

## **Religious Zionist Female Settlers and Participation in Warfare and Violence.**

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### **Introduction**

While patriarchy still has a strangle-hold on all of the nations in the world, it is safe to say that Western societies have moved much closer to equality amongst the sexes in comparison to other societies. However, even in these best of circumstances, gender roles, beliefs, and stereotyping still exist. One example of this is the common perception that war is always an act of masculine culture. This essentialist thought presumes that violence is only an expression of males, and thus, by default argues that females are by nature peaceful and non-violent unlike their male counterparts. The following will attempt to refute this largely universally accepted belief by showcasing the violence utilized, taught, and believed in by religious Zionist female settlers in the hijacked territories of Palestine. While it is significantly easier to select women in Western societies to prove that war and violence are not always acts of masculine culture, this author believes that by selecting religious Zionist female settlers for the case study a profoundly stronger argument is made. This is due to the fact that these women live in a strictly patriarchal, conservative, and traditional society which is, according to those who believe that violence is always a demonstration of masculine culture, far less likely to allow women to participate in this “masculine” realm of violence. The argument will be explained in linear episodes in the following order. Initially, this essay will explain the history, roots and beliefs of religious Zionism. Next, it will account for how religious Zionism became violent and what its consequences were. Finally, the last transition will be explained: how women support and engage in the violence and how vigorously they live by their violent values in the lands acquired illegally by the religious Zionists of Israel. Furthermore, it will be also argued that women play a large role in the spread of violence due to the role they play in the domestic realm in regards to raising children which enables them to teach their young to utilize various forms of violence as well.

~~Finally, this topic is of crucial importance due to the contemporary nature of the plight of the Palestinians and thus deserves the utmost attention and attempts at raising awareness about the issue and all of its dynamics.~~

## **1. Religious Zionism: A Brief History**

### **1.1 Rise of Zionism as a Political Movement**

To get a clear understanding of religious Zionism it is essential to first clarify what Zionism itself is. Fundamentally, Zionism was the political movement<sup>1</sup> started by Theodor Herzl, an Austro-Hungarian journalist who at the age of 18 moved to Vienna. This political movement sought to find a home in Palestine for the international Jewry. It was sparked due to an anti-Jewish<sup>2</sup> row in France in the 1890s which saw a Jewish French military officer be wrongfully accused and convicted of treason. His name was Alfred Dreyfus and the incident came to be known as the “Dreyfus Affair”<sup>3</sup>. This event also saw a strong surfacing of anti-Jewish sentiment exemplified by rallies and marches with anti-Jewish slogans written and verbalized. This shocked Herzl and many other Jews around the world who viewed France as one of the epicenters of enlightenment and justice, and thus, a safe haven. The Dreyfus Affair motivated Herzl to start a mass movement to establish a nation and asylum within Palestine for Jews around the world. At this point it is also necessary to clarify that Herzl himself was a well known atheist. Thus, it must be understood that one can be a Jew by religion or by culture and ethnicity. While it is possible to be both, Herzl was clearly of the second grouping. Although Herzl was an atheist, he attempted to appeal to all Jews to accept and support his movement even though the core of Zionist movement consisted of secular Jews.

However, according to Yihudah Mirsky “Most rabbis of the time, though, understandably viewed Zionism as at best a distraction and at worst a dangerous heresy, an act of self-assertion sure to anger both God and the Gentiles”<sup>4</sup> The reason for this rejection by religious figures was that in their belief, the creation of a Jewish homeland was against the desires of god and thus completely unacceptable. Judaism believes that before the world is saved all Jews will return to the land they departed thousands of years ago due to their wrong doings. However, it is god who is supposed to bring the Jews back. Gary A. Anderson,

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<sup>1</sup> Mirsky, Yehudah. "The inner life of religious Zionism." *New Leader* 78.9 (1995): 10

<sup>2</sup> The author has chosen to use the term “anti-Jewish” as opposed to the commonly used “anti-Semitic” as to avoid confusion due to the fact that Semitic people, genetically speaking, include Arabs and Syrians and others along side Jewish people

<sup>3</sup> Balakirsky-Katz, Maya. "Émile Zola, the Cochonerie of Naturalist Literature, and the Judensau." *Jewish Social Studies* 13.1 (2006): 115

<sup>4</sup> Mirsky, 12

Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible at the University of Notre Dame explains this facet of Judaism well:

“when the movement started nearly all religious Jews opposed any effort to establish a Jewish homeland. To be sure, the prayer book used on the Sabbath and festival days was chock-full of petitions for the day when God would gather His people from the four corners of the world and draw them to the land He holds so dear. But those prayers were all cast in highly theocentric terms. The end of the Diaspora was to be accomplished by the hands of the Holy One, not by mere mortals. And certainly not by mortals who had little or no interest in the life of the Torah as it was traditionally understood.”<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, as it has been the case with every major religion in history, there were those who interpreted the religious writings differently and thus had the scripts justify and mold around their own convictions and objectives.

## **1.2 The Emergence of Religious Zionism**

While most religious figures rejected Zionism as blasphemy, with some rabbis saying that Zionism was “sacrilege” and was “forcing the End”<sup>6</sup> which the messiah was supposed to naturally bring about, there were still the rare cases of rabbis supporting the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The founder of the religious Zionist movement was a rabbi by the name of Abraham Isaac Kook who was born in Latvia in 1865 and immigrated to Palestine in 1904. While the other rabbis were saying that the establishment of a Jewish state showed disrespect and disbelief in god’s salvation powers, Kook took the chance here interpret the Torah differently. Kook’s argument can be summed up by the following: the Jews were being sent back by god as to initiate his return and to prepare god’s home for his arrival. Basically, Kook told his followers that the messianic age when god would save the world was soon to and this depended on the Jews’ return to what was then Palestine. While most rabbis were saying the migration was blasphemy Kook said that it was god’s will. The camps were divided, yet both claimed they were devoutly perusing what god wanted.

The anti-Zionist rhetoric did not stop here though. There next question to Kook enquired at to why it was that Zionism’s followers were mostly secular Jews if god, according

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson, Gary A. "How To Think About Zionism." *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion & Public Life* (2005): 32

<sup>6</sup> Brownfeld, Allan C. "Jewish Fundamentalism in Israel." *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 19.2 (2000): 120

to Kook, wanted his religious Jews to go back to the land and prepare for their god which these atheists did not believe in? One of Kook's early contradictions, of which there were many to follow during his life teachings, was found. His rebuttal was weak: secular Zionists were carrying out God's will--unknowingly, despite themselves--and would eventually return to faith.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Kook's teachings claimed that all of those who migrated, religious or non-religious, consciously or subconsciously, were in fact preparing for the messianic age and that one day when god decided he would make them realize that they were in fact doing his work under his command all along.

But Kook's teachings did not solely contrast the goals of Zionism as perused by Herzl on religious grounds. Rather, while Herzl did not necessarily want all of Palestine for the establishment of the home land, Kook's teachings claimed that the messianic age would be incomplete unless all of Palestine was controlled by Jews. This was what god wanted, of course.

### **1.3 Expansionism**

Kook died in 1935 but his teachings were carried on fiercely by his son Tzvi Yehudah Kook until his death in 1982. Kook's teachings taught that all of Palestine was to become that of the Jews; however, in 1948 when Israel was carved out of Palestine, the lines were drawn. Although more than half of the best land of what used to be Palestine was given to a small minority of Jews, the mission of the religious Zionists was far from over and they were anything but satisfied. The religious Zionists continued to preach messianic prophecies about the near arrival of god. All that was keeping the messiah away, according to these prophetic religious Zionists, was the lack of Jewish take-over in the smaller and fractured remnants of what remained of Palestine in the forms of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, as well as the Syrian Golan Heights. The religious Zionists therefore sought to push the boundaries of Israel to the borders of Jordan and north to the Golan Heights in Syria. With the fierce conviction that this was god's will they continued to interpret every daily occurrence or political move as being with or against their expansionist movement. Everything was a sign from god. However, the fact remained that after getting hold of Israel in 1948, the religious Zionists had not realized any expansion of the new Jewish homeland which, according to them, was absolutely crucial

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<sup>7</sup> Gorenberg, Gershon. "BURNING GUSH." *New Republic* 210.16 (1994): 21

for them to reach their end: salvation. At the same time, they were not in a political or military position to conquer land on their own. Consequently, as the years wore on, their rhetoric and interpretation of “signs” regarding their expansion into Palestine became less and less credible.

This is perhaps why the Six Day War of 1967 was of unprecedented value to the religious Zionists. The aftermath of the war saw, amongst other things, Israel taking complete control of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Golan heights<sup>8</sup>. For the religious Zionists, this was it. God had spoken. This was the ultimate sign. According to the religious Zionists, the Jews had prevailed in capturing the lands necessary for the return of god. This is when the building of the settlements which are still illegal to this day under international law began. The first new settlement built on Palestinian land after the Six Day War took place in Hebron. The religious Zionists saw it not only as their right, but their duty, to take these lands even if it was illegal or occupied by the indigenous Palestinians who lived there for centuries<sup>9</sup>. Gershom Gorenberg explains that for the religious Zionists, such as the younger Kook, “The Six-Day War of 1967 turned belief into ecstasy: Israel's might and the conquest of the Temple Mount, Hebron and other land promised to the Jews in the Bible proved that history had entered its final, miraculous act.”<sup>10</sup> For the heavily armed and protected religious Zionists the task of hijacking land was easy, especially given the fact that the Palestinians were now completely weakened. Mel Frykberg sums up the take over of the first new settlement in the following way:

The history of the Hebron settlements goes back to the Six-Day War of 1967 when a group of Jews disguised as tourists, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, took over the main hotel in Hebron and refused to leave. They later moved to a nearby abandoned army camp and established the settlement of Kiryat Arba. Afterwards Levinger's wife led 30 Jewish women to take over the Daboya Hospital (Beit Hadassah) in central Hebron in 1979. Before long this received Israeli government approval and further Jewish enclaves in the city were established with army assistance.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Etkes, Dror. "A divine mission, to bring forth the messianic era. (Cover story)." *New Statesman* 133.4696 (2004): 29

<sup>9</sup> McGirk, Tim, Hamad, Jamil, and Aaron J. Klein. "In the Land Of the Lonely." *Time* 169.6 (2007): 43

<sup>10</sup> Gorenberg, 21

<sup>11</sup> Frykberg, Mel. "Under pressure." *Middle East* (2006): 13. The number of these illegal settlements has grown under every israeli Prime Minister. At its height the Gaza Strip which had 19 settlements was recently liberated from the hold of the settlers. The West Bank in 2000 had over 190 settlements and the number continues to grow.

## **2. Religious Zionism's Post 1967 Violence, Prejudice, and Expropriation**

### **2.1 Shift to Overdrive in Settlement Establishment**

The largest religious settlement movements to come about directly after the Six Day War were known as Gush Emunim or “Bloc of Faithful” started by Kook Sr.’s son, Zvi Yehuda<sup>12</sup>, and the Kahanist movement which followed the teaching of yet another rabbi, Meir Kahane<sup>13</sup>. Even from the unorganized early days after the Six Day War, these religious Zionists aggressively pushed for expansion at any cost and their forte and prime goal was establishing as many settlements as possible. They lobbied political parties to support their movement and help them set up settlements<sup>14</sup>. They threatened to go forward with or without their support and they did just that as in the early days because, unlike the Knesset’s full support today, government support was either hidden or sporadic. They saw the victory of the Six Day War as their window of opportunity to fulfill their visions and they were now ready to push on at any cost because for them no cost or act was too horrific if it is done in the name of god, specially at a time when god had given them their most significant sign and gift of victory. In fact, in such a circumstance, it would appear far from horrific in their eyes; rather, given the circumstances, it was divine. The shift to this mentality is largely responsible for the turn to violence amongst the religious settlers. They continued to set up settlements but when Israel went into talks with Egypt and Syria regarding withdrawing from only portions of the lands it had illegally occupied after the Yom Kippur War of 1973 the Gush Emunim and Kahanist followers became livid. They believed god had given them the captured lands and any withdrawal or peace agreements regarding the land were strictly blasphemous and counter-prophetic<sup>15</sup>. Brownfeld explains the reaction of one prominent Zionist rabbi during this period: “Rabbi Schneerson always supported Israeli wars and opposed any retreat. In 1974 he strongly opposed the Israeli withdrawal from the Suez area. He promised Israel divine favors if it persisted in occupying the land.”<sup>16</sup> The post Yom Kippur War marked the first time since Israel had to negotiate with its Arab neighbors regarding land and instead of this weakening the religious Zionists’ advance, it pushed them into overdrive, motivating

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<sup>12</sup> Mirsky, 4

<sup>13</sup> Gorenberg, 22

<sup>14</sup> Schnall, David J. "Gush Emunim: Messianic Dissent and Israeli Politics." *Judaism* 26.2 (1977): 148

<sup>15</sup> Newman, David. "From Hitnachalut to Hitnatkut: The Impact of Gush Emunim and the Settlement Movement on Israeli Politics and Society." *Israel Studies* 10.3 (2005): 201

<sup>16</sup> Brownfeld, Allan C. "Religious Zionism: A Growing Impediment To Middle East Peace." *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* 21.9 (2002): 74

them to set up settlements in Palestinian lands with utter disregard for what the Israeli government proposed and especially what kind of harm was done to the Palestinians. They believed that they were ideologically under attack and this drove them to a new limit of permissible actions. Ungodly forces were working against them. Their god was being disrespected. Interestingly, the religious interpretations became twisted once again; the Palestinians became regularly interpreted as non-human, and thus unworthy of any consideration or rights, amongst the religious Zionists.

## **2.2 Religious Zionism's Violence and Increased Prejudice**

While Kook proved himself to be a racist through numerous texts he wrote such as, for example, "The difference between a Jewish soul and souls of non-Jews--all of them in all different levels--is greater and deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle"<sup>17</sup> he seems like Gandhi compared to his Gush Emunim and Kahanist counterparts of the 70s. Gershom Gorenberg, an academic with expertise on the settler movement, interviewed Kahane two years before his death and as his transcript shows Kahane and his followers were nothing short of supremacists. Gorenberg shares that

for Kahane, God's reputation in the world was purely a function of Jewish might. If Jews were killed, he said, God looked weak; if they were strong, the Name got good press. Letting Arabs remain in the "land of the Jewish people, God's land," was a desecration of the Name, Kahane told me in 1988.<sup>18</sup>

Kahane also said that Arabs are "dogs" and "slime."<sup>19</sup> In the same way, Israel's leaders agreed. It is easy for a bigot such as Kahane to be able to say such things when in 1982 Menahim Begin, the 6<sup>th</sup> Prime minister of Israel, stated publicly to the Israeli Knesset that Palestinians "are two-legged beasts"<sup>20</sup>. If that alone was not enough motivation for the religious Zionists then Dror Etkes, a member of the Israeli movement Peace Now, quotes and incriminates Rabin saying "'We shall never forbid any Jew to live wherever he wants in the land of Israel"<sup>21</sup>. Such messages gave the Zionist settlers a very bright green light to do as they pleased, and they have. It is a sad, twisted and scary irony that Kahane's teachings

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<sup>17</sup> Brownfeld, Allan C. "Religious Zionism Suffers a Crisis of Faith In Wake of Israeli Withdrawal." Washington Report on Middle East Affairs 24.9 (2005): 55

<sup>18</sup> Gorenberg, 21

<sup>19</sup> Makovsky, D. "Meir Kahane." U.S. News & World Report 109.20 (1990): 21

<sup>20</sup> Elia, Nada. "Open Letter To My Anti-Racist Friends." Off Our Backs 32.7/8 (2000): 31

<sup>21</sup> Etkes, 29

resemble the supremacy displayed by the Third Reich. Rabbi Lior who is yet another fanatical clergyman who is associated with the Gush movement has said that medical experiments may be carried out on “captured Arab terrorists”<sup>22</sup>. Without saying, this is a vividly sad flashback. An example of this irony can also be observed when in the book *Forty Years* which Kahane authored in 1983 he wrote “drive out the Arab ... cleanse the Temple Mount” for he said that god had told them that the Jews had forty years to take all of Palestine or else his Jewish followers would be met by a “holocaust, more horrible than anything we have yet endured”<sup>23</sup> at the hands of god. There is a loud echo from that message which calls for ethnic cleansing.

Perhaps then it should not come as any surprise that Dr. Baruch Goldstein, the man who entered a Mosque in Hebron during Ramadan, 1994, and shot dead 29 while injuring 150 during prayers was a devout Kahane follower<sup>24</sup>. It would be extremely short-sighted to believe that such acts represent only the madness of one person and are not supported within large circles of people, most significantly amongst religious settlers. Gary Cooperberg, the public relations director of Nir yeshiva, a settler group in Qiryat Arba, commented on the massacre. He said that Goldstein’s rampage was a “desperate act of love for his people ... [it] will someday be recognized by all Jews as the turning point which brought redemption upon us.”<sup>25</sup> This mentality is once again showcased when Rabbi Moshe Levenson, a community leader in the West Bank, was asked if he was sorry for the 29 murdered. He proudly declared: “I am sorry not only about dead Arabs but about dead flies.”<sup>26</sup> The most famous example of the lengths these religious Zionists will go to can be documented with the assassination of former Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzchak Rabin, by a Kahanist named Yigal Amir. On the topic of Rabin’s assassination Zeev Sternhell, political science professor at Hebrew University, Jerusalem, writes “His assassination gave a tragic dimension to a fact that hitherto many people had refused to admit: that Israel has its Brownshirts too”<sup>27</sup> Menachem Lorberbaum accurately sums up the type of mentality of these religious Zionists when he says

An entire Orthodox generation has been taught that territorial compromise of the Holy Land is as grave a transgression as idolatry, incest or murder, and is subject to the injunction *yehareg v'al ya avor*--suffer death rather than commit these crimes. But the distance between what one

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<sup>22</sup> Gorenberg, 22

<sup>23</sup> Gorenberg, 22

<sup>24</sup> Masland, Tom, and Carroll Bogert. “Benjie was always an extremist.” *Newsweek* 123.10 (1994): 36

<sup>25</sup> Gorenberg, 21

<sup>26</sup> Brownfeld “Fundamentalism”, 7

<sup>27</sup> Sternhell, Zeev. “BLOOD AND SOIL.” *Index on Censorship* 33.4 (2004): 188

is willing to die for and what one is willing to kill for, the young assassin Yigal Amir has shown us, is dreadfully short.<sup>28</sup>

This “dreadfully short distance” is not any longer when it comes to the beliefs and actions of religious Zionist female settlers.

### **3. Religious Zionist Female Settler’s Violent Engagement in the Prophetic War**

#### **3.1 Verbal and Mental Abuse**

Before moving forward, it is important to keep in mind that all of the movements, actions, and beliefs discussed earlier have applied to women, but at this point, all attention will be turned to religious Zionist female settlers alone. Even though religious Zionists live by very traditional and patriarchal beliefs and practices, the females in the movement have always at least played an unprecedentedly powerful supportive role in the numerous acts of mental and physical violence against the indigenous Palestinians. The following will showcase some very recent examples of these females’ violent participation so as to illustrate that violence and war are not always acts of masculinity. Using recent incidents is also beneficent regarding a topic such as this, because the spread of knowledge about current atrocities is one step forward in the attempt to rally awareness around a people’s plight who desperately need international support.

In 1983, gunmen killed three students and wounded 30 at Hebron's Islamic college. Followers of Rabbi Kook openly applauded these attacks, and it should not be forgotten that this moral support for violence was far from exclusive to men. Regardless of the type of violence utilized by these settler women, their goal remains true to that of the religious Zionists: to force the Palestinians out of their homes and into exile so their biblical prophecy can be completed.

While the government of Israel may have tanks and bulldozers to tear down Palestinian homes, women use their own tactics to fight the same kind of war. One of many examples of this kind of warfare in capturing land is the following. In September of 2006, settler women went to a Palestinian family’s home which did not have running water for a

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<sup>28</sup> Lorberbaum, Menachem. "For the sake of the land." *New Leader* 78.9 (1995): 11

reported twenty days. The settler women did not go unarmed; they carried saws and hammers with them. They proceeded to cut the water pipes of the family's home. The victimized family have fixed these pipes numerous times but they are constantly destroyed by the settler women of Tel Rumeida in their on going attempt to bring the Palestinians to a point of mental breakdown in their war of attrition, hoping to force them out of their homeland so as to allow the religious Zionists to fulfill their takeover of Palestine.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the settler women breach the olive fields and farms of the Palestinians and harvest their crops as if they were their own, depriving the impoverished Palestinians of their minuscule form of income which they need to survive their day-to-day lives<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps it is this type of women who are now a part of Women in Green movement, an all female movement which supports the same expansionism of Gush Emunim and the Kahanist movement. People often think that women are meant to be, and are, docile peoples who do not engage in aggressive behavior; they are greatly mistaken. The Women in Green are no strangers to horrific acts, however, their prey are usually smaller than those of their male counterparts. On a daily basis these women hide outside small Palestinian children's school and await their departure. For example, on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005 as soon as children got out of the school they were cornered by the Women in Green and had racist slogans shouted at them. Another favorite tactic to scare these children is to photograph them. They do this mainly for the purpose of distribution as propaganda, putting the face of then young children who they find at random as the face of the "enemy".<sup>31</sup> All and any of these tactics are further attempts to further degrade the quality of life of the Palestinians and force them to reconsider their location of habitation. They also express their violent and hateful beliefs via marches. Their favorite time to march is when Palestinian school children are getting out of school on the crowded Shuhada street in Hebron, which is one of the largest areas for their attacks. On one march which took place on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005, international volunteers in Hebron who are there to observe the circumstances in the area documented that the Women in Green shouted at the Palestinian children and their parents phrases such as "All these children are terrorists", "Kill all Arabs",

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<sup>29</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, September 2006 Incidents < [http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/September\\_06.html](http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/September_06.html) > accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

<sup>30</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, September 2006 Incidents < [http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/September\\_06.html](http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/September_06.html) > accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

<sup>31</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, November 2006 Incidents <<http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/November.html>> accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

“These children learn arithmetic, English and terrorism in school.” “This is our land”, “There is no Palestine”, “They should all fuck off to Saudi Arabia”, “There is a place for all Arabs and it is called Hell. There is a place for you there”, and “You have the blood of the Jews on your hands”<sup>32</sup> Contrary to the beliefs of sexists and essentialists who believe that such a violent mentality and behavior is restricted to men, these women also encourage and condition their young children to behave in this way too which further makes these women agents for and agitators of violence. In fact, due to the patriarchal setting that these religious settler women live in, they are made responsible for the violence and lack of ethics they teach to their children as role models and educators. Thus, for the sake of this essay’s topic, the utilization of violence against Palestinians by the female settlers’ daughters is of special significance.

### **3.2 Violence Employed by Young Girls and Harbored and Used by Women**

Death threats are common in all societies, but it is uniquely shocking when it comes from girls as young as 10 years old. However, on Thursday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006, numerous international observers witnessed just that and it was not an isolated incident. A group of 15 young settler girls approached a 10 year old Palestinian child and repeatedly chanted to him in a menacing tone and in English “I will kill you!”<sup>33</sup> Two months earlier an international volunteer witnessed firsthand the violent mother-daughter relationships that often exists amongst these females settlers. This is the volunteer’s account

Girls came right up to us abusing and yelling at us. Twenty young settler boys threw stones at us. I was hit several times... settler boys were coming round behind me and throwing large rocks at my back. I called the police, saying that I had been hit with 12 stones and rocks and had been hit on the head... Some of the soldiers started grabbing the boys who resisted and kept throwing stones. The girls kept coming right up to me and abusing me. The settler adults watched and did nothing to help or control their children.<sup>34</sup>

This speaks volumes about the permeability and culture of violence by settler parents and their children.

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<sup>32</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, November 2006 Incidents <<http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/November.html>> accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

<sup>33</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, July 2005 Incidents <<http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/June.html>> accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

<sup>34</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, May 2005 Incidents <<http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/May.html>> accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

The abuse of Palestinians on their own land is a daily occurrence where there are settlers; however, it is rarely ever shown in the media. The following is one of many incidents which happen to the indigenous people of the land at the hand of settler girls which is rarely, if ever, heard about. As transcribed by B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights group, Kamal Shabaneh, a father of five, describes one time he and his family were victimized by a group of 10 girls:

They were all about 16-18 years old, and all were dressed in civilian clothes... the girls went to the olive groves alongside the road, took two full sacks of olives and began to drag them to the road. We shouted at them and they left the sacks and ran away. While we were talking, the girls came back to the sacks of olives. Most of them had knives, and they began to rip the sacks. The other farmers and I began to push them away, to protect ourselves and our crop. The girls threw stones at us. One of the girls took a stick used for picking olives and hit my mother, Hilwah al-Haj Sur, who is sixty-five years old. The other girls had sticks and beat other women who were with us.<sup>35</sup>

While religious Zionist female settlers may allow, teach, and encourage such behavior from their young offspring, they too also engage in vicious acts of violence themselves, disproving universally believed gender-stereotypes.

### **3.3 Physical Violence Unleashed by Women**

Believers of the religious Zionist cause believe that everything that they do, regardless of who it is done to or to what extent, can be justified if the victim does not sympathize with their views. In their point of view, and as documented numerous times earlier, they believe they are fighting god's enemy. Brownfeld says that "In the synagogues of religious Zionism, worshippers debated whether 'Thou shall not kill' applied to Arabs at all."<sup>36</sup> After all, these religious Zionists believe that anyone who is not with them is against god, and thus them, therefore being deserving of all and any punishments at religious Zionists' hands -- the chosen people of god. Ironically, one of god's enemies happened to be a woman from World Council of Churches. On Friday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, 2006, the woman was attacked by a female settler in Tel Rumeida. Whilst in the area of the Cordoba school, where Christian volunteers accompany children to school so as to protect them from settlers who try to attack the Palestinians on a daily basis, Duduzile Masango, a South African ecumenical accompanier was attacked by an elderly settler woman, who pulled a towel tightly around her head leaving

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<sup>35</sup> B'Tselem, *Settler Activity, Testimony of Kamal Shabane*, (November 2005)

<[http://www.btselem.org/english/testimonies/20051113\\_settlers\\_attack\\_olive\\_pickers.asp](http://www.btselem.org/english/testimonies/20051113_settlers_attack_olive_pickers.asp)>

<sup>36</sup> Brownfeld "Middle East" 6

the accompanier with breathing difficulties. As it is a usual tactic, stones were also thrown at Masango and four other internationals who were with her.<sup>37</sup>

On a psychological level, Chaya Possick who attends The Academic College of Judea and Samaria in Ariel, which, as a side note, is built on illegally occupied land, decided to study fellow settler women. As a research project, she interviewed three fellow settlers and their thoughts revealed that the women felt more than comfortable being armed and using their weapon against the Arabs. One of these women described the Palestinians as such a potent enemy that if she ever saw one through her door's peep-hole she would immediately run for help. Most showed signs of utter loath toward the Palestinians and generally were not against the use of violence if the opportunity arose<sup>38</sup>. If an academic source written from an illegal settlement reveals such violent and aggressive tendencies amongst the settler women then one is left wondering what a more neutral source would reveal about the female settlers' fierce inclination.

None of the cases mentioned here are isolated nor confined to only certain religious Zionist women in certain settlements. Sadly, it is the case that such beliefs, behaviors, and conduct are widespread and encouraged both within the realms of communities and families. These women are domestic laborers, spending day and night in the kitchen preparing kosher crackers for Passover and knitting the knitted yarmulkes, symbolic of, and worn by the machinegun-brandishing religious Zionist settler men.

## **Conclusion**

As this essay has shown, mental, verbal, and physical violence has been used by religious female Zionist settlers against the Palestinians. The contribution of these women in the war against the Palestinians in their mission to capture Palestine in the name of god and for their own salvation has been fruitful to the movement, and very harmful to the Palestinians. These certain settler women employ all tactics at their disposal to drive the rightful inhabitants of the land away so as to win their religious war and undertaking. Such behavior by these women is beyond normal within their communities; in fact, it would be a

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<sup>37</sup> The Tel Rumeida Project, June 2005 incidents <<http://www.telrumeidaproject.org/June.html>> accessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

<sup>38</sup> Possick, Chaya. "Narratives of West Bank women settlers in "multi-problem families": A case of conflicting master-narratives." *Narrative Inquiry* 15.2 (2005): 416

rarity to find a religious Zionist settler woman who did not participate in this same mission in these violent and oppressive ways. While it may have been Kook and Kahane who started the movements, women still follow, believe, and preach to their children the same violent teachings. A point was never made to exclude women from the settler movements and women, like men, continue to work in bringing about the prophecy and visions which they so strongly believe in at any cost. They have even organized themselves into very well structured and large groups such as the Women in Green which engages in violent practices all strictly for advancing the goal of the religious Zionist movement.

Furthermore, while the religious Zionist settler men take the lion's share of conducting the typically thought of types violence and warfare against the indigenous Palestinians, it would be thoughtless to suppose that the typical types of warfare and violence are the sole types and methods of harmful hostile conduct. In fact, some may argue that the violent contributions of women to the religious Zionist settler movement are more significant than those of men. This is due to the fact that these women are, as is the case with almost all nuclear families, the most influential role-model to the children due to their predominantly domestic role as mothers. This is pivotal because the violent beliefs and demeanor of the religious Zionist settler mothers will be passed on to the next generation which will be responsible for continuing the war against the Arabs and bringing on the salvation of god with the capture of Palestine.

While these women's participation is dynamic and complicated, and while their contribution to the war has evolved and shaped the women's identities, and shifted their roles within society, one thing has remained completely static since the Zionists were gifted with Israel in 1948: Palestinians have consistently and systematically been marginalized. They have been oppressed in countless ways but without a doubt they have suffered the most harm due to the divine war of the religious Zionists, which, amongst many other things, has shown us that war is not always an act of masculine culture.

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