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The Face of the Occupation

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Israel's right to exist," thus giving the concept its true importance. But since the PLO's total refusal to accept the concept has been known for years, why should two of its members be asked to change that policy in London? Was this due to ignorance or a deliberate and crafty attempt to call off a meeting that the U.S. and Israel strongly objected to?

The Face of the Occupation

Reporter David Hirst authored the following article, "Gaza dances shirtless to satisfy Israeli troops," which appeared in the Guardian (U.K.) on 30 September 1985.

"Have you been dancing?" I asked some young men and women drinking beer in a neighbor kebab shop. "God, no!" one of them replied. "They would come and smash the place up."

He had misunderstood the question and by "they" had meant Muslim Brother fundamentalists who are active and obstreperous in this very conservative corner of Palestine. But he quickly got the point. Yes, he said, only the night before a bearded, religious youth had been dancing just outside his door.

Nowadays, Gaza's manhood dance in the streets and squares of the town, in the narrow alleyways of the refugee camps, in restaurants and on tables, singly or in groups, young and old, occasionally without their shirts and once, he said, without their trousers. They have been doing it for almost three weeks now.

This is no sudden unaccountable outbreak of high spirits in a community now under its nineteenth year of Israeli occupation, or some mysterious collective hysteria. It is the latest diversion of the Israeli soldiery.

On 5 September, an Israeli driver of a tanker delivering petrol to a local filling station, was stabbed by two Arabs in Pal-

estine Square. After that, the army began its latest security crackdown. In addition to their standard practice of thrusting people, hands up, against a wall with insults of forcing them face down on the asphalt, troops on stepped-up patrols have developed a technique which can be intended only to humiliate.

The practice appears to be random, a matter of the soldier's mood that day, but it conforms to a general pattern, involving the seizure of identity cards, whose owners have to perform some insane and degrading antic to get them back. Usually, it is dancing. The victims have to keep it up until the soldiers, laughing, sneering, and clapping, are satisfied with their performance.

There are variations. The price of getting back an identity card might be to cite its numbers. "It is a long one," said a British-educated doctor, "but I remembered mine immediately; whatever happens I wasn't going to dance for them."

Once the soldiers assembled some fifty people in a square, and scattered the identity cards all over it, so that everyone had to hunt for his own. This is part of a wider pattern that extends to the West Bank where according to reports, Arabs have been invited to bark like dogs, bray like donkeys and—in one case in Hebron—kiss their donkey's behind.

Yes, conceded Captain Eli Hurewitz, the military spokesman in Gaza, such things were happening. No, it was not officially ordered or condoned. It was a regrettable consequence of the war in Lebanon. Returning soldiers were apt to forget that they were now in the very different environment of the occupied territories. With regular soldiers replacing reservists, this has become the orthodox explanation for such excesses.

That the Arabs were now having to dance for their identity cards was the only concession to their grievances that Captain Hurewitz would make. According to the

Arabs, the stabbing that apparently provoked the crackdown was actually a quarrel between well-known hashish smugglers. The Israeli partner had refused to pay up.

There is much circumstantial evidence, such as a long altercation which preceded the attack, to lend credence to this contention, but Captain Hurewitz insisted that it was an act of politically motivated terrorism.

Even if it was, the Arabs retort, this isolated act hardly seems to justify a form of collective punishment visited on Gaza city when the two "terrorists" came from Rafah. Resistance in Gaza has long been at a very low ebb. Captain Hurewitz himself said: "I know that 99 percent of the people here want peace."

The humiliations are new, but the crackdown has its more conventional, more tragic side. According to Captain Hurewitz, when it comes to deaths and injuries, Israeli soldiers have behaved with impeccable discipline, strictly conforming to standing orders. When eighteen-year-old Munzer 'Abd al-'Aziz 'Awad was killed last week, they had first fired two warning rounds in the air, then, as he ran away, at his feet and finally—but unintentionally—at his chest and head.

The family claims otherwise; a soldier pursued Munzer about 150 yards; he was indeed hit in the legs some 20 yards from his home; still managing to advance, he was hit again, and then, collapsing, he was finished off at close range.

"A bullet came in at the top of his head and came out at the neck," said a close relative, one of the few permitted to attend the funeral. It was arranged at short notice, at dead of night with the scantest traditional ceremonial, in a cemetery guarded by four jeeps, two armoured cars, and some fifty soldiers.

Two days later, an eight-year-old boy was shot in his father's car. Arab doctors who first operated on him said that his

intestines had been ripped apart by an explosive bullet. Captain Hurewitz denied this. But a good twenty-four hours after the boy's death, the Israelis agreed, saying that the father failed to stop when hailed and drove through two roadblocks. Roadblocks, in the traditionally accepted sense of the words, are very few in Gaza.

The Arabs are at a loss to explain the crackdown, but, especially given the flimsiness of the ostensible pretext, they tend to see it as just another manifestation of what they have always regarded as Zionism's grand design: to subjugate, pauperize, and ultimately drive them out.

They attribute the timing, among other things, to the rampant extremism of Israeli society and to the competition which it has provoked within the ruling establishment to "get tough" with the Arabs.

Those contemporary standard-bearers of militant Zionism, the religious-nationalist pioneers of the Gush Emunim, appear to have got the message.

According to local witnesses, they staged two provocative demonstrations. In the smaller of the two, some fifteen settlers descended on the Zeitoun district of Gaza city, identifying this as a former "Jewish quarter," and with shouts of "Death to the Arabs," called for eventual settlement there. Some Jews had indeed rented accommodation there—during the British Mandate—natives say.

However, it is the basic doctrine of the Gush and their supporters in the government coalition that Jews have the right to settle not just in open country, but in the heart of Arab towns.

It is easy to imagine what consternation that would cause in Gaza. There are nearly 600,000 people crowded into its 227 square miles, with perhaps a third of that territory, including rich agricultural land, already in Jewish hands.

All things considered—the humiliations and trigger-happy exploits of the military,

the ambitions of the settlers, plus the wretched and deteriorating material conditions of a community that is being reduced, by deliberate policy, to a kind of Soweto—Gazans say that things have never been as bad as they are today.

“They just don’t want peace,” said the taxi driver who took me out of the Strip into the wide open spaces of southern Israel—a universal sentiment.

Reflecting another sentiment which is gaining ground, he added, “We know that it is them or us. We have no arms, no help from outside. I don’t know when the explosion will come, in two years, five, or twenty, but I know that it will. When it does, there will be blood, much blood.”

The Larnaca Incident

This article by Elisabeth Serraj, entitled “The Pretext,” appeared in Afrique-Asie, 21 October–3 November 1985.

Israel has cited as a pretext for its bombing of the PLO headquarters in Tunisia the murder in Larnaca, Cyprus of three Israeli tourists. Ester Paltzur (fifty years old), Reuven Paltzur (fifty-three years old), and Avraham Avrery (fifty-five years old): were they Israeli tourists on vacation whom the Palestinian commandos blindly chose in the middle of a port where no less than a dozen yachts of Israeli vacationers were anchored? Were they, as a leading writer for a French monthly “on the left” wrote, “unknown civilians whom one could imagine to have, for example, demonstrated for peace in the streets of Tel Aviv”—in short, people who “answer the description that one uses in times of war of ‘innocent’ ”?

The Cypriot investigator who interrogated the authors of the attack, two Palestinians and one Briton, gathered from the three detainees the following information reported by the Kuwaiti daily *al-Qabas* of 7 October. The real name of the Israeli

woman was Sylvia Raphael, a Mossad agent responsible for the assassination of several PLO leaders including Wa’il Zu’aytar (1972) and Abu ‘Ali Hasan Salama (1979). Personally charged with surveillance of the latter in Beirut, it is she who detonated the device which caused his car to explode.

The second man, Zvin Baltzio, alias Reuven Paltzur, led Mossad in Europe in the 1970s, a period in which several Palestinian leaders were killed during the “shadow war” which followed the Munich 1972 attack. He inspired the celebrated British spy novelist John Le Carré’s *Little Drummer Girl*. As for Avraham Avrery, as assistant director of Mossad he planned the murder of three Palestinian officials in Beirut in 1974: Abu Yusuf al-Najjar, Kamal ‘Adwan, and Kamal Nasir.

The *Guardian* (London), citing diplomatic and intelligence sources, confirmed that the three people murdered in Larnaca were Mossad agents. And not minor ones, Sylvia Raphael in particular. The elimination of this agent would be strongly felt by the Israeli secret service, the *Guardian* reported.

Of South African origin, Sylvia Raphael lived in Jordan during the 1960s as a freelance photographer under the name of Patricia Roksberg. She succeeded in penetrating leadership circles in Jordan before leaving ‘Amman on the eve of the massacres of September 1970. She then joined in Norway a Mossad team that was tracking Abu ‘Ali Hasan Salama, the head of the PLO secret service. This team killed a Moroccan by mistake. The Norwegian police arrested the group of Israeli agents; she was among them. Sentenced to five years in prison, she was released eighteen months later. She then went to Paris where she reorganized the Mossad office. In 1979 Abu ‘Ali Hasan Salama fell victim to a booby-trapped car in Beirut.