

September 2012

PASI NEWS

Newsletter of Peace Action of Staten Island, www.peacesi.org 718-989-2881

Calendar:

- SAT., SEPT. 8, PASI MEETING, Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place, 5:45 – 8 PM
- SAT., SEPT. 15, 12 Noon. Black Heritage Parade. Vanderbilt & Targee. Festival in Tappen Park.
- SEPT 15. 12pm – 7pm: Occupy Town Square (Washington Square Park, 5th Ave and Waverly)
- SEPT 16. 12pm – 7pm: Occupy Town Square (Thomas Paine Park, Worth St. btw Lafayette and Centre)
- Oct 7 – ELEVENTH ANNIVERSARY OF AFGHANISTAN WAR
- FRI., NOV. 2, 7 to 10 PM. MAKE FOOD NOT WAR DINNER. St. Sylvester's School, 884 Targee St.
- SAT., NOV. 10, PASI MEETING, Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place, 5:45 – 8 PM

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Saturday, September 8, 5:45 to 8 pm

Voices for Peace & Justice for Israel & Palestine

Staten Island Museum, 75 Stuyvesant Place

Sometimes in the midst of gloom, it is easier to recognize the bright spots. We have civil war in Syria. Israel's leadership, with some American politicians backing them up, has threatened attacks on Iran over its uranium enrichment program. And we haven't seen any movement towards a peace agreement in the Middle East for years.

On Saturday, September 8th, at its first fall public meeting, Peace Action will be shining the light on some of the positive developments: on the individual and organizational Jewish voices, both in Israel and in the United States, that are calling for peace and democracy in Israel and Palestine.

Our guest speaker will be **Sefi Yahav, a young Jewish Israeli activist** who is a student here in New York temporarily and has been working hard for unity between Palestinian and Israeli workers and students.

One state-side example of this type of work is the "Unity Campaign" at Arizona State University between the American-Israeli Alliance (AIA) and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP).

We have also invited a **representative from Jewish Voice for Peace.** JVP was formed in September, 1996 and is a national organization with

27 chapters and 100,000 online activists. JVP's mission seeks an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; security and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians; a just solution for Palestinian refugees based on principles established in international law; an end to violence against civilians; and peace and justice for all peoples of the Middle East.

At a future date we hope to invite representatives of J Street, an American lobbying group founded in



2008 which supports diplomatic and peaceful path to a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is Peace Action's hope that this will turn into more extensive conversations at different venues and times throughout the coming year sponsored by open-minded and peace-loving Staten Islanders.

PASI ON THE BEACH



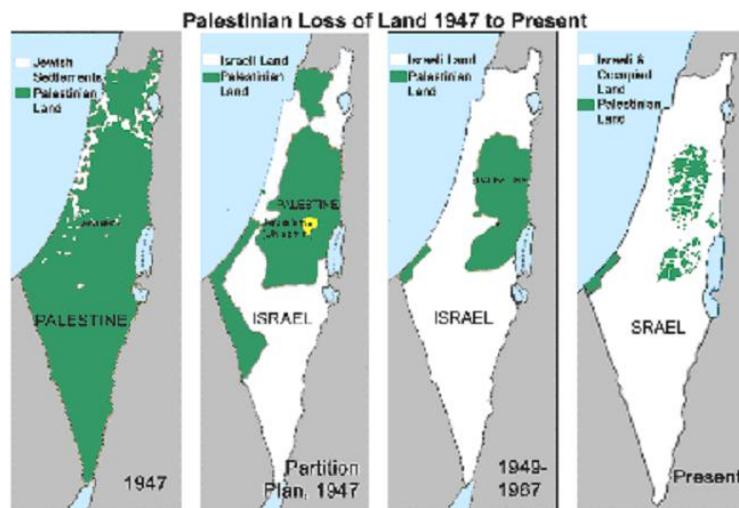
This summer, PASI tabled at the Pride Festival, Occupy Town Square, Night Out Against Crime, and Back to the Beach. To the left, is the PASI booth at Midland Beach staffed by chair Eileen Bardel and board member John Lawrence. We asked young and old to earn a Peace Sign button by signing a Peace Petition. (PASI Photo)

Realities in Palestine 2012 - An Eye-Opener

By Carol Husten and Pat Salomon

Three Peace Action members just returned from an eye-opening journey to Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories. We went because of the troubling news coming from Gaza about collective punishment, because of images of a 300 mile wall, of separation between Israelis and Palestinians and perhaps, most of all, to understand the nature of this occupation, the longest occupation in recent history, in place since the 1967 Israel-Palestine war.

We traveled with the Interfaith Peace Builders (IFPB, www.ifpb.org), and 30 US delegates, of various ages, religions, and occupations. We traveled mainly along the "green line" which is not green at all but dusty and rather desolate. This line was the boundary between Israel and the West Bank created by the 1967 War. The sequence of maps below, show that since 1967 continuous land confiscation east of the green line and west of the Jordan River have markedly reduced the land remaining in Palestinian control. Whether taken by the military or by settlers, the remaining small and isolated



parcels of land barely constitute a viable second state.

We visited UN offices and an NGO with expertise on the refugee health, housing and economic status. Six and a half million Palestinians now live abroad, displaced by war or by systematic removal, as villages are demolished, land confiscated, families forced out of their ancient homes. One and a half million Palestinians remain in the occupied territories. We learned about and saw crowded, impoverished refugee camps with poor sanitation, sparse water, weak infrastructures, more than 50 years after the war.

We saw the new Israeli settlements strategically placed on hilltops, with trees, fountains and swimming pools, towering above and surrounding the low lands where Palestinians have their farms, and

olive trees and fields. And we saw the wall, at least 20 feet high, often passing close to Palestinian homes, separating Palestinian farmers from their lands. The farmers would have to walk many miles each day to simply get to their fields. As a result the lands often lay fallow. According to Israeli policy, when a field is not planted for 3 years, it can be confiscated, so loss of Palestinian income, land and traditional livelihood are occurring continuously.

We passed through the gates and channels that are called checkpoints. Palestinians in the West Bank must pass through these to enter what is now Israel proper. The system of chutes and gates is weirdly reminiscent of cattle yards. Each day adults and children must show identity cards, be questioned and searched by the military. Some people do this on a daily basis, some only for emergencies. For all it is a degrading and sometimes dangerous restriction of mobility

Much of life within the refugee camps and in the traditional villages is shaped by Israeli's permitting policies: No matter what the request or issue is, however, no permits are granted to make physical improvements in living conditions. No cisterns for water collection. No wells can be dug. No buildings can be renovated. Essentially almost nothing can be improved or changed.

Every Palestinian family is affected by the occupation. In the name of security, all Palestinians are suspect. They are subject to imprisonment called "administrative detention" for up to 6 months without charges. Nearly every Palestinian family has had members arrested. Every adult male we met, including professors, community elders, water experts, and land owners, have all had spent some time in prison.

Lest you think the entire trip was negative, it is important to talk about the Palestinian families we met and their hope. They consistently speak of non-violent solutions. They want the occupation to end, the land confiscation to end and the return of their confiscated lands. They want to manage their own water and electricity and roads and schools. They are spurred on by support from the many Israeli citizens who are at their sides, defending Palestinian equality and human rights, creating solar and wind power solutions, standing against expansions of the Wall.

We know that to some, any criticism of Israel is equated with anti-Semitism. But we saw with our own eyes the unacceptable results of more than 50 years of occupation. We want to share our concerns with those who can envision other ways for Israel to protect itself. If you are interested in learning more about our experience, please contact us through Peace Action of New York State, info@panys.org.

Carol Husten is a board member of Peace Action Fund NYS and Pat Salomon is a board member of Massachusetts Peace Action.

WHY WAR IS THE WORST CRIME *by Richard Greve*

When countries go to war, killing becomes sanctioned. Bombs reign down on the innocent, soldiers aim their guns to kill, and the more they kill, the more they are lauded. Some guidelines are now in place to protect civilians, but they are most often ignored, and when found to be true, penalties are light or don't happen. War, is basically legalized killing. It is a blight on humankind, and shows how dangerous a species we are. The extent of killing done by humans to each other is unparalleled in the animal kingdom.

Under International Law, nations are entitled to self defense, and to defend themselves from attacks by others. But the aggressors in war, those who attack, are committing the greatest of crimes because it leads to wonton death and destruction, often in the millions.

After WW11, the biggest war in history, more guidelines were set up, to prevent war. The Geneva Convention, outlawing aggressive wars was established, the UN was established to prevent wars, and the Nuremberg Principles were established to assure accountability for wars and war crimes, declaring that soldiers, officers and civilians in command of war, could not merely say they were following orders when committing crimes against humanity.

The US, committed a war crime when it attacked Iraq a decade ago. Iraq had done no harm to us. None of our leaders have been prosecuted for this crime of initiating a war of aggression against Iraq.

Now, Israel is threatening to attack Iran, with or without US backing. If either or both countries attack Iran, it will be another war crime---initiating a war against a nation that has not harmed either country. Both Israel and the US have many nuclear bombs and war heads capable of destroying Iran completely. Iran signed the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, and is inspected for nuclear weapons. Israel did not sign the NPT, and has made its weapons in secret, and its nuclear sites are never inspected because it did not sign the treaty. Iran has also called for a Nuclear Free Zone in the Middle East, which would protect all the nations of the region from the danger of nuclear attack. Only Israel, among the nations of the region, has refused to call for a Nuclear Free Zone in the Middle East.

Will the US and/or Israel commit another great crime by launching a war against Iran? Will the Geneva Conventions and the Nuremberg Principles apply to them if they attack Iran? They probably won't be applied, and that is the tragedy. The aggressor nations, if powerful enough do what they want, ignore International Law, and commit war crimes, and there are no consequences. This needs to change, if it doesn't, our species will destroy itself, and the planet along with it.

Rich Greve serves on the PASI Board and is active in Veterans for Peace.



Dr. Schwartz's Reading List

Here are some book recommendations from Dr. Richard Schwartz, Professor Emeritus, College of Staten Island, and author of *Judaism and Vegetarianism*, *Judaism and Global Survival*, *Mathematics and Global Survival*, and *Who Stole My Religion*, and 150 articles at JewishVeg.com/Schwartz:

- "A New Voice for Israel: Fighting for the Survival of the Jewish Nation" by Jeremy Ben-Ami, Director, J Street (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)
- "The Unmaking of Israel" by Gershom Gorenberg (Harper 2011)

He has also ordered:

- "The Crisis of Zionism" by Peter Beinart (Henry Holt, 2012)

A Staten Islander himself, Dr. Schwartz, argues that Jews in the U.S. should speak out about what is happening in Israel. In Chapter 6 on "Who Stole My Religion?" he writes about revitalizing Judaism and applying Jewish Values to Help Heal our Imperiled Planet. (The complete book can be read freely via a link just under the picture of the cover of the book at www.WhoStoleMyReligion.com.) Dr. Schwartz is President, Jewish Vegetarians of North America (www.JewishVeg.com) and the Society of Ethical and Religious Vegetarians (SERV) and Associate producer of A SACRED DUTY (aSacredDuty.com).

THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF AUGUST 12 1949

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

The Defendants at Nuremberg



Peter Beinart, author of "The Crisis of Zionism" speaks to 200 attendees at a Peace Action sponsored lecture in Lenox, MA, on August 21, 2012. (PASI photo)

**Peace Action of
Staten Island**

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PASI Meeting Schedule

September 8, 2012
November 10, 2012
January 12, 2013
March 9, 2013
May 11, 2013
June 8, 2013

**VOICES FOR
PEACE & JUSTICE
FOR ISRAEL &
PALESTINE**
Saturday
September 8, 5:45 PM
Staten Island Museum,
75 Stuyvesant PI, SI, NY

Thank You for Joining or Renewing Your PASI Membership.

If you aren't a member yet or still need to renew, it's easy.

Membership form

We have a sliding scale membership. No member turned away.

Name _____
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I can help with

- Actions
- Lobbying
- Membership
- Speakers Bureau
- Fundraising
- Communication/Publicity

Contribution

- \$26 (regular)
- \$40 (family)
- \$10 (senior, student, fixed)
- Other _____

*Make check out to PASI and
mail to address at left.*

***Pssst... You can save a stamp
by joining online at
www.peacesi.org***

*Peace Action of Staten Island, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-partisan, non-profit organizations. Peace Action is
dedicated to promoting the non-violent resolution of conflict, the abolition of nuclear weapons, halting the global
spread of conventional arms, building a human rights culture and supporting human needs instead of militarism.*

Make Food Not War Dinner

Celebrating Our 10th Anniversary & Honoring Staten Island Peace Makers

Friday, November 2, 2012 - 7:00 - 10:00 p.m.

The Lifestyles Educational Center (formerly St. Sylvester's School)

884 Targee St., Staten Island, NY 10304

Catered by Lifestyles for the Disabled

Pre-paid tickets \$50 (\$60 at the door)

Tickets available online at www.peacesi.org

