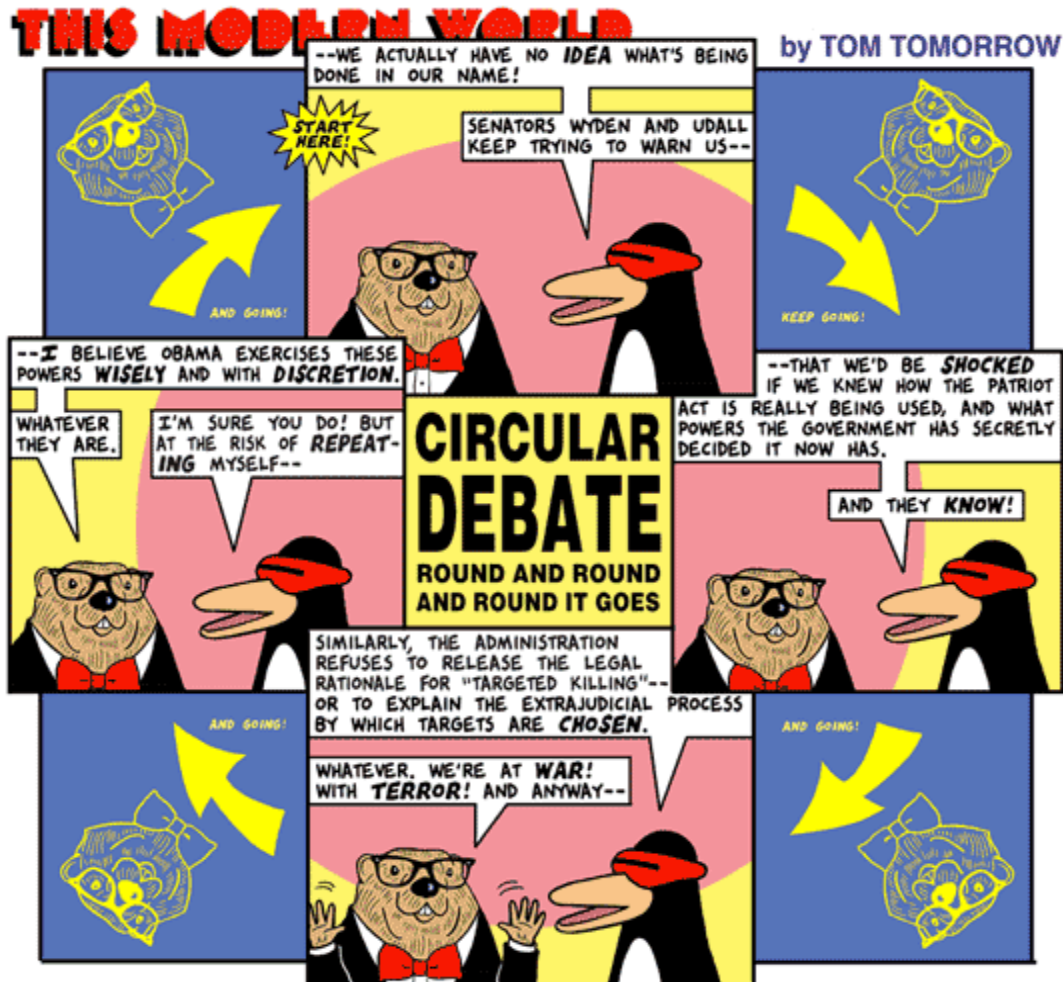


Military Resistance 10E18



**“Deepening Antiwar Sentiment
Among Post-9/11 Veterans”
“33 Percent Of Post-9/11 Veterans
Say That Neither The War In Iraq Nor
In Afghanistan ‘Were Worth The
Cost’”**

“Our Troops Are Facing Suicide Bombers And IEDs Knowing That Today Might Be Their Last Day, But For What?”

[Thanks to Fabian Bouthelette, Iraq Theatre Veteran & Military Resistance Organization, who sent this in.]

May 26, 2012 By Gloria Goodale, Staff writer; Christian Science Monitor [Excerpts]

Despite the end of the Iraq war and the scheduled drawdown in Afghanistan, this Memorial Day arrives against a backdrop of deepening – and some say more troublesome – antiwar sentiment among military veterans.

One of the most vivid and replayed images of protesters at the NATO summit last weekend in Chicago was a group of some 40 vets lined up to toss their war medals over the chain link fence to protest what former naval officer Leah Bolger calls “the illegal wars of both NATO and America.”

According to a recent Pew Research Center study, 33 percent of post-9/11 veterans say that neither the war in Iraq nor in Afghanistan “were worth the cost,” and this among a highly motivated cohort who chose to serve.

What this means, says retired US Army Col. Ann Wright, who resigned from a State Department post in 2006 over US policies in Iraq, is that there is a widening gap between the government, military policies, and the soldiers that carry them out.

“Military personnel know America will always have a military, but there is growing concern over the way it is being used,” says the 29-year veteran, adding that an increasing list of concerns include “the use of torture, illegal detentions, and both soldiers and the public being lied to about the actual reasons for going into combat.”

Many of the post-9/11 veterans who have served in what is now American’s longest-running military action, find that pressures that can fuel antiwar sentiment have ratcheted up with the all-volunteer army.

In order to meet troop level requirements, many soldiers have been deployed as many as six times – a level unheard of prior to the all-volunteer military, points out Mike Hanie, an Air Force veteran and founder and executive director of the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University.

Veterans returning to normal life are facing struggles that include uncertainty about possible redeployments, cutbacks in benefits, and an economy in recession. This has led to many troublesome results, including a suicide rate among post 9/11 veterans of some 18 veterans per day, says Dr. Harry Croft, a former Army doctor and a psychiatrist who has evaluated more than 7,000 veterans for combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and is author of the book “I Always Sit With My Back to The Wall.”

Afghanistan is even murkier, says Dr. Croft. "Our troops are over there risking their lives and the Afghan people and government don't even like us," he says, adding "our troops are facing suicide bombers and IEDs knowing that today might be their last day, but for what?"

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?



U.S. soldier in Beijia village Iraq, Feb. 4, 2008. (AP Photo/Maya Alleruzzo)

Forward Military Resistance along, or send us the email address if you wish and we'll send it regularly with your best wishes. Whether in Afghanistan or at a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, inside the armed services and at home. Send email requests to address up top or write to: Military Resistance, Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Fund Established To Help Daughter Of Local Soldier Killed In Action

May 22, 2012 By Dave Jordan, News Reporter; KCTV

OVERLAND PARK, KS

A family is coming together to remember a soldier killed in Afghanistan. Sgt. Mike Knapp was killed in the line of duty early Friday morning.

He just became a father nine months ago.

Right after Knapp graduated from Shawnee Mission North, he went into the National Guard, served a few years, left briefly and then re-enlisted as a full-time soldier.

He was supposed to be home in just three days, but then the tragedy happened.

The Mike Knapp his military colleagues knew was a 28-year-old Kansas native who loved being a soldier and serving his country. But Tom Brassfield paints a different picture of the Overland Park high school graduate – as a God-fearing traditionalist who asked him for his daughter's hand in marriage.

"Mike was the best son-in-law for my daughter, and when he asked to marry my daughter, and I knew that he knew God, I said 'yes,'" Brassfield said.

Knapp's wife, Abby, and their newborn daughter had recently moved back to Kansas from the Northwest as Knapp was serving his third tour of duty in Afghanistan. The family was anticipating a brief, but long-awaited, reunion when Knapp would return home for a two-week vacation. But Friday morning, his in-laws received the grim news that two servicemen were killed in Afghanistan.

Brassfield's wife heard a news report and then saw two military personnel walking up to the house.

"She called me immediately and said 'please come home quickly,' and I just ran out the door," Brassfield said.

His daughter arrived shortly after.

"She (Abby) came home with a 9-month-old baby and saw the government plates and immediately knew what it was, and they just told us the best way they could that Mike had been killed in Afghanistan early this morning, May 18," Brassfield said.

As neighbors heard the news, they quickly displayed their flags, some stopping by to pay their respects. Right now, the family doesn't know the details of his death, other than the fact that it happened at military artillery on the Afghan border.

For now, they're focusing on the memories of Knapp and his ultimate sacrifice.

"Our son-in-law served bravely, and he did what he wanted to do for his country," Brassfield said.

Knapp's mother found out about his death just a few hours before 10 p.m. Friday. She was out of town and headed back to Kansas when she got the news.

An assistance fund has been set up for Knapp's 9-month-old baby at Valley View Bank.

To help donate: (checks can be mailed to any of their locations)

Kinsley Knapp Assistance Fund
Valley View Bank
7500 W. 95th St.
Overland Park, KS, 66212

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

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WAR**

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**U.S. Efforts Fail To Cut Afghan
Opium Trade That Helps Finance
The Insurgency And Fuel
Corruption:**

**“Breaking The Narco-State In
Afghanistan Is Essential, Or All Else
Will Fail”**

**“There Is So Much Money To Be Made
That Powerful Political Players, From
Police Chiefs To Governors, Inevitably
Want A Cut”**



An Army officer walking through a poppy field while on patrol in Afghanistan last month.
Baz Ratner/Reuters

May 26, 2012 By ALISSA J. RUBIN and MATTHEW ROSENBERG, New York Times
[Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan — For years, American officials have struggled to curb Afghanistan’s opium industry, rewriting strategy every few seasons and pouring in more than \$6 billion over the past decade to combat the poppies that help finance the insurgency and fuel corruption.

It is a measure of the problem’s complexity that officials can find little comfort even in the news this month that blight and bad weather are slashing this year’s poppy harvest in the south. They know from past seasons that blight years lead to skyrocketing opium prices and even greater planting efforts to come.

“Now I am desperate, what can I do?” said Mohammed Amin, a poppy farmer in Tirin Kot in Oruzgan Province, who harvested only one kilogram of opium poppy this year compared with 15 last year. “I don’t have any cash now to start another business, and if I grow any other crops, I cannot make a profit.”

The seemingly unbreakable allure of poppy profits — for producers and traffickers, government officials and Taliban commanders alike — has kept fighting opium at the heart of efforts to improve security.

It drove Richard C. Holbrooke, later the special envoy to Afghanistan, to write in 2008: “Breaking the narco-state in Afghanistan is essential, or all else will fail.”

As the money from the Western military and civilian aid programs dwindles, the relative importance of opium to the economy is likely only to increase, said Jean-Luc Lemahieu, the director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Afghanistan.

“Some money is available through the licit economy, but less than in the past as the Western contracts dry up, and so the importance of the illicit, informal economy will

increase: human trafficking, gems, timber and weapons smuggling, and of course narcotics is a huge chunk of it," he said, adding: "The prognosis post-2014 is not a positive one."

Opium poppy, much like the coca grown in Colombia and Peru, poses a number of problems because there is so much money to be made that powerful political players, from police chiefs to governors, inevitably want a cut.

The Taliban also support the drug trade, directly by protecting opium farmers, and indirectly by shielding traffickers, who pay off everybody in order to move their products quickly to the borders, according to narcotics experts at the United Nations and the Afghan government.

Despite all the effort, there are many troubling indicators.

Nationwide, the number of poppy-free provinces, which reached a high of 20 in 2010, has now dropped to at least 17 and could be found to be still lower once researchers finish surveying remote provinces. Overall acres under poppy cultivation began rising again in 2009 after a significant drop the year before, and the total has grown slowly but steadily since.

Interdiction, while somewhat improved under new Afghan counternarcotics leadership, nets only about 3.5 percent of the 375 tons of heroin that leaves the country every year, according to the United Nations.

This year's low opium harvest has thrown another element of unpredictability into the picture. It has already driven a few farmers to commit suicide and others to flee because they feared retribution from creditors, according to the governor's office in Helmand.

But rather than serving as a disincentive, the poor crop is more likely to prompt many to plant even more poppy next year to make up for this year's losses. That was the pattern in previous blight seasons, like 2010.

Mr. Amin, the poppy farmer in Tirin Kot, says that despite the risks, there is nothing to replace opium: "The poppy is always good, you can sell it at any time. It is like gold, you can sell it whenever and get cash."

In the meantime, the price for opium at the farm gate has soared — up more than 50 percent from a month ago and now selling for more than \$320 per kilogram — another factor likely to spur more planting, Mr. Lemahieu said. Traffickers, who stockpile opium from year to year, are making a killing, he said.

On the Afghan side, the minister for counternarcotics, Zarar Ahmad Muqbel Osmani, has increased poppy eradication efforts in areas where farmers can grow other crops and is lobbying to expand the alternative crop program. But he remains deeply frustrated with the overall lack of law enforcement. Asked what it would take to affect the country's drug problem, he answered tersely, "Political will."

Among the continuing problems with corruption: information leaks that scuttle potential drug raids; political pressure that results in the release of major

traffickers; and local politicians and police officers who participate in the poppy trade and use eradication programs to attack their rivals.

The deputy interior minister for counternarcotics, Lt. Gen. Baaz Mohammed Ahmadi, said his specialized force must still answer to local police officials.

“Because they are dependent on the regular force for everything, for gas for their vehicles and for the vehicles, even a very junior fuel dispatcher will know about the details of our operations,” he said.

“And when we plan an operation, we have to have approval of the local police chief or his deputy or the zone police chief, and if one of those people is corrupt or linked to a big trafficker, it leaks.”

The Americans have taken at least three different tacks to fighting opium poppy cultivation.

In the early days after the 2001 invasion, a little more than half the current acreage was under cultivation, a legacy in part from the Taliban’s ban on opium, which they ignored selectively.

The Western emphasis was on driving the remaining Taliban fighters from the country, and with that in mind the Americans made allies of many of the old warlords who were also involved in the drug trade, entrenching a culture of impunity.

In 2005, British forces found nearly 20,000 pounds of opium in the office of the Helmand governor, Sher Mohammed Akhundzada, an ally of President Hamid Karzai. He was forced out at the behest of the British, but was later named to the Senate.

In 2006, as Americans began promoting eradication by specially trained Afghan forces, heroin was found in a car belonging Hajji Zaher Qadir, whom Mr. Karzai had been considering to lead the border police force.

That appointment was scrapped, but Mr. Qadir is now one of the leaders in the lower house of Parliament.

Many of the northern power brokers are also believed to be involved in the drug trade.

In 2007, as poppy growth reached a record-high 477,000 acres, the new American ambassador, William B. Wood, began to lobby for aerial eradication of the kind that had been undertaken in Colombia.

Mr. Wood became such a vocal proponent that he was known in the British press as “Chemical Bill.”

He once even tried to overcome President Karzai’s skepticism about spraying by offering to publicly sit in a vat of pesticide clad only in a Speedo bathing suit to prove the chemicals were safe, said a Western official familiar with the discussions at the time.

Strenuous opposition from Mr. Karzai, European diplomats and some American policy makers stopped the program from getting off the ground. They feared it would backfire by reminding impoverished Afghans of Soviet-era spraying and would push them further into poverty, and into the arms of the Taliban.

In 2009, with the arrival of President Obama's team, including Mr. Holbrooke, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal and later Gen. David H. Petraeus, the focus turned toward a counterinsurgency strategy that hinged on gaining acceptance from local Afghans.

Aware of how eradication deeply alienated rural Afghans who depended on opium for their families' subsistence, the American military distanced itself as much as possible from destroying poppy crops, instead supporting alternative crops and livelihoods. The State Department paid provincial governors to use Afghan forces to eradicate.

Still, for many Afghans in the poppy belt, the idea of placing a bet on the government's future by cultivating anything other than poppy seems like one of the longest of shots.

"It is not an easy choice to grow poppies," said Tahir Khan, a local village leader in Khogyani district in the Nangarhar Province in eastern Afghanistan.

"We know the danger and threat from the government and it is difficult, it needs hard work to recoup our investment. But the people are poor, they have no choice."

ENOUGH OF THIS SHIT; ALL HOME NOW



U.S. soldiers from Charlie troop, 4-73 Cavalry Regiment, 4th brigade, 82nd Airborne division jumps over a ditch during a joint mission with the Afghan Army in the Maiwand district in Kandahar province, April 7, 2012. REUTERS/Baz Ratner

MILITARY NEWS

Comment Unnecessary



May 20, 2012 Chicago: Iraq Veterans Against The War

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

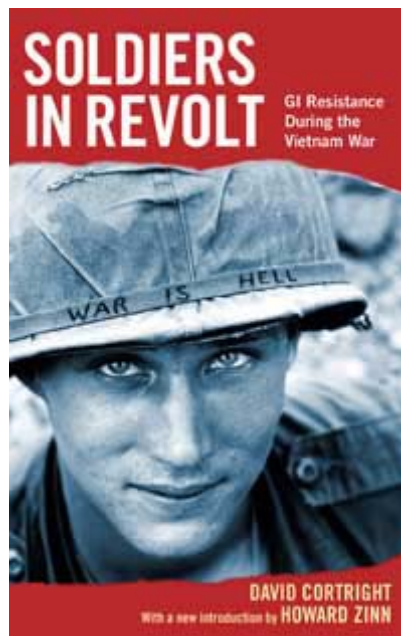
“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms.
-- Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787

“GI Activists Should Remain On Base And Work Directly With People At Their Jobs And In The Barracks”



From: SOLDIERS IN REVOLT: DAVID CORTRIGHT, Anchor Press/Doubleday, Garden City, New York, 1975. Now available in paperback from Haymarket Books. [Excerpts]

[By activists with the paper *Fight Back* in Germany, 1973. Excerpts]

Radicals Must Join The Army.

The role of radicals who purposely join the services to organize has been important throughout the GI movement and remains so today.

Within the Fight Back group, in the GI Alliance in Tacoma, and at numerous other projects, former civilian activists, some of whom gave up deferments to join, have been a vital force in sustaining GI dissent.

The presence of even a few hundred committed activists could have great impact on the level of servicemen's dissent.

Civilian Support Is Crucial:

As we have seen throughout the history of the GI movement, such support has been a crucial ingredient of successful organizing. Civilian activists are most needed as political workers and counselors at local projects.

Peace organizations should adopt programs for training civilians in military counseling and supporting them during a tour of duty working directly with servicemen at major bases.

A Newspaper Or Newsletter Is Necessary:

Nearly every servicemen's organization has coalesced around a newspaper as the best means available for communicating with other GIs.

An important variation of this is unit newsletters, pioneered at Fort Lewis, to expose abuses within individual units and mobilize political pressure at the local level. Unit newsletters appearing on a biweekly basis could then be supplemented by a monthly or bimonthly base-wide newspaper.

This should be part of a general shift in the locus of GI action away from off-base coffeehouses, back to the barracks.

Off-base locations are still needed for printing and counseling activities by civilian staffers, but GI activists should remain on base and work directly with people at their jobs and in the barracks

Regardless of what form it takes, though, citizen action must continue.

Continued work is necessary to establish democratic control over the institutions of war and to secure independence and dignity for people in the ranks.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

ANNIVERSARIES

May 29, 1932: Betrayed Veterans March On Washington DC



The St. Louis contingent of the Bonus Expeditionary Force is pictured here as it starts for Washington, D.C., in May 1932.

Carl Bunin Peace History May 28-June 3

In the depths of the Great Depression, the “Bonus Expeditionary Force,” a group of 1,000 World War I veterans seeking cash payments for their veterans’ bonus certificates, arrived in Washington, D.C.

By mid-June, they had set up a massive “Hooverville,” a contemporary term for an encampment of the homeless.

One month later, other veteran groups made their way to the nation's capital, swelling the Bonus Marchers to nearly 20,000 strong, most of them unemployed veterans in difficult financial straits.

In direct violation of the Posse Comitatus Act, they were violently disbanded by the Army in July.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

We Shall Return: The Story Of Iqrit: “On Christmas Eve, 1950, The Israeli Army Blew Up All The Houses Of Iqrit, In A Timely ‘Christmas Gift’ To Its Expelled Christian Residents”



The Church of Our Lady in Iqrit.

May 5, 2012 By Fida Jiryis, Uruknet

Fida Jiryis is a Palestinian writer from the Arab village of Fassuta in the Galilee. She is the author of the forthcoming book, 'My Return to Galilee,' which chronicles her return from the Diaspora to Israel.

'I don't want to open all my wounds...,' says Maher Daoud, a descendent of Iqrit refugees, as we drive to the site where the village of his parents once stood. I wince and apologize, aware of how difficult the subject must be for him.

Iqrit is one of the 350 or so Palestinian villages that were completely destroyed and ethnically cleansed in 1948, its residents barred from returning but turned, overnight, into internal refugees in their own country.

Maher, 43, is married to my cousin, Njoud, and they live in Mi'ilya, a village in the Galilee.

They regularly drive up to Iqrit, whose church is all that remains today, to partake in religious celebrations at Christmas and Easter and to visit dead relatives in Iqrit's cemetery.

The occasion of our visit now is sombre: Maher's mother passed away two years ago, and we are here to visit her grave on the occasion of Good Friday, as is the custom among Palestinian Christians.

The drive to Iqrit takes a mere twenty minutes from my village, Fassouta. Both are in the Galilee: the north of historical Palestine, a few kilometres from the Lebanese border. During Israel's "War of Independence" in 1948, or the Nakba (Catastrophe) as Palestinians refer to it, the residents of Iqrit and Biram, another nearby village, were uprooted from their homes on "security grounds," presumably for Israel to protect its northern border.

The residents of Iqrit were bussed to Rama village, twenty kilometers south in the Galilee, and told it would be for a few weeks, until the security situation was calm and they could return. But they never did.

On Christmas Eve, 1950, the Israeli army blew up all the houses of Iqrit, in a timely "Christmas gift" to its expelled Christian residents. My father, a boy of 12 at the time, saw the smoke rising above the village in the distance, and, in panic and haste, told a man named Tu'meh from Iqrit, who had taken refuge in Fassouta. Tu'meh's eyes filled with tears.

In 1951, the Israeli High Court ruled that the villagers be allowed to return "as long as no emergency decree" existed against the village.

With cold predictability, the government was quick to issue such a decree against the Iqrit evacuees.

In 1953, it blew up the houses of Biram, too, leaving only the churches of the two villages standing.

Two years later, the theft was completed: the land of the two villages - 16,000 dunams (4,000 acres) in Iqrit and 12,000 dunams (3000 acres) in Biram - was

expropriated for establishing Jewish settlements, which are there today: Even Menahem, Shlomi, and Shtula.

I'd read about this before; Israel coldly and ruthlessly destroyed about 350 Palestinian villages and turned close to 700,000 Palestinians into homeless refugees during the Nakba. I had visited Suhmata, another such village, already, so I was prepared for what I expected to see.

Nothing stopped the flood of goose bumps, though, when my cousin whispered: "Here it is. The village starts here."

"The village" that she was referring to "started" as a small pile of rubble by the roadside. Maher was quick to point to the church atop a hill in the distance. "That's Iqrit," he said.

I experienced the same sickening disbelief I'd felt when an old relative had pointed to a tree-covered hill and told me: "Here it is. This is Suhmata."

In fact, it is completely surreal: all you see are shrubs and trees, thick greenery as is characteristic of the wilderness of Galilee. The small piles of rubble dotted periodically around are the only small reason to believe that those speaking to you are not deranged or delusional.

As we climb up the winding road in Maher's car, I notice piles of fresh rubble by the side. He says: "We put asphalt on the road a few years ago, just to be able to drive up to the cemetery because the old people can't walk up this far. But the Jewish settlers came and tore up the road. You can see the piles every few meters."

Such is the refusal and phobia of Israel that Palestinians may exercise their right of return to their stolen homes: even a simple road to get to a cemetery is torn apart, lest it become a precedent

We reach the cemetery and walk in with flowers and candles to pay our respects. I notice a large stone at the entrance with these words on it: "We remember and will not forget - This stone was erected in memory of our fathers and mothers who staged a sit-in in Iqrit Church, in the hope of returning alive, as the highest judicial authority in the country deemed, to rebuild what the hands of decision makers have destroyed.

"But the policy of rights abuses and land confiscation did not allow them to do so, and they died refugees in their own land."

I start to read the names that follow... Elias Yousef Daoud, Atallah Mousa Atallah, Elias Diab Sbeit, Najib Jiryis Khayyat, and on it goes... Eighteen names of people who tried desperately to undo the cruel fate that they had been dealt by Israel and return to their homes, but whose efforts were in vain, until they could only return as dead to be buried in their village.

In fact, such was not even the case: from the time Iqrit was ethnically cleansed in 1948 until 1972, its scattered residents were not even allowed to bury their dead in the village.

This posed a serious problem, for they had to rely on the kindness of the people of Rama to give them a space in its cemetery. Suddenly, a death was not only cause for mourning but for logistical worry as well.

In a sad story that Maher told me, a group of young men once decided to break the rule and took the body of one of their dead for burial at night in Iqrit. Israeli soldiers heard of the matter and followed them, then forced them to dig the ground again, retrieve the coffin and take it to be buried elsewhere.

Life for the living wasn't much easier. The people of Iqrit settled in Rama in harsh conditions.

With the sudden influx of refugees, daily living was crowded and difficult, and jobs were scarce. The pain of having just lost, overnight, everything that they owned was compounded by this new and harsh reality.

Maher, for example, was the grandson of the mukhtar, or head of the village, of Iqrit. His grandfather was very well off, owned a shop and an olive oil press, and traded in tobacco. The shock of losing all that he owned - his home, lands, and businesses - and being turned into a homeless, penniless refugee overnight was overwhelming. Maher's father lived in denial.

"For years, all the time that I was growing up, my father refused to paint the house or do any badly needed renovation to it. Why? Because he feared that in doing so, he would be seen as acclimatising to his new home, having forgotten Iqrit or his hope of returning."

The people of Iqrit proved themselves in Rama, taking menial work and enduring difficult conditions to support their families. Eventually, the next generations moved to Haifa and elsewhere in search of work.

Do they feel a connection to Rama, now, as their surrogate home?

I pose the question to Maher and he says, "Sure, I was born in Rama and grew up there, I have memories there and feel some belonging. But I'm not from Rama. I'm from Iqrit." He tells me that the people of Rama also add to this feeling; when he asked for directions to someone's house, for example, the man in the street responded with: "Oh! The man from Iqrit..." before giving him directions. This was despite the man in question having lived in Rama for more than sixty years.

Maher was sorely reminded of this misfit when he decided to build a house for himself and his family. His father had no land in Rama. When Maher got married, he rented a flat in Kfar Veradim, a Jewish locale near the Palestinian village of Tarshiha where he works, and lived there for a number of years. Then, with rent becoming too high for him, he moved to Mi'ilya, another nearby Arab village, where he bought land to buy a house.

He then faced a problem that he had never thought of: some residents of Mi'ilya did not want him. He was labelled a stranger, and an uproar ensued on his owning land in the village, including threats and slander against him. Maher comments bitterly: "If I were still in Iqrit, my grandfather's land would have been more than enough. I would not have needed to beg anyone for a corner to live in with my family!"

"Every day, I feel that I'm a living testimony to the injustice that was done to us," he continues.

I ask him how he reconciles, internally, living in Israel, alongside the people who took away his village and committed this injustice. "It's a huge contradiction," he says painfully. "They are the ones who did this to me, to us, yet they are my customers in my hummus shop; I need them to survive."

He finds it emotionally difficult to separate work from the personal, though. Sometimes, he enters into political discussions with Jewish customers, but is frustrated because he can't say everything he wants. He cites an incident that took place when he was living in Kefar Veradim.

One of his neighbours had come to his shop to buy food and inquired, "So, what's it like living in our place?" Maher quickly looked at her and replied, "Actually, you're the ones living in my place. You're the guests in this country, and unwanted ones at that." The customer did not return.

The people of Iqrit are remarkably tight-knit and steadfast in their resolution to return to their village. Six decades after they were ousted from their homes and lands, they still pray in their church, bury their dead in Iqrit, and hold summer camps there annually for their children, to teach them about their village.

A famous poet from Iqrit, Aouni Sbeit, was once quoted telling a reporter, during a demonstration of the people of Iqrit in front of the Israeli prime minister's office: "If you put your ear to the belly of a pregnant woman from Iqrit, you will hear the baby saying that we shall return!"

Powerful words, but whether they will ever come true for these internal refugees is anyone's guess.

Despite an on-going legal battle, Israel will not allow them to return, lest it set a precedent for the return of other Palestinian refugees to their homes.

Despite the fact that, in 1998, then-justice minister Tzachi Hanegbi recommended to the Netanyahu government that "no obstacles should be placed in the way of the return of the evacuees," the final settlement offered to them in 1995 and 1996 was that Iqrit and Biram be re-established as community settlements on the basis of long-term land leases.

In other words, the residents would have to "rent" their own lands from the state. Not surprisingly, they refused. The case has since been at a stalemate. Maher remarks bitterly: "How many articles have been written about Iqrit... How much material circulated... And we still can't go home."

The story of Iqrit, though, illustrates the power of home and belonging. No one, not even Israel, can take that away.

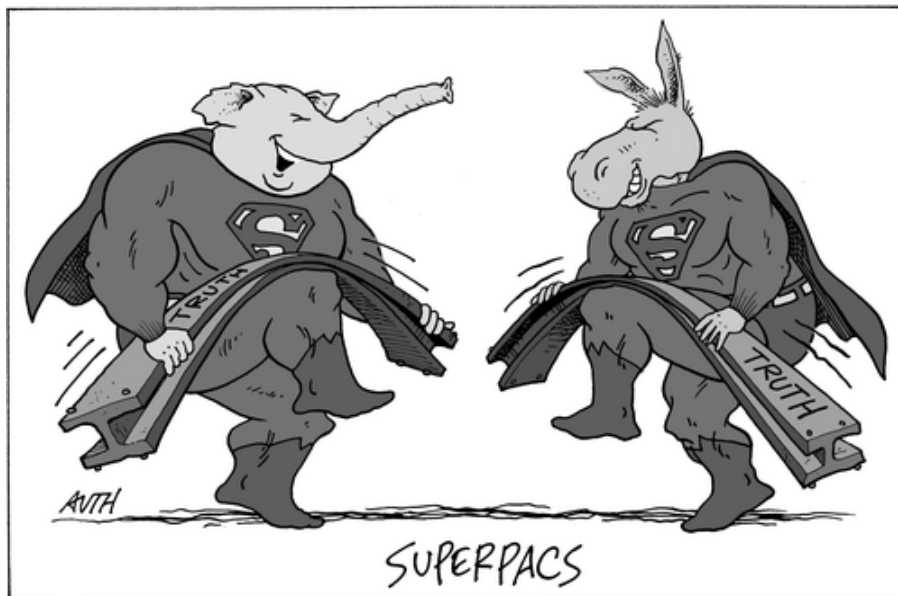
Palestinians have been connected to this land for generations; it's not a connection that they can sever or replace.

They know no other home and ask only for their basic human right: to return to this home that they were so cruelly ousted from.

"My father has lived a temporary existence for sixty-four years," Maher says. "Because, for sixty-four years, he's been sitting on his suitcase, waiting to go home."

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



“A Thickset American Interrogator Nicknamed ‘The Elephant,’ Who First Told Lakhdar Boumediene That Investigators Were Certain Of His Innocence, That Two Years Of

Questioning Had Shown He Was No Terrorist, But That It Did Not Matter” “The Interrogations Would Continue Through What Ended Up Being Seven Years, Three Months, Three Weeks And Four Days At The Prison Camp At Guantanamo”



Lakhdar Boumediene

May 26, 2012 Scott Sayare, The New York Times

Nice, France:

It was James, a thickset American interrogator nicknamed "the Elephant," who first told Lakhdar Boumediene that investigators were certain of his innocence, that two years of questioning had shown he was no terrorist, but that it did not matter, Mr Boumediene says.

The interrogations would continue through what ended up being seven years, three months, three weeks and four days at the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

An aid worker handling orphans in Sarajevo, Mr Boumediene (pronounced boom-eh-DIEN) found himself swept up in the panic that followed Sept 11, 2001.

He likens himself to a caged cat, toyed with and tormented by fate and circumstance.

"I learned patience," Mr Boumediene, 46, said. He is a private man, trim and square-jawed and meticulously kempt, his eyes set in deep grey hollows. "There is no other choice but patience."

The United States government has never acknowledged any error in detaining Mr Boumediene, though a federal judge ordered his release, for lack of evidence, in 2008.

The government did not appeal, a Defence Department spokesman noted, though he declined to answer further questions about Mr Boumediene's case. A State Department representative declined to discuss the case as well, except to point to a Justice Department statement announcing Mr Boumediene's transfer to France, in 2009.

More than a decade has passed since his arrest in Bosnia, since American operatives shackled his feet and hands, dropped a black bag over his head and flew him to Guantanamo.

Since his release three years ago, Mr Boumediene, an Algerian by birth, has lived anonymously in the south of France, quietly enraged but determined to start anew and to resist the pull of that anger.

He calls Guantanamo a "black hole." Islam carried him through, he says. In truth, though, he still cannot escape it, and is still racked by questions.

"I think back over everything in my life, all the stages, who my friends were, who I did this or that with, who I had a simple coffee with," Mr Boumediene said. "I do not know, even now, why I was at Guantanamo."

There were early accusations of a plot to bomb the American Embassy in Sarajevo; he lived in that city with his family, working for the Red Crescent, the Muslim branch of the Red Cross.

President George W. Bush hailed his arrest in a State of the Union address on January 29, 2002.

In time, those accusations disappeared, Mr Boumediene says, replaced by questions about his work with Muslim aid groups and suggestions that those groups financed Islamic terrorism.

According to a classified detainee assessment from April 2008, published by WikiLeaks, investigators believed that he was a member of Al Qaeda and the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria. Those charges, too, later vanished.

In a landmark case that bears Mr Boumediene's name, the Supreme Court in 2008 affirmed the right of Guantanamo detainees to challenge their imprisonment in court. Mr Boumediene petitioned for his release.

In court, the government's sole claim was that Mr Boumediene had intended to travel to Afghanistan to take up arms against the United States.

A federal judge rejected that charge as unsubstantiated, noting that it had come from a single unnamed informer.

Mr Boumediene arrived in France on May 15, 2009, the first of two non-French former detainees to settle here.

Mr Boumediene retreated into himself at Guantanamo, he says.

He speaks little of his past now; with few exceptions, his neighbours know him only as a husband and a father. He lives with the wife and two daughters from whom he was once taken, and a son born here two years ago. More than vengeance, or even justice, he wants a return to normalcy.

He lives at the whim of the French state, though. France has permitted Mr Boumediene to settle in public housing in Nice, where his wife has family, but he is not a French citizen, nor has he been granted asylum or permanent residence.

His Algerian and Bosnian passports, misplaced by the American authorities, have not been reissued, leaving him effectively stateless.

Money comes in a monthly transfer to his French bank account. He does not know who, exactly, pays it. (The terms of his release have not been made public or revealed even to him.) He has been seeking work for years.

Recruiters typically scan his résumé with an air of approval, he said, until noting that it ends in 2001. He tells them that his is a "particular case," that he spent time in prison. He avoids the word "Guantanamo," he said, as it often stirs more fear than sympathy.

Mr Boumediene arrived at Guantanamo on January 20, 2002, nine days after the camp began operations. He was beaten on arrival, he said. Refusing food for the final 28 months of his detention, he was force-fed through a tube inserted up a nostril and down his throat, he said. There was a hole in the seat of the chair to which he was chained, sometimes clothed, sometimes not; as the liquid streamed into his stomach, his bowels often released.

He emerged gaunt, with wrists scarred from seven years of handcuffs, almost unable to walk without the shackles to which he had grown accustomed, he said. Crowds terrified him, as did rooms with closed doors, said Nathalie Berger, a doctor who worked with Mr Boumediene shortly after his release.

Dr. Berger was moved, she said, by his equanimity and his "strength to live."

"He has no hate for the American people," she said, though Mr Bush is another matter. Mr Boumediene has been disappointed too by President Obama, who pledged to close Guantanamo but has not done so.

Born in the hills of northwestern Algeria, Mr Boumediene served for two years in the Algerian military before following a friend to Pakistan in 1990, to aid refugees of the Afghan civil war.

He found work as a proctor at an orphanage and school operated by a Kuwaiti aid organization, a post that investigators later seized on as evidence of ties to terrorism.

A man identified as a director of the group, Zahid al-Shaikh, is the brother of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the architect of the September 11 attacks, who has been held at Guantanamo since 2006 and is now to be tried before a military court. Mr Shaikh's

signature appeared on Mr Boumediene's contract, but the two had little interaction, Mr Boumediene said.

He moved to Yemen, studying at the French cultural centre in Sana; fighting there drove him to Albania, where he worked for the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates. Deadly riots erupted in 1997, and he received a transfer to Bosnia.

Violence seemed to trail him, his interrogators noted. He has come to understand their suspicions, he said.

In Nice, Mr Boumediene has grown friendly with a neighbour, Babette. She brings him coffee, he said, and gifts for his young son. They share meals at Christmas and on Muslim holy days.

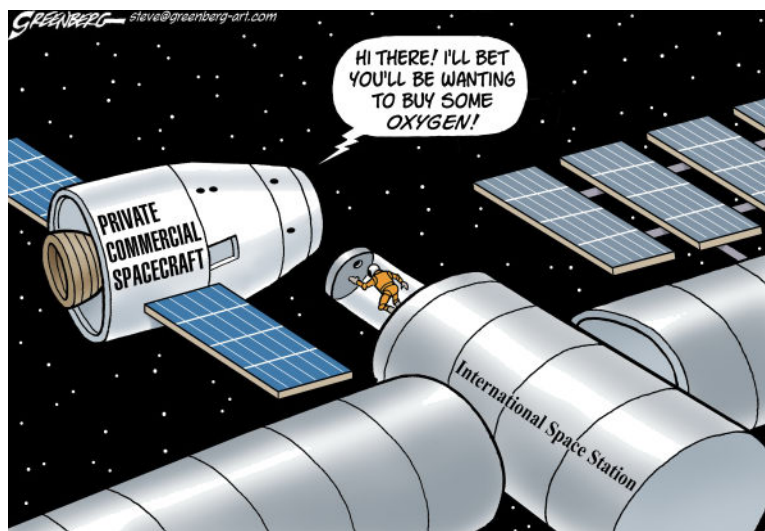
He feared she might no longer come if she knew his past. In January, though, it was the 10th anniversary of the opening of Guantanamo, and there was media coverage. Babette asked if it was true.

"I told her, 'It's fate, and it's life,' " Mr Boumediene said. She still comes to call, he said, and still calls him "my brother."

"Little by little, now, there are people who know who I am," he said. Some offer cautious words of encouragement, others their apologies.

"I do not know what the right reaction is," he said, but he does like a reaction, just the same.

CLASS WAR REPORTS



**“Syrian Tanks And Artillery
Pounded Houla, A Rebel-
Controlled Village”
“Then Soldiers And Pro-
Government Fighters Stormed The
Village And Killed Families In Their
Homes Late At Night”
“Damascus Took On The Look Of An
Armed Camp On Saturday, With
Closed Shops And A Heavy Military
Presence”
“Activists Reported Demonstrations In
At Least 10 Neighborhoods”**



Members of the Syrian Free Army near the bodies of people killed by government security forces, at Ali Bin Al Hussein mosque in Houla, near Homs May 26, 2012. A Syrian artillery barrage killed more than 90 people, including dozens of children. REUTERS/Houla News Network/Handout

27 May 2012 By Hwaida Saad and Neil MacFarquhar, The New York Times News Service [Excerpts]

Beirut, Lebanon - The Syrian government on Sunday rejected claims that it carried out a massacre that killed more than 90 villagers, including at least 32 children, a death toll that has prompted a sharp denunciation from United Nations officials.

In one of the worst episodes of carnage since the uprising began 15 months ago, Syrian tanks and artillery pounded Houla, a rebel-controlled village near the restive city of Homs, during the day, opposition groups said, then soldiers and pro-government fighters stormed the village and killed families in their homes late at night.

Amateur videos said to be taken in the aftermath showed row after row of victims, many of them children with what appeared to be bullet holes in their temples. Other videos showed gruesome shrapnel wounds caused by what activists said was a barrage of shelling that started Friday in response to demonstrations after the weekly prayer service and that continued Saturday.

After monitors visited the village on Saturday, counting at least 92 bodies, they said they found spent tank shells, which they cited as evidence that the Syrian military had violated its part of a truce in firing heavy artillery at civilians.

Gory images posted online — particularly the scene of rows of dead children smeared with blood — prompted an emotional outpouring of antigovernment demonstrations across Syria and calls for sectarian revenge.

Activists said that much of the slaughter had been carried out by pro-government thugs, or "shabiha," from the area. Houla is a Sunni Muslim town, while three villages around it are mostly Alawite, the religion of Mr. Assad and whose adherents are the core of his security forces. A fourth village is Shiite Muslim.

A man in a black knitted mask who appeared on one YouTube video, for example, said it was time "to prepare for vengeance against this awful sectarian regime."

The rebel Free Syrian Army, the loose federation of armed militias across the country, issued a statement saying it was no longer committed to the United Nations truce because the plan was merely buying time for the government to kill civilians and destroy cities and villages.

"We won't allow truce after truce, which prolongs the crisis for years," the statement said.

Activists said that there had been firefights between the armed opposition that controlled the village and the government forces besieging it. Although the United Nations statements called for stopping violence on both sides, neither suggested that the opposition was involved in the deaths of civilians in Houla.

The United Nations observers produced a quick assessment, the first time they have issued a publicly damning report so soon after an episode of violence.

Despite their efforts, as well as the unusual step of the United Nations directly accusing the government of perpetrating major violence, the massacre soured Syrians even more on their presence, since the killing took place despite observers being deployed in nearby Homs.

Saleem Kabani, an activist reached via Skype who said he was in the town, said that government forces had shelled Houla heavily all day Friday, also raking it with machine-gun fire and firing mortar shells. There had already been a substantial toll from that assault, he and others said, with some residents killed as their houses collapsed.

Then gunmen from the Free Syrian Army left the center of the town to try to assault the government checkpoints from which much of the barrage originated, he said.

Taking advantage of the absence of any armed men inside the village late Friday, government soldiers moved in, along with volunteers from surrounding hamlets, to kill civilians, Mr. Kabani said.

Another activist in Homs reached via Skype, using only the name Saif, said the people of Houla were demonstrating on Saturday despite renewed shelling.

Activists in Houla had told him that more bodies were left on roads exposed to government fire and in houses, he said.

The government appeared to have anticipated the demonstrations that took place on Saturday in solidarity with Houla.

Damascus took on the look of an armed camp on Saturday, with closed shops and a heavy military presence.

Activists reported demonstrations in at least 10 neighborhoods.

"The regime kills thousands of Syrian citizens, and Annan's monitors are watching and writing the number of killed people as if they were game scores," said Fadi, a 25-year-old demonstrator in the southern Damascus district of Qaddam.

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