



# AJDS Newsletter

Volume 11, Issue 7

August 2010

www.ajds.org.au

## Editor's view

### ***Labor must be returned!***

At a dinner conversation, an Israeli friend on a long-term stay in Australia was astounded with Australians. "If this was Israel two weeks before the elections, we would be talking about nothing but the elections", she said. Naturally we explained to her some elections do generate excitement. We did have some exciting elections in 1969 (*Don's Party*), 1972 (Gough Whitlam's triumph), 1975 (post dismissal), 1983 (Hawke's win), 1993 ("sweetest victory"), and most recently in 2007.

But deep inside, we knew that these elections were dull and that few people were getting enthusiastic about them. Nevertheless, the vital thing to remember is that they are important. The two major parties may seem like Tweedledee and Tweedledum, but there are differences between them and those differences do matter. And because of those differences, it is imperative that the Labor Government gets returned.

One could sum up the argument for the re-election of the Gillard government in a nutshell: there are a thousand reasons not to vote for the Labor party and only one reason to vote for it: the policies of the Liberal Opposition are far worse. That may be a neat encapsulation but it is still a caricature, regardless of the large kernel of truth that it contains.

I had very few expectations of this government. That should have saved me from disappointment. Unfortunately the disappointments still came and they did hurt. The biggest is of course Climate Change. In the words of the then Labor Leader Kevin Rudd, this is "the greatest moral, economic and social challenge of our time". In government, Labor did sign the Kyoto Protocol, but then came up with a scheme regarded by most environmentalists variously as either counterproductive or too weak to curb greenhouse gas emissions. Labor refused to negotiate with the Greens and was stymied by the Liberal Opposition in the Senate. But what hurts most is the thought that John Howard took a better and more effective

climate change policy to the people in 2007 than Julia Gillard is taking this year. A great leap backwards.

The implementation of Labor's policy on refugees was a great stride forward with such measures as the abolition of Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs). But there was tracking back here as well, first with the moratorium on the processing of Afghans' and Sri Lankans' applications and more recently with the adoption of a policy reminiscent of the Pacific solution.

But if there was a move forward on refugees, the situation in giving Australians greater value for their natural resources has been a case of 2.00 steps forward, 1.99

steps backward. The mining tax fiasco saw Julia Gillard essentially capitulating to extremely rich Australians and multinational corporations.

Then there are other issues such as same-sex marriage.

A fair assessment of the past three years has to highlight the positives as well. The Apology to the Stolen Generation and to Indigenous Australians generally was a time of pride. I'm sure my friends overseas got the message with all the YouTube and 7.30 report clips I sent them during those momentous days. But there has been very little change to NT intervention and the number of new houses built for Indigenous Australians is still abysmally small.

It is the government's greatest achievement, in shielding Australians and our economy from the worst aspect of the global financial crisis, that provides one

of the best clues as to why this government should be returned. Had Brendan Nelson, Malcolm Turnbull, Tony Abbott or even the affable Joe Hockey been in charge, it would not have happened. They say so themselves; they were opposed to the stimulus package and voted against it.

Related to this is the issue of industrial relations. Labor

***(Continued on page 2)***



***No, your Editor is not telling you to vote for Julia Gillard or her party; he's just pleading with you to make sure that she's triumphant over the Liberals at the end of the night.***

**The Australian Jewish  
Democratic Society Inc**  
(Affiliated with the Jewish  
Community Council of Victoria)  
**Contact the AJDS!**  
**PO Box 685 KEW 3101**  
**Phone 9885 6260**  
**Executive Committee**

**Steve Brook**

sbrook34@gmail.com

**Sandy Joffe**

sandyj@people.net.au

**Helen Rosenbaum**

hrose@vic.chariot.net.au

**Les Rosenblatt**

wandjina0@bigpond.com

**Sol Salbe**

ssalbe@westnet.com.au

**Larry Stillman**

larryjhs@fastmail.fm

**Tom Wolkenberg**

lintom@bigpond.com

**Harold Zwier**

hz@doublez.com.au

**Newsletter Committee**

**Editor: Sol Salbe**

**Steve Brook, Miriam Faine, Margaret Jacobs, Vivienne Porzsolt, Dan Rabinovici, Les Rosenblatt**

**Editorial Phone: 9318 3107 or  
0417 508496**

***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***

*In posting the current Newsletter articles to our indefatigable proofreader Steve Brook, I noticed that we have a larger number of articles than usual. Maybe we picked less-long winded writers or perhaps we were more ruthless this time but we have managed to provide you with a greater variety.*

*But wait, there's more. We have also managed to get away more times from the perennial subject of Israel-Palestine. Starting naturally with the **cover** on the **Federal elections**. The differences between Labor and Liberal on Israel-Palestine are not sufficiently significant for any AJDS member to switch sides over but other issues make for a strong recommendation to ensure that Julia Gillard's government is returned.*

*We also have an interesting piece on **the media and climate change** on **page 6**, **Peter Singer** on how charity can make a difference (**p5**), industrial issues from **Australia (p7)** and **abroad (p12)**, an article about the fate of the **children of Russian agents** by one of **Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's children (p11)** and an update on the situation in **Papua** from local activist and occasional **Newsletter** contributor **Esther Anderson** on **page 12**.*

*There are there three review-type articles one dealing with **human trafficking (p14)**, a review of the Howard Zinn's **The Bomb (I13)**, and Vivienne Porzsolt looks at **Norman Finkelstein** life having seen **American Radical** on **page 15**.*

*Our own activities include our discussion and **resolution on BDS across the page**. **Sivan Barak** attended a conference on Israel held very recently in Melbourne and is glad that she did not boycott Israeli academics even while not seeing eye-to-eye with the speakers. Read her account on **page 4**. The proverbial issue of **Boycotts Divestments and Sanctions** raises its head again on **page 10**. **Gush Shalom's Adam Keller** tackles an important issue: **Is Israel Singled out? His answer on pp8-9** is yes but not in the way you expect.*

*We have had more local contributors than recent issues, but as usual we welcome your letters, comments and original articles.*

**Sol Salbe**

---

***(Continued from page 1)***

tore down some of the worst aspects of WorkChoices, although it did keep some nasty legacies of Howardism such as the Australian Building and Construction Commission. The latter still presents a threat to union officials for merely doing their job. Many of my friends from within the union movement will be working and voting for other parties on 21 August. But every single one of them expresses genuine dread at the prospect of an Abbott Liberal government in terms of their day-to-day work.

In plain English, there are differences between the two parties and it should affect the way we vote. Think of health and education, where Labor has made some progress while the key plank in the Liberals' policy is cutbacks in expenditure.

Remember, Julia Gillard may take a worse line on climate change than John Howard did, but at least she and her party recognise that human activity is responsible for it. The Liberals are headed by a group of climate change deni- alists who triumphed over Malcolm Turnbull over this very issue.

The Israeli friend mentioned earlier, and her husband, are fascinated by our preferential voting system. I think this is part of what makes us the Lucky Country. I don't need to tell you who to vote for – you can choose your own party. All I wish to do is to implore you to ensure that you put Labor ahead of the Liberals. My friend does not have a vote, but she's barracking for the "gingit" (red-haired female, pronounced jinjit). No matter our reservations, we need to ensure that my friend will be celebrating on the evening of 21 August.

**Sol Salbe**

# AJDS endorses nuanced version of BDS

## [Contributed]

The Australian Jewish Democratic Society has become the first community-affiliated Jewish organisation to adopt the view that some boycotts of Israel may indeed be justified. The decision culminated a 16-month process of discussion and expression of a wide range of views in this Newsletter.

The resolution (full text below) rejected the Palestinian civil society version of Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS): "*The AJDS is opposed to any Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign aimed at the breadth of Israeli economic, cultural or intellectual activity*". The AJDS only supports "*selected BDS actions designed to bring about an end to the Israeli occupation, blockade and settlement on Palestinian lands lying outside of the June 1967 Israeli borders*."

Unlike the rejected Palestinian BDS, the AJDS wants to concentrate on those who profit from this very occupation. An example given in the resolution is of boycotting "settlement products". In this way the AJDS's stance is similar to that taken recently by the National Council of Churches in Australia. Like the churches, the AJDS has not endorsed some of the other aims of the Palestinian BDS such as the Palestinian Right of Return.

While not reversing the AJDS's long-term opposition to blanket academic boycotts, the AJDS envisages boycotting "*specific Israeli academics openly supportive of the Occupation*." The organisation made it plain that nevertheless decision on any action would still need to be taken on a case-by-case basis.

*The AJDS is opposed to any Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign aimed at the breadth of Israeli economic, cultural or intellectual activity. However, the AJDS does support selected BDS actions designed to bring about an end to the Israeli occupation, blockade and settlement on Palestinian lands lying outside of the June 1967 Israeli borders. Such limited and focused BDS support might include boycotts of settlement products and divestment from military Research and Development (R&D) and boycott of industrial/military activities unre-*

*lated to Israel's defence and security. It might also include selected sanctions or boycotts against specific Israeli academics openly supportive of the Occupation.*

*The AJDS will make any decisions on these matters on a case-by-case basis, and exercise its judgement as to the political/social cost-benefits of any such actions before granting specific endorsement or approval.*

## BDS forum held

On the day of its Special General Meeting, the AJDS held a forum which gave a hearing to Palestinian activist Samah Sabawi on the subject. Sabawi put the case for the Palestinian civil society's call for a BDS of Israel. She explained the need for non-violent actions as a better way of resolving the issue. The audience was receptive and with the exception of one non-member, those who spoke expressed agreement with the thrust of her presentation. A common disagreement, however, aired by several people, was Sabawi's use of the term "Apartheid state" for Israel.



**Samah Sabawi** Sabawi spent a lot of her time going through counterarguments to objections to BDS raised with her by progressive Jews in the past. If audience expression was any guide, some appear to be superfluous for AJDS members. On the other hand she was explicit in denying the people of Israel a say in the process. She wanted to use international pressure to force an imposed solution based on her narrative on Israel. Election of a different kind of government was not an option. This went against the grain of the AJDS's long-held view that there were two sides of the conflict, and any resolution must have majority support in each of the two national groups involved: Israelis and Palestinians. Sabawi has been asked to provide a summary of her views for a future Newsletter. She herself expressed an interest in further exploring with AJDS members her use of "Apartheid state" terminology and the issue of the Right of Return.

## Why I feel unease at the Palestinian BDS project

### Sol Salbe

*This is an edited text of a talk that was not delivered at the AJDS forum on BDS owing to time constraints.*

The starting point of any discussion in a Jewish left forum such as this has to be our wish to take action to change Israel's behaviour. Above all, we want to end the Occupation (with everything that it entails); we also want to make it crystal clear to Israel that attacks on its neighbours such as occurred in Lebanon in 2006 and in the Gaza Strip in that year and again in operation Cast Lead in 2008-09 are not acceptable. I could go on with the list of what we want to change, but this would take up the entire allocated time for this forum. There is no question that we should start from a position of fundamental agreement on the need to do something to achieve our aims.

Furthermore it is important to put on the record that we

should be rewarding and encouraging those Palestinians who are engaging in non-violent actions to achieve their aims.

So why do I feel uneasy about the current Palestinian project? Well, I am unhappy at the way it is couched in terms of "Palestinian civil society has asked us to do it, therefore we should do it." My reaction is: "Wait a minute -- why? Did you follow the advice of the Vietnamese people on how to oppose the war on their country? Did you listen to the Bangladeshis? The boycott South Africa movement didn't take up any ANC calls for a boycott (at least not until very late days). I don't recall any comment from Iraqi civil society telling us to oppose the war on the country being uppermost in the material distributed by the

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Israel conference a pleasant surprise

### Sivan Barak

*Israeli-Australian Sivan Barak, a regular attendee at AJDS functions and a member of our Facebook group, was lucky enough to attend the recent conference **Israel Nation State: Political, Constitutional & Cultural Challenges** at Monash University. Her personal account provides us with a fresh perspective.*

Last week I chose not to support the boycott of Israeli academics, and instead go listen to them at a conference organised by the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University.

The line-up was both impressive and extensive, three days full to the brim with debates on this ever-topical theme. The list of Israeli participants included: Professor Anita Shapira, Tel Aviv Uni; Dr Arik Carmon, Israel, Democracy Institute; Prof Yedidia Stern, Bar-Ilan Uni, Profs Eli Salzberger and Fania Oz-Salzberger, Haifa Uni; and Profs Michael Karayanni and Ruth Gavison of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as well as International and Australian speakers.

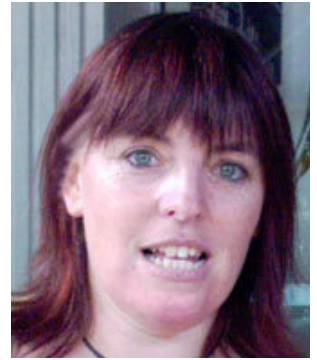
The conference was a quite informal, round table setting, on the eighth floor of a Caulfield building with a magnificent view of the bay from the windows; each speaker was allotted under an hour in which to present their paper after which there was an open discussion among the learned academics. There was also allowance for approximately 25 audience participants, I was fortunate enough to be present at the first two days and heard many topical and conflicting opinions on issues regarding the lack of a constitution, the multicultural nature of the state especially, in regards to the minorities, the obligatory Holocaust influence mention, post-Zionism, Immigration policy and comparisons between Israel and Australia, the rising influence of religion on the state and public spheres, a revisit of the

Law of Return, Israeli exceptionalism and what the Europeans today think about the de-legitimisation of Israel.

As you see, this was a very intense couple of days with incredibly complex and debatable topics. I admit coming with a negative, defensive attitude to this forum, feeling that there was no voice of the “other” represented, that it would be another back-slapping Israel fest.

I was very pleasantly surprised to discover that one of the guests was in fact a Palestinian; another questioned the sustainability of the Law of Return in 2010, the issue of human rights and the uniqueness of Israel were raised without a sense that a sacred cow was being slaughtered. It was a shame there weren't more people exposed to true inner debate occurring daily inside Israel. During the breaks around the coffee the truly exciting dialogue began, questions rarely heard in public were passionately shared among old, young, religious, secular, left, right academic and wannabees (that's me).

Sadly I couldn't stay for the final day, which I am sure was as animated and rousing, but I did leave the conference feeling that if the BDS was imposed on these visiting Israeli academics I wouldn't have the chance to hear open debate on topics that are so close to my heart. This would be a great loss, for if it had been made more public, this conference could have aroused great challenging discussion in the wider, non-Jewish community, which could then lead to open dialogue which would help to re-legitimise Israel...who knows?



Sivan Barak

---

### *(Continued from page 3)*

Victorian Peace Network. As a matter of fact, in at least one case we knew that the very opposite was true. For it so happened that an Australian peace activist who met the Vietnamese leadership and described the experience is AJDS member Bernie Taft in his book *Crossing the party line*. The Vietnamese wanted our movement here to be mobilised around the demand of “stop the bombing, negotiate”. We overruled Taft and his friends, and built the movement around a different demand.

The point of this objection is that it turns what is above all a **tactical** question into a moral one. We need to support action that is smart and effective, and whether or not the view coincides with that of Palestinian civil society is very much a secondary issue. The key here is that there are three areas in which we need have an impact: the international community, and each of Israeli and Palestinian societies. There is no intrinsic reason why Palestinian activists should possess a greater understanding of all three than others. The guiding principle ought to be: which tactic will receive maximum support in the West, will convince more Israelis that they need to change their way while simultaneously give encouragement to the Palestinians that they are on the right path.

This is very much related to the demands behind the BDS campaign. If you look at the Vietnam Moratorium or the VPN you'll see that they had principled but still broad-based demands that could mobilise hundreds of thousands of people in this country. We didn't call for victory to the NLF, but for the withdrawal of all troops; this allowed churches and unions and all sorts of ordinary people to participate in our actions. By insisting on the right of return as being intrinsic to the BDS campaign, the Palestinian-initiated movement excludes not only people like us but the vast majority of unions and churches in this country.

To me it seems as if mobilisation of the largest possible number of people is not a key aim of the BDS movement. Otherwise they would gone for something like “Achieving a just solution to the conflict acceptable to the majority of Palestinians and the majority of Israelis.”

But what concerns me more is that finding the most effective way to win over Jewish Israelis is not a key aim of the movement either. This is something that ought to be a key pillar of those who wish to end the conflict in the best way, even of those who subscribe to the view that Israeli Jews are the oppressors of the Palestinians.

## Saving a child – easily

Sunday 11 July saw an exceptionally successful first Renate Kamener Oration. More than 250 people crowded into the main hall at the Leo Baeck Centre to hear Professor Peter Singer Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University speaking on “Living ethically in a divided world.” Prior to him speaking, Larry Kamener spoke movingly about his mother Renate and the way her values drove her political life and activity. Nearly \$5000 was raised towards a bursary for an Indigenous student at Melbourne University.

Prof Singer held his audience spellbound with his flawless delivery. His talk generated quite a lot of discussion. One of those who disagreed with Singer on his take on charity, the World Trade Organisation and lots more was Dr David Legge, who has volunteered to provide his counterview for a forthcoming issue of the Newsletter.

While only covering some of the points made in his talk the following article submitted by Prof Singer explained the central thrust of his argument.

### Peter Singer

Imagine you come across a small child who has fallen into a pond and is in danger of drowning. You know that you can easily and safely rescue him, but you are wearing an expensive pair of shoes that will be ruined if you do. It would

be wrong -- monstrous, in fact -- to walk on past the pond, leaving the child to drown, because you don't want to have to buy a new pair of shoes. You can't compare a child's life with a pair of shoes!

Yet while we all say that it would be wrong to walk past the child, there are other children whose lives we could save just as easily – and yet we

don't. UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, estimates that nearly 9 million children under 5 die each year from causes related to poverty. That's 24,000 a day -- a football stadium full of young children, dying every day (along with thousands of older children and adults who die from poverty every day as well). Some die because they don't have enough to eat or clean water to drink. More die from measles, malaria, diarrhoea and pneumonia -- diseases that don't exist in developed nations, or if they do, are easily cured and rarely fatal.

Describing a case in Ghana, a man told a researcher from the World Bank: “Take the death of this small boy this morning, for example. The boy died of measles. We all know he could have been cured at the hospital. But

the parents had no money and so the boy died a slow and painful death, not of measles but out of poverty.”

Many organisations are working to reduce poverty and provide clean water and basic health care. If people donated more to these organisations, they could save more lives. Most people living in affluent nations have money to spare, money that they spend on luxuries like clothes they don't need, vacations in exotic places, even bottled water when the water that comes out of the tap is safe to drink. Instead of spending money on these things, we could give the money to an organisation that would use it to reduce poverty, and quite possibly to save a child's life.

Of course, the situation in which you can rescue the child in the pond is not exactly the same as that in which you can donate to an aid organisation to save a child's life. There is only one child in the pond, and once we have saved him, we have solved the problem and need not think more about it. But there are millions of children in poverty, and saving one of them does not solve the problem. Often this feeling – that whatever we do will be merely “drops in the ocean” -- makes us feel that trying to do anything at all is futile. But that is a mistake. Saving one child is not less important because there are other children we cannot save. We have still saved a life, and saved the child's parents from the grief that the

parents of that boy in Ghana had to suffer.

Saving a child drowning in a shallow pond is a simple thing to do, whereas reducing global poverty is complex. But some aspects of saving human life are not so complex. We know that providing clean water and sanitation saves lives, and often saves women hours each day that they previously spent fetch-



**Kamener family members with Peter Singer (sitting second from left)**

ing water, and then boiling it. We know that providing bed-nets reduces malaria, and immunising children stops them getting measles. We know that educating girls helps them to control their fertility, and leads them to have fewer children.

In *The Life You Can Save* I explore this argument in more depth, and consider objections. I discuss whether aid is effective, and how we can be confident that our donations are making a difference. I also propose a realistic scale for giving. (You can also find that at [www.thelifeyoucansave.com](http://www.thelifeyoucansave.com).)

As people with more than enough, we have a moral obligation to help those who, through no fault of their own, are living in extreme poverty. It's not hard to do.



# You wouldn't read about it: climate scientists right

## Rodney Tiffen

Chances are, you have not heard much about Climategate lately, but last November it dominated the media. Three weeks before the Copenhagen summit, thousands of emails from the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia were published on a Russian website. The research institute was a leading contributor to the fourth Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, and some of the leaked emails showed the scientists in a poor light.

The scandal was one of the pivotal moments in changing the politics of climate change. What seemed close to a bipartisan agreement on an environmental trading scheme collapsed with Tony Abbott's defeat of Malcolm Turnbull. Within months the Rudd government lost its nerve on what the former prime minister called "the greatest moral and economic challenge of our time".

By casting doubt on the integrity of the scientists, Climategate helped puncture public faith in the science, and probably contributed to Labor's political panic. The echo chamber of columnists reverberated with angry and accusatory claims. In Australia, Piers Akerman said: "The tsunami of leaked emails . . . reveals a culture of fraud, manipulation, deceit and personal vindictiveness to rival anything in a John le

Carre or John Grisham thriller." Later he wrote: "The crowd that gathered in Copenhagen were there pushing a fraud."

Andrew Bolt thought that "what they reveal is perhaps the greatest scientific scandal" of our time. "Emails leaked on the weekend show there is indeed a conspiracy to deceive the world - and Mr Rudd has fallen for it."

Miranda Devine wrote: "We see clearly the rotten heart of the propaganda machine that has driven the world to the brink of insanity."

The ramifications of Climategate were immediate. The climate unit's head, Professor Phil Jones, was forced to stand down. Three inquiries were set up to examine the scientists' conduct.

The first, a British House of Commons select committee, reported in March that the scientific reputation of Professor Jones and the CRU remained intact. The second, a science assessment panel, set up with the Royal Society and consisting of eminent British researchers, reported in April.

Its chairman, Lord Oxburgh, said his team found "absolutely no evidence of any impropriety whatsoever" and that "whatever was said in the emails, the basic science seems to have been done fairly and properly".

The third, set up by the university itself, published its 160-page report four weeks ago. On the specific allegations made against the behaviour of the CRU scientists, "we find that the rigour and honesty [of the scientists] as scientists are not in doubt". Importantly, it concluded: "We did not find any evidence of behaviour that might undermine the conclusions of the IPCC assessments."

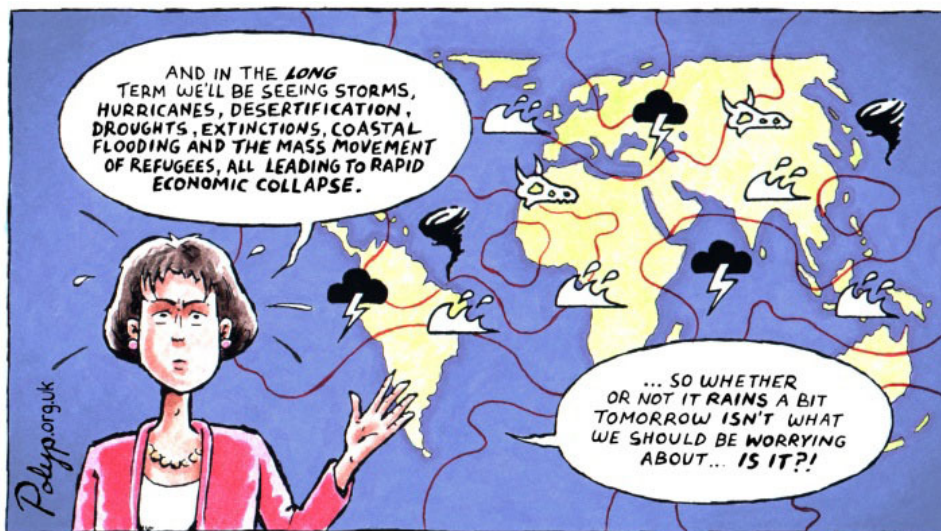
In other words, nothing in the emails undermined the research of the climate scientists. Like the other two, the inquiry found aspects of the scientists' behaviour that fell short of professional standards -- "failing to display the proper degree of openness".

What might seem the most damning was the way Jones dealt with freedom of information requests, but context makes his behaviour more understandable. In July last year alone, the CRU received 60 FoI requests. Answering them would have been too much for even all the unit's staff time. In a matter of days, it received 40 similar FoI requests, each wanting data from five different countries - 200 requests in all. Jones concluded the unit was subject to a vexatious campaign.

While not fully excusing their behaviour, one has to appreciate the embattled position of scientists who received a steady stream of obscene and abusive emails and constant public attacks on their integrity.

After the leaks, Jones, now reinstated, received death threats and said he had contemplated suicide.

You might imagine the media would be keen to report on authoritative conclusions about allegations it had found so newsworthy in December. But coverage of each of the reports has been non-existent in many



'YOU'RE FIRED'

news organisations and in others brief or without prominence.

At best, the coverage of the inquiries' conclusions added up to a 20th of the coverage the original allegations received, which leaves us to ponder the curiosities of a news media that gets so over-excited by dramatic allegations and then remains so incurably uninterested in their resolution.

The newspapers that gave greatest play to the allegations tended to give less attention to the findings. The columnists who gave greatest vent to their indignation have not made any revisions or corrections, let alone apologised to the scientists whose integrity they so sweepingly impugned.

Even at the time, it was clear much of the coverage was more attuned to maximising sensation rather than to reporting with precision. The sheer number of leaked

(Continued on page 7)

# Who is Ark Tribe and why his case should concern others

## Shirley Winton

In 2005 the Howard government introduced the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). The coercive powers of the ABCC are designed to criminalise building unions and workers' activities, much of which is related to health and safety in one of Australia's top four most dangerous industries. A safe working environment is a priority for construction workers, where on average 50 construction workers are killed each year from work related incidents and illnesses, or one construction worker per week. The far-reaching net of ABCC draconian powers can be extended to wider sections of the community and other workers. In spite of continuing strong public condemnation by many human rights and industrial lawyers, civil liberties groups and even six times by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the ALP government refuses to abolish the anti-democratic and anti-union ABCC.

The ABCC has wide-sweeping coercive powers; even people charged with murder have more rights than workers in the building industry. The ABCC has powers to compel workers to attend interrogations. Refusal to attend or answer questions carries penalties of up to six months jail or a \$22,000 fine. There is no right of silence -- people can be forced to give information and evidence about union meetings, who attended and what was said by whom. Workers investigated do not have an automatic right to a choice of their own lawyer and cannot discuss the proceedings of the interrogation with anyone

(including family members) except their lawyer. Further, a construction worker can be fined up to \$22,000 for stopping work -- even attending a brief OH&S meeting. More than 150 construction workers have been questioned in secret by the ABCC since 2005.

Members of the public passing by a building site have been hauled in by the ABCC to give evidence. Refusal to give evidence by passersby also carries the threat of hefty fines.

Ark Tribe, a South Australian rank and file construction worker is facing a jail sentence of up to six months for simply refusing to answer questions about a union meeting on safety he attended on his job.

For weeks, construction workers at the Flinders University site complained about what they believed to be shoddy safety standards. Concerned about the employer ignoring their safety complaints workers signed a petition, on a paper towel, and called in the union. The union notified SafeWork SA who inspected the building site and issued two prohibition notices. The safety problems were then fixed and work resumed as normal.

Then the ABCC arrived, questioning workers about who said what about safety and tried to pressure workers to answer questions. Ark Tribe was hauled to court for refusing to answer questions about a meeting. In the past 12 months Ark Tribe has appeared in court four times, and each time the hearing was deferred.

**Shirley Winton is an organiser with the Communication Workers' Union (CEPU)**

---

## Long-awaited cluster bomb ban enters into force

### Esther Banales

Thirty-eight countries started observing the Convention on Cluster Munitions on 1 August after a rapid entry into force since the treaty was announced two years ago in Oslo. "This new instrument is a major advance for the global disarmament and humanitarian agendas, and will help us to counter the widespread insecurity and suffering caused by these terrible weapons, particularly among civilians and children," noted UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Cluster munitions explode in mid-air to release dozens -- sometimes hundreds -- of smaller "bomblets" across large areas. Because the final location of these scattered smaller bombs is difficult to control, they can cause large numbers of civilian casualties.

Bomblets that fail to explode immediately may also lay dormant, potentially acting as landmines and killing or maiming civilians long after a conflict is ended. Children are known to be particularly at risk from dud cluster munitions since they are often attracted to the shiny objects and are less aware of their dangers.

*(Continued from page 6)*

emails, for instance, was sometimes taken as proof of the scale of the scandal, as if they were all disreputable.

In fact, only from a handful could anything sinister be conjured.

It is a common criticism of the media that it prominently publishes allegations, but gives less coverage to the pro-

Since the countdown towards enforcement started in February 2010, the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC), a civil society campaign, has been raising public awareness and encouraging countries to adhere to the "most significant disarmament and humanitarian treaty in over a decade".

"Our activities more recently have been aimed at trying to get an early entry into force, getting to the 30 ratifications necessary to do this," Stephen Goose, one of the founders and co-chair of the CMC and director of the Arms Division at Human Rights Watch (HRW), told IPS.

More countries are expected to join the current list of 38. So far, 107 countries have signed. Others remain hesitant.

Meanwhile, the Pentagon declared that the US will restrain from using cluster munitions with a failure rate of more than one percent, which would include all but a small fraction, by the end of 2018. "[The US] should not wait another eight years to stop using cluster munitions; it should ban them now," Goose declared.

**Originally published by the Inter Press Service**

saic facts that later refute them. But rarely is the disproportion so stark. Rarely has such an edifice of sweeping accusation and extravagant invective been constructed on such a slender factual basis.

Rarely does it do such damage.

**Rodney Tiffen is emeritus professor of government and international relations at the University of Sydney.**



# Is Israel singled out – and why?

## Adam Keller

Googling for "Israel singled out" + "antisemitism" would immediately get you many thousands of results. All over the world, supporters of the policies enacted by the government of Israel are busily churning out article after article, repeating with minor variations the same message -- Israel is being unfairly singled out, harshly criticised for the kind of acts which others are allowed to get away with, and the motive is antisemitism.

In a way, this is a second line of defence. There had been a time when this kind of people took the line that Israel can do no wrong. That it is an utterly wonderful place, little short of a utopia, a vibrant democracy and the only one in the Middle East, the home of tireless and dauntless pioneers who made the desert bloom. But this way of looking at things had become increasingly difficult to sustain. There has been too much unsavoury TV footage of Israeli soldiers broadcast into every home around the globe, too many nasty revelations, quite a few of them by Israel's own dissident citizens...

It is far easier to freely admit that Israel is not blameless, that some of its actions and policies do deserve criticism -- but as a matter of fact, "everybody does it". Many others all over the world also violate human rights and/or international law, others discriminate against ethnic or religious minorities, others launch military offensives which claim the lives of innocent civilians. Muslims, it is quite true, have been killed by other Muslims as well as by Israel. So, why pick on Israel, specifically? Why, if not out of antisemitism? "Anti-Israelism is the New antisemitism", period.

True, as far as formal international diplomacy is concerned, it is easy to show that if Israel is singled out at all, it is singled out for rather lenient treatment.

Should Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir land in any European country, he is bound to be arrested by the local police and extradited to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to stand trial for the misdeeds of his army, and of militias backed by his army; in Darfur. Binyamin Netanyahu need fear nothing of the kind. When private groups attempted to start criminal proceedings against Israeli civil or military officials, the governments of Belgium and Spain enacted legislation to make this impossible, and the British government is about to follow suit.

Iran is facing increasingly tough international sanctions -- and increasingly vocal threats of war -- for its attempts to produce a nuclear bomb. Israel faced nothing of the kind for its own highly successful enterprise in the same field. (Instead, the government of Germany provided to Israel, free of charge, several submarines so modified that nu-

clear-tipped missiles could be installed on them and create a "second-strike capacity").

Many countries violate human rights in one way or another -- but few have the consistent backing of a Permanent Member in the UN Security Council. Most proposed resolutions condemning acts by the government of Israel get aborted by the US veto. And even when a resolution gets past this barrier (invariably, after having been considerably watered down), the government of Israel can (and often does) ignore it brazenly and with complete impunity. Non-compliance by Israel would never entail a second Security Council Resolution, and a third and fourth and a fifth each tougher than its predecessor, such as heralded the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, and eventually the end of Saddam's own life.

Still, even if baseless when directed at diplomats and ministers and heads of state, the charge of "singling out Israel" cannot be dismissed out of hand when much of civil society in the world today is concerned. It is a fact -- which can be easily proven statistically -- that there are intellectuals and university lecturers who write more articles condemning Israeli actions than they write against comparable actions in other countries. It is an easily

proven fact that a considerable number of activist groups, and student organisations, and militant trade unionists, and a host of others, are busy passing sharply worded resolutions, and holding protests, and sometimes calling for a boycott against Israel, while falling short of acting as vehemently against each and every culpable country around the world.

For the likes of Alan Der-showitz and Nathan Sharransky and Ben-Dror Yemini, this is a clear and sufficient proof of antisemitism. The proper

course for a genuine upholder and defender of Human Rights should be to compile a full and comprehensive list of all violators (Amnesty International used to be a fairly reliable source for such, except that nowadays Amnesty has also become stained with "singling out Israel"). Then, a rota of pickets should be set up in front of all relevant embassies, with the Israeli one visited for three-quarters of an hour every third Monday, and anyone overstaying this quota by more than ten minutes would stand condemned as an antisemite (or a self-hater if a Jew oneself, or a traitor if an Israeli citizen, or all three combined...)

In practice, of course, the government of Israel and its

*(Continued on page 9)*



Adam Keller



**Second Lebanon War 2006. How many other countries could have turned whole suburbs into rubble for 33 days before being made to stop by the UN?**



(Continued from page 8)

adherents are well aware that public campaigns, to achieve any result, must be focused on a specific issue, which necessarily means that somebody in "singled out". To cite one prominent example, the eminently successful worldwide campaign of the 1970s and 1980s, conducted under the slogan "Let My People Go!" was based on singling out the Soviet Union as against all other countries violating the Human Rights of their citizens; and on singling out Soviet Jews as against all other oppressed Soviet citizens; and singling out Soviet Jews wanting to leave their country as against those wanting to stay and have their rights respected at home; and on singling out Soviet Jews wanting to go to Israel as against those wanting to go somewhere else (the latter were the target of a particularly vituperative campaign...).

The result of all these forms of singling out is that Russian has become Israel's de-facto second language, with Russian speakers comprising some 20 per cent of its population (a large part of them not being recognised as Jews, and not being able to get married in Israel -- but this is a subject for another article...) An unfocused general campaign, against



*In the 70s and 80s we, alongside others, singled out the oppression of Jews by the then Soviet Union.*

all forms of injustice everywhere, singling out nobody, would hardly have achieved this (or any) result.

Still, granted that focusing on a specific issue is the indispensable precondition of a successful campaign, the reason why it is particularly Israel which has become the target of such a campaign still needs to be looked at. It is my contention that the singling out of Israel for a special consideration and a treatment different from that given to

anybody else is nothing new, nor has it always been directed against Israel. In fact, it has been actively initiated and promoted by Israel itself, or rather by the Zionist movement at the very inception of the project which would culminate in the creation of Israel. Zionism very specifically and explicitly asked the international community to be singled out for a very specific and very unique privilege, which was never ever granted to any other group anywhere else. Namely, the right to claim a land as its "National Home" on the basis of ancestors having lived in this land 2000 years ago.

**Adam Keller is Gush Shalom spokesperson. Abridged from a longer article – full version is available on our website.**

## The battle for Israel's soul

### The only democracy in the Middle East?

In a demonstration of support for the New Israel Fund and the values it shares with activists around Israel, leading Israeli thinkers and artists participated last month in a one-day NIF Symposium: "The Only Democracy in the Middle East? The Battle for Israel's Soul". Held in Jaffa with more than 500 people in attendance, the symposium provided a very public platform to emphasise and endorse the NIF agenda.

Welcoming remarks by NIF Israel Director Rachel Liel and NIF President Naomi Chazan reinforced the NIF position that love of Israel means the right to criticise, while declaring their commitment to fight against all attempts to silence our work. American political writer Peter Beinart then offered a compelling keynote address, followed by two lively panels with well-known Israeli figures.

Beinart, who received widespread attention for his recent article "The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment", admitted that his renewed zeal for Israel and his commitment to securing its democratic foundation was inspired by the daily activity of progressive Israelis, the very people who make up the New Israel Fund. "You, the people who are waging the struggle for Israel's democratic soul, you can be our 'freedom riders'," Beinart said. With more and more young American Jews drifting away from Israel, Beinart is convinced that the work of NIF and other Israeli civil and human rights groups can serve as the vital link needed to reconnect and reengage the next

generation of American Jews.

The first panel, "Israeli Democracy under Siege: A Call to Action", moderated by TV commentator Orli Vilnai, entailed a conversation regarding the value and realisation of democratic values in Israeli society. Dynamic exchange took place among panel participants Prof Moshe Haberthal, Prof Rachel Elior, journalist Zouheir Bahloul, and Prof Yossi Yona. With diverse personal experiences, the panel raised candid points of difference and shed light on the complex system of beliefs that converge in this Jewish and democratic state, agreeing that the political discourse cannot be separated from the dialogue on human rights.

Gal Uchovsky, leading filmmaker, critic and TV personality, moderated the second panel, "Artists Speak Out." Popular musician David Broza, writers Rona Kenan and Nir Baram, poet Mati Shemoelof and actress/singer Mira Awad, discussed the role and special responsibility of artists to actively engage in social-political debate. The panel agreed that they have a greater obligation to take a public stand on political and social issues and that they indeed have a unique ability to make a difference. In a salute to NIF, Uchovsky ended the symposium with a statement of solidarity: "We have come here today to express our love and support for NIF and its activities."

**From the New Israel Fund.**

## My favourite band and my No 1 topic of interest

### Mitchell Plitnick

Ask anyone who knows me even a little bit socially who my favourite rock band is, and they will not hesitate for a second before they say it is Jethro Tull. So, at least they will be expecting me to say something about Tull's leader, Ian Anderson's statement that the band intends to perform their three concerts in Israel as planned.

Again, it's well known that I do not support a boycott of Israel, while I do support a boycott of settlement products.

That said, given the escalation by Israel embodied in Operation Cast Lead and its aggressive actions to defend its blockade as well as the assault on Israeli democracy by a large portion of the Knesset, I am sympathetic to those artists who have chosen not to perform in Israel.

But I think Anderson has chosen the right path to deal with these issues.

He says:

Having long maintained the position that culture and the arts should be free of political and religious censorship and a distance kept between them, I took a decision, nonetheless, in February of 2009 that any future concerts in Israel by me or Jethro Tull would be for the benefit of charitable donations to bodies representing the development of peaceful co-existence between Arabs, Jews and Christians, and the fostering of better Palestinian/Israeli relations.

There are nitpicks I can make with that statement (Ian needs to be aware that some Arabs are Christians, and



**Jethro Tull WILL play in Israel**

that Arab is not a substitute for Muslim, for instance), but the basic idea is just right—use a concert in Israel to promote reconciliation. I see that as far more productive than the boycott, which is not increasing the Israeli sense that the world won't stand for the Occupation nearly as much as it is reinforcing the Israeli sense that they are being "singled out."

In my view, this is the better course. Anderson is not ignoring the situation, but he is refraining from getting involved in it, while trying to do something to help that does not necessarily favour one group or the other.

Anderson has generally refrained from being involved in politics, in a public way. As a result, I have no idea how well he grasps the Israel-Palestine conflict. Nor do I have much sense of where his sympathies lie, if he has any. I do hope he will consult with knowledgeable people (and I of course volunteer my services) as to

which groups to donate to.

I would hope that BDS advocates would recognise that a band that doesn't boycott Israel but contributes the proceeds of its shows to good organisations is working toward the same goal most of us are—an end to occupation and conflict. I've applauded Ian Anderson at literally dozens of concerts. I now get to applaud him in the context of my work. I like it.

**Mitchell Plitnick is a veteran US peace activist and blogger.**

---

## Pink Floyd reunites for Palestinian benefit concert

For the first time in half a decade, rock legends Pink Floyd reunited for a benefit concert in England to raise money for young Palestinian refugees.

Roger Waters and David Gilmour, joined by a full stage of keyboardists and drummers, both picked up the guitar to play for the more than 200 fans gathered to see the Oxfordshire concert. The reunion was unpublicised prior to the curtain's rise.

The proceeds from the benefit concert went to the Hoping Foundation, an organisation that focuses on the "next generation" of young Palestinians, mostly refugees. Their projects include a film workshop, a scouting group in the Balata refugee camp near Nablus, and a UN Relief and Works Agency yearbook. The event raised over half a million dollars to benefit the group.

The Pink Floyd duo played a number of classic and fan favourites, including *Wish You Were Here* and *Another Brick in the Wall (Part Two)*.

Waters has been involved in pro-Palestinian activism for years. In 2006 he spray-painted "tear down the wall" on Israel's West Bank separation wall in the city of Bethlehem. He also worked with the United Nations to produce a short film about the wall's impact on life in the West Bank. [Editor's note: Walters nevertheless defied the BDS calls and played a major concert in Israel. His visit received huge publicity in Israel and enabled him to address millions of Israelis through the news services about the inequities of the Wall.]

A slew of musicians, including Elvis Costello and The Pixies, recently cancelled concerts in Israel in protest at Israel's policies toward the Palestinians and the deadly attack on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla on 31 May.

**From Palestinenote.com**

# The children of Russian agents

## Robert Meeropol

I spent the end of June and early July on a speaking tour in Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima in Japan, and Taipei, Hsin-chu and Tai-chung in Taiwan as part of an anti-death penalty campaign. Thus, I was half a world away when the FBI arrested ten people and accused them of being agents of the Russian Federation. It was hard to figure out what was going on from Japan and Taiwan, but I soon learned the ten people included four couples who collectively had seven children, and that one of the children was three years old, the exact age I was when my parents were arrested.

The media wanted to know my reaction to these events, but my rigorous schedule, limited phone and email accessibility and a twelve-hour time difference forced me to remain silent until today. This was, to a degree, fortuitous because whatever I might have said last week or even two days ago would not fit today's circumstances.

At first it appeared that these children's world was being turned upside down; they were separated from their parents and faced enduring the spectacle of their parents' trial and long-term imprisonment. Now it looks like those who are not yet adults may be uprooted and shipped back to Russia with their parents. We don't know if these children can speak a word of Russian, and we don't know what kind of life they, and their parents, face in Russia. Since we have so little information we can only speculate. Still I can't help imagining being a teenager growing up in an American suburb, with immigrant parents, who -- presumably -- had told you a cover story, and then discovering that your parents are not who they said they were; and next, summarily being deported to a different country.

I know of at least one teenage RFC beneficiary who suddenly discovered his parents' secret life when his father was arrested. He has never gotten over what he considered an enormous betrayal. Is this the way some of the older children will feel? Clearly, how much the children knew, and how deeply connected they were to their parents' lives would make a tremendous difference. Those who were blindsided and felt they and their parents were living a lie could be devastated regardless of how this case is ultimately disposed of. While the children would probably suffer more if they faced long-term separation from their parents, I doubt any of them will have an easy time even if they are reunited and set up in relatively comfortable lives in Russia.

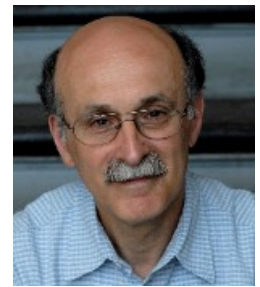
While I was focused on the children initially, I can't help but marvel at the political gulf that separates my parents' case from the current one. The way the government reacted to the present situation stands in stark contrast to



***One day they are American kids, a few weeks later they are Russians and in Russia.***

how they treated my parents.

At the height of the Cold War, the government inflated the vague charge of Conspiracy to Commit Espionage levied against my parents into the Theft of the Secret of the Atomic Bomb. We know now that my father and a group of technically oriented young adults supplied our ally, the Soviet Union, with military-industrial information to help them



**Robert Meeropol**

defeat the Nazis. But the government transformed this activity into giving our most deadly weapon to our greatest enemy and causing the Korean War.

Today the United States is engaged in delicate negotiations with Russia, and is courting their cooperation. Thus, initial claims that these people were part of a dangerous network of "sleeper" cells have been re-characterized as a poorly conceived plan of a relatively trivial nature that produced little, if any, information of value for Russia.

General Leslie Groves, the head of security for the Atom Bomb project, wrote years after my parents' execution: "I think the data that went out in

the case of the Rosenbergs was of minor value." Perhaps that is how my parents' case would be presented if it occurred today.

**Robert Meeropol is the younger son of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. In 1953, when he was six years old, the United States Government executed his parents for "conspiring to steal the secret of the atomic bomb." Since 1990 he has served as the Executive Director of the Rosenberg Fund for Children ([www.rfc.org](http://www.rfc.org)), a non-profit public foundation that provides for the educational and emotional needs of both targeted activist youth and children in the USA whose parents have been harassed, injured, jailed, lost jobs or died in the course of their progressive activities.**

---

## Loss of Sol Encel, Tony Judt

We were saddened to hear about the death of Professor Sol Encel, a prominent progressive identity in our community. Each of Prof Encel and the British-born US historian Tony Judt who died at the same time deserve a proper obituary by those who knew them or are familiar with their work. If there are any AJDS members who could help the Editorial committee with writing either obituary or providing information about these two people, please contact the editor at the address on page 2 of the *Newsletter*. Naturally if you know somebody outside the AJDS who could help, tell us about them.



# West Papua: a deepening impasse?

## Esther Anderson

"West Papua warns of intifada against Jakarta." This was the headline for an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 7 Aug. Events in the region of West Papua since the cruel 1969 sham referendum (that resulted in the acquisition of West Papua by Indonesia) mean that articles like this carry no surprises. West Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea, called first Irian Barat then Irian Jaya by Indonesia, then renamed Papua under the more tolerant and inclusive Indonesian president Gus Dur (Abdurrahman Wahid), and still called West Papua by many West Papuans, is frequently referred to as "restive Papua" or "the restive province of Papua" by the media. Although there is a long-standing ban on international media in West Papua, and West Papuan journalists often receive threats against themselves and their families, reports of military and police brutality against the Indigenous population, for example torture, beatings, killings, house burnings and food garden destruction continue to leak out of West Papua.

When questioned, West Papuan refugees in Australia will give a number of reasons why West Papuans are "restive" under Indonesian rule -- the disproportionately large number of military/security personnel, which means that their country still has the feel of a country under occupation, the notorious security force brutality, similar to that experienced by East Timor following the 1975 invasion, the exploitation of their natural resources, notably minerals and timber, with virtually no benefit to West Papuans, and consequent environmental devastation, the 'transmigrasi' policy of settling mainly Javanese in Papua which further marginalises West Papuans, the murder of West Papuan leaders, the failed "special autonomy" policy, and the lack of progress towards genuine autonomy, and the reluctance of the Indonesian government to engage in dialogue with West Papuan leaders. In the past few months there have been protests by thousands of West Papuans all over West Papua; regrettably the Indonesian government seems to have largely ignored the requests of the protesters.

The injustice inherent in the 1962 New York Agreement, and the shameful "Act of Free Choice" by which West Papua was handed over to the Republic of Indonesia still is a major issue for many West Papuans. Recently the Vanuatu government passed the Wantok blong yumi Bill, which calls for the UN General Assembly to seek the opinion of the International Court of Justice about the 1962 New York Agreement. However, this is unlikely to happen without more international support, as the Indonesian government will lobby intensively against this issue ever surfacing at the UN.

Australia's role? Australia is a major general aid donor to Indonesia, and specifically is a country that trains and funds Indonesian security forces, for example, Special Detachment 88 (Detasemen Khusus 88). This is officially described as an anti-terrorism unit, however this force has been used to harass West Papuan separatists and break up peaceful demonstrations in West Papua. The Australian government should make aid contingent on accountability for past human rights abuses, reform, and a clear commitment that Australian trained anti-terrorism

forces not be used against ethnic separatists, and target its general aid towards improving health and education among West Papuans, who have been marginalised and disadvantaged for so long, (while the massive Freeport mine funds the Indonesian military).

A recent International Crisis Group report entitled Indonesia: The Deepening Impasse in Papua stated that the Indonesian government should 'urgently address discontent in Papua' because the longer the Indonesian government failed to discuss West Papuan concerns over discrimination and unfulfilled promises, "the stronger the radical voices will become". Australia should take a more active role in pushing for dialogue between West Papuan leaders and the Indonesian government, not because "the stronger the radical voices will become" but because the injustice and brutality towards West Papuans has gone on too long. We, ourselves, by contacting our Federal MPs, could help put this on the agenda.

**Esther Anderson is a long-time activist in support of the rights of the people of East Timor and Papua.**

## Sweatshop activists' victory over Nike

### Micah Uetricht

With the memory of a previous victory over a multinational garment manufacturer still fresh in their minds, student labour activists and Honduran workers are celebrating what they say is another major win -- this one against industry giant Nike.

In 2009, Nike shut down two subcontractor plants in Honduras, leaving 1800 workers without jobs. Under Honduran labour law, the workers were owed severance pay, to the tune of several million dollars. But Nike indicated it had no intention of paying.

Student activists with United Students against Sweatshops (USAS) were no strangers to labour disputes over Honduran factory closures. Also last year, they picked a fight with Russell Athletic, another major global garment manufacturer, over alleged union busting in Honduras after the company shuttered its only unionised plant in the country. After students heaped pressure on a slew of US universities, convincing them to cut their Russell contracts, the company agreed to reopen the plant, scoring a major victory for students and the Honduran unionists.

Building on this experience, students began a campaign to force Nike to pay the 1800 workers their severance. On 26 July, they emerged victorious. As they had done against Russell, activists crisscrossed the country with workers from the closed plants on a speaking tour at dozens of universities with contracts with the company, meeting with several university administrations. It wasn't long before the prospect of terminating Nike contracts was raised, and the company began to change its position.

It took 89 contract losses before Russell caved in. This time, one contract termination at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the threat of another at Cornell were enough to convince Nike to accede to worker/student demands. The company agreed to pay US\$1.54 million to their former employees, provide healthcare and vocational training for a limited time, and give priority rehiring to the laid-off workers.

**From *Portside*.**

## Howard Zinn's *The Bomb*

### David Swanson

The late Howard Zinn's new book *The Bomb* is a brilliant little dissection of some of the central myths of our militarised society. Those who've read *A Terrible Mistake: The Murder of Frank Olson and the CIA's Secret Cold War Experiments* by HP Albarelli Jr know that this is a year for publishing the stories of horrible things that the United States has done to French towns. In that case, Albarelli describes the CIA administering LSD to an entire town, with deadly results. In *The Bomb*, Zinn describes the US military making its first use of napalm by dropping it all over another French town, burning anyone and anything it touched. Zinn was in one of the planes taking part in this horrendous crime.

In mid-April 1945, the war in Europe was essentially



**Royan in France saw the harbinger of napalm attacks that continued in Vietnam and Middle East.**

over. Everyone knew it was ending. There was no military reason (if that's not an oxymoron) to attack the Germans stationed near Royan, France, much less to burn the French men, women, and children in the town to death. The British had already destroyed the town in January, similarly bombing it because of its vicinity to German troops, in what was widely called a tragic mistake. This tragic mistake was rationalised as an inevitable part of war, just as were the horrific firebombings that successfully reached German targets, just as was the later bombing of Royan with napalm.

Zinn blames the Supreme Allied Command for seeking to add a "victory" in the final weeks of a war already won. He blames the local military commanders' ambitions. He blames the American Air Force's desire to test a new weapon. And he blames everyone involved -- which must include himself -- for "the most powerful motive of all: the habit of obedience, the universal teaching of all cultures, not to get out of line, not even to think about that which one has not been assigned to think about, the negative motive of not having either a reason or a will to intercede."

When Zinn returned from the war in Europe he expected to be sent to the war in the Pacific, until he saw and rejoiced at seeing the news of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, 65 years ago this August. Only years later did Zinn come to understand the inexcusable crime of the greatest proportions that was the dropping

of nuclear bombs in Japan, actions similar in some ways to the final bombing of Royan. The war with Japan was already over, the Japanese seeking peace and willing to surrender. Japan asked only that it be permitted to keep its Emperor, a request that was later granted.

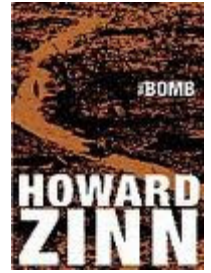
But like napalm, the nuclear bombs were weapons that needed testing. The second bomb, dropped on Nagasaki, was a different sort of bomb that also needed testing.

President Harry Truman wanted to demonstrate nuclear bombs to the world and especially to Russia. And he wanted to end the war with Japan before Russia became part of it. The horrific form of mass murder he employed was in no way justifiable. Zinn also goes back to dismantle the mythical reasons the United States was in the war to begin with. The United States, England, and France were imperial powers supporting each other's international aggressions in places like the Philippines. They opposed the same from Germany and Japan, but not aggression itself.

Most of America's tin and rubber came from the Southwest Pacific. The United States made clear for years its lack of concern for the Jews being attacked in Germany. It also demonstrated its lack of opposition to racism through its treatment of African Americans and Japanese Americans. Franklin D Roosevelt described fascist bombing campaigns over civilian areas as "inhuman barbarity" but then did the same on a much larger scale to German cities, which was followed up by the destruction on an unprecedented scale of Hiroshima and Nagasaki -- actions that came after years of dehumanising the Japanese. Zinn points out that "*Life* magazine showed a picture of a Japanese person burning to death and commented: 'This is the only way.'" Aware that the war would end without any more bombing, and aware that U.S. prisoners of war would be killed by the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, the US military went ahead and dropped the bombs.

Americans allowed these things to be done in their name, just as the Germans and Japanese allowed horrible crimes to be committed in their names. Zinn points out, with his trademark clarity, how the use of the word "we" blends governments together with peoples and serves to equate our own people with our military, while we demonise the people of other lands because of actions by their governments. *The Bomb* suggests a better way to think about such matters and firmly establishes that what the US military is doing now, today, parallels the crimes of the past and shares their dishonourable motivations. The bad wars have a lot in common with the so-called "good war," about which there was little if anything good. Howard Zinn did far more in his life for peace than for war, and more for peace than just about anybody else, certainly more than several Nobel Peace Prize winners.

**David Swanson is the author of *Daybreak: Undoing the Imperial Presidency and Forming a More Perfect Union*.**



# Trafficking and the sex industry: the Nordic legal model

## Janice Raymond

There is no doubt that the Nordic countries lead the world on most indicators of gender equality. Gender equality experts and advocates have long pointed out that in economics, politics and social services, the Nordic countries top the charts. A less noticed equality indicator is that the Nordic countries outpace others in legal action to stem the sex trade by addressing its unnoticed perpetrators -- the mainly male purchasers of women and children in prostitution.

In 1999, with the approval of over 70 per cent of its surveyed population, Sweden passed groundbreaking legislation that criminalised the buyer of sexual services. Part of a larger Violence Against Women bill, the legislation was based on the foundation that the system of prostitution is a violation of gender equality.

Sweden's legislation officially recognises that it is unacceptable for men to purchase women for sexual exploitation, whether masked as sexual pleasure or "sex work." Equally important, its law acknowledges that a country cannot resolve its human trafficking problem without addressing the demand for prostitution. The law does not target the persons in prostitution.

### Evaluation

Last month, the government of Sweden published an evaluation of the law's first ten years and how it has actually worked in practice. Compared to the report's understated and cautious tone, the findings are strikingly positive: street prostitution has been cut in half; there is no evidence that the reduction in street prostitution has led to an increase in prostitution elsewhere, whether indoors or on the Internet; the bill provides increased services for women to exit prostitution; fewer men state that they purchase sexual services; and the ban has had a chilling effect on traffickers who find Sweden an unattractive market to sell women and children for sex.

Sweden appears to be the only country in Europe where prostitution and sex trafficking has not increased.

The Swedish results should be contrasted to neighbouring countries such as Denmark where there are no legal prohibitions against the purchase of persons in prostitution. Denmark has a smaller population than Sweden (roughly 5.5 million to Sweden's 9 million), yet the scale of street prostitution in Denmark is three times higher than in Sweden.

In casting the comparison further, we should note the dismal results of the legalisation model of prostitution from countries in Europe that have normalised pimping, brothels and other aspects of prostitution and the sex industry. In 2002, Germany decriminalised procuring for purposes of prostitution, widened the legal basis for establishing brothels and other prostitution businesses, lifted the prohibition against promoting prostitution and theoretically gave women the right to contracts and benefits in prostitution establishments. Five years later, a federal government evaluation of the law found that the German Prostitution Act, as it is called, has failed to improve conditions for women in the prostitution industry nor helped women to leave. It has also failed "to reduce crime in the world of prostitution." As a result, the report stated that "prostitution should not be considered to be a reasonable

means for securing one's living." The federal government is drafting a criminal provision to punish the clients of those forced into prostitution or who are victims of trafficking -- the Swedish model lite.

### Legalisation's failure

The results are equally bad in the Netherlands, where prostitution and the sex industry have been legalised since 2000. Two official reports in 2007 and 2008 have soured official optimism about the Dutch legalisation model. The government-commissioned Daalder Report found that the majority of women in the window brothels are still subject to pimp control and that their emotional well-being is lower than in 2001 "on all measured aspects." The Dutch National Police Report puts it more strongly: "The idea that a clean, normal business sector has emerged is an illusion..." Like the Germans, the Dutch are now proposing an amendment that would penalise the buyers who purchase unlicensed persons in prostitution.

The failure of the legalisation model in Europe helped the Swedish model to become the Nordic model in 2009 when Norway outlawed the purchase of women and children for sexual activities. One year after the Norwegian law came into force, a Bergen municipality survey estimated that the number of women in street prostitution had decreased by 20 per cent with indoor prostitution also down by 16 per cent. Bergen police have effectively monitored telephone numbers of buyers, who respond to such advertisements, in order to identify and charge them. An added value is that monitoring reveals a wider network of criminal groups involved in trafficking for prostitution and their links to others involved in child prostitution, pornography and drug trafficking.

### Iceland's experience

The same year as Norway, Iceland passed a law criminalising the purchase of a sexual service. Earlier in 2004, Finland approved a more anemic version of the Nordic model. This left Denmark as the outlier with no legislation targeting the demand for prostitution.

The success of the Nordic model is not so much in penalising the men (the penalties are modest) as in removing the invisibility of men who are outed when they get caught. This, in turn, makes it less appealing for pimps and traffickers to set up shop in countries where the customer base fears the loss of its anonymity and is declining.

Legalisation of prostitution is a failed policy in practice. The prostitution policy tide is turning from legalisation of prostitution to targeting the demand for prostitution without penalising the victims.

Countries who want to be effective in the fight against trafficking and not havens of sexual exploitation are beginning to understand that they cannot sanction pimps as legitimate sexual entrepreneurs and must take legal action against the buyers.

**Janice Raymond is Professor Emerita of Women's Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and a member of the Board of Directors of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW). First published by Portside.**



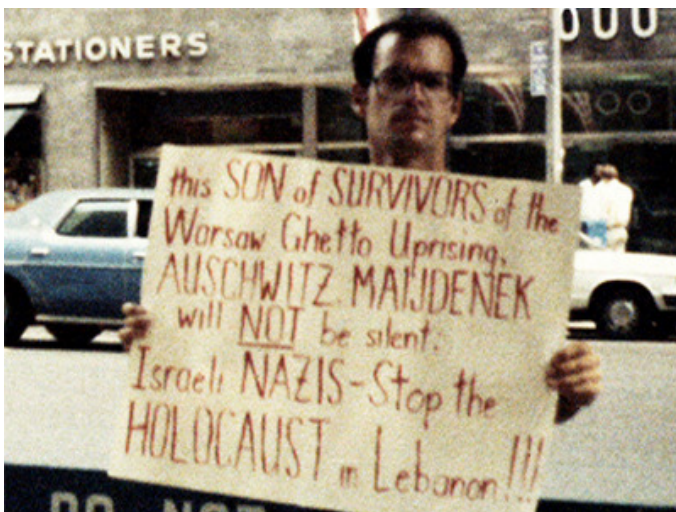
## Norman Finkelstein: channeling the Holocaust

### Vivienne Porzolt

At the age of 55, Norman Finkelstein is without a job and lives alone with his books and computer in Coney Island, New York. He was hounded out of his job as a professor at De Paul University Chicago by the machinations of Professor Alan Dershowitz and his supporters. In *Beyond Chutzpah*, Finkelstein had aroused the ire of this warrior of Zionism by accusing him of plagiarism as well as being fraudulent in his writings on Israel. He laughingly says in the documentary film, *American Radical*, he wouldn't use Dershowitz's book as a *schmatte* (Yiddish for rag).

*American Radical* is a portrayal of Finkelstein's own warrior exploits against Israel's oppression of the Palestinians. He has published numerous books on the conflict. He has been engaged with the Palestinians and their struggle since the early 'eighties. He visits Palestine every year and has a number of close friends there. With inexorable reason, he dissects the mystifications around Israel and its history put out by Zionist ideologues.

The driving fact in Finkelstein's life is that he is a son of Nazi Holocaust survivors. Solidly working class and committed pacifists, both his parents survived the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. His mother was later in Majdanek concentration camp and his father was in Auschwitz. The Holocaust was a daily presence in Finkelstein's life as his



**Norman Finkelstein has always been provocative.**

mother, in particular, endlessly and vocally processed her traumatic experiences. As is well-known, traumas such as these, if not resolved, are handed down from generation to generation, distorting and limiting human potential. *American Radical* shows how this manifests in Norman Finkelstein.

The pain borne by Finkelstein is palpable as he speaks of his parents' experiences. He virtually channels the Holocaust, its flames burn in his veins. Yet this pain drives him in a direction diametrically opposed to that of so many Jews. The trauma of the Holocaust has been shamelessly used by the Zionist movement to build uncritical support for Israel. It is a branch of what Finkelstein has provocatively dubbed 'the Holocaust Industry'. Because Israel has been framed by Zionism as the guarantee of existential security in the face of carefully nourished terror, too many Jews are incapable of considering the issues clearly and are tragically ready to believe all kinds of

nonsense promulgated by the *hasbara* brigade. Also, such victimhood justifies everything. Who can argue against the imperative to survive against what is said to be constant threat?

For Finkelstein, "Never again" means never again for any human group. Not for him the endless communal self-absorption and narcissism underlying so much of Jewish attachment to Israel. Following in the footsteps of his mentor Noam Chomsky, he is a fierce, even provocative critic of Israel. He argues passionately that Jews have a special obligation to ease the suffering of all humanity because of what was done to them. Yet his views are essentially moderate. He is not an anti-Zionist (in the sense of opposed to a homeland for Jews in Palestine) and he supports a two-state solution.

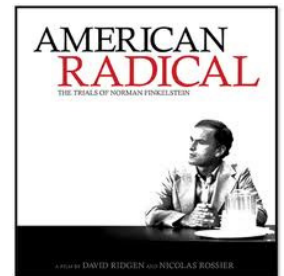
His situation is essentially tragic. Now jobless, he is very much a victim of the Zionist Establishment. But even his strong supporters, Noam Chomsky and John Mearsheimer, admit that Finkelstein is over-provocative in a way that unnecessarily arouses opposition. To that extent, he blocks communication of his message and the important results of his rigorous scholarship. The inherited experience of the Holocaust has left its scars.

It is possible to understand Finkelstein's fierce denunciation of the atrocities committed by the state of Israel as rooted in his determination not to betray the suffering of his parents, to be worthy of what they went through, perhaps in some small way to make it up to them by in turn suffering for the exercise of moral courage.

Whatever the roots of Finkelstein's commitment, his story illustrates that the power of terrible experiences can be used to fight for a better world or they can lead, as in the case of those who cling to Israel for security in an ultimately self-destructive way, by failing to confront Israel's ongoing assault on the Palestinians and denial of their rights.

Historically Jews were in the forefront of progressive movements and apart from the issue of Israel, they are still on the liberal side of politics. However, the official Jewish leadership persists in unquestioning support for Israel regardless of justice or international law. And too many Jews are driven by their fears to blindly follow. This fear and despair gives Hitler a tragic posthumous victory. However, even this is changing. Peter Beinert in a recent article in the *New York Review of Books* reminds us that younger Jews are no longer driven by an overpowering sense of victimhood and imminent destruction. They are distancing themselves from Israel, feel it is less relevant to them as Jews.

Finkelstein's career reminds us that unquestioning support for Israel is not the only lesson to be drawn from a tragic history, that a passionate commitment to the well-being of all human beings is equally rooted in the Holocaust experience. It is the only way of conquering its legacy.



## AJDS SUBSCRIPTION

AJDS PO BOX 685 Kew Vic 3101 Tel (03) 9885 6260

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ (New/Renew)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed for Dues: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership (Due 1 January each year):

\$40 single person; \$50 family; \$25 Concession. Subscription only \$30

## AJDS NEWSLETTER

Australian Jewish Democratic Society

POSTAGE  
PAID  
AUSTRALIA

PO Box 685  
Kew  
Victoria 3101