

Israeli anarchism

Statist dilemmas and the dynamics of joint struggle

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ABSTRACT

This article examines anarchist activities and positions in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and addresses some under-theorised dilemmas that they raise around joint struggle and active solidarity with national liberation struggles. The first part of the article begins with a critique of the scant anarchist polemical writing on Palestine/Israel, which reveals a pervasive reliance on ‘old-school’ anarchist formulations and a lack of attention to actual struggles on the ground. At the root of these difficulties, I argue, lies the inadequacy of traditional anarchist critiques of nationalism for addressing what seems to be the overriding dilemma in the present context – the question of statehood for a stateless people. As a response, I examine four reasons why anarchists can, in fact, support the statist independence claims of Palestinians and, by extension, of other peoples under occupation. The second part of the article analyses three threads of intervention present in the activities of anarchists and their allies in Israel/Palestine – linking issues, direct action and grassroots peacemaking. The goal here is to examine how the global agendas of contemporary anarchist politics receive a unique local articulation within the context of a joint struggle, and to expose the insights afforded by the experience of Israeli anarchists to social struggles elsewhere.

Issue 13:2 of this journal featured Aaron Lakoff’s piece ‘Israeli Anarchism – Being Young, Queer, and Radical in the Promised Land’, an interview conducted in February 2005 with Yossi Bar-Tal of the Alternative Information Centre, who is also active in various Israeli anti-authoritarian initiatives such as Anarchists Against the Wall and Black Laundry (Lakoff 2005). While informative in its portrayal of the activities and approaches taken by anarchists in Israel/Palestine,¹ the interview’s brevity and inevitably first-person, conversational frame still leaves a good deal of room for a more analysis-driven approach to anarchist activism in the region, and for engagement with some theoretical issues that arise from the special situation that activists face in this context.

ANARCHIST STUDIES

The purpose of this article, then, is to examine anarchist responses to the conflict in Palestine/Israel through two lines of inquiry: theoretical and empirical. The first regards anarchist attitudes to national liberation and to solidarity with the non-anarchist agendas of peoples struggling against occupation. Here, the primary issue is the apparent contradiction created by the anarchist commitment to support the ongoing struggles of oppressed constituencies on the latter's own terms – which in the case of Palestinian liberation would inevitably entail support for the creation of a Palestinian state. This would seem to contradict both anarchism's anti-statist positions and its objections to nationalism. In addressing these dilemmas, I begin with a critique of existing anarchist literature on Israel/Palestine, and briefly review the anarchist critique of nationalism and the traditional distinction between the 'nation' and the 'folk'. I go on to argue that there are at least four separate reasons why anarchists can in fact support the Palestinian struggle despite its statist implications.

The second, empirical line of inquiry regards the ongoing anarchist activities in Palestine/Israel. Here, rather than engaging in a merely descriptive exercise, an attempt is made to offer an analytical framework which situates these activities within the context of three threads that characterise the contemporary anarchist movement on a more global scale. These are (a) the linking, in practice and theory, of different campaigning issues and axes of social antagonism through an overarching agenda of struggle against domination and hierarchy; (b) the ethos of direct action and civil disobedience which emphasises unmediated confrontation with social injustices and community self-empowerment; and (c) the construction of alternative modes of social organisation and interaction which have both practical value (in contributing directly to the creation of a different society) and educational/propaganda value (in displaying and exemplifying the validity and practicability of anarchist visions). In our case, this means the extension of the constructive logic of direct action to efforts at grassroots peacemaking. The discussion, through concrete examples, of each of these threads has two goals. First, to trace the way in which the emergent global framework of contemporary anarchism is reflected and receives unique articulation in the Israeli/Palestinian setting; and second, to point to a number of anarchist issues and dilemmas – e.g. non-paternalism, violence and burn-out – which activity in the region throws into especially sharp relief, and whose discussion contributes to broader anarchist debates.

UNEXPECTED COMPLICATIONS

With the conflict in Palestine/Israel so high on the public agenda, and with significant domestic and international anarchist involvement in Palestine solidarity campaigns, it is surprising that the scant polemical anarchist

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contributions on the topic remain, at their best, irrelevant to the concrete experiences and dilemmas of movements in the region, and, at their worst, depart from anarchism all together. Thus the American Platformist Wayne Price (2002) descends into very crude terms when proclaiming:

In the smoke and blood of Israel/Palestine these days, one point should be clear, that Israel is the oppressor and the Palestinian Arabs are the oppressed. Therefore anarchists, and all decent people, should be on the side of the Palestinians. Criticisms of their leaderships or their methods of fighting are all secondary; so is recognition that the Israeli Jews are also people and also have certain collective rights. The first step, always, is to stand with the oppressed as they fight for their freedom.

Asking all decent people to see someone else's humanity and collective rights as secondary to anything – whatever this is, this is not anarchism. Where does Price's side-taking leave the distinction between the Israeli government and Israeli citizens, or the expectation of solidarity with Israelis who struggle against the occupation and social injustice? These Israelis are certainly not taking action because they are 'siding with the Palestinians', but more likely out of a sense of injustice, responsibility and solidarity. For the anarchists among them, it is also clearly a struggle taken from the perspective of self-liberation from a militaristic, racist, sexist and otherwise unequal society. Price's complete indifference to those who consciously intervene against the occupation and in multiple social conflicts within Israeli society rests on vast generalisations about how 'blind nationalism leads each nation see itself and the other as a bloc'. However, people who live inside a conflict can hardly be expected to display such naïve attitudes – the author is only projecting his own, outsider's, black-and-white vision onto the alleged mindsets of the subjects, and the side tagged as black is subject to crass and dehumanising language (see also Hobson, Price & Quest 2001). This has become a widespread phenomenon in the discourse of the European and American Palestine-solidarity movement and the broader Left, representing what anarchist critics have recently pointed to as a typically Leftist form of Judeophobia or anti-Semitism (Austrian and Goldman 2003, Michaels 2004, Shot by both sides 2005).

Meanwhile, Price is so confident about having insight into the just and appropriate resolution that he permits himself to issue elaborate programs and demands, down to the finer details: unilateral Israeli withdrawal to 1967 lines, a Palestinian state and the right of return, ending up in 'some sort of 'secular-democratic' or "binational" communal federation' with 'some sort of self-managed non-capitalist economy'. Meanwhile 'we must support the resistance of the Palestinian people. They have the right to self-determination, that is, to choose their leaders, their programs, and their methods of struggle, whatever we think'.

A blank cheque, then, to suicide bombings and any present or future Palestinian elite. The statement's imperative tone also begs the question. To whom, precisely, are Price's 'we' supposed to be issuing such elaborate demands? To the Israeli state, backed perhaps by the potent threat of embassy occupations and boycotts on academics, oranges and software? Or maybe to the international community, or to the American state for that matter? In all cases this would be a 'politics of demand' which extends undue recognition and legitimation to state power through the act of demand itself – an approach far removed from central anarchist strategies.

Myopia towards what is happening on the ground is also a problem for Ryan Chiang McCarthy (2002). Though taking issue with Price's failure to distinguish between peoples and their rulers, McCarthy's call for solidarity with libertarian forces on the ground is unfortunately extended only to struggles which fall within his prejudiced gaze: 'autonomous labour movements of Palestinian and Israeli workers ... A workers' movement that bypasses the narrow lines of struggle ... and fights for the unmediated demands of workers'. Besides being entirely detached from reality – the prospects for autonomous labour movements are as bleak in Israel/Palestine as they are in the rest of the developed world – such a workerist fetish is also directly harmful. It reproduces the invisibility of the many important struggles in Palestine/Israel that do not revolve around work, and in which most anarchists happen to be participating (see below). Meanwhile, stubborn class reductionism demarcates no less narrow lines of struggle than the ones which it criticises, and does the protagonists violence by forcing their actions into artificial frameworks. Thus Palestinians and Israelis are first and foremost 'workers ... manipulated by their rulers to massacre one another'; army refusal is a 'sparkling [act] of class solidarity carried out across national lines' (most refuseniks are middle-class, and self-declared Zionists to boot); while 'the nationalist poison ... drives Palestinian proletarian youth to destroy themselves and Israeli fellow workers in suicide bombings'. This may still be anarchism, but it is of a fossilised variety that adheres to the antiquated formulas of class struggle, with little or no attention to the actual articulation of the struggle by those who are engaged in it.

The root of the problem displayed by these writings is that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict introduces complexities that are not easily addressed from a traditional anarchist standpoint. The tension between anarchists' anti-imperialist commitments on the one hand, and their traditionally wholesale rebuttal of the state and nationalism on the other, would seem to leave them at an impasse regarding the national liberation struggles of occupied peoples. The lack of fresh thinking on the issue creates a position from which, it would seem, one can only fall back on the one-size-fits-all formulae of class struggle, or otherwise disengage from the debate altogether. In order to understand why this is so, let me now look at anarchist critiques of nationalism.

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ANARCHISM AND NATIONALISM

Prevalent in anarchist literature is an epistemological distinction between the artificial *nationalism* constructed by the state on the one hand, and, on the other, the feeling of belonging to one's *folk* or people – a natural grouping arising from shared ethnic, linguistic and/or cultural characteristics. Michael Bakunin (1871: 324) argued that the fatherland ('patria') represents a 'manner of living and feeling' – that is, a local culture – which is 'always an incontestable result of a long historic development'. As such, the deep love of fatherland among the 'common people ... is a natural, real love'. While Bakunin (and many other anarchists) by no means rejected the feeling of common belonging, most typically to a land, it was this feeling's corruption under statist institutions that they rejected as nationalism – a primary loyalty to one's *nation-state*. Such nationalism was and is seen as a reactionary ideological device intended to create a false unity of identity and interest between antagonistic elements within a single society, pitting the oppressed working classes of one country against those of another, and averting their attention from the need for struggle against their oppressors along internationalist lines. Thus for Bakunin 'political patriotism, or love of the State, is not the faithful expression' of the common people's love for the fatherland, but rather an expression 'distorted by means of false abstraction, always for the benefit of an exploiting minority' (*ibid.*).

The most elaborate development of this theme was made by Gustav Landauer, who saw in the folk an organic entity based on the uniquely shared spirit (*Geist*) – feelings, ideals, values, language, and beliefs – that unifies individuals into a community. For Landauer, the folk spirit is the basis for community; it existed before the state and would return to prominence in a free society. The presence of the state is what prevents this spirit from realising itself as 'an equality of individuals – a feeling and reality – which is brought about in free spirit to unity and union' (Landauer 1907). Landauer also considered it possible to have several identities – he saw himself as a human being, a Jew, a German and a *southern* German. Elsewhere (1973/1910: 263) he wrote,

I am happy about every imponderable and ineffable thing that brings about exclusive bonds, unities, and also differentiations within humanity. If I want to transform patriotism then I do not proceed in the slightest against the fine fact of the nation ... but against the mixing up of the nation and the state, against the confusion of differentiation and opposition.

Rudolf Rocker adopted Landauer's distinction in his *Nationalism and Culture*, where a folk is defined as 'the natural result of social union, a mutual association of men brought about by a certain similarity of external conditions of living,

a common language, and special characteristics due to climate and geographic environment' (Rocker 1937: 200-1). However, Rocker clarifies that it is only possible to speak of the folk, as an entity, in terms that are location- and time-specific. This is because, over time, 'cultural reconstructions and social stimulation always occur when different peoples and races come into closer union. Every new culture is begun by such a fusion of different folk elements and takes its special shape from this' (346). What Rocker calls the 'nation', on the other hand, is the essentialist idea of a unified community of interest, spirit or race. This he sees as a creation of the state. Thus, like Landauer and Bakunin, it was the primary loyalty to one's nation state that Rocker condemned as 'nationalism'. At the same time, the traditional anarchist position expected that, unencumbered by the state, a space would be open for the self-determination and mutually-fertilising development of local folk cultures.

These attitudes to nationalism, however, had as their primary reference point the European nationalisms associated with existing states. The issue of nationalism in the national liberation struggles of stateless peoples received far less attention. Kropotkin, for example, saw national liberation movements positively, arguing the removal of foreign domination was a precondition to the workers' realising their social consciousness (Grauer 1994). However, what may be a necessary condition is by no means a sufficient one, and it could equally be argued that national liberation efforts can only end up creating new state-sponsored nationalisms.

This tension comes very strongly to the fore in the case of Israel/Palestine. The overwhelming majority of Palestinians want a state of their own alongside Israel. But how can anarchists who support the Palestinian struggle reconcile this with their anti-statist principles? How can they support the creation of yet another state in the name of 'national liberation', which is the explicit or implicit agenda of almost all Palestinians? What is at work here is anarchists' critique that in their national liberation efforts, Palestinians are bowing to the idea that the state is a desirable institution, and lending themselves to nationalist illusions fostered by Palestinian elites, who will only become the source of their future oppression. This is the logic animating McCarthy's stance, as well as that of the British syndicalists of the Solidarity Federation, who state that 'we support the fight of the Palestinian people ... [and] stand with those Israelis who protest against the racist government ... What we cannot do is support the creation of yet another state in the name of 'national liberation' (Solidarity Federation 2002).

But there are two problems with such an attitude. First, it invites the charge of paternalism, whereby anarchists are pretending to be better than Palestinians at discerning their 'real interests', while jettisoning the need for solidarity to happen on the terms articulated by the oppressed. Second, and more importantly, it leaves anarchists with nothing but empty declarations to the effect that that 'we stand with and support all those who are being

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oppressed by those who have the power to do so' (ibid.); or that 'it is not about forcing the Israeli state to respect the rights of Palestinians, nor supporting the formation of a new Palestinian state. Rather it is a question of starting to practice desertion, refusal, sabotage, attack, destruction against every constituted authority, all power, every state' (Friends of Al-Halladj 2002). Again, while such sentiments are certainly in tune with longer-term anarchist aspirations, they also consign anarchists to a position of irrelevance in the present tense. On the one hand, anarchists could certainly agree that the establishment of a capitalist Palestinian state through negotiations among existing and would-be governments would only mean the 'submission of the Intifada to a comprador Palestinian leadership that will serve Israel', and that neoliberal globalisation, and initiatives for regional trade cooperation such as the Mediterranean free trade zone, are demarcating a capitalist trajectory for the region which will only increase economic hardship and social gaps, giving no solution to the refugee problem (Anarchist Communist Initiative 2005). On the other hand, by disengaging from concrete Palestinian demands for a state, such anarchists are left with nothing to propose except 'an entirely different way of life and equality for all the inhabitants of the region ... a classless anarchist-communist society' (ibid.). This is all well and good, but what happens in the meantime?

SUPPORTING STATEHOOD?

While anarchists surely can do something more specific in solidarity with Palestinians than just saying that 'we need a revolution', any such action would appear hopelessly contaminated with a statist agenda. The fact that anarchists nevertheless engage in on-the-ground actions of solidarity with Palestinian communities and groups requires us to grip this particular bull by its horns. Here, I believe there are at least four coherent ways in which anarchists can deal with the dilemma of support for a Palestinian state.

The first and most straightforward response is to acknowledge that there is indeed a contradiction here, but to insist that in a liminal, imperfect situation, solidarity is still worthwhile even if it comes at the price of inconsistency. Endorsement of Palestinian statehood by anarchists can be seen as a pragmatic position based on anti-imperialist commitments or even basic humanitarian concern. It does nobody any good to effectively say to the Palestinians, 'sorry, we'll let you remain non-citizens of a brutal occupation until after we're done abolishing capitalism'. For this reason, one can see some kind of representative statehood for the Palestinians as the only short term solution, however imperfect, to their current oppression. This is attached to a view in which solidarity is 'not about supporting those who share your precise politics. It's about supporting those who struggle against injustice – even if their assumptions, methods, politics, and goals differ from our own' (ISM Canada 2004). With

this type of response, anarchists recognise an unresolved tension in their politics, but they express a specific value judgement whereby one's anti-imperialist or humanitarian commitments are seen to 'trump' an otherwise fully uncompromising anti-statism.

A point to be emphasised here is that states are consistently hostile to stateless peoples (and nomads). The Jews in pre-Second World War Europe and the Palestinians are two among many examples of oppressed stateless peoples in the modern era. Note that while many Jews were citizens (often second-class citizens) of European countries at the beginning of the twentieth century, an important precondition for the Holocaust was the deprivation of Jews' citizenships, rendering them stateless.

A second and separate response is to say that there is actually no contradiction at all in anarchists' support for the establishment of a Palestinian state. This is for the simple reason that Palestinians are *already* living under a state – Israel – and that the formation of a new Palestinian state creates only a quantitative change, not a qualitative one. Anarchists object to the state as a general scheme of social relations – not to this or the other state, but to the principle behind them all. It is a misunderstanding to reduce this objection to quantitative terms; the number of states in the world adds or subtracts nothing from anarchists' assessment of how closely the world corresponds to their ideals. Having one single world state, for example, would be as problematic for anarchists as the present situation (if not more so), although the process of creating it would have abolished some 190 states. So from a purely anti-statist anarchist perspective, for Palestinians to live under a Palestinian state rather than an Israeli state would be, at worst, just as objectionable. In such a situation, the pragmatic considerations mentioned in the first response above are no longer viewed as a trade-off, but as an entirely positive development. If the choice is between an Israeli or a Palestinian state controlling the West Bank and Gaza, while the basic objectionable social relations remain static, then clearly the latter option is purely preferable. A future Palestinian state, despite maintaining the basic scheme of statist and capitalist social relations, and no matter how corrupt or pseudo-democratic, would in any event be less brutal than the Israeli state currently is towards the Palestinian population. Control by a civilian authority, though far worse than anarchy, is still far better than military occupation with its relentless humiliation and control over every aspect of Palestinians' everyday lives.

A third response, informed by Kropotkin's view mentioned above, is to say that anarchists can support a Palestinian state as a strategic choice, a desirable stage in a longer-term struggle. No-one can sincerely expect that the situation in Israel/Palestine will move from the present one to anarchy in one abrupt step. Hence, the establishment of a Palestinian state through a peace treaty with the Israeli state, although far from a 'solution', may turn out to be a positive development on the way to more thoroughgoing social change. The

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reduction of everyday violence on both sides could do a great deal to open up more political space for economic, feminist and environmental social struggles, and would thus constitute a positive development from a strategic point of view. In the region at present, all liberatory agendas are marginalised by the ongoing conflict. While the fighting continues, it is very difficult to engage with people on other social issues since the conflict silences them out. Thus, the establishment of a Palestinian state would form a bridgehead towards the flowering of other myriad social struggles, in Israel and in whatever enclavopolity emerges under the Palestinian ruling elite. For anarchists, such a process could be a significant step forward in a longer-term strategy for the destruction of the Israeli, Palestinian, and all other states along with capitalism, patriarchy and so on.

A fourth response would be to alter the terms of discussion altogether, by arguing that whether or not anarchists support a Palestinian state is a moot point, and thus leads to a false debate. What exactly are anarchists supposed to do with their 'support'? If the debate is to resolve itself in a meaningful direction, then the ultimate question is whether anarchists can and should *take action* in support of a Palestinian state. But what could such action possibly be, short of declarations, petitions, demonstrations, and other elements of the 'politics of demand' that anarchists seek to transcend? One can hardly establish a state through anarchist direct action, and the politicians who actually get to decide whether or not a Palestinian state is finally established are not exactly asking anarchists their opinion. Seen in this light, debates about whether anarchists should give their short-term 'support' to a Palestinian state sound increasingly ridiculous, since the only merit of such discussion would be to come up with a common platform.

From such a point of view, anarchists may take action in solidarity with Palestinians (as well as Tibetans, West Papuans and Sahrawis for that matter) *without reference* to the question of statehood. The everyday acts of resistance that anarchists join and defend in Palestine and Israel are immediate steps to help preserve people's livelihoods and dignity, which are in no way necessarily connected to a statist project. It is doubtful whether the Palestinians whom anarchists join in removing a roadblock, or in harvesting their olives while threatened by settlers, are doing so while consciously seeing it as a step towards statehood. The point is that, once viewed from a longer-term strategic perspective, anarchists' actions have worthwhile implications whether or not they are attached to a statist agenda of independence.

With this approach in mind, it would seem that the most fruitful avenue for further inquiry would be to analyse what anarchists and their allies are already doing on the ground. This leads us to the second part of the article. Now the key question becomes: Which aspects of anarchist involvement in the struggles in Palestine/Israel point most clearly towards *relevant* anarchist strategies and approaches?

LINKING ISSUES

In looking at the landscape of struggle in Palestine/Israel, one should be aware that the anarchist presence on the ground is scarce and unevenly distributed.² On a generous estimation, there are up to three hundred people in Israel who are politically active and who would not mind calling themselves anarchists – most of them Jewish women and men between the ages of 16-35. Among Palestinians there are a few kindred souls and many allies, but no active anarchist movement. To this is added the presence of some anarchists in international solidarity efforts on the ground, primarily through the Palestinian-led International Solidarity Movement (ISM). Despite their small numbers, however, anarchists and their immediate allies have had a significant impact. In analysing the picture of anarchist activities in Israel/Palestine, three interwoven threads of intervention stand out, which point to broader features of global anarchist politics while raising some issues that have received less attention outside the region. The first of these is linking issues.

Perhaps the most obvious strength of contemporary anarchism is its multi-issue platform, a conscious agenda of integrating diverse struggles. In genealogical terms, this platform derives from the rootedness of the contemporary movement in the intersection of ecological, feminist, anti-war and anti-neoliberal movements. In theoretical terms, this intersection is grounded in anarchists' stress on domination and hierarchy as the basis of multiple injustices. By creating networks that integrate the different movements and constituencies in which they are active, anarchists can facilitate recognition and mutual aid among struggles.

This strand is clearly present in the activities of anarchist and other radical movements in Israel/Palestine, where it comes into unique local configurations. As a result of their activity, more profound and aware connections are being made between the occupation, the widening social gaps between rich and poor, the exploitation of foreign and domestic workers, the status of women, racism and ethnic discrimination, homophobia, pollution and consumerism.

One example of linking the struggle against the occupation to a different liberatory agenda is the activity of Kvisa Shchora (Black Laundry) – a direct action group of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and others against the occupation and for social justice. It was created for the Pride Day parade in Tel-Aviv in 2001, a few months after the second Intifada began. Jamming the by-now depoliticised and commercialised celebration, about 250 radical queers in black joined the march under the banner 'No Pride in the Occupation'. Since then, the group has undertaken actions and outreach with a strongly anti-authoritarian orientation, which stresses the connection between different forms of oppression, which 'feeds on the same racism, the same chauvinism, and the same militarism that uphold the oppression and

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occupation of the Palestinian people ... In a military society there is no place for the different and weak; lesbians, Gay men, drag queens, transsexuals, foreign workers, women, Mizrahi Israelis, Arabs, Palestinians, the poor, the disabled and others' (Black Laundry 2001). In recent years the radical queer community in Israel has grown in numbers and has become more strongly networked. Free public queer parties (the Queer'hana), often coinciding with the 'official' Pride Day events, added to public visibility, and connections with queer anarchists worldwide were strengthened through the organising drive towards the ninth Queeruption – a free, Do-It-Yourself radical queer gathering in summer 2006 (see www.queeruption.org/q2006/).

The Israeli radical queer network's multi-issue politics places it in a dual role: on the one hand promoting solidarity with Palestinians, as well as anti-capitalism and antagonistic politics, in the mainstream LGBT community; and on the other hand stressing queer liberation in the movement against the occupation. According to one member, while many activists did not initially understand the significance of queers demonstrating as queers against the occupation, 'after many actions and discussions our visibility is now accepted and welcome. This, I can't really say about our Palestinian partners, so in the territories we usually go back to the closet' (Ayalon 2004). The latter reality has also led the queer anarchists to make contacts and offer solidarity with Palestinian LGBTs, who find even less acceptance in their society than Israeli queers do.

Another interesting relationship to be examined in this context is that between animal liberation groups and anarchist struggles. While cross-participation in the two movements remains relatively small globally, the two movements clearly have shared attributes (a confrontational stance, use of direct action, extreme decentralisation, roots in the punk subculture). More recently, animal liberation groups such as SHAC have begun to target the corporate infrastructure of animal testing. While remaining a tactical choice, this also implies a deeper analysis of the connection between animal exploitation and other forms of domination – a direction explored in writing, with increasing intensity, in recent years (Dominick 1995, Anonymous10 1999, homefries 2004). Recent trends in state repression, including the narrowing of demonstration rights and legislation against economic sabotage, are beginning to generate meaningful solidarity and cooperation between the two movements, and individual activists from the animal rights movement have recently been making deliberate contacts with anarchists, a process which is beginning to create interesting cross-fertilisations.

In Israel, the small size of the radical scene has created a different reality whereby there is actually a very large overlap between the two movements. The most outstanding example is Ma'avak Ehad (One Struggle), an affinity group combining explicit anarchism and an animal liberation agenda, whose members are also very active in anti-occupation struggles. Again this combi-

nation of agendas is there with the explicit goal of ‘highlighting the connection between all different forms of oppression, and hence also of the various struggles against them’ (One Struggle 2002). Ma’avak Ehad’s explicit anti-capitalist and ecological agenda also adds a rare radical critique of the relationship between capitalism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the latter is well researched on the economic level (see e.g. Nitzan and Bichler 2002), awareness of these connections is far from widespread in public discourse, going only as far as political rhetoric like ‘money for social services, not for the settlements!’. The group’s emphasis on animal liberation again creates a critical bridge: calling attention to animal rights within peace and social justice movements, but also encouraging resistance to the occupation in the vegetarian and vegan community. By operating Food Not Bombs stalls, the group creates meaningful connections between poverty, militarism and animal exploitation, which are highly poignant in an Israeli context. In addition, members of this group were some of the founders of Anarchists Against the Wall.

A third example in this thread is New Profile, a feminist organization that challenges Israel’s militarised social order. Its activities fall into two categories. First, it does educational work around the connections between militarism in Israeli society and patriarchy, inequalities and social violence, and acts to ‘disseminate and realize feminist-democratic principles in Israeli education by changing a system that promotes unquestioning obedience and glorification of military service’ (Aviram 2003). Activities in this area include debates in schools that promote critical, non-hierarchical thinking, and workshops on consensus, conflict resolution and democratic process for groups. In its second role, New Profile is the most radical among the four Israeli refusenik groups, and the one through which anarchists refusing military service predominantly organise. The group campaigns for the right to conscientious objection, and its website has full guides to refusal for both men and women. It operates a network of support ‘buddies’ for refuseniks before, during and after jail, arranges seminars for youth who are still dwelling on whether or not to refuse or evade service, and campaigns to support and recognise the struggle of women refuseniks. The group’s radical feminist/anti-militarist stance, besides being an important message to society, also creates a meaningful bridge between feminists and the refusenik movement, critical in challenging the core narratives to which most refuseniks – predominantly mainstream left-Zionist males – continue to adhere.

DIRECT ACTION

A second thread of intervention in Palestine/Israel in which global trends are refracted is civil disobedience and direct action, in particular within the context of the anti-occupation struggles since the beginning of the second Intifada. Such tactics are clearly central to the anarchist political repertoire,

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with their emphasis on unmediated action to change reality – be it to destroy and prevent, or to create and enable – rather than appealing to an external agent to wield power on one's behalf.

The most prominent site of anarchist involvement in civil disobedience and direct action in Israel/Palestine is the everyday support for Palestinian non-violent resistance. The development of this thread can be quite neatly divided into two periods. The first was from summer 2001 to spring 2003, when the central organ for direct action solidarity activities was the International Solidarity Movement, a Palestinian-led coordination through which European and North-American activists, many of them anti-capitalists, arrived in the occupied territories to accompany non-violent actions (Sandercock et. al 2004). The ISM became active before the height of the Israeli state's invasions and attacks on Palestinian population centres. Its actions included forming human chains to block soldiers from interfering while Palestinians tore down military roadblocks, held mass demonstrations, or collectively broke curfews to go to school or harvest olives or play soccer. Interestingly, organisers estimate that between a quarter and a third of ISM volunteers have been Jewish. As the violence escalated, the ISM was driven to focus more and more on accompaniment and human-shielding while at the same time drawing world attention to the repression of Palestinians through the 'live' presence of international witnesses. During the spring 2002 invasions, at a time where more proactive involvement would inevitably be suppressed with deadly force, ISM activists stayed in Palestinian homes facing demolition, rode with ambulances, escorted municipal workers to fix infrastructure, and delivered food and medicine to besieged communities. In what was the most widely-broadcast drama of this phase, internationals were holed-up for weeks in the besieged Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem with residents, clergymen and armed militants. For a while, what internationals did was dictated by when, where, and how the Israeli army would attack. As the violence ebbed, however, the emphasis on defensive operations diminished and the ISM turned proactive again, with demonstrations to break curfews and an international day of action in summer 2002.

Now while the ISM and similar solidarity groups are not nominally anarchist, and include a large and divergent array of participants from a wide range of backgrounds, two clear connections to anarchism can nevertheless be made. First, in terms of the identity of participants, international solidarity activities in Palestine have seen a major and sustained presence of anarchists, who had earlier cut their teeth on anti-capitalist mobilisations and local grassroots organising in North America and Europe. Thus, these networks constitute the foremost vehicle for on-the-ground involvement of international anarchists in Palestine. Second, and more substantially, it may be argued that the main source of anarchist affinities with the ISM is that it prominently displays many of the hallmarks of anarchist political culture: the lack of formal membership,

comprehensive ‘policy’ or official leadership groups; a decentralised organising model based on autonomous affinity groups, spokescouncils and consensus decision-making; and a strategic focus on short-term campaigns and creative tactics that stress direct action and grassroots empowerment. These affinities are evinced by a statement from ISM Canada (*ibid.*) on the need to move ‘from an arrogant “saviour” model of activism, to a real “solidarity” model of activism’, whose emphasis on direct action contains many keywords of anarchist political language:

Solidarity means more than ‘charity’ work to ease our conscience. It must also do more than simply *witness* or *document* atrocities – though these tasks are also critical to our work. The ISM views solidarity as an imperative to *actively engage* in resistance to the Occupation, to take sides, to put our bodies on the line, and to use the relative privilege of our passports and, in some cases, colour – first and foremost, in ways that Palestinians actually request, but also in ways which help build trust and expand networks of mutual aid.

It should be emphasised, however, that these anarchist affinities are not the result of any direct influence on part of the Western anarchist movement. Rather, they are a point of convergence between anarchism and the endemic Palestinian tradition of popular resistance. Palestinians have a long-standing orientation towards civil disobedience and non-violent action, which has continued since the first Intifada – an uprising organised through popular committees and largely in detachment from the PLO leadership, and involving mass demonstrations, general strikes, tax refusal, boycotts of Israeli products, political graffiti and the establishment of underground schools and grassroots mutual aid projects.

Hence, the first point to be made about the particulars of anarchist involvement in direct action in Palestine relates to its strong display of anti-vanguardism. In all of these actions, anarchists and their allies have deliberately participated as followers and supporters rather than as equals. The ethos of the ISM and other solidarity groups stresses taking the lead from Palestinian community members or representatives, based on the principle that decision-making and control of actions should be in proportion to the degree to which one is affected by the potential outcome. As a result, ISMers have been careful to emphasise that ‘internationals cannot behave as if they are coming to teach Palestinians *anything* about “peace” or “non-violence” or “morality” or “democracy”, or anything else that many in the West typically (and arrogantly and mistakenly) view as the exclusive realm of Western activism and values’ (*ibid.*). Similarly, Yossi Bar-Tal has argued that ‘we’re not working in Palestine to educate ... We would never hand out leaflets in Arabic explaining what anarchism is and why you should join us, because this is not our way ... we’re not there to educate, because while they’re being occupied

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by our state we have no reason to come there and preach' (Lakoff 2005). The same logic has been applied to the ideas of disobedience and direct action. In such a setting, any attempt at a defining contribution in terms of direct action – say, by way of implanting tactics garnered from Western models – would strike anarchists as an arrogant intervention. So in this case the anarchist connection happens more in terms of support for existing forms of popular resistance towards which anarchists experience affinity, rather than in terms of anarchists importing their own politics into a new arena.

The spring of 2003 marked a clear period of transition for direct action in Israel/Palestine, with the centre of gravity for solidarity activities shifting from the ISM to Israeli initiatives. The reason for this shift was a profound crisis in the ISM, following a rapid succession of tragic events, which led to a lowering of its profile and created a vacuum that was filled by Anarchists Against the Wall, who began their organising in the same period.

Two factors contributed to the ebb of ISM activities. The first was the killing of two of its volunteers in Gaza. On 16 March, Rachel Corrie was crushed to death under an Israeli armoured bulldozer which she was trying to obstruct during a house demolition in Rafah. On 11 April another international, Tom Hurdall, was shot in the head by an Israeli sniper in the same area and went into coma, dying nine months later. While the killings raised international outcry, increased the ISM's profile and further highlighted the brutality of the occupation, they also underlined the immense risk accompanying solidarity activities and caused many activists to think twice about going to Palestine. The second factor was a concerted Israeli campaign to associate the ISM with terrorism, and subsequent clampdowns on the organisation. On the night of 27 March, during a period of curfew and military arrests in Jenin, a 23-year-old Palestinian named Shadi Sukiya arrived at the ISM office in Jenin, soaking wet and shivering, and was given a change of clothes, a hot drink and a blanket. Soon afterwards Israeli soldiers came in and arrested Sukiya, who they accused of being a senior member of the Islamic Jihad. The army also claimed that a pistol had been discovered in the office, but later retracted the allegation. On 25 April, a public memorial service for Rachel Corrie organised by the ISM was attended by two young British Muslims, Asif Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif. Five days later, the two carried out a suicide bombing at a restaurant in Tel-Aviv. Despite the fact that in both cases contact had been minimal and ISM volunteers had no idea about the identity of their guests, the Israeli government used these events as an excuse to publicly accuse the organisation of harbouring terrorists and proceeded to repress the organisation. On 9 May the army raided the ISM media office in Beit Sahour, seizing computer equipment, video tapes, CDs and files. Though unconfirmed, it is thought that among the materials seized was a comprehensive list of past and present ISM volunteers, including their addresses and passport numbers. This enabled the Israeli security apparatus to expand its 'blacklist' of

unwelcome internationals, resulting in an increase of deportations and denials of entry into Israel in subsequent months. Put together, these events placed the ISM in crisis and seriously reduced the flow of internationals into Palestine – although small numbers continue to arrive to this day.

Meanwhile, also in spring 2003, some Israelis who were cooperating on direct action with ISM affinity groups and with other internationals increasingly felt the need to give more visibility to their own resistance as Israelis, by creating an autonomous group working together with Palestinians and internationals. This was the same period in which the construction of the segregation barrier on the western part of the occupied West Bank began in earnest (the barrier is a network of fences with vehicle-barrier trenches (95%) and concrete walls (5%). For details see PENGON 2003, PLO-NAD 2006). After a few actions against the barrier in Israel and Palestine, a small group started to come together and build a trusted reputation as Israeli direct-action activists willing to struggle together with local Palestinians. In March 2003 the village of Mas'ha invited the group to build a protest camp on village land that was being confiscated for the Wall (96% of Mas'ha land was taken). The protest camp became a centre of struggle and information against the planned construction of the barrier in that area and in the whole West Bank. Over the four months of the camp more than a thousand internationals and Israelis came to learn about the situation and join the struggle. During the camp a direct-action group calling itself Anarchists Against the Wall was created. After the eviction of the Mas'ha camp in summer 2003 amid ninety arrests, the group continued to participate in many joint actions across the occupied territories. With about one hundred active participants overall, the group has been present at demonstrations and actions on a weekly basis in villages such as Salem, Anin, Biddu, Beit Awwa, Budrus, Dir Balut, Beit Surik and Beit Likia. In some of these actions, the Palestinian villagers and anarchists managed to tear down or cut through parts of the fence, or to break through gates along it. Since 2005, the group has mainly been active in the village of Bil'in, which has become a symbol of the joint struggle.

The appearance of Israelis taking direct action along with Palestinians has, over time, destabilised the unquestioned legitimacy of the barrier and impacted the public sensibilities in Israel to a degree which international activists could never have managed. This is not so much due to the type of actions – which are essentially the same – as to the identity of the participants. Such actions taken by Israelis are far more transgressive and provocative in the eyes of the Israeli public, which is not accustomed to seeing its own citizens put their bodies on the line in support of Palestinian rights. Grassroots Palestinian leaders are interested in furthering such cooperation in order to influence public opinion in Israel, and more especially because the presence of Israelis, they hope, will moderate the reactions of the soldiers. While the majority of the public certainly views Israeli anarchists as misguided, naïve

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youth at best and as traitors at worst, it is impossible to deny that their direct actions have had some impact on the discourse of wider Israeli society, especially around the barrier. Israeli-Palestinian cooperation in militant action is inherently powerful because it enacts a dramatic, 90-degree flip of perspective: the ‘horizontal’ imagery of conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is displaced by the ‘vertical’ one of struggle between people and government.

There are two further points to be made regarding the direct-action activities in Palestine/Israel surveyed above. The first regards the special intersection, in the current context, between direct action and questions of political violence. While recognising the legitimacy of organized, armed insurrection (though not of targeting civilians), the ISM and the Anarchists Against the Wall participate only in non-violent acts resistance by Palestinians. This has the goal of giving visibility to the non-violent aspects of Palestinian struggle, which in fact constitute the bulk of their activity against the occupation, and with which Western audiences can more easily identify. Now this position provides an interesting counterpoint to the debates around violence in European and North American anarchist circles. The endorsement of a ‘diversity of tactics’ places anarchists in a more comfortable position than strictly non-violent activists regarding the landscape of struggle in Palestine/Israel. Here, the non-violent aspect of direct action plays an entirely different role, since it takes place against the backdrop of a highly *violent* conflict, in which armed struggle is the norm rather than the exception. By engaging only in non-violent forms of action while not denouncing armed resistance, the ISM and the anarchists have, after their own fashion, also adopted a diversity of tactics position. Where supporters of a more strict, ideological version of non-violence (e.g. in the Gandhian tradition) might experience a deep conflict with such a position, Western anarchists who have distanced themselves from strict non-violence can more comfortably accept it – although in this case it is they who take on the non-violent option. In Palestine, then, anarchists have found themselves inhabiting the other side of the ‘diversity of tactics’ equation, counteracting the charge that this formula is merely a euphemism for violence (Lakey 2002) by showing that they too are committed to engage in purely non-violent actions under some conditions.

The second point to be made in this context regards the uncommon degree of state violence faced by the Israeli anarchists, and the resultant pervasiveness of post-traumatic stress and burn-out among their ranks. While obviously amounting to very little compared to the lethal brutality directed towards the Palestinian population, the frequency of Israeli anarchists’ experiences of state repression is certainly considerable in comparison to those of their European and North American counterparts. Exposure to tear-gas and baton blows has become a matter of weekly regularity, compounded by the use of sound grenades, rubber-coated metal bullets and even live ammunition. In one case an Israeli protester was shot in the thigh with a live bullet and almost died of

blood loss, while another was shot in the head by a rubber-coated metal bullet and was also in critical condition. In addition, there have been uncounted minor injuries sustained at the hands of soldiers and border police during anti-wall demonstrations. The army has also been using demonstrations in the West Bank as an opportunity to test novel 'less lethal' weapons such as pepperballs (a small transparent red plastic ball containing an extremely irritant powder) and the Tze'aka (Hebrew for 'scream') – a minute-long blast of deafening sound emanating from a vehicle-mounted device that causes nausea and imbalance (Rose 2006).

These experiences have led to widespread post-traumatic stress (PTS), a phenomenon which is only now beginning to be acknowledged and dealt with in anarchist circles internationally. In the wake of repression, numerous activists have experienced emotional symptoms of PTS, including anxiety, guilt, depression, irritability and feelings of alienation and isolation; cognitive symptoms such as disturbing thoughts, flashbacks and intrusive images, nightmares, panic attacks and hyper-vigilance; and physical effects including fatigue, elevated blood pressure, breathing and visual difficulties, menstrual changes and muscular tension. Unfortunately, until very recently the anarchists did not give any significant attention to these problems and failed to create a space for dealing with them. As a result of the accumulation of untreated stress, the initiative has seen high degrees of burn-out and withdrawal from activity, creating a lack of continuity in the group. Only a handful of the founding participants remain active today, while new and younger activists join in and soon experience the same difficulties.

The failure to address PTS and burn-out can be traced to the internal dynamics of the group: a short-term focus on organising the next demonstration, mirrored by a lack of more strategic discussion about the group's long-term goals and sustainability as a group; and (perhaps most disturbingly) an uncritical reproduction, among at least some of the activists, of a cultural ethos which emphasised personal sacrifice, resilience and toughness, creating widespread reluctance to surface the psychological effects of regular exposure to repression for fear of being considered 'weak'. The same short-termism has also been responsible for the unchecked development of informal hierarchies in the group, due to differences in experience, personal time and energy, and access to resources and networks. In the past months, however, some promising changes have been taking place. Two members of the British activist trauma group – a network of activists trained to treat post-traumatic stress who are raising awareness to the issue within the movement – arrived in the country with their Israeli partners and proceeded to set up a local group with the same goals (for details on the British group's work see www.activist-trauma.net/). While initially intended as a support network for the upcoming Queeruption events, the initiative was soon received with enthusiasm by a much broader range of activists including participants in Anarchists Against the Wall, who

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could for the first time name what they had been going through and feel safe to ask for support. Also recently, a discussion of the issues of leadership and power in the group has been initiated in earnest, with increased awareness of the need for re-distributing responsibilities, decentralising communication and sharing resources and skills. These developments may mark a new phase in the activities of the Israeli anarchists, creating a more sustainable movement and a space for the elaboration of longer-term agendas.

ALTERNATIVES AND GRASSROOTS PEACEMAKING

This leads us to the third and possibly most important thread of intervention. European and North American anarchists have long been aware of the need to complement destructive/preventative direct action with constructive/enabling forms of the same. However, the context in which the latter are discussed and used has been predominantly social and economic, with examples ranging from squats and social centres through urban food-gardening and self-help groups and on to cooperatives and LETS systems. The unique situation in Israel/Palestine allows us to glimpse the further potentialities of this logic in a setting of military conflict. Here, we can consider a third thread of anarchist intervention, whereby direct action in its constructive mode is enacted through projects of grassroots peacemaking.

Israeli citizens cannot legally enter the West Bank or Gaza. Citizens of the West Bank and Gaza cannot legally enter Israel. The only Israelis that many Palestinians get to see are the army. The only Palestinians that many Israelis get to see are on TV. This reality obviously fosters mutual ignorance, fear and hatred on both sides. Paradoxically, however, for most Jewish Israelis the notion of peace is strongly associated with the notion of separation. Ehud Barak's central slogan in his 1999 election campaign was 'physical separation from the Palestinians – us here, them there'. Thus the refusal to reinforce separation works against the grain of mainstream discourse. It should be appreciated that the Israeli government's name for the barrier, the 'separation' fence or wall, signifies something *positive* for many Israelis. Most of the Israeli 'peace camp' has a problem with the wall, but would be satisfied if its route were to overlap with the Green Line, say, as a border between two states. However, this idea too needs to be challenged by anarchists and others who support a genuine peace in the region. This is because conditions of physical separation cannot make for the true reconciliation that is required by a more thoroughgoing notion of peace. The latter would go beyond a 'permanent armistice' and signify the full normalisation of relations between Palestinians and Israelis, where coexistence is a relationship free of all fear, suspicion and distance.

Many grassroots peacemaking efforts are oriented in this direction. One example is the organisation Ta'ayush (Arab-Jewish Partnership), created after the beginning of the Second Intifada. That month saw one of the few cases

when Palestinians who live in Israel actively resisted and raised their voices in solidarity with those in the occupied territories. Ta'ayush has a large membership of Jews and Palestinian Arabs of Israeli citizenship, including many students, and undertakes many actions in the territories – bringing food to the towns and helping farmers to work their land. A more communal example is Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam, a cooperative village of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis, situated equidistant between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Founded in 1972, the village now houses about 50 families and operates Israel's first fully bilingual regional school, with 290 Jewish and Arab children. The residents also have been organizing projects to help Palestinians in the West Bank with distribution of food and medical attention. Overall, the network of organisations for Jewish-Arab coexistence in Israel already lists over one hundred groups, from lobbying and advocacy groups through educational and artistic projects and on to local citizens' fora in mixed cities and regions.

However, unlike Ta'ayush, many of these initiatives explicitly designate themselves as 'a-political', sidestepping the obligation to confront social inequalities in Palestine/Israel, and see themselves as 'civil society' initiatives which supplement rather than challenge basic political and social structures. Thus a specific anarchist contribution to this thread of intervention is to infuse it with a more clearly antagonistic dimension. What anarchists especially contribute to grassroots peacemaking is to undertake projects within its fold, on their own or in cooperation with others, while maintaining a stance of refusal towards state power. Thus community peacemaking, as a form of politician-bypassing direct action, at least has the potential for generating further joint struggles and a deeper awareness of how collective oppression and trauma are at work on both sides.

In a highly-evocative article, American-Israeli anarchist Bill Templer (2003) points to one version of what this could look like, using many keywords that will be familiar by now:

Reinventing politics in Israel and Palestine means laying the groundwork *now* for a kind of Jewish-Palestinian Zapatismo, a grassroots effort to 'reclaim the commons'. This would mean moving towards direct democracy, a participatory economy and a genuine autonomy for the people; towards Martin Buber's vision of 'an organic commonwealth ... that is a community of communities'. We might call it the 'no-state solution'.

Templer's optimism for such a project rests on the perception of a widespread crisis of faith in 'neoliberal governmentality', making Israel/Palestine 'a microcosm of the pervasive vacuity of our received political imaginaries and the ruling elites that administer them ... [but which] offers a unique micro-laboratory for experimenting with another kind of polity'. While acknowledging the inevitability of a two-state settlement in the short term, he

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traces elements which are already turning Palestine/Israel into ‘an incubator for creating “dual power” over the middle term, “hollowing out” capitalist structures and top-down bureaucracies’.

Amid the daily horrors of death and humiliation, and set against the backdrop of the defensive and bellicose attitudes of the Israeli public, Templer’s speculations may involve more than a bit of wishful thinking. But the relevant point is that the activities of antagonistic groups and communities can ‘contaminate’ any future peace process with a more thoroughgoing agenda of social transformation. What grounds such an agenda, from an anarchist perspective, is the argument that the creation of genuine peace requires the creation and fostering of political spaces which facilitate voluntary cooperation and mutual aid between Israelis and Palestinians. Indeed, even if the Israeli government turned around and accepted a route towards peace and normalisation between the two peoples, such peace and normalisation would still only exist to the extent that people practised them; they would not spring into being by executive fiat.

The Mas’ha camp has already registered a powerful example of the potentials of such endeavours. The encounter between Israelis and Palestinians engaged in a joint struggle against the construction of the segregation barrier in the village became a protracted face-to-face encounter, where members of both communities could work together on a daily basis, overcoming the invisible walls of isolation and stereotypes created by the occupation. For both sides, the camp was an intense experience of equality and togetherness, which by extension could create a model for future efforts – as these quotes from a Palestinian and an Israeli participant demonstrate (Shalabi and Medicks 2003):

Nazeeh: We wanted to show that the Israeli people are not our enemies; to provide an opportunity for Israelis to cooperate with us as good neighbors and support our struggle... Our camp showed that peace will not be built by walls and separation, but by cooperation and communication between the two peoples living in this land. At Mas’ha Camp we lived together, ate together, and talked together 24 hours a day for four months. Our fear was never from each other, but only from the Israeli soldiers and settlers.

Oren: The young Israeli generation realizes that the world has changed. They saw the Berlin wall come down. They know that security behind walls is illusionary. Spending some time together in the camp, has proven to us all that real security lies in the acceptance of one another as equals, in respecting each other’s right to live a full, free life ... [we struggle] to topple walls and barriers between peoples and nations, creating a world which speaks one language – the language of equal rights and freedom.

The imagery of resistance to fences, walls and borders already has a very strong currency in anarchist and broader anti-capitalist circles. The fences

erected around summits, immigrant detention centres, affluent suburbs and prisons – all have been used as symbols for broader social processes such as border regimes, the enclosure of commons, restrictions on freedom of movement, the ‘democratic deficit’ in global institutions and the stifling of dissent (Klein 2002). Meanwhile, a series of No Border protest-camps have been taking place in Europe and the US-Mexico Border, under the slogan ‘No Human is Illegal’ – expressing an explicit rejection not only of immigration controls, but of all border regimes as such (and thus, by way of veiled implication, of the state). In such a discursive environment, the fence in Palestine/Israel was just asking for it. The challenge, however, is to extend this logic to the multiple fences – real and political – that segregate the Israeli and Palestinian communities on the level of everyday life.

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to make sense of anarchist positions and actions in the context of Palestine/Israel. I have pointed to the obstacles that the traditional anarchist position against nationalism creates for solidarity with occupied peoples, arguing that support for national liberation in the form of a new state does not in fact contradict central anarchist concerns. While this is an interesting theoretical point, it turns out to be far less than critical in practical terms, since the relevant actions that anarchists undertake on the ground are either indifferent to the question of statehood (in the case of everyday practical solidarity and direct action), or else attempt to transcend it (in the case of grassroots peacemaking that seeks reconciliation and mutual aid alongside and as-against any statist resolution). In examining these concrete activities on the ground, I have pointed both to local expressions of the action repertoires and perspectives of contemporary anarchism as a global movement, and to unique configurations and dilemmas that accompany anti-authoritarian activism in this particular context.

I would have liked to end this article on an optimistic note, but as it goes to print the situation in Israel/Palestine is worse than it has ever been. The Israeli government continues to make life hell for the residents of Gaza and the West Bank, and has adopted a policy of knee-jerk rejection towards any and every initiative for renewed negotiations. Among the Israeli public, wide support for the recent war in Lebanon and the lack of outcry at the ministerial appointment of Avigdor Lieberman – a barefaced racist advocating ethnic cleansing and centralisation of power – represent a mood of dazed passivity, fed by economic hardship and the constant revival of dark collective traumas. In such an environment, the efforts of anarchists and the wider left easily seem like a drop in the sea. Even when hundreds mobilise to protest the continued pounding of Gaza or the accelerated building of the segregation barrier, their voices largely fall on deaf ears as the seemingly-unstoppable engines of death churn on. As the nightmare unfolds, all that anarchists and their allies can do

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is hold on to their visions and continue the thankless work of building the infrastructures of joint struggle, never losing their hope for a breakthrough that will finally bring some solace to this orphaned land.

NOTES

1. Throughout this article, the terms 'Israel/Palestine' and 'Palestine/Israel' are used interchangeably to refer to the land west of the Jordan River.
2. The information presented in this part of the article is based on the author's ongoing participant observation of anarchist activities, supplemented by examples from relevant literature.

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