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civil society (churches, non-profits, individuals, schools, etc.) are not illegal. Certain trade agreements, like the WTO, might have policies against sanctions (which actually contradict other international laws allowing sanctions), but those apply to governments, not individuals and organizations.

Comparison with Apartheid in South Africa

The application of international moral and financial pressure to bring change was most successfully demonstrated by the anti-Apartheid movement of the 1980's, culminating in *divestment* campaigns involving faith groups, students, university boards, city councils, unions. Eventually, even national governments joined the efforts. Against all the "wisdom" at the time, this pressure from within and without South Africa led to the non-violent transformation of a nation without the expected "bloodbath".

The former director of the Jerusalem Center for Women shared her detailed research describing the similarities, as well as the differences, between the conditions of apartheid in South Africa and the continuing occupation of Palestine by Israel. Counter to many people's prior understanding, the research demonstrated that human suffering and violations of human rights in the Israeli occupation of Palestine are even more severe and blatant than were the practices under the apartheid regime. This analysis was backed up by speakers who were themselves involved in the anti-apartheid struggle within South Africa.

Readers may contact the CSJ Justice Office for a much more thorough account of the conference. Resources to learn more about the conference, about the Sabeel organization, about the Palestine/Israel conflict, and about the peacemaking and justice efforts of faith groups globally to end the occupation are available.

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Green Happenings ... by Sr. Evelyn Flowers, CSA, Environmental Coordinator

Advice From Poor Robin's Almanac

*Now that the time has come wherein
Our Saviour Christ was born,*

*The larder's full of beef and pork, the granary's full of corn,
As God hath plenty to thee sent, take comfort of thy labours,
And let it never thee repent to feed thy needy neighbours.*

(Anon.)

It has become clear that poverty is the world's number one problem. This poverty is mainly the result of exploitive systems which trap workers and their families in a cycle of poverty while also damaging the environment. This Advent we have a chance to assess how, where, and what we shop for. Fair Trade items are produced in ways that promotes social equity, environmental protection and economic security. (See this month's Justice Action Alert for more details.)

A great way to reduce damage to the environment and life on Earth is to be savvy about what we use and buy. For example, we toss over 6 billion batteries, or over 250 tons of toxic battery waste, in the trash every year. These pollute drinking water, cause cancer, and kill wildlife. Solar-powered flashlights and radios reduce battery waste and help to save money. The flashlights' built-in solar panels can produce light without using batteries. Charging in sunlight for 5-6 hours provides 3 hours of continuous light. The AM/FM radios can be powered by the sun or by hand cranking. (www.eartheasy.com).

When you buy recycled goods, you help create a market for recycled materials and then you add to the loop by recycling. Every year Americans generate an **additional** 6 million tons of waste between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Holiday cards alone add 4.4 million **more** tons of trash. (*L.A. County of Public Works*). While we think of all this waste as polluting the physical world, we may fail to understand its impact on all of us.

Did you know it was happening? *Well, sort of. There was news about it, but it didn't seem too real.*

How did it feel when you couldn't eat the fish anymore? *Well that was hard. We never thought that would happen.*

Didn't they warn you? *Not really. I guess some tried to. But not in a big way. Not like on television, or even much in the newspapers. You had to really know, I guess. People just didn't care that much. We were pretty busy then. Pretty caught up in our own lives.*

What about the forests? Didn't you know how much we needed them, just to breathe? *People never thought about that connection, son. We needed that timber. Companies needed it for their business. That's what was important back then. Business.*

But why would you let them take away everything we needed? Why did you let them make all those stupid things out of plastic? Why didn't you save some of the oil for us? *I swear, we never thought we'd use it up. We weren't trained to think about the future. No one taught us how to think. We did the best we could do, day by day.*

I thought you were smart. You had your own business, didn't you? Yes.

If you were so smart, why didn't you stop them from ruining all the water? Didn't you ever think I might want to swim like you used to? It's not like that.

Oh yes it is. If you were so smart you would have known what was happening. But you didn't care. It's your fault. *It's not my fault, son. There were millions of us here. Everyone was to blame.*

Then why didn't they stop it? Why did they ruin things for us? Why didn't you care enough to DO something? Why? Why? WHY?

(A conversation between a boy and his grandfather in 2050 in *Museletter*, by Jan Phillips).

The Justice Report

Congregation of Saint Joseph, Cleveland, Ohio

Justice Committee

For the Month of December 2005

The Wall or Seeds of Peace? Which Do We Nurture?

[In October this year, six sisters and associates from the Cleveland CSJ community joined a Holy Land Retreat that took the forty sojourners to various Christian sites in Israel. The tour included stops in Palestinian territories under the control of the Israeli occupation. Sr. Pat Kozak was one of the tour leaders.—ed]

By Pat Kozak, CSJ

The wall is enormous. That was the first and the lasting impression. Our bus passed through a seemingly small opening in the wall, probably the width of one or two vehicles. The road was crowded with busses, cars, and taxis trying to pass through. Having been refused passage, some cars and taxis attempted nearly impossible u-turns on the crowded access road. Pedestrians seemed oblivious of the traffic as they too attempted to wend their way through security. But the whole while, the wall loomed there in front of us. Gray concrete, 20 feet high. Erected by the Israelis, it completely surrounds the Palestinian land of the West Bank, creating a walled prison of Palestinian neighborhoods.

We didn't go to Israel to see the wall. The 39 other women and myself went as part of a retreat to the Holy Land, to be introduced to the biblical land, to learn the context of the scripture stories, to see the places important to our faith, to walk where Jesus walked.

For the first four days, we stayed in the northern region of Israel, in Galilee, and were privileged to visit Capernaum, the Mount of Beatitudes, Nazareth, and the Sea of Galilee. We shared rich experiences with wonderful input from scripture scholars that was inspiring and expansive. The power and grace of being in these places cannot be overstated. But for this reflection, I want to talk about one of the powerful contrasts we experienced.

Throughout our days in the north, there was little sense of the struggle between Israelis and

Palestinians. They lived as neighbors, without hostility, without violence.

When we moved south, to Jerusalem, it was as if we had traveled to another country. The military was clearly evident. Young Israeli soldiers, men and women, were everywhere. Fully armed, waiting on corners to catch a bus, on guard at check points, laughing and talking with each other on their way home from "work" at the end of the day.

Also evident were the settlements, the Israeli-built cities intruding onto Palestinian land in clear and flagrant violation of international law. The largest settlement we passed was a city of 50,000 Israelis, a place set on a hill and visible for miles away, a complete city with homes, schools, retail, etc. The Palestinian people are helpless to prevent such encroachment; their only recourse is the largely indifferent international community, including the United States. While we were there, we saw construction underway for still another illegal Israeli settlement, planned for 30,000 people.

It is hard not to come away from the experience sympathetic to the Palestinians. The economic stranglehold that Israel has on the Palestinians is seen in the unjust "immigration" laws that deny property rights, safe passage, and employment that continues imprisonment and oppression, often for no reason other than that of nationality. We would condemn such actions in this country as racism.

The Palestinians are not without blame. They too play a part in the ongoing violence. Suicide bombings

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are terrible acts, with the greatest cost paid by innocent civilians. Our failure as a world community to insure Israel's security in a tense and untrusting region—as well as to uphold the rights of the neighboring Arab countries—insures that violence will continue on both sides.

One cannot help but wonder what lessons were learned from the horrors of the Holocaust — and the years of anti-semitism that led up to it. We seem to be repeating history rather than learning from it. The laws governing who must live where, who can work, who is allowed to be on the streets and when, people illegally removed from their homes and land and isolated within walls—all this is part of the tragic irony of history. It becomes even more apparent when one learns that the majority of those working on the walls are Palestinians. They are desperate to earn money to support their families, even at the cost of their own “imprisonment.”

The situation, dire though it is, is not without hope. There are groups of Palestinians and Israelis working together to build peace. There are small inroads being made. Our press however rarely provides us with such views. Pro-Israeli, we rarely read a story that provides the Palestinian perspective, their loss of life, property or freedom.

On the last night of the trip, one of the retreatants shared that one of her most valued learnings was the realization that the stereotype of Palestinians she had brought with her to Israel was that all Palestinians were terrorists. This, she shared happily, was convincingly contradicted by her experience of the wonderful and gentle Palestinians whom she had met and come to know.

An Amazing Story of Peacemaking

Peace will be possible only when we can begin to imagine it. We have to begin to imagine both sides as wanting peace, both sides as peacemakers. A recent incident, reported in European papers, and picked up by *USA Today*, nurtures this imagination.

“The vital organs of a Palestinian boy mistakenly killed by the Israel Defense Forces last week have been transplanted into the bodies of six Israelis, after the boy's family donated his organs ‘for the sake of peace between peoples,’ Israel Radio reported.

“Ahmed al-Khatib, 12, was fatally shot during clashes in Jenin last week, when Israeli troops mistook the toy gun he carried for a real rifle.

“Three Israeli girls . . . underwent surgery Sunday to receive Al-Khatib's lungs, heart and liver. Twelve-year-old Samah Gadban had been waiting for a heart for five years when doctors called her family late Saturday and told them of the Al-Khatib donation. ‘This morning, I did not know anything about the boy. I only knew that the doctors said they had a heart,’ said Samah's father, Riad. ‘I don't know what to say. It is such a gesture of love . . . I would like for [the family] to think that my daughter is their daughter.’

“The boy's liver was divided in two and given to a 6-month-old baby and a 56-year-old woman; his kidneys were given to a 5-year-old boy; and his lungs were given to a 5-year-old boy and a 4-year-old girl,” the radio said. Dr. Tzvi Ben-Yishai, spokesman for Rambam Medical Center in Haifa, where Al-Khatib had been treated, said the boy's parents decided to donate his organs ‘to bring hearts closer and bring peace closer.’

“I don't mind seeing the organs in an Israeli or a Palestinian. In our religion, God allows us to give organs to another person and it doesn't matter who the person is,” said Jamal al-Khatib, the boy's father, who added that he hoped the donations would send a message of peace to Israelis and Palestinians.

“I had an older brother who suffered from kidney failure,” he told Channel 2, “and there were no transplants available. When the doctor told me that my boy was clinically dead, I remembered my brother.”

Acts such as these feed our imaginations and enable us to believe that in this land we call Holy, there is still the possibility for peace. —Pat Kozak, CSJ

Israeli, Palestinian, North American, European, and South African Speakers Agree

The Occupation of Palestine: Immoral, Illegal, Unnecessary

Just as the Holy Land tour group was returning, Brian Fry joined with the coordinator of the Interfaith Council for Peace in the Middle East to participate in Sabeel's (means “the path” in Arabic) conference in Toronto, Canada: “A Call for Morally Responsible Investment: A Nonviolent Response to the Israeli Occupation”. Major points from that conference are shared below

Why Divest From the Occupation? Why Now?

Two of the first speakers outlined why **today** is the time for the international civil society to take financial action to bring about the end of a brutal occupation that has lasted 39 years. Rev. Naim Ateek, a Palestinian, is an Episcopal bishop and director of Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem. Stav Adivi, is an Israeli human rights activist, veteran of more than 20 years with the Israeli Defense Forces, and a high-ranking “refusnik”.

Both speakers outlined the “silencers” which have inhibited not only Israelis, but well-meaning people around the world from acting against a severe and systematic violation of human rights in defiance of international law and United Nations resolutions:

- Fear of being accused of anti-Semitism.
- The tragedy of the Holocaust creates reluctance to criticize current atrocities perpetrated by Israel, in deference to past victim status of Jews.
- Interpretations of parts of the Bible in support of “end times” apocalypse theories which are supposed to occur when Israel dominates a large section of the middle east—referred to as “Christian Zionism”.
- Media, particularly in America, presents a distorted view based almost entirely on the Israeli/Zionist narrative to the exclusion of the Palestinian narrative.
- The declaration that the situation is “too complex”, implying that there is no right or wrong to be discerned and that it is beyond ordinary people's ability to understand or act.
- Believing that the powers causing the occupation are too strong and the people are too weak and powerless...there is nothing that we can do, even if it is an unjust and immoral situation.

Stav's comments as a former Israeli military commander were compelling, as he explained why he opposed sanctions, divestment, and boycott actions until just one year ago. He then addressed each of those arguments, one's he himself had made, to show why he now feels strongly that it is the right time and strategy to apply **targeted** financial pressure on Israel to end the occupation. The emphasis on **targeted** actions was to make it clear to Israel and the world that the problem to be addressed is **not** the existence of Israel itself. Rather, the actions should aim at corporations, government aid, and financial arrangements that directly support the illegal occupation and confiscation of Palestinian territory. Calling it “foolish,” he argued that the continuation of the occupation, far from protecting the security of Israel, in fact works to destroy its long-term survival and its acceptance by the world community of nations.

Occupation is Illegal under International Law

Law professor Michael Mandel provided a rapid and thorough explanation of numerous legal precedents which are violated **both** by the continuation of the occupation itself, and by the particular methods by which the occupation is enforced. Most of these laws stem from the Geneva Conventions on war developed following World War II, the United Nations Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Even individual nations like the U.S., Canada, and Israel itself have laws (though ignored), which would make support of the occupation illegal.

Sometimes legal concerns are raised to inhibit organizations from engaging in boycotts. Professor Mandel clarified that boycott and divestment actions by

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Did you know? Since the 1960's, the United States has used its **veto power** as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council more than all of the other members combined.

Nearly all of those vetoes were exercised on behalf of two countries:

1. To protect the former white-dominated government of the Republic of South Africa from nearly unanimous United Nations resolutions against its apartheid policies, and
2. To support Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in defiance of overwhelming UN votes to declare the occupation illegal under international law.