

About This Issue

Our board of directors, at its November meeting, requested that I gather what information I could on the weapons Israel was using against occupied Palestinian civilians in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as against its own Palestinian citizens in Israel. The board was particularly concerned about the deployment of rubber-coated steel bullets.

Initially we thought of publishing the findings in one of our Public Affairs pamphlets. But soon the research extended to other lethal anti-civilian weapons such as tear gas, Apache gun ships and tanks.

The conclusions were so disturbing, we decided to publish the results in this issue.

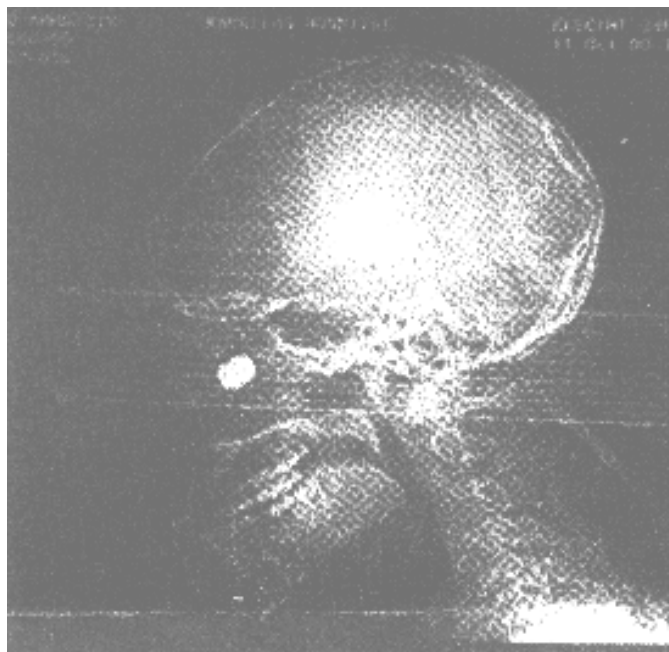
As the principal researcher, I wish to acknowledge several studies that were particularly helpful: The Palestine Red Crescent Society and the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem on rubber-coated bullets; the Swedish Save the Children and the Earth Island Journal on tear gas and Israel's toxicological capabilities; and Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch on Israel's violations of Geneva Convention treaties.

Our book and video listings are found on pages 14-16.

John F. Mahoney
Executive Director

Israel's Anti-Civilian Weapons

BY JOHN F. MAHONEY



A CT scan of a rubber-coated steel bullet in the head of a 21-year-old Palestinian, who died of his injury in a Ramallah hospital.

—Photo by Quique Kierszenbaum,
Chicago Tribune, 28 October 2000

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Israel's Anti-Civilian Bullets

Some Israelis liken them to prophylactics that leak.

Others to hoods that mask sinister cores.

Avigdor Feldman, an Israeli lawyer, calls them rubber stamps for the deployment of excessive violence against a civilian population.¹

In 1999 the Israeli army, anticipating the recent civilian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, trained four battalions of soldiers for low-intensity conflict. One of them, dubbed Nahshon, specializes in urban warfare. Its troops train in mock Palestinian villages constructed in two Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) bases. According to an article in The Jerusalem Post of 27 October 2000, these specially trained Israeli units aim to hit their targets in a way that will cripple them, while keeping the death statistics low.

Why cripple and not kill? Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak gave the reason in The Jerusalem Post of 30 October 2000: "Were there not 140 Palestinian casualties at this point, but rather 400 or 1,000, this ... would perhaps damage Israel a great deal."

What the prime minister means is that, in the dry statistics of headline news, those injured do not count. The Jerusalem Post writer speculates about these faceless, often nameless Palestinians: "Who will pay attention to their fate after the injury, in overcrowded and under-equipped hospitals? Who will stop to think how many of them will die slowly, from their wounds, or remain disabled, blind or maimed for life? Or to think about their chances to survive the siege and starvation inflicted on their people?"

In the six years of the first intifada (1987-1993), Israelis wounded 18,000 Palestinians. In the first month of the new intifada (October 2000), Israelis shot at and injured over 7,000 Palestinians, most of them stone-throwing demonstrators, many of these young children under 14 years of age.²

Listen to Sgt. Raz, a 20-year-old sharpshooter from the Nahshon battalion, quoted in the October 27th Jerusalem Post: "I shot two people ... in their knees. It's supposed to break their bones and neutralize them but not kill them. How did I feel? Well actually, I felt pretty satisfied with myself. I felt I could do what I was trained to do."

What Sgt. Raz was shooting was a rubber-coated metal bullet. What he didn't say, however, but what The Jerusalem Post article goes on to report, is that Israeli sharpshooters play a little game among themselves, one that tests how really good they are: they aim for an eye.

Often enough, they succeed. Reports of eye injuries come in daily. According to a 19 October 2000 report from the Palestinian human rights organization LAW, "On October 11, Mizan Diagnostic Hospital in Hebron reported treating 11 Palestinians for eye injuries, including three children. El Nasir Ophthalmic Hospital in Gaza has treated 16 people for eye injuries, including 13 children. Nine of them lost one of their eyes." And a LAW report of 2 November 2000 adds that from 29 September to 25 October, Jerusalem's St. John's Eye Hospital has treated 50 patients for eye injuries.

What must it feel like to place a child's eye in the crosshairs of your rifle? Does it ease a soldier's conscience if his or her bullets are rubber-coated?

It shouldn't. The fact is, rubber-coated projectiles can do more bodily damage than conventional live fire.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society has recovered four types of bullets of various caliber used by the Israeli army against Palestinians: black cylinder, or rubber-coated steel (or metal) bullets; black ball, or thin plastic-coated steel balls; yellow, or solid rubber balls; and non-coated steel balls. These last bullets are larger than what the soldiers generally use for live ammunition and for that reason affect a wider surface area, damaging more muscles and organs, and actually causing a number of fatalities.³

It is, however, the rubber-coated steel

bullets specifically that, according to the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem, cause most of the blinding, broken bones, severe internal organ damage, and trauma.

In 1998, B'Tselem found that, from January 1988 to the end of November 1998, at least 58 Palestinians were killed by rubber-coated steel bullets, including 28 children under 17-years-of age, of whom 13 were under the age of 13. Dr. Robert Kirschner, a forensic scientist working for the Boston-based Physicians for Human Rights, gave the following forensic opinion of "rubber bullets" for the B'Tselem report:

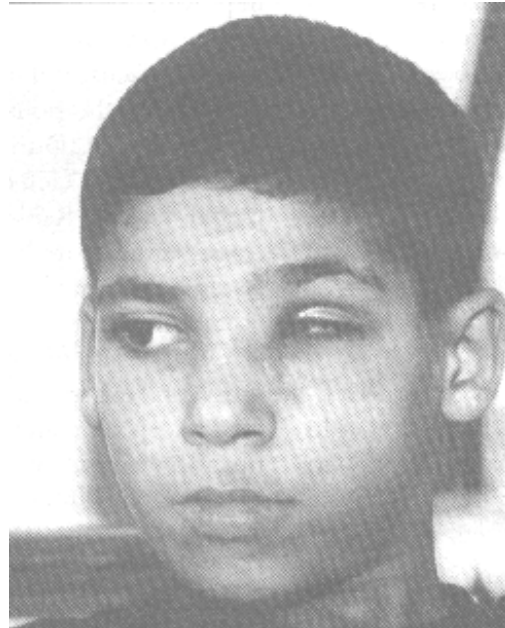
The tissue damage caused by a rubber-coated steel ball perforating the skin is much greater than that caused by a normal bullet, which pierces the skin more easily because of its more aerodynamic shape and smaller diameter. The wounds are more akin to severe blunt trauma injury, and cylindrical rubber bullets cause even greater damage as they are tumbling when they strike the body. There is a greater tearing, or lacerating, effect, often gaping holes, and more internal damage along the path of these projectiles. Although they rarely penetrate deeply as their kinetic energy is dissipated in the superficial tissues, only a few cm of penetration is necessary to enter the brain, thoracic and abdominal cavities, heart, lungs, liver, gastrointestinal tract, or spinal column. Rubber bullet injuries to the spinal cord have produced paraplegia and quadriplegia. While penetrating injuries, particularly to the head, are more likely to be fatal, three of the ten fatalities reported by Hiss et al in their autopsy series were of blunt trauma injuries to the head or neck with internal injuries caused by transmission of kinetic energy into deeper tissues.⁴

The B'Tselem report goes on to note that children and the elderly are at greater risk of serious injury or death from rubber-coated steel bullets because of their more fragile bone structure and smaller muscle mass. And small children, due to their size, are more susceptible to being hit in the upper body either directly or by rubber bullets ricocheting off the ground.

How bad are these rubber-coated steel bullets? Bad enough that the U.S. Department of State has criticized the Israeli government for their use and misuse. The 1998 Report on Human Rights Practices states:

Israeli soldiers and police sometimes used live ammunition or rubber-coated metal bullets, which can be lethal, in situations other than when their lives were in danger and sometimes shot suspects in the upper

body and head. During the year, Israeli soldiers shot in the head and killed, with rubber-coated metal bullets, three Palestinians under the age of 18.



Makassed Hospital: Ala Badran, 12, hit by rubber-coated steel bullet in the eye, October 2000. Source: *Challenge*, Nov.-Dec. 2000

Because they are the targets, Palestinian youngsters have become authorities of sort on rubber-coated steel bullets. They collect them much like American kids collect baseball cards. And they've learned how to discern what's coming at them. They need only to check the type of canister on the end of the high-velocity rifles pointed at them to know which bullets are being used. If the canister is about 10 inches long, an inch wide, and looks like a very long silencer, the gun is shooting plastic-coated steel balls that are 95% by weight metal, 1.8 cm in diameter, and surrounded by a one mm coating of plastic. Palestinians know they can cause extensive damage such as broken bones, tissue and organ damage, and death. Because of the large number of brain injuries caused by this type of bullet, some doctors have devised a new surgical tool, a long slender magnet, used to pull the bullet out through the entry pathway.⁵

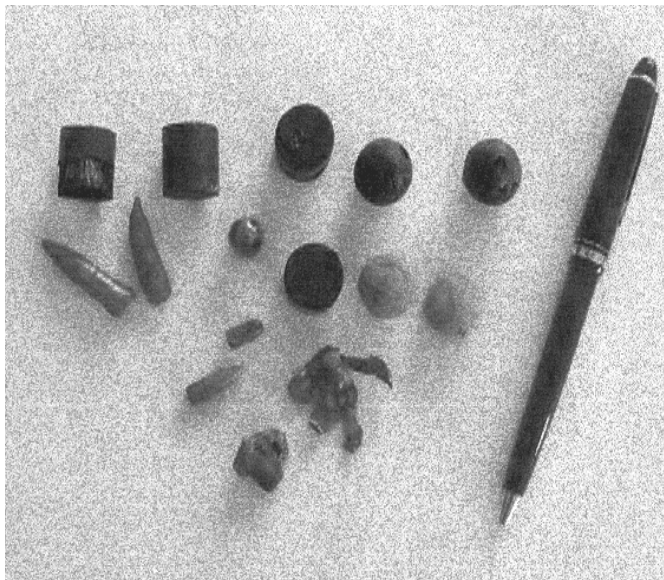
If, however, the canister is about the size of a 12-ounce can of soda, the gun is shooting rubber-coated steel bullets which, being 74% by weight metal, are more accurately called, according to the Reuters news agency, "rubber coated metal bullets with the rubber slashed to release the metal in the body of the victim." These bullets can cause severe bruises, tissue and organ damage, eye loss, broken bones, and death.⁶ The soda can at the end

of an Israeli rifle is, for Palestinians, far from the pause that refreshes.

In November 2000, Physicians for Human Rights issued a report of its independent inquiry into the most recent killings of Palestinians. An examination of hundreds of Palestinian casualties found that scores had been killed or badly injured by rubber-coated steel bullets fired, "excessively and inappropriately," contrary to army rules, at close range. The soldiers, the report concluded, "appeared to be shooting to inflict harm, rather than solely in self-defense."

None of which would come as news to Palestinians. There is, however, one weapon in Israel's anti-civilian arsenal that is new. According to a London Times report of 17 October 2000, stone-throwing youths in Ramallah watched, stunned, as men and boys at the barricades collapsed with small bullet holes in their chests, testicles, arms and hips. Tamir Barghouti, nephew of Marwan Barghouti, leader of the West Bank intifada, was one such casualty.

Palestinians are used to the rubber-coated steel bullets in their daily ritual of ducking and diving and hurling stones. But bullets that come out of nowhere terrify them. There are no bangs, no smoking guns. Victims just collapse and bleed, sometimes unnoticed. "I didn't hear a thing. I didn't feel much. I just fell over," recalled Tahir Afaneh, 18, speaking from a bed in Ramallah's central hospital, where he was being treated for a bullet lodged in his pelvis. Hosni Atari, the doctor who was treating him,



For up-to-date information on Israel's use of the above rubber-coated steel bullets see the Palestine Red Crescent Society's web site: www.palestinercs.org/bullet_types_images.htm

said he had never seen the results of the new Israeli weapon before. Hollow-nosed bullets open up like umbrellas on impact, spin about, then chew up internal organs; seldom do they leave an exit wound. That day alone Dr. Atari had treated seven patients hit by the "new" weapon.⁷

It is, in fact, an old weapon. Called dum dum bullets by the British, after the munitions factory at Dumdum, India, where they were first manufactured in the late 19th century, they are designed to inflict maximum damage. So vicious are they, the 1899 Hague Conference adopted the Hague Declaration IV (3) by which the parties agreed to "abstain from the use of bullets which expand or flatten easily in the human body, such as bullets with a hard envelope which does not entirely cover the core or is pierced with incisions."

Israel denies using dum dum bullets. Dr. Hosni Atari and Tahir Afaneh know otherwise.

Israel's Anti-Civilian Toxins

That 750,000 Palestinians were expelled from over 400 towns and villages in 1948 is now well documented. Less well known is how Zionists made sure these Palestinians never returned home: they poisoned their wells with typhus and dysentery bacteria.

Bacteriological agents also were used in the assault on the coastal town of Acre. Because of its natural defenses, the Zionist forces could not overrun Acre as easily as they did other villages. So they put bacteria into a spring that fed the town. The spring, called Capri, ran from the north near a Jewish farming collective. Once the people of Acre began to get sick, Jewish forces occupied the town.

This worked so well in Acre that the Zionists sent a Haganah division dressed as Arabs into Gaza, where Egyptian forces were positioned. The Egyptians, however, caught them in the act of putting two cans of bacteria, typhus and dysentery, into the civilian water supply. One of the captured saboteurs was quoted as saying, "In war, there is no sentiment."

How do we know all this? From the Hebrew press. In an article published 13 August 1993 in the Israeli daily *Hadashot*, writer Sarah Laybobis-Dar interviewed a number of Israelis who knew of the use of bacteriological weapons in 1948. One of those interviewed, Uri Mileshtin, an official historian for the Israeli Defense Forces, said that bacteria was used to poison the wells of every village emptied of its Arab inhabitants. According to Mileshtin, it was former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan who gave the order in 1948 to remove Arabs from their villages, bulldoze their homes, and render their water wells unusable with typhus and dysentery bacteria.

We also know of this anti-civilian warfare from a former Zionist, Naeim Giladi. Writing in the April-May 1998 issue of *The Link*, Giladi tells of a conversation he had in the early 1950s with a technician with Mekorot, the Israeli Water Authority. The technician was testing a well near a construction site where Giladi was working. Giladi asked him what he was doing. Thinking Giladi had fought in 1948, the technician replied: "Don't you remember? We used bacteria in many places. Every village we occupied we put bacteria in the wells. Now we keep testing them to keep track of when it is safe to use them again."

The subject of Israel's use of poison gained worldwide headlines in November 1999, when Suha Arafat, wife of Yassir Arafat, made the accusation at the opening of a U.S.-sponsored health project for Palestinian women in Ramallah, at which First Lady Hillary Clinton was present. At one point Mrs. Arafat said: "Our people have been submitted to the daily and intensive use of poisonous gas by the Israeli forces which has led to an increase in cancer cases among women and children."

The U.S. media denounced Mrs. Clinton for not immediately registering her dissent to what some columnists called a blood libel against the Jewish people. Few, if any, examined the allegations.

Israel's deadly use of tear gas to put down the Palestinian intifada of 1987-1993 first raised the question of whether Israel was using chemical weapons that cause injuries and fetal deaths. The Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights reported that, as of 31 May 1988:

More than 50 people have died after tear gas inhalation; 2 people have lost organs after being directly hit by canisters; and at least 150 pregnant women have suffered miscarriages or intrauterine fetal death after being gassed. A four-year-old boy was burned to death in Gaza City when a gas canister fired into his home ignited a kerosene stove; two of his siblings were badly burned and hospitalized.

Both The Washington Post and The New York Times of 16 January 1988 reported that Israeli soldiers, contrary to instructions printed clearly on the canisters not to use the tear gas inside buildings, did use them in hospitals and places of worship. The most dangerous use was in closed areas, such as shops and homes, an act that could and did produce fatalities. The Washington Post of 31 May 1988 reported:

Palestinian doctors and officials working for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)... contend there have been more than 1,200 injuries, dozens of miscarriages and at least 11 deaths from tear gas since the uprising began

December 9 [1987].

And The Washington Post of 14 April 1988 concluded that there appears to be:

... much evidence indicating that on numerous occasions soldiers and police have violated the manufacturer's printed warning by firing the gas into enclosed areas such as rooms or small courtyards.

These reports of Israeli misuse of tear gas prompted the Pennsylvania supplier, TransTechnology, to suspend sales of tear gas to Israel on 6 May 1988. The tear gas canisters, however, were still in use as of November 1989, but without the manufacturer's name on them. And one year after the suspension, The Jerusalem Post of 27 April 1989 reported that the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress had found that no grounds existed for withholding U.S. export of tear gas to Israel, "despite reports that the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] had sometimes used it improperly in the West Bank."

In 1990, The Swedish Save the Children organization sponsored a major report, "The Status of Palestinian Children during the Uprising in the Occupied Territories." The report concluded that Israeli use of tear gas had "contaminated homes, schools, offices, mosques, churches, clinics, and hospitals," and that decontamination was "extremely difficult" for a number of reasons.⁸

- First, most Palestinians were not told by the Israeli military government's Civil Administration how to decontaminate their houses, schools, or their buildings; in fact, no school official interviewed said that decontamination had been carried out in the many schools hit with tear gas.
- Second, many, if not most Palestinians could not obtain, let alone afford, the dry cleaning services suggested by the Pennsylvania manufacturer.
- Third, according to field investigations by the Database Project on Palestinian Human Rights, some Palestinian water sources, such as wells, were contaminated by the introduction of tear gas canisters.
- Fourth, because most rural and refugee families traditionally stored a year's worth of foodstuffs, ingested foods contaminated by tear gas had the long-term potential of causing vomiting and diarrhea.

A report by Physicians for Human Rights further suggested that exposure to CS gas (the "irritant agent" type of tear gas that is the only type known to have been used

during the first intifada) can result in heart failure, liver damage, and other long-term chronic illnesses, including carcinogenicity and influence on fertility.⁹

The Save the Children Report concluded with these chilling words from yet another report in the Journal of the American Medical Association:

From a toxicological perspective, there is a great need for epidemiologic and more laboratory research that would illuminate the full health consequence of exposure to tear gas compounds such as CS. The possibility of long-term health consequences such as tumor formation, reproductive effects, and pulmonary disease is especially disturbing in view of the multiple exposures sustained by demonstrators and non-demonstrators alike in some areas of civilian unrest.

Now, with the second intifada, gas attacks against Palestinians again proliferate. Michael Finkel, writing in *The New York Times Magazine* of 24 December 2000, describes a typical scenario:

At one point, following a rock-throwing jag, there was a sudden series of suctionlike pops. "Fireworks!" the kids shouted, and in an instant tear-gas canisters exploded about us. For reasons that didn't seem clear, the Israeli retaliation had begun..."Look," said Hares [a young teenager], making a face. "Built in America. I hate America." The writing on the outside of the 560 CS Long-Range Projectile said that it was manufactured by Federal Laboratories in Pittsburgh.

And there are other troubling reports. Israel admits sending secret units into the West Bank and Gaza Strip, according to the investigative journalist Gordon Thomas in his article "Banned Toxins Are Israel's New Weapon Against the Palestinians," published in *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* on 31 October 2000. What Israel doesn't admit is that these units are equipped with various types of weapons, all of which are banned under international treaties.

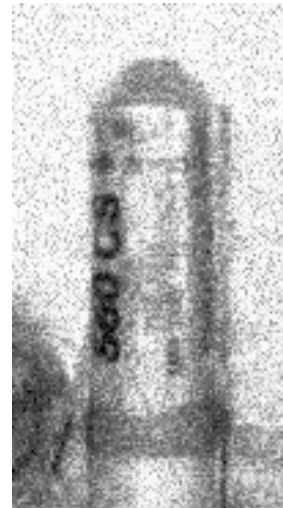
The weapons include fast-acting toxins that leave no obvious traces and can be treated only by specialists who know how to detect them.

At least six types of these toxins have been created and developed at Israel's Biological Research Institute, located 12 miles southeast of Tel Aviv. They were employed in September 1997, when Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, tried to assassinate Khalid Mish'al, a Hamas leader, in Amman, Jordan. When the operation failed, the Institute's chemical experts created more advanced delivery systems.

One such system is a powerful revolver that fires the toxins from a range of 150 feet. When the bullet hits the target, it injects a needle containing the toxin. Israeli operatives are trained to hit body parts, excluding the head, where the needle leaves no trace. The gun itself is silenced and the round is designed to penetrate just deeply enough for the toxin to have maximum effect.

The lethal needles essential for the operation have been supplied secretly to the Institute by German Jewish chemists who used to work officially for the Stasi intelligence service in the former East Germany.

The "smoking gun" that confirms Israel's chemical and biological operations showed up on 4 October 1992, at 6:35 p.m., when Israel's El Al Flight LY 1862 crashed into a block of 12-story tenements in Bijlmer, just outside Am-



For further information on Israel's use of CS tear gas, see the Palestine Red Crescent Society's web site: www.palestinercs.org/teargas

sterdam. Killed were three crew members, an unidentified "non-revenue passenger," and at least 43 people on the ground.¹⁰

At first Israeli and Dutch officials said the El Al flight carried only "perfume and gift articles." As late as 22 April 1998, Israeli Transport Minister Shaul Yahalom insisted there was "no dangerous material on that plane. Israel has nothing to hide."

Meanwhile, since the crash, 850 Bijlmer survivors have been suffering from multiple ailments including fatigue, breathing disorders, hair loss, neurological ailments, mental confusion, depression, encephalomyelitis and joint pains--all of which they blame on the crash.

Then, on 4 October 1998, the Dutch daily NRC Han-

delsblat printed a leaked copy of a page from Flight 1862's cargo manifest. It showed that the plane had 10 tons of chemicals on board, including hydrofluoric acid, isopropanol, and dimethylphosphonate (DMMP)—three of the four chemicals used in the production of sarin nerve gas. Combined, the chemicals aboard Flight 1862 could have killed the entire population of a major world city.

The DMMP had been shipped by Solkatronic Chemicals Inc. of Morrisville, PA and was destined for the Israeli Institute for Biological Research (IIBR) in Nes Ziona, outside Tel Aviv. IIBR is Israel's front organization for the development, testing and production of chemical and biological weapons. The poison (and antidote) used in the attempted assassination of the Hamas leader in Jordan was provided by IIBR. So secret is its location it appears on no maps and is off-limits even to members of the Israeli Parliament.

In the months following the crash, a Dutch citizens' group, *Ontoerzoeksgreg Vliegkamp Bijlmermeer (OVB)*, revealed that, in addition to the three toxic chemicals, traces of uranium, zirconium and lanthanum were found in soil samples taken from the crash site. More alarmingly, OVB found traces of depleted uranium (DU) in feces samples taken from survivors. Swallowing or breathing DU dust can cause significant and long-lasting irradiation of internal tissues, resulting in physical and mental debilities similar to those reported by the Bijlmer survivors.

How seriously should Palestinians—and, indeed, the rest of us on earth—take this unmapped Institute? The answer is provided by a former IIBR biologist in a 4 October 1998 interview with *The London Sunday Times*: “There is hardly a single known or unknown form of chemical or biological weapon ...

which is not manufactured at the institute.”

If anything, Suha Arafat may have understated the case.

Israel's Anti-Civilian Tanks And Helicopter Gunships

Tiananmen Square, June 4, 1989. A young man, unarmed, stands defiantly before a tank. There's no way he's going to win. Yet he stands there. David against Goliath: the indomitable spirit to be free confronting the forces of oppression. The picture was seen around the world on the covers of newsmagazines and the front pages of newspapers. Americans, in particular, decried the brutal use of such overwhelming force.

But what of the photo of the Palestinian youngster taken in occupied Palestine in October 2000? There he stands, alone, armed only with a stone, poised defiantly before an on-coming Israeli tank. How many U.S. newsmagazines carried this photo on its covers? How many newspapers highlighted it on their front pages? Where was the outcry against the use of such force against a civilian population? And what of the follow-up stories?



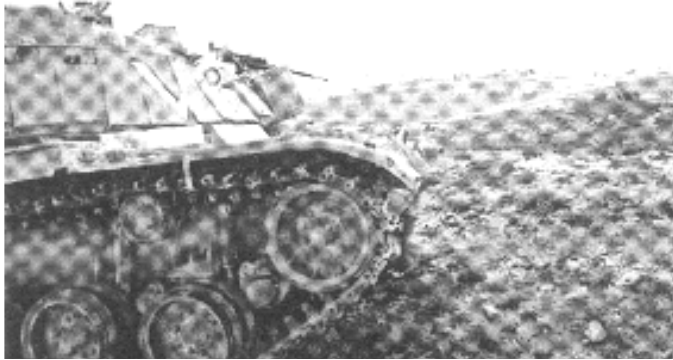
Faris Odeh, nine days before he was shot to death by an Israeli sharpshooter.

—AP Photo/Laurent Rebours.

Periodically,, the U.S. media keeps us updated on what is happening to the lone Chinese student. But what of the Palestinian child? How many reports told us how old he was—13 at the time—or even his name—it was Faris Odeh? More incredibly, how many newspapers or TV outlets reported that, nine days after his heroic stand, Faris Odeh was fatally shot in the neck by an Israeli sharpshooter?

Arab-Ameri-

cans often speculate that, were the situation reversed, how different the coverage would have been. Imagine that a Jewish population has been suffering for 50 years under a Arab military occupation; imagine that Arab settlers were colonizing more and more Jewish land; that at some point the Jews rise up in protest; that the Arab occupiers come into their overpopulated cities and camps with tanks and gunships; that a Jewish child stands valiantly



Israeli tank pointing at Beit Jala. Source: *News from Within*, 8 Nov. 2000

before one of the advancing tanks with nothing but a stone. The stuff of front-page news: a modern-day David defying a monster Goliath.

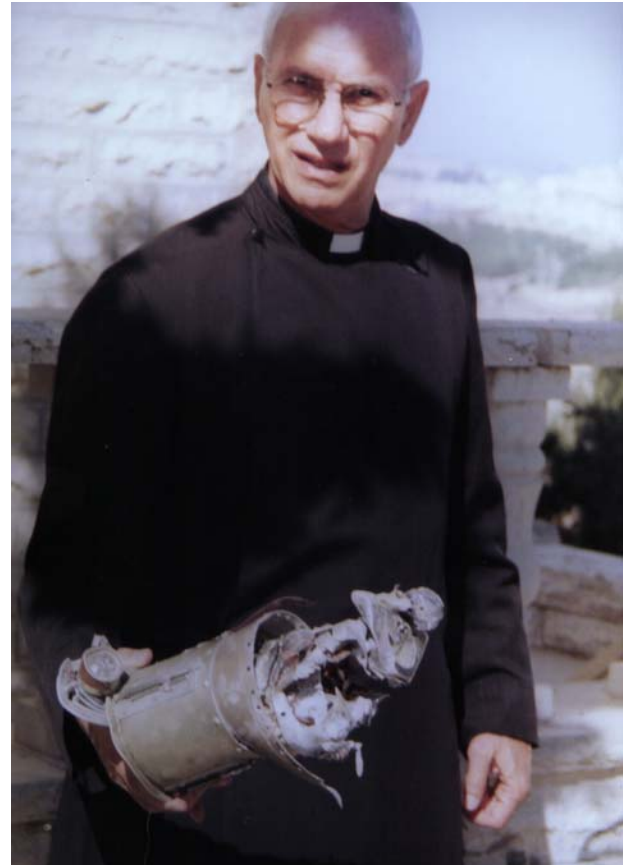
The sight of tanks and helicopter gunships firing into Palestinian population centers is a terrifying one. Again, few photos of the destroyed homes and buildings have found their way into our media. Some idea of the impact can be had by considering a United Nations estimate that tens of millions of dollars of damage to Palestinian "buildings, infrastructure and vehicles (has resulted) due mainly to the Israeli Army's use of heavy weapons, including rockets, tank shells and high-caliber automatic weapons." The report went on to say that in the first six weeks of the recent conflict, Israeli attacks resulted in the partial or total destruction of 431 private homes, 13 public buildings, 10 factories, and 14 religious buildings.

But there is more to be concerned about. A 1995 report from the U.S. Army Environmental Policy Institute states that Israel is one of the countries with DU munitions in its arsenal. And Israel's U.S.-manufactured Apache and Cobra helicopters are both equipped to fire DU shells. Israel's Sabra tank, modeled on the Abrams M1A1 tank, likewise has the capability of firing DU shells.

DU is a waste product of the process that produces enriched uranium for use in atomic weapons and nuclear power plants. When turned into a metal it can be used to make a shell that penetrates steel. It is also pyrophoric, so that it burns when heated by friction when it strikes steel. And when it does that, it spews tiny particles of poisonous and radioactive uranium oxide into the air. These small

particles can then be ingested or inhaled by humans for miles around. Just one particle, when lodged in a vital organ, can be dangerous.

At least one monitoring organization in the United States, the International Action Center (IAC), founded by



Episcopal Canon Naim Ateek holding shell casing fired by Israel into Beit Jala, a largely Christian-populated town near Bethlehem. Photo: *Sabeel Ecumenical Center*

former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, has called for an international investigation of the use by Israel of depleted uranium shells in its repression of the latest Palestinian uprising. According to IAC co-director Sara Flounders:

Such use of DU weapons adds to the crimes the Israeli forces are committing against the Palestinian population. Israeli helicopter gunships are firing into densely populated areas. According to international law these attacks on civilian areas are war crimes, as is the long-term destruction of the environment from depleted uranium contamination. The radioactive materials enter into the land, the water, and the whole food chain, contaminating the densely-populated West

Bank and Gaza, where water is a scarce resource. The wanton radioactive contamination of this region is a crime against all of humanity and a threat to the entire region now and for generations to come.¹¹

Perhaps this was what Suha Arafat had in mind.

Civilians in the Crosshairs

The weapons we have examined are all being used against a Palestinian civilian population. Israel claims it uses these weapons as means of crowd control. But Israel uses these weapons *only* against Palestinian crowds. It *never* uses them against Jewish demonstrators or rioters inside Israel or against Jewish settlers in the West Bank or Gaza. Palestinians claim this is blatant anti-Arab racism.

A 13 December, 2000 article by Lee Hockstader in The Washington Post quoted the defense correspondent of the Israeli newspaper Haaretz as reporting that "Key members of the [Israeli] defense establishment are increasingly convinced that Israel has frequently been using excessive force against the Palestinians." Hockstader cites another article in the Israeli paper Maariv that describes two army combat units in which soldiers repeatedly opened fire indiscriminately, exaggerating the threat they faced to secure the approval of commanders who were not at the scene.

And among the civilians in the crosshairs certain categories of individuals are targeted:

Children. As of 1 December 2000, 310 people have been killed in clashes between Israelis and Palestinians including 97 children aged 18 or under who were all Palestinians, according to the UN Children's Fund, UNICEF. UNICEF spokeswoman Lynn Geldof also reported that 9,802 Palestinians had been injured in the violence from the end of September until November 30, of which an estimated 4,116 were children.¹²

Stories and photos of killed and wounded children have filled the Arab media, but one of the most poignant reports I have read came from a 28 October 2000 Chicago Tribune staff writer Stephen Franklin. He quotes medical social worker Magada Abu Ghosh, who had been pressed into service as a first-aid worker. She had been standing beside one of the ambulances, waiting to take the wounded off on stretchers. "I heard a loud noise," she recalled, "and I looked around and there was this boy, maybe he was 17 years old. I will never forget him. He was wearing a white T-shirt. The bullets exploded in his leg and his hand and the blood was all over him. He was just standing there and he didn't realize what happened. He died."

And Michael Finkel, in his previously cited New York

Times Magazine article, reported that he spent 2 weeks at Karni crossing in Gaza with stone-throwers 13, 14 and 15 years of age, and each day the Israeli army fired live ammunition at the kids, even though "Not once did I see or hear a single shot from the Palestinian side." What about Israel's claim that its Army fires only in self-defense? Finkel writes: "Never during the time I spent at Karni did an Israeli soldier appear to be in mortal danger. Nor was either an Israeli soldier or settler even slightly injured. In that two-week period, at least 11 Palestinians were killed during the day at Karni."



Palestinian ambulance under fire. For this and other photos of violence against Palestinian civilians, see the web site: www.addameer.org

Medical Personnel. Magada Abu Ghosh's position was itself dangerous. On 28 November 2000, Physicians for Human Rights-Israel issued a report "Medicine Under Fire, October 2000." In it, the world-wide human rights organization accused Israeli security forces of using rubber and rubber-coated steel bullets, as well as live firearms, against Palestinian civilians, including doctors and ambulance drivers who were trying to evacuate other Palestinian civilians who had been injured. Much of the world did see the shooting death of 12-year-old Muhammed al-Durreh, as he huddled next to his father. What the world did not see was the shooting death of the ambulance medic who had tried to reach him.¹³

"It is becoming very difficult to evacuate the injured," said Dr. Mohammad Skaft, head of the first-aid teams in the West Bank. Ambulances are hit by gunfire, emergency workers are wounded, and field hospitals, many of them close to the clashes, fall under the clouds of tear gas fired at the crowds. "When you get hit with the gas, said one emergency worker, "you can't do anything. You can't breathe."

The Physicians for Human Rights—Israel report also criticized Israeli security forces for delaying ambulances and medical relief vehicles on their way to evacuation of the injured and for harassing the medical relief personnel.

Journalists. Many of the journalists, particularly photographers and cameramen from the local and international media, have been chased, intimidated and shot by Israeli security forces in order to prevent them from documenting the killing and wounding of defenseless civilians. According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, these incidents multiplied after a French journalist filmed the killing of Muhammed al-Durreh. Such practices are expressly condemned by international conventions and law. The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) has documented numerous such violations on its web site www.pchrgaza.org. We note just a few.¹⁴

- On 11 November, 2000, Yola Monakhov, 26, an American photographer for the Associated Press, was crouched in a doorway near Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem. Suddenly an Israeli soldier appeared from around a corner about 50 yards away, aimed at her and fired. There had been no gunfire from the Palestinian side, she said from her hospital bed, following two operations to treat extensive damage to her pelvis.
- Israeli soldiers beat Awadh Awadh, a photographer for Agence France Presse, and tried to break his camera while he was covering clashes with Palestinian civilians on 29 September 2000. On the same day, Israeli soldiers shot Amer El-Jabari, a reporter for NBC, wounding him with a bullet in the head as he covered clashes in Hebron.
- On 4 October 2000, Atta Oweisat, a photographer for the Zoom 77 press agency, was attacked by seven Israeli soldiers while he was covering a funeral procession of a Palestinian martyr in the village of Jabal El-Mukabber. The soldiers forced Oweisat to the ground and began hitting him in the stomach and neck. Oweisat fainted and had to be taken to the hospital.
- On 9 October 2000, in Ramallah, Israeli troops shot rubber-coated steel bullets at Luce Delahye, a Newsweek photographer, hitting the lens of his camera. A week later, also in Ramallah, Delahye was hit by a rubber-coated bullet in the forehead, while he was photographing a youngster who had been hit in the head.
- On 31 October 2000, Ben Wedeman, an Ameri-

can correspondent for CNN, was covering a Palestinian demonstration near Al-Mentar (Karmi) Outlet. The situation had been relatively calm until the Israeli forces started shooting intensively and "walking" tank shells in the direction of Wedeman and other journalists. Wedeman, who was wearing a helmet and bulletproof vest, was forced to lie down to escape the shooting. A few minutes after the shooting broke out, and while he was trying to stand up with his back to the Israelis, he was wounded with a live bullet in his right side and had to be evacuated to Shifa' hospital.

In light of these incidents—and they are but a few of the ones documented—the PCHR has called upon the international community, especially the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention, to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1322/2000, which calls for establishing an international commission of inquiry to investigate the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces. Israel rejects such a UN-designated commission, opting instead for a three-person commission headed by former U.S. Senator George Mitchell, which Israel insists will be permitted only to consult the findings of other researchers, and not gather information itself.

Certainly, Senator Mitchell's panel would be expected to consult the findings of the respected human rights organizations listed below. And the hope is that, once it has read these reports, Senator Mitchell will insist that Israel allow his commission to conduct its own inquiry into the allegations.

International Law on the Treatment of Civilians

The renowned international lawyer W. Thomas Mallison liked to quote the Roman philosopher/emperor Marcus Aurelius, who observed that the only thing separating men from the jungle is the law.

That truth was brought home to Americans in the wake of our post-presidential election this past November. How often were we reminded that we are a nation of laws, and that it is only our respect for the law that keeps us from social meltdown.

Nations, too, have acknowledged this principle in their relations with one another. Between 1864-1949, a series of treaties were signed in Geneva, Switzerland, providing for humane treatment of combatants and civilians in wartime.

The first convention, signed by 16 nations, covered the protection of sick and wounded soldiers and medical personnel and facilities. Later conventions extended the first to naval warfare (1906) and to the treatment of prisoners of war (1929). As a result of World War II, four con-

ventions were adopted in 1949 (including by Israel) to strengthen and codify earlier treaties and safeguard civilians.

It is these treaties that Israel has been charged with violating by various international organizations:

Amnesty International, United Kingdom:

Since 29 September (until 5 November 2000) 130 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli security forces, nearly 40 of them children, during riots and demonstrations in Israel and the Occupied Territories. Amnesty International has sent two missions to Israel and the Occupied Territories to investigate the excessive use of force by the Israeli security forces. The first mission produced a report concluding that Israeli security forces had repeatedly used lethal force in situations where there was no apparent danger to themselves or others. Amnesty International is calling on the United Nations to establish urgently an independent international investigation, to include criminal justice experts known for their impartiality and integrity, and to investigate all killings of civilians that have taken place since 29 September in Israel, the Occupied Territories and south Lebanon.

Amnesty International UK today calls on the British government to suspend all exports or transfers of components, spares, servicing and equipment for U.S.-supplied attack helicopters in Israel until the Israeli authorities demonstrate that the helicopters will not be used to commit human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Territories and the areas under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Israeli forces have used U.S.-supplied helicopter gun ships to violate the human rights of Palestinians in punitive attacks—on civilians, including children—where there was no imminent danger to life.—*Report dated 24 October 2000.*

Amnesty International, USA:

Amnesty International USA today called on the U.S. government to cease all transfers of attack helicopters to Israel, including the pending sale of Apache helicopters, until Israeli authorities demonstrate that the helicopters will not be used to commit human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Territories and the areas under the control of the Palestine Authority.—*Report dated 19 October 2000.*

In policing the recent demonstrations, the Israeli security forces tended to use military

methods rather than policing methods involving the protection of human lives.—*Report dated 19 October 2000.*

Amnesty International reiterated its urgent call for an independent international investigation by the United Nations into the serious human rights abuses in Israel and the Occupied Territories, including the areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, since 29 September.—*Report dated 13 October 2000.*

Amnesty International today expressed grave concern for the safety of civilians, following Israeli military helicopter attacks in Gaza City and Ramallah which reported injured Palestinian civilians.—*Report dated 12 October 2000.*

Since 29 September, Israeli security forces have frequently used excessive force on demonstrators when lives were not in immediate danger.—*Report dated 9 October 2000.*

Amnesty International condemns indiscriminate killings of civilians following four days of clashes in Israel and the Occupied Territories which have left at least 35 Palestinian civilians dead and hundreds of others injured. The dead civilians, among them young children, include those uninvolved in the conflict and seeking safety. The loss of civilian life is devastating and this is compounded by the fact that many appear to have been killed or injured as a result of the use of excessive or indiscriminate force.—*Report dated 2 October 2000.*

B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights:

...Testimonies given to B'Tselem indicate that security forces often fire "rubber bullets" at times with fatal results in violation of the Open-Fire Regulations (that such bullets should be used only as a last resort to disperse riots and demonstrations, that they should be aimed only at the legs, that they should not be fired at a distance of less than 40 meters, and not at children.) In some cases, the security forces themselves admit the breach of regulations.

New York Times correspondent Joel Greenberg was an eye-witness to the shooting death of eight-year old Ali Jawarish and provided testimony to B'Tselem:

"When the soldier fired, he was some 15 to 20 meters from the fleeing children. At that time, some children were detained and others were

fleeing, no stones were thrown. After the firing, the soldiers retreated. When they did so, I noticed a child, around nine or ten years old, lying motionless on the ground."

In the vast majority of cases in which soldiers shot "rubber bullets" and killed Palestinians, no one was held accountable. Forty-nine of the 57 cases of Palestinians killed by "rubber bullets" involved IDF soldiers. In only three of these cases did the authorities initiate legal action against those responsible ... [Of those soldiers found guilty of killing Palestinians], one was acquitted, one sentenced to 21-months' imprisonment and two years' probation; and one subject to disciplinary proceedings.—*Report dated 24 November 1998.*

Human Rights Watch, World Report 2000:

Human Rights Watch reports its week-long investigation of clashes in the West Bank, Gaza, and northern Israel showed repeated use of Israeli security forces of lethal force in situations where demonstrators posed no threat of death or serious injury to security forces or others. In situations where Palestinians did fire upon Israeli security forces, the IDF showed a troubling proclivity to resort to indiscriminate lethal force in response. At least 100 Palestinians have been killed and 3,500 injured in clashes with Israeli security forces. Human Rights Watch also expresses concern at the IDF's use of medium caliber munitions, which are meant for penetrating concrete and other hard surface barriers, against unarmed demonstrators in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The military munitions were particularly devastating when they hit civilians.

The organization also condemned the repeated apparent targeting of emergency medical personnel and facilities by the IDF, as well as stoning attacks by Palestinian and Israeli civilians on ambulances.

Under international standards on the use of force by law enforcement officials, firearms may be used only "in self-defense or defense of others against the imminent threat of death or serious injury." Even then, law enforcement officials must "exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved," and "minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life."

Civilians should not be dying in this conflict, on either side," said Hanny Megally, executive

director of the Middle East and North Africa division of Human Rights Watch ... Megally noted that under the Fourth Geneva Convention, which governs military occupations, Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem are internationally protected persons, and signatory states have an obligation to respect and ensure respect for rights and guarantees of the Convention.

MADRE, International Women's Human Rights Organization:

As of 9 October 2000, at least 85 Palestinians have been killed and over 3,000 wounded by Israeli forces using rubber-coated bullets, live ammunition, helicopter gunships, tanks and anti-tank missiles.

In an interview given to The New York Times on 4 October 2000, Dr. Khaled Qurie, director of Makassed Hospital in East Jerusalem, reports an unusually high number of upper body injuries to the head, neck, chest and abdomen compared with previous clashes. Doctors at St. John's hospital in Jerusalem have treated 18 Palestinians shot in the eye at close range with rubber-coated bullets. This, despite the fact that Israeli troops are trained to fire these bullets from at least 100 feet away and only at the feet and legs. International standards dictate that security forces may use firearms only when lives are threatened and other options are unavailable. In these confrontations, Israeli forces have apparently relied on deadly force as a first, rather than last, resort. Palestinian human rights organizations report that numerous people who were seeking shelter from the clashes have been among those fatally wounded by indiscriminate Israeli gunfire.

The Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees reports that a full 44% of the wounded are children under the age of 18 ...

It is our view that the conduct of the Israeli military violates numerous international human rights standards, including Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials and Articles of the Fourth Geneva Convention governing the treatment of civilians under military occupation.

Mary Robinson, UN Human Rights Commissioner :

The civilian population feels besieged by a stronger power prepared to use its superior force

against demonstrations and stone-throwing by adolescents ... It's very clear it's having a devastating effect on the civilian population.—*News Conference, Geneva, 27 November 2000.*

Conclusion

One question that haunts this report throughout is why do civilians, particularly children, expose themselves to such high-tech death and destruction?

Israelis blame Palestinian parents for sending their children out to die. But that wasn't the case with the mother of Faris Odeh, the 13-year-old who confronted the tank. She didn't want her son standing in front of sharpshooters. When Faris was killed, she wept uncontrollably.

Yet Mrs. Odeh and the other parents of slain Palestinian children know why their children throw stones.

I'm reminded of a quote from Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "You only have power over people so long as you don't take everything away from them. But when you've robbed a man of everything, he's no longer in your power — he's free again."

Palestinian hopes of shaking off the 50-plus years of military occupation have collapsed over the years, especially since the 1993 Oslo Accords; Israel to this day continues to confiscate more and more Palestinian land for the construction of Jewish-only settlements and Jewish-only highways, leaving Palestinians penned up in their ever denser bantustans. Intifadas erupt when the oppressed know they have nothing to lose. It happens often enough in the history of anti-colonial conflicts, in South Africa, Vietnam, Ireland, Algeria, to name but a few.

It is an imperative that knows no one religion, nor one cultural ethos. It is a cry from the human heart. When American revolutionaries rebelled from their oppressors, they described it as their rightful claim to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Palestinians are no different.

Occupiers too have instinctive feelings. They know that land acquired by illegitimate force can only be held by the threat of superior arms. That's why the United States gives Israel some \$10 billion a year, as documented by Richard Curtiss in our September 1997 *Link*, in order to maintain its military and economic superiority. And that's why Israel has reacted to this latest Palestinian intifada by using what the international community has deemed excessive military force against a civilian population.

Seldom, however, do occupiers comprehend Count von Bismarck's admonition that you can do everything with a bayonet except sit on it.

So the madness continues.

End Notes

¹Ezrahi, Yaron, "Rubber Bullets: Power and Consensus in Modern Israel," 1997, Univ. of California Press, p. 214.

²O'Sullivan, Arie, in The Jerusalem Post, 27 October 2000.

³Palestine Red Crescent Society Web Site <www.palestiners.org/bullet_types_images.htm>. On same Site, see PRCS Director Mohamed Awad's medical analysis of the extensive damage caused by rubber-coated steel bullets and other blast weapons.

⁴Copy of the B'Tselem Report can be found on the web at <www.btselem.org/files/ERubber.rtf>.

⁵See B'Tselem Report noted above.

⁶See B'Tselem Report noted above.

⁷Kiley, Sam, in The London Times, 17 October 2000.

⁸Nixon, Anne, "The Status of Palestinian Children during the Uprising in the Occupied Territories, Part I: Child Death and Injury," Rädä Barnen, Swedish Save the Children, January 1990. This is one of the most comprehensive studies on the physical and long-term effects of the type of tear gas used by Israel.

⁹See Save the Children Report above.

¹⁰Smith, Gar, "Uranium Skies: What was aboard Flight 1862?" in Earth Island Journal, v. 14, no. 4, winter '99-2000. Information on the crash is based on this article.

¹¹Flounders, Sare & Catalinotto, John, "Is the Israeli Military Using Depleted Uranium Weapons Against the Palestinians?" International Action Center, November 2000. See Web Site <www.iacenter.org>.

¹²Agence France Presse, 1 December 2000.

¹³"Medicine Under Fire—October 2000," Report by Physicians for Human Rights-Israel. This Report is based on hundreds of first-hand testimonies by the wounded, eye-witnesses, doctors and other medical personnel. For further information, phone PHR's office in Israel at 011-972-3-5664526.

¹⁴"Silencing the Press: A Report on Israeli Aggression against Journalists, September 29—November 20, 2000," Palestine Center for Human Rights. See Web Site <www.pchrgaza.org>.

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