



MELBOURNE GROUPS FOR PALESTINE

REPORT

Melbourne Vigil

to protest against Israel's 40-year
Occupation of the remaining Palestinian
lands held on Tuesday 5 June 2007

On a cold, but thankfully dry Melbourne day, members of *Women for Palestine*, *Australians for Palestine* and the *Palestinian Community Association of Victoria* came together in support of each other's commitment to expose Israel's brutal 40-year long occupation of the remaining Palestinian lands. Hundreds of leaflets explaining Israel's systematic land theft, human rights abuses and its end goal to Judaise the whole of Palestine were handed out and numerous discussions ensued with members of the public who were intrigued to know more about an issue which for so long has failed to redress the injustices or advance towards peace.

In the evening, a Palestine Film Preview was held at ACMI Cinemas. The films were introduced by journalist Maher Mughrabi who gave a riveting and moving account of just what occupation means for the 4 million Palestinians living under Israeli domination and linked it to the human suffering that has been visited upon all indigenous people who have been dispossessed of their lands by colonial powers. (Speech published on www.67.com.au website.)

The films held everyone in suspense by the sheer awfulness of human cruelty towards defenceless people, made more so by their inability to move freely and without harassment by the Israeli military at any number of checkpoints throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory - the West Bank. In the film "Until When . . ." the reality of occupation really sunk in as four families described the sorrows and

frustrations, and even the little joys of their lives while living in the shadow of fear. One Palestinian man summed it all up by saying that the occupation is in every part of his being. He has never known anything else.

We all left feeling the enormous challenges ahead, especially knowing that we can never undo the terrible deeds that have trampled innocence and hope into oblivion for so many lives. But, there are still many beautiful children there whose eyes still light up, who still see a future beyond the Wall without tanks and guns, who still believe that anything is possible – for those children, we need to seriously re-think our commitment to ending the abominations being visited on them by Israel's policies and practices. As a US-Palestinian academic, writer and activist said recently "how willing are we to be inconvenienced to get peace and justice?" Collectively, we can make a difference.

On the 16 and 17 June, we invite you to come and experience our Occupation Exhibition at the State Library of Victoria. It will be a journey into confined spaces that will open your minds to things happening in a world away from life in Australia. Through photographic exhibitions, information sessions, embroidery demonstrations, henna painting sessions, children's drawings and meeting with Palestinians, you will come to know about a culture and a people too long deprived of their own history and identity. And the films being shown over these two days will introduce you to different aspects of the occupation – from the very human stories affecting the everyday lives of Palestinians to the political intrigues that have impacted on these people so dramatically and tragically.

- Sonja Karkar