

The Link

Published by Americans for
Middle East Understanding, Inc.

Volume 43, Issue 4

Link Archives: www.ameu.org

September-October, 2010

S H U H A D A S T R E E T



Credit: Rina Castelnova, New York Times, Sept. 15, 2009

By

Khalid Amayreh

About This Issue

I look at the above photo and wonder why anyone would toss wine at this woman. I have to think it is to make her feel less than human, like garbage. Perhaps even to belittle her religion by spraying her with alcohol.

But this is Shuhada Street. And in this issue West Bank journalist Khalid Amayreh introduces us to numerous Palestinians for whom this main thoroughfare in Hebron has been paved with cruel, oftentimes fatal humiliations.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

AMEU Board of Directors

Jane Adas (*Vice President*)
 Elizabeth D. Barlow
 Edward Dillon
 Rod Driver
 John Goelet
 David Grimland
 Richard Hobson
 Anne R. Joyce
 Hon. Robert V. Keeley
 Kendall Landis (*Treasurer*)
 Robert L. Norberg (*President*)
 Hon. Edward L. Peck
 Donald L. Snook
 Rosmarie Sunderland
 James M. Wall

AMEU National Council

Hugh D. Auchincloss, Jr.
 William R. Chandler
 Paul Findley
 Moorhead Kennedy
 Ann Kerr
 Mary Norton
 Marie Petersen
 Don W. Wagner
 Miriam Ward, RSM

Executive Director

John F. Mahoney

AMEU (ISSN 0024-4007)
 grants permission to
 reproduce material from The
 Link in part or in whole.
 AMEU must be credited and
 one copy forwarded to our
 office at 475 Riverside Drive,
 Room 245, New York, New
 York 10115-0245. Tel. 212-
 870-2053; Fax 212-870-
 2 0 5 0 ; E - m a i l :
 AMEU@ameu.org; Website:
 www.ameu.org.

Suhada Street runs through the center of Hebron, the second most populated West Bank city after Jerusalem.

Since the time of Abraham Hebron has always had a small Jewish population. But at no time in the past 1,400 years did Jews constitute a majority or even a large minority of the town's inhabitants.

In 1538, we know from Jewish and Western sources that the city had 749 Arab-Muslim households, 7 Christian, and 20 Jewish. In 1839, there were 1,295 Muslim families, 1 Christian family and 4 Jewish families. By 1922, according to the British Mandate census, the total population of Hebron was 16,577, including 16,074 Muslims, 73 Christians and 430 Jews.

Today, according to Khaled al Usaily, the mayor of Hebron, the Arab population of Hebron exceeds 180,000 Palestinians, with 400-500 Jewish settlers living in the old part of town under constant protection of Israel's occupation army.

The Israeli army seized the West Bank, including Hebron, from Jordan during the 1967 war. Initially, the Is-

raeli defense minister, Moshe Dayan, and the mayor of Hebron, Sheikh Muhammed Ali al-Jabaari, sought to encourage a palatable modus vivendi between the occupying power and the local populace. The people of the city would be allowed to maintain normal lives without interference from occupation authorities. In return, the people of Hebron would not interfere with the army's security functions.

Some Palestinians feared that Jews would seek to avenge a massacre that occurred in 1929, when a mob of local Arabs, inflamed by false rumors that two Arabs were killed and that Jews were attacking the al-Aqsa Mosque, murdered as many as 67 Jews. Most of the Jews survived by hiding with their Arab neighbors.

Al-Jabaari, indeed the bulk of Palestinians, thought the Israeli occupation was a passing phenomenon that would end soon, just as the British mandate did.

The next year, however, in 1968, the Israeli military governor of Hebron summoned the notables of Hebron and surrounding villages to the military government headquarters in the city and told them that the army needed to have shelters that would

Also in This Issue.....

- Page 13..... The Link's Links, interview with Tarek Abuata about the website of the Christian Peacemaker Teams, www.cpt.org
- Page 14..... Jane Adas reviews "Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews," by Alan Hart
- Page 15..... Video Catalog
- Page 16..... In Appreciation: James E. Akins

protect soldiers from the weather. According to Abdul Rahman Hijeh, a notable from the nearby town of Dura who attended the meeting, the military governor asked the Palestinian dignitaries to protect their “cousins” from the harsh winter by granting them “a small plot of land outside the city in order to build temporary barracks for the army.”

The dignitaries, who included al-Jabaari, reportedly consented to the request on the condition that the Israelis use the land only temporarily.

A few months after the Israeli military governor met with the Hebron dignitaries, a group of Jews, disguised as tourists, led by the extremist rabbi Moshe Levinger, took over the main hotel in Hebron and refused to leave. A few weeks later, Levinger moved to the army barracks, declaring the establishment of the settlement outpost of Kiryat Arba. Today Kiryat Arba is a flourishing suburb of Hebron with a population of 7,500 Jewish settlers.

More than ten years later, Levinger’s American wife, Miryam, with the tacit encouragement of the army, led 30 Jewish women to take over the Daboya hospital, now Beit Hadassah, overlooking Shuhada Street in central Hebron. Eventually, successive Israeli governments approved the seizure, encouraging the mostly messianic Jewish group known as Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) to take over more and more Arab homes and property.

Rabbi Levinger is not exactly an embodiment of a righteous Jew who would follow the Talmudic edict, codified by the famous sage Hillel, who told a heathen who wanted to learn the Torah while standing on one foot, “What is hateful to yourself, do not do to your fellow-man...this is the whole of the Torah and the rest is commentary.”

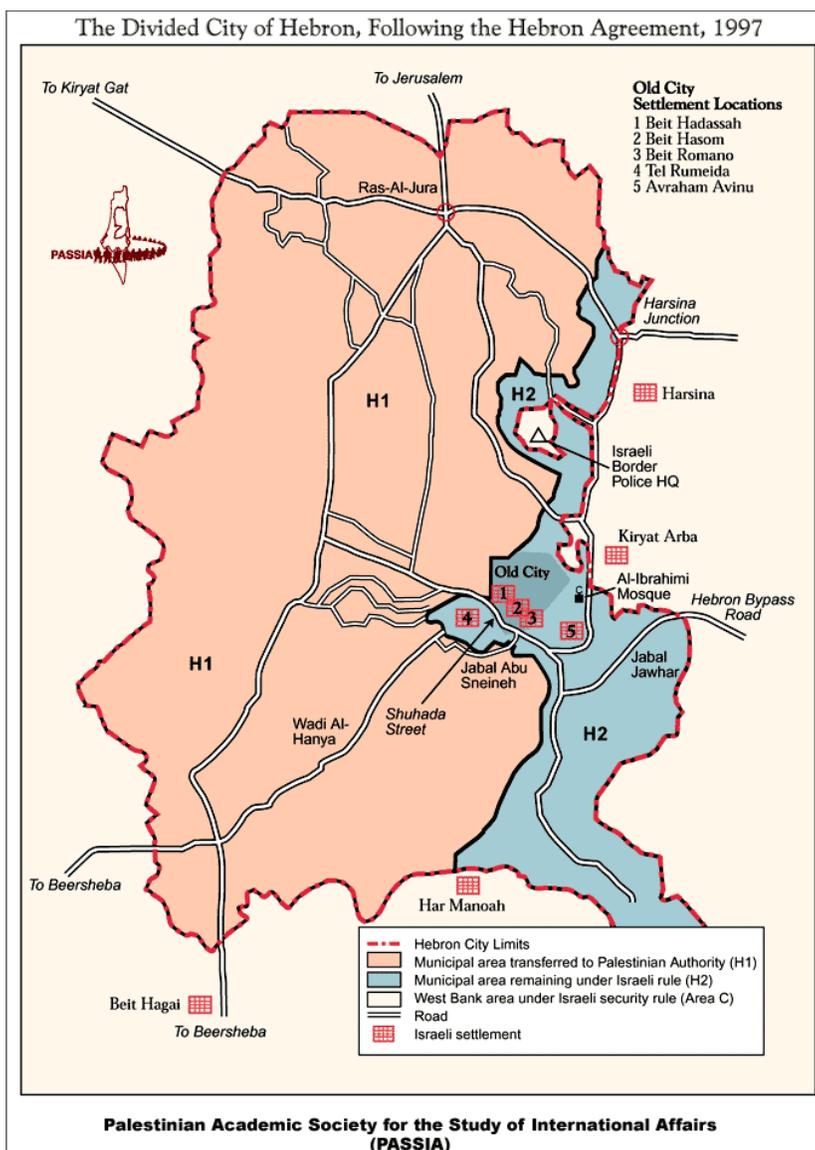
In 1988, Levinger shot and killed an innocent Palestinian shopkeeper, Kayed Salah, in cold blood. He never expressed

remorse for the murder and the Israeli government only detained him for a few weeks.

A few years ago, this writer tried to interview Levinger as he was walking near the Ibrahimi mosque. His response to my request was this: “If you don’t go away, I will shoot you.”

Levinger is affiliated with the religious-Zionist camp, which follows the messianic ideology as taught by Abraham Kook, widely viewed as the modern mentor of Religious Zionism.

According to the authors of “Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel,” Israel Shahak and Norton Mezvinsky (Pluto Press, London, 1999), Kook is quoted as



saying that "The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jews—all of them in all different levels—is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle."

Some apologists would dismiss Kook's views as anachronistic, and not necessarily representative of modern Jewish orthodoxy. Don't tell that to Rabbi Levinger. Following the massacre of 29 Muslim worshipers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, Levinger was quoted as saying, "I am not only sorry for dead Arabs, but also sorry for dead flies as well."

Then there is Rabbi Saadya Grama of Beth Medrash Govoha, the renowned Talmudic school of Lakewood, N.J. In 2003, he published a book in which he claims that gentiles are completely evil and that Jews constitute a separate, genetically superior species.

The book, published under the Hebrew title, "Romemut Yisrael ufarshat Hagalut," quoted numerous classical Jewish sources to prove Jewish superiority over the rest of mankind.

The difference between Jews and gentiles, the author argued, is not religious or political. It is rather racial, genetic, and scientifically unalterable. One group is at its very root and by its very nature "totally evil" while the other is "totally good." Rabbi Grama concludes: "Jewish successes in the world are completely contingent upon the failure of other peoples. Only when the gentiles face total catastrophe, do Jews experience good fortune."

While castigated by many Jewish figures, both religious and secular, for its brazen racism, Grama's thesis is not really in conflict with the rabbis of Gush Emunim (the settler camp) and their supporters who have taken over Shuhada Street, and don't hesitate to quote from the Talmud and Old Testament to justify their inhuman treatment of Palestinians.

Baruch Goldstein

With this background in mind, one can easily predict how virulent and venomous the settler discourse

toward the Palestinians can be.

Consider that massacre at the Ibrahimi Mosque. On February 25, 1994, as hundreds of local Muslim worshipers were praying at dawn in the old quarter of Hebron, an American Jewish immigrant, a physician by profession named Baruch Goldstein, descended on the mosque and started spraying the worshipers with bullets. Within minutes, he murdered 29 and injured dozens; the survivors eventually killed him.

Goldstein was a follower of the manifestly racist rabbi Meir Kahana, who believed in the necessity of ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from the River Jordan to the Mediterranean. In 1978, he wrote a book entitled "They Must Go." Fourteen years later, following a speech in a New York City hotel in which he called for uprooting all Palestinians from Palestine-Israel, Kahana was assassinated.

The Israeli government and major Jewish organizations around the world condemned the killings at the Ibrahimi Mosque, saying it didn't reflect Jewish ethics and morality. However, it was clear that the vast majority of settlers and their supporters, both in Israel and abroad, effectively supported the mass murder in one way or the other.

Indeed, Goldstein's tomb in the nearby settlement of Kiryat Arba became a pilgrimage attraction for radical Jews from around the world, with some Gush Emunim rabbis writing books glorifying Goldstein and calling him a saint.

Even today, more than 16 years later, while Goldstein himself no longer exists, "Goldsteinism" e.g. anti-Palestinian vindictiveness and hatred, is alive and well among the settlers.

Nearly two years ago, Daniella Weiss, a settler leader, visited Hebron to encourage settler squatters, who had taken over an Arab property in the city, to resist government efforts to vacate them.

Weiss, a former mayor of a northern West Bank settlement, quoted extensively from the Old Testament, especially the Book of Joshua, verses urging

the ancient Israelites to slaughter every man, woman and child and not leave a breathing thing. According to Weiss, "This is the way to deal with the Palestinians."

Following the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre, the Israeli army put Hebron – the Arabs, not the settlers – under the harshest and longest curfew ever imposed since the onset of the occupation in 1967.

So cruel was it that several residents succumbed to their illnesses because they were denied access to local hospitals. The Israeli authorities argued rather dishonestly that the curfew was justified by "the security situation." However, it was clear, at least from the Palestinian view, that the main purpose behind the extended lockdown was to push as many Palestinians in the Old Town as possible to leave their homes in order to facilitate the coveted takeover of these homes by Jewish settlers.

The Shamgar Commission, a board of inquiry appointed by the Israeli government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the massacre, concluded that the Israeli authorities had consistently failed to investigate let alone prosecute crimes committed by settlers against Palestinians.

But perhaps it was Hebron military commander Noam Tivon who said it most honestly when he told the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*: "Let there be no mistake about it. I am not from the U.N. I am from the Israeli Defense Forces. I didn't come here (to Hebron) to seek people to drink tea with, but first of all to ensure the security of the Jewish settlers."

Street of Martyrs

Shuhada means "martyrs" in Arabic. In its long history, the street has witnessed numerous demonstrations against reigning governments during the British, Jordanian, and Israeli eras, and several people have gotten killed or injured. Hence, the name of the street.

Slightly over a half-mile long, the street links the Bab Elzawiay district, the commercial heart of Heb-

ron, to the eastern and southern suburbs of the city as well as to neighboring smaller towns such as Yatta.

Some of the buildings abutting the street on both sides go back to the British and Ottoman eras. In recent years, efforts have been made to rehabilitate the street. To commemorate the new Oslo 2 "peace" accords, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) spent thousands of U.S. tax dollars to fix the street, installing red tile sidewalks and quaint street lights.

Jewish settlers fought the project from the start. They broke the street lights and the paving stones, often hurling the stones at the workers and shooting out the windows of their heavy machinery with pellet guns. As a result the project came in three months late and cost the U.S. taxpayer twice as much.

When it was completed the new "peace" street was closed to all Palestinian vehicles and, not long after its opening, it was closed even to Palestinians on foot, except for those living along its route.

Today Shuhada Street is a ghost scene. Only Israeli settlers, soldiers and foreign tourists are allowed to access it. And what they see is anti-Arab graffiti sprayed or scrawled across the streets. Some of this graffiti is particularly ugly, such as "Kill the Arabs."

More bizarre are the metal mesh cages that enclose the balconies of houses where Palestinians continue to live. For these Palestinians to exit their homes – the Israelis have bolted their outside doors – they have to use dangerous ladders, or crawl out the windows in the back of their apartment and go from roof to roof.

In fact, the problems facing Palestinians in the vicinity of Shuhada Street go beyond being merely denied access to the street itself. According to eyewitnesses, settlers living in the small Jewish enclave on one side of the street routinely and nearly on a daily basis harass Palestinians on the adjacent Shallala Street. From the upper stories of their apartments,

Israeli settlers throw stones and worse on Palestinian shoppers and pedestrians below, which forced the municipal council to install wire mesh across and down the length of Shallala Street. This does not, however, protect the people under the mesh from settler children urinating on them. Similar behavior by settlers has been reported in the other Jewish enclave near the Ibrahimi Mosque.

Needless to say the impact of all this harassment is calculated by both the settlers and the Israeli political-security establishment to make the daily life of Palestinians living in the Old Town, especially along Shuhada Street, an enduring nightmare. And it has.

Personal Testimonies

As I began interviewing locals along Shuhada Street for this article, Israeli soldiers took my ID for a while, and upon finding out that I was Palestinian, they told me that my presence in the street was illegal. When I asked what made my presence illegal, one soldier said rather tersely in Hebrew “because I say so.” In a certain sense, his laconic reply epitomizes the way the Israeli establishment deals with the Palestinian community. It all comes down to “because I say so.”

I walked down the street toward the Ibrahimi Mosque, known to Jews as the Cave of the Patriarchs, and I encountered a young Palestinian shopkeeper, **Abdel Rauf al-Muhtaseb**, who tells me he lost a number of friends and relatives in the 1994 massacre.

Al-Muhtaseb described his suffering as “deliberate pressure by the Israeli authorities aimed at forcing us to leave our homes and our town.

“Security is an excuse, even a secondary excuse. The Jews (i. e., the settlers) are intent on committing ethnic cleansing against the people of the city. They are doing it street by street, home by home, even stone by stone.

“People from around the world are welcomed to walk and stroll along the street, but we, the natives



Interviewer Khalid Amayreh

of the land, are barred. “

Al-Muhtaseb sells souvenirs to tourists near the Ibrahimi Mosque. He says he used to make money and a decent living when the roads were open. Now, he says, “I have been going through a Nakba (catastrophe) of my own.

“My business has been devastated because access to this place is tightly restricted. Even when tourists come here, Israeli troops don’t let them mingle with us. They apparently are worried that the tourists might hear the Palestinian narrative, the Palestinian viewpoint.”

The 40-year-old Palestinian businessman says he has no choice but to continue “hanging in there” because, as he puts it, “the alternative is emigration, and emigration is a dishonorable thing for us because it would imply defeat.”

As I was chatting with Al-Muhtaseb, I noticed that Israeli soldiers manning a nearby checkpoint were barring a Palestinian mother and her ailing daughter from reaching their home nearly 100 meters away.

Alaa al-Fakhuri, 19, suffered from multiple fractures as a result of a car accident and can’t walk normally. Her mother pleaded to the soldiers to allow them to reach their home on the other side of the checkpoint, which also functions as a road-block. But the soldiers wouldn’t relent.

I asked the young woman’s mother why they

were being denied access to their home. These were her words:

“Well, the reason is because we are not Jews. If we were Jews, they certainly would allow us to proceed.”

When I told the woman that I was preparing a story on Shuhada Street for an American journal, she displayed an additional incentive to speak up:

“Tell the Americans that they are financing, supporting and abetting a criminal state that commits every human rights violation under the sun while



dred Israeli shekels (roughly 28 U.S. dollars) in return for allowing local Palestinians to proceed to their homes in the vicinity of the Ibrahim Mosque.

But the problem facing local Palestinians is by no means confined to denying them straight access to their homes.

According to **Jamal Arafat al-Fakhuri**, who lives near the eastern end of Shuhada Street, Israeli settlers, supported and guarded by army troops, routinely attack Palestinian homes in the area.

“Believe me, we can’t leave our homes lest these



Alaa al-Fakhuri (right) and her mother.—Photo credit: *Khalid Amayreh*

claiming to be an enlightened democracy. Does an enlightened democracy prevent an ill girl who has just recently undergone a major surgical operation from reaching her home just because she happens to be non-Jewish?”

A few minutes later, the woman and her daughter found a taxi that traveled several kilometers, effectively circumventing half of Hebron, in order to get them home, which is less than a hundred meters away.

As the two women got into the taxi, the mother vented her anger: “Allaho Akbar (God is great), why should we pay for whatever the Nazis did to them. This is not fair.”

Sometimes, the soldiers abuse their own designated tasks. Al-Muhateseb intimated that sometimes soldiers demand and receive money, usually a hun-

‘animals’ attack in our absence. Would you imagine that even toddlers are not safe from the settlers’ savagery and cruelty.”

A few years ago, a settler woman seized a Palestinian boy, not far from the Qurduba school, along Shuhada Street, forcing stones into the young child’s mouth, ostensibly to make him choke to death.

However, when Palestinians submit complaints, they are often told that the perpetrator is deranged, or asked to submit impossible evidence such as the settler’s full name and ID number.

“I think our situation is unique. Were it not for the fact that the settlers are our unwanted neighbors, I wouldn’t believe that human beings are capable of behaving in this manner,” said al-Fakhuri.

As I spoke with more people living on both sides of Shuhada Street, it became clear the extent to



Idris Zahdeh—Credit: Khalid Amayreh

which these Palestinians are tormented and humiliated both by the Israeli security authorities and fanatical Jewish settlers, hell-bent on expelling Palestinian families from their homes.

Listen to **Idris Zahdeh**, 62, from Tel Rumeida, a neighborhood adjacent to Shuhada Street:

I live near the Qurduba school, not far from the Shuhada (martyrs) Cemetery. We are under a constant state of siege. It is either steadfastness or death. Don't write either steadfastness or departure, write either steadfastness or death because departure is not a choice. We are not going to leave no matter what they do to us. We are here to stay, and we will. Period.

No reporters are allowed to reach my besieged home and when some come, they are chased away and stoned by the settlers. I testify with utmost honesty that Israeli occupation troops routinely connive and conspire with the settlers against us. The settlers attack us physically and vandalize our property in full view of soldiers. And when we submit a complaint to the police, the police simply turn a blind eye or justify its inaction by arguing that the settlers control the government and that there is very little the police can do to control them.

In addition, the settlers teach and train their children and minors to assault Palestinians, such as throwing garbage onto Palestinians and their homes, pulling women's head-

scarves, and stoning our children. And whenever we complain to the police, we are told that these are minors who can't be arrested no matter what they do. Yet it's OK for Arab children and minors to be arrested, beaten, and prosecuted as terrorists at the slightest suspicion of committing a misdemeanor.

Most of the settlers here don't work. Their job is to provoke, harass and persecute the Palestinians in an effort to drive them away.

Zahdeh narrated how, in 1994, the settlers attacked his neighbor, Fathi Sharabati, who was then 75, who died several years ago.

They beat the old man, even his 103-year old mother was not spared. I tried to protect the old man, his wife and mother. However, when I stood between the settlers and the victims, several soldiers ganged up on me, beating me mercilessly, knocking out most of my teeth.

Zahdeh said a settler broached him to sell his home and property to the settlers for a hefty amount of money.

A settler woman named Anat Cohen repeatedly used all sorts of threats and inducements to get me to sell my home. And when I told her that my home was not for sale, attacks and other acts of harassment increased markedly.

Now they call me "the Arab cancer" because I refused to sell my home in order to enable the settlers to expand their enclave.

Another resident I interviewed is **Wael Sharabati**, 51, of Tel Rumeida:

The closure of Shuhada Street since 1994 has had a devastating effect on us. Let me give you an example. Prior to the closure, I could travel to Yatta (a nearby town of 50,000 people) in 10 minutes. Now, it takes me more than 1½ hours. But this is a minor



Wael Sharabati—Credit: Khalid Amayreh

problem in comparison with the daily acts of harassment meted out to my family at the hands of Israeli troops.

Because my home is located at a strategic location and overlooks Shuhada Street, the Israeli occupation authorities have been seeking to seize it for “security considerations.”

On Sept. 28, 1998, I was able to obtain a court order that allowed me to retain the ownership of my home and the small backyard around it. However, a few months later, the Israeli occupation army got the court to issue a ruling allowing them to maintain a military observation post right on my rooftop. This was really an act of rape. Imagine ill-behaving soldiers invading your privacy, urinating and defecating on your rooftop and in your backyard. In fact, their behavior is more than disgusting. Unfortunately, the observation post has remained on my rooftop to this very moment.

In 2002, one of the soldiers urinated on my child’s head. And when I protested, one of the soldiers aimed his gun at me.

Again, I asked Wael Sharabati why he didn’t complain to the police? He glared at me, rather sarcastically, saying “To whom shall I complain? The police, the army, the settlers and the justice system as well as the courts are all one. There can be no justice for non-Jews under Jewish rule.” And he added:

One day, a Mexican national named Marco, who held a high-ranking post in the Middle Eastern Chapter of the International Red Cross, asked me the same question you are asking me now, namely why don’t I complain. He and I went to the Israeli police station near Kiryat Arba. Marco, who introduced himself as a high-ranking Red Cross official, told the police that he wanted to submit a complaint on my behalf. We waited for 73 minutes before an Israeli soldier told us to go away. I then explained to Marco that even if I waited 73 days, not 73 minutes, the Israelis wouldn’t help or even care. In the final analysis, their job is to torment us and make our life unbearable, and their ultimate goal is to get us to leave.

Sharabati says his daily life and that of his family, has been transformed into an enduring hell. “There is nothing that we can take for granted. Even the smallest task, like getting your kid to school, or moving a cooking gas cylinder to your home, is a formidable challenge. I believe that only sadistic people would enjoy watching us suffer. Do Jews suffer from some kind of irredeemable sadism?”

Interestingly, Sharabati’s agony is by no means an erratic experience representing the exception rather than the standard. Several other residents of the area told similar stories that are equally ugly.

I interviewed **Mufid Sharabati**, a Fatah operative responsible for documenting assaults and harassments by both Israeli troops and Jewish settlers.

He says that documenting Israeli crimes against the Palestinians in Hebron, especially the Old Town, including Shuhada Street, would require an entire encyclopedia.

Stressing that the Israeli state is first and foremost responsible for the “systematic pogroms” carried out against the Palestinians, Sharabati says that the Israeli authorities and the settlers who, he emphasized, were two sides of the same coin, coveted Shuhada Street from the first days of the occupation. He continued:



Mufid Sharabati—*Credit: Khalid Amyreh*

If someone tells you that settler crimes against the Palestinians here are a reaction to Palestinian resistance, which Israeli spin doctors and perhaps some misguided and misinformed westerners call terror, don't you believe them. Palestinian suffering began in earnest in 1967 when Jewish settlers, especially those affiliated with the messianic group known as Gush Emunim, would visit a certain place and then claim it as theirs. In the early and mid-1970s, visiting settlers would hold certain rituals. Then the number of settlers increased, with the occupation army's blessing. In 1978-79, they took over the Daboya building which they called "Beit Hadassah" and shortly afterwards they took over the main bus station as well as a petrol station belonging to the Jaabari family. [In 2000, the Israeli High Court issued a ruling demanding the army return the two locations to Palestinian proprietors. The ruling, however, has not been carried out due to settler objections.]

In 1980, the Israeli army demolished a large building owned by the Hirbawi family. The Israeli authorities then justified the manifestly illegal demolition by citing "security considerations," an allusion to providing protection and security for the growing number of settlers in the area.

More Arab property was confiscated later, including the wholesale vegetable market. Again the Israeli court ruled that the take-

over of the market was illegal, but the Israeli security authorities refused to carry out the court ruling.

Indeed, far from obeying the court order, Israeli settlers put up placards and signs, reading "Arabs to the Gas Chambers" and "Arabs to the Ovens." Some of these signs are still placed along the street, near the Abraham Aveno (Abraham is our Father) enclave, the former site of the wholesale vegetable market.

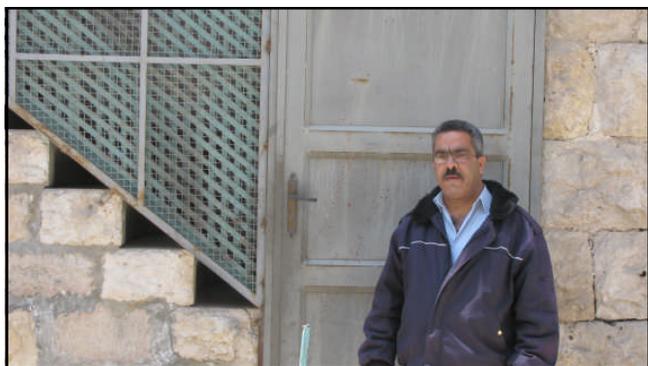
Mufid Sharabati argues that the perpetration of the Ibrahimi Mosque massacre in 1994 was an effect rather than a cause. "The massacre was by no means thunder on a clear day. It was the cumulative effect of years of incitement by the political and military establishment against the Palestinians. The Israeli media also played a significant role in demonizing and dehumanizing the Palestinians. The (Baruch) Goldstein phenomenon is, sadly, much stronger than ever before. It can resurface at any moment."

Mufid Sharabati complains that he and his family and fellow Palestinian citizens are made to suffer immensely in order to ensure serenity for the settlers. "Look," he says, "if one of us fell ill, he or she might succumb to his or her illness before reaching the hospital because no ambulance is allowed to access the streets without Israeli permission, and the permission may take hours to arrive. The same thing can be said about other vital services. In short, they want us to leave so that the settlers can take over our homes and property. This is the crux of the matter."

Sharabati, barely concealing his exasperation and indignation, opines that it is virtually impossible to coexist with the settlers of Hebron whom he described as the "worst Jews under the sun."

"They are more than just bad neighbors. Bad neighbors can sometimes be avoided. These people are clear-cut criminals."

He recounted how a settler deliberately hit and tried to run over his daughter, Tahrir, as she re-



Khalid al Khatib —Credit: *Khalid Amayreh*

turned home from school a few years ago. “She was walking along the paved roadside. He deliberately hit her. Not only that, he got out of the car and beat her on the ground saying she broke his car’s mirror.”

Another member of the Sharabati family, Muhammed Shaker Sharabati, who also lives along Shuhada Street, narrated how, in 2005, Jewish settlers hit him with a stone on his left eye while he was handcuffed:

The settlers were trying to carry out a pogrom against my family. I tried to put up a semblance of resistance. However, the soldiers hastened to the place to protect the settlers. They arrested me and got me handcuffed. In the meanwhile, the settlers ganged up on me in full view of the soldiers. They threw stones at my face, resulting in having one of my eyes plucked out. I underwent three operations in an effort to restore my eyesight, but to no avail. Now I only see with one eye, thanks to the criminality of these Nazis known as Jewish settlers.

Did he file a complaint? Muhammed Shaker Sharabati shrugged: “I submitted several complaints, but what can one do when the police, the judges and the entire system is hostile to you.?”

I also interviewed **Khalid al Khatib**, whose family in 1948 had been expelled from the little town of Beit Jibril, some 12 miles west of Hebron. He says he can hardly reach his home near the old Jewish cemetery, which overlooks Shuhada Street.

Even doing the simplest of tasks, which people elsewhere take for granted, is a real challenge for me and my family. One day, I tried five different routes to reach my home and every time I was turned back by the Israelis on the grounds that the area was a closed military zone.

At one point I lost my composure and cried out Allaho Akbar (God is great). What am I supposed to do, board a helicopter gunship to get to my home?!

The soldiers heard me and trained their guns on me, probably thinking I wanted to attack them. Eventually, after much argument, they allowed me to proceed. However, they told me that they were only doing me a favor.

Khatib said that thanks to the draconian Israeli measures, his social life is paralyzed. “Imagine not being visited by any of your relatives and friends even on major Muslim holidays such as the Eid marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan and al-Adha holiday which marks the end of the annual pilgrimage season.”



Settlers’ anti-Arab graffiti, doorway on Shuhada Street circa 2000.—Credit: *Jane Adas*

He says he realizes well that the Israeli goal is to get him to sell his home or leave it for good. "The security argument is only a pretext. The truth is that they just don't want us here."

Bleak Prospects

As I wrapped up this article on June 22nd, Israeli officials announced the planned destruction of 22 Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem area. Why? In order to build a large archeological park and 1,000 new apartments for Jews only, along with shopping and boutique hotels. The U.S. State Department expressed concern that the action ran the risk of undermining trust that is fundamental in making progress in Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. Due to the strength of the American Jewish lobby, however, no one, but no one, believes that Israel will heed U.S. concerns.

The Obama administration had been trying to get Israel to freeze Jewish settlement expansion in the West Bank, especially in occupied East Jerusalem. However, due to the strength of the American Jewish lobby, Netanyahu consistently refuses to heed Obama's directives. In addition, he has pre-conditioned any serious steps toward peace with demands that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state and come to terms with the refugee plight as an irreversible historical fact.

For the Palestinians, or more correctly for Palestinian citizens of Israel, recognizing Israel as a Jewish state would constitute another Nakba since it would imply that Israel would be justified in expelling or ethnically cleansing its large Palestinian population, which now exceeds 20% of Israel's population.

Israel defines itself as a Jewish and democratic state. However, critics argue rather convincingly that Israel can't really be a Jewish and a democratic state at the same time, and that there is no doubt that whenever there is the slightest incompatibility between the democratic and Jewish aspect of Israel, the latter would overcome the former.

As to the Palestinian refugee plight, there seems to be no Palestinian leader, worthy of the title, who can openly discredit the Right of Return for the refugees as such a right is widely considered the soul and heart of the Palestinian question. Indeed, one would exaggerate little by saying that any Palestinian leader would commit not only political suicide but lose his life as well should he openly disavow the Right of Return.

Meanwhile, it is increasingly apparent that the two-state solution strategy, which is at the center of President Obama's efforts to revive stalled peace talks between the Palestinian Authority and Israel, has become unrealistic and unworkable in light of the ubiquitous proliferation of Jewish-only settlements in the Occupied Territories. This necessarily means that there is no room left for the creation of a viable and territorially-contiguous Palestinian state.

In short, there are only two alternatives left for Israelis and Palestinians, and probably for the rest of the world as well: Either open-ended conflict that could escalate at any point in the future into some sort of a nuclear Armageddon, or a unitary civil state in all of mandatory Palestine in which Jews and Arabs can live in peace and equality.

Needless to say, the latter alternative is anathema for most Jews, especially Israeli Jews, who view the one-state solution as a vicious prescription for abolishing Zionism and making Israel lose its Jewish majority and identity. Israelis think, probably correctly, that within a few years, Palestinians will have a clear majority in Palestine-Israel.

The settlers and the overall rightist camp in Israel are aware of this looming fact. However, they suggest that the adoption of apartheid, or worse, ethnic cleansing, would enable Israel to prevail, no matter how large the Arab population will grow.

As for Hebron, the settlers, the Sharabatis and other Shuhada Street dwellers, they will have to wait as they have been waiting for years. It is doubtful that prayers alone will help. ■

From **The Link's** Links

<http://www.cpt.org>

Tarek Abuata grew up in Bethlehem, Palestine. In 1989 he moved to the United States with his family, where he received his J.D. in International Law from the University of Texas Law School. He is the founder of Love Thy Neighbor, an organization that promotes nonviolence in Palestine/Israel, and serves as the Palestinian



Support Coordinator for the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). He was interviewed about CPT's website by AMEU Executive Director John Mahoney.

One of the projects of CPT in Palestine is to escort Palestinian children to school. Your website has an article, "The Closed Road to Education," which offers incident reports and photos to explain why such an escort is necessary.

How do you find Americans respond to such evidence? The immediate responses we get vary. Some respond with disbelief and desire more information, some respond with disbelief and anger at our criticizing the Jewish settlers, some want to help out and ask us what they can do, and some make anti-Semitic remarks about Jews in general. I have had all these responses from over 100 presentations I've given to churches and other groups.

CPT is in several hot spots around the world, always at the invitation of the local community.

Who invited you to come to Palestine? We were invited by many local nonviolent activists as well as by some high level government officials in the Hebron Governorate.

Your website does mention another nonviolent group, "Open Shuhada Street," and has photos of its demonstrations. Can you tell us a little about this group? Shuhada Street used to be the main thoroughfare for Palestinian traffic in the Old

City of Hebron. In the 1990s, USAID renovations were done that were completed before 1998. During the work, Israeli settlers, many of whom had confiscated Palestinian properties on and around the street, vandalized the equipment of the contractors and intimidated the workers. The renovations were supposed to be part of a package to re-opening the street to Palestinian traffic.

Unfortunately, restrictions on Palestinian use and access have accumulated continuously since at least 1994. Currently, Palestinians are not allowed on or anywhere near the street. Even families whose homes are on the street are not allowed to exit their homes from the main door. They have to build back exits, exits from their rooftops and side-way exits through their neighbors' homes.

"Open Shuhada Street" is a local campaign organized by nonviolent Palestinian activists, many of whom we have worked with for many years, and some of whom serve on our Advisory Council. Their goals include highlighting the injustice of the Israeli Occupation, under which generations of Palestinians have been forced to live, protesting the illegality—even under Israeli law—of closing off Shuhada Street to Palestinians, and asking the international community to support justice for the local Palestinian residents in ending Israel's Apartheid system. Their website is: www.openshuhadastreet.org.

Your website lists the departure dates of various CPT delegations to Palestine. Who goes on these delegations? Folks of all faiths and backgrounds who want to know more about Palestine/Israel, and particularly about the nonviolence efforts of Palestinian and Israeli activists in the region. Many who join the delegations are also interested in doing service with CPT either as reservists or as full/part-time personnel on our projects. The reservists in Palestine serve a minimum of one month a year, and our full/part-timers serve a minimum of 4 ½ months a year. Those interested are asked to fill out an application before going which is subject to approval by the CPT Delegation Coordinator.

For those who may want to contact you, is there an e-mail address or phone number you can give? To contact the CPT office in Chicago either call 773-376-0550 or e-mail us at peacemakers@cpt.org. For readers who may wish to contact me, my e-mail is tarek.abuata@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW

Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews. Volume One: *The False Messiah* (2009); Volume Two: *David Becomes Goliath* (2009); Volume Three: *Conflict Without End?* (2010)

By Alan Hart

Atlanta, GA: Clarity Press

List: \$21.95 per copy (excluding postage)

AMEU Prices: \$45 for 3-volume set, \$16.50 per copy.

(AMEU price includes postage. See order form on page 16.)

Reviewed by Jane Adas

After a distinguished career as a foreign correspondent for England's ITN News and BBC's *Panorama* where he has reported on the Middle East since 1967, Alan Hart took five years off to research and write *Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews*. The result is grounded in his interviews with decision makers on all sides and in his personal friendships with, among others, Prime Minister Golda Meir and President Yasser Arafat. Yet no British publisher would touch it lest, as Israeli historian Ilan Pappé told Hart, the truth in the seven-word title frighten Zionists. So in 2005 Hart published it himself in two volumes. In 2009 – 2010 Clarity Press brought out an updated American edition in three volumes, which Hart dedicated to "everyone working for justice and peace in the Middle East."

Volume one, *The False Messiah*, spans the beginnings of the Zionist movement through the Nakba; the second volume, *David Becomes Goliath*, continues through John F. Kennedy's assassination. Hart updated the third, *Conflict Without End?*, to include Hamas' 2006 parliamentary victory, Israel's assault on Lebanon in that same year and on Gaza in 2008-09, and President Obama's capitulation to Prime Minister Netanyahu "with the assistance of the Zionist lobby and its stooges in Congress" in September 2009. The scope is immense, but leavened by Hart's conversational writing style and his years of personal experiences and insider observations. Even the most obsessive readers on this topic will learn much in its pages.

At a book promotion gathering in a home in Brooklyn in June, Hart said he wrote with two goals in mind: to contribute to justice for Palestinians and to stop anti-Semitism. Hart is in earnest about the latter. It is essential, he ex-

plained, to distinguish between Judaism, a religion with ethical principles at its core, and Zionism, a settler-colonial enterprise that created a state by terrorism and ethnic cleansing. He described Zion-

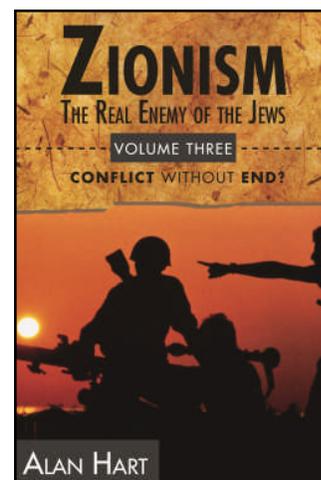
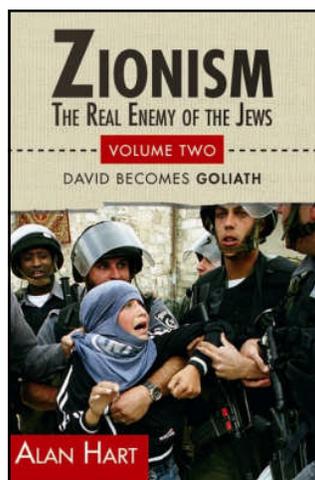
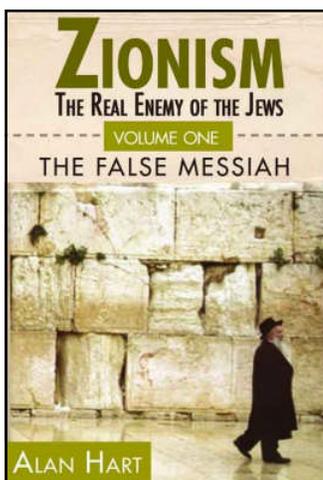
ism as a movement that exploits a state of the Jewish mind wherein the world hates the Jews so to hell with the world and sees Israel as the refuge of last resort. In Hart's view, Israel's misbehavior could endanger all Jews everywhere by provoking an anti-Semitic backlash, "blaming all Jews for the crimes of the few."

Hart is clear that America's "Israel right or wrong" policies are detrimental to Israel, the U.S., and indeed the whole world. He prefaces the new edition with "An Appeal to the American People."

The problem, dear Americans, is that many of you are too uninformed to make your democracy work for the purpose of giving expression and substance to your idealism. And many of you are uninformed about conflict in the Middle East not because you don't want to know, but because you have been misinformed by the corporate-controlled mainstream media.

Hart does not blame the pro-Israel lobby for playing the game according to rules. He faults America's "pork-barrel politics" where congressional votes are for sale to the highest bidder. What needs to happen in America to further peace, Hart insists, is for citizens to inform themselves in order to be empowered to make democracy real, so that politicians will be more frightened of the voters than of the pro-Israel lobby. ■

Author
Alan
Hart



AMEU's Video Selections: Use Order Form on Page 16

All AMEU Prices include Postage & Handling

- AJPME, **Beyond the Mirage: The Face of the Occupation** (2002, DVD, 47 minutes). Israeli and Palestinian human rights advocates challenge misconceptions about the Occupation and Palestinian resistance to it. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- AJPME, **Imagine ...** (2005, DVD, 15 minutes). Palestinian education under Israeli occupation. Excellent for discussion groups. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
- Baltzer, Anna, **Life in Occupied Palestine** (2006, DVD, 61 minutes). By the American granddaughter of a Holocaust refugee. This is her powerful account of the occupation. **AMEU: \$20.00.**
- DMZ, **People and the Land** (2007, DVD, updated version of 1997 film, 57 minutes). This is the controversial documentary by Tom Hayes that appeared on over 40 PBS stations. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- FMEP, **Searching for Peace in the Middle East** (2006, DVD, 30 minutes). A film by Landrum Bolling. **AMEU: \$10.00.**
- Mennonite Central Committee, **Children of the Nabkah (2005, DVD, 26 minutes)**. Why Palestinian refugees must be part of any peace settlement. Comes with study guide. **AMEU: \$15.00.**
- Munayyer, F. & H., **Palestinian Costumes and Embroidery: A Precious Legacy** (2008, DVD, 38 minutes). Rare collection of Palestinian dresses modeled against background of Palestinian music, with commentary tracing the designs back to Canaanite times. List: \$50.00. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- NEF, **Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land** (2004, DVD, 80 minutes). Excellent analysis of how the U.S. media slants its coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. **AMEU: \$25.00.**
- Real People Prod., **Sucha Normal Thing** (2004, DVD, 80 minutes). Six Americans document a "normal" day under military occupation in the West Bank. **AMEU: \$25.00**
- IHF, **USS Liberty Survivors: Our Story** (1992; DVD; 60 minutes). The truth as provided by the men who lived through it. **AMEU: \$25.00**
- Tripoli Productions. **Occupation 101** (2008, DVD, 90 minutes). Powerful documentary on the root causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and US involvement. **AMEU: \$15.00.**

Please send a gift subscription* of *The Link* in my name to:

 Name Address City ST Zip

 Name Address City ST Zip

Mail with \$20 for each gift subscription to:
 AMEU, 475 Riverside Drive, Room 245,
 New York, New York 10115-0245.

Donated by:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

*One yr. sub. + free copy of "Burning Issues,"
 AMEU's 440-page anthology of best *Links*.

Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #155
Deep River, CT

Americans for Middle East Understanding, Inc.
Room 245, 475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115-0245

To Support The Link

A \$40 voluntary annual subscription is requested to defray cost of publishing and distributing The Link and AMEU's Public Affairs Series.

Contribution to AMEU (tax deductible)

Please Send Recent Link Issues

A check or money order for \$_____ is enclosed, payable to AMEU.

Name _____

Address _____

Zip+4 _____

In Appreciation: James E. Akins

We are saddened to report the death on July 15, 2010 of The Honorable James E. Akins, former United States Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and a vigorous advocate for a Palestinian-Israeli peace accord within the pre-1967 borders.

That word "Honorable" in his title was more than a pro-forma appellation. Those who knew Jim well knew him as a man of keen intelligence and moral integrity.

For years Ambassador Akins's name headed our list of National Council members. These are Americans who accept our invitation to publicly support our efforts. For all of Jim's encouragement, his advice and assistance, we will be profoundly grateful – and honored.

John F. Mahoney, Executive Director

RUSH ORDER FORM

Book Orders: Alan Hart's "Zionism: The Real Enemy of the Jews," comes in three volumes. The AMEU price is \$16.50 for individual copies and \$45 for a three-volume set, including postage. Note quantities below and make checks payable to AMEU. Add \$3 per book for international delivery:

Three-volume set, ____; vol. 1, "The False Messiah," ____; vol. 2, "David Becomes Goliath," ____; vol. 3, "Conflict Without End?" ____.

Video Orders: Please send ____ videos checked on pg. 15 with a total AMEU price of \$_____. (Price includes domestic USPS postage. Add \$3/video for international delivery.)

Total Amount Enclosed: \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

**MAIL ORDER WITH CHECK TO:
AMEU, Room 245, 475 Riverside Drive,
New York, NY 10115-0245
Telephone 212-870-2053, Fax 212-870-2050, or
E-Mail AMEU@aol.com**