



AJDS Newsletter

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The Australian Jewish Democratic Society

June 2009

Take Obama's Road, not Netanyahu's

The contrast between Barack Obama's address to the Muslim world and Binyamin Netanyahu's own major speech was there for all to see. It was not just the delivery styles that differed, but the content, vision and world outlook. In some respects the two speakers seem to be anchored in different eras as well.

But what most people seem to have missed is what they had in common. I have no doubt that both had Israel's best interest at heart.

Ironically, therein lies the biggest difference: Obama's vision has Israel living as an equal in peace within something close to its old borders (the Green Line). Netanyahu has a vision of a grander Israel, but one not living in peace because the other side won't accept it no matter what it does.

Clearly, progressive forces should line up with Obama, not

Netanyahu. But that said, it is important to draw the lessons from some of the other contrasts between the two speeches. President Obama clearly does not buy the Neo-Cons' view of a hostile political Islam as the main driving force opposed to his country in the world. Nor does he believe that opposition to Israel is rooted in Islamic religious belief. And there is no reason why he should, after all for most of Israel's existence its leaders and thinkers recognised nationalism as being the major force driving Palestinian resistance, a term used by Obama.

As a student of history, Barack Obama would no doubt be aware that throughout the colonial period, occupiers explained away opposition to them by blaming the natives'

religious fanaticism. The most celebrated example of this was the British rationalisation of the Mau Mau guerilla uprising in Kenya. The British blamed religious fanatics for inciting the Indigenous people's opposition to their land being stolen. Few people remember that explanation and even those who do remember, do not take it seriously. But perhaps someone with a Kenyan heritage might have an additional reason to reject this shoddy explanation when it is applied to Palestine/Israel.

Obama also recognised that rights and wrongs exist on both sides. He admitted his country's wrongs, citing the US role in the overthrow of the democratic government of Iran half a century ago. Contrast this with Netanyahu's it's-all-their-fault take on history. Obama was at pains to educate his Muslim listeners about the Holocaust as an

important factor in the establishment of a Jewish homeland, but he also raised the plight of the Palestinian refugees who have been dislocated from their homes for 61 years. As far as he was concerned, sympathy for the plight of one side did not render one blind to the plight of the other.

But the biggest difference between Obama and Netanyahu lay not in their vision of Israel, but that of Palestine. The US President did not talk about "a" Palestinian state; he talked of Palestine. And he talked of it being very much a normal country.

The Israeli Prime Minister, on the other hand, finally uttered "two states" but he piled enough conditions to



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**Let's shape our own future
SECOND AJDS PLANNING WORKSHOP**

Sunday 28 June 9.30am – 1.00pm

1590 High Street Glen Iris (A private residence)

BYO snacks to share

Please inform Tom Wolkenberg on 9885 6260 if you intend attending - we need to know the numbers and we would like to send you some material from the first session as well.

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(Affiliated with the Jewish
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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...

*A month ago, we knew it. This issue would be dominated by the Barack Obama speech. His skilful oratory was indeed matched by the contents of his speech. My lead article analyses the differences between that and Bibi Netanyahu's response (**cover**). Also included is the AJDS-initiated petition in support of his major points (**p3**). For good measure we are including the segment of the speech covering the Israel/Palestine conflict (**pp4-5**). We expect a lot of BHO in this issue, but we did not anticipate his strong support of gay rights. His proclamation of June as LGBT pride month is on **page 13**. (Who would have predicted two years ago that we would be taking material from the White House website!)*

*Israel/Palestine also manifested itself in many of our own activities (**across the page**), Haneen Zoabi's visit to Melbourne (**p6**), and the debate on Leonard Cohen's forthcoming Israel concert (**p15**). The related coverage of Seven Jewish Children and its treatment by the media can be found on **pages 5,12 and 13**.*

*We don't neglect other issues. You can find the most comprehensive summary of the Rudd government record on immigration in the **centre pages**. There is also an Indigenous coverage of William Cooper's role in organising an Aboriginal protest delegation to the German Consulate after Kristallnacht (**pp 14-15**).*

*Finally, it's nice to see **Raisins and Almonds** back in its full glory, taking up two pages again. The items may be short but they are some of the most interesting articles around. Enjoy!*

Sol Salbe

(Continued from page 1)

ensure that the second state never comes into being and that no Palestinian leader would lend his or her name to the farce of negotiations with him.

Just think of it. Jerusalem remains undivided -- so the eastern half cannot be the Palestinian capital. The Palestinian refugee issue is not negotiable either. And then came Netanyahu's real negotiations slayer: the demand that the Palestinians recognise Israel as a Jewish State. As the AJDS Executive wrote to the media, such a demand "relegates non-Jews in Israel to be lesser citizens; it panders to a rather unpleasant nationalism in Israel; and manages a slap in the face to Palestinians". Neither Egypt nor Jordan who signed peace agreements with Israel, or the PLO who signed the Oslo Accords, was made to sign on this condition.

If this wasn't enough, Netanyahu refused to accept Israel's commitment to halt the settlements. The US President may have put an equals sign between the Palestinian terrorism and the settlement project, but Netanyahu is sticking to his guns. He wants to allow natural growth for the settlements. But this excuse has been used while the number of settlers has increased much more than the birth rate would have allowed. It is fraudulent. At any rate, in the memorable words of Israeli columnist B. Michael: "Where does it say that young couples must live near their parents? And where does it say that the State's duty is to supply every young man and woman with a plot of land at their birthplace?" No one in Australia expects such a right. Why should the settlers?

Having thrown so many spanners in the works to sabotage any negotiations Binyamin Netanyahu knows that in the hutzpah department he can outdo Obama any day:

"I call on you, our Palestinian neighbors, and to the leadership of the Palestinian Authority: Let us begin peace negotiations immediately, without preconditions."

"Without preconditions?" Need I say more? But this is a conflict which is only beginning a new phase. It is important for progressive forces to take the Obama road, but it is even more important to explain why. Our audience in the Jewish and broader community is likely to understand it.

Sol Salbe

The AJDS month

Phew, what a month: between the need to respond to President Obama, the *Seven Jewish Children* saga, our own Yakov Rabkin forum and a string of objectionable Israeli legislation pieces, we have been busy. That is even before we mention our website and other less dramatic activities. You can read the Executive response to the Obama speech below. The front page is devoted to it. So there is little point in over-stressing just how pleased we were in having the president of United States endorse a view similar to the one we have held for years.

The additional effort that we have put into getting our view to the media since the AGM has been bearing fruit. The media is more often contacting us for an opinion. Our spokesperson, Les Rosenblatt, was quoted in an article about Julia Gillard's impending delegation to Israel. Rosenblatt emphasised the need for Australia not to be seen favouring Israel over the Palestinians. A lot of media work was done in terms of letters to the editor. Two letters from AJDS members were published in the *Age* lamenting the poor judgement of Jewish Care in cancelling Miriam Margolyes' appearance in one of their centres. Over the next few weeks quite a few letters on the same subject were published in the *Australian Jewish News* as well.

It was one of those occasions in which there was a great degree of unanimity among AJDS activists, and not merely the Executive. Anyone who has gone to the trouble of reading the play or watching it on YouTube could tell it was not antisemitic. Since the Melbourne kerfuffle the play has been staged at LimmudOz in Sydney with no outcry or complaints. It has also been staged in Hebrew in Rabin Square in Tel Aviv.

Between rushing to attend the various meetings around the place, we held our own meeting. Our guest was Professor Yakov Rabkin, who was exceptionally informative.

It was one of those occasions where one may not subscribe to the speaker's point of view but one nevertheless learns a hell of a lot. Frankly most of us have never heard a Modern Orthodox speaker who is opposed to the notion of a Jewish state, while at the same time is happy to accept the existence of Israel. A Palestinian supporter who attended the evening remarked on the breadth of the range of speakers we had and how the occasion was used to enhance understanding rather than repeat old mantras. Those who attended Rabkin's Trades Hall talk complained about this very issue, that everyone repeated their own set piece.

Finally the AJDS got involved in the debate regarding the Knesset proposal to ban the commemoration of the Nakba (see page 7).

Larry Stillman adds: The AJDS now has a revamped website at www.ajds.org.au. It is an important way to get the alternative voice out, particularly to young people.

It's an active website, including newsfeed from *Haaretz* and other sources. It has had over 500 hits in the few weeks it has been up, including many from other countries. There are also many links to other news and information sources around the world which we keep posting.

There is also a link to an archived version of the old site.

It's also an active opinion site, allowing members to post their opinions under the blog feature. If you have an opinion, and you'd like to post it, you can do so "on the spot". Contact Larry Stillman -- larryjhs@fastmail.fm -- if you wish to do so.

Finally an important reminder our next AJDS planning session is scheduled for 9.30am on Sunday 28 June 2009 at the same private dwelling as before (1590 High Street Glen Iris). We would like to send a summary of the last session to all those who are coming so let us know if you are.

AJDS petition in support of Obama vision

This is the text of the petition initiated by the AJDS Executive. If you are not on email contact Steve Brook on 9525 6815 to arrange for the addition of your name.

The **Australian Jewish Democratic Society** together with other Jewish Australians who care greatly for both the future of Israel and the legitimate national aspirations of Palestinians, strongly endorse the views recently expressed by the US President in Cairo. His words represent a sea change in approach to a conflict that has festered for so long that many of us have despaired of the possibility of finding a path to a resolution. His words articulate both the main elements of the conflict as understood by the **Australian Jewish Democratic Society** and a way forward to hope:

"The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop."

" Hamas must put an end to violence, recognise past agreements, and recognise Israel's right to exist."

"So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on

the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own."

"...the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress."

"Palestinians must abandon violence."

"Israel must also live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society."

These are bold words that must lead to bold action. An opportunity has arisen unlike any other in the last 15 years. We call on the rest of the Jewish community to accept and embrace a new path.

We call on the Australian government to use its good offices to encourage all the parties to the conflict to reject the failed policies that have prevailed till now and grasp the possibilities of a new beginning.

Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world

Barack Hussein Obama

America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties, and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.

Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and antisemitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust. Tomorrow, I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed -- more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today. Denying that fact is baseless, ignorant, and hateful. Threatening Israel with destruction -- or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews -- is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve.

On the other hand, it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people -- Muslims and Christians -- have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than sixty years they have endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighbouring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. They endure the daily humiliations -- large and small -- that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable. America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.

For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It is easy to point fingers -- for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought by Israel's founding, and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its borders as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security.

That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest. That is why I intend to personally pursue this outcome with all the patience that the task requires. The obligations that the parties have agreed to under the Road Map are clear. For peace to come, it is time for them -- and all of us -- to live up to our responsibilities.

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not

succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the centre of America's founding. This same story can be told by people from South Africa to South Asia; from Eastern Europe to Indonesia. It's a story with a simple truth: that violence is a dead end. It is a sign of neither courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus. That is not how moral authority is claimed; that is how it is surrendered.

Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, and to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognise past agreements, and recognise Israel's right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not

accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

Israel must also live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society. And just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

Finally, the Arab states must recognise that the Arab Peace Initiative was an important beginning, but not the end of their responsibilities. The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action to help the Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state; to recognise Israel's legitimacy; and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past.

America will align our policies with those who pursue peace, and say in public what we say in private to Israelis and Palestinians and Arabs. We cannot impose peace. But privately, many Muslims recognise that Israel will not go away. Likewise, many Israelis recognise the need for a Palestinian state. It is time for us to

(Continued on page 5)



President Obama speaking at Cairo University

Reflections on antisemitism and *Seven Jewish Children*

Harold Zwier

The staging of the play *Seven Jewish Children* and the accusation of antisemitism by some in the Jewish community has brought into focus the question of what defines antisemitism.

It is likely that most people in the Jewish and wider community generally understand antisemitism to be a form of racism and therefore while something can be racist without being antisemitic, something antisemitic must be racist.

Yet in a recent discussion about the claimed antisemitic nature of the controversial play, it was said that antisemitism is more than racism. And it seemed to me that this claim captures the way words and their meanings are altered for the purpose of debate.

If indeed antisemitism is more than racism then it ought to be possible to find something written, drawn, or said, that is antisemitic but not racist.

Those who believe that antisemitism is more than racism argue that when criticism of Israel slides from criticism of Israeli society or its government's policies, to unreasonable vilification of Israel, including the questioning or denial of its right to exist, such anti-Israel sentiment also falls within the ambit of antisemitism.

This argument seems somewhat academic to me, because most people easily recognise the extreme ends of the political debates as being largely disconnected from the real world and in any case it is often accompanied by unmistakable antisemitism.

But the broadening of the definition of antisemitism is then applied to comment that is not on the extremity of the debates and this semantic shift is not academic because it allows a play such as *Seven Jewish Children* to be tagged as antisemitic even though it is not racist.

The benefit of this argument is clear. Since most people associate antisemitism with racism, rather than with a broader definition of antisemitism, the whiff of racism is attached to the play. But the down side is that the meaning of the word antisemitism is devalued and will no

longer be seen to convey the serious accusation of racism.

I don't want to end this discussion of antisemitism without saying something about *Seven Jewish Children*.

Just because it is not antisemitic doesn't mean it is beyond criticism and doesn't mean its critics should be dismissed. Precisely because it has been labelled by some as antisemitic it is important to be aware of the environment in which the play has appeared.

The play is presented as a reflection on seven stages of recent Jewish history starting with the Holocaust 1939-45 and ending with the Israeli offensive in Gaza at the end of 2008 and early 2009. It is a monologue of a parent or close relative of a child, considering what to tell or avoid telling the child. It uses this device to expose the views of the adult. It is a clever means of presenting the fears, hopes and prejudices of the adults through these seven stages of history.

Although the monologue canvases a range of views, it cannot capture the diversity of views that exists in any society and in that sense the prejudices it exposes are simply a part of the whole without necessarily being representative of the whole. But awareness of the origin of the play is crucial to understanding the critical message it sends.

The author of the play is Caryl Churchill who is a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign in Britain, a group supportive of Palestinian rights and critical of Israel. In

Australia, the play is being performed during the Nakba commemoration, in which Palestinians remember the displacement and dispossession that occurred in 1948.

While the play might validly serve as a self critical reflection within Israel, it takes on a protest role when presented as part of the Nakba commemoration.

From my perspective, I would be very keen to see a Jewish and Palestinian group putting on this play and an equivalent "Seven Palestinian Children", exposing the hopes, fears and prejudices on both sides. Such an enterprise might indeed provide a thought-provoking reflection.



**Staging the play at Nakba commemoration:
From left, Miriam Margolyes, John Cleary, Alison Bell,
Tony Llewellyn-Jones and Max Gillies**

(Continued from page 4)

act on what everyone knows to be true.

Too many tears have flowed. Too much blood has been shed. All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear; when the Holy Land of

three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims, and a place for all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed (peace be upon them) joined in prayer.

[From the Cairo speech to the Muslim world.]

A different kind of visiting Israeli MK

Sol Salbe

It certainly has been an “eventful” Israel/Palestine month in Melbourne. What with the *Seven Jewish Children* performance and forum, and several talks by Professor Yakov Rabkin we had just about our annual quota in a month. But it was the visit by Knesset member Haneen Zoabi which struck the strongest chord with this writer.

Knesset members usually visit Australia on behalf of the Jewish National Fund or the United Israel Appeal, or possibly the Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council. But Zoabi was a guest of Students for Palestine and the Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine, at least in Melbourne. The organisers made a good choice for publicising their cause – the first Palestinian-Israeli woman to represent an Arab party was a very articulate and impressive speaker.

Not “Palestinian-Israeli”

Actually Zoabi does not like being described as Israeli-Palestinian. She began her Melbourne University talk by explaining this very point. People like her are described by the authorities in her homeland as Israeli Arabs. But this negates the fact that they are not merely Arab but Palestinian Arabs with their own distinctive cultural markings. Zoabi does not subscribe to the use of Palestinian Israelis either. This notation, familiar to people in this country who regularly use expressions like Greek-Australian or Vietnamese-Australian, does not meet with her approval as it implies (as it does in Australia) equal citizenship. But with 20 laws discriminating against her people, she does not feel an equal citizen in a self-described Jewish State. She prefers the more technical description of a Palestinian citizen of Israel.

Zoabi hails from a very political family in Nazareth [My first political activity was attending a Mapam event against the Military Rule for Israeli Arab citizens circa 1962, where a close relative spoke.] Previously she worked as a journalist. But her main claim to fame has been as one of the founders of the I'lam Media Centre which concentrates on promoting media rights and empowerment for Palestinian Israelis.

In her talk Zoabi alluded to the Nakba. But again she had a different take from the one with which we are familiar. For her, the Nakba is an ongoing policy in which her people keep on losing land and being discriminated against. However, I wasn't convinced by the land figures she provided. While not being able to confirm my understanding I think she included all government land in 1948 as belonging to the Arabs. The vast majority of that land was Crown land vested in the British mandate which legally passed on to the State of Israel as the Mandate's successors. Neither side seemed to have researched the amount of land which was actually being used by individual Palestinians who tilled the land without having a title to it. At any rate, the current situation, with only 3 per cent of the country's land in the hands of a substantial rural Arab population, did indicate an unquestionable, unjustified and discriminatory loss of land.

A related issue was that of what she called obsessive demography, where the authorities continued to treat the birth rate of Palestinian Israelis with alarm even though it

has gone down considerably in recent years.

For Israel, cultural expression by the minority had its limits. While the culinary arts and music were free to flourish, other expressions were frowned upon. Palestinian children spend more time studying the Torah and Jewish poets than their own cultural heritage. Despite repeated requests, there is no Arab University in the country for the 20 per cent of the population whose first language is Arabic.

Campaigner

Zoabi is first and foremost a campaigner. Her talk was structured around the theme of her people's civic and national rights which she wanted recognised.

The concept of a state of all its citizens may not be the dominant one in the Middle East. But it is the one favoured by liberal democracies, which Israel aspires to be.

It should be disclosed that this writer found the “Israeliness” of Haneen Zoabi particularly appealing. Considering it is her third language, her English was very good but occasionally I could detect both Arabic and Hebrew coming through. Even her mannerisms were Israeli. In private conversation I discovered just how fluent was her Hebrew. Perhaps it was a consequence of her Israeli-ness that she made a point of saying how much she prefers dealing with Israelis, even hostile ones, to members of the Jewish Diaspora, whom she considered ignorant of the real issues.



Haneen Zoabi

Israel adopts anti-refugee laws

The Knesset has approved the first reading of a border-protection bill to “prevent infiltration” which echoes the worst of the Howard era in Australia.

According to *Ma'ariv's* parliamentary reporter Arik Bender, “Under the law a Darfuri refugee arriving from Sudan will receive a seven-year jail sentence.

“If such a refugee had crossed the border with a smuggler armed with a knife then the sentence is increased to 20 years. A person rendering assistance to such a refugee making his/her stay in the country more amenable is liable to a jail sentence of up to 20 years.

“Under this draconian law one is forbidden from even offering a glass of water to a refugee.”

A total of 59 Knesset members voted in favour while only one, Dov Hanin of Hadash, voted against.

Hanin said that such a law will be a dark stain on the law book and even the writer himself expressed the hope the law will be modified in the second and third readings.

[From Arik Bender in *Ma'ariv*]

Durban Review debate: Jews on Ahmadinejad

Cecille Surasky

Let me say up front that I don't think it's wise to ignore the fact that Ahmadinejad, while no Hitler, is an opportunistic demagogue who undoubtedly shares the Netanyahu-inspired tendency to over-inflate his own importance. Nor is it wise to deny that many countries deliberately single out Israel while ignoring their own terrible human rights records.

Acknowledging these facts in no way lessens Israel's responsibility for stopping its oppression of Palestinians. And it doesn't absolve Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who comically condemned the UN conference for giving a platform to his Iranian twin.

Spirited defence

I was there at the time, and found myself rolling my eyes when Ahmadinejad employed classic antisemitic canards to lecture the UN on human rights, love and justice. Diana Ralph, of Canada's Independent Jewish Voices, who was also at the conference, was more impressed. She has written a spirited defense of Ahmadinejad:

In the polarised context of opposing narratives, it is risky to appear to defend the "bad guy." Everyone "knows" Ahmadinejad equals bad, antisemitic, Holocaust denier. So why defend his speech? I don't endorse his values and I regret that, in his speech, he did not acknowledge injustice, antisemitism, and racism in Iran. However, it is NOT true that this particular speech was an antisemitic diatribe that denied the Holocaust.

I heard what Ahmadinejad actually said (which dropped language describing the Holocaust as "ambiguous and dubious" from an earlier draft—the one quoted by most mainstream and Jewish press). In his speech, I heard much with which I agreed. For example, he objected to the UN Security Council's veto rights over the democratic wishes of the world, particularly in supporting Israeli war crimes and violations of international law. He labelled the wars against Afghanistan and Iraq as exercises in imperial conquest, causing massive suffering, expanding the narcotics trade, and benefiting arms dealers. Finally he urged our collective effort to "make the world a better place full of love, fraternity, and blessings; a world devoid of poverty and hatred."

Brian Klug

Oxford University's Brian Klug of Independent Jewish Voices in the UK had something entirely different to say, much more in line with my own response:

Someone might object that, unlike the Protocols [of Zion], Ahmadinejad confines his attack to Zionists and does not brand Jews collectively. But no other political movement in the world is credited with the kind of fantastical power and influence that he attributes to Zionism. Moreover, Zionism is a Jewish movement; and what he attributes to it is precisely the kind of power and influence that antisemitism attributes to Jews. It's a bit of a giveaway. As is his embrace of Holocaust denial: no one denies (or plays down) the Nazi genocide against the Jews except for dyed-in-the-wool antisemites and certifiable lunatics. Whatever else he might be, Ahmadinejad is not insane.

I have written extensively about the difference between anti-Zionism and antisemitism and the danger of conflating them. But the one can turn into the other. And if it is wrong to make false accusations of antisemitism, it is equally wrong to turn a blind eye when it stares us in the face.

We should not be deceived by the fact that following an intervention by Ban Ki-moon, Ahmadinejad left out one or two of the most inflammatory passages that appear in the transcript ... A last-minute response to diplomatic pressure from the UN secretary general does not constitute a change of heart.

Plitnick

Mitchell Plitnick of B'Tselem, and formerly of Jewish Voice for Peace, adds in response to Ralph's piece:

[Ahmadinejad] said the "Zionists" essentially ordered the US invasion of Iraq (specific quote: "Was not the military action against Iraq planned by the Zionists and their allies in the then US administration in complicity with the arms manufacturing countries and the possessors of wealth?")

And what about this modern version of the Protocols? "They [the Zionists] mobilize all the resources including their economic and political influence and world media to render support in vain to the Zionist regime and to maliciously diminish the indignity and disgrace of this regime."

There are other, more subtle pieces to this, but come on, how can anyone who is even remotely familiar with the mechanics of antisemitism not see it in his speech? Is David Duke also only anti-Israel because he says Zionists and not Jews?

[Cecille Surasky is Director of Communications for the US Jewish Voice for Peace. She runs the Muzzle-watch blog on behalf of that organisation, where this was first published.]

AJDS Letter to media on Nakba Legislation

Israel is introducing legislation banning the commemoration of the Nakba, the disaster that befell the Palestinian people in 1948. The country's Deputy Foreign Minister, Danny Ayalon (*The Age* 27/05), does not believe that there is any country in the world which allows its national day to be turned into an occasion of mourning. Strangely enough, we are aware of a country straddling the Pacific and Indian oceans in which a substantial minority of the population, and not just Indigenous citizens, actually marks the national day as Invasion Day.

One can only imagine the howl of protest if our own Federal Parliament were to pass similar legislation banning anyone from marking the dispossession of Aboriginal Australia.

There is one substantial difference. Whereas in Australia the two events are marked on the same date, sensitive Israeli citizens do not have to have their celebration spoiled by the sight of others' mourning. The vagaries of the Hebrew and civil (ordinary) calendars mean that the two events only coincide every 19 years, the next one being 2024.

We urge all the friends of Israel in this country and particularly in Federal Parliament, to call on Israel to withdraw this offensive legislation.

[Sent on 27 May]

The Labor Government and refugee policy

Robin Rothfield

[We have asked Labor for Refugees activist Robin Rothfield for a summary of refugee policy halfway through the life of the ALP government.]

The Rudd Government has progressively made key changes on legislation and regulations affecting refugees and asylum seekers.

Achievements to date:

1. End of the "Pacific Solution"

The detention centre on Nauru has been closed.

2. Replacement of Temporary Protection Visas with Permanent Visas

Implemented August 2008.

3. Repeal of section 209 of the Migration Act – billing of asylum seekers for the costs of their detention

Legislation introduced into the Senate 18 March 2009, but final outcome not clear because the Opposition has declared that it will oppose the legislation.

4. Detention

Changes have been made to detention which improves the situation but maintains mandatory detention as "an essential component of strong border security". All "unauthorised arrivals" are subject to mandatory detention for "management of health, identity and security risks". Children, including juveniles, foreign fishers and "where possible" their families, will not be detained in a detention centre.

The Government has stated that "detention that is indefinite or otherwise arbitrary is not acceptable and the length and conditions of detention, including the appropriateness of both the accommodation and the services provided, will be subject to regular review". Further, that detention in immigration detention centres is "only to be used as a last resort and for the shortest practicable time". People in detention will be treated "fairly and reasonably within the law"; and conditions of detention will ensure "the inherent dignity of the human person."

However, there is no provision for an independent review of mandatory detention or the conditions of a person's detention, except by the Ombudsman, after a period of six months (down from two years).

Further changes needed:

- Asylum seekers should be kept in custody only if necessary for the purposes of identity, health and security checks. Custody will depend on the Department of

Immigration and Citizenship's declared health and security concerns, and will be for 30 days only, extendable for a further 30 if these concerns continue, and thereafter only renewable by order of a judge. Adequate resources should be allocated to meet this standard.

- Adequately resourcing and making permanent the current pilot scheme for care in the community of re-leased asylum seekers.

5. Removal of the arbitrary 45-day-rule – the right to work

This was announced in the 2009 Budget.

All holders of bridging visas should be allowed to work and to be eligible to receive Medicare benefits and education entitlements through all stages of the refugee determination process, including determination of applications to the Immigration Minister for humanitarian visas.

Bridging Visa E conditions violate basic human rights by not allowing the recipients to earn a living in any way. This affects the poorest and it can concern whole families. Children in families on bridging visas are also adversely affected by

not being eligible for full education entitlements and being denied access to higher education (possible only as full fee paying students). This multiplies the penalties imposed on families on Bridging Visa E by actively discouraging young people from achieving their potential, to the detriment of the community as a whole. Bridging visa holders have

also been denied access to Medicare and other benefits, although this is to change.

Outstanding issues requiring attention:

1. Australia's Migration Zone and the Christmas Island Detention Centre.

Labor has continued the excision of Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Ashmore Reef and 4600 outer islands from Australia's migration zone as part of its "border protection" strategies.

Asylum seekers who enter Australian territorial waters by boat are now taken to Christmas Island for processing following the end of the "Pacific Solution". The use of Christmas Island as the site for processing asylum seekers is unsatisfactory because being excised territory, Australian law does not apply and appeals to Australian courts cannot be made. It should be noted that, as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission has pointed out, asylum seekers landing on any of the

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Christmas Island detention centre

(Continued from page 8)

"excised" islands are still covered by the international conventions to which Australia is a signatory.

Changes needed:

- The Howard Government's excision of all Australian territory from the migration zone should be reversed, thereby restoring the territorial integrity of Australia's borders;
- There should be legislative provision to ensure that persons seeking asylum in the so-called excised territories will have the protection of Australian law and procedure;
- There should be an end to the processing of arrivals on Christmas Island.

2. Return of detention centres to public management

Labor's longstanding policy has been to end the privatisation of detention centres. Private detention centres are incompatible with the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. They are able to resist FOI and Ombudsman accountability. Immigration detention centres which are run for profit are inappropriate. All institutional detention arrangements are extraordinarily expensive and community-based arrangements could be an excellent strategy to find significant savings in this portfolio area.

Changes needed:

- Bring detention centres and the processing of asylum seekers under public ownership and control.
- In the interim, all detention centres operated by private contractors should be subject to the control and direction of an embedded senior officer of the Commonwealth Government with full rights to insist on compliance with any contractual obligation of the detention centre operator. Contractors should be required to abide by Government integrity procedures, including appearing before Senate Estimates.

3. Complementary protection claims and non-refoulement obligations

Complementary protection as provided under the Convention against Torture, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention of the Rights of the Children to which Australia is a signatory and has obligations which need to be legislated into domestic law. "Complementary protection" refers to protection obligations under international law to people who cannot be returned to their home country safely, but who are not strictly "refugees" as defined by the Refugee Convention. These conventions impose non-refoulement obligations on signatory states, which prohibit the return of people to specific situations of danger, such as people who are at risk of being tortured, are fleeing civil war or generalised violence or are stateless.

Detention and imprisonment of children and arbitrary and non-time limited detention of adults is not legal under UN instruments to which Australia is a signatory. Deportation has been occurring despite individuals facing the prospect of torture and other mistreatment in the country of destination in the absence of the application of complementary protection under other conventions.

Changes needed:

- Parallel processing of complementary protection

claims being incorporated into the process for applying for asylum at all stages. Applicants should receive the same access to advice and assistance in relation to complementary protection as in respect of claims for protection visas.

- Cease deportation where there are reasonable grounds to fear that a person will face execution, torture or other mistreatment in the country to which they are deported. In addition, stateless persons should not be deported. All deportation decisions should be subject to judicial oversight, and deportations should be reported 6 monthly to Parliament.

4. Removal of "Absorbed Citizens"

Changes to the Migration Act in 1998 by Phillip Ruddock has allowed for the expulsion of long term permanent residents on "character grounds", through the exercise of ministerial discretion.



Minister Chris Evans has been in charge of all these changes

This has resulted in individuals who have been resident in Australia for almost all of their lives to be deported to the country of their origin (or in some instances, that of their parents). Those given adverse character assessments have been found guilty and imprisoned for criminal offences, and having served their time, have been deported, often without language skills or family connections, causing significant hardship in a number of notable cases. The policy also causes permanent family separation. The removal of "absorbed citizens" is effectively a lifetime penalty, more akin to transportation than a rational policy process for dealing with crime, punishment and rehabilitation.

Change needed:

- Cease the removal of "absorbed citizens" i.e. long term residents with residence of 10 years or more who originally came to Australia as minors.

5. Enquiry into "Children Overboard" and sinking of the SIEV-X

Two of the most infamous and shameful episodes during the Howard years were the Children Overboard saga and the sinking of the asylum seeker boat known as the SIEV-X, which resulted in the tragic loss of some 347 lives, mostly women and children seeking to reunite with family members in Australia on temporary protection visas. In Opposition, Labor promised a full enquiry into these episodes.

- Establish an inquiry into the Children Overboard affair and the sinking of the SIEV X.

6. Special Humanitarian Program and Refugee Resettlement Support

(This relates to family reunions)

Change needed:

- Provide financial (and other) assistance to people coming under the Special Humanitarian Program in circumstances where there is financial hardship.

RAISINS AND ALMONDS

“Price tag” origin

The Israeli media reported that in response to the evacuation of an outpost, settlers threw stones at Palestinians and burnt the latter's fields. This was the “price tag” for the evacuation. Yoram Hirschfield wrote in response to *Ha'aretz* that he read about it “and remembered the origin of the expression price tag to denote a retaliation against a third party which is not involved.

“Back in 1942 members of the Czech underground killed the head of Nazi protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heidrich. Hitler demanded “such a price tag for terrorist acts that will make the criminals give up their evil deeds.” The price tag chosen was the burning down of the village of Lidice after its men were murdered and women exiled to concentration camps.

“Those who light the holy flame in the holy land are undoubtedly unaware of the origin of the expression”.

[Translated by Sol Salbe from the Hebrew *Haaretz*.]

Hundreds march in Tel Aviv

A demonstration to commemorate 42 years of the Occupation was held in Tel Aviv on 6 June. The several hundred protesters called for an end to Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Many of the protesters belonged to Hadash (the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality which includes the Communist Party), Meretz, Gush Shalom, and Yesh Gvul.

As they marched to the square, protesters chanted "42 years of occupation", "Israel-Palestine, two states for two



peoples" and "End the occupation -- start living."

Nitzan Horowitz, a Meretz member of the Knesset, or parliament, urged his country to stand with US President Barack Obama.

"Obama is drawing a clear line between supporters of peace and democracy and those who oppose peace," he said. "Israel must be in the first camp, beside the (United States), and the path there is clear: The end of settlements and the adoption of a two-state solution."

Dov Khenin, a Hadash member of the Knesset, said the occupation could destroy Israeli society, with "occupation norms" leading to an end to political freedom.

[Various sources]

Bread and Roses calendar 2010

Sindyanna of Galilee and the Workers Advice Centre have launched the Fair Trade Calendar for 2010.

The Bread and Roses Calendar consists of 12 paintings by Palestinian and Jewish women living in Israel. The works are among hundreds from an exhibition called Bread and Roses, which took place recently in Tel Aviv.

Sindyanna of Galilee is a fair-trade organisation which aims to strengthen the position of the Arab community in Israel by marketing products of Arab manufacturers according to fair trade standards, and promoting the social status of Arab women.

Both groups, Sindyanna and WAC, seek to create a meeting of minds between workers and artists, Jews and Arabs.

The income from sales of the Bread and Roses calendar will go to the WAC campaign to place Arab women in organised jobs.

The price per calendar is US\$5.30 (for 100 items and above).

The size of a calendar is 15x15cm.

More information at ftcalendar2010@gmail.com.

[From Sindyanna.]

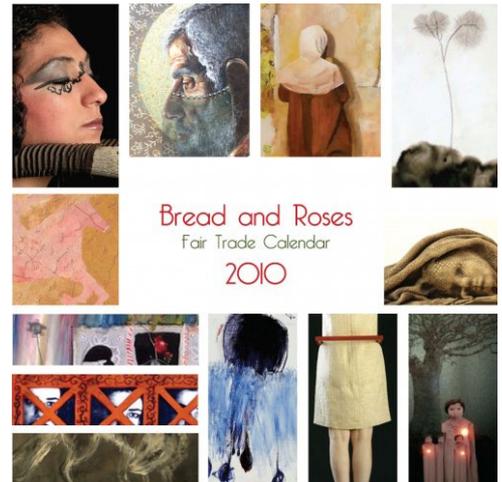
ACTU safety campaign

With almost 500,000 work-related accidents each year and more than 7000 Australians dying annually from work-related accidents (four times the road toll) issues of work safety are paramount.

At present there are nine different Occupational Health and Safety laws operating in Australia. All governments want to replace these with a model OHS law. This new model law is due to be completed by the end of 2009. To do this, the Government appointed a panel to make recommendations about the model law. Its final report was released in February.

Instead of raising the Federal standards to the highest levels from each State's existing laws, the Report's recommendations, if adopted, could strike down up to 30 years of progress.

Unions are very concerned that if the governments accept all the recommendations – ALL Australian workers



RAISINS AND ALMONDS

(Continued from page 10)

will be worse off.

The ACTU is running a signature campaign to support stronger laws. More information at rightsatwork.com.au.

[From the ACTU]

ECCV wants action on violence

The member organisations of the Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV) came together in mid-June to express their common outrage at the ongoing violence on the streets of Victoria's capital.

At the meeting, ECCV Chairperson Sam Afra said, "Victoria is a world leader as a multicultural, tolerant state and we want to keep it that way. There is no place for the violence directed at students and others that we've seen and heard about in recent weeks.

"While we can all welcome the Brumby Government's plans to amend the Sentencing Act, we have been calling upon the Victorian Police to do more to protect victims," Afra declared.

Afra was referring to an announcement by Premier Brumby that the Victorian Government was considering amendments to the *Sentencing Act* which would require judges to take into account hatred for or prejudice against a particular group as an aggravating factor when sentencing.

Afra added: "We encourage all Victorians to stand up and reaffirm that our tolerance and our multiculturalism are central to our way of life by participating in the Harmony Walk from Carlton Gardens at 12.30pm on Sunday 12 July."

[From the ECCV]

An appeal from MachsomWatch

Since the Gaza atrocities, Israel, once a democracy for Jews, but never for anyone else (remember the millions living 42 years without any human rights, and the million and a half in Gaza who are locked in a concentration camp, subject to starvation and death), is imprisoning human rights activists, Israeli citizens and raiding their homes.

In this case – Ezra, no standard human rights activist is a loner who is all heart, of Iraqi descent, a plumber who dedicates his life to helping the cave dwellers in South Hebron.

Please check www.supportezra.net to watch the movie of his arrest at -- to see that he is totally innocent. Also note the joy and mockery of the soldiers in face of the tragedy they caused and listen to the sad words of Ezra.

Without your help Ezra will go to jail -- please help by donation or write to whomever might be effective.

[From Daphne Banai of MachsomWatch via Robin Rothfield]

Homeland Security warned of antisemitic violence

A heavily criticised Department of Homeland Security Report on right-wing extremism that was released in April warned precisely of the type of violent antisemitic activity that occurred at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

The accused perpetrator, James W. Von Brunn, has a history of antisemitism and may have been driven by such feelings when he committed his violent act. Indeed, Von Brunn even had antisemitic writings on his website, and had made pejorative remarks about "Jewish control of the justice system".

In light of these biographical revelations, it is worth revisiting the DHS report that was deemed by conservatives to be so controversial.

In April, the Department of Homeland Security issued a draft memorandum warning that the current economic and political landscape created dangerously ripe conditions for a resurgence in radicalisation and extremist recruitment. In it, federal officials warned specifically about an upswing of antisemitic behaviour.

eral officials warned specifically about an upswing of antisemitic behaviour.

"Antisemitic extremists attribute these losses to a deliberate conspiracy conducted by a cabal of Jewish 'financial elites,'" the report read. "These 'accusatory' tactics are employed to draw new recruits into right-wing extremist groups and further radicalise those already subscribing to extremist beliefs."

When the 10-page DHS memorandum was made public, however, warnings like these largely took the back seat to charges that the department had been politically motivated in its assessments and writings. Indeed, a wide swath of voices in the conservative movement lashed out at DHS Secretary Napolitano over what they deemed an anti-Republican report.

"This is the height of insult here," RNC Chairman Michael Steele told Fox News. "I mean to segment out Americans who dissent from this administration, to segment out conservatives in this country who have a different philosophy or view from this administration, and labeling them as terrorists and then to call into question the service of the men and women who are right now standing on that wall defending our freedom and linking them to terrorism while you refuse to call the terrorists -- the real terrorists -- terrorists, to me it's the height of insult."

[From Sam Stein in the *Huffington Post*.]



One event – many descriptions

Sol Salbe

For some time we have been thinking of reviewing the “new” Jewish media. For a long time the *Australian Jewish News* has had a monopoly, but now there are several email news lists of varying political hues, an alternative news service in J-Wire and the most recent newcomer, *Sensible Jew*. The last is not strictly a news service but as it covers and comments on current affairs it has an important role in Jewish discourse.

We were thinking of doing an overview, starting with some more details from our own Vivienne Porzsolt, who was impressed with the professionalism of the J-Wire people she dealt with during Jeff Halper’s tour. But as luck would have it, there was an event that tested the mettle of these media. This was the staging of *Seven Jewish Children* in Melbourne at a Nakba rally, an event accompanied by a demonstration outside and followed by a high-powered forum inside.

It was a great event for comparative media performance: J-Wire and the *AJN* were joined by the *Age* and even Israel’s *Ynet* in covering it. The *Sensible Jew* dealt with it extensively: there were statements from the demonstration organisers, and naturally the event organisers also tossed their hat into the ring.

I felt I was in a good place to judge. I arrived early enough to watch the entire proceedings. I knew quite a few of the protagonists to recognise them by name and I had all the time in the world to observe, not being involved in any of the organisational aspects of the evening.

So how did they perform?

Attendance

On this score, only the *Age* actually had a reporter on the spot, and she seems to have got most of the details correct. Perhaps the only point of significance that Andra Jackson missed involved the chants. By the time the Australasian Union of Jewish Student demonstrators got into a shouting match with the Left sects, the predominant chant on one side was not just “Palestine will be free” but also “from the river to the sea” – a clear call for the destruction of Israel. No one else seems to have sent a reporter. [Naomi Levin’s report in the *AJN* does not seem to be first hand and does not contain any details not covered anywhere else.] Disappointingly, J-Wire carried a report from a protagonist: Stephan Oberman of AUJS Victoria. It further claimed that he attended the performance of the controversial play. Methinks that’s highly unlikely, as by

the time Oberman’s demonstrators arrived, all tickets were already gone and he couldn’t have attended the performance even if he wanted to. Not a good indication of J-wire’s credibility.

The crowd

J-Wire’s Oberman was the only one to have noted the crowd was generally non-aligned. Having been around the Left and pro-Palestinian crowd for four decades, I know most of the regular faces. Most of the people I recognised, however, were AJDS members. The rest were indeed new to the issue. Tal Dror’s comments to Yael Branovsky’ at *Ynet* that the “audience consisted mainly of members of extreme Left parties and Arab[ic] speakers” was way out wrong. I suspect it had been embellished somewhere along the line. Certainly Dror’s quoted comment: “We distributed flyers explaining why the play is antisemitic” is verifiably wrong. The leaflets asserted the play was antisemitic, but did not explain why. At most they directed people to a selection of critiques in the British media whose main common denominator appeared to be the writers’ support for the Iraq war.

Unfortunately for Oberman, he ruined his copybook record by claiming in a letter to the 20 May *Age* that many members of the crowd “walked away when we

‘unpacked’ the issues with them.” Of course they walked away: tickets were gone long before AUJS arrived. There was no point in hanging around.

The rally and arguments

While I was too far back in the queue to see any alleged altercations, I find it amusing to read Oberman reporting: “I saw one

pro-Palestinian protester being manhandled by four police officers, though I can’t confirm whether he was arrested or not”. Maybe he thinks that is a proof of the pro-Palestinian person’s wrongdoing. More seasoned observers would have drawn conclusions about the police.

Similarly I cannot comment in detail on the “lower volume” arguments between the two sides. There were some; not all the disputation was limited to inane chanting. [On that, I can only concur with my colleague Steve Brook, who quipped that waving Israeli flags and Palestinian Keffiyehs only proves that both sides had props made by the same Chinese factory.] Except that among the “extremist pro-Palestinians” that *Ynet* reported on there were several committed Zionists, including the former head of Hashomer Hatzair in Australia.

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The panel: From left, Randa Abdel-Fattah, Paul Heywood-Smith QC, Robert Richter QC, Patrick Wolfe (Moderator) Prof Yakov Rabkin, Assoc Prof Bassam Dally, Dr Michael Fagenblatt, Prof Dennis Altman

Proclamation on LGBT Pride Month 2009

Barack Hussein Obama

[Michael Barnett of *Aleph*, the Melbourne Jewish gay group, tells us that there are gay pride months or events in every state of Australia. June has been pride month in the United States for many years. This year, however, is the first time to his knowledge that the country's president has actually made it official. Unfortunately in Australia, official support lags behind. While the former Victorian Police Commissioner, Christine Nixon, made a point of supporting her gay and lesbian officers by marching in the local event one is unlikely to expect similar strong words to Obama's from our own PM.]

Forty years ago, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City resisted police harassment that had become all too common for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Out of this resistance, the LGBT rights movement in America was born. During LGBT Pride Month, we commemorate the events of June 1969 and commit to achieving equal justice under law for LGBT Americans.

LGBT Americans have made, and continue to make, great and lasting contributions that continue to strengthen the fabric of American society. There are many well-respected LGBT leaders in all professional fields, including the arts and business communities.

LGBT Americans also mobilised the nation to respond to the domestic HIV/AIDS epidemic and have played a vital role in broadening this country's response to the HIV pandemic.

Due in no small part to the determination and dedication of the LGBT rights movement, more LGBT Americans are living their lives openly today than ever before. I am proud to be the first President to appoint openly LGBT candidates to Senate-confirmed positions in the first 100 days of an Administration. These individuals embody the best qualities we seek in public servants, and across my Administration -- in both the White House and the Federal agencies -- openly LGBT employees are doing their jobs with distinction and professionalism.

The LGBT rights movement has achieved great progress, but there is more work to be done. LGBT youth should feel safe to learn without the fear of harassment, and LGBT families and seniors should be allowed to live their lives with dignity and respect.

My Administration has partnered with the LGBT community to advance a wide range of initiatives. At the international level, I have joined efforts at the United Nations to decriminalise homosexuality around the world. Here at home, I continue to support measures to bring the full spectrum of equal rights to LGBT Americans. These measures include enhancing hate crimes laws, supporting civil unions and Federal rights for LGBT couples, outlawing discrimination in the workplace, ensuring adoption rights, and ending the existing "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in a way that strengthens our armed forces and our national security. We must also commit ourselves to fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic by both reducing the number of HIV infections and providing care and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS across the United States.

These issues affect not only the LGBT community, but also our entire nation. As long as the promise of equality for all remains unfulfilled, all Americans are affected. If we can work together to advance the principles upon which our nation was founded, every American will benefit. During LGBT Pride Month, I call upon the LGBT community, the Congress, and the American people to work together to promote equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2009 as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month. I call upon the people of the United States to turn back discrimination and prejudice everywhere it exists.

[From the White House website.]

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As for the rally itself: the *Sensible Jew* spent an inordinate amount of time discussing the purpose of the rally and why in its view it was counter-productive. Sonja Karkar of Women for Palestine, on the other hand, used 15 words to tell everything that needed to be told. She referred to "efforts by about 35 Zionist hecklers to cause a scene outside the State Library of Victoria."

The panel

It's unfortunate that so little space has been devoted to the panel discussion. After all, the play was only eight minutes or so long. (See our own reports on pages 3 and 5). As the only self-described Zionist on the panel, Michael Fagenblatt received star billing. Jackson highlighted "the sentimental psychologising of the play". She also quoted his strong comment that the device of a child standing for an expose of the morality of the Jewish people was "frankly childish", while Women for Palestine's Sonja Karkar omitted to mention any of his critical re-

marks, which was a pity.

The *Sensible Jew* printed Fagenblatt's entire talk. However it did not seem to have made an effort to get any of the other speaker's talks. Fagenblatt had offered his to them, but surely it wouldn't have been difficult to get say Robert Richter QC, who is not an anti-Zionist and spoke clearly in support of Israel's existence.

Sonja Karkar again showed her word skill with a neat observation: "The lineup was impressive -- lawyers and academics from Melbourne and interstate as well as one academic from the University of Montreal in Canada. If anyone had wanted to draw a line to make two sides, he or she might have asked why the panel was weighted in favour of Jews."

These are mere observations. No doubt blogs like the *Sensible Jew* and its owners will be the focus of further observations -- there is no question that they are here to stay and change the way we see the news, even if they have not as yet done so.

Changing the world, one Bill at a time

Amy McQuire

In 1938, William Cooper wasn't even considered a citizen of his own country. He lived in a time when the treatment of Aboriginals was akin to slavery, when they were losing their children to those who believed they knew better, when they were being forced off their land and onto reserves. He lived in the time before land rights were on Australia's tongue, and when the concept of "terra nullius" was still plausible instead of preposterous.

He lived in a time when Aboriginal people were considered part of Australia's 'flora and fauna' and he would die before the time of the '67 referendum, when the majority of Australians mobilised in support of the first peoples. Cooper also lived in a time when other minorities were being oppressed, sometimes horrifically so (although this time has not yet passed, you could argue).

It was in 1938, at 77 years of age, that Cooper looked across the seas and felt so much compassion for the cries of another people that he took action, while most of the world pretended not to hear. In this year, German atrocities against its Jewish population escalated, culminating in what is now called the Kristallnacht.

Kristallnacht

Such a beautiful name actually represented something more sinister – "The Night of Broken Glass" -- inferring the lines of broken glass left in the wake of anti-Jewish riots, where Jewish businesses and the windows of synagogues were plundered and destroyed on November 9 and 10, 1938.

About 91 Jews were murdered and 30,000 deported to concentration camps. Kristallnacht is considered one of the turning points in the persecution of Jews under Nazi Germany, which later led to the Holocaust. Despite the atrocity, much of the world stayed silent... but Cooper was an exception.

Exactly a month after the violence, he led a delegation of the Australian Aborigines' League to the German consulate in Melbourne, walking on foot from his own suburb, only to be refused admittance.

Their resolution said:

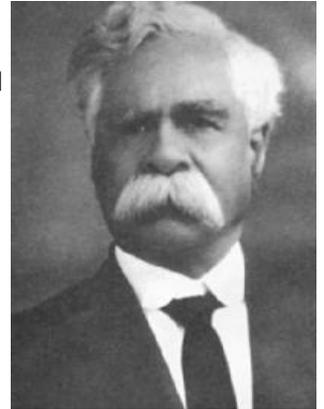
"On behalf of the Aborigines of Australia, [we register] a strong protest at the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi government of Germany, and ask that this persecution be brought to an end."

It was a small show of support, but a significant one because Aboriginal people were, and still are, the most disadvantaged members of our society. Indigenous activist Gary Foley puts it like this in an article on his Koori History website: "Thus, the first group in Australia to try and lodge a formal protest with the German government's representative about the persecution of the German Jewish community, were a group of Koori political activists representing a people who, in the previous hundred years, had themselves been sub-

ject to genocide, and in 1938 were (like Germany's Jewish people) denied citizenship."
It wasn't as if Cooper didn't already have a fight on his hands. He had, all his life, been a tireless campaigner for Aboriginal people.

So it makes me proud to read of this show of solidarity from Australia's most oppressed to the victims of one of the greatest human rights abuses in the 20th century. And it also made me proud when I read that Mr Cooper was, late last month, honoured in Israel, in an official ceremony by the Israeli government.

The Jewish National Fund planted 70 trees at the Martyrs' Forest, a memorial to commemorate Holocaust victims, in Cooper's honour. The forest has about six million trees representing those who died under Nazi Germany.



William Cooper

Recognition

Last year, Israeli Ambassador to Australia, Yuval Rotem, told the Victorian government, at another ceremony honouring Cooper, that he had "defied the silence" of most of the world.

"If there were more like William Cooper in every nation of the world, then perhaps, just perhaps, the Jews of Europe may have defied their fate," he was quoted as saying.

"He deserves to be remembered as a hero to the Jewish people and an inspiration to mankind. His message is clear: The convenience of silence is as evil as the greatest crime."

It is perhaps ironic that the man who campaigned tirelessly for the rights of Indigenous peoples is now being honoured by a country who are oppressing the Indigenous peoples of its own land. But the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not the point.

The point was an Aboriginal Australian, himself an avid campaigner for his people, had cared enough to advocate for the plight of others. His compassion crossed boundaries, and borders did not restrict his actions.

Faith Bandler was another of these people. She was the daughter of a South Sea Islander who was taken

from his island home and transported across the waters to work in the cane fields. But although she would campaign for South Sea Islander rights later in her life, it is her activism for Indigenous equality that has been her most celebrated accomplishment.

Her untiring work helped lead to the most successful ref-

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The New York Times.



(Continued from page 14)

erendum in Australian history - when almost 91 per cent of citizens voted 'yes'.

If Bandler weren't on the scene back around '67, the result may still have been the same. One person can't persuade a nation.

And Cooper's small action wouldn't have stopped the Holocaust. One person can't bring down an evil regime. But if we have many such people, mobilised together, imagine the impact.

If we had more Bandlers and Coopers, would we have the Hitlers and the Howards?

If we had these people, so willing to take the plight of another people to heart and advocate loudly for them, would we still have the horrific human rights abuses occurring in the world today?

The answer to that question may be found in another time.

[Amy McQuire is a Canberra-based journalist with the *National Indigenous Times*, where this was first published. The *NIT* is an independent newspaper and receives no government funding whatsoever. You can always assist by subscribing or browsing the *NIT* shop at nit.com.au.]

Singing for peace in Israel

Hillel Schenker

"This machine surrounds hate and forces it to surrender," reads the famous slogan on Pete Seeger's banjo. The legendary folksinger, who is celebrating his 90th birthday this year, popularised one of the most powerful peace songs ever written: "Last night I had the strangest dream, I'd ever dreamed before. I dreamed the world had all agreed, to put an end to war" – a song that was played for many years every day on Abie Nathan's pirate Voice of Peace radio station based "somewhere in the Mediterranean".

Music has frequently accompanied struggles for freedom, equality and peace, like the songs of the Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish civil war, the civil rights movement in the United States, and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa.

For us in the peace movement, many of these songs have been part of the soundtrack of our lives and struggles.

And now a group of academics in the UK – among them Professor Haim Bresheeth, who spent many years in Israel – is urging Leonard Cohen to cancel his concert in



Roger Waters showed the way

he identifies with, because it sends a message of support for Israeli military actions against Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

Well, Leonard Cohen's music is part of the soundtrack of my life as well, and I think he is doing the right thing performing in Israel this September, and I will add that I have no idea where he stands on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, since he usually doesn't voice his political positions either in his music or otherwise.

But there are others who have made their positions very clear.

Back in 1978, Joan Baez was invited to appear at an Is-

rael, scheduled for 24 September, because "your songs have been part of the soundtrack of our lives". It is not "the right action" according to the Buddhist precepts

raeli Woodstock-type festival in the Sinai desert oasis town of Nuweiba. When Israeli peace activists told her that it was in occupied (ie Egyptian) territory, she cancelled her participation. However, she insisted on coming to perform in Israel and Lebanon, to demonstrate her identification with both Israelis and Palestinians. Her visit coincided with one of the first major Israeli-Palestinian dialogues, organised by the Tel Aviv-based peace monthly *New Outlook*. It later appeared in book form under the title *When Enemies Dare to Talk*. [Available on the Internet- Ed.]

She used the opportunity to meet the Israeli participants in the dialogue at the Jerusalem home of Yaacov Arnon, the former director general of the finance ministry, and one of the first people to enter into ongoing dialogue with the PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. She also met Palestinians at the home of Professor Nafez Nazzal in Ramallah, and academics at Birzeit University.

In 2006 there were calls for Roger Waters, the Pink Floyd leader, not to perform in Israel out of identification with the Palestinians. Waters – who performed *The Wall* when the Berlin Wall came down, and will hopefully have an opportunity to perform when the separation wall snaking along and through the West Bank comes down (and it will come down) – did not listen to those calls. Instead he chose to make a statement against the occupation and for Israeli-Palestinian peace by performing in Israel at the joint Jewish-Arab community Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam. [He actually addressed the issue during his performance as well –Ed.]

Professor Bresheeth, one of the organisers of the call to Leonard Cohen, was the founder of the cinema studies department at Sapir College, in the Negev near Sderot and Gaza. Last week I went to the Tel Aviv Cinemateque to see a showing of an impressive feature film called *18 Kilometres*, directed by student Avi Levi. It tells a very human story – in both Hebrew and Arabic, with Jewish and Palestinian actors – about the lives of ordinary people in Gaza and Sderot who live 18km from each other. After the film ended, the current department head, Avner Feingelrant closed the evening by declaring: "May the flame of creativity defeat the fire of war."

[Hillel Schenker is co-editor of the *Palestine-Israel Journal*.]



Hillel Schenker

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