

Dear Mr Gandhi

By Uri Avnery
August 29, 2004

Dear Dr. Gandhi,

We Israeli peace activists welcome you with all our heart. We are all deeply impressed by the immortal message of your grandfather, the great Mahatma, who practiced non-violence while fighting with all his strength against a cruel foreign occupation. We are grateful to you for coming here to encourage our commitment to freedom, justice and non-violence.

But what IS violence?

Is it only the act of a suicide bomber in West Jerusalem? Is it only the violent resistance to occupation – or is it the occupation ITSELF?

Occupation is violence. Occupation IS violence.

Building settlements is violence.

Destroying homes, uprooting plantations, taking away land is violence.

Mistreating prisoners-of-war is violence.

This wall, this terrible wall, is violence. It does not shoot, it does no kill, but it is violence.

Therefore, to put an end to violence means putting an end to the occupation, fighting against it by non-violent means, until we achieve peace.

We hope that the next time you come to visit us, you will see peace in our country, peace between Israel and Palestine, two states and two peoples living side by side, without walls, without barriers between them, with Arab East Jerusalem, including Abu-Dis, as the capital of Palestine.

Thank you, Dr. Gandhi. Shukran. Toda raba.

This is the text of peace activist Uri Avnery's speech at the Abu-Dis demonstration with Dr. Gandhi on August 27, 2004.