



# LIVE FROM Palestine

TESTIMONIES  
FROM THE  
NONVIOLENT  
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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## The Global March to Jerusalem

*“Some of the world’s most notorious terrorists, tyrants and radicals.”*

By Rick Williams, May 2012

### BRIEF HISTORY

The seed of the idea for GMJ initially came out of the Asia to Gaza Caravan of 2010-2011. In Spring 2011 a small group of Palestinians and Internationals reflected on that previous project and decided that a global march and rally focusing on Jerusalem could be a good way to draw the world’s attention to what is happening in Palestine. As they later said, “The Global March to Jerusalem aims to shed light on the issue of Jerusalem (The City of Peace) as the key to peace and war in the region and the world.”

Throughout Summer and Fall 2011 the idea was proposed to activist organizations and individuals around the world. In many cases the initial response was skepticism. As Ghada Karmi said, in an eloquent article written in the run-up to March 30, “I had not expected it [Global March to Jerusalem] would ever happen when I first heard about it.” But with encouragement from Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon, Jordan and elsewhere, the organizers persisted and during Fall 2011 support for the project slowly grew. Some key international and Palestinian leaders and activists voiced support for the project.

By the end of 2011 support for the project began to gel. Most of the major West Bank activist orga-



GMJ protest in New Zealand

nizations issued an important “Call from Palestinians in Palestine to join the GMJ”. Endorsements from famous international leaders such as Bishop Desmond Tutu and Mairead McGuire came in. The project developed a momentum and support poured in.

### THE ASIAN LAND CONVOY FOR PALESTINE

One of the signal accomplishments of this inaugural GMJ was the land convoy from Asia. The Indian contingent began their journey on the 9th of March from Raj Ghat in Delhi, which is the shrine of Mahatma Gandhi, the modern apostle of non-violence and peaceful resistance. It began on March 6 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Participants flew to Karachi, Pakistan and commenced the arduous land journey. For the next three weeks the convoy traveled by land, as contingents continued to join them along

Editor: Jeff Pekrul

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the way. Ultimately the convoy had the participation of 150 activists from 14 countries. They traveled thousands of miles in a remarkable demonstration of solidarity with the Palestinian people. They had to surmount many challenges along the way. The convoy could not get approval to travel by



www.gmj2j.com and www.facebook.com/GMJArb

GMJ protest in the West Bank

land through Iraq. The conflict in Syria prevented the convoy from traveling through that country to join the GMJ in Jordan. To reach Lebanon, they had to travel by ferry from southern Turkey. When they

## *There was a clear effort [by the Israeli government] to preemptively blame violence on the protestors*

finally succeeded in reaching port in Beirut there was yet another challenge: many convoy members were told they did not have authorized visas to go ashore! Finally, after pressure and influence was brought to bear, the entire convoy was able to disembark, celebrate and join the March 30 action.

### **ISRAELI REACTION**

Israeli government and media paid close attention to the Global March to Jerusalem. There was a clear effort to preemptively blame violence on the protestors. Even though GMJ has nonviolence as a core principle, Israeli officials continuously suggested that elements within the march were seeking violence. Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations (Ron Prosser) wrote an editorial for the Jerusalem Post claiming, “On Friday, some

*of the world’s most notorious terrorists, tyrants and radicals are organizing a mass attempt to violate Israel’s sovereignty, calling it a ‘Global March to Jerusalem’...Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood are bankrolling the event and taking part in preparations. To bring maximum media attention, these groups will likely induce the March’s participants to instigate violence.”*

In parallel with trying to preemptively blame violence on the nonviolent GMJ, Israeli officials issued warnings to neighboring countries and governments to not allow demonstrators to “approach” the border. Israeli media informed the world: “Israel reiterated it would treat anyone who approaches the border as an infiltrator, and will act against them decisively.”

Is there any other country that claims the right to attack people who merely approach its border?

While attributing violent motives to the protestors, Israeli media and government tried to portray themselves as nonviolent. With characteristicchutzpah, Mark Regev informed the world press, “Israel has no trouble with peaceful protest and respects the rights of people to demonstrate peacefully.”

Of course, the response of Israeli soldiers in all areas turned out to be very different. As the violence against peaceful demonstrators on March 30 unfolded, Amnesty International issued a statement condemning Israel’s “frequent and persistent use of excess force”.

### **ACTIONS ON MARCH 30**

Hundreds of thousands rallied around the world in support of Land Day and the Global March to Jerusalem.

■ At Qalandia Checkpoint in the OPT, thousands of demonstrators tried to march to the checkpoint but were stopped in advance. Clashes broke out, with the Israeli military using a barrage of stun grenades, tear gas, stink water and rubber bullets. Medics treated 249 protesters, with 20 transferred to hospital. Israeli soldiers also fired on those trying to help the wounded. Eurasia Review reported, “Israeli forces injured nine medics and damaged three ambulances.”

■ At Bethlehem, hundreds of marchers prayed, then surged past Palestinian Authority soldiers trying to block the road to the wall at Bethlehem Checkpoint. One brave protester scaled the wall with rope then staked a Palestinian flag at the top of the wall. He was later shot in the head with a teargas canister and taken to hospital emergency

ward. Overall there were 11 Bethlehem protesters injured and hospitalized. One North American GMJ participant, Don Bryant from Ohio, was among the injured.

■ In Gaza there was a rally of many thousands. Hamas police tried to keep the crowd from getting closer to the checkpoint and border but some protestors managed to get beyond the control point

man's horse were serious.”

■ In the Jordan Valley tens of thousands rallied within sight of Palestine. Tighe Barry of Code Pink wrote a good report published at the Common-Dreams website.

■ In southern Lebanon, thousands rallied at historic Beaufort Castle. Black, red and green balloons were released. Lebanese and Palestinian



and to approach the razor wire before Erez Terminal. Despite the fact that the protesters had no chance of surmounting the wall or massive terminal, Israeli soldiers fired live ammunition on the mostly youthful protesters. They killed 20 year old Mohamed Zaqout and injured 20 others, three of them severely.

■ Protests were held in Palestinian villages throughout the Occupied Territory as well as Galilee and Negev.

■ In occupied East Jerusalem near Damascus Gate, hundreds of demonstrators chanted and waved Palestinian flags. Police mounted on

leaders along with a leader from the Asian Convoy and a rabbi from the anti-Zionist Neturei Karta spoke to the crowd.

■ Around the world, on all continents, there were demonstrations in solidarity with the GMJ. 15,000 marched in Malaysia. As many as one hundred thousand marched in Morocco. The GMJ-NA website has a nice collection of photos from dozens of cities and countries.

### ISM PARTICIPATION

ISM members played a significant role in GMJ. Long-time Northern California ISM member Paul Larudee was part of the original group that developed the idea. Northern California ISM members Henry Norr and Deppen Weber have been instrumental in GMJ-North America. In the actions on March 30, many ISM members were actively involved. Among the activists:

■ Philip Schulz from Sweden was beaten and arrested at Qalandia.

■ Rosa Schiano was in Gaza, filming the march and showing youth returning bloodied from Erez Terminal.

## *Is there any other country which claims the right to attack people who merely approach their border?*

horses charged the crowd while other soldiers pepper-sprayed demonstrators in the face. “A Red Crescent supervisor in Jerusalem reported six injuries; two of them injured by a riot police-

■ Axel was at Kufr Qaddum and documented Israeli soldiers shooting directly at journalists.

### CHALLENGES AND HOPES

ISM activists know that the path is seldom smooth. Some days go easily with clear success;



www.gmj21.com and www.facebook.com/GMJArb

GMJ protest in Jerusalem

other days are frustrating; then there are days of setback.

Some of the early promises and commitments to the GMJ did not materialize. Why? This needs to be understood for the future.

The movement also had its political differences. One issue pertains to the “inclusivity” of the movement. The question arose regarding the participation of Israeli activists. A few in the organization resisted the inclusion of lead-

## ***GMJ has the potential to become a powerful new force in the struggle to expose what is going on, which is the precondition to ending it.***

ing Israeli activists in the Advisory Board. Others argued that this participation is vitally important for strategic reasons as well as principle. Ultimately a compromise was worked out whereby Israeli activists were welcomed and invited but not identified by Israeli nationality.

Another point of difference was regarding relations with individuals in the Iranian and Syrian governments. Some elements in the GMJ prefer

to not have relations while others believe that we can and should accept support from whomever as long as they support our principles of inclusivity and our goals. Internal Lebanese politics, compounded by the strife in Syria, undermined the final actions in that country after so much work had been done.

### WHAT WAS ACCOMPLISHED?

■ Despite the shortcomings, major goals were achieved: Media coverage and actions raised the issue of Jerusalem and ethnic cleansing.

■ The struggle for justice in Jerusalem and Palestine was shown to be a GLOBAL cause.

A Palestinian led international coalition with broad support across religious, ethnic and political boundaries was forged.

A living testament to GMJ 2012 is the music CD ‘Jerusalem for us All’. Nineteen songs, played by a spectacular array of committed musicians, span the spectrum from hip hop to jazz to folk. What unites it all is beauty, spirit and the desire for peace with justice. The MP3 album is available for download from [www.cdbaby.com](http://www.cdbaby.com), with proceeds supporting the project.

### GMJ 2013

GMJ 2012 showed the desire of Palestinian organizations and international activists to shine a bright light on the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem.

■ In 2013 GMJ plans to mobilize bigger and better actions. The goals will be to strengthen and expand the broad coalition

■ inspire bigger and more extensive actions internationally

■ have bigger and broader demonstrations within Palestine

■ get more media coverage in North America  
Discussions regarding specific plans are underway.

Israeli government and media response shows that we are touching a nerve they would rather hide. GMJ has the potential to become a powerful new force in the struggle to expose what is going on, which is the precondition to ending it. ■

*Rick Williams volunteered with GMJ-North America in the Bay Area. He went to Palestine with Palestine Summer Encounter in 2007. In the 1970's and 80's, he worked in support of anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggles in Southern Africa.*

# Israel opens fire on the Global March to Jerusalem in Qalandia and across Palestine

By Rana Hamadeh, March 31, 2012

Yesterday the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) opened fire on marchers as they headed towards Jerusalem marking Palestinian Land Day.

The Global March to Jerusalem was an initiative that took place across the world, with hundreds

truck' which propels torrents of a sewage-like liquid; rubber-coated steel bullets; sound bombs; high-velocity tear gas; and live ammunition.

When I arrived at the protest area, people were running away as tear gas was fired. I ran towards the soldiers, trying to get to the area behind them



Rana Hamadeh

of thousands of people involved. Marches were organized within Palestine, 1948 territories, and Gaza, as well as all surrounding countries and parts of Asia, North America, and Europe. Among other things, the march was calling for an end to the ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and Palestine at large, the right of return for all refugees, and the protection of Jerusalem's non-Jewish holy sites which are currently at risk. At least two hundred people were injured by the IOF in protests across Palestine, and one young man was killed in Gaza.

The Israeli military employed a series of weapons on the unarmed protesters, including the 'siren', which emits a deafening ringing; the 'skunk

where journalists were set up. The 'siren' was already put in use, getting unbearably louder as I approached, and the street already had a grim look only minutes into the march. People hid behind cement blocks and smoke filled the air. As soon as I reached the soldiers, the 'siren' became a quiet ringing. The technology used allows the IOF to propel the sound in a specific direction.

As I snapped photographs of the abundant Israeli soldiers in the area, and the murals covering the apartheid wall behind them, the 'skunk truck' moved forward and arbitrarily fired sewage water at the people, houses, and shops in its reach. Journalists ran for cover to save their cameras

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from damage. Others ran to save themselves from being marked with the foul smell for days to come. A mist carried back to where I stood and I almost choked. The scent is stronger and lingers longer than would even real sewage. One young woman marched up to the truck, and was drenched, but managed to place a Palestinian flag on it.

When they finished with the 'skunk', the soldiers got into jeeps and moved forward, firing tear gas at the same time. The protesters ran in a frenzy to find clear air and avoid arrest by the approaching army.

I ran for cover behind a building from the onslaught of tear gas grenades. A handful of others joined me and we thought we had reached

*One young woman marched up to the [skunk water] truck, and was drenched, but managed to place a Palestinian flag on it.*

safety when the smell of tear gas overcame us. We ran deeper behind the building, stepping through piles of garbage and trying to find relief from the gas filling our eyes and lungs. To both directions was gas. There were no options. Most of us fell to the ground choking and trying to stay conscious. Someone was desperately shouting the name of a blind girl who they had lost track of in the chaos. When I was able to open my eyes a slit, I saw that the soldiers had come to our hideout and were beckoning everyone out. In the chaos of the moment we didn't think about disobeying. As soon as we were out, a commander targeted one of the boys among us. It was an arbitrary choice. Another woman and I stood in between the soldiers and the young man, pointing out their discrimination in that whatever he had done, we had also done. We attempted to de-arrest but soldiers surrounded us and aggressively took the young man away, still choking on tear gas.

Across the street I found a group of soldiers banging on the door of an apartment building, trying to break it open. Faces of women and children looked down at them from the windows above. They broke the door's window and continued to hammer the door until it was bent out of shape and able to be opened.

When they finally got the door open, a group

of soldiers stamped into the building and up the stairs. The last few walked backwards, with their guns pointed at us, comically as if myself and a few other journalists would attack. Other soldiers stayed at the door, guarding it. The group of soldiers made their way through the building then emerged on the roof from where they would shoot rubber-coated steel bullets at a wider range of people.

I grew frustrated of standing among the soldiers with the other journalists so amidst gun fire I ran back towards the protesters. The scene was much grimmer from this perspective. Every few minutes people would shout for an ambulance and the wounded would be carried away.

As time passed, the shooting of rubber-coated bullets seemed to escalate and people were no longer seen in the center of the street, but rather pressed against buildings and behind walls.

It was draining to continue to duck at the sound of gunfire and watch as the ambulance workers crowded around a person, so eventually I asked a dozen people to come walk up to the soldiers with me. Many agreed so we stepped out into the street, arms and flags in the air and began to walk. The army continued to fire. I looked behind me and only one person was left walking with me. "Don't worry about it, Rana," he reassured me, "keep going."

We stayed motivated and it was liberating to walk unabashedly towards the Israeli soldiers, dressed in military armor and carrying their range of weapons. At the sound of gun fire, we turned our heads away so that at least if injured, our eyes would be protected. We didn't flinch as soldiers fired tear gas over our heads.

A handful of others were caught up as we approached the soldiers. The idea was to stand in front of them and prevent them from firing at the protesters behind us. We were chanting slogans like, "no justice-no peace" and "we are peaceful-what are you?" At first I didn't see many journalists and the soldiers got aggressive quickly. An Israeli soldier grabbed the Palestinian flag from my hands and threw it on the ground. Another girl and I tried desperately to reach it but we were hit and shoved away.

We linked arms and formed a chain. When the Israeli military tried to move to the side, we moved with them. They attacked the group, clearly trying to break us up and make arrests. Soldiers kicked and beat the group. When one young woman put her arms in the air and shouted that

she was unarmed, a soldier picked up a rock and smashed her hand with it. The young man to my left was dragged away and I felt myself taken in a headlock and pushed to the ground. Bodies and feet pressed on me and I focused only on keeping my head from hitting the pavement as chaos ensued around me. I felt people pulling, pushing, and hitting me. When I could lift my head to see, the same friend who had initially marched with me was holding on to me, and I am certain saved me from arrest.

I learned later that the other activists had been similarly attacked, but had managed to prevent any other arrests. We stood there stunned, injured, and exhausted.

We continued to chant as we backed away and returned to the rest of the protesters. Only a few meters away they began to shoot again and we saw more injuries carried into ambulances. Throughout the day I witnessed several people bleeding from injuries by rubber-coated bullets, but refusing to take up space in the ambulances.

Later, after many had left and the protesters were few, we were standing against a wall and turning our heads at the sound of gunfire. Suddenly, a rubber-coated bullet hit a young man standing beside us in the face. His expression was frozen as if he had lost consciousness with his eyes still open. We shouted for an ambulance and he was carried away.

That was our final straw and we decided to head home, having been at the protest for about six hours. Clashes continued until at least 10pm when my friend called me to say he was finally leaving, and completely drenched in 'skunk water'.

These experiences are so common in the

Palestinian struggle that one easily becomes normalized to them in order to cope. As activists, this is something we are fighting, and nonetheless

we are all deeply affected by these experiences whether we can still find the passion to express it or not. Understand only that this was not a unique day. This is a regular response to the peaceful protesting which occurs at least weekly across Palestine. A young man being arbitrarily chosen for arrest is something every family has experienced. The IOF breaking down a door in order to use the roof of as a military base is a common practice. Breaking the windows of an ambulance with gun fire, targeting journalists, firing at homes and shops, can all be witnessed in a trip to Palestine. ■



Rana Hamadeh

*Rana Nazzal Hamadeh is a Palestinian-Canadian photographer, writer, and activist. She travels between Canada and the occupied West Bank working with direct-action activism groups and was one of the nine Canadian delegates sent to the Middle East by the Global March to Jerusalem-North America.*

## Donations Needed

For years, ISM—Northern California has rented only a supply closet at the Grassroots House, 2022 Blake Street in Berkeley, California, with right of access to the common area for meetings and other activities. Now, at long last, we are able to rent office space, as well. The cost of the two spaces together is a

mere \$190/mo. At the present time, however, we are coming up short.

Renting this office is a dream come true that enables us to expand our activities and capabilities, but means that we have an additional monthly expense. Will you help? We especially need you to commit to a regular monthly amount for

this fixed expense. You can instruct your bank accordingly or select the monthly donation option at our website, [www.ism-norcal/contribute.html](http://www.ism-norcal/contribute.html).

We are also in need of office furnishings, as well as volunteers to contribute time at the new office. Call or write us to help. *Thank you.* ■

## Call for Volunteers

**T**he 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@norcalism.org](mailto:solidarity@norcalism.org), 510-236-4250, [www.norcalism.org](http://www.norcalism.org) or [www.palsolidarity.org](http://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](http://www.ism-norcal.org)*

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