



LIVE FROM Palestine

TESTIMONIES FROM THE NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Palestinian Activists Block Apartheid Road 443

By Popular Struggle Coordination Committee, October 16, 2012



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About 50 Palestinians joined by a number of international activists blocked today the Apartheid Road 443 (known as Modi'in, which passes on West Bank lands, connecting Tel Aviv to Jerusalem). The road was blocked for about 30 minutes to Israeli and settler traffic.

Soldiers and Border Police who arrived on the scene physically attacked protestors and journalists, and used pepper spray and sound bombs. One Palestinian protestor was detained and beaten. He was released an hour later.

This direct action was organized in light of the increasing settler terrorism against

Palestinians and their properties during the current olive harvest season, including the torching, uprooting or setting fire to olive trees, the theft of harvested olives, and the attacking of Palestinian families while picking olives.

Mohamad Khatib, of the PSCC emphasized, "We organized this action today to stress that as long as Palestinians suffer under the daily practices of the occupation and settler terror, Israeli daily life can't continue on as normal."

Khatib added, "We call on people of conscience around the world to support the Palestinian struggle by engaging in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against



Fadi Arouri

Israel, and to take serious actions to boycott companies that are complicit with the Israeli apartheid, such as Veolia, which operates transportation routes that use Road 443, which is built on Palestinian lands.”

Background, Road to nowhere: During the occupation of the West Bank in June 1967, the Israeli army destroyed the villages of Yalu, Beit Nuba and Amuasse in the Latrun enclave.”Canada Park” and a number of settlements were built on their lands.

Most of the residents of these three displaced villages currently live in villages near Highway

443, such as Beit Liqya, Beit Sira and Beit Ur. In the eighties, thousands of acres were confiscated by Israel along the road, claiming that the road will serve as the main traffic

artery for these villages to Ramallah.

However, the road has been closed for years to Palestinian vehicles. Following the High Court ruling on Route 443, a small section of the road was opened last week for Palestinian traffic, but is still nearly useless for the villagers, as access to Ramallah

from it is prohibited, turning it into a highway to nowhere for Palestinians. ■

Protestors: Israeli daily life can't continue on as normal while Palestinians suffer under settler terror.

URGENT — FUNDS NEEDED

International Activists Threatened With Illegal Deportation

By International Solidarity Movement, November, 2012

Israeli authorities are threatening to deport two international activists, arrested yesterday at a non-violent action at a settlement supermarket, despite a judge ruling that they should be released. They are currently being held in immigration detention.

deportation, then these will be even higher. We urgently need funds to challenge the Israeli tactic of deporting solidarity activists to prevent our work in the West Bank.

Freedom for international activists can also be key in legal processes for Palestinians who are arrested at the same time. Previously this

ISM-Palestine issued this appeal in October. We wish it were exceptional but it is not. The Northern California Chapter has already sent \$200, but we used to be able to send thousands. We are the only tax-exempt ISM chapter, and we realize that many of you prefer to donate by check. If you wish to send your donations in the enclosed remit envelope, therefore, we will assure that all of your funds goes to support our work, as we have for the last ten years.

—The ISM Team in Northern California

Earlier today, defense lawyers were informed that a judge had ruled that they should be freed without charge, but this ruling was ignored by Israeli police, who handed the two activists to the Ministry of Interior, to begin the deportation process. They could be flown back to their home countries within hours, despite never having been charged, let alone convicted of any crime. They have also been repeatedly denied contact with their lawyer.

Substantial legal costs have already been incurred. If they choose to fight this unjust

month, four ISM activists and two Palestinian men were arrested. One of the Palestinian men was released just yesterday, following a judge's decision that to keep him in prison after the international activists had been freed would be unjust and discriminatory.

Please donate now so that we can continue our work supporting the Palestinian cause. ■

DONATE HERE:
<http://palsolidarity.org/donate/>

Interview With a Settler

By Kelly Joiner, October 1, 2012

“What cause have we to complain about their fierce hatred to us? For eight years now, they sit in their refugee camps in Gaza, and before their eyes we turn into our homestead the land and villages in which they and their forefathers have lived.”

—Moshe Dayan, Israeli general, 1956

During my visit to Palestine this summer, I met with an Israeli settler in an effort to learn more about the views of settlers living in the West Bank. My ultimate goal was to speak very little, listen a lot, and try to understand the thinking behind the settler point of view. My purpose was to try to understand his point of view in an

Settlers like the one I interviewed were enticed to move there because the Israeli government heavily subsidized the housing.

effort to be able to explain it to others and argue effectively against it, so I spoke very little and allowed him to talk, which he was more than happy to do.

I spoke to a settler living in the Efrat settlement which is part of the Gush Etzion settlement bloc. It is located south of Jerusalem between Bethlehem and Hebron over 4 miles from the green line separating Israel and the West Bank and is on the Palestinian side of the apartheid wall. There are about 22,000 illegal settlers in Gush Etzion and 7000 of those live in Efrat.

All settlements within the West Bank have been deemed illegal under international law and are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition against an occupying power's transfer of civilians into occupied territory. The Israeli government disputes this not by saying that population transfer is not occurring, or even that the boundary is disputed, but because Palestine was under occupation already when Israel conquered the territory, it was not bound by the Geneva Convention because it was a *liberating army*. The International Court of

Justice, in an advisory opinion issued in 2004, has rejected this assertion and reaffirmed the position that all Israeli settlements within the West Bank are illegal under international law.

The man that I spoke with one afternoon in August of 2012, was an American who made aliyah, which is the Jewish-only right to return to the holy land, in the early 1980s. He and his wife, also an American, first moved to Tel Aviv because they wanted to live “among their own kind.” He said they “wanted to raise their children with people who were like them.” And he said that while he loved America, he only wanted to live with other Jews. After a few years in Tel Aviv, he moved to Efrat because it was cheaper than living in the city and was closer to Jerusalem. He said he felt no particular attachment to the specific land the settlement was built on, but now that he had purchased his home, he felt entitled to keep living there. Regardless of the original illegality of the purchase apparently.

He asserted that none of the land in the settlement had been illegally confiscated, but had been purchased from the Israeli government. The problem with this is that it was not the Israeli government's land to sell, and it was precisely this government that stole the land in question. He pointed to small bits of land near the settlement that still held olive trees that were tended by Palestinians as evidence that everything was legal.

But this is one of the legacies of colonialism. Palestinians who had been living on their land for hundreds of years, often did not hold official western legal documents outlining their holdings. So the small patches of Palestinian land that are still held by Arabs are often newer pieces adjacent to more ancient holdings that were purchased more recently during the British occupation. Israeli courts held that these new purchases were the only legally held lands, and the rest were confiscated and used to build settlements.

Settlers like the one I interviewed were enticed to move there because the Israeli government heavily subsidized the housing in settlements in an effort to change the demographics within the West Bank and enlarge Israeli territory. The Israeli government is

beholden to Zionist ideology that says that God gave Israel to them and so any action they might take to get that land back is justified.

This does not fit with traditional Jewish teachings about justice however. Abraham *purchased* the land for Sarah's grave in Hebron parts of which are now being stolen by settlers on a daily basis. He would be ashamed of what is being done in the name of his God. As would most religious figures. Muhammad would be ashamed at the actions of many of his fringe followers, as would Jesus. As a Catholic, I am often ashamed of people who call themselves Christian and yet deny basic tenets of our faith that is based on love and equality.

Here is an analogy I was offered. Israel and the British at the time of Partition offered the Palestinians a state on 45% of their historic homeland in 1947 and offered 55 % to Jews who constituted 30 % of the population and owned only 6 % of the land. Palestinians rejected this offer because they thought they would win in a war supported by other Arab nations. They were wrong. More territory was lost in 1967. "Now faced with almost nothing they have come crawling back like babies" (here he actually began to suck his thumb and talk like a baby) "Waaaaah, I'm sowwwy." He adds, "So because they say sorry we are obligated to give them what they want?"

Actually, you are obligated to give them what they want because what they want is to be treated like human beings and be allowed to live in the land they have lived on for thousands of years. But I digress.

He then compared partition to a common business transaction. "Let's say I offer to sell you this cake for \$5. You try to negotiate the price lower and I refuse. You refuse to pay my price and walk away. If you come back tomorrow and I have sold the cake to someone else am I still obligated to sell you the cake for \$5?"

Yes, that's exactly the same thing. Your homeland and a piece of cake. Perfect analogy. But it illuminates a lot. If you think of the invasion and occupation of Palestine as a business transaction, then Palestinians are simply trying to declare the contract null and void. There is no need to demonize them or paint them as scary, they are simply unsatisfied customers. It also means that you should not be so zealously attached to your product. Every businessman knows you don't get emotional. It's just business. Typically, the settler is applying different standards to others than

for himself. Palestinians are hopelessly violent, emotional and scary. Israelis are just rational businessmen. I often see businessmen in America throwing rocks at children on their way to school. Sure. Totally rational.

The settler also compared the situation to that of Native Americans in the US. As if I, as a beneficiary of American colonialism, would sympathize and collude with him. Some differences. First, the majority of atrocities committed in the US happened several hundred years ago. I was not a settler who pushed Native



Wikipedia

Americans off of their land, my ancestors were still in Europe when this was happening. Not that I didn't benefit indirectly, I did and still do, but I do not bear personal responsibility for the actions. This settler is living on someone else's land. *He took it. He did.*

Second, while I would not argue that similar atrocities were committed against Native Americans, I would argue that many of them are not still ongoing. Native Americans suffer from the same effects of institutionalized racism that African-Americans and other communities of color in America face. This racism is real, powerful, and harmful. But the fact remains that today Native Americans can leave their reservations whenever they like—they have freedom of movement. Though incarceration rates are far too high relative to their proportion of the population, we do have

The settler-bypass road from Gilo into the Etzion settlement bloc.

He returned to the theme he began with, namely that he doesn't want to live with anyone but Jews.

legal procedures and mechanisms for prohibiting torture by guards and policemen. We do not imprison children with adults, nor do children end up in military jails. We do not send our air force to bomb reservations, or poison their water and fields anymore. Our military does not target civilians on American soil. And while I do not often defend the US government, police, and military, I have to say that within the bounds of our own country, we are not as bad as Israel. Not that we are good. But we at least have the sense to know that discrimination is wrong. It is illegal. And people who do bad things are supposed to be punished. Does this always happen, no. Far too often, power is abused. But we do not legalize torture because it

happens. We do not legalize stealing because some people will steal. At least not yet. But even if we did, I would not support that.

Once I was apparently unable to mask my disgust or shock when he was telling me that all Palestinians teach their children to hate Jews. At that point he backtracked and spent a lot of time trying to convince me he was right and eventually said, "But I don't mean Christian Palestinians, I mean the Muslims."

He tried to play on my Christianity several times by saying that Palestinian Christians were not bad guys; it was the Muslims that were a problem. He intimated that I would be OK with this type of intolerance because it was so common at home I guess. *Those people* are clearly not to be trusted, but Christians are fine. Of course this is despite the fact that the Israeli occupation makes no such distinction and Palestinian Christians are targeted just as harshly by the regime as Muslims.

But even if this were not so, the nakedness of his prejudice was startling. I am from San Francisco, and I am not that old yet, so I am used to people having the sense to be ashamed of their racism. Not that it doesn't come out, but when confronted, most people that I know feel bad afterwards, not unabashed. He really did remind me of a Klan

member at that moment. Explaining why *those people* aren't really people and don't deserve the same respect as you and me.

Eventually he returned to the theme he began with, namely that he doesn't want to live with anyone but Jews. So the fact that other people have historic and meaningful ties to this land as well appears immaterial. He is an Israeli. They won a war. And God gave them the land. So might makes right. The fact that this Zionist philosophy of exclusivism is racist and antithetical to ideas of democracy seemed not to bother him.

Then he returned to the idea that he and I were the same and it was the Arabs that were the problem. "9/11, that was Muslims" he told me. That's when I knew it was time to leave. I think once you bring 9/11 into a discussion, it is a sign that you are out of rational arguments. It was such a bald-faced attempt at fear-mongering and racism I realized that I had nothing more to learn.

Apparently the lessons of Exodus and the Holocaust were lost on him. The Old Testament says, "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:21) And the lesson of the Holocaust is *Never Again*, not *Never again to us*. I do not accept that this settler and others like him should be allowed to continue to live on stolen land. I do not accept that there is something fundamentally different about the Palestinian people that means they are not entitled to basic human rights and the protection of international law. I do not accept that there is nothing we as Americans can do about this situation.

We must refuse to allow our government to continue to support this inhumanity in our name and with our money. We must educate other Americans about what is going on. And we must do this not because it is in our own interest, even though it is, but because it is the right thing to do. Doing the right thing is rarely easy. It means awkward conversations at work and at Thanksgiving dinner. It is our responsibility as Americans to act in solidarity with Palestinians by changing things here in the United States. This is the work. Yalla. ■

Kelly Joiner is an activist from Northern California working on issues affecting communities of color. In 2012 she spent the summer in the West Bank working with IMEMC news. She is currently working on research regarding Palestinian children in the Occupied Territories.

Israeli Environmental Protection of Palestinian Land

By Barb Weir, August 4, 2012

Uri Gnorant of the Israeli Bureau of Land Redemption was eager to see me. "I'm glad you're here," he said. "You reporters talk about how little we do for Palestinians. This is a chance to set the record straight. When it comes to environmental protection and conservation, no one could possibly do more than we do.

"Take water, for example. We have reduced Palestinian water consumption to less than a third of what it was in 1967. Nowhere in the world can boast such an accomplishment. Even the Israelis themselves cannot match it. Villages like Beit Furik and Beit Dajan, with a combined population of around 15,000 get by on only 12 tanker loads of water per day during the summer, and sometimes less, supplemented by some filthy ground water for their vegetable gardens. You can't do better than that.

"Or fire prevention. You remember the terrible Carmel forest fire that we had in 2010? You never see anything like that in Palestinian areas, and this is because we removed a lot of the trees as a preventive measure. Some people say that the Carmel fire was due to the dead non-native European trees that we planted to hide hundreds of Palestinian villages that we destroyed in 1948, and that Palestinian olive and other fruit trees don't have the same problem. Let me assure you that olive trees also burn, as our settlers have amply demonstrated. The solution is for them to be removed, which is the policy that we have put in place and are diligently pursuing.

"Our protection of the Palestinian marine environment in Gaza is also unmatched. Over the last twenty years, we have progressively put larger and larger areas under protection from fishing, so that now the area available for fishing is less than a fifth of what it used to be, and most of the fish are not in that area, anyway. We can assure you that there will be no overfishing in Palestinian waters!

"There are many other ways that we protect the environment that is exposed to Palestinian abuse. For example, Palestinian women have

gathered wild herbs like thyme and sesame for thousands of years on the hills and in the valleys of what used to be called Palestine. We have put a stop to that and made it illegal, so as to protect these plants from further exploitation.

"We also can't have grazing animals like



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sheep and goats eating up the natural herbs and grasses in the pastures. If Palestinians want fresh meat, let them buy their feed from Israeli merchants like nature intended, or get frozen meat from New Zealand, which we are happy to sell to the humanitarian organizations that keep Palestinians alive.

"As we know, however, human activity inevitably damages the environment in one way or another, no matter what policies we put in place. Our long term policy is therefore to eliminate as many of the Palestinian people as possible from as many places as possible that are under Israeli control, and also to expand the areas under Israeli control for the same reason.

"As you can see, our commitment to environmental protection of Palestinian land is unshakeable." ■

Palestinians line up for water rations..

Barb Weir is the pseudonym of a writer and human rights activist in Northern California.

Call for Volunteers

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) needs nonviolent resistance volunteers to stand with Palestinians against the theft and colonization of Palestinian land. You will witness and report human rights violations, participate in nonviolent demonstrations, resist home demolitions and land confiscations, accompany children and patients to school and hospital, remove roadblocks, or just share time with Palestinians, listen to them, and help ensure that their voices are heard. When you return to your community you will be better equipped to advocate for the freedom and self-determination of the Palestinian people.

More info: solidarity@ism-norcal.org, 510-236-4250, www.norcalism.org or www.palsolidarity.org ■



Speakers Available

ISM volunteers who have recently returned from Palestine are available to make presentations to high school and college campuses, churches, organizations and house parties.

For more information or to register: www.ism-norcal.org

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