

Notes on the International Day of Action for Justice in Palestine, 6-5-03

The June 5 International Day of Action for Justice in Palestine, called by United for Peace and Justice, the International Solidarity Movement, and the Peace and Justice Studies Association, was a success. Over 35 events took place in cities around the world, in major cities: New York; San Francisco; Chicago; Seattle; Los Angeles; Minneapolis; Austin, Texas; Olympia; London; Dublin; and Barcelona, and in areas that are not generally hotbeds of activism: Peoria, Illinois; Pensacola, Florida; Reno, Nevada; West Lafayette, Indiana; Charleston, South Carolina; Lawrence, Kansas; Aberystwyth, Wales; Atlanta, Georgia; New Brunswick, New Jersey; Charlotte, North Carolina; and more. There were events in Jerusalem and in the occupied territories: Kalandiya, Nablus, and Jenin, and a border-crossing event originating in Amman. The Day of Action was endorsed by a broad range of groups and individuals, from Palestinian support groups to Tikkun, proving that language can be crafted that can span a large spectrum of positions on this issue.

In New York, we held a forum at the UN. Speakers were Cindy Corrie, mother of Rachel Corrie; Palestinian authors and scholars Nadya Hijab, Rabab Abdulhadi; Simona Sharoni and Starhawk, two of the major organizers of the June 5 day; and longtime peace activist Cora Weiss. Sadly, Edward Said was unable to attend because of health concerns. The discussion analyzed the "New Road Map," reported on the situation on the ground in Palestine and the attacks on the ISM, and explored strategies for moving ahead. It was followed by a small but spirited rally at the UN, which received much support from passersby and many encouraging honks and thumbs-up from motorists. A group of students who had come from Evergreen University in Olympia, where Rachel Corrie was studying, were invited on a tour of the UN by the Delegation for Palestinian Rights. We then attended a vigil in Union Square called by Women in Black of several hundred people.

We received much good media coverage, including coverage on Democracy Now and NPR. NPR mentioned the demonstrations in Nablus and Jenin, showing that an international context can help make the nonviolent resistance in occupied Palestine more visible.

Considering that this was organized with very little lead time and essentially no budget at all, and coordinated by two women who were both already insanely busy, and that much of the European progressive movement was tied up with actions around the G8 meeting in Evian, it was amazingly successful.

United for Peace and Justice, at its organizing and strategy conference June 6-8, has now agreed to support a campaign for justice in Palestine and another International Day of Action--with virtually no opposition at the conference. Justice in Palestine was one of

the five main action areas prioritized by the 524 delegates, who represented a broad spectrum of peace and justice groups. The issue of justice for Palestine is moving to the forefront of the concerns of the peace movement, and that has strategic implications which I'll consider in another post.

There are a few things I can also see that could improve our work for next time:

- More lead time.
- Resources! Money to hire one staff person, even temporarily, to coordinate and follow-up on media, to handle the website and posting and listing of events and to nag people to actually list their events!

We had a certain amount of technical difficulties and confusion over which website we were using--links did not get posted early enough and different websites were put out on different versions of the call. Next time, we should decide early on which website will be the central information point, and use that URL consistently.

Much information did not get posted until very late, the eve or day of action itself, and that made it harder to frame a media message early on. While we had good media coverage, more coordination and time to carefully craft a message could have helped us do even better.

Not all of the events were aware of the others going on at the same time or mentioned them--partly because of some of the difficulties noted above, and that could be more coherent next time.

Materials for flyers, fact sheets and press releases and graphics that could be downloaded could be available earlier.

We collected a lot of endorsements, but could have done so more systematically and listed them more prominently.

Overall, the fact that we could achieve so much in such a short time is thanks to the many people who stepped forward and organized events in their own communities, to the support of the United for Peace and Justice network, the ISM, the Peace and Justice Studies Associations, and the many already existing groups working on this issue.

Special thanks to our webmaster Geoff and to Beth Thompson who did the wonderful flyer for New York.

-- *Starhawk*