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Denmark

Trial to judge PFLP and solidarity activist rights

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“If the Copenhagen City Court determines that the PFLP is a liberationist organization it could have a positive impact for a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict and worldwide,” summarized Israeli historian Ilan Pape, a defense witness for seven “Fighter and Lovers” solidarity activists charged with abetting terrorism by selling t-shirts with PFLP and FARC insignias. The police confiscated proceeds, which would have gone to media projects for these groups.

Pape gave testimony during the resumed trial sessions, November 14-16, in Copenhagen. The professor of the Arab-Israeli conflict for 25 years recently moved from his teaching job at Hafa University to head the history department at England’s Exeter University. Son of immigrant German Jews, Pape has lived his entire life in Hafa.

Pape outlined the history since the state of Israeli was established in 1948. He said that Israel has systematically ignored and violated the UN Charter, the Geneva Convention, and hundreds of UN resolutions ever since. This gives the Palestinian people legal right to defend themselves and fight for their sovereignty.

Israeli has forcefully expelled two-thirds of the Palestine population from their lands and occupied 92% of what was their country. It currently imprisons over 10,000 Palestinians, has murdered several thousands more, in addition to frequently torturing Palestinians. It denies Palestinian detainees the same civil rights of trial and defense as is granted Israelis, Pape testified.

“The West Bank is now encircled by a wall higher than the Berlin Wall, all against international law and condemned by the International Haag Court, in 2004,” said Pape.

“Former President Jimmy Carter describes Israeli as employing apartheid. And Nelsen Mandela stated that what it does is, in some ways, worse than what South Africa’s white regime did.”

In the first years of the [Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine](#), 1967 to 1974, it did employ the use of terror, Pape said, but has since ceased this policy. Attacking armed civilians who illegal occupy Palestinian territory is a legitimate act of defense, he maintained, as are attacks upon military targets.

Pape testified that the PFLP is not a terrorist organization rather a legitimate armed and political liberation group “a very important part of Palestinian’s lives and political process.”

“It is often impossible to divide the military from civilians as they operate so closely together, especially in the illegal settlements,” he said.

“It is Israeli that is illegal. If it did recognize international law, it could not occupy Palestinian lands granted them by the UN. Israel has systematically destroyed over 12,000 Palestinians homes. Its objective is to take over the entire country. But the PFLP recognizes the rights of two states.”

The defense introduced documentation showing that the PFLP has concentrated on military targets throughout this century. It ceased using car bombings in 2001, recognizing them to be imprecise and a cause of harm to innocent civilians. PFLP also builds and runs social programs where Palestinians live, and participates in local and national

elections.

In October 2005, the PFLP won 50 seats on local councils, and later that year won 4% of the votes in the legislative council election, giving it three seats. It is the third largest parliamentary party after Hamas and Fatah.

Ole Sippel, a Danish television journalist with 40 years experience in the field, many of them in Israel-Palestine and throughout the Middle East, testified for the defense.

“The occupied settlements are a main cause of the increased violence. There are 140 settlements now in and around the West Bank. Many of these civilians are in the army reserves, are well armed and often conduct unprovoked attacks upon Palestinians. The military protects them but not the Palestinians,” Sippel said.

Sippel knows many members and leaders of the PFLP.

“PFLP does not use terror as an integrated policy. It answers in kind to Israeli liquidation of Palestinian leaders,” he said, in answer to the Israeli accusation that it was a terrorist act when PFLP liquidated its tourist minister, Rehavam Zeevi, on October 17, 2001.

PFLP chose Zeevi because he was a key member of the Israeli cabinet and co-responsible for security forces' illegal and brutal attacks upon Palestinians. It was also an act of revenge for Israel's assassination of two months before of PFLP general secretary, Abu Ali Mustafa, who had recently replaced its ailing founder, George Habash.

Israel arrested four PFLP members in connection with Zeevi's death. US and UK forces took them to a jail in Jericho. In March, 2006, Israel's military attacked the jail and kidnapped the four.

The state's case

Once again state's attorney Lone Damgaard chose not to cross-examine the defense witnesses, part of a “tactic”, she said.

Her witness, Reuven Paz, was employed from 1971 to 1994 by Israeli General Security Service, both as a researcher and with 17 years in the field. He has since started his own research consulting firm specializing on Middle East affairs.

The Israeli human rights organization, Bt'lesem, and Amnesty International criticize the IGSS for using torture in interrogation of Palestinian detainees.

Paz read his statement, in which he characterized PFLP as a terrorist organization. Much of his testimony concerned its hijackings in its early years, which it ceased in 1974. Most civilians killed since were armed settlers in the illegally occupied territories, although Paz considered these killings as terrorist acts.

Paz admitted that, unlike other Palestinians resistance groups, or, in his words, terrorist organizations, the PFLP is secular and is not financed by other countries or outside groups.

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On cross-examination, Paz conceded that PFLP central command members denounce the use of suicide bombings, of which a handful has occurred by young PFLP members acting on their own.

Defense attorney Torkil Hoeyer asked Paz to explain why Israel is willing to negotiate and cooperate with Fatahâ€”which forms part of the PLO alongside PFLPâ€”even though it is also characterized by Israel and the EU as a terrorist organization.

“I don’t know,” he replied. Nor did the Middle East affairs expert know or remember if Israel violated basic human rights and civil liberties of Palestinians.

“I am not an expert on international law...The United Nations works out of political interests,” implying that Israel need not abide by it or the Geneva Convention.

Tomorrow, the Copenhagen City Court will hear a Danish intelligence police and army analyst report on the PFLP. His testimony will be held behind closed doors but will later be read to the interested public and media. The three-panel court should render a verdict later tomorrow.