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Peres was in Nederland, hierna nog het ANP-bericht hierover.

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Peres zegt niets over mensenrechten [o.a. Amnesty, LAW en BADIL publiceren "wel eens" wat] en/of Israels vertrek uit bezet gebied. Hij kreeg op dit punt kennelijk ook geen "moeilijke vragen" gelet op de tekst bij de foto [Volkskrant 25-1] van een vrolijk samenzijn van Van Aartsen, Peres en Kok. Peres herhaalde [Ned 2 25-1] de uitspraak dat Arafat de fout maakte de deal in Camp David niet te accepteren; hij zou Menachem Klein eens moeten spreken [zie Volkskrant 23-1] die deze uitspraak nogmaals als onzin betitelt. De Haagsche Courant van 24-1 citeert Peres: "Iedere dag probeer ik die Nobelprijs waard te zijn" International Campaign for Justice for the Victims of Sabra & Shatila

- * zie www.indictsharon.net
- * Ghosts and secrets at Hobeika funeral, Robert Fisk in <http://www.arabnews.com/Article.asp?ID=12331>
MERIP at www.merip.org.
- * Toward Submission or War in Palestine?, Adam Hanieh, 26-1-2002
- * Sharon's National Unity Government: Shoring Up the "Iron Wall", at <http://www.merip.org/pins/pin50.html>

Acties/Activiteiten

Op het Plein te Den Haag was zaterdagochtend de 26e een Boycot-Israel-prikactie [.. zo lang Israel de internationale rechtsorde boycot...] met zo'n 15 personen. Volgens een eenvoudig "recept": pamfletten uitdelen aan het winkelend publiek, de pamflettekst staat op de NPK-website. Soemoed's december-nummer is [helaas] vertraagd net uit; inhoudsopgave zie de NPK-site. Deze Soemoed bevat o.a. de bevindingen van oud-CNV-voorzitter Anton Westerlaken als waarnemer in de bezette gebieden. Wie Soemoed-exemplaren wil verspreiden op plaatselijke bijeenkomsten, graag. Denk vooral ook aan bijeenkomsten van politieke partijen en van vakbonden. Op www.bbo.org is te zien [bij actuele documenten] hoe de Tweede Kamer bezig is met Palestina-Israel; zie o.a. het 14-1 vastgestelde verslag van een "Algemeen Overleg". Opvallend is dat weinig bezetters zoveel begrip ondervinden als Israel.

NPK/WL, 27-1-2002 ■

Monday January 14, 2002

A Question of Conscience

By Dr. Hanan Ashrawi

Jerusalem - Although the oft lamented, near demise of the peace camp in Israel has become the subject of current debate-whether in disappointment, anger or in horror, some heroic stories still persist in defying the prevailing "wisdom." The ilks of Peres and Ben Eliezer are no longer the objects of amazement and condemnation, since they have proven their a turncoat, opportunistic bents beyond question, having been willingly co-opted by the Sharon extremist government for both the misleading spin and dirty tricks departments.

Nor are the ilks of Yossi Beilin and other Labor party "rebels" being singled out for heroism in their desperate attempts to engineer meetings, joint statements, and back-channel talks with Palestinian officials. The real heroes are those who rarely get mentioned in the Israeli, let alone international, media as individuals of conscience who dare defy the overwhelming discourse of hate, racism, and violence that seems to have taken hold within and beyond the Israeli public.

Rather than succumb to the ultra-nationalist, xenophobic version of popular politics that attempts to rationalize the worst of Israeli measures against the Palestinians while blaming the victims for the horrors being inflicted upon them, this distinctive minority has dared to challenge the lies and distortions and to take a stand despite the high price to be paid. Among the journalists, Amira Haas and Gideon Levy stand out as examples of courage and honesty.

Among the activists, the Women's Peace Coalition (including many organizations) has taken the forefront in defying the dangerous politics of Sharon and his gang, taking to the streets in growing numbers. Women like Neta Golan and Dafna Golan have maintained a steady commitment to those principles of justice, peace, and human rights that seem to have been swept away by the rising tide of hatred and destruction.

Among the most persevering are long-time activists Leah Tsemel, Judy Blanc, and Shulamit Aloni who have not wavered in their commitments and courageous struggle not just for Palestinian rights but also for the soul of Israel.

Organizations like Rabbis for Human Rights, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, Gush Shalom, and many others have also steered a steady course despite the turbulent waves.

When, during the earlier intifada, movements like Yesh Gvul emerged to challenge the military establishment and militarization of Israeli society, they were viewed as challenging the most "sacred" of Israeli tenets and power systems.

Thus, to see Yesh Gvul reemerging now, along with other organizations and individuals challenging the same military supremacist mentality is a sign of health within an Israeli society that many had deemed hopelessly captive to the power industry of unbridled and unquestioned violence.

Women like Rela Mazali and objectors of conscience such as 18-year-old Yair Khilou and his fellow army resisters are a resounding cry for sanity and morality in the face of warmongering Sharon, Mofaz, and Ben Eliezer. The question, however, remains unresolved within Israel's rarely questioned assumptions about blind obedience to military orders and the glorification of military force.

Recently, Shulamit Aloni raised two questions that are in pressing need of a daring response. Both have to do with culpability-individual responsibility and guilt.

The first is the responsibility of decision makers in Israel for the war crimes and crimes against humanity being exercised against the Palestinian people with full impunity and with official authorization by such "killers" as Sharon and Mofaz. She called for the compilation of evidence and the preparation of files to be presented before appropriate tribunals at the right time.

Given the fact that Sharon, so far, has been "sanitized" by the press and world (mainly western) leaders and has been exempt from real accountability for his decades-long history of massacres and war crimes against innocent Palestinians has not gone unnoticed. Neither "rehabilitated" nor repentant, Sharon has been not only unleashed on a captive and defenseless Palestinian population, but also granted a "green light" and the blessings of the US to do more of the same. His indictment by a Belgian court rarely gets a cursory mention in the American press, while he gives himself license to murder and to label his enemies as "terrorists," despite the fact that he has transformed Israeli policy as a whole into officially sanctioned state terrorism.

Perhaps it is time for those who have been swept away by the Sharon military storm (or the bulldozer of death and destruction) to take pause, to stop awhile and consider the implications of their actions. Sooner or later, history will catch up with them, and the question of their individual responsibility and guilt will be raised.

The second issue is that of the "I was only following orders" infamy. Here, the "ordered" have to make the distinction between blind obedience and matters of individual conscience, between military discipline and moral mutiny.

An Israeli soldier who is given instructions to torture or to beat to death captive Palestinians is called upon not only to question the legal consequences of such crimes (however distant they may seem now), but he/she is also required to consider the internal distortions and ramifications of such brutality on his/her own sense of values and self definition. A soldier who aims at Palestinian children's heads and etches a notch on his gun barrel

with every "kill" will ultimately have to face more scars on his own psyche and moral character. Even those who fly Apache gun ships or F 16's will have to face the horror of their own (however anonymous) innocent victims, for physical distance does not provide any moral distance or immunity. On land, those who drive the heavy machinery designed to demolish homes, uproot trees, and destroy crops will also have to face a different type of "deprivation" from the total material deprivation of their Palestinian victims. And at every check post, those young individual Israeli soldiers who indulge in the daily humiliation of every individual Palestinian should also question the price they are paying, now and in the future, for their desensi-

tization toward human dignity and human suffering. Perhaps those who have already refused to obey immoral orders are a distinct minority; nevertheless they remain visible symbols of a spirit that rejects moral torpidity and inhumanity.

Perhaps those who dare to challenge their military "superiors" and moral "inferiors" are preparing the way for a future course of action that perceives a reality beyond the unquestioned military superiority and dominance of the Israeli occupation.

Ultimately, these "righteous" Israelis will be the ones who will redeem Israel's soul in the future when the days of historical reckoning will dawn as separate from the impunity of the present. ■

Open brief van Gideon Levy aan Peres
Ha'aretz, 24-1-2002

Twilight Zone

Tell the truth, Shimon

By Gideon Levy

In the 24 years of our acquaintance, four of which I spent working as your aide, this is the third time I have written you an open letter. In 1989, when you were finance minister in the Shamir government and the first intifada was raging, I used these pages to write "A letter to a former boss." Then, I told you that "for the first time in your life, you have nothing left to lose - except the prospect of vanishing into thin air." This was after you kept silent in the face of the IDF's conduct in the intifada, in the face of the continuation of the occupation and Israel's stubborn refusal to recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians. At the time, I believed that you thought differently from Yitzhak Shamir and Yitzhak Rabin (known then as the "bone-breaker"), but that you just weren't bold enough to speak up.

Eleven years later, in 2000, I wrote you another open letter. This was after Oslo and the Rabin assassination, and after you again had lost an election - this time, to the office of president. Then, I said: "Many Israelis see you as a different person now. For them, you represent the hope of something else." And now, as I write to you again, I have to say: You no longer represent hope for anything.

The government of which you are a senior member, the foreign minister, is no longer just a government of last resort in our history of governments of last resort; this government is a government of crime. And partnership in this crime is another matter. It is no longer possible to absolve you, to give you credit for Oslo, to understand that your heart aches over what is happening, and to know that you may even be bursting with rage over what is happening and refraining from speaking out,

from shouting out, and most of all, from acting, only because of tactical considerations, which you understand better than anyone.

No, your silence and inaction can no longer be justified by any excuse: Shimon, you are a partner in crime. The fact that you might realize this in your heart and, from time to time, even utter some feeble words of condemnation, the fact that you are not prime minister and that America is giving carte blanche right now, the fact that most of the people think otherwise and that to quit and "chase after a Ha'aretz journalist," as you put it, would be pointless - All of these excuses make no difference.

You continue to serve in a government with blood on its hands, whose outstretched hand is still busy killing and jailing and humiliating, and you are a partner to all of its deeds. Just as the Taliban foreign minister is a part of the Taliban regime, you are a part of the Sharon regime. Your responsibility does not fall far short of the prime minister's. It is equal to that of the defense minister and the chief of staff, whose actions you harshly criticize in private discussions. Always in private discussions only.

You say you heard about the assassination of Raed Karmi, after three weeks of Palestinian quiet, on the radio. From your perspective, that's enough to exempt you from responsibility for the deed and even from having to express criticism of it. While the IDF was reoccupying Tul Karm, you were with Bill Clinton.

When asked about it, you mumbled something incoherent. Following the house demolitions in Rafah, you bit your lip and kept silent. One could assume that the blowing up of the radio station was not your cup of tea either. But you bear the terrible responsibility for all of these things, for all of these actions that cannot be defined as anything other than war crimes. Ask your brother-in-law, Prof. Rafi Walden, the head of surgery at Sheba Medical Center, who sometimes travels to the territories as a volunteer with Physicians for Human Rights, and he'll tell you what you're a partner to. He'll tell you about the women in labor - not just one or two, not just the rare exception - who can't get to the hospital because of the cruelty of the IDF of which you were once so proud, and whose babies die right after they

deliver them.

He'll tell you about the cancer patients prevented from getting to Jordan for treatment. No, they cannot even go to Jordan - for "security reasons." He'll tell you about the hospitals in Bethlehem that were shelled by the IDF. He'll tell you about the doctors and nurses who sleep in the hospital because they can't get home. He'll tell you about the dialysis patients forced to spend hours jostled about while traveling makeshift routes three times a week in a desperate attempt to reach the machines that their lives depend on. He'll tell you about the patients denied crucial medical treatment because of the closure and about the ambulances prevented from passing through checkpoints, even when they're carrying critically ill passengers. He'll tell you about the people who have died at the checkpoints and about those who died at home because they didn't dare to approach the checkpoints - which are now made up of menacing tanks in the middle of the road, or mounds of dirt and cement blocks that cannot be budged - even for someone on the brink of death.

You have imprisoned an entire people for over a year with a degree of cruelty unprecedented in the history of the Israeli occupation. Your government is trampling three million people, leaving them with no semblance of normal life. No going to the market, no going to work, no going to school, no visiting a sick uncle. Nothing. No going anywhere, and no coming back from anywhere. No day or night. Danger lurks everywhere, and everywhere there is another checkpoint, choking off life.

An entire nation already partly outstretched its hand in peace, no less than we have - you know this well - It has had its fill of suffering, from the Nakba in 1948, through the 1967 occupation and the siege of 2002, and it wants exactly the same things that Israelis want for themselves - a little quiet, a little security and a drop of national pride. To a man, this entire people now wakes up each morning to a gaping abyss of despair, unemployment and deprivation - now with tanks parked at the end of the street, too. You were always forgiven for all this - but no longer. Someone who is a partner in a government that deliberately sabotages every Palestinian effort to achieve quiet, that utterly humiliates their leaders, for whom vengeance is the sole motivating force, which cynically exploits the world's post-September 11 blindness and obtuseness to do as it pleases - can no longer be forgiven. True, you do not agree with everything this government wants to do, but what does that matter? You're inside - you're an accessory, as in any other crime. I sometimes see you answering a reporter's question about your government's latest despicable deed. The look on your face (and I'm pretty familiar with your expressions after all these years) suggests unease, even disgust. And then you give one of your evasive, hint-laden and not quite direct answers. You mumble something and try to extricate yourself by means of some awkward wordplay. Like what happened

this week when you were standing next to Clinton and were asked about the occupation of Tul Karm and you said nothing - nothing - and just waited for the question to pass, to be left alone so you could go back to talking about peace and vision. When asked about the assassinations, the demolitions, the humiliation of Arafat and his scandalous confinement, the destruction of the Dahaniya airport or the festival of the munitions display in Eilat, you furrow your brow and give half an answer. But that's not enough anymore.

Now is the time for a straight, honest and truthful answer - or nothing. Now is the time to say that the occupation of Tul Karm was a foolish move, that the assassination of Raed Karmi was intended to renew the violence and that the destruction of the houses in Rafah was a war crime - or to be Ariel Sharon. This is not the time for subtlety, for hidden meanings, for veiled criticism in private - because, here on the outside, a terrible disaster is underway, and a great ill wind is blowing and laying waste to everything. Shall I give you an example? A few days ago, you were quoted as saying (privately, again) that it was hard for you to criticize the government's actions when the United States wasn't doing so. What kind of pathetic excuse is that? What does the fact that there is a predatory administration in the U.S. that has no counterbalancing power in the world, that does as it pleases and lets Israel do as it pleases, have to do with your principled positions? What does that have to do with the good of Israel? What does that have to do with basic values of justice and morality?

Perhaps you might take just one day of vacation, which you so rarely do, and visit the occupied territories. Have you ever actually seen the Qalandiyah checkpoint, even once? Have you seen what happens there? Do you think that you can do your job without seeing the Qalandiyah checkpoint? Do you understand that you are responsible for what goes on there? Do you understand that any foreign minister of a state that puts up these checkpoints bears responsibility for their existence?

Then you could go to the village of Yamoun and meet Heira Abu Hassan and Amiya Zakin, who lost their babies three weeks ago when IDF soldiers wouldn't let their cars through the checkpoint, while they were in labor and bleeding. Listen to their terrible stories. And what will you tell them? That you're sorry? That it shouldn't have happened? That it's part of the war on terror? That it's shocking? That maybe it's Shaul Mofaz's fault and not yours? The IDF spokesman hasn't even expressed regret about these two instances, not to mention any criminal investigation. He only confirmed that one occurred and said he "didn't know" about the other.

And equally important, what will you say about our soldiers who behave this way? That it's because of national security? That the Palestinians are to blame? Or Arafat? The truth, Shimon, is that you bear responsibility for the deaths of those two babies. Because you were silent. Because you sat in this government.

These are terrible times. But worse is yet to come. The cycle of violence and hatred has far from reached its peak. All the injustices and evil perpetrated against the Palestinians will eventually blow up in our faces. A people that is abused this way for years will explode one day in a terrible fury, even worse than what we see now. And meanwhile we have the soldiers going into the radio station, laying explosives and blowing the place to kingdom come - without stopping to ask why. These soldiers are the bearers of bad tidings, not only for their victims, but for their dispatchers as well. Soldiers that destroy dozens of homes belonging to refugees, with all their meager possessions inside, without a moment's hesitation - and certainly no refusal to carry out such blatantly illegal orders, are not good soldiers, even for their country. Pilots who bomb targets in the heart of populated cities, tank operators who point their guns at women trying to get to the hospital to give birth in the middle of the night and Border Police officers who abuse women and youngsters are not a good portent of things to come. They all attest to the loosening of restraint that derives from a total loss of direction.

Yes, this year we have lost our way. You have joined forces with a prime minister who is Israel's most veteran warmonger, and no one can say for sure what your intentions are. And with a brainwashed public that speaks with frightening uniformity, you have it easy. Ever since another member of your party, Ehud Barak, intentionally shattered the peace camp, you've been able to do practically as you pleased. The IDF no longer investigates any war crime and the legal system approves every injustice that comes wrapped in the mantle of security. The whole world is busy struggling against terror, the press hides its face and the public doesn't want to hear, doesn't want to see and doesn't want to know. It only wants revenge. And under cover of this darkness and with the backing of a person of your stature, the occupation has become a machine of crime and evil. Naturally, you'll say: What can I do? I wasn't elected prime minister. And I wasn't elected chairman of the Labor Party. I'm not even the defense minister. You're right: In this government you cannot do anything and you are not doing anything. Which is exactly why you never should have become a member of it. You'll say: I have influence - I rein things in, I'm a moderating force, I'm trying. Nonsense. It couldn't be much worse than it is now, so where exactly have you exerted your influence and what are you preventing from happening? Did you ever imagine that you would be sitting in a government that would reoccupy parts of Area A completely unhindered?

Just think what would have happened had you got up and loudly resigned from this government and told the world what is (perhaps) in your heart. The Nobel Prize

laureate versus the crimes of the Sharon government. Imagine if you had gone to Ramallah, to Yasser Arafat who is under siege there, and taken to the street together, faced the Israeli tanks and called for their removal and for a cease-fire. True, the sky wouldn't have fallen - the occupation wouldn't have ended and the closure of Jenin would not have been lifted, but real cracks would have been opened in the moral, political and international basis of this currently immune government. Imagine if you would have said: Yes, the house demolitions are a war crime. Yes, a state that has lists of assassination targets is not a state of law. Yes, installing a checkpoint that causes people to die is an act of terror. No, the Palestinians are not the only ones to blame for this orgy of blood. Yes, we have a chief of staff who is a danger to democracy. Yes, we have a defense minister and Labor Party chairman who is the government's contractor for assassinations and house demolitions. Yes, we have a prime minister who only wants to occupy, to avenge, to kill, to expel, to demolish and to uproot and he has no other plan in mind. That's what you think, isn't it? If it is, then say so, for God's sake. And if not, then your place really is with this government and we who once believed in you made a dreadful mistake. And please don't say that you're being made a punching bag once again. You're not. Ever since Oslo, you were the embodiment of our hopes. And these have been disappointed.

Time is short, Shimon. Not just for you, but for all of us. We are standing on the verge of the abyss. If you wait until Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, Ephraim Sneh, Ra'anan Cohen, Dalia Itzik and their like come up with another sneaky resigning-from-the-government-for-election-purposes deal, you might just find yourself kicked into oblivion by them. You know that they've been itching to be rid of you for some time now. And even if you do make a stand now, it may just be too late. Everyone may already be too disappointed in you and there may be no way to rebuild the ruin brought about by Sharon. But the only way for you to add one more meaningful accomplishment to your rich biography is not just to get up now and resign from this government, which you may be compelled to do at some point anyway, but to do it while speaking out loud and clear, and telling Israelis all that you think about everything that is happening, especially about the evil we are perpetrating with our own hands. Once more in your life, try to build something new - not an atomic reactor or an aircraft industry, of which we already have more than enough. Now, against all the odds, try to build a radical Israeli peace camp, to make something out of nothing. Is it too farfetched to believe that you still see things differently than the rest of your colleagues in the government? Tell the truth, Shimon. ■

Peres: vernietiging infrastructuur is geen opzet

23 januari 2002 22:53 - ANP

Vernietiging van Palestijnse infrastructuur door het Israëlische leger gebeurt nooit opzettelijk. Dat zei de Israëlische minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Peres woensdagavond op Schiphol, waar hij aankwam voor een bezoek aan Nederland. Peres spreekt donderdag met Kamerleden en met premier Kok en minister Van Aartsen (Buitenlandse Zaken). De Europese Unie becijferde woensdag dat het Israëlische leger al voor zeker 17 miljoen euro aan Palestijnse installaties, infrastructuur en projecten heeft vernietigd. Het grootste deel daarvan is betaald door de EU. Peres zei woensdag dat de vernietiging niet een doel op zich is. Hij verweet de

Palestijnse leider Arafat dat die geen autoriteit heeft over Palestijnse terroristische groeperingen. Ook uit het Israëlisch kabinet komen verschillende geluiden, zei Peres, maar 'Israël spreekt met één geweer, de Palestijnen met meerdere'. Peres zei niet te weten met wie hij in gesprek moet treden om de terreuraanslagen te doen stoppen. Peres benadrukte de rol die Nederland kan spelen, binnen de EU, maar ook rechtstreeks omdat Nederland volgens hem goede contacten heeft met de Palestijnen. De EU en de Verenigde Staten moeten volgens Peres de Palestijnen oproepen de wapens neer te leggen. ■

BADIL Resource Center

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Content:

- Editorial: "Collective AND Individual Rights: Palestinian Statehood and the Right of Return"
- Report from the 2nd Annual Strategy Workshop, Coalition for the Palestinian Right of Return (Brussels, 27-30 November 2001)
- War Crimes Case Against Ariel Sharon Continues
- The PLO and the Right of Return: Interview with Saji Salameh, Director General, PLO Department for Refugee Affairs
- From Rights to Reality: An Introduction to Mechanisms for Return and Restitution
- "From Refugees to Citizens at Home" (Excerpts from a new book by Palestinian researcher Salman Abu Sitta)
- Updates on Refugee Projection and Assistance Editorial (excerpts): Collective AND Individual Rights: Palestinian Statehood and the Right of Return [...] The US vision of the broad parameters of a two-state solution to the conflict has been largely welcomed by Israel, particularly, in reference to the refugee issue. Israeli politicians, academics, as well as many activists in the so-called peace camp have long argued that a Palestinian state and the right of return are mutually exclusive - i.e., the (non-Jewish) Palestinian refugees should be absorbed by the Palestinian state rather than return to their places of origin inside Israel. The US vision, shared by Israel, would thus save the

Jewish people from having to live together with Palestinians, or in their words, drowning in a sea of Palestinians.

*** The amount of sheer effort expended by Israeli politicians, academics and activists in designing a solution to prevent refugees from exercising their right to return begs the simple question: What is so awful about having to live together with Palestinians? *** The US vision for a solution to the refugee issue also received support from an expected source. Over the course of the past several months Palestinian intellectual Dr. Sari Nusseibeh - recently appointed as the PLO point-person for Jerusalem affairs following the death of Faisal Husseini - has repeatedly emphasized to the foreign press and in the company of Israeli interlocutors such as Yossi Beilin, that a two-state solution is incompatible with the right of return. Refugees must, therefore, cede their right to return to their places of origin inside Israel. The statements have elicited strong condemnations from refugees in the region and around the world, while some Israeli politicians have rushed to embrace Nusseibeh as their new Palestinian knight in shining armor.

This vision for a solution to the refugee issue, however, is problematic on both the legal and political level. The vision clearly violates basic tenets of international human rights law. UN human rights treaty monitoring committees and major international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, for example, hold that all refugees have the individual human right to return to their places of origin, including Palestinian refugees.

*** Moreover, there is no contradiction between collective and individual rights in international law. They are

complimentary. In other words, the creation of a Palestinian state in the 1967 occupied territories does not negate the individual right of Palestinian refugees to return to their places of origin inside Israel. ***

Under international refugee law, the starting point in crafting durable solutions to refugee problems is the wishes of the refugees themselves.

At the political level, the vision contradicts the official position of the Palestinian leadership and the content of the Palestinian proposal presented during the last round of final status negotiations in Taba (January 2001). The US vision, apparently shared by Nusseibeh, is based on the assumption that Israel will never agree to the return of Palestinian refugees and therefore a different solution must be found. The US, Israel and Nusseibeh have all failed, however, to explain why Israel's refusal to allow refugees to return is more valid as a starting point for crafting a solution than the Palestinian refugees' demand (and right) to return to their villages of origin? The obvious answer it seems is the current balance of power. This elicits another obvious (unanswered) question:

*** Why does the balance of power provide a better set of guidelines for a solution than international law, especially since this formula - peacemaking based on the balance of power - has guided more than 50 years of UNSUCCESSFUL efforts in the Middle East? ***

The vision also fails to square several inherent contradictions. Why, for example, does a law or right of return apply to all other refugees (and every Jew under Israel's Law of Return) but not to Palestinians? Why do other refugees, including Jews of European origin have a right to real property restitution, but Palestinians are

denied the same right?

While this vision of a solution to the refugee issue has been given wide press coverage, it does little to advance a durable and comprehensive solution to the refugee issue and the conflict as a whole. The vision only engenders confusion regarding the legal parameters for durable solutions to refugee problems and harbors the potential to create false expectations among Jews in Israel regarding the demands of Palestinian refugees and the official position of the Palestinian leadership. At the same time, the US vision underscores or exposes the real obstacle to a durable solution to the Palestinian refugee issue - i.e., Israel's definition of itself as a Jewish state characterized by a Jewish demographic majority and Jewish control of refugee land, which negates the possibility of Jews and Palestinians living side-by-side on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Given the unlikelihood that the present generation of Jewish Israeli politicians will change their position on the return of refugees, it will be necessary to find ways to engage the Jewish public in Israel in ways that move beyond the simple rhetoric that the return of refugees will mean the "destruction of the state of Israel" or "national suicide."

BADIL Resource Center aims to provide a resource pool of alternative, critical and progressive information and analysis on the question of Palestinian refugees in our quest to achieve a just and lasting solution for exiled Palestinians based on the right of return.
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