

Weekly Briefing No. 12

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From: Madison-Rafah Sister-City Project

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- Israel, the U.S. and the Fatah-Hamas Conflict: (3 articles, the last one containing an excellent new UN map of the reality of the West Bank)
- West Bank: New York Times discovers that settlements are growing (1 article)
- Scooter Libby vs Mordechai Vanunu by Daniel Ellsberg

THE CRISIS IN GAZA

1. **Rafah Crossing: 6000 stuck, Mother of Five dies** (Gush Shalom Press Release, July 2, 2007) Excerpt: "The Rafah Border crossing has been closed ever since the eruption of confrontations between the Palestinian militias in the Gaza strip, which culminated with the Hamas takeover. Some six thousands of residents who found themselves at the time on the Egyptian side - among them a considerable number returning from medical treatment at Egyptian hospitals - have been stranded ever since: waiting, sleeping, and living in the streets under the hot sun, unable to wash, and with no idea how long they would still have to wait. The money most of them had on them already ran out. And since last week the services of Western Union and DHL in the Gaza Strip were discontinued under Israeli and American pressure, making it impossible for families to send money to their trapped relatives. Yesterday, July 1, Taghreed Abeaed, a 31 years old Palestinian woman, mother of five children - died while waiting in the very bad conditions at Rafah Crossing. Even her body is not allowed to be brought back into the Gaza Strip." For complete release see: <http://www.alternativenews.org/news/english/thousands-of-palestinians-stuck-under-appalling-conditions-at-rafah-20070703.html> (For background information on the Rafah Crossing, visit http://www.btselem.org/english/Gaza_Strip/Rafah_Crossing.asp)
2. **Israel Suspends Gaza Custom Code with Dire Consequences for Gaza Economy.** Statement by Al Mezan Center for Human Rights (July 10, 2007) Excerpt: "...On 21 June 2007 Israel decided to suspend this code; thus erasing Gaza from the economic map. Practically, the decision renders Gazan import and export activities through Israel's ports impossible. Almost 100% of Gaza's imports and exports pass Israeli ports, especially as such activities have been halted through the Rafah Crossing and both Gaza Airport and Gaza International Port require major construction to be able to function. Those need Israeli

permission so that they can work. The decision is expected to create serious impacts on the Palestinian economy with immediate effects on human rights and poverty. Without this code, Gaza's imports and exports cannot be cleared at Israeli ports, which already received instructions not to clear any cargo headed to Gaza." Full report:

http://www.mezan.org/site_en/press_room/press_detail.php?id=659

3. **World Bank says Gaza may face "irreversible" collapse.** Reuters (Published 07.12.07, 23:01 / Israel News Excerpt: "The World Bank said on Thursday the prolonged closure of Israel's border crossings with Hamas-controlled Gaza could lead to the coastal strip's "irreversible" economic collapse. The international lending agency delivered that stark assessment during a closed-door meeting of aid groups and private sector organizations." Full article: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3424950,00.html> Note: For specific details on the threat to economic sustainability in Gaza caused by the U.S./Israeli/Egyptian blockade, see this from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/EGUA-74ZK3J?OpenDocument&rc=3&emid=ACOS-635PFR>
4. **At the doors of Gaza** (from Electronic Intifada) Husam El Nounou writing from al-Areesh, Egypt, Live from Palestine, 5 July 2007. Excerpt: "I considered myself lucky to be able to rent a small "chalet" in al-Areesh and to have the money to manage my expenses. This, however, is not the case for about 5,000 Palestinians who are stuck in Egypt and were not allowed to go back home. The humanitarian situation for the Palestinians in al-Areesh here is very harsh. You can find hundreds walking or sitting in the streets, some sleep in the mosques or the public garden after running out of money. The grocer from whom I buy things told me that every day dozens of men come proposing to sell their cell phone or hand watches to him." More at <http://electronicintifada.net/v2/article7090.shtml> Note: El Nounou works with the Rebuilding Alliance, a U.S. group which has rebuilt the home in Rafah that Rachel Corrie died trying to protect and hopes to rebuild other homes in Gaza.

THE FATAH-HAMAS CONFLICT

1. **Statement by Al Haq on Abbas' State of Emergency Decree.** Excerpt: "Instead of declaring a political and civil state of emergency, which is regulated by Chapter Seven of the Basic Law, this presidential decree effectively transforms the current state of affairs into a military state of emergency, thereby threatening to transfer Palestinian society and institutions to a police state. This would do away with civil rights and

freedoms, the rule of law and judicial independence.”

Full statement at:

<http://www.alhaq.org/pdfs/POSITION%20ON%20THE%20PRESIDENTIAL%20DECREE%20OF%206%20JULY%202007.pdf> Note: Abbas has also recently issued a decree threatening the rights of all NGO's operating in areas of Palestine under his control.

2. **How US Middle East Policy Continues to Undermine the “Moderates”** (Nadia Hijab, Institute for Palestine Studies) Excerpt: “In the wake of the fighting that pitted Fatah against Hamas this month, ending in Hamas control over Gaza, the United States has voiced full support for Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas. But past US policy greatly contributed to present conditions: a Palestinian national movement in a power struggle over an authority that has no power, and a West Bank split from Gaza, East Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley. The Institute's Senior Fellow Nadia Hijab argues that unless the US changes tack it will further weaken those it hopes to keep as allies.” Full article: <http://www.palestine-studies.org/final/en/bn/viewbndetails.php?bnid=30>
3. **Palestine: Blood is in the Air** by Ran HaCohen (Antiwar.com June 26, 2007) Excerpt: “Obviously, there is no Palestinian state, and there may never be one (or two). The Gaza Strip is “an independent state” just like any prison cell is: a hermetically sealed cage, overpopulated by 1.3 million people; no sea port or airport; no control over its own borders, waters, or airspace; even its population database, not to mention water, food, electricity, gasoline, and medical equipment, are all strictly controlled by Israel. And as for the West Bank, it's enough to look at its recent map prepared by the UN to understand why no Palestinian state can emerge there: notice how the small area was pulverized into numerous tiny cages for humans, separated by Israeli settlements, fences, roadblocks, and checkpoints...” Full article: <http://www.antiwar.com/hacohen/>

WEST BANK

Israeli Settlements Found to Grow Past Boundaries

(NY Times, July 7, 2007) By STEVEN ERLANGER

Excerpt: “JERUSALEM, July 6 - Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank use only 12 percent of the land allocated to them, but one-third of the territory they do use lies outside of their official jurisdictions, according to a new report released on Friday by Peace Now, an advocacy group..According to the report, based on official data released by the Israeli government after a court order, 90 percent of the settlements sprawl beyond their official boundaries despite the large amount of unused land already allocated to them.” Complete article and link to report: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/07/world/middleeast/07mideast.html?ex=1184472000&en=6f5eaf79359952ec&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

LIBBY AND VANUNU

On the day Libby's prison sentence was lifted, Mordechai Vanunu was sentenced to prison, again, in Israel, by Dr. Daniel Ellsberg, Global Research, July 6, 2007. Excerpt: “On the day that Scooter Libby's prison sentence was lifted by President Bush, Mordechai Vanunu was sentenced to prison, again, in Israel. In both cases, the underlying offense was the same: speaking to journalists. In each case, the nominal charges were otherwise. For Libby, lying under oath about the circumstances, thereby obstructing justice. For Vanunu, it was breaking a restriction laid upon him when he emerged from prison three years ago, after serving an earlier full sentence of eighteen years, also for speaking to journalists: he was ordered not to speak, at all, to journalists or foreigners. Like a free man, he did both, openly and repeatedly.” Complete article: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=6232>

This information is compiled by the Madison-Rafah Sister City Project, www.madisonrafah.org, and distributed by People for Justice in Palestine, www.iowajp.org