

DEAR SENATOR:

With the U.S. presidential election and the recent death of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat still fresh in many people's minds, talk of elections in Palestine is heating up. On Nov. 2, Americans drove to their local schools, churches, community centers and fire departments to choose their next president.

Due to Israel's military occupation of their land, it is unlikely that Palestinians will be afforded the same freedom of movement to democratically elect their next leader. As long as the Israeli army occupies the West Bank and controls the Gaza Strip, Palestinians say it is impossible for them to hold free, fair and transparent elections.

Israeli roadblocks and checkpoints impede campaigning—an essential part of any election, as you are well aware—and many significant Palestinian leaders remain in Israeli prisons, including Marwan Barghout, who was one of the 10 original presidential candidates.

Please work to ensure Palestinians are given a chance to truly pick their next leader, and insist that Israel facilitate the process by removing all roadblocks and checkpoints.

TO:

SENATOR _____
(name of your Senator)

**U.S. SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510**

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REPRESENTATIVE _____
(name of your Representative)

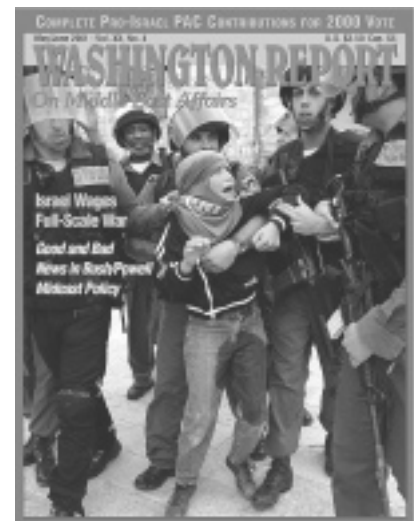
**U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515**

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The White House
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Washington, DC 20500**



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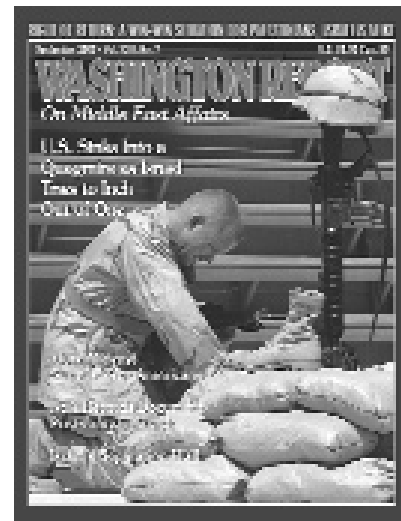
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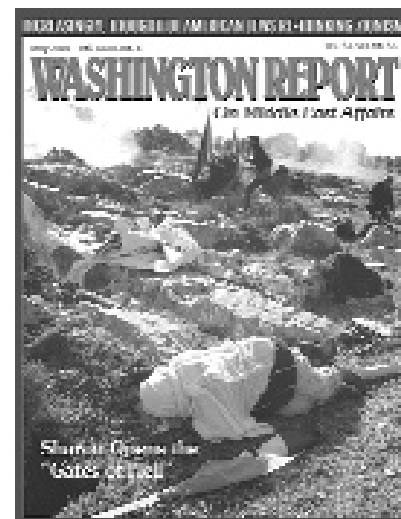
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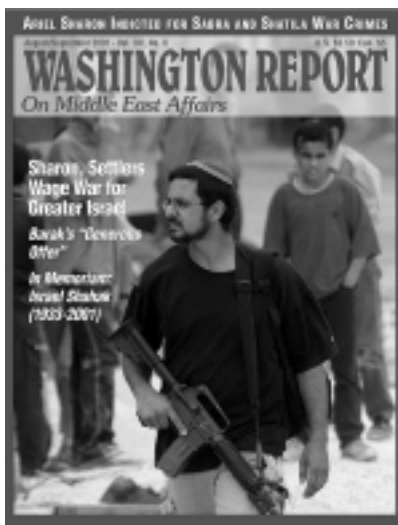
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FROM: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

In November talks with Israeli officials in Jerusalem regarding the Jan. 9 Palestinian election, Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "We want to do everything we can, working together, to see that these elections are held in a peaceful way and give the Palestinian people a new opportunity to move forward. The terror must be ended; the violence must be ended."

To achieve balance in our Middle East policy, the secretary of state—and, by extension, the U.S.—must put equal emphasis on ending Israel's military occupation, and the brutality that accompanies it, as on ending Palestinian violence.

The U.S. and Israel must accept the leader Palestinians elect and establish a relationship based on honesty and mutual respect. As Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom recently said, it is in Israel's interest to see the Palestinian elections go forward, as they could pave the way for a new leadership "with whom we can sit down." An equitable and lasting peace can never be achieved as long as Palestinian leaders are denied a place at the table.



AFP PHOTO: SOURCE PEOPLE'S PARTY
 Israeli border police arrest Bassam al-Salhi, a People's Party candidate in the Palestinian elections, as he tries to enter Jerusalem.

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