

We Are All Anarchists Against The Wall

**On the non-violent resistance of the Israeli anarchist movement and the
Palestinian popular committees against the Apartheid Wall**

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

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For the last year there has been a new type of struggle in Palestine: a non-violent struggle against the Wall which the Israeli State is building in the country. The Wall, officially known as a “separation fence” is in fact one of the greatest threats the Palestinian population has known over the last century. It is a “peaceful” operation, in the sense that unlike so often in the past, this is not an all-out military war against the people, but it is nonetheless a war against them and against their lands. It is a war for the control of territory, for the control of water, but above all it has one final aim, which is to make life so appalling for the Palestinian people that they will be left with one choice: move out. On the wake of the rampant US militarism of the early 21st century, the State of Israel is seizing its opportunity to resolve once and for all “the Palestinian question”. And the results are there to see: the slow spread over the land of this shameful wall, the Apartheid Wall.

The material which we have gathered here illustrates the nature of the Wall, examines what it means for Palestinians and Israelis alike, and present the story of the non-violent resistance of the Palestinians and some Israelis against this hateful wall. This booklet is being published to coincide with and as a contribution towards the International Day of Anarchist Solidarity with the Palestinian struggle and that of the Israeli refusniks, due to be held on 22nd October 2004, on the initiative of the comrades in Crete. We are confident that anarchist groups and individuals the world over, will do their part to raise awareness about this too little known event, after all, we are all Anarchists against the Wall!

FEDERAZIONE DEI COMUNISTI ANARCHICI

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RESISTING THE APARTHEID WALL

This is the text of a talk given by Uri Ayalon in Manchester on 7th June 2004, adapted by the Anarchist Federation in Britain and included in their website.

Introduction

My name is Uri Ayalon. I'm an Israeli, working as a journalist and as a facilitator in the school of peace in Neve-Shalom/Wahat al-Salam. As a journalist I used to be the media reporter of "Haaretz" newspaper and now I'm writing articles about politics and culture for "Walla" website, and also I'm the theatre critic of the finance newspaper "Globes".

I have been an activist since I was 13 years old. After the murder of Rachel Corrie in March 2003, I decided to devote my time and power to the struggle against the Israeli occupation. In the last few months I'm participating in the civil protest against the "Separation Fence". As part of a group named "Anarchists Against the Wall", I've attended a lot of demos in the occupied territories as well as direct actions, such as the famous cutting of the fence on the day the soldiers fired at us, seriously injuring one of my friends – Gil Na'amati.

I'm here not only in the name of my group or my friends in the radical left of Israel. I'm here in the name of my good friend Mohanad from Nablus and in the name of Nazee from Mas'ha. Nazee and Mohanad not only can't go abroad to the UK, they even can't go outside their village or city.

A short history of the occupation

According to the decision of the UN this (see map) should be the distribution between the Palestinians and the Jewish people who lived in Palestine. The Jewish were only 600,000 – 37% of the population – but they got 55% of the land. Almost half of the Palestinians should have been under Israeli control. This decision of the UN made Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq join the Palestinian people in the struggle against the new state of Israel.

At the end of the War of 1948 – which involved horrible massacres and expulsions – 2.5 million Palestinians became refugees. 737,166 Palestinians were evicted from their homes and land. 531 Palestinian villages were entirely destroyed.

In the War of 1967 Israel occupied the Golan Heights, Sinai, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Before 1967, only 400,000 Palestinians were residents of Israel. In the occupation of 1967, 1.1 million Palestinians were added (a lot of them were all ready refugees). A few days after the war a small Israeli radical left group Matzpen ["compass"] published this statement: "occupation leads to foreign regime, that leads to resistance, that leads to oppression, that leads to terror and counter-terror. Holding on to the occupied territories will turn us to a people of murderers and victims of murderers".

There are 6 million Palestinian refugees worldwide today:

- 2,000,000 in Jordan
- 500,000 in Lebanon
- 500,000 in Syria
- 900,000 in Gaza
- 800,000 in the West Bank
- 1,300,000 in other countries

The Intifada [“uprising”] of the Palestinians that started in 1987 led to the beginning of the “peace process” in 1993. Rabin’s government signed the Oslo agreement with the PLO and most Israelis felt that we were putting an end to the occupation and starting new relationships with the Palestinians and with the Arab world. But the reality in the occupied territories was different – Areas A, B and C separated the Palestinians into Bantustans. The A Areas are under full Palestinian control, B Areas are under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, while C Areas are under full Israeli control.

Disappointment from the so-called “peace process” together with the provocation in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam’s holy places in Jerusalem, by Ariel Sharon who was the leader of the opposition in parliament at that time led to the 2nd Intifada. Since October 2000 Palestinians fighters have killed more than 1,000 Israelis. Israel re-occupied the territories and killed more than 3,000 Palestinians. Suicide bombers are the most terrifying issue for most Israelis, bringing the territories over the Green Line (the border between Israel and the West Bank).

According to the Israeli government the fence is meant purely to prevent suicide bombers from getting into Israel, not to set the country’s borders. The settlers feared that the fence would be built along the Green Line and leave them outside. That is why the right wing opposed the fence, especially Ariel Sharon. In practice, the fence’s route takes as much as it can from the land of the West Bank without considering security issues. The fence is actually a system of fences that will imprison hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in barbed wire-enclosed enclaves.

The History of the Wall

Since 1994 the Gaza Strip has been surrounded by a barrier that cuts off residents from the rest of the world (especially from the West Bank); Gaza has no economic autonomy, Israel controls everybody and everything that goes in and out of the Strip.

In November 2000, Prime Minister Ehud Barak (Labour party) approved the first project to build a “barrier”. His election campaign was: “We are here – they are there”. The leader of the opposition, Ariel Sharon, was one of the main opponents to the idea of a fence. He didn’t want to give up the dream of “Greater Israel” – from the Jordan to the sea. In June 2002, the new government of Israel, led by Ariel Sharon, decided to build a physical barrier to separate Israel and the West Bank in order to prevent the uncontrolled entry of Palestinians into Israel. Construction of the Wall involved land confiscation and the uprooting of trees in Jenin. Only in

September 2002 was the first public map of the Wall (consisting of only the northern part) made available to the public.

In March 2003 Sharon declared the expansion of the Wall by building a wall within and along the entire Jordan Valley, bringing the settlements in this area under total Israeli control. In July 2003, the Israeli Defence Ministry announced the completion of the “first phase” of the Wall, a total of 145 km from the planned 728 km. The Israeli government allotted an additional US\$171 million for the construction of the Wall. The Wall costs some US\$3 billion, approximately US\$4 million per kilometre. On any given day there are 500 bulldozers at work, paving and building one of the largest projects in the history of the country.

Currently, the Wall has already been completed in the districts of Qalqiliya, Tulkarem and Jenin (from Salem to Mas’ha) and is being built in Ramallah, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem. In 2005, the entire project should be finished. Besides the horrific humanistic and economic reality that the Wall imposes on the Palestinian people, the Wall is also the biggest environmental disaster in the history of Israel.

What does it look like?

Actually it’s a system of electric fences, barbed wire, trenches, patrol roads, trace paths, cameras and sensors. The fence itself is 3 metres high.

The concrete Wall, now present in Qalqiliya, parts of Tulkarem and East Jerusalem (always near houses) is 8 metres high – twice the height of the Berlin Wall – with armed watchtowers and a “buffer zone” of 30–100 metres. The Wall’s “buffer zone” paves the way for demolitions and the expulsion of nearby residents as in many places the Wall is located just metres away from homes, shops, and schools.

The Israeli military has created gates in the Wall. However, these do not provide any guarantee for farmers to access their land but instead create a system of permits and checkpoints where Palestinians are humiliated.

This is in addition to more than 600 checkpoints that the Israeli army has set up over the last 3 years. 56 of them are permanent while the others change. Most of the time the roads are blocked without any soldiers – only with stones. This creates a system of Jewish-only roads all over the West Bank. This is one of the evil faces of the occupation preventing people’s freedom of movement, making them wait for hours to be controlled by young soldiers.

It’s important to remember that the Israeli army controls both of the sides of the fence!

The Route of the Wall

The Wall is not being built on, or in most cases near, the 1967 Green Line, but rather cuts deep into the West Bank, 6–7 km from the Green Line, isolating communities into cantons, closed-off by an “Isolation Barrier”, ensuring they are surrounded on all sides.

The lands between the Wall and the Green Line have been declared by Israel as a “seam zone” whereby all residents and lands owners must obtain a permit to remain in their homes and on their lands. 11,700 people in 13 villages will be imprisoned between the Wall and the Green Line. This does not include the over 200,000 residents of East Jerusalem, who will be totally isolated from the rest of the West Bank. 98% of the settler population will be included on the Israeli side

of the fence. At the demand of the Israeli settlers, the Wall is planned to move far further to the east to include the settlements of Ariel, Emmanuel and Kedumim. This will dramatically increase the number of Palestinians who will be affected by the Wall.

The control of water sources is an important motivation for the Israeli government in stealing the land in the northern West Bank area. This land sits above the mountain aquifer (a huge underground reservoir) which is one of the main water sources for central Israel, providing 600 billion litres of water every year.

The Wall is expected to have a devastating impact on the lives of some 210,000 Palestinians living in 67 towns or villages.

If the eastern fences are built the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would live on only 12% of historic Palestine.

Creating Ghettos

The Wall encircles regions with the highest Palestinian population density into ghettos. The isolation from basic services in these areas along with the loss of land, markets, and resources, equates to an inability for communities to sustain themselves adequately and with dignity.

Farming is a primary source of income among the Palestinian communities situated along the barrier's route, an area that constitutes one of the most fertile parts of the West Bank. The harm to the farming sector will have and already has had drastic economic effects on the residents and will drive many families into poverty.

The barrier will also significantly reduce access by the population to hospitals in the nearby cities. The educational system will also be harmed because many teachers come from outside the communities in which they teach. According to the Israeli State's report from 2002, most of the Palestinians who carried out attacks in Israel entered the country through the checkpoints situated along the Green Line, and not through the open areas between checkpoints. This why the current route has little to do with the security of Israeli civilians.

In the past, Israel used "imperative military needs" to justify the expropriation of land to establish settlements and argued that the action was temporary. The settlements have for some time been facts on the ground. It is reasonable to assume that, as in the case of the settlements, the separation barrier will become a permanent fact to support Israel's future claim to take additional land.

Qalqiliya is one of the cities which has become a huge prison. The wall surrounds Qalqiliya completely, leaving one opening guarded by two checkpoints. The city, which once was the centre of commerce, is dying these days with more and more people leaving it to go to the villages, trying to live from farming.

The Wall in Jerusalem and the ring of settlements around it serves to complete the isolation of Jerusalem from the West Bank. At the same time, the Wall rips through villages and neighbourhoods, separating families, cutting social and economic ties, and ghettoizing areas. It not only separates Israelis from Palestinians but Palestinians from each other and from their livelihoods, schools, hospitals and municipal services.

A new kind of resistance against the wall Almost every morning the residents of villages located along the planned route of the separation fence wake up to the noise of the bulldozers.

In the early morning the heavy machinery rumbles into the area, surrounded by security guards and the army.

The construction of the barrier has brought new restrictions on movement for Palestinians living near the barrier's route, in addition to the widespread restrictions that have been in place since the outbreak of the current Intifada. You can term this uprising, which involves the civilian population of all ages, the "Intifada of the fence," as distinct from the more familiar one of attacks and armed fighters.

Almost every day the villagers go out to their land – men and women, young and old. They position themselves opposite the soldiers, wave flags and try to get to the machines or sit down on the ground in an attempt to block them.

Violence will usually break out after the demonstration disperses. Usually soldiers shoot rubber-coated metal bullets, shock grenades and tear gas at the crowd. Soldiers sometimes even enter the village and chase people into houses. For their part, the young people respond with stone throwing from a distance of 100 metres, and it's obvious that this is symbolic and can't really hurt anyone. Sometimes three hours of encounter go by without one stone being thrown, and then suddenly the soldiers "lose it" and start throwing tear gas and then all hell breaks loose.

The Palestinian Authority has played a very small role in the events of the past few months. The current uprising started from below, from people who watched their land being taken. In some of the events, the Palestinian demonstrators are bolstered by Israelis, ranging in number from a few individuals to dozens, mainly from the "Anarchists Against the Wall" group, and by international peace activists who also document the events on video. Although the form of organization is anarchist in the sense of there being no centralized power and with direct participatory democracy, not all the participants consider themselves anarchists.

Since the end of 2003 the group has been mostly active in supporting Palestinian demonstrations against the wall. The main aims are to reduce the threat of violence against the Palestinians and to increase media attention.

We believe that a non-violent struggle puts more pressure on the Israelis. When the army has to deal with civilians, it has to bring in a far larger number of soldiers. They can't open fire at them freely, or at least we hope not.

In spite of the best efforts by organizers, almost every week of demonstrations ends with at least a few wounded. 262 people have been injured and 5 killed in the village of Biddu, near Jerusalem. One of those killed was a boy of 11.

Since November 2003, Budrus, a small village close to the Green Line, has been the model for what has come to be called "The Third Intifada" – popular resistance to the Wall by whole villages.

In January two brothers from Budrus were arrested within a few days by the Shin Bet security services, on the grounds that "intelligence material attributes terror-supporting activity to them". However, the military justice system itself rejected this, stating that the military prosecution and the Shin Bet had misled the court by claiming that they had been involved in terrorist activity and adding that protest activity against the fence does not constitute a cause for arrest.

On March 29, at Bitunia near Ramallah, soldiers and demonstrators met on a dirt road at the entrance to the village. An army jeep tried to move forward and a group of demonstrators, with Yonatan Pollak among them, attempted to block its progress. The driver accelerated and moved forward. Two of the demonstrators managed to jump aside, but Pollak, who was in the centre, found himself on the hood of the jeep which kept going and even speeded up. It went a few

dozen metres, did a U-turn and then returned to its starting point where it slowed down and Pollak was able to jump off.

On March 12, Itai Levinsky was injured in Hirbata. The army simply fired rubber bullets like crazy. Itai was standing in front and talking to the soldiers by megaphone. At every demonstration we talk to the soldiers by megaphone and tell them that this is a quiet demonstration of Palestinians, Israelis and internationals. While Itai was talking on the megaphone he took a rubber bullet between his nose and his left eye.

The day when an Israeli will be killed is approaching. Of course, it's not worse for an Israeli to be killed than for a Palestinian, but it illustrates the escalation in the use of force. At first we thought the cameras would deter them, then we thought the presence of Israelis would be a deterrent, but now there is nothing that deters the soldiers. What they are doing now is shooting the Palestinian peace camp.

The participation of women in this struggle is unique. Palestinian women don't usually get the opportunity to get involved in political actions. The decision to let the women go to demonstrations and talk with the soldiers and block the bulldozers earned the Palestinians not only better coverage in the media but has also given the women themselves more power. I believe it is a sign of women's liberation from a very old tradition of patriarchal society. Some of the demonstrations are for women only, organized by the women of the village combining Israeli and Palestinian feminist activists.

Israeli resistance against the occupation since October 2000

Ta'ayush:

This is a joint Israeli-Palestinian group that was created after the beginning of the 2nd Intifada (October 2000). That month was one of the only cases when Palestinians who live in Israel actively resisted and raised their voices in solidarity with their brothers in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Ta'ayush ("partnership" in Arabic) do many actions in the territories — bringing food to the towns and helping farmers to work their land.

Gush Shalom:

An Israeli group that was created by Uri and Rachel Avnery after the decision of Rabin's government in 1992 to expel 415 Hamas members to Lebanon. That was an important moment for the extreme Israeli left, who started to understand that this "left" government was not what they thought or hoped it would be.

Kvisa Shchora/Black Laundry:

A group of gays and lesbians fighting together for queer rights, feminist issues, social justice and against the occupation. It was created for the Tel Aviv gay parade in 2001, a few months after the beginning of the Second Intifada. People were being murdered in the territories and we felt that we couldn't celebrate as usual. In the beginning it was not clear for leftist activists why we should come as gays to demonstrations against the Wall, but after many actions and discussions I can say that our visibility is accepted and welcome. This, I can't really say about our Palestinian partners, so in the territories we usually go back to the closet. The Mas'ha camp was unique in this aspect.

Other groups:

Other groups active in the struggle are the Women's Coalition, Machsom Watch, the Israeli Com-

mittee against House Demolitions, Rabbis for Peace, the various groups of refusniks (those young people who refuse to do any military service, reservists who refuse to serve in the occupied territories, pilots and so on – a total of more than 600 people).

Independent activists working with the ISM:

Many Israelis worked with the International Solidarity Movement, but there was a feeling of the need to make the fact that Israelis were resisting (with the same methods as the ISM). This was important both for the Israeli public and for the Palestinian public (and also internationally). Israelis also come from a different perspective and culture than the internationals and it's important to create an autonomist group resisting together with Palestinians and internationals, but as a separate group.

Anarchists Against the Wall:

After a few actions against the Wall in Israel and Palestine, a small group started to come together and build a trusted reputation of Israeli direct-action activists willing to struggle together with local Palestinians against the Wall.

In March 2003 the village of Mas'ha invited the group to build a protest tent on village land that was being stolen for the Wall (98% of Mas'ha land was taken). The protest camp was created and became a centre of struggle and information against the planned construction in the area and in the whole West Bank. Over the 4 months of the camp more than a thousand internationals and Israelis came to the camp to learn about the situation and join the struggle.

In August 2003, we found out that the constructors of the Wall intended to start work that morning inside Hani Ammer's yard at the edge of the village of Mas'ha – to construct the wall inside the yard. Several structures were to be destroyed (crippling Ammer's source of income) and the final plan was to have his yard surrounded with fences (on all four sides), and to "allow" his family and visitors to enter and exit the yard only at specific times during the day, as if it were a prison camp. Early on the morning of 5th August all structures but the house itself were destroyed. A total of more than 60 Palestinian, Israeli and international activists were sleeping in the tent on that night and they were detained and arrested. The next day, 28 Israelis came again and we managed to stop the bulldozers from destroying Hani's yard for a few hours. Then, the army arrested us all.

During the camp a direct-action group calling itself "Anarchists Against the Fence", or "Jews Against Ghettos", or simply "Anarchists Against Walls", was created. We started to do graffiti on the Wall, as well as put a giant poster on it. The group also held many joint actions across the territories, for example in Salem (July), Anin (August) and Zabube (9th November) in which we succeeded in breaking the fence. These actions built a growing reputation in the Palestinian public but got almost no attention from the Israeli press and media.

December 26, 2003 might be the turning point. That was the day on which an Israeli demonstrating against the fence, Gil Na'amati, was shot and wounded by Israeli soldiers at the village of Mas'ha. This action had a big impact on the struggle against the fence. We came to the gate of the apartheid fence built between Ma'sha and the settlement of Elkana. Against all the army's promises, during the previous few weeks the gate had stayed shut and prevented the people of Ma'sha from reaching their fields and sources of income. The soldiers started to shoot in the air and at the ground near us. In spite of all our calls and signs (in Hebrew), after 5 minutes and without any warning the soldiers started to shoot live ammunition towards us, during which Gil's legs were hit. Now, 6 months later, he still cannot walk properly. The Israeli army decided

that the soldiers who shot us were acting according to the rule that says that anyone trying to get through the fence is a threat to the lives of the people around him.

After this action we wrote: *“In Mas’ha we experienced on our own flesh the live reality of our Palestinian brothers. By shooting us Israeli activists (with live ammunition), the Israeli army took a step without precedence and crossed another red line. However, this must remind us of the daily continuing harassment by the army in the occupied territories, where the killing, the blockade, the strangulation, the invasion and the annexation do not stop. Shooting us will not deter us from continuing the active resistance to the apartheid wall and to the cruel occupation monster”*.

Because of the shock of the fact that an Israeli soldier had shot another Israeli (who was himself released from the army only a few weeks before the action), and also being almost the only Israeli movement that talks about the fact that the Jewish people are creating ghettos for other people, we started to have huge interest in our group. The Israeli media started to deal not only with the Anarchist issue, but also with the problems of the fence that used to have a very good reputation before.

A day later, a big spontaneous demonstration was held in front of the Security Minister’s office in Tel Aviv. At the same moment, 300 people started blocking the road, preventing the cars from moving. 8 people were arrested. For most of them it was their first action of disobedience.

One week later, a joint direct action with the Ta’ayush group was disturbanned by the police. They stopped 6 buses of activists and prevented us from getting into the territories to Deir Balut, a village that was imprisoned by the fence. 28 people were arrested while blocking the main settler road in the West Bank.

The protest hasn’t stopped: a few weeks ago after the invasion of Rafah, we had a very big direct action and succeeded in breaking through the checkpoint of the Gaza Strip and going inside, as a solidarity act with the people of Rafah.

On recent Palestinian Popular Resistance and its Israeli Support

Palestinian Resistance

Palestinian popular resistance is nothing new, yet in recent months it has reached a new level of development. The catalyst has been the confiscation of Palestinian land for the construction of the separation wall, the path of which stands to create enclaves containing tens of thousands of Palestinians. One of the leaders of the new type of resistance is Ayed Morrar (also known as Abu Ahmed) of Budrus, a small village close to the Green Line.

Since November 2003 Budrus has been the model for what has come to be called the Third Intifada: Popular resistance to the wall by whole villages. According to Morrar, there are several reasons why Budrus has been a model of organizing. Budrus is a small village with strong social and familial ties where the social and political leaders all know each other. So when the time came to organize a popular committee in Budrus, it happened quite naturally. Morrar stresses that it was important that the popular committee include everyone: religious leaders, members of Fatah, leaders of the mosque, school headmasters, leaders of the youth club and the civic council. Women's groups were particularly strong and vocal in demonstration in Budrus, unlike in some other villages.

In addition to the local committees, a council of 9 villages was formed to coordinate resistance among the villages. For various reasons, however, other villages where the wall was constructed did not put up an organized fight. According to Morrar, the villages that did not resist were not as unified as Budrus and also did not know exactly how to go about actually resisting the wall.

From the beginning of the demonstrations in Budrus on November 11, 2003, the popular committee made a clear decision on three principles:

- to use only peaceful means in their struggle;
- to involve the entire village; and
- to seek international and Israeli support.

The organizers were both morally committed to non-violence and also believed that it is the most effective way to struggle in this situation. Morrar explained how easy it is for a handful of soldiers to disperse a crowd throwing stones from a distance but very difficult even for large groups of soldiers to control a disciplined crowd that approaches them. Morrar's assessment is confirmed by Haaretz reporter Arnon Regular who describes "confused regular and reserve troops [facing Palestinian demonstrations], acting without a guiding hand in violation of regulations they do not know" [Haaretz, April 14, 2004].

Commentator Amos Har'el commenting in the same issue on soldiers assigned to face demonstrations concludes that "it is not hard to guess which is the least favourite mission amongst soldiers in the central command region." In contrast, the army does not suffer from confusion or lack of guidance when it resorts to the use of violence, and according to Amos Har'el at least, Israeli soldiers prefer anything, including the use of violence, to confronting non-violent demonstrations. "At first it was very hard for us to get near the soldiers. With their history and their armour and weapons we were intimidated," says Morrar, adding that "once we got past the fear, the soldiers were unable to control us and we were able to push the soldiers back a few times and stop the bulldozers." One key to maintaining unified and disciplined demonstrations in Budrus was that the leadership placed itself in front of the crowd and was always present. The level of coordination and trust was such that the people of Budrus were able to do one of the most difficult things in a demonstration, which is to walk away from a standoff without being hurt. When they wished it, they would march up to the soldiers and hold their ground for an amount of time they decided on in advance and then turn back. In that way they gained a measure of control of the situation, and preserved their energies for days on which their goals were more ambitious.

As mentioned above, certain kinds of confrontations are easier than others for the army. Therefore, the army would try to escalate the situation into a confrontation between small groups of soldiers and a crowd throwing stones from a distance of 50–100 metres.

It is probably not the case that explicit orders are given to prevent peaceful demonstrations. Rather the soldiers on the ground are effectively given permission to use tear gas, shock grenades and rubber-coated metal bullets at their discretion and given orders that make escalation inevitable. After hours in the sun, performing a frustrating job they are not equipped or prepared for, soldiers act in a predictable way to make their job easier: they escalate the confrontation.

The realization that the soldiers' job is difficult (if not impossible) does not remove their guilt. Soldiers do have the option of refusing to serve, as thousands have done before them. However, the larger part of the blame belongs to the commanders who send soldiers on missions with a predictable outcome and who set standards of conduct that allow soldiers to attack peaceful Palestinian demonstrations without fear of being disciplined. This is the sense in which it is army policy to prevent peaceful Palestinian resistance.

As further evidence one can compare army procedures when dealing with settlers. In a recent example (May 17, 2004) no fewer than 1,000 troops and police were used in the demolition of the single permanent structure in the Mitzpeh Yizhar outpost. With such huge numbers of troops, the need to escalate violence (to rubber-coated metal bullets) in order to carry out orders does not exist. It goes without saying that the army would retreat before using live fire on settlers.

In the case of Palestinian demonstrations, violence would usually break out after the demonstration disperses. Usually soldiers would shoot rubber-coated metal bullets, shock grenades and tear gas at the dispersing crowd. Soldiers would sometimes even enter the village and chase people into houses. For their part, the young people of Budrus would respond with stone throwing.

Morrar emphasizes that the demonstrations were disciplined enough to prevent stone throwing but that demonstration organizers should not be expected to be responsible for how the young people respond to army provocation after the demonstration is over. In addition, the army would often raid villages at night, arresting those they suspect of stone throwing or political organizing. Once arrested, Palestinians can be held indefinitely without trial. Morrar himself was arrested

in this way and held for 10 days. Eventually, after the intervention of a member of the Knesset, Morrar was released by a military judge who criticized the arrest in a rare move.

The price of resistance has been very high for Budrus and neighbouring villages: 6 dead and hundreds wounded. If the army succeeds in violently crushing this popular resistance, it would escalate the level of violence in two ways. First, by condemning thousands of Palestinians to life inside open-air jails and second, by making non-violent resistance impossible. Army commanders and Israeli policy makers must know this and would welcome the escalation of violence for the reasons mentioned above. The higher the level of violence, the simpler the confrontation is for the army.

On the other hand, Ayed Morrar and the other leaders of the Budrus resistance are striving in the opposite direction. As Morrar says: "We do not demonstrate against Jews, Israelis or even against soldiers. We demonstrate against the wall and the occupation. We have to act in a way that gives people a hope of freedom." That hope is both the strongest force against the escalation of violence and the strongest force of the popular resistance.

Israeli Support

Israeli resistance to the separation wall in the form of direct action and support for Palestinian demonstrations has been growing along with the construction of the wall. The group I am familiar with is best described as a spontaneous anarchist organization, which has operated under different names such as "Jews Against Ghettos" and "Anarchists Against the Wall." Although the form of organization is anarchist in the sense of no centralized power and direct participatory democracy, most participants probably do not consider themselves anarchists. While in practice being far from the anarchist ideal, the group does benefit from the main advantages of such an organization: highly motivated and creative participants and a resilience against political pressure or repression.

Since the end of 2003, the group has been mostly active in supporting Palestinian demonstrations against the wall. The main aims are to reduce the threat of violence against Palestinian demonstrators and to increase media attention. It should be made clear that the role of Israelis is that of support. The initiators and large majority of participants in the demonstrations are Palestinians, who are also the ones who suffer the brunt of the violence and repression.

Between January and May 2004, demonstrations occurred practically daily and often in more than one village. Israeli participation falls into two categories, weekdays and weekends. During the working week, construction usually goes on and the border police and army are out in force to prevent the demonstration from getting near the bulldozers. In spite of the best efforts by organizers, almost every weekday demonstration ends with at least a few wounded Palestinians. As the Christian Science Monitor reported, [May 6 2004], 262 people have been injured and 5 killed in Biddu alone.

Weekend demonstrations are relatively safe since on those days there usually is no work being done on the wall and therefore less army or border police will be present to protect the bulldozers. However Friday demonstrations are also attacked sometimes such as in Beitunia on April 16, 2004, when 17-year-old Hussein Mahmoud Hussein Awad was killed. Because of the constraints of work and school, and because of the increased risk, a relatively small number of Israelis participate in weekday demonstrations. The Friday demonstrations are quite successful in drawing

Israeli participation. The most successful Friday demonstrations have been organized mostly by Ta'ayush and have drawn hundreds of Israelis to Budrus.

One aspect of the demonstration which does not make it into the media coverage is the interaction with occupation forces. It is sometimes possible for Palestinians as well as internationals and Israelis to safely approach the soldiers and negotiate or debate with them. It is not expected that soldiers will be persuaded to immediately put down their guns and refuse to continue to serve in the army. The hope is that it will be harder for soldiers to open fire on people they have just talked to and that a residue of moral pressure will still settle in them. It should be added that while internationals and especially Israelis might have more access to soldiers, their interaction with occupation forces should be approached very carefully. In my experience, soldiers have been surprisingly open to discussion and have been frank about their dislike of what they say they must do. However, as Gadi Elgazi pointed out to me, some of that sentiment should be understood as an attempt by the soldiers to divide Israeli and Palestinian demonstrators. The danger is that any agreement or even familiarity between Israeli demonstrators and soldiers can cast doubt on the solidarity of Israeli demonstrators with Palestinians. Still, with the conscientious objector movement growing amongst Israeli soldiers it is important to keep repeating to soldiers that they can follow the thousands of others before them and refuse to serve in the occupied territories or refuse to serve at all.

The first-mentioned goal of Israeli participation in the demonstrations is the increase of safety. It is impossible to know exactly how much safety is provided by Israeli presence. However, according to a senior army officer who commands the region "there is no doubt that the introduction of Israelis into [demonstrations] changed the picture... the most significant thing to change when Israelis are around is the open fire regulations." [quoted in Haaretz weekend section April 16, 2004]

The second main goal of Israeli support of Palestinian demonstrations against the wall is to increase media attention on the popular struggle. There has, in fact, been much media attention but most of it centred on the shooting of an Israeli protester by the army in Mas'ha on December 26, 2003.

Much of the rest of the coverage was about the participation of Israelis and not about the demonstrations as such, let alone the cause of the demonstrations. Still even with such racist priorities in the press, the existence of principled Israeli opposition to the wall and its critique as a means for Palestinian dispossession are now well known in Israel – something that was not true six months ago.

The over-attention on Israeli demonstrators is motivated in part by the Israeli press' familiarity with the Israeli propaganda device known as "shooting and crying". By this device, domestic criticism is used as evidence of the liberalism and ultimate benevolence of "the only democracy in the Middle East." Indeed, a receptive Haaretz readership always feels flattered by depoliticised depictions of the beautiful Israeli leftie. In this way, just as with familiarity with soldiers, so over-familiarity with the Israeli press can corrupt Israeli dissidents.

There are several obstacles to the organizing of Israeli support of Palestinian popular resistance. It is a reflection of deep racism that permeates Israeli society that even after the army shot several Israelis and very nearly killed one of them, many potential supporters have to overcome their fear of the Palestinians they would be supporting rather than fear of the army. For those who do come out and support the Palestinian struggle, the reception has been completely positive – almost overwhelmingly so. This type of refutation of Israeli racist assumptions (about the

hostility of Palestinians to individual Israelis for example) is perceived as a novelty and thus is one reason for the amount of attention given to the demonstrations.

Another typical obstacle to drawing more Israeli support for Palestinian popular resistance is the particular opinion received by those more sophisticated than us. It is the idea that political activism is generally futile. This idea is communicated with empathy in the form of “very good of you, but do you think any of it makes a difference?” The almost universal prevalence of this idea generally reflects the anti-democratic tendencies in societies where people are governed by other people and is not unique to Israel. It is both personally convenient and convenient for governments when people believe that their role is essentially as spectator. The fact that the belief in political impotence is a product of indoctrination and personal psychology is reflected in the fact that it is typical exactly for those who do have the most political power and as such are subject to the most indoctrination.

One more indication of the power of the myth of political impotence is that as soon as this myth is refuted, political action suddenly becomes very attractive. In this particular case, the relatively large amount of media attention, (in spite of it being mostly derogatory) did give the impression that these actions have an effect and consequently the interest in joining the actions increased dramatically.

As mentioned above, media attention has a corrupting effect. While it is essential, it is dangerous for political action to be directed by a quest for media attention. On the contrary, much of the work of resistance is the unglamorous tedious work of political organizing. In many ways organizing is harder, more important and more democratic than the work that can be done by small groups of people. The true of success of direct forms of resistance is success in organizing a growing number of people.

At this point Palestinian popular resistance is in need of more Israeli support. Given the effect that a relatively small group of activists has had, it seems possible to increase significantly the political and material cost of constructing the wall. This effort does not really require an intellectual contribution (if this term even makes sense) in the form of literary metaphors or marketing expertise. The Israeli support effort requires resources and an honest effort on the part of Israelis. It requires more people, more creativity, more money and more work.

Kobi Snitz

The author is a member of Anarchists Against the Wall and the Department of Mathematics of the Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva

ACCIDENTAL INTERVIEW OF AN ANARCHIST

This is an interview from 13th August 2004 between a British activist of the International Solidarity Movement and Raz, a member of the Anarchists Against the Wall during a break in the ISM march along the route of the Apartheid Wall in Palestine. The questions are by the interviewer and the editorial collective of the British anarchist journal, Freedom.

It would be wrong to call “Anarchists Against the Wall” an organization in the formal sense, and they themselves would probably prefer not to have this label. The label was assumed by and for the Israeli media once their actions came to its attention. It was clear from the interview that they would prefer just to be seen as anarchists and as anarchists, opposition to the wall would automatically follow. Shortly after the interview was conducted, two of them initiated a direct action at the Wall and smashed through two gates, one of which was electrified (it’s electrified for warning purposes and is not mortal). The action was given the encouragement and consent of local Palestinians and had Palestinian participation, but nevertheless demonstrated the special role the Israeli anarchists play in the unarmed struggle. As Israeli citizens they are in far more danger from the IDF and the legal system than international activists, but then again, as Israeli citizens they are more passionate in their opposition too.

What size is the organization and what are its main functions?

Raz: We are at demonstrations and actions once or twice a week, and on these demos there are generally 10 to 15 of us. The organization is really more of a network for anarchists who want to do direct actions, and we have about 100 active people on the contact list. As for our functions, they change with the Palestinians. Up until December last year we concentrated on direct actions against the Wall – cutting and forcing open gates, but we have slowly changed somewhat after two big events: after the end of the Mas’ha peace camp which led to a radicalisation of people and for the fence-cutting and gate-forcing actions, and the popular uprising in Budrus. In Budrus we moved towards popular uprising happily; we were invited to take part in daily demonstrations and resistance by the community members themselves, and it was really cool to see the community rising up together. Since then we have tried to combine this sort of work with our direct action – this march could be considered part of this.

How has the State reacted since your creation?

In the first two actions we had, in Zubaba and Anin, there was no State intervention. Then in Mas’ha on the 26th September the army shot an anarchist in both legs. One activist was arrested after a demo and another one had to sign a contract promising not to damage the Wall again (interviewers note: the Israeli security forces are fond of such contracts, and are a useful propaganda tool for the Israeli public – they have the dual purpose of making the IDF seem calm and reasonable and the prisoner, normally uncharged, seems guilty by association). A few activists have been interrogated by the Shabak (THE secret service). On demos the police are always trying to arrest the Israelis now. It won’t be too long before someone gets a serious

prison sentence. We are under surveillance as well, which we know from experience. The Shabak are really on our back with monitoring and stopping actions before they happen. If they know where and when we will cross through the wall into Palestine, all they have to do is notify the checkpoint or get the taxi we are in stopped on the way. When the International Court of Justice trial of the Wall began in the Hague on the 23rd February we got stopped on our way to a demo twice using different routes. We ended up going back to Tel Aviv and doing the demo outside the Defence Ministry building there, which is basically like a massive military pound in the middle of town. A few people blocked the road and stopped their cars from coming out. 12 people were arrested for this. Many have been charged with assaulting police for passive resistance. The trial will be in September and I think this is where the legal system will catch up with us.

How much support – if any – do you have within Israel?

Actually we do have some support from individuals in Israel. We do not have the official support of any groups, but individuals within different Israeli peace groups and also some journalists. After the Mas'ha shooting incident, where Gil Na'amati was shot in both legs by an IDF sniper, there were a few big demos supporting us and against the treatment of the IDF of Israeli demonstrators. In one demo, road number 5 leading to the settlement of Ariel was blocked by hundreds of activists from all sorts of Israeli peace groups for about 2 hours. Internationally? There was a benefit gig organized for us in Amsterdam 2 months ago. Against a few months ago two of us toured Europe giving lectures and were able to collect some donations, too.

Was this tour within the anarchist community in the countries visited?

No, it was not explicitly anarchist. It was more about telling people the realities, about the Wall and the Occupation.

How do you see the situation developing?

With continuing land confiscations and continued extension to the fences. I do not see it getting any better. It looks like the resistance in Israel (especially in the government) to removing any settlements means the fence will go up, and go up where it is now. That means well beyond the Green Line (the so-called Palestinian side ... for those who choose to take sides). Er, don't get me wrong – I don't want the Wall anywhere at all. For the situation in general, it won't come anywhere near peace whilst there are still settlements, and government.

Have you considered doing actions at settlements then?

No. The settler security would probably shoot us, and what would be the point if they didn't? The residents wouldn't listen to what we have to say. These people think what they are doing is the will of god. The army are reasonable in comparison.

What are the group's intentions for the future? Is there a particular direction the group is moving in or would like to move in?

No. We initiate together or at least agree on the same principles, even though at the end it's always their call 'coz it's their life and they are the ones to suffer mostly from the occupation Palestinian initiatives basically (interviewers note: like the ISM in this respect). We participate in their initiatives, but we always try to be involved in the planning and decision-making too.

Do you expect to grow in size?

Not really. We have really just united anarchists interested in direct action in Israel/Palestine, I don't think that we have created any new ones!

This brings me to my next question; for you personally, what came first – opposition to the occupation or anarchism?

Opposition to the occupation.

Do you see it as natural that anarchists would support the struggle and your participation then? I'm playing the devil's advocate, but isn't this a national liberation struggle, with a lot of religious and nationalistic dominance?

I expect anarchists to support the struggle. This is not a national liberation struggle it is a human rights struggle. Well, it is a national liberation struggle, but first of all it's a human rights struggle for freedom and equality and that's what matters to me.

The right answer! In that case would you like to extend an invitation to anarchists to come out and work with you?

Sure. It's not something we actively do, but we have houses and places for people to stay. It's definitely a possibility.

Do you have a message for the international anarchist community – they all read Freedom of course!

If they see this struggle as part of their struggle they are welcome here. We would like to have more contact with other organizations internationally. I know it's a bit shitty, but money always helps too. We have a website I think, but I can't remember the address – there's a link to it off onestruggle.org, an Israeli animal rights and anarchist website. It's probably best to email me at barvazduck@yahoo.com – and that's for anything, not just if you want to give some money.

Final question, then. Are there any Palestinian anarchists?

Apparently yes! Some people said they met Palestinian anarchists in Balata refugee camp (Nablus). Some people we work with are secretly anarchists though they won't admit it! Perhaps you should ask them?

THE PEACEFUL WAY WORKS BEST: THE EXAMPLE OF BUDRUS

There's a remote little village in the West Bank that decided to behave differently. A village whose residents decided not to lament and not to blow themselves up. They chose another way between violence and surrender.

The residents of the village of Budrus, west of Ramallah and close to the Green Line, chose to wage a non-violent struggle against the separation fence that is being built on its land. The whole village has pitched in — the Hamas and Fatah members, the old and the young, men and women, and for three months they have been going down by the hundreds to their olive groves every week, to demonstrate against the uprooting of their trees and the encircling of the residents.

The IDF and the Border Police have been faced with an unfamiliar phenomenon: What are they supposed to do about hundreds of unarmed, non-violent residents slowly descending toward the bulldozers, with women and children leading the pack, and a handful of Israeli and international volunteers sprinkled among them, approaching to within touching distance of the armed soldiers? Should they shoot to kill? Shoot to injure?

So far, the IDF has fired, but less — no one has been killed, and about 100 people have been injured, most of them lightly, in the course of about 25 demonstrations over a two-month period. Most of the injuries were from batons and rubber bullets, like in the old days. Twelve villagers have been arrested, and nine of them are still in jail, for participating in clearly non-violent demonstrations. This, too, is a violation of the IDF's rules, as one military judge noted when he refused to send one of the leaders of this pacifist revolt to administrative detention. The arrested man's brother, however, was sent straight to administrative detention by another military judge.

But the most important point is that the construction work on the fence near the village has been stopped, for now. Budrus against the occupation.

Budrus against the separation fence, which will encircle the village on all sides and cut it off, like eight other villages slated to be enclosed in fenced-in enclaves opposite Ben-Gurion Airport. The fence could have been built along the Green Line, several hundred meters from the present route, but Israel had other ideas — about the vineyards, about the olives, about life. Today, or tomorrow, the quarrying and paving work will resume, and so will the protest demonstrations.

Will this remote village become a milestone in the struggle over the fence? Will the residents of Budrus herald a change to non-violence in the Palestinian struggle against the occupation? Or, in a week or two, will the separation fence cut off life in this village, too, and show that non-violence doesn't pay, with the scene in Budrus soon becoming a forgotten episode?

Cacti wherever you look. Old stone houses standing alongside half-built ones that will never be completed. Things look promising as you enter the village, but the further inside you go, the more the reality hits you.

After the last house, from within the olive groves, is the sight that is frightening the residents: the rising orange of the bulldozers, blotches of colour in the wadi cutting into the rock, digging

up and scarring, and after them the steamrollers and the heavy trucks. Olive trees whose tops have been cut off stand in mute testimony to the work of the bulldozers so far. This is where the fence will pass. Through these olive groves. One fence to the west of them and another to the east of them, leaving them stuck, imprisoned in the middle. Why? Because.

“If the fence were on the mountain, it would give more security,” ventures Iyad Ahmed Morrar, a leader of the protest in Budrus, whose two brothers are in administrative detention. “But they want a fence in the wadi. Common sense says that if you want a security fence, put it on the mountain and not in the wadi. But they want to destroy the land and the olives. What difference would it make if they moved 200 meters toward the Green Line?”

Before 1948, Budrus had approximately 25,000 dunams. Of that, 20,000 went to Israel and the village was left with about 5,000. Now, according to Morrar’s calculations, about another 1,000 dunams will be stolen. The construction work near the groves has stopped for now, but is continuing not far away, toward the neighbouring village of Qibiya. But it’s not just the fate of the land that is worrying the village, which hasn’t had a resident killed since 1993. What’s more worrisome is how the fence will effectively choke off the village.

Morrar: “The fence will be around nine villages. Ramallah is our mother and only one gate will lead to it. And what if the soldier is on a coffee break? Or off smoking a cigarette? Maybe he’ll lock the gate so he can go to the bathroom. Maybe there will be a problem in Tel Aviv and they’ll close the gate. And then you won’t be able to get to the university, to the hospital or to work, and in the end, people will start to live where they work. If someone gives me a job, and I come one day and not the next, in the end he’ll tell me to stay there where the job is or be fired. People will start thinking about having to stay where their job is. And the student and the sick person will start thinking the same way.”

This is what the village is the most afraid of – a “willing” transfer; of life being made so difficult that they’ll be compelled to move east. A 1,000-year-old village. That’s why the fence is here. In Budrus, they’re convinced that Prime Minister Sharon is continuing what Captain Sharon began: In Qibiya, he tried it with dynamite, now he’s trying it with a fence. The objective is the same: to move them away from the Green Line, especially in the vicinity of Ben-Gurion airport. What can they do?

“Demonstrate in a peaceful manner,” says Morrar the rebel.

It all began on November 9, when construction work first started here. Since then, they’ve been demonstrating and demonstrating, always in a peaceful manner. Sometimes once a week, sometimes every day; sometimes the entire village; sometimes only the women and children.

They walk down through the groves toward the route of the fence and get as close as possible to the soldiers and Border Police officers. Morrar likes to describe the little rebellion, stage after stage, almost hour after hour.

How they once stood there for a whole day, how they brought lunch and ate in front of the soldiers, how they were beaten with batons and rifle butts.

He records every detail: During one demonstration in December, he counted 15 humvees, six Border Police jeeps, two blue police jeeps and another two military jeeps inside the village, 25 jeeps altogether. At another demonstration, the officer declared the area a closed military zone.

Morrar: “They had a letter in Hebrew – maybe about this area, maybe about the whole village, maybe about the whole world, declaring a closed military zone. They said they’d impose a curfew if we did anything.” He also talks about how they managed to go out to the land despite the curfew and to demonstrate in front of the bulldozers.

We decide to go down now toward the route that has already been paved. Morrar remains behind. “If there are too many of us, they’ll think it’s a demonstration.” The last demonstration was last Friday; tear gas canisters are still scattered about. The residents know the work is going to resume soon. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow. Here are the red markings on the ground. They have scouts on the balconies of the outer houses of the village, who will report if they see something. The tread marks left by the bulldozers are still visible in the mud. From here, the route is supposed to ascend toward the olive groves, another four kilometres. The first trees have already been uprooted. Yesterday was Tu Bishvat (Jewish arbour day).

A group of volunteers from the International Solidarity Movement, along with two young Israelis, accompany us through the olive groves, but they do not go down toward the fence route. They are staying in the village now, preparing for what is to come. Today they’re here, tomorrow they’ll be in the next village that the fence is approaching. Young dreamers and fighters who pay 20 shekels a night to stay in a rented apartment in the village. Yonatan Pollak of Anarchists Against the Fence, a 21-year-old with blue eyes, dimples, acne scars, a worldview and a past: Europe is already closed to him because of anti-globalization demonstrations he participated in there. He pulls a black sleeve over the tattoos on his arm. He won’t buy an Israeli soda in the village grocery store. While his contemporaries are standing at checkpoints and deciding which woman in labour to let pass and which not, he is here, with the Budrus residents, in their struggle.

We return to the village. The Amhassein family’s two-story house: the family on the first floor, the chickens on the second. The mother, Suriya, just returned from Mecca and the house has been decorated in her honour.

The children play loudly at recess at the school at the edge of the village. The fence will pass right behind the border of the school and the border of the nearby cemetery. Mighty Israel is spread out all around: Modi’in, Ramle, Shoham, Rosh Ha’ayin — and on a clear day, you can even make out the Shalom Tower in Tel Aviv. And on the other side, to the east, Kiryat Sefer, Nili, Na’aleh. “Tell me, could the fence go into the cemetery?” Morrar asks.

A meeting at his home: About 20 women sit in the yard of the attractive house on the edge of the green valley and plan the exhibition they want to stage here on the 23rd of the month, the first day of hearings on the fence in the International Court in The Hague. Half the women came from Salfit and half are from the village. They sit in the shade of the banana tree in Morrar’s yard and talk about the exhibit of olivewood products they will present in a tent in the centre of the village. Maybe people from all over the world will come to see. A Swedish member of parliament was already arrested here by the IDF. Morrar says that the exhibition will include a dove carved out of olivewood. They’re also planning a demonstration of children soon.

Morrar: “We’ve learned lessons — where we did good and where we did bad. They [the Israelis] have also learned lessons. Maybe they’ll strengthen the curfew more when they’re working. But our plan is to defend our land and our trees in a peaceful manner. Sometimes among our people there are a lot of ideas about what to do against the occupation. We here have chosen a different strategy. Our strategy in this small village is that we’re turning things over. In the north, from Jenin until Budrus, there were Israeli and international demonstrators, supported by Palestinians.

But here, we think that it’s our problem and that we have to defend our land and do something, and the Israelis and international protesters are only supporting us. First the Palestinians, and then the internationals. We are very grateful for Israeli and international support, but the Palestinians have to make a stand. We’re adopting a special strategy, a peaceful strategy. The

Hamas here, too. In the beginning, they walked with their green flags in the demonstrations. After the first three demonstrations, we only carry the flag of Palestine. Everyone together. In a totally peaceful way. We also all agreed on one thing: We are not against the Israelis and not against the Jews and not against the soldiers. We are only against the occupation. We are against the bulldozers. And we in Budrus believe that killing is easier than crying. But just crying over the land isn't enough. A peaceful demonstration is stronger than killing. If you stand before the Israeli soldier, right beside him, you'll be stronger.

If someone asks: Why peaceful? I tell him: I've tried all the ways and the peaceful way works best. The worst thing is to kill the innocent. That's the worst thing in the world. They kill day and night and say that we are terrorists. But we need all the world to be on our side. I'm against killing people. All people, Jews and Arabs. I'm not afraid or ashamed to say that. That's why I'm demonstrating peacefully against the fence."

Gideon Levy

This article was published in Haaretz, February 11, 2004

PEACEFULLY CONFRONTING THE WALL IN BUDRUS

The International Court of Justice's (ICJ) decision against Israel's Apartheid Wall is an important step forward. It will not matter on the ground because Israel ignores many international decisions, but it will increase people's trust in the justice of our struggle and their support for our cause.

The Wall will affect my family as it affects many Palestinians. I live in Budrus, a village of 1,200 people, west of Ramallah. The Wall will completely surround Budrus and eight other villages, separating us from the rest of the West Bank, with just one gate connecting us to Ramallah.

We fear that the gate will only be open for a few hours, like in other places where the Wall is finished. So if someone misses the opening they will spend the night outside their home waiting. There are no hospitals, universities, or civil institutions in these nine villages, and many of the people work in Ramallah. The Wall will prevent thousands of Palestinians from going to work, school, universities, and hospitals.

We already live in a prison, surrounded by settlements and checkpoints. So it is hard for me to imagine a Wall surrounding my village and the eight other villages. It will become a prison within a prison. As a young Palestinian woman, I dream of becoming a doctor, as we in Palestine don't have enough doctors. However, the Wall may prevent me from studying in a university.

On November 23, 2003, Wall construction started in Budrus, and we immediately began holding peaceful demonstrations opposing it. The Israeli authorities planned to take 250 acres of Budrus' land and bulldoze our olive groves. The day construction began, the soldiers formed a line to prevent us from reaching the bulldozers, but I was able to cut through the line and sit in front of the bulldozer.

Surrounded by dozens of soldiers, I was afraid, until one of the international demonstrators joined me in front of the bulldozer. Three soldiers then left the line to remove me, opening the way for others to join us. As others came, the bulldozer left the field. We stopped Wall construction that day.

We protested peacefully for three months until March 1, when the Israeli authorities said they would move the Wall to the Green Line, so that Budrus would not lose land. Recently, the Israeli authorities told us that they still want to take 44 acres of our land, and Budrus and eight other villages will also still be surrounded by the Wall. So we will continue to struggle against the theft of our land.

Though our demonstrations were peaceful, the Israeli soldiers wounded 102 persons. They used sound bombs, teargas, and rubber-coated steel bullets, and beat men and women with clubs. In Biddu and Beitunia, villages near Jerusalem, Israeli soldiers killed six people during protests against the Wall.

The Israeli military tried to stop Budrus' peaceful protests by arresting leaders and participants. Thirteen men from Budrus, including my father, two uncles, two cousins, and a 15-year-old classmate were arrested.

The soldiers' violence scares me, but to make my dreams a reality I have to participate in the peaceful struggle against that Wall. I cannot imagine a future without an independent Palestinian state, but if this Wall is completed, our state will be born in several separate pieces.

Non-violent resistance against the Wall requires everyone. Our entire community participated in protests, men with women, elders with children, and Palestinians with Israelis and internationals.

I had never dealt with Israelis as friends before. Israelis were always occupiers and soldiers. During the first demonstration I met three women who became my first Israeli friends. They believe the Wall will not bring them security, and they wish more Israelis would see what is happening on the ground. I now have many Israeli friends. A friendly relationship between Palestinians and Israelis is important, because I look to the future when there will be a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders next to Israel. Security and understanding requires friendship.

The ICJ's decision reaffirms our right to struggle against the Wall, and encourages me to continue. We in Budrus and in many other West Bank villages are already implementing the ICJ decision on the ground through protests. Please support us in ending this oppressive Israeli military occupation of our land.

Iltezam Morrar

Iltezam Morrar is a 15-year-old student, living in the Palestinian village of Budrus, near Ramallah. This article appeared in The Electronic Intifada, 16 July 2004.

DOSSIER: DOCUMENTS OF THE “ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL”

ANNOUNCEMENT BY ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL

25th December 2003

[The following message was distributed before details of Gil's injuries were known. He lost consciousness after being shot with live bullets in the legs, one of which was broken, and was taken for treatment by ambulance. Everything was photographed by both still and video camera.]

No to the ghetto that's being built by Jews!

No to walls between people!

Stop the occupation!

Israeli, Palestinians and international activists!

Bringing down the apartheid wall in Mash'a!

At this moment, Friday afternoon (seventh candle of Hanukkah), dozens of activists are tearing apart and breaking down the gate of the apartheid wall which is also known as the “separation fence”, to enable free passage for the people of Mas'ha to their lands. The activists, equipped with tools, are breaking through the gate that has remained closed since the wall was built two months ago. The farmers, whose land is on the other side of the fence, were told that they would be able to cross through the gate to work their lands. That promise turned out to be a methodical, crude and cruel lie. All along the suffocating wall the gates remain blocked and the Palestinian residents remain with no access to their only source of income.

The army is present at the Mas'ha village gates which are located next to the Elkana settlement and yet it is not clear how the confrontation between the army and the activists will end. The activists are calling for joint active resistance by Israelis and Palestinians against the ghettoizing policy that the Israeli government is pursuing.

The action is being held as a part of the Alternative Protest Camp Against The Apartheid Wall that started a week ago in Deir Balut. The camp hosts Israelis and Palestinians, and is located on the path of the Apartheid Wall, on the land of the village's elementary school. (Building of the school was stopped due to the land being confiscated for the building of the wall.)

We invite the media that follows Ariel Sharon's promises for the so-called evacuation of the settlements, to come and see for themselves the land confiscation and settlement expansion operation that is operating these days. Deir Balut protest camp and other protest actions that are taking place and that will take place in the future will provide a live and kicking alternative to the occupying, stealing and confiscation actions that the Sharon government and the Israeli army are responsible for.

ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL

“ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL” LEAFLET

29th December 2004

[A leaflet distributed during a demonstration on the evening of 29th December 2004 in front of the Israeli War Office in Tel Aviv in protest at the shooting of a comrade during the direct action against the wall at Mas’ha the previous day.]

NO TO THE GHETTOS!

NO TO THE WALL BETWEEN PEOPLE!

END THE OCCUPATION!

Yesterday we experienced the reality of our Palestinian brothers. The shooting of Israeli activists by the Israeli army sees them crossing a red line never crossed before, but it must remind us of the daily atrocities of the army in the occupied regions. This weekend too the killings, the closures, the strangulation, the invasion and the annexation continue. Their shooting us will not deter us from continuing to actively resist the Apartheid Wall being built before our eyes. Yesterday we broke through the gate at Mas’ha, but it must be remembered that all along the route of the wall the gates stay locked and the Palestinian people remain with no access to their source of income. We will continue to try to block the occupation with our bodies, to open a breach in the wall of hatred, and with our actions to provide a lively and kicking alternative to the ghetto policy of the Israeli government.

We express solidarity with our comrade Gil from Kibbutz Reim who was shot by the Israeli army, just a few weeks after he was released from army service. Gil was hit in both legs by live ammunition and was taken unconscious to Beilinson Hospital and diagnosed there as being in serious condition. Today, Saturday, Gil has regained consciousness for the first time and was able to smile and talk. The condition of his legs is still not clear. We send him our wishes for a quick recovery.

We express our solidarity with our comrade Yonatan from Tel Aviv, held by the Ariel police since the action as he refused to sign a commitment not to enter the occupied territories for three months. He is scheduled to be brought on Saturday to court in Rishon-LeTzion in order to prolong his detention. We call here for the immediate release of Yonatan.

Description of the direct action:

At about 1.00 pm we came to the gate of the apartheid fence built between the village of Mas’ha and the illegal settlement of Elkana. In spite of army promises, throughout the last few weeks the gate stayed shut and prevented the inhabitants of Mas’ha from reaching their fields and sources of income. It was a non-violent demonstration in which we wanted to make a symbolic act of protest against the building of the fence and the closure of the gate. To our astonishment, the soldiers started to throw big stones at us, then they shot in the air and at the ground near us. In spite of our calls “do not shoot, this is a non-violent demonstration, we have no intention of hurting you!”, and the holding high of placards in Hebrew against the wall, after just a few minutes and without warning the soldiers started to shoot (using live ammunition) towards the bodies of the demonstrators. It was during this shooting that Gil’s legs were hit. In contradiction to the army spokesperson, no teargas was fired towards us and no warnings were given by the soldiers. They did not communicate with us in any way before shooting to hit with live ammunition.

The activity was carried out as part of the protest camp against the wall started a week ago in the village of Deir Balut in Samaria. The camp is inhabited 24 hours a day by Israeli and Palestinian people and is located on the route of the apartheid wall, within the half-built school

of Deir Balut. The building of the school was stopped after confiscation of its land, needed for the building of the wall. We invite the media who believe in the promises of the prime minister Ariel Sharon, about the so-called evacuation of illegal settlements, to come and see for themselves the project of land annexation and the ongoing expansion of settlements.

ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL

CALL FOR ACTION BY “ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL”

2nd January 2004

WITH OUR BODIES AND YELLS WE WILL BLOCK THE WALL!

You are invited to join us in an active demonstration at the Deir Balut village in Samaria (south of the village of Mas’ha) next Saturday, 3rd January 2004. Israelis, Palestinians and internationals together, we will protest against the continuing building of the apartheid wall and the cruel trigger-happy soldiers of the Israeli army in the occupied territories.

In recent days, building of the wall in the Deir Balut region has resumed. According to the present route, the people of the villages of Deir Balut, az-Zawia and Rafat will be jailed in an enclave isolated from the south, east and west. When the wall is completed, the only way the villagers will be able to reach the nearby city of Ramallah (to the south) will be through far-away Nablus (to the north).

We will march together towards the Israeli army’s roadblock on the road to Ramallah and restrict the free travel of the inhabitants of the region. The soldiers of the Israeli army who man the roadblock are systematically abusing the Palestinian population. One week ago (22 December) the roadblock soldiers prevented a seven-months’ pregnant Palestinian from reaching hospital. This resulted in the abortion of her twin fetuses at the roadblock. A few weeks earlier, soldiers vandalized a taxi passing through the roadblock for a debt of 200 Shekels (\$45) of the driver. The soldiers pelted the taxi with stones, tore the upholstery and stole items including money.

In the direct action against the wall in Mas’ha the previous Friday we experienced with our own flesh the live reality of our Palestinian brothers. By shooting Israeli activists (with live ammunition), the Israeli army took a step without precedent and crossed another red line. However, this must remind us of the daily continuing harassment by the army in the occupied territories, where the killing, the blockade, the strangulation, the invasion and the annexation do not stop. Shooting us will not deter us from continuing our active resistance to the apartheid wall being built before our eyes, and to the cruel occupation monster.

On Friday we breached the gate at Mas’ha. It must be remembered that along the route of the wall the gates are kept shut and the Palestinian inhabitants remain without access to their means of livelihood. We will continue with our efforts to block the occupation with our bodies and to open a breach in the wall of hatred. Not even live ammunition will deter us.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO RESIST THE GHETTO BUILDING POLICY IMPLEMENTED BY THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WITH ONE SOLE AIM – THE TRANSFER OF THE PALESTINIAN POPULATION.

The action on Saturday will be the climax of the protest camp against the wall built two weeks ago at Deir Balut. The camp, with 24-hour presence of Israeli and Palestinians is located on the

route of the apartheid wall in the compound of a school whose construction was stopped because of the confiscation of the area for the building of wall. The camp is used as a base for non-violent protest activities and an information centre about the wall building and its harm it is causing.

We call for those who are lured by sham promises about the evacuation of settlements, who believe in the army declarations about cosmetic changes to the cruel route of the wall and who believe the lies about the pseudo-security aims of the fence, to come and see with their own eyes the land annexation project and the expansion of settlements, being carried on even in these days.

THE PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI RESISTANCE WILL CONTINUE AS LONG AS THE OCCUPATION WHICH BREEDS THE TERROR IS NOT STOPPED.

Anarchists Against the Wall

ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL DECLARATION

5th January 2004

In these days, with the building of the system of fences, ditches and the wall of separation which robs the fields and leaves people in enclaves without the necessary means of existence, when hundreds of thousands are cut off from health and education facilities and essential infrastructure and are forced to choose between “voluntary” transfer or death, it is our duty as human beings to struggle against this crime.

We forced open the gate at Mas’ha to open a gap in the wall of hatred and to provide with our actions a living, kicking alternative to the apartheid policy of the Israeli government. We, to whom the future of this land is important, regard the system of fences and a separation wall not only as a huge disaster for the Palestinian people, but also as a direct threat for us and for anyone who desires a peaceful and secure life. This is not a security fence. This is a racist apartheid fence that will cause bloodshed for all of us for many years to come.

We try to live in our daily lives the changes we are striving for. We work in a spirit of full cooperation, without leaders. Our decisions are arrived at by consensus and everyone contributes according to their ability. We believe that justice and equality are arrived at by voluntary agreement between people and that the State is only an aggressive tool of dominant ethnic/class groups.

We are realists and understand that the abolition of the State system will not occur tomorrow, but even today we can already demand a way of life with “no rulers and no ruled”, “no masters and no slaves”. Direct action is the democratic act when democracy stops functioning. The Berlin wall was not dismantled by rulers and agreements, but by the citizens who felled it with their own hands.

Since we can remember, we have been brainwashed with hatred and fear of our Palestinian neighbours. We have not gone for trips in the countryside without armed escort. We were told that our hand is extended for peace but there is no-one to talk to. But these lies were exposed and are clear for every one who participates in the actions against the occupation to see. We have slept together beneath the olive trees (before they were uprooted), we have marched together to the fence and we will continue to struggle together — Israelis, Palestinians and internationals, for justice and equality for all.

For years, good people claim that when the transfer is enacted, they will lie down in front of the wheels of the trucks and buses to block that crime. But, the transfer is already happening

now! Depriving thousands of people of the minimal means of existence does not leave them any alternative. Thousands are leaving their villages to find food for their children. The ethnic cleansing is occurring before our eyes and we have only one option: to use the few rights we still have from the remnants of Israeli democracy and break the racist, immoral laws. Yes, to break the gates and fences, to block the bulldozers with our bodies, to enter closed-off military areas, and also to transform the enemy into our friend. Palestinian and Israeli resistance will continue as long as the occupation, which is the infrastructure/root of the terror, continues.

Anarchists Against the Wall

STATEMENT BY THE “MAAVAK EHAD/ONE STRUGGLE” COLLECTIVE

LEFT, RIGHT, TURN BACK!

Before leftist activists take to the streets with vigils against the settlements or the oppression of the Palestinians, and in order for them to even be able to formulate a real alternative to the Apartheid policies, massive land theft and low-profile transfer which we are witnessing these days, they must first identify the social conditions that enable the current right-wing government to imprison, starve, wound and kill the Palestinian people. The left must also recognize and understand its own role in creating and prolonging these conditions. Contrary to the political conditions which make current policies possible (a simple arithmetic majority in the Israeli parliament), social conditions have much stronger, deeper roots (historical, cultural), and enjoy an equally strong hold within the left as they do within the right.

These conditions are interconnected and weaved with one another, however it is possible to isolate two main ones, which are at the heart of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians: Zionism and Militarism.

The Israeli left cannot become an obstacle for the brutality of Ariel Sharon's government (or Barak, or Netanyahu or Rabin before him), because its hands are tied in blind obedience to the demands, needs and to the very viewpoint of the Israeli army. The leftist camp declares it does not believe in a military solution to the conflict, but with the same breath declares also that it intends to join the army and give it full, unconditional support, no matter what. Thus, in its willingness always and as a matter of principle to hand itself over to military service, the left neutralizes its own potential to halt the Militaristic carnage. If Israeli prime ministers throughout history, from both the left and the right, hadn't known that the army is a sacred "apolitical" tool at their disposal, enjoying sweeping popular support, they would not have been able to depend on it so readily and easily, and one can assume they would have had to stick more rigidly to the road of negotiation and true diplomatic solutions.

We ask, what credibility is there for people who realize that military force is not a solution, and who witness today the high, ever-growing number of victims and the vast destruction that the attempts to implement it bring, and yet are still willing (as well as demand of others) to serve in the army: to become cogs in the very same machine that creates and perpetrates these ill-fated attempts?

A good example of the hegemony of Militarism in Israel is that group of people labelled "Refusniks". As a whole, members of this group are not conscientious objectors in the true meaning

of the term, as it is in the rest of the world, meaning people who do not believe in war and combat. The “Refusniks” merely refuse to serve in the occupied territories. They are ripe with the disease of Militarism, since they do not question, not even for a second, the legitimacy of the Israeli “Defence” Force, and do not challenge the legitimacy of war as a means to solve national conflicts. They are willing to serve the war machinery, to kill and be killed by command, as long as they, personally, do not have to march their little feet across this or that geographic line (in this case the “Green Line”: Israel’s border prior to the 1967 war and its subsequent occupational misadventure).

The rest of the left, institutions such as “Peace Now” and “Meretz”, are even more captivated than the “Refusniks” by that old myth according to which joining the Israeli army is not a political act or statement. The uniform and unit pride, like the baton, the rifle and the tank, are not “neutral”.

Lending a hand to any and all of these means actively supporting the suffering, wreckage and death they sow among non-Jewish populations. For the more than two thousand Palestinians killed since the beginning of the el-Aqsa Intifada alone, for their families and for the tens of thousands injured, dispossessed and the homeless “our forces” have created – for them there is no comfort in the fact that the soldiers who inflicted this upon them did not do it out of “malice”. It does not make an ounce of difference whether those who are crushing their cities under armoured bulldozers, imprisoning them in their homes at gunpoint for weeks and dropping bombs on them from the sky, are “right wingers” or “leftists”, racists or humanists, believe in military solutions or not. In the talk shows on our TV screens the difference might seem significant, but if it was us standing in the shoes of the people in the occupied territories, we would no doubt finally understand the simple fact that there is, in all honesty, no difference at all.

The second social condition paralyzing the leftist camp from rising up against the killing, along with the sanctity of the IDF, is Zionism.

In the official stance and even slogans of mainstream Zionist leftists, one can detect a certain thesis: “Let us pull out of the occupied territories and all will be well” says a student group, “Leave the territories, return to our senses” exclaims the Peace Coalition, and so forth. The thesis is that the military conquest and occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were and still are something “alien” to the State of Israel, a kind of isolated historical “mistake” committed in the past, for reasons supposedly unrelated to the nature and essence of Zionism, and if we were only to pull out of them then everything would fall into place and back to normal. The truth, however, is not that simple.

Long before the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1967 (almost twenty years before), in what the Zionists call “The War of Independence” and the Palestinian people call “El Nakba” (The Disaster), close to 500 Palestinian villages were destroyed by Zionist armed forces (villages which today have no trace of existence in our current geographic or political landscape), and more than half the Palestinian people were expelled from the territory that became the State of Israel (we are talking about 750,000 people who were torn out of their lands and homes, whether directly by forceful transfer or by threats and the spread of fear through various massacres perpetrated by the Zionist side – of which Deir Yassin is the most famous, although not the only one or most terrible).

As long as the left continues to see the occupation of the Palestinian territories as some isolated historical mistake – the root of the problem instead of another one of its symptoms – it ignores (quite conveniently) the most crucial chapter of the Israeli-Arab conflict, which is the nature

of the establishment of the “Jewish State”: at the expense of the Palestinian people who lived here until the arrival of the Zionist movement. That is why the Zionist left fails to comprehend, just as Itzhak Rabin and Ehud Barak failed to comprehend in the Oslo and Camp David accords, the viewpoints and demands of the Palestinian side, which “insisted” on full control of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (only 22% of Palestinian territory during the British Mandate). He who remains blind to this — and this includes of course the Zionist left which enthusiastically supported these accords — cannot see that for the Palestinians, the demand of statehood over the aforementioned 22% meant that they were willing to give up 78% of the land from which they were expelled and exiled, and was in fact a historical compromise.

The left, the so-called “peace” camp, will never be able to establish a real, lasting peace, as long as it denies the responsibility of Zionism in the displacement of the Palestinian people from their land, and as long as it refuses to understand that a country in which more than a fifth of the population is not Jewish cannot be both Zionist (a “Jewish State”) and truly democratic. The best that the Zionist left can afford itself is a “military democracy” with second-class citizens (Palestinian, Bedouin, Druze and foreign workers) and “generous offerings” à la Barak or a “recognition of a Palestinian State” à la Sharon, which mean nothing but the establishment of poor Palestinian ghettos, separated and devoid of hope, to become easy dumping grounds for products, sweatshop infrastructures and a source of cheap labour for Israeli industries — Shimon Peres’ “New Middle East”. Indeed, it is not the least surprising that from 1993 (the beginning of the so-called “peace process”) until today, the situation of the Palestinian people has only got worse (and the number of settlers on their lands has doubled!).

The only thing that a left which insists on staying inside the parameters of Militarism and Zionism and their historical narrative can offer Palestinians is peace “from a position of superiority”, hoping all the while that “Gaza will sink into the sea”, as its beloved martyr Rabin once put it (that same man of peace who ordered the breaking of arms and legs of innocent Palestinians as a deterrent measure). The headline of the latest left-wing mass demonstration says it all: “Get out of the territories, for Israel’s sake!” — the other side does not exist, its demands and needs are irrelevant, and only the Jewish dead are taken into account.

The Zionist left is not capable of rising above its inherent limitations. Its political role is reduced to merely playing “good cop” to the “bad cop” of Ariel Sharon and the fascist generals who will follow in his footsteps. Its role is to assess damage control, put a more gentle face on Apartheid policies. Its role is to bomb, kill, destroy, discriminate — only slightly less. To shoot and shed tears at the same time, with drawings of doves, flowers and peace chants in the background. The absolute most it can do is try to impose a “peace agreement” like the ones the right wing and the USA are currently trying to impose: a peace agreement which brings no “peace” and no “agreement”, and will be forced under military threat on Arafat, Abu Mazen or any other Palestinian leader willing to sell his people in exchange for the chance to be a corrupt, brutal despot in one giant prison disguised as a State.

The Zionist left is constantly competing with the right wing: which one carries more national flags during its events, which one sings the national anthem louder, which one is harsher in its condemnation of “draft dodgers”...

We wish to convey the message that there is no longer a need to compete. You, the left, have become its equal. The common ground you share — Militarism and Zionism — is stronger and more meaningful than all those cosmetic differences separating you. The Palestinian people, against

whom our fathers, brothers and sons are committing war crimes via the terrorist organization known as the IDF, sure as hell can't tell the difference.

Maavak Ehad

LEAFLET FROM TEL AVIV CRITICAL MASS AGAINST THE WALL

NOT IN OUR NAME!

Not from our money!

How much this occupation cost us?

From October 2000 to the end of January 2004, 2,376 Palestinians were killed, amongst whom 445 were minors. In the same period 600 Israelis were killed, amongst them 74 were minors. In the last 3 years more than 500 kids below the age of 18 have been killed in the region. The violent Israeli occupation, the illegal settlers project (paid for by the Israeli government from taxes), and the atrocities against the civilian population in the occupied Palestinian territories, has brought about harm to [Israeli] civilian society on this side of the Green Line [1967 borders]. The harsh conditions cause despair, frustration, and to taking extreme steps.

The Israeli government found a "solution": build a twisting wall 8 metres high with a barbed wire fence as a supposed partition between the Palestinian and Israeli populations, but in reality the fence does not just separate us and our neighbours. The fence, which is more than double the length of the Green Line and is built deep within the occupied territories, separates many villages from nearby towns and other villages and also separates the villagers from hospitals, children from their schools, and the villagers from their fields and workplaces.

Within the Green Line, the building of the wall [because tax money is wasted on the wall] also separates old people from the appropriate care, children from food and proper education, and us from our security... because of the "budget deficit". Above all, the Wall separates us from peace, justice and security.

Lack of budget??

A third of Israeli children are below the poverty line. More than half a million people are hungry. More than 13% of the population of the Gaza Strip suffers from malnutrition. There is over 50% unemployment among the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The cost of the separation wall is about US\$2.2m per kilometre — about US\$1.4bn dollars for the whole fence. Every shekel for the building of the fence and the settlement means one shekel less for food, education, health care and development.

THE FENCE IS NOT SECURITY! It is aimed at annexing territory and expanding the settlement project!

NOT IN OUR NAME! We demand to live with dignity and security — for us and for our Palestinian neighbours!

It is important to stress that there is a continuous non-violent movement of Palestinian people against the occupation and the prolonged lack of justice. We have to cooperate with them in the struggle against the atrocities **WITHOUT HARMING THE INNOCENTS** and with no walls! Just in the last week, in the village Biddu, Israeli soldiers killed four demonstrators and dozens were

wounded during Israeli-Palestinian joint protest activity against the building of the wall on their land!

REPORT BY ANARCHISTS AGAINST THE WALL

23rd September 2004

Five days of struggle — the same repression, a new day With the resumption of construction of the separation wall, a familiar pattern is repeating itself. Negotiation is not even attempted and Israeli policy is set unilaterally by the army and government without consideration for Palestinians. At the same time, every attempt at protest and non-violent resistance is violently repressed. In addition to the criminality of this repression, by making negotiation and peaceful protest impossible the army and government are contributing to the escalation of the conflict in a direct way.

In the course of the last five days (September 19–23) the occupation forces have returned to their attempt to literally cement their existence on Palestinian lands. Naturally, the residents of the affected villages have resisted this attempt and we are with them. Our methods and our aims, which we have declared and consciously acted upon for the last two years, are popular, non-violent struggle.

Beit Awwa and Sikka: Sunday, September 19

For the first time since the bulldozers started wrecking the village lands about a week earlier, we headed for the bulldozers together with the residents of Beit Awwa and Sikka. In spite of the violence directed at the march, we managed to get to the machines. For about two hours we stood in their way and prevented the theft of the land. During that time the soldiers and the police tried to remove us using brutal violence, which caused a resident of Sikka to lose consciousness for about 15 minutes and three others to be wounded.

When large amounts of reinforcements arrived we were forced to retreat.

Budrus: Monday, September 20

When the bulldozers finally entered the village lands after a few weeks, following a long struggle leading to a compromise by which the path of the wall would not be on Budrus land, the people of Budrus went to their lands. Men, women and children sat on their lands and with their own bodies prevented the bulldozers from taking their lands. The army did not have sufficient forces and after several unsuccessful attempts to remove the demonstrators, the bulldozers left.

Budrus: Tuesday, September 21

At dawn we went to the land to stop the bulldozers, but this time the army was waiting with many troops. In spite of that, together with the people of Budrus we managed to get past the soldiers and to the land. After about two hours of work being halted, an agreement was made with a representative of the army that the bulldozers would not work on Budrus land that day and that we would leave the lands. As we began to leave, the border police attacked people with

batons, shock grenades, tear gas and rubber-coated metal bullets in violation of the agreement reached. In spite of that, during the attack, a representative of the village attempted to continue negotiating with a representative from the army. Finally, another agreement was reached by which we would return to the land where we stood first and the army would retreat from the lands. When the representatives headed their own way a border police force attacked the village, again in violation of the agreement reached. Resistance to the invasion of the village continued until about 5.00 pm, when the army left the village. Many were hurt during the confrontation, amongst them 26 people injured by rubber-coated metal bullets. Two Israeli protesters were arrested and their release was obtained the next day by lawyer Gaby Lasky, who represented them in front of a judge. The judge restricted their access to the Budrus area for 14 days.

Budrus: Wednesday, September 22

About 500 villagers together with Israelis and internationals were attacked by the army from a great distance with rubber-coated metal bullets and tear gas even before leaving the village. In the first few minutes of the demonstration five demonstrators were injured by rubber-coated metal bullets. Two of them, a 12-year-old boy and a member of the popular committee against the wall were hit in the head. The attempt to reach the land lasted about two hours and in the end the army occupied the schoolhouse and another house. The shooting continued during the course of the day as well as wide use of tear gas, which was sometimes shot directly into homes. The occupation of the village, which was carried out while the soldiers shouted "Budrus is ours!" was not only humiliating, illegal and immoral but also caused a large number of injuries, 17 of which were from rubber-coated metal bullets.

Beit Awwa and Budrus: Thursday, September 23

On our way to Beit Awwa we heard that a full curfew had been declared in Budrus at 8.00 am, after the beginning of the school day, thus trapping children in school. The army occupied several buildings and besieged the school. The curfew was lifted only after it was dark.

In Beit Awwa, about 1,000 demonstrators gathered, amongst them about 600 women and girls. We headed towards Sikka where the bulldozers were working and at a distance of about a kilometre from the bulldozers, we were attacked by the army without any warning. For about two hours the army used tear gas and rubber-coated metal bullets in one of the most extreme displays of violence used at a demonstration in a long time. We managed to hold our ground and were reminded of the most difficult demonstrations in Deir Kaddis and Harbata when an Israeli demonstrator was hit very near his eye by a rubber-coated metal bullet. The day's toll was 120 wounded, of whom 35 from rubber-coated metal bullets. 45 of the demonstrators were evacuated to hospital in Hebron because their condition was too severe for the village clinic. Many of the wounded were women and girls who had taken the lead in facing the army throughout the day. In addition, 2 Israeli demonstrators were arrested. They were later released on condition that they do not return to Beit Awwa for 14 days.

Unlike the occupation forces who are not interested in dialogue, the people of Beit Awwa declare again that they invite anyone who wishes to come and meet with them.

The bullets which try to silence protest will not silence us. Neither will political persecution, the corrupt system of military orders and courts, police interrogation or live fire stop the struggle.

We are an integral part of the struggle against the wall and the occupation and for true liberty for all living beings.

Anarchists Against the Wall

[Leaflet distributed on 23rd September 2004 in Tel Aviv during the celebrations for the release from prison of 5 Israeli total objectors after 2 years in prison for refusing to do military service.]

WE MUST BREAK DOWN THE WALL!

Would you buy a used toaster from Dany Nave¹? Would you buy a used car from Tsahi Hanegby²? So how come you buy these disastrous plans that will influence your life for many years to come from them and their friends Aric, Bibi, Ehud, Limor³ and all the other interested parties from anywhere up to the Likud Central Committee?

DO YOU TRUST THEM THAT THE SOLUTION TO THIS PLACE IS FENCES, WALLS AND APARTHEID?

At the end of 2002, the Israeli government started to build a separation fence. The route decided on mostly passes deep within the Palestinian area, destroying thousands of acres of agriculture land, separating children from their schools, sick people from their medical treatment and people from their relatives. The twisted route creates Ghettos – enclaves that prevent normal connections from villages to the surrounding world. Thousands of fruit trees are being uprooted to clear the way – trees that provide the main source of income to people who are already prevented from working in Israel. The government presents the route as just a security measure, but both the Israeli Supreme Court and the International Court of Justice have stated that the route is illegal and seriously harms the lives of the inhabitants. This raises the question: “Was this harsh harming of the inhabitants taken into the security considerations? Does a person whose resources have been robbed, whose trees have been uprooted and whose honour has been trampled become less dangerous?”.

So, if it is not for security, what really hides behind the decision to build that kind of fence? The sad answer is TRANSFER. Not the kind in which people are forced onto transport cars and taken away, but a quiet transfer – one where life is made so unbearable for people that they are left with only two options: to get out or to explode.

Since January 2004⁴ the villagers have chosen a different option – non-violent struggle against the fence inspired by figures like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King. Men, women, children and old people go out of the villages to try to block the bulldozers with their bodies, to prevent the destruction and robbery, accompanied by Israeli and international activists who arrived to stand by their side in solidarity and try to decrease the level of violence of the army. Not always was this helpful, as usually the army responds with extreme violence using batons, shock and tear gas grenades, rubber-coated bullets and even live ammunition. Throughout the year there have been dozens of harshly repressed demonstrations resulting in the killing of 6 demonstrators and the injury of hundreds. The media has usually chosen not to focus on what was happening and only the decision of the Supreme Court stopped the free stampede of the bulldozers for a while.

¹ Israeli health minister

² Suspended police minister

³ The first names of the top Israeli ministers

⁴ After 8 months of joint struggle consisting of small-scale activities by the villagers, international volunteers and people involved with the Anarchists Against the Wall initiative

In recent days, work on the building of the fence has been renewed with full speed, again in the Palestinian areas, in clear disregard for the Supreme Court's verdicts. Now, it is no longer possible to avert your eyes and to say "We did not know".

NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT!

STOP THE MADNESS!

STOP THE FENCE!

Anarchists Against the Wall

TWO STATES FOR TWO NATIONS:TWO STATES TOO MANY!

At a demonstration in Tel Aviv on 15th May 2004, 2,000 copies of a leaflet signed by the Anarchist Communist Initiative were distributed. The Initiative was formed by a small group of Israeli anarchists from three different cities, some of whom were involved from the start in the Israeli refusnik movement and have served prison sentences as a result of their protest. The following is the text of their leaflet.

If the state of Israel and the Palestinian Authority reach a “peace” agreement, it will not result from an Israeli wish for “security” for its citizens and a Palestinian wish for “independence”. It will be — more than anything else — a part of the configuration of the international powers’ interests as such concepts are alien to their way of thinking. The Geneva Accords, initiated by politicians and businessmen, if signed and applied as intended (two different things), will be the expression of these interests, as will any other political agreement one can imagine. The label most appropriate for describing the treatment by the Israeli State of the inhabitants and citizens who are not included in the category of “full-rights Jews” is APARTHEID: a chauvinist separation rule, which confiscates land from the peasants, restricts the freedom of movement of people on their way to work, and even obstructs the ability of Palestinian capitalists to develop their economy. All this, while trying to get the cooperation of the Palestinian leadership.

Some people who regard themselves as peace activists have asked themselves seriously, beyond the official answers of the left, what the reasons for the common policy of all Israeli governments — left and right — towards the Palestinians can be? We claim that it is not simply the conquering of one people by another, in the style of ancient empires; nor just the expression of a belief in an undivided land of Israel drawn from the Bible; neither does it stem from pressure from a strong lobby of settlers’ leaders, though that surely plays a role too.

The apartheid rule must be seen as something that serves several powerful interests. First, it served the Israeli economy — meaning the Israeli capitalists, by supplying cheap labour power which was mainly used by small and medium-sized employers in manufacturing and building.

The “Israeli Arabs” who were under military rule during the years from 1948 to 1966 have served this role and, even more so, the inhabitants of the regions occupied in 1967. Only lately, as if it were a result of the el-Aqsa Intifada and the massive “importation” of temporary work immigrants, was free access to that manpower interrupted. The big Israeli companies profited from the 1967 occupation mainly because it opened up for them a large consumer market with no competitors. The military establishment, which has always been powerful in Israel, and its top personnel have always enjoyed sure careers in government and industry after finishing their military service and have a vested interest in prolonging the apartheid (and the conflict) in order to assure their position and their rights. It is in the interest of the United States of America, which is helped by the services given to it by the Israeli State in the region and all over the world since the 1950s, for Israel to stay under a permanent threat so that it will continue to need its support.

A reminder: serious talks about the establishment of a Palestinian State only started 15 years ago, towards the end of the First Intifada. Hardly any of the leaders of the main Zionist left and the more radical left of the present day (that seems to have succeeded in rewriting its history in an almost Orwellian manner) ever imagined such an agreement. Even at the beginning of the Oslo period they still talked about autonomy. The PLO and the anti-Zionist left were talking about the establishment of a secular State of all its citizens. The Palestinian Authority did not exist at all, in fact, until Israel helped to establish the PLO in this role. The peace agreement providing for two States for two nations only entered the agenda when, following the First Intifada and the changes in the global world economy, it began to fit the interests of sections of the Israeli and US capitalists.

What does such a peace mean? If we continue the description of the situation in the extended Israel as apartheid and compare it to that which existed in South Africa, we can see that PEACE means the submission of the Intifada to a comprador Palestinian leadership that will serve Israel. PEACE like that, often called “normalization”, is related to processes occurring all over the world under the label of globalization, and to initiatives for regional trade cooperation designed to culminate in a “free trade region of all Mediterranean countries”. All over the world, agreements such as these have led to the takeover of local economies by multinational concerns, the infringement of basic human rights, a deterioration in the status and conditions of women and children, social violence and the destruction of the environment.

Will such an agreement and peace at least bring the cessation of violence? We do not think so: economic hardship and social gaps will increase, the refugee problem will remain unsolved and the legitimacy of international economic support given to the huge number of unemployed in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank (as partly happened after the Oslo Agreement and again recently). In this case, they will have to rely on “their” State — a small, dependent mini-State which will unlikely be up to the task.

States act within a system of interests and common people like us are not high on their list of concerns. If we want to bring about any sort of change for the better, to decrease the gaps and stop the mutual killing, we need to behave not as the obedient puppets of political leaders financed by Europeans and Americans who do nothing more than the odd “democratic” protest. We need to act instead in order to remove national partitions and above all resist the military forces that cause mutual and continuous slaughter.

We do not need to promote a political programme, be it that of the Geneva Accords or some alternative. Instead, we must put the demand for an entirely different way of life and equality for all the inhabitants of the region on the agenda. Even if we act in an independent (local) way, we still have to remember that as long there are States and as long as the capitalist system continues to exist, every improvement we manage to achieve will be partial and under permanent threat. Thus, we have to see our struggle as part of the struggle being carried on throughout the whole world against the world capitalism and call for a revolutionary change based on the abolition of class oppression, exploitation, and aim towards building a new society — a classless anarchist-communist society. A society in which there will be no State coercion, where organized violence will be abolished, where chauvinism will be inexistent, and where all other evils of the capitalist era will be removed.

Anarchist Communist Initiative

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committees against the Apartheid Wall
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