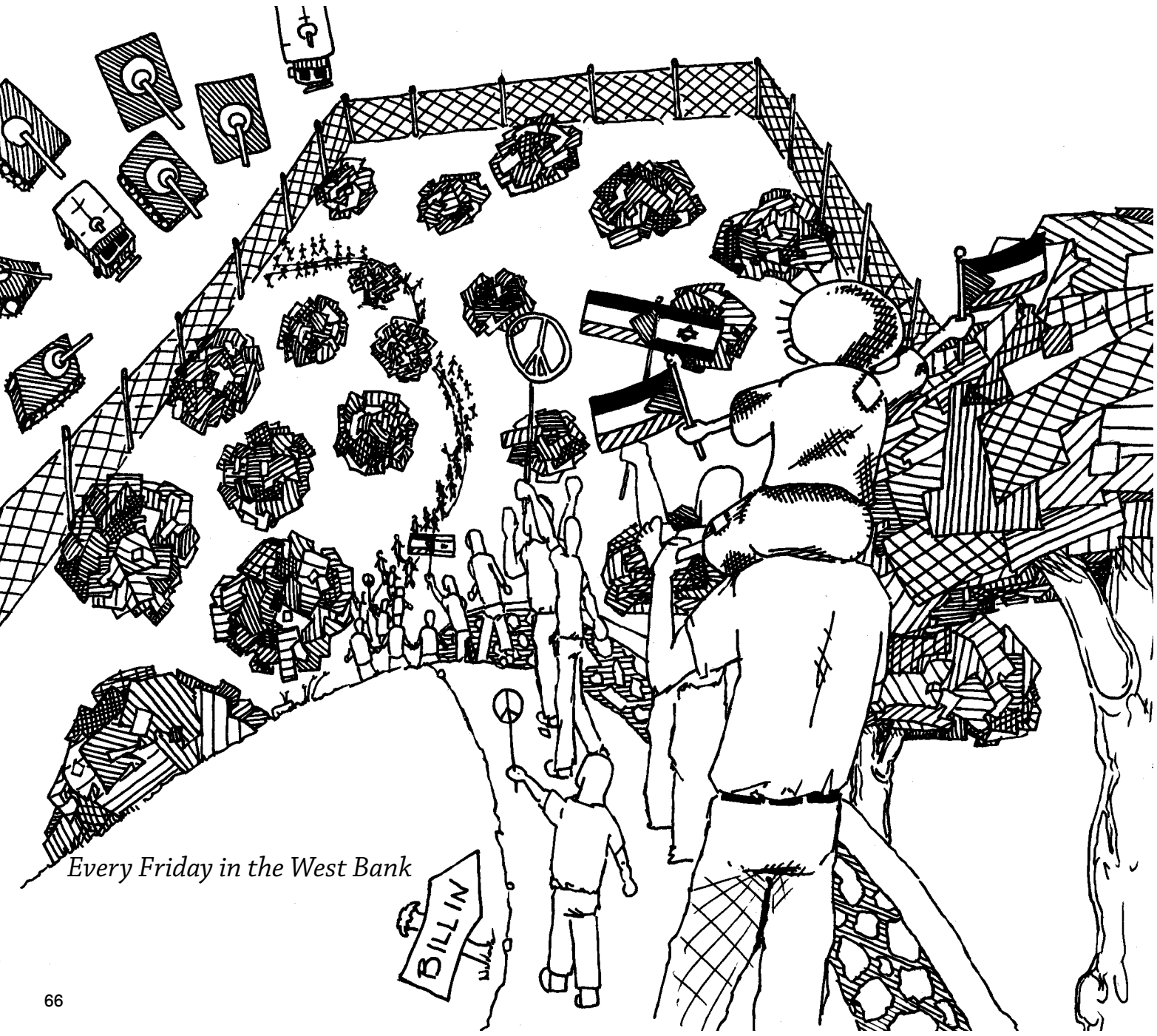


Non Violence



Every Friday in the West Bank

'Nonviolence is a powerful and just weapon which cuts without wounding and ennobles the man who wields it. It is a sword that heals.'

-Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

What is Non-Violence?

Non-Violence is an alternative to either armed resistance or passive acceptance of the status quo. It is both a strategy and a philosophy which rejects violence as a means to promote change, and instead aims to change power relations through assertive acts of omission (refusal to do something) or commission (actively challenging the status quo). It is a method by which to change the minds of both the oppressor and oppressed so that a new reality can be built upon different perceptions of the 'other'.

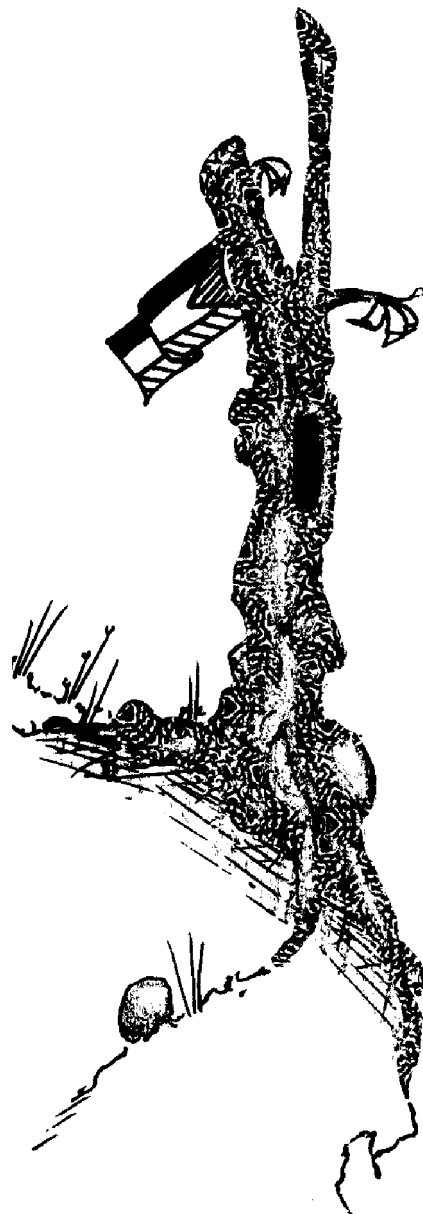
The many tactics of non-violence can be broken down into three broad categories:

1) Civil Disobedience: when individuals or a group refuse to obey rules and laws, therefore undermining the power of the oppressor. For example refusing to respect laws prohibiting the gathering of people, or the waving of a flag as has been the case in Palestine.

2) Reverse Strike: Involves community building and the creation of alternatives, in order to make a people less dependent on the facilities of their oppressor. This can involve boycotts of the oppressor's goods and services and the development of alternatives.

3) Direct Action: These are symbolic actions which are specifically directed to gain broad sympathy or express personal grief, opinions and commitment to a just cause. Direct action can take many forms along the spectrum between assertiveness and aggressiveness. For example a peaceful protest versus a group of individuals actively removing a roadblock or earth mound.

Successful non-violent campaigns are able to effectively utilize all three of these methods simultaneously.



Non-Violence in Palestine - Past and Present

Despite the common mischaracterization of Palestinian resistance as wholly violent or radical, there is a long and rich history non-violent actions and campaigns, as well as a large number of contemporary ones. For instance:

In 1902, the inhabitants of three Palestinian villages - al-Shajara, Misha and Melhamiyya - held a collective peaceful protest against the takeover of 70,000 dunums (7,000 hectares) of agricultural land by the first European Zionist settlers.

In 1936 Palestinians held a six-month non-violent industrial strike against the British Mandate's refusal to grant self determination to Palestine. The ultimate aim of the strike was to make Palestine ungovernable by anyone but the Palestinians themselves.

Fifty years later, in 1986, Hannah Siniora, then editor of the East Jerusalem Arabic Daily, called for Palestinian civic disobedience by boycotting Israel-made cigarettes. This led to a full-scale Palestinian boycott of Israeli soap, food, water, clothes and other consumer goods.

The 1987-1993 First Intifada was largely conducted non-violently. Palestinians held mass public demonstrations, refused to pay taxes, and sought out local alternatives to Israeli facilities. Community leader Mubarak Awad initiated olive tree planting on Palestinian land about to be confiscated by Israeli settlers. Israeli law prohibited any construction on land dedicated to growing fruit. Awad used non-violent resistance, and Israel's own laws, to challenge the encroaching settlements.

Currently, and especially since construction of the separation Wall began on June 16th 2002, Palestinian villages across the West Bank have cooperated in non-violent resistance.

The communities of Jayyous, Budrus, Bil'in, Ni'lin and Umm Salamonah have all non-violently resisted the Wall being built around them. Weekly non-violent demonstrations against the Wall are held in the cities of Bil'in and Nihlin (north of Ramallah) which bring together Palestinians and Israelis, as well international activists



The Logic of Non-Violent Resistance

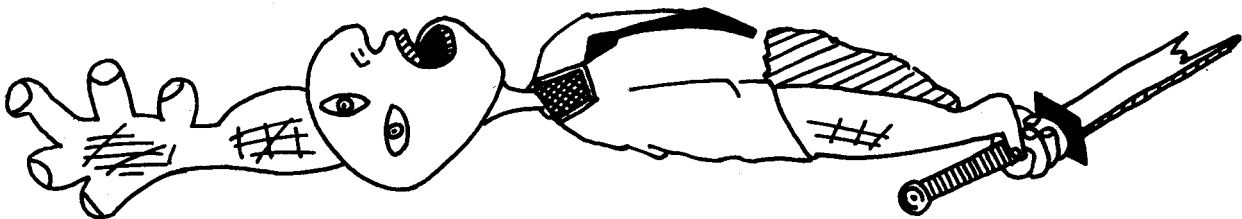
The logic of a non-violent strategy to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is simple. Turning this knowledge into a practical campaign effective in achieving Palestinian goals is much more difficult.

Practically, a non-violent strategy allows for a broader and therefore larger participation among the citizenry than armed conflict does. This was true in the First Intifada - largely credited with empowering civil society, women, as well as the young and old. The players in the Second Intifada, on the other hand, were restricted to their ability and willingness to fight violently.

Secondly, by unilaterally removing violence from one side of the equation, there is the possibility of transforming the perception of victimhood within Israel and the international community, which could in turn affect policy. Looking back through this book, it is clear that Palestinians and Israelis live in a rather asymmetric world, and that this conflict disproportionately affects Palestinians. Yet in the minds of Western Europeans and Americans especially, the perception of Palestinians has been shaped more by the sporadic acts of terror, rather than by the accumulation of suffering wrought by occupation.

It is assumed, but not guaranteed, that a nonviolent strategy would lead to a decrease in the cycle of death and injury. This sadly could be both bad and good for the Palestinian cause. A decrease in death and carnage is likely to coincide with a sharp decrease in media attention - precisely what is needed most to inspire change in opinion and policy.

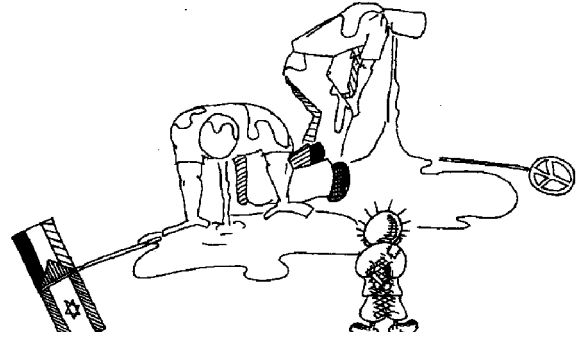
Only a strategy that is assertive, coordinated, inclusive, creative, and one that is more and more adept at creating its own media can hope to succeed in making lots of noise without firing any bullets. There have been powerful, if not controversial, attempts by isolated villages to begin building this movement. It is time now to learn from their experiences and begin coordinating a national non-violent strategy.



Israel's Response to Non-Violence

Israeli, Palestinian and international human rights organizations routinely catalogue, and often film, Israel's response to non-violent actions. The response usually consists of using overwhelming force to disburse crowds.

Most typically, Israel employs tear gas, concussion grenades and rubber bullets to do so, but on many documented occasions they have employed live ammunition, and most recently have begun showering protesters with a mixture of sewage water and chemicals from nearby settlements.



The saddest part of this response is the effect that it has upon the non-violence movement in general. The fact that protesters have been literally showered in sewage, beaten and sometimes killed in the daily or weekly events, reaffirms the notion amongst those most skeptical of a peaceful strategy that 'Israel only responds to violence'.

This perception is further strengthened by the lack of accountability laid upon those soldiers and their commanders who routinely sidestep the law in their use of force. Rarely, if ever, has anyone been punished; and never have these punishments made their way up the ranks or into the realm of those who design policies. This lack of accountability has endowed soldiers with a sense of immunity from their actions; a perception which no doubt adds to their willingness to utilize force - even when unnecessary.

This last summer the small village of Ni'lin north of Ramallah began to organize weekly, and sometimes daily demonstrations against the encroaching wall. On July 29th, the ten year old unarmed Ahmed Hassan Yusef Musa was struck in the head by a rubber bullet and killed at one such demonstration. The following day, at Ahmed's funeral -turned demonstration, 19 year old Yusuf Ahmad Amira was shot dead by the IDF. Neither case has resulted in punishment.

This is the same village where a 17 year old girl Salaam Kanan was able to capture video footage of a bound and blindfolded Palestinian man being shot at point blank range by a soldier a few feet from his commanding officer. This particular case received a lot of attention; however, Israeli, Palestinian and international human rights organizations insist that many more incidents like this take place when no cameras are present.