

THE MYTH OF THE SO-CALLED GENEROUS OFFER

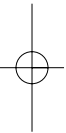
**WHY THE PALESTINIANS REJECTED A PEACE THAT WAS NO PEACE
(Taken from the pamphlet of this name published by Friends of
Sabeel UK, Courtesy of Tony Graham)**

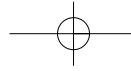
Introduction

We have put together some information and ideas from Jewish, Palestinian and Christian sources to counter an untruth that has been circulated not only in the media but also in the Churches; that in the summer of the year 2000 the Palestinians were offered a settlement that would have given them very nearly everything they wanted, and that they turned that offer down because they are a violent people. It is not only our view that Barak's offer was a trap - they were damned if they turned it down and damned if they accepted it - but there are reputable Jewish voices that say the same thing. **Jeff Halper**, for instance, of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, could see what was coming years ago.

I met Jeff Halper in February 2001 as he took some of us on a conducted tour around the north of Jerusalem where we saw some of the settlements and roads he describes in his articles. I had read much of his writings in the magazine called **News from Within** and heard and transcribed a tape of the presentations he gave in the USA where he has toured with Salim Shawamreh, a Palestinian whose house keeps being demolished - a process captured on film by the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD)

Jeff is Jewish and teaches anthropology at Ben-Gurion University. When asked why he works tirelessly to protest the actions of his own government he says simply that he doesn't want his children to grow up in an apartheid state. It seems to me that Jeff's passion for justice is thoroughly Jewish, as the actions of the Israeli State are un-Jewish. Especially in that the processes that oppress Palestinians constitute a massive abuse of law by the people who gave the Law to humanity; if Israelis steal land and demolish houses they do it legally, if they kill people they do it legally, while for Palestinians simply to live an ordinary life is defined as illegal.





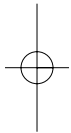
Most of what Jeff says here – reprinted from an article in **Cornerstone** the newspaper of the **Sabeel Center in Jerusalem** which we circulate in the UK – he has been saying for a long time; that the settlements and the roads connecting them have so split up the West Bank into 227 fragments so as to make a two-state solution impossible so that apartheid is the only possible outcome. The roads he talks about have been largely paid for by the United States. By January 2000 he was talking about 250 miles of road that with security areas either side are wide enough to lay four football fields on them side by side. All the way. And all that on an area smaller than the county of Devon [Jeff quoted Delaware] which has a population of 1,015,969 whereas the West Bank has a population of about two and a half million.

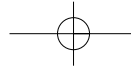
Why the Palestinians Refused Barak's "Generous Offer" – Jeff Halper

Since the Camp David talks in the summer of 2000, the notion has taken root that Israel "generously" offered 95 percent of the West bank to the Palestinians, as well as parts of East Jerusalem, only to have been answered with violence, with another Intifada. This has been used to "prove" that the Palestinians are not true "partners" for peace. Even the mainstream Israeli peace movement feels "betrayed" by the Palestinians and places the responsibility for their current suffering squarely at the Palestinian doorstep.

All this is based, however, on inaccurate information and false assumptions. Inaccurate information: the figure of 95 percent (even 96 percent) was bandied about by Clinton; Israel never offered more than 88 percent. Still, one could argue, even 88 percent sounds extremely generous. After all, no one gets 100 percent in negotiations. That leads to the false assumption: that 88 percent of the territory equals 88 percent sovereignty, or that 95 percent of the territory equals 95 percent - even 100 percent - sovereignty.

The issue of territory is important, especially territorial contiguity. But the crucial issue is one of control - not the 95 percent, but the significance of the other 5 percent (or 12 percent) It's like a prison. Looking at a blueprint you might get the impression that the prisoners actually "own" the place. After all, they have 95 percent of the area - the living areas, the exercise yard, the cafeteria, the work areas. All the prison authorities have are a measly 5 percent: the prison walls, the bars around the cells and a few control points. But that is what makes a





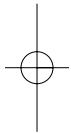
prison, the difference between a mini-state dependent on and controlled by Israel, and an economically viable, truly sovereign state with a coherent territory and control of its borders

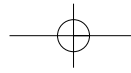
The issue, then, is how the prison is constructed. The 5-12 percent of the west Bank (excluding East Jerusalem, also a major point of control) that Israel insists on retaining is diffused in a way that it constitutes a Matrix of Control. The settlements, bypass roads and highways, border crossings, military bases and checkpoints - the walls and bars of the Occupied Territories - altogether add up to only 5-12 percent. Yet they absolutely nullify the sovereignty and viability of any Palestinian state. All this can only be appreciated however by looking at and understanding the reality "on the ground."

Constructing the Matrix of Control and "Destructing" Palestine

The Matrix of Control is a subtle construction, and it is no wonder that people following the conflict from afar cannot perceive it in the media. Although it is built on not-so-subtle policies and activities of the occupation, people invested so much hope in the "peace process" that they did not want to hear about the "other" process - the steady strengthening of Israel's grip on the Occupied Territories even as it was negotiating "peace." Let us recall what has happened "on the ground" since the Oslo Agreement was signed in September, 1993. In that time Israel has:

- Imposed a permanent "closure" preventing masses of Palestinian workers from seeking employment in Israel and preventing Palestinians in general from entering Jerusalem. The Palestinian workforce has been transformed from one based on agricultural and an incipient industrial and commercial economy to impoverished casual laborers dependent on an Israeli economy from which they are now largely excluded.
- Expropriated thousands of dunums of farm and pasture land from its Palestinian owners for exclusive Israeli settlements and roads;
- Uprooted more than 120,000 olive and fruit trees - for settlement or road construction, for "security" purposes, or for denying ownership rights to their Palestinian owners.
- Established more than 40 new settlements, including whole cities





like Kiryat Sefer, Tel Zion and Giva'ot, constructed some 90,000 new housing units in East Jerusalem and the settlements, and doubled its settler population.

- Demolished more than 120,000 Palestinian homes, including some 500 during the last Intifada.

- Began construction of a massive 480km system of highways and "bypass" roads serving the settlements while dissecting the West Bank and Gaza into dozens of tiny islands.

- Exploited the natural resources of the Occupied Territories, illegally drawing, for example, 25 percent of its water from the West Bank and Gaza while leaving Palestinians with chronic water shortages;

- Vandalised the West bank, the Holy Land, one of the world's most sacred heritage sites, destroying its historical landscape and turning it into a disposal site for Israel's industrial and urban wastes.

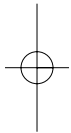
- Virtually completed the incorporation of the West Bank into Israel proper, thereby eliminating any possibility of a viable and truly sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel, raising the danger of apartheid.

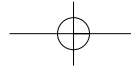
- Implemented plans for a "unilateral separation" - another sign of apartheid - including the construction of a massive system of bunkers, walls, fences,, minefields, "security crossings," checkpoints and other fortifications.

All this is, of course, in direct violation of international law (especially the Fourth Geneva Convention) and UN resolutions. It raises serious questions about who is or is not actually a "partner" for peace. It certainly provides a context for understanding why a second intifada has broken out.

The Matrix of Control

The matrix of Control, which Israel had laid over the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza since 1967 - but increasingly since 1993 - works like the Japanese game of "Go." Instead of defeating your opponent as in chess, in "Go" you win by immobilising the other side, by gaining control of key points of a matrix, so that every time your opponent moves, another obstacle of some kind is encountered.





In effect Israel has done the same thing to the Palestinians. The Matrix of Control virtually paralyses the Palestinian population without "defeating" it or even conquering much territory. It can even give the illusion of being fair and 11 generous," which is what causes "confusion," when the matrix victims attempt to resist. What are they resisting?" people ask. Israel offered them 95 percent!"

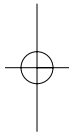
The matrix is composed of several overlapping layers.

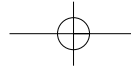
•**First** is the actual physical control of key links and nodes that create the actual matrix of control of settlements and their extended "master plans," a massive system of highways and by-pass roads, army bases, closed military areas, "nature reserves," control of aquifers and other natural resources, internal checkpoints, control of all border crossings, area "A," "B," "C," in the West Bank,, "H-1 " and "H-2" in Hebron, Yellow, Green, blue and white areas in Gaza and much more.

•**The second layer** of the matrix is bureaucratic and legal - the myriad planning policies, permits and policies of enforcement that entangle the Palestinian population in a tight web of restrictions. These include political zoning of land as "agricultural" in order to freeze the natural development of towns anti villages; a politically motivated system of building permits, enforced by house demolitions, designed to confine the population to its constricted enclaves, land expropriation for (solely Israeli) "public purposes;" restrictions of planting and the wholesale destruction of Palestinian crops; licensing and inspection of Palestinian businesses; closure; restrictions on movement and travel; control over water and other resources; the use of holy places as pretexts for a "security presence," and more.

•**The third layer** of the matrix involves the use of violence to maintain control over the matrix - the military occupation itself, including imprisonment, the extensive use of collaborators to control the local population, pressures exerted on families to sell their lands, the undemocratic, arbitrary and violent rule of the Military Commander of the West Bank and the Civil Administration, and much more.

Israelis do not know any more of this system than anyone else, and what little they know they justify as "security." Palestinians, of course, are



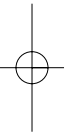


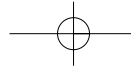
highly attuned to the presence of the matrix since they hit up against it every time they move, but they have not articulated it before world public opinion. Israel's actions on the ground since Oslo and its virtual completion of the Matrix of Control comprise the background of the latest Intifada. The breaking point - the Intifada in September 2000, the Palestinian street's orders to Arafat riot to sign the Camp David agreements - came because Israel attempted to force the Palestinians to accept a "peace" with the Matrix of Control. Although the Palestinians claim only 22 percent of historic Palestine for their state, Israel desires to control the entire West Bank but seeks to "get rid of" its 3 million inhabitants by imposing on them a non-viable bantustan enjoying only limited sovereignty - a kind of occupation by consent. This is unacceptable to the Palestinians, as it should be, and hence the current wave of repression, the last-ditch attempt to break Palestinian resistance, that is the only agenda of the Sharon-Perez "unity" government.

Only resistance from within Palestine and Israel (preferably effective nonviolent resistance) coupled with international support, will prevent the establishment of a new apartheid state in the world.

Jerusalem, 1996

A young German pastor told us as he got on the bus about his journey from Bethlehem that morning. How the soldiers got on at the checkpoint, and as they looked at the papers of Palestinians travelling to work, to visit, to get medical help, to study, to pray - they were telling anyone under thirty to get off the bus and go home. He had remonstrated unsuccessfully with the officer in fluent Hebrew. The utter petty cruelty angered him so much he had to tell us how outrageous he thought it was. As he finished Mora Carmi took the microphone and said simply, "these things happen to every one of us every day. And we know that if we bate them - we are lost. " And I realised that we were involved in a spiritual battle, and how much difference our prayers and our witness can make.





Mustafa Bargouti wrote in the same issue of Cornerstone.

Mustafa is a medical doctor and Palestinian civil society leader, President of the union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees as well as Director of the Health, Development Information and Policy Unit in Ramallah. Among the additional points he made were these:

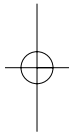
- The 'generous territorial offer' was less than the 95% claimed partly because Israel's "total" does not include Jerusalem, the Dead Sea, the Jordan Valley or the settlements in its computations. [or the Latrun 'no-man's land' area]

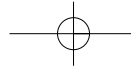
- Palestinians were asked to "compromise the compromise." In their acceptance of Oslo, Palestinians accepted the idea of a two-state solution on less than half of the area that had originally been assigned to them. The 1947 United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, from which Israel derives its legitimacy, provided 45% of historical Palestine for the Palestinian state. The demands of UN Resolution 242 for Israel to withdraw to the 1967 borders clearly indicating that no land can be illegally occupied - means a Palestinian state would be founded on 22% of historic Palestine even if it had 100% of the West Bank.

- But a large part of even that 22% has been annexed so that three million Palestinians are held hostage for the sake of 450,000 illegal settlers. East Jerusalem is the prime example; 63.5 square kilometres - 90 percent of the land annexed by Israel as 'East Jerusalem' - in fact belonged to 28 Palestinian West Bank villages, which suddenly found themselves part of an 'indivisible,' 'historic' and 'sacred' Jewish city.

- UN Resolution 194 §11 says that refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date or compensated if they chose not to do so. Camp David would have obliterated any rights these people - 3.7 million Palestinian refugees registered by the UN and about 2 million unregistered - might have had.

"The Israeli government tried to bargain away the right of return for Palestinian refugees as well as sovereignty over Jerusalem and the Muslim Holy site of Al Aqsa mosque for an entity that is not even a feasible state. Israel wanted to achieve the termination of the conflict without tangible compromises or resolving the basic issues. Their





intransigence at the negotiating table has led to the rejection of the Camp David settlement, and now they accuse the Palestinians of not wanting peace."

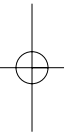
The New Battle for History

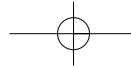
On 24th July the Revel Stephen Sizer, who has been an invaluable source of information throughout the intifada, (<stephen@sizers.org>) circulated a piece called NEW BATTLE FOR HISTORY that uncovered what is really going on. There is a battle for public opinion in which the publishing of a map - which we reproduce in black and white sketch form on the back cover - makes a difference. After initial comment, the substance of this section was published in the Israeli newspaper Ha 'Aretz;

Barak-Sharon Unofficial "Map" Finally Surfaces

The latest duelling. . . is a battle for public opinion conducted through a convoluted debate over who offered what to whom and who is responsible for the failing of the "peace process". Down the road it's a battle for whose version of history will prevail. The very notion for instance that Middle East history is for many primarily Presented through the medium of CAN - home of honorary Israeli lobbyists Wolf Bitzer and Larry King and whose Chief International correspondent is married to the former US Assistant Secretary of State for the media - should be considered ludicrous. But then sometimes reality is stranger than fiction.

As for the official Palestinian and Arab versions of all this, they too are terribly self-serving and skip over or distort crucial elements of what has actually transpired since the Madrid conference - partly because the Arab media is owned and controlled by the various Arab client regimes and partly because the level of even semi-independent and professional journalism coming from the Arab countries remains mediocre at best. This said, this "official PLO version" of what has happened of late is nevertheless of considerable interest, as is the unofficial map that finally surfaces of just what it is the Israelis were trying to get the Palestinians to agree to (or alternatively presenting to them knowing that they would have to reject it).





The following was written by Akiva Eldar and published in Ha'aretz, on 24 July 2001. It has been edited for reasons of space (the full text is available from us)

What went wrong at Camp David - the official PLO version

Members of the panel of experts working alongside the Palestinian negotiating team, who have American passports in their possession that open Israel Defense Forces roadblocks, have embarked in recent weeks on a round of appearances throughout Israel. They lecture at living room meetings in homes in Herzliya and meet with forums of confused intellectuals in Jerusalem.

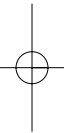
The questions repeat themselves: ... The young Palestinians, among them a legal adviser from New York and a doctoral student in law from Oxford, pull out an answer - in excellent English - to every question.

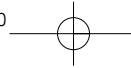
When Barak embarked on a spate of attacks against Arafat under the heading "I exposed his true face," the members of the Palestinian panel decided that this time they would not neglect Israeli public opinion. Under the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) logo, they collected the typical questions asked by Israeli listeners and next to them detailed the Palestinian positions and their version of Camp David and the events that snowballed from it.

Their version, especially concerning the map that Barak proposed there, is quite close to the one that Robert Malley, former U.S. president Bill Clinton's special assistant for Arab-Israeli affairs, is now publishing in the world press (to Clinton's displeasure).

1. Why did the Palestinians reject the Camp David Peace Proposal?

For a true and lasting peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, there must be two viable and independent states living as equal neighbors. Israel's Camp David proposal, which was never set forth in writing, denied the Palestinian state viability and independence by dividing Palestinian territory into four separate cantons entirely surrounded, and therefore controlled, by Israel. The Camp David proposal also denied Palestinians control over their own borders, airspace and water resources while legitimizing and expanding illegal Israeli





colonies in Palestinian territory. Israel's Camp David proposal presented a 're-packaging' of military occupation, not an end to military occupation.

2. Didn't Israel's proposal give the Palestinians almost all of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967?

No. Israel sought to annex almost 9 percent of the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in exchange offered only 1 percent of Israel's own territory. In addition, Israel sought control over an additional 10 percent of the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the form of a "long-term lease." However, the issue is not one of percentages - the issue is one of viability and independence

3. Did the Palestinians accept the idea of a land swap?

The Palestinians did consider the idea of a land swap. However, Israel's Camp David proposal of a nine-to-one land swap (in Israel's favor) was viewed as so unfair as to seriously undermine belief in Israel's commitment to a fair territorial compromise.

4. How did Israel's proposal envision the territory of a Palestinian state?

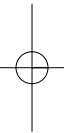
Israel's proposal divided Palestine into four separate cantons surrounded by Israel: the Northern West Bank, the Central West Bank, the Southern West Bank and Gaza. (Movement of people and goods and access to the outside world would be under total Israeli control) Such a Palestinian state would have had less sovereignty and viability than the Bantustans created by the South African apartheid government.

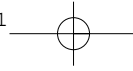
5. How did Israel's proposal address Palestinian East Jerusalem?

The Camp David Proposal required Palestinians to give up any claim to the occupied portion of Jerusalem... In effect, such a proposal would create Palestinian ghettos in the heart of Jerusalem.

6. Why didn't the Palestinians ever present a comprehensive permanent settlement proposal of their own in response to Barak's proposals?

The comprehensive settlement to the conflict is embodied in **United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338**, as was accepted by both sides at the





Madrid Summit in 1991 and later in the Oslo Accords of 1993. The purpose of the negotiations is to implement these UN [Security Council] resolutions (which call for an Israeli withdrawal from land occupied by force by Israel in 1967) and reach agreement on final status issues.

7. Why did the peace process fall apart just as it was making real progress toward a permanent agreement?

Palestinians entered the peace process on the understanding that

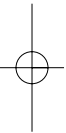
- (1) it would deliver concrete improvements to their lives during the interim period,
- (2) that the interim period would be relatively short . . . , five years, and
- (3) that a permanent agreement would implement United Nations [Security Council] Resolutions 242 and 338. But the peace process delivered none of these things....

8. Doesn't the violence which erupted following Camp David prove that Palestinians do not really want to live in peace with Israel?

Palestinians recognized Israel's right to exist in 1988 and reiterated this recognition on several occasions including Madrid in 1991 and the Oslo Accords in September, 1993. Nevertheless, Israel has yet to explicitly and formally recognize Palestine's right to exist. The Palestinian people waited patiently since the Madrid Conference in 1991 for their freedom and independence despite Israel's incessant policy of creating facts on the ground by building colonies in occupied territory (Israeli housing units in Occupied Palestinian Territory - not including East Jerusalem - increased by 52 percent since the signing of the Oslo Accords and the settler population, including those in East Jerusalem, more than doubled). The Palestinians do indeed wish to live at peace with Israel but peace with Israel must be a fair peace -not an unfair peace imposed by a stronger party over a weaker party.

9. Doesn't the failure of Camp David prove that the Palestinians are just not prepared to compromise?

The Palestinians have indeed compromised. In the Oslo Accords, the Palestinians recognized Israeli sovereignty over 78 percent of historic Palestine (23 percent more than Israel was granted pursuant to the 1947 UN Partition Plan) on the assumption that the Palestinians would be able to exercise sovereignty over the remaining 22 percent. The overwhelming majority of Palestinians accepted this compromise but this ...





was ignored at Camp David and the Palestinians were asked to "compromise the compromise" and make further concessions in favor of Israel. Though the Palestinians can continue to make compromises, no people can be expected to compromise fundamental rights or the viability of their state.

10. Have the Palestinians abandoned the two-state solution and do they now insist on all of historic Palestine?

The current situation has undoubtedly hardened positions on both sides, with extremists in both Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories claiming all of historic Palestine. Nevertheless, there is no evidence that the Palestinian Authority or the majority of Palestinians have abandoned the two-state solution. The two-state solution, however, is most seriously threatened by the on-going construction of Israeli colonies and bypass roads aimed at incorporating the Occupied Palestinian Territories into Israel.

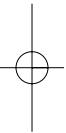
Without a halt to such construction, a two-state solution may simply be impossible to implement already prompting a number of Palestinian academics and intellectuals to argue that Israel will never allow the Palestinians to have a viable state and Palestinians should instead focus their efforts on obtaining equal rights as Israeli citizens.

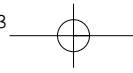
11. Isn't it unreasonable for the Palestinians to demand the unlimited right of return to Israel of all Palestinian refugees?

The refugees were never seriously discussed at Camp David because Prime Minister Barak declared that Israel bore no responsibility for the refugee problem or its solution. Obviously, there can be no comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict without resolving one of its key components: the plight of the Palestinian refugees. There is a clearly recognized right under international law that non-combatants who flee during a conflict have the right to return after the conflict is over. But an Israeli recognition of the Palestinian right of return does not mean that all refugees will exercise that right.

What is needed in addition to such recognition is the concept of choice. Many refugees may opt for

- (i) resettlement in third countries,
- (ii) resettlement in a newly independent Palestine (though they originate from that part of Palestine which became Israel) or
- (iii) normalization of their legal status in the host country where





they currently reside. In addition, the right of return may be implemented in phases so as to address Israel's demographic concerns.

Courtesy of Tony Graham of Friends of Saheel, UK

