

From Deir Yassin to the Wall

If Deir Yassin was the first atrocity then the wall is the latest and perhaps even the last atrocity.

To the Israeli people, it's a security fence. But a fence is something you can see through, something children climb over. Thirty feet high and maybe two or three feet thick, you can't see through this and no child will be climbing over it. And security for whom, and from whom? Because, if the wall will protect Israelis from Palestinians, who will protect Palestinians from Israelis?

To peace activists it's a separation barrier, an obstacle to the natural inclination of these two peoples to live together. Or, in a struggle between equals, a barrier to keep the two warring sides apart until such time as they can come together. But this is not a struggle between equals: this is the oppression of one people by another. And the wall is not a barrier to keep the two sides apart but to keep the Palestinians from living in their own land.

To those in solidarity with the Palestinians, who come fresh from the struggle in South Africa, this is an Apartheid wall – another occurrence of the ideology that they gave and did so much to defeat. But the Zionism, which in its oppression of the Palestinians uses as justification both the name of God and the suffering of millions, is so much worse than apartheid.

For those Jews of conscience in solidarity with the Palestinians, the wall is a ghetto wall. These Jews know a lot about walls. Jews are commanded to 'build a wall around the Torah' and the Western, or Wailing Wall is Judaism's only real holy place. But it is, of course, ghetto walls with which Jewish history and memory abounds.

Because that's what it is: a ghetto wall. They're walling these people in as surely as they walled them in, in the ghettos of Lodz, Bialystock and Warsaw.

And it's not new. The wall simply delineates the history of the last hundred years and especially of the last thirty-five years. Because, if you look at the map of the wall, it's the same map as proposed by General Yigal Allon in 1968 when he called for Israel to take as much of the land on the West Bank and Gaza as possible with as few of the people. And the map of the wall is not only the map of Allon but also of Rabin, Netanyahu, Barak and Sharon: Palestinians herded into ghettos in ten per cent of what was once their land. Only now there's a wall around it.

But Deir Yassin is not imprisoned inside the wall. Deir Yassin: where the Palestinian exile began, lies inside the state of Israel, once the land of Palestine. Deir Yassin, with its victims burned and buried under an oil depot not 1400 metres from the most famous Holocaust memorial in the world, stands as a permanent and irrevocable reminder that the Palestinian people and land live on in both memory and fact.

Nothing lasts forever, not even the present evil. With memory and hope we can struggle for a better future.

"From Deir Yassin to the Wall",
a theatrical presentation directed by Nadim Sawalha.

Sunday April 4th at 7 p.m.
The Royal Geographical Society, Kensington Gore, London SW7

Tickets £12.50

DYR, PO Box 25852, London N5 1ZU

020 7607 7408

dyr@eisen.demon.co.uk

Cheques payable to "Deir Yassin Remembered"