

2. Repression and the Threat to Life and Limb

Introduction

States seek to obtain compliance from their subjects by a combination of methods. Antonio Gramsci identified two general types of political control: *domination* (the exercise of repression, physical coercion, and the threat of penalties and sanctions for non-compliance) and *direction* or hegemonic control (the exercise of control through the generation of popular consent within civil society). He assumed that no regime could sustain itself solely through coercive power. In the long run any state depended for its existence on engineering its acceptance as the locus of legitimate authority with the acknowledged right to rule over its subjects, through infusing civil society with a system of values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions conducive to the perpetuation of the established order.¹

The moulding of the consciousness of a people by a state in order to achieve hegemonic control obviously requires time for the various agencies of socialisation to exert their influence. When an alien state seeks to impose its will on a conquered people, it faces a serious problem of obtaining compliance from the newly subject population. Few are prepared to grant it legitimacy and accept the new regime with a whole heart. As a result, the occupiers are invariably obliged to exercise control through domination, and in particular through coercion — making credible threats about the penalties to be incurred for non-compliance. During the early years of occupation the power of the state is invariably exercised in a peculiarly open and violent manner. Those who dare to oppose the will of the occupier are made to suffer, until they lose the urge to resist and, however reluctantly, consent to submit.

According to advocates of civilian-based resistance, it is the refusal to obey and the preparedness to suffer the penalties of non-compliance and non-cooperation that erodes the social sources of an occupier's power — the subjects' willingness to obey. Gandhi maintained that "all exploitation is based on cooperation, willing or forced, of the exploited... there would be no exploitation if people refused to obey the exploiters." A more recent exponent of this view has argued that²

the power of governments derives from sources in society, such as legitimacy, economic resources, skills and knowledge, submission and obedience of the population, sanctions, and others. All of those sources in society depend on the cooperation and obedience of individuals and of institutions. When that cooperation and obedience are withdrawn, then that power is weakened in proportion to the degree that the sources are withdrawn.

More than anything else, the Intifada represents the Palestinians of the West

Bank and Gaza Strip's withdrawal of their consent to be ruled, and an active attempt to make the costs of continued occupation unbearable to Israel. Faced with the radical erosion of consent, the Israelis sought to impose their control by domination. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the predominant modes of domination that have been attempted, particularly that of physical coercion.

Background: the Iron Fist

The authors of a report on human rights violations during the Uprising have observed³:

Few of the repressive measures undertaken by the military authorities since December 1987 were without precedent. These include beatings, opening fire at unarmed demonstrators, mass arrests, extra-judicial punishments like deportations, administrative detentions and house demolitions, collective sanctions like prolonged curfews, and other punishments which had been routinely meted out to the occupied population throughout the length of the occupation.

Since 1967 the Israelis have relied disproportionately upon the "stick" rather than the "carrot" to impose their control on the occupied territories. Any attempt by Palestinians to organise protest actions has been quelled. Strikes by lawyers and teachers, protests against house demolitions and trade restrictions during the first year of the occupation were met by arrests and deportations, with 69 people being expelled during 1968.⁴ In the Gaza Strip there was significant armed resistance against the occupation. In the West Bank those deported were generally opinion-leaders, activists in professional organisations, mayors, village elders and the like. The aim was clearly to forestall the emergence of any coherent political leadership in the territories. Palestinian sources estimate that at least 1156 people were deported between 1967 and 1978.⁵ In general the Israelis justified their actions in terms of the suspects' alleged connections with "terrorist organisations" such as the PLO. Thus, with regard to the demolition of houses, they claimed their practice to be "a very effective deterrent and to be a humane method ... there can be no doubt that the destruction of a few dozen houses of convicted terrorists ... has saved the lives of thousands of innocent people."⁶ Full use was also made of a measure introduced to Palestine by the British Defence (Emergency) Regulations of 1945: the detention of individuals without charge or trial for renewable periods of six months. In 1970 there were 1,131 administrative detainees.⁷

Soon after the Likud bloc came to power in 1977, repression and coercion were resorted to even more vigorously, as the rate of land confiscation increased and the settlement programme accelerated. Then, in 1984, the National Unity government was formed and Labour's Yitzhak Rabin became Minister of Defence. In August 1985 he launched his policy of the "Iron Fist". It was a clear attempt to cower the Palestinians into submission, to break their will. The practices of deportation and administrative detention

that had been allowed to lapse somewhat were revived. The effects can be seen in the statistics. Between January 1985 and November 1987, 43 Palestinians were deported and during the year immediately prior to the outbreak of the Intifada at least 20 people died as a direct result of actions of the occupying power. During this same twelve month period 180 suffered serious injury, 157 were imprisoned without trial under administrative detention, eight people were served with deportation orders, and 132 buildings were demolished or sealed.⁸

This tightening of the screw of repression, far from intimidating the population, served to feed their anger and frustration, their feeling that "something must be done before it is too late". In this way, Rabin's Iron Fist policy contributed to the emergence of the Uprising. Indeed, some would argue that it was the continuation and intensification of this policy during the Uprising that helped to sustain Palestinian resistance. As one Palestinian university student expressed it to me:

Economically we are suffering. Educationally we are suffering. Politically we are suffering, and in other aspects of life we are suffering. But the people have a strong will and trust in themselves — that they can defeat the Israelis at last, and that the Israelis should get out. We have one of two choices: either to die or to give in. This feeling is among all the people. The Israelis have taken many serious measures against the people. We are suffocated by the Israelis. But whatever measures they take, the Intifada will not end. The Palestinians have a strong will. The Israelis are very nervous, and sometimes they do not know what to do. All their measures, their killing, their arresting, deportations — they have no effect.

The Uprising as unarmed civilian-based resistance

The event that triggered off the Uprising was the death of four Gazans killed when an Israeli tank transporter crashed into a line of cars near the military checkpoint at the entrance to Gaza City. The funerals of the men were held later that day and were the occasion for demonstrations in Mughazi and Jabalya refugee camps. These continued the following day, and at Jabalya, Israeli troops using live ammunition shot and killed a teenager. This precipitated further protest demonstrations throughout the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. From the camps the demonstrations spread to the towns and to the villages. The pattern of large scale demonstrations and mass protest actions was soon widespread. People confronted the occupying force with slogans, flags and stones; roads were blocked with stone barricades and burning tyres, and primitive Molotov cocktails were sometimes hurled at the troops. Israeli property in the territories was targeted, as banks and other premises, buses, and cars were attacked with stones and fire-bombs.

This generalised form of mass protest is difficult to sustain for any lengthy period of time, and before too long spontaneous forms of mass protest gave way to more organised styles of confrontation, carried out by groups of

resisters. Groups of predominantly young people in neighbourhoods, quarters and villages each developed their own tactics of harassment.

I became familiar with the *modus operandi* adopted in one small town in the northern region of the West Bank during the summer of 1988. The youths divided themselves up into small groups, each with its own leader or commander. Some of the groups would lie in wait to ambush the settlers who drove through the town each day. Following a stoning incident the settlers would invariably stop their cars and fire after the retreating young men. The army would then hasten to the scene, along well known routes where other groups lay in ambush armed with stones. Their aim was to entice the soldiers to pursue them into the back streets of the town where they would present a better target for other groups who awaited them there. It was all highly organised. Each squad of four to six members was supported by teenage girls supplied with cologne, lemons, and onions to counteract the effects of tear-gas. For the members of these strike forces the daily "hit and run" confrontations had become an integral part of their life. Few of them slept in the same house every night, to minimise the risk of being arrested by the military. Of an evening one could observe many young men drifting off into the surrounding hills to sleep. In many ways theirs was the life of a guerrilla or outlaw — highly organised in small-groups, extremely mobile, completely integrated into the local society, and yet also separate from that society in terms of the type of resistance activity in which they participated. Although they did not use lethal weapons specifically designed to kill and injure, there could be no doubt that the immediate aim of their stone-throwing activity was to inflict physical injury on the potential victims.

For the young people that I came to know, stones and the occasional bottle filled with petrol were their armoury. According to Defence Minister Rabin, speaking in September 1988, "Some 80 per cent of the violence today is stone-linked — throwing and erecting barriers. The rest comprises incendiary bottles, assaults and violent demonstrations".⁹ It does not sound very threatening when compared with the weaponry available to the IDF. However, as one village leader reminded an interviewer,¹⁰

Don't underestimate our stones. Most of us here were brought up as shepherds, throwing stones at sheep to keep them from straying, and we learned to be very accurate. Some of us are good at using the *miqlaya* (a kind of slingshot) and can hit a sheep's rump at well over 100 metres.

Stones and petrol bombs can cause serious injury and even death. At the end of October 1988 a young Israeli mother and two of her children were burnt to death after an arson attack on an Israeli bus near Jericho. In February 1989 a soldier was killed in Nablus, when a concrete block was dropped on his head from a roof. Settlers and their families have been injured by stones and car accidents consequent upon attacks by stone throwers. Such incidents lent some much-needed credibility to Israeli attempts to label the stone-throwers

as little better than terrorists, engaged in violent forms of attack with weapons almost as dangerous as guns or bombs.

One Israeli commander has claimed that "they (the Palestinians) use stones to kill, because they don't have grenades or something else".¹¹ The truth is that grenades, knives and guns have been used by Palestinians during the Intifada. The first soldier to be killed was shot in the head whilst he was on reserve duty in Bethlehem in March 1988. In May 1989 one soldier was killed and a number of others seriously injured in a shoot-out with three Palestinians armed with automatic weapons, grenades and small arms. A few months later, in November, another was killed in an ambush on an army jeep in Gaza City. By mid-1990 a total of ten soldiers and nine Israeli civilians had been killed by Palestinians in the occupied territories. Within the borders of Israel proper 25 civilians and four soldiers had been killed by Palestinians over the same period. Such killings, more often than not, were the result of individual anger and resentment that had welled up beyond control. For example, in November 1988 a Palestinian labourer stabbed a soldier to death outside a settlement, after he had become enraged over a dispute concerning unpaid wages. Early in May 1989 a Palestinian brandishing a kitchen knife stabbed two Israelis to death and wounded three more in Jaffa Street, West Jerusalem. Two months later, on 6 July, a Palestinian from Nusairat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip grabbed the wheel of a public transport bus on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, sending it toppling down a ravine and causing the deaths of 16 passengers. It was an individual act of vengeance, committed by a lone individual determined to avenge the crippling injuries inflicted upon a friend by Israeli troops in Gaza. The killing of three Israelis in a suburb of West Jerusalem in October 1990 seems to have been a similar act of vengeance committed by a Palestinian teenager in response to the slaughter of some 17 of his fellow countrymen and the wounding of 150 others by Israeli border police on 8 October 1990 at the Temple Mount, the site of the Dome on the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque.

Whilst such lethal acts have been primarily the responsibility of isolated individuals acting alone, the vast majority of the Palestinian community have borne witness to their resistance by less drastic means. It is particularly worth mentioning at this juncture the various forms of "semi-resistance" that Palestinians have incorporated into their daily lives. This has entailed such things as wearing clothes in the Palestinian national colours, wearing pendants and jewellery incorporating the shape of Palestine, wearing the *keffiyah* head-dress or perhaps a t-shirt with a silk-screened pattern of the keffiyah printed on it, following "Palestinian time" by switching to summer time or winter time a week earlier than the Israelis. Such forms of symbolic, "non-heroic" resistance are crucially important insofar as they enable those who do not court martyrdom or imprisonment to affirm their solidarity with the Uprising. As such these forms of "semi-resistance" have been far more in keeping with the overall tenor of the Intifada as an unarmed "people's Uprising" than the acts of murder and carnage committed by individual Palestinians.

The decision to refrain from using arms was clearly taken by the leadership of the Uprising for pragmatic reasons rather than any moral revulsion against the taking of lives as such. At one level, Palestinians knew that any resort to armed revolt on their part would invite massive retaliation with truly horrendous consequences. They know that they cannot match Israel when it comes to armed force. Therefore they have sought to erode Israel's capacity to wield her might, and to impose political and moral costs upon Israel through the pursuit of unarmed struggle. The Palestinians believed that so long as they refrained from using arms they could continue to appeal to the sympathy of the international community (and sections of the Israeli public), appalled by the brutal repression of "civilians" by military force.

For many years Israel has laid claim to the status of "David" threatened by the "Goliath" of the Arab world — the unarmed nature of the Palestinian struggle succeeded in some measure in reversing the roles, with Israel increasingly cast as the brutal giant waging an unequal battle against the brave "children of the stones".

Force, might and beatings

Confronted by displays of mass defiance from broad sections of the Palestinian population, the Israelis reacted with force. The aim was clearly to restore law and order through physical intimidation and repression, in the long-held belief that force is the only thing that Arabs respect. If people participate in protest actions, however symbolic these might be, then they must be prepared to suffer. The result has been injury and death for many Palestinians. Within the first five weeks of the Uprising, some 47 Palestinians had been killed, the majority dying from bullet wounds. According to Yitzhak Shamir "the barrier of fear of the IDF among the Arabs of Judea, Samaria and Gaza" had been broken, the task was therefore "to recreate that barrier and once again put the fear of death into the Arabs of the areas so as to deter them from attacking us any more."¹²

The harshness of the Israeli response became a crucial factor contributing to the intensification of the conflict, adding impetus to the Intifada during that early period. The Israelis found themselves locked into that familiar spiral where an initial act of protest is met by repression, which shocks and angers the protesters and thereby provokes a heightening of the protest, which in turn leads to an escalation of the repressive measures and so on. The cycle continued, with mounting costs to both sides.

In an attempt to defuse the mounting international criticism of the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilian protesters, Defence Minister Rabin announced on 19 January 1988 a policy of intimidation by non-lethal means — that of systematic beatings. Ironically, this attempt to assuage international opinion back-fired completely, particularly after news film taken by CBS in late February was seen in Israel and around the world: it showed Israeli soldiers wielding rocks and clubs to break the limbs of four Palestinian youths on a hillside outside Nablus. The subsequent international and domestic

pressure led the Israeli Attorney-General to insist that the illegality of beating demonstrators be made clear to the soldiers.¹³ On 23 February 1988 the Chief of General Staff, Dan Shomron, reiterated the guide-lines under which force could be used:¹⁴

... under no circumstances should force be used as a means of punishment. The use of force is permitted during a violent incident in order to break up a riot, to overcome resistance to legal arrest, and during pursuit after rioters or suspects ... Force is not to be used once the objective has been attained ... In every instance the use of force must be reasonable ...

From the official Israeli perspective then, it was clear that any incidents of brutality were exceptions to the general rule and practice. For the soldiers in the field the situation seemed rather different. Shomron was forced to admit a year later, in March 1989, that the IDF's orders concerning the use of physical force against rioters left a "grey area" within which each soldier had to use his own judgement.¹⁵ The occasion was the trial of four soldiers from the Givati Brigade accused of beating to death a resident of Jabaliya Refugee Camp on 22 August 1988. Their defence was that they had "followed orders" — these being "to break the legs of people who violate orders" and to beat suspects in order to deter them, even when they were not resisting arrest.¹⁶ The four were eventually found guilty of causing grievous bodily harm, but acquitted of charges of manslaughter on the grounds that so many soldiers beat and kicked the dead man that it was impossible to determine who had struck the fatal blow. The court concluded:¹⁷

it seems that every unit that arrived in Gaza received guide-lines that during the arrest of a suspected rioter, soldiers were to use their batons on limbs as a deterrent ... We learned that breaking hands was not exceptional. The court accepts the testimony that the accused were complying with the orders of their commanders, but upon investigation it appears that the written orders were completely different ...

In March 1988, the same month that plastic and fibreglass truncheons were introduced to replace the wooden ones that kept breaking and splintering, an Israeli army reservist attempted to map out the nature of this "grey area" that created the space within which such shameful deeds could be committed.¹⁸

Every battalion works out its own set of norms, in accordance with its battle experience and the character of its soldiers. Every battalion commander is the sovereign of the area (under his command). Every company commander is the mukhtar of a village or two, and every soldier manning a road-block is a little god. He decides what to do: who will be allowed through and who won't be. Try to understand that every person there has considerable leeway when it comes to making decisions ... The best description I can find for what's going on there is total chaos. Our role has remained undefined. There are simply no rules

governing the implementation of orders, behavioural norms, and methods of punishment. They don't exist.

Reflecting on the evidence of systematic brutality committed by members of the IDF, Dr Jack Geiger of the City University of New York, suggested: ¹⁹

There are two or three things going on: first there is a small community of sadists; second, soldiers find it becomes progressively easier to implement these harsh policies. The initial step is always the hardest. For all this you have to dehumanise yourself. If you convince yourself the other side is less than human, you can get away with anything.

In many ways it was the practice of beating that shocked outside observers as much as anything else that the Israelis have resorted to in their efforts to suppress the Intifada. Perhaps it has something to do with the paradoxical nature of beatings. At one level it is so "human" and "low-tech" — real people injuring others with their own hands, assisted by a few simple tools like rocks and clubs. Somehow, the use of more sophisticated weapons that allow death and injury to be inflicted "at a distance" seems more "civilised" — perhaps because it is so far removed from our everyday lives, beyond our comprehension. "Face-to-face" violence is of a different order. Most of us have had some experience of it. We find it easier to identify with the perpetrator and the victim. We can recognise ourselves in them. The horror is therefore all the more when we witness the inhumane level to which "someone like us" can be reduced; for the systematic breaking of another's limbs is not only a denial of the humanity of the victim, but by their actions the bone-breakers deny their own humanity. I quote from a newspaper report of a disciplinary hearing in which an Israeli officer was dismissed for occurrences that took place in January 1988:²⁰

In Hawwarah, four officers and about 40 soldiers arrested twelve villagers, tied their hands and feet, shoved rags into their mouths and broke their arms and legs with clubs. They left the wounded Arabs in an orchard, witnesses said.

"Non-lethal" methods of repression: gas, rubber, and plastic

Of course, beatings were not the only "non-lethal" method adopted by the Israelis to deter and physically intimidate the protesters. Tear-gas is a common method resorted to by the forces of law and order throughout the world for dealing with riots and disturbances. Its safe use depends upon it being deployed according to the appropriate instructions. Both CS and CN gas have been used by the IDF, both types of canister bear the manufacturer's warning that the gas can cause death "should grenades, cartridges or projectiles designed for use in riots be used in confined areas ..." ²¹ Whilst Israeli forces have used tear-gas to disperse crowds and other public demonstrations, there is incontrovertible evidence that they have also fired gas canisters into crowded

neighbourhoods and refugee camps, into closed homes and hospitals, and directly at individuals. The elderly, the very young, pregnant women, the bedridden, the chronically ill and those with respiratory problems are particularly at risk from the effects of the gas. From a medical viewpoint it is difficult to determine when tear-gas has been the sole and direct cause of death. Palestinian sources claim that 66 deaths were caused by tear-gas during the first year of the Uprising, including 31 children — the majority of them aged under six months.²² Many cases of miscarriage were also attributed to the effects of tear-gas.

In May 1988, Federal Laboratories of Pennsylvania announced that they were refusing to deliver any more gas to Israel until they received "some confirmation that their [Israel's] intent [was] not to use it as a weapon".²³ The following month a report was issued by a team of Israeli doctors who warned of the fatal consequences of using gas in closed areas. In September the IDF General Staff responded to the pressure by issuing a directive prohibiting its use in confined spaces. This resulted in a significant reduction in the number of deaths attributable to the effects of tear-gas, such that the US State Department felt able to report in the spring of 1990 that Israel "has occasionally used tear-gas improperly and carelessly by employing it in closed areas, but this practice does not appear to be widespread".²⁴ Be that as it may, after three years of the Intifada, the Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre estimated the total of tear-gas related deaths at 88.²⁵

A variety of different kinds of rubber bullets have been used since the commencement of the Intifada. (In fact the collection of the many different types of bullet became one of the favourite hobbies of young Palestinian children.) The most common is cylindrical in shape, with a solid metal core. There is also a spherical one, about the size of a marble, most frequently shot in clusters. Both can cause, and have caused, serious injuries, blindings and loss of life amongst Palestinians when fired at short range. A spokesman from Maqassed Hospital in East Jerusalem estimated that during the first two years of the Uprising twelve deaths had occurred at the hospital due to the metal from the rubber bullets entering the brain and that the majority of eye losses were attributable to rubber bullets shot at short range.²⁶

In August 1988, just prior to the issue of the new directive on the use of tear-gas, plastic bullets were introduced into the armoury of the IDF, allegedly because rubber bullets had proved ineffective beyond a range of 50 yards. At a press conference on 27 September 1988 Defence Minister Rabin explained that the purpose of the plastic bullets was "to increase the number [of wounded] among those who take part in violent activities but not to kill them."²⁷ Although relatively ineffective beyond a range of 100 metres, these bullets can shatter bones at anything up to 70 metres — a fact which was reflected in the injury statistics. According to an Israeli military spokesman's statement issued on 22 January 1989, in the five months that plastic bullets had been in use, the bullets were responsible for about half the fatalities of that period, with 47 Palestinians dying from wounds inflicted by them and 288 suffering injury.

This period also saw a dramatic increase in the number of gunshot wounds suffered, with an average of 500 wounds from live ammunition per month.²⁸ Palestinians and others explained this phenomenon by claiming that by permitting soldiers to fire plastic bullets even in non-life-threatening situations, the IDF had seriously relaxed the restrictions concerning "open-fire situations", and contributed to an erosion of the threshold between "lethal" and "non-lethal" arms. The regulations permitted soldiers to fire plastic bullets during "violent demonstrations" in which three or more Palestinians were participating, at stone-throwers, and at those who burned tyres and erected road-blocks. Given the fact that at ranges of less than 70 metres plastic bullets can penetrate bones and organs with lethal results, the distinction between "lethal" and "non-lethal" weaponry certainly begins to blur somewhat. Indeed, in September 1988 the army finally admitted for the first time that rubber bullets and tear-gas, in addition to plastic bullets, could kill, when Chief of Staff Shomron reluctantly acknowledged that "In very isolated incidents it happens that people died of plastic bullets, but that happened also, by the way, from rubber bullets and even by those who inhaled gas."²⁹

In the summer of 1989 there was a further increase in the rate of Palestinian deaths caused by gunshot wounds. This followed the issuing of new open-fire orders by the IDF, which defined unarmed Palestinians who covered their faces with *keffiyas* as suspects who could be shot with live ammunition in pursuance of the normal procedure for the arrest of suspects. Amnesty International was just one of the human rights organisations to express disquiet at the new guide-lines insofar as their investigations seemed to suggest "that the Israeli government is condoning and in effect encouraging extra-judicial executions". In its statement issued in May 1990 Amnesty went on to voice its concern that the new directions "appear to permit unjustifiable killings by allowing firearms to be used against people involved in activities which do not necessarily endanger life, or who are suspected of having been involved in such activities, or who are simply wearing masks."³⁰ After three years of the Uprising Palestinian sources estimated the number of deaths due to gunshot at 890.³¹

Deportations

Amongst many Palestinians, the grief and mourning experienced at the death of a loved one is countered by feelings of joy and pride for one who has joined the ranks of the "martyrs". Indeed, it seemed to many observers that amongst the young members of the strike forces who confronted the Israeli army with stones and Molotov cocktails, the fear of death had all but disappeared. Difficult though it may be in such cases to separate rhetoric from reality, it would appear that many Palestinians fear the "living death" of expulsion from their homeland more than they do martyrdom.

A total of 56 Palestinians were deported during the first year of the Intifada as part of the Israeli attempt to remove those they considered to be the ringleaders from the arena of the Uprising. Community leaders and grass-

roots activists were targeted alongside trade unionists, lawyers, and journalists.³² On occasions, however, it has seemed as if the Israeli authorities have resorted to deportations in order to assuage the wrath of settlers and right-wing groups demanding punitive action against Palestinians. For example, following the tragic events at the village of Beita on 6 April 1988, when an *Israeli* settler killed two Palestinians and one of the teenagers he was supposed to be guarding, demands were heard "to raze the village of Beita and expel all rioters from the territories". Responding to this lynch-mob atmosphere, the authorities immediately expelled six residents of the village who were allegedly involved in the incident.

Expulsion orders are based on an administrative decision, those selected for deportation have no right to a fair defence, since they do not have access to all the evidence used against them. The practice has been condemned by the international community, and it is generally assumed that the cessation of expulsions was due to international pressure, particularly from the United States. However, in December 1990 the Israeli government reacted to growing Palestinian violence against Israelis in the aftermath of the al-Aqsa massacre and in the context of the Gulf Crisis by ordering the expulsion of four Gazans. They were members of Hamas, which had claimed responsibility for the fatal stabbing of three Jews in a Jaffa factory a couple of days earlier. Some months later, in March 1991, deportation orders were issued against a further four activists from the Gaza Strip after one Israeli was killed and five wounded in stabbing attacks during the previous week. Once again it seemed as if prominent activists were being targeted in order to ward off allegations that they were not doing enough to curb the mounting incidence of random attacks by Palestinians upon Israeli civilians and military.

Demolition and collective punishments

The deportation of any individual imposes a severe emotional and economic penalty on the family that has to bear the loss of separation, with little or no hope of reunification in the short or medium term. A similar form of collective punishment resorted to by the Israeli authorities is the demolition of homes, when the whole family is punished for the alleged crimes of one of its members. It is hard to convey the trauma of being given just a few minutes to collect your dearest belongings before your family home is either dynamited or bulldozed to the ground. You and your family are reduced to the status of refugees living in tents, years of hard labour and financial investment reduced to rubble.

According to Palestinian sources, 668 homes were demolished or sealed for alleged security purposes during the first three years of the Uprising.³³ In an earlier report the Israeli Information Centre on Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (*B'Tselem*) pointed out that only 30 per cent of the demolished homes in the West Bank, and 20 per cent in the Gaza Strip, belonged to people suspected of being connected with a killing. Others had their homes destroyed on suspicion of incitement, resisting arrest, or throw-

ing a petrol bomb. In some cases the homes belonged to relatives of the suspects and not to the suspects themselves, and in most cases the demolition was completed before the legal proceedings against the suspects had been concluded.³⁴ Within 48 hours of the incident at Beita in April 1988, 15 homes were destroyed and another eight damaged by the blasts. In at least one case, the home of a Gazan family was demolished because they failed to inform the authorities of the whereabouts of their son.³⁵ In February 1990 a new and harsher policy was introduced of sealing the homes of Palestinian youths caught throwing stones.

Given the high proportion of their disposable income that Palestinians invest in the building of private homes for the extended family, the threat of demolition obviously acts as a powerful disincentive for any parents who are tempted to encourage and applaud their offspring's harassment of settlers and Israeli forces. In a similar measure designed to pressure parents into preventing their children from taking part in protest activities, the practice was introduced of fining the parents of children caught throwing stones.

Another form of collective punishment regularly imposed by the Israeli occupying authorities has been that of the enforced confinement of people to their homes. It has been estimated that during the first year of the Intifada somewhere in the region of 1,600 curfews were imposed on areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. At least one quarter of these were of a prolonged nature, lasting between three and 40 days.³⁶ This has meant that almost every Palestinian within the occupied territories has suffered the disruption of daily life and the associated economic losses and costs to health of being imprisoned in his or her home during curfew.

It was during the period of the Gulf War that this method of collective punishment was imposed with unprecedented severity. A blanket curfew was imposed on the whole of the occupied territories at the outbreak of the war. For the next forty days Palestinians were only allowed out of their homes for a few hours every three or four days — once a week in the case of the Gaza Strip. From 25 February the situation began to ease somewhat, but the whole of the West Bank and Gaza Strip remained closed military areas, with travel between areas strictly controlled by a permit system and the discretion of the area military commanders. The impact of these measures on an already impoverished population was nothing short of catastrophic. Some 1.5 million people were imprisoned in their homes. Economic life was totally disrupted. Farmers could not tend their crops or livestock. People could not obtain medical assistance or supplies. Children could not go to school. The degree of trauma is difficult to comprehend. Moreover, the authorities maintained the restrictions on travel after the cessation of the war, further contributing to the deep bitterness felt by the vast majority of Palestinians towards the occupying power.³⁷

Imprisonment and detention

Imprisonment within the home is only one form of incarceration. After three

years of the Uprising the Israeli Chief Military Prosecutor estimated that somewhere in the region of 70,000 Palestinians had been arrested. At that time, in December 1990, there were a total of 9,972 in Israeli military detention centres and a further 4,000 in civilian prisons. Of those in military prisons, 762 of them were in administrative detention.³⁸

Any Palestinian apprehended by the Israeli authorities and found guilty of a security related offence can expect a disproportionate sentence compared to that meted out to settlers who have committed more serious offences. One man from the Gaza Strip was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for throwing stones and petrol bombs which did not injure anyone.³⁹ Another man, from Issawiyeh just outside Jerusalem, was sentenced to eleven years for throwing a petrol bomb at an Israeli army jeep and leading a "local organisation".⁴⁰ By comparison, a 38-year old settler was sentenced to three years in prison for killing a shepherd and wounding another one. He was also ordered to pay £10,000 (NIS 30,000) to the murdered man's family. He had shot the men after they had refused to heed his demands that they leave the area outside Shilo settlement where they were grazing their sheep.⁴¹

Perhaps the most notorious case of selective sentencing concerned Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a leader of militant settlers, who was sentenced to five months imprisonment for killing a Palestinian shopkeeper in Hebron. That same week a Palestinian was sentenced by a military court to life imprisonment and an additional 28 years for planting bombs in Tel Aviv. No one was injured by the explosions. In August 1990, Levinger was released from jail after serving little more than three months on the grounds of his good behaviour and overcrowding in the prisons.⁴²

The largest prison facility for Palestinians is Ansar 3, located inside Israel in the Negev desert. At any one time somewhere in the region of 6,000 detainees can be imprisoned there under the harshest of regimes. In a report of the New York based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights it was alleged that detainees were housed in primitive conditions, which did not provide adequate protection against the cold of the winter months and the heat of the summer. It was charged that discipline was imposed in an arbitrary fashion, with confinement in isolation cells as the most common form of individual punishment. Collective punishment such as the denial of cigarettes, soap and newspapers was imposed "in arbitrary fashion for minor infractions" according to the report, which also recorded prisoners' allegations that medical services were unnecessarily withheld from prisoners who were ill and in need of treatment.⁴³ It seems clear that the purpose of such a regime is to break the will of the prisoners, destroy their spirit and deter them from returning to active resistance upon their release.

Green cards

If such was the rationale behind such regimes, then they must be judged to have been a singular failure insofar as an estimated nine out of ten imprisoned men became involved in "hostile activities" after their release.⁴⁴ It is, however,

a familiar phenomenon that it is in prison that offenders receive the best grounding in methods of organisation and resistance. According to two Israeli observers:⁴⁵

The political consciousness of the young people who are released after a stay of several months is immeasurably higher than it was prior to detention. Their self-esteem rises, and they return to their homes as local heroes. In many cases they try to retroactively justify their detention, and perhaps also get revenge, as they renew protest activity with a vengeance. Many, who were detained for minor offences, like throwing stones, burning tyres and other "Intifada crimes" emerge from imprisonment as leading activists. Thousands of these young people have been transformed into the locomotive that leads the train of the continuing Uprising.

Naturally, such people are marked for special attention by the Israeli security forces. I had direct experience of one such method. I had been visiting a friend in Fara'a refugee camp, north of Nablus. When it came time to take the taxi back to Nablus, three of us walked through the camp to the road where the large Mercedes "service" cars stop to pick up passengers. As we waited, two soldiers emerged from the camp and demanded to see our documents. One of my friends produced a green ID card. He was promptly escorted away, whilst checks were made to see whether or not he was on any "wanted list". I had to follow them down the road to witness that he was not beaten, and to reassure the soldiers that he was merely escorting me to the taxi halt. Radio checks having been made, he was released. My two friends promptly disappeared back into the camp.

This took place in September 1989. Some months earlier the Israeli authorities had started issuing ex-prisoners and activists with special identity cards. Identity cards are colour-coded, (like the licence plates of cars). Blue indicates East Jerusalem or Israeli residency, orange indicates West Bank and red indicates Gaza Strip. The new cards were coloured green. Their bearers were barred from entering Israel, which also technically barred them from moving between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, insofar as travel between the two areas necessitates passing through Israeli territory. The possession of a green identity card marks out the bearer as a "security risk".

In November 1990 the Israeli military authorities began a radical extension of the "green card scheme", allegedly as a security measure in response to the Palestinian-Israeli violence inside Israel. By May 1991, there were estimated to be 27,000 West Bankers barred from entering Israel or East Jerusalem. In the Gaza Strip a slightly different practice is implemented. To travel into Israel, all Gazans need one of the magnetic cards that were introduced in August 1989. Those who are deemed security risks are simply not issued with them.⁴⁶

"Death squads"

Most of the Intifada-related deaths amongst the Palestinian community have been caused by soldiers firing at stone-throwers and those they judge to be potential assailants. But there is evidence that a more sinister method has been adopted on occasions to eliminate those considered to be particularly dangerous security threats: so-called "death squads". As early as January 1988 there were reports that an undercover military unit, code-named *Shimson* (Samson), had been operating in the Gaza Strip using a car with "foreign press" stickers. Another unit, code-named "Cherry", was later alleged to be deployed in the West Bank with verbal orders "to shoot to kill fugitives with blood on their hands". Israeli sources claimed that "killings were not the unit's prime task, although it had shot dead several Palestinians in ambushes and undercover operations".⁴⁷ The Israeli authorities denied these reports, revoking the press credentials of those journalists who dared to suggest the existence of such squads.⁴⁸

There have been a number of well-documented accounts of Palestinians being kidnapped and shot by armed "civilians" dressed as Arabs and driving vehicles with West Bank and Gaza license-plates. Thus, two leaders of the *Shabiba* (youth) movement in the village of Yatta near Hebron were killed in suspicious circumstances on 9 October 1988.⁴⁹ A month earlier a resident of Silat al-Harithiya in Jenin district was killed in similar circumstances⁵⁰, whilst another man was killed in Jenin on 13 November 1988.⁵¹ It is of course difficult to come up with incontrovertible evidence to support such claims, but the use of such undercover squads to eliminate key figures in the Uprising is a logical extension of the Israeli policy of targeting leading activists and organisers. The most widely publicised use of this technique was the assassination of Khalid al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) in Tunis on 16 April 1988. As Yasser Arafat's deputy with responsibility for activities in Israel and the occupied territories, he was widely presumed to be responsible for the overall guidance of the Uprising, and consequently fell victim to a raid by an undercover Israeli commando unit.

The role of the settlers

In addition to adopting the guise of Palestinians, Israeli security forces have been widely accused of impersonating journalists in order to photograph and arrest Palestinian suspects.⁵² The use of "press" signs on vehicles has also been a favourite ploy of settlers on vigilante patrol, enabling them to gain access to villages and neighbourhoods in order to carry out reprisal raids. The Hebron area has suffered more than most from the provocative actions of settlers, with reports of Palestinians being shot at by settlers cruising round the town in vehicles carrying "press" signs.⁵³

There have been other instances where settlers literally ran amok in Palestinian communities. Such was the case following the injuries sustained by a settler family of four after a stoning incident near Issariyah on the

eastern outskirts of Jerusalem on 21 May 1989. After news reached the settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim, hundreds of settlers piled into vehicles and headed for Issariyah seeking revenge. They rampaged through the village, smashing cars and destroying property, clashing with those soldiers who tried to restrain them. Other soldiers, apparently, actively participated in the raid, with reports of army jeeps picking out targets with their headlights, soldiers throwing rocks, shooting tear-gas into a mosque, and lending settlers a crow-bar with which to open up the doors of a garage before setting the premises on fire.⁵⁴ A few days later, on 29 May 1989, a group of settlers went on an alleged pilgrimage to a holy site at the village of Kifl Harith near Nablus. They clashed with villagers, leaving a 13-year old girl shot dead and a number of others seriously injured. Denying the charge that such a "pilgrimage" was a highly provocative action during the Intifada, one of the settlers later claimed that "at the entrance to the village it was clear we were surrounded. There was danger to our lives. The law enabled us to hit back."⁵⁵ The villagers, on the other hand, claimed that the settlers came through the village wreaking havoc and firing indiscriminately. The evidence appeared to support the villagers' version:⁵⁶

The village bore traces of a systematic, military-style operation of destruction. On either side of the main road, stacks of fresh straw had been set alight. A ewe had been shot through the head. On roofs, scarcely a water tank had not been punctured by shots. Three vehicles were damaged and a house was firebombed.

Four of the settlers, students from the Tomb of Joseph yeshiva in Nablus, were subsequently charged with manslaughter. At the time of the indictment one of them was already serving a prison sentence for an armed attack on two Gazans committed near Tel Aviv barely a month after the assault on the villagers of Kifl Harith.

According to a settler from the Hebron area, interviewed in 1989, a standard procedure had been worked out for when any of their vehicles was attacked by stone-throwers.⁵⁷

A stone is thrown. Right there, the car stops and the passengers storm out and fire at the site from which the stones were thrown. Then shots are fired at water tanks and windows. People open fire. They shoot and then get back into their car and continue on their way. They don't shoot in the air. They try to hit the person who threw the stones. There's no other choice. You have to fire if you want to hit as many as possible.

In the early weeks of the Intifada settlers began to form action committees for "Security on the Roads". Their argument was that if the security forces could not protect them, then they were obliged to take the law into their own hands. Here are some accounts of the kind of "law and order" actions in which groups from the Hebron area engaged:⁵⁸

In January 1988 we carried out our first operation after two Molotov cocktails were thrown at Jews in Hebron. Four people worked an entire

night in Hebron and they didn't leave one car (undamaged). They wrecked about 400 cars ... Since then we have carried out a lot of similar actions but in a more concentrated manner... We had one mishap: we accidentally damaged the car of a collaborator. After that we called it quits for a while, but then we started up again.

More than once we staged clashes. We rolled a few rocks onto the road and reported that we had come up against a road-block. Then we damaged the Arab's homes near the road. It's first class chaos here. Anyone can do as he pleases. It's another planet. You're the law. You have to defend yourself, because there's no one to defend you. And if you don't defend yourself, you'll end up in the hospital or the cemetery. I've already shot a few Arabs in the legs. I haven't yet killed anyone ... We go out at night, with our license plates covered, and enter a nearby Arab village and start up a ruckus.

People walk around with knives in their pockets and every now and then, they slash the tyres of parked cars. When it's possible, and the army isn't looking, they also pelt them with stones and torch them. The Arabs know they shouldn't park their cars near areas where Jews live. Our latest ploy is to quickly break into the car and release the brakes. The car starts rolling and peace to Israel. We didn't see anything and we didn't hear anything.

Such accounts make a mockery of claims that settlers only react to attacks by Palestinians, particularly in the light of the evidence that settlers have produced a manual on how to shoot Palestinians and avoid legal retribution.⁵⁹ At the very least the short-term aim would appear to be to intimidate Palestinians into submission, to instil fear into Palestinian communities. A related purpose is to exert pressure on the Israeli authorities, to cause them to pursue more punitive repressive measures, and to forestall any peace initiative that might involve any kind of concessionary "carrot" to the Palestinians. According to a political scientist from the Hebrew University their longer term aim has been:⁶⁰

to force the Palestinians to take up arms, to provoke a real war. This would enable the IDF to shed its inhibitions in dealing with a civilian Uprising and use its full military force. In the end the settlers want to see the Palestinians smashed into submission, a state that would be so unbearable to them that they would voluntarily transfer themselves across the river to Jordan leaving the West Bank entirely to the Jews.

Despite reports of clashes and fist-fights between settlers and soldiers trying to restrain them, many Palestinians are convinced that the settlers enjoy the active cooperation of the military in pursuing this plan. They believe that the IDF have used the settlers to do the kind of intimidatory "dirty work" that the soldiers felt unable to commit for fear of disciplinary action and public outrage. Whether or not this is the case, there has been clear evidence that in some situations soldiers turned a blind eye to the carryings-on of the settlers

and even encouraged them in their activities. It is common knowledge amongst Palestinians and Israelis who have served in the territories that certain units are more sympathetic to the settlers than others, just as certain categories of soldiers (especially reservists) are rather more "law-abiding" than others in their treatment of Palestinians. Certainly in the higher reaches of the IDF command structure the activities of the settler vigilantes have caused considerable concern and occasioned criticism and condemnation.

Major-General Mitzna, the officer then in command of the West Bank, expressed the view in May 1989 that Jewish settlers were the primary problem as far as IDF operations in the region were concerned. This concern heightened when evidence came to light that settlers were staging stone-throwing and petrol bomb attacks on Israeli cars in an effort to incite settlers and draw attention to "security problems" in the occupied territories.⁶¹ Amongst the military the paramount concern was that the violent actions of the settlers would provoke reprisals from Palestinians, with a consequent heightening of the tension all round and an accelerating spiral of violence and counter-violence, the burden of which would fall on the shoulders of the IDF. For Israeli politicians the spectre raised by settler violence was of a three-sided conflict between the Palestinians, the IDF and the settlers, and the consequent drift into a chaotic civil war situation (reminiscent of Lebanon) that might ensue as law and order and the state's monopoly of the use of violence was challenged from all sides. Indeed, in the summer of 1989 politicians from across the Israeli political spectrum joined voices in condemning those settlers "who would arouse fanatical strife".⁶²

The costs of repression

The physical toll of the Intifada upon the Israelis would appear to be minimal, when measured against the deaths and casualties borne by the Palestinians. By the end of June 1990 48 Israelis had been killed since the beginning of the Uprising, as compared with over 800 Palestinians killed during the same period.⁶³ By mid-1990 somewhere in excess of 150 soldiers had suffered serious disabling injury, whilst Palestinian estimated their seriously injured and disabled at over 2,500. When it comes to the number of Palestinians who have suffered some form of injury, the truth of the matter is that no one knows with any degree of certainty — some Palestinians put the figure as high as 80,000 who required some form of medical attention during the first two years of the Uprising.⁶⁴ What is clear is that during the third year of the Intifada the number of injuries and deaths dropped significantly. The main reason for this was that the new Minister of Defence, Moshe Arens, instructed the military to avoid needless provocation of the Palestinians in their camps, villages and quarters — instead they should concentrate their attentions on the main highways and roads. Thus, up until the slaughter of October 1990 on Temple Mount, there was a marked reduction in the number of confrontations between the military and the Palestinians. Even so, some Palestinian

sources have put the number of injuries suffered during the third year in the region of 26,000.⁶⁵

By comparison with such figures, the costs of the Intifada, as measured in terms of injury and death, have been relatively low for the Israelis. However, the self-confidence and morale of their army suffered a series of blows. Whilst the Palestinians, despite all their physical suffering, continued to display the determination necessary to sustain a resistance movement, the IDF became increasingly frustrated and demoralised by its role in the occupied territories.

In March 1988, during a visit to the Gaza Strip, Defence Minister Rabin pronounced that "the residents of the territories are beginning to feel exhausted." In November of that year he expressed the wishful hope that "within six months the Intifada will die out".⁶⁶ His chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Dan Shomron, was never as sanguine, arguing that "there is no such thing as eradicating the Intifada because, in essence, it expresses the struggle of nationalism".⁶⁷ In December 1989 even Rabin was forced to admit that the IDF had failed to suppress the Uprising and admit that it could go on for another two years.⁶⁸ There seems to be a shared awareness amongst the military community of Israel that it is in the very nature of a popular civilian-based Uprising that, whilst certain forms of resistance activity might be crushed by physical means, new forms of resistance will emerge, hydra-like, to replace the old patterns. As the respected Israeli military commentator, Ze'ev Schiff, wrote in the summer of 1988 concerning the role of the IDF in the Gaza Strip:⁶⁹

We shall win the confrontations in the Gaza Strip, but we must not delude ourselves. There is lava boiling underground there, the basic cause of the Uprising. This lava will burst out again in one spot or another. All we can do, via the Israeli armed forces and the other security arms, is locate the fire — not extinguish it.

In expressing this view he was clearly reflecting the mood within the general staff of the IDF and within the Shin Bet internal security service, who were reported to be feeling demoralised and angry that politicians continued to expect them to maintain order by military means, when only a political settlement of some sort could provide any long-term solution.⁷⁰ Indeed, Shomron told the Knesset Defence Committee in June 1989 that there were "only three ways to eliminate the Intifada: transfer of the Arab population of the areas, starvation or physical elimination, in other words, genocide".⁷¹

Such a perspective was diametrically opposed to the critical voices coming from the right wing of the Israeli political spectrum. Echoing the demands of the settlers, people like Ariel Sharon have urged a radical hardening of the Iron Fist policy, calling for mass arrests and deportation of all known activists, the sealing off of the entire West Bank from Israel, and a massive increase in the military presence as a means of punishing the population into submission. For such people, physical force and might continues to hold the key to the solution of the "Palestinian problem". Those with a somewhat

deeper understanding of the nature of the Intifada, however, realised that each act of repression might only serve to feed the will to resist, and strengthen the solidarity of the Palestinians. As Dan Meridor of the Likud bloc observed, "there is no greater error than to harass an entire population. It is a mistake to do so for operational, legal and moral reasons".⁷²

In acknowledging the fact that a straightforward military victory could not be achieved, Rabin pursued a twin-track policy based around the assumption that success in the conflict would go to the side that had more staying power, and could wear out and grind down the other. The aim was to continue wielding the stick of repression in order to maintain the burden of hardship borne by the Palestinians. Eventually their will to resist would be undermined to the extent that they would agree to accept, however reluctantly, any carrot that was held out to them which promised some relief from their suffering. What was on offer was the Israeli peace initiative put forward by Prime Minister Shamir in May 1989 that proposed elections within the occupied territories and the eventual devolution of some limited degree of autonomy.

The scenario, then, was that the Palestinians would eventually realise that the Intifada was only increasing their hardships, whilst failing to break Israel. They would then opt for talks. As such it was a classical "throtter": a combination of threat and offer, stick and carrot.⁷³

A major problem with this strategy was that in acknowledging the long-term nature of the struggle, it demanded patience and perseverance from the Israeli public and their politicians, and from the security forces who were required to continue wielding the stick. It was a measure of the costs incurred by Israel, in its struggle to suppress the Intifada, that as early as February 1989 some observers began to question whether the level of morale within the IDF was sufficient for it to continue performing its allotted role, without risking permanent damage to its status and effectiveness as a military force. This point was put particularly strongly by Professor Martin van Creveld of the Hebrew University:⁷⁴

By virtue of its questionable legitimacy and, even more, the tremendous disparity in power involved, the attempt to put down the Intifada has put the IDF troops into a false position. What used to be one of the world's finest fighting forces is rapidly degenerating into a fourth-class police organisation. To realise the way such a force will fight when confronted with a real army, one need look no further than the Argentinians in the Falkland Islands.

Time and again during the Intifada I have heard reservists saying they would prefer to serve in southern Lebanon or sit facing the Syrians in the north-east, rather than spend their time "maintaining law and order" in the occupied territories: a role for which they had not been trained, and which many found militarily futile and morally distasteful. In a series of interviews with reservists serving in Gaza in February 1989, Abraham Rabinovich elicited some interesting comments on this theme from the soldiers.⁷⁵

Danny, a 32 year old from Tel Aviv:

Last year they looked us in the eye, and we could see the hate. Now, they look past us. And we look past them ... There is a resignation on their part that the Intifada is going to continue for a long time ... They know they're going to win, and a lot of us know they're going to win as well ... Before, we used to see that every burning tyre was cleared away. Not any more. Almost no one wants to chase after 14-year-olds any more. What do you do if you catch them? Hit them? Or if they're over 16, put them in jail for a few months? People realised it wasn't doing any good ... After spending 75 days in Gaza in the past year, the main feeling is apathy and disgust ... I'd prefer four weeks in Lebanon to two in the territories.

Ra'anana, a kibbutznik:

Our object now is to get through our reserve stint without getting hurt, or hurting. There is an understanding that catching the stone-throwers and punishing them won't lead to anything. So we try not to get involved. Before, we would never let anything go by; if someone threw a stone we gave chase. Now, we usually just ignore it.

On the basis of such remarks, it is clear that part of the reason for the army's relative failure in the occupied territories has been due to the lack of motivation of the officers and soldiers. This was most publicly displayed when Prime Minister Shamir paid a flying visit to a parachute battalion operating in the Nablus area in January 1989. The reservists who addressed him made clear their frustration and the weight of their moral burden as one of them complained:⁷⁶

In order to enforce order in the casbah, we must be brutally violent against people who are innocent of any crime. I violate army regulations every day, and this weakens me and strengthens them. This dead-end situation is a disaster. Everything we do bolsters the Intifada.

A significant number of reservists and young people have confronted this moral dilemma by refusing to serve in the occupied territories. In excess of a hundred people have been jailed as conscientious objectors, including one sergeant in a combat engineers' unit, Rami Hason, who has served four periods of imprisonment totalling 140 days in jail.⁷⁷ However, the actual number of such refusals is known to have reached many hundreds, but in order to minimise controversy the army authorities have found a variety of ways of getting around the issue. As one reserve officer in an elite infantry unit explained:⁷⁸

Ninety percent of the guys in my unit are simply not psychologically built for clubbing little kids who throw stones at them. I don't know if they'll refuse, but neither does the army. The fact is, we haven't been called up for reserve duty, and in the statistics we figure among those who don't refuse. I'm an officer — the army has invested considerable

money and energy in me — but I'm also the child of Holocaust survivors, and I'm not ready to enter the homes of civilians at night and scream at them to wake up and hear their children cry ... If it comes to it, I'll refuse and I'll protest in a manner that will make people very uncomfortable — including the chief-of-staff, with whom I flew in the same plane to Entebbe. Understand, he'll have a hard time explaining how it came about that a reserve officer who fought against PLO terrorism and risked his life now finds himself forced to refuse to serve.

The distress experienced by such people is a symptom of the malaise brought about by the army's unhappy role in confronting the Intifada. Senior officers feel they have been the scapegoat of the government's "non-policy" in the territories. Consequently, they find it difficult to issue clear directives. The result of this has been that officers and soldiers in the field complain that they are constantly told by their superiors what *not to do*, instead of being directed what to do. Meanwhile, the army has been pilloried at home and abroad for acts of brutality which contradict the values upon which the Israeli Defence Force was established. At the same time, officers and soldiers have been criticised and disparaged by settlers and their allies for their inability to suppress the Uprising. As the editor of the army officer's journal *Ma'arachot*, Uri Dromi, has observed:⁷⁹

The Intifada is a slap in the face for the IDF — it's caught between the demand to curb the violence and the limits imposed on it through Israel being a democratic society. The result is a little of this and a little of that — the worst of possible compromises. Young officers are as aware as anyone else that there is a negative public image. Now they see the most senior commanders dragged into the mire as public scapegoats.

Called into question for the way it performed its role in the occupied territories, the army was challenged also for taking on what many came to view as an impossible role in itself. The result was that the IDF, which had hitherto been the most sacrosanct of Israeli institutions, began to lose its self-confidence. According to one military researcher,⁸⁰

During the Lebanon war there was disenchantment, but it was limited to a particular political sector, it was based on moral reservations and it was directed almost exclusively at the politicians who had launched the war. There has never been such delegitimisation, such an attack on the professional integrity of the army as we have seen recently. This encompasses far wider sections of the public and has focused on popular symbols or figures such as the Chief of Staff.

Evidence to support this view emerged when, in June 1989, General Amram Mitzna, who had been in command of the West Bank since the beginning of the Intifada, asked to be relieved of his post. Considered by those who knew him to be of a liberal disposition, it was known that he had not enjoyed fighting the "children of the stones" and sought to point out to people that the Uprising was not like invading Lebanon or Syria "but a question of dealing with

civilians, and whatever happens we are going to have to live with them in the future".⁸¹

It is this question of the future that exercises the worst fears of many Israelis about the ultimate cost they will have to pay for attempting to suppress the Intifada by violent means. Advocates of nonviolence have always argued that violence is like a cancer: it spreads and distorts all with which it comes into contact. It corrodes the moral fibre of those who employ violence as much as it hardens the will for revenge of those who are its target. An indication of the nature of this process is provided in the following account by an Israeli officer of a tour of duty in the Ramallah area:⁸²

The first night we had to make arrests in a village according to a list drawn up by the security services. The village was sleeping when we began rapping on metal doors with clubs and shouting "*Ifiah el bab!* Open the door!" It was a terrible noise. They were poor villagers and they huddled together and tried to protect themselves.

Then the search began. Some of the soldiers didn't give a damn and just threw everything around. A woman began to cry when we arrested her teenage son. I felt terrible. How could I participate in something like this?

The next night we did the same thing. This time I said to myself, "Well, what do you expect? You look for suspects and you make arrests. Just be sure you don't hurt people unnecessarily." The third night it was already routine, and when the woman starts to cry you say "Oh God, is that wailing beginning again?" The fourth night you're shouting at the woman, "*Uskur!* Shut up!"

I felt us hardening from day to day. Not becoming brutalised — we were never brutal — but it could lead to that, or at least to acceptance of excesses that others perpetrate.

Despite his protestations to the contrary, what the officer was describing was a process of brutalisation: the erosion of respect for any kind of humanitarian moral code, brought about by the everyday practices required of those charged with controlling the Intifada. A process through which violence, intolerance, and contempt for the "other" has become the norm, a routine part of everyday military life. The soldiers who are exposed to this process are not *separate* from Israeli society, they are an integral part of it. What, then, does it bode for the future of that society? When intimidation and the threat of violence become the accepted methods of dealing with people, what happens to the values of tolerance, respect for the law, and all those other values upon which Israel prides itself? As the head of the military tribunal judging the case of the four soldiers from the Givati Brigade involved in the beating to death of a Gazan commented, "We must preserve at all costs the rule of law from which derive the values that are at the foundations of our existence as a cultured people".⁸³

As the Intifada continued, month after month, year after year, the fear

grew that these foundations might be undermined to such a degree that the whole edifice might fracture. Although the Gulf War and the fear of Saddam Hussein and his Scud missiles, possibly bearing chemical warheads, caused the overwhelming majority of Israelis, "doves" as well as "hawks", to join together in solidarity against the external threat, this can only be a temporary respite from the unprecedented divisions that the Intifada has created within the Israeli political system and society. Under the impact of the Uprising the society has become increasingly polarised between those who believe the Uprising can be eliminated by force, and those who see the futility and danger of such a path and, however reluctantly and fearfully, urge some kind of political settlement. The accompanying erosion of the moral basis of the society has been evidenced by the spectre of "mob rule", which began to raise its head as settlers clashed with soldiers who dared to interfere with their vigilante raids. Even Prime Minister Shamir was moved to warn of the danger of civil war if extremists did not restrain themselves, after he had been jostled and abused as a "traitor" at the funeral of a West Bank settler killed by Palestinians.⁸⁴

Of course, the violence has not stopped at the Green Line, but has spread into Israel itself. One of the most shocking incidents occurred in August 1988, when three Gazans were burned to death in an arson attack upon a hut adjacent to the construction site where they were employed in Or Yehuda, a development town outside Tel Aviv. In May 1989, crowds in Ashkelon and Ashdod, incensed by the discovery of the body of a soldier who went missing whilst hitch-hiking, drove Palestinian workers from their towns screaming "Death to the Arabs!", and began stoning the vehicles of Palestinians. It culminated in the death of a Palestinian driver hit by a stone. That same month an Arab youth was fatally stabbed in Acre, and the mayor of Petah Tikva decided to ban Palestinians from moving freely about the city. He ordered the construction of a terminal on the outskirts to which all Palestinian workers would be bussed in the morning. The mayor explained that "All Arab workers who come to Petah Tikva will either be at work or at the terminal. We don't want them on the streets; they are taking over the city".⁸⁵ In May 1990 an Israeli civilian took such racist attitudes to their logically insane extreme when he lined up Palestinians who were waiting to be hired for work in Rishon Lezion and shot dead seven of them.

The fear and hatred within Israel that lies at the heart of such incidents grew to a new pitch in the months following the killings on Temple Mount, when the spate of knife attacks by Palestinians led to a hardening of attitudes, and an unprecedented lynching atmosphere was discernible in the streets of Israel. As part of this process, the brittle nature of the national consensus is further threatened.

Israeli morale and self-confidence has not been helped either by the censure that its treatment of the Palestinians has attracted from the international community. Such criticism, and the consequent damage to Israel's image, has come not just from international non-governmental agencies such as Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

States noted for their sympathetic attitude towards Israel have also felt constrained to express their concern. Particularly damaging was the 1988 US State Department report on human rights abuses, which accused Israel of a "substantial increase in human rights violations" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and expressed the view that many of the practices adopted by the Israeli government were illegal in terms of both Israeli and international law. Furthermore, in October 1990 the United States felt constrained to take the unprecedented step of supporting UN Security Council resolutions censuring Israel following the slayings on Temple Mount.

Even the staunchest of supporters have expressed their unease with Israel's repressive policies. Thus, a poll conducted early in 1989 amongst American Jews revealed a clear majority (54 per cent) opposed to the methods used by Israel to put down the Intifada.⁸⁶ At about the same time as the poll was taken, a number of prominent US Jewish intellectuals, associated with the *Committee for Judaism and Social Justice*, published a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* denouncing the policies of the Israeli government as "immoral, contrary to what is best in our Jewish tradition and destructive to the best interests of Israel and American Jewry".⁸⁷

Perhaps the most vivid expression of the fear that gnaws away at the self-confidence of Israelis was the outburst from Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, after he had listened to the complaints of soldiers during his visit to Nablus in January 1989: "We hate these terrorists, these PLO men, because they force us to kill children. But we have to do it to protect ourselves".⁸⁸ A few months later in May, after a Palestinian had run amok in the main street of West Jerusalem and fatally stabbed two Israelis and injured another three, he encouraged Israeli Jews to exact vengeance if attacked, when he declared:⁸⁹

I think that the public, the Jewish public, has to do everything possible to defend itself to prevent murderers from carrying out their plots and to prevent them coming out in one piece if they succeed in doing anything.

The nightmare that must concern all is the way in which fear and hatred, and the urge to retaliate, could become the accepted norm on both sides of the conflict — with each side using the outrages of the other to justify its own pursuit of revenge. The costs borne by both sides in terms of loss of life and physical injury could be such as to render the toll imposed during the Intifada pale by comparison. Moreover, the damage in terms of the brutalisation and traumatising of whole generations would cast an even darker shadow over future prospects of peace between Palestinians and Israelis — as people, let alone as states.

Notes

1. See C Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism*, London: Pluto Press, 1976, especially ch. 2.

78 *Living the Intifada*

2. G Sharp, *Non-violent Struggle: An Efficient Technique of Political Action*, Jerusalem: Palestinian Centre for the Study of Non-violence, nd.

3. *PAN*, p 5.

4. See Ann Mosley Lesch, "Israeli deportation of Palestinians from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, 1976-78", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Summer & Winter 1979.

5. Al Haq/ Law in the Service of Man, *Twenty Years of Israel Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza*, Ramallah: 1987, p 26.

6. Israeli embassy, 1978, quoted in J Metzger et al, *This Land Is Our Land*, London: Zed Press, 1983, p 78.

7. Al Haq (1987), op. cit., p 27.

8. See Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights, *The Cost of Freedom (COF)*, Jerusalem: Arab Studies Society, 1988, p 33. The figures for demolishing and sealing buildings does include 97 that were "unlicensed", where the Israelis claimed they had been constructed without the necessary permits.

9. Quoted in *Jerusalem Post (JP)*, 11 September 1988.

10. John Law, "Letter from Kufr Malik", *Middle East International (MEI)*, November 4, 1988 p 24.

11. K. Kaplan, "An onerous duty that must be done", *JP*, September 8 1988.

12. *JP*, 26 January 1988.

13. Doctors representing Physicians for Human Rights referred to "a deliberate policy of systematic beating designed to disable and not to kill, to inflict maximum damage while reducing the risk of death . . . it seemed more a planned and purposeful form of brutalisation, indiscriminate in choice of victim but precise in choice of injury". Quoted in *COF*, op. cit., p 5.

14. *JP*, 24 Feb 1988

15. *Jerusalem Post, International Edition (JP/IE)*, 11 March, 1989.

16. *JP*, 5 October 1988.

17. *JP*, 26 May 1989.

18. Ronit Natalon, *Ha'Aretz*, 11 March 1988, quoted in *PAC*, op. cit., p 17.

19. Quoted in *The Observer*, 14 February 1988.

20. *G*, 12 May 1989. At a subsequent trial the officer, Colonel Yehuda Meir, alleged that both the Defence Minister and the Chief of Staff had personally ordered such beatings, claiming that the army had two separate policies on beatings, one for the public record and the other for the soldiers in the field. See *MEI*, 6 July 1990, p 8.

21. Quoted in *PAN*, op. cit., p 28.

22. *COF*, op. cit., p 5. Also *JP*, 23 May 1989. According to figures produced by UNRWA, of the 65 children aged under 16 who were killed between 10 December 1987 and 10 April 1989, 19 died from the effects of tear-gas. See *I*, 27 April 1989.

23. Quoted in *PAN*, op. cit., p 31.

24. *JP/IE*, 26 May 1990, p 6.

25. Palestinian Human Rights Information Centre (*PHRIC*), *From The Field*, v 1, no 4, December 1990.

26. Personal communication, 31 December 1989.

27. *G*, 28 September 1988.

28. *COF*, op. cit., p 7.

29. In Northern Ireland plastic bullets have killed at least a dozen people since introduced by the British Army in 1975. See *I*, 30 September 1988.

30. *AF*, 28 May 1990, p 9. IDF standing orders concerning the arrest of a suspect stipulate that soldiers must first give a verbal warning, fire shots in the air, and shoot at the suspect's legs, before resorting to direct fire.

31. PHRIC, *From the Field*, v 1, no 4, December 1990.
32. Jerusalem Media and Communication Centre, *The Intifada: An Overview, The First Two Years*, 1989, p 10. In May 1988 Israeli intelligence authorities reported that they had prepared a list of 1200 Palestinians they would like to expel. *COF*, op. cit., p 15.
33. *From The Field*, v 1, no 4, December 1990.
34. See *JPIC*, 7 October, 1989, p 3. Concern has also been expressed about the practice of using an unnecessarily large amount of explosive to demolish a house, thereby causing structural damage to neighbouring buildings.
35. *AF*, 20 March 1989, p 3.
36. *PAN*, op. cit., p 177
37. See PHRIC, *Information Bulletin*, 3 March 1991. Also the report of *B'Tselem*, reviewed in *AF*, 18 February 1991, p 4.
38. See PHRIC, *Update*, v 3, no 13, December 1990, p 530.
39. *New Outlook*, February 1989, p 43.
40. *AF*, 6 February 1989.
41. *AF*, 12 December 1988, p 15.
42. *I*, 5 May and 15 August 1990.
43. *JP*, 6 April 1989.
44. This was the information presented to the Israeli cabinet in May 1989. See *JP*, 22 May 1989. According to a report in *al-Quds*, 30 August 1989, 85 per cent of those Palestinians who had been under administrative detention were re-arrested.
45. Uri Nir & Dan Sagir, in *HaAretz*, 14 April 1989.
46. See I Black, *G*, 2 May 1991.
47. *JP*, 23 October 1988.
48. See *G*, 26 October 1988.
49. See *AF*, 30 October, p 10.
50. See *PAN*, op. cit., pp 38-9.
51. *News From Within (NFW)*, 26 February 1989, pp 14-15. See also *AF*, 27 February 1989, p 3.
52. See *JP*, 31 March 1989.
53. See *JP*, 2 April 1989.
54. See *JP*, 28 May 1989.
55. *I*, 31 May 1989.
56. Charles Richards, *ibid*.
57. Quoted in *AF*, 5 June 1989 from *HaAretz*, 26 May 1989.
58. *Ibid*.
59. *AF*, 9 July 1990, p 1.
60. Ehud Spitzack, quoted in *MEI*, 9 June 1989, p 8.
61. *JP*, 26 September 1989.
62. See *MEI*, 9 June 1989.
63. This figure does not include the Palestinians killed by their fellow citizens in attacks on alleged collaborators, estimated to have been in the region of 228 by the end of June 1990. Source: monthly report of *B'Tselem*, quoted in *AF*, 9 July 1990, p 3.
64. Personal communication from surgeon at Maqassed Hospital, 31 December 1989.
65. PHRIC, *From The Field*, v 1, no 4, December 1990.
66. Quoted by Uzi Benziman, *HaAretz*, 7 April 1989.
67. Quoted in *New Outlook*, February 1989, p 42.

68. *JP*, 6 December 1989.

69. Quoted by Charles Richards, *I*, 4 July 1988.

70. *HaAretz*, 8 July 1988, cited in *G*, 9 July 1988.

71. *JPIE*, 24 June 1989.

72. Quoted in *JP*, 17 August 1988.

73. See M Taylor, *op. cit.*, p 12.

74. Martin van Crefeld, *JP*, 18 February, 1989.

75. *JP*, 18 Feb 1989.

76. Quoted in *G*, 18 January 1989.

77. See *JP*, 21 May 1989.

78. Quoted by Shmuel Tal, *Hadashot*, 18 March 1989.

79. Quoted by David Richardson, *JP*, 26 May 1989.

80. Moshe Lisak, quoted by David Richardson, *ibid.*

81. Quoted by Ian Black, *G*, 14 June 1989.

82. Quoted by Abraham Rabinovich, *JPIE*, 4 March 1989, p 7.

83. Quoted in *G*, 26 May 1989.

84. See *G*, 22 June 1989.

85. Quoted by Yehuda Litani, *JP*, 26 May 1989. Following the lead of Petah Tikva, the mayor of the West Bank settlement of Ariel, with a population of 6,000, proposed that Palestinian employees should wear tags saying "foreign worker". The parallel between this and the forcing of Jews in occupied Europe to wear a yellow star in the Second World War period outraged Israelis from across the political spectrum.

86. *JP*, 17 March 1989.

87. *JP*, 5 April 1989. In November 1989 there were reports that an opinion poll of leading Jewish figures in the United States had been found to possess surprisingly dovish positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *JPIE*, 18 November, 1989, p. 2.

88. Quoted in *G*, 18 January 1989.

89. Quoted in *I*, 6 May 1989.