

Feynman papers in the Caltech archives by Paula Hurwitz and Charlotte Erwin in December 1988.

DAVID L. GOODSTEIN

California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, California

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Appeals for Tayseer Aruri

On several occasions in the late 1970s and early 1980s, most notably in December 1982, I had the opportunity to visit the universities in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. At Birzeit University, An-Najah University and Bethlehem University, I met a number of very impressive individuals, who were doing their best to develop educational institutions. One of those people was Tayseer Aruri, a physicist at Birzeit.

After being educated in Moscow in the early 1970s, Aruri returned to the occupied territories, where he was arrested in 1974. For four years he was imprisoned in "administrative detention"—without trial. He was not accused of responsibility for acts of violence. His case eventually attracted the interest of some journalists and intellectuals in Israel and abroad (including Freeman Dyson, my colleague at the Institute for Advanced Study), and he was freed in 1978. He is currently 43 years old and has three children, aged one to five.

When I met Aruri in 1982, he told me that the worst part of prison life was the crowding. The crowding was "unbelievable," and "the prisoners had to sleep in shifts."

Aruri told me in 1982: "I believe that the solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians must be a Palestinian state alongside and at peace with the state of Israel. I want to be very precise: The borders of this state should be the West Bank and Gaza. If we say we want a Palestinian state that includes Tel Aviv, naturally all the people in Tel Aviv will be opposed to this. I have believed for many years that we Palestinians should make our position more explicit.... These have been my views since before I was arrested."

Not surprisingly, about a year ago Aruri was one of the signatories of a symbolic "peace treaty" that was signed by 25 Israeli and Palestinian intellectuals. But it was a shock to learn that he was arrested again in August 1988 and is one of a new group of two dozen Palestinians in the occupied territories who are threatened by the Israeli Army with being

deported. [See PHYSICS TODAY, December, page 127.]

It is disturbing that a person with views such as Aruri's should be considered a candidate for deportation. This fact deserves to be pondered seriously.

Many voices have been raised against Aruri's prospective deportation. The US State Department has criticized the threatened deportations; Amnesty International has adopted Aruri as a "prisoner of conscience"; Anthony Lewis devoted a *New York Times* column to the Aruri case.

It will doubtless be claimed by some that Aruri is being justly punished for a role in promoting the Palestinian "intifada." Such claims may involve attempts to confuse normal, legitimate political activity with violence. They may also be based in part on innuendos about secret evidence; certainly this is how foreigners who inquired about Aruri's incarceration in the 1970s were answered. The context in which Aruri is currently threatened with deportation should help put the excuses that may be made for his treatment in their proper perspective. Aruri is not the only physicist in the occupied territories who has recently been incarcerated. Nicola Dabit (of Birzeit) was incarcerated for a number of months, and Sami Kilani (of An-Najah) was imprisoned on several occasions, for durations adding up to a period of years. (And a fourth physicist, Abdel-Gaber Shayeb, a native of the occupied territories, was classified as a foreigner; as a result, he was ordered to sign an anti-PLO statement required of foreign lecturers in the occupied territories, and after he refused to sign he and his family had to leave the country.)

Of course, the situation of physicists is not unique. Of some 150 journalists in the occupied territories, more than 50 have been imprisoned at some point for more than six months, and more than a dozen are currently imprisoned. In fact, nearly 20 000 people from all walks of life have been imprisoned at different times in the last year, with thousands currently held under extremely difficult conditions. Facts such as these help supply the context for understanding Aruri's current situation.

EDWARD WITTEN

Institute for Advanced Study
Princeton, New Jersey

3/89

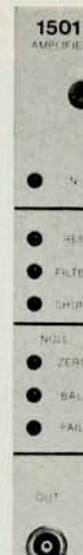
I wish to call the attention of APS members to the case of Tayseer Ali Aruri, a professor at Birzeit Universi-

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ty, who is now in prison and threatened by Israeli military authorities with deportation. He has been adopted by Amnesty International as a "prisoner of conscience." I report here only facts of which I have firsthand knowledge.

I visited Birzeit University twice, in 1977 and 1982. It happened that Ramzi Rihan, who was head of the Birzeit physics department in 1977 and later became dean of the faculty of science, had been a student in a quantum mechanics course I taught at Columbia. From conversations with Rihan and his students, and from visits to classrooms and laboratories, I could see that Birzeit is a bona fide university, with a faculty working hard and successfully to provide modern higher education to the West Bank population. I was amazed by their dedication to this task under the harsh conditions of the Israeli military occupation. When I visited in 1977, Aruri had been sitting in jail without charges for three years. When I visited in 1982, the whole university was closed for two months as a collective punishment for a student demonstration. Since students were refused access to the classrooms, I was obliged to give my physics seminar to a small audience in a private home.

The Israeli authorities say that Birzeit is a hotbed of student radicals. This is of course correct. But the students did not learn radicalism from Birzeit. They learned radicalism from their daily encounters with Israeli soldiers and from their experience of the injustice of collective punishments, long before they became students. Birzeit is one of the few institutions on the West Bank that offers young people hope. It stands, like the Hebrew University in Jerusalem 30 miles away, as a symbol of peaceful achievement in the midst of turmoil. The faculty at Birzeit, as I observed, was trying constantly to steer the students away from violence, to give the students an alternative to violence. The faculty was accused by the Israelis of encouraging terrorism and was accused by the students of encouraging subservience to the occupation. Neither accusation was true.

On 21 November 1988 the Military Advisory Committee announced its decision to uphold the order of deportation against Aruri. The announcement begins as follows: "Tayseer Ragheb Ali Aruri, born in 1945, resident of Al Bireh, Professor at Birzeit University, is the oldest of the appellants, and, we have the impression,

the ranking member of the group, having sensed the high esteem his prison colleagues show towards him."

These words show that Aruri has won the respect of his enemies as well as of his friends. The sentence of deportation is nonetheless a monstrous injustice, cutting off a dedicated teacher from his students, a father from his children, a native son from his homeland. For a native of the West Bank, prison is an everyday occurrence but deportation is a tragedy. I call upon all supporters of academic freedom, and especially upon American and Israeli physicists, to protest this injustice. The freedom of Birzeit should be as precious to us as the freedom of the Hebrew University.

FREEMAN J. DYSON

Institute for Advanced Study

3/89

Princeton, New Jersey

Physicists may be interested in the situation of one of our number, Tayseer Aruri, a professor at Birzeit University. Aruri was put under "administrative detention" by the Israeli military authorities in the 1970s. No precise charges were made, but he was accused of organizing violent activity, a charge he has denied. The Israeli authorities also claimed he was a member of the Palestinian Communist Party—a charge he has not denied. Although the Palestinian Communist Party is affiliated with the PLO, it has no military arm, and I know of no evidence that it has, even unofficially, advocated violence.

On 14 June 1988 Aruri, together with 24 other Israeli and Palestinian writers and academics, signed a document referred to as a "peace treaty," advocating a two-state solution to the problems of the region.

On 8 August Aruri was arrested.

On 18 August Aruri was served with a deportation order, which he is appealing to the Israeli supreme court.

Aruri is still, I understand, being held in Junaid prison near Nablus.

Several organizations, including Amnesty International and the Committee of Concerned Scientists, and numerous individuals have endeavored to find out the precise nature of the charges against Aruri. So far the Israeli authorities, including Defense Minister Itzhak Rabin, have not been helpful, merely quoting part of the above past history, without dates or place names, and stating, without any specific claim, that Aruri "continued his political activity in prison" and continues to advocate, and organize, violence.

I understand that in most, if not all, Israeli deportation orders there is no precise statement of charges, there is no presentation of evidence, and the accused does not have the opportunity of confronting, or even questioning, his accusers.

Many countries have used exile, deportation or banishment as punishment throughout the ages. But many countries agreed on 12 August 1949 to the fourth Geneva Convention, which in article 49 outlaws "individual or forcible transfers, as well as deportation, of protected persons from occupied territory." Neither the government nor the supreme court of Israel accepts the applicability of this convention to the situation in the West Bank.

Many persons in the world are concerned. The UN Security Council, in its resolutions 605 of 22 December 1987, 607 of 5 January 1988 and 608 of 14 January 1988, called upon Israel to cease such deportations.

Aruri's situation appears to be opposite to that experienced by scientists who wanted to leave the Soviet Union in the last 15 years: The USSR insisted that they stay. But either situation represents a deprivation of freedom of choice. There are other differences. In some cases, the "refuseniks" in the USSR were accused of crimes such as "defamation of the Soviet Union"; but the charges were specific, even though ludicrous, and the legal procedure, while grossly inadequate, was at least formally carried through. Aruri's situation is more similar to that of the Argentine physicists whose fate concerned many of us some years ago; many of them could have left the country before they were arrested, but they elected to stay and were jailed.

Another physicist at Birzeit University, Nicola Dabit, was put under "administrative detention" in the summer of 1988. But he was released on 21 November. Alas, the absence of these teachers from their duties does not affect Birzeit University, because it has been closed by a series of military orders since 9 January 1988.

RICHARD WILSON

Harvard University

1/89

Cambridge, Massachusetts

Patching a Hole in the Antarctic Ozone Story

In her comprehensive report on our state of knowledge about the Antarctic ozone hole (July 1988, page 17), Barbara Goss Levi has given the impression that very few experimental field data were available until the