

# **DIALOGUE**

**REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN  
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE**

**END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW AND FRENCH**

## **MINUTES OF THE International conference FOR THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES' RIGHT OF RETURN**

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# ***INTRODUCTION***

**Daniel GLUCKSTEIN**

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First of all, let me introduce myself : my name is Daniel Gluckstein, I am International Co-ordinator of the International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples, and a member of the editorial board of Dialogue.

I want to welcome all the participants here, who will have the opportunity to make their contribution to the debate.

There are among us some comrades and delegates from, of course, Palestine, Palestinian Arabs and Palestinian Jews, and also from various territories where the Palestinian diaspora are dispersed today, within the 1948 borders, the 1967 borders, in Lebanon, Syria, and more widely throughout the world.

There are also among us comrades and delegates from Tunisia, the United States, Britain, Algeria, Morocco, Switzerland, Brazil and of course France. Several intended participants have been prevented from coming, especially because visas have not been granted. So thank you to all of you who have been able to come. In the course of the Conference, we shall be reading out a certain number of messages of support sent to us by comrades and friends who have not been able to be here in person. As we open this Conference, I would like

especially to convey apologies from two comrades. Comrade Pierre Lambert, director of the publication Dialogue, has recently had to undergo minor surgery, and is convalescing. He has asked me to greet all the comrades here today on his behalf, and of course to express his complete solidarity with the work of this Conference. There is also a message from Comrade Louisa Hanoune, spokesperson of the Algerian Workers, Party and member of her country's parliament, who has had to miss this Conference due to her current responsibilities in Algeria. But another representative from her party is here with us and will speak in the Conference.

As far as the organisation of the Conference's work is concerned, it is proposed, if you are in agreement, that the platform given responsibility for managing proceedings should be made up, besides myself, of Comrade Salah Salah, member of the Palestinian National Council and representative of the Refugees Committee, and Comrade Djelloul Djoudi, member of parliament for the Algerian Workers, Party and representing that party here today. If there is no objection, I propose to hand over to Djelloul Djoudi to chair the proceedings, to allow us to get straight to the heart of the matter of this Conference. Thank you.

Thank you, comrade Daniel. And a warm welcome to all. I am very honoured to chair this conference. Its title announces a very important theme of great concern not only to the Palestinians, but also to all the peoples of the world. And that is, the right of return.

This conference will begin with two presentations. The first will be given by comrade Salah Salah ; the second by comrade Daniel Gluckstein. After these two presentations, we will open the discussion to all participants. Out of this discussion, it is hoped that we might arrive at an

understanding of how to provide support and make common cause with the rights of the Palestinian people, and in particular their right of return.

I will try, with your help, to facilitate the discussion, and to move us toward conclusions that hopefully will provide serious support and assistance to our brothers and sisters, the Palestinian people. You know that the call for this conference sought our contributions with respect to both practical activity and discussion. In those terms, let us address and debate these very important points.

# ***FIRST INTRODUCTORY REPORT***

**Salah SALAH** (Chair of the Commission of Refugees of the Palestinian National Council)

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Firstly, I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for their invitation to the rostrum, allowing me to present this report. I would also bring your attention to my two previous written contributions on the subject of the refugees, concerning the question of the Right to return and the solution of the creation of a single State.

After the death of President Arafat, I imagine that you are impatient to know what is happening in Palestine. Hence, in this introduction, I will speak about the latest political events. But first, I would ask for your permission, at the start of this political contribution, to express my loyalty and esteem with respect to the late president. He is a martyr for the Palestinian cause, since, for me, he was killed because he refused to capitulate to the conditions imposed by Israel, always respecting the reality of the Palestinian struggle. There is absolutely no doubt that President Arafat was the emblem of the Palestinian national movement. We had lots of differences and also lots of points in common with him, and he remained the leader and the symbol of the Palestinian national movement right until his death. We send to him, as does every Palestinian, confirmation of our love and our respect.

There is no doubt that we now face a very difficult and complex period, during which the Palestinian authorities will face two principle tasks.

The first consists of reorganizing the Palestinian authority, especially within the framework of the institutions representing the Palestinian people, notably the Palestinian National Council and the Legislative Council or the Palestinian Authority.

Israel, until now, has only allowed the organizing of presidential elections, and is opposed to

municipal elections and elections for the National Council. Hence, Israel blocks democracy and wants to have a Palestinian president free from any links to a collective framework such as the Legislative Council. Israel wants to stop the participation of the opposition in National Council committees, such as the Municipal and Legislative Councils. As a result, I think that this will lead us to an internal vacuum within the Palestinian Direction.

The second problem is also linked to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. Even if Abu Mazen has been elected president of the Palestinian Authority, for the Executive Committee, this election is only temporary and remains fragile due to the expiry of the mandate of the Executive Committee, which must be re-elected by the Palestinian National Council. The mandate of the National Council has also expired and it must also be re-elected. Add to this the fact that several Palestinian organizations do not participate in the institutions of the PLO, nor of the Central Council, nor of the Executive Committee. Given that the PLO is both the reference and the direction for all of the Palestinian people, and in whose name the PLO has signed all agreements since Oslo, these institutions of the PLO must be elected and democratic and must represent all of the forces and movements active on behalf of the Palestinian people, which is not the case for the moment. This problem of a vacuum within the direction will persist even if a president of the Palestinian Authority has been elected. The medias present the view that this election of a president of the Palestinian Authorities will resolve the problem.

My friends, brothers, I want to be frank with you. This will in no way resolve the problem. The directional vacuum will persist. But the biggest and

most dangerous problem which we must now confront is the political problem. The Palestinian direction, whether under Abu Mazen or another, will be subjected to real and serious pressures obliging it to continue the negotiations based upon the « road map ». There is a lot which could be said about this « road map ». But, in brief, it is enough to say that the first clause constrains the new Palestinian direction to liquidate all forces of the opposition, to stop the Intifada, to stop the resistance and to hand over all illegal weapons except for those of the security apparatus. In addition to this, it will be forced to arrest and pursue each person acting against Israel. This means that each person wishing to protest against the Wall of Apartheid, or against the massacres committed by Israel against our people in Palestine, or wanting to express their refusal of the continuation of the Israeli occupation of Gaza and the West Bank is considered to be an agitator and must be pursued and arrested. Further, changes are ordered in school programs and in the medias. This is not my personal interpretation, but what is actually stated in the first clause of the « road map ». Will Abu Mazen, or whoever of the future direction, have the courage to take this step, with the danger that it presents for the internal situation in Palestine. But, just supposing that a future Palestinian authority could introduce the necessary security forces, and be successful in stopping the Intifada, and the resistance, and in stopping all opposition voices, what would be the result ?; If all of this happened, and we continued the negotiations based on the « road map », the Palestinian Authority would take up the 14 conditions which form the basis of the American « road map », approved by Sharon. What are the contents of these 14 conditions ?

One of the fundamental clauses of these conditions insists that the Right to return must not be raised as a problem to be resolved. The second condition, is to consider a unified Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel. The third condition is that Israel will not be required to return to the frontiers of 67. The fourth condition is not to dismantle the colonies. The fifth condition is to maintain the borders with Egypt and Jordan under Israeli control. The sixth condition is to maintain air space and sea under Israeli control.

If the Palestinians must accept these things , plus the remainder of the 14 conditions, what will be left to negotiate ? What value will these negotiations have, and what will they give to Palestinians ?

We are facing a period where the negotiations will have absolutely no effect to resolve the problem with the Zionist institutions. The conflict will hence start again and we will face new massacres. This means that the Palestinians should calculate their choice right now. Indeed, the only option open to them now is hardly that of negotiations, but of struggle and resistance. The dislocation of the Palestinian position is not in the interests of this people, who continue to resist and remain patient in the face of occupation.

Now I would like to handle the main subject of this conference, the refugees. Given that you have received a written contribution that I have prepared, I will resume my remarks by insisting on one essential point. There have been a lot of conferences on the refugees and the Right to return, which have provided an abundance of important information for those who seek to understand the question of the refugees and their Right to return. Nevertheless, I think that we must take a new step forward, rather than repeating what has been stated before. We should use these other conferences as a springboard.

For this, we must consider two principle points. The first is : During the next phase, to whom must we turn in order to discuss the problem of the refugees and the Right to return. I think that we need to focus mainly on European public opinion which has started to show a great interest in the Palestinian cause, and notably the question of the refugees and the Right to return. Over recent decades this public opinion has been influenced and mislead by a single vision dominated by Zionism. Today, this same public opinion has started to discover another perspective – Palestinian opinion – and to understand that the essence of the conflict with the Zionist institution is that of the question of the Palestinian refugees and their Right to return. We need to make everyone aware of this question and try to inform world opinion. By informing average citizens, members of NGO's and political parties, we can achieve a real step forward. We need to turn to the 54 % of people who believe that Israel is the principle menace to world peace.

I say this because I see a menace for all of us in the declarations made by Bush before the recent elections. When Bush outlines a law pursuing anti-semites, and then asks all embassies, all diplomats, all political forces, and the whole of the media machine, to support him, who is he designating as anti-semitic ? It is you, and all those who

sympathise with the Palestinian cause and the rights of the Palestinian people. These are the anti-semites ! And they must be pursued, just as those forces in the middle-east who are opposed to the United States are pursued, as so called terrorists. Hence, we are led to turn to this international opinion so as to reinforce it's efforts and it's convictions, because the Palestinian cause is a just one, and the defenders of this cause cannot be treated as anti-semite.

The second point I would like to introduce, is the initiative to form an international committee which would start work immediately following the end of this conference. This conference must not finish like so many others,, where people meet, discuss, and change points of view, without any further action. So, it is vital to form an international

committee which will continue the work and activities in all possible forms, to insist upon the subject of the Right to return by linking the question of the refugees and their Right to return to the principle question, which is the conflict with Israel. The question of the refugees cannot be separated from the conflict with the Zionist enemy, and the question of the refugees cannot be resolved without resolving, completely, the conflict with the Zionist enemy.

Finally, I hope that we will be able to leave this conference with an interesting and advantageous dialogue, presenting opinions which will allow a position of solidarity, and the opening of new perspectives for new work and new conquests. Thank you all.



## ***SECOND INTRODUCTORY REPORT***

**Daniel GLUCKSTEIN** (Dialogue)

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The initiative for the Conference was taken in June 2003 on the fringe of an international meeting organised by the International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples (ILC) on the subject of defending the Conventions of the International Labour Organisation, and more specifically including the defence of labour rights in Iraq.

It was a few months after the invasion of Iraq by the imperialist armies. At the request of Iraqi trade union organisations, we launched on that occasion a joint international campaign by the trade union organisations of United States workers grouped in the USLAW coalition (US Labor Against the War), the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions and all the trade union federations that make it up, and of course the ILC. This was a campaign with two slogans: for the unconditional withdrawal of occupying troops from Iraq, and the right if the Iraqi people to decide its own future on a sovereign basis (and in particular the right of Iraqi workers to form their own organisations, freely and without being dependent on the occupation authorities).

It was in the course of discussions on the fringe of that meeting that we decided, together with some other comrades, to take a specific initiative especially on the Right of Return for the Palestinian refugees. This was the appeal you are familiar with. This appeal gathered 3,000 endorsements from around the world. I am drawing attention to this, because the refugees, Right of Return is a question of right. Just as labour rights are a question of right. Just as the ILO Conventions are a question of right. It is the particular application of a principle which should be universal: the right of each person to live freely in his/her country of origin, and to return to it after being driven out of it.

We are meeting here today because that right, in principle universally recognised, has been denied to the Palestinian people since the beginning of the expulsion of the Palestinians, in other words for almost 60 years. We will discuss here, and one of the proposals which will be made is to publish a report of all of this conference's proceedings. To publish all the contributions. The discussion is free between us. We share fundamental principles in common. But there are bound to be nuances and differences in assessment. That is normal. The discussion must be free. Everything will be published, to allow the continuity which Comrade Salah Salah spoke of before me, which must be a continuity both in action but also in free discussion. This is the point of view I would like to put across in this contribution.

This Conference For the Right of Return For All Palestinian Refugees is facing two major questions. The first could be formulated as follows: to what extent does the question of the Right of Return draw a line of demarcation for everyone who stands for democracy and human rights around the world ?

To this question, I would reply as follows: The particular situation of the Palestinian people is expressed in the fact that most political leaders throughout the world who in general recognise democracy and human rights nevertheless stop just short of recognising those principles as they apply to the Palestinian people. In other words, they do not understand their attachment to democracy as extending as far as recognising the unconditional and imprescriptible right - both a collective and individual right - of the Palestinian refugees to go back to their land, their village, their house, from where they were driven out, whatever the date when they were driven out - from 1948 to the

present day. This is a first question which we must debate here.

The second question is an extension of the first. To what extent does the very nature of the State of Israel mark a line of demarcation for all political leaders throughout the world who stand for the fight against racism, against xenophobia, against discrimination, and in favour of equality for all? To this question, I would give the following reply: Most political leaders who describe themselves as anti-racists, and who rightly fight against every form of racism, especially against anti-Jewish racism, stop just short of recognising that a state founded upon a principle of racial discrimination, a state in which Jews have rights which Arabs do not have, goes against the fundamental principles they claim to stand for. This is the crucial aspect of the discussion we need to have today.

As far as I am concerned, I say that a person can only be considered a champion of democracy and freedom if s/he declares himself or herself in favour not only of recognising, but also of applying, the right of each Palestinian refugee to return to his/her land of origin, without any limitation or restriction. And that anyone who refuses that recognition is not a genuine champion of democracy and freedom.

Saying this poses the problem of a political solution which will permit that return. Of course, and many comrades here know this much better than me, the refugee question is a dramatic question whose human and humanitarian dimension is undoubtedly one of the most tragic that the world knows today. But I would like to insist not on the humanitarian aspect - whose importance I do not deny - but the political aspect of the refugee problem. I would approach the political question from the following angle. Comrade Salah Salah is perfectly right to say that the problem of the Right of Return for the refugees has nothing to do with any accusation of anti-Semitism made by President Bush, that it is simply a problem of rights. I would like to extend that reasoning further. No-one can deny the terrible genocide suffered by the Jewish people during the Second World War, a genocide in which, let us remember, the Palestinian people bears no responsibility. But can this justify that in the land of Palestine, Jews should have rights which are denied to non-Jews? There is, it is true, a Jewish Question. Is there not a Palestinian Question? In any part of the world, on any continent, what would one call a state in which some inhabitants have all

the rights because they belong to one religion or one culture, while other inhabitants, due to their religion, their language or their culture, are deprived of all rights as citizens and driven from the land of their ancestors? To this question, several contributions published in the review Dialogue as part of the preparation of this Conference have given their response. These contributions speak of discrimination, of a racist regime, of an apartheid regime, compare the situation of the Palestinian people to that of the Blacks of South Africa penned into Bantustans. These contributions refer to colonisation, the existence of a theocratic state, ethnic cleansing, or again denounce a state founded upon the principle of racial superiority. All these affirmations are correct.

Can there be a solution to the rights of the refugees within the framework of such a state? Of course, there can be several replies to this question, and I repeat, our discussion here is free. As far as I am concerned, I consider that only a secular and democratic state covering the whole of the historic territory of Palestine, a secular and democratic state in which all citizens have exactly the same rights, independently of culture, religion and language, only such a state, in line with the universal principle of democracy and equality would be capable of guaranteeing the imprescriptible Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees.

It is a fact - and several contributions which you all have in your file show this - that all other so-called solutions have resulted in failure. Every solution based on so-called two-state plans, every solution since Oslo up to Madrid passing through Geneva, and more recently the "Road Map" not only have resulted in not resolving the problem of the Palestinian refugees, but in one way or another, at every stage, have worsened the situation.

I would like, in this respect, to refer particularly to a contribution that was made in an appeal which, I think, is called "the Olga appeal", and which has been signed by a certain number of Israeli Jewish activists who declare themselves in favour of the Palestinian cause. I do not doubt the sincerity of their commitment. But I notice that in that appeal the following is said (I quote from memory): "The Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees calls for political solutions. There can be several of these. A single state? Two states? One binational state? Or the setting up of cantons?"

Enjoying the privilege of being European, I

therefore have the advantage of having seen very close up what the “canton solution” means. I refer to Yugoslavia. All of imperialism’s plans in former Yugoslavia for the last ten years have consisted in cutting up former Yugoslavia, and then former Serbia, former Bosnia, former Croatia, into a mosaic of cantons, some of them Serb, others Bosnian, others again Croatian, others Albanian. But in order to reach the point of those cantons, it took ethnic purification, ethnic cleansing. And when those cantons were drawn up by imperialism - I am thinking in particular of the Dayton Agreements, which are the equivalent of the various “peace agreements” regarding Palestine - they brought with them a new wave of ethnic cleansing, of new displacement of populations.

Today’s map of Palestine is already that of a cantonised Palestine, with the Palestinian Authority exercising second-rate power over little cut-off bits of territory separated by hundreds of military posts, check-points, and settlements with Jewish populations. Cantonisation exists, it is not a solution. It is already reality. How can one sincerely declare oneself in favour of the Right of Return for the Palestinian refugees and then suggest that this right could be achieved within the framework of cantonisation ? To me, that is a complete contradiction. I repeat, cantonisation necessarily means “might is right”. And today in Palestine, we know that “might is right” is the right given to Israel to take possession of the territories which it wants to possess, and to decide for itself, as Comrade Salah Salah has explained, where, how, and in what conditions, the Palestinians should be dumped.

So in this Conference we need to pose very clearly the fundamental principles of democracy. We cannot accept a cantonisation which presupposes the recognition of the principle “might is right”, in this case which would presuppose the recognition of a law by which a chosen people claims all rights for itself. There is no chosen people. There is no people which can claim for itself rights that are refused to other peoples. There are simply peoples, who all enjoy the same rights and the same prerogatives before history. There exists a Palestinian nation which has the capacity to include within itself all its component parts - Muslim, Jewish, Christian, whatever their language and culture - but which can only do so on the basis of equal rights ; which presupposes the putting into question of the theocratic and discriminatory institutions of the State of Israel, which in turn

presupposes the dismantling of the institutions of that State.

This would be a solution which not only conforms to democracy and to the rights of the Palestinian people, but it is also, even if they are not aware of it, a solution which conforms to the interests of the Jewish masses in Israel, who are being forced by their leaders to pay a high price today for their privileged situation, at a cost of growing poverty, militarization and increasing decay of their society.

This is why I think that we must link - and I repeat, everyone can have his/her own point of view - but as far as I am concerned I think that we must link the demand of the Right of Return for all Palestinian refugees and the demand for a single secular and democratic Palestine covering the whole of the territory of Palestine, the whole of its historic territory, offering equal rights and duties to all of its component parts.

We must reject the accusation of anti-Semitism with the contempt it deserves. First of all, because no-one can fight against anti-Semitism by substituting another kind of racism for it, in this case anti-Arab racism. The fight against racism cannot be divided up. And to those who level that accusation we can reply: It is a fact that the photograph of the Jewish child raising his arms in front of the Nazi soldiers in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 is an image which, quite rightly, has provoked and continues to provoke the emotions of the whole of humanity, because that image will grab by the throat any human being with a conscience. But the image of the five-year old Palestinian child killed by an Israeli bullet in a school playground does not grab the throat of the whole of humanity any less. That child had no less a right to live than the Jewish child in the Warsaw Ghetto. She did not have more right to live. She had just as much right to live as he did. And today, when we see those old Palestinian refugees obstinately showing the TV cameras the map of the village from which they had been driven out, pointing out their houses and saying: “Whatever it takes, I’ll go back there”, we are entitled to say that they will go back. This is a basic demand of democracy, and once again it is not divisible. This is what it is all about. We are all human beings. Every human being has the right to a homeland and this requires the eradication of anything that puts equal rights into question, this requires putting an end to every form of racial discrimination. I thank you.

# INTERVENTIONS

**Tahar OUETTAR** (Writer, Algeria)

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The main door of the Jew's temple in Constantine was shut. Shut and looking abandoned for a long time. And the sign carved in the dirty marble said in French: "It is this house, which is mine that shall be a place of prayer for all peoples."

I was weary as I was getting ready to write my second novel, *El Zizal* (the earthquake), which has been translated in the main languages. And I was told that Levi Eshkol had translated it into Hebrew. This was in 1973.

The novel is about the town of Constantine as the symbol of the third world and a specimen of change after the end of colonialism.

It is said of Constantine, built on a rock, that it is the town of science, science being here the Islamic Arab culture like that preserved in the many mosques and *zaouïas*. It is the town of the important reformist the sheikh Ibn Badis.

They also say that Constantine is the capital of the Jews of East Algerian Olout. Their only known origin is their Algerian origin. They are Amazigh Berbers in the Amazighophone regions and Arabs in the Arab speaking regions.

There is agreement and unanimity amongst historians over the fact that the war chief against the Muslim invasion was of Jews faith, and that is why she was called "Al Kahina" (the priestess), and the inhabitants of the region continue to swear by the saints of the well in which she was thrown.

In eastern Algeria, which I know and have lived in, there is nobody who differentiates a Jew from a non-Jew. Our way of dressing, especially in the countryside, was the same, and our language united us. Perhaps from time to time there were quarrels

that rapidly disappeared and it was normal in a tribal peasant society. But there was a total idea that the Jews were a full part of society. We identified people by their religion and not their race. Thus the French and in general the Christians were Nazarenes or Romans. The same went for Jews. As for the French, they took all Algerians to be Muslims.

This part of my stock of memories resurfaced into my thoughts as I wandered around Rahbat Souf (the wool squares), the Jewish area, in which I recorded my impressions of the town concerning what it had lost and what it had kept.

I had been a student in Constantine for more than two years and I loved it so much that I felt enveloped by it, therefore I was able to recreate its features. The Jewish area was one of our haunts because the boys and girls, unlike the French, reacted like us to the Andalusian sounds that came out of Raymond's house or from Enrico Macias's guitar as he sat in one of the doorways, singing "the Arabs say" with his dark-skinned complexion and African looks.

The only remains of this past Constantine which I found were the closed temple and the funeral wash house transformed into a Islamic institute.

This led me to construct my novel, alluding to the State of Israel, and the closed temple as Palestine, the house that was the praying place for all peoples. I did so because for me there is a dialectical relationship between the feudal form of bourgeoisie and all reactionary projects, such as Zionism, and to explain that the marriage of Arab feudalism and Zionism is sterile and will not perpetuated the human species or labour or seeds.

That's why I cried, like Sarah's husband who was Arab, and she was Jewish, "open the windows, Sarah!"

In my latest novel in 2004, I stopped in front of the Wall of Shame built by Sharon and I laughed. It seems to me as if the closed window has become a cement enclosure, high, and the house of god a ghetto of a special size and a ridiculous form.

I recorded that the Zionist do not really believe in the declaration of Zion "from the Euphrates to the

Nile", otherwise they would never have abandoned it to imprison Israel at this destroyed end.

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Jews were salt in all the towns of the world, especially the Oriental towns, and I assure you that we miss them in Constantine, as in Palestine, as in Baghdad as in Cannes. Because alas, they have not remained part of us. They have deserted their own nests to drive out people from their homes and to occupy their nests by force.

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**Abdelfattah ABOU-SROUR** (Palestine – Aida refugee's camp, Bethlehem)

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My name is Abdelfattah AbdelKarim Hasan Ibrahim Mohamed Ahmed Moustafa Srou AbuSrou. This is a sequence of first names of my father, grandfather, etc.

I was born in a refugee camp called "Aida", like Verdi's opera, but which is a demonstration of another tragedy, that of the Palestinian refugees.

I am here to speak in my own name, and in the name of those who are like me, refugees living in their own homeland.

I would like to begin by saying that there is no hatred gene, and so we do not have a heritage of hate against anyone. And I would also like to say that every country, every people under occupation has the right to resist the occupation, and this is not terrorism.

Israel has been accepted in the United Nations on the condition of respect for all UN resolutions, and that includes Resolution 181, which divided historic Palestine into two states: Israel on 54% of the total land, and the Palestinian state on 46% of this historic land, which were changed subsequently to 78% for Israel and 22% for the West Bank and Gaza after the 1948 war.

When the Palestinians signed the Oslo Accords, they took the generous step of accepting that 22% for their future Palestinian state. But unfortunately, each new Israeli government, whatever I or other Palestinians might think of the Oslo Accords, has asked for more and more compromises from the Palestinians. And when we speak now about 45%

of that 22% for a possible future Palestinian state, a state of Bantustans which have no geographical link and no control over their borders, their airspace or their territorial waters.

People speak about refugees' rights as if it was a humanitarian case let's try to speak about this about a return, well-controlled and with a limited number

I think that everyone here recognises that the Right of Return is a right that is universally and internationally recognised, and which has been applied elsewhere. But when it concerns Palestine, it is something different, and when it concerns Israel it is something different.

The refugees' Right of Return is a legitimate right which must not be on the negotiation table, because it is an individual as well as a collective right, and it could be applied according to different notions:

- Israel should start by apologising to the Palestinian people for everything it has committed against them.
- Israel as well as the rest of the world should give the Palestinian refugees the choice whether they want to return or not. This is not something that could be dictated to the future Palestinian government and to the Palestinians, saying that this person can return while that person cannot.

Under Resolution 194, which Israel has also accepted, every Palestinian has the right to return to his house. Not only to his lands but also to his house. So, it is a clear and obvious right, and their

return should be implemented.

If the Palestinians accept the choice to return to their homes, or to remain in the country where they are and to be compensated, then that is their own choice, but it is not a diktat from anyone to say that you can return or you cannot.

There are also the 1948 refugees, Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship and who still live in Israel, but who were not permitted to return to their villages or cities of origin. There are the Palestinians in exile, refugees in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and elsewhere. There are also the Palestinians displaced in the West Bank and Gaza Strip: Where are these people going to return to?

If I, a refugee in my own country, living in the West Bank, have to return to the West Bank, then I shall remain in the refugee camp, because my village of origin was occupied and destroyed in 1948.

If the refugees of Lebanon or Syria or Jordan should return to the future Palestinian state, they will also be refugees in their own country.

So, I think that the UN resolution is clear. There isn't a hundred thousand ways of seeing how to apply it or not. Everyone should return to the place of his or her birth.

I think that some agreements, like the Geneva Agreement, are extremely dangerous, in the sense that they give a Jewish character to Israel. And in this sense, we have also heard such suggestions as: since about 20% of the population in Israel are Arabs of Palestinian origin, let's evacuate the settlements and we shall send these Palestinians or Israelis of Palestinian origin in their place. So, we will create new refugees. And if we continually negotiate this right, then it is certain that there will never be peace. The solution is therefore clear.

As for the application of international rights, if we apply the law, we are heading in the right direction. If we do not apply the law, then, we shall continue to follow the same cycle of violence. It is not an act of generosity by Israel to accept the implementation of the Right of Return, because it is a right. It is not an act of generosity to give back rights to those who used to have those rights, and it is not a catastrophe for Israel to apply this right.

According to a study by Dr Salman Abu-Sitta, Israel always tries to keep a certain percentage of

79% Jews against 20 - 21% Arabs. And if we apply the Right of Return, it will not change this ratio by more than 6%, so we can talk about 73-74% Jews as against 26-27% Palestinian Arabs. So it is not a demographic war. It is not an ethnic cleansing war for Jews.

And just the use of the term "anti-Semite" is a bit irritating for me, because we are equally Semites as well as the Jews, and in this context, one should say "anti-Jewish" or "anti-Arab", because it is one of the human rights like racism against the Blacks, anti-Black, it is anti-Arab or Anti-Jew it is simply racism. And France has joined Mr. Bush in the declarations of Mr. Raffarin when he said that "radical anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism". So, according to this definition, all of you are anti-Semites.

Palestinians are not asking for the impossible. They are not asking for the destruction of Israel, they recognise it and made the gesture of accepting to give up 78% of their own lands to Israel. They are claiming their essential rights in life, to have peace, to have the opportunity of circulating freely, to come and go from their homes whenever they want, without having Israeli control at each instant of their life, at each passage.

Me, I lived in a refugee camp. My wife is from East Jerusalem. For five years now, we have been obliged to live in Jerusalem, so that she can keep her ID card and her job. But for five years I have not had a permit to live in my own house with my family, with my three sons and my wife.

I always have to go and try to find an alternative way, going around the Israeli military checkpoints, and I make it. Despite the wall, I make it and arrive and this says simply that this wall and these military checkpoints have nothing to do with the security of Israel, and their aim is to humiliate the people and push them to the extreme, until one day they will explode. If this continues, things will explode, because nobody, nobody can tolerate living under these conditions, and what we risk is not only the occupation, but to lose our humanity which keeps us living. The humanity that we try always to keep in us. That we refuse to be treated like animals, that we refuse to be reduced to terrorist beasts who are only thirsty for violence and the desire to kill and blow everybody up.

The humanity that we try to keep is the humanity of dignity. When someone asks Palestinians how

they manage to tolerate what is going on, they answer: We are used to it.

This disturbs me enormously because one cannot be used to misfortune, one cannot be used to violence; one cannot be used to occupation. We are human beings, and we claim our humanity. And it is the role of the whole world to help us keep this humanity in us, and to live as human beings, and that Israel stops putting us in Bantustans and put the label of "terrorists" on our backs.

We are a people under occupation. Israel is a state of occupation, an outlaw state which does not obey

any law, observe any international right, and has respected none of these recognised international rights.

In this context, we are a people resisting against an occupation which goes on and on and on, and where the whole world maintains their hypocrisy and silence over this occupation. And as our comrade said : International rights apply everywhere, human rights apply everywhere, but when they refer to Israel and when they refer to the Palestinians, they close their eyes, and their ears become deaf. Thank you.

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**Hussein ABU-HUSSEIN** (State of Israel - a Palestinian Arab activist from Haifa.)

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In my capacity as President of the Union of Palestinian Associations "Al Itijah" which operates within the 1948 borders, I would like to speak on the subject of the citizenship law that was introduced in the State of Israel in 2000. I would also like to touch on the international legal action that has been taken against Israel regarding refugees' rights.

As far as the citizenship law is concerned, allow me to give you a concrete example that illustrates the reality in Israel; Rachida Mohamed is a citizen of the village of Assalla (West Bank) that was occupied by Israel in 1967. She married one of her relatives who lives in the village of Muawiya in the vicinity of the Palestinian region that is situated within the so called "little triangle" area, north of Um al Fahm. The couple has been living together since 1990. Her husband is an Israeli national, while she is a citizen of the occupied territories; they filed an application with the Interior Ministry for Israeli citizenship and family reunification (to be able to build a home and start a family). Between 1990 and 2003, the couple had three children, all of whom obtained Israeli citizenship, while their mother could not because she is a Palestinian citizen who used to live in the occupied territories. Following the Second Intifada, Israel froze all such claims relating to family reunification, notwithstanding that these practices were quite common for Palestinians who lived in the Gaza Strip or the West Bank, or who lived in Israel. Rachida's bad luck was such that her

husband was accused of murder and was found guilty by an Israeli penal court, which gave him a life sentence. The authorities ordered Rachida to leave Muawiya village and return to Assalla. So she filed an appeal at the Israeli Court in which she said: "I am with my children and I want to stay with them in their father's house in Muawiya". The essence of the response was: "Your much-vaunted marriage was over with the imprisonment of your husband, you no longer have a husband whose house you want to maintain, all that is left for you to do is to go back to your home in the occupied territories". She insisted that her children were Israeli citizens, but was told that children should follow their mother rather than the other way round, that is to say, she could take her children with her to Assalla, but she could not stay in Israel even if her children were there. Such an attitude means the displacement of new refugees inside the territories. This is the true reality of the Israeli citizenship law that is being applied currently under the pretext that the Palestinians are trying to exercise their Right of Return by manipulating family reunification requests.

The Palestinians are playing tricks; Palestinians who live in Jordan, in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip are trying to extort their right of return by means of marriage. As you well know, any Jew can obtain Israeli citizenship as soon as he sets foot in Ben Gurion airport. These are simply racist practices that constitute a threat to all Palestinian couples who are divided by the 1948 borders.

This policy is also being used against the 200,000 Palestinians who live in Al Quds (Jerusalem), and who were referred to by the last speaker. Official Israeli statistics show that over 35 percent of the people who came to Israel in the 1990's were not Jews, and that they were brought to create a demographic balance to avoid this much feared danger.

The other subject I would like to deal with here is the issue of refugees and their property. We all know that thanks to the help of the United States, the only existing supreme power today, Zionism is putting pressure on every Parliament throughout the world to pass laws that recognise the rights of Jews who were expelled or mistreated during the First and Second World Wars. We are not against the right of every individual to regain his property, gold and compensation; meanwhile we can only wonder about the right of Palestinians to regain their property and obtain adequate compensation. We can only wonder about their right to go back to their homes, the keys to which they still hold in their hands and pass on from father to son. As defenders of human rights in general and the right of property in particular, we demand that the international community asks Israel for the same

recognition, recognition of these particular rights of Palestinians, the rights that were confiscated by the State of Israel.

Last week, an Israeli Parliamentary Committee discussed the issue of Jewish possessions that were placed in Israeli banks before the establishment of Israel, and more particularly the possessions of those who died in the Holocaust. A Palestinian from the village of Al Boqaia intervened and spoke about a sum of money that was deposited at an Israeli bank before 1948. This indicates that Palestinians are beginning to understand the rules of the game, or what is known as the individual's right of property.

I suggest that we examine together, in this conference, the possibility of pursuing Israel legally just as Zionists pursued Europe and the United States, for confiscating Palestinian property by means of its laws. Finally I suggest that all Palestinian and international organisations that support the Palestinian cause mark an International Day for the Right of Return for Palestinian Refugees. I am not only referring to refugees who were expelled from Palestine, but to all refugees inside the territories and those living in Lebanon.

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**Eli AMINOV** (State of Israel - Committee for a Secular and Democratic Republic)

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Anti-Semitism is an instrument of Zionism. Of course, I do not say that Zionism creates anti-Semitism. But as soon as there is somewhere an anti-Semitic outburst, created by the capitalist regime, Zionism uses it at once, makes it grow, and you can say that the State of Israel has never done anything efficiently against anti-Semitism, because it knows that finally anti-Semitism nourishes Zionism. We can take for instance the example of the November 1956 war, when Israel sided with Great Britain and France, and anti-Jewish feelings that occurred in Egypt at the time served the State of Israel to transfer the Egyptian Jewish population towards the State of Israel.

We must bear in mind, maybe all of you do not know, that the State of Israel voted systematically in the UN against the independence of colonial peoples, against the independence of Algeria, against the independence of the British colonies on the pretext that this independence could only help

Nasserism. Actually, in the final analysis, this systematic policy followed by the State of Israel has been a stimulating factor for anti-Semitism. Because, in parallel to all that, the State of Israel was mobilizing the leaders of the Jewish communities in the world to support this State of Israel. Thus, the State of Israel tries to establish a link between the struggle against anti-Semitism and the struggle in favour of the State of Israel, whereas actually the truth is the opposite.

You cannot really fight against anti-Semitism if you do not fight against Zionism. Zionism nourishes anti-Semitism and nothing can change that. Anti-Semitism is a reality that concerns only some Jews. These things must be remembered every time: we fight against anti-Semitism, you must always remember that Zionism lives on anti-Semitism, it is its food. We saw it in the last four years, since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Intifada. When the TV channels broadcast pictures of the



repression against the Intifada in Palestine, that can only feed the feelings of revolt in Arabic-speaking populations.

Solidarity with the oppressed masses must be applied at every level, and particularly in Europe, solidarity is reasserted with the Palestinian people and against what the State of Israel does to them. The Israeli propaganda says: "Look at those outbursts of revolt by those people, this is anti-Semitism." But I think that this is not anti-Semitism. The fight against the apartheid regime at home is not anti-Semitism. On the contrary, it is help to the Palestinian people, and there is no anti-Semitism in this.

In some milieus in imperialist countries they say that anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism - Alain Finkelkraut, Bernard-Henri Levy, who support American imperialism as well as the repression of the Palestinian uprising by the State of Israel. No wonder they support both.

In conclusion, I would like to say that two years ago, the Israeli Parliament passed a racist law that wouldn't be accepted in any other Parliament of a country claiming to be democratic in the world. This law is a law against family gatherings between Israeli citizens and the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Thus two women from Hebron (West Bank) wanted to live together with two men from the city of Haifa (State of Israel). One is an Arab the other is a Jew from the Israeli colony of Hebron. The Jewish woman from the Israeli colony

of Hebron is allowed to go to Haifa, therefore to Israel, get married there, then the married couple can move throughout the whole country and settle wherever they like, because they are Jews. The dominant ideology says: this country is open to all Jews. The Palestinian Arab woman will be able to get married only in Hebron, and the man she wants to marry will have to move to Hebron, because the city of Haifa is not open to Palestinian Arabs.

This is obviously an apartheid law, based on the principle of religious and ethnic segregation. And the fact that an institution such as the UN never wanted to debate such matters, these human problems that are being raised in our country, shows what the true attitude of this so-called international institution is towards racism and racial segregation. This is a benchmark of what the UN really is.

And the fact that governments throughout the world, including that of France, do not condemn this kind of judicial practice in our country shows what Comrade Daniel said before, that so-called democratic feelings end where the Palestinian national issue begins. This is the situation we want to put an end to. And we can do so only within the framework of a democratic, secular Republic covering the whole country, in which there wouldn't be any segregation on a cultural, ethnic or religious basis. Only such a state will be able to pull down the walls of the ghetto, and bring the refugees back to their home.

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**Helene SEREN** (France - Academic, geographer)

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Greetings to all. I am speaking to you as a member of the academic community who has worked in the Palestinian territories, in the refugee camps of Gaza Strip and the West Bank. I should add that my father is of Palestinian descent, something which has at times given me legitimacy in the refugee camps, and at other times, done the opposite. We worked with the SHAML research centre, based in Ramallah, from 2002 to 2004, which concerns itself with the refugee situation, and the Palestinian Diaspora. Our work focused not on the question of the right of return, which we consider indisputable, but on the question of the right to survive, which is

what arises in the refugee camps, in the ancient autonomous territories Palestine, in the face of urbanisation.

What I would like to present are the results of a questionnaire that we distributed to about 800 persons in the camps of the West Bank and Gaza, concerning the hopes and desires, the reveries and dreams, the visions of the future, of these refugees. Some had small individual visions, available for fairly straight-forward realisation or gratification, while others dreamt on the level of great collective or community-oriented projects. In the Gaza Strip,

the small dreams or desires people reported concerned mainly the amelioration of daily life and work. Next, on a scale of dreams, their hopes were for a better future, and for peace. After that, there were those who dreamt of independence and freedom of movement. And finally, decolonisation. Among the 20 most reported visions of the future, at the individual level, the right of return was in 16th place. Among the larger collective visions, the right of return took on its essential importance; it placed second, after national independence. And when I speak of dreams, I want to emphasise that we had them all: for instance, "I want to get married;" or "I want a car;" or "I want to go into business."

Strangely, on the West Bank, the results were inverted from those in Gaza. It marks something to which we should pay special attention. Those whose visions of the future were on a small, individual level, the right of return was given massive priority, first place. Those whose hopes and desires flowed at the larger collective level, return was in fourth place, after national independence, the establishment of a nation, peace, and security. Faced with this report, researcher that I am, I wondered what might have produced such a difference between Gaza and the West Bank. And in fact, it appears, in Palestinian discourse in these territories, that the West Bank refugee, living within a social environment in which a category of citizenship has been well established, must strangely claim an identity as refugee, before calling for a right of return.

Conversely, in Gaza, since the majority of the population is refugee, the refugee has no need to reaffirm his special status. His right of return is already included in the larger national struggle.

It is necessary, then, to reflect on the question of the status of citizen and refugees in Palestine. We should recall that the citizen and refugee constitute two of five categories in Palestinian society. The citizen (*muwaatin*), as native of the West Bank, is owner of the land he lives on. He is free to do with it what he wishes: sell it, lease it, etc. The refugee, on the other hand, is the owner of land from which he has been expropriated, that has been stolen from him. He cannot return to it; and he is often unable to prove ownership by written deed. The camps, which provide the primary places of residence (though not the only ones) for the refugees, exist on rented land, which is owned either by private citizens or by the state (the West Bank). Now, recognising that the right to own land is

fundamental, we can understand a differential in relations between citizens and refugees in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

In another part of our investigation, we asked camp residents what kinds of activity they would like to involve themselves in personally. In the West Bank, again, it was the cause of the refugees that was given greatest priority. In Gaza, only 11% chose the right of return as a personal focus for themselves. Their dire necessities of survival have shifted their attention to work and to the local development of the camp.

We asked the refugees which domains of activity they wanted the public authorities to concentrate on. And there, we found ourselves within the most essential aspect of the refugee problem on the West Bank. Concerning individual rights, since that question was similarly posed, only 6% of West Bank refugees wished to see public authorities address the refugee question. Among Palestinians, two personal questions would be raised by that at the personal level, preceding the right of return itself. The first concerns the succession of refugee status. Status is transferred from father to son; but it can also be acquired or lost by marriage. When a refugee woman marries a Palestinian citizen, she loses her status, and her children are no longer refugees. This is often the case. Jenin, for instance, is full of families, of women whose husbands had recently fallen, and who no longer had papers or identity cards to give them status.

In my case, by marrying a man from Al-Burayj, I acquired refugee status. And my children have it from their father. In truth, these question must be broadly considered, to know exactly who, inside these camps, since there is no segregation of category in Palestinian society, who would be induced to return.

The second question, which was brought home to me one day in Bethlehem, was, "Okay, we want to return to our own homes, there we are all in agreement. But my father is from such-and-such a village, and my mother from a different one. To which am I going to return?" Palestinian society has, for the last 50 years, despite the conflict, evolved positively toward an internal mixing, a sociological complexity that has become quite rich today, and which we must have the right of return, as Palestinians, that can realise hopes and desires of the people, taking into account the questions of who returns where, and how, without even posing the question of choice.

I am addressing you on behalf of the "Popular Committee of Support to the Palestinian People and of Opposition to the Normalisation of Relations with the Zionist Enemy in Tunisia". Palestinian resistance certainly increases the causes of conflict within the Arab world. Therefore, the Palestinian Revolution has been the spearhead of the confrontation of the national liberation movement during its long struggle against Zionism, against its imperialist defender and its ally, Arab reaction.

The Right of Return is the bedrock of the Palestinian people's inalienable and unchangeable national rights. Unless the liberation of the land, the ability to decide of one's own future and the creation of an independent state covering the whole extent of national lands on the one hand, and on the other hand the return of refugees, become a reality, those rights will remain virtual.

Colonialism in Palestine is of a different nature to other, more conventional forms of colonisation. The phrase "Palestine is a land without people for a people without land" is openly Zionist and racist; it implies colonialism geared to expansionist occupation that, since the end of the 19th Century has purposed not only to invade Palestine but also to uproot its local population; it has used policies of population transfer, systematic and continued ethnic cleansing founded on terror, assassination, genocide and expulsion. Consequently, the majority of the Palestinian people first witnessed the razing of their villages erased from maps, then, they have become a mass scattered about in camps either in Gaza or on the Left Bank or in the Diaspora, deprived of any conventional right.

The Zionist movement would never have been able to carry out that criminal colonising programme if it had not been, right from the start, supported without restriction by imperialist forces. They made way for it to enable it to plant itself firmly in Palestinian soil through the Balfour Declaration, under the aegis of British rule, then through the 1947 "international" resolution of the partition of Palestine; this gave legitimacy to the occupation and the crimes it brought with it. Imperialist support for the Zionist institution has not decreased, simply because the institution is a convenient tool and spearhead for terrorising the peoples of the region, for laying hands on their resources, plundering their wealth and preventing

them from uniting together and gaining their independence.

During the last decade, more than during any other period, the Zionist institution has received renewed, increased and amplified support from imperialist forces, especially the US, in the areas of diplomacy, media, commodities and weapons. Actually, the daily crimes committed under the occupation have been covered up, they range from individual or collective murders, land confiscation, multiple fierce colonisation drives, reducing homes to rubble and erecting the Wall of Racism. All this is accompanied by the repeated denial of the non-negotiable fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, especially the Right of Return.

The various programmes advocated by imperialism and the miscellaneous initiatives produced - the "road-map" being the latest to date - are nothing but a diversion aimed at forcing the Palestinian people to their knees, compelling them to live with fragmented, primitive political institutions, deprived of the bases of sovereignty, utterly dependent in the areas of politics, economy and security, on a territory that covers less than 20 percent of Palestine. Reactionary Arab regimes actively condone the denial of the Palestinian people's national rights, because they contribute to besieging, strangling and marginalising it to make it give in. Reactionary Arabs have, from the start, been accused of complicity when they made way for Zionism in Palestine. They also clamped down on the Palestinian refugees when they regrouped them in camps similar to Nazi concentration camps, depriving them of the most elementary rights such as the right to a job, to a home, to health-care and education (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan...) and this is still going on. Those reactionary Arab regimes never shrank from hitting the refugees, using the most terrible forms of terrorism, such as blockades, arrests or even military onslaught such as "Black September" in Jordan or the civil war in Lebanon. Jointly, the Arab regime upped their political and economic pressure to splinter the Palestinian national movement and drive the Palestinian leadership to repeated capitulation. They have repeatedly used punishing boycott and marginalising, as for Arafat during the March 2002 Beirut Convention, when Emir Abdallah's programme was presented. One should also bear in mind that these regimes are continuing the series of treacherous acts begun by

Sadat in Camp David and continued during the Madrid Conference under the motto: "land for peace". Those regimes are continuing by totally and clearly normalising their relations with the Zionist institution, not only in the diplomatic, economic and commercial domains, but also in the military one. Bilateral or multilateral agreements are being reached, and several orientations are being implemented, including the US Greater Middle East or the Europe-inspired guideline on Euro-Mediterranean partnership agreement, and finally in the warlike framework of NATO. It is also worth noting that the imperialist US invasion of Iraq has shored up the strategic superiority of the Zionist institution and has provided it with the means to isolate the Palestinian people and deal a death blow to its rights.

However, the Iraqi and Palestinian peoples show that their struggle is stronger than all the military forces sent against them. This proves that resistance can reverse the balance of power, exacerbate the crisis of the Zionist institution and the impasse in which Arab reactionary regimes are trapped. This struggle also sheds light on US imperialism, which is trying to hide behind the mask of democracy, human rights and the fight against terrorism and racism. It shows it in its true light: a power determined to dominate, shaking off any moral or human restraint, only guided by the resolve to expand, plunder and exploit along capitalist lines, opposed to the most basic forms of people's individual and collective rights.

Therefore, the Palestinian people cannot assert its claim to national rights through the three-pronged solution: imperialist, Zionist, reactionary Arab. Quite the reverse, those programmes have to be pushed aside; their projects, initiatives and their pitfall-resolutions must be evaded, the latest one coming from the 23-24 November 2004 Sharm-el-Sheikh Conference, and the Tehran Interior Ministers Conference. The latter produced a resolution on 30 November 2004; it makes resistance illegitimate, dubbing it terrorism, it sets up security procedures to criminalise it, while giving legitimacy to the occupation of Iraq and again denying to the Palestinian people the Right of Return.

The Palestinian struggle is a liberation movement against a colonial invader. It is not a religious conflict between believers and non-believers, or a racial conflict between Jews and Arabs. Only imperialism benefits when such notions are muddled up, and when intellectual capitulation has

become the rule. The insistence on this kind of accuracy aims to protect the vision of Palestinian liberation, making it immune against all the jingoistic and fundamentalist deviations that give it a divine, metaphysical or racial make-up in contradiction with its ambitions and purposes.

It must also be clearly stated that breaking from racist Zionism and denying its institution in Palestine any legitimacy is a necessary prerequisite to clearing the hurdles of alleged solutions that never question colonisation. Quite the reverse, they accept it and, in the name of realism, they shift the discussion to the situation of the Palestinian people within the 1967 borders, with arguments favouring the occupant.

The Palestinian question cannot truly and justly occur within the framework of the two states or with a bi-national state. Both these solutions are based on writing off the Palestinian people's fundamental right - the Right of Return - by supposedly awarding compensation or, more likely, by offering integration in neighbouring Arab countries.

Hard facts have shown since the Oslo provisional agreements that the Zionist/imperialist enemy will simply not accept the creation of an independent Palestinian political institution, despite the repeated capitulations of the Palestinian leadership. It accepts a regime of scattered and dependent Bantustans. And even that option, currently not on the books, requires the creation of a State at the expense of the Right of Return.

As for the bi-national State, it can only lead to entrenching jingoistic, metaphysical and religious communalism, that will duplicate racial segregation, religious fundamentalism and national repression. That is the pattern chosen by US imperialism to serve its own interests, to bring the whole world under its sway; it is striving to expand it to the whole planet by dismantling existing States, sowing discord and war between the offspring of the same people.

In opposition to those options, the thesis of a single democratic Palestinian State covering the whole territory of Palestine is the most legal and just because "Palestine with its borders that existed long before the British mandate, is an indivisible territorial unit" and because "the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate and their consequences are unfair" (Articles 2 and 20 of the 1968 PLO National Charter).

This thesis is the only proposal that guarantees the Palestinian people the possibility to recover its rights, its land as well as justice - by materialising the right to return - in opposition to the monstrous historical injustice that millions of Palestinians underwent when they were thrown out of their country, robbed of their identity and scattered in the Diaspora or dumped into refugee camps. On the other hand, it can regroup all those who unwaveringly oppose the foundation of the Zionist project, by warranting the creation of a popular, democratic regime based on citizenship, free from racial, linguistic or religious discrimination.

However, one must insist that it would be an illusion to try and materialise that option without abolishing the State of the Zionist enemy (an illegitimate institution including all the colonial and racist administrative bodies).

Admiration-inspiring resistance both in Palestine and in Iraq showed that it could stand its ground and cripple the imperialist project. It also showed that it was the same fight against a common enemy with the same motivations and the same goals. Thus it opened up a vast scope for the struggle of Arab peoples, and of the oppressed peoples and nations across the world that actively fight colonisation and Zionist racist reaction.

The Palestinian and Iraqi peoples have shouldered a huge responsibility; this requires that all the Arab

advanced movements and forces should :

- Definitely refuse, condemn and publicly denounce all the forms of normalisation of the reactionary powers with the Zionist enemy ;
- Start campaigning among the people to boycott imperialist products and interests ;
- End all the agreements geared towards granting imperialist forces special preferences concerning troops and security, denouncing the integration into imperialist military axis, especially NATO ;
- Firmly isolate the diplomatic representatives of imperialist countries, and strive to induce opposition movements and civil society to shun their projects ;
- Find operative forms of organisation between political opposition movements and independent civil institutions to boost the common popular movements that support resistance, oppose imperialism as an alternative to governmental projects ;
- Develop forms of internationalist communication and solidarity for the common struggle between the advanced movements and all the oppressed peoples and nations across the world, against imperialism, against the Zionist institution that is the spearhead of the international capitalist system of exploitation and war.

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**Adeeb MAHMOUD** (Palestinian exiled in France, member of an association for a single secular state on all the historic land of Palestine)

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Dear friends and comrades, once again, just like my colleagues who spoke this morning, I would like to thank the organisers of this conference. Just a small comment, if I may, about what is written on the banner, which is “Right of Return for the Palestinian refugees”. There are in fact two notions regarding the Right of Return and that is; there are those who say : “The Palestinians may go back to the West Bank and Gaza” and there are others who say - and I think we are all included in the second group - that the right of return is to their homes from which they were originally expelled, from 1948 onwards. In order therefore that there is no confusion in the minds of certain people and

opportunists, I think it should be written clearly: “Right of Return to their original homes”.

I would like to pay tribute to a man who has remained faithful to his convictions despite some difficult moments, despite the temptation to give up or to accept concessions, especially regarding the Right of Return for refugees, and that is Mr Marwan Barghouti who, in his statement as an election candidate, stated again that the Right of Return is one of the foundations of the political position for all committed Palestinians. So I would like to pay tribute to him as an imprisoned Member of Parliament and as an activist.

Another comment, but this time it concerns purely the policy of France, even though a few friends made their own comments this morning. A few weeks ago, the Interior Minister asked somebody who lives in the upper class areas of Paris for a report, which concludes that those who associate Israel with the word “apartheid” or anything similar when they speak about Israel will be almost certainly threatened with legal prosecution. Even if the report hasn’t yet been approved, we must not accept this attitude being put into people’s minds, because if this view-point does become ingrained in the minds of citizens, it may well take on the force of law and it won’t be surprising at some point if a law is passed to penalise activists or threaten them with legal prosecution each time they associate the word “apartheid” with Israel. So I think we need to mobilise to put a halt to this type of attitude. Those are my two comments.

My speech will be about the economic consequences and the structure of Palestinian society regarding the deportation of 1948. The Zionist colonial project found support from the Mandatory powers in order to prepare the Zionist movement, its economic take-over, whether it was the trade unions, the political parties or the armed groups - that is, the take-over of Palestinian land. It is therefore not surprising in 1921, for example, that the Mandatory powers gave the monopoly of electricity production to a Jewish company - I apologise for the way it is expressed, but it’s because this is the expression that was used at that time - but also the monopoly regarding the exploitation of potassium from the Dead Sea. So, already over 30 years before the creation of this state, there was a long preparation, economically and socially speaking. The Zionist colonial project can be distinguished from other colonial projects – I’m not making a scale of preferences, but there is a difference - from the outset. From the 1920’s and 1930’s onwards, the Zionist movement gave privileges through the introduction of work - at the time they called this “jobs for Jews” - while driving out Palestinian farmers, for example, from their homeland, and taking on Jewish workers, even if, from a economic point of view and from statistics at the time, a Jewish worker cost three times more than a non-Jewish worker. So from that point of view, there was already the notion in people’s minds of preparing the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their mother homeland while at the same time suffocating them economically.

So there you have the ideology, and therefore the framework, for this project. And, at the heart of this

project, there is the land. So it’s not a coincidence if the slogan conveyed by the leaders, the activists and the members of the Zionist movement was that Palestine was a land without people which is ideal for a people without land. So, the land is at the centre in a broad sense whether it is economic or the commitment of the individual to his or her home, land ^ but also the structure of society.

So that was the centre of this conflict and battle. Like the subject, that is the return of the refugees and so as not to give the impression that this issue is essentially limited to a battle of statistics between the Palestinian people, the UNRWA and who knows who else concerned by the conflict, I think we can go beyond this to have consequences for deportation to see the human face, the human aspect of this issue. To paint a quick picture, I’m thinking about the Palestinian economy, in the 1920’s, 1930’s and 1940’s, practically 60 percent of Palestinians tilled the land as farmers, as landowners, 8 percent worked in industry, with the rest in services, the other economic activities. Once again, it isn’t a coincidence that following the occupation of Palestine in 1948, the town of Haifa wasn’t razed to the ground, nor was any other town, but on the other hand several hundreds of Palestinian villages were completely flattened. For them, it’s a way of totally destroying Palestinian society and structures, because when a village is destroyed, when the population is driven out of its homeland, it is the social structures and the hierarchy of Palestinian society which are threatened.

However, the consequences, once again, of the deportation of the Palestinian people: we have transformed the Palestinian people from a people who live through their own hard work into other groups of Palestinians: either those helped by the UNRWA and there has to be a real criticism of the role of the United Nation, because at the time when the UNRWA was created to subsidise or meet the needs of the Palestinian people, it was necessary to have resolutions which were voted and which have the strength of a law. So that the Palestinians who were driven out can return to their homes.

This policy, which was implemented through the 1920s into the 1940s, stressing 1948, and considering the fact that today a war is being waged by Israel not only against the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, but also against the Palestinians who resisted, who remained in Palestine in 1948, not forgetting the land wars, because the Palestinians represent 20% of the

population who own just 3% of Palestinian land. The war is still going on. And when the Palestinian people have replaced land by education as a way to find their place, the war continues against schools,

against universities, it's a way of suffocating the Palestinian people even more. But I think that the Palestinian people have shown their ability to resist, to find and to keep their structure.

**Israel SHAVIT** (from Palestine/State of Israel, representing the Registered Charity Association "Alternative Voice in the Galilee" (AVIG))

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I bring greetings of peace to us all,  
Al-Salam' Alaykum,

I am a member of an association named "Alternative Voice in the Galilee" (AVIG), and in the ten minutes available to me I will attempt to give a summary of AVIG activities. Our NGO came into being in the wake of the events of October 2000, known as Habbat al-Aqsa (The blast of al-Aqsa), when the Israeli police shot live ammunition at Arab demonstrators in the area where I live, the Galilee. Unarmed Arab youths from Sakhnin and other localities in our area were killed by armed Israeli police and Border Police officers.

We, those of us who came together to establish AVIG, asked ourselves initially a rather simple question: "What can we do end this kind of horrific oppression of the Palestinian population?". Following our first action of protest against this specific act of horrific oppression, we resolved not to limit our activities only to general actions of protest against oppression, but seek ways to enhance tangible change in our area. The relevant question in this context was "What was the cause of the outbreak of the events of October 2000?". It was clear to us that in addition to the fundamental solidarity with their brethren in the post-1967 occupied territories, the issue at hand was intimately related to the existence inside the State of Israel of a situation of chronic racial segregation, a situation of apartheid, between the Israeli-Jewish society on the one part and the Palestinian Arab people on the second part. Taking this awareness as our point of departure, we began sustained work to address this issue.

Needless to say that at a certain stage in the course of our work the question of the 1948 Palestine refugees came to the fore, especially, and very concretely, the question of the Palestinian internally displaced persons inside the State of

Israel. We soon concluded that it was not possible to sustain a model of genuine equality among Jews and Arabs in the State of Israel without due regard to the question of the Palestinian internally displaced persons inside Israel, and hence the question of the Palestinian refugees as a whole. There was no way that the question could be evaded. After a series of internal discussions we resolved, some three years ago, to join the annual march organized by the "Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Internally Displaced Persons in Israel" to commemorate an Arab village (a different village each year) ethnically cleansed and destroyed in 1948.

We concluded that only on the basis of a profound awareness of the problem of the Palestinian refugees, and the recognition that any viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must incorporate a just solution for the Palestinian refugees, can there be hope to effect a genuine change in the relationship between Jews and Arabs inside the State of Israel.

One ought not lose sight of the fact that some 250,000 Palestinians who are citizens of the State of Israel are classified in law as "present-absentees". They represent some 25 per cent of the total Arab population inside the State of Israel. They are citizens; they have the vote; they have the benefit of many (though by no means all) civil rights as the Jewish populace (though not always on an equal footing) – yet, the persons concerned, or their parents and grandparents, have lost their rights to their property, their homes, their lands, and under Israeli legislation, beginning with the Absentees' Property Law of 1950, are not able to return to live on the land of their families. That is the exact situation and legal status of some of my friends here participating in this Conference. We, as an active NGO intervening in the Galilee, defend the right of the internally displaced persons in Israel to rehabilitate what can be rehabilitated of

their villages inside Israel, **and demand that this is done immediately today!**

A just solution to the 1948 Palestine refugee problem is often regarded as completely utopian. We are told that, right, it is necessary to find a solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees, but also that this is a matter for the distant future, postponing the solution to an indefinite time.

Such statements are wholly wrong.

I put it to you that already today, inside the State of Israel, it is imperative that we find ways to support such forces in Israel that give serious consideration to the problem of the Palestinian refugees and forcefully voice the demand to implement the right of return of the internally displaced Palestinian persons in Israel to their villages.

The majority of the destroyed Palestinian Arab villages inside the State of Israel can be rehabilitated, because in most cases the on the actual site of the destroyed village there is nothing built. Instead, the Israeli establishment, notably the Jewish National Fund (JNF), planted trees over these sites. Today many of these sites have been turned into public parks and recreational facilities where people have their picnics on weekends and holidays. Hence, there is no practical problem in rehabilitating these villages, and, indeed, this is AVIG's first demand.

A particularly interesting case emerged in our area, and I hope that this first case is a harbinger of a development marking a new way. Not far from the locality where I live there is an Arab village named Mi'ar, destroyed and ethnically cleanse in 1948, and then again in 1951. The ruins of the village were completely razed to the ground only in 1967. In 1980 the Israeli settlement authorities established on the lands of the destroyed Arab village of Mi'ar a community settlement for Jews only called Ya'ad.

Recently, the said settlement authorities drafted a new development plan for Ya'ad with the view to enlarge the community settlement of Ya'ad and expand its residential quarters. The said new development plan had a new residential quarter planned for construction over the site of the destroyed center of the Arab village of Mi'ar. The internally displaced persons of Mi'ar, "present absentees" in the few neighboring Arab localities that escaped destruction in the hands of the Israeli army under the cover of the 1948-49 war, mounted

vigorous protest. Their protest was supported by a nucleus of residents in the all Jewish community settlement of Ya'ad. A few dozen Jewish residents of Ya'ad signed a petition opposing the building of a new residential quarter over the site of the destroyed center of the Arab village. Consequent to this joint Arab-Jewish protest, the original development plan for Ya'ad was abandoned, and the General Meeting of the community settlement of Ya'ad voted against the building of a residential quarter over the site of the destroyed center of the Arab village of Mi'ar.

I do not wish to mislead you and claim that all issues relevant to the question of Mi'ar versus Ya'ad have been resolved. This is far from being the case. But I do wish to submit to you that, when one works with the people concerned in a consistent and open manner, new possibilities for the development of alternative attitudes emerge, motivating the Jewish people concerned to understand that if they wish to live in the area in peace, maintaining friendly relationship based on mutual recognition and mutual respect, it is necessary, in the first instance, that they acknowledge the responsibility of the state of Israel for the criminal horrors of the Palestinian Nakba, and cultivate awareness of the catastrophe that has devastated the lives of their Arab neighbors in our area, the Galilee. There is nor escape from the question of the problem of the Palestinian refugees, internally displaced persons and destroyed villages.

We at AVIG work to advance one solution only in this case. We work to promote the idea of the rehabilitation of the destroyed Arab village of Mi'ar by way of establishment of new homes on the site of the destroyed village for all of the internally displaced persons of Mi'ar as well as all of Mi'ar refugees in the Lebanon and elsewhere who would wish to live there. I do not wish to imply that the Jewish residents of the community settlement of Ya'ad embrace our solution. At this stage only few extend support to this idea and cooperate with us towards its implementation. But the first steps towards this end have now been taken, and we at AVIG are committed to the advance the position enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that everyone has the democratic right to live in the localities of their choice, and most emphatically in the localities where their families and their parents lived before they were forcibly expelled by the Israeli army in the course of and in the wake of the 1948-49 war.

This is the direction we aim to promote.



Dear comrades, dear friends. To begin with I would like to thank the revue *Dialogue* for this gathering. I would also like to thank Mrs. Louisa Hanoune, who is absent due to affairs that are as important as ours, and also Daniel Gluckstein who, since the Geneva conference, has given me the courage to push this idea forward. And I would like to thank everybody here. I am also grateful for the opportunity that I have to meet with Palestinians, whom I am seeing for the first or second time. The issue of meeting among Palestinians had really become a utopia. It is not only the family that one cannot see, but also friends, comrades. One is often in foreign countries. Thank you.

I do not want to repeat things that have been said before ; I will try to be brief. I will tell you real stories that truly show what the question of the right of return is about. The refugees constitute the core of the conflict. The issue of the refugees can by no means be reduced to a problem of economic absorption. It is much more complicated, and it is above all more fundamental. It is a challenge not only for the viability of the Palestinian State, but also for a real reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. This question triggers passions among the actors of the conflict, it touches on several different registers which show its importance, and it gives an idea of the difficulty of negotiating a final arrangement in this conflict. It is above all a question that concerns the "historical legitimacy" of Israel.

By that I mean the fact that fifty-six years ago an entire nation was expelled, thrown out onto the roads and dispossessed of its land, raises the question of the legitimacy of the conditions under which the Israeli State emerged. The history of the Palestinian refugees brings up the history of the conditions under which the Israeli State was created. There are obviously factors related to the history of Jewish communities in Europe and in the rest of the world, to the economic situation after the war, to the British colonization, and to colonization in general. The first years of the Cold War imposed and marked the creation of the "Jewish State," to use the expression of Theodore Herzl. But even these important elements do not in any way relativize the fact that the injustice done to the Arabic people of Palestine still weighs upon the Israelis. The burning question is: how could a state that is presented as "good" arise out of the harm

done to another nation?

The second element that also gives this question its importance is of a political nature; it concerns the political rights of people. Everyone agrees in repeating and claiming the right of the people to govern themselves. In fact two words should be added to this principle. It would then be formulated like this: "the right of the people to govern themselves at home." I repeat: "at home," and not elsewhere. If these words are always missing in the announcement of those principles, the reason is not that they are an exception to the rule, but on the contrary because they are self-evident. A nation only can govern itself at home. I repeat: "at home," not elsewhere. It is precisely on the level of being deprived of this right that the political injustice inflicted on the Palestinians arises.

A third element, which is a humanitarian one, also gives its importance to the question of the refugees. In 2001 or 2002 there were four million Palestinians living in refugee camps, under conditions that should shame humanity. This situation has lasted for fifty-six years. After having specified these three elements, I will leave aside several things that have been discussed by the speakers before me. The negotiations that have been held on the question of the refugees have gone through several phases. At the beginning, there were attempts to sidetrack them twice. One wanted to begin negotiating those problems that were not explosive. "Drop the question of the refugees, the question of Jerusalem, the colonies; we will discuss that later on ; we should start with more important issues." There was some sort of a paradox at stake. The formulation of the United States was: "We have to improve the situation of the refugees in the countries where they live," i.e. around Palestine, in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria. And as soon as one improves their living situation, one completely forgets the issue of the right of return. A few months ago a civilian mission went to Palestine; it was a Swiss mission. They showed me a video for translation; it contained some comments made by children in the street. The camera circulated in the street: the cameraman asked a five-year-old boy from Gaza: "What do you want?"; the boy answered: "To go back to Jaffa." When I translated that, I started crying: "a five-year-old child that lives in Gaza, that was born in Gaza, does he know Jaffa?" He had only heard what his father and

grand-father had said.

These are real stories. Two days ago I was with two Palestinians from Ramallah who came to a meeting in Geneva supposedly to learn how to do the work of a customs officer, how to cash money etc... They told me, "Next month we'll be in Geneva if you want something for your family in Ramallah" because unfortunately one cannot have friends in Gaza who do this kind of work; therefore I am very thankful to the Swiss government for agreeing to

have them meet in Geneva in order for them to learn how to work at and control frontiers.

My dear friends, my comrades, when one speaks about the question of the right of return, one speaks about disrupted families, about people who are forced to live either outside or inside... I gave this example of the five-year-old child dreaming about seeing Jaffa. I am sure he has never seen Jaffa, and perhaps neither has his father, but history exists, it is told at home. Thank you.

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**Mohammad KAIYAL** (Association for the Defence of the Rights of the Internally Displaced, "ADRID")

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In June 1948, Israeli forces attacked the village of Albirweh in the region of Al-Jalil, in the north of Palestine. They were able to occupy it despite the resistance of its inhabitants, even though the village was part of the Arab country according to the partition under Resolution 181 issued by the UN in 1947.

My family lived in that village for hundreds of years, and in 1948 the Israeli troops drove away the villages 1,700 inhabitants, who were dispersed in different villages, cities and countries (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan). Despite this, many of them did not leave Palestine, but stayed in their homeland; they remained as refugees in their country, without houses and without lands, because Israel didn't allow them to return to their villages or to plant their lands, even though the majority of the people of Albirweh lived for decades in villages located near their home village, which was completely destroyed by Israeli forces, its houses, its mosque and its church.

In 1949, the Israeli government established a Kibbutz on part of the lands of Albirweh, and in 1950 a Jewish village was built on another part of the village lands.

The story of Albirweh and its people is the story of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who live in Israel and who are called the "internally displaced". They are citizens of Israel, and refugees at the same time, and they constitute a quarter of the Arab population of Israel, whose total number is almost one million people.

Israel has used force and various means to prevent

the return of many refugees to their homeland, and it has also prevented its own citizens from returning to their lands and houses. Israel used the emergency laws inherited from the British Mandate to drive the Palestinians from their homes and to forbid them from returning to their homes. These laws, especially No.125, enabled a military officer to declare any region "a closed military zone" and then no-one was allowed to enter it.

Israel has also introduced various laws that aim to dispossess the Palestinians of their property. Among these is the 1950 "law of absentee ownership", which considers the internally displaced Palestinians as "present-absent". Under this law, lands and property belonging to Palestinians were transferred to control by the state, and were not returned to their original owners who are citizens of the state of Israel, because Israel insists on considering the owners of this property as absentees under the aforementioned law, while it distributes that property to Jewish inhabitants.

For years, Israel has claimed that the inhabitants of villages and cities who didn't fight its forces remained in their villages and cities, but this claim has nothing to do with reality. The story of Alghabsieh village shows this. In May 1948, Israeli forces attacked the village, and penetrated it without resistance. When citizen Daoud Zaini climbed onto the roof of the mosque carrying a white flag, a sign of peace, the attackers responded with bullets, and he fell down dead, and the attackers continued the violence and killed eleven people from Alghabsieh village, aiming to force the inhabitants to leave. This criminal act was a violation of the agreement signed in March 1948

between representatives of the Haganah organisation and representatives of the village, whereby they agreed that the army would not hurt the inhabitants or enter the village, in exchange for the raising of a white flag on the mosque.

At the end of 1948, the Israeli authorities allowed the inhabitants of this village to return and plant their lands, but they retreated and the Israeli army returned to the village and forced its inhabitants to leave at the end of 1949. The army then declared it a closed military zone.

The inhabitants of Alghabsieh tried to return to their village many times. They were arrested, sent to martial courts, and forced to pay fines. In 1951, the people of Alghabsieh went to the Israeli High Court, thinking that Israel is a state that respects law and democracy. The court made a ruling that same year allowing them to return to their village and their houses, but consecutive Israeli governments did not permit them to return. The decision of the court amounted to nothing but ink on paper.

Israeli bulldozers erased all trace of the village's buildings, except for the village mosque, in 1955. Israel claims that it is a state that respects the law and equal rights, but the story of the inhabitants of Ifreth village in the north of Palestine proves the contrary when this concerns Arabs and their rights within the country.

In November 1948, Israeli forces ordered the inhabitants of the village to leave the village for a short period of time because of security reasons. But this short period has lasted up to the present day.

The people of Ifreth went to the Israeli High Court asking to be permitted to return to their village. In 1951, the Court made its ruling permitting them to return, but the Israeli government didn't respect the court's decision, and it destroyed and demolished the houses in the village as well.

In 1963, the military leader issued an order to close the area based on the emergency laws. On 23 July 1972, the Israeli government decided not to allow the people of Ifreth to return to their village.

In 1981, the people again went to the High Court, but this time, the Court only expressed its hope that the security situation might change for the better on the Lebanese border, thereby allowing the possibility of a positive hearing of their case, which

has lasted so many years.

Many senior representatives in the Israeli government have promised the inhabitants of Ifreth that their case would be resolved, but no such promise has been kept. Many committees have been formed, but all their recommendations have gone with the wind. And during those years, according to the claims of the Israeli authorities, the security situation didn't allow the inhabitants to return to their village, but that same situation allowed the building of Jewish kibbutz and settlements on the village lands.

The court and the government, the law and politics, exchanged roles to forbid the inhabitants of Ifreth from returning. But these people didn't despair.

In 1997, the inhabitants went once again to court. This came after the Oslo Accords. The Court sessions were delayed many times, and while the case was pending, the Israeli government changed many times. Years later, it was Ariel Sharon who came and declared to the Court that the government was permitted not to keep its promises if this was in the political and vital interest of the State of Israel, and he pointed out that the case of the refugees, return was on the table in the Camp David discussions, and that if the inhabitants of Ifreth were allowed to return to their village, the Palestinian Authority might use this in its political propaganda.

In its decision, given in 2003, the Court accepted the statement by Prime Minister Sharon, and this time explained the law and analysed the political context, and was convinced that it was not necessary to oblige the government to designate lands for the people of Ifreth to live. It was sufficient for the Court to say that : "if there is a change in the political situation, another solution should be thought of for the people of Ifreth, one that will enable them to live in the area, where the village used to be."

The courts of Israel, its governments and army have united to dispossess the Palestinians of their lands, and to forbid them from returning to their homes. In the Society for the Defence of the Rights of the Displaced, we are convinced that there will only be justice, peace and equality with the application of the Right of Return for the refugees, the restitution of their possessions, and the elimination of all kinds of racism in Palestine.

Jewish people in Israel (or at least most of them) live in complete ignorance or even denial of the Palestinian disaster that took place in 1948, the Nakba. The Nakba has no place in the language, the landscape, the environment, and the memory of the Jewish collective in Israel.

Traveling in Israel, one would find guideposts, landmarks and memorials that create and sustain the Jewish-Israeli narrative. Jewish-Israeli events that took place more than 2000 years ago are celebrated through these memorials, while Palestinian memorials are nowhere to be seen.

Moreover, there is an attempt to erase this memory from the collective consciousness and from the landscape. We, the Israelis, study in our schools that the Jews came to Israel to transform the desert into a blooming country, because we were a "nation without a land that came back to a land without a nation".

Zochrot is an NGO whose goal is to introduce the Palestinian Nakba to the Israeli-Jewish public, to express the Nakba in Hebrew, to enable a place for the Nakba in the language and in the environment. This is in order to promote an alternative memory to the hegemonic Zionist memory.

The Nakba is the disaster of the Palestinian people: the destruction of the villages and cities, the killing, the expulsion, the erasing of the Palestinian culture. But the Nakba, I believe, is also our story, the story of the Jews who live in Israel, who enjoy the privileges of being the winners.

The story of the Nakba and the lessons that we can learn from it are relevant also for the Jewish people. Zochrot was originally founded by Jews and its work was aimed for Jews in Israel. Today, however, there are Palestinians in our organization, and we hope that some programmes will be aimed for the Palestinian public.

Zochrot was founded in early 2002 and its main goal is, as I said before, to bring awareness of the tragic events of the Nakba as being at the centre of the Israeli-Palestine conflict. Awareness and recognition of the Nakba by the Jewish-Israeli people and taking responsibility for this tragedy are essential for ending the struggle and starting a process of reconciliation between the peoples of Palestine-Israel.

Zochrot acts in many ways to reach its stated goal. Of all its actions, the most unique and outstanding activity is the organization of tours for Jews and Arabs to Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948. During these tours, we post signs that designate the different sites in the destroyed village and provide some details about each of them. Refugees and their families provide knowledge of the village history, and an attempt is made to expose as much of the ruined village as possible. It is through these stories that participants can get an idea what the village actually looked like, and how it was to live in it. The event is also important in establishing the historical-collective memory of the land.

The tour has a different meaning for the Palestinians and the Jewish-Israelis. For the Palestinians, this event is a journey back in time to the place they used to live in. For the Jews, the tour and the marking of sites is a revelation of the memories hidden in the site. The memories that are revealed often compete with the common, hegemonic Zionist memories. Personally, I can say that for me the landscape actually changes, and as the stories are told, the village, as do other destroyed villages, come to life in my eyes.

This is a process of learning, and through this learning I have begun to see what was invisible to me before. Nowadays, when I travel to the northern parts of Israel and I see a large concentration of eucalyptus trees, I can see the village that was once there.

Another unique activity of Zochrot is to produce a special booklet, in Hebrew and Arabic, for each tour. These booklets reflect Zochrot's process of learning. They feature refugee's testimonies, pictures of the village and different historical references.

It is Zochrot's ambition to recreate the Nakba in Hebrew, in other words to enable a space where the Nakba can be spoken of or written about, in Hebrew. For this purpose, a website was created (<http://www.nakbainhebrew.org>). In this website, there is a list of all the Palestinian villages that were destroyed since 1948, and the names of the Israeli cities or villages that were built on their lands. There are also specific maps of the destroyed villages and different details about each of them. The site also presents the different activities of Zochrot. The importance of this site is that it places

the Palestinian Nakba in the virtual space of the Hebrew speakers who surf the web.

Another method that we use to reach the Israeli public is meetings with different groups of students, teachers, social activists etc. who want to learn about the Nakba. These meetings give rise to many different needs of the participants: accurate information, anger at their own ignorance, denial and misunderstanding. Difficult questions are raised in the meetings that challenge the participant's prior knowledge and values. We have also organized encounters between Palestinian refugees and the Israelis that live on their land. In the encounters, the different narratives of 1948 are shared, and then there is an attempt to discuss opportunities for creating a space that would enable the needs of both sides to be met.

Zochrot has an unusual name, which in Hebrew is the feminine form for the word "remembering". We are often asked: why "remember" in a feminine voice ? The masculine form of remembering, as presented in the hegemonic discourse, is masculine/chauvinistic, violent and Zionist. Zochrot aims to promote another form of remembering, an alternative form that will enable recognition of other memories which are often kept silent. In addition, Zochrot makes an effort to create a space for the memory of women in the Palestinian Nakba. The name "Zochrot" insinuates

to all of these.

The study of the Nakba as a condition for reconciliation: The study of the Nakba is an important step for Jews living in Israel, that often reflects a genuine interest to know and understand. But studying is not enough. The Nakba is not the story of another people, that took place somewhere else. It is the story that we, as Israeli Jews, are responsible for. Studying, without taking responsibility, is to me, not enough.

What do I mean by taking responsibility? I mean the acknowledgement and deep understanding of the tragedy that took place, and the taking responsibility for our part in this tragedy. Acknowledging the personal and collective right of return for every refugee that was deported, and the hope for the implementation of this right, either by giving back the lands, the payment of compensation or actual return.

This position is complicated for Israeli-Jews. It is hard for us to give up the image of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, an image that would be endangered should we choose to allow the right of return. Allowing the right of return will change the demographic balance in Israel and the Israeli state could not continue to exist in its current form. I believe that in this new state life would be better for both Palestinians and Israelis living in the land.

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### **Dominique FERRE (Dialogue)**

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Two years ago, when a few Jewish and Arab activists from Palestine decided to publish the review *Dialogue*, their aim was not, of course, to decide in the place of the Palestinian people, in the place of the Palestinian people's organizations, what solutions to bring to the problems of Palestine. On the contrary, the aim of publishing this review was create on open discussion forum to help allow Jewish and Arab activists work out their own solutions, to help the Palestinian people work out their own solutions. Such would be democratic solutions, by therefore respecting equal rights and so necessarily resulting in the right of return for the refugees.

And this free discussion is necessary because there are a number of inevitable political issues which

need to be debated.

In Europe and in my country, in France, everybody understands that the situation is not same as in Palestine. In Europe, and in France, you still have the right to essentially say what you think. There are leaders of left-wing organizations, there are leaders of a movement which claims to fight against globalization who have connections in Palestine with someone called Michel Warshawski, whom you know, who makes statements about Palestine.

For example there is an association which is called ATTAC, that circulated worldwide a text entitled "The alter-globalization struggle movements in Palestine". In this text, they say : "We recognize

international law, and international law this is UN resolutions." They are saying: UN resolutions assert there must be two states in Palestine, and, concerning the State of Israel, that it is recognized by the international community, by the United Nations. So it is apparently possible to think that the Zionist enterprise was a colonial enterprise and at the same time recognize the *fait accompli*. But this raises a problem: need we acknowledge such a *fait accompli*? For example, today in Iraq what is the *fait accompli*? Well, Iraq is being occupied by troops under the supervision of the USA, Iraq is torn apart, shall we have to recognize the *fait accompli*? Or else, shall we recognize the legitimate right for the Iraqi people to be able to live free from occupation and to self determination?

The document from ATTAC speaks about the Taba negotiations, when Israel had proposed that in five years less than 40,000 Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return within the 1948 borders. And here is what the leaders of the alter-globalization movement say about the Taba negotiations: "Many Palestinians reject this proposal and demand an unconditional right of return of the refugees into Israel. We may have long debates as to whether this position is legitimate, on the interpretation of Resolution 194. But it is obvious that neither Israeli public opinion nor the international community as it exists now, is willing to support such a choice".

And they add: "*The solution that was globally outlined in Taba represents a compromise between what international law says but also the reality of the balance of powers (...). Reasoning outside that realm of reality, as some Arab nationalist activists or as some Islamic groups do, who think that the only solution is the destruction of the State of Israel - even if that does not mean sending the Jews "back to their home" - is placing oneself within a*

*messianic view of history.*" This poses a problem: does this mean that the right to return is an abstract issue? Yet, we all heard what the Palestinian activists have said at this conference, describing the tragic reality resulting from the ban of the right to return for Palestinian refugee. As for the ATTAC text, it concludes: "*Some intellectuals are advocating the creation of a single state (...). This view raises exciting and necessary debates in which anyone in the alter-globalization movement can and must take part. But this is certainly not a political program of action.*"

What does that mean? That means that some intellectuals might be debating (if they decide to do so) the possibility that a single, secular and democratic state might be a solution. But this must only remain at the level of discussions, and in any case it must not lead to the possible prospect of a democratic solution for the Palestinian masses or the Jews who emigrated in Palestine.

In conclusion, I would like to ask the participants a question: can we accept the *fait accompli*? Doesn't accepting the *fait accompli* mean accepting that families be torn apart, as someone explained? Doesn't accepting the *fait accompli* mean accepting to answer that five-year-old child whom someone spoke about that "you will never go back to Jaffa"? Doesn't accepting the *fait accompli* mean accepting that the Jews be locked up in a ghetto, in a vast number of ghettos that are spreading all over the territory of Palestine? And we must ask those great left-wing leaders and those alter-globalization movement leaders who give the Palestinian people such good pieces of advice if all that is to be accepted, why don't they accept to live in refugee camps? Would they accept to live with their families in the squalid conditions that are imposed upon the Palestinian people?

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**Mahmoud AL ALI** (Lebanon – Aïdun association "*Those who will come back*")

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I thank the organizers of this conference, which has raised some questions I would like to address, as a member of a group working in the framework of the Right Of Return. Its name is "Aïdun", and it is part of the International Committee in defense of the Right Of Return for the refugees.

On the one hand, the struggle for the return, which

which was actually launched in recent years, came as the answer to the Oslo initiatives and due to the fear of the society of refugees and of their civilian bodies, of any surrender of the refugees' rights and notably the right of return. The Oslo initiatives were not clear, as some of the comrades emphasized. There were real dangers of giving up this right. The actions for the right of return which

were independent of the official Palestinian framework were meant to draw attention and raise the refugees' voices and the voice of the components parts of the refugees' civilian society.

On the other hand, the struggle for the right of return constitutes a part of the ideological conflict against Zionism, of its *de facto* racism and its refusal to acknowledge others. This struggle attests to the fact that Palestinian refugees are ready to come back and live peacefully with the Jews. There is no problem regarding this issue for Palestinian refugees. From this point of view, the movement for the return is an anti-Zionist movement, with all that Zionism represents as a reactionary and anti-humanistic foundation working to set apart the Jews by placing them in ghettos, be it inside or outside Palestine.

This matter consequently raised a series of challenges facing the movement for the right of return, some of which were mentioned during this conference. It is not enough to refer to international resolutions and to say that we stand for the right of return and that we stand firm on that. We have also to ask the question: how can we enforce this right, in what framework of institutions and in what State? Some ideas were raised : Is the solution a bi-national State or two States, or the "cantons", or the solution of a single, secular, democratic State? The latter is a real stake since what is raised today is the two-State solution. This solution is a danger for the right of return, taking into account the number of possible sell-outs. Moreover, it maintains the situation in the lands of occupied Palestine as it was since 1948. That is to say the continuation of the Zionist State and of many forms of segregation, and the existence of an Arab State. This cannot represent a definitive positive situation. What we are aiming for is a definitive solution and not a provisional one which, after some years, creates a crisis again and drives the peoples back into endless conflicts.

Thus we think it is important to coordinate efforts between the movement for the return inside, and the movement of solidarity of the right of return outside. Maybe this will require the creation of committees to explain the dangers of the Zionist movement and the Israeli Law of return. This task must be done by the Jews themselves. That is why we think it is important that the Jews play a fundamental part in the movement from outside so that it won't be qualified as anti-Semitic. When you criticize the State of Israel, it has become easy to be regarded as an anti-Semite and yet we are Semites like the Jews.

What's more, this will require organizing discussions inside Israel itself to strengthen the network that will do this task. In the interest of open-mindedness and fraternity new issues should also be added to the discussion. In the framework of the common achievement of the democratic, secular State, the Palestinians but so the Jews who were forced to leave their houses will get the right to return. This is an important aspect that everyone must integrate. Because, when you think in a democratic and secular way, you must go beyond everything that derives from religion. Accepting the two-state principle, means acknowledging the foundations of Zionist racism.

I am in favor of Comrade Salah Abou Rabi's proposal regarding the need of a world day of solidarity with the right of return and of coordination committees inside and outside. I would like to repeat again that what is being proposed today with the two states solution is in fact what was proposed in Resolution 181 of 1947 and which is what lead to a war that has lasted since that time. It is the partition resolution of that time, adopted by the United Nations to create a Jewish State and an Arab State, which led to insecurity, and it is unthinkable that the maimed two-state solution could create a lasting and definitive solution to war and to conflict.

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**Sohel SLEIBI** ("1948 borders", Abna Al Balaad association- "The sons of the earth")

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First, I should like to introduce myself. I am speaking on behalf of the Abna Al Balaad association and in the name of its General Secretary who is now serving a 30-month term in an Israeli prison for his political activities. Today,

what we are discussing is the Right of Return and UN Resolution 194.

Even before an international resolution took the right to return into account, it was a fundamental

right. The Right of Return must be respected if stability and peace are to be established in the region. My colleagues have spoken of the vision of a secular, democratic State, I am not going to broach that matter again at length, but some points have to be focused on.

First, a definition of the Zionist movement has to be given. We must make it clear that it is an imperialist, colonial movement that endeavoured to make use of the genocide that the Jews underwent in order to reach its goal. It is well known that some Zionist leaders co-operated with the Nazi regime even when it was universally condemned. Things must be put back in their proper place. It must be known that Israel, which is the product of Zionism, is only in the service of major powers' imperialist interests.

I should like to emphasise an especially important point; if a secular and democratic state were established, after the implementation of the Right of Return, in such case, stability and peace could become a reality. Conversely, if there is a continuation of the two state solution, such as it is at present, it is defined as a Jewish State or the

State of the Jewish people, this will raise problems for the other populations.

The Palestinian people in Israel, which today amounts to some 17 percent of the total population, poses a problem for Israel. How then can the Right of Return that concerns other Palestinians be implemented? It would harm this Jewish claim on the State of Israel.

When the Right of Return is evoked, Israel mentions a demographic time-bomb, which is why I consider that setting two separate states side by side is even more unfeasible than one democratic and secular State. This is why the actions of the Jews who live in those regions handed down in 1948 and which became Israel, who act on our side, is very important; they help strengthen the Palestinian identity, they enable the Palestinian paradigm to exist and to gain strength, so the Palestinians can live free and return to their home villages, for those who are still able to do so, or access their inheritance from their parents when those have died. The democratic and secular State is the only means to end the conflict and bring about peace and security.

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#### **Mohammed YACOUB (Right of Return Congress)**

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I would like to address two issues, and I will try to do so in less than ten minutes.

First, some of my colleagues have spoken of a coalition for the return. A coalition, that is to say, a series of committees and research centres existing in a number of places in the world that gave birth to a co-ordination committee in London last year, therefore one that exists. A co-ordination committee to which the person who spoke on behalf of Aïdun belongs, which meets in December every year in order to try to impose or to find a "World Palestinian Refugee's Day " that would be recognised internationally.

Secondly, this coalition is made up of several bodies, and I am mandated to speak on their behalf today. In brief, we must go down the road of claiming the right of return, because this issue has been put aside since 1951, when the Palestinian refugees were ignored when compared with other refugees throughout the world. They were dealt

with differently, and the provisions of other conventions in defence of displaced people and refugees do not apply to them.

Actually, Palestinian refugees still need today a movement that would be able to defend and protect their rights. Thus I appeal to you to spread the information that the "Palestinian" you are talking about is not only a "Palestinian" who is not a man who enjoys his rights per se. They are not subject to resolutions by the rest of the world, because to begin with they have no state recognised by the international community. Thus, their situation is completely different, that's why we have to focus specifically on this issue, and we have to understand that the Palestinian refugee has a lower standing than some others who enjoy their rights. The massacres that took place, for instance, in Sabra and Chatila in 1982 showed how this refugee status is endangered. Even the latest events that happened in Rafah and Khan-Yunis prove this daily.



Good evening to you, dear Comrades and friends. First, on behalf of all the participants, I would like to thank the organisers of this Conference who devoted themselves to this absolutely extraordinary job in the previous months and made possible this conference which is so important for us. They have done a wonderful job and we must thank them for that.

Now I would like, if I may, to tell you a personal story. In the early 1960s, I was part of a kibbutz in Israel, and had been for several years. One day, I went for a walk in the nearby forest, which had been planted around the same time as the kibbutz was started up. And there in the forest, I discovered ruins of houses. I was surprised. When I went back to the kibbutz, I asked the old hands. They were very embarrassed, and explained the following to me: our kibbutz was set up in 1952.

This kibbutz is called Horchin ("the farmers") in Hebrew. Before the kibbutz there was a Palestinian village called Hirbet Herech. One day, an army jeep arrived with an officer, and they called the village leader and told him : you have one month to leave from here. At the end of one month, the peasants from that village left. A kibbutz was set up on that spot. I then said to the old hands: "as far as I am concerned, this land is cursed. We have robbed the people who were working their land, and put in their place other people for totally inhumane reasons, for reasons of ethnic origin. I will not stay here any longer. And I left".

I did some research. I was a member of an extreme left-wing Zionist political party. I consulted the archives to find out if this had been an isolated case or if there had been others. And I realised that all along the borders at that time, along the borders with Lebanon, Syria and the old border with Jordan, a very large number of villages had been destroyed in this way in order to set up Jewish settlements.

You can also note the city of Majdal, along the Gaza Strip, whose inhabitants were expelled in 1951 I think, towards Gaza, they were sent to the Gaza refugee camps. Let us not forget that all those people who were driven out of their homes were formally Israeli citizens, carrying the blue identity cards of Israeli citizens. With regard to them, the principle of a citizen's equal rights and obligations was not respected.

I would like to talk about general issues. At home, if I dare say so, in the Jewish population of Israel, we are told the following on what is called "the Israeli Left": "If the Camp David negotiation, chaired by US President Clinton, between the Palestinian Authority led by Yasser Arafat on the one hand and the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak on the other hand failed, it is obviously because the Palestinians demanded the recognition of the Right of Return. Among other things. And Ehud Barak's delegation refused to recognise that right". And the Israeli Left adds: "What the Palestinian side, what the Palestinian Authority demanded was a recognition of the principle of the Right of Return" that is to say that the State of Israel should recognise the part it played in the creation of the refugee problem, that is to say it should recognise its responsibility in the Nakba.

But this recognition in principle does not necessarily mean, for this Israeli Left, that the refugees will come back home. What is demanded is the recognition of the right of return. "But the return itself does not necessarily need to be realised". I think that what millions of refugees need is not for someone to doff their hat and tell them "How guilty we were in the creation of your problem". What they want is the settlement of their real and concrete problem which they are facing. That is to say: that they should be allowed to come back home. Any other "solution" which would consist of saying: "There would be a peace agreement in which the State of Israel for its part would recognise its responsibilities in the creation of the problem", this is not a solution to the conflict that has existed between the State of Israel and the Palestinian people since 1948.

Once again, we have to bear in mind that the Palestinian national movement wasn't created after 1967, after the war that led to the occupation of the West Bank, of Gaza and more by the Israeli army. The Palestinian national movement went back before that time. The Fatah was created in Kuwait in 1959. The PLO was created in Jerusalem in 1964. The Palestinian national movement was in the first place a refugee movement.

In conclusion, a few words on the second point, which is the issue of the State. "Olga's appeal" proposes: "a single democratic and secular republic, or two states, or a federal state, or a state composed of cantons". Two states: we have known

that since 1948, and we know quite well that this has been a miserable failure. Such was the November 1947 UN resolution, and this solution could not succeed and was unable to be realised. Two states, that means two states built on a religious and ethnic basis, that means a perpetuation of the conflict, the war. And a federal state means, in other words, two states. "Cantons"

mean two states again. A multiplication of little states that are impossible to manage. The only solution that has not been tried is a democratic and secular republic covering the whole territory of historic Palestine, where there would be no difference in the status of citizens who comprise this State.

**Djelloul DJOUDI** (Deputy, Algerian Worker's Party)

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Our interest in the question of Palestinian refugees does not simply arise from a feeling of solidarity. It is grounded in our awareness that the issue of Palestine and the cause of refugees lies critically at the heart of everything that goes on in the region. It is at the foundation of any project for peace and security there. Understanding that the right of return for refugees is an inalienable right, a non-negotiable right, means that it is also an historic right that someday must see the light of day in that region, for the well-being of the Palestinians and all the peoples of the world.

Allow me to refer to the Algerian experience. Algeria suffered under occupation for 130 years, during which time other countries thought the Algerians had bowed their heads and resigned themselves to their fate. Many thought the Algerians would never reach their liberation, nor take into their own hands their right to self-determination. Yet, beginning on July 5, 1930, we took our first steps toward reclaiming our rights; and all the movements of opposition and resistance that have followed, up to November 1954, had our armed struggle as their implicit outcome. Simple justice legitimized our demand for self-determination, even from beyond our borders; and that is what the Palestinians are doing.

The creation of the state of Israel after the Second World War took place within a very articular context of which everyone is aware. It was first planned in British government offices, and then further elaborated in those of the US. This is an element of its history we must not forget. All the peoples of the world who seek to reclaim their rights should be aware of this. But it is especially important for the Palestinians, insofar as they live in a region where three religions coexist - the three monotheistic religions.

None of the resolutions or agreements, beginning with Madrid, and including the protocols and agreements of Oslo, have been founded on real international legitimacy; hence the persistence of conflict. None have attended to the real injuries suffered by the Palestinian people, by the Palestinian refugees, nor sought to remedy this problem. The rights of the Palestinian people can no longer be denied, neither their right to exist nor their inalienable right to return to and reclaim their land of origin.

Hence, our desire to see a single state emerge, both democratic and secular, in which these three religions can coexist in peace, and where all their people can flourish. This conference, which must be part of an international movement, is one of the means we have to encourage and give enhance the voice of the Palestinians in the international community.

What the Palestinians are claiming, in the end, are nothing but their rights to a state which has been denied them. Our efforts should help build a committee that will endeavor to organize various initiatives with respect to the right of return - like those of the Algerian National Assembly, for instance, which organized a Parliamentary international conference in 2004 on the Palestinian right of return. It is toward such actions that we should continue our efforts for this cause. We hope there will be future initiatives that go beyond Algeria, eventually spreading to Europe and the US - especially since Palestinians are today to be found all over the world. The Palestinian question is an international cause that we must respect and sustain by every means possible, in order to eventually restore their essential rights.

Decades have gone by, during which the Palestinian people has not stopped undergoing territorial expulsion and the worst massacres and crimes. Decades of oppression, but of resistance too. An honourable resistance by our Palestinian people, which is sticking to its national values, values at the head of which is the refugees' right to return to their land and to their homes.

This resistance proves day after day that our revolution has not been overcome, and that despite Sharon's war-machine, he has not succeeded in stopping it. Our resistance is our only hope, which does mean I do not believe in the possibility of negotiations, but I think that, at the moment, negotiation will only bring more misfortunes to the Palestinian people, and more compromise to its disadvantage, as had started with the sterile Oslo Accords.

I say sterile, while knowing that another point of view existed in the past, for me, for many others, thinking that these Accords were going to bring us an independent Palestinian State and bring the refugees back home after decades of expulsion and oppression. However, Oslo quickly proved to be a nightmare, because the refugees problem was not taken into account from the very beginning. Thus the people's anger changed into street demonstration in 1996, and as one can guess, the Israeli army reacted strongly, making about 150 martyrs among the Palestinians.

In the same way, the massacres carried on. In 1997, Tsahal responded violently to a demonstration against the annexation of Mount Abu-Ghneim, intended for the construction of new settlements, causing a new massacre. No improvement has appeared in the Palestinian situation, only the worst uncertainty with regards to the future of this people.

The Palestinians then realised that the Oslo Accords would bring nothing to their fundamental cause: the return of refugees. The essential nature of this claim was clear at the time of President Arafat's funeral in Ramallah, where the citizens, answers (who came en masse despite being blocked by the Israelis) to questions by the Al-Jazeera newspaper concerning the reasons for this

considerable presence were clear: "We are here because President Arafat never gave up the Right of Return nor did he give up Jerusalem".

Successive initiatives, lately that of Geneva, aim at cancelling the Right of Return of our Palestinian refugees. And a total rejection by Palestinian public opinion is opposed to this position.

Our position concerning the Palestinian refugees question must be clear and without ambiguity. During such a time of our history where conspiracies are being woven on all sides against our cause, I hope that this conference will help achieve the Palestinian dream: that of an independent state. But which State? What do we want ? Two States, one Palestinian and the other Jewish ? Or a single democratic and secular State?

The idea of two States has become totally unlikely, and I agree with the speakers who clarified this point. But I would like to add that Israel is a State based on Zionist ideology, which regards Palestine as part of a larger "Eretz Israel". Thus, a Palestinian State cannot exist within the context of this ideology, and I would like to point out one side which has not been developed yet: that of the "partition wall", destroying thoroughly the very idea of the two States!

The idea of a single state is back today, after being omnipresent in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Palestinian Prime Minister Abu Al Aala's allusion during his speech to the Israelis is proof of this, since he said clearly that the Palestinian people have nothing left but the choice of a single State after the two-state solution was destroyed by the Israeli side.

The Palestinians, Right of Return is a sacred right, it is recognised by all the international laws and human right organisations. It poses another question: to which kind of State will the refugees return?

The just, total and final solution will be carried out only by a single democratic and secular State covering the whole extent of historic Palestine, in and by the equality of rights between all its components regardless of their origins or religions.

I would like to begin by thanking the organizers of this international debate, which actually has come at the right time.

With this small contribution, I want to send a kind of hope to those who are present, given that the case of the Palestinian refugees, return to their home is a case which is not yet over in terms of timing. It is still alive, and is still being proposed despite the small disputes around this subject, on the occasion of the Geneva meeting for example, which was organized a year ago, but the case has still been proposed fundamentally, and it has every chance of being proposed afresh. Why ?

To begin with, I would like to support the request of our brother Salah Salah in his suggestion to establish a follow-up committee to work on the right of the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes, because this is a suitable occasion for many considerations.

The first and the main consideration is that the Palestinian refugees today are the concentrated expression of the international struggle between the popular, worker,s movement and the imperialist movement. On the other hand, the case of the Palestinian refugees is also the case of their justified claim for rights in their own land. This case began about 60 years ago. We notice today in the imperialist attack in all the parts of the world, from India to Brazil, on the peasants movements which have been banned and driven from their lands. And US domination is still present in those regions.

The Palestinians are delegated to fight against colonization and imperialism on behalf of all the peoples of the world. Hence, we should consider this case as a central case in the struggle with capitalist and imperialist forces in the world. Hence, it would be easy for us to convince many parties involved in the resistance against imperialism to become involved in this project - and I mean here the enlargement of the solidarity movement, while maintaining our core positions, and we should take into consideration the speech by Comrade Dominique, that there are some movements who have a wavering position, and as another comrade said, they are democratic to the bone, except for where the Palestinians are concerned, when democracy melts away and disappears.

We know that they do not have room for manoeuvre for various reasons, including the following :

- Resistance is becoming stronger throughout the world, with the strong battles that the popular, trade union and student movements are waging, and the case of Iraq and the US occupation, carried out with the support of the Zionist entity called Israel, is a kind of a supplement to encourage popular resistance to react against the presence of the US imperialist who violates the lands and commits every kind of act that deforms the face of humanity. This is an encouraging factor for the need to expand this movement.

The other factor is a factor which concerns the Arab region. The Arab region today is a region that is mostly composed of dictatorships supported by the imperialist countries in general, and especially by US imperialism, which is carrying out an operation of separation of what is normal, i.e. where the normal thing is that the Arab peoples co-operate in all their component parts with the case of Palestine, where these peoples are linked by a common culture and history, and common spiritual relations.

This falls outside the bounds of chauvinism, but there are also close links between the peoples of the region, for example, being a Tunisian, I feel these links because I know that the presence of Israel has allowed military regimes and dictatorships to be set up using Israel as a pretext. These military regimes have bypassed the project of liberation, increased backwardness and strengthened the dictatorships, and the presence of these regimes have created a kind of powerlessness in human development in the region, something that has brought us into a big crisis that we are still suffering today on every level.

Because of this, I have a request to make to all the participants here today: Do not forget that there are movements of resistance and solidarity with the Palestinian brothers and sisters in the Arab region, but these movements are oppressed, and both on a parliamentary basis and on a basis of strengthening the Palestinian resistance, we have to support these forces that are struggling and want to express their normal sense of belonging with their brothers and sisters in Palestine.

A Salaam Alaykum. My name is Musa Al Hindi and I am here to represent Al-Awda, the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition in the United States and in Canada. I am going to talk very briefly about the kind of work that we do in the United States so that you have an idea what we are doing. Most of our work is promotional and organisational. Promotional in the sense that we build a lot of contacts on the Palestinian issue in general and the Right to Return in particular.

One of the most recent conferences we had was held in San Francisco, and we had about 500 people attending. And we had to fight peacefully against Zionist protestors who, because we were holding the conference at a public school, asked the police to let them in. We had to fight not to let any Zionists inside the meeting, the conference.

The San Francisco Police gave the organisers a warning that this was a public space and therefore we had to let everybody into the event. The lead organiser said basically that we would not let them in, and the police had two choices: either to shut us down, shut the conference down and arrest 400 or 500 people on the spot, or let the Zionists in and take responsibility for what they intended doing. After consultation, the police said that even though it was a public space, they were not going to let the Zionists in. So we won the battle.

We are a group of Palestinians completely integrated into the US anti-war movement, for peace and justice, and we say to all organisations that defend justice and peace in the Middle East, and who are against the war on Iraq, that it is

impossible to defend the rights of the Palestinian people without demanding the recognition of the Right of Return. We explain to them that if they do not take on the slogan of the Right of Return we will not ask for their support, because this lies at the heart of the Palestinian issue. It is not Jerusalem, it is not even the state issue, the issue is the Right of Return.

As well as organising conferences to provide information, and producing publications aimed at the media, we also organise activity aimed at groups on the question of “disinvestment”. We go into universities, we go and see people in their churches. We ask them to put on pressure on their organisations to withdraw their investments outside of Israel, in other words not to invest in organisations and companies that do business with Israel.

The AFL-CIO has US\$300 million in pension funds invested in companies that do business with Israel, and even operate in Israel itself. Billions of dollars are at stake. The Presbyterian Church, which is very important in the United States, passed a resolution in favour of disinvesting from Israel. It was a method you have seen being used successfully by the anti-apartheid movements during the apartheid years in South Africa, which helped bring down the Botha regime.

This is one aspect of our activities, but I hope that here in France and Europe you will take up this question of disinvestment, because it hits the State of Israel where it hurts most, in other words the question of finance.

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**Jean-Pierre BARROIS** (Dialogue)

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Dear Friends, Dear Sisters and Brothers, the chair of this conference has already read you a number of messages that we received from Palestinian activists who were prohibited from entering French territory. We have received many messages, and of course everything will be published, but I would like to mention the names of those who told they were banned from getting a visa :

- Adel Samara, a writer who lives in the West bank, Walid Al Awad, quoted by the Chairman, Leila Khaled, member of the Palestinian National Council and General Secretary of the General Union of Palestinian Women, Tayseer Nasrallah, member of the Palestinian National Council as well as Jaber Suleiman of the Aidun Association.

You have the draft resolution and some speakers told you in their speeches that it was necessary for this conference to be a starting point instead of a final outcome. They referred to the need to extend the campaign, to widely circulate it around the world. I believe the proposal put forward to set up an international committee for the unconditional right of the Palestinians to return to their land, to their home, is the best way to pursue today's initiative.

I believe the initiative of the committee, which of course is not meant to substitute for or oppose any other existing initiative, will make it possible for all activists, democrats, civil rights advocates, Palestinian activists, all those fighting for justice and democracy, to know that there are people who are saying NO at the international scale. People who say NO to unequal rights, NO to injustice, NO to bantustans, who say NO to Zionism, to institutionalized racism, who say NO to the fact that there are first class citizens and second class citizens, that there are people who bringing together all those NO's and turning them into a YES and a fight, a fightback for this universal value which is that of the right of return to the land where the Palestinians come from.

From this point of view, I think it is important for this committee to become at the same time a point of support for those Palestinian activists, those Jewish activists from Palestine who sometimes fight separately and sometimes side by side, although with the same goal: equal rights, full

citizenship, refusal that someone's citizenship be determined by their mother's religion.

I think it is extremely important to spread the news of this committee, to launch an international campaign for people to join this committee, because it brings fundamental universal values without which there can be no human emancipation. Therefore, continuing the struggle implies that this international campaign gain a broad international audience of members to the international committee in all countries. In the same way, in appropriate forms, I think the proposition was made to organize an international conference, which appears to me to be a way to extend this campaign, which has already had as an initial result today's conference as.

I think it is very important for this initiative be known on the American continent where there is a large Palestinian diaspora.

We have to multiply initiatives to achieve the right to return. Several speakers have approached this issue: the right to return is not simply a principle: it is first of all and fundamentally a universal, individual as well as common, historical and democratic right. And we fight for its implementation, not for its advocacy as a principle. For it to be carried out, we have to spread the news of the existence of this campaign, of this committee, have people join the committee and multiply the initiatives worldwide.

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#### **Anis MANSOURI (Dialogue)**

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It is certainly difficult to add anything to what has already been said by the various participants of this conference. However, I would like to emphasize a point that seems important to me.

It is clear that the number of Palestinian refugees in the world is in the millions. In the beginning there were a few thousand, then hundreds of thousands who were driven from their land in 1948, expelled from their country and came to constitute a world wide Diaspora. The importance of the right of return is that it is the core and essence of the Palestinian question. One can truly say that as long as just one single Palestinian refugee does not have

the right to go to their village, on their land, into their house, then the war of 48 is not yet over.

The goal of the war of 48 was to create a racist and apartheid state. It is thus possible to say that the International Committee for the Unconditional Right of Return of Palestinian Refugees is at the very heart of the Palestinian question. During this conference, reference has been made to Resolution 194. This resolution is very good. However, the same institution that passed Resolution 194 also made Resolution 181. Let us not forget that the UN's Resolution 181 is the source of the trouble in the whole region; not only of the Palestinian

people, not only of the Jewish people, but of the people of the whole area. Resolution 181 was the instrument that American imperialism used to manipulate the region and to pit one group against another in order to implement an interminable war which goes on today, and will go on and on.

There is no solution under the aegis of Resolution 181. It is not possible that any solution could be brought about under the aegis of the UN. The UN presents many resolutions under the pretext of doing so in the interest of the people. But let us remember that the UN was there to make war against Libya; it was there to make war against Sudan; it was there to make war against the people

of Latin America; it was there to make war against Iraq, not only once, but twice and even three times. And when the UN did not approve the current war against Iraq, it could do nothing to stop it. But the UN was there to make Resolution 181, the resolution of the division of Palestine. It could apply Resolution 181 because it was supported by American imperialism.

If the people wish to live freely they will have their way. The Palestinian people today wish to live and nothing will stop them. Because they want to survive, they will survive and return to their land. They must embrace militant activism.

## *MESSAGES*

Message from **Walid AL AWAD**, Secretary of the Committee of Refugees in the National Council

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Gaza, Palestine

Dear friends, participants in the Conference for the Defense of the Right of Return for Palestinian Refugees,

I would very much have wanted to be amongst you to express my deep thanks and gratitude for this important initiative through which you express your support for just causes against injustice, tyranny and aggression. As you well know, the Israeli occupation with its oppression has imposed tough measures on our homeland through embargo and checkpoints which prevented me from getting a visa to enter this fraternal country, France, and be there on time.

Dear friends,

The cause of refugees and their right to return is considered amongst the most just in the world. Over 56 years ago, in 1948, the Zionist movement drove an entire nation out of its homeland. During this collective deportation process over 52 massacres were committed and 532 villages and cities were destroyed. Violent massacres in which innocents were burnt alive were committed; this was indeed the fate of the inhabitants of Al Taira village near the city of Haifa. Under this terrible burden, Palestinians were displaced outside their homeland and away from their properties. They were dispersed as a Diaspora around the world living in camps under difficult circumstances. Today, their number exceeds four million. With the establishment of the state of Israel that brought waves of Jewish immigrants who had suffered similar forms of injustice at the hands of the Nazi monster, this poses an important question: can the victim who was brutalized by Nazi cruelty become the henchman of a people of innocents living peacefully in their homeland? This is exactly what

happened to our Palestinian people who were living peacefully on their land until Zionist gangs came and used the suffering of Jews to turn them from victims into henchmen and murderers who drove out our people from their cities, villages and homes and established their country on their suffering and wounds. Since then, conflict broke out in the Middle East with at the heart of its concerns the cause of refugees. Without a fair solution to this problem, peace, stability and security will never be achieved in this region. This just solution necessitates the implementation of solutions of international legitimacy, mainly resolution 194 stipulating that refugees should be brought back to their homes and compensated for the loss and damage of property they suffered at the hands of Israel.

The Palestinian people, who uphold their just rights with the right of return for refugees and the establishment of an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital at their forefront, hope and seek a fair peace, a peace that gives back the rights to those who deserve them. The Palestinian people would readily live peacefully with their neighbors provided they are given back their rights; otherwise, they will continue their fight to obtain them.

In this context, your stance supportive of the right of return is a blessed contribution for the establishment of a peace based on justice and freedom. I commend this conference and look forward to consolidating relationships with you in the service of justice, peace and freedom in the region and in the world.

Walid Al AWAD  
Secretary of the Committee  
of Refugees in the National Council



To the participants in the International Conference For the Right of Return of the Palestinian Refugees, to the Organising Committee.

Dear comrades, dear friends,

This conference coincides with important and special moments our people is going through and having to face:

– on one a hand, after President Yasser Arafat's death, we have to find, among the Palestinian forces, how to give our people and their struggle an institutional and representative framework. The Palestinian people needs a unified national leadership that can be temporary only while awaiting the general elections, which is the only parameter for the political composition of this structure. Those Palestinian forces who have talks with the PFLP will not spare their efforts to conclude a historic agreement between the forces fighting within the Palestinian people.

– and on the other hand, we have to face a great mobilisation of the Palestinian masses against the attacks and aggressions whose principal objective is to erase the inalienable rights of our people; the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees represents the principal right which nobody has the right to replace.

The Geneva initiative concluded in December 2003 is the principal attack against this sacred right at the moment. The Palestinian people knows this danger. It faces it with great efficiency.

For the PFLP, the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees is a sacred right for more than millions of Palestinians, and it is out of the question that this conflict could be solved without this right being respected; your conference contributes to this.

Long live international solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people, hurrah for the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees.

Balata Camp, Nablus, Palestine.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you for inviting me to attend this conference and speak to you about the cause of Palestinian refugees. I deeply apologize at not being able to personally attend the sessions of this conference for reasons that are beyond my control. I would also like to express my satisfaction at the holding of this conference at a time when the Palestinian cause is undergoing attempts of marginalization, division and trampling of rights, hoping that this conference will shed some light on the cause of refugees which is the essence of the Palestinian cause and the Arab Israeli conflict. This cause is the longest in modern history for it extends over 56 years, since the occupation by Israel of three quarters of Palestine in 1948 and the rest in 1967, with the support of colonist countries at the time. This caused the displacement of a million Palestinians in different

parts of the world to lead a life of homelessness, dispersal and refuge after Israel had destroyed their homes and villages by direct military force.

The importance of this conference lies in its solidarity with one of the worlds' most just causes and its consideration of human dimensions. The number of Palestinian refugees has reached six million, yet they are still living in refugee camps and in different countries in the world, without being able to enjoy their natural human rights bestowed by God on all humans for five successive decades and without the implementation by the United Nations General Assembly of its resolution relevant to the right of return for Palestinian refugees which is resolution 194 issued in 1948 and the ensuing resolution 302 for the relief and aid of Palestinian refugees, until their problem is solved by the aforementioned resolution.

The historical injustice done to Palestinians is the responsibility of the entire international

community, particularly countries that call for justice, equality, human rights and freedom values and who refuse the occupation of land by force. The Palestinian people are paying the price of the historical injustice that was done to the Jewish people by Nazis. Israel today is using the same methods that were used against Jews in ethnic cleansing and genocide against Palestinians with no deterrent. On the contrary, it receives the support, approval and blessing of the international community with the American administration at its head. This encourages it to commit more crimes against Palestinians and to continue the denial of the indivisible national and human rights of the Palestinian people.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The idea discussed by this conference, for the establishment of one State in which Palestinians and Israelis have equal rights and duties with no boundaries and no discrimination, is worthy of analysis and consideration. We as Palestinians proposed it in 1968, when the Palestinian Liberation Organization, the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, declared accepting the idea of a democratic country in which Jews, Muslims and Christians live together on equal footing as monotheistics. However, this idea was rejected by Israeli. Israel continued to carry out policies of *fait accompli*, to build settlements and confiscate Palestinian land in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which then leads to an escalation of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. Thus, calls for a resolution of this conflict on a one-State basis were retracted. Especially with the signing of the Oslo agreement between the PLO and Israel in 1993, according to which the organization acknowledged the state of Israel for the first time and returned to parts of Palestinian territories that were occupied in 1976 and established the first Palestinian National Authority, a new political situation has emerged in the region. Such circumstances can not be transcended, overlooked or ignored when discussing any political visions or ideas that may lead to finding realistic solutions to the conflict between the Palestinian people on the one hand and the state of Israel on the other. These solutions should be able to survive any challenges they may face, particularly when we consider that the Israeli

occupation of Palestine is of a different nature than other occupations in the world: it is a replacement occupation. This means the replacement of indigenous people who lived on their land for thousands of years, established its ancient and modern history and were part and parcel of the neighboring Arab nations' civilization, occupied by a foreign nation that has no historical relation linking it to the land which it intends to occupy.

What Israel is doing today, by building the discriminatory security fence around the outskirts of the West Bank and the city of Jerusalem that extends for 350 kilometers, will remove any chance not only of the establishment of one State in Palestine but also of the establishment of a Palestinian State within the 1967 borders, according to Security Council resolution 242. Therefore, the only applicable realistic solution would be the recognition by Israel of the Palestinian people's rights, in particular that of establishing an independent Palestinian state with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital within continuous, safe and acknowledged borders free of Israeli settlements, and the recognition of the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland from which they were expelled by the force of Israeli weapons, according to resolution 194.

Any other solutions will face many obstacles and difficulties and will not be accepted by Palestinian people, even though this solution does not achieve absolute justice, which we seek.

Finally, allow me to wish you every success in your proceedings, I am confident that you will make recommendations and conclusions that will contribute to alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people and will be an element of strengthening the just Palestinian cause.

Thank you and may peace be upon you all.

Tayssir Nasr'Allah

Member of Palestinian National Council

President of Yafa Cultural Centre  
([www.yafacult.org](http://www.yafacult.org))

Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to send my sincerest regards from the prison of Hedarim, where the authorities of the Israeli occupation have been detaining me for 20 months, in violation of my parliamentary immunity in my capacity as an elected member of the first Palestinian Parliament. I am pleased to convey the regards of my fellow political prisoners detained in the prisons of the Israeli occupation and whose number amounts to eight thousand. These prisoners are living in great difficulty and hardship due to the mistreatment of prison authorities, directors who impose tough sentences, restrict their movement and isolate them in solitary confinement.

We are all hopeful and optimistic that this conference will dedicate an important part of its proceedings to our cause as political prisoners, as a nation suffering from Israeli occupation and as

Palestinian refugees scattered around the world. We also hope that this conference will lead to qualitative progress in solidarity campaigns for the just struggle of our people. I look forward to mobilizing the vital forces in your society who will put pressure on the Israeli government to stop its continued aggression against the Palestinian people struggling to regain their usurped national rights of freedom, independence and return.

Wishing you every success in your discussions

Hussam Khader

Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council  
Chairman of the Committee for the Defense of the  
Rights of Palestinian Refugees

Contact : [gkhader@hotmail.com](mailto:gkhader@hotmail.com)

## ***CONCLUDING REMARKS***

**Salah SALAH**

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We have seen the solidarity which exists for one of the most important causes in the World, and explained it's humanitarian dimension, while the number of Palestinian refugees is now more than 4 millions who continue to live in camps and in various countries around the world, without seeing the application of their basic individual rights, which are those of all human beings. And all the while, the UNO has never implemented Resolution 194, accepted in 1948 which deals with the return of refugees to their homeland, or the Resolution 302, which insists upon aid for the Palestinian refugees until their problems are solved in the manner outlined in the previously mentioned resolution.

The idea that this conferences deals with, the question of a single State, where Palestinians and Israelis live with equal rights and equal responsibilities, in a single country, without borders and discrimination, is an idea worthy of analysis and research. Especially because this idea was originally proposed by us Palestinians in 1968, when the PLO, the unique and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people announced that it was necessary to make an agreement on the question of a single democratic country where Jews, Muslims, and Christians could live as equals, as followers of monotheist religions, within a single country. Israel refused, and continued it's policy of repression and confiscation of land.

When, during his opening of this conference, Daniel Gluckstein spoke of the need for free and democratic discussions, to allow an exchange of ideas so that the conceptions of any one party would not be imposed upon another, I was reassured concerning the correct development of this conference. And we did not experience any terrorism, apart from that imposing the time limit on each speaker !! For the conclusions to be made, I do not personally feel myself capable to

impose my own views, but I would like to continue the discussion by underlining some points.

Firstly, we have listened to several propositions, and I think that all have been worthy of attention and should be seriously considered. This depends upon our will to succeed : Do we want to form a real committee which will continue these ideas, or not ? Can we magnify our efforts to achieve this task ? But, not one person has made a proposition contrary to the idea of this permanent committee, and this is why I would like one of the conclusions of this conference to be, with the agreement of everybody, the construction of this committee.

Secondly, I was comforted by a criticism made by a Zionist,... or more exactly by a Jew. You should know that in my youth I went to a nationalist school. I was cradled by a single ideology. I was not only opposed to Zionism, but also to Judaism. With experience, over the years, I have learned that to have a position anti-Jewish as a starting position, is a false position, since we must differentiate between Judaism and Zionism as political movements. As Arab nationalists, seeing how much the Palestinian people suffers under the Zionist movement, we do not have sufficient knowledge of the history of the Zionist movement, and this we should gather today by reading once more the Zionist ideology, because I think that our Jewish colleagues also, in turn, must help us to study Zionist thinking.

I will give you an example. I met someone from the Zochrot Association here in Paris around the 15th of last month. We had a very calm debate, and took our time to discuss, and I can assure you that this was the first time that I had faced a Jew to speak in such a way. He asked me : Do you still wish, as a Palestinian, to return to Palestine ? I replied yes, and that it is my right and that I desired to return and to have my children educated there. I

told him that I run an institution which educated its children to return to Palestine, and he replied : that means that you ask Israel to change its conception of Zionism. Yes, effectively I am telling him that Israel must change its Zionist principles, the ideological principles upon which it is built, otherwise no solution is possible, notably concerning the two fundamental questions of the Right to return and of Jerusalem, given that Zionism considers that the limits of its frontiers stretch from the Euphrate in the east as far as Egypt, and that the state is a state of Jewish confession.

And that is Israel's first error. In the beginning it gave nationality to non-Jews, which it does not want to do today. This is why Israel, today, still claims that Gaza and the West Bank form part of a sort of little Israel, and in this state, in these zones, there is no Israeli citizenship, but Palestinian minorities who must be integrated without ever having a status equal to those of the majority. All the while that this fundamental principle remains unchanged, there can never be a solution to the conflict. This is why I ask you to work together to reject the Zionist fundamental principle which I have just outlined, in order to advance toward a solution of the conflict.

In the speech given by the first Palestinian researcher, I would have liked her to make the distinction between the small dreams and little dreams of the Palestinian population. The Palestinian people today live a very difficult reality : occupation, destruction, suffering. The Palestinians you visited in West Bank and Gaza are not small and big dreams. The question is clear, it is the occupation which generates all of this. You should know that the first desire of the Palestinians living there is to see the end of the occupation which suffocates them, kills them ; for the women to be able to go to the hospital and give birth calmly ; to follow the basic steps of every day life. But Israel's policy of occupation forces us to demand our fundamental principles : return of the refugees, Jerusalem, etc. And this is why it is necessary to separate the two different routes of small dreams and big dreams, because our dream is a political one.

I do not want to enter into a grand debate, by stating that Israel is an outpost of colonialism and imperialism in the region. I do not wish to impose my point of view on anybody, but you should know that there is an alliance between the Zionist project and the global imperialist regime, under various forms. There is an alliance, with many interests at stake. Both of them, each from their own side, try to gain the maximum advantage. Israel does not hold the United States on a lead, and the contrary is also true, the United States cannot impose on Israel its actions and its decisions. There are interests and there is business, there is an economy and the region is so rich that the two parties want to profit from the situation.

Then, I am one of those who thinks that we should not, even if this is imposed upon us to a certain degree, make a distinction between those people displaced in 1967 and those displaced within the interior of Israel. We are all displaced, we are all refugees, wherever we are. There are refugees on the lands of 1948, there are refugees on the lands of 1967, there are refugees who are still at the exterior of these zones, but we all wear the same label as refugees, which signifies that we have all been expelled from our homes and lands of origin, and have been forced to live elsewhere. Therefore we are all refugees, wherever we are living, and as Palestinians the problem concerns us all. This is why I call upon all Palestinian brothers, whether representing the committees for return, or the committees of those displaced in 1967, or the committees of Palestinians of 1948, because we all have a single and common cause, to try to coordinate together our efforts and not to disperse our energies. This is my plea to my compatriots.

Another small point : the story evoked by one of our Jewish brothers, the story of the Kibbutz, this is an example, this is a kibbutz, but this is not necessarily Palestine. The Kibbutz have been founded on the ruins of Palestinian villages. The reaction which he had in relation to the Kibbutz, this must be known in Israel. Israel admits that these Kibbutz have been constructed on what was originally Palestinian land, and that this is the historical reality. 94% of the land on which Israel has been established once belonged to Palestinians. Thank you.

We must congratulate ourselves over the fact that a free discussion has been held between us. I think that what has allowed that free discussion is the fact that there were no preconditions, and in particular, that there was no precondition to accept the situation as it currently exists in Palestine.

A Palestinian activist who I met in the United States said to me: *"The title of your review Dialogue is a title, but you still need to point out that it is a dialogue without preconditions, in other words without the precondition of accepting what already exists, in particular state institutions founded on racial discrimination."* And I said to that comrade: *"This is the meaning of the review Dialogue."*

Moreover, the discussion that has taken place here, especially between Palestinian activists and Jewish activists from Israel, has been possible because that precondition did not exist and because there is a vision, certainly an embryonic one, certainly a minority one, that the perspective of a single secular democratic state recognising equal rights between Jews and Arabs is possible. Since discussion with equal rights is possible here, why could it not be possible in a secular and democratic Palestine from which all forms of discrimination have been banished ?

In this sense, the slogan of Dialogue is a slogan which opens a historic long-term perspective, but it is also a short-term slogan for advancing the cause of the Palestinian people,s right to a nation.

On this point, since several speakers have referred to initiatives undertaken in various countries - including France - to attempt to put anti-Zionism into the same category as anti-Semitism or anti-Jewish racism, I would say the following: As far as I am concerned, I have no difficulty in speaking highly of anti-Zionism, since it is enough to simply point to the historic fact that the first political movement which presented itself as a - and I quote - "radical anti-Zionist" movement was the Jewish Social-Democratic Labour Party of Russia and Poland in the 1920's-1930's. The programme of that party - the "Bund" - literally included a denunciation of Zionism as a reactionary ideology and policy, aiming to maintain Jews in isolation and discrimination, and to impose oppression on another people.

And this movement had majority support among

the Jewish populations of Eastern Europe. Therefore we have good reason for saying that the demand of anti-Zionism is a demand for fighting for equal rights which has nothing to do - quite the opposite, and many people have demonstrated this - with any kind of anti-Jewish position.

But I think that the question that we must pose is the following: It can appear paradoxical to launch an international campaign for the Right of Return of the Palestinian people at the very moment when world imperialism (and especially US imperialism) is putting into question the existence of every nation that has already been built.

It is a fact that we are living through a particularly difficult moment in world history, for all the peoples of the world. The atrocious situation which has been created today for the people of Iraq is unfortunately typical of what world imperialism - which is the expression of a decayed system based on private ownership of the means of production - has in store for the peoples and nations of the whole world. Almost two years after the intervention in Iraq, today it appears clearly that the sole objective of that intervention was to carve up the Iraqi nation, to break it into pieces, to pillage the wealth of Iraq and to destabilise the whole region. What is more, US imperialism has a plan which it calls the Greater Middle East, intended to stretch from Morocco to Iran, and this plan threatens the existence of every constituted nation.

It is enough to see what has happened since Bush,s election in Ivory Coast and Ukraine in order to understand that no nation can escape this policy, which is threatening every people, every nation and every acquired right. And nevertheless, it is in this context that we are stating the necessity and the legitimacy of the Right of Return of all Palestinian refugees, not only to their homeland but also to their homes, as a comrade rightly put it.

Why ? Quite simply because posing the question of the Right of Return today not only means stating one,s solidarity with the Palestinian people, but also affirming the right of every people to a nation. If we do not fight for the right of the Palestinian people, of the Palestinian refugees, to return to their homes, then we risk facing tomorrow a situation in which there will be Palestinian refugees throughout the world. There are millions and millions of refugees in the Balkans, in Africa, in Iraq, and there will be refugees throughout the world if this policy of destruction of

nations continues.

By stating the irrevocable right of every Palestinian refugee to return to his/her home, we are stating our irrevocable opposition to the dismantling of every nation and our irrevocable opposition to every war of imperialist intervention, beginning with the intervention in Iraq.

But I think that in the discussion that we have had, there is an extremely important dimension: the necessity and the possibility of making the question of the Palestinian refugees into an international issue. It is true that for reasons owed to the power of the propaganda machine, a whole series of sectors of the democratic movement or even the labour movement at the international level which profess a lot of sympathy for a lot of causes, are much more inclined to say very little on the Palestinian question.

But the meaning of the Conference that we are holding today, is to say that we are deciding to make the Right of Return for all Palestinian refugees not only a Palestinian question, not only a question for the "Arab world", but an international question. This means that for the International Committee that we want to set up, we want thousands and thousands of political and trade union representatives, elected representatives, university teachers, lawyers, in France, Germany, the United States and Britain, of course in all of the Arabic-speaking countries but also in what is usually referred to as the Western world, to join that Committee, and in a way to breach this kind of dam which has been raised up to now, and finally to turn this question into a central question for international democratic opinion. This is the challenge for this Committee : to unify that international campaign. And this is made possible by the kind of discussion that we have had here, because it gives straight away its universal and international character to the issue of the Right of Return of the Palestinian refugees.

Then of course, they will say to us: To do that means throwing open to debate the current situation in the region. We must avoid upsetting sensitivities, but what is shocking about asking questions about the institutions of a particular state? Since when has questioning the institutions which provide the foundation of a state amounted to a threat to its inhabitants ? I am very happy to say that in history it has happened that dictatorial or racist states, founded on discrimination and oppression, have been dismantled, and this has not meant the

destruction of their population, but on the contrary the liberation of their population. In the case before us, for my part I consider that it would be a huge factor of liberation not only for the Palestinian populations, but also for the Jewish populations who are prisoners of the State of Israel, for us to advance towards the constitution of a secular and democratic state covering the whole of the historic territory of Palestine, containing all its component parts on an equal basis.

The proposal that has been put to you is both modest and ambitious. It is modest, because we know that everything is not going to change from one day to the next, because we know that the international situation is difficult. We understand that the re-election of Bush signifies a redoubling in the offensive against all the peoples, and that the Palestinian people may well fear that the combination of Bush's re-election and the aftermath of Arafat's death may result in new imperialist attacks on the Palestinian people.

But at the same time, in this context, the fact of setting up this International Committee and bringing it to life, in other words organising conferences of this type, getting people to join the Committee, taking other initiatives, making it live as an International Committee, is an extremely important element for the future.

Of course, there are differences between us, and those differences are legitimate. Everyone has his own history, his traditions, his organisation, but let us focus on what unites us. What unites us is the imprescriptible right without restriction or limitation of each Palestinian refugee to return to his/her home. It is the recognition that the political solution for achieving this is the perspective of a single secular and democratic state covering the whole of the historic territory of Palestine.

We can rally around this perspective, whilst respecting each other's differences; but we can make progress on this perspective. And it is certain that, precisely because it is a complete and coherent perspective, because, as the appeal says, one cannot on the one hand demand the Right of Return for Palestinians and on the other treat separately a political solution for peace in Palestine, because these two questions are inextricably linked, this appeal is a solid foundation for action at the international level. And I sincerely hope that all the participants in this Conference can subscribe to it and together set up the International Committee, just as I invite all those that so wish to participate in the meeting of the editorial board of the review Dialogue to be held tomorrow.

***Appeal for the setting-up of a Permanent International Committee  
For the Unconditional Right of All Palestinian Refugees  
to Return to Their Homes***

Having heard all the contributions made in the Conference For the Right of Return for All Palestinian Refugees, the participants declare: nothing can justify denying the right of the Palestinian people to live and to return to live on their ancestral land. No-one can be considered a defender of democracy, of freedom and of human rights, if s/he does not support not only the recognition but also the application of the Right of Return of every Palestinian refugee to his/her land of origin - a historic, collective and individual right - without limitation or restriction, whatever the date of his/her expulsion or that of his/her family since 1947.

Our Conference has established on the basis of the facts that all the attempts made to bring a solution to the inhuman situation of the Palestinian refugees who were driven from their land have only resulted in a worsening of the suffering imposed on the Palestinian people.

We have noted that there is an explanation for this. The right to live in one's ancestral homeland is a right that in principle is recognised for all peoples. But this right is being denied to the Palestinian people. And the reason it is being denied is that the very principles which form the foundation for the State of Israel rest on a discrimination which recognises rights for the Jewish populations which are denied to the Arab populations.

No-one would deny the terrible genocide suffered by the Jewish populations in Europe under the Nazi regime (a genocide in which the Palestinian people carries no responsibility).

But can this justify a situation in which Jews have rights in the land of Palestine which are denied to non-Jews?

There is a Jewish question.

Is there not a Palestinian question ?

The universal principles of peoples, justice and law define as discriminatory and racist those states founded on the denial of rights to one part of the population due to its religion, culture or language.

Is this reality not the reason for the failure of all the attempts to bring a response to the refugee question within the framework of "political solutions" which, from Oslo to Geneva via Madrid boil down to continuing the partition and discrimination under the widest range of forms (two states, cantons, etc.)?

**Resolving the refugee question cannot be achieved without a global solution to the conflict. A solution which brings peace. In other words, a solution that satisfies the interests of both the Arab masses and the Jewish masses.**

This is why we, the undersigned, have reached the conclusion that the effective application of the right of each refugee to return to his/her land demands a national and democratic political solution, in other words one which excludes all form of discrimination and inequality between the citizens of the same state. That political solution is, in our opinion, the building of a secular democratic state covering the whole of the historic territory of Palestine and strictly guaranteeing equal rights to all its component parts, irrespective of religions, languages and cultures.

This is, in our opinion, a solution that recognises justice, that recognises the peoples, right to determine their own future in the interests of everyone, of the Palestinian Arab masses as well as of the Jewish masses themselves. Because the legitimate aspiration for peace cannot be satisfied on the ground of injustice, of oppression, of occupation, of inequality and racial discrimination.

These are our conclusions. We do not seek to impose them on anyone. But it is on this basis, respecting democracy, that we hereby decide to form a Permanent International Committee For the Unconditional Right of All Palestinian Refugees to Return to Their Homes.



We call on all men and women throughout the world who love justice and freedom to join our Committee, to organise in each country Conferences For the Unconditional Right of Return like the one we have just organised in Paris, and to engage in even more initiatives and activities in every form for the unconditional Right of Return.

We propose to publish a regular liaison bulletin of our Committee.

Join us for the right of the Palestinian people to live free in its independent state, for the right of the Palestinian people to take its destiny into its own hands.

**I endorse this appeal**

Name:..... Forname : .....

Organisation:.....

Address (including Country): .....

.....

on behalf of my organisation : ☐

in a personal capacity : ☐

Telephone:..... Fax : ..... email:.....

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**First endorsers:**

**Abou-Srour Abdelfattah**, Alrowwad cultural center Aïda Camp (Palestine) ; **Al Ali Mahmoud**, Aidun (Lebanon) ; **Al Awad Walid** Secretary of the Commission of Refugees of the Palestinian National Council (Gaza Palestine) ; **Al Barnousi Mohesen** (Netherlands) ; **Al Hasen Zeinab** (Palestine) ; **Al Hindi Musa** (USA) ; **Aminov Eli** Committee for a secular and democratic republic (State of Israel) ; **Arar Tarek** (Palestine) ; **B. Mounia** (Morocco) ; **Barrois Jean-Pierre**, Dialogue (France) ; **Ben Henda Mohamed**, Committee of Tunisians in Switzerland (Switzerland) ; **Challier Alain**, sculptor (France) ; **Chicouard Alain**, Dialogue (France) ; **Chori Latif**, Committee in support of the Palestinian People (Tunisia) ; **Djoudi Djelloul**, Member of Parliament (Algeria) ; **Doriane Olivier** (France) ; **Eemans Janine** (France) ; **Ferré Dominique** Dialogue ( France) ; **Gamzon Daniel** (France) ; **Gluckstein Daniel**, Dialogue (France) ; **Goulart Serge**, Palestinian People Solidarity Committee (Brazil) ; **Grim Malika** (Algeria) ; **Hayon Samy** Dialogue (France) ; **Housset Michel** (France) ; **Husar Krista** US Friends of Dialogue (USA) ; **Kaiyal Mohamed** (Palestine) ; **Karmi Ghada** Vice-Chair, Council for Arab-British Understanding (UK) ; **Khaled Leila**, General Secretary of the General Union of Palestinian Women (Palestine); **Kupferman Yehuda**, Committee for a secular and democratic republic (Israel) ; **Lazar François**, Dialogue (France) ; **Madi Rania** Women for Development (Palestine) ; **Mahmoud Adeeb** (France) ; **Mansouri Mohamed-Anis** Dialogue (France) ; **Musih Norma** Zochrot (Israël) ; **Musa Mahmoud** (Canada) ; **Nasrallah Tayseer** Committee in defence of the rights of the Palestinian refugees - Yafa Cultural Center Balata camp Nablus (Palestine) ; **Nedjari Kader** (France), **Ouettar Tahar** writer (Algeria) ; **Rubinstein-Carrera Hélène** lawyer (France) ; **Salah Salah** Chair of the Commission of Refugees of the Palestinian National Council (Palestine) ; **Samara Adel** Writer ( Palestine ) ; **Shavit Israel** (State of Israel) ; **Sleibi Sohel** Abna Al Balaad - Sons of the earth - (Palestine) ; **Suleiman Jaber** Coordinator of Aidun -Right Of Return advocacy group- (Lebanon ) ; **Yacoub Mohammad** (Palestine).

**The Conference sent its greetings to the Palestinian political prisoners**

1. The case of Mi'ar/Ya'ad, by Remy Mendelzweig
2. Michael Warschawski and the Geneva Accord, by Alain Chicouard
3. For a free and democratic Palestine, by Abna elBalad
4. Final Declaration of the Haifa Conference (26-28 March 2004)
5. Speech by Mohammed Abu El Heija, The Association of Forty
6. Correspondence from the "Bloc Elles Salam"
7. Extracts from a letter received by Dialogue
8. Some reflections for a Marxist approach to the Palestinian question, by Pierre Lambert
9. Statement of Purpose by the ,Aidun group
10. Letter from Ghassan Othman
11. Final Declaration of the Right of Return Congress, submitted by Dr. Salman Abu Sitta
12. Letter from the Israeli association Zochrot
13. A Contribution on the Arab Jews, by A.N.
14. Letter from Abdlefattah Abu-Srour, Aida Camp, Bethlehem
15. Statement by Dialogue, Letter of invitation
16. Statement by the Committee for a Secular and Democratic Republic
17. The Palestinian Refugees of Lebanon: Some reflections and a conviction, by Marie-Paule Migneau-Marchand
18. "The dreams and spatial practices of the inhabitants of the refugee camps of Palestine: between prolonging the exile, waiting to return and urban integration", by Dr Helene Seren
19. The Rape of Palestine, by Jess Ghannam
20. William Youmans Interview
21. Regarding the Right of Return, by Marie-Pierre Jodon (Ajial France)
22. Some Remarks on the "Olga document", by Remy Mendelzweig
23. The situation of Palestinian political prisoners in Israeli prisons, by Ghassan Khader, London, 27 May 2004
24. The political context of the two-state option, by Ghassan Khader
25. The Right of Return and its political context: The 2004 defining convention of Al-Awda, by Musa Al Hindi
26. A contribution for the Conference For the Right of Return, by Ben Eckstein
27. Only a socialist solution could work - Why?, by Adel Samara (Ramallah) - We have included after this contribution a discussion between a member of the Dialogue editorial board (in a personal capacity) and Adel Samara.

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CONFÉRENCE INTERNATIONALE POUR LE DROIT AU RETOUR DES RÉFUGIÉS PALESTINIENS

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE RIGHT OF RETURN OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES

REVUE "DIALOGUE" - PARIS - 4 DÉCEMBRE 2004

# DIALOGUE

REVIEW FOR DISCUSSION BETWEEN  
ARAB AND JEWISH ACTIVISTS OF PALESTINE

END OF TERM REPORT PUBLISHED IN ENGLISH, ARABIC, HEBREW AND FRENCH

[dialoguereview@yahoo.com](mailto:dialoguereview@yahoo.com)

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