

From: Sonja Karkar [sonjakarkar@womenforpalestine.org]
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To: Sonja Karkar
Subject: PROF JEFF HALPER IN AUSTRALIA - Melbourne Report



AUSTRALIANS FOR PALESTINE • WOMEN FOR PALESTINE
MELBOURNE – AUSTRALIA

JEFF HALPER BEGINS AUSTRALIAN TOUR IN MELBOURNE: 10 – 13 March 2009

organised in the interests of advocating for Palestine,
by *Australians for Palestine* and *Women for Palestine*





PHOTOS: Ric Kiakaha

Professor Jeff Halper's first major Australian public lecture was at the University of Melbourne where he spoke to a packed out theatre. Some 300 people came to hear Jeff speak, many of them drawn by his segment on Radio National's Breakfast show that morning with Fran Kelly. The welcome was given by Sonja Karkar on behalf of the Asia Institute, Australians for Palestine and Women for Palestine, co-sponsors of the event. In introducing Dr Patrick Wolfe from La Trobe University as moderator, she referred to his interest in anthropology which dovetails well with Jeff's own specialty in that field. She went on to say that both have been true to their professional calling in their passion to understand the long spurned human condition of the Palestinian people and to find ways of changing people's perceptions.

After paying reverent respect to the Wurundjeri people as the traditional custodians of the land, Patrick reminded the audience that Jeff had only last year attempted to break the siege of Gaza by sailing there with other activists. Jeff's action, he said, "stands for the ancient hallowed and beautiful tradition of Jewish universalism" and is a stark contrast to Zionism which is "narrow, exclusive, racist and colonial". He said it takes tremendous courage to stand up to Zionism and Jeff has done this over and over again by embracing the very people Zionism violates.

While Jeff's talk held the audience riveted to their seats for almost two hours, it was brought to a moving closure when Patrick - in response to Jeff's description of Israel's demolition of 24,000 Palestinian homes - described his own feelings at seeing the ashes of his home and worldly possessions after Melbourne's savage bushfires only weeks earlier. While his loss was not due to any government policy, he nevertheless felt as though part of his life had been completely wiped out even though he would be compensated. How could one then, he asked, even begin to imagine the overwhelming sense of loss and violation the Palestinians have to endure when the bulldozers come to deliberately destroy their homes as part of Israel's house demolition policy without any prospect of compensation? It was a question that he left the audience to contemplate as buckets were passed around to collect donations for Jeff's organisation ICAHD – The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions - which rebuilds the homes Israel demolishes as a political act of resistance.

Jeff Halper had given the audience a detailed explanation of how Israel's policy of not granting building permits to Palestinians affected the population. When refused permits to build, the Palestinians have no choice but to build homes without a permit for their families even though they build on their own land. They know that in all likelihood they will be issued with demolition orders. In East Jerusalem alone, said Jeff, there are 22,000 demolition orders outstanding, that is, "one-third of Palestinian homes can be demolished at any time and demolitions happen constantly every day." He then went on to say that since 1967, Israel has demolished 24,000 Palestinian homes, not for security reasons or because they are houses of terrorists, but because it is Israel's proactive policy of keeping Palestinians hemmed in while at the same time expanding the illegal settlements all around them.

While the audience certainly got a harrowing picture of life for Palestinians under Israeli Occupation, it also got a frightening look into how Israel's treatment of the Palestinians could affect our global future.

Israel, said Jeff, has created a laboratory out of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem where it experiments with its massive security and crowd control techniques for export to governments wanting to keep down the restless 'surplus' of humanity. The surplus, he explained, are the urban and rural poor, the unemployed, the homeless, the refugees, the prison populations, people in third world countries, particular minorities and anyone demonised for political purposes. He calls this 'warehousing' and the Palestinians are the first experiments in how to keep these 'surplus populations' forever under control.

Even as people are still trying to accept that Israel's occupation of Palestine is in fact apartheid, Jeff Halper said that "so rapid is the pace

of change in that indivisible entity known as Palestine/Israel that it almost defies our ability to keep up with it.” He believes that this warehousing is even worse than apartheid. It is “a system that has gone beyond occupation in its scale and permanence ...” because it creates facts on the ground - walls, electric fencing, checkpoints, Israeli-only roads, watchtowers and hostile, expanding settlement blocs – what Jeff calls the Matrix of Control and which makes any just political solution for the Palestinians impossible.

It is, he said, a useful model for governments wanting to deal with ‘surplus populations’ at home and why Israel is able to get away with its constant violations of human rights, UN resolutions and international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It answers the question often asked “Why Palestine?” when there are hundreds of other conflicts and situations in the world that violate human rights.

Understanding what is happening to the Palestinians is key to understanding Israel’s appeal to governments everywhere because Israel’s mighty military puts it in the ‘boy’s club’ that attracts all military establishments. Israel’s advances in control systems over the last forty years are being applied now internationally. It is involved in star wars “and is the world leader in the military applications of nano-technology – microscopic weaponry”. And, bringing it even closer to home, Jeff said that we would probably find Israel involved in the security of Melbourne’s airport and the training of Melbourne’s police force. In other words said Jeff, “the global implications go beyond Israel/Palestine” and it explains the incredible support for Israel from world leaders even when Israel’s bombs killed and injured over 6,000 Palestinians in the space of 22 days. A catastrophic situation for the Palestinians and a bleak future for all humanity.

The term ‘warehousing’ explained Jeff Halper is meant as a warning, and we must begin to recognise its applications if we are to effectively counter it. All the more reason, he said, to continue our efforts to end Israel’s Occupation of Palestine.

Jeff also spoke at Deakin, La Trobe and Monash universities and held a talk at the World Vision headquarters. His last appearance in Melbourne was organised by the Uniting Church Congregation of Mark the Evangelist and the Institute of Post-Colonial Studies.

Jeff spoke in Adelaide yesterday and will be speaking in Brisbane, Canberra and Sydney over the next 10 days (speaking schedule attached). We urge everyone to attend where they can to hear him. He is a charismatic speaker whose breadth of knowledge and experience is all the more remarkable because of his willingness to put himself into situations faced by the Palestinians themselves. His boat trip to Gaza with other activists to break Israel’s siege saw him arrested; his protests against bulldozers that come to tear down Palestinian homes or rip up Palestinian olives groves, have seen him handcuffed and dragged away by Israeli soldiers. So, not only does Jeff come to advocate for an end to Israel’s occupation, he comes to ask for donations to his “Homes Campaign” in which he is actively involved. It is the least we in Australia can do to help the Palestinians.

You can donate at the public lectures and meetings where Jeff is speaking, through PAYPAL on our website’s home page www.australiansforpalestine.com or by posting us a cheque or money order made out to Australians for

Palestine, PO Box 2099, Hawthorn, 3122. Please remember to mark all donations "ICAHN Homes Campaign".

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UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE LECTURE

A recording of Jeff's talk at the University of Melbourne can be downloaded from <http://truelifephotographics.com/media/>

RADIO INTERVIEWS

ABC Radio National Breakfast Show with Fran Kelly
"Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes"
<http://tiny.cc/lznA0>

ABC Radio National PM with Mark Colvin
"Middle East peace process on hold"
<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2008/s2513577.htm>

Radio Adelaide Back Story
"And the Walls came tumbling down"

NEWSPAPER REPORTS

Sydney Morning Herald
12/03/09 "Academic's visit divides Jewish groups"
<http://tiny.cc/l6hfk>

13/03/09 EDITORIAL "With friends like these ..."
<http://tiny.cc/PACHz>

Australian Jewish News
13 March 2009 "Shul cancels controversial academic"
<http://ajn.com.au/news/news.asp?pgID=7192>

JTA - Jewish Telegraphic Agency
12 March 2009 "Aussie Jewish paper refuses ad for activist's speech"
<http://tiny.cc/hRR9c>

LETTERS

From the SMH:

An offensive stance

Your editorial oversimplifies the reasons the *Australian Jewish News* rejected the Jeffrey Halper advertisement ("With friends like these ...", March 13). Halper does not just campaign against Israel's bulldozing houses. He campaigns against the existence of Israel as a Jewish state, as he did on ABC radio's *PM* on Wednesday. So do the groups promoting his visit. These campaigns are offensive to most the vast majority of the Jewish population. The *Jewish News* is a commercial business. I doubt the *Herald* would run an advertisement that offended most of its readers. The main opposition to Chas

Freeman came from the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, who objected to his stance on China. Resorting to Jewish conspiracy theories says more about his politics than the reasons he withdrew his nomination.

Athol Morris O'Connor (ACT)

BLOGS

Antony Loewenstein: "The peace activist the Jewish News rejects"

<http://tiny.cc/kmgle>