

## THE INTIFADA IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA: A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

Miro Cohen

[Editor's Note: Miro Cohen is the Security Coordinator, the local person responsible for the safety of the 400 residents of Tekoa, a Jewish community located a 20-minute drive south of Jerusalem at the edge of the Judean Desert, between King Herod's palace -- Herodion -- and ancient Tekoa, home of the Prophet Amos. Miro is a shepherd, speaks fluent Arabic, and has nearly three years of daily experience with the Arab uprising known as the intifada. He shares here from his broad knowledge of Arab life in the rural villages of Judea. Miro was interviewed by Mark Ami-El, of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, who lives in Tekoa.]

### Who are the Activists?

The Arab fundamentalist movement, Hamas, is now the leading force in all the rural Arab villages in Judea and Samaria, and because of this the villages are more extreme in their activities. Hamas sends its orders into the villages from outside, in the case of Tekoa, from Jerusalem or Hebron. In every village there is a group of 5 to 10 young activists -- the "masked youth" or the "people's committee." In more troublesome villages the group might number between 10 and 30. In villages closer to large towns there are also branches of the PLO. The villages closer to towns are less extreme than the distant rural villages. It is not that they love the Jews but that they have other interests. They are more educated and have lower school dropout rates. Overall, there are no large organizations as there are in the cities. The general picture is one of small units, mostly of Hamas, operating according to orders from above.

They do not have telephones to communicate with each other, so they use

very simple systems: whistles from those acting as lookouts; messengers -- small children who would not be suspect, or young women. Young women are playing a very active part in the whole enterprise. They do not actually participate so much in attacks but they are very active in preparing flags and slogans and acting as couriers.

The majority of activists are between the ages of 12 and 17. Seventeen is more or less the upper limit because after 17 they go out to work. At this age their interest in working and making money begins to assert a greater influence over them.

### Most Do Not Participate

Contrary to the common belief, most of the Arab population does not in fact participate in the uprising. Most of the adult population does not participate, as well as a very large part of the youth. There are entire families that do not participate.

There are a few dozen Arab schools in Judea and Samaria located next to major roads, affording the students easy opportunities to attack passing Jewish cars. Yet the scores of rocks being thrown from a school may be the work of only twenty rockthrowers. It is also important to remember that things are different among children. It is quite probable that when children are all together in school, including the children of those who cooperate with the Jews and those who were never involved with the intifada, these children have to go along with the crowd. Sometimes the children of parents who are suspected of being collaborators or children from neighborhoods where there are no problems will be active at school to prove

that their parents are not collaborators.

In one way it is possible to say that all participate. There are general norms of not telling on one another, not erasing slogans, helping erect roadblocks. That does not mean that a few minutes after the organizer has left, the adults will not go out and clear the roadblock themselves. They do it to prevent being woken up later by soldiers to clear it. They do many things that they are forced to do in order to show that they have done something. Some will also go and throw a few rocks on the road at night, even though they know it is not serious, in order to feel that they were part of something. But most of the population does not participate in violence against Jews.

### The Balance of Power

Of the over one hundred rural Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria, not one has been the target of bands of hostile neighboring Arabs, unlike the situation that was common in this country fifty years ago. There are many reasons for this. First of all, they know that the Israelis living in the settlements all have guns. They do not attack Jewish settlements because they are not so extreme as to lose their heads. They know it would be suicide. They believe the Jews in the settlements are strong and that every settlement is like a fort, where everyone walks around armed and the place is actively guarded, and that everyone there is just waiting for the chance to shoot an Arab.

A second reason is that in Judea and Samaria they do not feel as hopeless and desperate as they do in Gaza. In Gaza they are much worse off, both economically and morale-wise, and have greater hatred for the Jews because of their poverty. The satisfied ones are less dangerous; it is the hungry ones who are more dangerous. The Arabs in Judea and Samaria still live well. Life is good for them. Even with the intifada, the Arabs living in Judea and Samaria know that compared to other Arab countries they have a higher level of freedom and pros-

perity than any Arab state could give them. So it is in their basic interest not to inflame matters.

Those who do participate in more serious activities, such as scattering nails, are the more extreme groups who care more, but most do not. Most close up their houses at 8:30 or 9:00 p.m., with the coming of darkness, watch a bit of TV, and go to sleep. They do not go out and very few individuals venture outside.

### Who is Winning?

These days there is a marked decline in violent acts and the continuation of this trend depends largely on us. We must show them who the ruling authority is here, but must also deal with them as human beings; to work very hard with the carrot and stick approach. On one hand, we show them that we want to help them. On the other hand, they have to pay their taxes, drive with valid licenses, and everyone who does not will not be jailed but will face a stiff fine.

The main reason that the intifada will decline is that the Arabs in Judea and Samaria still need to work for the Jews. The major economic fact of life among rural Palestinians is that almost every family sends out two or three workers to work at Israeli construction sites, factories or hotels. The reason that we had nineteen years of quiet was because their economic situation had improved every year.

This was despite the fact that we ran a bad civil administration from 1975 on into the 1980s that dealt with the Arabs quite poorly. Beneath the top level of officers, the civil administration was staffed by people without any abilities other than the fact that they spoke Arabic; Jews and Arabs, especially Christian Arabs, who acted towards the local population exactly like the Turks had done. Sometimes, they defrauded the locals without anyone intervening to stop it. One of the main reasons behind the outbreak of the intifada was the bad relationship between the civil administration and the local population.

There was an initial period that lasted

nearly a year when it seemed that the Army was operating with its hands tied and that the Arabs were not afraid of the Army, but during the last year, since they began using plastic bullets and improved rubber bullets, the Army has begun to learn from its experience. At one time they depended upon reserve units that had no idea how to function against a civilian uprising, but after they acquired experience, together with the greater use of regular units, the Arabs are again afraid of the Army. They also respect the Army as an army that will not act unfairly toward them and will not bother those who do not cause trouble. The Arabs know the situation well. They know everything that is happening in the area better than we do. They know exactly what every Army unit is like. So if there are fewer incidents in an area, it has a lot to do with the type of unit that is there and how it acts.

In reality, Arabs are not so very different from Jews. What may be different is that Arabs tend to get excited more quickly and then give up more quickly, but generally their thinking or analysis of the situation is not different from ours. They see more or less through the same lenses that we use. They follow our internal politics very closely. What we say, they hear, through radio and television and everything else. They have been with us for over twenty years and hear the same things we do.

Again, contrary to popular wisdom, they no longer think they are going to win a Palestinian state. Yet they will continue

with the intifada to get a better deal in the end. What keeps them going today is mainly the Americans and support from various other countries and international organizations. There are a few families who make a living from it. A lot of money is still coming in to fuel the intifada. It is not coming from Jordan, that way has been sealed, but a lot is coming through overseas organizations, tourists, even Jews. But only a few families benefit from this. It does not reach everyone.

Overall, they realize that they have serious leadership problems. They see that with all that they have done in three years of intifada, the pressure on them has not weakened but rather has strengthened. And as the Army gets more experienced it learns how to increase the pressure. Today the intifada activists can no longer incite crowds to take to the streets. Only a few are active. In addition, the whole business of Jewish immigration from Russia is greatly depressing them. The fact that the right has formed a government also reduces their prospects and their morale.

Today, peace for most of the adult Arabs living in the Judean and Samarian countryside does not mean a Palestinian state. Peace means something like what the Likud is offering but not more than that. Many now do not want a state. Talk with the more serious adults and they will tell you that at best such a state would be a second Lebanon, but not more than that. They know that other Arab states would try to control them and that the private individual would suffer.

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## THE "GREEN LINE": BLURRED BY EMERGING ARAB SOLIDARITY

Ellen Friedlander

Following the 1967 war, the interaction between the Arab inhabitants on both sides of the "green line" extended itself to political consciousness and action. With the advent of the intifada, political cooperation between Israeli Arabs and the Arabs of Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip has grown and solidified, placing Israel in a precarious position. Although a significant percentage of contact between the two groups exists through familial ties and employment opportunities, politics plays a central and potentially explosive role.

"What is happening (the intifada) is nothing compared to what is going to happen. And the same thing will happen in Ramle," stated a Palestinian worker approached by a journalist at Rishon le-Zion, where on May 20th, 7 Palestinian workers from the territories were killed and 15 wounded by a mentally disturbed Israeli. On May 21st, violence erupted inside the "green line" as a nationwide strike was held by Israeli Arabs.

In Nazareth, a mixed Muslim and Christian town, hundreds of stone-throwing youths battled with police. The riots led to 10 policemen being injured, an Israeli bank burned, shops damaged, and mass arrests, which included the wife of Nazareth's mayor and former MK Tewfik Zaid.

Reportedly, 24 residents were arrested in connection with the disturbances in the Wadi Ara region. Another 57 inhabitants were charged with incitement and attacking the police. During the course of the rioting, "Petrol bombs, potatoes studded with nails and a veritable storm of stones were hurled at police....The riots were the worst I can recall in the Israeli Arab sector," stated Northern Region police commander Albert Musafiya. Despite his admitted surprise at the intensity of the disturbances, he firmly maintained that the intifada had not crossed the "green line." However, the police commander did feel

that the rioters had crossed a "psychological red line," which could only lead to further cases of widespread violence.

Throughout the country, black flags dotted Arab villages and towns while parades were held to honor the dead and their families. Violent incidents occurred in a number of Israeli Arab villages including Taibe, Baka al Charbiya, and Furaidis. The coinciding disturbances in the Galilee region resulted in more than 130 arrests. In Haifa, Arab students protested against the killings by holding a licensed demonstration with a mock coffin as its centerpiece. Expressions of anger took on different forms as slogans such as "Death to the Jews" were found scrawled on the city's walls. Palestinian flags were reported to have been draped across electric cables in Haifa's Wadi Nisnas quarter.

In general, how does Arab solidarity tend to manifest itself? One such way is the mutual observance of the original 1976 Land Day. Public demonstrations and political meetings are held on both sides and in support of each other. The commemoration provides a reason for Israeli Arabs to assert their nationalist inclinations; while at the same time providing the Arabs across the "green line" with a vehicle through which to express, albeit in a violent manner, their feelings and apparent sympathy with their brethren.

This year's Land Day activities were generally executed in an organized fashion, which explains, in part, the reportedly quiet atmosphere among the Israeli Arab population. However, as the newspaper Ma'ariv has maintained, "The quiet must not give rise to the illusion that all is fine in the Arab sector. Land Day was marked in full by total solidarity with the PLO, and was brimming with clearly nationalist tension. The calm only demonstrated two things: the latent power of the Israeli Arabs; and the powder keg on which it

(their power) is perched."

On a local level, expressions of Arab unity on Land Day were demonstrated through hostile acts. Palestinian flags were unfurled in the Galilee and placards were found on a Shfaram bus expressing solidarity with the intifada and denouncing the Law of Return, in the face of the new waves of Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel.

To what extent do Arabs on both sides of the "green line" share sentiments of unity and a common destiny? This question was addressed in a 1981-82 survey by political scientist Emile Sahliyah, who found disagreement at the time over the notion of a common destiny. The majority of the West Bank elite felt that as the Israeli presence was now on both sides of the "green line," the two peoples had that much more in common. Conversely, the Israeli Arab elite maintained that their destiny was one of a different nature. Interestingly, when looking at the responses of non-elites, a narrow majority of Israeli Arab workers agreed with the views of the West Bank elite, while the majority of West Bank workers shared the Israeli Arab elites' point of view. Despite the absence of new survey data, one may speculate that national Palestinian identity among Israel's Arabs is on the increase (see VP:82 "The Arabs in Israel: A Surging New Identity," by Rafi Israeli [1 January 1989]).

At a May 1987 Haifa University symposium on the post-1967 period, presentations by experts supported the Israeli Arab elites' position, describing them as having become "more Israeli" and more "deeply rooted" since 1967. One of the experts, Prof. Sami Smooha, reported that Israeli Arabs had actually become polarized since 1967. He maintained that the Israeli Arabs "do not negate their Israeli identity and in fact hold a deep attachment to the state." He further argued that all the Israeli Arabs want is to "share in the political life here and see their future with Israel." Dr. Majd el Haj, a Haifa University sociology lecturer, explained that Israeli Arabs have developed a "strategy of adap-

tation, while the West Bankers lived rather by survival -- for instance learning just enough Hebrew to get by....The two populations have different futures," as well as a different past.

The momentum of the intifada has been erratic but has managed to carry the Israeli Arab population with it. On March 27, 1989, MK Ehud Olmert (Likud), who was responsible at the time for Arab affairs, reported to the Knesset that during 1988 alone there had been 580 cases of political subversion within the "green line" such as displaying Palestinian flags, painting nationalist slogans, stoning vehicles, and attempting to block roads. He maintained that "there is currently a growing number of individuals who are ready to use violent measures, and they may upset the very delicate balance created and maintained for so many years."

"Potentially more serious than stone throwing incidents is the long-term effects of teaching hatred to children at a very young age, without any attempt to promote peaceful solutions," commented Superintendent Gideon Arbel, spokesman for the Northern District. In July 1989 in Shfaram, police uncovered two Israeli Arab children's summer camps involved in the promotion of the intifada and of Palestinian nationalism. The camps attracted approximately 150 children aged 5 to 14. The children were divided into groups with names such as the "Children Who Throw Stones." The day's activities would end with the singing of the Palestinian anthem. Following reports of children being taught Syrian nationalist songs and how to throw stones at Jewish cars, police raided a summer camp located near the Golan Druse village of Majdal Shams. In their search of the camp, police discovered that the tents used for housing the approximately 200 children were all named after Syrian, Palestinian and Libyan terrorists.

Superintendent Arbel noted that overall, nationalistically-motivated incidents by Israeli Arabs have sharply increased. The police reported as many as 1,000 such incidents in 1989, more than double the

previous year's figure. In May 1990, subversive incidents numbered 272, an increase of 40 percent over May 1989.

Writing in Ma'ariv in 1989, Amos Gilboa, the Prime Minister's former adviser on Arab Affairs, said, "none of us should be surprised when the Israeli Arabs cross the line from political sympathy to active collaboration" on behalf of the Palestinian

cause on the other side of the "green line."

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Ellen Friedlander is a Research Assistant at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.