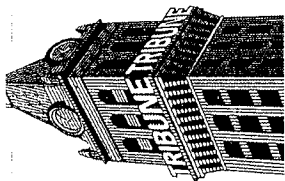


Oakland Tribune



Oakland

MONDAY
April 1, 2002

Serving Oakland for 128 years

oaklandtribune.com

50 cents

Activists question policy of Israelis

Berkeley forum studies U.N. talks, resistance

By **Lakiesha McGhee**
STAFF WRITER

After Israel inflicted what Palestinians described as one of the deadliest attacks in their 18-month conflict with Israel, peace activists in the Bay Area met to call for solidarity with the Palestinian people.

The Bay Area chapter of Women in Black, an organization of Jewish feminists opposed to the occupation of Palestinian territories, held a discussion Sunday at the Fellowship of Unitarians in north Berkeley.

While some advocated a stronger push for international intervention in the sometimes-heated discussion, others favored Israeli resistance to change Israeli policy.

On hand was American-born Marcia Freedman, a peace activist and former member of the Israeli Knesset who returned from Jerusalem early last month. She reported on the state of Palestinian territories, describing scenes in Ramallah where people don't leave their home in fear of being shot and where Israeli troops search and occupy civilian homes and businesses.

Freedman said "there is a growing movement in Israel that opposes the policies and actions of the present government, as well as more and more Americans, Jewish and non-Jewish, who support Israeli right to exist in security, yet question its current policies."

"The current Israeli government doesn't really represent the Israeli people," said Freedman. "It (the fighting) is so extreme that they're not able to come to any agreement."

Freedman quoted an Israeli newspaper that showed Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's approval rate decline from 57 percent to 32 percent. She said that many Israelis and American Jews are ill informed when it comes to what's happening to the Palestinian people. Freedman blamed restrictions on the media and media self-censorship, but said that "most people who want to know can know."

Freedman said that she believes that Jews have a right to a state of their own, but does not agree with occupation of Palestinian territories.

While the show of solidarity at Sunday's meeting was encouraging, some remained cynical of the groups objectives. Iman Farajallah, a Palestinian who lives in San Francisco, described the meeting as "a continuation of Israeli propaganda."

"If they really want peace why can't they march for peace. Why don't they put their bodies on the line if they really want to stop the killings," Farajallah said.

The 31-year-old is planning to return to her homeland, Gaza, to protest along with other Bay Area activists.