

By **ALAN SUROVELL**

Hopefully, Michael Gisser's views on the Middle East as expressed in *Israeli Ordeal* (Gazette March 5) are not shared by his colleagues in the Atlantic Provinces Jewish Student Federation. The interests of the Jewish people worldwide are not served by Israel's persistent human rights violations against Palestinians, nor by Jewish spokespersons like Gisser, who go to any lengths to cover them up. Tragically, in the name of Jewish people who not long ago suffered the genocide of the Holocaust, the state of Israel, in the words of a 1982 U.N. seminar report on Israeli human rights violations, "... has committed acts which most participants considered to fall clearly within the definitions of war crimes, the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity." Space limitations here permit me to discuss, all too briefly, only a few of Gisser's assertions.

Firstly, his attempt to place responsibility for the Palestinian Ordeal (Gazette, February 5) on the surrounding Arab states and not Israel amounts to blaming the neighbors for the residual problems of an innocent family evicted from their home by armed men. The fact that other Arab countries have had to cope with Palestinian refugees at all as always been a consequence of the fundamental problem, namely, Israel's uprooting of the Palestinians through terror and military force. The U.N. has, on countless occasions, condemned Israel as the primary source of Palestinian oppression as well as conflict generally in the Middle East. The Geneva Conference Declaration on Palestine of 1983, signed by 137 states and endorsed by the U.N. General Assembly, "... expresses the grave concern of all nations and peoples regarding the international tension that has persisted for several decades in the Middle East, the principal cause of which is the denial by Israel, and those supporting its expansionist policies, of the inalienable legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The Conference reaffirms and stresses that a just solution of the question of Palestine the core of the problem, is the crucial element in a comprehensive, just and lasting political settlement in the Middle East."

Citing U.S. State Department documents and official Israeli statistics, Gisser claims that "it is a myth that the West Bank and Gaza have suffered economically from Israel's occupation." Since it is very difficult to accept either of Gisser's two sources as being terribly objective about this question, let us consider U.N. resolution 39/169 which was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of member states of the General Assembly in 1984 (but not by the U.S. or Israel); it "... expresses its alarm at the deterioration, as a result of the Israeli occupation, in the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; (and) affirms that the Israeli occupation is contradictory of the

Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories." (*Living Conditions of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Territories*, United Nations, New York, 1985, p. 47. This pamphlet, to be found in the Killam Library, presents a detailed study of economic conditions in the occupied territories.)

Finally, Gisser would have us believe that Israeli occupation is benevolent and even beneficial to the Palestinians: "There is to be sure, a gap between Israel (sic) Jews and Palestinians in Israel, but it is more social and psychological than economic or legal... it is difficult to think of another country where an ethnic minority related to neighbouring enemy (sic) countries can live as freely." Gisser doesn't even bother trying to support those claims with any evidence, so patently false are they. When we consider the scores of unarmed Palestinian students murdered in recent months by Israeli troops for protesting the occupation of the West Bank, we realize that in fact Palestinians live about as freely as Blacks do in South Africa. Let's let the UN explain the "legal gap" and "freedom" of the Palestinians: "Human rights violations by Israel have been investigated since 1969 by a Special Committee. Its reports have led to numerous General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel for:

- a) its annexations of Israeli
 - b) the establishment of Israeli settlements,
 - c) the expulsion and deportation of Palestinians,
 - d) the denial of their right of return,
 - e) expropriations of property and destruction of houses,
 - f) mass arrests and ill-treatment of civilians,
 - g) interference with religious freedoms and practices, and family rights and freedoms,
 - h) ill-treatment and torture of persons under detention."
- (*The Question of Palestine*, United Nations, New York, 1979, p. 27).

In conclusion, the state of Israel, which initially won the sympathy of much of the non-Arab world as a haven for the survivors of the Holocaust, has actually been carrying out its own Holocaust against the Palestinians. Pocketing \$3 billion in U.S. government handouts a year, Israel has become the unabashed chief underlying responsible for U.S. dirty work worldwide. In addition to Israel's crimes against Palestine, frequent flagrant violations of international law, numerous military incursions into other countries, and key weapons and military training assistance to the most oppressive of Third World regimes, including South Africa, Somoza's Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Zaire, and the Contra, have earned Israel the deep resentment of freedom-loving people, including many Jews, around the world. Perhaps pro-Israel spokespersons like Gisser should think twice in the future about throwing their support behind such a rotten regime which has sullied the history of the Jewish people.



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