

Faysal al-Husayni

Born in Iraq (Baghdad) on 17 July 1940, raised in Egypt, educated in Syria and Lebanon, and died in Kuwait on 31 May 2001. Faysal Abdulqadir al-

Hussayni was a typical Palestinian. The large number of Arab cities his destiny carried him to from birth to death is symbolic of both the plight and struggle of his people. But like most Palestinians, being away from home did not in the least deflect him from the central cause in his life, Jerusalem, for which his father Abdulqadir sacrificed his life in 1948. In command of *al-Jihad al-Muqaddas*, Abdulqadir was martyred during the battle of al-Qastal in defence of Jerusalem against the Zionist Haganah gangs. Faysal was then only eight and living in Cairo.

His grand uncle al-Hajj Amin al-Husayni was the Grand Mufti and symbol of the struggle for Jerusalem. Despite the prestigious Islamic position of the Jerusalemite al-Husayni family, Faysal grew to be an Arab nationalist. He breathed his last struggling for Jerusalem from a secularist platform, working for a two-state solution to what has become known in the region as 'the Palestinian problem' and worldwide as 'the Middle East conflict'.

After finishing school in Egypt in 1958, Faysal co-founded the General Union of Palestinian Students, which later became a central institution of the PLO providing the means of recruiting young Palestinians, men and women, for the cause and of extending the influence of PLO leadership in the Palestinian diaspora.

In the heydays of Nasirism Faysal was attracted to the Arab nationalist movement, founded by George Habash, who later set up the Marxist-leaning Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). But this was not the platform Faysal found appropriate. He identified more with Yasir Arafat's al-Fatah movement founded in 1965.

By then, Faysal was back in Jerusalem working under Arafat's leadership, in the Jordanian-ruled East Jerusalem. While he was in Aleppo, Syria, receiving military training in a Palestine Liberation Army camp, the rest of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, was lost to Israel in the Arab defeat of June

1967. Faysal returned to a new reality, one in which the whole of Jerusalem was under Israeli occupation and Arab nationalism had received a fatal blow.

Resistance activity confronted Faysal with the occupiers of his country. His repeated imprisonment, albeit for short terms, afforded him the opportunity to learn Hebrew and acquaint himself with the intricacies of Zionist society. His secularist intellectual disposition made it possible to engage in dialogue and gradual acceptance of the idea that Israel's dominance and occupation might have to be recognised.

It is not known with certainty if Faysal was ahead of the rest of the PLO in adopting humanist discourse aimed at persuading the Israeli public of a two-state solution or he was merely employed by the PLO leadership to prepare the ground for their own eventual acceptance of Israel. In 1988 all PLO officials and institutions came out of their closets and pushed in one direction, that of statehood.

At the time when the first Palestinian Intifada erupted, on 8 December 1987, Faysal al-Husayni was in Israeli detention. He was under house arrest from 1982 to 1987 for PLO-related activities, and in prison from April 1987 to January 1989. His release came when the PLO was struggling for survival and the Islamic movement seemed to have pulled the rug from under the feet of the nationalist movement.

Under Arafat's leadership, the nationalist movement had taken the Palestinian struggle from one disaster to another. The PLO was also hit with rumours of rampant corruption and power struggle that led to liquidation or banishment of many comrades who did not see eye to eye or who spoke against the autocratic style of management.

Together with such personalities as Hanan Ashrawi, Sari Nusaybah and Haidar Abdulshafi, Faysal al-Husayni emerged as a local leader who spoke the language of peace and reconciliation while maintaining all along that the PLO was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. This was not an easy task.

For, on the one hand, Israel was not ready to make peace with those whom it accused of having Jewish blood on their hands. On the other hand, the mission Faysal al-Husayni and his fellow Palestinian secular intellectuals had embarked on could easily have earned them the wrath of many Palestinians, especially the refugees, to whom the language of peace and reconciliation meant only one thing: a sellout.

There are some who credit Faysal with persuading the US and eventually Israel to do business with the PLO. His intensive negotiations with US Secretary of State James Baker led to the Madrid Conference in October 1991 that facilitated the first open negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, paving the way to secret PLO-Israel talks leading to the Oslo accords.

It is not certain whether Faysal was also player in the Oslo process and a facilitator of the secret meetings that shocked the world. What is known with certainty is that his image suffered more than ever as a result of Oslo accord.

When the Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein massacred 29 Palestinian Muslim worshippers during al-Fajr prayer on the 15th of Ramadan (25 February 1994) inside the Ibrahim mosque in al-Khalil (Hebron), Faysal was denied entry into the town by an angry crowd of stone-pelting Palestinians. He had gone there to offer condolences to the families of the victims.

Despite their veneration of the memory of his father Abdulqadir, he was not acceptable to them. Later, Faysal became aware of posters in parts of the ancient city that bore his picture and that of his father with a Qur'anic verse inscribed underneath: 'He is not of thy family: for his conduct is unrighteous.' (*Hud*, 11:46)

It could not have been consoling for Faysal that while he lost ground among the Palestinians he was gaining some ground among Israeli leftists. He made friends with a number of prominent figures in the Israeli Peace-Now movement, who agreed with him that lasting peace could not be achieved without Palestinian statehood but disagreed on the quality of statehood.

However, if this may be considered an accomplishment, it was short lived. It must have been heartbreaking for Faysal and his comrades to see that following the second Intifada (late September 2000) most of these Israeli leftists with whom he dreamt of a future of peaceful coexistence were declaring that they were mistaken and that the Palestinians deserved neither a homeland nor compassion.

The last months in the life of Faysal al-Husayni must have been agonising. The entire edifice of the citadel of peace built over more than 25 years of 'struggle' crumbled before his very eyes. The impact of the failure of the 'peace process' on him was devastating. Even within his own al-Fatah movement, enthusiasm for peace with Israel had

almost died. Palestinians saw more of their land lost and more of their children killed in the seven or so years of peace making with Israel.

The final chapter in al-Husayni's life was the most tragic. He had been in Kuwait to attend a conference to discuss resisting the 'normalisation' of relations with Israel. To start with, he was certainly not the best person to attend such a conference. He was among the most active Palestinians in building bridges with the Israelis. Therefore, it would seem incongruous for someone like him to represent the Palestinians in a campaign urging the rest of the Arabs not to do precisely what he, and for that matter the PLO, had been doing.

The Kuwaitis in general have not recovered from the calamity that befell them in 1990 when Iraqi ruler Saddam Husain invaded their country and wiped it off the map. They continue to be sore about Yasir Arafat's open support for Saddam Husain - as a result of which millions of Palestinians have suffered.

Kuwait was among the most supportive Arab states of the Palestinian cause. Kuwaitis donated generously and hosted Palestinians in large numbers, providing them with an opportunity to make a good living, thus funding their struggle against the Israeli occupation.

The Kuwaitis have not ceased to support the Palestinian cause in spite of the ill judged support for Saddam Husain by Yasir Arafat and some other nationalist Palestinians. This is a point which some Palestinians continue to fail to understand.

Whatever hostile reception al-Husayni received in Kuwait should be contrasted with the warm reception accorded to Shaikh Ahmad Yassin, leader of Islamic Hamas. Perhaps this is what led to the somewhat hostile campaign in PLO-supported media against Kuwait on the sudden and tragic death of Faysal al-Husayni on Kuwaiti soil.

The editorials and comments, including those published in the London-based *al-Quds al-Arabi*, did every thing apart from using the event to restore fraternal ties with the Kuwaitis. One writer asked Faysal: 'Did you have to die in Kuwait?' Others proclaimed Faysal a martyr killed by the Kuwaitis who allegedly did not accord him a respectable reception or who, it is claimed, abused him for the PLO's stance over the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq.

Faysal al-Husayni, 60, has left behind a wife, a son and a daughter.

Dr Azzam Tamimi



Ibrahim Abu-Lughud

Prominent Palestinian author, scholar and political scientist, Professor Ibrahim Abu Lughud, died in

Ramallah, 23 May 2001.

He was born in 1929 into a well to do Palestinian family in Yaffa. He had hardly passed his high school when came the Zionists in 1948 and expelled everyone at gunpoint. Thus his family joined the refugee trail to Jordan.

Ibrahim was sent to the US in 1950 where he took a PhD in International Relations from Princeton in 1957. He worked for an Unesco project in Egypt before returning to the US in 1961; he taught at Smith College and later at the Northwestern University in Chicago. In 1992, he joined Birzeit University, Ramallah, as vice president and professor of international relations.

All through his student as well as teaching years, Ibrahim Abu-Lughud had remained actively involved in the Palestinian struggle. He was among the founders of the Arab Student Association and the Association of Arab-American University Graduates and served many years as member of the Palestinian National Council. With Edward Said, he founded and co-edited *Arab Studies Quarterly*.

He returned to the Palestinian territories in 1992 to take part in building his future homeland. 'The idea of return,' he said, 'began in the early 1990s when I talked to a South African physician who lived in exile in London for more than 20 years', and had finally decided to close his clinic and go home after the apartheid regime was overthrown. Abu-Lughud decided to do the same and resigned from his university post in Chicago and joined Birzeit University in Ramallah.

He came to Birzeit because he believed the main reason of their defeat in the 1948 War was that 'our enemy was more educated than we were' and it was, therefore 'important for Arabs and Palestinians, in particular, to establish educational institutions to teach the principles of Israeli Studies. We have to understand how Israel functions by learning and analysing their logistics, social and demographic formation'.

His return belied the view that Palestinians in the Diaspora would not be able to or not like to live under the

Palestinian Authority. On the contrary, Ibrahim Abu-Lughud asserted the national consensus among the Palestinians on their right to return and to exercise their right of return according to the UN Resolution 194. 'As long as this right is not implemented the conflict will not be resolved. Those who don't want to return should have the right for a full compensation.'

Ibrahim Abu-Lughud saw the Oslo accords as a 'fatal mistake' which had destroyed the Palestinian consensus. He thought 'the Palestinians miscalculated and were forced to enter the peace process under tremendous pressure' for 'despite the increasing international support that the Palestinians were gaining,' the leadership rushed into making a number of 'inappropriate agreements with Israel'.

In his view, if the Palestinians succeeded in asserting their sovereignty over East Jerusalem, they would have the freedom to negotiate over the other main issues. However, he was not optimistic about Israel ceding a single inch of Jerusalem to the Arabs or allowing an independent Palestine state, with East Jerusalem as its capital unless they have a superior power backing them. At present, Jerusalem reflects Israeli apartheid *par excellence*. 'The current Israeli policy is to alienate Palestinians in Jerusalem through regular expulsions. If we examine the economic and demographic situation in the city, we will find out that the Palestinians that are living in the city are under harsh economic situation.'

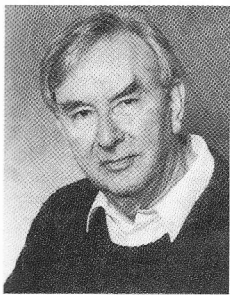
Still he kept swinging between his own expectations of human reasonableness and Israel's colonial mindset. 'The principles of the Israeli state,' he stressed, 'are based on colonial concepts.' He didn't think, therefore, that there was a difference between Barak and Netanyahu. The only difference was that Barak achieved his conquests through a nice tone, while Netanyahu spoke of his intentions aloud. In fact, Ibrahim Abu-Lughud reminded Palestinians, 'the greatest suffering of Palestinians was under the rule of the Labour party. They were the first to initiate settlements in Palestine, and seized Jerusalem. We have been misled by the Israeli media.'

It was, therefore, clear to him that even though the West Bank and Gaza Strip comprise only 20% percent of Palestine, the Zionists were not going to let them control even this portion. 'The Jews used to call the Palestinians "a people without a land". They succeeded in expelling the Palestinians from their

homes. The peace process aims to erase most of the painful events of our history.'

He had, however, hoped, in fact, he was 'sure' that 'both the Palestinians and Israelis have agreed to a political fight instead of a military one'. But that did not prove to be true. He had been correct though in thinking that the final status talks would not end the conflict but create another form of conflict. He was also right to assume that in the process, 'Palestinians will be able to intensify their strength and mobilise their resources.' He hadn't exactly anticipated the Al Aqsa Intifada, few had actually, but that was it.

Like most Arabs, he too seemed to overbelieve in a so-called international community and thus to predicate their salvation on the good sense of an entity that existed only in the imagination of the Arab and third worlds. More importantly, he also accepted that in order to achieve equity with the Israelis, the Palestinians have to transform themselves 'from a victim to an actual doer'.



**Reverend
Adrian Hastings**

Priest, professor, eminent church historian, Adrian C h r i s t o p h e r Hastings, died in Leeds on 30 May 2001. Prominent in the Roman Catholic

Church as an academic and a theologian who had taken issue with the Portuguese fellow Roman Catholics, about their occupation of Goa (India) and later the massacre by their army of the villagers in Wiriyamu, Mozambique, Africa, he had come to greater prominence in 1990s as a forceful defender of Bosnian independence and campaigner against the ethnic cleansing and genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosova. With the British Prime Minister John Major totally in sync with the American policy of masterly inactivity and winking at the likes of Slobodan Milosevic, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, doing the dirty job on behalf of the US and the European Union, Adrian Hastings' was one of the very few voices who had the uprightness and courage to challenge those immoral policies.

He helped to found a non-party political group, the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Alliance supported a democratic sovereign state of Bosnia-Herzegovina and called for

lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina. Later in 1997, Professor Adrian Hastings helped set up in London a permanent body, The Bosnian Institute, with Professor Noel Malcolm as its chairman. It aimed at 'educating people about the history and culture of Bosnia-Herzegovina, its social, economic, governmental, legal and cultural conditions, organisations and institutions'. Similarly, during the Kosovan crisis, he set up the Free Kosova Committee to argue for the right of Kosova's people to live in peace and freedom in a multi-ethnic, democratic and independent state.

Adrian Hastings did not feel comfortable with the Dayton accord while the indicted war criminals remained untouched. He also questioned the role of many western politicians and UN officials, without whose malign neglect Europe's worst genocide since the Second World War could not have taken place.

After the killing of some 10,000 Bosnian Muslims in July 1995 when General Mladic's Serb forces overran the UN 'Safe Area' of Srebrenica, he demanded an investigation into the responsibility for this genocide. The people of Srebrenica were promised that if the Serb forces tried to attack the enclave, the UNPROFOR would use air power. Adrian Hastings was quite certain Srebrenica could have been saved by the use of air power. **Colonel Karremans**, the Dutch commander of UNPROFOR in the town, had assured the community leaders in Srebrenica that 'if the Serb forces did not withdraw, they would be pounded by 40 to 70 planes, also that **General Rupert Smith**, the British Commander of UNPROFOR, would come by helicopter to visit the town. No such thing happened, the town fell a few hours later and the slaughter began almost at once, exactly as observers had predicted'.

Adrian Hastings asked: 'Did Karremans utter blatant lies? If he had indeed been informed that the air attack was to take place, who countermanded the order? Was it General Smith, **General Janvier** the overall commander of the UN troops in the former Yugoslavia, or UN Secretary General **Boutros Ghali**?

'Why subsequently were thousands of refugees inside the UN base forced out by Dutch troops to their near-certain death at the hands of the Serb forces standing outside? Why did British SAS officers in Srebrenica, who had direct contact with General Smith and the

power to ask for air strikes, do nothing?' To-date these questions remain to be answered.

Adrian Hastings also wrote a short but powerful booklet *SOS Bosnia* (1993) followed by *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (1997) with an insightful chapter on South Slavs. His other major works included *A History of African Christianity, 1950-1975* (1979), *A History of Christianity* (1985, updated 2000), *A World History of Christianity* (1999).

Born in Kuala Lumpur, 23 June 1929, he was ordained as a priest in 1955. He served as priest in Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia; and taught at Aberdeen, Selly Oak, University of Zimbabwe and Leeds University (1985-94), the last two as professor. He was about to be elected to Fellowship of the British Academy when he died on 30 May 2001.

M H Faruqi

U Ahmed Beeran

Author, journalist, long-time member of Kerala state assembly, former minister in the state government, Ulladassery Ahmed Beeran, 76, died in Kottakkal, Malappuram in Kerala.

Born in 1925, Beeran joined the then British Indian army as a non-commissioned officer soon after leaving high school. Demobilised after the war, he went to work with a British company (1950-56) in Bombay, now Mumbai, where he was associated with the Kerala Muslim Jamaat. In Kerala, he joined public life, elected successively to local and district bodies and, in 1970, to the state assembly on the Indian Union Muslim League ticket.

Beeran was elected to the state assembly five times. He became education minister in 1978 and later served as minister of food. He became legislator again in 1991 but resigned in 1994 after he quit Indian Union Muslim League in protest against the party continuing in coalition with the Congress party after the destruction of the Babari Mosque in December 1992. He joined a new party, Indian National League, formed by **Sulaiman Sait**. He became general secretary and later state president of the National League. However, because of ill health, he had ceased to take an active part in politics and had remained largely bedridden since.

Beeran is survived by his wife, four sons, two daughters and two sisters.

P V Saeed Muhammad