

CORNERSTONE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY SABEEL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER

SHAME



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“...THEIR GLORY
IS IN THEIR SHAME...”

(Philippians 3:19)

by: *The Rev. Naim Ateek*

IN THIS ISSUE

- “...Their Glory Is in Their Shame...”
by: *The Rev. Naim Ateek* 1-5
- No Impunity for War Crime Perpetrators
by: *Dr. Mamdouh Aker* 6-8
- Prayers for Gaza
by: *Jake Weber and Father Guy Tardivy* 10-11
- Myth and Reality:
A Call for Action on Behalf of the Palestinian People
by: *Dr. Mustafa Barghouti* 12-15
- A Letter from Gaza
by: *Father Manuel Musallam* 15-17

When Paul wanted to describe the enemies of the Gospel to his readers at the church of Philippi, he said, “...their god is their belly; and their glory is in their shame...” This is an apt description of many people who lose their compass in life. They live to eat rather than eat to live. Bodily wants and desires become a god to them. They boast in the shameful acts they do as if they were deeds of which to be proud. Such words reflect their moral bankruptcy. Their life priorities have become misguided and warped.

After the Israeli war on Gaza (December 27, 2008 to January 18, 2009) ended, I saw Israeli soldiers on their tanks making the victory sign. On TV, both Israeli and Hamas leaders were claiming that they won the war. Each side asserted victory.

THE GLORY OF ISRAEL

Human Casualty Figures:

On the Palestinian side 1440 died - among them 431 children and 114 women. 5380 were injured - among them 1872 children and 800 women; and 100 people have been reported missing [Figures cited from the Palestinian Ministry of Health by OCHA (ochaopt.org)].

It has been estimated that half of the injured Palestinians may suffer life-long impairment because of the inability to provide timely medical procedures (ochaopt.org).

On the Israeli side, three Israelis were killed and 182 injured by rocket and mortar fire from Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip. Eleven Israeli soldiers were killed and 340 wounded (ochaopt.org).

One cannot underestimate the traumatic effect on people, especially children, of both sides that will accompany them for the rest of their lives.

PROPERTY DAMAGE BY ISRAELI FORCES:

- 219 factories were destroyed or severely damaged in the Gaza Strip (ochaopt.org).
- 15 hospitals and 41 primary health clinics were partially damaged and two destroyed. 29 ambulances were partially damaged or destroyed (ochaopt.org).
- During the fighting, hospitals had only 2000 hospital beds with over 5000 injured. There was also a great shortage of medical personnel and supplies (bbc.co.uk).
- 24 mosques were shelled (muslimnews.co.uk). In one case, 12 people were killed; at least 6 were children (guardian.co.uk).
- Although the location of all UN facilities had been communicated to the Israeli authorities and known to the Israeli army, UN buildings suffered extensive

damage (un.org).

- 10 schools were severely damaged, 107 partially damaged, 8 kindergartens were severely damaged and 60 partially damaged (ochaopt.org).
- Israeli fighter jets bombed the Gaza Zoo (bbc.co.uk).
- Israel bombed the media center in Gaza City injuring a few journalists (Reuters, January 15, 2009). During the fighting, four Palestinian journalists were killed (cpj.org).
- Israel used white phosphorous bombs in civilian areas (bbc.co.uk).
- A pharmaceutical warehouse, the only one in the Southern Gaza strip was bombarded (haaretz.com).
- Estimated damage in the Gaza Strip is \$2 billion (bbc.co.uk).

When one observes, monitors, and surveys the carnage inflicted by the Israeli army and then hears the bellicose claim of victory, it makes people sick. The words of St. Paul ring true, "...their glory is in their shame..." In the face of such a primitive and antiquated war and ethic of violence how can anyone say that they have won? Are they not ashamed? Can they dare to stand before the children whose tender bodies have been ripped and burned by the white phosphorous bombs and say that they have won?

This reminds me of the working principle of the Holocaust theologian Irving Greenberg who wrote, "No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of burning children." [Quoted by Marc Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 1987), 36.] This statement was said in reference to Jewish children burned in the Holocaust. Many of

us find it comparable to what the government of Israel has done to the people of Gaza today. Is this the price that Palestinian children have to pay as a result of Israel's empowerment? Israel's military power seems unimpeded in its ferocity and immorality. Can Israeli leaders look at the suffering and burning children of Gaza and say anything that can be credible?

Greenberg has also written that with the exercise of power the prophetic should be deemphasized. We believe that we are called by God to do exactly the opposite. When there is empowerment, the prophetic is greatly needed in order to restrain the viciousness of power. There are prophets in Israel today. Most of them, however, are secular. They are the ones who dare to address the injustice against the Palestinians.

It is important to note that not all the people of the Gaza Strip are Hamas supporters. The Israeli war that Israel claimed was a war on terror, always imitating President Bush, was a war against the whole Palestinian people in Gaza. It was in the same spirit of vengeance and ferocity of previous Israeli wars whose aim was to crush the Palestinians. Yet, so long as the root causes of the conflict are not resolved, there will always be a new generation of Palestinians that will rise up and resist the injustice of the government of Israel. The war on Gaza did not bring any glory to any one. It brought only shame.

To Israel: Instead of pride and arrogance, the need is for humility and repentance. There were rabbis that approved the killing of Palestinians in the name of their religion and God. They called Hamas "Amalek" thus connoting Biblical wars of extermination and sanctioning total destruction [1 Samuel 15] (see Nadav

Shragai in Haaretz, January 16, 2009). Such a theology is not only obsolete, it is ridiculous and tragic. It is a travesty against the God of justice and love. God is not the god of war but the God of peace. In war, there are no winners. There are only losers. There is no glory. There is only shame.

Israel speaks reasonably and logically to the Western mind, but it acts with vengeance and hate when it strikes against the Palestinians. Israel is a deeply frustrated country because in spite of all its military power it cannot defeat the Palestinian spirit. It can easily kill them, but it cannot bring them to their knees. Israel continues to live the

lie. It knows well that one of the reasons for the Qassam rockets is the way that Israel blockaded the Gaza Strip for over one and a half years and brought the people of Gaza to the brink of hunger and desperation. (See: "How Israel brought Gaza to the brink of humanitarian catastrophe," guardian.co.uk, January 7, 2009). The tunnels which the Gazans dug were not primarily for smuggling arms, but for smuggling food, medicine and other necessities of life which Israel had denied them.



Photo by Sabeel

The Rev. Naim Ateek at the ecumenical prayer service in Haifa

“Tens of thousands of people died for Palestine. It is time for Palestinians to live for their country and enjoy their life in Palestine.”

To the Arabs and the International Community:

Shame on all of us as Arabs and as an international community. We are all guilty. It is true that the Arab states produced a very important peace initiative in 2002 that Israel did not even consider. But the Arab states could have resolved the conflict over Palestine a long time ago had they exerted concerted pressure on the United States government. Unfortunately, due to their divisions and the absence of a strong will, they failed.

Moreover, Western leaders-including those of the United States-have been afraid to put pressure on Israel to implement the demands of international law. In the bilateral negotiations between the two sides, the expectations have always been for the Palestinians to make more concessions to Israel when in fact Israel has been, all along, the aggressor. It seems as if peace between Israel and the Palestinians can only be achieved when the Palestinians accept what Israel dictates. Hence the vicious circle of never-ending negotiations will have to continue until the Palestinians say yes to what Israel wants.

WHO IS ON THE WRONG SIDE OF HISTORY?

The tragedy lies in the fact that many of the Western powers, including the United States, have applied double standards. On the one hand, they talk about the importance of international law and they expect countries to adhere to it; on the other hand, they have turned a blind eye to Israel's violations and are unwilling to exert pressure on it. From this perspective, Israel is on the wrong side of history, to use a phrase from President Obama. If Israel refuses to measure its actions in accordance with international law, i.e. the demands of justice, then international pressure should be placed on Israel rather than on the Palestinians. It is unjust to keep pressuring the Palestinians for more concessions in

order to meet the unjust demands of Israel. Many Palestinians are suffering today because they refuse to accept the injustice that is imposed on them by Israeli actions.

Most Western leaders bear the shame because, consciously or unconsciously, they too became party to the injustice of Israel. They betrayed their commitment to respect and enforce the demands of international law, thus putting the whole world in jeopardy.

Frankly, this has been the world that we have known for the last forty years under the leadership of the United States. What is needed now is not more discussions and negotiations, but immediate implementation. Any country that does not respect and refuses to implement the demands of international law, places itself on the wrong side of history and must be held accountable before the international community.

A SIGN OF HOPE

In his speech to the last Sabeel conference, Dr. Andreas van Agt, the former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, expressed hope that President Obama could do something (Sabeel, *Cornerstone*, Issue 51, 2008). We share that sentiment. There is hope that a window has opened up with the inauguration of President Obama. It might take time, but there are good signs already.

Months before the American election, Stephen Mansfield, a New York Times best-selling author, wrote a book entitled, *The Faith of Barack Obama* (Thomas Nelson). Mansfield wrote that "Obama roots his political Liberalism in a theological worldview, and he will call others to do the same." In the last paragraph of the book Mansfield added:

“... Obama seems willing to join with those of differing faiths to solve the crises of his times, to tend the wounds of his nation. Here, too, there may be an opportunity to heal...Perhaps we have come to a moment when a common devotion to God may fuel a national resolve to break cycles of poverty, challenge strongholds of racism, reinforce ethical conduct among the powerful and the powerless, deliberate on the morality of war before it is declared, and end the moral scourges of our time. If this is so, then part of the impact of Barack Obama in our generation may be for just such a purpose: to help wed faith to a political vision that leads to meaningful change in our time” (p. 143-144).

We know that the faith of Obama is not the faith of right-wing Christian extremists whose faith has only brought disgrace and disaster. The faith that heals is a faith in the God of love, peace, and reconciliation. It is the faith that respects and accepts the other even when the other is of another faith or of no faith. It is the faith that is committed to justice and truth. This is the faith that we must nourish and we hope and pray that this is the faith of President Obama. Indeed, the above words give us a sense of hope and encouragement. We will pray for President Obama to be able to “wed faith to a political vision that leads to meaningful change in our time,” and to bring about justice and peace to many oppressed people in our world.

A final word to Palestinians: During and after the war on Gaza, Sabeel organized three separate prayer services in Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Haifa for the people of Gaza. Hundreds of people participated in the prayer services and gave generously to help their brothers and sisters in

the Gaza Strip. We asked Father Manuel Musallam, the Roman Catholic priest of Gaza, to send a message to be read during those services. Fr. Musallam wrote, “...we want to live for Palestine, not die for it.” Our new motto for all the Palestinians should be: we want to live for Palestine. Tens of thousands of people died for Palestine. It is time for Palestinians to live for their country and enjoy their life in Palestine.

It is time for the leaders of the world, including President Obama, to work for justice and liberation for the Palestinian people so that they might live and prosper alongside their Israeli neighbors.

The Rev. Naim Ateek is the Director of Sabeel, Jerusalem.

Mrs. Samia Khoury, member of the executive board of Sabeel, has returned recently from the USA after receiving a citation of merit award from the Association of Southwestern University Alumni in Georgetown, Texas on January 31, 2009. “The Citation of Merit Award is given to a former Southwestern student who has performed exceptional civic and/or professional services in a given geographic area or field of endeavor.”

NO IMPUNITY FOR WAR CRIME PERPETRATORS

by: Dr. Mamdouh Aker

The Israeli war on Gaza in December/January 2009 was unprecedented in its savagery against civilian population and objects. When looking through the long list of Israeli violations of International Humanitarian Law during the 22 days of this war, one cannot avoid wondering what remains of war crimes and crimes against humanity that Israel did not commit! More than 1300 civilians were killed, and more than 5000 injured; 40-50% of those were children, women and elderly, hundreds of them will be left with permanent disabilities. More than 2,400¹ homes were completely destroyed. Thousands of others were heavily damaged. An additional 583 civilian and infrastructure objects were completely destroyed.

These figures and targets alone indicate a reckless disregard by Israel towards civilian life, in blatant violation of the fundamental principle of distinction as defined by



A fire erupted after the UN warehouse in Gaza City was hit by Israeli strikes.
Photo by AFP/Getty Images

International Humanitarian Law. Article 48 of Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions stipulates that: "In order to ensure respect and protection of the civilian population and civilian objects, the parties to the conflict should at all times distinguish between the civilian population and combatants, as well as between civilian objects and military objectives, and accordingly shall

direct their operations only against military objectives". In addition, article 50 (1-3) of the protocol states that: "1...In case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered to be a civilian...3. The presence within the civilian population of individuals who do not come within the definition of civilians does not deprive the population of its civilian character."

1. According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in a press release, reference number 19\2009, 22 January 2009.

In the same context, article 52 (3) that deals with the protection of civilian objects, states that: “In case of doubt whether an object which is normally dedicated to civilian purposes, such as a place of worship, a house or other dwelling or a school, is being used to make an effective contribution to military action, it shall be presumed not to be so used...”!

The list of targeted civilian objects during the Israeli attacks included municipalities, ministries, the legislative council building, universities, schools, mosques, hospitals, ambulances and infrastructure objects such as electricity, water and communication installations. UNRWA schools and warehouses (for medical and food supplies) were not spared either. Article 56 of the Hague Regulation of 1907 stipulates that “the property of municipalities, that of institutions dedicated to religion, charity and education, the arts and sciences, even when State property, shall be treated as private property. All seizure of, destruction or willful damage done to institutions of this character, historic monuments, works of art and science, is forbidden, and should be made the subject of legal proceedings.” The reckless disregard by Israel to civilian life is compounded by the nature of weaponry that was used by the Israeli occupation force (I.O.F) in its attack on Gaza. The widespread use of heavy artillery, tanks and F 16 fighter planes, let alone the use of prohibited

weapons, such as white phosphorous, against population centers in the Gaza Strip, which is one of the most densely populated areas on earth, only reflects a predetermined goal of exacting as much killing and destruction as possible.

The compelling questions are, “Why was all this savagery against a civilian population and civilian property done? Is it really all about Hamas and the launching of rockets?”

It is true that indiscriminate rocket

Humanitarian Law, i.e. the Principle of Proportionality. There is no proportionality between the “scale and effect” of Hamas rockets, and the “scale and effect” of the response by the I.O.F and its resort to the entire above-mentioned arsenal that caused devastating destruction.

This disproportionality can only be explained in the context of an ongoing effort by Israel to break the Palestinian will to resist occupation, and force the Palestinian people to give in to the Israeli diktat and grand



A white phosphorous shell fired into Gaza. Photo by www.bbs.chinadaily.com.cn

attacks against the Israeli civilian population and civilian objects are a violation by Hamas and other Palestinian resistance organizations of International Humanitarian Law. But here again, the Israeli response is in violation of yet another fundamental principle coined by International

design for the occupied Palestinian territory. The grand design is unraveling as a full-fledged fact on the ground: a new regime of Apartheid, which is far more sophisticated than the dismantled Apartheid regime of South Africa. The new Apartheid regime has been enforced by

fragmenting the Occupied West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip into separate Bantustans sealed by walls, colonies and hundreds of military check points. Thus far, Israel has been aiming at eliminating the Palestinian capacity to exercise the right to self-determination and the establishment of a free and sovereign state, as a realization of the Two-State Solution. To realize that Israel's real goal is to break Palestinian will, it is enough to recall the words of General Moshe Yaalon in 2002, then the Israeli Army chief of staff: "The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people." This statement should be coupled with what Professor Sara Roy (the daughter of a Holocaust survivor) described as a process of "De-Development" when explaining the ongoing systematic Israeli policies that result in frustrating Palestinian endeavors toward development, institution and nation-building.

So far, the outcome of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip did not bring the Palestinian people into a defeat, as much as it did not bring Israel a victory. Ironically it might have given Palestinians, amidst destruction, ashes and human suffering, an opportunity to challenge Israel on a different front worldwide, i.e. the International Humanitarian Law arena.

Israeli political and military leaders must be held accountable and must be brought to justice for all the war

“The compelling questions are, ‘Why was all this savagery against a civilian population and civilian property done? Is it really all about Hamas and the launching of rockets?’”

crimes and crimes against humanity they have committed. The road to the International Criminal Court might be long and tedious, but should not be left un-traveled. Meanwhile, another path should be sought. This path involves not only the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, but also the Human Rights NGO community at large, and individuals worldwide to activate the universal criminal jurisdiction.

Article 1, which is a common article to the four Geneva Conventions, obliges the High Contracting Parties to undertake respect and ensure respect for the provisions of the Conventions. Article 146 of the 4th Geneva Convention (relating to the Protection of Civilians in Time of War and in Occupied Territories) of 1949 stipulates that "The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing, or ordering to be committed, any of the grave breaches of the Convention..." Furthermore, the article stipulates that "Each High Contracting Party shall be under the

obligation to search for persons alleged to have committed, or to have ordered to be committed, such grave breaches and shall bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts. It may also, if it prefers, and in accordance with the provisions of its own legislation, hand such persons over for trial to another High Contracting Party concerned..."

By such universal criminal jurisdiction, Humanity has developed an effective tool, not only to bring persons who commit war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice and to pay reparation for their victims, but also to deter others from committing such crimes.

It should be as simple as this: No impunity for such persons.

Dr. Mamdouh Aker is the Commissioner General for The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR).

SABEEL FALL WITNESS VISIT

October 29 - November 6, 2009 (8 Nights)

The Sabeel Fall Visit offers a window into the daily lives of Palestinians living in the occupied Palestinian territories as well as into the experiences and challenges of the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

- Meet with Palestinian Christian and Muslim leaders of civic and religious organizations and Israeli advocates for Justice.
- Learn the stories of Palestinian Christians and share the worship that sustains their faith.
- Share thoughts and reflections with others from around the world who are working to end the conflict.

This trip includes visits to communities in the Occupied Territories and Israel, with **3 nights in Jerusalem, 3 in Bethlehem, and 2 nights in the Galilee.**

Payment: Land costs for the conference are \$1100 (\$250 additional for a single room)

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ECUMENICAL PRAYERS FOR GAZA

by: Jake Weber

To you, O Lord, we lift up our souls.
 In you, O God, we place our trust.
 Give ear to our words. Give heed to our sighing.
 Listen to the sound of our cry, for it is to you we pray.
 God, you are loving, gracious, merciful, and good.
 Relieve us from the anguish, the hatred, the violence.
 God, there are people in Gaza who really need you.
 Many are suffering. Innocent people are in danger.
 Reveal yourself to them. Show them who you are.
 Show them that you are Love.
 Show them that you are Just.
 Show them that you are Righteous.
 God be with us all, everyone in the world.
 Keep our paths straight.
 Teach us your ways.
 Lead us to the narrow gate.

God, forgive us, for there are times we do not know what we do. Remind us daily that you created everyone of us in your image. Help us see your steadfast love.

O Lord, rise up leaders who follow in your ways. Grant them the power and authority to speak out in your name. Use us God. We are your servants. Give us understanding of what you want us to do.

We are here tonight because we believe in you. We believe that you are the lone true God, the God of our salvation. Let your presence be felt in Gaza, in Israel, and throughout the world.

For these things we pray in your name,

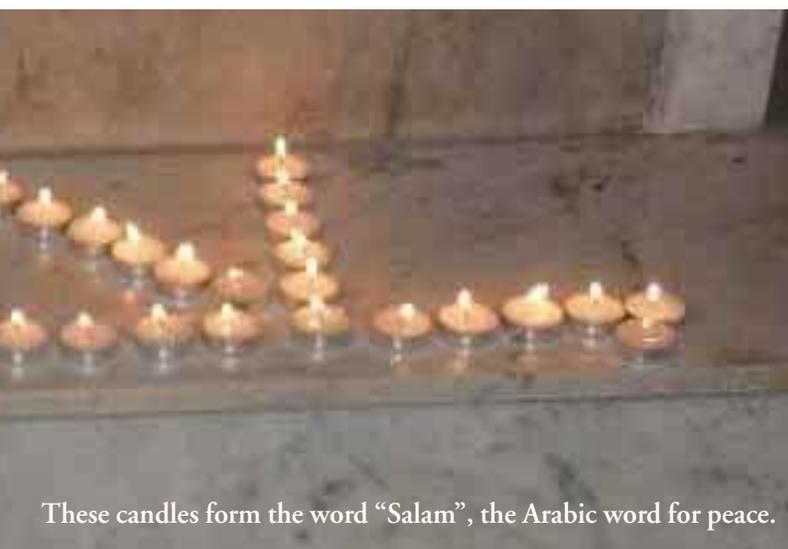
Amen

Jake Weber is a student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. He is currently working as an intern at Sabeel for nine months.



Prayer services for Gaza in Jer





These candles form the word "Salam", the Arabic word for peace.

Jerusalem, Nazareth, and Haifa.

Photos by Sabeel.



LORD, THE GREATEST OF YOUR GIFTS IS LOVE.

by: Father Guy Tardivy

All-powerful God, we lift our hearts to you and beg your mercy. Aid us, your children, in the turmoil of this world so full of suffering, pain, hate and injustice.

We turn to you in these difficult times to beg your aid for our brothers and sisters, victims of violence in all its forms. We feel completely powerless to aid them.

Lord, have pity on us. Hear our voice because it is also that of the victims of all war and violence.

To touch peace is more than to touch a person. It is to touch you, God, who is our Peace.

Lord, continue to remind us that the greatest of your gifts is love.

Lord, enlighten us to discover the true roots of peace; those which go deep into the heart of man reconciled with You.

Despite the costs and the burden, empower us to pardon in order to build a new life in our city, in our region, in the world. Such peace comes from you alone. The world cannot create it.

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, teach us to bring into being a peace that is the fruit of truth and justice.

We implore your Mother Mary. We beg you to send your Holy Spirit to reconcile the hearts of all peoples.

Amen

Father Guy Tardivy is the rector of the Dominican convents in Jerusalem. He is involved in ecumenical and inter-religious relations.

MYTH AND REALITY

A Call for Action on Behalf of the Palestinian People

by: Dr. Mustafa Barghouti

Even before the beginning of Israel's massacre in Gaza, they set about weaving a web of lies so as to deflect the international criticism of their actions. Amidst the smoldering ashes of Gaza, and the ruins of thousands of lives, it is time for the people and supporters of Palestine to raise their voices and cut through the web of deceit with our most powerful weapon - truth.

MYTHS

1. Israel completely left Gaza in 2005 and worked for peace with 'Peaceful Palestinians'.

While Israel has indeed removed the settlements from the tiny coastal Strip, they in no way ended the occupation. They remained in full control of the borders, airspace and waterways of Gaza, and have carried out frequent raids and targeted assassinations since the disengagement. Furthermore, since the 2006 Palestinian Parliamentary elections, Israel has imposed a comprehensive siege on the Strip. For over two years, Gazans have lived on the edge of starvation and without the most basic necessities of human life, only to have their situation

exacerbated by the most recent carnage.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank, throughout the entirety of the US-brokered Annapolis Peace Process, Israel has intensified its occupation of the 'Peaceful Palestinians' under the rule of the 'acceptable' Palestinian Authority. In 2008, settlement expansion increased by a factor of 38 percent, a further 4,950 Palestinians were arrested - mostly from the West Bank - and checkpoints rose from 521 to 699. Worst of all, throughout the year and amidst the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, Israel killed 546 Palestinians, among them 76 children. If Israel is in fact pursuing peace with 'good Palestinians', who are they talking about?

2. Hamas violated the cease-fire and Israel is acting in self-defense

Hamas, for the most part, respected their side of the cease-fire - except on those occasions when Israel carried out major offensives in the West Bank. Israel, however, did not live up to any of its obligations of ending the siege and targeted killings in Gaza.

Rather than the necessary minimum of 450 trucks per day being allowed across the border, on the best days, only eighty have been allowed in - with the border remaining hermetically sealed 70 percent of the time. Throughout the cease-fire Gazans have been living like animals, with a total of 262 dying due to the inaccessibility of proper medical care. Rather than ceasing violence, Israel officially broke the cease-fire on November 4th, killing a number of Palestinians near the Gaza Border.

Knowing this, it is difficult to believe Israel's claims of self-defense in a confrontation which they themselves have sparked. Self-defense is reactionary, whereas the bombardment of Gaza was planned up to six months before the ceasefire had ended or been renegotiated. Furthermore, not only did the Israeli press widely report the ongoing public relations campaign being undertaken by Israel to prepare Israeli and international public opinion for the attack; but Israel also tried to convince the Palestinians that an attack was not coming, by briefly opening crossings and reporting that

meetings on the possible invasion of Gaza were to be delayed. This report insured that casualties would be maximized in a packed Gaza Strip completely unprepared for the impending slaughter.

Israel is the largest military force in the region, and the fifth largest in the world. Furthermore, they are the fourth largest exporter of arms and have a military industrial complex rivaling that of the United States. In other words, Israel has always had a comprehensive monopoly over the use of force - so much so, that they use wars such as the one on Gaza as a showcase for their new instruments of death.

3. This was a war against Hamas and their 'Terrorist Infrastructure'

Even while image after image of mutilated women and children flashed across our televisions, Israel brazenly claimed that their munitions expertly struck only military installations, which apparently included hospitals, schools, universities, mosques, public utilities and nearly every private industry.

In the most densely populated area on the planet, tons upon tons of explosives were dropped. These missiles, sophisticated as they may be, did not differentiate people by their political affiliation-they simply killed everyone and everything in their path. Israel knew this; and as surveys carried out since the attack have shown, their actions have significantly strengthened Hamas politically while doing little damage

to their military wing.

FACTS

Sadly, Israel's most recent crime is nothing new for Palestinians - we have endured many massacres and will probably endure many more. Israel's myths are also familiar to a Palestine used to fighting against overwhelming odds both on the battlefield and in the media. Israel has invested so much into shaping how people view this conflict because they understand that a change in international perceptions, away from Israeli myths and toward the facts on the ground, is a far greater threat to the Zionist Agenda than any homemade rocket. Indeed, the latter violent forms of resistance work to justify and legitimize Israel's oppression when blown out of



Photo by Sabeel

A protest against the War on Gaza at the French Consulate in Jerusalem

proportion by their well-oiled spin machine.

The world is told, and thus believes, that a “war” was waged in Gaza - not an asymmetric massacre carried out by the world’s fifth-largest military-industrial complex upon one of the world’s last stateless peoples. Our death toll has climbed to over 1,400 while the aggressor mourns the loss of little over a dozen - most of the soldiers who died as a result of Israel’s own ‘friendly fire’. Yet the world still believes it witnessed a war and not a massacre.

The real target of their missiles in Gaza was not Hamas or their ‘infrastructure’. The real target was the Palestinian steadfastness and the growing movement of nonviolence in the West Bank.

They understand that this movement, above all, promises to change the international perception of victim and oppressor.

From the 1920s onward, Palestinian resistance has been overwhelmingly nonviolent. The number of peaceful, unarmed Palestinian martyrs of this conflict far outweighs those of us who have fought the enemy on their own violent terms. From boycotts to business and hunger strikes, from demonstrations to diplomacy, we Palestinians are engaged daily in nonviolent struggle against the occupation of our land and the constant abuse of our dignity and security.

The international media, seemingly cowed by Israel, does not focus on these forms of nonviolent resistance. Instead, they choose to emphasize the rare instances of Palestinian violence to such a degree that, in the eyes of the international community, they appear to be comparable to the massive crimes of our occupier.

Despite the fact that our nonviolence

“Nonviolence is the just means to a just end. It is a promise to ourselves that, ‘when we finally have our freedom...’ we will break this cycle of hatred and power.”

goes unnoticed by a world biased in favor of our oppressor, we continue unabated. We continue, not because nonviolence, resilience and the steadfast pursuit of justice is a “strategy” that we hope will one day turn the tide of public opinion in our favor - we continue because this is who we are. It is our integrity that guides our struggle rather than the constant humiliation and provocation of our occupier.

Nonviolence is the just means to a just end. It is a promise to ourselves that, ‘when we finally have our freedom, we will not merely change from slave to master’ - we will break this cycle of hatred and power. Unlike

our oppressor, we will learn the correct lessons of a tragic past.

A CALL FOR ACTION

It is not enough for readers of this article, or the numerous supporters of Palestine, to simply digest this information and continue on with their daily lives. We can no longer bemoan our isolation and perceived powerlessness.

Our horror and our disgust over the recent tragedy in Gaza must be translated into collective action that will hold the criminal to account for his crimes and create the groundwork for lasting peace and reconciliation.

IN THIS REGARD WE DEMAND:

1. A lifting of the medieval Siege on the Gaza Strip and the opening of ALL crossings in and out for humanitarian and economic purposes.
2. An end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the implementation of a real peace process aimed at creating a just solution for Palestinian refugees and a viable and contiguous future state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital.
3. We demand the establishment of a number of international and national independent commissions to investigate suspected Israeli war crimes. Once Israel is found guilty, we demand government and military officials be brought in front of a war crimes’ tribunal both at the state and

inter-state levels whenever and wherever possible.

4. We call on the international community to immediately cease all forms of military cooperation with Israel in the understanding that their continued assistance will be used to oppress the Palestinian people and further undermine the rule of international law. At a time of global financial crisis, using tax-payer money to fund our continued occupation is neither morally nor logically justifiable. We further call upon, not only governments, but also citizens and private companies, to begin a campaign of divestment and sanctions against the State of Israel modeled upon the successful movement to change Apartheid South Africa.
5. We demand the immediate suspension of Israeli privileges in international political and economic bodies due to their ongoing failure to respect even the most basic Human Rights. Israel should, furthermore, not be considered a prospective partner state in the European Union if it refuses to recognize even the most basic principles of the Union's charters.

Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, a physician, is general secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative. He is a member of the Palestinian Parliament and was a presidential candidate in 2005. His views can be read regularly at: www.palestinemonitor.org.

A LETTER FROM GAZA

by: Father Manuel Musallam

From the valley of tears; from Gaza that is sinking in its blood; the blood that has strangled the joy in the hearts of one and a half million inhabitants: I send you this message of faith and hope. But the message of love is imprisoned; choked in our throats as Christians; we do not venture even to say it to ourselves. The priests of the Church today are raising hope as a banner, so that God will have mercy and compassion on us and keep a remnant for himself in Gaza so that the light of Christ will not be extinguished and continue to shine. May Christ's compassion revive our love for God even though it is currently in "intensive care".



A child injured by an Israeli attack.
Photo by: www.dangerouscreation.com

I announce to you from the heart of a father and priest, the death of the daughter of our school, Holy Family, the dear, Christine Wadi al-Turk, the first Christian to die in the war. Christine was in the tenth grade in our school and she died the morning of Friday, January 2, 2009 as a result of fear and the cold. The windows in her home were open to protect the children from glass fragments and the missiles that passed above it. The bombing that hit her neighbour's home caused her whole body to shake in horror. She could not bear all this, so she went to complain to her Creator about her situation and request a home and a refuge where there is no crying or wailing, but joy and happiness.

Our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus:

What you see and hear on television is not all of the harsh reality experienced by our people in Gaza. Television and radio cannot transmit the whole truth in our land because of its immensity. The bitter siege on Gaza has become a hurricane that is growing every hour until it has become a war crime; a crime against humanity. If the people of Gaza are now presenting their tragedy to the court of the conscience of every human, then the time to come is the time of God's just court.

The children of Gaza and their parents are sleeping in the corridors of their homes, if there are any, or in the toilets and bathrooms for their protection. They are trembling with fear at every voice, movement and bombardment of the heavy shelling from F-16 planes.

It is true that these planes in most of their flights so far, have targeted the main government and Hamas headquarters, but all of these headquarters are near people's homes, not more than six meters away, which is the legal distance between buildings. Therefore, people's homes have been severely damaged and many children have died as a result. Our children are living in a state of



Glimmers of hope can be seen after the war on Gaza. Here, a group from Father Musallam's community get together to eat food, provided through support gathered at the three ecumenical services, and join together in activities. Photo sent by Father Manuel Musallam.

trauma and fear. They are sick from both it and other reasons, such as the lack of food, malnutrition, poverty and the cold...

As for the tragedies that are occurring in the hospitals, you can say what you like. These hospitals did not have basic first aid before the war and now thousands of the wounded and the sick are pouring into the hospitals. Operations are being performed in hospital corridors. The situation of the people in the hospitals is hysteric; both frightening and sad.

I would like to tell you a story that happened in the hospital with the Abdel Latif family. One of their sons had disappeared during the first bombing. His family looked for him, but did not find him on the first or the second day of the war. On the third day, while the family was walking

around the hospital, they came upon the Jaradah family who was surrounding their injured son who was also disfigured. This injured young man had had one of his legs amputated and his face was disfigured, not because of the aircraft shelling, but because glass had fallen on him while he was in the hospital after the planes had bombed part of it. The Abdel Latif family approached the Jaradah family to console them. When they approached the injured man, Mr. Abdel Latif discovered that he was his son and not the son of the Jaradah family. Amid the family controversy, they waited for the wounded man to wake up and say his name so that the Abdel Latif family could take him...

I summarize my letter to you by lifting our suffering to God and to you. Our people in Gaza are treated like animals in a zoo. They eat but remain hungry;

they cry, but no one wipes their tears. There is no water, no electricity, no food, but fear, terror and blockade. Yesterday the bakery refused to give me bread. The reason being that the baker refused to feed me with flour that was not worthy of humans so that he would not insult my priesthood. There was no more good flour; the flour he had left was inappropriate for human consumption.

We want you to raise your continuous prayers to God, and not to hold a mass or service without remembering the suffering of Gaza before God. I will be sending short messages from the Bible to our parishioners to increase the hope in their hearts. We have all agreed to pray this prayer at the top of every hour: "O Lord of peace rain peace on us, O Lord of peace, grant peace to our land. Have mercy, O Lord, on your people and do not keep us in enmity forever." Please stand with us now and sing this prayer with us.

Your prayers with us will move the whole world and teach it that any love that is prevented from reaching your brothers and sisters in Gaza is not the love of Christ and the Church. The love of Christ and the Church does not recognize political or social barriers and wars. When your love reaches us, it makes us feel that we, in Gaza, are an

integral part of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, and our Muslim brothers and sisters in our midst are our people and our destiny. We have what they have and we suffer like they do, we are all the people of Palestine.



Joining in the meal provided by Sabeel to Gaza. Photo sent by Father Manuel Musallam.

In the midst of all this, our people in Gaza continue to reject war as a means for peace and confirm that the road to peace is peace. We in Gaza are steadfast and have resolution in our eyes: "between slavery and death, we have no choice." We want to live to praise the Lord in Palestine and witness for Christ; we want to live for Palestine,

not die for it. If death is imposed on us, however, we will die honest, brave and strong.

We join you in your prayers so that Christ may give us His real peace, so

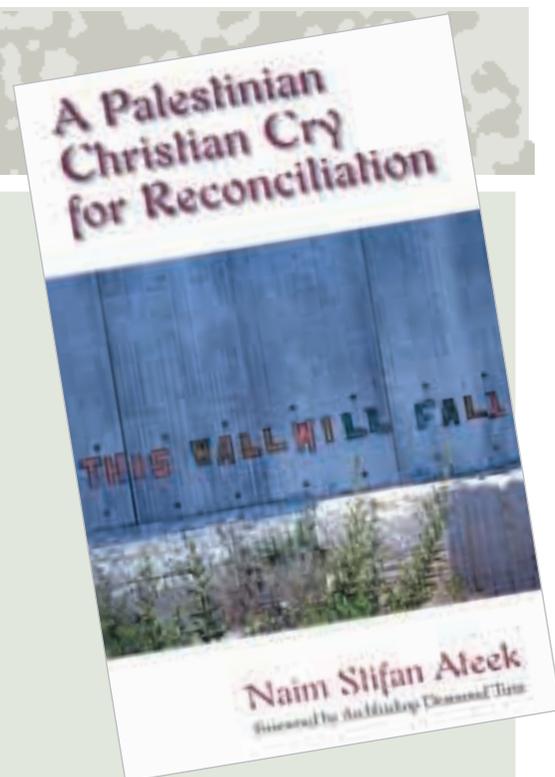
that "The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. (Isaiah 11:6)."

The peace of Christ, that peace to which you are called to be one body be with all of you and protect you. Amen

Father Manuel Musallam is a Priest of the Catholic Church in Gaza.

A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation

By Naim Stifan Ateek



In *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation*, The Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, Founder and Director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, expands upon the foundation for a Palestinian Theology of Liberation laid out in his first book, *Justice, and Only Justice*.

In his second book, Ateek further develops a theology that addresses the conflict over Palestine based on the faith principles of justice, peace, and nonviolence. Rev. Naim Ateek is an Episcopal priest with a doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary. He served as Canon of St. George's Cathedral, where he began to develop the theological ideas of Sabeel.

“An important book for understanding the deeper issues impacting the path to peace for the people of Palestine and Israel. The concrete course of action Fr. Ateek proposes is rooted in nonviolence, grounded in current realities, and can finally open a clear path to justice, reconciliation, and forgiveness for all the peoples of the Holy Land.”

-Dave Robinson, Pax Christi USA

“Naim Ateek gives voice to...hope by calling for a theology and a practice of nonviolent justice and love. He examines a past filled with injustice and pain, but he also looks forward with hope to a future that might truly reflect the dream of God for the Holy Land. We need voices like his to call us to seek reconciliation and to live in justice and love.”

-excerpt from the Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu

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Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity, justice and love. Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups worldwide to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

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Purpose Statement *of* Sabeel

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. *Sabeel* strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

For more information on *Friends of Sabeel* groups in your area please contact our international representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.



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