



**INAUGURAL  
EDWARD SAID MEMORIAL LECTURE**



**DELIVERED BY**

**DR ROBERT FISK**

**FIRST OF OCTOBER 2005 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE**

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The text below has been transcribed from the audio recording of the lecture and questions and answers session. Care was taken to accurately document the lecture as it was presented. The help of Mrs Marilyn Purdy and Mrs Kristin Munday are acknowledged.

**Published by: The University of Adelaide**

**Editor: Dr Bassam Dally**

**Date: October 2005**

For further information about the lecture please contact:

Dr Bassam Dally

Secretary, Steering Committee

Edward Said Memorial Lecture

The University of Adelaide

SA, 5005, Australia

Email: [Bassam.dally@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:Bassam.dally@adelaide.edu.au)

Tel: +61-8-8303 5397

Fax: +61-8-8303 4367

## EDWARD SAID MEMORIAL LECTURE

Welcome to the inaugural Edward Said Memorial Lecture. My name is Pal Ahluwalia. I am the Professor of Politics at the University of Adelaide and I am deeply honoured to be asked to introduce our distinguished speaker this evening. The lecture is sponsored by the Australian Friends of Palestine Association and hosted by the University of Adelaide. Given the response tonight I am certain that this annual lecture which will be held around this time every year will become an integral part of Adelaide's intellectual and cultural calendar. I would like to begin by acknowledging that this event is being held on Kurna Land and I have also been asked to request that you please all switch off your mobile telephones. At this time I would like to introduce the chairperson of the Australian Friends of Palestine Association, Paul Heywood-Smith QC, and invite him to say a few words.

Thank you Pal. The University of Adelaide is my University and I have over the years been to Elder Hall many times. I can't think of an occasion where it has been put to better use. I don't know what the view is like from down there - but from here let me tell you it looks fantastic. The Australian Friends of Palestine Assoc AFOPA is delighted to be associated with this lecture and I thank the University of Adelaide for allowing AFOPA to be a part of it. Edward Said said to the US Congressional Sub-Committee on International Relations in 1975, quote "Imagine to yourselves that by some malicious irony you found yourselves declared foreigners in your own country. This is the essence of the Palestinian's fate during the twentieth century". To be a friend of Palestine is to be a friend of Edward Said. We live in unusual times; we live in times when black is presented as white. Our government tells us that it is right to invade this country and to occupy it and that that's fine because this country is either this or that. Our government tells us that young Muslims are attacking us not because of the policies of our government but because of a political ideology of hate. Notwithstanding that whenever representatives of those people are asked, they invariably refer to our policies. In such confusing times we rely upon certain people and rightly so. We rely firstly upon the teacher, the academic, be he or she historian, scientist or philosopher. And we rely upon his or her professionalism and integrity. We rely upon such as in Edward Said. Secondly we rely on the journalist when we can because unfortunately too often we are let down by mainstream Western journalism. In 2004 in Glasgow, a survey was done of 300 young people concerning their perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The results were shocking. The results demonstrated that the youth of that city had little, if any idea of the background to this definitive conflict of our time. As I move in Australian society, particularly in my children's generation, it is apparent to me that our young people are similarly disadvantaged. When one reads the news reports of our journalists far too often it is glaringly apparent that the story is being told by someone who has not the slightest idea about what the conflict is about, its origins or its history. One journalist who we have come to rely upon

is the person who is about to address us, like Said we have come to rely upon his professionalism, his objectivity, his integrity. Dr Fisk may be the subject of adverse comment in certain quarters, I hope not. The University of Adelaide will and has been criticised for presenting this lecture. The criticism will be directed at the fact that AFOPA (The Australian Friends of Palestine Association) is associated with the lecture. The criticism is unwarranted. The first object of the constitution of The Australian Friends of Palestine Association is this: quote "To promote peace in Palestine based on international law and relevant UN resolutions". None of the other objects approach or detract from that primary object. Let me tell you that when AFOPA calls for an end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza that it is not AFOPA which is out in the left field. AFOPA stands fairly and squarely smack in the middle of the viewpoint of the community of nations. It is Australia which, when voting on the floor of the General Assembly, chooses to vote with the United States, Israel and the Marshall Islands against the balance of the world community that is out of the ballpark. I have said almost enough, I cannot pass up the opportunity however of thanking two fine Australians who have done so much to make this event happen. There are others who will be thanked but they will allow me to pick out the two that I have and I wish to thank the University's and our own Dr Bassam Dally and Houssam Abiad. Thank you.

[applause]

Thank you Paul. Before I introduce our distinguished speaker, I'd like to say a few words about Edward Said who provided a great deal of inspiration to me personally. Said was a great teacher, a kind person, a friend, a gifted cultural critic. I co-authored the first book length study of Edward Said's intellectual project and his impact on the contemporary cultural terrain, titled *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity*. But I'd like to begin by reading a quote from Said's memoirs that illustrates the paradox of identity that continuously confronted Edward Said. He wrote: "Thus, it took me about 50 years to become accustomed to, or more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with Edward, a foolishly English name, yoked forcibly with the unmistakably Arabic family name Said. True he says my mother told me that I had been named Edward after the Prince of Wales, who cut so fine a figure in 1935, the year of my birth, and Said was the name of various uncles and cousins. But the rationale of my name broke down when I discovered no grand parents called Said and when I tried to connect my fancy English name with its Arabic partner. For years and, depending on the exact circumstances, I would rush past Edward and emphasise Said. At other times I would do the reverse or connect these two to each other so quickly that neither would be clear. The one thing I could not tolerate", he says, "but very often would have to endure was the disbelieving and hence undermining reaction: "Edward Said?"".

There are many possible ways to describe Edward Said, none of them I'm afraid are adequate. For so large was his impact that it reshaped the academic terrain itself. But we can say this: that from a position of self exile and dislocation, he produced the most complex and demanding body of work of any post war cultural critic. Despite his academic achievements, Said was perhaps best known as the voice and conscience of Palestine. Palestine itself becomes an almost overwhelmingly repetitive theme in Said's work. Indeed, the major corpus of his writing deals with Palestine and much of it is topical and direct political commentary, very much in line with his stance on the role of the public intellectual. Hence, we have to see Palestine as firmly connected to the rest of Said's cultural theory. Although the issue of Palestine seems to be of distinct interest, a separate and coherent body of commentary and analysis in fact, it is constantly reflected in all his writing. Palestine forced Said to rethink his literary theory, its urgency, its material reality, its political reality, its location in the world, its ability to construct or become the focus of the construction of his own identity. The paradox of Said's work then is a considerable measure of its power, because such paradox locates his work firmly in a world in which ideology has material consequences and in which human life does not conform neatly to the abstract theory. I would now like to read a message from Edward Said's wife, Mariam Said, that she sent on this occasion. She says:

"My family and I wish to thank the University of Adelaide for establishing this lecture in memory of my late husband Edward Said. Special thanks go to Professor John Michael Innes who initially got in touch with me and Dr Bassam Dally and the steering committee whose efforts made this evening possible. Edward was privileged during his long academic career to deliver innumerable lectures all over the globe which he believed not only challenged him to be creative and innovative but also gave him an invaluable platform as a scholar to present and test new ideas. The Christian Gauss seminar, in criticism at Princeton University, was the first endowed lecture that Edward gave. He delivered a series of lectures that introduced the subject of Orientalism. Since at that time he was in the process of writing the book. It was Said's wish to endow as many lecture series in his name as possible because he wanted to extend to brilliant young scholars all over world a precious gift: a platform where the complicated process of intellectual discovery may thrive. The Said family is delighted that Adelaide University took the initiative in fulfilling Edward's wish and are very pleased that Robert Fisk has accepted to deliver the first lecture. We regret that none of us are able to be with you physically on this day commemorating the second anniversary of his death. However, we will be with you in

spirit this evening and hope that this event will be the beginning of a yearly lecture that will continue forever."

I would now like to introduce Dr Robert Fisk to deliver the inaugural Edward Said Memorial Lecture. Given the fact that this lecture is a sell-out and Robert Fisk is widely known to Australian audiences who closely follow his work, none of what I have to say will come as a surprise. Robert Fisk is undoubtedly one of the world's foremost international journalists. In that true Said-ian spirit he is best known for his ability to speak truth to power. He is the Middle East correspondent for *The Independent* in the UK, he has won numerous UK foreign press awards. Often at the risk of his own life, he has reported about international conflicts. He has resided in the Middle East for many years and has covered virtually every conflict in the region including the current war in Iraq. Amongst his various writings he is the author of two books on Irish history as well as *Pity the Nation*, a book that traces the history of the Lebanon war. His latest book *The Great War for the Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* will be released later this month. Without further ado I invite Robert Fisk to deliver the inaugural Edward Said Memorial Lecture.

[applause]

Thank you Pal. I am glad that Pal mentioned the mobile phones because in Dublin in Ireland a few months ago, I said that anyone's mobile phone that rang when I was speaking, they would be sold into slavery and immediately a mobile phone rang and it was mine. So keep your phones on if you want, there's no problem!

Ladies and gentlemen the last time I saw Edward Said I asked him to go on living. I knew of course about his leukaemia, he had often pointed out that he was receiving state of the art treatment from a Jewish doctor in New York and despite all the trash that his illness threw at him he always acknowledged the kindness and honour of his Jewish friends of whom Daniel Barenboim, of course, was amongst the finest. Edward was at the time dining at a buffet among his family in Beirut, frail but angry at Arafat's latest surrender in Palestine, Israel and Edward answered my question like a soldier: "I'm not going to die", he said, "because so many people want me dead". I first met him in the early years of the Lebanese Civil War. I had heard of this man, this intellectual fighter and linguist, an academic and musicologist and - God spare me for my ignorance in the 1970's - didn't know that much about him. I was told to go to an apartment near Hamra Street in Beirut, there was shooting in the street, how easily we all came to accept shooting in Beirut then. When I climbed the steps to the apartment and heard a Beethoven Piano Sonata, it wasn't the *Moonlight* - nothing so popular for Edward - but I waited outside the brown painted door for 10 minutes until he had finished. "You've read my books, Robert, but I bet you haven't read my work on music" he once

scolded me and of course I scuttled off to the *Librairie Internationale* in the Gefinor building in Beirut to buy his definitive book to add to my collection. His wonderful essays on the Palestinians, his excoriation of the corruption and viciousness of Yasser Arafat and his entourage. His outraged condemnation of the criminality of Ariel Sharon's regime. He was not a flawless man, was Edward, he could be arrogant with much to be arrogant about. He could be ruthless in his criticism, he could be repetitive. He could be angry to the point of irradiation, but he had much to be angry about. One afternoon I went to see him at the Beirut home of his sister, Jean (a fine lady whose own accounts of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, *Beirut Fragments*, is worthy of her brother's integrity) and he was half lying on the sofa. "I am just a bit tired because of the Leukaemia treatment", he said, "I keep on going, I'll not stop". He was a tough guy, the most eloquent defender of an occupied people and the most irascible attacker of its corrupt leadership. Arafat of course, as many of you would know, banned his books in the occupied territories proving the immensity of Said and the intellectual impoverishment of the Palestinian authority. At that first meeting in Beirut in the late '70s I had asked Said about Arafat. "I went to a meeting held in Beirut the other day", Said said, "and Arafat stood there and was questioned about the future Palestinian state and all he could say was: "you must ask every Palestinian child this question" Everyone clapped. But what did he mean? What on earth was he talking about? It was rhetoric and meant nothing". After Arafat went along with the Oslo Accords Said was the first, rightly, to attack him. Arafat had never seen a Jewish settlement in the occupied territories, he said. There wasn't a single Palestinian lawyer present during the Oslo negotiations. Said of course was immediately condemned. All of us who said that Oslo would be a catastrophic failure were, as anti-peace and by viscous extension, pro-terrorist. Said would weary of the need to repeat the Palestinian story, the importance of denouncing the old lies. One of them which especially enraged him was the myth that Arab radio stations have called upon the Palestinian Arabs of '48 to abandon their homes in the new Israeli state. But he would repeat over and over again the importance of retelling the tale of Palestinian tragedy. He was abused by anonymous callers, his office was visited by a fire bomber and he was libelled many times by Jewish Americans who hated that he, a professor of literature at Columbia, could so eloquently and vigorously defend an occupied people. An attempt was made in his dying days to deprive him of his academic job by some cruel supporters of Israel who claimed the same old mendacious slur: that he was an anti-Semite. Columbia, in a long but slightly ambivalent statement, defended him. When the Jewish Head of Havard expressed his concern about the rise of anti-Semitism in the United States, by those of course who dared to criticise Israel, Said said, scathingly, "A Jewish academic who's Head of Harvard complains about anti-Semitism?!" As his health declined Said was invited to give an EU lecture in Northern England. I can still hear the lady who organised him complaining to me that he insisted on flying business class. But why not? Was a critically ill man fighting for his life and his people not allowed some comfort across

the Atlantic? His friendship with the brilliant Barenboim and their joint support for an Arab/Israeli orchestra, which of course now play regularly together, was proof of his human decency. When Barenboim was refused permission to play in Ramallah, Said rearranged his concert, much to the fury of the Sharon Government for which Said has only contempt. The last time I saw him, he was exultant with happiness at the marriage of his son to a beautiful young woman. The time I saw him before, he'd been moved to infuriation by the failure of Palestinians in Boston to arrange his slides for a lecture on the right of return of Palestinians in the right order. Like all serious academics, he wanted accuracy. All the greater was his fury when one of his enemies claimed that he was never a true refugee from Palestine because he was in Cairo at the time of the Palestinian dispossession. He had no truck with sloppy journalism, take a look again at *Covering Islam* about the Iranian revolution, and he had even less patience with American, television anchors. "When I went on air", he told me once, "the Israeli consul in New York said I was a terrorist and wanted to kill him and what did the anchor woman say to me? "Mr Said, why do you want to kill the Israeli consul?"". How, Said asked me, how do you reply to such garbage?

Edward was a rare bird; he was both an icon and an iconoclast. He was also a rare historian. I have been tracing over some of his work for the new book that I have coming out and I have, like Edward, been digging and digging and digging into the actual events of the Palestinian disaster and what went before them in the '30's and I think I will miss very much hearing his dogged and no doubt acerbic and very critical comments on my book. However, the Arab-Jewish struggle, from the conflicting British promises of independence for the Arab states and the support for the Jewish national home in Palestine, to the establishment of the state of Israel on Palestinian land following the Jewish Holocaust in the second world war, is an epic tragedy, whose effects have spread around the world and continue to poison the lives, not only of the participants, but of our entire Western political and military policies towards the Middle East and the Muslim lands. The narrative of events, both through Arab and Israeli eyes, and through the often biased reporting and commentaries of journalists and historians since 1948, now forms libraries of information and disinformation through which the reader may wander with incredulity and exhaustion. As long ago as 1938, when the British still governed Palestine under a League of Nations mandate, the eminent historian George Antonius, the Edward Said of his time, was warning of the dangers of too much reliance on the vast body of literature already in existence and his words are no less relevant today. Listen to this: "It has to be used with care, partly because of the high percentage of open or veiled propaganda and partly because the remoteness of the indispensable Arabic sources has militated against real fairness, even in the works of neutral and fair-minded historians". A similar equality eviscerates the stream of day to day information. Zionist propaganda is active, highly organised and widespread. The world press, at any rate, in the democracies of the West, is largely

amenable to it. It commands many of the available channels for the dissemination of news and more particularly, those of the English speaking world. Arab propaganda is, in comparison, primitive and infinitely less successful. The Arabs have little of the skill, polyglotic ubiquity or financial resources which make Jewish propaganda so effective. The result is that for a score of years or so the world has been looking at Palestine mainly through Zionist spectacles and has unconsciously acquired the habit of reasoning on Zionist premises. Those of you who had to listen to Palestinian authority's spokesmen would agree with me that not much has changed.

Most of the last thirty years of my life has been spent cataloguing events that relate directly or indirectly to the battle for Palestine, to the unresolved injustices that have afflicted both Arabs and Jews since the 1920s and earlier. British support for an independent Arab nation was expressed, of course, when Britain needed Arab forces to fight the Turks. The Balfour Declaration giving support to a Jewish national home was made when Britain needed Jewish support both politically and scientifically during the First World War. Lloyd George, who was British Prime Minister in 1917, would often fantasise upon the biblical drama being played out in Palestine. He said that he wanted Jerusalem for Christmas in 1917. He got it, of course, courtesy of General Allenby and referred in his memoirs to the capture, by British troops, of the most famous city in the world which had for centuries baffled the efforts of Christendom to regain possession of its sacred shrines. Lloyd George, that he should have reflected upon Allenby's campaign as a successor to the crusades, *regaining possession of powers of Jerusalem*, was a theme that would run throughout the twentieth century in the West's dealings with the Middle East. It would find its natural echo in George W. Bush's talk of a crusade in the immediate aftermath of the international crimes against humanity of September 11, 2001. In those same memoirs, Lloyd George makes scarcely any reference to the Balfour Declaration and then only to suggest that it was a gesture made, of course, to reward the prominent Zionist Chaim Weizmann for his scientific work on acetone, a chemical essential in the making of cordite and therefore to the British war effort. Weizmann's name, Lloyd George would enthuse, will rank with that of Nehemiah in the fascinating and inspiring story of the children of Israel. Nehemiah was responsible for the fifth century BC rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem. But at almost the same time Lloyd George was writing this, in 1936, he was speaking far more frankly about the Balfour Declaration directly in the House of Commons. Here is what he said during a debate on the Arab revolt: "It was at one of the darkest periods of the war that Mr Balfour first prepared his declaration. At that time, the French army had mutinied, the Italian army was on the eve of collapse, [and] America had hardly started preparing in earnest. There was nothing left but Britain confronting the most powerful military combination that the world had ever seen." (That was the German Empire and the Ottoman, of course, Empire, which we were going to destroy - intended to - and the Austrian Imperial Empire). "It was important for us", this is Lloyd

George, "to seek every legitimate help we could get. The Government came to the conclusion, from information received from every part of the world, that it was very vital that we should have the sympathies of the Jewish community." We certainly had no prejudices against the Arabs because, at that moment, we had hundreds of thousands of troops fighting for Arab emancipation from the Turks. Under these conditions, and with the advice they received, the British government decided that it was desirable for us to secure the sympathy and co-operation of that most remarkable community, the Jews, throughout the world. They were helpful to us in America to a very large extent and they were helpful even in Russia, at that moment, because Russia was just about to walk out and leave us alone. Under those conditions, we proposed this to our allies. France, Italy and the United States accepted it and Jews with all the influence they possessed responded nobly to the appeal that was made. The French army's mutiny and the potential collapse on the Italian front it seems had more to do with promises for a Jewish national home than did Nehemiah. But now the Arabs were demanding, practically, that there should be no more Jewish immigration, Lloyd George complained to the Commons. We could not accept that without dishonouring our obligations. It was not as if the Arabs were in a position to say that Jewish immigration is driving them, the ancient inhabitants, out. But Lloyd George grasped, if with too little gravity, where the problem lay: "The obligations of the mandate were specific and definite. They were that we were to encourage the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine without detriment to any of the rights of the Arab population. That was a dual undertaking and we must see that both parts of the mandate are enforced". But of course, both parts of the British mandate Palestine could not be enforced and Nazi Germany's persecution of it Jews in 1936, which Lloyd George specifically mentioned would turn into the Holocaust, would ensure the existence of an Israeli state of Palestine whatever have the right to the Arab population. By 1938 George Antonius was saying quite clearly that, I quote: "The establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine or of a national home based on territorial sovereignty cannot be accomplished without forcibly displacing the Arabs." Antonius wanted an independent Arab state in which as many Jews as the country can hold without prejudice to its political and economic freedom would live in peace, security and dignity and enjoy full rights of citizenship. Fearing what he called an unpredictable holocaust of Arab, Jewish and British lives, help for the Jews of Europe, he said, must be sought elsewhere than in Palestine. I quote Antonius again and, remember in 1938: "The treatment meted out to Jews in Germany and other European countries is a disgrace to its authors and to modern civilisation. That posterity will not exonerate in any country that fails to bear its proper share of the sacrifices needed to alleviate Jewish suffering and distress. To place the brunt of the burden upon Arab Palestine is a miserable evasion of the duty that lies upon the whole of the civilised world. It is also morally outrageous. No code of morals could justify the persecution of one people in an attempt to relieve the persecution of another. The cure for the eviction of Jews from Germany is not to be sought in the

eviction of the Arabs from their homeland and the relief of Jewish distress must not be accomplished at the cost of inflicting a corresponding distress upon an innocent and peaceful population". It's astonishing that such remarks, so pressing to the view of the Palestinian disaster a decade later, would have been written in 1938. Yet there were others who foresaw future disaster and future history, in equally bleak terms. Few people remember or have come across this quotation from Winston Churchill in 1937. Reflecting upon the future, Churchill had written of the impossibility of a partitioned Palestine and had far more prophetically talked of how: "The wealthy, crowded, progressive Jewish state lies in the plains and on the seacoast, Palestine. Around it, in the hills and the uplands, stretching far and wide into the illimitable deserts, the war-like Arabs of Syria, of trans-Jordania, of Arabia, backed by the armed forces of Iraq, offer the ceaseless menace of war. To maintain itself the Jewish state must be armed to the teeth and must bring in every available, able-bodied man to strengthen its army. But how long would this process be allowed to continue by the great Arab populations in Iraq and Palestine? Can it be expected that the Arabs would stand by impassively and watch the building up of Jewish world capital and resources, of a Jewish army equipped with the most deadly weapons of war until it was strong enough not to be afraid of them? And if ever the Jewish army reach that point, who can be sure that cramped within their narrow limits, they would not plunge out into the new undeveloped lands that lie around them." Winston Churchill, 1937. "If Palestine should be partitioned", Churchill concluded, "I find it difficult to resist the conclusion that partitionist scheme would lead inevitable to the complete evacuation of Palestine by Great Britain." And so, as they say, it came to pass.

John Bagot Glubb commanding the Arab legion in 1939 would comment movingly that the Jewish tragedy owes its origin to the Christian nations of Europe and America. At last the conscious of Christendom was awake. The age long Jewish tragedy must cease. But when it came to the payment of compensation in expiation of their past shortcomings the Christian nations of Europe and America decided that the bill should be paid by a Muslim nation, in Asia. In 1997 a Palestinian humanitarian group in Scotland decided to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the UN Partition Resolution, the end of the British mandate, the Israeli war of independence and the Palestinian Nakba by publishing a day to day account of events in Palestine throughout 1948. Largely drawn from the pages of the then distinguished British newspaper, *The Scotsman*, a project that sometimes yielded devastating results. Here, for example, is a despatch from a special correspondent recently returned from the Middle East which appeared in *The Scotsman* on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1948: "A new danger to law and order is emerging in the Middle East. It comes from a loosely formed association of Arab terrorist gangs of hot-headed, xenophobic, young men who have sworn to rid their countries of all Westerners and, of course, particularly of British and Americans. Open threats have been made to Europeans living in Damascus, Baghdad and

Cairo, oil men mostly but if they continue to have business relations with the Jews they will be killed. The backbone of this new terrorist organisation is provided by young Palestinian Arabs. They have seen their country overrun and have lost everything they possessed - homes, property, money, jobs, they have nothing further to lose. They feel they have been let down by the British and the Americans, by the United Nations and also to some extent by other Arab countries. They now realise there is a grave danger that the present situation in Palestine with the Jews in total possession of the best part of the country would be generally recognised and legalised."

Another disturbing light into the future was cast in an article by Patrick O'Donovan which had appeared in *The Scotsman* on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 1948. "The war began as a simple war of survival, or so it seemed to the Jews. There was a set of figures that every little sunburned child knew by heart: 700,000 Jews against 30,000,000 Arabs plus the support of Britain. It seemed a victory every time a Jewish settlement survived an attack. But the Arabs proved less effective and the Jewish consent to the continuation of the truce was flouted. It makes no difference that the consent was certainly given in the knowledge that the Arabs would first refuse. The Jews have been free from any obligation to hold their hand. If Count Bernadot's efforts fail then the Jews will wage a war which, frankly, will aim at acquiring a maximum of Arab land - much of which will be retained because it will be empty of Arabs and occupied by Jews. In Haifa they have opened a ghetto for the Arabs. Four of the main streets have been wired off and, just like the Jews in medieval Cracow, Christian and Muslim Arabs will sleep and live here under guard. Business men can apply for passes if they wish to emerge during the day. It will be hard to visualise a more subdued and frightened population than the Arabs left in Israel."

Although the extent of Palestinian dispossession often appears to be a newly discovered fact of Middle East history, at least until new historians like Benny Morris researched Israeli government archives of the time, the British press reported the Nakba in graphic detail. On the 25<sup>th</sup> October, for instance, *The Times* of London reported from Beersheba that the Arab villages are deserted. Their miserable houses had been looted and many are burned. The inhabitants, estimated to be about 20,000 - a number which had been swollen considerably by refugees from the north, had fled and no-one knows or apparently cares where they have gone. It is obvious that most have fled in panic leaving behind their cloaks, sheepskins and blankets - so necessary if they were to survive the cold nights of the Hebron hills. In Beersheba itself, once a thriving centre for camel trading, a few inhabitants remain and at present members of the Israeli army are systemically looting those houses which survived the bombing. It is perhaps an ancient and tacitly accepted rule of war that troops should make themselves comfortable at the expense of the vanquished. But it is difficult to excuse the behaviour of some who ridicule Islamic devotions in a desecrated mosque. Holy books have been torn and strewn about the floor. Such a scene is disappointing to those who had gratefully the care taken by the Israeli army to guarantee the sanctity of

Christian holy places elsewhere and by those correspondents who today visited the imperial war cemetery just outside this town. In spite of the difficulties under which they worked, the Arab caretakers to the last obviously attended the graves of the British and Australian soldiers who died here in 1917 and English flowers are still blooming in the desert sands.

Desecration and murder were not tools of one side in this war. Of course, when the Israelis captured east Jerusalem in 1967 they discovered that Jordanian troops had used Jewish gravestones for lavatory floors. Ambushes and killings cut down many Jewish civilians although Israel's advance into the Arab villages of Galilee was accompanied as contemporary search in Israel has proved by massacres and sometimes the rape of young women. But if Israeli historians have proved the truth of this, Arab historians have largely remained silent about their own side's inequities in this and other wars. In my own book on the Lebanon war I have written at great length about the Palestinian dispossession of 1948, the subsequent history of those Palestinian homes that were vacated by their fearful inhabitants and the fate of the 750,000 Palestinian refugees and their millions of descendants today -many of whom rot in the squalor of camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and in the occupied West Bank. Following their travail the task of reporting their hopeless political leadership, their victimisation, most cruelly demonstrated when they were turned into the aggressors by an all powerful Israel and later an even more hegemonic United States. And their pathetic, brave and often callous attempts to seek the world sympathy have been one of the most depressing experiences in journalism. The more we wrote about the Palestinian dispossession, the less effect it seemed to have and the more we were abused as journalists. For throughout these long years there was one outstanding, virtually unchanging phenomenon which ensured that the Middle East balance of power remained unchanged: America's unwavering, largely uncritical, often involuntary support for Israel. Israel's security, or supposed lack thereof, became the yardstick for all negotiations, all military threat and all wars. The injustice done to the Palestinians, the dispossession, the massacres, not only the loss of that part of Palestine which became Israel, and is internationally recognised as such, but also the occupation of the remainder of the mandate territory and the bloody suppression of any and all manifestation of Palestinian resistance. All this had to take second place to Israel's security and the civilised values and democracy which Israel was widely promoted. Her army, which often behaved with cruelty and indiscipline, was to be regarded as an exemplar of purity of arms and those of us who witnessed Israel's killing of civilians were to be abused as liars, anti-Semites or, of course, friends of terrorism. Report the wanton use of violence by Palestinians, aircraft hijackings, attacks on illegal Jewish settlements and then inevitably suicide bombings on the innocent, the executioner with explosive strapped to his or her body and that was terror, pure and simple, dangerously present but comfortably isolated from reason, cause or history. As long as they were accused of crimes that had been committed because they

hated Israel or hated Jews or were brought up as anti-Semites, despite being Semites themselves, or paid to carry out terror or because they hated democracy or represented evil, most of these explanations would later be adopted by the Americans about their Arab enemies, then Palestinians were outside the boundaries of reason, they were generically violent, they couldn't be talked to, they could not be negotiated with. You cannot negotiate with terrorists.

Terrorism is a word that has become a plague on our vocabulary. The excuse and reason and moral permit for State sponsored violence, our violence which is now used on the innocent of the Middle East evermore outrageously and promiscuously. Terrorism, Terrorism, Terrorism has become a full stop, a punctuation mark, a phrase, a speech, a sermon, the be all and end all of everything that we must hate in order to ignore injustice and occupation and killing on a large scale. Terror, Terror, Terror, Terror, Terror. It is a sonata, a symphony, an orchestra tuned to every television and radio station and news agency report, the soap opera of the devil served up on prime time or distilled in wearily dull and mendacious form by the right wing commentators of the American east coast and, I am sorry to say by many of my American colleagues, also by some of the intellectuals of Europe. Strike against terror, victory over terror, war on terror, everlasting war on terror. Rarely in history have soldiers and journalists and presidents and kings aligned themselves in such thoughtless and questioning ranks. In August 1914 the soldiers of Britain, France and Germany thought they would be home by Christmas, today we are told we are fighting forever. The war is eternal; the enemy is eternal, his face changing on our screens. Once he lived in Cairo and sported a moustache and nationalised the Suez Canal. Then he lived in Tripoli and wore a ridiculous military uniform and helped the IRA and bombed American bars in Berlin. Then he wore a Muslim imam's gown and ate yoghurt in Tehran and planned Islamic revolution. Then he wore a white gown and lived in a cave in Afghanistan. And then he wore another silly moustache and resided in a series of palaces around Baghdad. Terror, Terror, Terror. Finally he wore a Kuffia head-dress and outdated, Soviet style military fatigues, his name was Yasser Arafat and he was the master of world terror. And then he was a super statesman and went to the Whitehouse and then again he became a master of terror linked by his Israeli enemies to the terror maestro of them all: the one who lived in the Afghan cave.

Arafat's greatest error, his support for Sadam [Hussein], was to give him his greatest and hollowest victory. Financially cut off by the wealthiest gulf Arab states, especially Kuwait itself of course, and derided by the world, Arafat shared the fate of King Hussein of Jordan, who also supported Sadam. He was now weak enough to be accepted as a peace partner of Israel. The Palestinians were not at first allowed to represent themselves, remember! President George Bush's senior, Middle East peace, was to permit the Palestinians to attend the Madrid Middle East conference only as part of a

Jordanian delegation. A delegation, moreover, in which Arafat was very definitely not invited to participate and the Israelis would have a veto over those who attended. In his theatrically arranged Kuffia head-dress, his khaki uniform and his silly pistol, Arafat was now a strangely dated figure. A revolutionary from the past who would soon have to put aside childish things. Even the word revolutionary sounded odd. Arafat's revolution was now over. For the half million Palestinian refugees in Lebanon who could now never return to their 1948 homes in what is now Israel. For the final settlement of Oslo was scarcely going to allow them to return to Haifa, Natanya and Galilee, it was a betrayal. I could accept, an Israeli soldier told me as he was helping to impose another curfew on Hebron in early September of 1993, compared to the others Arafat wasn't a bad terrorist. What an inventory on the revolutionary life of Yasser Arafat. Revolutionaries are supposed to be intellectuals, Rosbeair, Lenin, Marx, Trotsky, Atatürk, Naser, Castro, Guevara. They wrote books or talked ground philosophy amid their struggles, not so Arafat. He could rarely be seen reading books, let alone writing them. What he had however, was single mindedness, something to which Edward Said always paid attention and paid tribute. There was a certain self dedication in this and a lot of arrogance but it was a great strength. From start to finish it was Palestine, Palestine, Palestine. For the Palestinian poor of course, his uniform and head-dress, fancy dress to us Westerners and to the Israelis were necessary. Part of the binding of the spirits amid exile, but those spirits were now to be abandoned. A new rationale had been laid out in the Middle East. One which on a far greater geopolitical as well as geographical scale continues to this day. It goes like this: America is running a peace process, anyone supporting it is a friend, that includes Israel and for time being it included Arafat as well unless he was forced to metamorphose which he was back into being a super terrorist. It also included Egypt and Jordan and Saudi Arabia, our friends in the Middle East. But any Arab who believed that the Arafat-Rabin agreement was flawed or who believes today that Washington's monumentally ambitious and hopeless plans for Iraq and the entire Middle East are based upon lies or deceit, anyone who opposed this policy, objected to it, disagreed with it, however non violently, or said anything that might damage it was treated as an enemy or, more specifically in the words of the US press, an enemy of peace. Thus, by extension, anyone opposing America's policy in the region, which also means opposing Israel, is an enemy of peace. The all embracing phrase leads to grotesque distortion. When those Palestinian protesters demonstrated against the Israeli dynamiting and rocketing of seventeen houses in the Tofa district of Gaza in 1993 for example, CNN showed a tape of one of the young men stoning Israeli troops. I remember this because I was filming the same scene with a film crew for Channel 4 in Britain. But CNN's commentary described the young men as protesting at the peace process. You see if he was fighting Israel the Palestinian must be an enemy of peace, even if that had been his cause of complain it was clearly regarded as illegitimate, yet it was the PLO-Israeli Oslo agreement that in many Palestinian eyes

permitted Israel to keep both troops and settlements in the West Bank. It was Arafat, for tens of thousands of his detractors who legitimised the Jewish settlements because American newspapers and television networks also did not want to be regarded as enemies of peace. Many in the West still did not realise just how disastrously Arafat's peace accord with Israel was disintegrating. Under the Oslo agreement you may remember the occupied west bank would be divided into three zones. Don't go to sleep because I was tempted to when I had to read the Oslo agreement about ten times. Zone A would come under exclusive Palestinian control, it is actually sad to read this now. Zone B under Israeli military occupation in participation with the Palestinian authority and Zone C under total Israeli occupation. In the West Bank Zone A comprised only 1.1 percent of the land. Whereas in Gaza, overpopulated rebellious insurrectionally and now abandoned by Israel almost all the territory was to come under Arafat's control. He, after all, was to be the policeman of Gaza. Zone C in the west bank comprised 60 percent of the land which allowed Israel to continue the rapid expansion of settlements for Jews and Jews only on Arab land. Arafat, as Edward Said was the first to point out had already conceded Jerusalem. He had already agreed that it would be discussed only during final status talks. It thus fell outside the zoning system remaining entirely in Israeli hands.

The truth was that Oslo, far from holding out the possibility of statehood from the Palestinians, allowed Israel to renegotiate UN security council resolution 242. Whereas 242 demanded a withdrawal of Israeli forces from territory captured during the 1967 war, Oslo permitted the Israelis to decide from which bits of the remaining 22 percent of Palestine they would withdraw. The zoning system represented this new Israeli reality. The Israelis had the maps, Oslo, incredibly, was negotiated without proper maps on the Palestinian side and the Israelis decided which zones would be given to the Palestinians as a gift, you see, at once and which would be haggled over later. Indeed a detailed investigation in 2000 of Israeli withdrawals under the articles of agreement would prove that not a single one of these accords had been honoured by the Israelis since the 1991 Madrid conference. I'll just, because we need to get the record straight, tell you what happened. The Oslo 2 Taba agreement concluded by Rabin in September 1995, two months before he was assassinated, promised three Israeli withdrawals from Zones A, B and C. These to be completed by October 1997. Final status agreements Jerusalem, refugees, water, settlements would have to be completed by October 1999 by which time the occupation was supposed to have ended. In January 1997 however a handful of Jewish settlers were granted 20 percent of Hebron despite Israel's obligation under Oslo to leave all West Bank towns. By October 1998, a year later, Israel had not carried out the Taba accords. Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, negotiated a new agreement at Wye-River dividing the second redeployment promised at Taba into two phases but he honoured only the first of them. You can see how journalists get tired of this stuff; I mean the New York Times is not going to worry. Netanyahu

had promised to reduce the percentage of West Bank land under exclusively Israeli occupation from 72 percent to 59 percent, transferring 41 percent of the West Bank to zones A and B. But at Sharam El Sheik in 1999, Ehud Barak, the new Israeli prime minister, reneged on this agreement, made at Wye-River, fragmenting Netanyahu's two phases into three, the first of which would transfer 7 percent from zone C to zone B. All implementations of the agreements stopped there. You can't really expect many journalists to go through this but if you work it out you see what was happening. In the meantime the number of settlers illegally living on Palestinian land had risen in the seven years since Oslo from 80,000 to 150,000. Even though the Israelis as well as the Palestinians were forbidden to take unilateral steps under the terms of the agreement. The Palestinians saw this not without reason as proof of bad faith. Little wonder that by 1999 Edward Said, who had for many years shown both compassion and understanding for Arafat's brave role as the sole representative of a forgotten and dispossessed people, felt able to describe the Palestinian leader not only as a tragic figure but as the *Petain* of the Palestinians. The moment the Oslo Accord was revealed, the Israeli Likud Party foresaw the end of Jewish colonies on Palestinian land. Netanyahu claimed that these Israeli islands isolated in the PLO Sea will not last long. He need not have worried. On the 27<sup>th</sup> September 1994, when one hundred and forty Jewish colonies already existed in the West Bank but when the Oslo agreement was only a year old, the Israeli prime minister, Rabin, approved the construction of an extra one thousand apartments at the settlement of Alfe Menash close to Jerusalem. By 1996, 86.5 percent of east Jerusalem had been removed from Palestinian residents' control and use [and] 34 percent of east Jerusalem was expropriated for the building of Jewish colonies. The Jerusalem municipality announced plans to build another 70,000 new housing units over the next ten years. Then came the opening of the archaeological tunnel from the Wailing Wall which ran beneath Muslim east Jerusalem. Violent protests against the opening of the tunnel which was paid for by the Israeli ministry of religious affairs left 43 Palestinians and 11 Israeli soldiers dead. We know, of course, the history of the rest of this illegal colonial expansion which continued throughout the Oslo peace process without active encouragement from within the United States. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1997, the New York Times actually carried a full page advertisement signed by ten Christian spiritual leaders, including Pat Robertson and Gerry Falwel and all the rest of our friends, all supporting the continued sovereignty of the state of Israel over the holy city of Jerusalem. "We believe that Jerusalem or any portion of it shall not be negotiable in any peace process". What did Arafat think when he read this? He didn't read it, did he? Jerusalem must remain undivided as the eternal capital of the Jewish people. This spiritual message, as it was called, claimed that Israel had demonstrated sensitivities to the concerns and needs of all Jerusalem residents including the Palestinians and Israel's right to Jerusalem as a sovereign capital came by divine mandate. In due course, as we know, Sharon himself abandoned the settlements in the dustbin of Gaza but went on building as he does today in the West Bank.

What does this really mean? The dispossession of the Palestinians and the construction of settlements for Jews and Jews only on Arab land? In 1993 I made a series of films called *From Beirut to Bosnia* which were intended to ask and to explain why many Muslims in the region of the Middle East were coming to hate and despise the West. Our second film was about the Palestinians in both Gaza and West Bank and in one sequence we found a man, a Palestinian living on a little bit of land in East Jerusalem, who was trying to hold onto his land but had been given an order to quit and get out because there was going to be an Israeli settlement, part of the Ma'ale Adomim settlement which is now the focus of attention by both the Americans and Israelis. I would like to show you this short sequence in order to show those of you who haven't been to Palestine-Israel what it looks like when the bulldozers arrive.

[Movie starts]

[Narrator voice (Robert Fisk)] Jerusalem, holy to Jews, Muslims and Christians has been illegally annexed by Israel which still claims it to be its eternal and unified capital. East of the city, outside the internationally recognised border of Israel, only a little bit of the old rural Palestine remains and the huge Jewish settlements built on Palestinian land are now cities. A ring of Israeli concrete around Jerusalem. It takes a brave Palestinian to hold out here, to cling onto his own land in the face of Israel's expanding settlements. But in this little patch of orchard is a family that has refused to leave its land, despite an order to get out. [Bulldozer Noise]

Robert Fisk (RF): what is happening Sulleman?

Sulleman Khateeb (SK): as you see they are taking the land here.

RF: but, when you see this what future is there for you. This land is gone. How possibility you hope to keep your land in the face of this?

SK: because we still in the land, we have our house in the land covered with trees, with walls [fence], it is a "live" land.

RF: it is a living land.

SK: it is a living land of course.

[Narrator]

Mohamed Khateeb and his son had been told to leave their home to make way for a settlement for Jews, some of them from as far away as Russia.

[Bulldozer Noise]

RF: Sulleman how long has your family owned this land here?

SK: we own it as long as we live. It is inherited from our grandfathers and fathers as well.

RF: how many years do you think that is, more than a hundred years?

SK: yes

RF: do you have the documents to prove this. Do you have the original deeds and paper proving ..

SK: of course we have, we have documents from the ottoman period and from the period of the British mandate also.

RF: and you have your tax forms and you have your documents showing that this bit of land that we are on now ..

SK: yes, all of this yes

[Pointing to Mohamed Khateeb, MK] RF: why is he fighting fro his land? Ask him would ya?

SK: because it is his house

[Interrupting] RF: would you ask him?

SK [speaking in Arabic, translation]: why are you fighting to keep the house?

MK [speaking in Arabic, translation]: of course I will fight as much as I can. I will not let the house go at all [to be lost], our soles will go before our house will go. It is my property, the property of my father, my grandfather and great grandfather. What do you expect?

Um Suleman [mother of Suleman speaking in Arabic, translation]: it is not enough [referring to surviving of the land], we cannot eat, drink or sleep. We fill ill due to all this trouble. Despite all this, are we expected to leave our home? Where would we go? Are we expected to go and live in other people's homes? He [her husband] is sick and needs support and we both are elderly and sick. Is not this oppression?

RF: Suleman, what is this document we have here?

SK: a warning for us to leave the house.

RF: this is the official notice to quit.

SK: yes

RF: this is in Hebrew. Do you speak Hebrew?

SK: no, not very much

RF: what have you done with this document? Where is the original?

SK: ah, we gave to our lawyer Jonathan Kuttab.

RF: Kuttab

SK: yes

RF: and he is in East Jerusalem.

SK: Easy Jeruasalem

[Narrator] Although annexed by Israel the centre of east Jerusalem is still ostentatiously Arab. Israelis fear they will be attacked here. Israeli taxi-men don't like to drive on this side of the city.

[Arabic music]

RF [reading a sign on the wall]: Palestinian centre for the study of violence, [laughing] that sounds promising. Jonathan Kuttab there is our man.

Jonathan Kuttab (JK): he was given a charge sheet saying that he has to turn over his property to the state. But you see it was needed for public purpose.

RF: public purpose, meaning?

JK: hospitals, schools, roads, something that benefits the community. So we were told the public purpose was a special scheme for building your own home. I said wonderful. He has been trying very hard to build a home for his son on this land [getting permission to build] and was told you could not build on it. So if now he can build on it he will be glad to build a unit, a single apartment here in return for turning over his property. He does not want money, but he wants to participate in this wonderful public scheme.

RF: and?

JK: well, he was told, I'm afraid you are not a member of the public we intend to serve. Because the only people who are entitled under this program are either new immigrants or those who have served in the army.

RF: but he cannot serve in the army

JK: he said our army; it has to be the Israeli army. If the purpose for which this confiscation occurred is to serve Jews and Jews only and excludes him we object.

[Mr and Mrs Khateeb chatting in the chook shed]

[Narrator] Above Mohamed Khateeb's home the settlements continue to be built and among the settlers moving in are Europeans. Sonya Layani was born in France.

[Sonya and a man speaking in Hebrew]

[RF speaking in French and discussing the price of the houses in the new settlement with Sonja Layani]

[Car noise]

[Narrator] Mikey Molad is head of the settlements resident's association.

Mikey Molad (MM): Arabs and Jews and..., here I'll let you understand a little bit about the geography. Over here where the minaret is the mosque is a village is outside of Jerusalem.

RF: and obviously is an Arab Muslim village

MM: it is an Arab Muslim village called Chesmay, in front of us you see build your own house scheme, where on the right of it we see an Arab house and he is was owner of part of the land and he wanted to buy ..

[Narrator] Mr Molad has been following the story of Mohamed Khateeb and the Palestinian's efforts to keep his land.

MM: ...so we went to court

RF: because

MM: because this is part of my land and I'm willing for it again but I want the right to buy on it and its in court and we will wait and see ...

RF [interrupting]: why won't you let him?

MM: because he is an Arab not Jewish

RF: do you think it is fair it is still in the courts. Shouldn't the Israeli just say fine this man wants to be with us!

MM: if you talk fairness maybe you are right but we live in a society that there are certain laws and if I would have been him I won't even try to go and live within dense Jewish settlement it won't fit and there will be problems.

[End of movie, Robert Fisk speaks to the audience]

I have to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that when that series of films was shown on the Discovery Channel in America after the first showing, twice on each side of the United States, Israeli lobby groups attacked it saying it was anti-Semitic and there were no further showings in either Britain or America. We had hoped, of course, that Mohamed Khateeb might be able to keep his home with the publicity that we tried to generate. Discovery is a well watched

channel around the world particularly in the United States. He was thrown out of his home and with his old, elderly wife went to live in that village called Chismay which as Mikey Molad, the leader of the settlements committee pointed out, is outside Jerusalem. Another family gone.

The pumpkin, you see, of the Oslo agreement could never be turned into the golden carriage of peace. But it took the collapse of the Arafat Barak talks at Camp David in 2000 to prove this true. Even then Clinton was reduced to claiming that the Oslo negotiations were based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 which is not what Oslo said at all. And even Arafat must have realised that the end had come when Madeline Albright made her preposterous offer of "a sense of sovereignty over Muslim religious sites in Jerusalem". Only the silly villages that Arafat might have controlled outside his would-be capital would have virtually full sovereignty according to the Americans. There then followed the wilfully misleading leaks to the effect that Arafat had turned down 95 percent of Palestine. In reality around 64 percent of the 22 percent of Palestine was left. Barak would not give up Jerusalem or abandon the settlements. Arafat would not make the concession of ceding Israeli control over all of Jerusalem. So the sons of Abraham acknowledged what so many Israelis and Palestinians knew all along: that Oslo didn't work.

Clinton predictably saw fit to praise the stronger of the two parties, spoke of Barak's courage and vision, but merely of Arafat's commitment. So much for America's role as honest broker of the Middle East peace. Offered virtual sovereignty to secure virtual peace the Palestinian leadership, corrupt in defeat and undemocratic, preferred failure to humiliation, at last. But is Palestinian now just a dirty word or is Arab the dirty word? Let's start again with Edward Said who wrote among many other books, *Orientalism*, the ground breaking work which first explored our imperial Western fantasies about the Middle East. After he died of leukaemia, Zev Chafets sneered at him in the *New York Daily News* in the following extraordinary words. "As an Episcopalian, Said is ineligible for the customary seventy two virgins, but I wouldn't be surprised if he is honoured with a couple of female doctoral graduates". According to Chafets, who said the *New York Post* spent thirty three years in politics government in Jerusalem in journalism in Jerusalem, *Orientalism*, Said's book rests on a simple thesis: Westerners are inherently unable to fairly judge or even grasp the Arab world. Said, he said, didn't blow up the marines in Lebanon in 1983, he certainly didn't fly a plane into the World Trade Centre, what he did was to jam America's intellectual radar. When I read this vicious obituary I recalled hearing Chafets' name before - so I turned to my Beirut files and up he popped in 1982 as former director of the Israeli government press office in Jerusalem. He had just published then a book falsely claiming that Western journalists in Beirut, myself among them of course, had been terrorised by bands of thugs and alleging in the words of one US journalism magazine, that, the American press is engaged in a

conspiracy to defame Israel. So I got the point. You can kick a scholar when he is dead if he is a Palestinian and kick a journalist when he is dead if you want to claim he was murdered by Palestinians. Sean Toolem, according to Chafets, an Irish journalist who was murdered in Beirut, was killed because of what he wrote about the PLO. Actually Toolem was killed by a man whose wife he was having an affair with. But nonetheless, journalists and scholars are basically of the same chain of being at the moment. And now, as you know, the same sick fantasies have been taking hold in Australia where that determined effort was made by Israel's supposed friends to prevent Palestinian scholar, Hanan Ashrawi of all people, from receiving the 2003 Sydney Peace prize. As you know too a Jewish writer in Sydney bravely defended her, not least because the local Israeli lobby, in Sydney appeared to have deliberately misquoted an interview she gave to me more than two years ago. Distorting her words to imply - which she didn't - that she was in favour of suicide bombing. Ashrawi is not in favour of these wicked attacks. She has fearlessly spoken against them. She has said that she is willing to devote her life to peace and justice with Israelis and Jews but, just as she was abused when she spoke at Colorado University in 2002, so she was smeared here in Australia by local lobbyists. Sydney University of course had already withdrawn the use of its great hall for the presentation of the Peace Prize and the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Lucy Turnbull, had dissociated the city of Sydney as sponsor of the prize for the presentation. How much longer must this go on? Ashrawi, I noticed, was now being called by Mark Stein in, of all places, the *Irish Times* as an ageing bespoke terror of "apologist". As a recipient of a comparatively modest bunch of hate mail each week and to two American readers I repeat, no, my mother was not Eichmann's daughter she was in the RAF in 1940. I am beginning to think this intimidation and filth is getting very nasty indeed. And it is getting worse. Said's work, as many of you may know, was denounced in testimony to the US Congress by Dr Stanley Kurts who claimed that the presence of post colonial history in academic circles have produced professors who refuse to support or instruct students interested in joining the state department or of course American intelligence services. So now the house was proposing to set up an oversight board in the United States with appointed members from Homeland Security, the Department of Defence and the US National Security Agency that will link university department funding on Middle East studies to students training for careers in national security, defence and intelligence agencies. I have a feeling *Orientalism* won't be on the book list. As Professor Michael Bedner of the History Department of the University of Texas at Austin said: "The possibility that someone in US Homeland Security would instruct college professors on the proper patriotic American friendly textbooks that may be used in class scares and outrages me". So is it goodbye to the life work of Said and goodbye to peace prizes for Hanan Ashrawi? Goodbye to Palestinians in fact. Then the radar really will be jammed. So my last words to you tonight. Watch out. Thank you very much ladies and gentlemen.

[applause]

## Questions and Answers

Pal Ahluwalia : Robert has very kindly agreed to take a few questions and if you would identify yourself he will ask that person to come up to the microphone and

RF: ... first I'm going to have a drink of water if you don't mind (gulp). No one's going to ask a question, that's great. Anyone who puts a hand... there's someone over there, if you could come up to the mic which I think is there you are you've got a mic beside you.

Jack KING: my name is Jack King. I've been to the Middle East three times on peace missions. I met Mr Arafat in 1991, he gave me his kuffia in Bahgdad, I also went back in 2001 on a peace mission with other mostly Arab and er ... so I have an interest I'm just describing...

RF: uh huh

King: ... peace in the Middle East. Now, when you consider all the facts that you've revealed to us today, what hope, what strategy can you envisage could lead to peace in Palestine. Is there any hope, can you see any strategy on the horizon.

RF: full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from lands occupied in the '67 war, in return for the recognition of all states in the area which includes Israel. I think that remains the only only possible hope for peace.

[applause]

...the problem I think is that you know after Oslo when the Palestinians were injected with hope, many of them effectively said O.K. we'll forget the Palestine we lost. Israel exists, we'll accept 242. They believed they were going to get 242. They were not of course, and I know Palestinians in Gaza as well as in the West Bank who did accept the partition of Palestine, that's what we're talking about and who no longer will do so. They say O.K. if we can't have 242 we want Haifa, we want Tel Aviv, and that's the problem that the injection of hope has given way too early, if you like a poison that nobody believes in hope anymore. Look at Mr Khateeb, I don't know if he's still alive. I did go and see him after his ejection. And that was Oslo uhm, but 242 is the only hope, ah if you actually talk to Israelies, I don't mean spokesmen and members of the Knesset and certainly not the Sharon govt. a lot of them actually still say that 242 is not such a bad idea providing they were safeguarded. At the beginning of January of last year, there was a public opinion poll in Israel in (2.45) which more than 1/2 those people who

were asked about 242 said that they would accept international protection. This is not what the Israeli Govt. say, we don't want the UN, we don't want the UN, but that's what the Palestinians've been asking for. If the Americans would commit themselves to be along the Green Line, the real Green Line not the wall and the Palestinians could have that land back, but you see Bush announced the other day that there were new realities the Palestinians had to accept, he was talking about that settlement, Ma'ale Adomim which I showed you on the film. In other words he was himself Bush saying no more 242. So, no more 242 no hope. (3.24) That's the answer to your question.

There's a gentleman at the back over here.

[Inaudible] ...Would you be able to explain what's happening to the Bedouin South of Beersheba with regards to their lands and the settlements in that area.

RF: I'm sorry I'm going to disappoint you. I haven't been South of Beersheba for two years and I'm the wrong person to ask. I don't know the answer to your question. I read the papers on that including my colleague Donald McIntyre in Jerusalem on that. Forgive me for not being able to answer your question. After that there probably won't be any more questions for me.

Yes, down here

Frederick TOBIN: Robert, Frederick TOBIN. Robert, on our website we have a panel of 4 items, each one looks different but it's the same, it's Palestine. The first one indicates the size of Palestine, firstly with the green colour ... are you familiar with that map of Palestine?

RF: repeat which map it was again..

FT: it's the one map where it indicates before the settlement, before Israel was founded and after.

RF: yes yes, I know the maps, not on your website but ...

FT: what's your attitude towards this one state solution?

RF: well, I know what Edward Said's attitude was. ...uhm, look if you look through a Jewish perspective, not an Israeli one but a Jewish one and you do believe that Israel is the last defence of the Jewish people, even if it happens to be the most dangerous place for them to go much of the time, uhm I think Israelis will not accept one state and probably if I was an Israeli I wouldn't either. But, I think the only hope is 242 which implies, though it does not say, two states. Ahm, I don't think the one state is going to happen. There are of

course leftists among the Israelis who would support it but um I don't think it's a going concern if you talk to the people on the bus from Ben Gurion Airport to Jerusalem or to Haifa uhm they wouldn't wear it and therefore I think it genuinely is not a starter. I'm sorry to say that because you know Arafat used to believe in it. The first time I ever interviewed him in 1981, he used to, he always did the same, he would produce a Palestine pound note from the British mandate and say "look look we can live together, look it's in Hebrew here and in Arabic there", same note. And then he'd talk about how wonderfully the Jews and the Arabs used to get on in British mandate Palestine which was untrue, they didn't. Ahm, one of the problems of the people who espouse the one state solution is they look back mythical religious views of what Palestine was like after the British arrived and the problem is you'll find Arabs particularly who'll say, Oh we used to get on very well with the Jewish doctor down the road. Or the Israelis will say I don't know why the Palestinians dislike us, we used to get on so well in 1935, and for several weeks in my car I was driving between the different locations where people had told me about this and it was true that occasionally Arabs would go [to] Jewish weddings and Jews would go to Arab funerals but by and large there was great hostility between the 2 communities in the 30's and this image which is projected of this mythical friendship and love being destroyed by world war 2 and the British, the Americans and everyone else, ahm I think is a very dangerous one and I don't see a one state solution. I may be wrong but I don't.

Ah, yes.

Robert Lawton: ah Robert my name is Robert Lawton. One problem we have in this country is that we have very little...

RF: ...you have several problems in this country  
[Laughter]

RL: what I'd like to talk to you about is the fact that we get very little ha information about the internal politics of Israel itself and it's presented in a very monolithic fashion. I know that that isn't necessarily the case and that in your last answer you touched just briefly on the views of some leftists within Palestine. I'm interested in possible political realities and changes in the Israeli policy over say the next ten or 15 years as best you can see them. It seems to me we've got leaders like Netanyahu coming back for a 2<sup>nd</sup> bit of the cherry & I'm just wondering how much longer are we going to go before we get new leaders...

RF: well everyone thought we had a new leader in Ehud Barak but he turned out to be an old leader didn't he? Ahm, you know we Westerners, when we go to Israel, and this happens to me when I land at Ben Gurion [airport], we all want to go and find those Israelis who we know will agree

with us because then we can all believe in the mythical Israel that really does believe in purity of arms and does want peace and will accept that the Palestinians have a right to a state and so we go off to Mapam and all the other parties and I think it is actually a very unrealistic thing to do cos if you then go and talk to people in cafes in Tel Aviv you hear a different story. Uhm and look you know what Arafat's rule, I'm not totally unsympathetic to Arafat, I thought his death was pathetic and tragic but Arafat's rule and his behaviour, his speeches, did a lot to undermine Israeli trust in Palestinians, unfortunately. The idea that if he speaks in a mosque and says we're all going to Jerusalem, and the Israelis are not going to understand the Arabic is ridiculous of course they understood it. Ahm, I think the real change might come in the United States, not because the American govt will suddenly acquire courage, it doesn't have any on that front, but the American Jewish community is changing a lot. Read Rabbi Lerner's Tikkun magazine and you'll see that. More and more Jewish Americans believe and of course they're being abused by Likuddists in the States, that the Palestinians have suffered a great tragedy and should have a state and they believe in 242 and they say so publicly now. They now have the same difficulty of getting in the New York Times as Noam Chomsky has. Ahm but as long as that continues that is the one sort of political hope for move at the moment. But in a way you see, if you're in Israel you come to believe that the whole labour Likud uhm battle doesn't really involve the Palestinians at the end of the day they're all building settlements at the same rate. I mean I know that Melbourne and Adelaide are divided between Likuddists and the Labor party but I don't think when you get to Israel they really seem so different. Ahm, you know Rabin, the wonderful peacemaker and Nobel you know Laureate holder with Arafat, he was the man who said break their bones, ahm telling Israeli soldiers to break the legs of Palestinian who were throwing stones. Uhm I don't know I think Israel still has to undergo profound political changes before it proves to be the country we would like it to be. Of course they would say, Oh you want us to give them more land eh Bob? Yes 242 does require that but Bush has now said effectively that the largest settlements will remain, and that means that Jerusalem has gone and I don't know if Bush understands what he's saying in the practical sense on the ground. But, having just come from Iraq, it doesn't only apply to Palestine. Uhm, there ain't much hope at the moment. Internally I don't see the changes in Israel, but I do among the Jewish American community in the United States.

PL: we've got a question up here, up here.

RF: I can't even see p there but go ahead.

...[inaudible]... Thank you for a brilliant lecture,

RF: you're the first lady who's asked a question X\_ laughs, RF thank you.

Jane Sloan : My name is Jane Sloan, ah, Professor Stuart Rees is a friend of mine, he's the Dir. of the Sydney Peace Foundation and of course the Sydney Peace Foundation hosted the Sydney Peace Prize where Hannan Ashrawi spoke and he received death threats as a result of his position and in defending the decision to appoint the Sydney Peace Prize to Hannan Ashrawi, so too did the companies that were sponsoring that Sydney Peace Prize and it was as a result of public pressure that the University of Sydney withdrew, as you said, the availability of the Great Hall for her lecture. I just want to say that I think that it's really important that we acknowledge the moral courage that people, including the University of Adelaide has shown in staging this lecture tonight and I think

[Applause]

and I think we should all be writing to the university and praising them for this decision because it seems too often that it's just the complaints actually lead to banning certain people presenting and ah er it really seems important that we applaud the moral courage when it's shown. I'd also like to hear from you what you think we could do at a personal level to really show our own moral courage in the face of so much adversity.

RF: uhm, go on writing letters to the newspapers, uhm, meet journalists and try to persuade them to write fairly on the Australian press, uhm, (audience noise, RF chuckles), no I read the Australian press unfortunately for me.

Yah, do you remember that wonderful exchange between Kathryn Greiner and Stuart Rees over the whole question of Hannan Ashrawi. Can I read you the 3 critical paragraphs, the actual quotes on the telephone?

KG was the former chairwoman of the Sydney Peace Foundation.

Greiner: I have to speak logically, it's either Hannan Ashrawi or the Peace Foundation. That's our choice Stuart, my distinct impression is that if you persist in having her here they'll destroy you. (Aside - they'll) Rob Thomas of the City Group is in trouble for supporting us and you know Danny Gilbert (Aside: Australian lawyer) has already been warned off.

Stuart Rees: you must be joking, we've been over this a hundred times, we consulted widely, we agreed the jury's decision made over a year ago was not only unanimous but that we would support it together.

Greiner: but you're not listening to the logic. The Commonwealth Bank is highly critical. (Burst of laughter). We couldn't approach them for financial help for the school's peace prize. (Aside: you see how it works). We'll get no support from them. The business world will close ranks, they're saying we're one sided, that we've only supported Palestine.

Yes I think we should admire Professor Stuart Rees. We all get this same thing as well. Uhm, you know I don't know, I get more and more letters from our readers in Britain and our readers in America 'cos you know they read on the internet which I don't use by the way, and, nor email, erm and what they're all saying is that there's a detachment now between the sort of democracy they believe in and what they get. That the electors are no longer obeyed by those they elect. And this is a problem here too I know, it's certainly a problem in Britain. I mean the Tory party has gone so much across to the Labor Party that the press are the only opposition left in Britain. And in America it doesn't matter very much whether you vote Democrat or Republican because once they get into congress they're all going to say the same thing. It's a big problem and what you do individually I don't know. I mean, I say writing to the press, demonstrations are not in theory terribly democratic, uhm, but you all have a voice and universities have a voice. Ahm, I guess lectures like this aren't a bad idea, preferably without me, but when I arrived in Australia yesterday morning in the early hours I didn't realise it would take so long, it's my first visit, and I decided that we should never have invented Australia (laughter), but I don't really know the answer to your question because I'm sitting in the Middle East in the middle of the heat and I just get all these letters from all these people basically saying the same thing what can you do. Now I'll tell you what I think you should do actually, I think you've got MPs and I think you should lobby them and lobby them and lobby them. I mean I was saying to 2 Australians of Arab origin and 2 more today, it seems only in this new generation that Australians of Arab origin as Americans of Arab origin have actually got up off their knees and started to form groups which can put a point of view different from the normal one in the Middle East, the one that George Antonius was talking about in 1938. And it took people of Arab descent a long long time to get their act worked out. You know when I first went to the United States to give lectures when I was invited by you know an Arab society or a Middle East society, it was so badly arranged there was no organisation behind it and the various students were all arguing with each other, you know the ones from Syria, the ones from Iraq, e.t.c. I think things have changed there but I think people need to have lobby groups which are not run by uhm you know people who necessarily come from the region. I think it's very powerful to have groups of people who say we want to see this happen because we don't want injustice. Not because it will affect them personally or their family but because they don't like injustice. To that extent a powerful lobby group which advocates an end to injustice in the Middle East, not the Arab Australian community society for X might be impressive. But, that's about as far as I can go because I don't live in Australia & I don't like flying so far to get here either. [crowd laughter]

Can't see, oh there's lots of people now, oh there's someone down there.

Adrian Miller: Ah, Dr Fisk thank you very much for your work and the integrity of your work over many years. My name is Adrian Miller and I'm a member of the Greens. With the Democrats we're the true opposition in this country because the major parties are very similar. Uhm today in one of our well our only national ah paper which is a Murdoch paper The Australian, Clinton was reported to say that if he was in power for only another 6 months he could have achieved peace in the Middle East, I'm wondering what your response might be to that.

RF: He had a long time to do it anyway and he failed. Ahm, every state department official, every Pentagon general, every ex-White house official and advisor always says after they've left power, what they should have said while they were in it. ... inaudible, except Clinton, he came out of power, (chuckles) and then blamed the Palestinians on Israeli TV. No but, over and over again you hear the Brazinskys, you hear the James Bakers, the George seniors and they all come out and they cease to have power and they can't be bothered by lobby groups any more, telling the truth. What a pity they can't do it while they're in there. Tony Blair will do the same in due course, believe me, when he relieves us of the reins of his power; ah he'll come out and give a very powerful speech about the Palestinian tragedy and how perhaps we did get it wrong in Iraq, but in power it's like a crustacean you cannot move these people and its only when the president of the United States not the ex-president says these things that they matter.

Anybody with a mic can go to this gentleman here.

[Inaudible]

RF how much longer can?

Ralfe Clark: How much longer can American client regimes in Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States stay as is and if they change and become far more fundamentalist or more hostile to the United States with an overthrow of their governments will that finally push the Americans to have to seek a settlement between the Palestinians and the Israelis?

RF: I think you fundamentally; I won't say misunderstand, but get wrong, the structure, the political system in the Middle East. They're not going to change, and they're not meant to change, and we don't want democracy in the Middle East. We want to go on chopping up the Middle East like we did after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Mubarak has produced this ridiculous situation where he's going to have real democracy but his party is going to chose who can stand against him in presidential elections. Ahm, and indeed we may see his son Gamal in power. Why should the Americans change the Saudi regime, why should ... they want to keep them powerful and they will do so. You know the whole purpose of the setting up of the Middle East after

the First World War was to chop up all these areas. The great tragedy of the Americans and it is a tragedy is that at the end of the First WW all the American diplomats in the Middle East, I mean they were Consuls of course to the Ottoman Empire which was still dying and all the NGOs, American NGOs who of course were missionaries, they all said to the State Dept. and to the White House, Woodrow Wilson, we should chop Turkey off and create one modern Arab state and France and Britain of course; uhm didn't want that. We wanted to chop them all up and then they could have to rely on us to defend them. It's a very sad thing that in 17 months after the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> WW, the victors drew the borders of Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia and most of the Middle East. I've spent my entire professional career in Belfast, Bosnia and most of the Middle East and since my father was a soldier in the 1<sup>st</sup> WW much older than my mother I often say thank you dad, thank you very much indeed. Just look what your generation did. That's why I called my new book the Great War for Civilisation because when he died aged 93 in 1992 on the back of his 1<sup>st</sup> WW campaign medal it said the great war for civilisation. That's, ... in fact I've put, on the English edition, ... that's his medal.

But, going back to your original question, I keep saying to people I don't know, I wish I could give you a better answer. Uhm, these states are not meant to go democratic, they're meant to stay as they are. If we had democracy in Egypt, the Muslim Brothers would be in power. Of course they would, but they're going to remain technically illegal and all these states with their "states of emergency" which every 3 years they say that they're going to end but they don't; all these states effectively drive opposition underground by saying you can't have public demonstrations or public meetings. So the only place you can have your public meeting is in the mosque. Of course, that's how the Jamáa Islamiya started in Egypt and therefore they're always going to say look we've got Islamic extremists, we can't raise the state of emergency we can't have total democracy like in the West, OH look what might happen! And the message gets through, and that's the way the system operates unfortunately.

[Inaudible question from audience]

RF: when was the last overthrow in the Middle East?

[Inaudible reply]

RF: "naah"

[Inaudible response]

RF: Yes well not really, they wouldn't like to hear that it's outside the Arab world. There's a lady down here who wants to ask a question. A lady in red, is anyone with a mic for her?

[Inaudible response]

RF: OK and then will come to you afterwards. OK go ahead.

Sue Gilbey: My name's Sue Gilbey and I'd just like to ask what you think about a view that Alan Dershowitz, in his book *Why Terrorism Works* advocated & that was to publicly announce that as a deterrent for suicide bombers that you could hang their parents or or murder the mother or or at least...

RF...execute was the word he used

SG: yes execute, yeah yeah...

RF: ...mm granny first or the children yeah, that's right I know...

SG: ...mothers first generally. It was generally mums but if there wasn't a mother or a sister would be an effective deterrent as well. I was wondering what your view was on that.

RF: Ah it's very Alan Dershowitz, very Alan Dershowitz, I have clashes with him on the radio from time to time. He once said on the night of September 11 2001, he said I was a dangerous man because I was asking the question why, which you mustn't do I was a dangerous man, I was anti-American & that was the same as being anti-semitic. And that's my view of Alan Dershowitz,. The big thing about September 11 you see, is you mustn't ask the question why. If you have a crime, well you don't have crimes in Adelaide, if you have a crime in Australia, the first thing the cops do when they arrive is to look for the motive, but when we had you know the greatest crime in humanity in the United States the one thing we were not allowed to do was to look for a motive because the pilots & hijackers were Arab and they came from the Middle East and we mustn't sort of say Middle East is there a problem out there? That's Alan Dershowitz, for you.

Is there mic for this lady?

[Inaudible]

RF: It's the thick end.

Audience female: First of all I'd like to say thank you so much for the talk. It was just brilliant to have someone such as yourself come and speak, we're so so thankful to you for coming. Uhm I'd like to ask you what your perspective is on the terror laws which have been recently passed in Australia and also in the UK & the US and it seems that within this debate that when we talk about lobbying our politicians and the government and

wanting change that this is happening right at this moment and it's going to affect significantly the civil liberties of people in Australia & in the western world & somehow we seem to be sitting quite silently and letting this happen. What's your view on this.

RF: Well I've only been reading in the last 24 hours how exciting your terror laws are because in Beirut I've got other things to think about & I have in Baghdad too. I know a little bit about our own. Yeah, the trouble is we introduce these laws or our governments do which we love to elect and within a matter of months some clever policeman has decided to misuse them for other purposes within the peace community, keeping the peace. Uhm, I don't know, we had an 82 yr old man who yelled nonsense at Jack Straw and who got almost charged under the anti-terrorism law (chuckles) well done Tony Blair, no wonder he apologised. Uhm, I don't know you see are they going to use them to try & touch us is the question isn't it ah that comes through our minds. I don't know, uhm I was a bit worried frankly when in an audio tape which I could have lived with out, just before the presidential election in the United States last year uhm Osama Bin Laden suggested that Robert Fisk was a neutral reporter who could in some way pass on Al Qaida's,  
[Laughter]

...who could in some way pass on Al Qaida's views to the White House & I could see every computer in homeland security burning red, (laughs), uhm, Oh god, anti terror laws are so boring because what it is you see is it is part of the culture of making you frightened. That's what it's about, a culture of fear. When Bush said that Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> had changed the world forever, it was a lie. I'm not going to let Sept 11<sup>th</sup> change my life. I'm not gonna let, forgive me, 19 Arab murderers change my world. Bush said they would. They won when he said that. They won, that was the intention. Ahm & America went along with it. The whole institution of homeland security is what Bin Laden would've wanted & once you inject people with fear, most of them will go along with anti-terror laws. They've got children, they don't want to be on the London tubes on July the 7<sup>th</sup>. They don't want to be in the twin towers anywhere & they'll go along with fear. I mean Arab leaders do the same as well that's the emergency laws which the Arab world is so blessed with and loves so much. Ahm, that's how you do it, make people frightened. The only hopeful thing is that, uhm, is that when people are no longer afraid, they will never be injected with fear again. I mean one of the things that's happened in the Middle East is that more & more people are speaking out they're not so frightened of the Mochabarot [secret service] & the secret police & the torture chambers. Ah what happened in Lebanon in '82 was very important the Lebanese stopped being frightened of the Israelis & once you stop being frightened you cannot be injected with fear again. But, before you're frightened you can be injected with fear & that's what your government has successfully done in Australia.

[Clapping]

[Inaudible]

Ah can you put the mic up again,

[Inaudible] ... I was wondering if you could comment

RF: I'm not hearing you sorry.

Francis NATHAN: My name is Francis Nathan & I was wondering if you could comment on the increasing support of the Christian fundamentalist organisations in America for the state of Israel.

RF: [laughs], yeh, I gave a lecture in Berkley not long ago and the Christian fundamentalists were outside waving Israeli flags, they weren't members of the American Jewish community, they were Christian fundamentalists so I went & stood beside them and a lovely picture appeared in the local paper in which Bob Fisk is standing among all these Christian fundamentalists protesting against Bob Fisk's lecture.

[Audience laughter]

Look it's a very funny situation because obviously the Christian fundamentalists believe that the Jews'll have to convert to Christianity & those who don't die at the battle of Armageddon. Look, many of the lectures, more than half the lectures I give in the United States are actually organised by Jewish Americans. The last time this happened and I had a fundamentalist demonstration outside, it was in Las Vegas, I went up to Jeffery who is Jewish who was organising it and by chance the lecture was in a church which had been lent to this institution which was an academic institution for me to talk in. So I brought Jeffery into the church I said look I'm going to introduce you to the stations of the cross, you may need to know about this if these guys win you know (laughs) He understood the point.

(30.22) It's a crazy situation. You can find this Christian embassy operating in Jerusalem I can't think its going to last but its doing quite well at the moment. I mean they actually have weekly meetings at the Israeli Embassy in Washington or in the Israeli Consulate in New York for Christian fundamentalists & sort of Likuddists come together uhm very weird isn't it but there have been you can see strange alliances in the Arab Muslim world but that's sure a strange alliance for Israel .

Houssam Abiad: I want to be a little bit selfish just want to bring up Iraq

RF: I thought you might.

HA: I mean besides the rise in petrol which we've all felt on the pocket of a do you think ah the existence of the American troops and the Australian troops in Iraq will last longer as being that's the first bit of the question and the 2<sup>nd</sup> bit is it helping the situation?

RF: Having the Americans in Iraq?

HA: and the Australian do you believe its helping?

RF: Look you've got a very small contingent allegedly guarding Japanese who don't carry any guns haven't you. That's basically it.

[Applause]

... And the Japanese I promise you, will leave. And when they do you will leave too. Erm, no the Americans is the issue. Not even the Brits are in trouble at the moment. What my sort of equation is that I said this at an interview with The Age yesterday, I think it was yesterday, uhm, the Americans must leave Iraq, and the Americans will leave Iraq and the Americans can't leave Iraq and that is the equation that turns sand into blood and so many commitments have been made, democracy, freedom, the new, etc etc etc, the path to freedom...

[Interjection words inaudible]

RF; can I just finish speaking for a moment... that what is happened (interjection continues) is that you cannot at the moment get any kind of future political path inside Iraq as long as American forces remain but they cannot leave in case the Iraq they have left behind will not be the Iraq they want and you cannot have anyone in Iraq believing in the present government however elected it was as long as it accepts the American presence. Uhm, one of 2 things has got to happen, 1 is that the Americans will start to negotiate with the insurgents. They already are in a small scale in places like Mosel, & 2 if they really ant to get out they'll have to persuade and it won't take much persuading, an elected government of Iraq to tell them to leave. The, they say victory, we're leaving it's a democratic government. Heaven knows what happens afterwards, the insurgents'll be in power I imagine, be partly in power at least.

But the real danger in Iraq at the moment, you see is that we're living on 2 forms

[... interjection]

we've got on the one hand,

[interjection]

we've got 2 levels of reality, I'll just keep on talking and you'll hear me over the mic. We've got the reality of the streets, which is Iraqis who are fearful for their families, their kids going to school being kidnapped, sold into to prostitution, no electricity, no food, no money & suicide bombers and we've got the other level of unreality, who are the various officials living in the Green Zone, the former republican palace of Saddam Hussein who are talking about paths to freedom and elections and constitutions & constitutional referendums etc etc. I promise you that Iraqis I their homes are not

discussing constitutional referendums & this is the problem. But in our part of the world, uhm helped thanks very much to journalists we're still encouraged to believe the mythical level the unreality is what's actually what's happening in Iraq. Uhm, an Iraqi woman came up to me last night in Melbourne said you know I actually believed what I was told and I went there in February 2004 and it was so awful I could only stay 10 days. I said that's a long time to stay in February 2004. And one of the problems at the moment in Baghdad is that there is in existence what I call hotel journalism and that's that many of my colleagues, not all, the Guardian still travels and the Independent correspondent Patrick Ckovern & I still do; but that more & more journalists like the AP, Associate Press correspondents, they live behind armed walls in hotels with armed guards. So, they can't go outside, they don't go outside, they don't go on the streets; they get Iraqis to go on the streets & come back & tell them what they see. But you've got to go out in Baghdad to understand what's actually happening, you've got to go out into the real world.

I'll give you a little story, it's actually quite funny, there's a restaurant called Ramiah Well it was called Ramiah & it had a red neon sign & it always had good Lebanese red wine, you know it had an international menu and the other day on the last trip to Baghdad I told my driver whose my weather vane of fear, do you think we could go to Ramiah I'll do it in ½ an hour, get there eat & come out . & he said, "Inta Majnoon?", you're crazy. But we did for ½ an hour and it was not the Ramiah anymore. It now had a green neon sign with a Koranic title and the menu was no longer in Arabic, French and English. It was only in Arabic & of course there was no Lebanese red wine It had been Islamicised, and that's what's happening in Baghdad. But it doesn't get reported because we don't go to lunch anymore. That's just a little microcosm of a story to show you.

One final thing about Iraq and the whole thing about what's going to happen & so on, for my book I was researching the British arrival in Iraq. We were kind enough to invade Iraq in 1917, after being told, by the way, by British intelligence in Basra that we would be welcomed. Ahm, Iraqis who were fighting in the Ottoman army were sent off to prisons in India where they were abused, no photos in those days of course. Ahm, when we arrived in Baghdad, uhm, the British commander put up a poster on the streets, a copy of which I have in my home it's on the wall while I've been writing my book which begins, it's to the people of the Muhafazat [districts] of Baghdad & it begins in Arabic & English: "People of Baghdad we have come here not as conquerors but to free you from generations of tyranny". By 1920, there was a full scale insurgency going against British forces and the first attack by the British was made against insurgents in Feluga after a British officer had been killed at a place call Abu Ghuraib, the British then surround Najaf & demanded the surrender of a Shiite cleric who was also involved in the insurgency. British intelligence & I've seen the paper, in Baghdad, told the

Ministry of War in London that terrorists were crossing the border into Iraq from the French mandate territory of Syria. And just to finish the story, Lloyd George, our favourite Prime Minister, stood up in the House of Commons in 1920 & said, if British troops leave Iraq, there will be civil war.

I leave you with that thought.

[Applause]

Pal Ahluwalia: it remains for me to just say on behalf of the Australian Friends of Palestine and the University of Adelaide, thank you Robert for this wonderful lecture and we hope to see you all here for the next lecture, ah, Edward Said Memorial Lecture next year.

RF: Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

[end of questions and answers session]