



LIVE FROM Palestine

TESTIMONIES FROM THE NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Children Under Occupation

By Saeeda al-Rashid, October 2013

The time has come for systemic change and we are responsible for helping to bring that change about through our actions.

Saeeda al-Rashid

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Sixteen-year-old Nethel shows me through the rubble of his home, completely trashed by the military while they arrested his father without cause. He is cool and composed as he shows me the furniture they broke but I can hear the sadness in his voice...

Children selling corn in the street are interrupted by an armed settler, who spills their belongings out in the street, pushes them and threatens to take their lives...Two children, about eight years old, are arrested at night for allegedly throwing stones. They are surrounded by heavily armed soldiers, and no family members are contacted...

A four-year-old is struck in the face by a soldier as he walks in front of his home. Soldiers are raiding his entire village, which is threatened

Five-year-old Wadia and his father are detained by occupation soldiers claiming Wadia threw a stone at a soldier.

with an illegal mass demolition...

My neighbor's teenage son lies unconscious on the ground surrounded by angry settlers who jumped him. ISM activists form a buffer zone around the family and try to comfort his crying younger sister...

Ahmed, age 13, is snatched from the Palestinian-controlled market area and accused of throwing a tomato. His mother storms up to the military base and demands with a loud voice that they must release her son.

One summer living in occupied Hebron (known as Khalil in Arabic), the industrial capital of the West Bank, exploded in my view as



Saeeda al-Rashid

A home where numerous children live has been ransacked and trashed by the military.

my companions and I witnessed almost daily incidents of harassment, intimidation and violence, such as those outlined above, committed against children and minors. The perpetrators were the Israeli occupation soldiers, but also at times the colonizers of Hebron themselves, notorious for their puritanical fervor and unwavering belief that God had endowed them with the right to all the land at all costs.

In the West Bank parents have reason to worry about their children if they are late coming home. UNICEF reports that 700 Palestinian children aged 12 to 17 are arrested, interrogated and detained by the Israeli army, police and security agents each year. This is an average of two children each day and even the Israeli law

prohibiting arrest of children under 12 is trampled on. Palestine's most vulnerable population – its children living in the occupied territories – live in a hostile and unsafe environment on a day by day basis and many suffer from trauma as a result.

Most of the children arrested this summer were accused of throwing stones, but in the entire two months I spent in Hebron not once did I see a minor actually throwing a stone at a soldier or settler in Hebron. Even if they had, under UN Resolution 2659, "[The United Nations General Assembly] affirms the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples under colonial and alien domination recognized as being entitled to the right of self-determination to restore to themselves that right by any means at their disposal." Further, since the year 1990 the State of Israel has been signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which explicitly forbids arbitrary arrests, forbids states party from separating children from their parents unless it is necessary for their well-being, and mandates that states party do all in their power to protect children from abuse. The reality of the Israeli occupation is that while Israeli settler children can expect all the rights outlined by the United Nations to be protected, Palestinian children have no legal recourse.

Activists in the International Solidarity Movement, along with a number of other human rights organizations, intervene in and document episodes of violence to the best of their ability but the daily humiliation and abuses of occupation continue. The time has

come for systemic change and we are responsible for helping to bring that change about through our actions.

Boycott. Divestment. Sanctions. ■

Saeeda al-Rashid is a California student activist and ISM member who spent the summer working with ISM in Palestine. She can be reached by email at luvli_bonez@aol.com (or through ISM Northern California) for a presentation about the human rights situation in Palestine, her experiences and how to support the Palestinian liberation movement here in the US.



Carmen, Youth Against Settlements

A Tacit Admission

Israel is Ethnically Cleansing Palestinians

By Paul Larudee and Beth Daoud, October 2013

On April 8, 2009, ten billboards went up in the Albuquerque area saying “Tell Congress: Stop Killing Children. No More Military Aid to Israel.” On April 28, Lamar Advertising, with whom the ads had been placed by the Coalition to stop \$30 Billion, tore down the ads due to pressure, presumably from other clients with larger accounts.

In June, 2012, twenty-three billboards went up in the Los Angeles area, also calling for an end to US aid to Israel. One week later, the billboard company, CBS Outdoor, also took down the ads.

We have come a long way since then. Ads that are critical of giving billions of US tax dollars to Israel, of Israeli human rights violations and of the creation of the Jewish state at Palestinian expense have appeared in Detroit, Seattle, New York, San Francisco, Sacramento, Albuquerque, and other locations.

In Denver, another free speech struggle has achieved its objective. A partnership of NoTaxDollarsToIsrael.com and ColoradoBDSCampaign.com initially failed twice to get approval for a billboard. First, CBS Outdoor placed the restriction that the ad must not use the words Jew and Israel, so the coalition offered the wording “Want peace? Stop ethnic cleansing in Palestine.” CBS Outdoor rejected it without explanation.

The groups then tried Lamar Advertising, with

the same result. Finally, they borrowed a technique tried and tested by an anti-Muslim group, the Freedom Defense Institute. FDI chose public transit advertising space to place anti-Muslim ads in New York and San Francisco. After initial rejection in New York, FDI’s Pamela Geller sued and won a court order to permit her ads, based on the fact that the ad space was publicly owned and therefore subject to constitutional free speech principles. While the use of privately owned ad space is largely at the discretion of the owner, publicly owned space is not, and must



Colorado BDS Campaign

conform to First Amendment principles. The court also decided that in the absence of clear evidence that the ad used hate speech, it could also not be restricted by such criteria.

The Denver groups pursued the same strategy. They resubmitted the ad to Lamar, but this

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International Solidarity in the Refugee Camps of Lebanon

By Amith Gupta, September 2013

In July 2013, I embarked on a month-long trip to Lebanon, where I joined the Learning for the Empowerment and Advancement of Palestinians (LEAP) Program. LEAP, a US-based educational empowerment Program for Palestinian refugee youth in Lebanon, is coordinated in partnership with Bbeit Atfal Assumoud or BAS (“House of the Children of Steadfast-

ness”) organization, a Lebanese and Palestinian NGO based in the Palestinian refugee camps of Lebanon. LEAP is a volunteer-run Program dedicated to the right to education and refugee rights for Palestinians in Lebanon. As a volunteer, I joined several dozen foreign volunteers to teach English to Palestinian youths in the camps. Although the trip was “humanitarian,” rather than

Upon arrival, our orientation entailed testimonies from survivors of the Nakba, and the expectation that all volunteers will pursue “individual projects” upon their return to their home countries to promote Palestinian refugee rights.

During our first days, we visited the Lebanon-Palestine border, which is largely separated by a tall cement wall much like the Israeli apartheid wall. Riddled with graffiti in English and Arabic, the writing of the people was a heart-wrenching expression of remorse over the separation of loved ones. Many of the Palestinian volunteers from BAS were able to point out their historic villages, exposing the absurdity of Israel’s racist refusal to entertain the right of the refugees to return. Despite being literally thirty minutes away from their homeland, our friends and co-workers were expected to stay in Lebanon, where they were contained in camps for now 65 years and over four generations.

During our day-to-day work, we taught teenagers and pre-teens, who were either Palestinians in Lebanon, Palestinians from Syria, or Syrians who were not of Palestinian heritage. Some classes also included Libyan refugees. From students who were new to English to advanced

While refugee rights are often brushed aside in the West, LEAP puts refugees front and center.

“political,” it quickly became clear that the lack of demonstration did not signify a lack of solidarity.

While refugee rights are often brushed aside in the West, LEAP puts refugees front and center. Before our arrival, all volunteers were expected to familiarize themselves with the situation of the refugee community – from their expulsion from historic Palestine to the discrimination and subjugation they have suffered in Lebanon.

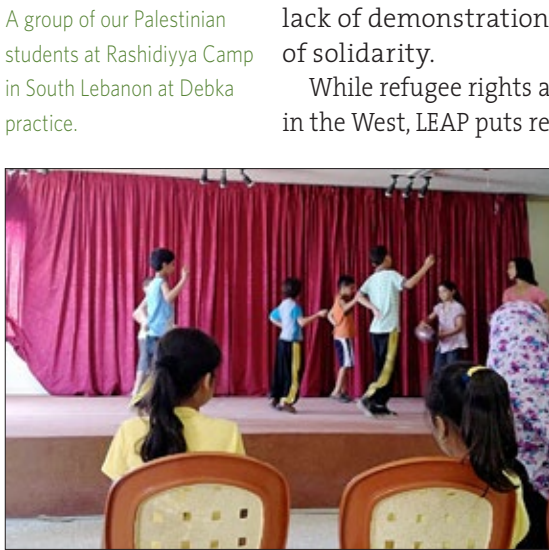
speakers, our goal was to prep our students for an English exam which they are required to take for promotion to high school and pursue careers in Lebanon. We also taught extracurricular activities, such as art, creative writing, photography, videography, and theater.

The reality of the situation became all too clear: in an effort to restrain the Palestinians and the expression of their rights – including their right to return to Palestine – authorities in Lebanon had contained the Palestinians in the camps, deprived them of the basics of life, and sought to restrict their movement and residency. Indeed, I was forced to come to terms with the reality that unlike in the West Bank, the occupiers who would make life difficult for the volunteers were not Israeli soldiers, but Lebanese



Mone Makkawi

A group of volunteers, including Palestinian volunteers from the Bayt Atfal Assumoud Center, looking over the Lebanon-Palestine border at Palestine, at Fatima’s Gate, in South Lebanon.



Mone Makkawi

soldiers – who would harass us despite being familiar with us, and attempt to prevent us from entering the camps despite our permits.

In addition, our students and their families were forced to deal with overcrowding, as Palestinian and Syrian refugees streamed in from Syria. Instability was a constant menace – even forcing LEAP organizers to severely curtail the extent of the program from five camps to two. While the people of my assigned camp, Rashidiyya, had built community, solidarity, and life out of their situation, the camp itself was squalid and lacked an underground sewage system. Furthermore, Israel had repeatedly bombed the camp throughout history.

But the communities with whom we worked were steadfast – and volunteers were required to behave accordingly. Most of us, Muslim or not, took part in Ramadan fasting, both out of respect and as logistical reality. Sex, drugs, and alcohol were completely forbidden. Our liv-

in the program again. As someone who has already been blacklisted by Israeli authorities, I held a strange sort of understanding every time I heard my students

talk of returning to Palestine. Insha'allah, soon we will all return. And to make return a reality, groups like LEAP are advancing the struggle through education in Lebanon. I highly recommend the program to US-based solidarity activists who see the value of education and want



Mone Makkawi

A group of English students taking their exam at Rashidiyya Camp in a class taught by one of LEAP's volunteers.

Improving the conditions of life in Lebanon is key to building self-determination for the Palestinian people

ing space was crammed, with dozens of volunteers sharing small apartments. Work days were stressful, from teaching hyperactive youths to writing lesson plans to adjusting to culture shock.

Sometimes, cultural differences were disconcerting. For example, it was difficult to explain my identity as an Indian-American to my students. As Palestinians in Lebanon, they did not identify as Palestinian-Lebanese, but as Palestinians only. They all knew which village their family came from, spoke in Palestinian dialect, and recited the national anthem each morning. Their stay in Lebanon was considered temporary, and in any case, Lebanon had made every effort to define them as foreigners. As a result, the concept of a second-generation immigrant being "American" was incomprehensible. Many of my students believed it meant I was half-white, and some people, including adults, tried to make small talk with me about Indian soap operas they had watched. They sounded entertaining, but I had never heard of them.

Nonetheless, the experience was worth it and I hope to return to Lebanon to take part

to work with Palestinian communities as they improve their own lot. There is no way to deny that improving the conditions of life in Lebanon is key to building self-determination for the Palestinian people – so that they can demand all of their rights, including their right to return to Palestine. ■

Amith Gupta is a former ISM volunteer and Palestine solidarity activist. He is currently resides in Egypt, where he is the Communications Officer for the Tadamon Council, a refugee rights organization.

The courtyard at the BAS center in Rashidiyya Camp, with some volunteers on their way out after a day of teaching.



Mone Makkawi

SodaStream's Commitment to Green Love and Freedom

By Barb Weir

SodaStream CEO Daniel Burnbomb has taken his company from a modest novelty manufacturer to an international sensation that is selling millions of home carbonation machines world wide and will have a half million-dollar advert

erty and care little for their safety. In most cases, this is accomplished by going to the most impoverished nations in the world, but Israel manages to impoverish the Palestinians under its control and has permitted us to confiscate their land for our factory. All of this lowers our cost, especially when

soda stream

If you love the bubbles, set them free.

during the most watched event in the U.S., the American football Super Bowl championship. I interviewed Burnbomb at his factory in an Israeli settlement in the Palestinian West Bank to learn more about the company's success story.

Barb Weir: Mr. Burnbomb, SodaStream has been around for years. Why is it suddenly so popular?

Burnbomb: There are many reasons, Barb. We have a green marketing campaign and we provide a great product at a great price. Our biggest distributor is Wal-Mart, and you know they're all about low prices. We worked very hard to meet their requirements.



we pay only a fraction of the wages and benefits that we would if our plant were in Israel.

Barb Weir: But doesn't your product say "Made in Israel"?

Burnbomb: Indeed it does, Barb. The Israeli government allows us to say that. Isn't that great? Imagine if the U.S. government would allow products made in Bangladesh or Saipan to be labeled "made in USA". That would be a great competitive advantage. That's what "Made in Israel" does for us.

Barb Weir: Actually, Mr. Burnbomb, Saipan was allowed to do that until recently.

Burnbomb: And what an advantage that was! Fortunately, Israel has a lot more clout in Congress than Saipan. No one would ever refuse an advantage for Israel. Do you know we recently won the Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval?

Barb Weir: I did. But your success can't all be due to low prices and Good Housekeeping.

Burnbomb: No, I have to say that our marketing campaign has been spectacular. Have you seen our new penguin-shaped machine? It requires more materials and energy to make, but it fits the theme of our green campaign, "If you love the bubbles, set them free."

Barb Weir: Very slick. What does it mean?



www.ewash.org

Israel is Ethnically Cleansing Palestinians, continued from page 3

time for space on the public transit system (inside the Denver light rail vehicles and outside the 16th street mall buses). After a long delay, the ads were approved, with no change at all in the message or graphics. As of this writing, the ads are available for all to see, both Denver residents and visitors to the city, like the hundreds of delegates to the convention of

depend upon proving the falsity of the “ethnic cleansing” label.

Apparently, these august jurists decided that a discussion of “ethnic cleansing” as a description of Israel’s actions was potentially far more dangerous to Israel than the placement of an ad to that effect. After all, there was no assurance that the court would rule in their favor, in which

How Palestinians disappeared from much of Palestine is a question that the Israel lobby would prefer to leave unanswered.

the Jewish National Fund, one and a half blocks from the 16th street mall.

What was going on during the delay? One may speculate that much deliberation was taking place, possibly in consultation with lawyers from the ADL (Anti-Discrimination League) and AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee). The only possible challenge would be that the ad constituted hate speech or was libelous. In both cases, however, the challenge would

case a terrible precedent would be set. Better to allow a bit of uncomfortable truth to appear in public than a legal ruling certifying such a truth. How Palestinians disappeared from much of Palestine is a question that the Israel lobby would prefer to leave unanswered. ■

Paul Larudee and Beth Daoud are organizers with No Tax Dollars To Israel and Colorado BDS Campaign, respectively.

Sodastream, continued from previous page

Burnbomb: It makes the point that we’re all about love and freedom, Barb. We want everyone to love us and our product, and we’ll sell them the gas canisters so that they can free the gas as they digest their beverages.

Barb Weir: You’re selling carbon dioxide to your customers? Isn’t carbon dioxide one of the main causes of global warming? How does that fit your green image?

Burnbomb: Have you seen our penguin-shaped machine?

Barb Weir: And the freedom that you advocate is for carbon dioxide? What about your workers that are living under a military occupation. They can be stopped and arrested without charge trying to get to work.

Burnbomb: That’s a problem, Barb, but they don’t get paid if they don’t work, so we know they’ll do their best. We’re also building a new factory where we can hire bedouins inside Israel. Israel is giving

us a break on land confiscated from the bedouins, who are almost as cheap as Palestinians under military occupation.

Barb Weir: Why would bedouins want to be factory workers? Aren’t they a pastoral society?

Burnbomb: Past tense, Barb. Their lands have been confiscated and their villages bulldozed more than a dozen times. These jobs will look like a godsend to them.

Barb Weir: This is part of your campaign to spread love and freedom, and to keep the planet green?

Burnbomb: Of course, Barb. We love offering cheap jobs that nobody else wants, while freeing the workers from a primitive and archaic lifestyle and assuring that the desert will be greener without those awful animals. ■



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/

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