

TOGETHER FOR THE ONE DEMOCRATIC STATE (ODS)

Report and photos by Theresa Wolfwood

INTRODUCTION

In May 2013, I attended a conference on the ODS in Stuttgart, Germany. This report is about the conference and the presentations made there. About 300 people from Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and North America were in attendance; the speakers at this well-organized event also came from these many parts of the world and while presenting a rich diversity of ideas were united in their struggle for ODS.



Photo: Haneen Naamnih, Pal-Isr., Ghada Karmi, UK, Evelyn Hecht-Galinski, Germany

THE ODS Declaration

The conference was based on previous conferences and the declaration made at ODS conferences in Madrid and London in 2007.

This declaration states:

“For decades, efforts to bring about a two-state solution in historic Palestine have failed to provide justice and peace for the Palestinians and Israeli Jewish peoples, or to offer a genuine process leading to them.”

It goes on to state that the two-state solution presumes a false parity and condemns Palestinians in Israel to a permanent 2nd class citizenship; that under present geographic reality, a Palestinian state is not viable.

“The historic land of Palestine belongs to those who live in it and to those who were expelled or exiled from it since 1948...”

It also states that any system of government must be founded on the principle of equality in all rights for all citizens; that a non-sectarian state does not privilege one group and respects the separation of state and religion; that there be a non-discriminatory immigration policy.

“The implementation of the Right of Return for Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN Resolution 194 is a fundamental requirement for justice, and a benchmark of respect for equality.”

THE ODS states that Palestinians in diaspora and refugees must play a central role in structuring the ODS which will also require legal and institutional frameworks for justice and reconciliation.”

And its final statement:

“The struggle for justice and liberation must be accompanied by a clear, compelling and moral vision of the destination – a solution in which all people who share a belief in equality can see a future for themselves and others. We call for the widest possible discussion, research and action to advance a unitary, democratic solution and bring it to fruition.”

The Stuttgart conference, this report and the informal action network set up after it are part of this process.

Summaries of presentations

These are brief notes on some of the many presenters at the gathering; it is not intended to be a comprehensive report. Most of the presentations are posted on YouTube. A complete list of speakers is included in the conclusions.

The conference was opened by Verena Rajab, one of the main organizers, who said they had chosen these dates, May 10-12 because they were just before the commemoration of the NAKBA to remember all those who were killed and exiled since 1948. She said that for ODS to become a reality, regime change in the region was essential and re-iterated there could be no ODS without the Right of Return.

Evelyn Hecht-Galinski, German-born Jewish writer, said in her opening speech that she knew that German politicians supported Israel uncritically because of their guilt about Jewish suffering in Nazi Germany. But she believes that Israel is an outpost of Western resource exploitation, and that she must speak out because Israel is a threat to world peace, that silence is complicity in Israel’s oppression of Palestinians, and that Israel does not speak for all Jews, including her. She refuses to accept responsibility for Israel’s war crimes; she credited another speaker, Ilan Pappé, for freeing her from Israel’s myths. She called for support of the BDS movement (boycott, divest, sanctions) as part of the non-violent struggle for Palestine as part of the process of the creation of the ODS. Later she re-iterated that “Israel does not speak

for me” and that there needs to be more focus on Palestine in activism, schools and politics. She ended by saying, “Start talking about Palestine.”

She is the author of (available so far only in German): *Das Elfte Gebot: Israel Darf Alles” Klartexte uber Antisemitismus und Israel-Kritik*. 2012. Edition tz, Russsdorf, Germany (*The Eleventh Commandment: Israel can do whatever it wants. A clear explanation of anti-Semitism and criticism of Israel*)

Richard Falk, USA academic, professor emeritus of international law at Princeton University, and UN official was unable to attend and spoke to the conference by video, saying that he supports the BDS movement and the ODS movement which were created by Palestinians to attain their goal of a just and sustainable peace. Falk served as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Inquiry Commission for the Palestinian territories and was appointed United Nations Special Rapporteur on Palestinian human rights in 2008. He endorsed the rights of all peoples to define their own future. He said that a two- state solution is futile and also that two ethnic states would be against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He is the author of many books including:

Israel-Palestine on Record: How the New York Times Misreports Conflict in the Middle East with Howard Friel, 2007, Verso, USA & UK

Achieving Human Rights, 2008, Routledge, USA

International Law and the Third World: Reshaping Justice, Editor, 2008. Routledge, USA

The Path to Zero: Dialogues on Nuclear Dangers, with David A. Krieger, 2012. Paradigm Publishers. USA

Ilan Pappé, Israeli author, academic and activist is a professor at the College of Social Sciences and International Studies of the University of Exeter, UK and director of the European Centre for Palestine Studies and co-director of the Exeter Centre for Ethno-Political Studies. Speaking several times throughout the conference, he stressed the importance of the historical context in the present conflict so that we could understand the obstacles to ODS. He said that the UN recognition of Palestine was an important symbolic gesture but gave no rights to Palestinians. He believes too many people accept the two-state solution as the only possible end, but pointed out that 90-92% of Palestine is now Israel, so that is not a possible solution. He stated that Palestinians have no autonomy and essentially live in a prison controlled by Israel. Recent events in the Arab world have pushed Palestine out of media attention; he recommended we understand the character of Zionism and its colonial power as some people still do not comprehend this basis of Israeli domination and continue to learn about Palestine and current events there.

He called for more support of ODS activists on the ground in Palestine, as well as Israel, so that Palestine could be seen as part of the new struggles for democracy in the Arab world. He stressed the importance of being present in the region with the declarations of ODS so that people in Palestine will know that there is an alternative. Even small grassroots projects may be significant for this purpose. He believes that the two-state solution is not possible as one state is being populated by invaders, part of the fulfillment of the Zionist vision of total occupation.

Pappé has also spoken out against the continuing Zionist denial of the reality of Palestine - that what is now Israel was a poor and unpopulated land, the rightful home of Jewish peoples from Europe. He is quoted in Z magazine as saying, “History shows that the human consequences are horrific and catastrophic when powerful people, heading powerful outfits such as a modern state, denied the existence of a people who are very much present.” He reminds us that, in spite of the ethnic cleansing in 1948, Palestinians in the millions live in Palestine and Israel. He said there can be no dialogue with Zionists – the time has come to pressure for change; outside pressure is vital and pressure to make Israel a pariah state.

Pappé believes that change is possible – change like the end of the Soviet Union and Apartheid in South Africa- and that we who advocate ODS must be ready to present alternatives.

He is an international speaker and author of many articles and books including:

The Bureaucracy of Evil: The History of the Israeli Occupation. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

2012; “*The Boycott Will Work: An Israeli Perspective*” in Audrea Lim (ed.) *The Case for Sanctions Against Israel*. 2012. Verso. London, UK & Brooklyn, USA

The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel. 2011. Yale University

Press. CT, USA. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* 2007. Oneworld, Oxford, UK Photo: Ilan Pappé



Joseph Massad is Palestinian, born in Jordan, and is an associate Professor of Modern Arab Politics and Intellectual History at Columbia University.

He called for continuing support of the BDS movement as part of the long-term solution towards freedom for Palestinians, calling the present Palestinian Authority collaborators and instruments of the Israeli occupiers. He is the focus of much controversy and many attacks for his statements on Zionism and anti-Semitism. I will not quote him on these subjects in case I misconstrue or misunderstand his beliefs; he is widely posted on the internet and elaborates on his theories in his books. He is well aware that all Jews are not Zionist, in spite of Israeli government claims; he is quoted as saying on *Al Jazeera's* website in an article entitled "The Last of the Semites: *It is Israel's claims that it represents and speaks for all Jews that are the most anti-Semitic claims of all.*"

On <http://mondoweiss.net/2013/05/prophetic-massad-strikes.html>, Marc Ellis writes about Massad, just after the Stuttgart conference, "He seemed intent on emphasizing that for Palestinians, Jews are neither here nor there. The issue for Palestinians is Palestine. What Jews do with their history is up to them. Just stop trespassing in Palestine." During the conference Massad called for Palestinians to rise up against the collaborating Palestine Authority.

Massad has written many articles and books including:

Colonial effects: the making of national identity in Jordan. 2001. Columbia University Press. NY, USA

The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism & the Palestinians. 2006. Routledge, London, UK.

Desiring Arabs. 2007. University of Chicago Press. Chicago, USA

Jaber Wishah is the Deputy Director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza.

After his family was driven out by the NAKBA, Wishah was born in al Bureij refugee camp in Gaza. He was educated and worked as a physicist but his participation in the struggle against Israeli occupation led to a life sentence in prison; he was released after 15 years in 1999 in a prisoner exchange. He calls himself a returned terrorist who is proud to be a fighter against state terrorism; a freedom fighter from a jail containing 1.8 million Gazans. There are 4800 Detained in Israel jails now; he supports the hunger strikers in prison who oppose the ongoing crime of occupation. He remembered the torture and severe violations of human rights in prison and on his release became a full-time human rights defender.

He recalled the memory of cruelty and torture but also an incident of kindness and humanity; he was sent to hospital because he was ill and injured and his handcuffed hands prevented the nurse from treating him. He heard the nurse and the doctor arguing because the nurse wanted the handcuffs removed but the doctor said he was a terrorist and the cuffs were necessary for security. He heard the nurse, "Yes, he is a terrorist, but above all he is a human being, above all we must treat him like a human being."

He has since devoted his life to human rights for all; part of that devotion is the One Democratic State and the Right of Return for exiled Palestinians.

Jaber Wishah wrote the foreword for this book: *Gaza Photo Album*. Kent Klich, Photographer, 2010. Umbrage Editions, NY, USA

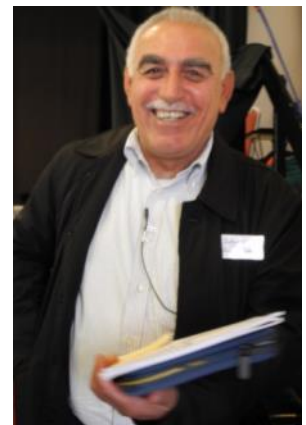


Photo: Jaber Wishah

Yoav Bar is a Jewish Israeli from Haifa and he refers to his domicile as occupied Palestine. I heard him speak in Toronto in January, 2012 and when he mentioned this conference I decided to come to Stuttgart to learn more. (For my article in English, Arabic, German and French see: http://www.bbcf.ca/articles/One%20Democratic%20State/one_democratic_state.html) Bar is one of the major architects of the ODS; he has been jailed, beaten, injured and abused for his defence of the rights of Palestinians. He blogs on www.freehaifa.wordpress.com He said it was time to speak the truth – the truth of the situation in the region. It is time to do more than react to war crimes being committed by Israel; it is time to envision real change while



Photo: Yoav Bar

doing the daily work of defending Palestinian rights. He believes we all have a moral right to call for full human rights for all Palestinians – including the right of return. Be prepared for the coming change, he says, particularly as the USA loses its world dominance, and that change can come if we unite for ODS. He reminded us that the two-state solution perpetuates apartheid. There is no democracy in the Middle East now as it is dominated by USA oil interests; democracy for Palestine means democracy for all Arabs. He called on us to cooperate and unite in the movement for ODS which can transform not only Palestine but the whole region. In his own report on the conference Bar writes that, "Uniting secularists and Islamist under a democratic program in Palestine may be our contribution to the democratic change in the Arab world, a change that is creating the conditions for bringing return, freedom and democracy to Palestine."

Haneen Naamnih is a writer and a former land rights lawyer with Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. She has a Master's degree in Law, specializing in colonial law, from The School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London.

She spoke on the historical importance of land in Israeli colonisation since the takeover of 1948 when 8% of the land was owned by Jewish settlers and the Jewish National Fund, now, 3% of Israel is owned by its Palestinian residents who make up 22% of the population. The settler policy was there from the beginning.

Environmental concerns are used as an excuse to displace people so that trees can be planted in the Negev under a new law which drive out tens of thousands of Bedouins from their homes, yet new Jewish colonies are planned to be built on the ruins of Bedouin villages. She reminded us that the 65 years since the NAKBA were the longest displacement of peoples in the world – both externally and internally. She endorsed the BDS campaign and sees ODS as the solution to the ongoing loss of rights of Palestinians. Several of her thoughtful and informative articles are posted on:

http://adalah.org/features/land/Haneen_Naamnih_Two_Sides.pdf and

<http://adalah.org/newsletter/eng/nov09/Haneen%20enemy%20English%20final.pdf>

Shir Hever is an Israeli graduate student and is an economic researcher in the Alternative Information Center, a Palestinian-Israeli organization active in Jerusalem and Beit-Sahour. He specializes in researching the economic aspect of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories; he is writing his PhD for the Freie Universität in Berlin, Germany.

Hever started his presentation by emphasising that the issue of Palestinian freedom is a global issue, that it is part of all struggles and is as much a symbol of freedom as it is a symbol of violence and racism. He presented a clear and somewhat horrifying documentation of the military economy of Israel and its links to other economies. Israel with seven million people is the world's 10th largest arms exporter. It also ranks 4th, 5th or 6th in possession of nuclear weapons worldwide.

Israel specializes in the production and sale of security and surveillance weapons and equipment, such as leg cuffs, cameras, biometric ID, which have been tested on Palestinians. Nonetheless, Hever emphasizes that Israel is not independent but relies on the West for survival - Europe, USA and Canada; Israel is part of the west and its determination to maintain the benefits of dominance. The arms industry is very much part of that dominance and Israel focuses on exports to the majority world, in particular to dictators and despots in Africa determined to suppress their own citizens. Tel Aviv is the world capital of "homeland security." He said that Netanyahu boasted that the Sept. 11 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York was "good for Israel."

Hever also described the revolving door of industry and military as retired officers move into the arms industry. Israel also produces drone technology, used on Gaza, but exported globally as well making what he called an "unequal confrontation" with poor civilians. Israel also exports generals to help in places like Georgia to restore their morale after the defeat by Lebanon in 2006 – the attacks on Gaza are also, he said, part of restoring the morale of the military after Lebanon. His book is full of more details of Israel's militarization; it should be required reading for Israeli students.

I overheard a conversation in which someone said, it is the young of both Israel and Palestine who are fed up with conflict – they are the hope for peace. Hever is one of those young Israelis.

He wrote: *The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation: Repression Beyond Exploitation*. 2010. Pluto Books. London, UK & New York, USA



Photo: Shir Hever

Ghada Karmi is a physician, writer and academic and research fellow at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter.

I have wanted to meet Karmi ever since I read her moving memoir; I was not disappointed by this courageous and wise woman. When she was a child, her family were exiled by the NAKBA and went to Syria, later they moved to England where she grew up and was educated.

She made a lively and thought-provoking presentation. She called for an end to refugees, a closing of refugee camps, internal and external, commenting on the terrible conditions in camps, particularly in Lebanon. She said that the Right of Return and the right to land are fundamental to Palestinians and are only possible through the creation of ODS. She was

one of several speakers who referred to the collaboration of the Palestine authority (PA) in oppressing and dispossessing Palestinians. She called on Palestinians to dismantle the PA. She also called for massive support not only for the ODS but also for equal rights for Palestinians within Israel.



Photo: Ghada Karmi talks to Helga Loew whom I was with in clouds of tear gas in Bil'in. She has been to Palestine regularly for 40 years working with women there.

She presented a provocative idea for discussion – that as an interim measure and a strategy, all Palestinians demand full Israeli citizenship – then they could reveal the racist structure of Israel and as citizens of occupation they can demand civil and political rights – an interesting proposal that could spark awareness.

She also called for a greater participation of women at all levels of the struggle and urged us to take the struggle home with us and change attitudes where we live about this classical anti-apartheid struggle.

Karmi has written articles and books including,

In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story. 2002. Verso. London, UK

Married to Another Man: Israel's Dilemma in Palestine. 2007. Pluto Press. London, UK and New York, USA.

Hermann Dierkes, a German political activist, active in the trade union movement and environmental policy and anticolonial issues, works closely with the Alternative Information Center in Palestine (Beit Sahour, Jerusalem). He recalled the Nazi era of racism against many groups, the death of ½ million Roma who are still being persecuted throughout Europe, he said we need to respect Jewish culture as well. This continuing racism in Europe is linked to German support of injustice in Palestine; support of Israel makes Germans responsible for the oppression of Palestinians. He called for more education and an increase in political awareness.

Attia Rajab, conference organizer and founder of Stuttgart Palestine Committee, originally from Gaza, said in his closing remarks that Israel is a racist state, economically based on an industry of death. He said that 'peace plans' fail because they do not address the root causes of the problem – colonization and displacement. We need to see Palestine as a whole – including refugees and exiles. In order for there to be liberation we need to show solidarity, not give aid that mitigates the situation. Support and act for the goals of ODS.

Photo: Attia (light brown jacket) & colleague drape keffiyahs on speakers at conference closing



Conclusions

I hope that this report gives both an overview and concrete reasons for the One Democratic State movement and vision. At present, it is a grassroots movement, in both Palestine and Israel. It is an idea whose time has come and it is spreading

around the world, thanks to conferences like this one. The wealth of wisdom and analysis expressed at this conference are important components of ODS and the opportunity for peaceful transformation. Most important is a growing movement at home; plans are being developed to open information centres for ODS in Haifa and Ramallah, so that people can be informed about ODS and see its value as the best and most hopeful solution for peace and democracy in this region. As one speaker said be prepared for the moment – a USSR or South Africa moment!

Other speakers included:

Asaad Abu Khalil, professor of political science at California State University, USA. His blog is: angryarab.blogspot.com

Rania Madi, Badil Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Geneva, Switzerland

Salah Salah, member of the PLO's Central Council in Lebanon & head of the Refugees Committee in the Pal. National Council.

Mhamed Krichen, member of the Board of Directors of CPJ (The Committee to Protect Journalists). He is a Tunisian journalist for Al Jazeera.

(Statements by these speakers are also on the internet in various languages.)



Photo: Rania Madi

: We were entertained by the German-Arab Hiwar Choir with forty singers accompanied by lute, qanun and flute. Germans of many different cultures join together to perform Arabic music and to promote cultural diversity, directed by Samir Mansour who grew up and studied music in Damascus, Syria and is now a Palestinian activist in Stuttgart.