

Israeli wall debate 'intense'

Tuesday's teach-in focused on the 25-foot-high barrier being constructed by Israel

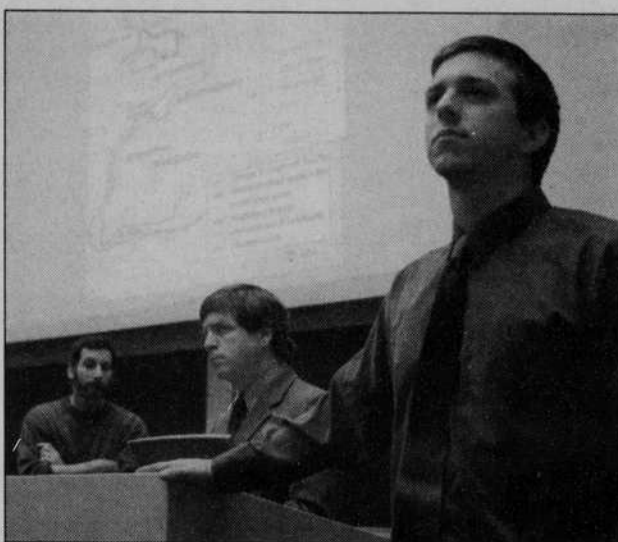
By Moriah Balingit
Freelance Reporter

Tensions ran high in 100 Willamette on Tuesday during a teach-in entitled "The Israeli Construction of the Wall in the West Bank." While participants said the dialogue was productive, Associate geography Professor Shaul Cohen noted that the intense debate "a number of times strayed from the boundaries of civil discourse."

The teach-in featured various perspectives on a 25-foot-high barrier being constructed between the West Bank and Israel. Israel states that the barrier's purpose is security, as it has been plagued by a rash of suicide bombings during the past three years that have resulted in the deaths of 900 people, psychology major and Oregon Hillel Grinspoon Israel Advocacy Intern Lach Litwer said. Critics maintain that the barrier's construction has hidden political motives and is a vehicle for "land grabbing" on the part of Israel.

Participants in the teach-in were somewhat divided on the issue, but some hot debate arose over aspects of the situation.

Honors College Professor David Frank, author of the book "Shared Land/Conflicting Identity: Trajectories of Israeli and Palestinian Symbol Use," said that he thinks the barrier is a bad idea. While he acknowledged that the wall has prevented some suicide bombings, he said, "... it's also



(Left to right) Shaul Cohen, Dr. David Frank and Lach Litwer participate in a panel discussion on the decision to build a wall between the West Bank and Israel.

Tim Bobosky
Photographer

created a context for the creation of more suicide bombers."

Litwer, the panel's student representative, said he believes the wall is necessary for the security of Israelis and that it will be beneficial in the long run.

"This fence is here in order to create an atmosphere where a lasting peace can be established," he said.

Cohen, author of "An Absence of Place: Expectation and Realization in the West Bank," was the third teach-in participant.

"In the short term, perhaps the wall is a good idea," he said.

But Cohen said that he objects to the projected course of the wall, which encroaches on the Palestinian side of the Green Line, a geopolitical border separating the West Bank

from Israel proper.

"In essence, the course of this wall ensures its necessity, and that's a tragedy," he said.

Tammam Adi, director of the Islamic Cultural Center of Eugene, objected to the way the conflict was discussed.

"I'm disturbed by the constant reference to the Palestinians as a problem," he said.

Cameron Levin, the contemporary issues coordinator for the University Cultural Forum, said she attempted to incorporate a number of viewpoints when organizing the event.

"There are a plethora of viewpoints," she said. "The interaction was intense."

Moriah Balingit is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

MARRIAGES

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White's position. Looney said he opposes a Constitutional amendment defining marriage because he doesn't believe the government should get involved.

"I don't like the fact that you need

a license to get married," he said.

Looney added that he believes marriage should be between a man and a woman, although he supports civil unions.

"Behind closed doors, with consenting adults, why is that the government's job to tell you what you can and can't do?" he said.

Multnomah County officials will hold a news conference at 9 a.m. today at the county's headquarters, and marriage licenses will be available at 10 a.m., according to news reports.

Contact the managing editor at janmontry@dailyemerald.com. Senior news reporter Jared Paben contributed to this report.

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