



LIVE FROM *Palestine*

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Six Years Without Rachel—We Still Demand Justice

By ISM Gaza Strip, March 2009

Every March 16th we remember Rachel Corrie, a kind, insightful, talented person committed to the Palestinian plight and the courage of her convictions. We believe that before she is remembered on this anniversary of her death, Rachel would want the world to remember the 1,400 Palestinians killed in Israel's massive assault on the Gaza Strip. The situation is now even more desperate than when she was here. We still demand justice. We still demand that the world hold Israel responsible for the murder of Rachel and so many Palestinians. We also demand that the US hold responsible the Caterpillar corporation that provides the military bulldozers that killed Rachel and many Palestinians, and which have demolished thousands of Palestinian homes.

Due to Israel's blockade, today was the first time ISM activists commemorated the anniversary in Gaza itself. Some of us who volunteered in 2003 compared the situation then and now. The oppressive wall with Egypt has been cut down but the siege and blockade continue. From 2002 to 2005 over 3,000 Palestinian homes were bulldozed in Rafah. Now, in just 22 days, thousands more were destroyed throughout the entire Strip. 100,000 Palestinians have been left homeless.

On this poignant day, we joined five young Palestinian artists to create a mural on one of the few remaining sections of the Israeli-built wall with Egypt, whose creation demanded the destruction of vast swathes of residential neighborhoods, including the one Rachel died trying to safeguard. It is the wall from which an Israeli soldier shot fellow ISM activist Tom Hurdall in the head less than a month after Rachel was killed,



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and which was intended to imprison Palestinian people, who finally destroyed it.

As colorful symbols of defiance were painted on the wall, Israeli F-16 fighter jets flew over Rafah. Despite Israel's "unilateral ceasefire" they unilaterally bomb Rafah and other areas almost daily. International

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Rachel Corrie

Photo: courtesy of the Rachel Corrie Foundation

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journalists have left and the world thinks the war is over, but Palestinians are still killed and injured regularly. Fortunately, today no bombs were dropped, perhaps due to the “Palestin-

“Despite the pain, we have once again felt privileged to enter briefly into the lives of Rachel’s Palestinian friends in Gaza. We are moved by their resilience and heartened by their song, dance, and laughter amidst the tears.”

Maybe the soaring kites were seen by internationals protesting on the Egyptian side, against the refusal to allow them in. They

Despite the injuries, abductions, illegal deportations and denials of entry that we suffered, we are back. ISM is still here, and will continue to support Palestinian non-violent resistance

ian Air Force”—Palestinian children defiantly flying 14 kites in memory of the 1400 Palestinians killed recently. Another kite sent our love to Rachel.

Gaza has been a besieged prison for nearly two years now, locking in 1.5 million people. After the Free Gaza Movement voyages challenged the blockade by sea, then Viva Palestina convoy by land last week, Palestinian children symbolically broke the control of Gazan airspace today. A delegation from Code Pink also entered recently and celebrated International Women’s Day with the courageous women of Gaza on 8th March. Rachel’s parents, Cindy and Craig Corrie joined them, commenting,

included Jordanian parliamentarians and Greek engineers aiming to assist reconstruction. However, it is not enough. The international community must mobilize against the genocidal siege on Gaza.

Israeli forces shot another American ISM activist, Tristan Anderson, in the head three days ago in the West Bank village of Ni’lin. Tristan, our thoughts and prayers are with you. One day we will stand together with you at the destroyed wall of Ni’lin to commemorate the sacrifice of Ahmed Mousa (10), Yousef Amira (17), Arafat Rateb Khawaje (22) and Mohammed Khawaje (20), the four civilian martyrs of Ni’lin. Despite the murders of Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurdall, despite the attempted assassinations of Brian Avery and Tristan Anderson, despite the injuries, abductions, illegal deportations and denials of entry that we suffered, we are back. ISM is still here, and will continue to support Palestinian non-violent resistance.

Six years after the martyrdom of Rachel; three days after the shooting of Tristan; two months after Palestinians ousted Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip; 42 years after the occupation of West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip; 61 years after the Nakba; we still say “Free Palestine! End the occupation! Peace with justice and dignity!” As we remember Rachel we must never let the world forget the innocent Palestinian souls who perished without mercy. Their fate is already slipping from the collective memory of the international community, fading from the headlines of a fickle corporate media. It is time this manufactured catastrophe ends so that Rachel’s death and the deaths of countless Palestinians are not in vain. ■

Donations Needed

If you donated after receiving the ISM winter 2008 newsletter, we thank you very much. We covered our printing and mailing costs and more, and remain committed to sending you two newsletters per year for the indefinite future. However, our costs go far beyond the newsletter, so we hope that if you may be able to help again – especially if you were unable to do so last time.

How important is our work? There are lots of worthy appeals to help the victims of Israel’s violations of human rights. However, for every victim that is helped another is created. Human rights work is never as well funded as victim relief, and yet our work is to prevent the creation of victims who then need your relief dollars.

We subsidize ISM volunteers in Palestine and provide funding to the ISM-Palestine team for office space, housing for volunteers, communications equipment, legal support and other requirements. We also participate in national and local activities to educate the American public and support other Palestine solidarity groups.

Please use the donation envelope on page 4/5 to give as generously as you can. *Thank you.*

Heed Voices Calling for Justice for Palestinians

By Huwaida Arraf, April 2009

WE Palestinians are often asked where the Palestinian Gandhi is and urged to adopt nonviolent methods in our struggle for freedom from Israeli military rule. On April 17, an Israeli soldier killed my good friend Bassem Abu Rahme at a nonviolent demonstration against Israeli confiscation of Palestinian land. Bassem was one of many Palestinian Gandhis.

One month prior, at another demonstration against land confiscation, Israeli soldiers fired a tear-gas canister at the head of nonviolent American peace activist Tristan Anderson from California. Tristan underwent surgery to remove part of his frontal lobe and is still lying unconscious in an Israeli hospital. In 2003, the Israeli military plowed down American peace activist Rachel Corrie with a Caterpillar bulldozer as she tried to protect a civilian home from demolition in Gaza. Shortly thereafter, an Israeli sniper shot British peace activist Tom Hurndall as he rescued Palestinian children from Israeli gunfire. He lay in a coma for nine months before he died.

Despite the killing of these unarmed civilians and documented evidence of systematic human-rights abuses, the U.S. continues to supply Israel with approximately \$3 billion in military aid annually, allowing Israel to continue abusing Palestinians and preventing any meaningful resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The Israeli government orders the confiscation of Palestinian land for one of two main purposes: to build or expand illegal colonies or to construct the Wall that the International Court of Justice ruled illegal in 2004. In the case of Bassem's village of Bil'in, even the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the Israeli government to change the route of the Wall, though Israel has yet to comply. Consequently, Palestinian farmers cannot reach their crops and they are devastated economically. Israel's policy is intended to force Palestinians to give up and leave in order to survive.

When village residents gather weekly to protest, they use various creative methods of nonviolent resistance, including carrying mirrors up to the soldiers to show them "the face of occupation" or dressing as various politicians and wearing blindfolds to symbolize the world's blind eye to their struggle. The Israeli military meets them and their Israeli and international supporters with tear gas, grenades, and bullets.

Eyewitness accounts and a YouTube video

of Bassem's killing attest to the fact that Bassem was not engaged in any kind of violent action when a soldier decided to fire a high-velocity tear gas canister — designed to be shot in the air or from a great distance — directly at his chest, fatally wounding him.

In fact, just before he was shot, Bassem is heard calling to soldiers to stop shooting as a woman had been injured. Far too often, Israel tries to silence dissent by using disproportionate and sometimes lethal force against demonstrators.

In February, I led a delegation of American lawyers to the Gaza Strip to investigate Israel's conduct in its 22-day military offensive during which more than 1,400 Palestinians were killed and more than 5,300 injured, most of them civilians — a rate of more than 60 killed per day. We found disturbing evidence of willful killing of civilians, wanton damage to civilian property and deliberate blocking of humanitarian aid. These are violations of international law that may constitute war crimes. During the offensive, Israel attempted to avert international outrage by refusing to let foreign journalists enter Gaza.

The United Nations has appointed a team of experts, led by a renowned human-rights advocate — Richard Goldstone, a Jewish, South African judge — to investigate the conduct of both Israel and Hamas. Hamas has agreed to cooperate, but Israel has indicated an intention to block the investigation. Israel tries to silence the human-rights community by preventing access to the occupied territory and refusing to cooperate with U.N.-mandated inquiries.

Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman claimed recently, "Believe me, America accepts all our decisions." I do not believe, however, that the United States condones the killing of my friend Bassem. But if President Obama is serious about true peace in the Middle East, he must demonstrate that Lieberman is wrong, break the American silence, and heed the voices of those calling for justice. ■

This article originally appeared in the Seattle Times on April 25, 2009

Huwaida Arraf, J.D., specializes in international human rights and humanitarian law. In 2001 she co-founded the International Solidarity Movement.



Bassem Abu Rahme

Photo: activistills.org

If President Obama is serious about true peace in the Middle East, he must heed the voices of those calling for justice.

Interview With Free Gaza Movement Volunteers

The Editors, April 2009



ISM volunteers and the Gaza Local Initiative during the olive harvest in Beit Hanoun, Gaza Strip.

Photo: Donna Wallach

Darlene Wallach and Donna Wallach were on board the first voyage of the Free Gaza Movement (FGM) in August, 2008. They remained in the Gaza Strip until December 2008, and helped re-establish a long-term ISM group in the Gaza Strip. Both have returned to the Bay Area, where they continue their activism on behalf of the Palestinian people and other social justice causes. The NorCal ISM Support group recently recognized them with the first annual Rachel Corrie award.

—Editor

The Palestinians in the Gaza Strip need their human rights, and of course justice—they want our help to hold Israel accountable for the war crimes they commit.

Ed: You arrived in Gaza before the devastating Israeli attacks of January 2009. What was the humanitarian situation like in August, 2008?

Darlene: Israel's blockade of Gaza had been going on for 2 years. The importation of food, fuel, medicine, building supplies, parts for the water treatment system, even school supplies were all severely restricted. Only one in seven people who needed to leave Gaza for treatment had been allowed to. Over 322 people were known to have died due to lack of medical care in Gaza because of the blockade and occupation. This is collective punishment and against international law. The harshness of these tactics is consistent with the unofficial Israeli policy of putting the people of Gaza "on a diet" as

Advisor to the Prime Minister Dov Weisglass has put it.

Donna: I lived in Tel Aviv from 1991 to 1993, and I used to visit Gaza weekly. The situation in Gaza was much worse in 2008 than I had ever seen it in the 90's, although in some ways it was also more developed. There was practically no economic base left for the people to sustain themselves, and they couldn't grow and export their crops. High unemployment was very obvious, many shops were closed, and unfinished buildings were everywhere. By the middle of November electricity was only available about 6 hours a day, at best. On the other hand, the

spirit of the people was as wonderful as ever. I always found it amazing how little they complain, and how they would always welcome me into their homes and show lots of love.

Ed: The Palestinian community asked for international support on fishing boats. Why did they ask for this?

Darlene: Israel had been imposing an arbitrary policy of no fishing more than 6 miles from shore, even though the Oslo Accords permitted fishing up to 20 miles from shore. This is intended to prevent the people of Gaza from accessing the good fishing waters, and it has a huge impact on their food supply. In addition to the 6-mile limit, fishermen endure severe harassment even within the 6 mile limit. We witnessed Navy boats attacking fishing boats with water cannons, grenades thrown into the water, and firing of M16 rifles into the water close to the boats. These attacks are often much more deadly if the Israeli military knows there are no internationals on board the fishing boats.

Ed: How do the people of Gaza view the work of international volunteers such as ISM and the Free Gaza Movement (FGM)?

Donna: Everyone I met in Gaza knew about the Free Gaza Movement boats, and we were all treated very warmly. People know about Rachel Corrie and respect the

Continued on the next page

work that she and other internationals did in Gaza. I think it makes a huge impact on them that foreigners, especially Americans, care and come to show their support. They know that most of the bombs and other weapons being used against them are made in the U.S. and paid for by the U.S. government.

Ed: What should activists and people here do to support the work in Gaza?

Donna: I strongly recommend going to Gaza and being a witness to what is going on. Especially in the aftermath of January's attacks, it is important to keep challenging the blockade and showing solidarity with the Palestinians. People who aren't able to make the trip can also help by supporting FGM, ISM and other groups financially. Just as important, people should keep informed, and also pressure Congress and the media. We can't let them get away with ignoring Gaza.

Darlene: The Palestinians in the Gaza Strip need their human rights, and of course justice—they want our help to hold Israel accountable for the war crimes they commit. Please donate to and support the Free Gaza Movement. Stay informed! Tell everyone! ■

Darlene and Donna Wallach are active members of the NorCal ISM Support Group, and the Free Gaza Movement. Both had visited occupied Palestine previously as ISM volunteers.



Daughters of Lalia & Jabar, Gaza.

Photo: Donna Wallach

Tristan Anderson

Kate Raphael, April 2009

Oakland resident and ISM volunteer Tristan Anderson, 38, was critically injured on March 13 following the weekly protest against the Apartheid Wall outside the village of Ni'lin, near Ramallah. The demonstration was over and Tristan was standing with friends inside the village when he was hit in the forehead by a new type of high velocity, extended range teargas projectile. Soldiers then fired gas at the ambulance drivers coming to take him, and delayed the ambulance at the roadblock. He remains in the hospital near Tel Aviv. He has sustained three life-saving surgeries to his brain, and has lost part of his right frontal lobe. He is in and out of consciousness, and it is unclear to what extent he will recover. His partner Gaby Silverman, who was also at the demonstration, and his parents remain with him at the hospital.

The type of projectile that hit Tristan also killed nonviolent protester Bassem Abu-Rahme in the village of Bil'in on April 17 and has been responsible for serious injuries, including broken bones and damage to internal organs. When used in accordance with protocol, it is dangerous enough. However, eyewitnesses testify that the weapon is often fired improperly at close range and directly at civilians, in violation of proper use regula-

tions, as was the case with Tristan, Bassem and others. This weapon is too dangerous to be considered non-lethal.

Ni'lin has had one of the most sustained campaigns of nonviolent resistance to the Wall. Four unarmed villagers have been killed there in the last year, including 10-year-old Ahmed Mousa. Dozens have been injured.

Tristan grew up in Grass Valley, CA and went to UC Berkeley. He has spent most of his life doing social justice work, including in Latin America and Iraq. He was arrested in the tree-sit to protect old-growth redwoods on the UC Campus and helped organize the shutdown of San Francisco at the beginning of the Iraq war. Well-attended demonstrations in solidarity with Tristan and Palestine were held from San Francisco to London. Everyone who can is asked to donate to Tristan's future medical and living expenses. For info on how to donate, or for updates on his condition and solidarity actions, see justicefortristan.org or <http://www.norcalism.org/tristan.html>. ■

Kate Raphael, a member of Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism, spent 18 months in Palestine before being deported in 2005.



Tristan Anderson.

Photo: Oren Ziv / Activestills.org

Recommended Reading

Schlomo Bloom, May 2009

The history of Israel/Palestine is not terribly complex, nor does it take a PhD to come to definitive conclusions about the injustices that the Zionist movement and the state of Israel have wrought in the land of Palestine and against the Palestinian people. However, pro-Israeli groups and interests in the media and political worlds have created an air of hysteria and obfuscation about this uncomplicated subject.

Nevertheless, important details are available from an abundance of sources. Many important books as well as the growing presence on the web are crucial to shoring up one's knowledge while also growing in the pursuit of peace and justice. The following is by no means a comprehensive list of sources, just a few that I think are particularly good.

Websites

**www.palsolidarity.org/
(INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT)**

One of the best sites for eyewitness reports, and it has been upgraded recently. As someone who helped staff the media office in past years in Palestine, I take pride in the fact that it thrives to this day.

**www.palestineremembered.com/
(PALESTINE REMEMBERED)**

Whenever I need info on the Nakba (ethnic cleansing), I go here. The pictures, data, and stories are a great tool for academia and the wider community as well.

**<http://imeu.net/>
(INSTITUTE FOR MIDDLE EAST UNDERSTANDING)**

**<http://electronicintifada.net/new.shtml>
(ELECTRONIC INTIFADA)**

**www.palestinechronicle.com/
(PALESTINE CHRONICLE)**

The above are all great sites for commentary and news on current events in and relating to Palestine.

**<http://angryarab.blogspot.com/>
(ANGRY ARAB NEWS SERVICE)**

What is a day without the unswerving and entertaining observations of Asad Abu-kahlil? For information, inspiration, and always for a good laugh, I check out what the Angry Arab has to say.

**<http://www.zochrot.org/index.php?lang=english>
(ZOCHROT)**

If you plan to go to Israel, visit this site first and then take a trip with Zochrot while you are there. They tour the remains of hundreds of Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948, erect signs to attest their existence and promote knowledge of the Nakba in Jewish Israeli culture.

Books

**EDWARD SAID:
*The Question of Palestine***

This book was one of the first to tell the story of Israel from the perspective of Palestine. Until Said, many in the US and Europe had read the story of the victors, but not seen Zionism from the viewpoint of its victims.

**NUR MASALHA:
*The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem***

Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948

The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel

Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees

Nur Masalha's books on "transfer" in Zionist thinking are his best. Transfer is usually relegated to the 'right' wing of Zionism, but Masalha shows that it has always been firmly in the mainstream of Zionist thought.

BENNY MORRIS:

The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem

The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited

Israel's Border Wars, 1949–1956

Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim and Ilan Pappé are known as the “New Historians” of Israel. They brought credibility to what Palestinian historians had been had been documenting for years, partly because racism favored Israeli credentials and partly because Israeli archives opened the late 1980’s confirmed the reports of genocide and expulsion. That it took Israelis to make people believe what Palestinians had already documented is unfortunately not surprising.

Benny Morris has been a crucial source of information and facts about Israel’s early years, although the conclusions that he draws are racist and disgusting in their disparagement of Palestinians (see <http://is.gd/xVAn> for an online interview). That said, the three books listed are each worth reading simply for the wealth of Israeli declassified data they present.

AVI SHLAIM:

The Politics of Partition

The Iron Wall

These are two of Shlaim’s best books even though, for all his valuable political commentary, he is still a committed supporter of the 2-state solution and does not seriously question the basic racism and colonialism inherent in Zionism.

ILAN PAPPE:

Modern History of Palestine (2nd Edition)

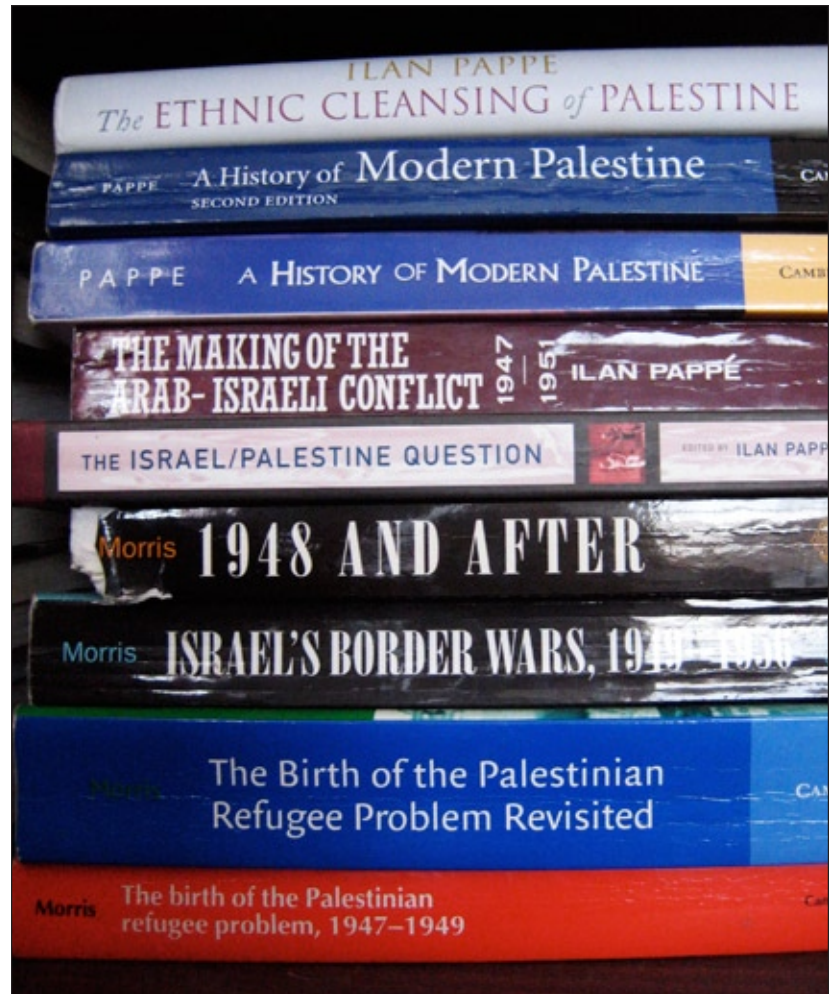
The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

Ilan Pappé is a true hero academically and politically. His writing and research cover the crimes of Israel and the nature of Zionism, as do his political conclusions and convictions; in fact, it has ostracized him in Israeli academic circles, forcing him to relocate to England. Both books are excellent, but *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* is a must read. He focuses on the 1948 Palestinian expulsion, which is the core event of the inherent injustice of the state of Israel.

GHADA KARMI:

Searching for Fatima

This book stands out as the personal story of a Palestinian refugee. We go from the streets of Jerusalem under siege by the Haganah and the Karmi family’s narrow escape to Ghada’s later political awakening and growth. As the author has points out, the Jewish Holocaust has been disseminated effectively through personal stories like those of Anne Frank. The stories of Fatima and Ghada similarly allow us to see the true meaning of the phrase ‘Never Again,’ with the important caveat that it applies to us all.



Other excellent authors include: Norman Finkelstein, Noam Chomsky, Maxine Rodinson, Joel Kovel, Rashid Khalidi, and Joe Sacco. ■

Schlomo Bloom is a founding member of Jews Against Genocide (J.A.G) and an ISM Volunteer

Call for Volunteers

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) needs office and field volunteers in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. You can help provide protection during non-violent 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, witness, and help ensure that their voices are heard. ■

SUMMER AGAINST APARTHEID

ISM SUMMER CAMPAIGN

JUNE 6–AUGUST 15, 2009

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



For more information or to register: www.palsolidarity.org

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