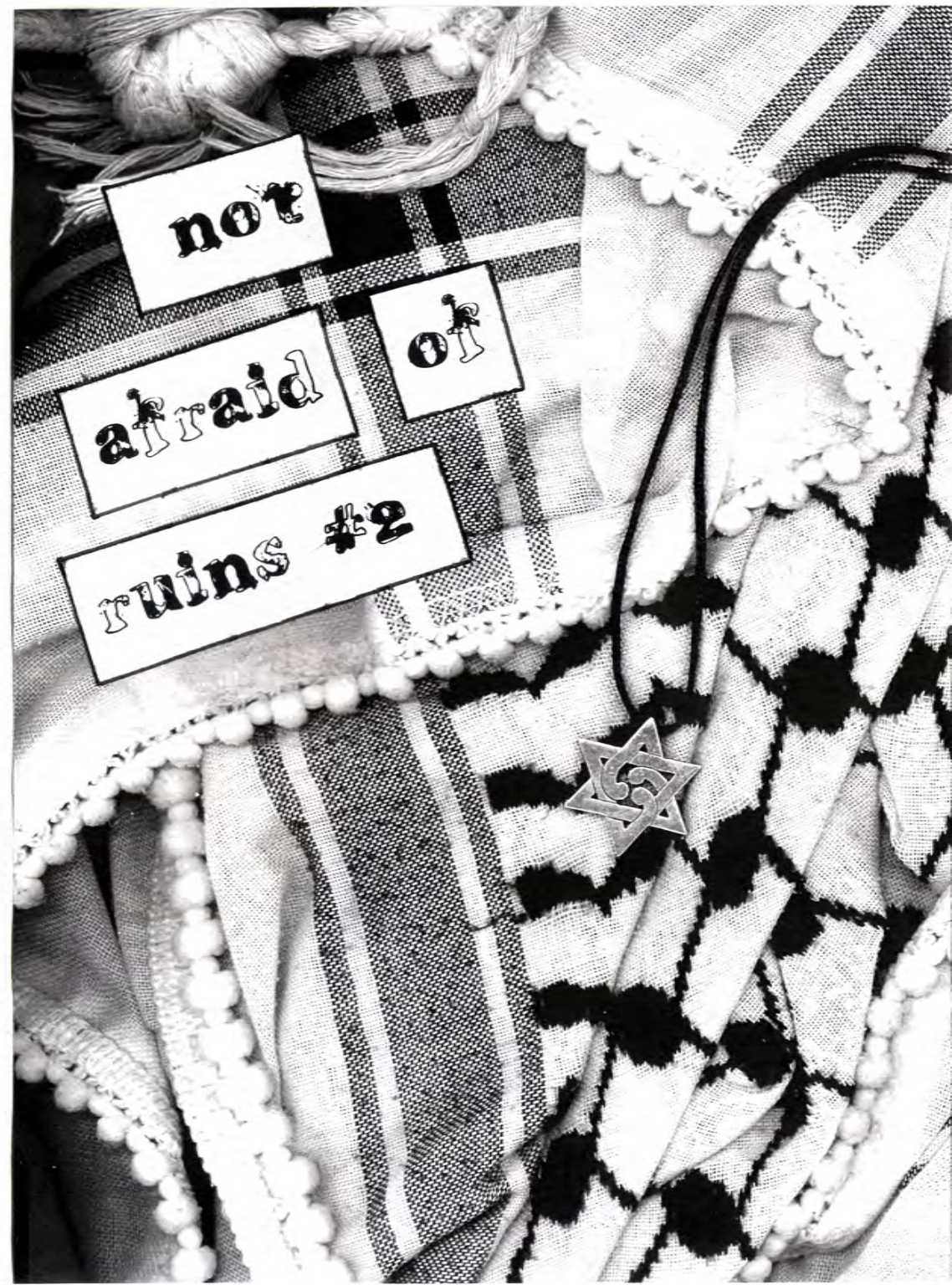
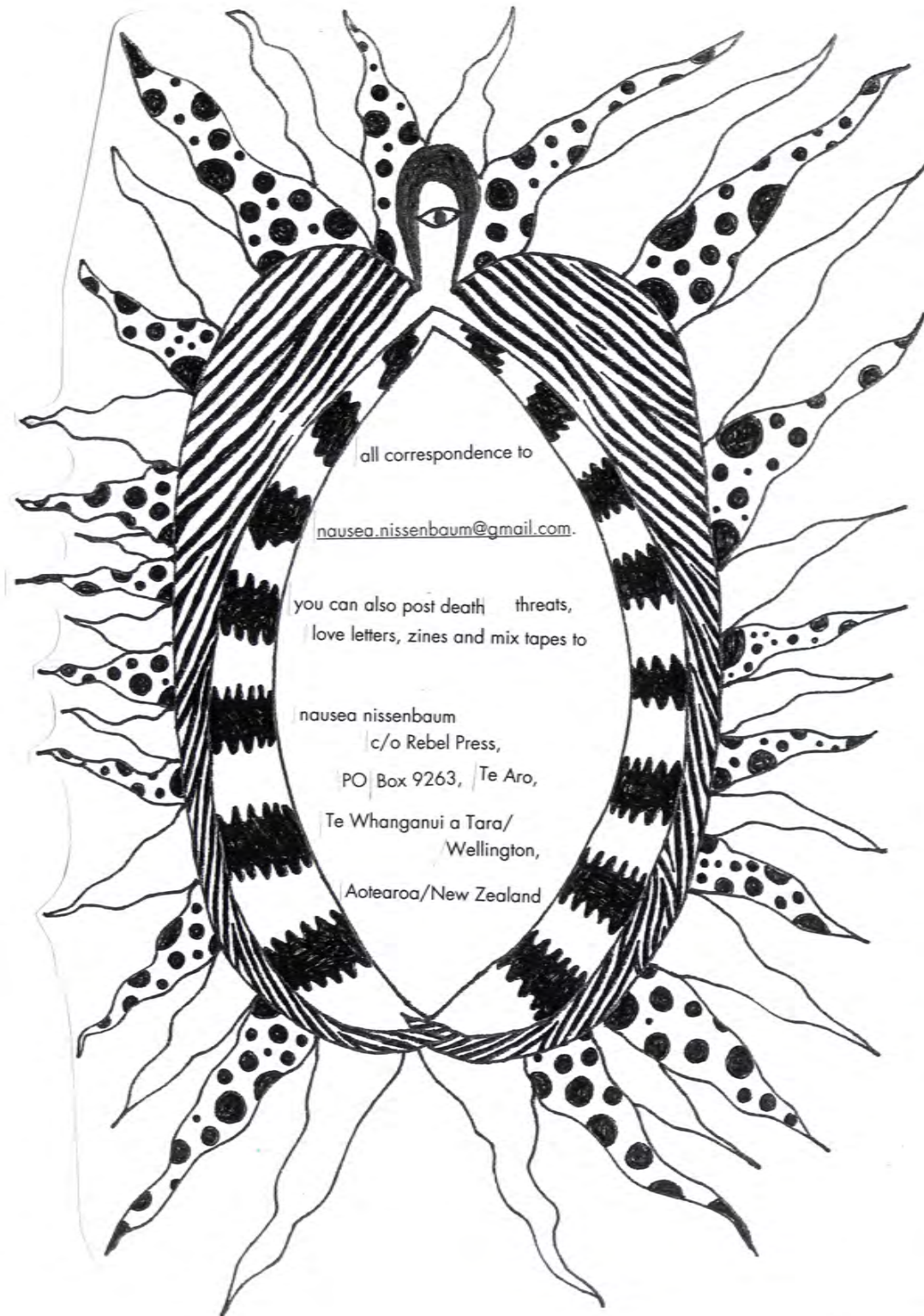




Infinite love and gratitude to everyone who hosted me, fed me, bought me beer, took me places, taught me things, danced with me, told me their stories, travelled with me, looked after me when I vomited on their floor... you are the ones who maintain my faith in humanity.

Typeset in Adobe Caslon pro, Futura Std Book and Grease Monkey.

Copyright is theft — reproduce freely but not for profit.

The most inspiring thing around here, is the people. Not just because of their amazing resiliency, their ability to keep living life in spite of horror and heartbreak. But also because of their patience and empathy. Their ability to build bridges. While the rest of the world sighs, shakes its head and mutters that 'those people' will never learn to get along, Palestinians and Jewish Israelis aren't just learning to get along, we're also learning to work together against the Israeli state.

When it all seems hopeless, I remind myself of the food, the desert, the sea, the people. I remind myself that this is a land worth fighting for.

Printed and bound at Rebel Press, with a hatred of the state and a primordial desire for freedom infused into every page.

www.rebelpress.org.nz

Just so you know,

it's not all violence

and oppression around here.

There's beauty and pleasure too.

For one thing, the food here is the best in the world. There's the traditional Palestinian foods like falafel, hommous, ful, olives and za'atar. There's the foods that Jews brought with them from around the world: malawakh and jakhnoun from Yemen, burekas from Turkey, sabikh from Iraq. It's a vegan's paradise.

Then there's the desert. The one called the Aqaba in Arabic and the Arava in Hebrew might just be the most beautiful place in the world. It's a special kind of beauty, a secret kind. If you don't pay attention you just might miss it, coz at first glance this is just a barren piece of land, scarred by millennia of human civilization. But if you're patient you'll see that there's so much more here than just sand and rocks. There's hidden life. Quiet life. When I'm here, I feel like I'm on another world — far from any war, from any state.

But it's the sea that I'm really in love with. I go for long walks on the shore, south from Ben Yehuda beach all the way to Yaffa. I kick the waves and dig my toes into the sand and sing to myself and ignore strange men who try to chat me up. I collect seashells, I build sandcastles, I play with dogs. Mostly I just stare at the Mediterranean sea, the bluest thing I've ever seen.

This zine is kind of a travel journal of two trips I made to the land where I was born, which is called Palestine or Israel, depending on your political stance. The first trip was in December 2008 and January 2009, during which the Israeli Airforce carried out operation Cast Lead, an air assault on the people of Gaza. The second trip was in May and June 2010, during which Israeli Defense Force commandos massacred activists who sailed to Gaza on the Mavi Marmara in order to break the Israeli siege on the area.

It's also a random collection of thoughts and ideas on Palestine, Zionism, Jewish identity and colonialism.

This is not a history textbook. If you don't know much about the situation in Palestine/Israel, there's probably things that won't make sense. I hope it encourages you to learn more, and to get involved in the Palestine solidarity movement.

It's also not a politics textbook, it's my own rather subjective experiences and opinions, as a Jewish Israeli.

It's also not in chronological order.

hello my darlings,

after four airplanes and god knows how many hours of my life i am finally in israel. my flights were uneventful, no customs hassles at all. i don't think i've ever felt so aware of, and obscenely grateful for, my white privilege. on the other hand, after being stuck in addis ababa airport for sixteen hours i really think airports should have women only spaces. i don't know what makes men think that just because a young woman is sitting alone it is their responsibility to chat her up.

so now i am in jerusalem. from the window of the apartment where i'm staying i can see beyond the green line, to the area that was jordan pre-1967. bit of a headfuck really.

incidentally, i note that it's only taken two weeks of me leaving new zealand for it to spiral downwards from pretence of liberal democracy to crypto-fascism. i only found out when i woke up this morning (ie two hours ago) that the 90 day bill was passed. crazy that the national government isn't even pretending to follow democratic procedure and whatever. when i was staying with my sis in melbourne she was telling me that getting fired is common as bullshit there, and she's constantly stressed about being fired from her crappy receptionist job coz of australia's 90 day fire-ya laws. it made me feel so appreciative of all the work done by union activists in nz, but i guess it only takes the blink of an eye for politicians to undo years of struggle.

not that i don't appreciate the black humour in the situation: that the government, in all its omniscient benevolence, has passed this bill in order to help workers in these trying times of economic hardship.

still you guys better make them chew and swallow their legal documents by the time i get back!

sigh

postcards home

Jerusalem

שד' ירושלים

Jerusalem Blv.

שד' ירושלים

Historical sites

A The Clock Tower

Print:

Mike Marqusee, *If I Am Not For Myself: Journey of an Anti-Zionist Jew.*

Charlotte Misselwitz and Cornelia Siebeck (ed.s), *Dissonant Memories Fragmented Present: Exchanging Young Discourses between Israel and Germany.*

Uri Gordon, 'HomeLand: Anarchy and Joint Struggle in Israel/Palestine' in *Anarchy Alive!: Anti-authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory.*

Trees Die Standing (zine) by Bridget

Nes La'G

Don't stop learning...

Digital:

Sheikh Jarrah: www.justilm.org

Silwan: www.silwanic.net, www.alt-arch.org

Naqab/Negev: www.dukium.org

Highway 443: www.btselem.org/English/Freedom_of_Movement/Road_443.asp

House demolitions: www.icahd.org

Palestinian & migrant workers' rights: www.kavlaoved.org.il, www.hotline.org.il

Nakba: www.nakbaonline.org, www.nakbainhebrew.org

Anarchists against the wall: www.awalls.org

Popular committees: www.popularstruggle.org

Breaking the silence: www.shovrimshatika.org

Queer liberation: www.alqaws.org, www.aswatgroup.org

Alternative Information Centre: www.alternativenews.org

International Jewish anti Zionist Organisation: www.ijsn.net

i'll write more when i have something interesting to tell you.

keep emailing and updating me on your lives, i miss you all heaps!

lots of love,

nausea

dear you and you and you and you...

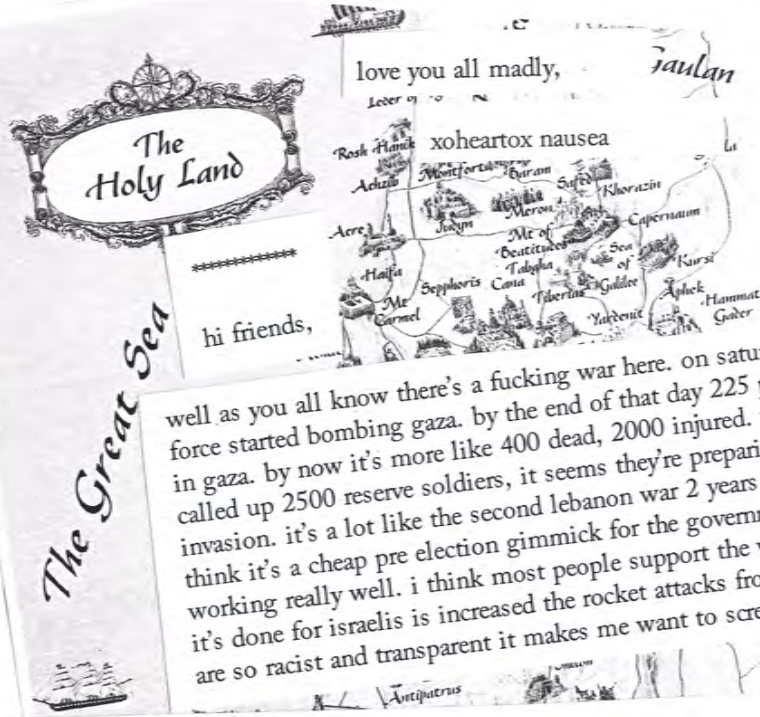
hi friends, sorry i haven't had time to write to you all individually. it doesn't mean i've stopped loving you.

i'm in tel aviv now, staying with some nice vegan punks in a flat near the beach. they have a kitten and two dogs so it's great here.

last night i went dumpster diving at the shouk (market) except there was zero diving involved. the stallholders just throw all their garbage out on the pavement at the end of the day and you can pick through it at your leisure in front of everyone and nobody tries to stop you. it was great. we got heaps of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, kohlrabi and some broccoli and celery too.

it was also the first night of hannukah last night so i insisted on lighting candles even though the folk i'm staying with treated me with the same kind of disdain i would show someone wanting to go to church on christmas day in new zealand. then we went to a hardcore show which was pretty mediocre, the same bullshit macho boys with guitars you find everywhere i guess.

before that i stayed with my grandparents for a few days. they live in a gated community for old people. it was real depressing mostly, but they do have very pretty gardens there, and my grandma took me to patchwork classes with her. it was real fun hanging out with all these old ladies and i got to fix the giant holes in my jeans.



love you all madly,
 Letter of ...
 hi friends,
 well as you all know there's a fucking war here. on saturday the israeli air force started bombing gaza. by the end of that day 225 people were dead in gaza. by now it's more like 400 dead, 2000 injured. yesterday the IDF called up 2500 reserve soldiers, it seems they're preparing for a ground invasion. it's a lot like the second lebanon war 2 years ago. most activists think it's a cheap pre election gimmick for the government, and it's working really well. i think most people support the war even though all it's done for israelis is increased the rocket attacks from gaza. people here are so racist and transparent it makes me want to scream.

on saturday evening there was a big anti war demo in tel aviv. we marched from the centre of the city to the IDF headquarters. we tried to disrupt the prime minister's press conference but the police blocked us from getting near it. the number of cops was crazy, some of them on horses, all of them with guns. there were also officers from the border police, who are somewhat a cross between cops and soldiers. i heard 5 people were arrested at that demo, and a friend of mine was arrested right afterwards for tagging.

on sunday there was a much quieter demo in the centre of town. we stood there chanting while the cops surrounded us. i think they were probably



My last thought is: This all sounds ridiculously utopian. I should be a bit more realistic. On the other hand, lots of people think that even a peace based on a two state solution is unrealistic. Many struggles for justice that were fought in the past seemed ridiculous and utopian before they were won. It makes me think of Herzl's famous decree about the Jewish state, 'im tirtzu, ein zo agadah' — if you want it, it isn't a fairy tale. He turned out to be right. Maybe we'll turn out to be right too. History has no true course. We can build the world we want to live in. But first we have to be able to imagine it.



One last thought: a forest is not a good metaphor for oppression. I like forests.



Another thought: Maybe a secular state is problematic. Not everyone in the state is secular. I know the idea is that in a secular state there is freedom of religion for everyone. But it doesn't always work that way. Look at France and Switzerland. Is imposing a secular way of government on people who want to live according to religious law better than imposing a religious way of government on people who want to live according to secular laws? Maybe instead of a secular democratic state, we should aim for a pluralistic democratic state.

My next thought is: I've lived in democratic states and they aren't really bastions of freedom and justice. They're a nicer place to live than the occupied West Bank, but they're still societies full of inequality, patriarchy, structural racism and capitalist exploitation.

Which leads to another thought: We have a diverse group of people with different beliefs and ways of life. We need to make government as decentralized as possible. If we have community autonomy then those who want to live according to the laws of their religion can do so, and people like me who want to live a secular life can do so, and everyone's happy. Instead of another state, we have a federation of autonomous communities. I think there's a starting point in existing structures of community self-government like the popular committees of West Bank villages or the kibbutzim in Israel.

This is another side thought: Lots of secular Westerners are afraid that if religious Muslim and Jewish communities are allowed to self govern then women within them will be abused. As if women are never abused in secular Western societies. I think religious women are not helpless brainwashed victims of patriarchy that need someone to intervene and save them. They can organize themselves to fight sexism in their communities. They deserve our solidarity, they don't need our condescension.

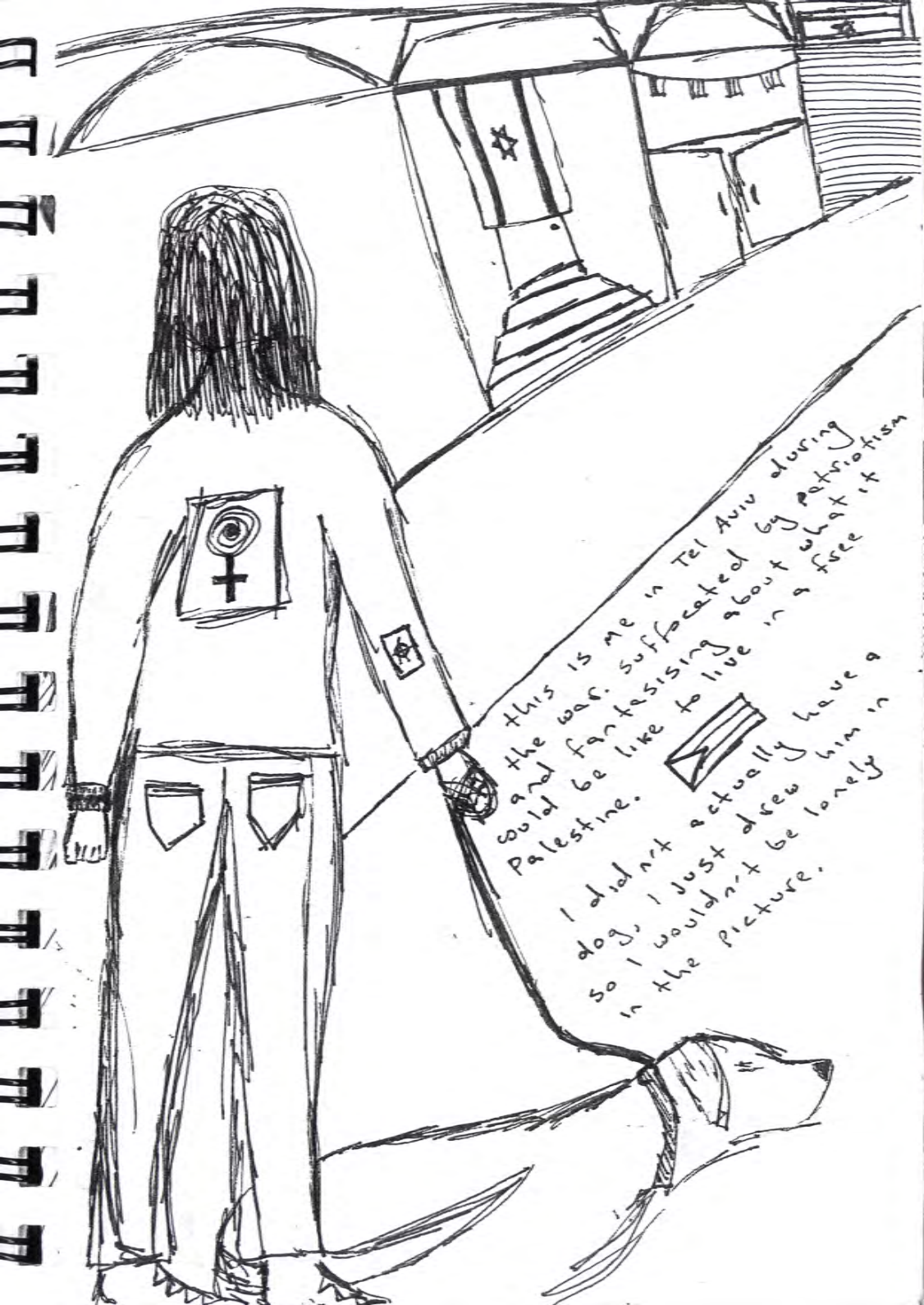
protecting us from the public, i really thought we were gonna get beaten up on the way home. i didn't go to the demo on tuesday, which was in the same place, but i heard that pro-war counter demonstrators were throwing eggs at protestors and yelling at them, 'go back to auschwitz'.

the war has given israeli police a lot more freedom to crack down on palestinian israelis. on tuesday (day 4 of the war) i heard that 200 palestinians (who are israeli citizens) had been arrested since the war began. on monday there was a protest in yaffa, which has a mixed jewish and palestinian population, and the (palestinian) organisers were later interrogated by the shabak, the israeli secret service. there's also very different treatment of jews and palestinians who are arrested, the police are much more likely to remand palestinians without bail. at one of the anti war meetings i attended someone suggested we need to find lots of jews willing to be arrested and refuse bail until all palestinian prisoners are bailed too, but I don't know if anything like that's been organised.

in the west bank things are even worse, on sunday the army shot dead two palestinian protestors in nialin.

the israeli left is really split (like everywhere). i came along to a meeting of the peace/human rights groups who are organising a big demo in tel aviv on saturday, it was people ranging from the 'zionist left' to anarchists and communists. a lot of the arguments were about what the demands of the demo would be and there was lots of talk about what was acceptable for people to put on their banners and what slogans people could chant which really pissed me off. some people wanted palestinian flags to be banned from the demo, and that the demo wouldn't have an anti zionist message, and they didn't like chants like, 'barak, you murderer, how many kids did you kill today'. the whole thing was really frustrating to watch, because i'm such a control freak about things like that that i just wanted to be like, 'this is how you organise a fucking protest!' but i managed to keep my mouth shut.

it's so appalling that people on the 'left' want to silence israeli palestinians and tell them what they can and can't say. i was impressed at the first demo i went to that people were waving palestinian flags and chanting 'the intifada will win' so it was disappointing that lots of the protest organisers objected to it.



this is me in Tel Aviv during
the war. suffocated by patriotism
and fantasising about what it
could be like to live in a free
Palestine.
I didn't actually have a
dog, I just drew him in
so I wouldn't be lonely
in the picture.

My first thought is this: All the peace negotiations that are proposed at the moment are premised on the idea of a two state solution. Israel, a state for the Jews, in the 1948 territories. Palestine, a state for the Palestinians, in Gaza and the West Bank. I don't think this proposition is viable and I don't think it's fair.

It's not fair because it denies Palestinians from the 1948 territories the right to return home and because it doesn't address discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel. It's not viable because of the number of Israeli citizens living in the West Bank, a number that is growing as Israel keeps expanding its settlements, and because Israel's extremely unlikely to cede East Jerusalem to the Palestinian state.

So here's another thought: The alternative to the two state solution is the one state solution. One state in the entire area currently controlled by Israel. Which means that rather than creating a new state, we overthrow apartheid in the state that already exists. This solution would mean Palestinian refugees from 1948 can go home, Palestinians from the 1967 territories would be free from the occupation, Jews who live in Palestine can stay and live in equality rather than as occupiers, there would be no theocracy of any religion, people of any religion or ethnicity could immigrate there and so on. Palestine would be a secular democratic state.

A side thought: The one state solution is usually referred to as a binational state. This is a misleading term. You can't reduce Palestinians to one nation and Israelis to one more nation. Both these 'nations' are religiously and ethnically diverse. Palestinians are Muslims, Christians, Druze and Jews, Bedouin, Kurds, Romani, they are also religious and secular, socialists, liberals, conservatives, farmers, intellectuals, factory workers, business executives and more. Israelis are Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, Ethiopians and Russians, Ultra-orthodox, Orthodox, 'traditional', secular, they are also socialists, anarchists, liberals, conservatives, fascists, farmers, intellectuals, factory workers, business executives and more. To reduce such diverse groups of people to a homogenous 'nation' is crude.

Ok,

so what's your solution?

People always want to know about solutions. They want to know my opinion about this peace agreement, or that negotiation...

To be honest I never pay that much attention to what the politicians are talking about. I don't like them and I don't trust them.

I'm way more interested in what's happening on the ground, the work being done at the grassroots by people who don't have a political career to build.

But I do think that grassroots activists often don't think much about what a solution would look like. We're always too busy dealing with individual trees of oppression (settlers, house demolitions, the segregation wall, road 443, administrative detentions etc) to think about what we want to plant after we demolish the whole forest.

So here are some of my thoughts on a solution. On what kind of political structure I'd like to see replace the apartheid state that exists in Palestine now.

gosh this is a really long email i'm impressed if any of you read this far down. i'm sorry i haven't written about anything other then the war, it's hard to think of other things.

i hope you all make it to solidarity events, in wellington there's a demo on tuesday at 12:30 outside MFAT, 195 Lambton Quay.

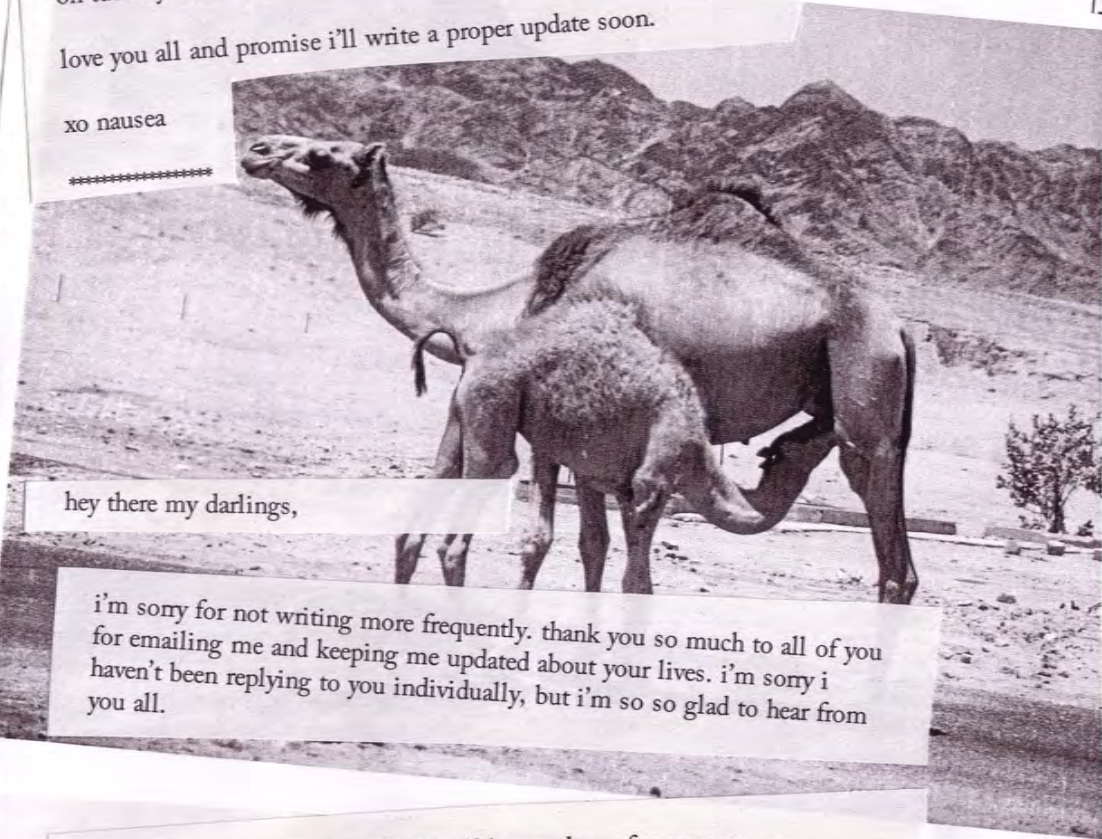
love you all and promise i'll write a proper update soon.

xo nausea

hey there my darlings,

i'm sorry for not writing more frequently. thank you so much to all of you for emailing me and keeping me updated about your lives. i'm sorry i haven't been replying to you individually, but i'm so so glad to hear from you all.

things here are exhausting. the blood lust and war fervour are unbelievable. on sunday the israeli government announced a ceasefire, but it's been on their terms only, not hamas's, so it's not really much of a ceasefire. IDF troops are still in gaza for now, and they won't lift the blockade to let aid in. i hope that people in the rest of the world don't forget about the issue now that the bombing's stopped, because the occupation goes on and in a way the war has brewed a fertile environment for more state repression, like the knesset committee trying to ban two political parties because they aren't zionist, or the government proposing



to 'disengage' bedouin communities like they did with settlers in gaza, as if bedouin living on their land where they lived since before israel existed have no right to be there.

i have such a love hate relationship with this place. it makes me so tired and angry all the time, the blatant racism and militarism of every day life, the fucking israeli flags everywhere. but i really want to come back as soon as i can. i feel like i'm in such a privileged position to be able to help, because of my dual citizenship, whereas most international activists have a really hard time getting in.

as depressing as it is here, there's been some glimpses of hope too. the politicians manipulate and propagandize but there are ordinary people who are really committed to peace and coexistence.

a few weeks ago i visited a palestinian farmer named abed, near the village of walaja. his farm is in a place where the segregation wall hasn't yet been built, so both israelis and palestinians can go there, and he took advantage of that to host an 'all nations café' where people from both sides could meet and have dialogue. now the municipal government wants to build a settlement on his land, and since he refused to sell it they issued a demolition order for the cave he lives in, on the grounds that it is an illegal building. we also got a tour of walaja and visited a farmer there who is about to lose his land because of the wall. when they build it, it will go straight through his greenhouses and 3 metres from his house. he's also going to court to try and get the wall rerouted.

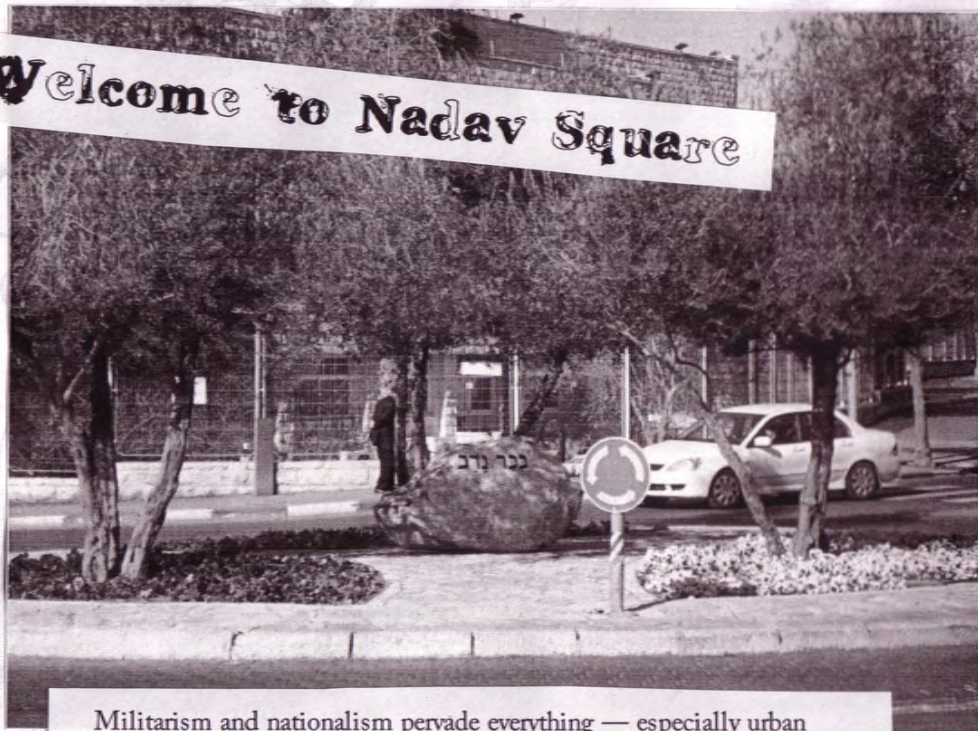
i also spent some time in beit sahour, which was my first time in the autonomous palestinian territories. luckily the soldiers didn't bother to look inside my passport. the alternative information centre in beit sahour has been organising daily vigils since the war started, so we stood in the cold around a fire holding black flags (for mourning, not anarchism) and palestinian flags. then we went inside and watched a film called 'death in gaza' which as it turned out was terrible and utterly inappropriate, i think



Nadav Square is named after Nadav El'ad, a Jerusalemite IDF paratrooper who died during military operations in Hebron.

I feel sorry for Nadav El'ad. It's not enough that the state uses people as canon fodder when they're alive. Even dead they still use you as an ideological tool to cement their power.

Welcome to Nadav Square



Militarism and nationalism pervade everything — especially urban planning. My cousin used to live right on the Green Line (the border between Israel and Jordan until Israel occupied the West Bank in 1967), in Ramat Eshkol, a neighbourhood near Ammunition Hill in Jerusalem. The neighbourhood is named after Levi Eshkol, who was Israel's prime minister during the Six Day War in 1967.

In Ramat Eshkol, streets have names like, 'The Six Days Street' and '1967 Street'. But the thing that grabbed my attention most, is Nadav Square.

Actually it's more of a roundabout, but a pretty roundabout, with olive trees and flowers and a big rock inscribed with the name of the square.



Music at Abed's farm, walaqa



anti war vigil in Beit Shohar

lots of people left. afterwards we had dinner at a restaurant which had a giant screen tv playing al jazeera. the hommous was excellent. the next day we had to be back in jerusalem by seven, so we were at the checkpoint before 6am. it was really fucking overwhelming seeing hundreds of people waiting in line, in the cold, before sunrise, just to get into israel to go to work. nothing that i've seen here shocks me, i knew all about the checkpoints, the house demolitions, the wall, the land theft, the racism in every part of life... but it's so much realer when you meet the people that have to live with this as their daily reality.

well, that's me. i can't wait to get back and hug each and every one of you.

love and revolutionary anti nationalist fervour,

nausea

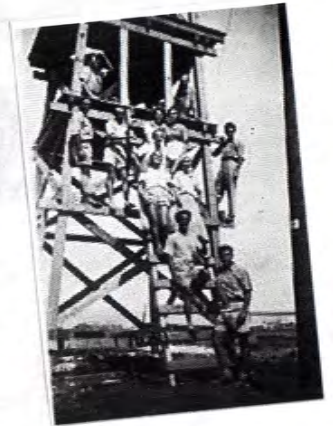
hi friends,

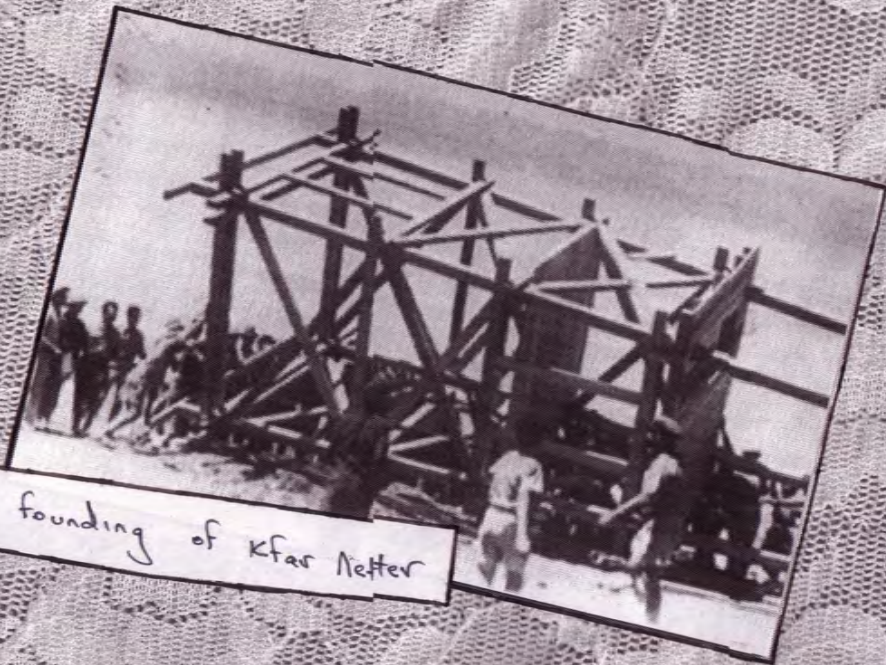
i am so so sleep deprived, every night i promise myself i'll go to bed early but it has yet to happen. i hope you're all well. i feel so out of the loop, i don't even know what's going on in aotearoa at the moment. i get back in 11 days so i guess you can all fill me in then.

i finally got to see my friend's band play last week, they're called the modern dance club and you should look them up on myspace coz they're amazing. their drummer is particularly swoonworthy, i pretty much fell in love with her instantly. it was the first time since i left melbourne that i had a proper dance and it made me happy.

the next day i went on an alternative archeological tour of the 'city of david'. the city of david is this archeological dig/tourist attraction in a

It's funny how colonization becomes so much more personal when you start thinking about the history of the places you spent your life in. Suddenly it's far less abstract. What if I met someone whose parents or grandparents were ethnically cleansed from Ghabat Kafr Sur? What would I say to them?





founding of Kfar Netter



Shavuot parade in the village

palestinian neighbourhood called silwan in jerusalem which is ostensibly the ruins of where king david lived. the research done there, like most archeology in israel, has a real zionist agenda and ignores the history of arab & muslim settlement. it's also used to make life hell for the local residents, who are being terrorised by a zionist trust called el'ad which is trying to take over the area. the basic zionist agenda for jerusalem is to build as many jewish settlements as possible and make life hell for palestinians so they leave. that way they ensure that east jerusalem won't become part of palestine if there's ever a two state solution. the locals had some shocking stories about what they've been put through.

afterwards i went to abed's farm, which i think i wrote y'all about last week. he was having a farmer's market which went really well i heard but i got there as everyone was packing up. it was still good times, we had an oud, a drum, a tambourine and a bottle of arak. apart from mohammed the oud player's terrible pick up lines it was a swell evening.

the next day the alternative information centre in beit sahour was hosting a children's camp for kids from deheishe refugee camp, we painted pictures and taught them capoeira. i was amazed at how good the kids were. my arabic is still real shitty so i couldn't talk to most of them, they just kept asking what my name is, because it's all the english they know, and they were really confused that i have a boy's name.

that night the alternative information centre had a screening of a documentary about the warsaw ghetto uprising which sparked a really interesting and intense discussion. one of the palestinian women there said she couldn't watch it, because she couldn't understand how jewish people who'd been in that situation could come here and do the same thing to palestinians.

last night was the last night of the children's camp, which is organised by an organisation called lighting candles, so we all went back to deheishe refugee camp for their performance and art exhibition as well as a huge

dinner which miraculously was mostly vegan.

so many palestinians i met in the west bank ask me if i've been to
jerusalem, and tell me that they can't go there. a guy i talked to at a party
said, 'you're telling me about my own country'. i didn't know what to say.
he was born in jerusalem but isn't allowed there now. i'm finding it so
hard to make sense of... even though i don't live in israel and don't think
israel should exist, i can still come here and move around freely whereas
most palestinians can never go to their family's ancestral land.

well...

i decided long ago never to walk in anyone's shadow if i fail if i succeed
at least i live as i believe no matter what they take from me they can't take
away my diiiiignittty...

when i get back monster karaoke cuddle pit piña colada times. and then
we smash imperialism and national borders.

i love you all lots and lots and lots and will see you real soon.

xoxoxoxox nausea



AUSTRALIANS FOR
WOMEN'S FREEDOM
www.australiansforwomensfreedom.org

Kfar Netter was founded on 26 June 1939, by students from the Mikveh
Yisrael agricultural school. The moshav was named after the school's
founder, a French Jew named Karl Netter. It was part of the 'Khoma
Umigdal' (tower and stockade) movement. Khoma Umigdal was a
settlement tactic used by Zionists during the 'Arab Revolt' of 1936-9,
when Palestinians revolted against mass Zionist settlement in Palestine
(remember, this is before the state of Israel was founded, when Palestine
was under British Mandate). The idea was to build lots of Zionist
settlements in rural areas which would be able to defend themselves —
hence the tower and the stockade. That way Zionist control of land was
maximized.

That's the history I learned from the village's official website. Then I did
some research on the Palestine Remembered database, which keeps a record
of each Palestinian community ethnically cleansed during the Nakba and
since. Here's what I learned:

Back when Kfar Netter was established, the land it's on was part of the
Tulkarem district of Palestine. That land belonged to the village of Ghabat
Kafr Sur, 16 kilometres southwest of the district centre. It wasn't a very big
village. In 1931 the combined population of Ghabat Kafr Sur and the
neighbouring villages of Bayyarat Hannun and Arab al-Balawina was 559.
By 1945 the population of Ghabat Kafr Sur was 740, and that includes the
Zionist settlements of Kfar Netter, Beit Yehoshua and Tel Yitz'hak. Even
before the state of Israel was established, most of the village's land was
owned by Jews. After the state was established in 1948, the Palestinian
inhabitants were completely ethnically cleansed. Today they and their
descendants are scattered around the world. All that's left of the village are
three houses.

I never thought about how long that tree had been there or who had planted it, and why there was one lone olive tree growing in the middle of a citrus grove. I never thought about what had been on that land before the village. I knew about the Nakba, and that Israel was built on Palestinian land. But somehow I assumed that the places I grew up in were always the way they are, that that land had been empty until the village was settled by Zionists. I thought, like most colonisers, that it was Terra Nullius.

Well here's a history lesson for you and me:



¹ Well, not exactly a village. A moshav is a particular kind of Zionist agricultural settlement.

² 1 dunam = 1,000 square metres, or 0.1 hectares

june 1, 2010

hi friends,

here is the spam email you've all been waiting for. i'm sorry i haven't been in touch.

i'm in shock right now, the slaughter on the coast of gaza is so hard to believe, and the lack of public outrage even more so. i was in nahariya with my aunt this morning, and the parking warden told us that 20 dead is not enough. i feel like israel crossed a line, not in terms of how many were murdered, which is far less than the gaza war, but in how much the government doesn't give a fuck what the rest of the world thinks. i see there's a bunch of protests planned around aotearoa, you should all go. i know it feels pointless but i think it's really important right now.

i'm in kfar vradim at the moment, with my very conservative family who i haven't seen in years. it's a small township, one of those suburban hellholes with lots of giant expensive houses that the people in them can't really afford. it's in an area surrounded by palestinian villages, and my aunt has this funny attitude to them, where she condescendingly likes the christians but thinks the muslims are terrorists.

i spent last weekend in haifa, which is actually a very nice city, contrary to my expectation. i attended the second haifa conference on the right of return for palestinian refugees and creating one secular democratic state. it was organised by balad, one of the socialist palestinian political parties in israel. the attendees were a mix of palestinian and israeli lefties, including people from the west bank and syrians from the golan heights, western marxists and random solidarity activists from different NGOs. there was also people from the brazilian communist party and MST, and one crazy cultish guy from india who told us that india is the capital of peace, and that netanyahu is a friend of his.

i really enjoyed meeting people, especially palestinian feminists, and a lot of the panel discussions were very interesting, although there were problems with translations so i missed out on a lot of what the arabic speakers were saying. on the last day we had a meeting about establishing an international coalition for the cause, which kinda fell apart because

some people objected to using the word 'secular'. this annoyed me coz it was mostly westerners who thought it would alienate potential muslim supporters, and that secularism is a foreign western concept being imposed on palestinians, which is a rich thing to say when it was a palestinian initiated conference. i'm still kinda gathering my thoughts on the conference but if anyone wants to know more then you should ask me.

the weekend before i was at an activism festival on the jerusalem hills. there were about 2000 people camping out, going to workshops etc. there was also live entertainment and stalls from different NGOs and community groups. it was all very rainbow festival — on the first night hippies drumming around the bonfire kept me awake till 2am — but i really enjoyed it anyway. i camped out at the salon mazal (tel aviv infoshop) stall, got eaten alive by mosquitoes, ate a lot of hippie gruel, picked up a lot of reading material, chatted with trotskysts (they support a socialist israeli state alongside a socialist palestinian state, they have no palestinians in their party but they hope to get some soon), went to a couple of workshops and met interesting people.

i also went on a tour of the south hebron hills organised by shovrim shtika (breaking the silence) which is an organisation of IDF soldiers speaking out about the things they've done, especially in hebron. it was really interesting hearing a soldier talk about his experience, that he didn't even know where the green line was or that the west bank was under military law, or even that the IDF doesn't have legal jurisdiction in area A. he made it really clear that in practical terms there is no 'autonomous palestinian area'. it was also really fucked up hearing him talk so blasé about some of the horrific things he'd done. like ethnically cleansing rural cave dwelling people from their land, or taking someone's car keys and confiscating their car to use as a road block. he was so blasé about it.

ok this is getting really long, and i keep worrying about my aunt coming in and reading over my shoulder, so i'll write more tomorrow. i love and



Where do I stand on Palestinian land?

When I visited Walaja, the locals took us to see what they reckon is the oldest olive tree in all of Palestine. Olive trees live for centuries — there are olive trees in Palestine that are estimated to be 3000 years old.

I never really thought about the trees around me before — olive, citrus, pine and palm trees. I never thought about how old they were, and who planted them where they are, and who used to stand under them the same way I do.

When I was a kid I lived in Kfar Netter, a small moshav¹ (village) near Natanya, in the Hof HaSharon region of Israel. We had a six dunam² property full of citrus and other fruit trees, excellent for climbing. It was an awesome place to be a kid. Right in front of our house was a ginormous olive tree, as big as the one I saw in Walaja. In summer it was the centre of my family's social life. My parents put a table and chairs under the tree and strung a lamp from the branches, and when they had guests round for dinner we'd eat under that olive tree.



If I was gonna write Stargate fanfiction, I think it would involve SG1 realizing that the organization they work for is responsible for exactly the same kind of conquest and domination on Earth that they are trying to fight against on other planets, and that they are implicated in the spread of US and Western imperialist conquest to other planets.

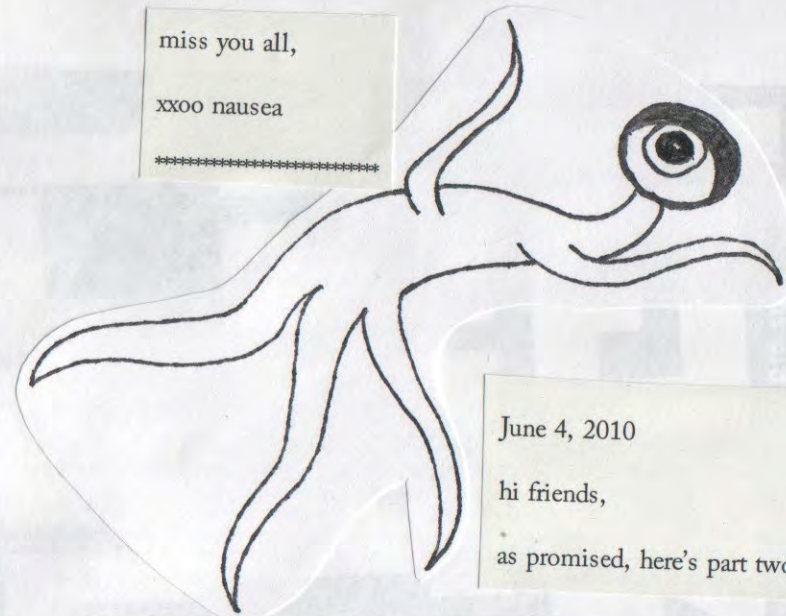
They would of course have to resign from their jobs at the Stargate program because they could no longer in good conscience serve the US military. Then they'd go rogue and become interplanetary guerillas liaising between liberation movements on Earth and across the galaxy. They would establish the Inter-Planetary Solidarity Movement, or IPSM, and encourage extraterrestrial species like the Tokra, Nox and Asgard to come to Earth as solidarity activists and support the struggle of humans for liberation from colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia and capitalist exploitation.

And after they smash Capitalist Imperialist Patriarchy across the universe, all the different species would have a giant picnic on the beach and play with puppies and eat ice cream.



miss you all,

xxoo nausea



June 4, 2010

hi friends,

as promised, here's part two of my rant.

i spent two nights in the galil with my aunt and cousins. my aunt's take on the flotilla massacre is unbelievable: the flotilla was full of terrorists, they tried to lynch our soldiers (a use of the word i find so incredibly offensive it makes me want to scream), people in gaza have enough food and medical supplies as it is, anyone who wants to send aid to gaza can send it through israel, and the entire world media just doesn't want to hear the real story. this is the standard line taken by the israeli media by the way (lynch?! they are seriously calling it a lynch!). my cousin asked her if it's true that the people on the ships were terrorists, and her response was 'what else would you call people who attack soldiers?'. aaaaarghh. now i remember why i never visit her when i'm here!

there's actually a big demo organised in tel aviv on saturday in support of the flotilla and against the blockade, with people coming from all over the country. it's organised under the slogan 'two states for two nations' which i disagree with (both parts), but it's the dominant current in the left here.



some other things i've been doing:

i went back to walaja to visit my friend abed. i think most of you heard the story, which is the typical palestinian story. the municipal government has issued a demolition order for his home, which isn't even a house but a cave, because he can't get a building permit to build a house. abed's court battle against the demolition order is still going on. meanwhile the place is looking really good, an italian delegation of volunteers came and paved the area in front of the cave, so there's a porch area which is sheltered from the sun, and lots of vegetable beds and new olive trees. we planted some peppers, okra, cucumber and tomatoes.

last time i was in walaja the village was just beginning the court battle against the wall, and now the building's started. when it's finished all of walaja will be surrounded by the wall and isolated from the rest of the west bank. walaja has such a fucked up history. in 1948 the entire village escaped over the green line to jordan and re-established themselves there. then in 1967 they were occupied by israel again. when israel annexed the 'greater jerusalem area' walaja's land became part of israel legally (by israeli law, not international law).

but the people living there didn't become israeli citizens, so they are in this weird legal position of being 'illegal immigrants' on the land they lived on since before it was part of israel. israeli law is full of absurd loopholes and double standards of this sort. anyway, walaja is now having weekly protests against the wall, along with a growing number of palestinian villages, to the point where the friday demos coordinated by anarchists against the wall are now friday to sunday demos. i'm cynical about demonstrations but don't know what else can be done, and i can understand people's need to just do something.

Let's think about the history of Hebridan. The planet's human population was oppressed by the Ga'ould when the Serrakin 'liberated' them and brought them advanced technology. This would create unequal power dynamics between the two species. I'm sure that the humans of Hebridan were grateful to be free from the Ga'ould, and welcomed the Serrakins to their planet. Perhaps the Serrakins were very benevolent and genuinely wanted to help the development of Hebridan society. Throughout history there have been benevolent colonizers who just wanted to help 'develop' societies they thought were needy and inferior. Those benevolent colonizers have done a lot of damage. The power inequality between humans and Serrakins would've made it pretty difficult for humans to stand up to Serrakins and make demands about what they wanted their new post Ga'ould society to look like.

The Hebridans were first introduced in the episode Forsaken, when SG1 came across a crashed prison transport ship on an abandoned planet. The prisoners being transported were all human — the prison guard piloting the ship was the Serrakin Warrick. This does indicate that humans are a criminalised population, in much the way that indigenous people and people of colour are criminalised in Earth societies like New Zealand, Israel, the USA, the UK and others which, like Hebridan, have an official history of mutual cooperation but are really colonial societies² where White/European people tend to hold economic, political and social power.

² In the case of New Zealand, Israel and the USA, colonial in the sense that they exist on colonized land. In the case of the UK, colonial in the sense that it was and continues to be a colonial power in other parts of the world.

Tynan: I didn't get that promotion coz humans are discriminated against. By the way, I sabotaged your brother's ship to make sure a pure blooded human would win the race.

Eamon: The reason you didn't get that promotion isn't coz you're human, it's coz you're stupid.

Then the president comes in and arrests Tynan for corruption.

Lazy screenwriting aside — the above dialogue sounds pretty familiar right? I mean, don't you just hate it when those coloured folk/women/homos/disabled people start whining about institutionalized discrimination? Don't they know that we're all New Zealanders, er... Hebridans? Don't you think people need to take charge of their lives and stop blaming the system for their problems when actually it's all their fault coz they are stupid and lazy?

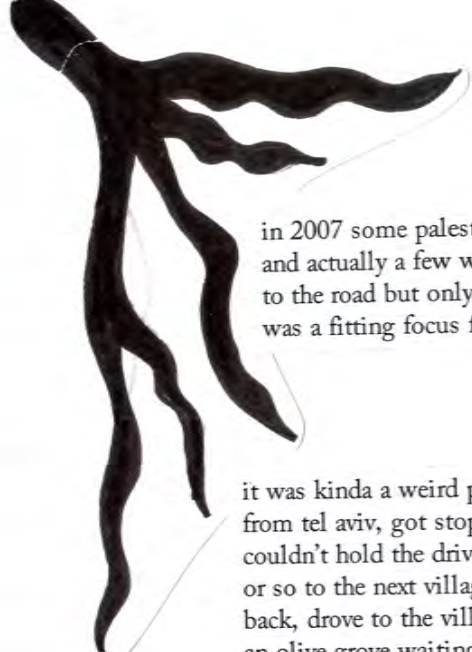
No?

Maybe you're one of those PC liberals who think widespread inequality has structural causes, but the Stargate SG1 writers sure ain't!

At the face of it this story is about a racist eugenicist trying to undermine a society based on mutual coexistence of two races. Tynan's argument about the need to preserve pure blooded humans is disgusting, don't get me wrong. But I think the human resentment of the Serrakins probably does have roots in racial (special?) inequality.

another place that's holding weekly demos at the moment is sheikh jarrah. this used to be a village near jerusalem but now the city's expanded it's more like a neighbourhood in east jerusalem. when sheikh jarrah was part of jordan, between 1948 and 1967, UNWRA, the UN agency that looks after palestinian refugees, settled a lot of refugees from the 1948 territories there, in exchange for them giving up their refugee status. recently jewish settlers have started settling sheikh jarrah, as part of a campaign to surround east jerusalem with jewish settlements so that in future negotiations israel can claim jerusalem as a whole. they've done this through some weird legal loophole i don't really understand: they're claiming they bought the land from the original jewish owners who owned it before 1948 (on the other hand the people from sheikh jarrah can't get back the land that they owned before 1948 which is now in israel). so far i think 2 families, hanoun and al ghawee, have been kicked out of their homes so that settlers can move in. another family, al kurd, has had settlers move into half of their house, an extension that was built without a permit. they've set up a protest tent outside their house, and the weekly solidarity protests are really well attended, even by zionists. if you're interested there's more info here <http://www.ir-amim.org.il/>

something that gets missed by international activists a lot is the struggle of bedouin people in the naqab/negev. most of their villages aren't recognised by israel, so they don't get access to utilities like electricity and water (unlike jewish settler outposts in the west bank which are also illegal), and are under threat of demolition of houses and other buildings. even the villages that are recognised don't get enough funding for basic infrastructure they need. there was a big protest a few weeks ago in tel aviv, which heaps of naqab bedouin came up for. it sucks that people need to travel so far just to have their voices heard. the main focus of the demo was that keren kayemet le'yisrael (the jewish national fund) is expropriating land from the al arakib tribe to plant trees on. it's funny how conservation and environmentalism are used as subterfuges to conceal land theft.



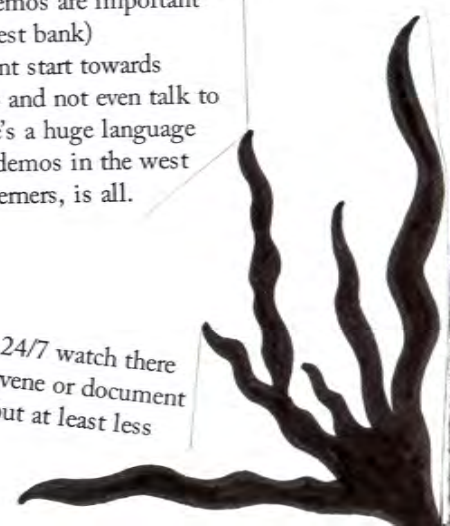
in 2007 some palestinian villages went to court over the closure and won, and actually a few weeks ago the army finally reopened palestinian access to the road but only partially and most palestinians still can't use it. so it was a fitting focus for a protest against the occupation in general.

it was kinda a weird protest that took forever to get going. we bussed in from tel aviv, got stopped at the checkpoint, got off the bus so the army couldn't hold the driver responsible for us being there, walked 200 meters or so to the next village, stood around and waited for the bus to come back, drove to the village where the demo was gonna be, stood around in an olive grove waiting for the others to arrive from ramallah and jerusalem, walked another 100 metres towards the segregation wall, waited around some more while people prayed, marched to the wall chanting slogans for about 5 minutes, got tear gassed, ran away, ran back, got tear gassed again, ran away again, got closed in by the army for a bit but eventually they let us leave, got harassed by the soldiers at the checkpoint for being leftists, but eventually they returned our IDs and let us go.

there's something very ritualistic about these demos. everyone knows how they're gonna end, and there isn't even much point trying to prepare for it

coz the army always has more power. if we all showed up in gas masks, i guess they would use bullets instead. i think these demos are important mostly for the sake of having (jewish) israelis and (west bank) palestinians protesting together, which is an important start towards living together but it's also very easy to go to a demo and not even talk to anyone who lives in the village, especially since there's a huge language barrier. i feel a bit cynical about the extent to which demos in the west bank have become a kind of protest tourism for westerners, is all.

after that i spent a few nights in sheikh jarrah. there's a 24/7 watch there (of israelis or ISM activists) so there's someone to intervene or document if the settlers start hassling residents. it was crazy hot, but at least less humid than tel aviv.



Obviously, this episode is an allegory about Western colonization of, well, everywhere. The Unas could be one of many indigenous peoples in Africa, the Americas or the Pacific. The way the story's writers depict the Unas reflects the way that indigenous peoples are seen through the Western colonial gaze. The Unas have characteristics attributed to indigenous societies by racist colonial stereotypes: they are a tribal society, they live in caves, they are incredibly superstitious, their command of technology is limited to the use of fire and rudimentary weapons, their society is rigidly hierarchical, and their language is so basic that Daniel Jackson figured it out, in like, no time, (to be fair, he is super smart).

The Airforce personnel, for their part, are a bunch of human chauvinists. They show no empathy towards the Unas, and no understanding that they are violating the territory (in this case an entire planet) of another people. They are willing to wipe out the entire population of the planet and justify it by saying that they need the natural resources to defend Earth and humanity — you gotta prioritise your own specie, right?

In this case specie is a metaphor for ethnic group. Which is why the humans from a colonial power of Earth treat the Unas in much the same way that their ancestors treated the indigenous people of North America. They call them primitive, animals, and even 'things', show no respect for their autonomy and feel perfectly entitled to displace them against their will so that they can steal their resources.

They also make it clear they value the Unas' lives less than those of humans. When Daniel Jackson mentions that his Unas friend Chaka led an uprising of Unas slaves against their human master, Colonel Edwards angrily demands to know how many people were killed. Clearly he thinks that his (and Daniel's) solidarity should lie not with the oppressed against their oppressors, but with the people of his specie against all others, even when they are enslaving those other species.

The Unas react to the violation of their territory the way that all Primitives react to Civilized Nations trying to steal their resources — they kill a soldier and string him up as a public warning. The civilized American soldiers don't take the hint and fuck off, they decide to search for the Unas and end up getting into a fight with them. Luckily, Daniel Jackson — archeologist, linguist, anthropologist, namby pamby liberal and all around dreamboat — talks to the Unas in their language, and they retreat.

Daniel later attempts to open up negotiations with the Unas, with the aid of Chaka, an Unas he befriended on another planet earlier in the series. The Unas tell Daniel that the site the Airforce is surveying is sacred to them — it's the place where they rebelled against the last aliens who tried to colonize them, the Ga'ould. Daniel tells Colonel Edwards, the mission leader, that they should find somewhere else to mine. The Colonel responds that they ain't going nowhere, because they just found a 53,000 metric ton deposit of solid naquadah. Instead, like the experienced colonizer they are, they plan to tranquilize and relocate the entire Unas community. If that fails, the pentagon has authorized the use of lethal force.

Then there's some more fighting. Eventually the Airforce works out that the Unas population is large enough to kick their arse. So Daniel Jackson is allowed to strike a deal with the Unas — they will mine the Naquadah themselves and trade it for food supplies from the Airforce. This doesn't sound like such a good deal for the Unas. Actually, Daniel Jackson convinces the Unas to agree not by offering them a really good bargain, but by warning them that if they don't strike a deal with the humans, the humans will just relocate them.

it was really nice to spend a decent amount of time there and get to know everyone in the neighbourhood. the protest tent outside the al kurd family home has become kind of a neighbourhood focal point, and in the evening people come and hang out with us til late (which is good, coz it was hard to stay awake on my night shift alone). my first night there some teenage boys brought us beer and hot dogs at 5am. then i had to escort them away since we're not allowed alcohol in the tent.

it's so weird watching the way these two separate communities live in the same neighbourhood but barely interact. the locals sometimes yell insults at the settlers, especially the kids, but there's not much they can do since the settlers have the army and courts behind them. actually i think one or two are in the IDF, from watching the people come in and out of the house they stole from the al ghawee family. there's been some settler violence towards locals in the past, but it was mostly quiet while i was there. it's also weird watching the settlers' kids, peeking out behind the bars of the gate watching all the local kids play in the street. i wonder what their parents are teaching them. poor kids i really feel sorry for them.

it's hard to grasp the impact that all this has on the kids who lost their homes. when the al kurd children found out i speak hebrew they made me play this role play game where i was the settler and they would ask me questions in hebrew like, 'why do you swear?' 'why are you crazy' 'why are you a thief?' and so on. then they wanted to learn new insults in hebrew. it's kinda funny and cute until you think about everything they've been through in the last year, and then it's not funny at all.

i asked people what they want in terms of international solidarity. they said they need lots of money to pay for legal costs, and of course solidarity demos are good too. they also specifically asked for donations of a laptop with wireless capability so they can update the sheikh jarrah news website (www.sheikhjarrahnews.com if you read arabic) from the protest tent, and a good quality camera for documenting settler abuses. i know it's a bit ridiculous to post that kinda thing all that way, but since they asked i thought i'd let you all know in case anyone knows anyone who might be able to help.

there's other stuff i wanted to write home about, like the tel aviv pride parade (zionist pinkwash) and an interesting discussion on BDS i went to, and an awesome drag party that made me very homesick, but i'll tell you bout it when i get home. now i'm being very tired in berlin, and eating lots of vegan food and riding the underground and seeing people i haven't seen in a long time.

love you all xxx

nausea

Stargate

& the

colonial

gaze.

Because I am a giant nerd, I abso-fucking-lutely love Stargate SG1. I don't care what all you poncy culture snob quasi-nerds say, it is an awesome TV show. It's got everything you want in a sci-fi TV show: ludicrous storylines, scary aliens, outlandish costumes and nonsensical fake science. It's also highly educational and has taught me much about the colonial mindset.

For those who don't know, Stargate SG1 follows an elite US Airforce team (SG1) on their many adventures exploring the universe using a system of interplanetary stargates, keeping the universe safe from megalomaniacal aliens and spreading American universal values throughout galaxies.

The two episodes I want to discuss are in season seven of the series. During which our heroes battle to save Earth and the galaxy from the Ga'ould, an evil race of evil snake things who climb into your brain and take control of your body, forcing you to dress like an Ancient Egyptian dominatrix. Did I mention they are evil?

In episode 7.07, Enemy Mine, a US Airforce team is surveying the planet P3X-403 for naquadah deposits. Naquadah is the Stargateverse equivalent of unobtainium — a super fuel that will power Earth's battle cruiser spaceships. Unfortunately for the Airforce, this planet is inhabited by an alien specie called Unas.

'I didn't want to do it that way. I thought it was important to make a stand. I thought maybe the gesture would mean something to Palestinians, to see that there's Israelis willing to go to prison to end the occupation.'



Has it really got to the point where taking a symbolic stance is the most we can do? He leaves me with something to think about.

Incidentally,

I am not a Zionist

Zionism is a term that gets thrown around a lot, without people explaining what it means. You can't have a decent analysis of any political movement, or a successful opposition to it, if you're not paying attention to the social, political and historical circumstances that shaped it.

In Israel, being a Zionist is synonymous with being a good person and a good citizen. It means you pay your taxes and donate to charity and help old ladies cross the road and it also means you do your reserve military duty without asking complex moral questions. Whether or not you should be a Zionist is way outside the parameters of acceptable discourse. We might talk about what kind of Zionist you should be, what it means to be a good Zionist or who has the monopoly on the term 'Zionist'. But it's taken for granted that all Israelis, and all Jews, are and ought to be Zionists. In fact the Zionist left's political line hinges on the argument that the leftists are the true Zionists, not the settlers, and that ending the siege on Gaza and dismantling the settlements in the West Bank is the Zionist thing to do.

Among Jewish communities in other countries there's the same kind of sentiment. Being a Zionist isn't a political viewpoint that needs to be considered. It is an inherent part of being Jewish. Jewish opposition to Zionism is often dismissed as an expression of internalized anti-Semitism. I think this is especially true among secular and Reform Jews. As Jewish religious practices and traditions decline, Zionism and political support for the Israeli state have become the main way to express Jewish identity. Instead of Jewish people being united by a common religious heritage, they are united by a common political stance. Zionism has replaced Judaism as the common faith of the Jewish people, in the sense that it is not a political idea to be questioned and analyzed but a stance that must be adhered to unquestioningly.



The same lack of analysis is apparent in the way many anti-Zionists talk about Zionism. It's often thrown around by (non Jewish) leftists as if it's such an obvious synonym for evil that you don't even need to explain what it means. The way some people talk about 'Zionists', they sound like some bogeyman that belongs in conspiracy theories along with the Illuminati and lizard people.

Often Zionists are conflated with Jews by people too stupid to differentiate between an ethnic group and a political movement. It's not surprising that so many Jews conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, when so many non-Jews use anti-Zionism as a veil for anti-Semitism. Talking about Zionism as if it's an exceptional ideology, worse then, and different from, other streams of racism, nationalism and colonialism, or talking about Israel as if it's an exceptional state, different from other colonial states, only makes sense if you're a moron, an anti-Semite, or just some arrogant White person who thinks colonization is fine as long as it's being done by White people.

So just to recap: Zionism is a Jewish nationalist movement that supports the existence of a Jewish state in Palestine, the state of Israel. As such, Zionism isn't exceptionally different from other nationalist ideologies. It's a product of its time, a time of colonialism and nationalist movements across Europe. It's rooted in the idea of the nation state, that people can be reduced to a static 'nationality' and that each national group could have self determination by having a state of their own. This is what was happening in Europe in the 19th century, when the Zionist movement was founded. There was Italy for the Italians, Germany for the Germans, France for the French. Jewish people in Europe didn't have their own land base; they were dispersed across the continent. They weren't considered members of the national groups of whatever nation state they lived in. They weren't Italian or German or French, they were Jews — a persecuted ethnic minority everywhere. They were frequently forced to migrate because of this persecution.

A week into the Gaza war Oren and I are downing pints at a south Tel Aviv bar.

'I'm sooo depressed', he sighs, 'this whole fucking war is depressing me'.

'Hey, we're not the ones having the living shit bombed out of us, we don't get to feel depressed,' I answer.

'That's right,' he agrees, 'we just get to feel to feel guilty because we're not the ones being bombed.'

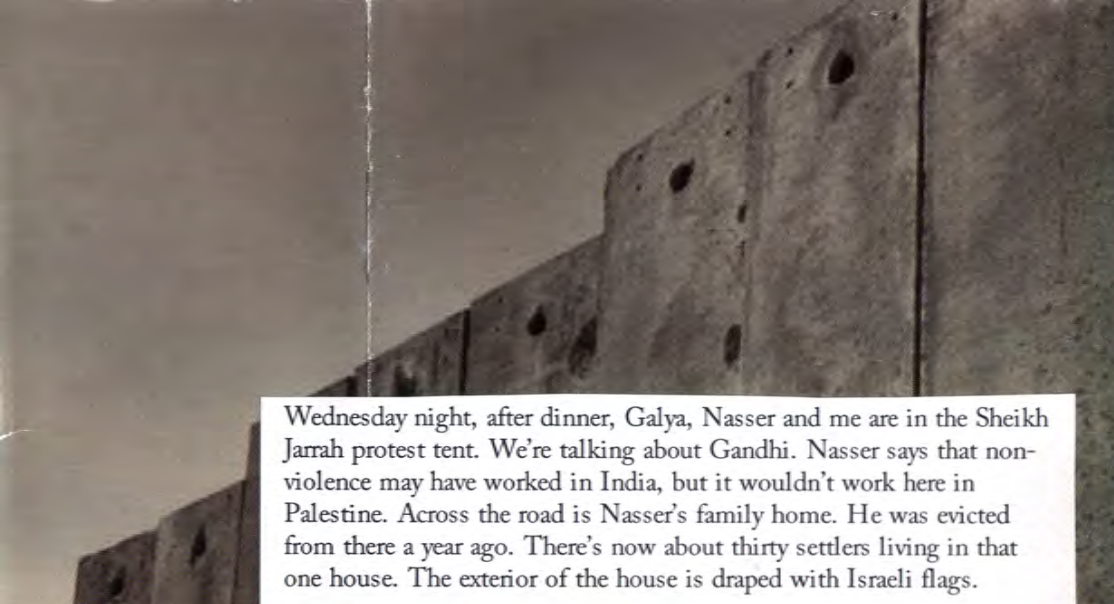
He hasn't had much sleep since the war started. Protests to organize, press releases to edit, media to phone. Mostly it's just the crushing frustration of not being able to do anything that will stop the war. He wants to go on hunger strike until the war ends.

'Do you really think it'll make any difference?' I ask, 'it seems so symbolic... like the government cares if a few leftists starve themselves?'

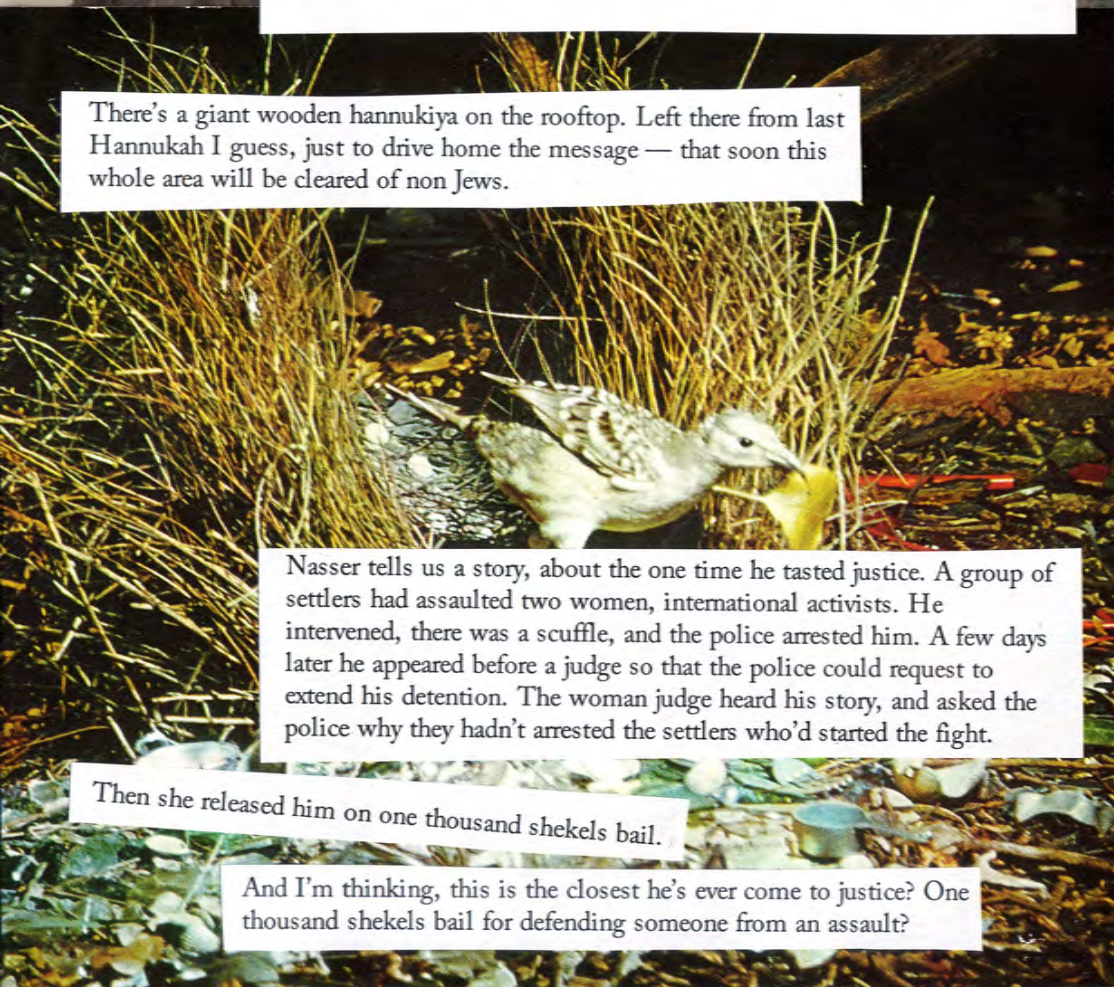
'Every direct action we do here is symbolic. Every time we cut down a fence or remove a road block the army builds it back.'

Later he tells me about the two years he spent in and out of military prison, for refusing to do his compulsory military service.

'Couldn't you get a medical exemption?' I ask. That's how most of my friends avoid military service. There's always a sympathetic psychologist who can sign you off as mentally ill.



Wednesday night, after dinner, Galya, Nasser and me are in the Sheikh Jarrah protest tent. We're talking about Gandhi. Nasser says that non-violence may have worked in India, but it wouldn't work here in Palestine. Across the road is Nasser's family home. He was evicted from there a year ago. There's now about thirty settlers living in that one house. The exterior of the house is draped with Israeli flags.

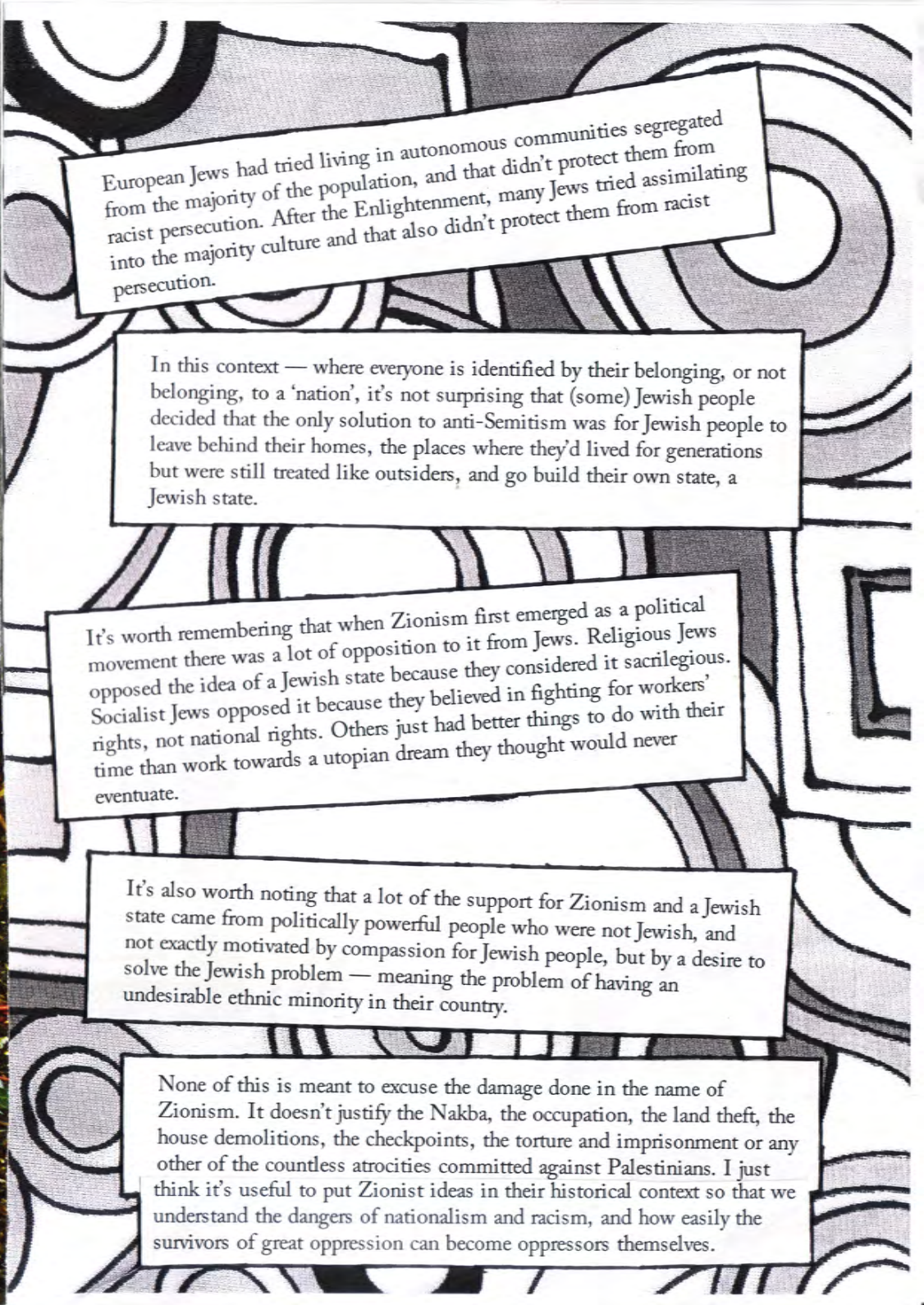


There's a giant wooden hannukiya on the rooftop. Left there from last Hannukah I guess, just to drive home the message — that soon this whole area will be cleared of non Jews.

Nasser tells us a story, about the one time he tasted justice. A group of settlers had assaulted two women, international activists. He intervened, there was a scuffle, and the police arrested him. A few days later he appeared before a judge so that the police could request to extend his detention. The woman judge heard his story, and asked the police why they hadn't arrested the settlers who'd started the fight.

Then she released him on one thousand shekels bail.

And I'm thinking, this is the closest he's ever come to justice? One thousand shekels bail for defending someone from an assault?



European Jews had tried living in autonomous communities segregated from the majority of the population, and that didn't protect them from racist persecution. After the Enlightenment, many Jews tried assimilating into the majority culture and that also didn't protect them from racist persecution.

In this context — where everyone is identified by their belonging, or not belonging, to a 'nation', it's not surprising that (some) Jewish people decided that the only solution to anti-Semitism was for Jewish people to leave behind their homes, the places where they'd lived for generations but were still treated like outsiders, and go build their own state, a Jewish state.

It's worth remembering that when Zionism first emerged as a political movement there was a lot of opposition to it from Jews. Religious Jews opposed the idea of a Jewish state because they considered it sacrilegious. Socialist Jews opposed it because they believed in fighting for workers' rights, not national rights. Others just had better things to do with their time than work towards a utopian dream they thought would never eventuate.

It's also worth noting that a lot of the support for Zionism and a Jewish state came from politically powerful people who were not Jewish, and not exactly motivated by compassion for Jewish people, but by a desire to solve the Jewish problem — meaning the problem of having an undesirable ethnic minority in their country.

None of this is meant to excuse the damage done in the name of Zionism. It doesn't justify the Nakba, the occupation, the land theft, the house demolitions, the checkpoints, the torture and imprisonment or any other of the countless atrocities committed against Palestinians. I just think it's useful to put Zionist ideas in their historical context so that we understand the dangers of nationalism and racism, and how easily the survivors of great oppression can become oppressors themselves.



My safta says that when she first came to Tel Aviv, back in '49, it was a tiny little shtetl. It was the worst two years of her life. Safta complains about the current government. It's full of all these new politicians, no one even heard of them before. They are making all this trouble for everyone, because they want all of Jerusalem for the Jews, and none for the Arabs. This is a bit surprising from my die hard Zionist grandmother.

After the massacre of the Mavi Marmara she tells us, 'I don't know what the army thinks it's doing. The Jews have gone crazy! I hear there's another ship heading to Gaza. What are they gonna do about it this time?'

'I think they should drown them,' my uncle offers helpfully.

'yeah, or they could build gas chambers,' I counter.

'Maybe they should,' my uncle agrees.

I think he's being sarcastic. God I hope he's being sarcastic.



I'm at a party in Beit Sahour, drinking a beer and dancing to Rihanna. Sameer, my dance partner, is the local hairdresser. Actually he was born in Jerusalem.

'Have you been to Jerusalem?', he asks. Yes, I have.

'I can't go to Jerusalem. I have a West Bank ID card.' So I tell him about Jerusalem, and about my travels: the Dead Sea, the Aqaba desert, the Galilee.

'You are telling me about my own country.' I've seen that same grief in the faces of so many people in the West Bank. People who can't go to the places where their grandparents were born.

So we smoke some sheesha, and he teaches me some Arabic words, and recommends Palestinian singers I should listen to. He says he wants to get out of Palestine. He loves his country, but there is no freedom here, no future. In Jordan things are better. There's more freedom.

Zionism was supposed to be a solution for racism, it was supposed to create a refuge where Jewish people were safe from oppression and violence. But Israel is not a refuge; it's one of the most dangerous places in the world to be Jewish. Nor has Israel's existence made Jews safer in other countries. Actually the Israeli state's atrocities against Palestinians, and its claim that it commits those atrocities in the name of all Jews, encourage anti-Semitism and make Jewish people in other parts of the world considerably more vulnerable.

The Zionist solution to the problem of anti-Semitism didn't work. Let's take a moment to consider the reasons why:

Zionism is colonial. Israel is a colonial state. The 'land without a people for a people without a land' did in fact have a people living on it. It's only the White supremacist mentality of colonialist Europe that could allow someone to think of Palestine as a land without a people. The Zionists were following the example of the White colonizers of Africa, south Asia, Australia, Aotearoa and the Americas when they decided that the needs and desires of the indigenous people were irrelevant.

Most Zionists would argue that Jewish settlement in Palestine doesn't constitute colonization because of the historic Jewish connection to the land — it's the place to which Jewish people trace our ancestry. The origin of the Jewish people, and of the Palestinian people, is a widely contested topic. It's possible that Jews are the descendants of the ancient Judeans and Israelites, and Palestinians are descendants of Arabs who arrived in the area after the spread of Islam. It's possible that Palestinians are descendants of ancient Canaanite people and Jews are descendants of Khazar or Berber people who converted to Judaism. It's possible that all of the above is accurate. These questions are very interesting but I don't think they are politically relevant.

Say we accept that Jewish people today feel an emotional connection to the land of Palestine. So what? There are many places that have a historic significance to me as a Jew. For instance, Ur in Iraq where Abraham, father of the Jewish people, was born, or Lublin in Poland where my grandfather was born. I should be able to visit those places, I should be able to live in those places. But my emotional connection to a place doesn't give me an exclusive claim to it. I have no right to deny anyone else the right to live there, especially not the people who already live there.

Fuck me, if the Brits can ethnically cleanse whole continents I'm sure we can manage a small middle Eastern territory...



Brad is from a Republican Oklahoma family. He is twenty seven and this is his first overseas trip. A friend paid for him to come join the International Solidarity Movement in the West Bank.

I think he's finding it overwhelming, and I can sympathize. It doesn't matter how many books and news reports and blog posts you read, nothing prepares you for the real life experience of being here.

Brad was hoping to learn some Arabic while he was here, but actually the local boys are far more interested in trying to impress the women ISM activists than in language exchange.

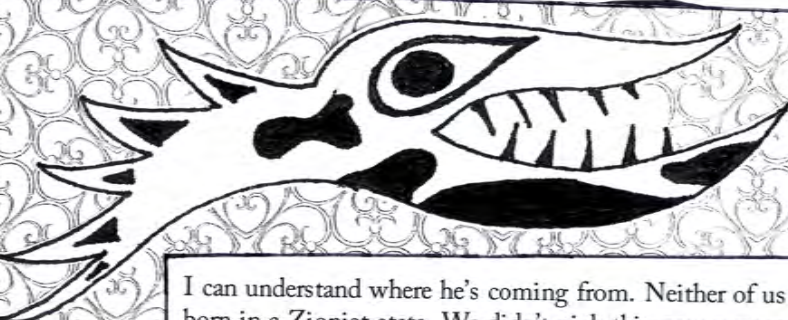
He tells me about some of the demos he's been to in the few weeks he's been here. He's been teargassed in several different Palestinian villages. One of his co-activists has a broken arm courtesy of an IDF bullet. Another lost her eye when a soldier shot a teargas cylinder straight into her face. I wonder why someone would choose to do something this dangerous, when you could just stay home in Oklahoma.

I chat to people...

The first day of the Gaza war, Eyal and me go for a walk on the beach. It's a sunny day. Gaza is only a few hours south from here.

We talk about the war, the occupation, the state. I tell him about my involvement in Palestine solidarity activism in Aotearoa. He is surprised. He asks me why I bother to put so much energy into a struggle that has nothing to do with me. Surely we have our own problems in New Zealand?

He tells me about the time he went to Germany, and how German people kept asking him about the conflict. He told them that it's got nothing to do with him.



I can understand where he's coming from. Neither of us asked to be born in a Zionist state. We didn't pick this government, or the one before, or any of the previous ones. We didn't ask for this occupation or this war. What's it got to do with us? What responsibility do we have for a situation that we didn't create?

But actually, I think it is something to do with me. Coz I have privileges that come with having a Jewish ID card in Israel, and I have freedom of movement which is denied to Palestinians. Coz people in Gaza don't have any more say in the situation than I do, and they don't have the option of saying, 'What's it go to do with me?' when the missiles are falling on their homes, schools and hospitals.

The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 required a wide scale ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in order to ensure a Jewish majority population. Those Palestinians who remained in the 1948 territories and became Israeli citizens are subject to institutionalized racism. They can't own land, their towns and villages have worse infrastructure, they aren't issued building permits, they're subject to house demolitions. This racism is pervasive. It's in the media, it's in the education system, and it's in the justice system. And this racism is mild compared with what Palestinians who don't have Israeli citizenship suffer. Palestinians who came under Israeli occupation after the 1967 war have to deal with land and water theft, house demolitions, checkpoints, curfews, military invasions, arbitrary imprisonment, torture, psychotic settlers, the segregation wall and in Gaza, an all out siege.

It takes a stupefying level of violence to maintain a Jewish state in Palestine, just as it does to maintain any colonial regime. That might be acceptable to people who are able to prioritize one ethnic group over another, but to anyone who is opposed to racism, it's not.

But say it was somehow possible to have a Jewish state that wasn't colonial. I have a friend who always says that hypothetically, she likes the idea of having a Jewish state — if only it was possible to build one somewhere that isn't already populated. Let's say, on the moon, Annares style. Awesomeness of living on the moon aside — I'd still be opposed to the idea.

For one thing, Zionism is racist and Israel is a racist state. A state where only Jews are welcome, or where Jewish citizens are given privileges withheld from non Jewish citizens, isn't any better than a state where Jews are not welcome, or where Jewish citizens are denied privileges which non Jewish citizens are given.

Israeli society is full of racism, both at a structural level and at an individual level. It's not only Palestinians who are affected by Israeli state racism. In the last few decades, Israel's economy has become hugely dependent on migrant labour. Since the second intifada the low paid jobs (mostly construction, agriculture and caregiving) that used to be done by Palestinian labourers are being done by migrant workers from Africa, Asia, South America and Eastern Europe instead.



These workers have few legal rights and are incredibly vulnerable to abuse by employers, recruitment agencies, and the immigration police. Migrant workers are not issued work permits. Instead, Israeli employers are issued a permit to hire a migrant worker. This means that workers are unable to leave their job even if they find a new one. In effect, migrant workers are slaves who are the property of their employer.

No matter how many years migrant workers live and work in Israel they will not become eligible for citizenship because they aren't Jews. Children of migrant workers, who were born in Israel and lived there their whole lives, have a choice when they turn eighteen. They can either become migrant workers like their parents, or they can be deported to a country they've never stepped foot in. More recently there have been huge struggles in Israel over government plans to deport all children of migrant workers. As far as the state is concerned, migrant workers, like Palestinians, are a demographic threat to the Jewish state.



Refugees who come to Israel from Africa are in the same position — treated like scum and given no support because they aren't Jewish. At the moment the Israeli government is planning to build a fence along the Egyptian border to curb 'infiltration' from Africa.

Handy phrases

Arabee (Arabic)

Hello — ahalan

How's it going? — keef halek?

Goodbye — ma'a salama

Please — min fadlak

Thank you — shukran

One falafel please — falafel wahed min fadlak

From sheikh jarrah to bil'in, Palestine will be free —

min sheikh jarrah la bil'in, hora hora falasteen

Ivrit (Hebrew)

Hello — shalom

How's it going? — ma nishma?

Goodbye — lehitra'ot

Please — bevakasha

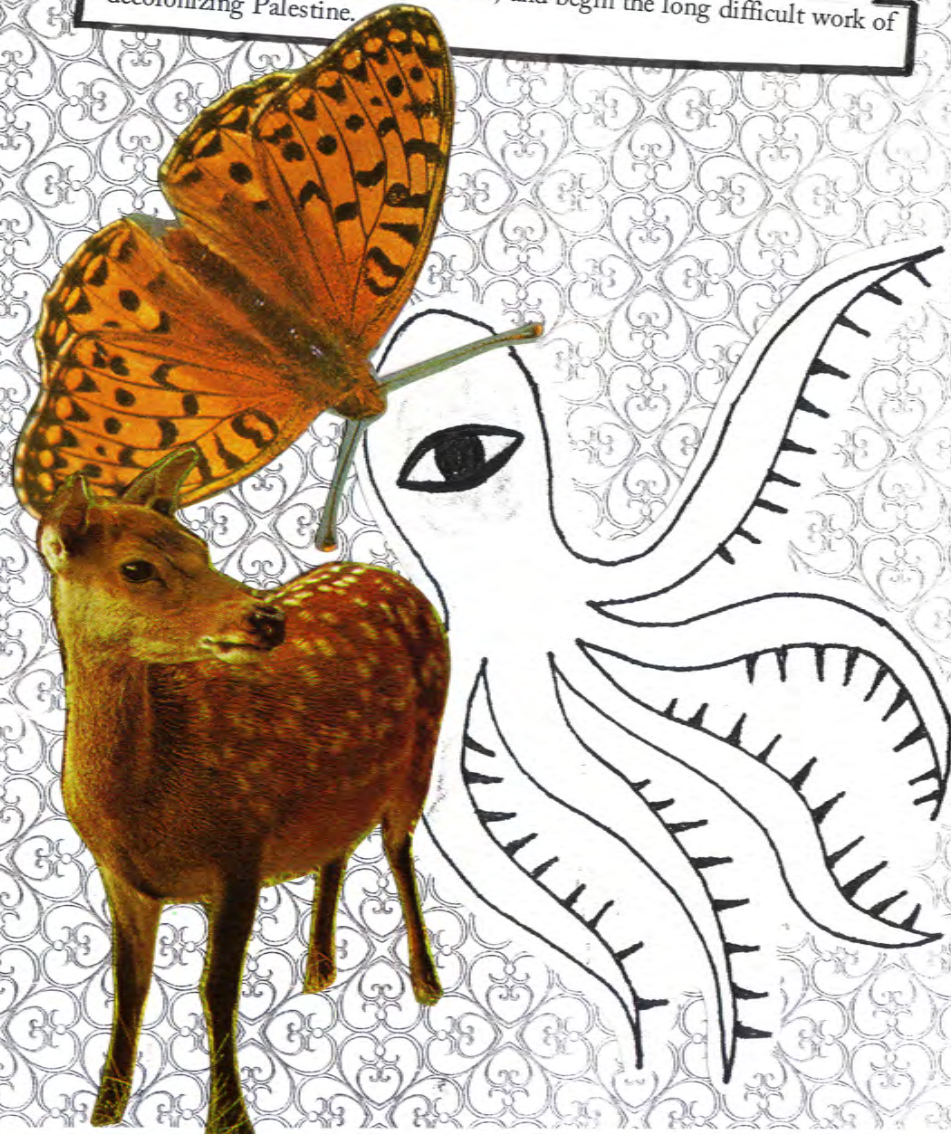
Thank you — toda

One falafel please — falafel ekhad bevakasha

Israel is a fascist state — yisrael hee medina fashistit

Jewish people can't protect ourselves from persecution by building a state founded on persecution, racism and inequality. We can only abolish anti-Semitism by abolishing all racism and oppression.

We can't combat racism with more racism and we can't combat state repression with another repressive state. It's time to cut our losses, declare Zionism a failed experiment, and begin the long difficult work of decolonizing Palestine.



Israeli immigration police harass migrant workers

Many Israeli Jews are opposed to this state racism and do a lot of admirable work to challenge it. But the majority of them fail to realize that all these different instances of racism against different groups of people happen because Israel is an inherently racist state — it is a state meant for one ethnic group alone.

As a matter of fact, every state is racist. All states draw a distinction between Us and Them, the ones who belong here and the ones who don't. It's the only way the state can maintain its power over its citizens. That's why a state isn't the solution to racism.

Now that I've covered the ways in which Zionism leads to discrimination against others, can we talk a little bit about how the Zionist movement has affected Jewish people, especially those who live in Israel?

Zionism brought together Jews from all over the world and attempted to assimilate them into one nation state. Because ostensibly, Jewish people are a nation and we all share some timeless, ahistorical common destiny. Actually Jewish people are diverse — geographically, linguistically, culturally, even historically and religiously. I am not disputing the existence of Jewish identity. There is something that brings diverse Jewish people together, a sense of a shared history. But it doesn't mean we're all the same, a homogenous nation. Nationality isn't timeless and ahistorical, it's a historically specific, constructed identity.

It takes a lot of conscious work by the state to construct a national identity. Zionists constructed Israeli national identity by reviving the Hebrew language to replace the different languages spoken by Jews, and through constructing a nationalist mythology around the Khalutzim, the Zionist 'pioneers' who founded the state of Israel.

Zionists didn't reunite a scattered nation to live peacefully in Israel. They brought together a culturally and ethnically diverse mix of people who all identify as Jews. Pretending that we all constitute one Jewish nation obscures the way that some Jewish ethnic groups dominate others within Israeli society. Mizrahi Jews (from Arab countries) and Ethiopian Jews are subject to racism. Their cultures, traditions and histories are marginalized. Meanwhile the cultures, traditions and histories of Ashkenazi Jews (from European countries) become the norm that defines Jewish experience. The discourse of one united Jewish nation hides this inequality just like the discourse of 'we are all New Zealanders' hides racism within New Zealand society.

It also hides other inequalities in society. Like sexism, homophobia, ableism, transphobia and capitalist exploitation. All of these are massive problems in Israel. For the most part, Jewish people living in Israel are spared the kind of anti-Semitism and cultural marginalization that can come with living in a country where Jews are a minority. But unless we happen to be able bodied, cis-gendered, heterosexual, bourgeois, Ashkenazi males, we still have to deal with all of the above. Unless we change the fundamental power dynamics of society there will always be a dominant group who benefit from the oppression of others. Does it really matter if people are being oppressed because of their ethnicity or because of their class? Why should we have to choose?

Then there's anti-Semitism — the reason and justification for Israel's existence. Except that internalized anti-Semitism pervades Israeli society. Israeli national identity is built on contempt towards Diaspora Jews, their cultures and languages. That contempt stems from the belief that Diaspora Jews deserve the persecution they suffered, that it is their own fault for being weak. For not dominating their society the way Jewish Israelis dominate theirs.

I mentioned earlier that I think Israel is responsible for escalating global anti-Semitism. Sometimes I hear people blaming anti-Semitism on Jewish people for supporting Israel. That kind of victim blaming rhetoric isn't ok. People who hijack the Palestinian liberation struggle to promote an anti-Semitic agenda are vile racists. The blurry distinction between Zionism and Judaism, between the state of Israel and Jewish people, definitely increases anti-Semitism. That blurry distinction is promoted by anti-Semites who want to justify their racism, and it is also promoted by Zionists, who want to censor criticism of Israel by equating it with anti-Semitism. Zionism and anti-Semitism complement and reinforce each other. After all, if one side of the coin says that all Jews belong in Israel, the flip side says that Jewish people don't really belong in the countries they live in.

I can't make an argument that Zionism is a unique evil. Israel is a colonial state like any other, like the USA, New Zealand, Australia, Canada and others. Zionism isn't radically different from other types of nationalism, racism and colonialism.

Anyone who wants to fight against either anti-Semitism or Zionism needs to be committed to fighting all racism, nationalism and colonialism.