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Of Invasions and Intifadas...

Day by day, another catastrophe is unfolding in the Middle East. After an escalation of suicide bombings in its cities, and using the pretext of 'self-defence', Israel has launched a bloody war on the occupied territories of Palestine. Since the early hours of March 30, most of the West Bank has been under siege, and the parameters of attack grow daily.

Tanks, bulldozers and APC's roll into Qalqiliya, Ramallah, Beit Jala, Nablus, Tulkaram, Bethlehem, into refugee camps at Azza, Aida, Jenin, Balata and Deheishe. Warplanes circle overhead. Infantry take over the streets. Bulldozers demolish entire areas. The Palestinian Authority chairman, Yasser Arafat is imprisoned in the basement of his besieged Ramallah compound. Everywhere the story repeats itself: with the aim of seeking out 'terrorists', houses and buildings are stormed, men and boys are rounded up and taken away, reports of torture are coming out, families are confined to their homes, deprived of food, water, medical assistance and electricity.

Blood and fear flows through the West Bank: terrified children watch their relatives being shot and their homes destroyed; ambulances are refused access to the injured and the dead; untold numbers of civilians are hurt or killed. And nobody is immune: peace activists, Israeli protesters, babies,

old women, medics, nuns, priests and even ancient religious sites have all come under fire.

Wilfully oblivious to the hard fact that an invaded, impoverished and humiliated nation can never be silenced, the Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, seemingly has no strategy, no end plan other than to reduce Palestine to a pile of corpses and rubble - his very own final solution for the Middle East. And as we watch the massacre taking place before us, two questions keep coming to the fore: who, in this equation, are the real terrorists and why, as the Israeli state systematically wipes out a people, does the world approve such action by its silence?



**THE LAUNCH OF IMC-PALESTINE
www.jerusalem.indymedia.org**

The IMC-Palestine website was launched 28 March, 2002. Using Indymedia's innovative "open-publishing" newswire, journalists and activists on the scene have had the ability to upload articles, images, audio and video, directly and immediately to the Indymedia newswires, without the filters and the corporate agendas of most media. Media coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is shockingly problematic, politically loaded and unevenly biased (especially in the US) highlighting a need for a diverse platform. With very little publicity, the IMC-Palestine site has had phenomenal traffic, a testament to the poignancy of immediate, authentic, grassroots reporting.

Blood, bulldozers and bodies

More than 4000 Palestinians have been arrested and first estimates are of around 500 dead and many more injured

Reports from Indymedia Jerusalem and Israel, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) ambulance services highlight the continuing dire situation in the West Bank since Friday 29 March:

Ramallah: On the 1st of March, the Israeli army shelled the local security building Al Ammen Al Weka'ai [Preventative Security], a government building with around 400 people inside, including 60 women. Reporters said the building was on fire and others heard of shelling and explosions also seemed to be coming from the Amaari Refugee camp.

Most of Israel's retaliation for suicide bombings was directed at Ramallah, particularly Arafat's headquarters there, most of which

was destroyed on Friday and Saturday (29-30 March). Some 30 international volunteers, mostly from European nations, arrived at his compound to act as a "human shield" to protect him, Palestinian families and emergency service personnel.

During these days, Israeli soldiers raided the main maternity hospital in Ramallah/Al-Bireh. Two doctors, two nurses and hospital worker blindfolded and taken away by Israeli army. Two medics in Ramallah were thrown out of ambulance and beaten. Ambulances are now only able to operate for top-urgent cases only as they continue to be attacked and harassed. IMC Palestine reports on the 5th of April that international volunteers have begun to ride in ambulances in an effort to get medical aid to the

dying and injured. There are around seven brave Israeli women volunteering at the UPMRC medical services in the hope that the Israelis will not shoot at their own.

A report from the UN Clinic next to the Ibd'a Social Centre in the Deheishe Camp highlights one distressing incident that the medical personnel witnessed on the 5th of April: A pregnant woman from Deheishe went to the clinic because she was having contractions.

The UN medics helped her give birth, but the baby was born sick. Mother and the baby needed to be rushed to the hospital, but IDF patrols told the UN medics that the ambulance was not allowed to move. As a result, the baby died 2 hours later.

There is a serious public health hazard in Ramallah due to

shortages of water (65%), electricity (50%), destruction of the city infrastructure, and serious interruptions of garbage collection and access to medical care. This has led to hundreds of calls for food and medicine relief from families and households. Despite these pleas, on the 3rd April, an aid truck previously let through by the occupation forces was attacked. Soldiers took off medical supplies, sugar, flour and other food aid stamping it into the ground, then threw tear gas again at the group. Earlier they had shot at an UN convoy.

On the streets hundreds of detainees are being released in the midst of a curfew and are unable to reach homes putting them at serious risk of beatings, being shot or re-arrested.



For further information on what is happening on the ground in palestine:

www.jerusalem.indymedia.org or www.indymedia.org.il

Nablus: On 5 April the old city of Nablus which is occupied almost exclusively by families, was heavily shelled by tanks and helicopter gunships as the IDF prepared to storm the streets. Many casualties have been reported.

The Balata refugee camp has also been fired upon with Apache helicopters. It is being reported that there are even more casualties and deaths emerging but still there is none or extremely limited medical help available.

IMC Jerusalem received an eyewitness report from Nablus that the Israeli army is using Palestinians in the Balata refugee camp as human shields. Civilians are being forced to walk in front of the tanks as the army sweeps through the area.

Mahmoud Alul, governor of Nablus, has had his home taken over by Occupation soldiers and it has been destroyed inside. However resistance was strong and people disabled 8 tanks, keeping the Israeli military at bay around the perimeter of the old city. Unfortunately, the Occupation forces have carried explosives into many people's homes and have destroyed them. On the 9th of April the IDF has continued its strikes in the city and broke into houses, conducting house-to-house searches for Palestinian fighters. More than thirty Palestinians have died in the current battles since Friday and many of the bodies still remain on the streets, however the city hospital have been able to bury 15 in a mass grave, in fear of disease and sanitation hazards.

Tulkaram: The city was invaded on Monday morning, 1st of April, and has been under complete siege and curfew. Schools and institutions are being used as prisons and military camps. The ambulances are also unable to leave the station whilst many areas are without electricity. Four deaths and six injuries from live ammunition were reported.

Bethlehem: A full invasion of Bethlehem occurred on the morning of the 2nd of April.

There has been the loss of the emergency ambulance telephone line and one ambulance has been completely destroyed by a passing tank, and ambulances are not able to leave the station. Half the city remains without electricity. On the 5th of April, the Red Crescent office reported that ambulance drivers have not checked in and are

Reports from Islamic Association for Palestine (IAP) IAP NEWS:

"We are getting reports of pure horror... In the name of human decency the Israeli military must allow our ambulances safe passage to help evacuate the wounded and deliver emergency supplies of medicines and food." (UNRWA, April 7, 2002)

"...[the] non-discriminate violence and lack of access to basic needs such as food and water have become major threats to children, including their physical and psychological well-being." (UNICEF, April 5, 2002)

"Humanitarian crisis looming as over one million people enter day 10 of total curfew... [there is a] high risk of epidemics in Ramallah and other areas."

(Palestine Red Crescent Society, April 7, 2002)

"...continued disruption to municipal garbage collection, together with the water shortages and lack of access to medical care, is causing public health concerns, especially in Ramallah." (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA, April 5)



Attack on the Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem:

The occupation by Israeli tanks at Manger Square and attack on The Church of the Nativity on the 3-5th April, have been confirmed from inside the church and from witnesses in its vicinity. There were around 300 Palestinian locals and religious scholars inside the church, all being labelled as terrorists by the Israelis, and some indeed are resisting. However there are reports that all have released their weapons before entering the

church. The IDF shelled the building regardless, shattering some of its windows, with snipers also firing into the church.

missing, later issuing a statement of the cessation of all Red Crescent operations. On 7th April the Israeli army announced a full curfew in Bethlehem. The Israeli DCO's office, stated that if they sighted even old women or children "they might just be arrested. We don't know what each individual soldier might do". Anyone on the street runs the risk of being shot. Later on, witnesses in the Azza refugee camp reported shelling of the camp, and that 7 APC's (armoured personnel carriers) were firing at buildings full of civilians, local and international. In the Beit Sahour district, almost 250 arbitrary arrests were reported.

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IMC Palestine also carries reports that the 40 to 50 priests and nuns in the church are not being held hostage, as claimed by an IDF spokesman (and by CNN). They remain to care for the wounded Palestinians who have been deprived of emergency medical care by the IDF.

Anton Salman of the Antonius Society of Bethlehem, said "they bombed the door and they destroyed part of the building. We are now inside the church without any protection."

The Vatican has sharply criticised Israel for its "imposing unjust and humiliating conditions" on the Palestinians, whilst also condemning "any acts of terrorism that target Israel." As of the 7th of April the Red Crescent have still been denied entry to the Church of Nativity, unable to deliver food and medical aid to the estimated 200 people still trapped inside. On the 9th, a 23 year old Palestinian policeman was shot dead at the Church Of Nativity by an Israeli sniper when he tried to extinguish a fire that burnt one of the church offices in the wake of Israeli heavy shooting. Bethlehem governor Muhammad Al Madani who was present among those besieged in the church said that IDF tanks shot at the Church of Nativity and that the army had prevented firemen from extinguishing the fire.

Attack of the Bethlehem Mosque

On the 2nd April, the Mosque of Umar ibn al-Khattab in Bethlehem, a holy site for Muslims and Christians alike, was bombed by the IDF. At least five people were reported dead and 30 wounded so far.

Urgent Appeal from the Presidential compound in Ramallah

April 8th, for international awareness of the need to take immediate action

We, members of a civil mission for the protection of Palestinian people, are presently in President Arafat's Palace in Ramallah. We are currently subjected, as are all the habitants of Ramallah and the Palestinian autonomic zones, to a siege of unprecedented violence by the Israeli Army. Our greatest suffering today is not our catastrophic unsanitary situation, but the terrible fate reserved for the populations in Jenin and Nablus. The occupation army, violating all the Geneva conventions and all moral principles, is systematically massacring the population; civilians as well as resistants are arbitrarily being assassinated. The Israeli Army prevents all medical assistance to the wounded, and shoots at ambulances and health workers. The Israeli government seeks to criminalize the right to resist, although that right is legitimized by international law. We issue an urgent appeal to all populations of the world, to their governments and international organizations: In the face of the Israeli government's ruthless efforts to exterminate the Palestinian people and their identity, and in this situation of denial of human dignity, you can not remain immobilized. Before the massacre is completed, and under the threat of being condemned by history, make the Israeli government accountable for its actions.

Force it to stop immediately the massacre . Save lives
The 40 internationals in the Presidential Palace in Ramallah
UN Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA): (972-2) 589-04

War in Jenin

Jenin has been the site of many atrocities over the last few days, with bodies in the streets and fierce fighting and resistance. Twenty-two Israelis were killed in fighting at the camp and estimates of Palestinian deaths are at several hundred and thousands of serious casualties.

On the 6th of April at Al Razi hospital in Jenin, doctors and medics watched on helplessly as 28-year-old Nidal Al Haj bled to death inside the hospital yard; they couldn't get to him because of the shelling. Hospitals report a shortage of oxygen and other medical supplies. Jenin reports a dreadful humanitarian situation. The Israeli army continuously attacks the refugee camp and the city throughout the day and night.

Apache helicopters have attacked and seriously damaged around almost 100 houses in the western side of the camp, and the Israel army is systematically bulldozing houses in the refugee camp, which is home to some 15,000 Palestinians in an area of one square kilometre. Many people are reported injured, bleeding in the streets and inhabitants report that there are

bodies scattered in different locations in the camp, but again ambulances came under attack when trying to gain access to these bodies.

For two days the camp resisted the Israeli invasion so now the nature of the invasion has changed. In an unprecedented breach of human rights, Israeli occupation soldiers announced in the afternoon that they would cease their fire in order to allow the women and elderly to get water, only to arrest and detain them and use them as human shields later on. The detainees were seen strapped to the tanks and personnel carriers, which resumed their bombardment campaign shortly after.

Strikingly, the Israeli officer previously heading the Jenin reoccupation offensive was reprimanded and removed from his duty after having failed to take over the camp in the past four days. Currently, Shaul Mofaz, Israel's Chief of Staff, heads the brutal operation personally. Palestinian officials have thus held him directly responsible for the atrocities taking place in the Jenin refugee camp. Reports of mass graves have also begun to filter out of Jenin.



Up date on the "shot at" International protesters

On the 1st of April international volunteers protesting at the occupation and two members of the Palestinian press were shot at with live rounds in Beit Jalla whilst attempting to visit people in homes that have been taken over by the Occupation Forces. These were warning shots but bullets ricocheted and shrapnel caused injuries. Among the wounded were:

- British citizen: Aisa Kiysue, Kunle Ibidun, Chris Dunham
- Australian citizen: Kate Irving (currently undergoing surgery)
- American citizen: Said Chill

The wounded were taken to Al Huissen Hospital in Bethlehem.

Word from the hospital staff has it that people were hit in the back of the head, face and one was hit in the upper thigh and knees. The two Palestinians were hit in the chest.

UPDATE: The wounded are O.K., including Kate Irving who underwent a two hour operation to remove shrapnel from her stomach and abdomen areas. Kunle Ibidun's injuries were minor and he has been given permission to leave Bethlehem, and is on his way home.

387 Israeli soldiers refuse to serve in the occupied territories:

"We, who sensed how the commands issued to us in the Territories, destroy all the values we had absorbed while growing up in this country. We, who understand now that the price of Occupation is the loss of IDF's human character and the corruption of the entire Israeli society. We, who know that the Territories are not Israel, and that all settlements are bound to be evacuated in the end. We hereby declare that we shall not continue to fight this War of the Settlements. We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people. We hereby declare that we shall continue serving in the Israel Defence Forces in any mission that serves Israel's defence. The missions of occupation and oppression do not serve this purpose - and we shall take no part in them." (<http://www.couragetorefuse.org/>)

Statement from UK citizens in the Al-Azzeh Refugee Camp, Bethlehem

"April 4th 2002: We are British nationals who are currently staying within the Al-Azzeh refugee camp in Bethlehem. We have been offered evacuation from Bethlehem by the British Consulate but have chosen to stay in Al-Azzeh in solidarity with the Palestinian people under occupation.

The Palestinian people do not have the option of leaving. Recent experience has shown that an international observer presence is effective in limiting Israeli brutality against civilians. Our presence here represents the support of the international community. We can act as an accurate source of information for the British government and public, and for the rest of the world.

With Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it is clear that the supply of arms to Israel adds to the terror felt by the Palestinian people. We note

that the present leader of the Israeli government, Ariel Sharon, has widely been held responsible for the massacres that took place in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Southern Lebanon in 1982. Our presence here is intended to prevent a repetition of these crimes.

We feel that Britain has a particular responsibility towards the Palestinian people due to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948. So far as we are aware, there has been no significant comment from the British Foreign Office in response to the latest Israeli military offensive of the past few days.

This stands in contrast to the breaking of diplomatic ties with Israel by the Belgian government and condemnation by other European Union governments. This silence implies consent. To us this lack of action is another example of the British governments'

foreign policy being determined by that of the United States.

As British nationals we demand that our government;

Ban the issuing of arms export licenses for the supply to Israel of equipment used in this illegal occupation, with particular reference to spare parts for Apache helicopters, communication equipment, Land Rover vehicles and handcuffs and other restraint devices.

Pressurise the Israeli government to withdraw from the occupied territories and respect international recognition of a Palestinian authority and territories under its control, using diplomatic pressure up to and including cutting ties.

Implement and maintain economic sanctions upon Israel for its repeated violations of the fourth Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UN resolutions 242 and 194.

We call upon the British public to take action to help bring a peaceful resolution to this tragic situation by means of Boycotting of Israeli goods and services to bring economic pressure on the Israeli government.

Joining demonstrations against the Israeli military aggression in solidarity with the Palestinian people and support of their basic human rights.

We recognise that our position here in Bethlehem places us at risk. Many deaths have already resulted from this most recent Israeli invasion, and this situation has been exacerbated by the deliberate obstruction of access for ambulances and medical personnel. We are neither eager nor prepared to die, but we will not turn our backs on the Palestinian people."

Martha Anderson, Philip Boast, Loukas Christodoulou, Jenny, James, Paul Stockley

Mediated views shown by corporate media

Robert Fisk (journalist) - "closed military areas' achieved another Israeli victory over the Western television satellite stations. Yesterday, the BBC, Sky and CNN, with their own crews largely prevented from filming in the reoccupied Palestinian cities, all ran footage of the Bethlehem battle taken by Israeli soldiers. Rather than refuse to use the tape unless their own crews were permitted access to the carnage, the three channels all dutifully used the film taken by the army of occupation. Another milestone in the collapse of journalism in the Middle East"

"We talked to a family in Jenin Camp. They are in their home with five children. All day they have been hearing bombs all around. Tens of houses have been destroyed by the shelling. Many died inside. There are people bleeding on the streets, some are children. The Red Cross is unable to do anything. The camp is surrounded and under heavy indiscriminate fire. It's a massacre. Several phone calls have arrived at the Jenin hospital. People are calling for help. The doctors said that most of the people calling say: "Help us, we are going to die, please help us". Several people whose houses have been bombed are running around the street carrying white flags, with nowhere to go."

From IMC Palestine: Letters from the massacre in Jenin. Flashpoints: Eyewitness to all out assault on crowded Jenin Camp

Civilians at risk in urban centres

Most major urban population centres (Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus, Jenin and Tubas) and surrounding villages continue to be under siege, with an estimated 1,000,000 people under curfew which is maintained by Israeli sniper's shooting civilians on sight, even inside their homes. Most critical is the situation for the 15,000 civilians in Jenin refugee camp, where there is heavy fighting and destruction of homes, and no safe place for families.

The risk of infection, dehydration and intestinal illnesses, especially for infants and the elderly, are a very real problem, since drinking water supplies are no longer available to half the population. The presence of corpses in the streets and in buildings further affects the physical and psychological health of civilians. Without a functioning health system, controlling communicable diseases will become an acute problem if the situation is not remedied immediately.

There is also the real possibility of increased malnutrition, especially in rural areas, due to increasing poverty from unemployment and restricted agricultural activities and transport of food, including animal feed and veterinary care. The disruption of agricultural activities is likely to have long term effects on the economy, household income and the agricultural sector as a whole.

No guaranteed evacuation of casualties: Urgent health requirement is to ensure that combatant and non-combatant casualties have access to immediate medical attention, and that those killed receive a dignified burial.

Endangerment of emergency workers: Reports of firing on ambulances, deliberate destruction of ambulances (7 PRCS ambulances ruined since March 29), interference with medical evacuation, and personal attacks and arrest of medical staff are frequent and well-documented.

No ICRC protection: The International Red Cross has also suffered from a number of "security incidents" with Israeli forces involving its own staff, and attacks on its vehicles and premises, prompting the international body to call such behaviour "unacceptable"; the West Bank Humanitarian Task Force (UNOCHA, April 3) termed the behaviour toward the Red Cross and Red Crescent as "blatant disrespect."

Conditions in hospitals: Most hospitals have been surrounded by Israeli tanks, compromising the free and safe movement of staff, patients and emergency



vehicles. Hospital generators, electricity and phone lines and water supplies have been damaged by Israeli soldiers. Transport of necessary supplies have also been impeded and intercepted; hospitals are reporting critical shortages of basic life provisions such as food, water, electricity, as well as medicines and oxygen and blood supplies. There is high risk of hospital infections due to the lack of even modicum sanitary conditions. The "safe place" status of hospitals and protection for injured persons, guaranteed by the Geneva Conventions, has not been respected.

Special need institutions: Orphanages, homes for the disabled and blind, the chronically ill, and the aged, report being damaged in attacks directly, and indirectly through cut-off of basic supplies. "Children's institutions are severely affected by shortages of food and water." (UNICEF, April 5)

Conditions for detainees: The conditions of detention and health of detainees, who can now be held for up to 18 days without access to a lawyer, court appearances or outside visits, cannot be monitored. Human rights organisations have reported cases of mistreatment and abuse, including the deliberate breaking of bones.

<http://www.iap.org>

E-mails: iapinfo@iap.org OR iapinfo@yahoo.com

Urgent call to action - come to Palestine

The local and international community of Palestine repeat our call for international civilians to come to Palestine and help end the violence and destruction of our communities. Please help us NOW!!

The situation is desperate, international volunteers are needed for witnessing, reporting and providing humanitarian aid. With no international intervention in sight, and reporters denied access, the role of the international community is of the utmost urgency. This is what human solidarity is about.

To go to Palestine, contact the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). The ISM is a growing movement of Palestinian and international activists working to raise awareness of the Palestinian struggle for freedom and an end to Israeli occupation. We utilise non-violent, direct-action methods of resistance to confront and challenge the illegal Israeli occupation forces and policies.

Beyond the immediate relief, international presence brings a message of solidarity and humanity to a population that is rapidly losing faith in the world. www.palsolidarity.org,

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