



LIVE FROM *Palestine*

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Land Day is Commemorated in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank

By Palestinian Grassroots Anti-apartheid Wall Campaign, April 2013



www.stophthewall.org

Editor: Jeff Pekarul

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Various events were held throughout the Occupied Territories in the West Bank to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the glorious Land Day. Stop the Wall implemented activities in lands which are threatened by confiscation and which are subject to continuous attacks by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF).

In Nablus, the grassroots campaign organized a central activity on land threatened by confiscation near the Shavei Shomron settlement, which was erected on the land of the villages of Sabastia, Amuriyah, Burka and Deir Sharaf, northeast of Nablus. These villages are continuously subjected to settler attacks on farmers and land is often contaminated with sewage. Hundreds of people from Sebastia and nearby villages marched to

this area before they were besieged by the large forces of the Israeli army and dispersed by force. Dozens of people were injured and nearly suffocated as soldiers let off a large number of gas canisters, and one citizen was wounded in the hand by a rubber bullet. Some young demonstrators were also involved in a fight with Israeli soldiers, and two young men were detained until the other demonstrators were able to liberate them.

In the Ya'bud area west of Jenin, the national movement and Stop the Wall (STW) organized a march to the wall and confiscated lands to support the people on Land Day and in solidarity with the prisoners on hunger strike. The march started from the village of Umm Dar and Al-Khuljan "Village Council Al Rayyan", and went along the wall of annexation to the villages. The people

raised Palestinian flags, images of prisoners on hunger strike, placards and banners condemning the wall and settlement policy. Dozens of olive trees were also planted in areas close to the apartheid wall (which constitutes more than ten thousand acres of village land) with the participation of Anin village council, STW and village organizations.

In Salfit, STW implemented a voluntary activity to plant trees in the villages of Bruqin and Wade Qana, adjacent to the village land confiscated for the benefit of the Ariel settlement. However, they were prevented from reaching this land where the tree planting was scheduled by the occupation army. The village of Bruqin, in the Salfit district, has been turned into a waste dump for the settlements Burkan and Ariel, which are linked by a sewage network and dump waste water into the village lands.

In Bethlehem, the IOF suppressed a demonstration by dozens of Palestinians at the checkpoint located in the north of the city by firing tear gas and sound bombs to disperse the demonstrators. Similarly in Hebron, the occupation forces suppressed a demonstration to demand that the road between Hebron and the southern cities and towns be re-opened.

On March 29, the IOF used tear gas and water cannons to suppress the weekly demonstration in Hebron which demands freedom of movement and the opening of the street connecting the city and the towns of Samu', Adahriya and Fawwar refugee camp which has been closed by Israeli occupation for the last 12 years.

Dozens of Palestinian militants from different sites in Hebron and a number of international activists have performed Friday prayers and marched near the iron gate that closes off the main road leading to the towns south of Hebron in the area near the settlement of Haggai, to south of the city. The army began firing tear gas among protesters in case they approached the gate that blocks off the road and dozens of soldiers and border guards gathered to spray the protesters with stinking water.

The coordinator of STW in Hebron, Yusef Tmeyza said: "We declare that today marks Land Day and every day we stick to our land and our right to live in freedom and dignity. The repressive policies for dealing with aggressive occupation will not deter us nor will the settler's aims to close the streets, confiscate our land and dump their waste water on our farmland."

Izhak Al-Absi, an activist of the National Committee to Raise Barriers, said: "Protesters carried Palestinian flags and banners written in Arabic and English that declare our commitment to our land and condemn the closures. They chanted slogans about ending the occupation and the closure."

The demonstrators announced they will continue their activities in the region every week until the road, which has been closed for about 12 years, is re-opened. This road closure has forced about 150,000 residents of the area south of Hebron to travel at least an extra 12 miles to reach their destinations inside the city.

In the same vein, on March 28th, the STW participated in events on the ground in Hebron. Dozens of activists planted trees and cleaned the cemetery on Shuhada Street, which was closed by the Israeli occupation after the massacre of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in 1994. Yusef Tmeyza said they will continue to organize events and increase efforts to resist the occupation and its expansionist policies.

In the village of Aqaba, Tubas district, STW organized an activity to revive the Land Day with the participation of tens of Palestinian youths. The head of the village council, Haj Sami Sadiq, received a solidarity delegation and explained to them the suffering of the village and the scale of the challenges and legal struggle faced by the residents to stop the ongoing Israeli attacks on the ground and the rights in this region.

Aqaba is considered a distinctive and successful model of Popular Resistance, especially after this tender submitted by the Haj Sami Sadiq, and although it has been hindered, this village has been able to grow and develop in its struggle against the Occupation. The village now contains a school and kindergarten, a mosque, a factory for packaging herbs, a feminist foundation, a study centre, a residence for foreigners and a charity concerned with the affairs of displaced people.

After a dialogue with the President of the village council and a visit to the village institutions, the young people from the delegation planted 37 olive seedlings to commemorate the 37th anniversary of the Land Day. The seedlings were a donation from the Agricultural Relief Society. Furthermore, they also put up posters to remember the martyrs who were killed in 1976 in occupied Palestine (1948 borders). ■

Life Near the Buffer Zone

By Itung, April 23, 2013

As soon as the most recent 8-day war began in November 2012, the cry for an international presence in the Gaza Strip rang out loud and clear. There was no way of knowing if this terror would be a repeat (or worse) of Operation Cast Lead; there was a need, as before, for people of all nationalities to witness what was happening on the ground.

A few days after the November 21st ceasefire, I arrived in Egypt and met with a large group of internationals coming from all corners of the world. CODEPINK was leading the delegation and I was able to join them on the journey to the Gaza Strip.

My first days in Gaza were filled with sorrow. In the Juhor ad-Dik area, near the border with Israel, bombs had flattened many homes. While visiting there I heard one of many heartbreaking stories. Om Mahmudal said she was walking down one of the village paths when a fighter jet appeared and targeted a civilian home near her. She and a group of women ran as fast as they could away from the house, but it all happened too quickly and many pieces of shrapnel lodged into her side. She said the steady circling of drones and F16s overhead keeps her in a constant state of fear, wondering when they will attack again.

"I seek and hope only for peace because we are frightened when our sons leave for work."

Om Mahmudal, 40, is a woman who speaks for many of the mothers of Gaza when she says the constant fear tactics used against the entirety of Gaza are causing major mental and psychological problems. Almost every single day since the ceasefire agreement between Gaza and Israel was signed, civilians in Gaza have been shot at.

So, why was the house near Om Mahmudal's home bombed, there in the small farming community of Juhor ad-Dik? Water. The home that was hit was one of the few in the area with a water well, which was shared by the community. Wells have been systematically targeted over the years in Gaza because without access to drinking water, families will suffer in the long



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term—months and years after the strike.

Right before we were visiting Om Mahmudal's home, I walked up to a wire cage that was bombed. Ahmed Hasan Bedui, the owner of the enclosure, told me it was a chicken coop that held all of the family's poultry, which are now all dead. Why would Israel bomb a chicken coop? Ahmed shrugged when we asked him why it was targeted. He is one of the thousands of unlucky farmers living or owning land near and in the buffer zone and because of this, he

Destroyed home and well

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Children Terrorized, Arrested, and Held in Military Prison in Israel

By Kelly Joiner, October 2012

The Israeli government must honor its obligations under international law and end the continued arrest, detention and torture of Palestinian children. According to reports by the *Save the Children Foundation*, the *East Jerusalem YMCA Rehabilitation Program*, and *Defense for Children International* (2012) the Israeli military arrests 700 Palestinian children every year. There are

are arrested. Soldiers arrive in the middle of the night and children are woken from their beds, marched outside, and forced to watch as their homes are ransacked. They are often blindfolded and handcuffed and forced to stand or kneel for hours with no explanation and without charges being explained to them (Cook, Hanieh & Kay, 2004). Even if they are not arrested at this point,

The mass arrest of Palestinian civilians, especially children, by the Israeli military is a tactic employed as collective punishment of the civilian population for resistance to the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank.

currently an estimated 280 Palestinian children in Israeli military prisons. Since the year 2000, the (AIC) estimates that about 8000 children have been arrested in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), to which Israel is a signatory. The mass arrest of Palestinian civilians, especially children, by the Israeli military is a tactic employed as collective punishment of the civilian population for resistance to the Israeli military occupation of the West Bank. This practice has been condemned by the United Nations, and the international community as a violation of international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949).

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that children under the age of eighteen have the right to special protection due to their age and special care should be taken to safeguard their well-being. Israeli soldiers have often used Palestinian children as human shields, have shot live ammunition into crowds where children were present, have used deadly force to capture and arrest children who were throwing stones, and have abused, tortured and murdered children in their custody (Cook, Hanieh & Kay, 2004). There is an utter disregard for the welfare of Palestinian children that is even evident in the manner in which they

the trauma to the child and his or her siblings is incalculable and inexcusable.

Children who are arrested are defined as anyone under the age of 18, but many children in Israeli prisons are as young as 12 years old and Israel has even arrested children as young as 9. They are sometimes arrested for throwing stones, but a reason for arrest is not always given and children are simply kidnapped from their homes, often in the middle of the night and taken to an undisclosed location.

The report also states that 90% of these children are victims of torture, ill-treatment, pressure and bargaining. Children are treated as "ticking bombs" which strips them of their immunity from torture by the Israeli prison system and bypasses International law. The United Nations Convention Against Torture (1984) states that the right to be free from torture is a non-derogable right meaning that it cannot be taken away, even in times of emergency. Additionally, the CRC states that it is never permissible to torture a child for any reason in any circumstance. Israel is a signatory to both conventions.

The report goes on to state that upwards of 90% of children imprisoned by Israel suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This condition is most commonly experienced by soldiers

serving in wartime, or victims of violent crimes.

Dr Mahmoud Sahwil, head of the Center for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, noted that one of the purposes of the occupation was to destroy the Palestinian population by denying children their right to live in dignity.

Children's rights groups, including and note that there are several reasons for the arrest and detention of children. Often the intention is to intimidate adults into submitting to the occupation or leaving the area, as in the mass arrests of children in East Jerusalem. There it was hoped that adults would be so frightened for their children's safety, that they would simply abandon their homes and leave the area to illegal Israeli settlers.

Children who are arrested are often kept from contact with parents, family, and legal representation. Should charges eventually be filed, the proceedings in court are conducted entirely in Hebrew, and translators are not provided, so children and their families often do not even understand what they are being charged with.

While I was in Palestine this summer, 25 children were arrested, and taken to military prisons. These children are often co-opted by the Israeli military through threats of intimidation against their families. It is not difficult to persuade 12-year-olds who are forced to watch as the Israeli military beats their fathers and ransacks their homes that if they don't spy on friends and family, their lives will be in danger. This practice of turning children against their own parents should shock the conscience.

I am still mystified by the entire experience. Mystified because I don't understand how anyone can justify the destruction of another people like this. I don't understand how anyone can rationalize treating children like animals. And I don't understand how people who have suffered this same kind of treatment can then do this to others. I just don't. I know this is common in history. The oppressed becomes the oppressor. The abused becomes the abuser. I know it happens, but I cannot really understand it. It is one thing to be so damaged that you lash out in fear and hatred in moments of passion. It is something else to coldly plan the destruction of another. To want it and wish for it and rationalize it to others.

How can Israelis be simultaneously proud of the Warsaw ghetto uprisings and call Palestinian children who throw rocks at tanks terrorists? They are the same thing. Both are examples of

ordinary people performing acts of heroism in the face of oppression and tyranny.

The scale of death of the holocaust was much more massive, to be sure, but unchecked, I am not certain that similar numbers might not be reached in this case. Over 1400 Palestinian civilians were killed in Gaza during the Israeli assault in 2008 and 2009; 400 of those were children. And Israelis are apparently fine with that since there have

been no mass protests in response to these atrocities. There are currently more Palestinians living in exile outside of Palestine as refugees than remain within the country. Seven million people are not allowed ever to come home. How can Israelis remember the boatloads of Jewish refugees refused in ports around the world and not empathize with the Palestinians? The hypocrisy is staggering.

In July, a group of British lawyers and Members of Parliament issued the results of a fact-finding mission to the occupied Palestinian territories in 2011. The report entitled, "Children in Military Custody" quotes an Israeli military prosecutor



Ahmedbasha3.blogspot.com

How can Israelis be simultaneously proud of the Warsaw ghetto uprisings and call Palestinian children who throw rocks at tanks terrorists?

saying, "every Palestinian child is a potential terrorist." This statement speaks volumes about the mentality of the Israeli military. These are no longer children who need protection, but non-humans undeserving of even basic rights.

As Americans whose government and tax dol-



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lars support this regime, we have a responsibility to protect Palestinian children. We cannot allow these abuses to continue when perpetrated against the most vulnerable members of our human family. These are not potential terrorists, whatever their actions. They are children. .

This is Islamophobia and racism in its purest form. Describing a child as a terrorist is beyond disgusting. It is reminiscent of the Klan members who celebrated the deaths of the four innocent African-American girls killed in the bombing of a Birmingham church in 1963. And make no mistake; that is exactly what is going on in Palestine. There is a reason that Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Bishop Desmond Tutu, and Alice Walker all support the Palestinian cause. It is because they are familiar with oppression and recognize it when they see it and are unafraid to name it. ■

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.

A sample of their words on the topic of Palestine:

“And the unfairness of it is so much like the South. It’s so much like the South of, you know, I don’t know, 50 years ago, really, and actually more brutal, because in Palestine so many more people are wounded, shot, killed, imprisoned. You know, there are thousands of Palestinians in prison virtually for no reason.”

—Alice Walker, 2012

“When the Palestinians are free, our struggle will be complete.”

—Nelson Mandela, 1994

“Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French.”

—Mahatma Gandhi, 1938

I am asking Americans to support the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel. I further ask that you speak about what you know about the injustice of the occupation and BDS to three people who are not already familiar with the situation. Raising consciousness is necessary to build a movement.

To that end, the following is a quote from a letter from Bishop Desmond Tutu to one of the student leaders of a BDS campaign at UC Berkeley in 2010:

“I have been to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and I have witnessed the racially segregated roads and housing that reminded me so much of the conditions we experienced in South Africa under the racist system of Apartheid. I have witnessed the humiliation of Palestinian men, women, and children made to wait hours at Israeli military checkpoints routinely when trying to make the most basic of trips to visit relatives or attend school or college, and this humiliation is familiar to me and the many black South Africans who were corralled and regularly insulted by the security forces of the Apartheid government.

In South Africa, we could not have achieved our freedom and just peace without the help of people around the world, who through the use of non-violent means, such as boycotts and divestment, encouraged their governments and other corporate actors to reverse decades-long support for the Apartheid regime.”

—Bishop Desmond Tutu, 2010

Life Near the Buffer Zone, continued from page 3

is regularly monitored. The Israel military has hundreds of surveillance balloons that provide a 24-hour feed of all activity in the buffer zone. Not only that, but Israel has also built hundreds of machine-operated watchtowers to monitor the border. Perhaps the balloons and watchtowers had identified Ahmed's chickens as members

I seek and hope only for peace because we are frightened when our sons leave for work

of a terrorist group. Or perhaps the Israeli fighter jets were aiming to destroy Ahmed's livelihood.

Ahmed holds the title to 50 dunams (there are approximately 1,000 square meters of land in one dunam) in the community, but he only has access to about 30—if he enters the remaining 20 dunams to farm, he will be shot at. Ahmed must endure threats and surveillance on a daily basis.

As their every movement is watched, and their livelihoods destroyed, Om Mahmudal and



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Ahmed Hasan Bedui will keep on living the best they can near the buffer zone.

In the meantime, international presence in the buffer zone is essential to document and share with the rest of the world how unarmed civilians are mistreated daily when they are shot at while simply trying to farm. ■

Om Mahmuda, lying with shrapnel injuries

Itung is an activist for human rights across the globe, currently residing in the Bay Area.

Call to action—Join the ISM in 2013



Prior to ISM's foundation in 2001, live ammunition was the most commonly used weapon to quell Palestinian demonstrations, resulting in huge casualties.

Since its foundation, ISM has seen live ammunition become far less common over time and the Israeli Army now utilize tear gas, sound bombs, and rubber coated steal bullets, more often as alternative crowd dispersion techniques. This is largely due to the presence of international and Israeli activists at demonstrations, something ISM has been central to.

In a time of an increased need for international presence in Gaza and what looks to be a upsurge of violence in the West Bank, we call on international activists to join the ISM on the streets of Palestine. ■

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.ism-norcal.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/

NORCAL ISM Support Group

405 Vista Heights Rd.
El Cerrito, CA 94530

www.ism-norcal.org
solidarity@ism-norcal.org
510-236-4250

