

We stand outside this celebration of Israel because we as Jews find it inappropriate to celebrate - especially on the 44th anniversary of the beginning of the Occupation - while the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians remains unresolved. So instead of celebrating Israel as a place where "ideas bloom", we ask...

How Can We Make Peace Bloom?

Peace can bloom in Israel/Palestine, but it will take cultivation and enrichment of the soil. That soil must consist of **respect for human rights, democratic process, and the rule of law, including international law**. Through commitment to these ideals, we can rise above the history of hatred, violence, and repression. We can reject the separation of our two peoples and embrace our similarities, and work together toward peace and justice.

It will take many actions by ordinary people to promote these goals, and many groups have already begun: the Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salaam/Oasis of Peace, the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions, Rabbis for Human Rights, the Bereaved Parents' Circle, and in the Bay Area, various Jewish-Palestinian Dialog Groups. We ask you to join in this effort.

What do we ask of those in power?

President Obama recently showed some understanding of the conditions under which Palestinians live, "suffering the humiliation of occupation". He also said, "The United States opposes the use of violence and repression against the people of the region." In fact, although the United States always condemns violent action by Palestinians, such as missile launches from Gaza by Hamas, it does not apply the same standard to the Israeli government's use of violence and repression. Indeed, the U.S. plays a strong role in supporting Israel's disproportionate use of force.

Jewish Voice for Peace and Bay Area Women in Black therefore ask of our president: "Will you hold Israel accountable for its violence against Palestinians, both in daily life under occupation, and in its brutal response to nonviolent Palestinian protest, like in Nabi Saleh and Bil'in?" We also ask: "Will you hold the Israeli government accountable for its other illegal actions, especially the relentless expansion of Jewish settlements beyond the 1967 line? Such accountability would constitute a most important step toward making peace bloom.

This is what peace in bloom looks like:



Israeli-Palestinian soccer team¹



The Parents' Circle²



Jerusalem Hug³



Bay Area Women in Black



¹ <http://palestinote.com/blogs/news/archive/2010/07/04/israeli-palestinian-soccer-team-honored-in-johannesburg.aspx>

² <http://www.theparentscircle.com/>

³ <http://www.mylot.com/w/photokeywords/israeli.aspx>

WHERE ARE ISRAEL'S BORDERS?

In May, President Obama called for Israel to accept as the basis for negotiations with Palestine its internationally recognized 1967 (pre-Occupation) borders. In his speech before the U.S. Congress on May 24th, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu forcefully rejected President Obama's proposal, and blamed Palestinian "refusal to recognize Israel" as the obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the Palestine-Israel conflict.

Today is the 44th anniversary of the military occupation of the Palestinian Territories by Israel, which began on June 5, 1967. Ever since then, Israel has sought to extend its borders deep into the occupied Palestinian West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

- Israel has built more than 200 settlements and located over 500,000 Jewish Israelis on West Bank land. These settlements and the infrastructure built to accommodate them (including Jewish-only highways and transit systems) take up almost half of the West Bank.
- Israeli Jewish settlements built outside the recognized borders of Israel on Occupied Palestinian land are illegal under International Law. **
- Netanyahu has proclaimed that Israel will continue to build even more settlements, despite U.S. calls for a moratorium. The settlement project makes a mockery of a "two-state solution", which depends on sufficient land on which to build a viable Palestinian state.
- In 1993, the PLO explicitly recognized the "right of the state of Israel to exist in peace and security." Since then, Israel continued with an even more aggressive program of land grabs beyond its borders, and dispossession of the Palestinian people.



1890's



1912



2009

Palestine's ancient olive-tree economy is being destroyed by the Israeli occupation, which demolishes Palestinian homes, farms and orchards, to take land for illegal Israeli Jewish settlements.

For maps and information on Israel's settlement policy, go to www.btselem.org (Israeli human rights information center).

*Gaza is occupied by Israel's military siege, which imprisons 1.5 million people, mostly children, in a tiny area, cutting off access to adequate water, electricity, food, and medical care.

** The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring citizens from its own territory to the occupied territory (Article 59)