

really so important to you?”

Interwoven throughout this mosaic book are reproductions of Yesh Gvul’s polemical posters, leaflets, and declarations against the occupation. Also included is the Aug. 19, 2001 letter of refusal to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, by the *Shministim* (high school seniors), Israel’s youngest generation of refuseniks. While still students, these people stated they would not serve in the IDF until it withdraws from the occupied territories. Of the signatories, five—Noam Bahat, Matan Kaminer, Adam Maor, Haggai Matar, and Shimri Zameret—have been in jail for more than one and a half years.

“Israel Today Is a Prison,” by Kaminer, and “Militarism and Racism Have Reached a Fascist Level,” by Matar, are powerful letters of refusal.

Were Friedrich Schiller, the Poet of Freedom, writing today, of the Refuseniks, he would claim that “a great moment has found a great people.” For these are, indeed, beautiful souls who have elevated their emotions to the level of reason.

Refusenik! is must reading for every citizen of the world. (Of note: the website of Yesh Gvul was stolen since the publication of *Refusenik!* Their new website is www.yeshgvul.org.)

Interview: Dr. Anat Matar

A Call for Support

Dr. Matar is a professor of philosophy at Tel-Aviv University, mother of jailed refusenik Haggai Matar, and one of the contributors to Refusenik!. She was interviewed online by Mary Woodward.

EIR: Dr. Matar, the introduction to Haggai’s refusal letter says that he “comes from a family of political activists.” It is easier to look the other way; what motivated your family to care so much about others?

Matar: It is very difficult to answer such a question, naturally. I can tell you that my father’s biography has a lot to do with my upbringing, and also with Haggai’s (Haggai has always been very close to my father. He actually mentions this briefly in the letter printed in *Refusenik!*). My father fought against the Nazis as part of the Red Army, but had also the opportunity to see the German soldiers as human beings. His own communist education surely helped him develop a strong compassion towards all human beings, and I think this is what our family inherited from him. But of course this is only one thread among many. I was personally very moved by the literature I read as a child, and I’m sure it contributed a lot to the kind of person I am today.

EIR: In September 2002, you were one of many Israeli signatories, who, in an open letter to the international community, warned that “the Israeli government may be contemplating crimes against humanity,” and that measures had to be taken to prevent such crimes. What kind of response did the international community give to this warning?

Matar: On the face of it, nothing. But actually, at the moment I am sitting and writing this answer to you, in the Hague international court they are reading their decision about the Apartheid Wall . . . and indeed, it was the Wall that was initiated more or less when we wrote that open letter. Needless to say, the international community’s reaction to the Wall is not a result of our letter, but of many, many efforts of many people, but perhaps our letter added something to the overall.

EIR: Eleanor Roosevelt has been credited by historians as helping to procure the release of Bruno Bettelheim from the Nazi concentration camps. Dr. Bettelheim, however, suggested that her intervention may have caused his release to have been postponed. Do you think that the pressure that the peace activists throughout the world have put on the Sharon government to release the Five Conscientious Objectors may be having a spiteful backlash?

Matar: No, I don’t think so. There’s not enough pressure, and I’m sure that if there was more pressure, the boys could have been released by now. This is what happened, 20 years ago, with Gadi Algazi. But things are now different. There are voices that are marginalized and thus have, alas, no effect or only a minor one; and the major forces haven’t intervened in our case.

EIR: Is it at all possible that the Israeli army actually thinks that draconian sentences against the Refuseniks will terrorize them to the point of moral bankruptcy?

Matar: No, of course they know the boys will not surrender. The army’s initial target was to intimidate others. They were really afraid the five will have many followers, a phenomenon they could not bear—although thousands of boys and girls are dismissed each year for all sorts of reasons, it is not on the basis of a moral criticism of the army’s deeds.

EIR: The ultra-religious right are a strange bunch. They claim to love Torah, but they do not act on the basic tenets of not oppressing their neighbors and of pursuing justice. How is it that secular Israelis carry Torah in their daily acts, but the *haredi* [ultra-religious] do not?

Matar: I don’t know how to answer this, I must admit. There are of course ultra-religious people who carry Torah in their daily acts. Others? For one thing, I’m sure they’re not exposed to data (in their papers, for example) about the conditions of their neighbors. But the situation is strange, I agree. You would expect independent, non-Zionist ultra-religious people to hold different views.