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THE OCCUPATION

Occupation Diaries by Raja Shehadeh – review
Anger co-exists with a sense of beauty in a valuable journal of West Bank life

Raja Shehadeh: ‘a contemplative man who writes with great simplicity and beauty’. Photograph: Murdo Macleod
Raja Shehadeh is an angry man. He is angry about the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the illegal settlements that dot his beloved Palestinian landscape and the roads that divide the people of this territory. And he is angry about the failure of Israel’s allies and donors to prevent the discrimination against Palestinians and Israeli Arabs that he encounters in his life as an activist and a lawyer.

1. Occupation Diaries
2. by Raja Shehadeh
3.

Shehadeh is also a contemplative man, a walker who meditates, tends his garden and writes about his daily life in Ramallah with great simplicity and beauty. His first memoir, Strangers in the House, was
published 10 years ago to warm reviews, but it was *Palestinian Walks* that drew a wider audience to his work and won the Orwell prize for political writing in 2008. It combined an intimate account of six walks through the Palestinian landscape with a devastating analysis of the politics of land ownership.

Shehadeh's anger in that book was modulated through his observations of the natural world. In these diaries, which cover the period 2009-11, the emotions are more immediate and rawer. Shehadeh's anger extends beyond the political domain and into his personal life: he is even angry with the dental assistant who addresses him in Hebrew. "Hearing Hebrew over the telephone aroused insecurity and fear, recalling earlier times when I received calls summoning me for interrogation by the military." Truly, in Ramallah, the personal is political.

Shehadeh notes the destructive potential of his anger, knowing that it is easy to dismiss an angry spokesman. At times, though, it seems that he uses it to sustain himself when beauty is not enough: "I want to continue to feel the anger and to rage, rage against the dying of the light." These raw emotions are also linked to the death of his mother, just before these diaries open. She was exiled from her home city of Jaffa in 1948, and watched her family's wealth disintegrate. In remembering the turbulent 60 years that followed, in which she lost her family, friends and property, he finds himself "still angry at what she had to suffer".

This heartfelt rage and frustration oscillates with Shehadeh's continuing sense of beauty, his enjoyment of his garden and his appreciation of "how lovely life is, how dearly we should cherish and cling to it".

He watches the Palestinian Authority pursuing a vigorous campaign for full membership of the United Nations. The emblem for this campaign – a gigantic replica of a UN chair – is installed at the centre of Ramallah as a symbol of Palestine's desire for a seat at the table. Shehadeh drives past this with somewhat raised eyebrows. He is almost as sceptical about the Palestinian leaders as he is about their Israeli counterparts.

But his spirits are lifted by the Arab Spring and its implications for Israel and Palestine. His diary entries in early 2011 are filled with a sudden rush of exhilaration as the possibility of profound and peaceful change flashes before him. Now the anger is pulled away, like a curtain, to reveal the desperately thwarted hope that lies behind it. Shehadeh dares to imagine a future in which Israel, Palestine and the other eastern Mediterranean states co-exist within a federal structure akin to the European Union. He traces this dream through the shared history of the region, in particular the Ottoman era, during which grand engineering projects linked these territories together by rail. "Not that we should call for a return of anything resembling Ottoman rule – the Ottomans were brutal and inefficient – but, rather, a return to the way things were organised then, with communities and cultures united."

This ambitious vision seems increasingly remote as Syria descends into civil war and the deadlock between Israel and the Palestinian Authority shows no sign of relaxing. Yet Shehadeh's rare blend of rage and contemplation gives him the resilience to keep working towards this seemingly impossible dream. He reminds us that France and Germany, mutual enemies for a thousand years, now share a cultural institute in the West Bank.

Shehadeh is a committed diarist who has been keeping a journal most of his life and surely his eyes and ears will remain open to these continuing upheavals, just as he continues to watch the dappled light coming through the gazebo covered with vines in his garden. We can only hope that he and his publishers continue to bring us his precious commentary on life inside one of the world's greatest political fault lines.

*Jonathan Heawood is director of programmes at the Sigrid Rausing Trust*

**INTERNATIONAL STOP THE WALL FORUM IN BRAZIL**

Whether you are attending our conference or just checking in from home, we hope you will join us next week for a National Briefing with Stop the Wall's founder Jamal Juma'a for member groups to learn more about the **first ever World Social Forum - Free Palestine (WSF-FP)** that is taking place in **Brazil in November**. The WSF-FP is a great opportunity to share, build and advance strategies and common visions, bringing together activists and varying sectors to develop strategies, tactics, networks, and cross-struggle alliances. Mark your calendars and click here to email **National Organizer Anna Baltzer** for more details! [organizer@endtheoccupation.org](mailto:organizer@endtheoccupation.org)

**VETERANS FOR PEACE GROUP**

VFP has a Palestine Working Group to expose the so-called “Peace Process” as an Israeli delaying tactic while they confiscate more Palestinian land and water, demolish more Palestinian homes, and expand more illegal Jewish settlements. They actively support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Campaign (BDS). See the Spring-Summer VFP Newsletter. Eduardo Cohen and Dr. Jack Dresser, co-chairs. VFP 314-725-6005; [vfp@veteransforpeace.net](mailto:vfp@veteransforpeace.net). (Dick)

**We Must Speak Out**

**Debra DeLee**, APN [DebraDeLee@peacenow.org](mailto:DebraDeLee@peacenow.org) via uark.edu to jbennet

Dear Dick--

The Talmud says that whoever can speak out to his household to prevent wrongdoing but does not, is considered guilty of that wrong; he is guilty of wrongdoing if he does not speak out to his fellow citizens or even the whole world when he sees their wrongdoing. (Shabbat 54b)
At the New Year, our time of self-contemplation and judgment, we must consider whether we have spoken out when it was our responsibility to do so. Those of us who care deeply about Israel as a Jewish and a democratic state must acknowledge that there is much wrong that needs to be addressed. It is our responsibility to speak out and work to correct those wrongs.

You may have seen our Rosh Hashanah appeal, written by Americans for Peace Now’s Director of Strategic Communications, Rabbi Alana Suskin. In her letter, Rabbi Suskin calls for the American Jewish community to speak out about the very real problems in Israel - settlement-building, settler lawlessness, assault on democracy, and inaction by the Israeli authorities against outrages that threaten the possibility of a two-state solution.

Many extremists work in the name of “Greater Israel.” We have a vision of a greater Israel as well. It is an Israel where civility is cherished; a Jewish state in which democracy and the rule of law are sacred; a state that lives in peace with her neighbors. We call upon the American Jewish community to speak loudly and firmly against wrongdoing, in order that this vision will be realized.

We at APN will continue to speak out for a better future for Israel. We hope that 5773 will be a year in which we all are brave enough to speak out against the wrongs we see. Join us.

L’shanah Tovah,
Debra DeLee
CEO, Americans for Peace Now

P.S. If you haven’t read the letter, read
RACHEL CORRIE VERDICT
JustForeignPolicy, 8-28-12 http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/node/1292:

1) An Israeli judge has ruled that the killing of Rachel Corrie was a "regrettable accident" for which the state of Israel was not responsible in a civil lawsuit brought by the Corrie family, the Guardian reports. The Corries vowed to appeal the decision to Israeli's high court. The judge said Rachel had "put herself in a dangerous situation" and her death was not caused by the negligence of the Israeli state or army. The ruling found no fault in the internal Israeli military investigation which cleared the driver of the bulldozer which crushed Corrie to death, an investigation which the U.S. has criticized as not being "thorough, credible and transparent." The family was "deeply saddened and deeply troubled" by the ruling, Cindy Corrie said. "I believe this was a bad day, not only for our family, but for human rights, humanity, the rule of law and also for the country of Israel."

Human Rights Watch said the verdict "sets a dangerous precedent in its claim that there was no liability for Corrie's death because the Israeli forces involved were conducting a 'combat operation' … The idea that there can be no fault for killing civilians in a combat operation flatly contradicts Israel's international legal obligations to spare civilians from harm during armed conflict, and to credibly
investigate and punish violations by its forces."

2) Amnesty International condemned the Israeli court's verdict, saying it continues the pattern of impunity for Israeli military violations against civilians and human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. "Rachel Corrie was a peaceful American protestor who was killed while attempting to protect a Palestinian home from the crushing force of an Israeli military bulldozer," said Sanjeev Bery, Middle East and North Africa advocacy director for Amnesty International USA. "Rachel Corrie was clearly identifiable as a civilian, as she was wearing a fluorescent orange vest when she was killed," said Bery. "She and other non-violent activists had been peacefully demonstrating against the demolitions for hours when the Israeli military bulldozer ran over her." Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes in the West Bank is still routine, Amnesty notes. Over 600 structures were demolished in 2011, resulting in the forcible eviction of almost 1,100 people. In the first seven months of 2012, the Israeli military demolished 327 structures in the West Bank, displacing 575 people.

3) The Corrie case laid bare the state of the collective Israeli military mind, which cast the definition of enemies so widely that children walking down the street were legitimate targets if they crossed a red line that was invisible to everyone but the soldiers looking at it on their maps, writes Chris McGreal in the Guardian. The military gave itself a blanket protection by declaring southern Gaza a war zone, even though it was heavily populated by ordinary Palestinians, and set rules of engagement so broad that just about anyone was a target. With that went virtual impunity for Israeli troops no matter who they killed or in what circumstances. [McGreal was the Guardian correspondent in Israel when Rachel was killed -JFP]

The following is a comment to the NYT story today about the verdict in the Rachel Corrie case:

Richard,    New York

I wonder how many other foreign governments could murder a young American girl in cold blood and get away with it without a peep from the U.S. government. The open cynicism of the judge's ruling, along with the recent murder of a random Palestinian by a mob of hate-crazed Israeli teenagers, tells us all we need to know about the current state of their society.

Israel has been slowly poisoned by its original sin: violently displacing an indigenous Palestinian population in and then telling itself a thousand lies to justify this fact. More than a half-century of brutality and moral evasion have produced a breakdown in even the most basic standards of human decency that I as an American Jew find unbearable to witness.

In the Soviet Union, capitalism triumphed over communism. In the United States, capitalism triumphed over democracy. - Fran Lebowitz, author (b. 1950)

SIMILAR CASES

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/28/rachel-corrie-verdict-exposes-israeli-military-mindset

The case laid bare the state of the collective Israeli military mind, which cast the definition of enemies so widely that children walking down the street were legitimate targets if they crossed a red line that was invisible to everyone but the soldiers looking at it on their maps. The military gave itself a blanket protection by declaring southern Gaza a war zone, even though it was heavily populated by ordinary
Palestinians, and set rules of engagement so broad that just about anyone was a target.

With that went virtual impunity for Israeli troops no matter who they killed or in what circumstances – an impunity reinforced by Tuesday's verdict in Haifa.

The Israeli military commander in southern Gaza at the time was Colonel Pinhas "Pinky" Zuaretz. A few weeks after Corrie's death, I (as the Guardian's correspondent in Israel) spoke to him about how it was that so many children were shot by Israeli soldiers at times when there was no combat. His explanation was chilling.

At that point, three years into the second intifada, more than 400 children had been killed by the Israeli army. Nearly half were in Rafah and neighbouring Khan Yunis. One in four were under the age of 12.

I focussed on the deaths of six children in a 10-week period, all in circumstances far from combat. The dead included a 12-year-old girl, Haneen Abu Sitta, killed in Rafah as she walked home from school near a security fence around one of the fortified Jewish settlements in Gaza at the time. The army made up an explanation by falsely claiming Haneen was killed during a gun battle between Israeli forces and Palestinians.

Zuaretz conceded to me that there was no battle and that the girl was shot by a soldier who had no business opening fire. It was the same with the killings of some of the other children. The colonel was fleetingly remorseful.

"Every name of a child here, it makes me feel bad because it's the fault of my soldiers. I need to learn and see the mistakes of my troops," he said. But Zuaretz was not going to do anything about it; and by the end of the interview, he was casting the killings as an unfortunate part of the struggle for Israel's very survival.

"I remember the Holocaust. We have a choice, to fight the terrorists or to face being consumed by the flames again," he said.

In court, Zuaretz said the whole of southern Gaza was a combat zone and anyone who entered parts of it had made themselves a target. But those parts included houses where Palestinians built walls within walls in their homes to protect themselves from Israeli bullets.

In that context, covering up the truth about the killings of innocents, including Corrie, became an important part of the survival strategy because of the damage the truth could do to the military's standing, not only in the rest of the world but also among Israelis.

The death of Khalil al-Mughrabi two years before Corrie died was telling. The 11-year-old boy was
playing football when he was shot dead in Rafah by an Israeli soldier. The respected Israeli human rights organisations, B'Tselem, wrote to the army demanding an investigation. Several months later, the judge advocate general's office wrote back saying that Khalil was killed by soldiers who had acted with "restraint and control" to disperse a riot in the area.

But the judge advocate general's office made the mistake of attaching a copy of its own confidential investigation, which came to a very different conclusion: that the riot had been much earlier in the day and the soldiers who shot the child should not have opened fire. In the report, the chief military prosecutor, Colonel Einat Ron, then spelled out alternative false scenarios that should be offered to B'Tselem. The official account was a lie and the army knew it.

The message to ordinary soldiers was clear: you have a free hand because the military will protect you to protect itself. It is that immunity from accountability that was the road to Corrie's death.

She wasn't the only foreign victim at about that time. In the following months, Israeli soldiers shot dead James Miller, a British television documentary journalist, and Tom Hurndall, a British photographer and pro-Palestinian activist. In November 2002, an Israeli sniper had killed a British United Nations worker, Iain Hook, in Jenin in the West Bank.

British inquests returned verdicts of unlawful killings in all three deaths, but Israel rejected calls for the soldiers who killed Miller and Hook to be held to account. The Israeli military initially whitewashed Hurndall's killing but after an outcry led by his parents, and British government pressure, the sniper who shot him was sentenced to eight years in prison for manslaughter.

That sentence apparently did nothing to erode a military mindset that sees only enemies.

Three years after Corrie's death, an Israeli army officer who emptied the magazine of his automatic rifle into a 13-year-old Palestinian girl, Iman al-Hams, and then said he would have done the same even if she had been three years old was cleared by a military court.

Iman was shot and wounded after crossing the invisible red line around an Israeli military base in Rafah, but she was never any closer than 100 yards. The officer then left the base in order to "confirm the kill" by pumping the wounded girl full of bullets. An Israeli military investigation concluded he had acted properly.

Tuesday's court verdict in Haifa will have done nothing to end that climate of impunity. Nor anything that would have us believe that Israel's repeated proclamation that it has the "most moral army in the world" is any more true than its explanation of so many Palestinian deaths.

4) How the US and Israeli justice systems whitewash state crimes
How the US and Israeli justice systems whitewash state crimes

Courts are supposed to check the abuse of executive power, not cravenly serve it. But in the US and Israel, that is now the case

Glenn Greenwald, Guardian, Tuesday 28 August 2012

http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/aug/28/us-israel-justice-whitewash-state-crimes

“How We Became Israel:

Peace means domion for Netanyahu—and now for us.”

By Andrew J. Bacevich • September 10, 2012 (The American Conservative, reprinted in Harper’s Magazine Nov. 2012)

Peace means different things to different governments and different countries. To some it suggests harmony based on tolerance and mutual respect. To others it serves as a euphemism for dominance, peace defining the relationship between the strong and the supine.

In the absence of actually existing peace, a nation’s reigning definition of peace shapes its proclivity to use force. A nation committed to peace-as-harmony will tend to employ force as a last resort. The United States once subscribed to this view. Or beyond the confines of the Western Hemisphere, it at least pretended to do so.

A nation seeking peace-as-dominion will use force more freely. This has long been an Israeli predilection. Since the end of the Cold War and especially since 9/11, however, it has become America’s as well. As a consequence, U.S. national-security policy increasingly conforms to patterns of behavior pioneered by the Jewish state. This “Israelification” of U.S. policy may prove beneficial for Israel. Based on the available evidence, it’s not likely to be good for the United States.

Here is Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu describing what he calls his “vision of peace” in June 2009: “If we get a guarantee of demilitarization ... we are ready to agree to a real peace agreement, a demilitarized Palestinian state side by side with the Jewish state.” The inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank, if armed and sufficiently angry, can certainly annoy Israel. But they cannot destroy it or do it serious harm. By any measure, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) wield vastly greater power than the Palestinians can possibly muster. Still, from Netanyahu’s perspective, “real peace” becomes possible only if Palestinians guarantee that their putative state will forego even the most meager military capabilities. Your side disarms, our side stays armed to the teeth: that’s Netanyahu’s vision of peace in a nutshell.

Netanyahu asks a lot of Palestinians. Yet however baldly stated, his demands reflect longstanding Israeli thinking. For Israel, peace derives from security, which must be absolute and assured. Security thus defined requires not simply military advantage but military supremacy.
From Israel’s perspective, threats to supremacy require *anticipatory action*, the earlier the better. The IDF attack on Iraq’s Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981 provides one especially instructive example. Israel’s destruction of a suspected Syrian nuclear facility in 2007 provides a second.

Yet alongside perceived threat, perceived opportunity can provide sufficient motive for anticipatory action. In 1956 and again in 1967, Israel attacked Egypt not because the blustering Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser possessed the capability (even if he proclaimed the intention) of destroying the hated Zionists, but because preventive war seemingly promised a big Israeli pay-off. In the first instance, the Israelis came away empty-handed. In the second, they hit the jackpot operationally, albeit with problematic strategic consequences.

For decades, Israel relied on a powerful combination of tanks and fighter-bombers as its preferred instrument of preemption. In more recent times, however, it has deemphasized its swift sword in favor of the shiv between the ribs. Why deploy lumbering armored columns when a missile launched from an Apache attack helicopter or a bomb fixed to an Iranian scientist’s car can do the job more cheaply and with less risk? Thus has *targeted assassination* eclipsed conventional military methods as the hallmark of the Israeli way of war.

Whether using tanks to conquer or assassins to liquidate, adherence to this knee-to-the-groin paradigm has won Israel few friends in the region and few admirers around the world (Americans notably excepted). The likelihood of this approach eliminating or even diminishing Arab or Iranian hostility toward Israel appears less than promising. That said, the approach has thus far succeeded in preserving and even expanding the Jewish state: more than 60 years after its founding, Israel persists and even prospers. By this rough but not inconsequential measure, the Israeli security concept has succeeded. Okay, it’s nasty: but so far at least, it’s worked.

What’s hard to figure out is why the United States would choose to follow Israel’s path. Yet over the course of the Bush/Clinton/Bush/Obama quarter-century, that’s precisely what we’ve done. The pursuit of global military dominance, a proclivity for preemption, a growing taste for assassination—all justified as essential to self-defense. That pretty much describes our present-day MO.

Israel is a small country with a small population and no shortage of hostile neighbors. Ours is a huge country with an enormous population and no enemy, unless you count the Cuban-Venezuelan Axis of Ailing Dictators, within several thousand miles. We have choices that Israel does not. Yet in disregarding those choices the United States has stumbled willy-nilly into an Israeli-like condition of perpetual war, with peace increasingly tied to unrealistic expectations of adversaries and would-be adversaries acquiescing in Washington’s will.

Israelification got its kick-start with George H.W. Bush’s Operation Desert Storm, a triumphant Hundred-Hour War likened at the time to Israel’s triumphant Six-Day War. Victory over the “fourth largest army in the world” fostered illusions of the United States exercising perpetually and on a global scale military primacy akin to what Israel has exercised regionally.
Soon thereafter, the Pentagon announced that henceforth it would settle for nothing less than “Full Spectrum Dominance.”

Bill Clinton’s contribution to the process was to normalize the use of force. During the several decades of the Cold War, the U.S. had resorted to overt armed intervention only occasionally. Although difficult today to recall, back then whole years might pass without U.S. troops being sent into harm’s way. Over the course of Clinton’s two terms in office, however, intervention became commonplace.

The average Israeli had long since become inured to reports of IDF incursions into southern Lebanon or Gaza. Now the average American has become accustomed to reports of U.S. troops battling Somali warlords, supervising regime change in Haiti, or occupying the Balkans. Yet the real signature of the Clinton years came in the form of airstrikes. Blasting targets in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Serbia, and Sudan, but above all in Iraq, became the functional equivalent of Israel’s reliance on airpower to punish “terrorists” from standoff ranges.

In the wake of 9/11, George W. Bush, a true believer in Full Spectrum Dominance, set out to liberate or pacify (take your pick) the Islamic world. The United States followed Israel in assigning itself the prerogative of waging preventive war. Although it depicted Saddam Hussein as an existential threat, the Bush administration also viewed Iraq as an opportunity: here the United States would signal to other recalcitrants the fate awaiting them should they mess with Uncle Sam.

More subtly, in going after Saddam, Bush was tacitly embracing a longstanding Israeli conception of deterrence. During the Cold War, deterrence had meant conveying a credible threat to dissuade your opponent from hostile action. Israel had never subscribed to that view. Influencing the behavior of potential adversaries required more than signaling what Israel might do if sufficiently aggravated; influence was exerted by punitive action, ideally delivered on a disproportionate scale. Hit the other guy first, if possible; failing that, whack him several times harder than he hit you: not the biblical injunction of an eye for an eye, but both eyes, an ear, and several teeth, with a kick in the nuts thrown in for good measure. The aim was to send a message: screw with us and this will happen to you. This is the message Bush intended to convey when he ordered the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Unfortunately, Operation Iraqi Freedom, launched with all the confidence that had informed Operation Peace for Galilee, Israel’s equally ill-advised 1982 incursion into Lebanon, landed the United States in an equivalent mess. Or perhaps a different comparison applies: the U.S. occupation of Iraq triggered violent resistance akin to what the IDF faced as a consequence of Israel occupying the West Bank. Two successive Intifadas had given the Israeli army fits. The insurgency in Iraq (along with its Afghan sibling) gave the American army fits. Neither the Israeli nor the American reputation for martial invincibility survived the encounter.

By the time Barack Obama succeeded Bush in 2009, most Americans—like most Israelis—had lost their appetite for invading and occupying countries. Obama’s response? He even more closely to the evolving Israeli way of doing things. “Obama wants to be known for winding down long wars,” writes Michael Gerson in the Washington Post. “But he has shown no hesitance when it comes to shorter, Israel-style operations. He is a special ops hawk, a drone militarist.”
Just so: with his affinity for missile-firing drones, Obama has established targeted assassination as the very centerpiece of U.S. national-security policy. With his affinity for commandos, he has expanded the size and mandate of U.S. Special Operations Command, which now maintains an active presence in more than 70 countries. In Yemen, Somalia, the Philippines, and the frontier regions of Pakistan—and who knows how many other far-flung places—Obama seemingly shares Prime Minister Netanyahu’s expectations: keep whacking and a positive outcome will eventually ensue.

The government of Israel, along with ardently pro-Israel Americans like Michael Gerson, may view the convergence of U.S. and Israeli national-security practices with some satisfaction. The prevailing U.S. definition of self-defense—a self-assigned mandate to target anyone anywhere thought to endanger U.S. security—is exceedingly elastic. As such, it provides a certain cover for equivalent Israeli inclinations. And to the extent that our roster of enemies overlaps with theirs—did someone say Iran?—military action ordered by Washington just might shorten Jerusalem’s “to do” list.

Yet where does this all lead? “We don’t have enough drones,” writes the columnist David Ignatius, “to kill all the enemies we will make if we turn the world into a free-fire zone.” And if Delta Force, the Green Berets, army rangers, Navy SEALs, and the like constitute (in the words of one SEAL) “the dark matter ... the force that orders the universe but can’t be seen,” we probably don’t have enough of them either. Unfortunately, the Obama administration seems willing to test both propositions.

The process of aligning U.S. national-security practice with Israeli precedents is now essentially complete. Their habits are ours. Reversing that process would require stores of courage and imagination that may no longer exist in Washington. Given the reigning domestic political climate, those holding or seeking positions of power find it easier—and less risky—to stay the course, vainly nursing the hope that by killing enough “terrorists” peace on terms of our choosing will result. Here too the United States has succumbed to Israeli illusions.

Andrew J. Bacevich is a visiting professor at Notre Dame.


Moor and Loewenstein bring ‘After Zionism’ to DC by Diana Galbraith on October 10, 2012
Most anyone who spends a couple of hours or days in the West Bank can see that not only is there not a viable “second state” for the ever-elusive “two-state solution.” When one goes to the West Bank to see how rapidly the settlements are being built, and their strategic arrangement, it is clear that there never was going to be one.

My Palestine advocacy work began three summers ago when I met Palestinians for the first time while studying in Jordan. I was aghast at how their stories—and the facts on the ground, even in Jordan—countered everything I had grown up believing and the entire master narrative in the US about the Middle East. The following summer I traveled to Palestine to see for myself, and my suspicions were confirmed. It also became clear to me as I traveled with Anna Baltzer, Rich Forer, and other Jewish-Americans that the dialogue in that community on Israel/Palestine was shifting. Having grown up around amazing and special Jewish friends, neighbors, colleagues, and classmates, the occupation and the devastating effects it has had for almost a century on indigenous Palestinians was an affront to everything I know and believe about Judaism.

Working with Jewish activists, such as the ICAHD activist who gave us a tour of East Jerusalem, who desire freedom and justice for all in Israel/Palestine made it clear to me that there is another chapter of history unfolding beyond Zionism, that in essence a “post-Zionist” narrative and movement are emerging. Needless to say, the ongoing discussion about a “two-state solution” is an illusion and a political cover to for allow settlement expansion and the inevitable failure of Oslo. We know that politics, particularly in the US, is part of the problem and an obstruction to justice for Palestinians. It therefore falls to the rest of us to recognize the reality on the ground and to push the dialogue in that direction.

In their new book *After Zionism* [a collection of essays], Antony Loewenstein and Ahmed Moor take as their premise that there is a *de facto* one state that between the river and the sea that is divided by a regime of apartheid rather than by geographical boundaries. They wanted to move the dialogue forward to match the status on the ground. What *After Zionism* does is take the one-state situation as an
empirical reality on the ground and the book's 14 contributors - many of the key thinkers and activists working on the question of Israel/Palestine today - explain exactly how and why this is the case. Their project seeks to begin, rather, to jumpstart the dialogue going forward about what one state will look like and how it will come about.

I've known of Ahmed and Antony's work for awhile. I follow them on Twitter (where Antony is regularly trolled for his views) and have saw Ahmed speak at the Penn BDS conference. As soon as I learned that they would be in DC for a book tour, I knew I wanted to help. The one-state scenario is crystal clear to me and part of my advocacy for Palestine is bringing that dialogue into the mainstream. I was able to help connect activists on the ground in DC to raise awareness of the tour, so when the date finally arrived to attend their book talk at the Palestine Center in DC, I was excited.

The lunchtime event on Thursday, September 13 was well-attended, with the a combination of retirees, full-time workers dashing over from their workplaces, and interns assigned to take notes. I ran into a PLO intern, who said that the PLO’s official stance is still two states, which I find baffling.

Yousef Munayyer, Executive Director of the Palestine Center, did his usual excellent job at moderating the talk. He prompted Antony and Ahmed to discuss the content of the book, the overall project, and their broader views on the occupation and what the future looks like. The discussion then opened to the audience. Questions were constructive and curious, there was no hostility or token person intent on accosting the speakers.

Antony and Ahmed took turns speaking about how and why they came to develop the project, which was two years in the making. Antony said that the two hadn’t met in person until two weeks before, when the book tour began. Ahmed has been squeezing time out of his busy schedule as a graduate student at Harvard and Soros Fellow to make appearances for the book while Antony is also promoting his “Disaster Capitalism” book and arrived in DC from an appearance in Haiti.

Antony emphasized the importance of Jewish and Palestinian activists working together in a meaningful way, beyond “warm, fuzzy” polite dialogue that rarely produces results and urged the Jewish community to revise its support of Zionism. Ahmed cited the extensive settlement patterns in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as evidence that Israel will never withdraw. The book contains essays by folks of various religious backgrounds. Antony comes from a secular Jewish family and Ahmed is a Palestinian-American who was born in Rafah.
They are pushing the dialogue the farthest forward it has ever been, and counter the hysterical canard that equality in the region equals doom for Israel and Judaism. There is such a thing as “life after Zionism,” and their book is an opening chapter in that dialogue.

**About Diana Galbraith**

Diana Galbraith is a graduate student of Arab Studies at Georgetown with an emphasis on Palestine and post-colonialism. Originally from the San Francisco bay area, her Palestinian advocacy work began in 2009 while studying Arabic in Jordan. She is based in Washington, DC and interning at the Middle East Institute.


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