

# Palestine: 40 years of occupation

CAII • THE CHURCHES' AGENCY ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES: RESOURCING CHURCHES AND CONGREGATIONS ON GLOBAL CONCERNS

## Palestine: our reluctance to act

The booklet, *Israel and Palestine: Conflict in the Holy Land* was written early in 2003 to introduce readers to some of the complexities of the ongoing struggle there and to help redress the imbalance in media coverage that tends to report events from an Israeli viewpoint only. The booklet aimed to present the position of both sides so that readers could decide for themselves where they stood.

This update will focus on the injustice of the occupation and on human rights abuses by the Israeli government. Palestine has now been illegally occupied for 40 years. The occupation has become increasingly repressive. In the last few years the separation wall, land annexation, checkpoints and other restrictions on movement mean that the denial of basic human rights in Palestine is now so gross that not to speak out is to be complicit.

We are, however, reluctant to speak out and take action about Palestine, whether as individuals, organizations or nations. Constantine Dabbagh, a Palestinian humanitarian leader, spoke of “the silence of the grave from the international community” while Israel waged a full-scale offensive against the people of Gaza last year.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Bishop Riah, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, begged Christians throughout the world to take action and “not to be like the disciple watching from afar”.<sup>2</sup>

### Our fear of terrorism

Several things help us disassociate from people's suffering there. Firstly, most of the Western media frames events in



Paul Jeffrey Ashrafi

Jabalia refugee camp, Gaza Strip: What future for these children?

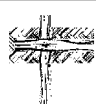
Palestine in terms of ‘terrorism’. We have become obsessed with terrorism. This obsession enables us to dehumanize whole populations. Terrorism has become “the excuse and reason and moral permit for state-sponsored violence – our violence.”<sup>3</sup>

### Our fear of being anti-Semitic

For many people a second set of factors operate, this time predisposing us to feel sympathetic towards Israel. The huge and long established power of the Zionist lobby means that most media ‘see the world through Zionist spectacles’.<sup>3</sup> We also carry Western Christian guilt for long years of persecution of Jewish people, a persecution that culminated in

the Holocaust. It is natural that we do not wish to be anti-Semitic and we have confused anti-Semitism with criticism of the Israeli government. Perhaps we should listen less to the Zionist lobby and more to the calls from Israeli peace and human rights groups. They are some of the most outspoken critics of Israel's occupation. They urge the world to speak out and act.

Some Christian leaders have specifically addressed fears of criticizing Israel. In an article in the Guardian Weekly Paul Oestreicher, a Jewish Christian and canon of the Anglican Church, has said “... the main objective of my writing today is to nail the lie that to reject Zionism as it is practiced today is in effect to be anti-Semitic, to be an inheritor of Hitler's



The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia



The Salvation Army in New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga



The Methodist Church of New Zealand



The Religious Society of Friends



Christian World Service

## Palestine: our reluctance to act – continued

racism. That argument, with the Holocaust in the background, is nothing other than moral blackmail. It is highly effective. It condemns many to silence who fear to be thought anti-Semitic. They are often the very opposite.”<sup>4</sup>

Archbishop Desmond Tutu has also noted that to criticize the Israeli Government “is to be immediately dubbed anti-Semitic. . . . People are scared in the US to say wrong is wrong because the Jewish lobby is powerful – very powerful. Well, so what? For goodness sake, this is God’s world! The apartheid government was very powerful but today it no longer exists...Injustice and oppression will never prevail.”<sup>5</sup>

1. Constantine Dabbagh, cited in CWS Update, August 2006
2. Open letter to Christians, August 2006.
3. Robert Fisk, War for Civilisation, 2006
4. Guardian Weekly, 29/04/06
5. Apartheid in the Holy Land, 2002

### The Heart of the Injustice

*“It is morally outrageous. No code of morals can justify the persecution of one people in any attempt to relieve the persecution of another. The cure for the eviction of Jews from Germany is not to be sought in the eviction of the Arabs from their homeland; and the relief of Jewish distress may not be accomplished at the cost of inflicting a corresponding distress upon an innocent and peaceful population.”*

**George Antonius, historian, 1938, when partition of Palestine was first officially suggested.**

### Hot Topics

Writer: Mary Hamilton

Layout: Marcus Thomas

### Partition and diaspora: al-nhakbar

In 1948 the General Assembly of the UN voted for the partition of Palestine against the wishes of the majority of its inhabitants. 55% of Palestine was given to the Jewish immigrants who then formed 32% of the population.

The establishment of the Israeli state was not peaceful. Jewish forces, well armed and prepared, quickly took over 4/5 of the land, far more than the UN had allocated them. Palestinians were evicted or killed and hundreds of villages demolished. Forces from Jordan, Egypt and Syria entered Palestine and occupied the remainder. Over 3/4 million Palestinians were either evicted or fled in terror. Most fled to Gaza or the shrunken West Bank, but thousands also fled to Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Most Palestinian refugees have remained in poor, overcrowded camps for nearly 60 years. Their children and grandchildren have been born and brought up in these camps and there are now 6 million Palestinian refugees. From the beginning UN resolutions have recognized the right of these Palestinians to return to their homes, in fact Israel’s admission into the UN in 1949 was conditional on its implementation of this right of return.

In 1967, during the six-day war, Israel captured East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, all the remaining land of Palestine. The UN Security Council passed resolution 242 calling on Israel to withdraw. Despite this and other UN resolutions, Israel has continued its occupation of Palestine.

In the mid 1990s very limited self-



An elderly Palestinian Christian

administration was agreed for certain areas within the West Bank and the Gaza Strip under the Palestinian Authority (PA). Meanwhile Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation erupted in the first, largely peaceful Intifada in 1987. In 2,000 the second Intifada began in response to continued human rights abuses and the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements.<sup>1</sup>

(A summary of the history of Israel and Palestine up to the end of 2002 is given in Israel and Palestine: Conflict in the Holy Land.)

### Summary of recent events :

**2003:** January elections in Israel returned the right wing Likud party to power with a large majority.

**In June the ‘Road Map’ peace plan,** sponsored by the USA, UN, EU and Russia, was agreed by both Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA). It called for the establishment of a Palestinian state by 2005 but contained no mechanism to ensure compliance. It called on Palestinians to stop attacks against Israelis and called on Israel to stop expanding settlements, to dismantle recently established ones, to halt the destruction of Palestinian homes and assassinations of Palestinians and to ease closures and blockades in the Occupied Territories. The main Palestinian armed groups declared a unilateral three-month cease-fire. Israel took no steps towards implementing the ‘Road Map’ and negotiations collapsed in September.

### Human rights overview

Israeli aggression in the Occupied Territories (OT) increased considerably during 2003 with the continued building of the wall and the vast infrastructure needed to maintain both it and the growing number of Israeli settlements in the OT. The seizure of Palestinian land, the demolition of Palestinian homes, imprisonment without trial, torture and extra-judicial killings all continued. Increasing restrictions on the movement of Palestinians imposed by the Israeli army caused unprecedented poverty, unemployment and health problems. The Israeli army killed 600 Palestinians and Palestinians killed 130 Israeli civilians and 70 soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

**2004:** In February PM Ariel Sharon



Paul Jeffrey Achintl

Jabalia refugee camp, Gaza Strip. What future for these children?

announced Israel's 'disengagement plan' to evacuate all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip while maintaining control of airspace, land and sea access.

In April PM Sharon announced a new Israeli policy that up to half the West Bank settlers would be entitled to stay in any peace settlement. President Bush immediately endorsed this "in light of new realities on the ground." In Britain PM Tony Blair supported Bush's position. 52 former senior British diplomats wrote an open letter to PM Tony Blair denouncing his support for President Bush's endorsement, and calling the new US-Israeli policies "one-sided and illegal."<sup>2</sup>

### Attack on Rafah

In May the Israeli army attacked Rafah, the poorest town in the Gaza Strip. Tanks fired into a peaceful demonstration killing children and unarmed civilians. Soldiers destroyed 300 homes and damaged over 270 other buildings in Rafah refugee camp, making nearly 4,000 people homeless. Israeli army tanks destroyed the greenhouses that provided much of the fresh produce for Rafah as well as destroying most of its olive groves.<sup>3</sup> A UN resolution condemned the attacks.

In November President Yasser Arafat, long time leader of the Palestinian people, also founder and leader of the Fatah party, died.

During the year the Israeli army killed more than 700 Palestinians, including 150 children. Palestinian armed groups killed 32 Israeli soldiers and 67 civilians including 8 children.

#### 2005:

- **In January** Mahmoud Abbas was elected President of the PA.
- **In February** and March most Palestinian armed groups suspended violence against Israel.
- **In August and September** Israel moved all 8,000 illegal settlers out of the Gaza Strip and dismantled the settlements and then imposed a three month closure at the Rafah crossing.

Amnesty International noted that there was much less violence but that human rights abuses continued unabated. There was also growing lawlessness and inter-factional violence within the Palestinian Authority (PA). Israel continued to prevent the PA police and security forces operating effectively. The Israeli army killed 190 Palestinians, including 'around 50' children.<sup>4</sup> Palestinian armed groups killed 41 Israeli civilians, including 6 children.

**2006** was a year of greatly increased violence by Israel. The Israeli army killed more than 650 Palestinians, including 120 children. Palestinian armed groups killed 27 Israelis, including one child. Repeated

Israeli military assaults on Gaza, combined with other measures led to a humanitarian disaster there.

In March elections in Israel confirmed Ehud Olmert as Prime Minister, following the illness of Ariel Sharon. Ehud Olmert announced **Israel's intention to unilaterally implement a 'convergence plan'** where Israel would annex large parts of the West Bank as well as the Jordan Valley.

### Election victory for Hamas

In January 2006 elections throughout the Occupied Territories resulted in a large majority for the Hamas party, which had contested the election on a platform of reforming the PA, particularly its corruption.

The elections were monitored by international observers and were agreed to have been free and fair. A mainstream British newspaper called them an 'impressive display of democracy'. However overall western reaction was negative. The US, UN, EU and Russia immediately demanded that the Hamas government commit to nonviolence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of existing peace agreements to maintain crucial financial support. No similar demands were made of Israel.

Although Hamas had suspended all violence for 11 months, the West imposed sanctions, stopping vital support for the Palestinian Authority. Israel launched a massive offensive and blockade of Gaza.

**2007.** In March a new Palestinian unity government was sworn in with both Fatah and Hamas members. There was no easing of sanctions by the West and Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip continued. A US supported programme trained and armed Fatah troops in Egypt. During inter-factional fighting Fatah troops seized control of the West Bank. However, in spite of Israel allowing the entry of Fatah troops from Egypt, Hamas regained control in the Gaza Strip.

1. Amnesty International, country report, 2004.  
 2. Guardian Weekly, 29/04/04.  
 3. Guardian Weekly, 28/05/04  
 4. Amnesty International, 2006.

# The growth of illegal Jewish Settlements in occupied Palestine

Israel has been building illegal settlements or colonies on Palestinian land since it began the occupation in 1967, but construction has accelerated since 1977 when Ariel Sharon became the head of the Israeli Ministerial Committee on Settlements. Palestinian farmland is taken, homes demolished, no compensation paid. The continued building of settlements, in defiance of UN resolutions for them to be dismantled, is a source of justifiable Palestinian grievance. It is a method of progressively evicting Palestinians from the remainder of their land and makes a mockery of peace negotiations.

**“The Occupying Power shall not ...transfer parts of its own civilian population into territories it occupies.”**

#### Fourth Geneva Convention

In 2005 the world media highlighted the demolition and evacuation of Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip. Little attention was paid to the fact that Israel continued to build and strengthen settlements in the West Bank, particularly in and around East Jerusalem. By 2006 there were more than 200 settlements and 100 ‘outposts’ in occupied Palestine with over 450,000 Jewish Israeli settlers living in them. Settlements are often on hilltops, with gun towers overlooking Palestinian valleys and villages.

#### PERSPECTIVES

*“Everybody has to move, run and grab as many hilltops as they can to enlarge the settlements because everything we take now will stay ours... Everything we don’t grab will go to them.”*

**Ariel Sharon, Israeli Foreign Minister, 15/11/1998, cited in Chain Reaction, No 4, 2006**



The Jewish settlement of Harhoma, one of a number built on Bethlehem land that now encircle the city.

Referring to this Ariel Sharon is quoted as saying, “My plan is difficult for the Palestinians, a fatal blow. There’s no Palestinian state in a unilateral move.”<sup>1</sup>

#### Settler Only Roads

To service and link the settlements a network of ‘settler only’ roads continues to be built. These roads cut across existing Palestinian roads, which are blocked off with lumps of concrete and razor wire. Movement between villages has thus become increasingly difficult, villagers are cut off from their lands, means of livelihood and essential services. The settlements also control and use most of the water resources in their areas and many Palestinian areas are experiencing extreme water shortages.

#### Settler violence.

Settlers are allowed to carry weapons and many do so. Palestinians are not allowed weapons of any sort. Even Palestinian police are unarmed. Settler violence against the local Palestinian population has continued with little check.

- “In March and April Israeli settlers spread toxic chemicals in fields around Palestinian villages in the southern Hebron Hills. The chemicals were spread in areas where Palestinian

farmers graze their sheep, effectively depriving them of their livelihood....”<sup>2</sup>

- “A 7 year-old boy has been in hospital with bad bruising and a broken arm after a beating by settlers”<sup>3</sup>
- “Settlers continue to invade Palestinian-owned shops in Hebron...”<sup>4</sup>
- “The settlers came with dogs and guns; even the children were armed. Men in the village were beaten in front of their families.”<sup>5</sup>

#### Impunity for settlers’ crimes

Each year human rights groups report that Israeli settlers, and Israeli soldiers and police, who committed unlawful killings and other attacks against Palestinians and their property mainly do so with impunity. Investigations are rare: 90% of complaints filed with Israeli police against Israeli settlers’ attacks are closed without indictments. In exceptional cases where Israelis are convicted of killing or abusing Palestinians, light sentences are imposed. ([www.yesh-din.org](http://www.yesh-din.org))

1. Quoted by Avi Shlaim in GW 17/7/05.

2. Amnesty International report for Israel/Occupied Territories, 2005.

3. CPT report, June 2006.

4. March 5, 2007, icahd.

5. Chain Reaction No 1, 2005.

## THE OLIVE HARVEST OF SAWIYA

**Abdula Yusuf is leader of the village council of Sawiya village, south of Nablus. He describes the villagers' attempt to harvest their olive crop, the livelihood for the 10 extended families of the village.**

**"It was the first day of picking and we worked for three or four hours. I had picked five sacks when the settlers came down the hill with knives and guns. They slashed open our sacks and emptied the olives on to the ground. They put guns to our heads and made us stand there while they did it. The settlers have built a road near the bottom of the hill. They told us we are not allowed to cross the road any more and all the land on the other side, all our olive trees up the hill, are now theirs."**

**The villagers returned the following day with a larger group of pickers from surrounding villages. The settlers stayed away but came down that night. Over two hillsides they sawed and hacked trees with power saws.**

**"Next morning we stopped an Israeli police patrol. The Jeep went to the settlement and told them not to do it again. Next night they were back and the police did nothing. We used to think the settlers just wanted our olives, but it's about land. They want to expand their settlement....."**

**The comment of the settlement spokesman, Yossi Peli, supports Mr Yusuf's fears, "The trees grow back and ultimately we hope to harvest them in the place of the unwanted inhabitants of the area."**

**Human rights groups estimated that more than 1,000 Palestinian olive trees were damaged or destroyed by settlers in the area during the 2003 October harvest. Some prominent Israelis condemned the attacks. However, the overall settlers' council decided that while it was wrong for settlers to wreck trees, it was acceptable for them to loot the olive crop "because Jews are entitled to harvest the produce of non-Jews in what the council defines as the Land of Israel" which includes the West Bank. (Guardian Weekly 20/11/03)**



Paul Jeffrey: Act Intl.

**House demolitions continue: this house in Bethlehem was home to four families.**

## House demolitions: the first victim of the occupation

During the 40 years of occupation of Palestine the Israeli army has demolished 18,000 Palestinian homes as well as hundreds of public buildings and private commercial properties. As one of the first acts of the occupation in 1967 Israeli bulldozers demolished the homes of more than 135 families and two mosques in the historic Mughrabi quarter of Old Jerusalem. No warning was given. One elderly woman, Haja Rasmia Tabaki, was killed as her home collapsed on top of her. Since then hundreds of thousands of people have been made homeless and destitute. ([www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org)) The rate of demolitions has increased greatly since 2000.

### PERSPECTIVES

*"We firmly stand by the historic right of the people of Israel to the entire Land of Israel. Every hill in Samaria and every valley in Judea (the West Bank) is part of our historic homeland."*

**Ehud Olmert**



EA/PI

**One of a grove of 900 Palestinian olive trees being uprooted and confiscated in order to expand a Jewish settlement near the village of Jayous. 'We have owned these trees for over a 100 years.'**

# Children in prison

**Each year hundreds of Palestinian children are arrested, interrogated and imprisoned by the Israeli military.**

Human rights groups report widespread and systematic violations of international law designed to safeguard the rights of children deprived of liberty.

As with adults, arrests often take place at night. Dozens of soldiers surround a house, usually without any warrant. "The entire house is searched, often ransacked, personal property destroyed, occupants humiliated and harassed." If arrested from checkpoints, children are often made to wait for hours blindfolded, their hands cuffed. The plastic cuffing is extremely painful.



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Children face loaded guns at a checkpoint. Checkpoints are a regular place of arrest.

## Justice denied: case study of a Palestinian child prisoner

Ala was a 16 year-old school student when she was arrested in the middle of the night in October 2004. Israeli soldiers surrounded the house then burst in through doors and windows, ordering Ala, her mother, sister and brother to stand in their nightclothes in the garden. Later her mother and sister were allowed back inside while Ala and her brother were blindfolded, handcuffed and driven away in an army jeep.

All night the jeep drove, sometimes picking up more people who had been arrested. No one spoke. Early the next morning the jeep drove into a military camp. There was a brief stop and Ala's brother was released but Ala moved on again. After 24 hours of near continuous transport from one military camp to another Ala was placed alone in a tent, her hands untied then recuffed behind her back, and was left there, blindfolded, for another 18 hours. Eventually she was taken to Ramle prison inside Israel.

It was ten days after her arrest before Ala saw a lawyer and had her only interrogation. Her interrogator accused her of knowing members of the Al-Aqsa brigade. "I told him it wasn't true, but he refused to believe me and then he started to threaten me. He said my house would be demolished and that

my brothers and sisters and even my mother would be arrested." A week later a military court ordered Ala six months in administrative detention. After six months the detention order was renewed without explanation. Altogether Ala was imprisoned for ten months.

Conditions in the prison were substandard and Ala spent all but three hours a day locked in a cell. Early in 2005 she was transferred to Telmond prison north of Tel Aviv where conditions were particularly bad. A metal panel covered the only window in Ala's cell and it was infested with mice and insects. Punishments for minor infringements, such as not standing up instantly for a roll call, included solitary confinement and being tied to a chair in shabah (positional torture).

### Denial of visits

From the day Ala was arrested her mother tried to arrange to visit her daughter. Each week the Red Cross told her that permission had been denied. "I had no contact with Ala; she couldn't phone; the letters she sent never arrived. Can you imagine it – not being allowed to see your child for months and months on end! Finally, eight months after Ala had been arrested, her mother was allowed one brief visit, in a crowded room, with thick panes of glass between them.

The reasons for Ala's arrest remain unclear – no charges were ever brought against her, no eyewitnesses gave evidence against her – her case was never even tried in a court of law.

**Ala was one of thousands of Palestinians arbitrarily incarcerated in Israeli prisons under administrative detention orders.**

([www.dci-pal.org/english](http://www.dci-pal.org/english))

In 2005 Amnesty International put out a Worldwide Appeal calling for all Palestinian administrative detainees to be released if not charged and tried.



CPT

Arrested children are often made to wait for hours.

## 'The suicide bombers have not always been there'

For my mother and father, Judaism meant bearing witness, railing against injustice and silence. It meant compassion, tolerance and rescue....The lessons of the Holocaust were always presented to me as both particular (i.e. Jewish) and universal.

I first went to the West Bank and Gaza in 1985, two and a half years before the first Palestinian uprising....That summer changed my life because it was then that I came to understand and experience what occupation was and what it meant....

One of my earliest encounters involved a group of Israeli soldiers, an old Palestinian man and his donkey. Standing on a street with some Palestinian friends, I noticed an elderly Palestinian walking down the street, leading his donkey. A small child no more than three or four years old, clearly his grandson, was with him. Some Israeli soldiers standing nearby went up to the old man and stopped him. One soldier ambled over to the donkey and pried open its mouth. "Old man" he asked "why are your donkey's teeth so yellow: Why aren't they white? Don't you brush your donkey's teeth?" The old Palestinian was mortified, the little boy visibly upset.

The soldier repeated his question, yelling this time, while the other soldiers laughed. The child began to cry and the old man just stood there silently, humiliated. This scene repeated itself while a crowd gathered. The soldier then ordered the old man to stand behind the donkey and demanded that he kiss the animal's behind. At first, the old man refused but as the soldier screamed at him and his grandson become hysterical, he bent down and did it.

The soldiers laughed and walked away. They had achieved their goal: to humiliate him and those around him. We all stood there in silence, ashamed to look at each other, hearing nothing but the uncontrollable sobs of the little boy. The old man did not move for what seemed a very long time. He just stood there, demeaned and destroyed. I stood there too, in stunned disbelief. I immediately thought of the stories my parents had told me of how Jews had been treated by the Nazis in the 1930s before the ghettos and death camps, of how Jews would be forced to clean sidewalks with toothbrushes and have their beards cut off in public.

What happened to the old man was absolutely equivalent in principle, intent and impact: to humiliate and dehumanize. In this instance, there was no difference between the German soldier and the Israeli one. Throughout that summer of 1985 I saw similar incidents: Young Palestinian men being forced by Israeli soldiers to bark like dogs on their hands and knees or dance in the streets.

....And it is from this context of deprivation and suffocation, now largely forgotten, that the horrific and despicable suicide bombings have emerged and taken the lives of more innocents....Like the settlements, razed homes and barricades that preceded them, the suicide bombers have not always been there.

*(Extracts from Sara Roy: The journey of a child of Holocaust survivors, 2002)*

## Human Shield



Hashimoun Palestine Monitor

**Blindfolded, with his hands tied behind his back, a Palestinian child crouches in front of an Israeli soldier. In 2005 the Israeli high court ruled that the practice of using Palestinian civilians as human shields in combat is illegal. Human rights groups who brought the case to court said the army routinely forced Palestinians into dangerous situations to protect soldiers**

*"It is family and community that have sustained these people during these hopeless times. For some, it is all that they had, but that too has been taken away with the continued building of the wall and check points."*

*(Bishop Riah, 2006)*

***Israel has ignored forty-six resolutions of the General Assembly and other UN bodies.***

# The Hafrada wall

In December 2003 the General Assembly of the UN sought an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, the highest legal authority of the UN, on the “legal consequences...” of the separation wall Israel had begun to build within the Occupied Territories. The opinion was given in July 2004.

## SUMMARY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE OPINION:

- The construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying Power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law;
- Israel is under an obligation to terminate its breaches of international law; it is under an obligation to end the construction of the wall, to dismantle it and to repeal any legislation relating to it;
- Israel must make reparations for all damage caused by the construction of the wall. All States are under an obligation not to recognize the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall; and all States party to the Fourth Geneva Convention have the obligation to ensure compliance by Israel with international humanitarian law;
- The United Nations should consider what further action is required to bring



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to an end the illegal situation resulting from the construction of the wall. (www.icj-cij.org)

An Israeli human rights defender stands in protest. The split flag is the emblem of Gush Shalom.

The 700 km separation wall is not a security barrier along the ‘green line’ but is being built deep into Palestinian territory. In this way large amounts of Palestinian land are annexed into Israel. It also seems to be part of a strategy to divide occupied Palestine into isolated Bantustans or cantons that have neither economic viability nor easy access from one area to another.

Palestinians living near the wall now have to obtain special permits to live in their own homes (an order that breached a pledge by Israel to the UN Security Council in September 2003 that the barrier would not alter the legal status of those who live near it). With the new order all land between the wall and the green line is now a ‘closed military zone’ and Palestinians living in the area are designated ‘long-term residents’.

## Israeli annexation of Palestinian land

In early 2006 Ehud Olmert, the new Israeli prime minister, announced a unilateral ‘convergence’ plan to expand Israel by annexing seven settlement ‘blocs’. In May he presented this plan to a joint session of the US Congress. These land blocs that Israel is now forcibly annexing with the building of the wall constitute 15-20% of the area of the West Bank, perhaps more.

## PERSPECTIVES

*‘Hafrada’ is Hebrew for separation. “This is the word which the government of Israel is using as it builds its separation wall. In time, the word hafrada can become synonymous with apartheid because it harbors within it the hatred of and discrimination against the Palestinians.”*

Sabeel Ecumenical Centre, Jerusalem. July, 2004)

## PERSPECTIVES

*“The issue is not only territory; it’s also a matter of control and resources. If a Palestinian state has territory but no control of its borders, no freedom of movement either internally or to neighbouring countries, no control of water and its richest agricultural land, no meaningful access to Jerusalem which accounts for 40% of its economy and no control of its airspace or communications, then it becomes a prison, a Bantustan a la South Africa in the days of apartheid.”*

Jeff Halper in Chain Reaction 5, 2006. Jeff Halper is Coordinator of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions [www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org).



# Jerusalem– Holy City?

East Jerusalem, including the old heart of the city, is the traditional Christian and Moslem area of Jerusalem containing holy sites of both religions and for long years an area criss-crossed with narrow streets and vibrant with life and thriving trade. Palestinians want Jerusalem to be an open city and have always looked to this eastern section as the capital of their independent state-to-be.

In 1967 Israel illegally annexed East Jerusalem and life since has become an increasingly difficult struggle for its inhabitants. No country in the world has recognized the annexation and several UN resolutions have condemned it. Notwithstanding, Israel has declared Jerusalem to be 'the unified and eternal capital of the state of Israel'. Israeli government policies have consistently worked to develop a Jewish majority in the city.

- Hundreds of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem have been demolished – over 400 since 2000.
- By denying permits to non-Jewish people, Israel has made it virtually impossible for Palestinians to build inside Jerusalem or even to renovate existing homes.
- A ring of Jewish-only settlements has been built around East Jerusalem on land that is an integral part of the West Bank. A 134km loop of the separation wall is being built to include these settlements, with nearly half million people, inside a Greater Jerusalem.



The wall encloses another suburb of East Jerusalem

- In other places the wall “slices through the heart of the city’s Palestinian communities” (Chain Reaction 4) to shut Palestinian areas out of the city. About one quarter of Palestinians holding Jerusalem identity cards have been forcibly transferred out of the city in this way. ([www.ochaopt.org](http://www.ochaopt.org))
- Cut off from the West Bank by wall and checkpoints, what remains of the city (and its 120,000 inhabitants) is becoming “a mere collection of ghettos surrounded by massive Israeli settlements”. (Chain Reaction 4)

These regulations are strangling the social and economic life of the city, often denying people access to workplaces, hospitals, schools and places of worship. Some areas are already deserted.

## Christians in Jerusalem

The number of Christians in Jerusalem is falling rapidly as people flee from the stress of walls, checkpoints, house demolitions and pass regulations. Christians can emigrate more easily than Muslims.



Racist graffiti is found both on Palestinian property and at checkpoints

## PERSPECTIVES

*“I know a family in Bir Nabala, part of the Jerusalem municipality. The father would drive his children to the Rosary Sisters school in Beit Hanina, about a five minute drive. Now the Wall has been erected, he has to drive half way to Ramallah, all the way to the Qalandiya checkpoint where his children have to get out of the car and walk through the checkpoint. This means leaving the house at 5.30am just to get his children to school on time. What kind of life is this?”*

*These measures are driving people crazy.”*

(Chain Reaction 4, 2006)

# The Long Siege of Gaza

The Gaza Strip is a tiny patch of land in the south east corner of the Mediterranean. It is about 42km long by an average of 7km wide. It is the most densely populated area in the world. Here are crowded nearly 1.5 million people, one third of whom live in refugee camps, descendants of those evicted from their homes in 1948.

## PERSPECTIVES

*“Israel has killed 2,300 Gazans over the past six years, including 300 in the four months since June 25. The wounded can be counted in the tens of thousands. Most of the casualties are civilians, many of them children.*

*The killing continues on a daily basis – by tank and sniper fire, by air and sea bombardment and by undercover teams in civilian clothes sent into Arab territory to ambush and murder, an Israeli specialty perfected over the past several decades.*

*How long will the ‘international community’ allow the slaughter to continue? The cruel repression of the occupied territories, and of Gaza in particular, is one of the most scandalous in the world today. It is the blackest stain on Israel’s patchy record as a would-be democratic state...”*

**Patrick Seale, International Herald Tribune. 27/10/06**

## Stopping trade and laying siege

After the removal of settlers in 2005 Israel stepped up closures of entrance/exit points to the Gaza Strip. The Karni crossing through which most commercial supplies entered and left Gaza was closed 50% of the time with enormous daily losses. From the end of June 2006 the crossing was completely sealed.

The Palestinian Authority has always been dependent on two sources of income: firstly on aid from Western donors of over \$1 billion per year; and secondly on a monthly transfer by Israel of \$55 million of Palestinian customs and tax revenues that Israel collects on behalf of the Authority. After the election of the Hamas government in early 2006 Western donors suspended payment of much of their vital aid money to the PA and Israel stopped the transfer of all Palestinian taxes. Hence thousands of teachers, health professionals, technicians and others could no longer be paid.



Paul Jeffrey Achintl

**Gaza Strip: salvaging wood from an olive grove destroyed by Israeli soldiers.**



Paul Jeffrey Achintl

**Japalia camp, Gaza Strip: descendants of those evicted from their homes in 1948.**

- Carnations and strawberries, two of Gaza’s main exports, had to be thrown away or left to rot at closed checkpoints.
- Fishermen were forbidden to go far from the shore and had to wade into the surf to try to catch fish with hand-thrown nets.
- The Israeli army also destroyed much agricultural land, including 70% of Gaza’s orange groves and many commercial greenhouses.
- By August 2006 two thirds of the population was unemployed and the remaining third, who mostly worked for the PA, were not being paid. 80% of Gazan households were living in severe poverty.

## The Israeli military campaign against Gaza

From early 2006, months before the Palestinian capture of Corporal Shalit on June 25, Israeli forces carried out frequent air and artillery bombardments of Gaza, often into densely populated refugee camps and residential areas. The campaign appears to have been a form of collective punishment following the election of Hamas.

- On June 9, 2006, the Israeli army fired several artillery shells at a Gazan beach crowded with picnicking families on the first weekend of the school holidays. Seven members of the Ghalia family were killed, including five children. At least 30 other civilians were injured.
- On June 27, 2006, Israel launched operation ‘Summer Rains’ and intensified the bombings. The only power plant in Gaza was bombed. Bridges, roads, water and sewage networks were also destroyed. There was no electricity for most of the day through the hottest months of the year; an estimated \$1.8bn in damage to the electricity grid. More than a million people were left without regular access to drinking water.

# ‘We affirm that all people are created in the image of God.’

(from The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism)



People living in a refugee camp, Gaza Strip.

Christian Zionism is a movement within Protestant fundamentalism that “supports the maximalist claims of Jewish political Zionism, including Israel’s sovereignty over the entirety of historic Palestine including Jerusalem”.<sup>1</sup> It equates Biblical Israel with the modern nation-state of Israel and cites God’s covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:1-7; 13:15; 15:4-7; 17: 1-8) to support these claims.

Christian Zionists also believe that a powerful modern state of Israel will usher in the last days of earth, the battle of Armageddon and Christ’s literal return to earth – to save some and condemn most to perpetual damnation. Hence Christian Zionists welcome and promote conflict and militarization in the Middle East.

Christian Zionists use particular passages in the Bible selectively. They ignore the ongoing emphasis on justice in both the Decalogue and the prophets; ignore the conditions attached in God’s original covenant with Abraham, the warnings of Samuel and the prophets and the return from exile; and ignore the dynamic

evolution of the Hebrew concept of God.<sup>2</sup>

Christian Zionists often view mainstream Protestant, Orthodox and Catholic denominations with hostility, seeing all those who criticize Israel as agents of the Antichrist. They are also hostile to Palestinian Christians and “generally detest Muslims.”<sup>1</sup> Their world view has no place for either Palestinian Christians or Muslims or for any Biblical doctrine of peace, justice and reconciliation in the Holy Land.

For some time Palestinian Christians have been alarmed by such destructive theologies which only serve to fuel extremism in the Middle East and to give ordinary Muslims the impression that Western aggression is in fact a religious war against Islam. In August 2006 a group of church leaders in Jerusalem spent time together in prayer and retreat. They then issued The Jerusalem Declaration on Christian Zionism, rejecting the tenets of Christian Zionism and affirming a more inclusive, loving and life promoting theology of the Holy Land.

## THE JERUSALEM DECLARATION ON CHRISTIAN ZIONISM

**We categorically reject Christian Zionist doctrines as false teaching that corrupts the biblical message of love, justice and reconciliation.**

We further reject the contemporary alliance of Christian Zionist leaders and organizations with elements in the governments of Israel and the United States that are at present imposing their unilateral pre-emptive borders and domination over Palestine. This inevitably leads to unending cycles of violence that undermine the security of all peoples of the Middle East and the rest of the world.

We reject the teachings of Christian Zionism that facilitate and support these policies as they advance racial exclusivity and perpetual war rather than the gospel of universal love, redemption and reconciliation taught by Jesus Christ. Rather than condemn the world to the doom of Armageddon we call upon everyone to liberate themselves from the ideologies of militarism and occupation. Instead, let them pursue the healing of the nations!

We call upon Christians in Churches on every continent to pray for the Palestinian and Israeli people, both of whom are suffering as victims of occupation and militarism. These discriminative actions are turning Palestine into impoverished ghettos surrounded by exclusive Israeli settlements. The establishment of the illegal settlements and the construction of the Separation Wall on confiscated Palestinian land undermine the viability of a Palestinian state as well as peace and security in the entire region.

**We call upon all Churches that remain silent, to break their silence and speak for reconciliation with justice in the Holy Land....” (The full text is included in Bishop Munib’s article, see below)**

1. Donald Wagner: Defining Christian Zionism.

2. Bishop Munib Younan: An Ethical Critique of Christian Zionism, in the Journal of Lutheran Ethics, May 2007. [www.elca.org/jle](http://www.elca.org/jle)

# Non-violent protest: Muslims, Christians and Jews work together for justice

There is much protest in the Occupied Territories. In spite of great provocation most protest continues to be non-violent and is rarely reported. Each year the Amnesty International Country Report for Israel/Occupied Territories includes reports such as, "Israeli forces carried out unlawful attacks and routinely used excessive force against peacefully demonstrators protesting against the destruction of Palestinian agricultural land and the Israeli army's construction of the fence/wall".

In a number of places Palestinians have been joined by members of international peace groups and by members of Israeli human rights groups. These people too have progressively become the targets of attack.

In March 2003, Rachel Corrie, a young peace worker with the International Solidarity Movement, was crushed to death by an Israeli army bulldozer. Rachel was trying to protect homes from destruction in the poor and overcrowded town of Rafah in the south of the Gaza Strip. Since then a number of other international peace activists and humanitarian workers have been killed or wounded by Israeli soldiers or settlers.

## The village of Bil'in

Here the separation wall cuts the village off from most of its land, on which the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Sefer will be enlarged. This settlement has taken 60% of the land of adjoining Palestinian villages since the beginning of 2005.

Bil'in village residents, with Israeli and international activists, have peacefully demonstrated every Friday since February 2005 in opposition to the wall. The Israeli army has consistently responded with teargas, sound bombs, clubs, rubber-coated steel bullets, and live ammunition. (A.I.2006)

On April 28, 2005 a particularly large demonstration took place that included the Palestinian minister Fares Kadduri, and other well-known figures. Film footage.... showed how undercover agents, who look in the beginning like ordinary demonstrators, suddenly take



Bil'in 2007: protest continues

off their masks, don police caps and draw revolvers, using great violence to arrest the persons next to them, for no apparent reasons. . . Two Palestinians and two

Israelis grabbed the undercover agents, only to find themselves arrested. (<http://gush-shalom.org/video/bilin>)



Schoolgirls and their teachers try to access their school in Hebron.

## Israeli human rights defenders

*"The brave body of Israeli conscientious objectors are the true inheritors of the prophets of Israel"*

(Canon Paul Oestreicher, Guardian Weekly, 24/02/06)

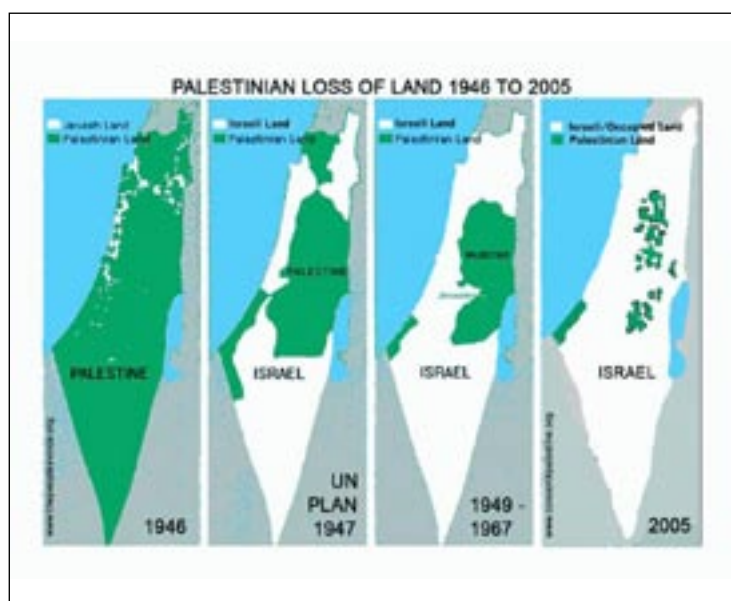
Although many in Israel support the expansionist and apartheid policies of their government and in fact know little of what happens in occupied Palestine, many Israelis have spoken out strongly to urge both their compatriots and the rest of the world to take action for justice.

Thousands of ordinary Israelis have refused to serve in the Occupied Territories during their military service. Many have been imprisoned. Groups such as the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, Gush Shalom and MACHSOMWATCH, journalists and academics like Amira Hass and Ilan Pappé take direct action and are critical of their government's policies to Palestinians.

## The protest continues

*"One of the strong impressions I get this year is that non-violent resistance to the Occupation has spread and is strengthening and getting better organised. Palestinians have set up Popular Committees in many towns and villages specifically to plan non-violent action against the ever encroaching Wall and other threats of the Occupation."*

(Christina Gibb, CPT in Hebron, 2007)



## TESTIMONY OF HOPE

In 1939 I left the village of Kippenheim, Germany, on a Kindertransport .. thus surviving the Holocaust. Last December I went to Israel to honor the memory of my parents... At a monument near Jerusalem, I lit candles for my parents and for the other 80,000 Jews deported from France to the death camps.

...We Jews who survived the Shoah know all too well that the intentional targeting of civilians is illegal and immoral. So I grieve the loss of life in Jerusalem from the suicide bombs. But I also grieve the loss of life in Palestine, which occurs almost on a daily basis. So I went to Palestine as a member of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) to observe the difficult conditions of daily life under military occupation.....

- In Bethlehem I saw a Caterpillar bulldozer ripping up centuries-old olive trees to clear a path for rolled razor wire and antitank trenches dividing the town where Jesus was born.
- In Qalqila I was dwarfed by Israel's separation wall rising more than 25 feet....It keeps farmers from their fields and hems in 50,000 residents (of Qalqilia) on all sides.
- In Mas'ha I joined a demonstration against this wall... I saw Israeli soldiers aiming at unarmed Israeli and international protesters. I saw blood pouring out of Gil Na'amati, a young Israeli whose first public act after completing his military service was to protest against this wall.

At the end of the journey I had a shocking experience...I did not imagine that the Israeli security force that guards Ben Gurion Airport would abuse a 79-year-old Holocaust survivor, holding me for five hours and performing a completely unnecessary strip search of every part of my naked body. The only shame these security officials expressed was to turn their badges around so that their names were invisible. The only conceivable purpose of this gross violation of my bodily integrity was to humiliate and terrify me.

Of course, I felt humiliated by this outrage but I refuse to be terrified by cowards who hide their identity while engaging in such unnecessary disrespect. It is a cruel illusion that brute force of this sort provides security to Israel. **Degrading me cannot silence my small voice. Similarly, humiliating Palestinians cannot extinguish their hopes for a homeland. Only ending this utterly unnecessary occupation will bring peace to the region.**

Hedy Epstein, October 2004

(slightly abridged; emphasis added)

# Taking action for justice in Palestine

“The end of apartheid stands as one of the crowning achievements of the last century, but we would not have succeeded without the help of international pressure – in particular the divestment movement of the 1980s. Over the past six months a similar movement has taken shape, this time aiming at achieving an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine.” (Desmond Tutu, former Archbishop of South Africa)

“For the past forty years we have been largely alone on this desert fighting a predator that not only has robbed us of all but a small piece of our historic homeland, but threatens the traditions and holy sites of Christianity. We are tired, weary, sick, and wounded. We need your help... If you find that you can no longer look away, take up your cross....I urge you not to be like the disciple watching from afar.”

(Bishop Riah, the Anglican Bishop in Jerusalem, July 27, 2006)

## Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

In July 2005, 170 Palestinian civil society organizations issued a Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel “until it fully complies with international law.” The call was issued on the first anniversary of the World Court ruling that the separation wall and the Israeli colonies on Palestinian land are illegal. (www.PACBI.org) Human rights groups in Israel have welcomed such action as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the Israeli government. Groups and organizations in a number of countries have now initiated discussion and action on divestment and sanctions.

- In North America a number of churches have taken action, including the Presbyterian Church of the US, the United Methodist churches, the Churches of Christ and the Episcopal church.
- The Church of Sweden has called for

a boycott of goods produced by Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

- European Jews for a Just Peace have put out a statement endorsing boycotts of Israel.
- The large union of British university lecturers recently voted to consider the “moral implications” of links with Israeli universities and has committed itself to a year-long debate on “a comprehensive and consistent boycott of all Israeli academic institutions.”

## Buying power

Olives have been grown in Palestine since biblical times and the production of olive oil has always been a mainstay of the economy. Over that time the olive has become a symbol of the identity and



Small boy in a refugee camp in Gaza.

soul of Palestinian people. PARC is a Palestinian organization founded to help reverse the deterioration in agriculture caused by Israeli occupation. Its slogan is “resisting the occupation by insisting on life.” One of its major projects is replanting olive trees on land bulldozed by the Israeli military. It also supports farming cooperatives. In 2005, in spite of major difficulties, it exported 310 metric tons of olive oil on behalf of struggling Palestinian farmers.

**You can support Palestinian farmers and PARC’s replanting project by buying Palestinian olive oil. It is on sale in Trade Aid shops throughout New Zealand and also in some organic shops. To find your nearest supplier go to [www.tradeaid.org.nz](http://www.tradeaid.org.nz)**

## PERSPECTIVES

*“Distance does not separate us from responsibility for action. As Christians we must stand, as Christ did, beside those who suffer, who are powerless or oppressed.”*

(NZ Catholic Bishops, For a Just Peace in Palestine)



A woman picks olives for export as olive oil via fair trade networks.



A family with their new water tank provided under the DSPR water cistern programme. Israeli settlers now take most of Palestine's water, causing severe shortages in many areas.

### Humanitarian Assistance

For over 50 years the Middle East Council of Churches, through its Department of Service to Palestinian refugees (DSPR) has supported Palestinian refugees dispersed throughout the Middle East and has advocated on their behalf.

The DSPR provides emergency help; it also runs family health clinics and vocational training schools. Recently, many Palestinians have been deprived of much of their basic water supply and shortages

in some areas have been severe. So the DSPR has been providing water tanks for Palestinian homes, enabling families to have water for careful domestic use and watering small vegetable gardens.

**To support the work of the DSPR, donate to CWS.**

**Mark all donations 'Water for Palestine'.**

**Post to**

**PO Box 22 652, Christchurch 8142**

**Free phone: 0800 74 73 72**

**www.cws.org.nz**

### The UN General Assembly has designated November 29 as International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

**It is the day on which in 1947 the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution to partition Palestine. "It should be a day to remind the world that the injustice needs to end. Israel needs to end its occupation. The same countries responsible for the resolution on the partition of Palestine should be the ones to carry out this task."**

*(Rifat Odeh Kassis, EAPPI International Programme Coordinator)*



### Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)

CPT are ecumenical groups whose members are trained, then commit to spending time with a team in an area of conflict. For several years a CPT group has been stationed in Hebron, Palestine, at the invitation of the local community. CPT members aim to support local people, sometimes literally standing between them and attack. They also monitor human rights abuses and raise awareness in their home countries about the situation in Palestine. There are CPT support groups in a number of countries. ([www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org))

### The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

The EAPPI supports Palestinians and Israelis working for peace by monitoring and reporting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, offering protection by accompanying local communities in daily activities, and by advocating with churches for a peaceful end to the Occupation. The programme, which began in 2002, is coordinated by the World Council of Churches. The commitment is shorter than with CPT. Details of the programme can be found at [www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org)

### Questions for reflection

- How can you work to counter the standard media portrayal of events in Palestine?
- What can you do to support a just peace in Palestine? How can you best encourage your church or group to take action?
- Read Bishop Riah's call at the beginning of this section. What is your response?
- Download the full text of the Jerusalem Declaration. Would your church endorse it?
- Are you involved in any group that needs to consider boycott and divestment?

***Occupation is about the domination and dispossession of one people by another.  
It is about the destruction of their property and the destruction of their soul.  
Occupation aims, at its core, to deny Palestinians their humanity by denying them  
the right to determine their existence, to live normal lives in their own homes.  
Occupation is humiliation. It is despair and desperation.***

(Sara Roy, *The journey of a child of Holocaust survivors.*)

## Further reading and useful websites:

- **Israel/Palestine: Understanding Conflict in the Holy Land** (2003) The Churches' Agency on International Issues. This is essential reading and outlines the historical, political and faith background to the current conflict. Copies can be ordered from CWS, PO Box 22652, Christchurch.
- **A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples** by Ilan Pappé (2004); Cambridge University Press. This is a moving, scholarly and forthright history of Palestine from the early 1800s. Ilan Pappé teaches politics at Haifa University in Israel and is a well-known critic of Israel's policies towards the Palestinians.
- **Chain Reaction** is the quarterly magazine of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme (EAPPI) in Palestine and Israel. It is an excellent source of current information on the occupation and its abuses. Copies can be ordered by writing to eappi-co@wcc-coe.org. The EAPPI website is www.eappi.org  
No. 1: The EAPPI Confronting violence with presence  
No. 2: While the World was Watching Gaza.  
No. 3: Children and the Conflict.  
No. 4: Holy City? Jerusalem – at the heart of the Conflict.  
No. 5: How long O Lord?  
The video: End the Occupation -Voices for a Just Peace (21minutes) can be borrowed from CWS, PO Box 22652, Christchurch, or ordered from eappi-co@wcc-coe.org.
- **Christian Peacemaker Team (CPT)** regular reports from Hebron: www.cpt.org
- **The Evangelical Lutheran Church** in Jordan and the Holy Land: www.holyland-lutherans.org
- **Amnesty International** documents human rights abuses worldwide and campaigns against them. Its Country Reports for Israel/Occupied territories for each year, as well as ongoing articles and reports on Palestine can be found by following through from www.amnesty.co.nz
- **United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)** is an excellent source of information about Palestinian refugees, including a detailed report about conditions in a small, totally enclosed enclave, Profile: Barta'a Sharquiya Enclave: www.un.org/unrwa/
- **Palestinian human rights and peaceful resistance groups.**  
The Palestine Monitor www.palestinemonitor.org has a news section that is updated almost daily.  
Palestinians for Peace and Democracy: www.p4pd.org  
Stop the Wall: www.stophewall.org
- The excellent video: **The Iron Wall** can be ordered from: www.theironwall.ps/ by following through to the Palestineonline store.  
Alternatively a film showing and discussion can be arranged for your group. Contact CAII, c/- CWS (details below).
- **Israeli human rights groups**  
The Israeli Committee against House Demolitions is one of the most active: www.icahd.org  
Yesh Gvul is the group of military who refuse to serve in the Occupied Territories: www.yeshgvul.org  
Gush Shalom: www.gush-shalom.org

***I look forward to the day when Israel can say to me and millions of other Palestinians: "Here, here is your family's house by the sea, here are your lemon trees, the olive grove your father tended: come home and be whole again."***

***Then we can speak of a future together.***

(Mousa Abu Marzook, deputy of the political bureau of Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement. Cited in *The Christchurch Press*, 13/7/07)

### The Churches' Agency on International Issues:

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Phone: (64 3) 366 9274 • Email: international@cws.org.nz • www.cws.org.nz