



Photo by Andre Kanier
Ziyad Abdesallam (left) and Fouad Elgharabli, University students from the Middle East, listen to Laila Jammal address Palestinian issues Thursday. Jammal, a Palestinian journalist, will speak at the closing event of Palestine Week tonight at 7.

Statehood still Palestinians' quest

By Daralyn Trappe
Emerald Reporter

At the heart of Palestine Week is an effort to provide insight to those who may hold the key to the Palestinian statehood — Americans.

The week's events conclude tonight with a panel discussion on the plight of the Palestinians. The panel will include several Middle Eastern students and Laila Jammal, a native Palestinian who now works as a journalist and author in New York. The discussion begins at 7 p.m. in the EMU Gumwood Room.

Jammal recently returned from a visit to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Schools and universities are closed, strict curfews are being enforced, and people are often arrested for "looking suspicious," she said.

The curfews pose a serious problem to the Palestinians, said Fouad Elgharabli, a University student from Palestine. People are unable to adequately tend their fields and have trouble entering Israel, where many Palestinians work.

"Because of the curfews, when you miss work, you find out that your job has been taken by Russian Jews," he said.

The immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel has further complicated the Palestinian issue, Jammal said.

The United States "is asking for a freeze on new Israeli settlements, but they bring more Jews from Russia," Jammal said. "Where are they going to settle them? They go to the West Bank and deport more Palestinians."

"It's mass deportations," she said. "There's a continuous crime going on right now in the West Bank, but the United States and the rest of the world

is shying away from it because they are busy with the Gulf."

"The U.S. is protesting the new settlements on the occupied land, but they wouldn't be built without funds, the American dollars in taxes that go to Israel," Elgharabli said.

Jammal and Elgharabli said the U.S. government is seen as somewhat hypocritical by Palestinians.

"They never impose embargoes on Israel or punishment like they did with Iraq," Jammal said. "Hundreds of resolutions were taken (by the United Nations), some of them unanimously, including the United States, to stop the expansion into the settlements, to reopen schools, and none of that has taken form."

"I think that's one of the reasons why the Palestinians are upset about the coalition against Iraq, not because they agree with what Saddam Hussein did, but because they see the injustice," Elgharabli said. "On one side they are willing to go to war in the gulf, but at the same time, when Israel occupies the West Bank, they do nothing. Actually, (the U.S.) was supporting Israel, and they see the unfair treatment."

Statehood for Palestine is the goal, they said, but Elgharabli

said he is pessimistic about the chances unless American policy changes.

"I feel that the Palestinian issue is kind of skirted somehow," he said. "There's a lot of attention toward the conflict between Israel and Arab countries. This doesn't present the real problem. I think the Palestinian issue is the main issue, and it hasn't been given enough attention."

Jammal said informing the American people about the realities of Palestine is crucial.

"Unfortunately the media in the United States is very biased for the past 40 years in the Palestinian issue, just to keep the American people in the dark," she said. "Anytime the chance is given to the Palestinians to speak up ... you see the media covering up the issues."

There will be no peace in the Middle East until the Palestinian issue is solved, Jammal said.

"We hope in the near future we will claim there an individual state next to Israel. We have to start somewhere. That will be an international peace conference in the United Nations with equal representation from the (Palestine Liberation Organization)."

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