seen enough Palestinian blood. The road ahead of us is still long.

Until then, the struggle continues.

(December 27, 2008)



Israel, the only haven for Jews. In 2006, a friend who often attended demonstrations in the West Bank, showed me the other side of my reality. It took me a full year to grasp the essence of the occupation, and journey the road to rid myself from the brainwash I never knew I had undergone.

One Friday in May 2007, I arrived at the village of Bil'in for the first time, where Israel's wall was being built on villagers' land. There, for the first time, all the pieces came together - I could see, with my own eyes, Israeli Apartheid. From then on, demonstrations became a weekly thing, the forming of a habit.

Before I knew it, I started joining Anarchists Against the Wall's meetings and demonstrations, becoming more heavily involved. Soon enough I was organizing the transportation for our Friday expeditions. Being part of those who decide, those who do, was an empowering experience. I met people from different backgrounds, ages, shapes and colors... all different, yet united by the same cause. We are all driven by the wish to fight the occupation and Apartheid. We hardly ever bother with promoting our various grand-scheme-of-things-ideas. Once the occupation will be behind us, we will have the luxury to discuss our diverse opinions.

I am perfectly aware that our actions alone will not end Israeli Apartheid. It will take much more than that. But I believe (or want to believe) that we disrupt Israel and its notion of "peace and quiet". I want to believe that when we march down the streets of Tel Aviv with banners calling for an end to the war, bystanders are forced to think. Perhaps our mere presence in the streets, our actions, will bring the consequences of the occupation to their backyard - and not some 20km away. Even those who call us traitors or self-hating-Jews are in fact reacting to the occupation. To an extent, I derive some comfort from such comments, since they show we are forcing people to be aware that there is an occupation and that Palestinians do exist.

The massacre in Gaza, in which more than 1,300 people were killed, was for us the ultimate proof that Israel is doing ethnic cleansing. Again, though I am perfectly aware of the government's capability to commit such crimes - even to feel comfortable while committing them - something about how this "war" was conducted felt revolting in new, unfamiliar ways. Even more appalling was the fact that 80% of the Israeli public supported the slaughter.

During those days, the sense of frustration and hopelessness overwhelmed us all. We organized demonstrations daily, we joined others' demonstrations in Palestinian villages and cities, inside Israel and in the West Bank, but there was nothing we could do to stop the wheels of that runaway train: Israeli fascism.

There was something else, too, apart from the incomprehensible dimensions of the catastrophe in Gaza. In the West Bank, we have gotten used to things being accessible. When, for instance, a murder occurs somewhere in the West Bank, we are able to get there, physically; the Apartheid segregation is not as

REBUILDING DEMOLISHED HOMES

As of August 2007, AAtW activists are helping rebuild the home of Zina and Omar Al-Adassi in the Ajami neighborhood of Jaffa, south Tel Aviv, which was bulldozed full of furnishings early July at five in the morning by the Israel Land Administration. The Al-Adassi family has four children, one of whom is disabled. They have lived in their home for 26 years, and since its destruction have been living outdoors in an orchard in Jaffa. The demolition of the Al-Adassi family home is part of a current wave of hundreds of demolition and evacuation orders in Jaffa, designed to evict Arab residents and promote the transformation of Jaffa into an exclusively wealthy-Jewish city, with the construction of some 5,000 luxury housing units where Ajami now stands. Reconstruction of the Al-Adassi home is coordinated by the Jaffa Popular Committee, founded in March 2007 to combat the wave of home demolitions and evacuations of Arab residents from Jaffa.

SUDANESE REFUGEES IN DISTRESS

AAtW people have also taken a direct role in lending a hand to Darfur refugees, who have fled into Israel across the Sinai desert from Egypt - especially during recent months - and are being badly mistreated by the Israeli state and local municipalities. A spokesperson from the Prime Minister's office has said: "We don't want to be the Promised Land for African refugees." Most are homeless, penniless; many have been imprisoned in Israel as 'enemy nationals,' since Sudan does not recognize Israel. All face the threat of deportation. A number of refugees were recently driven out of town by Hadera city hall and literally dumped in Liberty Bell Park in Jerusalem; AAtW activists are now helping them find shelter. There are some 2,400 African refugees in Israel now, about half of which came from Sudan. Many in the Israeli political class and the electorate oppose their deportation to Egypt, but few Jews in Israel other than AAtW call for them to receive asylum status and stay.

BUILDING NATURAL BRIDGES OF RESISTANCE

Progressive groups in North America should seek direct contact with AAtW, through their website and other channels. They need solidarity, practical productive links, and invitations to speak. They are present on a broad front of protest in Israel, including against nuclear arms on Hiroshima Day, Aug. 6. Israel is the only nuclear power in the Near East. As political scientist Neve Gordon recently wrote in The Nation's online edition (July 30, 2007):

"They have no official leaders, no office, and no paid staff, and yet they have managed to accomplish more than many well-oiled NGOs and social movements [...] As Jewish activists they are well aware that the Israeli military behaves very differently when Israeli Jews are present during a protest in the West Bank and that the level of violence, while still severe, is much less intense. Indeed, according to Israeli soldiers the military has more stringent open fire regulations for demonstrations in which non-Palestinians participate. So when

a village's public committee decides to carry out non-violent protests against the occupying power, the anarchists mingle with the demonstrating villagers, thus becoming a human shield for all of those Palestinians who have chosen to follow the path of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Even though the anarchists are frequently beaten and arrested, they do not desist."

THE LEGAL STRUGGLE

Like SDS increasingly will be in North America, AAtW is now engaged in a major battle to protect civil liberties. The Israeli state is seeking to undermine their work by a massive barrage of indictments, 63 to date. Neve Gordon:

"[w]hen the Israeli police began to realize that beating and detaining them would not stop their stubborn resistance, a different strategy was adopted. Scores of legal indictments were issued by the state prosecutor. The anarchists took this as a new challenge. They have launched a legal campaign, whose aim is to defend the basic civil right of all Israelis to resist their government's rights-abusive policies. Leading this battle is Gabi Lasky, an energetic lawyer, who spends many of her weekends releasing anarchists from detention and her weekdays representing them in court."

So AAtW comrades also need material help, and have just issued an appeal for funds. As the arrest of an SDSer in a clash with neo-Nazis in Morristown, NJ on July 28 points up, a legal defense fund is integral to the struggle, from Brooklyn to Bil'in.

Established four years ago, the political spectrum of activists in AAtW is wider than social anarchism in the stricter sense and reflects antiauthoritarian anticapitalist PGA views as well, analogous to a rich array of thinking inside SDS/MDS about analysis, praxis & ways forward. But all in AAtW are committed to uncompromising direct action on various fronts, often against fully-armed Israeli troops. A number have been wounded in confrontations with state violence. North Americans can learn from their struggle. Their battle on the streets and in the courts. They are natural allies.

¡YA BASTA! / KHALAS!

The global synergy of resistance is deepening. At a time when Zapatistas meeting in Chiapas are engaged in an international Encuentro/Encounter with followers of La Sexta Declaración de la Selva Lacandona from more than 80 countries, and the Oaxacan Popular Movement is growing in strength as a people's rebellion, it is important to see AAtW in the spirit of such resistance, struggle for indigenous autonomy and vernacular values, the ethos of Arab-Palestinian/Jewish radical solidarity - the "many other groups who exist all over the world but who we do not see until they shout Ya Basta of being despised, and they rise up, and then we see them, we hear them, and we learn from them" (Sixth Declaration EZLN, June 2005).

(August 4, 2007)

to the morgue by one of the doctors, where Ahmed's tiny body lay inanimate.

The sight hit me with shock. I had never seen a dead body before, let alone that of a child. I didn't know how to react or what to say. Anger, frustration and pain flooded my body. Though the army's cruelty and violence are nothing new, I could not understand how a 10-year old could have ever been perceived as a threat to a soldier.

The following day, at the funeral, thousands of people from all over the West Bank came to show their solidarity and share their pain with Ahmed Musa's family. We were there too, lost for words.

In the evening, after the funeral, rage took over the streets of Ni'ilin once again, and clashes erupted as the army invaded the village. Yousef Amirah, 17-years old, was in a yard close to the clashes, observing. An armored jeep pulled up at the street in front of him, and a soldier shot three rounds of rubber-coated bullets from inside the jeep through the firing loophole. Two bullets ended up lodged inside Yousef's skull. Minutes later, he was pronounced clinically dead at the Ramallah hospital, and died of his injuries a few days after.

The shock was once again terrible. Two murdered kids in two days. When we returned from the village, we joined others in an impromptu demonstration in front of the home of the minister of defense, Ehud Barak. Despite our rage, surrounded by dozens of cops, all we could do was to very shortly block one of Tel Aviv main roads, and shout slogans while we hold the murdered children's pictures in our hands.

Though I stood there and shouted along with others, my rage was certainly not only directed at Barak. Indeed, Barak is responsible for the murder of Ahmed and Yousef, and countless others before them, but he and the government he represents are certainly not the only ones. To me, Israeli citizens are the ones to point the finger at; they are the ones who elected these politicians; they are the ones who wholeheartedly support the government as it commits murder and wages war. Israeli citizens are the ones that do not revolt against racism, Apartheid and ethnic cleansing. In fact, all these are no more than a crystallization of Israeli public opinion.

Israeli children are brainwashed, from their very birth, to believe that Israel must be a Jewish state, that Palestinians are the enemy, that military service is a sacred duty - no matter the cost, no matter who is hurt. But despite this powerful indoctrination, we are all responsible for our actions. Though conscription is compulsory, decent people can always make a decent choice.

Faced by such widespread Israeli compliance with the crimes of our government, I cannot escape the conclusion that we are all accomplices through our silence, thorough the lack of deed.

FROM ZIONISM TO ANARCHY

I was not born in Israel, nor was I born an anarchist. I immigrated to Israel from Canada in 2001. I was a Zionist and believed my place in the world was in



HERE MURDERERS ARE HEROES

■ Sarah Assouline

On Tuesday evening, July 27th, 2008, a few of us gathered at the Vegan Community House for a meeting. Shortly before the meeting was scheduled to begin, we received the news: a child was murdered by the army in Nil'in. Minutes later, five of us quickly headed out to the village. When we got there, hundreds of people were in the streets, rioting out of sheer fury over the death of their neighbor, friend, brother and son. The army, too, was rioting. It had invaded the village, with its armored jeeps and M16-toting soldiers.

About an hour earlier, 10-year old Ahmed Musa along with a small group of kids and teenagers had approached the wall's construction site and were messing with the razor-wire installed around it by the army. A military jeep approached them, shooting rubber bullets. The kids ran away, but in his escape, Ahmed Musa lost his sandal. When he returned to pick it up, a soldier got out of the jeep and shot a single live bullet into the little boy's forehead, killing him on the spot. The others, including his own brother, carried his lifeless body back to the village, leaving a thick trail of blood through the ancient olive groves. From there he was transferred to the hospital in Ramallah, where, shortly after, his body was sent to the morgue.

Faced with the despair and deep sadness that slowly started accompanying the initial rage, the five of us eventually headed towards Ramallah as riots quieted down, hoping for something. A confirmation of the unbelievable maybe, or perhaps simply to offer the family our support. However, the family was already gone when we got there. For a reason I cannot clearly remember, we were taken

כפי ללقتל - כפי ללחצאר
 די להרג - די למצור
 TOP THE KILLING - END THE SIEGE



SPEECH FOR THE TEL AVIV DEMONSTRATION AGAINST THE WAR ON GAZA

■ Adar Grayevsky & Yanay Israeli

[On January 3, 2009, eight days after the beginning of Operation Cast Lead, AAtW took part in a thousands' strong march and rally in Tel Aviv against the attack on Gaza. The following is the speech AAtW members wrote for the event]

The attacks on Gaza bear witness to an alarming process pushing Israeli society further into the realms of extremism. Through this process, attacks on civilian populations become more and more brutal, while being simultaneously portrayed as essential, in fact as the very epitome of justice. It is the process of a moral obtusion washing over our entire society, a process by which everything and anything becomes permissible.

What makes this extremism possible? It takes hold through the distortion of facts and the blurring of notions. Such blurring is encouraged and nurtured by politicians and military officials, and it has been accompanying us as a society for a long time. We can all recall how the deepening of the occupation in Gaza and the West Bank was referred to as a peace process; how total Israeli control over people's lives in Gaza was termed disengagement; and how a cruel siege that included mass-starvation and withholding of the most basic goods became known as a period of "calm".

Today we are told that a ruthless attack on Gaza's populace is in fact a war on Hamas; we are told that dropping bombs on residential areas in the world's most densely-populated region is not a war crime but "an assault on the infrastructure of terrorism"; that shelling the University of Gaza's female dorms is eliminating explosives labs, and that murdering hundreds of women and children consti-

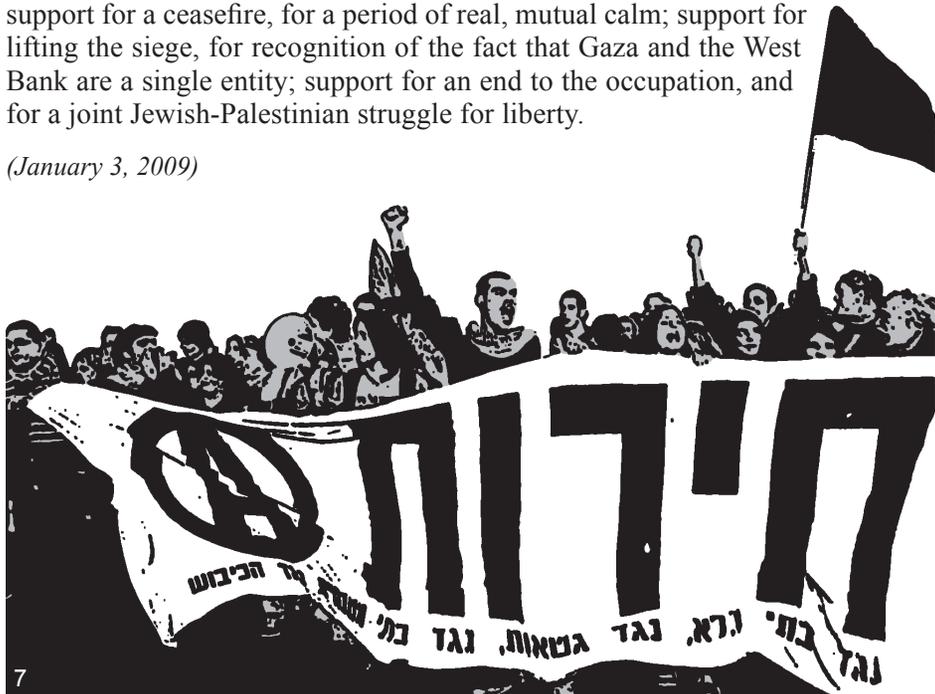
tutes just and moral combat. Foreign Affairs Minister Tzipi Livni went even further and explained how waging war is essential to the advancement of peace, no less. Yes, it appears that what we are witnessing in Gaza today constitutes the Israeli government's current definition of a "peace process".

We have come here to say that this war is not necessary and is certainly not just. We have come here to refuse the politics of hatred and vengeance. We have come here to oppose the whitewashing of war crimes, and their portrayal as a fight against terrorists. We are here to say that those who speak out against civilian casualties in Sderot cannot avoid speaking against the mass-killing taking place in Gaza, courtesy of the Israeli army's bombardments.

Thousands of people, both Palestinian and Jewish, have demonstrated against the war in the course of the past week. Israel's security apparatus, along with the mainstream media, are doing their very best to forcefully silence these voices of sanity. Those who expressed their opposition to the war were denounced as traitors, their protests portrayed as disturbances. But above all else, the pro-war forces within Israel have tried to crush the growing dissent through mass-arrests of Palestinians all across the country. Over 700 people who dared oppose the war have been arrested in the past week. More than 200 of them are still imprisoned, nearly half of them minors. This is a form of racist, political persecution which should worry every single Israeli citizen.

We stand here today, together, Jews and Palestinians, women and men, to make sure our protest is heard. To say no to military attacks on civilian populations, and no to war. I am frequently asked, why are you constantly opposing? However, we are marching here today not to oppose, but to voice our support: support for a ceasefire, for a period of real, mutual calm; support for lifting the siege, for recognition of the fact that Gaza and the West Bank are a single entity; support for an end to the occupation, and for a joint Jewish-Palestinian struggle for liberty.

(January 3, 2009)



our unconditional solidarity to the goals and needs of the oppressed sector? These questions, although cynically phrased, are not entirely false. National liberation is always ambiguous: it is the liberation from colonialist oppression and at the same time the construction of new models of oppressions and exploitation, and it is exactly within this ambivalent situation that we need to choose our path. This becomes even more complicated when we talk about a colonialist situation that cannot be dealt with by driving the colonialist powers back to their home-countries, but rather through de-colonizing the settler society, taking the Israelis into account not only as the current oppressors but also as a people that deserves the same freedoms and rights as all other peoples in the region.

The joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle - the fight against the wall that AAtW is leading, or the many campaigns that Ta'ayush organized in the occupied territories or in '48 Israel - seem to be the best way to tackle the many contradictions we face in a politically productive way. The joint work of Israelis and Palestinians is in this sense one of the goals, and maybe the most important goal, of every campaign we take part in, be it the wall, house demolitions or resisting army invasions. Through this work we deconstruct the racist foundations of the conflict. An Israeli taking part in a Palestinian demonstration, risking his life and body in the face of brutal army oppression, is challenging not only the basic understandings of the Israeli soldier (soldiers ask us quite often, before or after shooting at us, if we are not afraid to get killed inside the villages by their Palestinian residents), but also those of the Palestinian farmer that met Israelis only as their oppressors.

Naturally, the coming together of Palestinians and Israelis is not an easy task for both sides. We must remember that many cultural, political and social differences exist alongside our positions of power within this conflict, positions we cannot simply ignore out of hope or belief that we are all just equal partners in a struggle. The struggle to change and challenge Palestinian culture with its Patriarchal, Militarist and Homophobic elements is not our task but that of our Palestinian comrades to whom we must offer our solidarity - first and foremost by lifting the weight of the occupation from their shoulders and fighting those same elements in our own society. Liberation is always a process, and it can evolve and intensify only by removing the biggest obstacle that stands in our way.

The process of trying to build a joint future for Israelis and Palestinians in the present rife with so many preconditions raises plenty of contradictions. Our greatest task is finding out how to avoid these contradictions stopping us from carrying on our fight, as well as finding out how to learn from them and embrace them into a new understanding of the struggle against global Capitalism. We are on the geographical and ideological frontline of the new War, and our experiences, victories and failures will echo around the globe.

ferent future, for what we think is the best solution for all people to live with - but what is it?

One of the most important issues for Israel's radical left, especially since the beginning of the Intifada, is the joint political work of Palestinians and Israeli Jews. This could be understood as a reaction to the racist politics Israel stands for: total separation between Israelis and Palestinians, be it with walls (in '48 Israel and in the west bank), checkpoints and Apartheid roads, or through separate schools, racist and religious marriage laws and racist harassment of "Arab-looking" people at the entrance of every mall, restaurant or club. In such a blatantly racist atmosphere, the most radical act is to break this separation, by demonstrating together with Palestinians, living together, talking to each other, loving and caring for each other - even to make love with each other. It is not very well-recognized what a strong and amazing emotional effect meeting Palestinians for the first time as equal partners in a struggle, or even becoming friends with them, has on an Israeli Jew, and how important it is to have these contacts in order to challenge your own racist and orientalist attitudes and destroy the "Clash of Cultures" theory (I can personally admit that sometimes it was only my emotional connection to my several Palestinian friends that kept me sane under the constant wave of racist and nationalist propaganda). To come together, to live together - Ta'ayush in Arabic - is simultaneously our means and our ends.

LIBERATION IS A PROCESS

Bringing down the borders of nation and race might be the ultimate goal, but the situation is a bit more challenging: Palestinians, as an ethnic group suffering from national oppression and devoid of its own self-determination and state, is fighting against his oppression in the most common and familiar way: Palestinians are leading a national liberation struggle in hope of achieving an independent, national state. The fact that people forced to live under racist or nationalist oppression merge into a national group as a way for fighting for their rights, along with the sad fact that almost all national liberation struggles create new oppressive systems, should not be alien to us as Israeli Jews.

But what should do as Anarchists in this struggle? What are we actually fighting for, and with whom? Are we trying to be a part of this "national Liberation process" as some Israeli radical left activists do, and see ourselves as Jewish-Palestinians? Or do we believe that national liberation is just a point one should go through, one step forward, and that the day it ends victoriously (and another good question would be what does the end of a national liberation struggle in Palestine mean?) will also be the day the exploited Palestinian masses start the social revolution together with their Jewish working class brothers and sisters? Or maybe it is totally irrelevant what we think or want, because we are a part of the colonialist society and as such should only offer

TEAR GAS AND TEA DILEMMAS OF PRINCIPLED OPPOSITION AND PRIVILEGE

■ *Kobi Snitz*

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The truly marginalized political positions belong in a category of ideas which are considered mad or irresponsible. The former label usually requires no argument, but the latter is supported by an argument which cannot be dismissed out of hand. As the argument goes, when a position is sufficiently marginalized it actually becomes counterproductive. Instead, the responsible madman is urged towards the often-contradictory responsible position. This urging is possible when the basic terms of discussion are sufficiently distorted, and therefore it is useful to take another look at them.

"OUR GOOD INTENTIONS LEAD TO THIS HELL"; CRITICIZING THE WALL IN ISRAEL

For the last four years Israel has been building what it calls a security barrier (the wall) in the West Bank. The impact of this, the largest construction project in Israeli history, can only be understood in connection with the range of other Israeli policies and practices in the West Bank. According to the latest information from B'tselem - the leading Israeli human rights organization - these include about 40 manned checkpoints and about 470 physical barriers of other kinds. This count only includes the barriers located inside the West Bank which prevent movement between Palestinian towns and villages, not from the West Bank into Israel.¹ The checkpoints and barriers enforce an elaborate system of restrictions on the movement of all Palestinians in accordance with ever-changing rules which are not published, and are therefore almost impossible to challenge legally^{2,3}. These policies and others divide the Palestinian territories into what is called "territorial units" in IDF lingo.⁴

The map of the divided west bank speaks for itself, but if that is not enough, some of the people involved in implementing Israeli policy are frank enough to describe their aim:

"What Prime Minister Ariel Sharon played down in his Rosh Hashanah interviews was clearly exposed by his former bureau chief, Dov Weisglass, in an interview in Haaretz Magazine (October 8). The goal of the disengagement plan is to perpetuate Israeli control in most of the West Bank, and to repel any

internal or external pressure for a different political solution.

Sharon is consistently trying to realize his vision: Israeli control over the eastern and western slopes of the West Bank, and maintaining traffic corridors along its length and breadth. The Palestinians will be left with seven enclaves connected by special highways for their use.”⁵ More than any previous Israeli policy or practice, the wall, if completed according to plan, stands to make the partition of the West Bank permanent and irreversible. The prospects for Palestinians and Israelis living with such borders are that “Unless ... a new map is drawn separating Israel and the Palestinian state, there will be no end to war in the land.”⁶

The writer, Ephraim Sneh - who described Sharon's plan in this (presumably critical) way - is the current deputy Minister of Defense who wrote this before he joined the government which claims to continue “Sharon's way”⁷. It is convenient for Sneh, especially while he was in the opposition, to describe the division of the West Bank (which has continued uninterrupted under decades of changing Israeli governments) as “Sharon's vision”. However, as Ron Pundak and Menahem Klein write, “The leaders of the settlers are correct in saying that they came on behalf of the state and to their mind they are the embodiment of classic Zionism”.⁸

The spectrum of Israeli opposition to the wall, from liberals to radicals, falls into three main categories. The first category, the principled position, is to oppose the wall on the grounds that it is a policy which punishes people for being Palestinian. Its alternative, the second category, opposes the wall on the grounds that it is not an efficient way to achieve its stated goal of protecting Israelis, either because it does not provide security or because a more humane wall could provide an equal amount of security. These two categories contradict each other in the sense that to criticize the wall for being inefficient is to imply that, had the wall been efficient, it would have been legitimate. The third category is a variation of the second. It contains calls for the construction of the wall on the green line but crucially omit the condition that Israel withdraw back to the green line. This position is the common position on the Israeli center-left and is part of the platform of Meretz - the Israeli social democratic party. Yossi Sarid, a former head of Meretz who describes himself as “a [former] member of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, a former minister of education in the State of Israel, [and] a Zionist without 'post.'”⁹ supports a wall which would not hurt “Palestinians who committed no sin”. However, the wall which is being constructed “is not the fence we intended, [...] we intended a completely different fence, and [] our good intentions led to this hell. An apology is in order.”¹⁰ Sarid does explain why, as he predicted at the time, under Israeli occupation and with Sharon in power, it was unrealistic to think that his good intentions would be realized. Still, in writing his party platform Sarid wrote that “Meretz supports the accelerated construction of a complete [...] separation fence [...]. [it is] preferable *for Israel* that the route of the fence not include Palestinian

THE OCCUPATION NEVER STOPS

"When the occupation will end...", how many times did we say this sentence to ourselves, fantasizing over a future in the paradise we will live in, and becoming more and more cynical and disillusioned with every passing year. Today we know better - the occupation is not going to end, it is here to stay. 2 truths stand before my eyes as I make this statement: first, the end of the occupation with a two-state solution based on the '67 borders is unrealistic, and second, the occupation is not just "the occupation of 1967" but a much broader situation existing under the control of the state of Israel.

A solution comprised of two national states coexisting side by side as equals is today a sad joke, and maybe it always was. This much-endorsed solution was hijacked from its progressive supporters many years ago already (it was only the Communist party in Israel that demanded "two states for two people" in the 80s), and distorted it in order to legitimize the Apartheid of the 21st Century. Today we know what these two states will look like: barbed-wired Bantustans surrounded by the same big military camp known as Israel. The occupation will just continue under the new Orwellian definition of Peace process and a false independence.

But opposition to the two-states solution is not based solely on its implementation being impossible, but also on the fact that it ignores numerous aspects and existing problems. The occupation of '67 cannot be understood as an external problem, an invader's colonial fight. The occupation of '67 is not an external problem disconnected from Israel's internal problems. The Apartheid and the politics of occupation are the very basis of the state of Israel: the ethnic cleansing of 800,000 Palestinians in 1948 and the continued refusal to allow their return, the barefaced discrimination and the ever-increasing police violence against '48 Palestinians, the need to settle and protect the land from the illegal people, to judaize the periphery, to wage a demographic war - all of these take place in "Israel" and not in what is known as the "occupied territories". The occupation doesn't stop at the checkpoint, it is all around us, there is no "here" and "there". Israel is the occupation.

THE NECESSITY OF THE JOINT STRUGGLE

The struggle against occupation and Apartheid must be waged, not because they are the first step towards the revolution, but simply because daily war crimes and mass human rights violations shouldn't be allowed to happen, regardless of whether the victims of these crimes are revolutionary Anarchists or hard-working, poor conservative Muslims. The fact that the oppressed sector is not the perfect revolutionary subject (if there is such a thing) does not in any way diminish my obligation to stand alongside it against the state - my state - which is curtailing its basic rights. This should be enough to explain why one should fight fiercely against the occupation. However, fighting against something is never enough; we need to fight *for* something, for a dif-

Minority in Israel since 1948 ('48 Palestinians), play in Israeli-Jewish society. The state of Israel, which claims to be a "Jewish and Democratic state" and to uphold equal rights for all its inhabitants, is having great difficulties maintaining its democratic aspirations in light of its colonialist and religious nature. It is highly recognized that the democratic rights and freedoms of members from even the "more privileged groups" in Israel are suffering from the 40 year-old ongoing occupation, and the social reality that emerged from it. The need for national unity in the face of ever-coming wars, the rapid Militarization of a Society that needs to control every step of 3 million Palestinians, and not forgetting the Demographic war that needs to be waged against the Palestinian uterus, take its toll from minority groups in Israel and harm all emancipation struggles like the ones of the Feminist movement, the LGBTQ community, workers organization, Ecological campaigns, Ethiopian and Mizrahi (Jews from Arab decent) groups and many others. In a society that is in a constant state of emergency, it is very difficult to fight for social justice or even speak about it.

The history of the LGBT rights movement in Israel might serve as an example for the influences of major political events on a specific struggle for equal rights. The existence of Gay and Lesbian groups since the 1970s, together with several openly gay artists, poets and film-makers, did create a small circle of understanding and tolerance for sexual minorities, but no one could ignore the fact that the biggest and strongest wave of LGBT political action and successes took place in the 1990s, particularly after the election of Rabin (together with the big electoral achievement of Meretz, the Zionist liberal-left party) and the beginning of the Oslo "peace process" with the PLO. As unrealistic and false as they were, the hopes that the failed "peace process" raised among the Israeli public - hopes for a real democratic state, for an end to religious coercion and a new middle east - gave the push that the LGBTQ community needed in order to gain recognition and legal achievements. The second Intifada, orchestrated with the reemergence of religious control, nationalism and militarism, stopped these processes and, one might argue, also led to the big backlash and the huge wave of homophobic violence, in the streets as well as in the media, which was sparked by the attempt to lead an international gay pride parade in West-Jerusalem.

Thus it is clear for many political activists in progressive circles that the national conflict currently blocks any kind of radical progress, disables building of coalitions, and is being used and intensified quite often in order to silence social conflicts inside Israel (one can find a similar phenomena within Palestinian society, where the struggle against Israeli occupation is being used by some reactionary groups to silence social and feminist critics). The first step for a radical social and feminist change in Israeli society must then be an end to the occupation - but what does it really mean?

population or territories."¹¹ He went on to call "Sharon's fence [...] a crime against humanity"¹². The difference between the first and third position is more than a matter of the unintended, consequent route of the wall. Without an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, even if the wall had been built on the green line as Meretz wished, it would have facilitated the caging of Palestinians by other means. With the Israeli army remaining on both sides of the wall, freedom of movement for Palestinians could have remained increasingly constrained by checkpoints, restricted roads and internal fences. Such tight control would not have been possible without a wall preventing Palestinian access to Israel, even if that wall was on the green line.

Sarid's article certainly constitutes the strongest condemnation of the wall by such a prominent Israeli figure, but although he assures us of the quality of his intentions, the principled position is absent even in this apology.

To my knowledge, the principled opposition to the wall has not been made in the Israeli press at all, and rarely even in statements of the radical left. The dilemma for Israeli radicals facing a tide of support for the wall is between making an inherently racist argument and risking their exclusion from the mainstream media.

To further illustrate what it means to even criticize the wall on any grounds other than a principled opposition, consider the reaction to the idea of imposing on Jews a regime similar to that imposed on Palestinians. The scale of reaction to that hypothetical suggestion can be measured by the reaction to a related restriction proposed for the Jewish State. That proposal is UN resolution 242 which, if implemented, would prevent the Jewish state from ruling over Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israel's Foreign Minister Abba Eban responded to resolution 242 by saying "We have openly said that the map will never again be the same as on June 4, 1967. For us, this is a matter of security and of principles. The June map is for us equivalent to insecurity and danger. I do not exaggerate when I say that it has for us something of a memory of Auschwitz."¹³ Following Eban, the 1967 borders of Israel are now commonly referred to as "Auschwitz borders" in the Israeli right.

Moreover, consider the idea that restrictions on Jews be justified by the existence of "a Jewish threat". Such a discussion should be rejected flat out, in its entirety, as being extremely racist, and arguing that a Jewish danger could be dealt with differently would undermine such an unequivocal rejection. In fact, even the mere allusion to a Jewish threat by terms such as "Jewish Bolshevism" portrays those using it as antisemitic. Furthermore, to continue arguing for a more efficient way to deal with such a threat is to accept one or both of the racist premises that underlie it - namely that all Jews are responsible for the actions of some of them or that even if they are not, it is still legitimate to punish innocent Jews. The first of these premises is the official position of the state of Israel, and is evident in the writing of human rights icon and Israel's Minister for Diaspora Affairs and Jerusalem, Natan Sharansky. It makes for some strange bedfellows:

“The state of Israel was born in order to be a national home for the Jewish people. Zionist leaders have always declared that the Jewish state belongs not just to its citizens but to the Jewish people as a whole... for example, Argentinian Jews paid a heavy price [for Israeli decisions] when in revenge for the elimination of the leader of Hezbollah the organization blew up the Jewish community center and murdered hundreds of Jews.”¹⁴ Such a statement can only be made by those who are considered immune from charges of antisemitism¹⁵. Otherwise, these terms would be rejected and condemned.

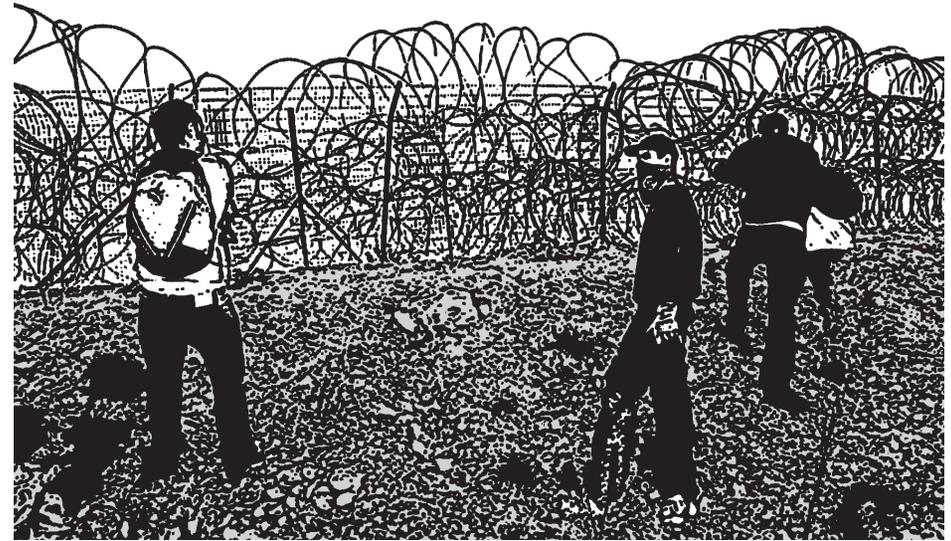
This reaction should be kept in mind when it comes to racism against Arabs. To take just one of countless examples, it is apparently acceptable for a major Israeli newspaper to title the cover story of its weekend section “The Beduin Threat” in large red letters over a picture of young children at a dump site.¹⁶

Furthermore, while discussion of “Jewish Bolshevism” is immediately understood as racist due to its implication of all Jews, the same treatment is not meted out to the widely-used term “Islamic Terrorism”. I have seen only one discussion about the appropriateness of using that term in the mainstream press; it was a side comment in a story about the appropriateness of calling Eric Robert Rudolph a “Christian terrorist”.¹⁷ The almost universal acceptance of such racist terms is the reason why opposing the wall on principled grounds is either incomprehensible in the Israeli media or understood as an endorsement of the murder of Israelis. Israelis opposed to the wall often argue along the lines of the alternative to the principled position, however when they do so, it is a concession to the racist assumption underlying that argument.

In reality, the factual claims in this alternative argument hardly need to be made. During arguments at the High Court of Justice, Israel's State's Attorney reversed the official position and admitted that considerations other than security issues determine the route of the wall.¹⁸ Those considerations are demographic and geographical, i.e. the objective is to retain the largest amount of land and natural resources with the smallest amount of Palestinians on it. These objectives are openly admitted by many of those who were involved in planning and influencing the route of the wall.¹⁹

The relative importance of security considerations versus other objectives in planning and building the wall is reflected in the fact that the border between Israel and Egypt is not even fenced for most of its length. The Sinai desert is widely used to smuggle weapons and was considered by Sharon (and now by Olmert) as a security threat²⁰, to say nothing of the active trafficking of women and girls which takes place through that border²¹. Apparently, the security of these women and girls is not the kind which compels the Israeli government to build a wall. It should be pointed out that had a wall been built along the Israeli Egyptian border it would have faced no opposition. On the other hand, the territory of Israel would also not have been effectively expanded by such a wall.

Security considerations and expansionist goals in the route of the wall sometimes come into conflict. This allows for an actual comparison of their relative im-



DYKES AND THE HOLY WAR THE FIGHT AGAINST APARTHEID AND QUEER STRUGGLES IN ISRAEL/PALESTINE

■ *Yossi Bartal*

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As a queer-anarchist activist from Israel I am quite often confronted with questions concerning the engagement of queer groups or individuals in the Palestinian struggle against Israel's Apartheid regime. How could I, as queer and as an anarchist, fight for the establishment of a State where the powers of occupation will just change hands and will erect new and old oppression? What do we have to do with a National movement that is reconstructing the same national ideals we are working to dismantle in our own society? In this article I will try to examine these questions and expand my thoughts on the role of Solidarity and joint struggle from a queer-anarchist perspective.

THE FIGHT AGAINST THE OCCUPATION AS A FIGHT FOR CHANGE IN OUR OWN SOCIETY

Maybe the most important point to clarify in the beginning of this text is the role that the occupation since 1967, and the oppression of the Palestinian

demonstrate hand-in-hand with Palestinians are threatening because they are afraid neither of Arabs nor of the Second Holocaust that they are supposedly destined to perpetrate. Notice how everything comes out when the anarchists are vilified by other Israelis: the fear of annihilation, the enemy as a calculated murderer, and victims' guilt expiated through the assertion of self-defense and just war as unexamined axioms. And this is threatening on a deeper level than any hole in the fence – but then again, anarchists didn't get their reputation as trouble-makers for nothing.

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portance. In certain places where Israel does not yet dare to complete its planned route for the wall, gaps remain which supposedly pose a security threat. But as Akiva Eldar writes in Haaretz “Annexation is important, Security less so”.²²

Even some of the settlers, who one would assume have the greatest need for its protection, are opposed to the wall's construction.²³ The urgency of the need for the protection allegedly provided by the wall is demonstrated by the fact that the damage to the scenery and habitat of small animals was cited as sufficient reason for freezing construction of an entire section of the wall in Southern Israel. This, more than two years after it was publicized that the construction of the southern part of the wall was delayed by Sharon's refusal to construct it on the green line.²⁴ The story appeared two days after a double suicide attack in Be'er Sheva, and concerned the section of the wall through which the terrorists entered Israel.

TEAR GAS AND TEA IN THE WEST BANK

Media work and, to a lesser extent, other appeals to the public present a dilemma between opposing the wall on principled and marginalized grounds or conceding the racist assumptions underlying the alternatives. Naturally, interaction with other Israeli institutions ranging from the High Court to infantry troops present parallel dilemmas.

In several instances, in what might seem like a victory, the Israeli High Court ordered that the route of the wall be changed²⁵. Almost without exception, these decisions also set precedents which legitimized much larger sections of the wall.²⁶ In that sense, these small victories help legitimize the wall. Regardless of the effect on the wall, an appeal to a court which approved the execution of Palestinians without trial²⁷ is a repulsive concession. Furthermore, an appeal to the court might also provide false hopes and defuse an otherwise more militant popular struggle. In spite of this, dozens of appeals to the High Court were filed by Palestinians who were directly affected by the wall.

It is not hard to understand how a similar dilemma exists with respect to contacts with other levels of Israeli officials or with soldiers. For example, it is often possible for activists (especially Israelis) to have a form of on-the-spot negotiations with soldiers about minor “concessions”, such as being granted permission to demonstrate at a certain location. On the one hand, such negotiation might reduce the physical risk to demonstrators or buy some time, but on the other hand the act of negotiating provides a recognition of the army's authority, as well as a pretext for attacking the demonstration when the “agreement” is not kept. As above, the process of negotiation also serves to defuse the momentum of a demonstration or march.

What is less widely accepted is the fact that the same sort of dilemma exists even in the cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli activists in the West Bank. The privileged position of Israelis means they have greater access to the media, the ability to move much more freely and face much less legal and

physical risk, etc. This tends to increase the influence Israelis have on decisions about the struggle which affect their Palestinian counterparts considerably more. In other words, even when using Israeli privilege for the purpose of the struggle there is a concession. That is to say that, in a sense, the privilege is extended in the struggle as well.

Even social interaction can extend Israeli privilege. The relative freedom of Israelis elevates their social position, and social ties created under these conditions reflect that, thus perpetuating it. At least to some degree, this applies even to the social ties between Israeli and Palestinian activists. This phenomenon is one facet of what is referred to in Palestinian society as 'normalization'. As this Israeli sees it, this means that any interaction Palestinians carry out with Israelis, be it for the most positive purpose, while the conditions are such that Israel occupies Palestine, contains within it a degree of adjustment to these conditions and, in a way, even their extension. This sensitivity is partly a result of the fact that some of the most damaging Israeli policies were described as confidence-building measures or similar processes, accompanied by promises of Israeli good intentions.

There is a contrasting idea, which is that interaction between Israelis and Palestinians - and in particular social interaction - can eliminate mutual fear and suspicion, supposedly the root cause of the conflict. Another variation on this idea, one which I find more realistic, is that social interactions are valuable because they strengthen the basis for a joint struggle. The value, even the very justification, of joint political action should be weighed with this in mind.

The question is perhaps illustrated in the choice Israelis make when coming to the West Bank. It is the choice of whether to drink tea or to inhale tear gas at a demonstration.

A sentiment perhaps unappreciated in the wider circles of Israeli activists was expressed by a member of the Popular Committee Against the Wall in the Palestinian village of Bil'in. His message to Israelis was "After we end the occupation together, there will be plenty of time for tea".²⁸



A third response, informed by Kropotkin's view mentioned above, is that anarchists can support a Palestinian state as a strategic choice, a desirable stage in a longer-term struggle. No-one can sincerely expect that the situation in Israel/Palestine will move from the present one to anarchy in one abrupt step. Hence, the establishment of a Palestinian state through a peace treaty with the Israeli state, although far from a real solution to social problems, may turn out to be a positive development on the way to more radical changes. The reduction of everyday violence on both sides could do a great deal to open up more political space for economic, feminist and environmental struggles, and would thus constitute a positive development from a strategic point of view. The establishment of a Palestinian state could form a bridgehead towards the flowering of myriad social struggles, in Israel and in whatever enclave-polity emerges under the Palestinian ruling elite. For anarchists, such a process could be a significant step forward in a longer-term strategy for the destruction of the Israeli, Palestinian, and all other states along with capitalism, patriarchy and so on.

A fourth and final response would be to alter the terms of discussion altogether, by arguing that whether or not anarchists support a Palestinian state is a moot point, and leads to a false debate. What exactly are anarchists supposed to do with their "support"? If the debate is to resolve itself in a meaningful direction, then the ultimate question is whether anarchists can and should take action in support of a Palestinian state. But what could such action possibly be, short of declarations, petitions, demonstrations, and other elements of the "politics of demand" that anarchists seek to transcend? One can hardly establish a state through anarchist direct action, and the politicians who will eventually decide on creating a Palestinian state are not exactly asking anarchists their opinion. Seen in this light, debates about whether anarchists should give their short-term "support" to a Palestinian state sound increasingly ridiculous, since the only merit of such discussion would be to come up with a common platform. On this view, anarchists may take action in solidarity with Palestinians (as well as Tibetans, West Papuans and Sahrawis for that matter) without reference to the question of statehood. The everyday acts of resistance that anarchists join and defend in Palestine - e.g. removing roadblocks or defending olive harvesters from attacks by Jewish settlers - are immediate steps to help preserve people's livelihoods and dignity, not a step towards statehood. Once viewed from a longer-term strategic perspective, anarchists' actions have worthwhile implications whether or not they are attached to a statist agenda of independence.

For one thing, Israelis taking direct action alongside Palestinians is a strong public message in itself. The majority of the public certainly views Israeli anarchists as misguided, naïve youth at best and as traitors at worst. The latter response happens because the joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle transgresses the fundamental taboos put in place by Zionist militarism. Alongside the living example of nonviolence and cooperation between the two peoples, the struggle forces Israeli spectators to confront their dark collective traumas. Israelis who

On the other hand, by disengaging from concrete Palestinian demands for a state, the same Israeli anarchists are left with nothing to propose except “an entirely different way of life and equality for all the inhabitants of the region... a classless anarchist-communist society” (ibid.). This is all well and good, but what happens in the meantime?

While anarchists surely can do something more specific in solidarity with Palestinians than just saying that “we need a revolution”, any such action would appear to be hopelessly contaminated by statism. The fact that anarchists nevertheless engage in solidarity with Palestinian communities, internationally and on the ground, requires us to grip this particular bull by its horns. Here, I believe there are at least four coherent ways in which anarchists can deal with the dilemma of support for a Palestinian state.

The first and most straightforward response is to acknowledge that there is indeed a contradiction here, but to insist that in this given situation solidarity is important even if it comes at the price of inconsistency. Endorsement of Palestinian statehood by anarchists can be seen as a necessary pragmatic position. It does nobody any good to effectively say to the Palestinians, “sorry, we’ll let you remain non-citizens of a brutal occupation until after we’re done abolishing capitalism”. A point to be made here is that states have a track record of hostility to stateless peoples, refugees and nomads. The Jews and the Palestinians are two among many examples of oppressed stateless peoples in the modern era. While many Jews were citizens (often second-class citizens) of European countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, an important precondition for the Holocaust was the deprivation of Jews’ citizenships, rendering them stateless. As a result, anarchists can recognize Palestinian statehood as the only viable way to alleviate their oppression in the short term. This amounts to a specific value judgment whereby anti-imperialist or even basic humanitarian concerns take precedence over an otherwise uncompromising anti-statism.

A second, different response argues that there is no contradiction at all in anarchist support the establishment of a Palestinian state. This is simply because Palestinians are already living under a state – Israel – and that the formation of a new Palestinian state creates only a quantitative change and not a qualitative one. Anarchists object to the state as a general scheme of social relations – not to this or the other state, but to the principle behind them all. It is a misunderstanding to reduce this objection to quantitative terms; the number of states in the world adds or subtracts nothing from anarchists’ assessment of how closely the world corresponds to their ideals. Having one single world state, for example, would be as problematic for anarchists as the present situation (if not more so), although the process of creating one would have abolished some 190 states. So from a purely anti-statist anarchist perspective, for Palestinians to live under a Palestinian state rather than an Israeli state would be, at worst, just as objectionable. A Palestinian state, no matter how capitalist, corrupt or pseudo-democratic, would in any event be less brutal than an occupying Israeli state.

THE CHOICE OF SATANISTS, ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL

The following are my impressions of the dilemmas faced by Anarchists Against the Wall (AAtW) and the choices it made. It should be understood that this does not represent an AAtW consensus or otherwise official position; in fact, such a thing hardly exists.

In late 2003, a loose group of Israeli activists formed a political direct action group to oppose Israel's so-called separation barrier (the wall or fence). The pattern of activity agreed on at the start of the activity, and which remains to this day, is that of a non-violent “propaganda of the deed”, as well as leaving the talking and institutionalizing to others.

A typical sentiment amongst members of the group was rejection of the old tactics of the Israeli peace movement as ineffectual and paternalistic. In fact, it was fairly common to reject even the formation of a recognizable group, because spending energy on the organization of such a group was thought to be a waste of resources. Moreover, as far as political traditions and connections are concerned, the group can more accurately be described as part of an international movement than as a part of the Israeli peace movement. In particular, anarchist movements and the so-called anti-globalization movement, as well as the International Solidarity Movement, provided the experience and connection which shaped the work of AAtW.

The group coalesced around the Mas’ha camp where, together with international and Palestinian activists, a protest camp was set up on the route of the wall at the village of Mas’ha. At the same time, as part of its resistance to the ongoing construction of the wall, the group also cut the fence and destroyed parts of it. At one such action in December 2003, an Israeli activist named Gil Na'amati was shot by IDF soldiers in both legs with live ammunition from close range. The large amount of publicity this incident received fixed the group's previously rotating name as the name picked for that action: Anarchists Against the Wall.

In Israel, like many other societies, the term “Anarchist” is commonly used in a derogatory manner whose most accurate synonym is probably “Satanist”. The satanic association actually serves two purposes: it frees the group from considerations of its public image, which tend to paralyze political action, and more importantly it demonstrates the group's intent to set its own agenda. This demonstration strengthens the group, as it offers its members and potential members the option to act according to their honest opinion, as opposed to taking a compromised position in a debate whose terms are dictated by others.

In late 2003 and early 2004, several Palestinian villages which were about to lose much of their lands to the wall formed Popular Committees to resist the wall and began demonstrating almost daily. The connections made during the Mas’ha camp lead to Israelis being invited to join those demonstrations and with it, to the beginning of a long-term partnership between AAtW and Popular Committees in many villages.

AAtW began a period of very intense activity. There were almost daily demonstrations in several villages and AAtW, with a group of several dozen Israelis, managed to have a small presence at each one of the demonstrations they were invited to. Of course, every Palestinian demonstration also includes uninvited Israelis in the form of the army or border police. The importance of the presence of Israeli activists at demonstrations was that it significantly reduced the amount of violence the army used against demonstrators. In fact, the army freely admits that its regulations regarding live fire change when they suspect there are Israelis at a demonstration²⁹. The latest instruction booklet provided to IDF soldiers serving in the west bank explicitly states that the rules of engagement are different for demonstrations which include Israelis. Still, even with the levels of violence reduced, nine Palestinians were killed while demonstrating against the wall, some even when Israelis were present. Thousands more were injured or arrested and some spent months in jail.

Resistance to the wall in Israel is made difficult by the extreme racism prevalent in Israeli society, which makes principled opposition to the wall either incomprehensible or interpreted as an endorsement of the murder of Israelis. This has meant that AAtW has remained marginalized and subject to legal persecution as well as violent attacks at demonstrations. To date, AAtW members have been arrested more times than it is possible to count, 63 indictments have been filed against members of the group and one activist has already been jailed for several months. The routine activity for AAtW includes not only constant contact with the group's lawyer - the excellent and dedicated Gaby Lasky - but also personal acquaintance with nurses at one of the major trauma centers in Tel Aviv.

Dealing with such levels of physical danger is hard for a loose group which is pretty open to new people to join and come to demonstrations. It is a constant concern for AAtW to try to be as careful as possible without abandoning its Palestinian partners. However, it is not clear if safety precautions exist at all which can reduce the risk at demonstrations. Of the serious injuries suffered by members of AAtW or other Israelis invited by the group, only in one instance could the activists have prevented the injury.

Another unique aspect of AAtW's work is the joint struggle it wages together with Palestinians. This, of course, is not without its difficulties. It is hard to expect Palestinians to immediately accept and trust Israelis. In addition to the fear of spies and provocateurs, cooperation with Israelis also involves an element of 'normalization' which means an adjustment to the conditions of the occupation. Israeli activists also bring with them cultural influences which might not be welcomed in some parts of Palestinian society. In light of this, and although it has no formalized ideological platform, AAtW does insist on several principles of joint work. The first principle is that although the struggle is a joint struggle, Palestinians are the ones who are affected more by the decisions taken within it,

geographic environment" (Rocker 1937:200-1). However, Rocker clarifies that it is only possible to speak of the folk, as an entity, in terms that specific to a given location and time. This is because, over time, "cultural reconstructions and social stimulation always occur when different peoples and races come into closer union. Every new culture is begun by such a fusion of different folk elements and takes its special shape from this" (346). What Rocker calls the "nation", on the other hand, is the artificial idea of a unified community of interest, spirit or race created by the state. Thus, like Landauer and Bakunin, it was the primary loyalty to one's nation state that Rocker condemned as "nationalism". At the same time, these writers expected that with the abolition of the state, a space would be opened for the self-determination and mutually-fertilizing development of local folk cultures.

These attitudes to nationalism, however, had as their primary reference point the European nationalisms associated with existing states. The issue of nationalism in the national liberation struggles of stateless peoples received far less attention from anarchists. Kropotkin, for one, saw national liberation movements positively, arguing that the removal of foreign domination was a precondition to broader social struggle (Grauer 1994). On the other hand, many anarchists have argued that national liberation agendas only obfuscate the social struggle, and end up creating new local elites that continue the same patterns of hierarchy and oppression.

This tension comes very strongly to the fore in the case of Israel/Palestine. The overwhelming majority of Palestinians want a state of their own alongside Israel. So how can anarchists reconcile their support for Palestinian liberation with their anti-statist principles? How can they promote the creation of yet another state in the name of "national liberation"? The attempt to distance oneself from support for Palestinian statehood is what motivates McCarthy's workerist stance, as well as the British syndicalists of the Solidarity Federation who declare that "we support the fight of the Palestinian people...[and] stand with those Israelis who protest against the racist government...What we cannot do is support the creation of yet another state in the name of 'national liberation'" (Solidarity Federation 2002).

But there are two problems with such an attitude. First, it invites the charge of paternalism since it implies that anarchists are somehow better than Palestinians at discerning their real interests. Second, and more importantly, it leaves anarchists with nothing but empty declarations to the effect that "we stand with and support all those who are being oppressed by those who have the power to do so" (ibid.), consigning anarchists to a position of irrelevance in the present tense. On the one hand, it is clear that the establishment of a capitalist Palestinian state through negotiations among existing and would-be governments would only mean the "submission of the Intifada to a comprador Palestinian leadership that will serve Israel", as well as neoliberal exploitation through initiatives like the Mediterranean Free Trade Area (Anarchist Communist Initiative 2004).

The root of the problem displayed by these writings is that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict introduces complexities that are not easily addressed from a traditional anarchist standpoint. The tension between anarchists' anti-imperialist commitments on the one hand, and their traditionally wholesale rebuttal of the state and nationalism on the other, would seem to leave them at an impasse regarding the national liberation struggles of occupied peoples. The lack of fresh thinking on the issue creates a position from which, it would seem, one can only fall back on the one-size-fits-all formulae. In order to understand why this is so, let me now look at anarchist critiques of nationalism.

Prevalent in anarchist literature is a distinction between the "artificial" nationalism constructed by the state on the one hand, and the "natural" feeling of belonging to a group that has shared ethnic, linguistic and/or cultural characteristics. Michael Bakunin (1871:324) argued that the fatherland ("patria") represents a "manner of living and feeling" – that is, a local culture – which is "always an incontestable result of a long historic development". As such, the deep love of fatherland among the "common people...is a natural, real love". However, the corruption of this love under statist institutions is what anarchists commonly rejected as nationalism – a primary loyalty to one's nation-state. On this reading, nationalism is a reactionary ideological device intended to create a false unity of identity and interest between antagonistic classes within a single country, pitting the oppressed working classes of different states against each other and averting their attention from the struggle against their real oppressors. Thus for Bakunin "political patriotism, or love of the State, is not the faithful expression" of the common people's love for the fatherland, but rather an expression "distorted by means of false abstraction, always for the benefit of an exploiting minority" (ibid.).

The most elaborate development of this theme was made by Gustav Landauer, who used the term "folk" to refer to the type of organic local and cultural identity that is suppressed by state-sponsored nationalism and would return to prominence in a free society. He saw folk identity as a unique spirit (Geist) consisting of shared feelings, ideals, values, language, and beliefs, which unifies individuals into a community (Landauer 1907). He also considered it possible to have several identities, seeing himself as a human being, a Jew, a German and a southern German. In his words,

I am happy about every imponderable and ineffable thing that brings about exclusive bonds, unities, and also differentiations within humanity. If I want to transform patriotism then I do not proceed in the slightest against the fine fact of the nation...but against the mixing up of the nation and the state, against the confusion of differentiation and opposition. (Landauer 1973/1910:263)

Rudolf Rocker adopted Landauer's distinction in his book *Nationalism and Culture*, where a folk is defined as "the natural result of social union, a mutual association of men brought about by a certain similarity of external conditions of living, a common language, and special characteristics due to climate and

and are therefore the ones who should make the important decisions. Second, Israelis have a special responsibility to respect Palestinian self-determination, including respecting social customs and keeping out of internal Palestinian politics (of which there is plenty).

Weighting the negative aspects of normalization versus the benefits of social ties is a more difficult question. Unlike cultural standards such as modest behavior and dress, it would be far more repressive to try to codify what constitutes appropriate social ties, let alone demand it of individuals. The only principle is the general policy of respecting requests by Palestinian Popular Committees in this regard as well.

The amount of details above might give the impression that the difficulties in a joint struggle are larger than they really are. Instead, the joint struggle faces only one main difficulty: the Israeli state. The attention given to the issues above is meant to highlight the process of political development which AAtW has gone through together with its Palestinian partners. Over several years of intense struggle, at certain low points the above difficulties came to the surface and had to be dealt with. As perhaps the main contact between the Israeli peace movement and the Palestinian peace movement, AAtW transmitted its experience to the Israeli peace movement and played an important role in its political development. At the time of AAtW's beginning, the idea of Israelis joining Palestinian demonstrations seemed incredible to the huge majority of the Israeli left. After several years of activity, the number of Israelis who have themselves participated in joint demonstrations with Palestinians is in the thousands and includes many who are personally not marginalized at all. Still, other than political parties with a mostly-Arab constituency, no Israeli political party has supported the joint struggle against the wall.

The obligation of citizens to resist criminal acts and policies carried out by their government is recognized in international law and requires Israelis to do all they can to resist their government. More importantly, the moral obligation of resisting the wall becomes apparent to anyone who has witnessed it cutting off villages and towns, or merely seen its path drawn on a map. To look away and ignore the crimes committed in our names, with our taxes, by the students we train or those we keep polite company with, is to lose part of one's humanity. This is a burden which Israelis are enslaved to by fear. In that sense, the act of disobedience and resistance is also an act of personal liberation; an option open to all Israelis who would join the struggle.

The struggle of Palestinians against those who would have them move away or disappear is a constant struggle to simply exist. This struggle is joined by Israeli supporters one day at a time, at a certain risk to themselves. The harshest penalty likely for Israelis does not include a lifetime of financial insecurity and being subjected to the whims of occupying soldiers. If those penalties are not enough to deter our Palestinian partners – it should not deter us as well.

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ing what anarchist critics have been highlighting as a typically Leftist form of Judeophobia or anti-Semitism (Austrian and Goldman 2003, Michaels 2004, Shot by both sides 2005).

Meanwhile, Price is so confident about having insight into to the just and appropriate resolution that he permits himself to issue elaborate programs and demands, down to the finer details: unilateral Israeli withdrawal to 1967 lines, a Palestinian state and the right of return, ending up in "some sort of 'secular-democratic' or 'binational' communal federation" with "some sort of self-managed non-capitalist economy". Meanwhile "we must support the resistance of the Palestinian people. They have the right to self-determination, that is, to choose their leaders, their programs, and their methods of struggle, whatever we think".

A blank cheque, then, to suicide bombings and any present or future Palestinian elite. The statement's imperative tone also begs the question: to whom, precisely, are Price's "we" supposed to be issuing such elaborate demands? To the Israeli state, backed perhaps by the potent threat of embassy occupations and boycotts on academics, oranges and software? Or maybe to the international community, or to the American state for that matter? In all cases this would be a "politics of demand" which extends undue recognition and legitimation to state power through the act of demand itself – a strategy far removed from anarchism.

Myopia towards what is happening on the ground is also a problem for Ryan Chiang McCarthy (2002). Though taking issue with Price's failure to distinguish between peoples and their rulers, McCarthy's call for solidarity with libertarian forces on the ground is unfortunately extended only to struggles which fall within his prejudiced Syndicalist gaze: "autonomous labor movements of Palestinian and Israeli workers...A workers' movement that bypasses the narrow lines of struggle...and fights for the unmediated demands of workers". Besides being entirely detached from reality – the prospects for autonomous labour movements are as bleak in Israel/Palestine as they are in the rest of the developed world – such a workerist fetish is also directly harmful. It reproduces the invisibility of the many important struggles in Palestine/Israel that do not revolve around work, and in which most anarchists happen to be participating. Meanwhile, stubborn class reductionism demarcates no less narrow lines of struggle than the ones which it criticizes, and does the protagonists violence by forcing their actions into artificial frameworks. Thus Palestinians and Israelis are first and foremost "workers...manipulated by their rulers to massacre one another"; army refusal is a "sparkling act of class solidarity carried out across national lines" (most refuseniks are middle-class, and self-declared Zionists to boot); while "the nationalist poison...drives Palestinian proletarian youth to destroy themselves and Israeli fellow workers in suicide bombings". This may still be anarchism, but it is of a fossilized variety that forces obsolete formulas of class struggle on a reality that is far removed from such orientations.

ANARCHISM, NATIONALISM AND NEW STATES

■ *Uri Gordon*

[The following is an excerpt from the book “Anarchy Alive!: Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory”, by Uri Gordon, published by Pluto Press, 2008. Due to the range of different and at times conflicting opinions within AAtW regarding the one or two state solutions, we would like to reemphasize that the following discussion represents only the opinions of the article’s author, not of Anarchists Against the Wall as a whole.]

[...] With the conflict in Palestine/Israel so high on the public agenda, and with significant anarchist involvement in Palestine solidarity campaigns, it is surprising that the scant polemical anarchist contributions on the topic remain, at best, irrelevant to the concrete experiences and dilemmas of movements in the region. At their worst, they depart from anarchism altogether. Thus the American Platformist Wayne Price (2002) descends into very crude terms when proclaiming:

In the smoke and blood of Israel/Palestine these days, one point should be clear, that Israel is the oppressor and the Palestinian Arabs are the oppressed. Therefore anarchists, and all decent people, should be on the side of the Palestinians. Criticisms of their leaderships or their methods of fighting are all secondary; so is recognition that the Israeli Jews are also people and also have certain collective rights. The first step, always, is to stand with the oppressed as they fight for their freedom.

Asking all decent people to see someone else’s humanity and collective rights as secondary to anything – whatever this is, this is not anarchism. Where does Price’s side-taking leave the distinction between the Israeli government and Israeli citizens, or solidarity with Israelis who struggle against the occupation and social injustice? These Israelis are certainly not taking action because they are “siding with the Palestinians”, but rather out of a sense of responsibility and solidarity. For the anarchists among them, it is also clearly a struggle for self-liberation from a militaristic, racist, sexist and otherwise unequal society. Price’s complete indifference to those who consciously intervene against the occupation and in multiple social conflicts within Israeli society rests on vast generalizations about how “blind nationalism leads each nation see itself and the other as a bloc”. However, people who live inside a conflict are hardly that naïve – the author is only projecting his own, outsiders’ black-and-white vision onto the conflict, and the side tagged as black is subject to crass and dehumanizing language (see also Hobson, Price & Quest 2001). Unfortunately, this kind of attitude has become a widespread phenomenon in the discourse of the European and American Palestine-solidarity movement and the broader Left, represent-

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ISRAEL – THE ONLY DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

■ *Anat Guthmann & Anat Matar*

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS - JOURNALISTS' ACCESS TO THE GAZA STRIP DENIED

Reporters Without Borders has recently ranked Israel 149th of 160 countries regarding the respect of the freedom of the press.

Israeli journalists have been forbidden to enter the Gaza strip for more than two years. Amira Hass and Shlomi Eldar, two well-known Israeli reporters, who entered Gaza before the offensive and reported from there, were immediately arrested upon returning to Israel.

The Israeli High Court's ruling of January 2nd 2009 to allow a pool of representatives of the world media (only eight of them) to enter Gaza under strict military supervision was not implemented by the state until the present day. However, two Israeli reporters, Ron Ben Yishay from Ynet and Amos Harel from Haaretz, were allowed into the Gaza Strip, on the condition that they accompany the Israeli army. This fact exposes the lie of the army's spokesmen as for the reasons not to allow journalists into the Gaza Strip despite the HCJ decision.

On the other hand, dozens of journalists that cannot enter the Gaza strip are present in Sderot and other cities near Israel's southern border. This fact creates an imbalanced coverage of the events, which is exactly the Israeli goal in winning the media war as the world receives one-sided reports.

Foreign journalists have been detained, and online forums have been contacted and requested to remove threads, which the army considered 'dangerous either to security or morale'. The parliament has happily jumped on the bandwagon, with one prominent MK suggesting to 'block al Jazeera and al Arabiya due to the demoralizing effect it has on our Arab population'.

'These actions are placing Israel at risk of appearing like a military dictatorship', said ABC's Simon McGregor Wood. 'When Israel prevents journalists from reporting it is running the risk of being portrayed in the same manner as countries such as Burma and Zimbabwe', he added.

THE REPRESSION OF THE PROTEST - EXTENSIVE FORCE, MASS ARRESTS, INVESTIGATIONS AND THREATS.

Since the beginning of the offensive on Gaza, protesters met police and army brutality in most of the peaceful demonstrations taking place on a daily basis. More than 800 Israeli citizens have been arrested during or after non-violent demonstrations against the war, for disturbing the peace, waving Palestinian flags, and 'hurting the nation's morale'. Others were called in for interrogation

10 of them minors. We would like to dedicate this medal to the two most recent casualties of the struggle, ten year-old Ahmad Mousa and seventeen year-old Youssef Amirah, who were murdered by border policemen in the village of Ni'ilin four months ago, as part of the attempt to militarily suppress the wall-related insurrection in the village.

Thank you again for supporting the joint popular struggle,
Anarchists Against the Wall

(December 7, 2008)



THE CARL VON OSSIETZY MEDAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

■ *Anarchists Against the Wall*

[On December 7, 2008, the Bil'in Popular Committee and Anarchists Against the Wall were jointly awarded the prestigious Carl von Ossietzy Medal in Berlin, given annually by the International League of Human Rights and named after German Nobel Peace Prize winner Carl von Ossietzky (1889-1938), who died in a Nazi concentration camp. The following is a speech read at the ceremony by an AATW activist]

Hello,

I would like to be honest - I am standing here, over this podium, although as anarchists this situation raises very mixed feelings for me and my comrades. Honestly - we are reluctant to receive prizes for political activism. We would prefer not to be singled out for glory, and receive gratitude for doing what we feel is our duty. However, despite our anarchist reservations, which under normal circumstances would have prevailed, as Israelis and beneficiaries of our country's unjust deeds toward Palestinians, we are very thankful for your support of the Palestinian struggle against Israeli Apartheid.

Here on this podium, just as in the olive groves of the West Bank, our primary moral duty is not to maintain ideological purity, but rather to stand with Palestinians in their resistance to oppression. We recognize the importance of garnering international support for the ongoing struggle, and the major contribution of this award to this end. We believe that standing here, in the current state of affairs, is a direct continuation of the blocking of bulldozers, standing side by side with the stone throwers, or running away from teargas along with young and elderly protesters.

Here, as in the olive groves, I would like to stress that we are not equal partners, but rather occupiers who join the occupied in THEIR struggle. We are aware of the fact that for many, the participation of Israelis in a Palestinian struggle serves as a stamp of approval, but in our eyes, this partnership is not about granting legitimacy. The Palestinian struggle is legitimate with or without us. Rather, the struggle is an opportunity for us to cross, in action rather than words, the barriers of national allegiance.

Over the past four years, and through over 200 demonstrations, Bil'in has become a symbol and focal point for the movement against Israel's wall, a movement that for the past six years has mobilized thousands of people into grassroots popular resistance, and has forged an unprecedented on-the-ground, joint Palestinian-Israeli struggle.

The fact that the movement is a civilian and unarmed one only serves to accentuate the army's excessive and unjust violence. Thousands have been injured, hundreds jailed and imprisoned for lengthy periods and 15 were killed,

by the security services, and were intimidated, threatened and warned not to take part in any demonstration, given house arrests and forbidden to enter certain cities. The large majority of those arrested are Israeli Palestinian citizens. About 30 others belong to the non-Zionist Jewish left wing. A third are under 18. More than 100 have already been indicted.

Palestinian, Israeli and international protesters in the West bank, participating in non-violent demonstration against the attack on Gaza, met extreme army violence, which used live rounds, killing 4 Palestinian demonstrators in Ni'ilin, Kalkilia and Sawad. Many others were wounded. Demonstrators testified that in the wake of Operation Cast Lead, the army has reintroduced the use of the Ruger 22, a semiautomatic rifle that uses live ammunition to disperse crowds. This rifle was banned after the second Intifada for causing the deaths of a number of Palestinians, including youths and children.

On January 12th, 2009, the Central Elections Committee disqualified the Israeli Arab lists of Balad and Raam-Taal from participating in the coming elections by a large majority in light of their opposition to the military attack. This decision was annulled on January 21st 2009 by the HCJ.

The real test of democracy is in times of war and conflict, and it is in those times that it is measured. These recent events join the long list of Israeli oppression towards its Israeli and Palestinian citizens as well as the Palestinian habitants of the Gaza strip and the west bank. By denying the most basic democratic rights: freedom of the press, the right to protest and minority rights, Israel has shown itself once more far from the democratic values to which it pretends.

(January 30, 2009)





ANARCHISTS UNDER FIRE

■ *Neve Gordon*

Over the past five years the Israeli peace camp has dwindled. Last month marked the occupation's 40th anniversary, and no more than 4,000 people gathered in Tel-Aviv to protest Israel's longstanding military rule. Of the demonstrators who did show up, only a few hundred are what one could call ardent activists - people who have dedicated their life to peace and justice

Among the most committed of these are Israel's anarchists. Yet, over the past two years they have been under an ongoing attack, and it is becoming more and more difficult for them to continue their struggle.

Established in 2003, the anarchists are made up of young Israelis, mostly in their twenties, who work closely with the Palestinian popular village committees in order to resist Israel's occupation. They have no official leaders, no office, and no paid staff, and yet they have managed to accomplish more than many well-oiled NGOs and social movements. They are perhaps best known for their efforts in the small village of Bil'in, where for more than two years weekly demonstrations have been staged against the wall that Israel is building on Palestinian land.

The anarchists are active in numerous other villages and towns as well. Day in and day out, they travel in small groups through the West Bank, supporting non-violent direct action that help Palestinian farmers gain access to their fields and crops, while opposing the construction of the separation barrier and the confiscation of occupied land.

One of the most remarkable qualities of these young Israelis is their subversive use of their own privilege, employing it not for self-interested social, economic or political gain - as most people do - but rather in order to stand up to power. The anarchists, in other words, exploit the privilege that comes with their Jewish identity and use it as a strategic asset against the brutal policies of the Jewish state.

As Jewish activists they are well aware that the Israeli military behaves very differently when Israeli Jews are present during a protest in the West Bank and that the level of violence, while still severe, is much less intense. Indeed, according to Israeli soldiers the military has more stringent open fire regulations for demonstrations in which non-Palestinians participate. So when a village's public committees decides to carry out non-violent protests against the occupying power, the anarchists mingle with the demonstrating villagers, thus becoming a human shield for all of those Palestinians who have chosen to follow the path of Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King.

Even though the anarchists are frequently beaten and arrested, they do not desist. To date, about 10 Palestinians have been killed in demonstrations against the separation barrier and thousands have been wounded, a number that would no doubt have been much greater had it not been for the fearless dedication of the anarchists.

These unsung heroes are currently regarded in Israel as a fifth column. And when the Israeli police began to realize that beating and detaining them would not stop their stubborn resistance, a different strategy was adopted. Scores of legal indictments were issued by the state prosecutor.

The anarchists took this as a new challenge. They have launched a legal campaign, whose aim is to defend the basic civil right of all Israelis to resist their government's rights-abusive policies. Leading this battle is Gabi Lasky, an energetic lawyer, who spends many of her weekends releasing anarchists from detention and her weekdays representing them in court.

Unlike the struggle inside the Occupied Territories, the legal battle to protect civil liberties requires financial resources, which the anarchists do not have. The state knows this is the anarchists' Achilles heel and has been trying to undermine their peace-building activities by making them pay hefty legal fees. Although Lasky is working for little more than minimum wage, the anarchists' struggle cannot be sustained without help from concerned individuals around the world. Find out how you can help online at www.awalls.org.

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