



AJDS Newsletter

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The Australian Jewish Democratic Society

April 2010

Reverse the asylum seekers decision!

The following statement was issued by the AJDS's official spokesperson **Les Rosenblatt**.

The 9 April Australian government decision to stop processing the asylum/refugee entitlements of Afghanis and Sri Lankans – predominantly from the persecuted minorities of Hazaras and Tamils – combined with the threat to force their return to their countries of origin – based on completely untenable claims of “durable security” in these countries – is intolerably inhumane.

The Australian Jewish Democratic Society agrees with the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees that conditions in Afghanistan are worsening rather than improving and that the numbers of displaced people are increasing. Similarly we hold that there is no security for Tamils in Sri Lanka and that the boat-arriving asylum seekers represent no threat to Australian society and that we are obliged both legally and morally to

process their claims for refugee status in the shortest possible time.

We deplore as cynically opportunistic the Rudd government's ploy to garner electoral support from the most ill-informed quarters of the Australian electorate while pandering to prejudice and ignorance and refusing to put the facts of these matters squarely before the Australian public.

We recognise from our own Jewish history of expulsion or fleeing for safety, the horrors of denial of refuge and asylum, and cannot accept that our own Government would act so callously. We join our voice to those of many others who will not rest from demanding the government honour its international obligations and reinstate humane refugee assessment and support practices by processing applications without delay.

18 April 2010

A participant's account

How we got the Anat Kamm story out to the world

Sol Salbe

It has been a great story: secret arrest, Watergate-style break-in, a journalist hiding in London, threat of kidnapping a la Vanunu, not to mention 2000 missing secret IDF documents and a young whistleblower inside the army. But from a journalistic point of view it was also a strange story, with very little action appearing on the surface. The story was bubbling along and developing but for one reason or another we could not report on it. In fact quite a few of us were sitting on our haunches and twiddling our thumbs waiting for the story to come out in public.

But back to the beginning. Way back in late January I read an article in the *Ma'ariv* online publication NRG about a female journalist being arrested a month earlier in the fictional “Shushu-land” and no one being brave enough to say anything about it. Curiosity was indeed aroused, but with no follow-up articles, everyone, including the present writer, soon forgot about this article. After all this Samizdat style of writing is something one associ-

ates with the pre-Gorbachev Soviet Union, and not a democracy like Israel. The last time I recall anybody using the method was Uri Avnery's *HaOlam HaZeh's* coverage of the Lavon Affair as a fictional story about Greece and Turkey, but that was nearly half a century ago. The normal practice these days is for any story to be given to a foreign reporter, who publishes it abroad. Then the Israeli media can quote that publication.

The next account, however, was much more definitive. On 13 March an anonymous person posted a story, “Anat Kamm in the hands of the Shabak” on the Israeli Indymedia website. The headline was in English, although it is not known how many English speakers would recognise Shabak as the Hebrew acronym of Sherut Bitachon Klali – General Security Service. The rest of the article was in Hebrew. It told of Anat Kamm's arrest by Shabak and of the story's connection to *Haaretz* reporter Uri Blau's account of November 2008. In that story, Blau wrote of the

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The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the AJDS. These are expressed in its own statements.

What we stand for:

- Social justice and human rights.
- Opposition to the vilification and mandatory detention of asylum seekers.
- The struggle against racism, antisemitism in particular.
- Non-violent paths to conflict resolution.
- In line with this, the search for a negotiated solution to the Israel/Palestinian conflict.
- Equal rights, including land rights and justice, for Indigenous Australians.

In this issue...

Sometimes it makes more sense to start with "the ones that got away". There are several important stories which seem to be developing at the moment. The biggest is of course the change of relationship between the United States and Israel, which some people are calling a crisis. Proud as I am to have seen that as early as last April, the developments are such that even a weekly newspaper like the Australian Jewish News finds it hard to keep up. Therefore we'll continue to publish analytical pieces when good ones come along but will not try to keep you up to date with the latest developments. Nor can we see a way of covering the weekly demonstrations in Sheikh Jarrah which seem to a developing a growing momentum.

*So what is in this issue? Let's start with our scoop. The **undersigned** was involved in unravelling the Anat Kamm saga from its very beginning and my account of it starts on the **cover**. Also taking pride of place **there** is a statement by our spokesperson, **Les Rosenblatt**, on asylum seekers.*

***Across the page** you'll find accounts of two of the reports given to the AJDS Annual General Meeting. But for a spectacular view of our work check out our involvement in the anti-racism rally on **page 9**. Many thanks to the Greens' **Felicity Hill** for the quality of that picture. [A good reason to receive the Newsletter by email is to be able to see the picture in full, glorious colour.]*

*Our international coverage is quite extensive: from the condition of women in Iraq on **page 10** through **Stephen Zunes**'s analysis of the occupation of Western Sahara on **page 11** to nurses' leader **Rose Ann DeMoro**'s assessment of the health insurance victory in the US on **pp14-15**.*

*On Israel-Palestine, the **undersigned** takes issue with the Palestinians' recent decisions to name streets and squares after those who have engaged in terrorism (**p7**). **Bernard Avishai** and **Sam Bahour** look at the intertwining of the future of Israel and Palestine no matter what happens (**p6**).*

*Finally leading up our own vote on the issue of boycotts, divestments and sanctions, there are two items, one appealing to moderate supporters of Israel by **Jerry Haber** (**p4**) and an angry response by **Mariam Said** to the proposed Palestinian boycott of the Western East Divan Orchestra led by Daniel Barenboim on **pp 12-13**.*

Sol Salbe

Correction

Our March issue carried an article by Sol Salbe of a forum on "Israeli Apartheid" organised by the Australian Friends of Palestine. The forum took place just before the *Newsletter* was printed and our reporter was unable to check his notes with other AJDS attendees or with any of the speakers.

One of the speakers, Samah Sabawi, contacted us and pointed out that several errors have crept into the article. While they do not change the thrust of the contents they need to be corrected:

- There was no mention of Herzl in Samah Sabawi's talk, according to a printed version of it that she has distributed. She began her talk with 1967 and only talked about Israel and the Occupied Territories as of the start of the occupation.
- There were already 18 industrial zones prior to Netanyahu's "economic peace" plan. What is new is the establishment of three or four joint Israeli Palestinian Industrial zones.
- Mishor Adumim is not a new zone and it has run environmentally hazardous industries for many years.

For technical reasons I haven't been able to watch the video of the evening on the Australians for Palestine website. The text of Badawi's talk is available at <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/659>.

Our apologies to our readers and to Samah Sabawi.

Editor

A year's developments reviewed at AGM

There is no point in projecting our organisation's tasks for the following year without some perspective. So **Les Rosenblatt** was delegated to deliver this most important report at the February Annual General Meeting.

The AJDS has had an interesting year in 2009, following the Cast Lead horrors in Gaza and the subsequent allegations of war crimes against both Israel and Hamas, as investigated by Judge Goldstone at the behest of the UN. This conflict, and other international issues such as the violent Iranian elections, the Sri Lankan military destruction of the Tamil secessionist forces, and the vortices of the Afghani-Pakistani and Iraqi conflicts added to the fallout of the Global Financial Crisis and the increasing urgency of global climate change -- challenges providing an international scenario for our work.

In Australia we've had issues such as the continuation of the Northern Territory 'intervention' and the assimilation/racism/cultural diversity debates concerning Indigenous Australians, the attacks on Indian students, and the ongo-

ing battle against strident exclusionists to establish the AJDS as a legitimate voice within the Jewish community. The year also saw the improved understanding of our Jewish community through the release of recent research exploring our characteristics both statistically and qualitatively, and our efforts to influence policy in the JCCV and meet the editors of both the Age and the Australian Jewish News.

Within the AJDS, we are busy trying to establish a much more sophisticated set of platforms for our networking and communications as well as streamlining our decision-making and readiness to respond to issues of importance. The members of the Executive have worked hard and well together to serve the interests of our members and the broader community through our online presence and through face to face events with speakers and discussion.

New technology – a priority for the AJDS

Continuing our coverage of the AJDS AGM, **Larry Stillman** takes up the issue of the Internet and new technology generally.

In a key report at the AGM, I spoke about the importance of the Internet to reaching out to younger members of the Jewish community who were not "joiners". The traditional way of formally joining an organisation to support a cause was no longer the major way that young people expressed themselves, if at all. In fact, fewer people were involved in formal organisations than ever before, but people were increasingly creators and consumers of information. The debate over Israel/Palestine is increasingly carried out online, and not through conventional newspapers: the Left and Right, whether Jewish, Palestinian, or other groups advocate its positions online. It is clear that the Jewish Right which is well resourced online, gets a full range of materials made available through Hasbara networks, and it pushes its positions in Jewish and other online media, relentlessly. We have to be the critical Jewish voice that offers alternative opinion.

The AJDS therefore has an opportunity, through emails, and through the Internet to make its positions known on a wide range of issues as people connect and link to websites or email referrals that contain AJDS material, or material that the AJDS was passing on or linking to from progressive websites, whether in Israel, the US or elsewhere. It was also a matter of not having one site, which we expected people to go to, but being picked up in as many places as possible. For example, the Middle East News Service run by Sol Salbe is picked up on the Scoop news site in New Zealand.

Blogging -- giving a personal opinion on the news of the day, is an increasingly important way of doing this, but

speed is critical, in contrast to the traditional method of publishing an article in a magazine or even the turnaround time for a letter to the editor.

But such resources also have to be attractive to consumers of information, and this is a great challenge to the organisation. We desperately need the assistance of a multimedia volunteer to make the information appealing and multimedia (images, video), and to train people who would like to publish online, but don't know how. At the



We can reach a much wider audience by availing ourselves of such websites as The Drum – part of abc.net.au

moment, the work is falling on a couple of people whose technical expertise is limited.

The AJDS also needs to be prepared to actively publish its viewpoints on such websites as *Galus Australis*, *On Line Opinion*, *New Matilda*, the ABC opinion site *the Drum* and so on. In fact, it is not hard to get published, because at the moment, most articles (from the 'left' and 'right' are written by a small coterie of known names (including yours truly), but it is very important to publish other voices and nuances. It's also important to make comments on articles that are published (for example to articles in *J-Wire* or *Galus Australis*), some of which appear to have a very large readership.

We can also have an impact in other areas. For example, Sydney unionist and NSWJBD member Angela Budai published an item on the AJDS website on parental leave in response to views offered by Tony Abbot, and this had hundreds of hits. There is no reason why members with opinions on a host of other issues should not be published and "blog" themselves.

But I admit, it does take a certain sort of personality to be prepared to respond quickly online to an issue: but I hope that we can inspire a few other budding writers who want to push social justice causes to get involved. The AJDS has all the webspace in the world for you!

Liberal Zionists and the BDS movement

“Jerry Haber”

I am addressing this to my liberal Zionist readers – those who are pained and disillusioned by Israel’s actions, but who want to preserve what is good about the Jewish state, and to help it become a just society. You are nervous about BDS because it seems so drastic and unbalanced to you – and because you have been misinformed that it is motivated by hatred for Israel.

Those Jews who have spoken in favour of BDS are mostly post-Zionists, anti-Zionists, non-Zionists, and/or known leftists. Yes, their voices are important, and I believe they have been on the correct side of history longer than I have. But I don’t need to convince them to support BDS. So why should you, as a liberal Zionist, consider supporting the global BDS movement? Here are thirteen reasons.

1. You already support two of the three central aims of the movement, which are

1. Ending Israel’s occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;

2. Recognising the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality;

Where you may disagree is over:

3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

But note that the phrase “as stipulated in UN resolution 194” weakens the statement since even Israel never rejected 194. And even if you don’t recognise the right of return, you recognise the importance to the Palestinians of claiming that right. And haven’t you signed petitions with which you are not in complete agreement because you believe in the broader goal?

2. You don’t have to sign on to all of BDS.

You don’t like academic boycotts? Good, neither do I. You are nervous about calling for sanctions? Don’t. But what about partial divestment from companies profiting from the Occupation as a symbolic and non-violent act of protest? What about boycotting settler’s wine and other products? How can you be opposed to the Occupation and support the Occupiers?

3. You want to support non-violent Palestinian protest.

BDS is first and foremost a Palestinian action. “If only,” you have said countless times, “there were a Palestinian Gandhi or Nelson Mandela.” Well, the tactics of BDS are the tactics of Gandhi and Mandela. Even if you are apprehensive about the aims of some of the movement, don’t you understand how important it is to support non-violent protest?

4. There is no slippery slope here.

If you support BDS today, you say to yourself, what will happen when it really gets up steam – perhaps you will be hurting Israel? Yet the chances of that happening are nil, and you know it.

5. BDS is becoming effective as a tactic.

In the beginning it wasn’t, and this is what kept me off the BDS wagon for a long time. And I am still not entirely on it. But successes recently have been impressive, both in their own right, and as a morale booster for the Palestinians.

6. If you oppose them you stand with the Right.

Sure, you may not like the rhetoric of some Palestinians and their allies. But you also don’t like some of the rhetoric of the Jewish right-wingers. So who do you stand with on this one? The human rights folks -- or the Right? Do you really want to hear the Neo-Cons crowing over their victory as they simultaneously demonise your ilk?

7. BDS actually strengthens the hand of the pro-peace camp in Israel.

Israel is very sensitive to its public image. Whenever it is criticised, there are elements in Israeli society that point to Israel’s loss of standing and argue that only a just and peaceful solution will stop the decline. This also answers the objection that it is unfair to single out Israel. And the people who make this argument are always singling out Israel for preferential treatment.

8. BDS does not materially hurt the average Israelis.

I find it odd that many liberal Zionists who call for sanctions against Iran – a regime that is not engaged in the systematic deprivation of human rights to the extent that Israel is engaged – think that a cultural boycott or a divestment from certain American companies will hurt the average Israeli. The effect of the protest is symbolic; the message is what is important.

9. Other tactics have failed repeatedly.

If you genuinely believe in a two-state solution, wouldn’t it be a good idea to see if BDS helps end the Occupation? Or are you one of those liberal Zionists who want a two-state solution in theory, but is pretty ineffectual about ending the Occupation?

10. Palestinians should have a little Naches (pleasure) after all their suffering and BDS provides them with that.

They don’t have an army. They are not allowed armed resistance. Where else, besides some world organisations, can they score victories?

11. You are appalled at the lies and disinformation of the anti-BDS movement.

The BDS movement does not seek to destroy the state of Israel. BDS is not even anti-Zionist. Stop listening to the Big Lies.

12. Many Jewish and Israeli human rights activists support it.

They are doing your job for you in Israel. They allow you to be hopeful about the state. Shouldn’t you be listening to them here?

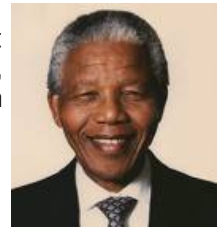
13. You are sick up to here with the news coming out daily from Israel.

Isn’t it about time you gave back a little? There are consequences for their misdeeds.

If you are unconvinced by the reasons above, but uneasy about circling the wagons with the likes of AIPAC, ZOA, Aish ha-Torah, etc. then you have another option: oppose BDS, but don’t be strident about it. Don’t rain on the Palestinian parade.

Sit on the fence and wait, if you must. But don’t fall on the side of the Rightists!

Jerry Haber is the pseudonym of an orthodox Jewish Studies Professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.



The Palestinians have not produced a Mandela as yet but should we emulate his tactics?

(Continued from page 1)

IDF going all the way to the highest level of the Chief of Staff, authorising the “liquidation” of Palestinians on the wanted list, even if it were possible to arrest them -- and even if innocent people might be killed in the process. That authorisation was in clear violation of the ruling of Israel’s High Court of Justice (often referred to by its



“Israeli censorship scandal” — the Judith Miller article in Yediot

Hebrew acronym of Bagatz).

The Blau article was accompanied by photos of the top-secret relevant documents. Indymedia’s anonymous scribe had done her/his homework. The article connected the dots: Blau’s article, the Shushuland article and an obscure allusion to Anat Kamm going on unpaid leave

from Walla, a news website that at that stage was part-owned by the Schocken group, which also owns *Haaretz*. It is strange for the Israeli Democracy Institute to report on such everyday occurrences, particularly relating to a lowly reporter who is not a household name. The anonymous scribe was able to decipher that there was a gag order on reporting the details of the case, and a further gag order on the very existence of the gag order.

That amateur reporter was on the money regarding everything suggested in that article. But getting the story out proved to be difficult. I forwarded it to a few close colleagues, indicating that I was about to translate it into English. I also used Facebook to publicise the original Hebrew item. Soon afterwards, word came around from those close to Anat Kamm that she would very much prefer it if international publicity was curtailed, as she was apparently trying to cut a deal with the prosecution. On that basis, I deleted the Facebook entry and held off from the English translation.

But Hebrew-reading Seattle blogger Richard Silverstein, who received my email, took up the story. He produced a fair summary of the material originally available. He too was convinced to take his blog off, but on further research he decided that it is the role of the media to run with stories and that Anat Kamm’s case could only benefit from being exposed. [He did remove my name from the story, as I wasn’t convinced of the wisdom of his course.]

But even with the story being available in English on his blog, nobody in the rest of the media was prepared to touch it. The next development brought some hope. Former *Haaretz* editor Hanoach Marmari stepped in to the front with an article headed *It cannot happen here*. He used the form of fiction to repeat the story and point out that Israel’s treatment of whistleblowers was far

from encouraging. It contained such gems as: “We can, however, recall the extended (a whole ten years) absolute gag order that was imposed on the arrest, trial, conviction and incarceration of Marcus Klingberg on charges of espionage for the Soviet Union.” Marmari published his article on the *Seventh Eye* – the online publication of the Israeli Democracy Institute. The IDI



Anat Kamm

were quite happy to let me translate that article, but insisted that no connection be made between Marmari’s “defence” of the Israeli legal system and any information I might have on Anat Kamm.

Negotiations were continuing with an Australian newspaper when the story finally jumped from the blogosphere into the mainstream. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency’s Ron Kampeas broke the story on 27 March. Soon afterwards it was covered by the *Independent* and *Guardian* in the UK. But it was former *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller who made the difference. Her story, which included a credit to Silverstein, was reprinted in *Yediot Acharonot* with almost every single detail blanked out. That and a campaign advising readers to Google “Israeli journalist” (in English) forced the court’s hand and the gag was removed.

Revelations since then have uncovered an intriguing story. While serving in a key clerical position Kamm copied up to 2000 documents, she gave some of them to *Haaretz*’s Uri Blau. Kamm says that she was concerned at the blatant disregard of Bagatz’s orders. For his part the reporter submitted his story to the military censor which approved publication. Another story about the methods to be used in the next confrontation with the Palestinians was also approved but was spiked when the censors changed their mind after the presses were already running. In a deal with the Shabak, Blau returned the secret documents on the proviso that they were not be used to track down his source. The Shabak then worked out it was Kamm and that Blau would have had more documents in his possession. Even though Blau’s original computer was destroyed in front of him, the Shabak broke into his house and stole his new computer. Blau was overseas at the time and with his employer’s agreement has remained in London, fearing arrest on his return.

The story continues.

Please note that it took some time for the correct spelling of Kamm to be established. We have used Kamm above, regardless of how it was transcribed at the time – Editor.

Independent and interdependent

Sam Bahour and Bernard Avishai

The latest rift between the United States and Israel, which began with Israel's announcement of more construction planned in Ramat Shlomo -- a Jewish-only neighbourhood -- that would further separate East Jerusalem from the rest of a future Palestinian state, distracts from the larger, even more inhumane separation that must be reversed if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has any chance of being resolved peacefully. This is the separation between Israel and Palestine themselves.

The parties to this conflict must recognise that their futures are inevitably linked, in peace even more than in war, and that they already can establish cooperation, as equals under international law, with international partners, without forgoing national sovereignty. America's commitment to "confidence building" begins here.

Yes, negotiations cannot take place unless the sides are each attributed the right to self-determination; each side will exercise sovereignty after any agreement is concluded. But self-determination never meant that a nation does whatever it wants, without regard for the interests of others. In this context, the need for cooperation is especially urgent. The shared territory is very small, and more like one big megalopolis than two hermetically sealed states.



Sam Bahour

The need for mutual accommodation usually comes up when discussing security arrangements: demilitarisation, safe passage to Gaza, and so forth. But this is only the beginning. There are scarce resources to be shared: water, the electromagnetic spectrum, natural gas reserves. Tourists will travel around what they'll need to see as a borderless territory. There will have to be reciprocal agreements on currency and labour law. There will be investments in what will seem like a common business ecosystem.

This is why the United States should seek to use its leverage to reduce tensions and mitigate grievances now, in advance of any final-status agreement, by reinforcing international conventions regulating state-to-state relations. These conventions would enable Palestinians and Israelis to advance their economies through a joint planning process. Why not establish an equitable foundation now in areas where progress is possible? Why shouldn't Palestine already enjoy the prerogatives of a sovereign state in fields that do not pose a security threat to Israel, especially where international conventions and bilateral modalities are clear?

Water is an ideal place to start, given its strategic importance in the region. What is keeping Palestinians and Israelis from applying international water treaties to water allocation? Israel has already recognised Palestinian water rights as part of the Oslo II Interim Agreement. However, it has not implemented that agreement, and continues to deprive Palestinians of their fair share of water. On average, Palestinians receive less than 100 litres per capita per day, far less than the minimum availability of 150 litres recommended by the World Health Organisa-

tion. The average Israeli uses 353 litres of water per day, while the average Israeli settler in the territories uses up to nine times what's available to a Palestinian. If the international community is sincere about incubating an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, why should this issue be deferred to political negotiations later on?

The same is true of the electromagnetic spectrum. Visit Palestine's \$350-million mobile-phone company, Jawwal, which now faces legal competition from Wataniya Mobile, a joint venture of the Palestine Investment Fund and Wataniya Telecom from Kuwait and Qatar. From the roof of Jawwal's modern headquarters in Ramallah, what you see is disturbing. On one hill to the north is an Israeli settlement in Area C, with a mobile tower for Israeli operator Cellcom. To the south is another settlement with another tower. Cellcom gets about 10.5 megahertz of spectrum; Jawwal, 4.8. To get 3G and continuous coverage, which is what every Palestinian entrepreneur needs, you need an Israeli carrier. This conflict over bandwidth should be negotiated away now, and subject to the rules of the United Nations International Telecommunications Union - of which Israel is a member.

There are other ways of untangling the web of military occupation, including free trade zones, postal services and environmental protection. These should all be managed based on tested international models, such as the European Union's. Most important, perhaps, is access for Palestinian talent and foreign intellectual capital (such as investors, educators and doctors) to, and movement throughout, the occupied territory.

If progress is made on things like bandwidth, movement and access, will the classification of territory into areas A, B and C not seem obsolete? Moreover, if Israel and Palestine can build trust as two sovereign entities, will Hamas be enough of a reason to maintain the siege on Gaza, especially as Palestinian entrepreneurs from the West Bank prove able to bring hope there?

The challenge, in short, is to create dignified ways of becoming equals and partners in each other's lives. Postponing this invites new violence that will rip apart the fabric of both Palestinian and Israeli society. And who knows how the violence will spread? Rather, we must shrink the negotiating agenda to a manageable scale, whose end game is clear: two independent but interdependent states, living side by side. The United States, for its part, should build on its condemnation of settlements and establish international law as a reference point for immediate changes.

Sam Bahour is a management consultant and entrepreneur living in Ramallah. He blogs at www.epalestine.com. Bernard Avishai is an author and management consultant living in Jerusalem. He blogs at www.bernardavishai.com. (Published in conjunction with *Common Ground News Service*.)



Bernard Avishai

Palestinians err in naming landmarks after terrorists

Sol Salbe

Mitchell Plitnick summed it up in two words: "Pretty stupid", while an Australian would have called it "Bloody stupid". Plitnick, the US representative of the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem, was putting down his own personal view. But no doubt most well-informed people would have agreed with him. Naming a Ramallah Street after the most recognisable Hamas suicide bomb mastermind, Yihyeh Ayyash, also known as the "Engineer," was monumental stupidity. In an ongoing conflict naming a street after the architect of multiple attacks, including a 1994 bombing of a Tel Aviv bus which killed 20 people and injured dozens, is bound to be seen as a provocation by ordinary Israelis. It would be just as hurtful as the hastily called-off decision to name a square after Dalal Mughrabi, who led a hijacking of an Israeli bus in 1978 which resulted in the death of 37 Israelis (including 13 children) as well as most of her colleagues.

For the Israeli government, such PR mistakes are a godsend. "Incitement!" they cry out. US secretary of State Hillary Clinton joined the condemnation. Addressing the America Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) she said: "When a Hamas-controlled municipality glorifies violence and renames a square after a terrorist who murdered innocent Israelis, it insults the families on both sides who have lost loved ones in this conflict." Actually it was the Palestinian Authority that was in charge, Hamas having no say in Ramallah, but the point was made nevertheless.

Stupid and offensive it was. But incitement? Would Palestinian youths dream of sacrificing themselves for the cause in order to have a square named after them? Not much of an incentive, in my book. Abir Kobti, a Palestinian-Israeli media adviser, didn't think so either. Writing in the Hebrew *Ynet*, she opined: "It's important to state that the Occupation is the biggest incitement of them all. Any reasonable person would see the Occupation of land that belongs to others as incitement. Building settlements on Palestinian land is an incitement. A siege and a military closure is an incitement. Humiliating Palestinians in military checkpoints is an incitement. Erecting a fence to annex land is also an incitement. Chopping down Palestinian farmers' olive trees, forcing Palestinian farmers to strip off on their way home to their village, running down a 14-year-old child and the killing of 373 Palestinian children in 2009 -- all these constitute incitement."

Kobti argued that for the Palestinians, even those who disagree with Mughrabi's methods, she was a freedom fighter and that we ought to keep in mind that there are two narratives to the conflict. Kobti was on much firmer ground when she pointed out that there was a great deal of hypocrisy in Israel making a song and dance about memorials to Palestinian terrorists. People in glass houses... she cautioned. She pointed to the Israeli government having recently resolved to consecrate the memory of Rehavam Ze'evi, who was responsible for the massacre of dozens of Palestinians at the Dahamash mosque in 1948. Ze'evi was assassinated while serving as a Cabinet minister for the openly racist Moledet party that favoured the expulsion/"transfer" of all Palestinians including Israeli citizens out of historic Palestine/Eretz Israel.

While Israeli historians are not in agreement about Dahamash, they are unanimous about Olei Hagardom, the twelve members of the Jewish underground sentenced to hang by the British. On 9 March 2010, the Knesset held a special session to commemorate them. The main



Aftermath of attack on Coastal Road bus

speaker was Prime Minister Netanyahu, who said that the twelve were freedom fighters who sacrificed their lives for their people's liberty.

But most of the twelve were just as much terrorists as Dalal Mughrabi and Yihyeh Ayyash. Shlomo Ben-Yosef, for example, opened fire in 1938 at an Arab bus in which innocent civilians were travelling, including women and children, on the way to Safed. The group also included Eliyahu Bet-Zuri and Eliyahu Hakim, who in 1944 murdered Lord Moyne, the British Minister of State in Cairo.

Looking at other parts of the world, people who have engaged in terrorism (even in some cases against civilians) have had famous landmarks named after them. Think of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Airport or Michael Collins Park in Dublin. But the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is a long way from being resolved. Maybe one day after a future Palestinian/Israeli Truth and Reconciliation Commission would hand in its report, circumstances would be different. But for the time being, those who are glorifying the conflict's killers, no matter how brave they were, are doing a disservice to efforts to bring the conflict to an end.

Because we are Palestinian

Joharah Baker

"They" in common Palestinian discourse almost always refers to one group: the Israelis. Any mention of "they" usually results in the shaking of heads, disbelief or anger and immediately evokes a sense of empathy with those at the receiving end of "their" actions. The stories usually go something like this: "Today they turned me back at the checkpoint – said my permit had expired," or "They closed off the roads to my house and were checking everyone's IDs". Worst of all are the stories that involve "them" killing someone or demolishing a home. In short, when "they" are the subject of conversation, it usually amounts to nothing good. And so, here is my story. On March 16, "they" took my husband.

By telling this story, I am in no way trying to be melodramatic or highlight my story as anything extraordinary, because in reality, my family's experience pales in comparison to so many other Palestinians in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine. However if I succeed, I would have at least given a personal account of the brutality, injustice and oppression of Israel's military policies in Jerusalem in particular. That is something I think many will agree is not portrayed enough to the outside world.

Tinderbox

The events of Tuesday 16 March had been in the making for days. Anyone who made their way through the Old City's walled alleyways would have seen the ominous presence of Israel's mighty military machine and felt the thick tension looming over the city like a dark cloud. How else could the 3000 or so Israeli police, border guards, soldiers and special forces spread throughout the Old City and especially around the Aqsa Mosque be interpreted? Their presence was menacing, to say the least, heavily-armed forces with machine guns, nightsticks and sashes fixed with tear gas canisters slung across chests, Rambo-style. "They" said the reinforcements were in anticipation of riots from Palestinians in response to an ever-increasing Jewish presence in the Old City, including the ubiquitous threat of extremist Jews entering Al Aqsa.

True to expectations, the Palestinians would not stand idle and Israel cracked down with a merciless hand. Jerusalem went up in flames on that day and the Old City turned into a scene from a war movie. I was not there that day, having left my neighbourhood that directly abuts the main gate to the Aqsa Mosque compound. Predicting that Israel would exercise its iron fist, I wanted to keep my children safe and brought them to Ramallah. Living under Israeli occupation on a daily basis and seeing the ramifications of this occupation have already ex-

posed them to too many things no child should have to see and my husband and I figured that if we could spare them just once, it was better than nothing.

In hindsight, I am so glad we made this decision. Their father, who had slept in late that day, had heard the riots, which were going on not 20 metres away, just outside our neighbourhood's entrance. Palestinians were pelting Israeli soldiers with stones and trying to keep a large enough presence inside the Aqsa Mosque just in case Israel invaded. My husband had gone out to see what was happening,

like so many others. Apparently, when Israel's special forces broke into the neighbourhood, ostensibly to look for those ever-dangerous stone-throwers, they did not stop to ask who was doing what. They just pulled men and boys from their homes and from their families and corralled them out of the city and into an army jeep, straight to the Russian Compound detention centre. My husband and six others from our neighbourhood, including a 14-year old boy, were duly arrested and

thrown in prison. After they took the first bunch, Israel's "security" forces decided they were not done. According to my neighbours and family, they ordered all the men from our neighbourhood out of the house. When no one came out, they proceeded to kick the doors in, mine included, looking for "terrorists". Of course, there was no one in my house but "they" did not care. According to my neighbours, they broke the lock with their guns and searched the house. Then they beat women, threw tear gas into homes and broke windows and doors vowing to arrest any man from our neighbourhood.

Blur

On the other side of Israel's separation wall, which divides Jerusalem from the West Bank, I had been told the news of my husband's arrest. The next 24 hours are a blur, what with trying to control my own emotions while dealing with my children's anxiety about their father. Furthermore, I could not get home. The Kalandia checkpoint, the only way back into Jerusalem for me (because of my status as a West Banker with a residency permit in Jerusalem), was up in flames. Palestinian youths were clashing with Israeli soldiers at the checkpoint and "they" had closed the crossing off completely. Anyway, even if I had made it into Jerusalem, I wouldn't have been able to get home. Israeli forces had cordoned off the neighbourhood and were only allowing those with ID cards specifi-



Joharah Baker



East Jerusalem 16 March

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cally indicating their home address to cross. Since I do not have a Jerusalem ID yet, I had no proof of my place of residence.

At this point, raged-filled helplessness washed over me. I was powerless before this injustice. Not only had my husband been basically abducted from his own home, but I did not know where he was nor could I get back to a home I knew Israeli soldiers had broken into. For me, that violation alone was upsetting enough. I felt utterly drained. After finally going to my mother's house in a West Bank village, I put my anxious and confused children to bed and tried to allay their fears about their father. My seven-year-old daughter cried herself to sleep worrying about "Baba" and my son closed in on himself like he always does when he cannot properly express his emotions.

The next day my husband was released, since "they" had

absolutely nothing to hold him for. But instead of admitting that their policy of arrest and brutalisation was discriminatory and arbitrary, the court decided to ban him and six others from entering the Old City of Jerusalem for 15 days. Yes, you heard right. They cannot sleep in their own homes or come near the neighbourhood or even inside the city walls for over two weeks.

I have given up trying to find any logical explanation for such oppressive measures, except one ever-prevalent truth. This is an occupation and we are the occupied. My husband, our 14-year-old neighbour and all the other Palestinians who suffer at the hands of Israel's military machine every day are being punished for one thing and one thing only: because they are Palestinian.

Joharah Baker is a Writer for the Media and Information Department at the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH).

AJDS join anti-racism rally

On 9 April several hundred people gathered outside Flinders Street Railway Station to rally in opposition to racism. The rally was called in response to a plan by a group of racists to hold a "Rally Against Immigration and Islam".

As the anti-racism rally initiator, Jacob Grech, wrote to the AJDS: "I believe that you share our concerns that

these kind public displays of racism need to be nipped in the bud. The success of this rally will ensure that racist organisations have second thoughts before again attempting to publicly promulgate their hateful ideologies."

As you can see below, we did.

Picture: Felicity Hill



Iraq: Not such a good deal for women

Abdu Rahman and Dahr Jamail

Under Saddam Hussein, women in government got a year's maternity leave; that is now cut to six months. Under the Personal Status Law in force since 14 July 1958, when Iraqis overthrew the British-installed monarchy, Iraqi women had most of the rights that Western women do.

Now they have Article 2 of the Constitution: `Islam is the official religion of the state and is a basic source of legislation.` Sub-head A says `No law can be passed that contradicts the undisputed rules of Islam.` Under this Article the interpretation of women's rights is left to religious leaders – and many of them are under Iranian influence.

"The US occupation has decided to let go of women's rights," Yanar Mohammed, who campaigns for women's rights in Iraq, says. "Political Islamic groups have taken southern Iraq, are fully in power there, and are using the financial support of Iran to recruit troops and allies. The financial and political support from Iran is why the Iraqis in the south accept this, not because the Iraqi people want Islamic law."

With the new law has come the new lawlessness. Nora Hamaid, 30, a graduate from Baghdad University, has now given up the career she dreamt of. "I completed my studies before the invaders arrived because there was good security and I could freely go to university," Hamaid tells the Inter Press Service (IPS). Now she says she cannot even move around freely, and worries for her children every day. "I mean every day, from when they depart to when they return from school, for fear of abductions."

There is 25-per cent representation for women in parliament, but Sabria says "these women from party lists stand up to defend their party in the parliament, not for women's rights." For women in Iraq, the invasion is not over.

The situation for Iraq's women reflects the overall situation: everyone is affected by lack of security and lack of infrastructure.

"The status of women here is linked to the general situation," Maha Sabria, professor of political science at Al-Nahrain University in Baghdad tells IPS. "The violation of women's rights was part of the violation of the rights of all Iraqis." But, she said, "women bear a double burden under occupation because we have lost a lot of freedom because of it.

`More men are now under the weight of detention, so now women bear the entire burden of the family and are obliged to provide full support to the families and children. At the same time, women do not have freedom of movement because of the deteriorated security conditions and because of abductions of women and children by criminal gangs."

Women, she says, are also now under pressure to marry young in the family's hope that a husband will bring security. Sabria tells IPS that the abduction of women "did not exist prior to the occupation. We find that women lost their right to learn and their right to a free and normal life, so Iraqi women are struggling with oppression and denial of all their rights, more than ever before."

Yanar Mohammed believes the Constitution neither protects women nor ensures their basic rights. She blames the United States for abdicating its responsibility to help develop a pluralistic democracy in Iraq.

"The real ruler in Iraq now is the rule of old traditions and tribal, backward laws," Sabria says. "The biggest problem is that more women in Iraq are unaware of their rights because of the backwardness and ignorance prevailing in Iraqi society today."

Many women have fled Iraq because their husband was arbitrarily arrested by occupation forces or government security personnel, says Sabria. More than four million Iraqis were estimated to have been displaced through the occupation, including approximately 2.8 million internally. The rest live as refugees mainly in neighbouring countries, according to a report by Elizabeth Ferris, co-director of the Brookings Institution-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement.

The report, titled, *Going Home? Prospects and Pitfalls For Large-Scale Return Of Iraqis*, says most displaced Iraqi women are reluctant to return home because of continuing uncertainties.

The Washington-based Refugees International (RI) says in a report "Iraqi Refugees: Women's Rights and Security Critical to Returns" that "Iraqi women will resist returning home, even if conditions improve in Iraq, if there is no focus on securing their rights as women and assuring their personal security and their families' well-being."

The RI report covered internally displaced women in Iraq's semi-autonomous northern Kurdish region and female refugees in Syria. "Not one woman interviewed by RI indicated her intention to return," the report says.

"This tent is more comfortable than a palace in Baghdad; my family is safe here," a displaced woman in northern Iraq told RI. The situation continues to be challenging for women within Iraq.

"I am an employee, and everyday go to my work place, and the biggest challenge for me and all the suffering Iraqis is the roads are closed and you feel you are a person without rights, without respect," a 35-year-old government employee, who asked to be referred to as Iman, told IPS.

"To what extent has this improved my security?" she asked. "We have better salaries now, but how can women live with no security? How can we enjoy our rights if there is no safe place to go, for rest and recreation and living?"

Abdu Rahman is the Inter Press Service correspondent in Baghdad, and Dahr Jamail is an IPS US-based specialist writer on Iraq who reports extensively on the region. IPS describes itself as civil society's news agency.



Selling candles and incense will not lead to equality.

US lawmakers support illegal annexation

Stephen Zunes

In yet another assault on fundamental principles of international law, a bipartisan majority of the United States Senate has gone on record calling on the US to endorse Morocco's illegal annexation of Western Sahara, the former Spanish colony invaded by Moroccan forces in 1975 on the verge of its independence. In doing so, the Senate is pressuring the Obama administration to go against a series of UN Security Council resolutions, a landmark decision of the International Court of Justice, and the position of the African Union and most of the United States' closest European allies.

More disturbingly, this effort appears to have the support of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. A letter, signed by 54 senators, insists that the United States endorse Morocco's "autonomy" plan as the means of settling the conflict. As such, the Senate opposes the vast majority of the world's governments and a broad consensus of international legal scholars, who recognise the illegality of such an imposed settlement. More than 75 countries recognise the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR), which represents the people of Western Sahara under the leadership of the Polisario Front. The SADR is also a full member state of the African Union, and has governed nearly half of the people in liberated zones in Western Sahara as well as refugee camps in Algeria for nearly 35 years. The majority of Congress, however, wants the United States to pressure Polisario to surrender the Western Saharan people's right to self-determination and accept the sovereignty of a conquering power.

How much "autonomy"?

The autonomy plan is based on the assumption that Western Sahara is part of Morocco rather than an occupied territory, and that Morocco is somehow granting part of its sovereign territory a special status. This is a contention that the United Nations, the World Court, the African Union, and a broad consensus of international legal opinion have long rejected. To accept Morocco's autonomy plan would mean that, for the first time since the founding of the UN and the ratification of the UN Charter nearly 65 years ago, the international community would be endorsing the expansion of a country's territory by military force, thereby establishing a very dangerous and destabilising precedent.

If the people of Western Sahara accepted an autonomy agreement over independence as a result of a free and fair referendum, it would constitute a legitimate act of self-determination. Outstanding UN Security Council resolutions explicitly call for such a referendum (which the Sen-

ate letter ignores).

International law aside, there are a number of practical concerns regarding the Moroccan proposal. For instance, centralised autocratic states have rarely respected the autonomy of regional jurisdictions, which has often led to violent conflict. In 1952, the UN granted the British protectorate of Eritrea autonomous status federated with Ethiopia. In 1961, however, the Ethiopian emperor revoked Eritrea's autonomous status, annexing it as his empire's 14th province. The result was a bloody 30-year struggle for independence and subsequent border wars between the two countries. Similarly, the decision of Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic to revoke the autonomous status of Kosovo in 1989 led to a decade of repression and resistance, culminating in the NATO war against Yugoslavia in 1999.



Stephen Zunes



Even on academic maps the area of Western Sahara is not marked

The Senate letter

There has long been concern that Morocco's ongoing illegal occupation of Western Sahara, its human rights abuses, and its defiance of the international community has jeopardised attempts to advance the Arab Maghreb Union and other efforts at regional economic integration and security cooperation. However, the Senate letter turns this argument on its head, arguing that the international community's failure to recognise Morocco's annexation of the territory is the cause of the "growing instability in North Africa." The letter ominously warns that "terrorist activities are increasing" in the region, ignoring the fact that

the Polisario Front has never engaged in terrorism, even during the years of guerrilla warfare against Moroccan occupation forces between 1975 and 1991. The Polisario has scrupulously observed a ceasefire ever since, despite Morocco breaking its promise to allow for a UN-sponsored referendum. Furthermore, Islamist radicals have little sympathy for the secular Polisario and the relatively liberal version of Islam practiced by most Western Saharans.

US support for Indonesia's occupation of East Timor didn't end until human rights activists made it politically difficult for the Clinton administration and members of Congress to continue backing it. Similarly, voters who care about human rights and international law must make it clear they won't support any lawmaker who favours the right of conquest over the right of self-determination.

Stephen Zunes is a professor of politics and chair of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of San Francisco. First published by [Foreign Policy in Focus](#).

Barenboim-Said Foundation and normalisation

Mariam Said

On 28 January, the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) issued a statement to the Qatari government calling for a boycott of Daniel Barenboim and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra (WEDO) and condemning the Qatari Ministry of Culture for hosting the orchestra in Doha. The statement goes as far as to accuse Daniel Barenboim of being an ardent Zionist. I would like to point out that the PACBI policy is "to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel." It does not call for a boycott against all Israelis, but those affiliated with institutions that support the Israeli state and its policies and who do not express support for the Palestinian struggle against occupation. Daniel Barenboim and WEDO do not meet any of those criteria.

WEDO is but one of the many educational programs of the Barenboim-Said Foundation (BSF) which was founded by Daniel Barenboim together with my late husband, Edward Said. It is registered in Spain and the regional government of Andalusia is the main partner in this project.

Not normalisation

WEDO is not a project for normalisation. The yearly workshops in Spain are advanced musical summer courses. When students from Arab countries and Israel attend the same courses at any university around the world where the professor's competence is the reason for which they enrol, it is considered furthering their education, not normalisation.

The only requirement to attend the workshop and become a member of the orchestra is musical competence and talent. The musicians have to pass rigorous auditions and the ultimate goal is musical education on the highest level. The BSF has been offering music education programs in the occupied West Bank in partnership with the al-Kamandjati Music Centre. We are actively supporting the AM Qattan Foundation's Music Centre in Gaza, as well as pioneering projects in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon. We also offer music education programs for Palestinians in the Galilee (we have a conservatory in Nazareth) and in Jaffa. The aim is to bring together all the Palestinians in Palestine through the language of music.

Most importantly, nowhere in the PACBI statement is it mentioned that the WEDO was established by Edward



Mariam Said

Said as well as Daniel Barenboim.

Attacking Said's memory

By attacking the orchestra, PACBI is attacking the integrity of my late husband and his legacy. It is not the first time PACBI has used this skewed approach. The deliberate omission in the statement of any reference to Edward and his support for this project is a manipulation of the media and a conscious effort to mislead the Palestinian people. Edward passed away more than six years ago. I do not know what he would have said about all this today, but I know how he felt about this project and what he wrote about it. A couple of weeks before his death, when a Palestinian activist friend who had reservations about the project asked him about WEDO, Edward unhesitatingly replied in an email: "It is the most important thing I did in my life."

Denial of the existence of the Palestinians has been the essence of the Zionist project. When this method is used by Palestinians to deny one of their own, their most vocal advocate, a champion of justice and universal human rights who never tired of demanding their right to self-determination, it is an outrage.



Daniel Barenboim conducts the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra

Edward was a visionary and con-

structive critic who spoke truth to power. He was a courageous and original thinker who was not afraid of taking risks and going against the grain, who always thought in alternative ways that led to opening roads and building bridges. The only thing he most abhorred was criticism that was destructive.

Barenboim opposed to occupation

Daniel Barenboim has also been courageous and issued many statements condemning the occupation and the Israeli policy on Gaza. He was also a close friend of Edward. They wrote a book together entitled *Parallels and Paradoxes* in which they articulate many of the ideas that WEDO is based on. Daniel's thinking has evolved over the years even though he and Edward did not agree on some issues. One does not have to agree on everything. The recent statement of PACBI indicates that the authors did not do their homework. Had they done so, they would have found more statements articulating Daniel's support for the Palestinian cause.

Last year, in an interview with Yussuf Shayeb in the Ramallah-based *al-Ayyam* newspaper, Daniel stated that the work of the BSF has nothing to do with normalisation. It embodies solidarity and consolidates against injustice and occupation. In the summer of 2006, the orchestra

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issued a statement against the wars on Lebanon and Gaza. In January 2009, during the assault on Gaza, the orchestra again stated that it "deplores all actions that lead to civilian deaths" and that it "represents an alternative model based on equality, cooperation and justice for all." These statements were published in all the concert programs. When last summer a concert planned as part of the celebrations for "Jerusalem -- Cultural Capital of the Arab World" was forbidden, the orchestra dedicated its concert in Geneva to "Jerusalem -- Cultural Capital of the Arab World."

The terrible irony is that by attacking the WEDO and the vision of Edward and Daniel, PACBI is doing exactly what Edward saw the Western media doing to the Islamic world, as he wrote in his book *Covering Islam*. When former US President George W Bush attacked Iraq in 2003, Edward Said responded with a lecture on humanism in Beirut and Cairo. Bush told the world: "you are either with us or against us." At a PACBI panel discussion held during Israeli Apartheid Week in New York City in March 2009, a Palestinian speaker said: "To those who profess to be our friends and talk only about humanism, we say 'f... humanism'. You are either on board or not." I wonder what the difference is between him and Bush?

Edward's thinking about the conflict evolved over the years. In the end, no matter what the solution is, both peoples will have to live together. To do so we need to talk to the enemy and to break the wall that separates us. To him, the WEDO was an experiment that broke down barriers of hatred and allowed the participants to get to know the other. It was also an educational project where music was taught on a sophisticated level to musicians who had talent. Today, it remains a humanistic endeavour whose results will bear fruit in the future.

Since Edward's passing, I have been actively involved in this endeavour. I too was in Qatar this past January and when introducing the orchestra I made a strong statement demanding freedom for Palestine.

Edward always reminded the Palestinians that they must fight on many fronts simultaneously. The WEDO is fighting on the cultural front; PACBI is fighting the same fight on another track. Many of us actively support the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign and respect what it is doing. But equally, I have the right to ask that it acknowledge my involvement and the legacy of Edward Said in this project and respect the goals of the WEDO and the BSF.

Mariam Said is a retired banker and vice president of the Barenboim-Said Foundation USA. Originally published by the *Electronic Intifada*.

Israel in shock: The third largest party in Hungary is nationalist, racist and xenophobic

Meanwhile back in Israel the party's youth have gathered for a permanent visit...

בישראל מזועזעים: המפלגה השלישית בגודלה
בהונגריה היא לאומנית, גזענית ושוונאת זרים



צעירי המפלגה בביקור קבע בישראל

Much more needed, says US nurses union leader

Rose Ann DeMoro

Passage of President Obama's healthcare bill proves that Congress can enact comprehensive social legislation in the face of virulent rightwing opposition. Now that we have an insurance bill, can we move on to healthcare reform?

As an organisation of registered nurses, we have an obligation to provide an honest assessment, as nurses must do every hour of every day. The legislation fails to deliver on the promise of a single standard of excellence in care for all and instead makes piecemeal adjustments to the current privatised, for-profit healthcare behemoth.

When all the boasts fade, comparing the bill to Social Security and Medicare, probably intended to mollify liberal supporters following repeated concessions to the healthcare industry and conservative Democrats, a sobering reality will probably set in.

What the bill does provide:

*Expansion of government-funded Medicaid to cover 16 million additional low-income people, though the program remains significantly underfunded. This limits access to its enrollees as its reimbursement rates are lower than either Medicare or private insurance, with the result some providers find it impossible to participate.

*Increased funding for community health centres, that will open their doors to nearly double their current patient volume.

*Reducing but not eliminating the infamous "donut hole" gap in prescription drug coverage for which Medicare enrollees have to pay the costs fully out of pocket.

*Insurance regulations covering members' dependent children until age 26, and new restrictions on limits on annual and lifetime on lifetime insurance coverage, and exclusion of policies for children with pre-existing conditions.

*Permission for individual states to waive some federal regulations to adopt innovative state programs like an expanded Medicare.

All of these reforms could, and should, have been enacted on their own without the poison pills that accompanied them.

Where the bill falls short:

*The mandate forcing people without coverage to buy insurance. Coupled with the subsidies for other moderate income working people not eligible for Medicare or Medicaid, the result is a gift worth hundreds of billions of dollars to reward the very insurance industry that created the present crisis through price gouging, care denials, and other abuses.

*Inadequate healthcare cost controls for individuals and families.

Insurance premiums will continue to climb. Proponents touted a "robust" public option to keep the insurers "honest," but that proposal was scuttled.

* An illusory limit on out-of-pocket medical expenses.

But even in the regulated state exchanges, insurers remain in control of what they offer and what will be a covered service. Insurers are likely to design plans to attract healthier customers, and many enrollees will likely find the federal guarantees do not protect them for medical

treatments they actually need.

*No meaningful restrictions on claims denials insurers don't want to pay for. Proponents cite a review process on denials, but the "internal review process" remains in the hands of the insurers, and the "external" review will be up to the states, many of which have systems now in place that are dominated by the insurance industry with little enforcement mechanism.



Rose Ann DeMoro



Not everyone approved of the health insurance victory

nism.

Permitting insurers to sell policies "across state lines", exempting patient protections passed in other states. Insurers will likely set up in the least regulated states in a race to the bottom threatening public protections won by consumers in various states.

*Erosion of women's reproductive rights, with a new executive order from the President enshrining a deal to get

(Continued on page 15)

How not to argue your case

Sol Salbe

Those of us involved in the Israel-Palestine discourse are familiar with a certain self-righteous style of writing. The writer knows s/he is right, so why should s/he bother trying to present the case logically? Why be polite to those you are arguing with and you know they are wrong? It's more important to feel good and know that you have "shown it to them" – or at least, that's the way it appears to outsiders.

I emphasise the point that the style is almost universal. Whether they are arguing the Palestinians' case or Israel's, an identical form of indignation comes through as the main feature. As an example from one side, I received material that had the Jordan River running south to north (presumably climbing 200 metres uphill in the process). It didn't matter – the Students for Palestine were determined to demonstrate against Silvan Shalom. Similarly the nuances of Palestinian society were irrelevant to a notorious pro-Israeli advocate, for they were all "Mohammedans" anyway (even the Christians and communists!).

But maybe it is just too difficult for supporters of Israeli and/or Palestinian causes to mentally separate the style from the content. It may be easier to look at another conflict to see just see just how stupid angry indignation can be.

The following letter was sent to the International Crisis Group in response to the ICG's latest report on Indonesian-occupied (west) Papua. The writer calls himself Alezev. I'm told by an activist supporter of the Papuan struggle that he is a Papuan who needs to use a pseudonym. Fair enough, but couldn't this be explained? Other-

It is important to win others to your cause, but you won't succeed by abusing them.

(Continued from page 14)

the votes of anti-abortion Democrats and a burdensome segregation of funds, that in practice will likely mean few insurers will cover abortion and perhaps other reproductive medical services.

*A windfall for pharmaceutical giants. Through a deal with the White House, the administration blocked provisions to give the government more power to negotiate drug prices and gave the name brand drug makers 12 years of marketing monopoly against competition from generic competition on biologic drugs, including cancer treatments.

Most critically, the bill strengthens the economic and political power of a private insurance-based system based on profit rather than patient need.

Too many people will remain uninsured, individual and family healthcare costs will continue to rise largely unabated and private insurers will still be able to deny claims with little recourse for patients.

Leaders of the National Nurses United have raised many of these concerns about the legislation for months. But, sadly, as the healthcare bill moved closer to final passage, the space for genuine debate and critique of the bill's very real limitations was largely squeezed out. Much of the fault lies with the far right, from the streets to the

wise the ICG recipients would have looked the name up on Google and discovered an Alexandre Azzvedo, who is Brazilian. Without Google I would guessed a Bulgarian name!

The language is also reminiscent of other conflicts: (Goldstone report, anyone?)

I write this letter to you not as a member of any organisation, but as a fellow human being who has lived in West Papua and seen firsthand the situation there.

I feel it necessary to make a response to the recent International Crisis Group report on West Papua and the follow-up article you have written. It is clear that your report is littered with half truths, lies and inaccuracies about the present and historical situation in West Papua. Unfortunately this will only damage your and the International Crisis Group's reputation. Above all, it presents a false picture to the outside world on the reality of life in West Papua. It also places many people at risk as a result of assertions made in the report.

I will only address three points from your report that stood out as requiring urgent amendment by yourself, but am sure others will add. For reference I am also cc'ing the International Crisis Group head office into this email so they can take any appropriate urgent action that they feel may be needed to avert further hostilities.

The actual contents of the letter are very important to West Papua. But there is no point in including them here. Our aim to draw the commonalities, not the specifics.

It is important to win others to your cause, but you won't succeed by abusing them. It is also a good idea to provide your credentials if they are relevant -- and they usually are.

airwaves to some legislators that steadily escalated from deliberate misrepresentations to fearmongering to racial epithets to hints of threatened violence against bill supporters.

For its part, the administration and its major supporters shut out advocates of more far reaching reform,.

Both trends are troubling for democracy, as is the pervasive corruption of corporate lobbying that so clearly influenced the language of the bill. Insurers, drug companies, and other corporate lobbyists shattered all records for federal influence peddling and were rewarded with a bill that largely protected their interests, along with a Supreme Court ruling that will allow corporations, including the health care industry, to spend unlimited sums in federal elections.

Rightwing opponents fought as hard to block this legislation as they would have against a Medicare for all plan. As more Americans recognise the bill does not resemble the distortions peddled by the right, and become disappointed by their rising medical bills and ongoing fights with insurers for needed care, there will be new opportunity to press the case for real reform.

Next time, let's get it done right.

Rose Ann DeMoro is an Executive Director, National Nurses United and the California Nurses Association.

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