

# Palestine-Israel: The Effects of Occupation

## CBA Lesson Packet

CBA TOPIC: Dig Deep

LEVEL: Middle/High School

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*This document is intended to assist teachers who are implementing the Dig Deep CBA for high school students, but may be useful to anyone teaching about current world issues, international relations and related fields.*

### **WASHINGTON STATE CLASSROOM BASED ASSESSMENT: DIG DEEP**

The Dig Deep CBA states that, “a responsible citizen can use historical thinking to develop thoughtful participation in a democratic society. To develop your thinking skills you will develop and support a thesis on an historical question based on your analysis of primary and historical narratives.”

### **What does the CBA require students to do?**

- 1) Develop a historical question.
- 2) State a position on the question that outlines reasons in support of the position.
- 3) Support the position with evidence drawing on multiple social science perspectives\* that includes primary and secondary resources.
- 4) State why studying the historical question helps in understanding current issues and events.
- 5) Prepare a presentation/paper explaining the position and the supporting evidence.

\* The social science perspectives are: geographic, cultural, political, economic, sociological, and psychological.

Please see the following OSPI website for more information: <http://www.k12.wa.us/SocialStudies/Assessments/HighSchool/HSHistory-DigDeep-CBA.pdf> The graphic organizer and scoring rubric for this CBA are available at the OSPI website.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this activity, students will be able to:

- 1) Explain how historical events have created or affected the current Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
- 2) Identify factors that perpetuate the conflict.
- 3) Develop an individual opinion regarding possible solutions to some of the issues that are part of the conflict.

Time: 2-4 weeks

## **APPROACHING THIS CBA**

This CBA helps students understand the Palestinians and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It also helps them understand larger issues such as causes of conflict, the role of culture, and historical analysis. **Please refer first to the introductory material in the Palestine Teaching Trunk.** This material includes a letter to educators, sample letter to parents, discussion of the National Council for Social Studies Ten Themes, the Washington State Standards, and a curriculum comprised of four units. If you feel there are gaps in these units, we encourage you to use the other lessons in this curriculum binder/web site to fill those gaps.

# 1. Dig Deep CBA

## Palestine-Israel: The Effects of Occupation

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**III. History of the Conflict:** “What’s the History? Questions and Answers from Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict by Phyllis Bennis”, “What’s the History ? : Timeline”. p. 22

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**VI. Breaking the Silence --Israeli Soldiers Speak About the Occupation:** 7 testimonials + explanation: jigsaw reading and discussion questions. p. 55

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**VIII. Writing your Classroom Based Assessment:** suggestions for how to prepare students to choose their research question and write their paper. p. 73

## DIG DEEP CBA: PALESTINE-ISRAEL: THE EFFECTS OF OCCUPATION

### 3 week calendar

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1 (50 minute class)	Show map of Palestine & Israel. Explain Roots of Conflict. Handout: "Questions As You Go" to develop research question. Use "Movement Worksheet" to understand impact of the Israeli Wall. Small group and class discussion.	Play youtube report on Wall & E. Jerusalem. Analyze maps & statistics about the Wall.	Show <i>Promises</i> DVD of Palestinian and Israeli children dealing with the conflict.	History of the Conflict: Each small group reads about a part of the history, summarizes it, & prepares to present to class. Phyllis Bennis reading.	History of Conflict (cont'd): Groups present to class. Create a class timeline on board. "Palestinian Loss of Land" maps
Week 2	"Life and Death of a Young Activist." Readings by and about Rachel Corrie, from Olympia, WA, killed by a Caterpillar bulldozer driven by an Israeli soldier. Small groups read and answer discussion questions. Class discussion.	Nonviolence in Palestine (2-5 day lesson). Discussion & definition of nonviolence, followed by case studies in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.	Nonviolence (cont'd) Activities include reading article, watching movies ( <i>Budrus</i> , or Freedom Flotillas, etc.) & discussion.	Nonviolence (cont'd)  Students begin to develop a historical research question for your CBA. Discuss rubric and resources list.	Israeli Soldiers speak about Occupation: readings.  Assign initial research over weekend.
Week 3	Research Day in library or classroom.	Media Literacy: Show <i>Peace, Propaganda &amp; the Promised Land</i> .	Using Graphic Organizer for outline.	Writing Essay.	Essay due on Monday. Students can share final essays.

# I. Introduction & the Wall

Show students a map of Israel and Palestine. There are several in the trunk or online in the Maps Folder. Ask students what they know about the Palestinian- Israeli conflict. It can help to ask students to distinguish between what they know, what they think they know, and what they would like to know more about. In this first lesson, you will explain the roots of the conflict, then move into an analysis of the Wall:

**First**, tell students that you will be studying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and completing a “Dig Deep” CBA research project on a question they have about the conflict. Briefly explain the roots of the conflict (go into as little detail as possible here; your students will be reading about the conflict later); the following is provided for you to decide what you should say:

**Not an Ancient Conflict:** The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is often portrayed as “an ancient conflict,” dating back thousands of years. This is more than a generalization—it is mostly not true. In 70 BCE a Jewish rebellion against the oppressive Roman Empire was brutally crushed, and many Jews were forced out of the region and into exile. However, some Jewish communities remained. After the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fourth century CE, the Byzantine Empire ruled Palestine until the second Caliph of the Islamic Empire overthrew it in 640 CE. Caliph Umar I allowed descendants of the displaced Jewish population to immigrate to Palestine, something they had not been able to do for five hundred years. With each successive caliph of the Islamic Empire, treatment of the non-Muslim communities differed. It is true that sometimes Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims living in Palestine during this time were oppressed. During other periods, they coexisted harmoniously with the Arab-Muslim population. This is no different from the dynamics that characterized Roman rule over the region—there were periods in which Romans allowed the Jewish community autonomy, and other periods in which they were brutally oppressed. Indeed, this is no different from the dynamics that characterize the relationships between most ruling empires and their multi-cultural subjects: as leadership changes hands, policies towards different groups change. It is therefore mostly not true to say that Arabs and Jews or Muslims and Jews have been fighting since ancient times.

**Conflict Began in the 1920s:** To understand the current conflict in Palestine-Israel, it is more helpful to begin with the point at which the Zionist Movement had succeeded in facilitating large-scale immigration of European Jews to Palestine with the intention of creating a Jewish State. This happened in the 1920s and was made possible by the decision of Great Britain to take control of Palestine after the Ottoman Empire fell in 1918 and to support the plans of the Zionist Movement. This occurred after the British had promised the Palestinians self-rule in return for their participation in the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. Prior to this, Palestinians had coexisted with indigenous and immigrant Jewish communities. However, when Palestinians realized that they had been betrayed, and that the British intended to allow for a Jewish state to be established in their country, Palestinians protested. Conflict among the Palestinian community, the Jewish community, and the British rulers began. This is the root of the conflict that is going on today.

**Israel and Palestinian Refugees:** During the 1930s and 40s Jewish immigration to Palestine increased as Jews fled the Nazis in Europe. After World War II, Holocaust survivors who no longer had families, homes, or land, and who were turned away from the US and Britain, immigrated to Palestine as well. The United Nations suggested a Partition Plan, allotting 55% of the land in Palestine for the formation of a Jewish state, and 45% for the Palestinians to

keep. Fighting began in 1947. In 1948, after the British had withdrawn and Jewish militias had defeated the Arab resistance, the state of Israel was established on 78% of historic Palestine. During the conflict of 1947-49, 750,000 Palestinians (three-quarters of the Palestinian population) were forced to leave their homes and either go abroad or move to refugee camps in the remaining 22% of Palestine—Gaza and the West Bank, which were controlled by Egypt and Jordan respectively.

**The Occupied Territories:** In 1967, Israel seized control of the West Bank and Gaza from Egypt and Jordan. Israel instituted a military occupation in Gaza and the West Bank—which are now called The Occupied Palestinian Territories. Over the decades, the Israeli military occupation has become increasingly brutal, in contravention of international law. Palestinians have engaged in violent and nonviolent resistance in pursuit of self-determination. The violent attacks by an occupied population on military targets are protected under the Geneva Conventions, while attacks on civilian populations (by Palestinians or by Israelis) are in violation of international law. While the Palestinian Authority and the majority of the Palestinian people recognize Israel as constituting 78% of historic Palestine, and have agreed to re-form their country only in the West Bank and Gaza, they have not been able to do so due to the occupation in place there. Peace talks between the two entities continue to fail for this reason.

Tell students that this unit will focus on the more recent history of the conflict, but that some of the older history will be examined in an effort to understand how things got to where they are today.

**Second**, give students the handout “Questions As You Go!” Tell students that at the end of each lesson they will have time to write down some of the things that they still don’t understand or would like to know more about. Explain that at the end of the unit, those questions can be their starting point for developing a historical question that they will research and develop a position on. They can write questions on this sheet during class too, not only during the designated time at the end of class.

**Third**, give students the handout “Movement Worksheet”. Have students divide into groups of three or four. Read the instructions aloud to walk the class through filling out their individual movement worksheets. Then read the discussion questions aloud, asking students to make notes of their own thinking before discussing with their group. Have students discuss their answers within their group. Then have each group share what they discussed with the whole class.

# Questions As You Go!

As you learn about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, write down questions you have, or things you would like to know more about. When you get ready to develop a research topic, the ideas you have recorded on this sheet will help you brainstorm.

**MOVEMENT WORKSHEET GRID**  
**NAME: \_\_\_\_\_**

A	B	C	D	E	F
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					



## Movement Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

You will need a pencil and a marker for this activity. As you follow these directions, don't take up an entire square ("quadrant") with any one building. Use your pencil first:

- 1) Choose a quadrant for your house, draw your house and label it "A"
- 2) Choose a quadrant for your Grandmother's house, which is at least three quadrants away from your house, draw her house and label it "B"
- 3) Draw your school in quadrant D-4 and label it "C"
- 4) At least three spaces away from your house, draw your best friend's house and label it "D"
- 5) In quadrant B-6 draw a grocery store, label it "E"
- 6) In quadrant F-1 draw an ice cream store, label it "F"
- 7) In quadrant D-3 draw a water tower, label it "G"
- 8) In quadrant F-6 draw a shopping mall label it "H"
- 9) There is wireless internet in columns E and F, using your pencil/pen lightly shade in the two columns
- 10) In quadrant B-4 draw your most prized possession, label it "I"
- 11) Draw roads (===) that connect your house to any resources you wish to access
- 12) Using a marker, put dots on the edge of A-1, F-3, A-4, and F-6.
- 13) Using the marker, draw one continuous line to connect your dots: Draw the line from A-1 to F-3, then from F-3 to A-4, then from A-4 to F-6. This represents the building of a concrete wall 25 feet high and 9 feet wide.
- 13) Upon government orders row 4 has been confiscated: in dark colored pencil, shade in row 4.

**Discussion Questions** (write your own answers on the back of this paper first, then discuss your answers with your group):

- 1) After the confiscation of land and the creation of barriers, what resources do you still have on the side of the wall with your house?
- 2) What resources do you no longer have that you wish you had?
- 3) How would your life be different if these barriers really existed in your neighborhood?
- 4) Are there rights that all people deserve that would be taken away from you if these barriers were constructed?

## THE WALL (option A)

Inform students that the movement activity worksheet was representative of a real wall/barrier/fence with real implications that is being built around the West Bank, one of the Palestinian Territories occupied by Israel.

A. Play the Al Jazeera report “Israel’s Wall Divides East Jerusalem,” available at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYJ\\_HdI55eM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYJ_HdI55eM). 21 Jul 07: 4 minutes, 2 seconds long. Ask the class the following questions to facilitate discussion about the video:

- The Israeli official who is interviewed affirms that the wall protects Israeli citizens from Palestinian attacks. How does the wall protect Israelis?
- The newscaster calls the wall “a barrier to peace.” Based on the interviews with the Palestinians who talk about the economic and psychological impact of the wall, how might the wall be a “barrier to peace?”
- If the wall is a barrier to peace, can it effectively protect anyone?

B. Show students a map of the wall (in the trunk or online in the Maps Folder).

i. Point out where the wall juts into Palestinian land instead of following the “Green Line”—the boundary line between the West Bank and Israel (the 1948-1967 boundary between Israel and Jordan). Point out that some areas of Palestinian land are almost or completely enclosed by the wall.

ii. Point out that the entire West Bank is supposed to belong to the Palestinians according to international law, but that some areas are controlled by Israeli settlers, people who have moved from Israel to the Palestinian territories to build small cities and towns of their own. (Show students maps 14-17 of areas of settlements, settler roads, and Israeli control.) Explain that some of the settlers do not agree that the West Bank belongs to the Palestinians and that settlers believe the land should belong to Israel. Mention that the Israeli government has given settlers both official and unofficial support over the years by subsidizing housing, building roads, and offering the protection of the Israeli army, even though the International Court of Justice ruled that the settlements are illegal.

C. Give students the handout “Statistics Relating to Israel’s Wall/Barrier.” (You may be able to get a more updated version from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs online at <http://www.ochaopt.org/>). These charts contain lots of information and can be difficult to comprehend. They are given to add details to the picture students are forming in their minds about the Wall. To make it easier on students, put them in groups of four and ask one group of students to look closely at one chart. After five minutes, they should report to the class by summarizing the information and telling the class one thing that impressed/surprised/confused them about the chart. Tell them to be sure to read the text in between the charts, as it provides important elaborations. Finally, wrap up by saying that in the next lesson the students will learn more about the history of the conflict and how the issues they learned about in this lesson arose. Allow a few minutes for students to write questions on their “Questions As You Go” sheets.

# STATISTICS RELATING TO ISRAEL'S WALL/BARRIER

Note: All the data below relate to the barrier's effect following its completion in accordance with the route that the government approved on 30 April 2006. \* A dunam is 1000 square meters or about 1/4 acre (in Ottoman times, it was the amount of land that could be plowed in a day).

## 1. Construction Progress

	Length (km)	Percentage of barrier's length
Completed construction	409	56.6
Under construction	66	9.1
Constructions not yet begun	248	34.3
Total	723	100

Source: OCHA: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, August 2008.

## 2. Areas surrounded by barrier

	Amount of area (in dunams*)	Percentage of West Bank
Area west of the barrier (including East Jerusalem)	479881	8.5
Area east of the barrier that is completely or partially surrounded	191040	3.4
Total land area affected	670921	11.9

### 3. Palestinian population affected by the barrier's route

	Number of communities	Number of residents
Communities west of the barrier*	17	27520
Communities east of the barrier that are completely or partially surrounded**	54	247800
East Jerusalem	21	222500
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>497820</b>

\*Residents of these towns and villages will require permits to live in their homes, and they will be able to leave their communities only via a gate in the barrier. The figure does not include three communities that are presently situated west of the barrier but lie east of the barrier according to the currently approved route.

\*\* Residents of these towns and villages will not require permits or have to pass through a gate.

### 4. Settlements [towns where only Jewish Israelis are allowed to live]

	Number of Settlements	Number of Residents
Settlements west of the barrier	48	187840
Settlements east of the barrier	69	57330
Settlements in East Jerusalem	12	192918
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>438088</b>

Data source: Israel 's Central Bureau of Statistics, The Palestine Authority's Central Bureau of Statistics and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. All data on population updated to the end of 2005.

## 5. Gates in the Separation Barrier

The Separation Barrier has 66 gates (as of July 2008) for crossing between severed parts of the West Bank. 27 are closed, leaving only 39 to serve Palestinians.

Of the open gates, 20 are either 1) Gates for daily crossing, in which the general Palestinian population can cross from one place to another within the West Bank. Some of these gates are open daily for a consecutive period of twelve hours, others are open twice a day at fixed times, and a few are open around the clock; or 2) Agricultural gates, which are opened two or three times a day, for farmers with crops that require daily care (vegetables and greenhouses, for example) on the other side of the Barrier. To cross, farmers need to obtain a permit from the Civil Administration, which is good for a specific gate.

The remaining 19 gates are opened seasonally, such as during the olive-picking and harvest seasons, for farmers working land on the other side of the Barrier. Generally, these gates are opened two or three times a day, at fixed times and according to the permit regime mentioned above.

### Separation Barrier Gates, by Area, July 2008

Area	Open Gates	Seasonal Gates	Closed Gates	Total
Qalqilya	11	3	0	14
Salfit	0	3	3	6
Tulkarm	6	4	0	10
Jenin	2	9	0	11
Jerusalem	0	0	10	10
Ramallah	1	0	7	8
Hebron	0	0	7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>66</b>

Data Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

## THE WALL (option B)

Here is an alternative to the previous lesson if you think that the charts might overwhelm your students. This lesson relies more on maps (in the Maps Folder online or in the trunk) and whole group discussion. “Charts” refers to the tables in the option A lesson directly preceding this one. Below, the teacher script is in *italics*. **Bold** represents directions and which maps or charts to show the students. Students can write their answers on the Movement Worksheet.

**1. Explain:** *The Movement Worksheet that we just concluded was to help you understand what is happening to Palestinians in the West Bank, occupied by Israel. Israel is building a wall about 26 feet high. I’ll show you some maps and you can tell me what you notice. Write your thoughts down on the back of the Movement Worksheet. Then I’ll ask some of you to share with the class. On these maps, Israel, formed in 1948, is tan. The West Bank and Gaza, occupied by Israel in 1967, is in green.*

**Show:**

**2. Map 13 of the wall:** *What do you notice? Remember to write your thoughts down on the back of the Movement Grid. Then I’ll ask some of you to share with the class. (Students write and then discuss: the wall does not run along Green Line of West Bank.)*

*Why might this be so? (Students guess.)*

**3. Map 11 of aquifers and the wall:** *An “aquifer” is where there is water underground. What do you notice? (students write and discuss: Wall is taking land around where the aquifer is...wall’s route might be to take water...) Why would Israel want to take water? (Students write and discuss: maybe for its cities and towns and agriculture inside Israel, maybe for its towns/settlements in the West Bank.)*

*Notice where the Wall goes very far inland? Why might this be so? (Students guess, write and discuss.)*

**4. Map 12 of aquifer, wall and settlements:** *This map shows where Israeli settlements are built in the West Bank. The entire West Bank is supposed to belong to the Palestinians according to international law, but some areas are controlled by Israeli settlers, people who have moved from Israel to the Palestinian territories to build small cities and towns of their own. Some of the settlers do not agree that the West Bank belongs to the Palestinians, and settlers believe the land should belong to Israel. The Israeli government has given settlers both official and unofficial support over the years by subsidizing housing, building roads, and offering the protection of the Israeli army, even though the International Court of Justice ruled that the settlements are illegal. Now why do you think the Wall goes very far inland at some points? (Students write and discuss: the wall goes in to major Israeli settlements, to place them on the western/Israeli side of the wall.)*

**5. Chart 4 Settlements [towns where only Jewish Israelis are allowed to live]:** *In fact, of the 129 settlements that Israel has built in the West Bank, 48 of them have now been enclosed on the western side of the wall, that's 187840 of the settlers, compared to only 57330 on the eastern side (192918 more settlers are in East Jerusalem which also is being separated from the West Bank). Remember that the wall is running through the West Bank, so there are Palestinian villages and towns and farmland all through the land. How might you feel if you are a Palestinian farmer with your house on one side of the wall and your farmland blocked off from you on the other side of the wall? (Students write and then discuss.)*

**6. Chart 5:** *In some places, there are gates and farmers are still allowed onto their land. But they are only allowed to come and go at some times of the day. Here is an excerpt from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): "The Separation Barrier has 66 gates (as of July 2008) for crossing between severed parts of the West Bank. 27 are closed, leaving only 39 to serve Palestinians. Of the open gates, 20 are either 1) Gates for daily crossing, in which the general Palestinian population can cross from one place to another within the West Bank. Some of these gates are open daily for a consecutive period of twelve hours, others are open twice a day at fixed times, and a few are open around the clock; or 2) Agricultural gates, which are opened two or three times a day, for farmers with crops that require daily care (vegetables and greenhouses, for example) on the other side of the Barrier. To cross, farmers need to obtain a permit from the Civil Administration, which is good for a specific gate. The remaining 19 gates are opened seasonally, such as during the olive-picking and harvest seasons, for farmers working land on the other side of the Barrier. Generally, these gates are opened two or three times a day, at fixed times and according to the permit regime mentioned above."*

*How well do you think the gates would work for a farmer? (Students write and then discuss.)*

**7. Chart 3:** *About 27520 Palestinians are also being separated from the West Bank by having the wall put them to the west of the main West Bank. "Residents of these towns and villages will require permits to live in their homes, and they will be able to leave their communities only via a gate in the barrier. The figure does not include three communities that are presently situated west of the barrier but lie east of the barrier according to the currently approved route."*

**8. Map 16 of areas of Israeli control:** *This shows the wall, settlements, settler roads, and closed areas where Palestinians are not allowed to go. What do you notice? What percentage of the West Bank do you think is off limits to Palestinians? (Students guess: about 60 percent) How do you think they feel? What would it be like to have a country only in the green parts? how would you cross the red parts (Israeli control)? What would it be like to cross an international border on your way to and from school, work, the library, the hospital, your friend's house? (Write and then discuss.)*

**9. Disappearing Palestine maps (Map 2a.):** *The first map is of Mandate Palestine (pre-1948) and it represents 100% of Palestine. Notice that very little of the land is Jewish (the tan parts). The next map is of a UN plan that was never carried out. The third map shows what happened after 1948 when Israel was created. Notice that the West Bank and Gaza Strip (green parts) represent about 20% of Palestine. The fourth map represents the situation today. The wall, settlements, settler-only roads, and closed areas have taken another 60% of the West Bank, leaving Palestinians with very little land and very chopped-up “Swiss cheese” pieces of land on which to build an independent state. What questions or comments do you have now? (Write and then discuss.)*

**10. (Optional) Play the Al Jazeera report “Israel’s Wall Divides East Jerusalem,”** available at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYJ\\_Hdl55eM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYJ_Hdl55eM). 21 Jul 07: 4 minutes, 2 seconds long. Ask the class the following questions to facilitate discussion about the video:

- *The Israeli official who is interviewed affirms that the wall protects Israeli citizens from Palestinian attacks. How does the wall protect Israelis?*
- *The newscaster calls the wall “a barrier to peace.” Based on the interviews with the Palestinians who talk about the economic and psychological impact of the wall, how might the wall be a “barrier to peace?”*
- *If the wall is a barrier to peace, can it effectively protect anyone?*



## II. **PROMISES** by the Promises Film Project, 102 minutes, English subtitles

Show the movie *Promises*. This movie has been cited by many as the most memorable resource for them as teenagers; it made them pay attention to the conflict. You can show it at the beginning, middle, or end of your unit of study. There are so many aspects of the conflict and the cultures in this movie that it could also be a great jumping-off point for individual research projects.

Tell students that *Promises* is a documentary filmed in 1997-2000, which was between the two Intifadas (Uprisings) by the Palestinians against the Israeli occupation. As the opening lines say, it was a time of relative peace for Israelis, but the opening lines fail to mention that many Palestinians during that same time were being thrown out of their homes as settlement activity ramped up. Checkpoints, arbitrary detention, and the strangulation of the Palestinian economy deprived many families of their livelihood. Thus it was not a time of peace for Palestinians. The film has subtitles, so you should not ask students to take many notes. The movie sections are presented below with detailed notes for the teacher. Five general questions for the students are also included. Tell them the questions in advance and discuss them with students at the end. The last two questions can also be assigned as Homework/Response.

### **Problems with this film:**

- The film maker starts by characterizing the Mideast as a place of war and perpetual conflict. Actually, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dates from the 1920s when Zionist Jews began arriving in British-ruled Palestine in significant numbers with plans to displace Palestinian Arabs and create a political nation-state for Jews.
- The film does not compute settlers in E. Jerusalem when it gives numbers of settlers (the numbers are out of date anyway; tell students that there are over half a million settlers in the Occupied Territories, which include E. Jerusalem).
- Many of the people in this movie use “Arab” when they mean Palestinian, and “Jew” when they mean Israeli -- you may want to warn students about this.
- The relative poverty of the West Bank and refugee camps compared to Israel is not explained; it is actually the direct result of Israeli occupation, dedevelopment, land confiscation, and lack of funding of the Palestinian economy.
- The movie doesn't explain that Israel illegally annexed (not just occupied) E. Jerusalem after 1967.

### **Teachers' notes:**

#### **The People:**

The Twins: Yarko and Daniel (Jewish Israelis)-- live in W. Jerusalem, fear terrorists on buses

Mahmoud -- (Palestinian Muslim) lives in E. Jerusalem, says Jerusalem belongs to the Palestinians

Shlomo -- lives in W. Jerusalem, observant Jew with American Rabbi father, feels safe because there are both Arabs and Jews in the city

Sanabel -- (Palestinian) brief history of 1948, maps, 1967, Deheishe Refugee Camp, dad is journalist, in PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine), and in jail (arbitrary detention = no charge, no trial, just kept in prison), nondelivery of letters

Faraj -- (Palestinian) Intifada footage, tells of his friend Bassam who was shot dead for throwing a stone, we see Faraj a year later and he justifies throwing stones against bullets and nuclear power, lives in Deheishe Refugee Camp

Moishe -- (Jewish Israeli) settlement history, encouraged by government, Moishe is part of a religious settler family living in Beit El (near Ramallah in West Bank), says land belongs to descendants of Abraham (Jews), says that settlers are people who fight Arabs,

Raheli -- (Jewish Israeli) Moishe's sister, notice the difference in girls' roles in the family, discusses what happens on Shabbat/Sabbath, the "chair girl"

### **The Issues:**

Checkpoints-- between W. Bank & Israel, between different areas in W. Bank, need permits issued by Israeli military, humiliate Palestinians, make Israelis feel safer

Somewhere Safer-- twins' grandfather reminisces about the Holocaust and moving from Poland to Israel to become safer; he seems to be an atheist but tells the twins to decide for themselves

Al-Aqsa Mosque --in E. Jerusalem in an area holy to both Jews and Muslims, praying at the Mosque

The Western Wall -- holy to Jews, praying at the Wall, division between secular and religious Jews

The Palestinian Dance -- Sanabel in Deheishe is part of a dance troupe (Ibda'a) that celebrates culture and history and dream of Palestinian statehood; they sing that the pen and the sword are their symbols

The Jerusalem Finals -- the twins in a volleyball tournament; notice that the off-duty soldier in stands has a rifle slung around his shoulders

Faraj the Sprinter -- notice the kids in army fatigues; he cries when he comes in second; the twins say they cry too

Ashkelon Jail -- Sanabel and her family get up very early and ride on a bus to visit her father in prison, notice Santa Claus over the bed, go through checkpoint, soldiers seek

translation from Hebrew to Arabic, bus goes into Israel to Ashkelon Prison, takes about 8 hours for a 30 minute visit, no visitors other than immediate family (even though he has not been charged or convicted but is an “administrative detainee”)

Our Land -- both Israeli and Palestinian kids say that the land is theirs. They have different explanations: religion, or conqueror’s rights, or land deeds (1931, 1942), or keys to houses

This is our House -- traveling to Ras Abu- Ammar, Faraj’s family’s house inside Israel (Faraj & grandmother are snuck in by filmmakers); village is completely destroyed and erased but they find stones from their house; grandmother discusses why they left: massacres in Dir Yassin (Deir Yassin), and fear of rape; says they sought refuge in Bethlehem; Faraj says that he has the right to live without checkpoints and to return to his ancestral village; parade for refugee rights against colonialism and Zionism and Israel; Faraj says he’ll pass the key to his children

All of Jerusalem -- Jerusalem schoolteacher contrasts captivity with freedom; children draw pictures of what it feels like to live as Palestinians; all the kids weigh in on how they feel about Jerusalem and why; settlers in Jerusalem march through Muslim Quarter guarded by soldiers; celebration and provocation; kids on both sides discuss how the other side should be killed

Murdered -- Moishe tells of a terrorist shooting of his Israeli friend Ephraim and his mother; Israeli memorial day for fallen soldiers and those killed by terrorists

Hadassa Hospital -- the twins visit their babysitter in the hospital: Matan has been hit by a missile while serving in the army; they are not sure they will join the army, they don’t want to shoot people; religious Jews are exempt from the army

Burping Contest -- Shlomo and Palestinian neighbor; Shlomo says he doesn’t want to make friends, but then joins in burping contest

Why Don’t We Meet Them? -- the kids continue discussing whether they could meet and befriend kids on “the other side” (notice the range of opinion on both sides)

Invitation -- the children record why they want to meet each other and talk on the phone with each other; they discuss whether they have pizza or hummus in the camp, international soccer teams; the Israeli children come to the camp because checkpoints prevent the Palestinians from going into Israel; parents worry about the meeting

The Meeting -- (notice that only the twins visit; we can wonder why the other Israelis did not visit, but it’s not explained) they meet in Deheishe, explain areas where there were clashes, ask that the twins don’t speak Hebrew, play games, eat, teach each other martial arts, play soccer, use slingshots, learn the Dubke (traditional Palestinian dance)

Our Day Together -- then they sit down and talk about issues; Ahmed remembers his brother Bassam shot by Israelis; fear that they will forget each other when BZ, the filmmaker, leaves

Respect Will Grow -- two years later, they talk about not being able to meet again, and about the situation; movie shows babies in a hospital with both Palestinian and Israeli parents



### **III. HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT**

Give students “What’s the History?” handout on the following pages. Have students divide into groups of two or three. Assign each group a Question/Answer set to read. There are 11 Question/Answers. (The readings have been divided into five page-long readings for ease of copying). Some groups can be assigned two of the shorter ones to divide the work more equally. Each group will read their answer amongst themselves and prepare a short presentation from what they read. The presentation doesn’t need to be more than a short summary of the information in the answer section. Give each group a large piece of drawing paper for writing down key words and phrases that they don’t know. They will be expected to look up the definitions and write them on the paper as well. They should also write down any dates that appear in the text, with a short description of what occurred. When the groups present, they should hang or hold up their paper with definitions and dates for the class to refer to.

While the groups are preparing their presentations, refer to the handout “What’s the History?: Timeline” and draw a blank timeline on the board with enough space to fill-in events from the timeline on this handout. As the groups present, fill in the timeline with the dates they mention in their presentations. When all of the groups have presented, give each student a copy of a completed timeline. Copy the “Palestinian Loss of Land” map (in the Maps Folder) on the back. Review the timeline and maps as a class.

# What's The History?

## Questions and Answers from

## Understanding the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict by Phyllis Bennis

Q: Who are the Palestinians? Where do they come from? Why are they in Israel?

Palestinian Arabs are the indigenous people of Palestine, descended from those who lived under the vast Arab/Islamic Empire that dominated the region from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Palestinian cities, especially Jerusalem, were hubs of Arabic civilization, where scholars, poets, and scientists congregated. A constant influx of traders forged Jerusalem's identity as an important national center. Small indigenous Jewish communities were integral parts of the Palestinian community. They were comprised of the Jews that remained after the Romans drove thousands of Jews from the region in 70 BCE. For centuries Palestinian Jews, Christians, and Muslims coexisted in Palestine.

When Israel was created as a state in 1948, 750,000 indigenous Palestinians, whose families had lived in Palestine for hundreds of years, were forcibly expelled by the powerful militias that would soon become the army of the State of Israel. The one million or so Palestinians inside Israel today (making up just under 20% of the population of Israel) are those that remained and their descendants. Until 1966 the indigenous Palestinian population inside the country lived under military rule. Since then, they have been considered citizens, can vote and run for office. However, some rights and obligations favor Jews over non-Jews (who are mostly Palestinian) in social services, the right to own land, access to bank loans and education, military service, and more.

More than three times as many Palestinians live under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem than remain inside Israel proper. Millions more remain refugees.

Q: Who are the Israelis? Where did they come from? Why are they in Israel?

Israel defines itself as a state of and for the Jewish people, and about 80% of the population is Jewish. It is, however, a country of immigrants, and unlike the indigenous Palestinian Israelis, the vast majority of Jewish Israelis (or their ancestors) have come to Israel from all over the world in the past 120 years, mostly since 1948.

It was European and Russian Jews back in the 1880's that first began significant Jewish immigration to Palestine. They came fleeing persecution and violent attacks in their home countries. They were able to go to Palestine because the Zionist movement was mobilizing Jews to leave their countries to create a Jewish state in Palestine. At this point Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the area since 1516. During World War One, the British supported an Arab revolt against the Ottomans, promising them self-rule if they won. At the same time, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration (1917), which promised the Jewish people a homeland in Palestine. When the Ottoman Empire fell in 1918, Britain took over Palestine, allowing more Jewish immigrants to come, but ignoring the promise they made to the Arab population.

Before the Holocaust, many Jews fled from Europe to Israel, and after WWII ended, many survivors emigrated. A significant percentage of the population is made up of Russian Jews who emigrated in the 1990's after the fall of the Soviet Union. Jews have also come from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and from the surrounding Arab countries. Historically there has been significant tension within Israel between Jews of European or Russian descent, and those whose families emigrated from other areas, as

Israeli society has tended to privilege Europeans.

Israel defines itself as a state of the entire Jewish people, wherever they live. It encourages Jewish Immigration through what is known as the Law of Return, under which any Jewish person born anywhere in the world has the official right to claim immediate citizenship upon arrival in Israel. With citizenship they are granted the right to state-financed language classes, housing, job placement, medical and welfare benefits, etc.



Q: What is Zionism? Do all Jewish people support Zionism?

Zionism is a political movement that calls for the creation of a specifically Jewish state. When the movement began in the late 1880's, anti-Semitism was a powerful and growing force in Europe and Russia. Most Jews at that time believed that the best way to stop anti-Semitism was either through assimilation or through alliances with other political movements. But a small number of Jewish people believed that anti-Semitism was a permanent feature of national and world politics, and that the only way for Jews to be safe would be for them to leave their home countries and establish a Jewish state elsewhere.

Early Zionist leaders believed that a Jewish state could be established anywhere (Uganda, Turkey, and Argentina were all considered at different times); it was a thoroughly secular movement. But the founder of the modern Zionist movement, Theodore Herzl, recognized that linking Zionism to Palestine, which was the land that the Jewish people inhabited in Biblical times, would gain wider support for the movement among Jews. Many Jews opposed Zionism, seeing the call to leave their homes as reflective of the same demands being made against them by the anti-Semites. The movement gradually gained more adherents, though slowly. It was in the 1930's and 40's as German, Polish, and other European Jews frantically sought to escape Hitler and their first choice countries of refuge—Britain and the United States—denied them entry, that the call to create a Jewish state in Palestine became a more popular view among Jews. After World War II, with desperate Holocaust survivors filling displaced persons camps across Europe, Zionism became the majority position. The Zionist slogan was that Palestine was “a land without people for a people without a land.” Certainly the second part was true—the European Jews who had escaped or survived the Holocaust had lost everything—their homes, their families, their countries, their land. Turned away from the U.S. because of anti-Semitism, and encouraged to go to Palestine instead, it was not surprising that thousands flocked to join Jewish communities there. But the first part of the slogan hid the reality—for Palestine was not a land without a people. Its indigenous people had been there all along.

Q: How did Israel become a state? What are the occupied territories?

In 1947, the British turned control of Palestine over to the United Nations. That same year, the U.N. issued a Partition Plan that divided Palestine into sectors: 55% for a Jewish state, and 45% for a Palestinian Arab state, with Jerusalem to be left under international control. War broke out immediately. After the 1947-1948 war (called the War of Independence by Israelis, and *Nakba* or The Catastrophe by Palestinians) the new state of Israel was announced in June 1948. It was made up of 78% of what had formerly been Palestine. The remaining 22% was made up of the Gaza Strip (a small piece of land along the Mediterranean coast, bordering Egypt), the West Bank (along the Jordan River), and the eastern section of Jerusalem. From 1948 until the Six Day War in 1967 Gaza was controlled by Egypt; the West Bank and East Jerusalem by Jordan. In June of 1967, Israel took over these areas and has held them under military occupation since then.

Q: What does “military occupation” mean?

Military occupation means complete Israeli control over every facet of Palestinian civil and economic life. Israel has regularly closed its borders to the more than 125,000 Palestinian workers—primarily from Gaza—who rely on low-tier jobs within Israel for their still-insufficient income. Closing the borders also restricts what can go *in* to the occupied territories, meaning that Israel has full control over trade, and thus the economy. Due to the failing economy in Gaza, 70% of the population relies on food aid to cover their basic needs. However, even food aid is often turned away at the border due to Israeli-imposed closures.

Military occupation also means restricting mobility *within* the territories. Armed checkpoints, curfews that require Palestinians to stay in their homes—sometimes for days at a time—, and the destruction of roads all serve to prevent Palestinians from moving within the territories. This causes further economic shortages and creates humanitarian crises, with women giving birth at checkpoints because soldiers would not allow them to pass, and victims of settler or soldier violence dying because military officers would not allow Palestinian ambulances to move.

Palestinians are subject to the decisions of the Israeli military and have no legal recourse if they are wronged. Currently, the military is confiscating miles of Palestinian land in order to build a separation barrier twice the size of the Berlin Wall. Houses and farms that are on land claimed by the military are destroyed, and the inhabitants are made refugees. The Israeli military has also destroyed Palestinian water sources and infrastructure.

The severity of restrictive measures used by the Israeli military has changed over the years, notably escalating during and after the first intifada [Palestinian uprising] (1987-1993), and reaching an unprecedented level during the second, which began in 2000 and is ongoing.

Q: What are the first and second intifadas?

Intifada literally means, “shaking off” in Arabic, but is usually translated to English as “uprising.” The first intifada began in 1987 and was characterized by mass grassroots organizing, non-violent protest, daily commercial strikes, widespread tax resistance, and stone throwing. The Palestinians’ demands were that Israel end the occupation and allow for a Palestinian state to be established. The Israeli government responded by greatly strengthening restrictions such as border closures that sent the already weak Palestinian economy into steep decline. In 1993 the chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Yasir Arafat, and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin, signed the Oslo Accords, a peace treaty that was negotiated under the supervision of the United States government. The accords established the Palestinian Authority, which was given limited governing power in the territories. It also brought about the end of the first intifada, as the Palestinian people put their trust in the peace process.

However, the Oslo Accords did not end the occupation, in fact the occupation became harsher. More checkpoints were built, housing demolitions continued, and Israeli settlement construction within the territories nearly doubled. Border closures continued to keep Palestinian workers out of Israel, and goods out of Palestine, further damaging the Palestinian economy.

The second intifada was a response to the loss of hope Palestinians felt after seven years and no progress. It began in 2000, and initially took similar forms to the first intifada—mass protests in the streets with youth throwing stones at tanks and armored vehicles characterized the first week. But the Israeli response was far more brutal than it had been during the first intifada; the stone-throwing protesters were met with gunfire. The Israeli military began using live-fire and tank-fired weapons where tear gas and

rubber bullets would have once been used. Soon helicopter gunships and US-supplied F-16 fighter bombs became regular parts of the Israeli arsenal in the occupied territories.

In response, Palestinians changed their tactics. Small, armed Palestinian factions took over in challenging the Israeli occupation forces. Many of these attacks targeted the Israeli military apparatus, but some have inflicted civilian casualties, which is in violation of international law. The second intifada has seen a rise in the phenomenon of suicide bombings, which also have sometimes targeted the civilian population of Israel.

Q: What is the wall Israel is building in the occupied territories?

Known to Palestinians as the “Apartheid Wall,” [“apartheid” implies separate and unequal] Israeli officials claim that the huge wall being built in the western sector of the West Bank is designed to protect Israel by keeping potential attackers out. Begun in 2002, the wall, made of 24-foot-high cement blocks and including electric fences, trenches, gun emplacements, and security patrols, is planned eventually to extend the full length of the West Bank. The wall was not built to follow the Green Line (the border between Israel and the West Bank); instead it curves significantly eastward in many areas to encompass huge swaths of Palestinian land— towns, farmland, and major Palestinian water sources—on the Israeli side. According to the United Nations, in Jerusalem 55,000 Palestinians live in the area between the Green Line and the wall—an area that in some places will become a closed military zone.

Thousands of acres of Palestinian land on both sides of the wall are being seized by the Israeli military and cleared of houses and farmland. Palestinian farmers are supposed to be allowed to cross the wall to farm their land, but in many areas the wall extends for huge distances without access gates. Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations estimate that when completed and matched by the planned parallel wall on the eastern side of the West Bank, 90,000 Palestinians will have lost their land.

In December 2003, the UN General Assembly requested that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) advise them on the legality of the wall. The ICJ ruled explicitly that the wall was illegal and that Israel must stop construction and dismantle any part of the wall inside the occupied territory. It also stressed the illegality of the Israeli settlements built throughout the Palestinian territory. The ICJ also stated that other countries have their own responsibility to pressure Israel to comply with the court’s opinion by refusing to give aid or assistance in maintaining the situation caused by the construction. The U.S. government quietly criticized the wall early in its process of construction, but soon dropped the critique and agreed to pay Israel almost \$50 million to construct checkpoints and gates in the wall.

Q: Who are the settlers?

Immediately after the 1967 War in which Israel took Gaza and the West Bank from Egypt and Jordan, some extremist Israelis moved to establish Jewish colonies in the occupied territories. The first settlement was built in 1968. Israeli governments have justified construction of the settlements both for security and ideological reasons. As settler expansion increased, religious and nationalist extremists became a minority among the settlers themselves. Most moved to settlements in the occupied territories because government stipends kept mortgages low, amenities accessible, and commuting to jobs inside Israel easy because of a network of settler-only “bypass roads,” designed to connect settlements to each other and Israel without traversing Palestinian towns.

Since 1993 when the Oslo “peace process” began, the settler population has nearly doubled. More than 400,000 Israeli Jewish settlers now live in the occupied territories. Although Israeli governments have tried to distinguish between “authorized” and “unauthorized” settlements, in fact all of the settlements are in violation of international law. US governments have identified the settlements variously as “illegal,” as “obstacles to peace,” and as “unhelpful.” But they have consistently accepted Israel’s distinctions between “authorized” and “unauthorized” settlements.

Q: Does the US support Israel?

Yes. U.S. support for Israel emerges in several ways: financial, military, and diplomatic. While most Americans assume that U.S. foreign aid goes to help the poorest people in the poorest countries, in fact it is Israel (wealthier than a number of European Union Member Countries) that receives 25% of the entire U.S. foreign aid budget. Since 1976, Israel has remained the highest recipient of U.S. foreign aid in the world. The congressionally mandated aid comes to \$1.8 billion a year in military aid, \$1.2 billion in economic aid, plus another \$1 billion or so in miscellaneous grants, mostly in military supplies, from various U.S. agencies. Tax-exempt contributions to Israel by private citizens brings the total of U.S. aid to over \$5 billion annually.

Israel has access to the most advanced weapons systems in the U.S. arsenal, for purchase with U.S. taxpayer assistance. Most of the weapons Israel uses in the occupied territories, including Apache helicopter gunships, F-16 fighter bombers, wire-guided missiles, armored Caterpillar bulldozers used to demolish Palestinian houses, are all made in the US, and purchased from US manufacturers with US military funds.

Diplomatically, the US alone protects Israel in the United Nations and other international arenas and keeps it from being held accountable for its violations of international law. The US defends Israel's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and has endorsed the principle of "strategic ambiguity" in which Israel refuses to officially acknowledge its widely known and documented nuclear capacity. Its arsenal of over 200 high-density nuclear bombs remains uninspected.

Q: What do the Israelis want?

Most Jewish Israelis want to live their lives very much as they have been doing for the last decade or so, but with an end to the occupation-driven attacks that have brought such fear to ordinary Israelis. Only a minority of Israelis, according to the polls, are committed to holding on to the occupied territories, but the majority, who are willing to return the territories to the Palestinians and end the occupation, has not been able to convince Israel's successive governments to do so. Since the intifada began in 2000, many Israelis have taken up the view that Palestinian violence can be stopped by ever-increasing force, while leaving the occupation intact. Despite its failure so far, a majority still seem to accept or support that position. For most Israelis, an end to Palestinian resistance violence would be sufficient, regardless of whether the occupation remained intact.

Q: What do the Palestinians want?

Many Palestinians, those in their sixties or older, remember being expelled from their homes inside what is now Israel but what was then Palestine, in 1947 or '48. Some of them, though now growing old, still hold the keys to their homes that they kept as they fled, thinking they would be back in days or weeks. Many more remember the terror of being expelled from their homes in the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, finding minimal shelter in refugee camps that have now been their homes for over forty years. Palestinians want dignity, human rights, equality, and a state of their own.

In 1988 in an enormous, historic compromise, the Palestinian National Council, or parliament-in-exile, voted to accept a two-state solution that would return to Palestinians only the 22% of their land that had been occupied in 1967. They accepted that the other 78% would remain Israel. While some individual Palestinians and some smaller organizations still reject that compromise, for the vast majority of Palestinians

the goal is an independent state—a fully realized and truly independent, sovereign, and viable state—encompassing all of the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Palestinians also insist on the right for refugees to return to the homes from which they were expelled. The Right of Return is part of international law and Palestinians are specifically guaranteed that right by UN Resolution 194, which states that “refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so...compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return.”

## What's the History?: Timeline

pre-600s: Canaanites, Hebrews and other people live in the region now called Palestine. Early religions include paganism, Judaism, and Christianity.

600s CE -- Arab/Islamic Empire takes over the region; most inhabitants convert to Islam.

1516 -- Palestine falls under the control of the Ottoman Empire.

1880s to 1940s -- European & Russian Jews immigrate to Palestine.

1896 -- Herzl proposes idea of a Jewish state. The Zionist Movement forms in Europe (1897).

1915 -- Britain promises Arabs self-rule. (Husayn-McMahon Correspondence)

1916 -- Britain and France agree to divide up the Middle East region between themselves. (Sykes-Picot Agreement)

1917 -- Britain promises Jewish homeland. (Balfour Declaration)

1918 -- The Ottoman Empire falls, partly due to British-backed Arab revolt. Britain takes control of Palestine. European & Russian Jews immigrate in increasing numbers to Palestine.

1920s-1940s -- both Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Zionists use violence to further their causes.

Eg., In 1929, amid increased Jewish immigration and Zionist demonstrations and Palestinian fears of losing their land, more than 100 Palestinians and 100 Jews are killed by each other and by British police in Jerusalem; more than 65 Jews are killed by Palestinians in Hebron.

1936-39 -- Palestinian Revolt against Zionism and British colonial policies.

1939-45 -- Zionism gains popularity: Jews flee the Nazis and Holocaust in Europe.

1947 -- Britain turns control of Palestine over to the UN. The UN Partition Plan suggests allotting 55% of the land (some of it is desert) for a Jewish state although Jews are only about one-third of the population. Fighting begins.

1947-49 -- Jewish militias defeat Arab resistance (including armies from other Arab countries) & the state of Israel is declared. It encompasses 78% of Palestine. Over 750,000 Palestinians (3/4 of the non-Jewish population) are forced by Zionist militias to flee or forced out by news of violence taking place in other villages. For example, in the village of Deir Yassin, in April 1948, over 100 Palestinians are killed. These refugees have never been allowed to return; Israel implements laws to stop refugee return.

1956 -- Israel, Britain, France invade Egypt. They withdraw after American insistence.

1964-- Palestine Liberation Organization formed, composed of many different Palestinian political parties and armed wings.

1967 -- War between Israel, Syria, Egypt & Jordan. Israel occupies the remaining 22% of Palestine. UN Security Council Resolution 242 calls on Israel to withdraw from the territories it occupied; Israel refuses.

1967 -- 1st Jewish Israelis settle in the occupied Palestinian territories.

1973 -- Egypt attacks Israel to regain Sinai Peninsula but does not succeed

1979 -- Egypt and Israel sign peace treaty. Israel returns Sinai.

1982 -- Israel invades Lebanon. Allows and encourages huge massacre (1000-3000) of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

1987 -- 1st Palestinian Intifada/Uprising begins.

1988 -- Palestinian National Council recognizes the state of Israel as constituting 78% of historic Palestine, & accepts the remaining 22% for Palestinians.

1988 -- Hamas -- another Palestinian political party with an armed wing -- founded.

1993 -- Oslo Accords signed: Israel recognizes PLO as representing the Palestinians. Although the "Palestine Authority" is formed, it is weak with no real power; the Israeli occupation & settlement building continue.

2000 -- 2nd Palestinian Intifada/Uprising begins.

2002 -- Israel begins building 26 foot-high wall around and inside the West Bank. It is estimated that when the wall is complete, 90,000 Palestinians will have lost their land.

2004 -- The International Court of Justice rules that the wall violates International Law.

2005 -- Israel pulls soldiers and settlers out of Gaza, but more settlers move into West Bank, and Israel maintains ultimate control of Gaza (air, land, sea, water, electricity, etc. & ability to enter with army at will).

2006 -- Hamas wins the majority of seats in the Palestinian elections; US, European Union and several other countries suspend foreign aid. After an internal conflict, Hamas retains control of Gaza while the other major party, Fatah, retains control of the West Bank.

2007 -- Israel tightens its blockade on Gaza. Foreign aid returns to West Bank, but not to Gaza.

2008-09 -- Israel attacks Gaza, kills 1400 Palestinians, mostly civilians. UN reports that Israel has committed war crimes. Gaza remains completely besieged by Israel; most people live under the poverty line. Gaza remains a "humanitarian disaster."

2011 -- Hamas and Fatah make some progress towards reconciliation. Egypt lifts blockade on Gaza.



## IV. PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE CONFLICT

Give students the handout “Life and Death of a Young Peace Activist” (see following pages). Read aloud to the class the introductory paragraph and the section that gives Craig Corrie’s account. Then have students divide into groups of three to five. They can either read the rest of the handout to themselves or take turns reading out loud while the others listen and follow along. When they are finished reading, instruct them to answer the discussion questions that follow by both discussing their responses as a group and recording their own answers on the worksheet. When they have had time to do that, reconvene as a class and allow members of each group to share what they discussed. This lesson may take two days.

**Extension of this lesson:** show the section of *Occupation 101* that shows footage of Rachel and her parents. You will find that section at Minutes 1:11 - 1:16.

# The Life & Death of a Young Activist

Excerpts from *Let Me Stand Alone: The Journals of Rachel Corrie*

Born in 1979, Rachel was a writer and an artist from the start. From her childhood, through her teen years, and into college, she kept journals, wrote poems, and created art. She possessed a sharp sense of humor that was at play in every aspect of her life—in her own words she was “scattered, and deviant, and too loud.” She was also politically conscious, and as her understanding of international politics expanded during her time at the Evergreen State College, she decided she needed “to go to a place and meet people who are on the other side of the portion of my tax money that goes to fund the U.S. and other militaries.” Thus, at the age of twenty-three, Rachel ventured from her home in Olympia, Washington to Gaza, where she joined activists working in solidarity with the Palestinian people to oppose the Israeli Occupation. She and other activists stood between Palestinian municipal workers and Israeli military watchtowers, as the workers repaired damaged wells and the soldiers shot at them. The activists slept at the wells to protect them from demolition. They lived with Palestinian families whose homes were threatened with demolition, and stood between the homes and the bulldozers sent to demolish them. She studied Arabic and became close with the Palestinian people she knew and lived with. She also became close with the activists who came from all over the world to bring attention to the human rights violations that are the everyday experience of the Palestinian people. Always a prolific writer, Rachel wrote press releases for her hometown newspaper about the things she witnessed, she wrote e-mails to her family, and entries in her journal.

## Words from Craig Corrie, Rachel’s Father:

### On Rachel’s Death

“On March 16, 2003 there were two Israeli bulldozers and an armored personnel carrier operating in Hi Salaam in Rafah along the Egyptian border. Each bulldozer had two occupants: an operator and, sitting next to him, a vehicle commander. The onsite commander of the operation watched from the armored personnel carrier nearby. Late in the afternoon, one of the bulldozers headed toward the home of the Nasrallah brothers (a pharmacist and an accountant), their wives, and five young children. The older brother’s family lived on the first floor, the younger brother’s family on the second. Rachel knew the Nasrallahs, had often spent time with them, and sometimes had slept in their home.

Rachel knew the Nasrallah family was inside their home as the bulldozer approached it. At approximately 5 pm. she positioned herself between the home and the D-9. From eyewitness accounts, we know that her actions were the same as those taken by other activists in the preceding hours. Bulldozers had often come so close that the dirt they were pushing touched the activists’ feet. On one occasion a U.S. activist was rolled over into barbed wire; on another, a British activist was pinned against a wall. In both instances, the bulldozer stopped in time. But on this run, with Rachel in its path, the bulldozer did not stop. The ISM activists screamed and waved frantically, but the machine continued ahead. Witnesses state that as the D-9 pushed earth forward,

Rachel managed to climb up the mound to avoid being engulfed by it. They report that she was up high enough to see directly into the cab; but as it continued to advance, she lost her footing and was pulled under the blade. The bulldozer continued forward until its cab was over Rachel, then backed up, revealing her crushed body. Rachel was alive when her friends rushed to her. She told them, 'I think my back is broken.' But the Palestinian ambulance driver later told us there was no sign of life when he arrived. She was pronounced dead a short while later in the local hospital.

On March 17, 2003 according to U.S. Department of State press briefings, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon promised President Bush a 'thorough, credible, and transparent,' investigation into Rachel's killing. Months later, the Israeli military stated in conclusion to their investigative report that the Israel Defense Forces did not see her, that no charges would be brought, and that the case was closed. The official position of the U.S. Department of State is that the Israeli report does not reflect an investigation that was 'thorough, credible, and transparent.'"

#### On Rachel's Work:

"In her work, Rachel joined Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals from many countries—Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others—who seek to end the Israeli Occupation by nonviolent means. She consulted both with municipal water employees and Israeli peace activists to better understand the destruction of the Palestinian water supply. Danny, a reservist in the Israeli military, taught her Hebrew phrases to shout through her megaphone when she encountered bulldozer and tank operators, while Palestinians helped her to safely navigate the streets of Rafah. When she caught a flu bug, Rachel was cared for by Muslim mothers; and as she died, she was held by Alice, a Jewish activist from the UK.

On March 16, Rachel stood with seven other internationals from the United States and United Kingdom nonviolently resisting the demolition of Palestinian homes—mass clearing demolitions that the Israeli Human Rights organization B'tselem said were in most cases a flagrant breach of international humanitarian law and that Human Rights Watch reported were generally carried out in the absence of military necessity. Rachel and other activists stood in their belief that both Palestinian and Israeli families have the right to be secure in their homes, in their restaurants, and on their buses—and with the conviction that an end to the oppressive, decades-old Israeli Occupation is the best way to achieve that. They stood in their belief that the nonviolent direct action they were supporting, if effective, could make Palestinians, as well as Israelis, Americans, and the entire world, more secure."

#### On Rachel's Writing

"The world knows of Rachel from how she died, but [her family members] know her from how she lived. She was, first and last, a writer and an artist. Compelled to create, she was left only with the choice to become good at it. Rachel worked hard at her craft from an early age. When she was ten, a friend of mine asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. "I *am* a poet!" she declared. Words were sacred to Rachel, and her words have become treasures to us.

When Rachel arrived in Rafah, she entered a world of tanks, bulldozers, sniper towers, and checkpoints—a world of smashed greenhouses, crumbled homes, and a giant steel wall being constructed on the rubble near the border with Egypt. But she also entered a world of families—people resisting oppression simply by maintaining their own humanity as they struggled through the day-to-day activities of their lives under occupation. And as she entered this world, Rachel brought us with her through her phone calls and e-mail."

## Words from Rachel Corrie:

January 19, 2003

Hey Mom,

I'll call you tonight, but could you e-mail to me with anyone you know who it would be good to contact if I get in trouble—though I'm not planning on it—friends or family who would call their congresspeople, etc.—also, friends who might be interested in getting info or at least knowing that I'm going...

I'm going to give *The Olympian* your number. Please think about your language when you talk to them. For instance, if you talk about the “cycle of violence,” or “an eye for an eye,” or “no side is right,” you could be perpetuating the idea that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a balanced conflict, instead of the national liberation struggle of a largely unarmed people against the fourth largest military power in the world.

I think it's smart that you are wary of the word *terrorism*. It's important to realize that state policies that lead to deaths by malnutrition, destruction of housing, “accidental shootings,” assassinations, economic strangulation, and imprisonment without trial (“administrative detention”) are all acts of terrorism—if we define terrorism as acts of violence directed at civilians for political purposes.

The scariest thing for non-Jewish Americans in talking about Palestinian self-determination is the fear of being or sounding anti-Semitic. Reading Chomsky's book and talking to my non-Zionist Jewish friends has helped me think about this. Mostly, I just think we all have the right to be critical of government policies...any government policies...particularly government policies which we are funding.

It is important to recognize that the people of Israel are suffering and that Jewish people have a long history of oppression. I also think it is extraordinarily important to draw a firm distinction between the policies of Israel as a state, and the Jewish people. That's kind of a no-brainer, but there is very strong pressure to conflate the two. Thus, the pro-Israel lobby becomes the “Jewish Lobby,” and criticism of Israel becomes anti-Semitic. This kind of stuff I just think about all the time and my ideas evolve. I'm really new to talking about Israel-Palestine, so I don't always know the political implications of my words.

Rachel

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January 25, 2003

My introduction to curfew is gentle: a rush out into the street in the midst of our training to buy lunch before the shops close in Beit Sahour. When we enter the street to buy shawarma and falafel there is music—singing in Arabic—pouring into the street from somewhere. A hidden loudspeaker. By the time the whole group of us have food, the noise is the bleat of military jeep horns and a voice shouting through a bullhorn—the squeal of a car pulling backward down the narrow streets after it comes face to face with the first jeep—border police or IOF [Israel “Offense” Force/Israeli army]—I don't remember which. The jeep backs them down and I think they might crash—with people still in the streets and walking fast and

shops closing and the voice in the jeep yelling.

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*January 27, 2003*

Travel to Rafah. Pass soldiers at bus stations—bombed market in Gaza City. Jehan greets cab. Children grab my butt, throw garbage at my head, scream, “What’s your name?” Sleep in tent. Gunshot through tent. Start smoking.

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*February 7, 2003*

Hi friends and family, and others,

I have been in Palestine for two weeks and one hour now, and I still have very few words to describe what I see. It is most difficult for me to think about what’s going on here when I sit down to write back to the United States. Something about the virtual portal into luxury. I don’t know if many of the children here have ever existed without tank-shell holes in their walls and the towers of an occupying army surveying them constantly from the near horizons. I think, although I’m not entirely sure, that even the smallest of these children understand that life is not like this everywhere. An eight-year-old was shot and killed by an Israeli tank two days before I got here, and many of the children murmur his name to me - Ali - or point at the posters of him on the walls.

No amount of reading, attendance at conferences, documentary viewing and word of mouth could have prepared me for the reality of the situation here. You just can’t imagine it unless you see it - and even then you are always well aware that your experience of it is not at all the reality: what with the difficulties the Israeli army would face if they shot an unarmed US citizen, and with the fact that I have money to buy water when the army destroys wells, and the fact, of course, that I have the option of leaving. Nobody in my family has been shot, driving in their car, by a rocket launcher from a tower at the end of a major street in my hometown. I have a home. I am allowed to go see the ocean. When I leave for school or work I can be relatively certain that there will not be a heavily armed soldier waiting halfway between Mud Bay and downtown Olympia at a checkpoint with the power to decide whether I can go about my business, and whether I can get home again when I’m done.

Today, as I walked on top of the rubble where homes once stood, Egyptian soldiers called to me from the other side of the border, “Go! Go!” because a tank was coming. And then waving and “What’s your name?”. Something disturbing about this friendly curiosity. It reminded me of how much, to some degree, we are all kids curious about other kids. Egyptian kids shouting at strange women wandering into the path of tanks. Palestinian kids shot from the tanks when they peek out from behind walls to see what’s going on. International kids standing in front of tanks with banners. Israeli kids in the tanks anonymously - occasionally shouting and also occasionally waving - many forced to be here, many just aggressive - shooting into the houses as we wander away.

My love to everyone. My love to my mom. My love to smooch. My love to fg and barnhair and sesamees and Lincoln School. My love to Olympia.

Rachel

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*February 14, 2003*

**PRESS REPORT/ARTICLE:  
THE SITUATION IN RAFAH**

Rafah is a city and a refugee camp of about 140,000 people in the southern Gaza strip immediately adjacent to the Egyptian border. Currently, the Israeli Military (IDF) is constructing a wall approximately ten meters high paralleling the border.

The Rafah Popular Refugee Committee estimates that over six hundred houses have been destroyed on the Rafah side of the wall. Seventy-nine houses were destroyed in Rafah in January alone, according to the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) press release Tuesday. UNRWA Commissioner General Peter Hansen urged the international community not to ignore the situation in the West Bank and Gaza as focus intensifies on Iraq.

Internationals engaged in human rights work in Rafah report daily demolitions of civilian homes and "ceaseless shelling" from tanks stationed along the outskirts of Rafah. Palestinians living on the "front line"—those homes immediately facing the now-open area where other homes once stood—refer to the shelling and larger bomb blasts as "music."

An international from the United States pointed out that the children here rarely have direct contact with the outside world. "They have never seen Israelis except inside of tanks and sniper towers."

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*February 20 2003*

Mama,

Now the Israeli army has actually dug up the road to Gaza, and both of the major checkpoints are closed. This means that Palestinians who want to go and register for their next quarter at university can't. People can't get to their jobs and those who are trapped on the other side can't get home; and internationals, who have a meeting tomorrow in the West Bank, won't make it. We could probably make it through if we made serious use of our international white person privilege, but that would also mean some risk of arrest and deportation, even though none of us has done anything illegal. The Gaza Strip is divided in thirds now. There is some talk about the "reoccupation of Gaza", but I seriously doubt this will happen, because I think it would be a geopolitically stupid move for Israel right now. I think the more likely thing is an increase in smaller below-the-international-outcry-radar incursions and possibly the oft-hinted "population transfer".

I am staying put in Rafah for now, no plans to head north. I still feel like I'm relatively safe and think that my most likely risk in case of a larger-scale incursion is arrest. A move to reoccupy Gaza would generate a much larger outcry than Sharon's assassination-during-peace-negotiations/land grab strategy, which is working very well now to create settlements all over, slowly but surely eliminating any meaningful possibility for Palestinian self-determination. Know that I have a lot of very nice Palestinians looking after me. I have a small flu bug, and got some very nice lemony drinks to cure me. Also, the woman who keeps the key for the well where we still sleep keeps asking me about you. She doesn't speak a bit of English, but she asks about my mom pretty frequently - wants to make sure I'm calling you.

Love to you and Dad and Sarah and Chris and everybody.

Rachel

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*February 27, 2003*

(To her mother)

Love you. Really miss you. I have bad nightmares about tanks and bulldozers outside our house and you and me inside. Sometimes the adrenaline acts as an anesthetic for weeks and then in the evening or at night it just hits me again - a little bit of the reality of the situation. I am really scared for the people here. Yesterday, I watched a father lead

his two tiny children, holding his hands, out into the sight of tanks and a sniper tower and bulldozers and Jeeps because he thought his house was going to be exploded. Jenny and I stayed in the house with several women and two small babies. It was our mistake in translation that caused him to think it was his house that was being exploded. In fact, the Israeli army was in the process of detonating an explosive in the ground nearby - one that appears to have been planted by Palestinian resistance.

This is in the area where Sunday about 150 men were rounded up and contained outside the settlement with gunfire over their heads and around them, while tanks and bulldozers destroyed 25 greenhouses - the livelihoods for 300 people. The explosive was right in front of the greenhouses - right in the point of entry for tanks that might come back again. I was terrified to think that this man felt it was less of a risk to walk out in view of the tanks with his kids than to stay in his house. I was really scared that they were all going to be shot and I tried to stand between them and the tank. This happens every day, but just this father walking out with his two little kids just looking very sad, just happened to get my attention more at this particular moment, probably because I felt it was our translation problems that made him leave.

I thought a lot about what you said on the phone about Palestinian violence not helping the situation. Sixty thousand workers from Rafah worked in Israel two years ago. Now only 600 can go to Israel for jobs. Of these 600, many have moved, because the three checkpoints between here and Ashkelon (the closest city in Israel) make what used to be a 40-minute drive, now a 12-hour or impassible journey. In addition, what Rafah identified in 1999 as sources of economic growth are all completely destroyed - the Gaza international airport (runways demolished, totally closed); the border for trade with Egypt (now with a giant Israeli sniper tower in the middle of the crossing); access to the ocean (completely cut off in the last two years by a checkpoint and the Gush Katif settlement). The count of homes destroyed in Rafah since the beginning of this intifada is up around 600, by and large people with no connection to the resistance but who happen to live along the border. I think it is maybe official now that Rafah is the poorest place in the world. There used to be a middle class here - recently. We also get reports that in the past, Gazan flower shipments to Europe were delayed for two weeks at the Erez crossing for security inspections. You can imagine the value of two-week-old cut flowers in the European market, so that market dried up. And then the bulldozers come and take out people's vegetable farms and gardens. What is left for people? Tell me if you can think of anything. I can't.

So when someone says that any act of Palestinian violence justifies Israel's actions—not only do I question that logic in light of international law, which recognizes the right of people to legitimate armed struggle in defense of their land and their families; not only do I question that logic in light of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits collective punishment, prohibits the expropriation of water resources and the destruction of civilian infrastructure such as farms, I also question that logic on the basis of common sense.

If any of us had our lives and welfare completely strangled, lived with children in a shrinking place where we knew, because of previous experience, that soldiers and tanks and bulldozers could come for us at any moment and destroy all the greenhouses that we had been cultivating for however long, and did this while some of us were beaten and held captive with 149 other people for several hours - do you think we might try to use somewhat violent means to protect whatever fragments remained? I think about this especially when I see orchards and greenhouses and fruit trees destroyed - just years of care and cultivation. I think about you and how long it takes to make things grow and what a labour of love it is. I really think, in a similar situation, most people would defend themselves as best they could. I think Uncle Craig would. I think probably Grandma would. I think I would.

You asked me about non-violent resistance and I mentioned the first Intifada. Much of the leadership of more moderate resistance during the first Intifada has been

assassinated, deported, or held indefinitely. But anyway, yes, there was Gandhian nonviolent resistance during the first Intifada. And, of course, there still is staunch nonviolent resistance. The vast majority of Palestinians right now, as far as I can tell, are engaging in Gandhian nonviolent resistance. Who do you think I'm staying with, in houses that are going to be demolished amid gunfire, which often happens with absolutely no response whatsoever from Kalashnikovs—resistance weapons? Who do you think are staffing the human rights centers? Who do you think are still trying to maintain their farms every day directly in sight of sniper towers? Who do you think engage in protest with us? What do you think this Palestinian-led movement is that I joined—that engages in nonviolent direct action? Who do you think these families are that I tell you about, who won't take any money from us even though they are very, very poor—and who say to us, “We are not a hotel. We help you because we think maybe you will go and tell people in your country that you lived with Muslims. We think they will know that we are good people. We are quiet people. We just want peace”? Do you think I am hanging out with Hamas fighters? These people are being shot at every day—that, on top of the complete strangulation I described above—and they continue to go about their business as best they can in the sights of machine guns and rocket launchers. Isn't that basically the epitome of nonviolent resistance—doing what you need to do even though you are shot at?

When that explosive detonated yesterday it broke all the windows in the family's house. I was in the process of being served tea and playing with the two small babies. I'm having a hard time right now. Just feel sick to my stomach a lot from being doted on all the time, very sweetly, by people who are facing doom. I know that from the United States, it all sounds like hyperbole. Honestly, a lot of the time the sheer kindness of the people here, coupled with the overwhelming evidence of the willful destruction of their lives, makes it seem unreal to me. I really can't believe that something like this can happen in the world without a bigger outcry about it. It really hurts me, again, like it has hurt me in the past, to witness how awful we can allow the world to be. I felt after talking to you that maybe you didn't completely believe me. I think it's actually good if you don't, because I do believe pretty much above all else in the importance of independent critical thinking. And I also realize that with you I'm much less careful than usual about trying to source every assertion that I make. A lot of the reason for that is I know that you actually do go and do your own research. But it makes me worry about the job I'm doing. All of the situations that I tried to enumerate above - and a lot of other things - constitute a somewhat gradual - often hidden, but nevertheless massive - removal and destruction of the ability of a particular group of people to survive. This is what I am seeing here.

Anyway, I'm rambling. Just want to write to my Mom and tell her that and I'm really scared, and questioning my fundamental belief in the goodness of human nature. This has to stop. I think it is a good idea for us all to drop everything and devote our lives to making this stop. I don't think it's an extremist thing to do anymore. I still really want to dance around to Pat Benatar and have boyfriends and make comics for my coworkers. But I also want this to stop. Disbelief and horror is what I feel. Disappointment. I am disappointed that this is the base reality of our world and that we, in fact, participate in it. More big explosions somewhere in the distance outside.

When I come back from Palestine, I probably will have nightmares and constantly feel guilty for not being here, but I can channel that into more work. Coming here is one of the better things I've ever done. So when I sound crazy, or if the Israeli military should break with their racist tendency not to injure white people, please pin the reason squarely on the fact that I am in the midst of a genocide which I am also indirectly supporting, and for which my government is largely responsible.

I love you and Dad. Sorry for the diatribe. OK, some strange men next to me just gave me some peas, so I need to eat and thank them.

Rachel

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*February 28, 2003*

(To her mother)

Thanks, Mom, for your response to my email. It really helps me to get word from you, and from other people who care about me.

After I wrote to you I went incommunicado from the affinity group for about 10 hours which I spent with a family on the front line in Hi Salam - who fixed me dinner - and have cable TV. The two front rooms of their house are unusable because gunshots have been fired through the walls, so the whole family - three kids and two parents - sleep in the parent's bedroom. I sleep on the floor next to the youngest daughter, Iman, and we all shared blankets. I helped the son with his English homework a little, and we all watched *Pet Semetary*, which is a horrifying movie. I think they all thought it was pretty funny how much trouble I had watching it. Friday is the holiday, and when I woke up they were watching *Gummy Bears* dubbed into Arabic. So I ate breakfast with them and sat there for a while and just enjoyed being in this big puddle of blankets with this family watching what for me seemed like Saturday morning cartoons. Then I walked some way to B'razil, which is where Nidal and Mansur and Grandmother and Rafat and all the rest of the big family that has really wholeheartedly adopted me live. (The other day, by the way, Grandmother gave me a pantomimed lecture in Arabic that involved a lot of blowing and pointing to her black shawl. I got Nidal to tell her that my mother would appreciate knowing that someone here was giving me a lecture about smoking turning my lungs black.) I met their sister-in-law, who is visiting from Nusserat camp, and played with her small baby.

Nidal's English gets better every day. He's the one who calls me, "My sister". He started teaching Grandmother how to say, "Hello. How are you?" In English. You can always hear the tanks and bulldozers passing by, but all of these people are genuinely cheerful with each other, and with me. When I am with Palestinian friends I tend to be somewhat less horrified than when I am trying to act in a role of human rights observer, documenter, or direct-action resister. They are a good example of how to be in it for the long haul. I know that the situation gets to them - and may ultimately get them - on all kinds of levels, but I am nevertheless amazed at their strength in being able to defend such a large degree of their humanity - laughter, generosity, family-time - against the incredible horror occurring in their lives and against the constant presence of death. I felt much better after this morning. I spent a lot of time writing about the disappointment of discovering, somewhat first-hand, the degree of evil of which we are still capable. I should at least mention that I am also discovering a degree of strength and of basic ability for humans to remain human in the direst of circumstances - which I also haven't seen before. I think the word is dignity. I wish you could meet these people. Maybe, hopefully, someday you will.

# The Life & Death of a Young Activist

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read these questions with your group and discuss possible answers. Write your own answers on the back of this page, or on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1) In the first e-mail, why does Rachel say it is important to “draw a firm distinction between the policies of Israel as a state, and the Jewish people”?
- 2) In the section “On Rachel’s Work,” Craig Corrie talks about some of the different kinds of people Rachel came in contact with in her work in Gaza. Who are some of the different people that helped and worked with her? Does this information support the idea that the two sides to this conflict are the Israeli Side and the Palestinian Side, and that everyone involved belongs only on one side or the other? Why or why not?
- 3) In the press release, Rachel writes, “the [Palestinian] children rarely have direct contact with the outside world. ‘They have never seen Israelis except inside of tanks and sniper towers.’” What impression do you think these children have of Israelis? What might someday be the outcome of these children’s opinions? What are some actions Israel could take to make Palestinian children feel differently about Israelis?
- 4) What are some examples in Rachel’s writing of the Gazan economy suffering because of the occupation? (Remember: Things that affect the economy include things that directly affect the exchange of products and services, but also things that indirectly affect these exchanges, such as access to jobs and education, etc.)
- 5) Do you think the Palestinians who experience the effects of the occupation are more or less likely to feel hostility towards Israel?
- 6) In light of your answer to number 5, do you think that checkpoints, house, road, and well demolitions, border closures, the separation wall, and other characteristics of the occupation make Israel more or less safe from violent attacks?
- 7) What do you think would make Israelis and Palestinians safer?
- 8) How does learning about Rachel Corrie make you feel? Does her story affect your ideas about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

## V. Nonviolence in Palestine (2-5 day lesson)

This lesson makes connections between the nonviolent resistance used by Palestinians to challenge occupation, and nonviolent strategies used in other struggles that students may have heard of.

### Day 1

I. a. Write “nonviolent civil disobedience” on the board. Ask if students know anything about the phrase. Write their ideas on the board. Hopefully, this will elicit words like: civil rights, desegregation, Martin Luther King, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, Ruby Bridges, Thoreau, tax resistance, Boston tea party, taxation without representation, boycott, marches, sit-ins, lunch counters, freedom rides, salt march, anti-apartheid.... Take the time to discuss or define each of these words briefly so that students begin to see connections.

b. Try to come up with a class definition of nonviolent civil disobedience.

c. Compare the class definition with the following definition of Gandhi’s philosophy (from the Harper’s article reproduced below). Keep these definitions visible (on the board) for Day 2 and refer to them as you discuss Palestinian nonviolence:

**“Fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these...[Action meaning] deliberately breaking an immoral law; en masse, with an eye to the symbolic effect of disobedience: “You assist an evil system most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees,” said Gandhi. The goal was never merely to undermine the system but also, crucially, to change the hearts and minds of one’s opponents--in effect, to humanize them. To this end, one must never meet violence with violence.”**

d. **Have students** read one of two articles, or both if you have time:

di. In class, students read all or part of the article “ Salt March to the Dead Sea: Gandhi’s Palestinian Reincarnation” by David Shulman. *Harper’s Magazine*/ June 2011. p. 76-79. (Reproduced below.) The article is a review of a book about Gandhi. The article is written by an Israeli Jewish professor and activist. He connects Gandhi’s actions to those of Palestinians and Israelis, three in particular. If you choose to have students read only half the article, begin after the \*\*\* where the article reads: “What would a Palestinian or an Israeli Gandhi look like? As it happens, there are several very good candidates. I know two or three of them well....”

dii. Alternatively or in addition as homework, have students read the other article *Palestinian Nonviolent Movement Continues Despite Crackdown* by an Israeli and a Palestinian activist (Reproduced below).

Have the students read with these questions in mind:

**1. What ideas, feelings, and questions does this article raise for you?**

**2. How are the the Palestinians and Israelis following a philosophy of nonviolence?**

After reading, have students in small groups discuss the answers to the questions above. Then elicit answers from the groups in a whole-class discussion. Students can then write a personal response to the article.

## Day 2

**II. Option A** (lots of time -- three or more class periods). Student groups can each research one of the Palestinian nonviolent actions below and compare it to other struggles that they know about. For instance, a group could learn more about the Freedom Flotillas to Gaza to break the Israeli blockade and compare them to the Freedom Rides to desegregate buses in the southern United States (if you want to inform your students more about the American Freedom Riders, you can show parts of <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRlZFk8Lc3Y> (30 min.) “Freedom Riders: PBS 2011”). Student groups can then share what they found with the rest of the class. (For more suggestions and lessons, look also in the Additional Lessons folder).

- Freedom Flotillas to Gaza (see the vimeos <http://vimeo.com/25105104> and <http://vimeo.com/24046397>. The latter is a comprehensive 17-minute explanation of the blockade on Gaza by Israel and the flotillas that challenge it. The director is Adam Shapiro, an American Jewish filmmaker. The narrator is Huwaida Arraf, a Palestinian-American and Israeli activist, lawyer, and co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement.)
- Bil’in and Budrus’ struggle against the Wall and land confiscation (see the movie *Budrus*, 82 minutes)
- Beit Sahur’s tax resistance during the First Intifada (alternate spelling: Bayt Sahur)
- Challenging house demolition, curfews, closures, and segregated roads (see Rachel Corrie, Tom Hurndall, International Solidarity Movement, Rabbis for Human Rights)
- Strikes and marches in 1930s Palestine against the British (see other lessons in this trunk, especially in the Cultural Interactions CBA, with more information about this nonviolent movement.)
- Boycott, divestment, and sanctions movement in Palestine, including the Palestinian Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (see the Pixies’ cancellation of their concert in Israel). The most comprehensive lesson on BDS is in the Causes of Conflict CBA. There is also a discussion of the academic and cultural boycott in the Cultural Interactions CBA.

**II. Option B** (less time -- two more class periods). If you have two more class periods to devote to this lesson, you can show the 82 minute film *Budrus* (included in the trunk) and discuss. See discussion questions below.

**II. Option C** (least time -- just this one class period). If you do not have time for a research project and just have one more day to devote to this lesson, you can show the short vimeo on the Freedom Flotillas (just show the 17-minute one at <http://vimeo.com/24046397>) and discuss. Your students can learn more about the American Freedom Riders, if you show parts of <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRlZFk8Lc3Y> (30 min.) “Freedom Riders: PBS 2011”. (This is part I)

With either *Budrus* or the Freedom Flotilla films, ask the students to watch the films with the following questions in mind:

1. How did you feel when watching this film?
2. What is the injustice?
3. What are the actions that people in the film are taking?
4. How do they think that these actions will right the injustice?
5. What do you think? How do these actions connect to your understanding of nonviolent civil disobedience?
6. What connections can you make between the actions in this film and other nonviolent struggles you know about?

III. As the **culmination** of this lesson, students can create a personal response to any aspect of the discussions about nonviolence. They can create an essay, story, song, poem, rap, poster, or artwork (etc.). They can focus on what was analyzed in class or you can encourage them to make their creation about an issue they feel strongly about. For instance, if they would like to see healthier food in their cafeteria, or an end to ageism in stores, what kind of nonviolent actions could they take to bring about that change? How could their art/song/poem (etc.) inform about the issue and start a nonviolent campaign?

# SALT MARCH TO THE DEAD SEA

## Gandhi's Palestinian reincarnation

By David Shulman

Discussed in this essay:

*Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*, by Joseph Lelyveld.  
Knopf. 448 pages. \$28.95.

Sixty-three years have passed since Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma or “Great Soul” of Joseph Lelyveld’s remarkable new biography, was assassinated by a fanatic Hindu nationalist, at that time a relatively marginal political persuasion in India. Things have changed. My friends in Gujarat, Gandhi’s home state and the site of his famous Sabar-mati Ashram in Ahmedabad—a state ruled for years now by extreme Hindu nationalists—sometimes say to me, “Gandhi and all he stood for are dead in Gujarat.” Perhaps, but I believe they have been reborn in Palestine. I want to explore this perhaps unexpected linkage in a concrete and personal way.

It’s not so easy to write something original about Gandhi; whole libraries have been devoted to this great eccentric, his quirks and passions, his uncanny ability to move millions, and his no less riveting failures. Yet Lelyveld does have a new perspective to offer, one that emerges from his long experience as the *New York Times* correspondent in South Africa and in India. He describes beautifully, better than anyone before him, the young Gandhi’s twenty-one-year-long incubation in the South Africa of Smuts and the Boer War, a newly consolidated, resolutely racist country that

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served as a living laboratory for Gandhi’s first political experiments. By the end of that period, in the great campaign of 1913 to improve the lot of Indian immigrants, in particular the indentured workers in the coal mines and on the sugar estates—the first modern mass movement of nonviolent civil disobedience—the main principles of Gandhi’s philosophy were in place. Nehru would summarize them succinctly: “Fearlessness and truth, and action allied to these.” “Action” meant deliberately breaking an immoral law, en masse, with an eye to the symbolic effect of disobedience: “You assist an evil system most effectively by obeying its orders and decrees,” said Gandhi.

The goal was never merely to undermine the system but also, crucially, to change the hearts and minds of one’s opponents—in effect, to humanize them. To this end, one must never meet violence with violence.

Like so many others before him, Lelyveld finds Gandhi both compelling and maddeningly elusive, on many levels. He is less interested, I think, in Gandhi’s well-known ascetic practices, and the earnest, often tiresome preachiness that accompanied them, than in the man’s sheer, cussed persistence in the face of overwhelming obstacles, his “moral stubbornness.” He was in it for the long haul. When a disciple in the 1925 campaign against untouchability in Kerala, in the far south, asked him how long the struggle would last, Gandhi answered: “A few days or forever.” Many years later, he was asked what his formula for solving the same problem was, and answered: “Silent plodding.” It is Gandhi’s consistent, Sisyphean attempt to channel recalcitrant self-doubt and varieties of spiritual hunger—his and others’—into large-scale practical social and political action that Lelyveld correctly characterizes, at the end of his book, as “distinctively Gandhian.”

We should resist the temptation to romanticize the man. Perhaps never has a modern politician lent himself so readily (and, I think, so deliberately) to a romantic vision. Following the release of Richard Attenborough’s *Gandhi* (1982), a cartoon in one of the Indian papers showed two Indian gentlemen coming out of the cinema; one remarks, “Quite a good film,” to which the second replies, “Yes, and I hear it’s based on a true story.” Lelyveld aptly describes Gandhi as a “master political alchemist and dramaturge.” He knew very well how to manipulate and to coerce; and he was not above bargaining with his opponents over grimy details of very concrete political deals and maneuvers after fasting for seven days—almost to the point of death—“much like a Bania,” says Lelyveld, referring to Gandhi’s merchant caste, “haggling over the price of a bolt of cloth.”

Demonstrators dressed as Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela take part in a protest by Palestinians and foreign activists against Israel’s controversial separation barrier in Bil’in, March 5, 2010 © Abbas Momani/AFP/Getty Images

*Great Soul* offers a mostly sympathetic portrait of the man. The book has, however, been widely attacked in India, even banned in Gujarat, mostly because Lelyveld dares to write—actually in a remarkably balanced and careful way—about “the most intimate, also ambiguous relationship of [Gandhi’s] lifetime”: with the German- Jewish architect Hermann Kallenbach, during Gandhi’s South African period. (Kallenbach was an ardent Zionist whose ashes were buried at Kibbutz Degania, the first kibbutz in Israel.) Lelyveld does not, in fact, claim that these two men had an overt homosexual bond; his Indian critics have, as usual, not bothered to read the book. But there is a marked irony in the hysterical reaction this part of the biography has aroused in India. As the cultural historian and social psychologist Ashis Nandy has argued, the whole point of Gandhi’s strategy against his powerful and hardened opponents lay in his refusal to accept the classic, starkly male-female dichotomy—either to respond to violence (in this case, the British Raj) with more violence (armed insurrection) or to submit passively. Gandhi sought and found a creative third way, that of *satyagraha* (“holding fast to truth,” a Sanskrit term suggesting truth as moral engagement), which Nandy thinks of as symbolically “androgynous,” an integrated and humane male-female mode that is entirely active, a form of uncompromising resistance, and yet refuses to inflict physical harm of any kind on the enemy. (If bringing your enemy to renounce his violent prejudices counts as inflicting mental harm on him, then that, in Gandhian-style resistance, is allowed.)

Often, as one reads the stories of emblematic moments, one gets the impression that the Great Soul was fiercely engaged in an internal battle with himself (and his idealized image of himself), which resonated so strongly with what others, outside him, saw or wanted to see. Perhaps his greatness lies precisely here, in that endless inner struggle. I once, many years ago, heard a telling story from someone who had himself heard Gandhi give a speech in 1931, at the Raleigh Club in Oxford, where he was introduced as the great apostle of nonviolence and uncompromising truth. Gandhi, clad in his loincloth, got up and said, “I thank you for this flattering introduction, but I have to tell you that all my life I have been interested in one thing only—naked power.” There is, I suppose, no longer any way to check the fidelity of this report, but to my ears it rings true.

Is the Gandhian practice of nonviolent civil disobedience universally applicable in situations of systemic oppression? As always when universals are at stake, it’s not so easy to say. Gandhi himself certainly thought his method was the only morally responsible one for such situations, wherever they might arise—and he has been roundly criticized for this view. Gandhi fatuously suggested nonviolent protest as the method of choice for European Jews facing genocide, which drew an anguished response from Martin Buber. Some of my Indian friends still, unaccountably, think Gandhi was right. I myself think the method worked best in Alabama and Mississippi in the 1950s and ’60s. It is something of a platitude, by now, to remark that Gandhi’s great good luck was in having the British as his adversaries, and that one aspect of his genius lay in finding a way to speak to that part of the British soul that was, for its own historical reasons, already sympathetic to the values that Gandhi embodied in his struggle. He would have had little or no effect on the Nazis or Stalinists or the Khmer

Rouge or the Chinese in Tibet; it remains to be seen what widespread Gandhian resistance would do to Israelis.

It's not even clear that Gandhi was key to the ending of the British Raj in 1947; some modern historians argue that the British Empire was in any case an anachronism by the 1940s, and that the decision to leave India, when it came, had little to do with the mass protests that Gandhi masterminded in the 1930s and during the war. I'm not sure, however, that this really matters. As Jyotirmaya Sharma, a prominent scholar of modern Indian thought, has said, Gandhi's legacy in India is not so much a matter of practical results (they are few and far between); the critical thing is that Gandhian ideals remain alive, however attenuated or even distorted in the public space, as an always accessible, powerful point of cultural reference. I think this reading is sober, just, and persuasive.

There is rather a lot to be said about the specificity of the Indian context to Gandhi's politics—about the tremendous power, and of course love, that fell to the lot of this man, who was trained in England, who thought and wrote mostly in English rather than in his native Gujarati, who was an intellectual disciple of Ruskin and Tolstoy, and who assumed, both externally and existentially, the guise of a Hindu holy man and ascetic. To state the matter bluntly: in late-colonial India, it worked wonders (in a way). A more positive formulation would stress that Gandhi miraculously brought out the best in millions of Indians, who were motivated to something like self-sacrifice in the name of the common good by the way he lived and spoke. From my vantage point, in Israel-Palestine, the most striking aspect of the Gandhian model is the transition he effected, on a mass scale, from the default human mode of passivity and apathy into agency and a readiness to take risks. No one has so far succeeded in galvanizing Israelis to do the right thing—to end the occupation of the Palestinian territories, or, on a smaller scale, to protest even a few of the appalling daily injustices and humiliations, and above all the endless theft of land, that are part and parcel of this occupation. (continued on next page)



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What would a Palestinian or an Israeli Gandhi look like? As it happens, there are several very good candidates. I know two or three of them well. One thing I can say in advance: none of them are, by any stretch of the imagination, saintly, nor need they be. They are decent, ordinary, and above all courageous human beings who are capable, under the extreme circumstances in which we live, of extraordinary deeds.

Take Abdallah Abu Rahmah, from the village of Bil'in, who was released from the Israeli military prison at Ofer, after fifteen months' detention, on March 14. He is a central figure in the ongoing campaign by the village against the Israeli government's appropriation of a large portion of its lands in the course of building the huge concrete separation barrier or wall, situated in this case, as in many others, on Palestinian land far to the east of the Green Line, the old international border. Even the Israeli Supreme Court eventually acknowledged that the trajectory of the barrier was illegal and that some of the lands should be restored to the village. You can read the court's decision online; what is only suggested in that rather inadequate document, however, is the simple truth that the barrier was charted there to provide space for the huge Israeli settlement of Modi'in Ilit—which sits on Bil'in's lands—to expand.

Bil'in has become the stuff of myth in Palestine. This small village forged a grassroots nonviolent protest that has been sustained for more than six years with remarkable tenacity, despite continuing casualties—two killed and hundreds wounded by the Israeli army. (The weekly demonstrations, which start off with a peaceful march to the wall, inevitably deteriorate into violent clashes between the soldiers, who fire tear gas, rubber bullets, and sometimes live ammunition at the protesters, and young village toughs throwing rocks.) Abdallah is thirty-nine years old, a teacher, and a father of three young children. He has read Gandhi and Mandela. He is soft-spoken, charismatic. I first met him in 2005 at one of the Bil'in demonstrations; I was arrested and brought to a holding area outside the village, where he was waiting, unafraid, initially isolated from the Israeli activists. The senior officer in charge had arrested him for giving an interview to an Egyptian television crew while standing in his own front yard—thereby, so said the soldiers, violating a curfew they had imposed.

You can see why the army is afraid of him; what Israel is doing in Bil'in, as in most places in the Palestinian territories, is indefensible, and Abdallah is perfectly capable of explaining why to the world at large. When the army arrested him in December 2009, they took the trouble to fabricate a case against him that included the Kafkaesque charge of possessing weapons: Abdallah had contributed to an exhibition of spent tear-gas canisters and empty shell casings, fashioned into a large symbol of peace, in the village square. In due course the military court found him guilty of “incitement and organizing illegal marches,” which, said the judge, were “not spontaneous”—apparently a grave crime.

Here is how Abdallah replied to his accusers (writing from prison, December 9, 2010):

*I have been accused of inciting violence: this charge is puzzling. If the checkpoints, closures, ongoing land theft, wall and settlements, night raids into our homes, and violent oppression of our protests do not incite violence, what does? Despite [all the above], we have chosen another way. We have chosen to protest*

*nonviolently together with Israeli and International supporters. We have chosen to carry a message of hope and real partnership between Palestinians and Israelis in the face of oppression and injustice. It is this message that the Occupation is attempting to crush through its various institutions including the military courts.*

Abdallah Abu Rahmah is no longer a local figure. Amnesty International has named him a “prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and assembly.” He is now back on the front line; as with Gandhi, prison only strengthened his clarity and his determination. (Why is it that oppressive regimes always fail to recognize this simple truth?) I can tell you from my own experience: there is something about nonviolent resistance that does away with fear. Even children feel it. Abdallah:

*My eldest daughter Luma was nine years old when I was arrested. She is now ten. After my arrest she began going to the Friday demonstrations in our village. I worry for my little girl. I wish that she could enjoy her childhood like other children, that she could be studying and playing with her friends. The adults try to look after her but [she insists on going. She says,] “Baba, they cannot stop us.*

Then there is Ali Abu Awwad, who runs the Palestinian Movement for Non-Violent Resistance from his offices in Bethlehem and Beit Jala, south of Jerusalem. He read Gandhi’s writings in what he calls “my Palestinian university”—an Israeli prison, where he spent four years in the early 1990s. His mother, Fatima Um Yusuf, a prominent Palestinian political activist, was also jailed during the First Intifada, in her case for five years. The family were refugees in 1948 from the large village of Qubeibeh. Ali has lived what might be called, in one sense, a perfectly typical Palestinian life under the occupation. In October 2000, he was shot in the knee by an Israeli settler spraying bullets at Palestinians outside the small town of Halhul. A month later, while recuperating in Saudi Arabia, Ali got the news that his elder brother, Yusuf, had been murdered by an Israeli soldier at the entrance to the village where the family lives. As Ali told me the story, Yusuf got out of his car to stop young boys in the village from throwing stones, and indeed the boys listened to him; the soldier disliked the display of authority and shot Yusuf in cold blood. The soldier was not arrested.

As Ali told me:

*Yusuf left a son and daughter and this huge package of pain. Nothing is worth such a price—not land, not identity, nothing. You have to understand. I’d give up everything just to be able to talk again, for one minute, with my brother. Everyone loved him. He was a gentle man. The soldier who shot him wanted to bury my mind and my humanity in the same grave. He failed. For eight months I closed myself in. I couldn’t be part of anything. Then a call came from an organization formed by people who have lost a loved one to the conflict. I went there. We told our stories. It was the first time I saw Israelis crying. Something changed in me.*

Ali is tall, handsome, fluent in several languages, precise in formulating his thoughts, which seem to come from some irreducible core of experience; he is a Gandhian who has improvised a vision, and a method, suited to the particular circumstances of Palestine. He, too, is no longer a local figure. When I first met him last September— he led a small group of us in hushed single-file, some of the time on hands and knees, through the olive groves just under the noses of the soldiers at the checkpoints outside Nabi Saleh, north-west of Ramallah—he was bringing a large

contingent of Palestinian peace activists from all over the territories to celebrate International Peace Day in the village (most of them were turned back by the soldiers). Ali says,

*Some people think that satyagraha is weakness; they believe that the angrier you are, the stronger you will be. This is their great mistake.*

*Causing someone to suffer the same price you have paid will never ease your pain. It doesn't help much to be right. You damage your right by just being right. One usually wants to be right only because he or she can't be honest. Give me a solution—whatever it is, one state, two states, something in between—where my right is in harmony with my humanity and their right is in harmony with their humanity. Nonviolent protest is where you invest your pain, a place where this pain becomes active in accordance with your humanity. You cannot practice nonviolence without listening to the other side's narrative. But first you have to give up being a victim. When you do that, no one will be able to victimize you again. I don't want the world to feel pity for me; I want the world to take responsibility, as I do.*

*It is the competition in suffering, in being victims, that keeps the conflict going. The Jews are not my enemy; their fear is my enemy. We must help them to stop being so afraid. I understand why they are afraid—their whole history has terrified them—but I refuse to be a victim of Jewish fear anymore. Nobody is born to hate. Hatred is poison, and revenge, or the thirst for revenge, makes it worse. Forgiveness is the best revenge.*

Echoes of Gandhi: “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

There are Gandhian figures within Israel, too—foremost among them, perhaps, Ezra Nawi, a tough-minded, soft-hearted plumber who, I think, has never read a line of Gandhi but who has reinvented Gandhian-style protest on his own, largely in the harsh region of the South Hebron Hills. Predictably, an Israeli court recently sent him to jail for a month, and the judge wrote a long decision concerning, what else, the virtues of law and order. (The circumstances in this case involved the gratuitous destruction by the army of Palestinian shacks and tents at a place called Umm al-Kheir; Ezra tried to stop it by throwing himself in front of the bulldozers and then running into one of the shacks.) There's a good film about Ezra—Nissim Mossek's *Citizen Nawi*. I recommend it. But Ezra is by no means alone. You can see Gandhian civil disobedience in action, Israeli style, every Friday afternoon in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, where a grassroots movement called Solidarity has kept up highly creative forms of protest (presenting the commander of the riot police with a bouquet of flowers, for example) against the dispossession of Palestinians from their homes and their replacement by Jewish settlers. So far, some 160 court cases are pending against Solidarity activists who were arrested by the police, often with extraordinary brutality, in the course of the demonstrations.

New forms of civil disobedience are spreading within Israel, driven by peace activists and ordinary citizens who are fed up with the blatant injustice of Israeli policy and who are increasingly prepared to break the letter of the law when the law is discriminatory, indeed racist. You can read about some of the people involved in Michael Riordon's fine book *Our Way to Fight*. As Palestinian independence comes nearer— hopefully, to become a reality this year—there will be more and more

instances of such protests inside Israel and, in some cases, by Israelis working inside the occupied territories, together with Palestinian partners.

Make no mistake, when it comes to Israeli activism, we're not talking about anything like a mass movement. But I'm not sure that numbers are the best indicator of what's to come. The Israeli settlers who hijacked the entire political system to their utterly destructive goals some three decades ago numbered, initially, at most a few thousand. I think that even a few hundred brave individuals prepared to face the riot police and the soldiers and the courts in the name of the Eighth Commandment may, with the help of the outside world, be enough to spark the change.

No one can say what form the revolutionary fervor currently sweeping the Arab world will eventually take in Palestine. It may very well be directed, first, against the centers of power in Gaza and Ramallah ( Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, respectively; up-to-date studies show a sharp decline in popular support for the former). Eventually, however, the tide will turn against the Israeli occupation; the Israeli government has no effective response to a situation where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians decide to assert their freedom, one can hope, in nonviolent ways. I hope that some of us, at least, will have the privilege of standing beside them, sharing the risks, when that day comes. Here is another irony to contemplate—that of Palestinians in 2011 successfully adopting the method Gandhi recommended to the Jews in the 1930s.

In the meantime, Palestinian and Israeli Gandhians are living out, day by day, the moral code that Lelyveld has rightly identified as Gandhi's: Persist in the active pursuit of what is right and good, without thinking too much about the immediate results ("Silent plodding"). Above all, don't underestimate the intrinsic force of a moral act. If we are true to our humanity, each such action, however small, changes the world. Lelyveld shows us how a stubborn, conflicted, extraordinary individual could enact such a program in a manner "not unworthy of the rubric 'tragic' in its fullest, deepest sense." ("Tragic" in that the Gandhian program ultimately failed to contain the immense sectarian violence of Partition.)

The whole beauty of this way of being in the world is that you don't need to be a Great Soul; indeed it's probably best not to be one. Any of us can do it. Ali Abu Awwad says, "I want Israelis to recognize Jewish fear and what it does to all of us. I wish you could show me your sorrow and your pain and not your strength, which is not real strength in any case. We read Gandhi, but you know what? We don't need to study him anymore. We need to study ourselves. There is a Gandhi in every human being."

Like the other Gandhians I have met, he exemplifies the ancient virtue of hope. Hope is a spiritual act, far removed from, say, optimism, a rather shallow option. So let me say it: there is hope, today, in Palestine, more than I've ever seen before. The Israeli government is doing what it can to destroy it, but I doubt that the government will succeed. ■

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mohammed-khatib/post\\_1615\\_b\\_812459.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mohammed-khatib/post_1615_b_812459.html)

## **Mohammed Khatib and Jonathan Pollak**

Posted: January 21, 2011 06:02 PM

# **Palestinian Nonviolent Movement Continues Despite Crackdown**

The January 1st death of Palestinian protester Jawaher Abu Rahmah from Israeli tear gas, and efforts to imprison people like us illustrate the Israeli government's intensifying crackdown on the unarmed Palestinian protest movement. Though threatened, this movement of Palestinian men, women and children, along with Israeli and international supporters, has grown too much to be easily stopped.

Over the last eight years a Palestinian-led movement using a strategy of nonviolence has coalesced around marches by unarmed civilians in a number of West Bank villages to reclaim land Israel is seizing for its wall and settlements. As one example, six years ago the village of Bil'in began weekly protests opposing Israel's seizure of 60 percent of the village's land. Even Israel's own Supreme Court ruled in 2007 that the wall must be rerouted to return some of Bil'in's land. Yet the decision remains unimplemented.

These protest marches by unarmed civilians are generally met by heavily armed Israeli soldiers with arrests and violence -- tear gas, rubber-coated steel bullets, and live ammunition. The Israeli army has killed 21 unarmed Palestinians in these protests since 2004, the majority with live ammunition -- not to mention hundreds of other innocents in Gaza and the West Bank.

Eyewitnesses and medical records show that Jawaher Abu Rahmah was overcome with tear gas at a protest in Bil'in, leading to her death. Jawaher's brother Bassem was killed in April 2009 when he was shot directly in the chest with a tear gas canister during a peaceful protest. In 1988 during the first Palestinian intifada, Amnesty International documented 40 tear gas-related deaths over seven months. However, judging from the mainstream media and Israeli military justice system's response, one would think that the rocks sometimes thrown on the margins of these protests are the deadly weapons and the soldiers the victims of the people whose land they occupy.

When Jonathan and his friends first came to Bil'in, we Palestinians were surprised to meet Israelis who believed in our rights. But after we saw these Israelis injured and arrested, the people of Bil'in opened homes and hearts to them. We became partners in a joint struggle against Israel's occupation.

Though Palestinians are primarily targeted, Israel's crackdown reaches even Jewish Israelis who enjoy significantly more rights. I, Jonathan, started three months in prison on January 11th of this year for riding my bicycle along with many others in a 2008 protest in Tel Aviv against Israel's siege of Gaza.

I, Mohammed, barely avoided a prison sentence. I was acquitted this month following my arrest a year ago, my release on bail and subsequent hearings. The case was flimsy. Upon arrest I was charged with throwing stones, but I proved that I was overseas the day I was accused of doing so.

However, many other Palestinians, including our friend Abdallah Abu Rahmah, a teacher from Bil'in, have been imprisoned. Abdallah was sentenced to one year in prison for "incitement" and organizing "illegal protests," charges denounced by Jimmy Carter, European governments, and human rights organizations. On January 11th, after Abdallah served 13 months, an Israeli military judge extended his sentence by three more months.

Hundreds of West Bank protesters have been jailed in recent years. Also this month, Israel expelled prominent activist Adnan Gheith from his Silwan home in East Jerusalem to the West Bank. An Israeli military judge ordered this without charges, and based solely on secret evidence that Adnan and his lawyer were not allowed to see. This fundamentally undemocratic persecution is the sort most commonly associated with police states.

Still, our movement is growing and in many ways embodies the principles of equal rights and freedom that have historically galvanized action worldwide. Palestinians from all parties and from throughout the West Bank now come to participate in our protests. And Israelis and people from around the world are joining us.

Yet if Israel is allowed to continue arrests and violence against unarmed protesters without strong criticisms and sanctions from the international community, some Palestinians may conclude that nonviolence is an ineffective path to freedom.

European governments have condemned the arrests of protest organizers. However, the US government, Israel's closest ally, remains terribly reticent, cautiously acknowledging the issue only after repeated questions. President Obama called on Palestinians to employ only nonviolence in his 2009 Cairo speech, but we and our colleagues have since faced death, maiming and prison without a public word of concern from him.

Nonetheless, we are building a movement for Palestinian rights that is part of the global movement for justice and peace for people of all races and religions. To succeed, we need the support of civil society and governments worldwide.

*Mohammed Khatib from the West Bank village of Bil'in, is the Coordinator of the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee, a Palestinian grassroots initiative composed of various Palestinian popular committees in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Jonathan Pollak, Media Coordinator for the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee, is an Israeli activist who has been involved in Palestinian popular resistance since 2002. He is currently serving a three month prison sentence.*

## **VI. Breaking the Silence -- Israeli Soldiers Speak About the Occupation**

Many Palestinians criticize the Occupation. What about Israelis? What do Israeli soldiers say about their own role in the Occupation?

Your students can read testimonials in the booklets in the trunk or they can go online and read some from the website. Some of the booklet testimonials, online testimonials, and the organization's aims are reproduced below. Assign each student to read one of the following articles: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, or H (or if you have lots of time and good readers, each student can read more than one). Then put them in groups ABC, or DEF, or AGH and have them discuss what they read: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What is unbelievable? What is believable? What would be hardest about being a soldier? Why don't the soldiers speak up at the time? Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to object to a problem, but felt you couldn't?

A. The quotes below are from <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/about/organization> , the “Breaking the Silence” organization page. It is written by Israeli soldiers speaking about their time as soldiers in the Occupied Territories. As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What is unbelievable? What is believable? What would be hardest about being a soldier? Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to object to a problem, but felt you couldn’t?

**Breaking the Silence** is an organization of veteran combatants who have served in the Israeli military since the start of the Second Intifada and have taken it upon themselves to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories. We endeavor to stimulate public debate about the price paid for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population on a daily basis, and are engaged in the control of that population’s everyday life.

Soldiers who serve in the Territories witness and participate in military actions which change them immensely. Cases of abuse towards Palestinians, looting, and destruction of property have been the norm for years, but are still explained as extreme and unique cases. Our testimonies portray a different, and much grimmer picture in which deterioration of moral standards finds expression in the character of orders and the rules of engagement, and are justified in the name of Israel's security. While this reality is known to Israeli soldiers and commanders, Israeli society continues to turn a blind eye, and to deny what is done in its name. Discharged soldiers returning to civilian life discover the gap between the reality they encountered in the Territories, and the silence about this reality they encounter at home. In order to become civilians again, soldiers are forced to ignore what they have seen and done. We strive to make heard the voices of these soldiers, pushing Israeli society to face the reality whose creation it has enabled.

We collect and publish testimonies from soldiers who, like us, have served in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem since September 2000, and hold lectures, house meetings, and other public events which bring to light the reality in the Territories through the voice of former combatants. We also conduct tours in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills region, with the aim of giving the Israeli public access to the



reality which exists minutes from their own homes, yet is rarely portrayed in the media.

Founded in March 2004 by a group of soldiers who served in Hebron, Breaking the Silence has since acquired a special standing in the eyes of the Israeli public and in the media, as it is unique in giving voice to the experience of soldiers. To date, the organization has collected more than 700 testimonies from soldiers who represent all strata of Israeli society and cover nearly all units that operate in the Territories. All the testimonies we publish are meticulously researched, and all facts are cross-checked with additional eye-witnesses and/or the archives of other human rights organizations also active in the field. Every soldier who gives a testimony to Breaking the Silence knows the aims of the organization and the interview. Most soldiers choose to remain anonymous, due to various pressures from official military persons and society at large. Our first priority is to the soldiers who choose to testify to the public about their service.

B. The quotes below from Israeli soldiers are from the booklet “Breaking the Silence: Soldiers Speak Out About Their Service in Hebron.” These testimonials are taken from 2000-2004. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). Hebron is a city with 150,000 Palestinians and about 500 Jewish Israeli settlers. As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier in Hebron? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn’t?

The great thing about Hebron, the thing that gets to you more than anything else, is the total indifference it instills in you. It’s hard to describe the kind of enormous sea of indifference you’re swimming in while you’re there. It’s possible to explain a little, through little anecdotes, but it’s not enough to make it really clear. One story is about a little [Israeli settler] kid, a boy of about six, who passed by me at my post. We were at... He said to me: “Soldier, listen, don’t get annoyed, don’t try and stop me, I’m going out to kill some Arabs. I look at the kid and don’t quite understand exactly what I’m supposed to do. So he says: “First, I’m going to buy a popsicle at Gotnik’s” -- that’s their grocery store, “then I’m going to kill some Arabs.” I had nothing to say to him. Nothing. I went completely blank. And that’s not such a simple thing.... that a city, that such an experience can turn someone who was an educator, a counselor, who believed in education, who believed in talking to people, even if their opinions were different. But I had nothing to say to a kid like that. There’s nothing to say to him. (p. 17)

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What bothered me most, let’s face it... In \*\*\* you really see it, at the outposts that are right there on the street. One day I saw an elderly Palestinian. Really old. With a long white beard, his face all wrinkles, carrying 2 shopping bags, passing by a small religious Jewish boy, probably a first grader, a 6-7 year-old, maximum 9. The child came up, looked the Arab in the eye -- mind you, this is a street where both Jews and Arabs are allowed to use -- and said to him: “You filthy Arab”, spat in his face and ran off. Far away, he climbed some roof and threw stones at him. I was in shock. I thought, is this the kind of upbringing these children get here? If I had done much less, as a child, I think my mother...I don’t know what she would have done. It doesn’t make sense. Inconceivable. And then if you manage to catch that kid and call his parents, they tell you? “What do you want from my child?” You tell them what happened, and it’s fine with them. Right next to the kid. It’s fine, it’s legitimate. That really blew my mind--how could this be legitimate? How could your son go spit at an elderly person’s face, no matter who or what he is, plain spit in his face.... (p 15-16)

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What I finally realized after half a year there, was that we have to protect the Palestinians from the Jews there, rather than watching over the Jews. The Jews are the ones threatening the Palestinians in that area. (p. 18)

C. The quotes below from Israeli soldiers are from the booklet “Breaking the Silence: Soldiers Speak Out About Their Service in Hebron.” These testimonials are taken from 2000-2004. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). Hebron is a city with 150,000 Palestinians and about 500 Jewish Israeli settlers. As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier in Hebron? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn’t?

In a patrol in Abu Sneina a commanding officer and three soldiers, patrolling the area. We make a check post. It’s a station where you stop cars and check ‘em out. We stop a guy whom we know, who always hangs around doesn’t make trouble... and no, personally, I never had a run-in with him, in short, a guy who looks all right, it happens. Connections are made, even if we don’t speak the same language and even if it’s hard to explain. The commander stops him, the guy with the car, two soldiers on one side. “You cover the front. You cover the back.” So I cover the front. The commander goes to him: “Do you know the commercials for Itong?” “Go on, get going.” “Get out your jack.” The guy just stands there and stares. He doesn’t understand what they want from him. So the commander yells at him that he should get out his jack and begin to take the wheels off. I’m standing near a stone wall and the guy comes over and takes a stone to put under the car, and then another stone. At that point, the commander comes over to me and says: “Does it look humane to you?” He has this horrible grin on his face. It’s awful. I can’t do anything. I don’t have enough air to say anything. I take my helmet and fall on the stone wall, still covering from the front, and I cry. There’s nothing I can do. (p. 16)

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In one of our conversations with the Border Police in Hebron, two of them were bragging about how much they liked to take a Palestinian whom they caught throwing stones or just throwing a word at them, or looking at them the wrong way. They’d put him into an armored jeep and then hit him with the spark-mufflers of their weapons in the chest or the stomach or the neck. They they’d bet how fast they could take the turn in the road where they’d throw him out of the armored jeep. If you ask me, then yes, it really bothered me, but what could I do about it.?

**Q: You know that the Border Police did this to someone afterwards and he was killed. They murdered someone.**

That’s very sad. And, so?

**Q: Did you recognize any of the murderers, the guys who are standing trial now?**

No. I didn’t recognize anyone. I don’t know them. I just heard ‘em talking.  
p. 19)

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If I go to the sergeant now and tell him: “There’s this woman and her child is ill, and she wants to take him to the hospital”, and could I let her through, he asks me: How does she seem? I think she’s okay, I tell him. Not suspicious. The company commander and HQ get on the line and tell me: “No way. There’s curfew on. She’s not going anywhere.” And sure enough, she doesn’t. (p. 34)

D. The quotes below are from Israeli soldiers in Hebron. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). Hebron is a city with 150,000 Palestinians and about 500 Jewish Israeli settlers. As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier in Hebron? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn't?

- I. Hebron Testimonies

<http://www.shovrimshatika.org/UserFi...>

*“Every day a six-man unit would cross over the roofs and enter a house. First they’d search the entrances and exits, order the entire family into a single room and get them to talk: ID cards, profession, begin to interrogate them. It also serves one of the army’s aims—to make its presence felt. I remember many of the interrogations, but I recall one in particular where we asked...we spoke with an older man who, unlike many of the others who say things like, “We’ve got no problem with Israel,” “We’re neither Fatah nor Hamas”... “All we really want is peace so we can work”... Usually when they say things like that you can see that they’re just looking at you. They’re looking at your weapon. They’re all scared, so it’s only natural that they act so defeated. But this man was not obsequious, and he spoke the truth: that his life was a living hell, and that he wanted us to get out already. He said that we are to blame for this entire situation, and all he wanted was for us to get out. I think someone asked him why he hated us, why he supports the opposition fronts. Why he supports killings. I don’t agree with the man’s opinions, but he told the soldier that he had entered his home just like that, and was humiliating him, undermining his dignity. And I looked at this man and said to myself: wait a minute, here is this man in his own home, and it made me think of my own family home, surrounded by a garden, and greenery, a kind of fortress surrounded by a hedge of lantana and hibiscus, and I thought what if someone were to burst into our house like that, entering through an upstairs window, and force my parents and my younger brother into one of the rooms and start interrogating us, questioning us, searching the entrances and exits, and treating us so patronizingly... If I had not received the kind of education I did, I think I would certainly support even ... That is to say, this going into people’s houses, how can you relate to it as something separate?”*

*These are not people of a different kind. The men even physically look like my grandfather. ... An elderly man, or an old man who has to beg you at the checkpoint to allow him to pass, who shows you an X-Ray and you have no idea why he’s showing it to you, or the man who tells you that his brother in Bab al-Zawia is ill with asthma or some other disease and that he has to pay him a visit. That same person could be your own father, for whom you have the greatest respect, but do we really understand what respect is...It’s hard to say what I felt at that moment. On the one hand, I was stationed there, I didn’t choose to be there. On the other hand, I wanted to get the hell out of there. As an individual who considers himself a nice guy, a*

*moral kind of guy.. I said to myself, damn I'm really doing something here that I don't believe in. I don't believe in it 100%, and I'm putting myself in a position where someone wants to kill me because of it. The question is, where am I? Do I have no choice in the matter? In other words, should I refuse? Is refusal the answer? So there I was torn by the dilemma, pondering. I had lots of time eight by eight [eight hours on-duty eight hours off-duty] to think about it. The point is that I was faced with a crazy dilemma where I was torn between personal freedom and personal choice. Here lies the contradiction between the military, which is undemocratic and the state, which is supposed to be democratic. When you see that you are doing things which in your own home could not possibly happen and must never be allowed to happen, this is where you cross a certain line. Okay, so here you're in a different state. That is to say, everything you have known until now, all the rules by which you and your own family conduct your lives, all that does not seem to count here. \*\*\* Sit and wait. Why? Because he walked outside. Because he dared go buy something. Because he dared send his kid to school.\*\*\**

E. The quotes below are from Israeli soldiers. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn't?

## II. Testimonial Booklet #2 (not available on Internet yet)

The witness: First Sergeant from battalion 932 of the Nahal brigade  
The Location: Refugee camp near Ramallah. Date: \*\*\*

*Okay so our "house" swooped onto the refugee camp. That is why we were there. There was a snipers' post there. This is regarding the orders to commence fire that we're to shoot anyone who had a Molotov cocktail in his hand, because it is a life threatening situation. We knew that they were planning to throw the Molotov. We saw them with the bottle. We kept them under surveillance. There was a Molotov in their hands, but they did not ever throw it, they never lit it. SO that they would do it, we did something that was the idea of one of the platoon commanders. We told the sniper to "be ready" when we just arrived from the Ofer camp. We brought supplies or something. We said, okay, we will pass through, and we will let them throw the bottle, and then the sniper can shoot him. We intentionally drew their attention and we passed through there with our half-track, on purpose, on a road that we do not usually drive on. We went on that road on purpose. Then he threw the Molotov cocktail, and the sniper hit him. He was a 10-year-old boy.*

A boy?

*10-year-old boy. He did not kill him. I think he wounded him seriously or moderately, a ten-year-old boy. That is what he did there. You know, it was the intent, for the purpose of shooting someone. For doing ... I just don't know what. This is not a special story. There are a few more like that in the "cartridge".*

F. The quotes below are from Israeli soldiers in 2003. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn't?

- III. Testimonial Booklet #2

<http://www.shovrimshatika.org/UserFi...>

**Witness: Staff sergeant, Paratroops. Place: Beit-Furik. Date: end of 2003.**

*Can any fighter shoot? Yes. From one's personal weapon. If the commander in the patrol is a vice company commander, he can authorize such a thing. And if I accidentally hit someone in the back, or kill him - and things like that have happened to us... It happened two or three times only in our last deployment. Kids were killed? Kids were killed accidentally. One aims at the legs - shoot them in the back and kill them. How do you find out later whether they were killed? [We get] reports, later on, from the coordination and liaison office, the Palestinians report. There is cooperation in this regard. So kids get killed. For a soldier it means nothing. An officer can get a 100 or 200 Shekel fine for such a thing. 100, 200 Shekel for a kid? Yes. Prison? No, no. Trial? Is such a thing seriously investigated? No. I am sure it does not get beyond the battalion commander. I don't know [of any case] in which people were investigated. I cannot tell you for certain that it didn't happen... but I haven't seen them being taken for investigation, and I know nothing was done about that later on.*

G. The quotes below are from Israeli soldiers in Hebron. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). Hebron is a city with 150,000 Palestinians and about 500 Jewish Israeli settlers. As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier in Hebron? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn't?

#### IV. Soldiers' Testimonies from Hebron 2005-2007

<http://www.shovrimshatika.org/UserFi...>

##### Testimony 64, Hebron

*First interviewee: ... At Beit Hadassah we once ran on patrol because we were told settlers were throwing stones at the Shalalas (a Palestinian market in Hebron). So we ran all the way from Menuchat Rachel: Something was happening, we ran and ran, children on recess came out of school at Beit Hadassah, and went to throw stones. When we got to the site, they already went back into class, recess was over and they began their lesson.*

*Second interviewee: As part of the patrol, there was always that point in time when children would come out of the Palestinian school house, so we had to stand guard and watch over them so the settlers wouldn't throw stones at them. And then you continue your patrol. Every morning.*

*First interviewee: ...what happened was that we got there running, out of breath, suddenly we realize this is about a few cheeky little kids, second or third graders, who had thrown stones. Our platoon commander knocked on the door of the classroom, the teacher came out and he told him: "Listen, there are children here who throw stones. I'm asking you to have them come out for a second, we need to talk with them, with whoever it was who threw stones." Then the teacher answered him: "Will you kindly let me educate my pupils as I see fit, and not intervene, please?" and he closed the door. That's how it ended. And this went on?*

*First interviewee: I don't know what happened afterwards. Another day, a Saturday, I was with \*\*\*, we caught little children. They were throwing stones at the TIPH (international observers) as well as at Arabs in the Shalalas. We caught them like this, they hit us and \*\*\* accidentally ripped the shirt of one of these kids as he tried to stop him from throwing stones. It was on the Sabbath and all the parents were in the Avraham Avinu settlement, at Beit Hadassah, they saw us struggling with their children and they went inside. It really felt like, what am I doing here anyway? What is this bullshit, kids hitting you, little kids. Really. Afterwards we tried to corner them into a playground there, a basketball court. And Bnei Akiva (religious youth movement) were having their get-together there, with a counselor.*



*So I spoke to him about this, to ask him to take the kids. You're their counselor, come on, help us, round up the children, play with them or something. And then, I don't know, we were talking and he told me that there was this ruling by some rabbi that Arabs are not humans. Some regional rabbi ruled this, and that it was okay to throw stones at them, really okay. And you're standing there, in shock, facing some boy who's a counselor in Bnei Akiva, wearing the movement shirt, and you don't know, what can you do? What am I still doing here? There's nothing I can do...*

*Second interviewee: I recall once standing at 44 post (army post), there's this path below which was then opened just for Abu Aisha (an isolated Palestinian family living in Tel Rumeida next to the settlement). One of the guys passed there, a young boy, and one of the settler women from Tel Rumeida simply caught him and began to beat him. I didn't know what to do. I stood there between them. I let him go, he went back and she tried to push me away and continue hitting him. At some point she simply stood and began screaming at me and pushing me. I didn't know how to handle this. Finally a sergeant showed up (from the second platoon, I think) and he managed to get me out of there. I had no idea what to do. All she wanted was to beat him up. She said he was not allowed to be there and was jeopardizing her children by just being there. He must not pass by there and how can we let something like that happen. That he was there to murder her children and how can I let this take place. He came along, trying to go home, that's his way home. Afterwards they came and yelled at me. That's what I remember. \*\*\**

H. The quotes below are testimonials taken from Israeli soldiers in Gaza during the assault by Israel in 2008-09. More recent testimonials can be found on their website: [www.breakingthesilence.org.il](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il). As you read, think about: What did you learn about the occupation? What questions do you still have? What would be hardest about being a soldier? Why do you think the soldiers feel they cannot object to what is happening? Have you ever felt that you wanted to object to a problem but couldn't?

#### V. Operation Cast Lead, Gaza 2009

<http://www.shovrimshatika.org/oferet...>

#### Testimony 43 - Rules of Engagement

*One guy said he just couldn't finish this operation without killing someone. So he killed someone, apparently some sort of lookout. There was an order that if you see someone on the lookout at our building, he should be taken down.*

*What does that mean? During the bombing, people either ran away or hid, so it was said that if anyone is out on a street where the IDF is currently present, and he's holding a cell phone - he must be a lookout. What's important here is the fact that he said he wasn't willing to go home empty-handed, without having marked an X on his rifle butt. You recall at what distance you may or may not open fire? I suppose the guy also got some okay...*

*I think the okay was the instruction given for the future. I mean, say a terrorist is running and crossing the line, you may act at your discretion according to the general instructions. But here, for example, it's someone holding a cell phone, not someone running towards you, armed.*

*That's right. But he is considered incriminated. We're not on routine security duty here, suspect arrest procedures. This is a type of war. So what was the story with that Palestinian, in this case? The soldier was lying in his position, he has a shooting crack. The kind snipers have.*

***And he detected the guy with the cell phone?***

*I don't remember exactly whether it was a cell phone. Could be I can definitely say he was not armed. I can definitely say the soldier regarded this as some children's game and was delighted and laughing after this. I think that a normal person, even having killed an armed terrorist, would not be amused. Too bad there are people for whom the army is a way to work out their aggressions. I want to get the picture: a soldier in a position shot someone, hit him, he's glad he scored. What's the reaction? More things happen at the same time. There's a tank company around us and more things are happening.*

***But inside the house?***

*There are several positions that must be manned, and the rest are relaxing. I think that if this platoon commander had thought just anyone had been shot, he would really not like this. But listen, the lines are pretty blurred... In general, in the West Bank the battalion commander could order us to tell apart civilian population from terrorists. He could tell us, "You're not in a war zone, but this could turn into a war zone". But Gaza is war.*

## VI. Women Soldiers' Testimonies

<http://www.shovrimshatika.org/UserFi...>

**Testimony 91 Name: \*\*\* | Rank: Sergeant | Unit: Erez Crossing | Location: Gaza Strip**

*There was the child, the most shocking story about a tank-commander, you've got to find him. Anyway, he was sitting there Saturday around noon, that most boring of times, sitting there in 'Magen', in his tank, and some kids threw stones at the tank, which sounds fun, right? Kids throwing stones at a tank. It annoyed him, though. **That doesn't exactly jeopardize a tank...No, but it annoyed him.** So he got on the radio with us: "There are kids here throwing stones." He was expecting some kind of response. That's it. Eventually he did shoot, we heard shots. I remember being surprised at the sound of shooting, because if there is any shooting at 'Magen' you hear it at the war-room, although it's a 3-minute drive away. Not adjacent. But you hear. So we did hear shots. We got on the radio to all the companies. The tank fired and the kid fell. **He fell? Fell. They always 'fall.'** **He saw him fall? Yes.** And then he had to be retrieved. \*\*\**

Photo on homepage: FLV (Hebron: checkpoint in Tel Rumeida, old city)

For more details about Breaking the Silence or to participate in the tours: <http://www.shovrimshatika.org>

## **Discussion Questions for Breaking the Silence:**

- 1. What did you learn about the occupation?**
- 2. What questions do you still have?**
- 3. What is unbelievable? What is believable?**
- 4. What would be hardest about being a soldier?**
- 5. Why don't the soldiers speak up at the time?**
- 6. Have you ever been in a situation where you wanted to object to a problem, but felt you couldn't?**

**VII. Media Literacy: *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land:*  
*US Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*  
by the Media Education Foundation (approx. 80 min.)**

Information Literacy: This documentary discusses how American foreign policy and Israeli public relations influence news reporting. If you are discussing media literacy, propaganda, or if students want to know why our mainstream media mainly show only one side of the conflict, this is a film to show them. The Study Questions are divided into three pages, each covering about 30 minutes of the movie. Save some time at the end of each class to go over notes/answers. Use the last day to discuss answers to the last third of the movie, and save time to go over the discussions questions listed after Part III.

1-30 minutes: If you show the first 30 minutes of the film, you will get through the introductory analysis and the specific discussion of settlements and house demolitions. Look at the student study questions to get a sense of what is covered.

30-60 minutes: The second 30 minutes covers how the media present violence and deaths, the myth of American neutrality, and American support for Israel.

60-80 minutes: The third section covers the year 2000 peace talks, the Palestinian uprising (2nd Intifada), Israeli opposition to occupation -- interviews and footage with many Israeli groups --, anti-semitism, whether peace is possible.

Teacher warning: contains scenes of graphic violence & dead bodies.

***Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land:  
US Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Take notes on the film.

**Part I**

1. What's the situation in the Occupied Territories?
2. Describe Israel's public relation campaign to maintain a positive public image.
3. What institutional filters are there on American news coverage?
4. Describe American news coverage of the conflict. What's omitted? What's included?
5. How do the American media refer to illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories? Why?
6. How do the American media refer to house demolition of Palestinians?

***Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land:  
US Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict***

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Take notes on the film.

Part II

1. How do the American media portray violent Palestinian resistance to occupation?

2. How do the American media portray the deaths of Palestinian and Israeli civilians?

3. What is the myth of American neutrality? What are some reasons for American support of Israel?

***Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land:  
US Media & the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Take notes on the film.

**Part III**

1. How did the Israel public relations campaign, American media, and government portray the 2000 peace talks (called the “generous offer” or “Camp David”) and the subsequent Palestinian uprising?

2. How are the Israeli peace movement (many Israeli anti-occupation groups) and anti-occupation American Jews marginalized in the American media?

3. Is peace possible?

**Discussion Questions after you’ve watched the movie:**

1. How can we get accurate information about the occupation and the conflict?

2. What questions does this documentary raise for you about the information you get from the media?

3. Think of one international issue that you don’t know much about. Write down what you think causes the problem. Then research the issue using a number of news sources from different countries and perspectives, using mainstream and alternative media sources both electronic and print. Now can you identify more detailed causes of the issue? Can you identify biases in some of the media? Your teacher can help you identify more mainstream sources such as [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), [nbc.com](http://nbc.com), and [foxnews.com](http://foxnews.com) and alternative media sources, such as [democracynow.org](http://democracynow.org) and [thenation.com](http://thenation.com). Try comparing coverage among Canada ([cbc.ca](http://cbc.ca)), England ([bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)), and Qatar ([aljazeera.com](http://aljazeera.com)).



## VIII. WRITING YOUR CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENT

### CHOOSING A TOPIC

Have students get into groups and review their “Questions As You Go!” sheets. Ask them to consider how different questions relate and could be combined. How can broad questions be narrowed down to be more specific? How can questions about current events be developed into a historical question that will help us understand the current situation? If students have written down topics they are interested in, but don’t necessarily have a question about, ask them to explore how to develop a question out of the topic. Take some examples from what students have written and, as a class, work through the process of developing a historical research question.

### COLLECTING INFORMATION

- Give each student a copy of the Resources list (in the introductory documents), the Dig Deep Graphic Organizer, and the Dig Deep rubric (you can print these out from the OSPI website-- see the introductory documents).
- Discuss the rubric and make sure the students understand what is expected—what constitutes strong evidence, the difference between primary and secondary sources, examples of the six different social science perspectives, how to relate historical questions to current events, etc.
- Encourage students to search for more sources in addition to using the Resource list. Discuss the issue of how to determine a source’s credibility.
- Consider allowing students with similar topics to form groups to search for resources collectively. In the middle of the research process allow some time for groups to share some of their best resources with other groups.
- Go over how to use the graphic organizer in order to synthesize information into an outline for a paper.

### CULMINATION

Students begin their individual writing work. (Time for this varies and is up to the teacher.) Their papers and presentations should:

- be well-organized
- have five or more paragraphs including an introduction, body, and conclusion
- provide evidence that supports the thesis and that uses three or more social science perspectives
- reference four or more sources, including primary and secondary, and evaluate how these sources support the thesis.

The papers/presentations should also address why studying this historical question helps us to understand current issues and events.

Try to make time at the end for students to present their findings to the rest of the class and to have a culminating class discussion.