

## PEOPLE POWER IN THE HOLY LAND: HOW POPULAR NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE CAN TRANSFORM THE ISRAELI- PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a human tragedy that has defied political settlement for more than 50 years. Official negotiations have neither ended Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories nor fostered the development of a viable Palestinian state, both prerequisites for a secure peace. This article argues that an alternative strategy based on civilian-led, nonviolent struggle, or “people power,” is needed to transform the conflict. It analyzes tactics and strategies of collective nonviolent direct action and their relevance to ending a situation of occupation. Conflict theory and principles of nonviolent action are applied to a case-study analysis of the 1987 *Intifada*, a mostly nonviolent popular uprising that forced the issue of Palestinian statehood to the forefront. A central conclusion is that official-level negotiations are insufficient; a strategy of sustained, nonviolent direct action involving all parties, with adequate moral and material support from the international community, can help break the cycle of violence and pave the way to a just peace.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since 1948 a major policy goal of the United Nations (UN) and the international community has been the creation of two sovereign states, Israel and Palestine, that would coexist peacefully within internationally recognized borders. For more than fifty years the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, pitting an internationally recognized state against a nationalist movement, has defied resolution while producing incredible bloodshed. As of the writing of this article and since the start of the second, or al-Aqsa, *Intifada* in September 2000, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem reports that more than 1,800 Palestinians and 450 Israelis have been killed (B'Tselem Report 2003). A vicious cycle of violence resulting in massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law have transformed Israel-Palestine into a killing field, where an absence of visionary leadership and a culture of fear and distrust have intensified the intractability of this conflict.

There has been no shortage of high-level diplomatic efforts to resolve this conflict: a failed UN partition plan in 1947; countless UN resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from lands captured in the 1967 war and occupied illegally (the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem); and a number of “track I” (formal) and “track II” (informal) negotiated peace plans. None achieved a breakthrough in the conflict. The latest diplomatic attempt to overcome the impasse is led by the international Quartet comprised of the United States, the UN, the European Union, and Russia in consultation with Arab countries in the region. The Quartet has produced a “road map” for achieving Palestinian statehood by the year 2005.

While this “road map” is a positive symbol of the international community’s commitment to resolving the conflict, there is little evidence to suggest that this timeline will offer any more

hope for a peaceful settlement than past attempts made by high-level government officials. Just as there can be no military solution to the fundamentally political problem of creating a viable Palestinian state, there can be no political settlement as long as politicians and diplomats alone dictate the parameters for peace. The fundamental disconnect between official-level negotiations, taking place behind closed doors, and the reality in the streets will doom the “road map” to failure. In multidimensional, protracted social conflicts like this one, where traditional approaches have consistently failed to bring peace, an alternative to deadlock led by citizen-based initiatives is imperative (Rupesinghe 1996, 153). Furthermore, in a conflict marked by considerable power asymmetries, where the roots of the conflict are structural and based in the institutions of occupation, negotiations and problem-solving techniques alone are insufficient (Galtung 1990; Burton 1990). In such cases, a course of action that lies between talking and killing is needed to address the sources of the conflict.

It is not possible to provide a comprehensive analysis or a diplomatic history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict here. Instead, the focus is on nonviolent direct action, a set of techniques that allow ordinary individuals to wield considerable power in a conflict without the use of physical violence (Sharp 1973). The nonviolent technique is not to be confused with nonviolence as a religious or ethical belief, but what will be discussed in this article is nonviolent action as a form of struggle. Popular nonviolent resistance to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip was a prominent part of the first Palestinian Intifada from 1987-1993, consisting of both successes and failures. Individuals on both sides of the Green Line (Israel’s border before the 1967 Six Days War) have been and continue to be engaged in nonviolent struggle to bring an end to the illegal occupation and to create a viable Palestinian state.

The article begins with a discussion of the theoretical and historical foundations of nonviolent struggle, offering important insights about the mechanics of “people power”. Classical military strategists are surveyed to provide useful lessons to those planning campaigns of nonviolent resistance. Section III of the article explores the application of nonviolent direct action in the first Palestinian Intifada and analyzes the outcome of these actions. At the end of this section it will be argued that terrorist warfare has undermined, rather than helped, the Palestinian self-determination movement. The use of violence against a militarily and economically superior opponent has not brought Palestinians any closer to their goal of independent statehood. Using lessons learned from the prosecution of nonviolent combat in the first Intifada, the final section of this article will offer policy recommendations for governments, international organizations, NGOs, and the Israeli, Palestinian, and international activists already engaged in nonviolent struggle.

## **II. PEOPLE POWER: A BRIEF OVERVIEW**

Nonviolent resistance, or what Mahatma Gandhi often referred to as “war without violence,” is a strategy for transforming societal attitudes and institutions (Sharp 1979, 4). This is neither weak nor passive nor new. In every decade of the past century, on five continents, popular movements that have employed nonviolent methods have successfully overthrown oppressive regimes, thwarted military coups and defended human rights (Ackerman and Duvall 2000; Wehr and Burgess 1994). The Gandhi-led movement for Indian independence against British colonial domination, the 1986 “people power” movement in the Philippines that toppled the corrupt Marcos regime, the 1989 revolutions to replace communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and the recent student-led movement to overthrow

Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia are only a few examples. In each of these cases, ordinary people wielding nonviolent “weapons” (including strikes, boycotts, and protests) took matters into their own hands and worked outside of normal political channels to bring about incredible societal transformations.

Gene Sharp, a pioneer in the field of nonviolent action writes extensively on the theory and practical application of nonviolent direct action Sharp has shown in his research that neither culture, religion, geography, nor wealth has constrained the willingness of people to embrace this form of struggle (Sharp 1973, 63). Case study analyses show that *strategy* is a crucial determinant of success or failure for both nonviolent and violent struggles (Ackerman and Kruegler 1994, 318). This important finding suggests that strategic theories of renowned military strategists like Sun Tzu, Liddell Hart, and Michael Howard can be used to build upon and improve strategies of nonviolent combat. Notably, these strategists emphasize the importance of targeting the opponent’s centers of gravity and using psychological tactics to undermine political will to maintain systems of oppression as part of an overall strategy of collective defense (Burrowes 1996). These insights can be used to build upon Sharp’s theory of nonviolent direct action while informing a reinvigorated nonviolent strategy to dismantle the institutions of Israeli occupation and to build a viable Palestinian state.

Nonviolent direct action relies on a set of methods, ranging from symbolic protests to civil disobedience to direct interference (e.g., strikes, boycotts, or creation of parallel institutions), as a means to transform power relations between different groups. Sharp has identified and categorized over 200 methods of nonviolent struggle according to how they effect or resist change (Sharp 1973). The theory of nonviolent direct action is grounded in the theory of power: namely, that all rule, no matter how tyrannical, is based on the consent and obedience of

the ruled. By temporarily withholding or denying crucial resources (material, human, and/or ideological) to the ruling authorities, ordinary people make occupations unsustainable and dictatorial rule impossible (Sharp 1985, 151). An analysis of the use of nonviolent direct action in the first Intifada reveals a number of important theoretical and practical lessons for nonviolent action in the current Intifada and other conflicts marked by great power asymmetries.

### **III. AN ANALYSIS OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE DURING BOTH INTIFADAS**

#### **INTIFADA I**

The main goals of the 1987 Palestinian Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip can be summarized as follows: severing ties (especially economic) with Israel and building local institutions to provide substitute public services; engaging in civil disobedience by disobeying laws and regulations promulgated by the Israeli civilian and military authorities in the Occupied Territories; and carrying out activities to promote Palestinian solidarity (Mishal and Aharoni 1994, 38). In asymmetric conflicts like this one, popular nonviolent resistance can be used to reverse power asymmetries. This often occurs when popular opinion turns against the stronger power after this power uses large-scale violent force to repress an unarmed resistor group. Sharp calls this “political ju-jitsu,” a key concept of nonviolent resistance whereby the strength of the opponent is turned back on itself and becomes a weakness and liability (Sharp 1985). When mostly unarmed Palestinian civilians confronted heavily armed Israeli soldiers during the early stages of the first Intifada, this revealed the huge power discrepancy between occupier and occupied, and made the military occupation look ridiculous.

## **Effective Grassroots Mobilization**

By far the most impressive and strategically significant element of the first Intifada was the role played by grassroots organizations and local committees in mobilizing the Palestinian population to resist occupation. In the early stages, the 1987 Intifada was a highly decentralized uprising consisting of local initiatives, led by local activists who acted upon the instructions handed down by the secular and Islamic groups leading the resistance (the United National Command (UNC) and *Hamas*). The unprecedented burgeoning of women's committees, trade unions, student groups, and medical, educational, and agricultural work committees powered the resistance in the Occupied Territories. Nonviolent campaigns launched by the Palestinian population consisted of three principal categories: those aimed at severing ties with Israel, acts of civil disobedience, and campaigns designed to promote group solidarity.

Campaigns aimed at severing ties with Israel included: not working in Israel; boycotting Israeli products; withdrawing deposits from Israeli banks; resigning from the civilian administration; developing a home-based economy; and establishing local bodies for popular education. Acts of civil disobedience included: refusal to pay taxes; partial commercial strikes; and holding general strikes on specified days. Campaigns designed to promote group solidarity included: day-long strikes of solidarity with Palestinian prisoners and with families of victims; coordinating with lawyers to defend prisoners; sit-down strikes by students, teachers, and parents in front of foreign missions and closed schools; volunteering with farmers to help with the olive harvest; assisting needy families, writing slogans on walls and raising flags (Mishal and Aharoni 1994, 38-40).

One of the best examples of effective mass organization in the Occupied Territories was the 1989 tax revolt in Beit Sahour, a village of approximately 12,000 people located near

Bethlehem in the West Bank (Dajani 1995, 64-65). For almost six weeks in October-November 1989, the villagers launched a total tax revolt against the occupation. They used the slogan “No Taxation Without Representation” to fuel the campaign. The Israeli army, in response, put the entire village under siege. The villagers held out in their defiance campaign until the end of October 1989, when media exposures and international outcry forced Israel to lift the siege.

Creative campaign planning, nonviolent discipline, and the effective use of media contributed to the success of this campaign. Unfortunately, few Palestinian-led campaigns had as direct an impact. Beit Sahour was a relatively wealthy Palestinian city located close to Israel with good access to Israeli peace groups and media. Most Palestinian towns and villages, however, enjoyed no such luxury and could not endure such an economically challenging campaign.

By the early 1990s a large part of the Palestinian population reached its threshold of sacrifice and eventually abandoned the demanding campaigns of civil resistance. Whole cities and villages began to disobey UNC and Hamas calls for strikes and boycotts when Palestinian substitutes for Israeli goods proved too costly. In strategic terms, the leaders of the Intifada escalated the popular conflict without having sufficient resources to sustain the escalation. Also, international aid to the Palestinian Territories, which might have mitigated the negative consequences of the strikes, boycotts, and mass resignations, was far from matching the over three billion dollars in direct and indirect assistance given annually to the Israeli government by the United States. In addition, Israel receives an additional three billion dollars through philanthropy, short and long-term commercial grants, and proceeds from the Israel Bonds (Congressional Research Service Report 2002).



### **Costs of Nonviolent Action**

Tactically, the first Intifada was effective at escalating the level of direct confrontation between the Palestinian population and the Israeli civilian and military authorities, but was completely unable to maintain the intensity of the resistance. The mass mobilization and collective resistance simply became too costly for the Palestinian population, whose economic dependence on Israel proved to be insurmountable. Engaging in mass riots on a daily basis resulted in mass arrests, casualties, and deportations while disturbing the routine of Palestinian daily life. Closed schools, curfews, and profound economic hardships made the resistance lose its popular appeal by the third year of the uprising. Nevertheless, despite the collapse of the civilian-led resistance campaigns by the early 1990s and an eventual spiral into violence, these campaigns recorded a number of successes that were unprecedented in the Palestinian national movement.

### **Transformation/Mobilization of Palestinian Population**

The most impressive success of the first Intifada is that Palestinians worked together as a people fighting for their own liberation for the first time in their history. “The Intifada taught Palestinians that their greatest source of strength lies in the power of the people themselves, in their ability to organize and participate in resistance on a mass scale” (Dajani 1995, Introduction). The Palestinian uprising mobilized all sectors of the Palestinian population: women, trade unions, merchants, white-collar workers, and students to fight for their liberation in ways that guerrilla violence never had. Active grassroots organizations and local committees that became alternative institutions were highly successful and constructive forms of resistance. Collective sacrifice and resistance created a deep sense of Palestinian solidarity. “The pervasive

civilian character of the uprising and the participation of the population in all its sectors and at all levels, along with the deliberate choice of largely nonviolent means of struggle, contributed toward a feeling of euphoria and excitement among Palestinians. They had taken matters into their own hands and had risen against a very powerful opponent” (Dajani 1995, 65).

The first Intifada had a profound effect on the Israeli population and its perceptions of the viability of the occupation. More importantly, it changed the image of Palestinians within Israel from violent, Arab “terrorists” intent on destroying Israel to a people with legitimate goals that were similar to the Zionist aim of establishing a Jewish homeland. Reports of widespread torture of Palestinian prisoners, extensive beatings, bone smashing, lethal tear-gassing, and live burials of Palestinian youths elicited outrage (Elon 1988, 12). A growing Israeli peace movement emphasized that the occupation was immoral, a contradiction of Judaic principles, and a security hazard for Israel. Shlomo Avineri, a professor at Hebrew University, warned at the time: “an army can beat an army, but an army cannot beat a people” (Elon 1988, 12).

### **Serious Challenges Posed to Israeli Occupation**

Another success of Intifada I was that it seriously challenged the sustainability of the Israeli occupation and shattered the long-held belief in Israeli society that there was such a thing as a benevolent occupation by posing direct challenges to Israeli rule in the Occupied Territories. For example, Palestinian women from the Dheisheh camp near Bethlehem, (a site of frequent clashes between Palestinian refugees and Israeli soldiers and settlers) wailed and shouted for three nights in a row in 1988, forcing Israeli troops who had set up tents near the camp were to leave. Although this was a minor retreat, it was a positive demonstration of the power of collective action. The frequency of mass protests and wide-scale acts of civil disobedience showed the

Israeli authorities that they could no longer count on passive Palestinian submission and obedience to maintain the occupation.

The brutality of the occupation, revealed in the media, polarized Israeli society and damaged Israel's international standing. Even the traditionally cohesive and non-critical American Jewish community began to launch protests, expressing pain and outrage at what Israel was perpetrating in the Occupied Territories in the name of Jews around the world. A powerful moral dimension had been injected into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for the first time. By the third year of the Intifada, the Israeli government was compelled to reconsider its techniques. Criticism of the occupation, including the high economic costs of maintaining a vigilant occupying presence in the West Bank and Gaza and defending Israeli settlements in the Territories, became mainstream in Israel and in the international community.

The most striking indicator of the effectiveness of the civilian-led uprising in undermining popular support for the occupation within Israeli society was the civil disobedience by the *refuseniks*—Israeli soldiers who refused to serve in the Occupied Territories. As early as January 1988, some 160 Israeli refuseniks declined to serve in the West Bank and Gaza; by the seventh month of the Intifada, this number reached more than 600 (Dajani 1995, 78-81). Hundreds of young Israelis procured medical documents declaring that they were psychologically unfit for military service, a clear sign that opposition to the occupation was widespread. During this time there were clear divisions between the political and military elite in Israel, with high-ranking military officials insisting that there could be no military solution to the conflict. The concept of land for peace, in fact, had its strongest supporters within the ranks of the Israeli military.

## **INTIFADA II: SELF-DEFEATING VIOLENCE**

The second Palestinian uprising that erupted in September 2000 is a radically different rebellion marked by a profound escalation in the level of violence. Khalil Shikaki, Associate Professor of Political Science at Bir Zeit University and Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah, argues that Intifada II is being led by a “young guard” of Palestinian leaders embittered by what they perceived to be Yassir Arafat’s weak and incompetent negotiating (notably at Camp David) and determined to attack the occupying power by targeting its civilian population (Shikaki 2002). Their goal is to compel Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza Strip unilaterally and simultaneously to weaken the Palestinian old guard and eventually replace it (Shikaki 2002, 89). Shikaki argues that most members of the “young guard” never supported negotiations between the PA and Israel and were dismayed by the types of concessions that Arafat offered without any indication that Israel would follow through on its promises to abandon settlements and support Palestinian statehood. Furthermore, he indicates that they concluded that the Palestinian people could end the occupation on their own terms only through armed confrontation (Shikaki 2002, 97).

In July 2000, less than one-third of Palestinians believed that violence would help achieve goals in ways that negotiations could not; a year later, 59 percent had come to the conclusion that it would be effective. After nine months of the Intifada II, 71 percent believed that the fighting had already had such an effect (Shikaki 2002). Despite these poll results and after two years of low-intensity war marked by a dramatic rise in suicide bombings and massive Israeli retaliation against mostly Palestinian civilians, new survey results indicate that the Israeli and Palestinian people are desperate for an alternative strategy to break the violent impasse. A

2002 survey conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) in Israel and the Occupied Territories revealed surprising results about the possibility of collective nonviolent struggle to transform the conflict and to provide an alternative path to peace (PIPA 2002).

According to the survey commissioned by the international conflict resolution organization Search for Common Ground, 80 percent of Palestinians would support a large-scale, mass nonviolent movement against the Israeli occupation and 56 percent would participate in its activities. Far less than half the Palestinian population (41 percent) believes that the al-Aqsa Intifada advanced their collective interests. Conversely, 78 percent of Israelis Jews believe that Palestinians have a right to an independent state provided that they use nonviolent means to achieve it (PIPA 2002). This groundbreaking survey suggests that the majorities on both sides are weary of violence and desperate for an exit.

#### **IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS: SUPPORTING NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE**

The odds appear to be against a reinvigoration of a civilian-led resistance movement in the Occupied Territories. The West Bank and Gaza have been reduced to rubble as a result of the Israeli military response to the second Intifada, which has destroyed more than a decade of institution building and eviscerated the command and control of the PA (Roed-Larsen 2002). In addition, a concrete “segregation wall” is currently being built on the Palestinian side of the Green Line that effectively annexes another ten percent of the West Bank to Israel (Schlomka 2002). Militant Islamic groups are also waging a new war that has severely limited popular Palestinian participation while marginalizing traditional allies, particularly Israelis who were once active in the peace movement.

Furthermore, the lack of strong leadership within the Palestinian national movement and Yassir Arafat's inability to control Islamic militant groups continues to hamper the development of a cohesive Palestinian strategy for resisting the occupation. Notwithstanding these realities, a number of countervailing trends suggest that civilian-led nonviolent resistance is not only possible in Israel and Palestine, but that it is already firmly established and gaining strength. The following policy recommendations (directed at grassroots activists, aid agencies, and government officials from the United States, Europe, and Arab countries) are aimed at improving the strategic component and outreach potential of nonviolent direct action. The ultimate goal of this strategy, which complements formal negotiations, is to replace violence and terrorism as the dominant civilian-led strategy for resisting the occupation and to build participatory Palestinian self-government.

### **Policy Principle One: Embrace Pure Nonviolent Resistance**

Nonviolence must be understood as *the* dominant strategy of Palestinian resistance and not simply as a set of instruments that can be used interchangeably with violent tactics. Nonviolent discipline, like military discipline, is something that must be learned. In the words of Andoni, “the overwhelmingly nonviolent character of the rebellion and the unprecedented level of Israeli oppression encouraged many Israelis to work against the occupation as an essential requirement of achieving peace, and the uprising helped the Israeli anti-occupation movement in its campaign against state policy” (Andoni 2001, 217). The first Intifada achieved a number of tactical and political successes on three fronts: within the Palestinian population, in the Israeli body politic, and with international actors. Unfortunately, the divided Palestinian leadership failed to highlight these successes during the first uprising, so that by the early 1990s many Palestinians believed

that the collective uprising had been a complete failure and their sacrifices had been for nothing (Dajani 1995).

Furthermore, the extremely divided secular and Islamic Palestinian leadership never gave any indication that they were committed to a strategy of nonviolent resistance, or that this form of popular struggle functioned any differently than violent struggle. Mubarak Awad, a Palestinian who was deported from the Territories during the first Intifada for training youths in techniques of nonviolent resistance, argues emphatically that violence undermines the moral force of nonviolent resistance while sending mixed messages to the members of the opposition (Awad 1992). By the third year of Intifada I, the number of violent tactics far outnumbered nonviolent tactics, signaling the demise of the popular struggle (Mishal and Aharoni 1994). The increasingly violent youth movement was excluded from the planning and execution of the more mainstream resistance campaigns, something that encouraged the formation of an unruly and undisciplined splinter group within the Palestinian movement. Without any clear specification of what an escalation of violence would achieve, youth violence took over the movement, causing the Palestinian movement to lose the moral high ground (Dajani 1995, 66). In terms of Sharp's theory, Palestinian violence undermined the effect of "political ju-jitsu" that had been working in the Palestinians' favor during the early years of the Intifada.

In order to reestablish credibility and to convince the Israeli public that their resistance is not about destroying Israel, a critical mass of Palestinians must forcefully and repeatedly renounce suicide bombings/martyr operations and acts of terror as a strategy for achieving national liberation. Palestinian men, women, and children must convey the message to the Israeli population (and to American Jews) that their resistance is directed at the unjust policies and practices of the Israeli government, not at the physical well being of the Israeli people. Given the

frequency of terrorist attacks and the popularity of the martyr image of suicide bombers, this will be a difficult undertaking, but absolutely necessary if the Palestinian struggle is to achieve any degree of success. A public renunciation of violence by a group of committed Palestinian activists, disseminated via the Arab and Israeli media, would likely have the same moral force that Anwar Sadat's peace mission to the Israeli Knesset had in the 1970s.

### **Policy Principle Two: Propagation of New Martyr Image**

To make nonviolent resistance a powerful force for change in the Territories, the image of a new kind of martyr needs to be popularized: one willing to die, but not kill, to liberate the Palestinian people from the repressive occupation. In order to achieve this new image, a sustained public relations campaign assisted by Arab, Israeli, and international media sources and organizations that support nonviolent methods of conflict transformation is needed. The media is crucial to the mobilization of nonviolent warriors in the Territories. Their ability to document and broadcast images and stories of nonviolent resistance in the Territories would help convey the message to Palestinians that nonviolent resistance is a dignified and powerful response to an unjust occupation. This public relations campaign should highlight the numerous success stories from the first and second Intifadas while emphasizing the heroic nature of nonviolent resistance.

### **Policy Principle Three: Education Campaign**

An active education campaign focused on the tradition of nonviolent resistance in the region that highlights its prevalence and past successes is needed in both the Territories and in Israel. The biographies of nonviolent warriors like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, known as the "frontier Gandhi" for leading the *Khudai Khitmatgar* ("Servants of God") movement of Muslim Pathans



against the British *Raj*, need to be incorporated into school books and documentary films. Nonviolence International, an international NGO, has compiled an entire literature linking Islam to active nonviolent resistance. These materials could be disseminated throughout the Arab world but particularly amongst Palestinians living in the Territories.

#### **Policy Principle Four: Infusion of Resources for Nonviolent Training**

Nonviolent movements are often marginalized in situations of escalating violence where fear is pervasive. Groups resisting the status quo desperately need outside support, particularly when these groups advocate a radically different strategy. Foreign governments, international organizations, NGO leaders, multilateral organizations, and local government agencies should formally recognize and channel resources to the active nonviolent movement involving Israeli and Palestinian grassroots organizations and institutions. There are currently a handful of organizations in the Territories conducting trainings and workshops in techniques of nonviolent resistance for Palestinians, Israelis, and international activists.

The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between Peoples, the International Solidarity Group, and the Christian Peacemakers Team are leading these trainings. However, the closures, curfews, checkpoints, and other restrictions to freedom of movement and assembly have severely restricted the activities of these groups while frustrating the outreach capability of nonviolent activists. The trainings ideally must expand beyond Ramallah and Bethlehem to other towns and villages in the Occupied Territories. Those organizations involved in the trainings should focus their recruitment efforts on groups such as Fatah Youth organization, whose membership extends throughout the West Bank and Gaza, in order to build a youth base for the movement.

## **Policy Principle Five: Foreign Pressure on Israel to Allow Freedom of Movement and Assembly**

The prison conditions of the Occupied Territories and the practical inability of Israeli and Palestinian peace activists to meet regularly is a severe impediment to the coordination of joint nonviolent campaigns. This regular meeting between Israelis and Palestinians is an essential part of the process of rehumanizing the “other” and demonstrating solidarity through concrete acts of joint resistance. Hundreds of Israeli Jewish activists joined Palestinians and marched from the Jerusalem-Bethlehem checkpoint to Manger Square on Christmas Eve 2002 to show solidarity with the Palestinian people living under curfew and to protest the occupation. One organizer indicated this was the first time in years that Bethlehem residents had seen Israelis who were not part of the occupation army (Schlomka 2002). Governments, notably the United States government, should intensify pressure on the Israeli government to relax restrictions on freedom of movement within the Territories and across the Green Line.

Equally important, the U.S. government should seek to balance its billions of dollars of annual military and foreign aid to Israel with assistance, even if minimal, to these and other grassroots groups committed to disseminating ideas and principles of active nonviolence. Relief and development assistance from the UN, the European Union, and international aid agencies should be used to support training opportunities and to sponsor meetings between nonviolent activists in safe areas outside of the Territories. Palestinian youth leaders must be allowed to escape the daily hardships of the occupation and cultivate their leadership skills with others. These small initiatives will go a long way towards ending the cycle of violence and promoting a new generation of leaders trained in strategies of nonviolent resistance.

## **Policy Principle Six: Develop A Strategic Framework**

During the first Intifada the Palestinian resistance and its supporters in Israel and in the international community lacked a comprehensive plan for undermining Israeli and American political will to maintain the occupation. The American and Israeli populations were key centers of gravity that were never effectively targeted. The failure to link political goals with an effective strategy for achieving those goals was due in large part to the failure of the Palestinian leadership. Leaders of Intifada I failed to articulate a clear political platform that could translate the tactical successes of the resistance into tangible results, most notably a Palestinian state.

Stone throwing had a symbolic meaning, which was articulated in song and slogans calling for the Israelis to get out of the [T]erritories, but the rioters did not propose any specifics for the Israeli withdrawal nor did they have a clear idea of the kind of political settlement they wanted. It was unclear whether the Intifada was merely echoing the PLO's old call for Israel's destruction or meant to call for coexistence and recognition of a Jewish state (Teitelbaum and Kostiner 1991, 310).

Weak leadership in the first Intifada, including divisions between the secular UNC and the Islamic Hamas factions, resulted in a policy-strategy disconnect (Dajani 1995, 37). In addition, there was little transparency in the planning and coordination of the 1987 Intifada. The underground, largely secretive nature of the Palestinian uprising went counter to openness, honesty, and clearly defined aims, which theorists contend are essential components of effective nonviolent struggles (Gregg 1959). The centralization of PLO leadership that began in 1989 led to a decline in the level of participation, a marginalization of local leaders, and a general suppression of creative local initiatives.

A strategic umbrella under which to coordinate campaigns of nonviolent resistance is now needed in order to expand their geographic reach. Strategic nonviolent action, linking political demands with realistic, issues-oriented direct action campaigns, is necessary to carry the

nonviolent movement forward. Underneath an overarching strategy of nonviolent resistance must be small-scale campaigns that focus on specific political demands. These demands should be feasible and must have supporters from within Israel. Ceasing the construction of the “separation wall,” ending closures and curfews to allow Palestinian children to attend school, demanding an end to home demolitions, and stopping the razing of olive and fruit groves are examples of concrete demands that could serve as the basis of larger political campaigns that attack the injustices of the occupation while winning sympathizers within Israel.

### **Policy Principle Seven: Nonviolent Action to Reinforce Negotiations**

Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and sociologist Robert J. Burrowes declared that negotiations are an essential corollary to nonviolent defense, “making it possible for an opponent to withdraw from policies and positions which the resistance has shown to be impossible or unprofitable” (Burrowes 1996, 219-20). Negotiations constitute a complementary element of any nonviolent direct action movement and getting to the negotiation table is the goal of many nonviolent campaigns. Non-cooperation with an occupying force should not be understood to mean non-communication. A principle objective of nonviolent resistance is to force the opponent to embrace meaningful negotiations, on terms that are favorable to the nonviolent group. This important negotiation-nonviolent action link, as this article has shown, was completely missing from the first Intifada.

Although the mass uprisings played a significant role in forcing talks between Israeli and Palestinian authorities, once high-level talks began in the early 1990s in Madrid and Oslo those leading and engaging in the popular resistance were largely ignored. “[Palestinians] lost the chance to combine negotiations with active resistance” (Andoni 2001, 212). The popular

campaigns and the Palestinian Authority's negotiation strategy followed parallel paths. As a result, official negotiations "turned legitimate Palestinian resistance into illegitimate anti-Israel 'incitement' and eviscerated the demands of the first Intifada—the demand for an end to Israeli occupation and colonization of Palestine, for meaningful self-determination, for human rights, for the implementation of UN resolutions and international law" (Murray 2001, 333).

Arafat had little understanding of how active nonviolence could advance the Palestinian position at the negotiation table and he followed an independent course of action that ignored what was happening in the streets, severely weakening his negotiating power (Dajani 1995; Reinhart 2002). For nonviolent resistance to offer a viable alternative in the current Intifada, a new cadre of local leaders will need to assert control of the movement and gain followers in different parts of the Territories. These leaders must be somehow connected to the negotiation process through Israeli and Palestinian authorities such that the campaigns of nonviolent resistance reinforce, rather than remain disconnected from, future official negotiations.

### **Policy Principle Eight: Joint Israeli-Palestinians Actions**

Israelis and Palestinians must be allowed to protest together in order to show that both sides want the occupation to end, both sides accept the claims of the other side as legitimate, and both sides are prepared to use confrontational means in order to be taken seriously. The active involvement of internationals, including American Jews, in solidarity campaigns, civil disobedience, and media outreach from the Territories is an important element of the anti-occupation movement that must be expanded. International volunteers have been very effective at offering protection to Palestinians who confront Israeli occupying forces nonviolently. In addition, they have

accompanied Palestinians at checkpoints and driven with them in ambulances to prevent unnecessary harassment from Israeli soldiers.

American Jewish organizations could play a very important role in pressuring the American government to modify its policy vis-à-vis the Israeli government, making aid contingent upon taking concrete steps towards dismantling the occupation. Given the unconditional material and political support given by the United States government to the Israel, which indirectly helps to maintain the occupation, it is unrealistic to expect that Israel will withdraw from the Territories without active pressure from the United States and influential members of the Jewish American community. The anti-occupation grassroots movement is spreading and gaining momentum in the United States, led by groups such as the Tikkun, Voices for Peace With Justice for Israel-Palestine, Rabbis for Human Rights, Sabeel, Boston-to-Palestine, and the International Solidarity Movement. These groups are often run by volunteers and therefore need financial and moral support to continue to work effectively in the Territories and to build the nonviolent movement.

### **Policy Position Nine: Presence of International Peacekeepers to Support Nonviolent Resistance**

Following large-scale Israeli military actions in the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the deployment of a multinational peacekeeping force to the region to separate the combatants and help defuse the tensions between the two sides (Kifner 2002). The presence of international peacekeepers on the ground in the Occupied Territories would be a visible sign that the international community is committed to ending the cycle of violence and to opening the political space for civilian-led peace initiatives. Kofi Annan and his envoy to the region, Terje Roed-Larsen, have insisted that the deployment of

international peacekeepers to the region would help to deter Palestinian suicide/martyr bombings and Israeli incursions into the Territories. This would help reduce the violence, save innocent lives, and create an environment conducive to trust building and peacemaking. Civil society and human rights groups active in the Territories should organize a grassroots campaign to pressure the United Nations, notably its permanent five members, to follow through on the Secretary General's appeal for the deployment of peacekeepers. Foreign governments, and particularly the international Quartet, should incorporate a UN-mandated peacekeeping force as part of an overall peace plan for the region. This is a realistic and potentially effective campaign for nonviolent activists in Israel and Palestine as well as their partner organizations in the international community.

## V. CONCLUSION

This article has presented a case study analysis of the use of nonviolent direct action in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which is infamous for its asymmetric and protracted nature. It has argued that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will not be found in any military strategy nor will it be dictated from above following high-level negotiations. A public peace process initiated in the streets of Israel and Palestine has a far greater chance at transforming the current violent stalemate, particularly now that the focus of international attention has shifted to a possible war with Iraq. It has also argued that the parameters for any future negotiations ought to be based on issues-oriented campaigns of nonviolent resistance led by a committed cadre of Palestinian, Israeli, and international nonviolent activists.

There must be a strong, repeated public commitment to nonviolent defense by the leaders of the Palestinian nonviolent movement, in order to send a clear signal to Israelis that peaceful

co-existence, not Israel's destruction, is their ultimate goal. There can be no mixture of violent and nonviolent tactics. Joint Israeli-Palestinian campaigns of solidarity and nonviolent resistance are the most effective way to graphically demonstrate to audiences in the Middle East and in the United States that a large part of both populations are prepared for peace, provided that it is a just peace that affords both peoples security and effective self-rule. Nonviolent resistance and negotiations must be understood by activists and negotiators alike to be mutually reinforcing, not contradictory. The former is necessary for sustaining the latter.

The seeds of a successful nonviolent movement involving civilians (and soldiers) on both sides of the Green Line were sown during the first Intifada in the late 1980s. The nonviolent campaigns of Intifada I achieved a number of important successes, including the legitimization of the Palestinian nationalist cause and the enlistment of active support within Israel and throughout the international community. A strategy of terrorism, on the other hand, has only undermined the Palestinian cause while restoring a popular image of Palestinians as a people intent on destroying Israel. Terrorism caused Israeli public opinion to shift dramatically to the right, paving the way for the reelection of Likud party leader and noted hawk Ariel Sharon as Israeli Prime Minister in the January 2003 elections.

Fear, hopelessness, and the inability of ordinary Israelis and Palestinians to interact in meaningful ways with one another are currently driving public support for military solutions in Israel and widespread support of suicide/martyr operations amongst Palestinians. Nonviolent resistance involving both peoples offers an alternative path to helplessness and hopelessness, not to mention a political agenda for pushing negotiations forward. What the nonviolent activists now desperately need are resources, training, and as much positive reinforcement as the international community can muster. Empowering ordinary Israelis and Palestinians to take



matters into their own hands in order to resist the violent status quo nonviolently could be a powerful way to make peace a reality in what many consider “the Holy Land.”

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