

# APJP AND THE ETHICS OF ISRAELI ARCHITECTURE

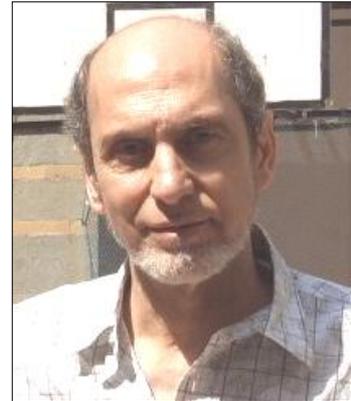
## STOCKHOLM SPEECH 16 APRIL 2010

By Abe Hayeem<sup>1</sup>, APJP

Thanks for inviting me. It seems a natural linkup between our group APJP (Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine), ARC•PEACE and Architecture Sans Frontières (ASF).

Professor Thiberg has spoken about the professions' lack of principles.

Trying to get architects to act ethically is like asking an alcoholic not to drink. Architecture is the second oldest profession. Most professional codes of conduct deal with the construction, legal and bureaucratic aspects of architecture with the ethical part tagged on. One can look at architects building in countries with abysmal human rights records like Saudi Arabia and Dubai with the terrible exploitation of migrant labourers, or in countries like China, which has Tibet and the Uiger lands under occupation, and the destruction of their heritage and history, or the sequestration of tribal areas in India by giant corporations exploiting the mineral wealth at the expense of the environment – and then ask why we have focused on Israel and Palestine.



### Why Israel?

It is because Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East conflict, and because it is closely allied with the West, particularly the UK and US, indeed it was promoted from the earliest days of Zionism, by Western powers as an imperialist outpost on the Middle East. In fact Britain was instrumental in this, as it held the mandate in Palestine, and the Balfour Declaration in 1917 suggested the Jewish homeland in Palestine. It was formulated on the principle of sharing a land between two peoples, but where, since 1948, one has completely dominated and occupied another – using massive military might. Zionist Israel was formulated as a European state, to serve as a refuge and a nation for Jews from anywhere in the world, and even though it is described as a Jewish State, claims to the only democracy in the Middle East. Yet its occupation and domination of the Palestinian people, which has been going on since 1967, has identified it as parallel to apartheid South Africa, with its own, if anything, more insidious characteristics. Israel is almost unique in that it would be difficult to separate architecture from the Israeli occupation and the political and military strategies that it consolidates. The practice of the profession is inextricably linked with politics and machinery of the state.

### Setting up APJP

Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine was formed to challenge the practise of Israeli architects who, in building the settlements and towns in the occupied territories and within the context of a brutal military occupation, are also in breach of international law and Geneva Conventions. It was modelled on *UK Architects Against Apartheid*, also formed in the 1980s by us architects to oppose the links between the UK and to South Africa, in line with the cultural and Academic boycotts. It was supported by many eminent and progressive architects in the UK – *Richard Rogers, Ted Cullinan, Cedric Price, Hugh Casson, Peter Ahrends* – and who managed to get the RIBA to cut its links with the six Schools of Architecture in South Africa. We produced lists of building firms and materials with links in South Africa, and also encouraged anti apartheid policies in local authorities. In fact the borough Lambeth I worked at in South London I named a housing project after the famous ANC leader Walter Sisulu and when he was released from prison he came to London to open the project.

APJP was started at a meeting in 2002 organised by one of the solidarity groups, where we invited Eyal Weizman to give a talk on the architecture of the occupation connected with the *Road Map*. The many architects in the audience agreed that a campaigning architects group needed to be set up. Eyal Weizman, the Israeli architect, together with his colleague Rafi Segal had won a competition in Israel for the UIA General Assembly in Berlin in 2002 on the theme – *A Civilian Occupation – The Politics of Israeli Architecture*. When the *Israel Association of United Architects* (IAUA), saw the catalogue of the

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exhibition, it reacted with fury and ordered its withdrawal and the 5000 copies destroyed. In fact I contacted Eyal in Israel and managed to get the incident reported in the British architectural press. I have one of the few remaining copies of the original catalogue, which was eventually published as a book - which together with his follow-on book *'Hollow Land'* have become iconic documentation of the Occupation.

Esther Zandberg wrote in Haaretz, *"the Israeli community of architects very piously follows a total separation between 'pure' professionalism and 'dirty' politics"*. The chairman of the association at the time, Uri Zerubavel, wrote to the curators of the UIA exhibition, that the IAUA *'represents its members in regard to their profession and not in regard to the political aspect.'* But as the catalogue authors state, *"planning decisions do not generally stem from economic or ecological considerations, but are meant to serve strategic national goals. The clearest expression of the conflict is the processes of change, adaptation, construction and erasure of the open landscape and the built-up surroundings. The singular topographic conditions [in the West Bank] dictate the points of friction, and the terrain becomes a field of battle on which themes of power, control, and resistance are played out."*

We officially launched APJP in 2006 in the world famous architect's London office of Richard Rogers who was also very much involved with Architects Against Apartheid - this time again with the backing Charles Jencks, Ted Cullinan and Neave Brown. As an independent international pressure group of design professionals we were seeking international support for an ethical and just practice for our professions in Palestine and the Occupied Territories. We opposed the building of such projects as the illegal settlements, check points, settler-only highways and above all the Separation Wall. Palestinian land had become so fragmented that a viable Palestinian State had been rendered impossible. The map of Palestine, for the indigenous Palestinians, had shrunk from owning 97% of the land in 1917 to 44% in 1947. Today only 10% of the former Palestinian lands are left in fragmented cantons for a supposed Palestinian state, and that small part is being further divided by planning and architectural devices and the matrix of control.



*Palestinian loss of land 1946-2000.*

Since 1947 Israeli kibbutzim, towns and cities have been built over the ruins of 560 Palestinian villages, houses and heritage that were wiped from the map by a form of architectural erasure. Israeli architects and planners, knowingly or not, have become a part of this situation. Israeli settlements built after the 1967 War, considered illegal under international law, could not have been realized without their help. Professional ethics, long enshrined in architectural and planning codes,

demand that we confront these unwelcome truths and not remain silent or complicit. It is with this in mind that we are supporting particular campaigns that challenge this unprofessional conduct. We share the international condemnation of the continuing annexation and fragmentation of Palestinian land through the expansion of illegal settlements and outposts and the construction of the Separation Wall in defiance of international law.

We hold all design and construction professionals involved in projects that appropriate land and natural resources from Palestinian territory to be complicit in social, political and economic oppression, and to be in violation of their professional ethics.

APJP seeks to raise awareness in the planning, design and construction industries of how these professions are central to the occupation of Palestinian land and to the erosion of human rights and act as a channel for the dissemination of news and information relating to the built and natural environment in Israel/Palestine, in particular highlighting ways in which planning, architecture and other construction disciplines are being used to promote an apartheid system of environmental control. This is all on our website [www.apjp.org](http://www.apjp.org).

We have also linked up closely with Israeli and Palestinian professionals, local community representatives and NGOs committed to non-violent resistance to the Occupation and to the establishment of a just and lasting peace. These include:

**BIMKOM - Planners for Planning Rights** was established in May 1999 by planners and architects with the goal of strengthening the connection between human rights and spatial planning in Israel. (<http://eng.bimkom.org/>)

**B'Tselem – The Israeli Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories** – which scrupulously documents human rights violations, and was responsible for the excellent document “*Land Grab*” and the famous map of the settlements, co-authored with Eyal Weizman. (<http://www.btselem.org/>)

**Peace Now** - The largest peace movement in Israel which has conducted “Settlement Watch” monitoring and documenting the expropriation of Palestinian land, the bulk of which make up the settlements like Maale Adumim. (<http://peacenow.org.il/eng/>)

**ICAHN – The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions**, which resists the demolition of Palestinian homes, and tried to rebuild the ones that are demolished. (<http://www.icahd.org/>)

**ZOCHROT**: ["Remembering"] is a group of Israeli citizens working to raise awareness of the Nakba, the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948. (<http://www.zochrot.org/>, in Hebrew)

**FAST: The Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory in Israel** that works to prevent the erasure of Palestinian memory and history, like in the village of Lifta, which they are trying to revive for the original Palestinian inhabitants. (<http://www.seamless-israel.org/>)

**RIWAQ**: a Ramallah based non profit organization whose main aim is the protection and development of architectural heritage in Palestine. Some of the Ramallah architects in architecture schools in London are working on projects in Birzeit old town to revive Palestinian life there and in adjoining villages in the West Bank. (<http://www.rivaq.org/2010/index.php>)

International Humanitarian Law relates to rules applying to states during war and occupation. The settlements in the OPTs breach two primary instruments of international law: The Hague Convention, the Laws and Customs of War on Land, and its attached Regulations of 1907, and the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to Civilian Persons in Time of War of 1949.



*LIFTA, Yaqub Ouda, a Palestinian refugee from the town of Lifta who fled his home there in 1948, leads a tour sponsored by Zochrot to teach Israelis about the Nakba. Photo by Ryan Rodrick Beiler.*

## Launch of APJP

At our launch meeting we discussed briefly what our campaigns should be - mainly targeted action against the Wall and construction firms involved in the settlements and demolitions, like Caterpillar – whose bulldozers wreak havoc in destroying Palestinian houses. We also said we would not target individual architects, but the institutions involved – like the Israeli Association of United Architects. Although we had not then consolidated any boycott action as such, all hell broke loose the following day – when the press reported sensationally that we were going to ‘boycott Israel’. Suddenly it

became an international story. Lord Rogers, who had five major projects in New York, worth several billion dollars – one of which was the Jacob Javits Conference Centre, named after a famous Zionist senator – was accused of taking part in the boycott of Israel – which is illegal in the US – when in fact he was only present to say a few encouraging words and then left the meeting when the campaigning discussion took place. Rogers was summoned to New York like a suspected criminal to face a tribunal of city councillors, the heads of prominent Jewish organizations and congressmen, describing us as an ‘abhorrent organisation’ and of anti-semitism, and threatened to remove Rogers from all these projects – which included the World Trade Centre. Rogers was put into an impossible ethical dilemma, as we knew his sympathies were with us. But what would you do? We thought he should get a good lawyer, but unfortunately he hired a well known PR consultant ‘who was especially in demand from people who need to get out of a deep hole with maximum velocity’ and he then had to publicly refute his connection with us and also make statements to satisfy the Major Jewish Organisations that Hamas should recognize Israel and that he was in favour of the Wall to thwart terror attacks against Israel.

Though APJP was campaigning for Israel to obey international law and the UN Charter, we were described as a “*Group that is convened for the purpose of activities detrimental to a democratic state*” meaning Israel. This shows how standing up for justice, peace, humanity and the law can lead to a clash with ethics where mega bucks are involved!

*Haaretz’s* architecture critic Esther Zandberg, demonstrated a more profound understanding of the issues involved by writing:

*“Many Israeli architects continue to make clear that they ‘do not plan in the territories,’ but at the same time refuse to give expression to their political views. Even now, senior architects, some defining themselves as leftists, don’t put their prestige and influence to the test by coming out against the demolition of Palestinian and Bedouin houses, the vandalism and uprooting of olive trees, or the construction of the separation fence, which is tearing up the landscape, where the architects work. In Israel, business goes on as usual. . . . Thus, the call for a boycott might not be too extreme a measure. The British organization has already made contact with non-governmental organizations operating for the sake of justice and equality in planning both in and outside of Israel. Their activities could have a positive reverberating effect on all sides.”*

Returning to the ethics of Israeli architects – they played a key role right from the earliest days of Zionist settlement in Palestine – since the Jewish National Fund bought land in 1901 for exclusive Jewish settlement in Palestine, with designing the model of “Wall and Tower” for fortified outposts within sites of other outposts to establish a presence in the land and fight off local Bedouin and farmers. The Wall and Tower model is still seen in the design of the Apartheid Wall, and settlement outposts of today.

#### *The infamous separation wall.*

The same strategy of civilian-military planning was employed throughout Israel after 1948 in the form of the “mitzpim” (look-out settlements) on land confiscated from existing Arab towns and villages. The Jewish settlements took commanding positions, overlooking the neighbouring Arab communities. This process continued after 1967 with the development of illegal settlements on hilltops in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, in line with Ariel Sharon’s edict to “*grab every hill*”, whose radial designs along the contours, described in Eyal Weizman’s *Hollow Land*, enabled visual observation and monitoring of the Palestinian neighbourhoods, to deter “*terrorist elements*” and to “*inform the authorities of any suspicious movement*”. The Israeli government was: “*enlisting its civilian population to act as its agents alongside state power and serve the state’s security aims. The task of the civilian settlers is to help turn the occupied territory into an optical matrix radiating out from a proliferation of lookout points/settlements scattered across the landscape.*”



Thus began the pattern of driving the indigenous population off the land and the expansion of Jewish settlements. Today, settlers of the West Bank, supported by Israel’s Civil Administration in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), continue to expropriate Palestinian lands, often terrorising Palestinian farmers off their fields.

## The politics of Israeli architecture

The synergetic link between the JNF and the acquisition and expropriation of land, involving the military and defence forces (later the Haganah and then the Israeli Defence Force) and the Zionist Israeli architects (adrichalim) of the kibbutzim, moshavim (agricultural villages), towns and cities, is what makes every act of building so political and controversial in Israel and the OPT.

Again, as Eyal Weizman says in *Hollow Land*:

*“Most Israeli architects building in the West Bank do not see the panorama as constituting a strategic and defensive category. They have simply internalized the security discourse of the state and have learned to use it when discussing matters with state agents in order to get their projects approved. When they have designed neighbourhoods and settlements overlooking the surrounding landscape, they have generally done so in order to provide residents with views of the landscape.”*

Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion recognised the importance of the adrichalim when he placed the state Planning Department directly in the Prime Minister's office in 1948. He oversaw the work directly; ever since, every act of building in Israel and the OPT has been politically charged. Remember that this was the scenario following the destruction of over 600 Palestinian towns and villages with their farms their inhabitants driven out, making 750,000 refugees.

### *Palestinian land ownership 1945.*

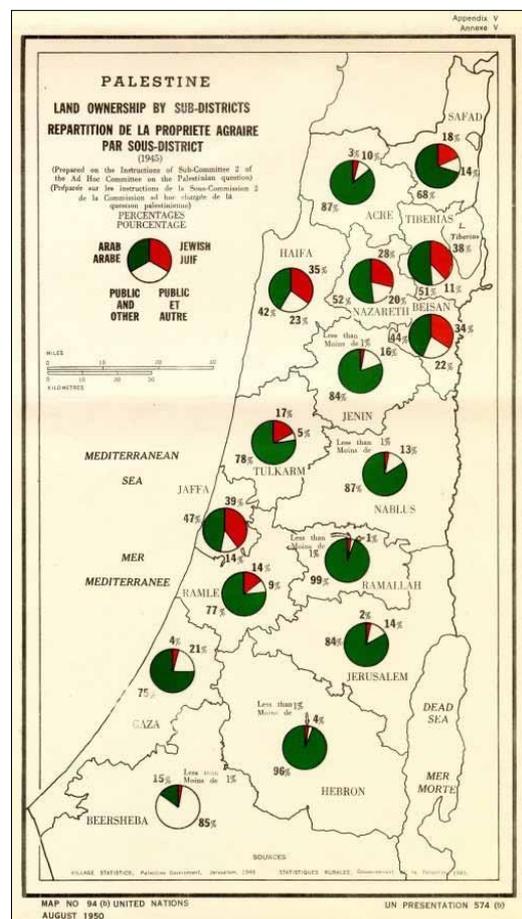
At the end of the 1948 war, 93% of Palestinian land on the Israeli side of the armistice line was sequestered to the Israeli state using a whole series of 'Kafkaesque' forms of legislation (e.g. the Absentee Properties Act, The Present Absentees classification, and Land Acquisition Orders). The best real estate, mainly from the destroyed villages and their farmland, was acquired or 'sold' to the JNF (about 13% of all the land, with funds from diaspora Jewry). 'Internal' refugees were denied return to their villages and land, which were allocated to kibbutzim. A close alliance was formed between the state-owned Israel Land Administration (ILA) and the privately owned JNF, such that the JNF collectively owns and manages the 93% with the state (the JNF has half the seats on the board of the ILA).

In May 1948 the Jewish population of the new Israeli state numbered 650,000, scattered over some 305 towns. 235 of these towns stood on JNF land. The land sequestration has no validity under international law.

As Zvi Efrat has written, Arie Sharon, an architect of the Bauhaus school, was

*“...commissioned to establish ... an overall master plan for Israel ... providing temporary housing solutions for the masses of new Jewish immigrants and settling the country's borderlands in order to stabilize the 1948 ceasefire lines, prevent territorial concessions and inhibit the return of the Palestinian war refugees. The planners accomplished this by drafting a state-wide network of civil frontiers composed of transit camps and agrarian outpost settlements, as well as re-settling deserted Arab villages with new Jewish immigrants ... a long-term mission, for the country's intense and comprehensive development which would reach all its corners ... with the moral and material support provided by the world's superpowers for the new state ... a project of construction (and obliteration) – more daring than any of its imagined precedents.”*

The Israeli architect and writer Sharon Rotbard has commented especially regarding the Western trained architects who responded to this highly politicised situation where they were mobilized to serve the Zionist project:



*“They attempted to allow political ideology to infiltrate through the architectural forms and enabled architectural doctrines to express themselves through programs inspired or even dictated by politics. In Israel, political ideology and architectural doctrine are dependent on one another and are in a constant and complex dialogue of justification and argumentation ... besides relinquishing the universal viewpoint held by western (and some Eretz Israeli) architects that was rooted in the dialectics between theory and practise, the Israeli ‘Adrichalut’ is rooted between politics and architecture ... and lacks a reflexive, comprehensive view of itself; mobilized by the political ideologies, it establishes facts cast in concrete that are inherently political, but lacks political awareness entirely”.*

This is why Israeli architects never seem to question the morality or methods by which the land on which they are building was acquired, or that what they are building consolidates and entrenches an apartheid system that dispossesses and denies land and property rights to Palestinian citizens of Israel and the OPT.

This applies to the ‘no-man’s land’ in Jerusalem, yet, after the 1967 war, Israel treated this area along the interim armistice Green line as if it owned it, and illegally annexed east Jerusalem and the Old City. Major developments here, like Mamilla (once a thriving ‘mixed’ town, now mostly demolished) in Jerusalem were carried out by the world famous architect Moshe Safdie. As Ilan Pappé says:

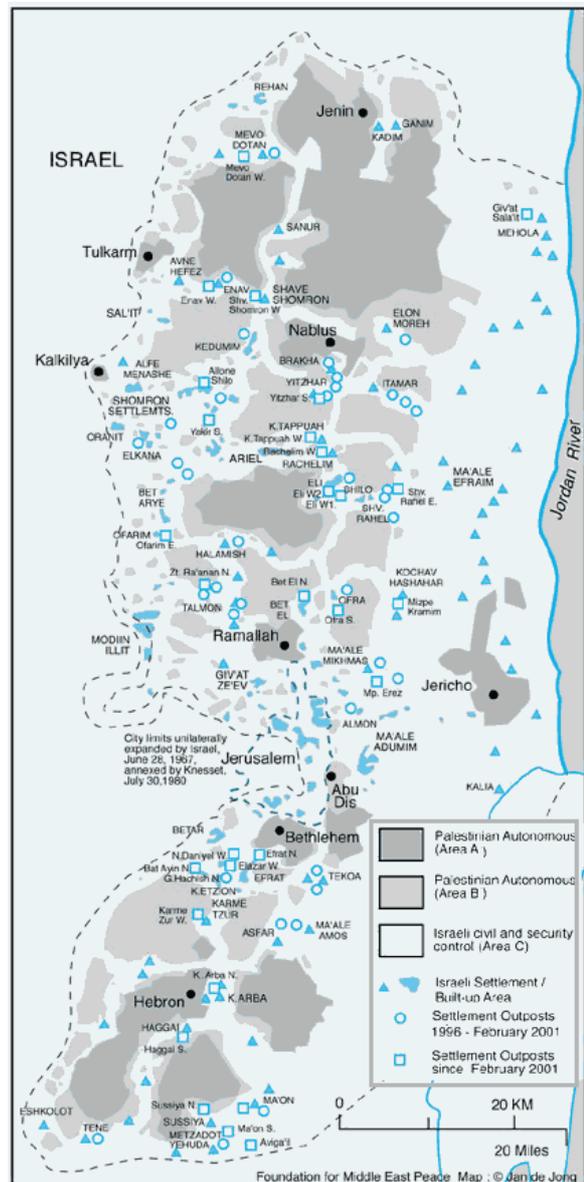
*“The JNF also owned land in the Greater Jerusalem area – after the 1967 war. In the early eighties this land was passed on to Elad, the settler’s NGO, devoted to the Judaization of East Jerusalem ... who stated openly that it wanted to cleanse Silwan from its original Palestinian inhabitants.” (8)*

*Map showing the illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian territory (2008).*

This unfortunately is now proceeding in leaps and bounds, aided by Israeli architects and archaeologists under the control of Elad, to establish the ‘City of David’ in the Wadi Hilweh area of Silwan, planned by the world famous architect Moshe Safdie. Another Israeli architect, Arieh Rahamimov is designing the ‘King David Park’ in threatened Silwan, which will involve the demolition of 89 houses in the Al Bustan area, as part of a series of parks and routes linking all the sites relating to Jewish biblical narrative, which will exclude Silwan residents., and create a complete encirclement of Arab neighbourhoods, preventing the inclusion of East Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital.

Moreover, it is a fact that there is massive overcrowding in Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem. Yet while the government of Israel has built more than 50,000 units for Israelis in East Jerusalem settlements since 1967, fewer than 600 residential units have been built for Palestinians in East Jerusalem with any kind of government support, the last was more than 35 years ago. Similarly while the government of Israel is approving planning and permits for private Jewish construction in East Jerusalem, including in the heart of East Jerusalem, it is well documented that since 1967 East Jerusalem’s Palestinian residents have had a difficult and sometimes impossible time getting permits to build on their own, privately owned land, and the government of Israel has refused to approve new neighbourhood plans that would allow for systematic expansion

After 1948, every Arab village allowed to be regi-



stered in the master plan had 'blue line' borders drawn closely around them leaving no room for development, while Jewish settlements and communities had generous lines with plenty of room to expand. This method is still used for the illegal West Bank settlements with huge municipal boundaries, while Palestinian villages have their farmland sequestered for the Wall and apartheid highways, and for Jewish settlers' expansion. Within Israel itself, although the Palestinian Arab population is seven times greater than it was in 1948, their towns and villages are still confined to their original boundaries (minus their farmland), not one new Arab community has been built since. They are still confined to the 7 % of land not owned by the State, and banned from the remaining 93% of Israel.

Eyal Weizman

### Eyal Weizman on Israeli architects

In his iconic publication *A Civilian Occupation*, Weizman describes the workings of Israeli architects in building the settlements, producing particular and locally developed spatial arrangements- the vernacular of occupation – how directly domination and control are “inscribed in the way space is organized; rural suburbs whose form attempts to adapt an ideal, concentric social and strategic model to diverse topographical conditions, in the hilltops and valleys of the West Bank, generating the complete fragmentation of the terrain.” Further, “The map marks the enormous disparity between the areas they cover, and the areas intended for future growth. With a built fabric covering less than 2% of the West Bank, settlements strategically placed manage to generate complete territorial control.”



“Settlements constructed beyond the international border established in 1967 violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention that states: The Occupying power shall not deport or transfer part of its own civilian citizens into the territory it occupies” Settling Israeli citizens in the Occupied Territories thus contravenes international law.

By taking up these projects, Israeli architects cross yet another red line. The planning conforms to a mode of design that serves to oppress and disrupt the local population – the way they are designed directly and negatively affects the lives and livelihoods of Palestinians. According to the regional plans of politicians, suburban homes, industrial zones, infrastructure and roads are designed and built with the self-proclaimed aim of bisecting, disturbing and squeezing out Palestinian communities. Israeli civilians are placed in positions where they can supervise vital national interests just like plain-clothes security personnel. This centralized, strategic and political use of planning was transferred onto the ground by private architectural firms for financial gain. Planning and building in the West Bank is effectively executing a political agenda through spatial manipulations. The evidence is in the drawings.

In both its overall logic and the repetition of its micro-conditions, architecture and planning are used as territorial weapons. Settlement forms and locations are manipulated for the bisection of a Palestinian traffic artery, for surrounding a village, for supervision of a major city or a strategic crossroad. In the very act of design, the architect is engaged in the reversal of his professional practice. That is if despite the banality and simplicity of the statement, and in the absence of an architectural equivalent of the medical profession's Hippocratic oath – planning and architecture must still be carried out to the benefit of society. This is if design decisions, and building matter are used as a weapon with which human rights are violated, are practically aimed at disturbance, suppression, aggression or racism, and when these stand, clearly and brutally, in breach of basic human rights, a crime has been committed. The question of responsibility and liability must be addressed.

**This statement opens up architecture to a different kind of critique. Beyond there introduction of morality and ethics into the architecture debate, does this not call for legal proceedings that should be prosecuted by international law.**

### War Crimes

In fact in May 2001, the head of the International Red Cross delegation to Israel and the Occupied Territories said that settlements are “equal in principle to war crimes”.- “The transfer, the installation of population of the occupying power into the occupied territories is considered as an illegal move and qualified as a ‘grave breach.’ It’s a grave breach, formally speaking, but grave breaches are equal in principle to war crimes”, Rene Kosirnik, head of the ICRC delegation to Israel and the OPT, press conference 17 May 2001.)

This has been reinforced in the Thirteenth session of the Human Rights Council of the UN General Assembly, expressed its grave concern and condemnation of

*The continuing Israeli settlement and related activities, in violation of international law, including the expansion of settlements, the expropriation of land, the demolition of houses, the confiscation and destruction of property, the expulsion of Palestinians and the construction of bypass roads, which change the physical character and demographic composition of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan, and constitute a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and in particular article 49 of that Convention, and recalls that settlements are a major obstacle to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace and to the creation of an independent, viable, sovereign and democratic Palestinian State;*

In 2007, APJP placed an ad in the times regarding three projects that highlighted the illegal activities of Israeli architects, which formed a petition signed by hundreds of architects, planners and academics, many well known in their fields. APJP's three petitions were:

1. Currently, on the slopes of east Jerusalem, in the village of Silwan some 89 Palestinian homes are under threat of demolition. This is part of a master planned development on annexed land for the alleged benefit of Israelis of the extreme religious El 'Ad movement, which would consolidate their presence to the exclusion of the current Palestinian inhabitants.

*This plan was produced by Palestinian Israeli architect Yosef Jabareen in opposition to the Mayor of Jerusalem's plan for the King's Garden, which would have been built over this area once all the existing homes were demolished.*



2. Israel's E1 Plan that aims for the expansion of the largest illegal Israeli settlement, Ma'ale Adumim, linking it with the Jerusalem metropolitan area. This plan would dissect the West Bank, destroying the possibility of contiguity for a future viable Palestinian state.

3. The campaign to save Lifta, the ruins of a Palestinian village near Jerusalem, from being converted into a real estate development for wealthy Americans that totally excludes the original Palestinian inhabitants who live nearby, and also their heritage and memory. It is hoped to have the involvement of UNESCO and the World Monuments Forum in this campaign.

When APJP decided to highlight the practices of Israeli architects to the International Union of Architects, the UIA, we wrote to the President of the Israeli Association of United Architects, and asked her why there had been no action taken to end its members acting against international law and the UIA Codes of Conduct. Her reply was:

*"In response to the letter you addressed to me expressing your concern about some building projects initiated by the Israeli Government, I would like to point out to you that the Israeli Association of United Architects is a non-political organization dealing with professional issues only.*

*While trying to achieve our main goal - improving the position of Architects and Architecture in Israel - we do now and then express our opinion on different projects, but only from an architectural point of view.*

*The members of our organization are of course entitled to their individual political opinion and acting upon it.*

APJP's response was:

*Let us take this opportunity to point out some important facts about our campaign. Firstly, there are numerous Israeli design professionals, of exceedingly high esteem who are putting their weight behind this action. Furthermore, this campaign is worldwide in nature, and, as such, we have the full support from individuals as far away as Japan, New Zealand and Australia. Finally, our campaign features numerous American design professionals (Israel's greatest ally) from some of America's greatest institutions. We point this out to assert that important design professionals (many award winning) individually have in common the fact that they are gravely concerned about the professional conduct of some of Israel's architecture firms. It is with this in mind that we contact you, the governing body to bring to your attention the contravention of these codes by your members, and to find out what concrete measures you intend to take with these firms in relation to these projects. This is not a political subject, it is in pure and concrete terms a matter of professional conduct.*

Symptomatic of Israeli architects denial of the political implications of their practice was that of Thomas Leitersdorf, a top Israeli architect and town planner, who studied at London's AA. He designed Maale Adumim, the largest 'city' in the West Bank and a suburb of Expanded Jerusalem – which he admitted was “ to capture ground' You capture as much area as possible by placing few people on numerous hills. The underlying political idea was that the furthest inside the occupied territory we placed settlers, the more territory Israel would have when the time came to set international borders. Building Maiale Adumim right next to Jericho was a government decision, and its location was accurately specified – at the end the desert, the furthest place from Israel that was conceivably possible.

Yet when asked how he saw Maale Adumim from a political perspective, he said;

*“As to the politics of Jews and Arabs, I cannot contribute, because I am very weak on politics. To tell you that an architect influences politics? He doesn't. The whole story of Judea and Samaria would have been different, but this is on levels that are neither in your hands nor mine”*

Their professional body, the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA), has displayed a chilling detachment from the consequences of their work. They deny any political involvement, when in fact the whole agenda of building supports occupation, including the use of overwhelming military force to grab land, to displace and oppress Palestinians.

It is not only the minor firms who are involved with such projects. Mainstream and famous Israeli architects partake of the feast. Moshe Safdie, who is master planning the City of David project for the extremist Elad settlers backed by Jerusalem's mayor in East Jerusalem, where Palestinian houses are being taken over or demolished, was lecturing at the RIBA about the importance of working to an ethical framework. He reaffirmed the human mission of architecture as increasing integration and interaction within cities and he spoke of the relationship between symbol, identity, memory and landscape.

But behind the rhetoric, Safdie epitomises the contradictions that underlie architecture in Israel, where the values he espouses are turned upside down. While Israeli architects seek acceptance on the world stage, at home they are inescapably drawn into the political agenda of territorial expansion and separation pursued by Israel's government.

Safdie says he refuses to build in the West Bank. But by working in East Jerusalem, where he also partially lives, he is still helping to implement the government's divisive policies. Similarly the famous brother and sister duo. Ada Karmi, who also studied at the AA, is involved with schemes in occupied East Jerusalem, while building luxury housing in Tel Aviv.

It is well known that Israel continues with impunity to continue its illegal settlement building and Judaising of the Galilee and the Negev desert and Arab neighbourhoods within Israel – in Acre, Jaffa and Ramle. The EU and the White House have urged it to stop, but each settlement freeze becomes a frenzy.

If the Palestinians can't be transferred, they must be made invisible, or totally controlled to every minute of their lives, whether it is in Zones A, B or C, or even to pass from one border (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the Green Line) to another. Palestinian villages are seen as part of the 'biblical' landscape, used in its blatant Orientalist form to recreate 'Jerusalem' architecture, or as scenic views from the strategically placed hilltop settlements. Weizman writes :*“Like a theatrical set, the panorama is seen as an edited landscape put together by invisible stagehands who must step off the set as the lights*

*come on.*" ...or as the head of the architecture department in Ariel College in the West Bank says about his students watching out of their classroom windows who 'see the Arab villages, but don't notice them. They look and they don't see.'" Thus the matrix of settler only roads, going through tunnels or bridges, by-passing check points, allows the settlers to travel over the whole West Bank landscape *"without seeing an Arab."*

We had a small victory as far as Ariel was concerned. When we heard that Ariel college's architecture school had been shortlisted to build a solar house for the Solar Decathlon in Madrid this July, we wrote to the Spanish Minister of Housing to cancel them off the list, as they were an illegal entity in occupied territory and should not be representing Israel as they claimed. The cause was taken up by Spanish universities, and in fact, to Israel's fury they were taken off the list, and refused to re-instate them, despite huge pressure from Israel's foreign ministry.

Due to pressure from APJP, the world famous architect Frank Gehry, who had designed the controversial "Museum of Tolerance" that was to be built over a section of the ancient and most important Muslim cemetery of Mamilla in Jerusalem, withdrew from the project, and later supported the boycott of a theatre being built in the illegal settlement of Ariel. A revised project for the Museum has been given the go-ahead with a new Israeli architect, the Chyutin firm, but this is still being opposed by many, including APJP.

Similarly, when the British Government was contemplating renting space in a tower block in Tel Aviv, owned by diamond billionaire Lev Leviev, whose company Africa-Israel was building real estate housing for settlers on land stolen from the West Bank village of Bil'in, encroached by the illegal Apartheid Wall, we made strong representations to them, and they backed off from going ahead with such intentions.

We also back the campaigns against Caterpillar for the bulldozers that demolish Palestinian houses, and Veolia, the company building the light railway that connects Jerusalem to the settlements, and excludes the Palestinians. It was encouraging to see that Sweden has followed Norway in removing its pension fund investment from the Israel high tech firm Elbit, which installs the electronic fence systems used to deter Palestinians from coming near the Wall.

### **Professional associations and the UIA: Refusal to accept the political implications of the Occupation and Architecture.**

It is clear now that Israel and its architects will continue building illegally, since even the US and the Quartet have not been able to stop their breaches of human rights and violations of international law in 43 years since the occupation. Only sanctions can bring the message home.

Our professional Architects associations seem reluctant to take up issues of ethics that they feel are "political". Even though South Africa was expelled from the UIA in the 80s because of apartheid, they seem reluctant to act against member countries.

APJP has made several attempts for the UIA to take up the issue of Israeli membership at Council and Assembly meetings at Beijing, Turin, Brazil, and Sydney. Till now it was impossible to get even one country to back a motion to suspend Israel. We wrote to the UIA president Louise Cox:

*"It now remains for the UIA to take appropriate action against such clear cut and glaring breaches of international law and the 49<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention. In the 1980s, the Institute of South African Architects was suspended from the UIA, setting a precedent to follow for the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA)"*

Since the IAUA has disassociated itself from its members' actions, it merits suspension from the UIA until it adheres to such ethics, and until projects based on land theft from the indigenous Palestinians and human rights breaches come to an end together with the occupation, and justice is restored. This will provide a salutary signal from an international professional body that it is making an ethical stand to safeguard the dignity and importance of our role in civic society that will provide some hope of change, at a moment of great urgency.

IN fact, the UIA recently condemned such projects, after we raised the issue, saying:

*"The UIA Council condemns development projects and the construction of buildings on land that has been ethnically purified or illegally appropriated, and projects based on regulations that are ethnically or culturally discriminatory, and similarly it condemns all action contravening the fourth Geneva Convention."*

Despite international agreements, numerous UN resolutions and EU Commission reports against them, since 1967 Israeli architects have continued to help build settlements and towns illegal under international law on expropriated Palestinian land in the Occupied Territories including annexed East Jerusalem. Israel's discriminatory architectural and planning projects have accelerated daily, with thousands of dwellings and public facilities being built, forcing the dispossession of Palestinians from their homes and land, and the destruction of their civic life, culture and national rights.

These activities are unethical, and as a strict reading shows, in violation of professional ethics and the IUA Charter. Dialogue with the Israeli Association of United Architects (IAUA) was attempted but has brought no change. The IAUA has shown total detachment from these practices by its members. As the international guardian of professional and ethical standards in our profession, it is time that appropriate action be taken by the UIA to suspend the IAUA from the UIA, in line with action taken against the South African Institute of Architects in the 1980s.

This should bring home to the IAUA and Israeli architects that unacceptable and long-standing breaches of professional and ethical practice brings the humanitarian aims of architecture into disrepute. Further, they operate within a highly racist and discriminatory system of oppression against a whole people. The situation gets worse by the day, in an agenda of total impunity and arrogance, reminiscent of apartheid South Africa.

Western support for Israel is strong – clinging to the mythology of 'plucky little Israel' standing with the West against terror. It will be a long struggle to get a response and achieve justice for the Palestinians and an equitable peace for all in the Middle East.

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## **From the International Union of Architects' Charter:**

### ***Principle 2 - Obligations to the Public***

*"Architects have obligations to the public to embrace the spirit and letter of the laws governing their professional affairs, and should thoughtfully consider the social and environmental impact of their professional activities.*

*2.1 Standard: Architects shall respect and help conserve the systems of values and the natural and cultural heritage of the community in which they are creating architecture. They shall strive to improve the environment and the quality of the life and habitat within it in a sustainable manner, being fully mindful of the effect of their work on the widest interests of all those who may reasonably be expected to use or enjoy the product of their work."*

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Meron Benvenisti writes in "A Civilian Occupation": The future of the settlements is currently perceived in terms of a political solution which views the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a national-ethnic conflict, the solution to which is "*two states for two peoples*". However it is possible that this model was never viable, or that there were strong forces that succeeded in destroying it. Or that the fundamental hostility between the settlers that struck roots and the natives that were expelled or subjugated does not allow for the attainment of mutual recognition and equal rights. That is why a solution of separation on the basis of equality is not viable, since in reality there exists a de-facto bi-national entity, where two rival communities exist in perpetual enmity.

Though the human landscape may be exchanged, the results of mass building are irreversible. The Israeli settlements generated extreme changes to the physical environment of the Occupied Territories, the most pronounced example of which is Maale Adumim. The town forms a sweeping built-up area that entirely blurs the dramatic confrontation between the desert and the planted land. The significance of Jerusalem as a city perched on the border between the arid barren land and the fertile populated land – a confrontation that has always defined the physical and historic environment of the Holy City - has been destroyed forever. No change in the human landscape will rescind this physical change. Irreversible too is the extensive environmental damage caused by the hysterical paving of bypass roads built as a result of the temporary and erroneous considerations of security measures. The arrogance of the founders of the Jewish Settlement project will not disappear, neither will those who perpetuated it. It is immortalized in the hundreds of thousands of tons of concrete that bury the hills of the West Bank between them.

*Quotations used are from "A Civilian Occupation" edited by Eyal Weizman and Rafi Segal and from "Hollow Land" by Eyal Weizman, both published by Verso Press.*

Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP) <http://apjp.org/>