

Brief Peace Update

In Jerusalem alone, 100 people turned up for a vigil on Sunday in a surge of anger, protest, and mourning following the killing of children and adults in Qana, Lebanon. Vigils erupted all over Israel, punctuated by the fury of passersby as they read our signs. I brought candles, but they did not stay lit in the cool evening breeze of Jerusalem. Others brought their own signs. Here are a few photos of the Jerusalem and Haifa vigils (the 2 right photos are by Jacob Katriel in Haifa):

On Saturday, we held an extraordinary mass march of "Women Against War" in Tel Aviv. Women came from 17 sponsoring women's organizations*, and we estimate about 3,000 participants (including men). It was a dramatic sight marching through the streets dressed in black as a sign of mourning for the victims on both sides. While the tabloids ignored us, *Ha'aretz* published a photo and detailed caption, and NRG, one of Israel's biggest news portals, told the whole story. The Arabic press gave us front-page coverage, and some of the foreign press also captured the story. This was an important action in a society in which the voices of women are always marginalized – and entirely erased during times of war. Our gratitude to the Urgent Action Fund for helping make it possible.

For chant collectors, here's a translation of a few of ours (in Hebrew they rhyme):

"Peace and security are not built on dead bodies"

"Money for the disadvantaged, not for war"

"Children in Beirut and Haifa ALL want to live"

It was an amazingly long procession (photo left), and we could see people hanging out of balconies to watch and sometimes curse – no surprise, with 90% of Israelis in support of this war. The anti-war movement in Israel seems to be inching forward, though the vast majority of Israelis continue to view us as traitors. The international anti-war movement is a great source of solidarity for us here.

Most disturbing is the overwhelming Israeli support for the Qana bombing based on the belief that the Hezbollah were using this building as a launching site for their missiles. And while all this is happening, dozens of

Palestinians are being killed in Gaza by Israeli troops. A news (not op-ed) article in *Ha'aretz* noted, "The large number of fatalities suggests the IDF is engaged in indiscriminate killing under the cover of the war in the north" ("97 fatalities in Gaza, but all eyes are on Lebanon" by Avi Issacharoff, 30 July 2006).

It's more than those killed for whom we have to light candles – it's the breakdown of morality in Israeli society in general.

In sadness,

Gila Svirsky, Jerusalem

*The participating organizations: Women against War: Coalition of Women for Peace, Ahoti, Aswat, Bat Shalom, Women in Black, FORA (Russian-speaking women), TANDI, Women against Violence, Al-Tufula, New Profile, The Fifth Mother, WILPF, Neled, Feminist House, Ittihad el-Nissa el-Takdumi, and Kayan.

Gila Svirsky

Coalition of Women for Peace

www.coalitionofwomen.org