



WAKE UP!! WAKE UP!!! IT'S YER NO U-TURN...

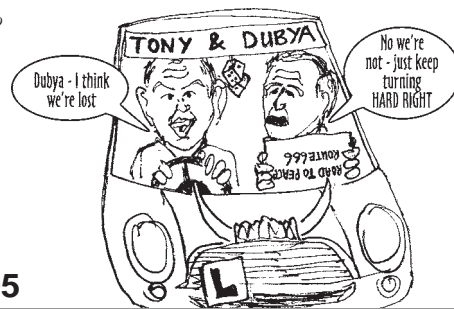
SchNEWS

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Terror-ISM

"When all the witnesses are murdered or driven out, what will go on in the Occupied Territories? How will anyone know whether things have gone from mere checkpoints, house demolitions, massacres, destruction of crops, theft of land, denial of food, water, medicine, and assassination, to something worse? How will anyone know if stepped-up killings, or mass starvation, or mass expulsions, or mass denial of medical care is taking place? What will happen to the Palestinians then?"
- Justin Podur, ZNet www.zmag.org

Last Friday, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) raided the media offices of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in Beit Sahour in occupied Palestine. The raid, in which computers, discs, papers, and every piece of data they could lay their hands on was confiscated, will undoubtedly have a temporarily paralysing effect on ISM operations.

Over the past two years, over a thousand volunteers from around the world have joined ISM in the occupied territories, helping Palestinians by taking non-violent direct action such as clearing road blocks and acting as willing human shields, as well as sending back eyewitness reports of their experiences. Over the past two months, the IDF have been making ISM volunteers feel increasingly unwelcome--3 have been killed or critically injured, and many others have been deported, some violently. The office raid comes just over a week after two British suicide bombers detonated bombs in Tel Aviv. The Israeli government have now tried to link the two bombers with the ISM in order to justify their new hard-line crackdown on human rights observers.

The IDF now stops any foreigner entering the Gaza Strip, making them sign a waiver which reads, "I am aware of the risks involved and accept that the Government of the State of Israel and its organs cannot be held responsible for death, injury and/or damage/loss of property which may be incurred as a result of military activity." In other words, please sign your own death warrant.

The stance of the IDF will affect humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people. Amnesty International have refused to sign the waiver, and so have been denied access to the occupied territories, while the main UN Agency working there (UNRWA) are concerned that their operations are being crippled by their staff being denied access.

The ISM, however, is determined that they will continue working in the area, although the stakes have now been raised. In the past, the basic assumption of international observers had been that they were relatively safe while the eyes of the

world's media was upon them. But Israel's security forces no longer appear to have any qualms about killing foreigners, even when they happen to be the citizens of Israel's closest allies. Sadly, however, the death of three foreigners is a drop in the ocean in the Palestinian conflict - on the day American Rachel Corrie was killed, nine Palestinians, including one 4 year old girl, also suffered the same fate.

Fence Offensive

At the same time that the Israel army has been busy in the occupied territories, their government has been continuing to flout international law and have indicated their intention to stick two fingers up to the new "Road Map" for peace. The Road Map, which was published earlier this month, is an American-led invention that lays out plans for the creation of an 'Independent' Palestinian state by 2005. In reality, the Road Map is based on the assumption that the new US-installed moderate Palestinian leader, Abu Mazen, will be able to stop suicide attacks. But that's a tall order, particularly for a puppet leader. As Rachel Corrie, the ISM volunteer killed earlier this year, explained in an email to her Mum, who'd suggested that a cessation of Arab violence might ease the situation: "If any of us had our lives and welfare completely strangled, lived with children in a shrinking place where we knew, from previous experience, that soldiers and tanks and bulldozers could come for us at any moment and destroy all the greenhouses that we had been cultivating for however long, and did this while some of us were being beaten and held captive - don't you think we might try and use violent means to protect whatever fragments remained... The vast majority of people here, even if they had the economic means to escape, even if they wanted to give up resisting on their land and just leave, can't leave... I think this qualifies as genocide."

Next week, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will be meeting George Dubya to discuss the Road Map, but Sharon has already made it clear that regardless of whether Palestinian terrorist attacks stop, there will be no concessions on the Israeli side. He has also made it clear that there's no question of Israel

* Israel has the 16th highest per capita income in the world, yet it receives 40% of US aid - \$3.5 billion a year. 60% of this goes to the military.
* By providing aid to Israel to construct highways connecting settlements, the US is in violation of UN Security Council resolution 465, which "calls upon all states not to provide Israel with any assistance to be used specifically in connection with settlements in the occupied territories."

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For playing games

An 11 year old boy was arrested in Antrim, Northern Ireland for carrying an "offensive weapon" - a wooden hurling stick. The boy had been on his way home after a game in the park when he was bundled into a car and questioned before being taken home where the cops told his mum that he wouldn't be allowed to take his hurley onto the street anymore.

giving up any of the Palestinian lands that they've occupied since 1967, something that they're required to do under international law.

In fact, quite the opposite is happening. Work is continuing at a frantic pace to complete the "separation wall", an Israeli invention that will confiscate even more Palestinian land, and that will cut the Palestinian territories into little pieces completely separated from the rest of the world. "With an electrified fence cordoning off all "autonomous" areas, the "independent" Palestine that the roadmap is supposed to lead to by 2005 couldn't possibly be anything other than a glorified concentration camp. Perhaps not even glorified. And most likely a series of concentration camps," said Mahir Ali, a reporter in Pakistan.

If this sort of behaviour were taking place in any other country of the world, it would be called genocide or apartheid. Lev Grinberg of Ben Gurion University says: "Suicide bombs killing innocent citizens must be unequivocally condemned... But they cannot be compared to the State terrorism carried out by the Israeli Government. The former are individual acts of despair by a people that sees no future, vastly ignored by an unfair and distorted international public opinion. The latter are cold and "rational" decisions of a State and a military apparatus of occupation, well-equipped, financed and backed by the only superpower in the world."

* Tom Hurndall, the UK ISM volunteer who was shot in the head last month by an Israeli sniper, is still in a coma in an Israeli hospital. The Israeli government won't pay the £25,000 needed to fly him home, so his parents have set up the Thomas Hurndall Fund to bring him home and a fund to help relieve poverty in Palestine. Money for either fund, the Thomas Hurndall Fund or The Tom Hurndall Trust Fund, can be sent to Lloyds Bank, 273-275 Kentish Town Road, NW5 2LP.

* Read **eyewitness accounts** from International observers at www.palsolidarity.org

* **Rally for Palestine this Saturday (17)**, 1.30pm Trafalgar Square, London 020 7700 6192 www.palestinecampaign.org

* This **Sunday (18)** UK premiere of 'Bitter Water.' What is it like to live as a refugee for 54 years? The film-makers will have a discussion after the screening. 4pm, The Other Cinema, 11 Rupert Street, London. £5/£4. Info and other world documentaries showing in June at www.dochose.org

* **Hands Off the Middle East**. Brixthelm, North Rd, Brighton, 7th June, 9.30am-1pm, £1. Sussex Action for Peace 01273 706820 www.safp.org.uk

EAT YOUR GREENS™

The genetically modified food debate is set to become a fully-fledged trade war after the US this week filed a complaint with the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Thanks to intense lobbying by big US-based biotechnology multinationals like Monsanto, the US government wants to force the EU to remove all opposition and controls on GM food, complaining that they're 'an illegal barrier to free trade.'

The EU has been relatively cautious about GM foods, insisting on labelling and traceability of foods. The US, who has refused to sign up to international safety codes regarding GM, says that this is just costly and pointless.

The opposition to GM foods comes from the public in European countries and is genuinely democratic (some surveys say 70% of people don't want GM foods), but of course this is irrelevant to the WTO. Un-elected pro-business trade lawyers will hear the case behind closed doors and there is no right of appeal. If they rule in favour of the US, the EU could face trade sanctions running into the billions, with Green MEP Caroline Lucas warning that "the mother of all trade wars and could bring about the [WTO]'s collapse." Shame.

However, if this looks like the EU is a friendly crusader against crossing fruit with jellyfish to make wine gums or whatever nonsense they're trying this week, think again. The EU has granted Monsanto a massive monopoly over all GM soybeans after a nine-year civil battle with watchdog group ETC - the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration.

The patent was originally granted to a different company, with Monsanto then firing off a 292-page long statement of opposition. However, when Monsanto bought that very same company they quickly changed their tune and supported the patent. The ruling means that anyone who genetically modifies soybeans in any way has to pay Monsanto.

There is some good news: Monsanto's sales are well down from last year, and they're now facing shareholder resolutions questioning the safety of GM.

ATOM BUMMER

Meanwhile Nanotechnology (see SchNEWS 249 & 348) looks set to become the next big GM thing, with mad scientists already rolling out the old cliché that it could end world hunger. Nanotechnology involves building materials and small devices by manipulating individual atoms. The scale is so small that you could fit 100,000 of these devices across a human hair.

Environmental groups are pushing for caution, with Kathy Jo Wetter of ETC complaining, "Even though industry is scaling up the manufacture of nanoparticles... there appear to be no government regulations in Europe or North America to ensure the safety of workers or consumers." Funding in the US for Nanotech this year will total around \$2 billion, with similar amounts in Japan.

Nanotech particles are already beginning to pop up in various products such as sunscreens and wound dressings without extensive testing, and of course the US is busy using the technology to make new bombs. According to Patrick Mulvany from ETC, "Nanotech threatens even further to divert funds, knowledge and political will away from the research necessary to address society's problems."

More on the GM Trade War: www.foe.org.uk Nanotech, GM and patents: www.etcgroup.org or read this month's Ecologist magazine www.theecologist.org

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SchNEWS in brief

Reverend Billy, the anti-consumerist evangelist who spreads the gospel 'Thou shalt not shop' was nicked in a Derby Disney Store after he used a megaphone to inform shoppers of the company's use of sweatshop and child labour. Arrested under breach of the peace, he was held until the shops shut. Follow the anti-shopping tour at <http://stopshopping.blogspot.com> ** **People's Assembly** for Manchester, June 7th with workshops on everything from the selling off of our public services to lessons from the anti-war movement to creating your own media. Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, City Centre (behind Central Library) 1- 5pm 07986 305320 peoplesassembly@manchestersstopthewar.org ** Apologies from your **geographically challenged** SchNEWS. Dundrennan, Kirkcudbright (in last week's SchNEWS), is in *Scotland* not Ireland. ** Manchester **Radical Bookfair** this Saturday (17th) 11am- 5pm Bridge 5 Mill, 22a Beswick Street, Ancoats. www.radicalbookfair.org.uk ** **Lakenheath Trespass Day**, May 27th 6am-midnight, Lakenheath, Suffolk, the primary U.S. tactical airbase in Europe with about 30 nuclear weapons. Organisers are asking people to form affinity groups and spend the day trying to get into the base 0116 247 0121 www.lakenheathaction.org ** The annual **Stonehenge walk** starts in Brighton, 27th May, 1pm from the Old Steine Fountain, Brighton, for a walk along South Downs Way to Stonehenge Solstice celebration 078141 92881 jesterdream@hotmail.com ** A **Stonehenge Acoustic Free Festival** is planned for June 21st - 22nd to protest at English Heritage's decision to open the monument on the wrong day of the solstice! Campaigners are demanding full restoration of their traditional rights of free access to the Stones and the provision of land for camping. Acoustic musicians and groups wanting to participate in the celebration should contact <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stonehengeentertainmentdiscussion/> ** Sound systems are planning a big **UK T3KNIVAL free festival** somewhere in the UK over the Bank Holiday weekend (24-26 May) "open invitation to all, sound systems, artists and performers.... and ravers of course" 07050 601945/07092 350834/07092 310245 (phonelines active from Saturday pm) <http://uktek.freetekno.org> ** 'The Allotment - Its past, present and future' conference organized by the Rural History Centre, 31st May, University of Reading. Tickets £25 and spaces limited 0118-378 8306

CHEW ON THIS

The new Water Bill to be discussed in Parliament later this month may force water companies to add fluoride to public water supplies if told to do so by health authorities. So what's wrong with fluoride, after all it's in our toothpaste? While fluoride applied to the teeth can neutralise the bacterial action of sugar (which is the cause of cavities), when it is ingested, as would happen if it were in the water, it can have severe health effects such as high incidences of hip fractures, joint conditions, bone cancer, and Alzheimers disease. Adding fluoride to water has been banned in most of continental Europe because of the health effects. Switzerland has just ended 41 years of putting fluoride in the water saying its merits "could not be proven in any study."

Fluoride is a toxic waste product of the phosphate fertiliser industry. Dumping it in our water avoids the high costs of safe disposal, and the industry has done a brilliant job of persuading everyone that it is necessary to combat tooth decay. This is forced medication on a massive scale and is against the EU Human Rights Charter which states: "everyman has to have a guarantee...that he has free choice of therapy."

National Pure Water Association 01924 254433 www.npwa.freeseerve.co.uk

"I'm a Refugee, Get Me Out Of Here"

"I have been living in Battersea for fourteen years. I am married to an English woman and have been working and paying my taxes all this time. Two years ago they caught me and took me to a detention centre, then they let me go and now they have caught me again and put me in Haslar and I don't know why. They ask me to explain why I don't want to go back to Algeria. Anyone who knows anything about Algeria knows that it is kill or be killed over there. There has been civil war there and I don't want to go back." Medhi Bentounes, detainee at Haslar 'removals' centre.

On Monday, eleven people went on hunger strike at Haslar 'removals' centre in Portsmouth to protest against conditions and SchNEWS was amongst some of those who visited them to offer solidarity. The hunger strikers overwhelming message was that none of them know why they are being detained or for how long. Asked about the hunger strike, a detainee told us, "We feel a little weak and sick but this is our only weapon we have at hand. Conditions here are so bad, you know we can't eat the food anyway usually because it's too disgusting". Medhi, the detainee we quoted above, is not on hunger strike because, like many other Algerian detainees at the centre, he is scared that it will harm his case and that he will be deported. After the last hunger strike, a man who had been identified as 'leading' the strike was deported only days after the strike had ended.

Like most detention centres, Haslar has now been renamed a 'removals' centre, despite the fact that only a handful of detainees face immediate deportation. People being kept at Haslar are forced to spend most of their days in dormitories-large rooms housing 120 detainees. They are locked in their dormitories for 16 hours a day and are only permitted to have visitors for two hours (the rest of the time they are asleep, with most detainees being given sleeping tablets because they suffer from insomnia due to high levels of stress and lack of privacy).

* Support the hunger strikers - write to the governor of Haslar and ask him to listen to their demands. For a sample letter go to www.ncadc.org.uk

* National demonstration against Haslar, 21 June, 11am at the centre. Bring noisy things, the detainees need to hear us!

* The Yarl's Wood trial (see SchNEWS 348) is now in its fourth week and there are demos outside Harrow Crown Court each Monday 9-10:30am 07786 517379 ginn_emma@hotmail.com

...and finally...

Strathclyde cops are on rent strike after part of the roof of their new building caved in. The new police recruitment and training centre was built under the Private Finance Initiative (see last week's SchNEWS) by Balfour Beatty and funded by US private equity firm Babcock and Brown. Balfour Beatty are the safety-conscious crew who received a record £1.2 million fine after part of the tunnel they were building on the rail link to Heathrow airport 'collapsed'. Their latest building achievements include no disabled access and flooding caused by a collapsed roof that forced the police to cancel one of their own conferences. This is the first time that a public authority has withheld rent on a PFI project, although many PFI projects have been fined for poor services and missed targets. Babcock and Brown have blamed Balfour Beatty and also accused the cops of being "pretty crap at looking after their own facilities." SchNEWS can't wait for the bailiffs to turn up...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all backseat drivers to fasten their seatbelts - with SchNEWS at the wheel it's a bumpy ride. Honest!