

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIENDS OF PALESTINE ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

CHAIRPERSON'S 2005 ANNUAL REPORT

AFOPA commences 2006 after a highly successful program in 2005 highlighted by the Robert Fisk address in the inaugural Edward Said Memorial Lecture. We ran two events which exposed South Australians to Palestinian culture via the Palestine Lost Exhibition in the Town Hall early in the year and the fashion parade at the end of year dinner. We championed the push to stop Australian taxpayers' money going to support Israeli settlements in Palestine. That issue continues. Prominent members the Nathans went to Palestine and donated your money and their time to help Palestinians. More and more we are being recognized for our activism and views and we need to keep the momentum going. More people are subscribing to our updates to learn about the issues from a reliable source.

Your Executive has already met to plan events for 2006. We are anxious to involve members at the grass roots level, particularly in our efforts to engage the media and inform fellow South Australians of the true state of affairs in Israel/Palestine.

This will be a momentous year in Palestine. The election processes have guaranteed this. I believe that the Israeli government is beginning to realize that it must obtain fixed borders. It wishes to include as few Palestinians as possible on the western side of those borders. Having resisted a just peace open to it since 1988 by engaging honestly with its Palestinian counterpart it will shortly declare that it is ready for peace on its terms and express surprise and resentment when the Palestinians reject the crumbs thrown to them. I for one believe that Hamas brings a more disciplined and principled approach to the exercise. Moreover, it is hypocritical in the extreme for the West to criticize the Hamas government. It has been the West's preparedness to allow the farce of a "peace process" to continue and continue whilst the settlements grew and grew which made a Hamas election inevitable.

The call for Hamas to honour previous agreements, namely Oslo, is a cruel and sick joke as anyone who knows the Likud program of non-implementation throughout the 90's would know. Israel is now not able to implement Oslo without evacuating all settlements established since 1993 and restoring the devastation to homes and orchards over the same period. My belief is that Israel and its backer, the US, will become more and more desperate as events turn against them.

Meantime, AFOPA looks forward to a year of continued success which will include (in part) raising monies for charities in the Occupied Territories including by way of a mid-year film festival, in sponsoring a trip to Palestine, possibly in September, and in bringing another World class speaker to Adelaide for the second Edward Said Memorial Lecture.

Come on the journey with us.

Your Chairperson

Paul Heywood-Smith