



# The Right Livelihood Award

*for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people*

Gush Shalom / Uri Avnery and Rachel Avnery (Israel)

(2001)



*for their unwavering conviction, in the midst of violence, that peace can only be achieved through justice and reconciliation."*

Rachel & Uri Avnery  
at a demonstration

Gush Shalom was founded in 1993, as a new peace movement, which came into existence because the other Israeli peace movements had decided not to criticise the new Labour government. Gush Shalom is founded on three principles:

- Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories;
- recognition of the PLO as the Palestinians' representative;
- recognition of the right of the Palestinians to establish their own independent state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, alongside Israel.

Gush Shalom is a wholly voluntary organisation with no hierarchy. All its members simply refer to themselves as 'activists'. Since its founding in 1993, Gush Shalom has organised hundreds of demonstrations, protests and actions in line with its three objectives. The actions included rebuilding the demolished houses of Palestinians, demonstrating against the expropriation of Palestinian land for the establishment or enlargement of Jewish settlements, and generally giving support to the Oslo peace process and moving towards the establishment of a Palestinian state. Other initiatives have included:

- Boycott of the products of Jewish settlements on Palestinian land;
- Symbolic marking with green paint of all the points where roads cross the 'Green Line' between Israel and the occupied territories to signify to travellers that 'At this point you are leaving your country and entering the country of your neighbours';
- Placing peace advertisements in the newspaper Ha'aretz. On one occasion, a published statement signed by 500 prominent Israelis, supported the establishment of the State of Palestine in "All the territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip", with Jerusalem as the joint capital of the two states, Israel and Palestine.

Most importantly, Gush Shalom has been campaigning, along with other Israeli peace organisations, against the further extension of Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories and, in particular, against the continuing demolition of Arab houses that are intended to make that extension possible.

Since the end of the 'peace process' and the upsurge in violence in Israel and the occupied territories, Gush Shalom has persevered in its pursuit of what it perceives as the only road to peace. Gush Shalom activists are regularly arrested and abused, although as Israelis their treatment is far better than that of Palestinians, and their presence in situations of conflict undoubtedly does much to prevent the mistreatment of Palestinians.

Gush Shalom demands to end the blockade on the Gaza Strip and has sent several convoys for humanitarian relief to the beleaguered Strip. Gush Shalom has requested the Israeli government, as well as the governments of Europe and America, to start a dialogue with Hamas. Gush Shalom has vigorously opposed both the 2006 Lebanon War and the 2009 Gaza War from the first moment, organising demonstrations against the wars and protesting against the war crimes committed in their course.

Two of the main founders of Gush Shalom are Uri and Rachel Avnery.

Rachel Avnery was born in 1932 and worked first a schoolteacher and then as a photographer. Since 1993, she worked as the full-time unpaid administrator and organiser of Gush Shalom. Rachel Avnery died in May 2011.

Uri Avnery was born in 1923 in Germany, but moved in 1933 with his family to Palestine. He sustained severe wounds fighting in the Israeli-Palestinian War in 1948. Since then he has dedicated his life to campaigning for peace between Israelis and Palestinians: as an author and magazine editor, as a Member of the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, and as an indefatigable peace activist.

### Quotation

*"Ours is but a small part in a world-wide struggle for peace, justice and equality between human beings and between nations, for the preservation of our planet. It can all be summed up in one word, which both in Hebrew and in Arabic means not only peace, but also wholeness, security and wellbeing: Shalom, Salaam."*

Uri Avnery