

Commentary

Palestinian academic freedom stifled in Israel

by Caroline Zayid

In recent months we have heard a little of Israeli attempts to enforce Military Directive 854 requiring all foreign faculty to sign a document indicating that they would not support (directly or indirectly) the P.L.O. Most faculty refused to sign this because it represented a denial of their right to free political opinion and they had previously signed statements indicating they would engage in no *illegal* activities. The authorities, who in any case exercise authority over all appointments, deported all those who refused to sign. Despite Israel's promises, as a result of world pressure to cease to enforce this rule, many professors were deported, severely limiting the ability of the institutions to continue some programs. For instance, at Bethlehem University alone, by December 1982 40 lecturers had been expelled.

This gross violation of the right to academic freedom is only a small part of the overall attempt of the military authorities to debilitate the Palestinian universities by exerting

a direct stranglehold on them. All students and faculty must obtain a military permit before applying to a university, and even the university itself must obtain an annual opening permit. The military authorities screen all university reading materials, and have banned over 3000 books (even though the same books are available in Israel). In a similarly discriminatory arrangement, the Palestinian universities are subjected to taxes; including some on lab equipment; from which Israeli universities are exempt.

Of course the most extreme measure available to the authorities is closure, and this power has been exercised frequently. The universities are closed in "retaliation" for peaceful political demonstrations or even festivals of Palestinian folklore. For example, of the 1981-82 academic year, Bir Zeit University was closed for 7 months by military order.

All this suppression of academic life on the West Bank is justified by

the Israelis on the grounds that the universities, and especially Bir Zeit, are centres of nationalism, radicalism, and political unrest. It is quite clear that the students, like the rest of the population, object to the occupation and engage in political dissidence; but the only violence that has occurred is the throwing of stones. On the other hand, despite the claims of the government: "... The army acknowledges that, in its many searches of Bir Zeit, it has never uncovered revolutionary cells, discovered weapons or explosives, or even found stones of revolutionary tracts" (*Science*, December 5, 1980). In fact, soldiers entered the campus seven times in a month to tear down posters, including calendars and academic notices: (New York Times, February 17, 1982)

The harassment and denial of civil liberties occurs against individual students also, especially the student leaders. On January 10, 1983 at Al Najah University, the student council president and eight other councillors were arrested, fol-

lowing a "patriotic festival" on campus. The campus was raided by troops and the nine student leaders were summoned to the military governor's for interrogation. Adnan Damiri, who was the recently elected president was released two weeks later and reported having been beaten repeatedly, along with other students, being left in solitary confinement for three days and of being threatened with eight years detention if he did not "confess". Throughout this time, Israeli soldiers guarded the campus entrances, keeping out students and faculty and effectively closing the university.

It is quite clear from even a glimpse at these incidents, that Israel is conducting a deliberate campaign to stifle the post-secondary education of Palestinians on the West Bank. According to UNESCO, these flagrant abuses constitute denial of "freedom of education". They can be best understood when viewed in the broader context of Israel's attack on Palestinian institutions and

Palestine's intellectual leadership. During Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, schools and hospitals were favourite targets of bombing raids; and the academic research centres of Beirut, unique sources of archival material about Palestinian history, were raided, pillaged and ransacked by Israeli troops. In addition, over the years of Israeli occupation of the West Bank hundreds of university professors, teachers, doctors, lawyers, writers, and elected officials have been deported without ever having faced legal charges.

The reasons for all this are obvious. No PLO fighter can ever pose the threat to Israel's future that an educated Palestinian constitutes. It is time for academics and students in Canada to express their opposition to the denial of academic freedom on the West Bank. When Palestinians are permitted to pursue an education and study their own history, it will represent a first step towards the mutual respect which must form the basis of any just peace in the region.

Letters

The emperor's violent movies

To the Editor:

Three cheers for "Clockwork Violence," the letter protesting the screening of movies such as Clockwork Orange at Dalhousie.

The more enlightened among us may insist that any attempt to stop the presentation of such material constitutes censorship, or that there is really a deep meaning and freedom of expression in types of violence. It is a pity that the writer withheld their name — they obviously felt intimidated to express their opinion because they view violent movies as the general public does — *Violent movies*.

Ricki Garrett-Smith

Censorship and responsibility

To the Editor:

I'm writing in reference to the letter printed under the heading "Clockwork Violence!" I am an avid defender of the freedom of the press, having lived in the USSR and Czechoslovakia where such freedom is denied. However, I think the need for editorial discretion and rationality is often important also — it certainly was in this case. Clockwork Orange is *not* a film "... by which men reflect their seedy and sickening sexual fantasies ..." nor, for that matter, does it encourage the brutalization and victimization of women, as the anonymous letter-writer claims. In fact, the purpose of Clockwork Orange is to make a statement about the nature of good and evil.

The film raises the question of whether a human being can rightfully be deprived of the capability for choice in order to protect the interests of society as defined by the leaders of that society; if a man, in this case "Little Alex," cannot choose between good and evil, can he be considered good? The film, and the book which preceded it, hypothesize that the value of good rests on the capability of the individual to make that choice. By suggesting that Clockwork Orange should not be shown at Dal, the letter-writer is taking the first step on the road to denying a reasonably intelligent audience the freedom of choice to decide for themselves what the message of the film is, and whether it is good or evil. Furthermore, I get very pissed-off when some rabid fanatic writes a highly polemical letter to the Gazette and then defaults on his/her responsibility for the view presented by refusing to have his/her name

printed at the bottom of the letter.

Freedom of expression does not include the right to abdicate responsibility for the view expressed. So for all you anonymous radicals/fanatics/assholes out there, I have one thing to say: show some courage the next time you feel the itch to mouth off, and *don't* have your name "withheld by request!"

Doug Peel

Wrong on three counts

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to Mr. Martin's letter with the following observations:

You are sadly mistaken in your assumption that widespread sex education in high school will in any way reduce the number of abortions. Even staunch proponents of unrestricted abortion, such as Planned Parenthood, readily admit that their school programs have been ineffective in this regard.

Your arguments for a non-human fetus are lacking the simplest and most obvious element in the process of decision-making ... common sense. Several millennia of successful human reproduction make unnecessary and irrelevant any attempt to isolate one stage of human development from another. The fact is, we humans breed other humans, and the interesting titles science has granted to the various developmental stages of a human being sound impressive enough, but you are using them out of their proper context.

Finally, your assertions regarding the assumption of male responsibility for contraception is a careful sidestepping of the real issue which deals with the failure on the part of both partners to assume sexual responsibility. Given the latter, we eliminate the need for the former.

Bradley Blanchard

This is the effect of higher education?

To the Editor:

I have recently noticed in your letters column some very upsetting and puerile remarks directed against the sexes, namely these "societies" for keeping either the man or the woman in his/her place. I find it very sad that a university students' newspaper, which to an extent is supposed to reflect

something of our thoughts, ideas, and opinions as students of a higher educational institution, has the gall to patronize such insipid groups. These "societies" offer very distorted views of the opposite sex, views which are in effect nothing but mundane name-calling. Surely there are more suitable places for such intellectual activity.

I would simply like to conclude my letter by saying that I believe intelligence, warmth, dignity and any other quality which we hold dear to us as human beings are found in the individual as opposed to any particular sex, race, religion or nationality. "Naive!" you may say, or is it too close to the truth?

Sincerely,

James Lawrence Cowan

There's still a pile of work to do

To the Editor:

To those who produced the Women's Day supplement:

As part of Women's International Day, a day which should commemorate the war of liberation women face, as much as Remembrance Day honours men's courage - I think some idea of the obstacles we yet face are in order.

In my view, where women stand in 1983 means we have a lot of work ahead of us. Considering the issues about to be listed it hardly seems like 1983.

1. Women still give up their own names, thus becoming 'chattel', through the institution of marriage.
2. The Victorian word 'Miss' is still part of the English language where it should be extinct.
3. Officially, we still do not recognize one word as an honorific for women, which I believe should be Ms., pronounced Mis(us) for women as Mr. is pronounced Mis(ter) for men. We still accredit women according to their marital status.
4. We regard as acceptable that man's sexual nature means he is more aroused the more a woman is degraded; and if she is killed, he is more aroused yet.
5. Men still regard women as property they have paid for, which earns them the right to willfully batter, degrade and abuse women as prostitutes, wives and as pornographic depictions.
6. Men (or primarily men) spend 5 billion dollars yearly on pornography which harms women, yet those things in society

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