

Women Speak Out Against Zionism

**'If a woman calls herself feminist
she should consciously call herself
anti-Zionist'**

On June 6 the Israeli army invaded the South Lebanon, calling it the 'Peace for Galilee' operation. Fourteen thousand Palestinian and Lebanese people (mainly civilian) have been killed and thousands more injured and/or made homeless. *Nidal*, a Lebanese woman, *Randa*, a Palestinian woman, and *Aliza Khan* an Israeli woman spoke to *Roisín Boyd* who asked them about what was happening, and to explain the importance of recognising the difference between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

Nidal: There is an enormous difference between being Jewish and being Zionist. The main idea behind Zionism is that all the Jews should gather together and form a nation, because they are in danger from the 'non-Jews', what they call the Gentiles. Which is so similar to the Nazi ideology that the Jews should not be with the Gentiles. There is a great quote from Hertzal, a well known Zionist leader, where he says Israel will be a bastion of imperialism in a 'sea of barbarity' and he draws a comparison with Ireland, Israel will be 'A Little Jewish "Ulster" in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism'.

I think it is important to talk about the guilt women experience when they start talking about the whole issue of Zionism. How they have lots of reservations about coming out as anti-Zionist, because this will be taken as being anti-Jewish. But anti-semitism is something we are fighting as well, and in the West we are also seen as semites. I was once assaulted by two guys who called me 'Yid' and 'bloody Jew'. For the life of me I wouldn't say I'm not a Jew, I'm Arab. That shows we suffer from the same problems. But Zionism separates the Jews, it says you cannot live with Gentiles, Christians or Muslims. You've got to live on your own. It's as if it's something biological.

It's up to us to show it up, but it's

also up to Jewish women because if you draw a parallel between that and the issue of racism — white women are always coming to Black women and asking them how to be anti-racist.

Aliza: Zionism claimed to speak in the name of the Jews. In fact, it was created by European Jews who used anti-semitism for their own interests. Its aim never was to fight anti-semitism, moreover, it saw anti-semitism as its best ally. Hertzal said 'Anti-semites will be our most dependable friends . . . our allies'. After the second World War, Zionist leaders used to say that Jewish people should thank Hitler because without him, the state of Israel would never have been created. If we are concerned about anti-semitism we must fight Zionism. To be anti-Zionist is to be anti-imperialist, and to be against the fact that Zionism (and the founding of the state of Israel) caused Palestinians to be refugees.

Nidal: The women who teach history to the children in the Palestinian refugee camps always make a point of telling them the difference between a Jew and a Zionist. Who took your land? And the child says the Jews and the teacher says it's not the Jews it is the Zionists. The Jews are our sisters and brothers like the Christians and the Muslims are.

Aliza: In contrast, in schools in Israel, the children are taught to fear and at the same time have contempt for the Arabs. The Arabs are presented as Jew-haters and murderers who may seem friendly at first, but would stab you once you turn your back. Even the existence of the Palestinians is denied.

Nidal: If you dare call yourself a Palestinian in Israel you would get five years in jail. When Golda Meir, the former Prime Minister of Israel, said it's a country without people, she just negated the existence of a nation.

Aliza: In Israel we were made to believe that Palestine was an empty land, before the Zionists came. Israel,

Zangwill, a member of the Zionist executive, said that Palestine was 'a land without people for people without a land'.

Britain as the colonial power in the beginning of the twentieth century in the Middle East, became the first ally of Zionism. The establishment of a Zionist base would serve its own interests of having a watchdog in the area. There would be no need to keep British troops in the Middle East once the Zionists played this role. This led to the Balfour declaration in 1917 which stated the need of a 'homeland' for the Jews.

In fact Israel was highly populated and the Israeli kibbutzim lie now where the Palestinians were living and working their farms. The image kibbutzim have in the West as a socialist and egalitarian enterprise is far from the truth. The kibbutz consists mainly of European Jews who employ large numbers of Palestinians and oriental Jews as a workforce. They actually forbid the Palestinians, and make it very difficult for the oriental Jews, to live in the kibbutz and share the profits. The kibbutzim are male dominated and many produce military equipment. Women work mainly in the kitchens and do the 'normal' jobs that women always do. If a woman calls herself feminist she should consciously call herself anti-Zionist.

Nidal: In the film *On Our Land* it shows Arab labour going from Arab villages which have become like enclosures or reservations, to go and work in big Israeli towns or settlements (kibbutzim) and how badly they are treated. It talks about how Arab workers don't have insurance or national health entitlement.

From the very beginning of Israel's existence Arab Palestinian workers were not allowed to work the land. In Israel the idea was that the workers and bourgeoisie should be Jewish and to eliminate the Arab Palestinians, either by killing them, or getting rid of them to Lebanon or Jordan. It is important to stress that when the Zionist movement started there were a group of progressive Jews who were against Zionism, and were acting against this Zionist wave. But they were silenced. In Lebanon now there are Palestinian Jews in the refugee camps. They saw themselves first as Palestinians and second as Jews. Of course the Zionists never mention that there are Jewish refugees too in Lebanon.

Aliza: When the Zionist leaders went to Arab countries to take in Arab Jews they actually misled them. The Ashkenazy (Central and East European) Zionists wanted a cheap labour force, so they used every means to bring the

Arab (Oriental) Jews to Israel. The Zionist leaders went to Yemen and promised the Yemeni Jews that the Messiah was coming and told them that an ideal life was waiting for them in Israel. In Iraq, where there was a large Jewish population, the Jews were reluctant to leave, so the Zionists put bombs in synagogues in order to create tension among Moslems and Jews*. Only in that way could they convince Iraqi Jews to emigrate.

Roisin: What's happening now in Palestine?

Nidal: There was a quote from a Palestinian woman in the *Guardian*. She has six daughters and sons and three of them were killed. She said 'I have given three children to the revolution and I'll give three more'. In a sense you're defending your existence not as an individual but as a nation. I can't think of any example in history where in two weeks flat they're going to wipe out a whole nation so they will be able to say later on 'You see we told you the Palestinians never existed.'

Aliza: What Israel is doing now in the Lebanon is nothing new but an extreme part of its nature. Killing people barbarically, children, women, with poisoned gas and with cluster bombs. It's hard to imagine how human beings can do this. My mother, who emigrated to Israel from Germany, rang me two weeks ago and said that she is broken hearted because what Israel is doing now is what the Nazis did to her. There are a lot of people in Israel who supported Zionism moralistically but now slowly they are realising what it really means. Women must come out against it because our sisters are being murdered.

Nidal: The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) is an organisation that has been *chosen* by the Palestinian people wherever they are, whether in refugee camps, in occupied Palestine (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) or even within what is called Israel itself, whether they are living in the West or America. Those people have recognised the PLO as their only representative. The PLO acts a bit like a government in exile. There is a general union of Palestinian women which covers all the Palestinian women throughout the world. When the Israelis say they want to destroy the PLO, in their communiques and articles, any Palestinian will tell you how ridiculous and ironic that is. They will never be able to destroy the PLO unless they destroy every single Palestinian living on this earth. What *we* need is support if we can count on being backed up and sup-

ported, then at least we know we are not alone.

Randa: Palestinians suffer racism all around the world. In Kuwait there are Palestinian schools because they can't go to Kuwait schools. All the Palestinians in Arab countries are treated as second class citizens. They are not allowed citizenship, in Kuwait, even if they've lived there thirty years. They are seen as threatening the existence of the Gulf states — the Western orientation of the Arab countries.

Nidal: And because they are racist. How dare a Palestinian want to get Kuwaiti citizenship! There is this myth in the West that Arab means one thing.

Randa: But the West has really divided the Arab world and they really benefit from Arab disunity. Imagine if the Arab world was united — it would threaten America and the West. They want their oil and labour cheap and they want to make sure they keep it that way.

Nidal: Now, there is such a complete and utter isolation in Beirut. So complete, that was obvious from the phone call I got from my friend there. They are even cut off from the Palestinians and the Lebanese in the south. I asked her about lots of people and she said I can't

see them. I felt so badly — was this the last time I'd speak to her. She told me, 'Tell the world what is happening'.

Aliza: It's because of the bloody Western countries that they are suffering. It's not just Israel. It's because of the West's interests that all those people died. I am calling you sisters, to come together against the holocaust of the Palestinian and Lebanese people. There is no way we can sit quietly and do nothing about it.

Letter from women in Israel. 'Once again the men have gone to battle. We are told that they want to defend us. The wives, daughters, sisters and mothers. We are supposed to wait with open arms for the return of the fighters. We shall not shut up. We shall not agree to be "purged" of the Palestinian people. Get out of Lebanon at once.' Women against the invasion into Lebanon. (Published in Israeli papers)

Money and support to Women for Palestine c/o A Womans Place, 48 William IV street, London WC2

* Haolem Hazeh 20/4/66. See also 'Black Panther', 9/11/72 (reprinted in *Documents from Israel*, Ithaca Press, Uri Davies/N Mezvinsky, pp23/33 (D Hirst op cit pp 55-64 and op cit pp 89-201) See also Alex Bein *History of Zionist Colonisation*, 4th edition, Massada (p101).



Women fleeing South Lebanon