



LIVE FROM *Palestine*

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Resistance to the Wall Continues in Nil'in and Bil'in

By Tracie De Angelis Salim, November, 2009

“OPTIMYSTICAL” is a word coined by one of the doctors treating Tristan Anderson at a hospital in Tel Aviv. Nancy Anderson, Tristan’s mom, uses it to express her feeling about Tristan’s recovery.

On March 13, 2009, Israeli Occupation Forces shot Tristan in the head with a high velocity tear gas canister as he stood in solidarity with Palestinians in the village of Nil'in. He had been drawn to Palestine because he is a human rights activist and recognized the need for internationals to stand with the local population against injustice—in this case by demonstrating against the Israeli Apartheid Wall that would take a third of their land for an Israeli settlement. Tristan suffered severe brain injuries, and his survival was by no means certain.

Although an Israeli human rights organization immediately asked for a judicial order forbidding the use of “non-lethal” weapons in a lethal manner, the same weapon killed an unarmed Palestinian activist, Bassem Abu Rahme, only one month later at another demonstration in the neighboring village of Bil'in. It was captured on film, as he called out, “Do not shoot. There are children.” Only then did Israel’s State Attorney’s office order the Police to review its guidelines. However, the IOF continue to use deadly force.

Tristan’s recovery has seen ups and downs. He has had several brain surgeries, at times wrought with complications. He has had serious bacterial infections and two rounds of pneumonia. In October 2009, Tristan and his family endured four scary days where Tristan became non-responsive. His eyes did not open and no one could wake him. Several tests were taken, but there was no explanation for his non-responsiveness.



Tristan
Anderson

Israeli Occupation Forces continue to fire tear-gas projectiles, rubber coated steel bullets and live ammunition against demonstrators.

On the fifth day, however, he awoke and showed startling improvement, which continues to this day. He can put his hat and sunglasses on by himself. He is starting to hoist himself up in bed. While he still unable to speak, Tristan is now answering ques-

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Resistance to the Wall Continues

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tions with yes and no gestures and he is able to hold cards and play games that motivate him to move more, plan actions and solve problems. While his actions are slow, they are appropriate and show that he is making steady progress.

In addition, he is re-learning how to write. He can write “n” for no and “y” for yes. Tristan has about 2.5 hours of therapy a day,

Villagers marked the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall by toppling eight meters of the Israeli Apartheid Wall.

including speech, physical, occupational and “plant therapy.” Tristan is hard working and determined. He recently had minor surgery on his injured right eye and his left toe, and he has a cast on his left arm to help stretch the tendon. According to his mom, Nancy, “Even with these medical problems he continues to sail ahead in his recovery.”

Tristan is making improvements with his balance and continues to gain strength in all of his limbs. He recently began painting and enjoys any activity that allows him to express himself. The staff at the hospital is introduc-

ing a variety of ways of expression to see what works best for Tristan. They are quite impressed and his parents say that, “he even looks more like his old self, more alert and curious.” “Tristan still sleeps for a large part of the day but when he is awake we see his curiosity, interest and preferences emerging; we can connect and engage with each other so much more now,” said Nancy.

Meanwhile, in Ni’lin, Bil’in and sometimes other villages, non-violent demonstrations take place nearly every Friday. On November 6, they marked the 20th anniversary of the

fall of the Berlin Wall by toppling 8 meters of the Israeli Apartheid Wall.

Sadly, the Israeli Occupation Forces continue to fire tear-gas projectiles, rubber coated steel bullets and live ammunition against demonstrators. In addition to the attacks on Tristan and Bassem, five of Ni’lin’s residents have been killed from Israeli fire during grassroots demonstrations.

The road ahead will be long for Tristan, and his prognosis is still guarded. The same is true for the road towards justice and freedom in Palestine. However, Tristan and his family and friends remain hopeful. Likewise, Palestinian patience and determination, with the support of the international community, give us all reason to be “optimystical.” ■

Tracie De Angelis Salim has volunteered with ISM in Palestine twice, and most recently with Interfaith Peace-builders. On her most recent trip, she was able to meet and visit Tristan and his family.

Donations Needed

If you donated after receiving the ISM Spring 2009 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.*

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.

Palestine's Peaceful Struggle

By Mohammad Khatib, September 11, 2009

A few weeks ago, in the dead of night, dozens of Israeli soldiers with painted faces burst violently into my home. If only they had knocked, I would have opened the door. They arrested me. My wife, Lamia, was left alone with our four children. My youngest, 3-year-old Khaled, woke up to the image of Israeli soldiers with painted faces who were taking his father away. He has not stopped crying since. A few nights ago he woke up in terror, sobbing: "Daddy, why did you let the soldiers take you?" That's the way our children sleep--in a constant state of fear.

Many Americans know that the Obama administration has been pushing the Israeli government to accept a freeze on settlement construction. What is not commonly known is that even as Israel negotiates with the United States, it has been taking steps, including my arrest, to crush the growing Palestinian nonviolent movement opposing Israel's construction of settlements and the wall on Palestinian land in the West Bank.

For over five years the residents of Bil'in and other villages have been protesting against Israel's separation wall, which cuts off our village's land for the sake of Israeli settlement expansion. We have even taken the struggle to the courts. The International Court of Justice at The Hague ruled in July 2004 that the wall, where it has been built inside the West Bank, is illegal under international law, as are all Israeli settlements. In September 2007, Israel's Supreme Court ruled that the wall in Bil'in, which separates us from 50 percent of our land, is illegal according to Israeli law. The wall has yet to have moved.

The Israeli army is using more-lethal weapons and greater violence against protesters, and arresting many people, including many protest organizers. In Bil'in alone, twenty-nine residents have been arrested in the past three months. Twelve of them are children. Almost

all were arrested during military raids in the middle of the night. Their detention has been extended repeatedly.

But the charges against them are baseless. As one example, I have been charged



Mohammad Khatib speaking in Montreal, Canada

Photo:Valerian Mazataud

with stone throwing. I was released on bail with draconian terms only after my lawyers showed the court passport stamps proving that I was abroad at the time of the alleged offense. My friend, Adeb Abu-Rahme, 37 years old and the father of nine, has been imprisoned for more than six weeks, though the charges against him are just as absurd.

Every Friday in Bil'in, we march to the wall in peaceful protest, along with our Israeli and international partners. Once a year we hold an international conference about the popular nonviolent struggle. Together we learn and gain inspiration. We struggle together to bring down the many walls between people that the occupation is creating. We've repeatedly addressed the Israeli soldiers here, telling them we are not against them as people, but that we oppose their actions as an occupying military force.

Still, nineteen demonstrators have been killed by the Israeli army in these nonvio-

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Farming in the West Bank

Chet Collins, October, 2009



The bedouin village of Wadi Rasha, and a nearby Israeli colony.

Photo: Chet Collins

In the Northern California area where I live are many farmers, so I was excited to learn about the lives of farmers in the West Bank. While working with ISM in the Nablus area, I met with a group of farmers from nearby villages. Farming probably isn't easy anywhere, but in the West Bank, the occupation makes farming even more difficult. Roadblocks make it difficult for farmers to get to their farms and grazing areas. Many farmers there are losing the land where their families live and have ranched and farmed for many generations. It is being confiscated by Israel to build settlements and roads off limits to Palestinians.

One farmer asked me to visit his village, take pictures, and tell people about their plight. I took him up on the offer. This farmer was bedouin and his village is called Wadi Rasha.

Unfortunately for the bedouin villages, the Israeli government and military are successfully isolating them and moving them off their land. They do this by building huge walls around their villages. These are different walls from the Annexation Wall. They make it so the village has no access to water or electricity, and people cannot get to their farmland without a permit. The government

mostly ignores their permit applications, or only issues a permit that can be used once a year. Before the "security walls" were built, the bedouin villages used to have water and electricity. But because of the walls, they now need a permit for water. Permits are not issued. They live in squalor, sometimes ranching in their own shacks with very little land and electricity from a generator. Huge pipes, the infrastructure for water that was the lifeblood of the community, sit empty.

The small villages still remain, but the people are not sure how long they can survive. The military has ordered them to leave many times, but they have no place to go. And who would want to leave land that has been in their family for generations? Demolition orders have been given to every house in the village.

Checkpoints are a part of life in the West Bank. On my way to the village I spoke to a woman soldier from Brooklyn who was working at the checkpoint that separates these villages from all the other parts of the West Bank. She had been in Israel for five months. She was friendly and tried to be helpful by telling us, "It's not safe in the Arab

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villages, they will shoot you and kidnap you.” I asked why they would do that and she said, “because they are Arabs.”

At the same time, there are many Israelis who go to the West Bank to help build schools and defend the rights of the Palestinians. And there are many Israeli soldiers who refuse to fight in the occupied areas. However, dehumanization of the Palestinians is prevalent and makes it easier for Israeli society to justify the ongoing theft of land and collective punishment.

I now understand better how Americans and others can be complicit in the destruc-

Most people I talk to in the States believe there is no solution. I think there can be a solution, but not until countries like Israel and the US stop occupying other countries. I believe we can end the wars and change course for the better.

Palestinians I met want peace and to keep their land and to farm it. They want their children to be able to go to school. They have tried armed resistance and the court of international law. Now they are trying non-violent resistance, but they are up against the most powerful weapons and propaganda in the world.

The bedouin villages remain, but people in them are not sure how long they can survive.

tion of a people. Our own country was founded by the taking land and resources from Native Americans. As Israel occupies Palestine, we occupy Iraq and Afghanistan. I witnessed Israeli settlers, like early colonists in America, destroying the lives of Palestinians who had no way of defending themselves. While I was there, hundreds of acres of wheat were burned, ancient olive trees were destroyed, and armed settlers shot at houses filled with families who had no weapons.

The military invaded a village near a town I was in, which is nothing unusual. Palestinians are not treated like citizens and are rarely granted even the most basic rights. I heard accounts of young men that were kidnapped by Israeli soldiers during night time raids. A friend of mine from Sebastopol, California was arrested while trying to block the door to a home that was being invaded without cause or warrants during a night raid.

My brief glimpse of life under occupation was an extremely emotional experience, and I could not hold back tears when it was time to leave. People in Palestine need our solidarity and support urgently. People here may have different opinions about the conflict there, but none of us would feel comfortable leaving a family or friend who is living under constant threat of attack.

Israel continues to expand the settlements. According to Noam Chomsky, US taxpayers are giving Israel so much military and financial aid that we are effectively paying for all the settlement building that's taking place in the occupied West Bank.

The ranchers and farmers I met personally asked me to tell you about the difficulty of their lives under occupation and their need for freedom. Please do what you can to influence our government to end their suffering. ■

Chet Collins lives in rural Mendocino County, California. His mom, Susan Crane, a "Plowshares Activist", brought him to direct actions and was a great inspiration for him. At the age of 31 Chet volunteered with ISM in the Nablus area. For more info go to: <http://chetreport.com>.

We love you but... ...we need to hear from you.

Sad to say, some of you are at risk of being dropped from our mailing list. This is because, after years of sending you our newsletter, we simply haven't heard from you and fear that you may not be reading it. We therefore ask for you to respond by mailing in the remit envelope with your name and address, just to show that you still want the newsletter. No need to send a donation, although it will of course be welcome. You can also send your response by email to solidarity@norcalism.org. Of course, if you have already responded in the last year or two, there is no need to do this. Thanks for following the work of ISM.

Palestine's Peaceful Struggle

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lent demonstrations against the wall. Many have been injured, including Israeli and international activists protesting with us. Here in Bil'in we recently lost our friend Bassem Abu Rahme, who was fatally shot by soldiers in April while he was imploring them to stop

Why has the Israeli government decided now to increase the suppression of demonstrations and to break the spirit of protest leaders?

shooting at demonstrators.

Several months ago we were warned by Israel's occupation forces that they intended to crush the popular struggle.

Why has the Israeli government decided now to increase the suppression of demonstrations and to break the spirit of protest leaders? Maybe because they realize that the nonviolent struggle is spreading, that more and more villages have created popular committees that are organizing demonstrations. Perhaps the crackdown is a result of their

concern and the growing international movement for the boycott of companies and businessmen such as Lev Leviev who are involved in Israel's land grab. Or maybe they fear that the new American government could learn through our demonstrations that Israel's wall is a means to annex land for the growing settlements, and that nonviolent Palestinian protests are being brutally suppressed.

Israel's actions suggest that it is intimidated by people struggling for their rights in a nonviolent manner. The Israeli government seems to believe that Palestinians who struggle while partnering with Israeli activists endanger Israel's occupation and that tearing down human walls is a dangerous act. Perhaps what the state of Israel fears most of all is the hope that people can live together based on justice and equality for all.

Mohammad Khatib is a member of the Bil'in Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements. ■

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ISM Greeted Ehud Olmert in Chicago and San Francisco

Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert received a very special greeting everywhere during his October U.S. speaking tour. Volunteers from ISM-Chicago were among thirty who interrupted his speaking engagement. One by one, they were removed from the speaking venue. One person was arrested.

The scene was similar in San Francisco, where the interruptions began with an attempted citizen's arrest. The SFPD was more strict. They arrested all 22 who participated, including several ISM volunteers, while around 250 of their colleagues demonstrated outside in Union Square.

In both cases, the demonstrators managed to delay the event by twenty minutes or more. The message was that although we don't oppose Olmert's right to free speech, we are against paying him to speak, and that it is irresponsible to treat a war criminal as an honored guest.

We hope that this form of recognition will catch on whenever Israeli officials travel abroad, and that before long the police themselves will enforce valid arrest warrants for such criminals.



Travels in Palestine: Bil'in

Courtney Day, October, 2009

“Each step we take leaves a blood mark.”

Those words left the mouth of an Israeli activist branding a devastating image in my mind of the beautiful and contentious land called Palestine/Israel, and our role back in the United States.

It was a hot Friday afternoon in the West Bank's inspiring village of Bil'in. Vicious tear-gas canisters and rubber-coated steel bullets rained down on the residents of Bil'in along with International and Israeli activists who marched toward the illegal wall, protesting the annexation of nearly 60% of Bil'in's land. The weekly non-violent demonstration against Israel's Apartheid Wall had just ended. As the dust began to settle, people descended the hill, stopping to cough, gag or vomit. An older couple draped in colors of the Palestinian flag sat on a pile of rocks near the bottom of the hill. The man sprayed squares of tissue with alcohol, the woman placed them in our hands, and we inhaled the fumes to remind our brain to breathe then wiped our eyes and faces to stop the burning sensation.

My throat seared from the noxious tear-gas as I rested under the shade of thick, aged olive trees. Situated on the land surrounding me, stood three distinct Israeli settlements boasting their defiance of international law. Over the last three decades Israel has continued to build one illegal settlement after the other on Bil'in's land, each one an insulting reminder of Israel's ongoing and destructive land expansion fueled by racist, apartheid policies. I never realized how close the settlements were to Palestinian homes until I was there; how massive, intrusive, and untenable they truly are. Obama's short-lived settlement freeze rhetoric was already thawing, and I was experiencing just a small taste of what occupation meant.

Occupation is exhausting when you consider 60 years of colonizing, oppressing, racially discriminating, dehumanizing and ethnically cleansing the Palestinian people. Remarkably, occupation doesn't sleep. Occupation thrives in the nighttime, particularly in Bil'in where families awake from nightmares to nightmares as young soldiers dressed in guns invade families' homes to inexplicably arrest young men. They leave children scared, heirlooms shattered and men beaten. These soldiers are masked as they target the homes of Bil'in's resisters.



“Why do they wear masks?” an International shouts.

“Because they are ashamed.” answers an Israeli.

While staying in Bil'in I met some of the most amazing human beings. I learned that resistance is not just marching to the wall every Friday. It is not just staying up all night on rooftops watching for Israeli soldiers who sneak through the fields by foot and storm the streets in a caravan of camouflaged Hummers. Resistance is playing with children, cracking jokes, walking down the street with your head

Resistance is playing with children, cracking jokes, walking down the street with your head held high shaking neighbors' hands along the way. Resistance is living your life.

held high shaking neighbors' hands along the way. Resistance is living your life.

Now back home, my stomach unsettles at the unbridled support the US gives Israel and her brutal military occupation. How many bloody footprints must we leave before we say enough is enough? ■

Courtney recently spent a month in the West Bank. She is now back in the US working on BDS campaigns and performing the play My Name is Rachel Corrie.

Tear gas being used against non-violent demonstrators in Bil'in.

Photo Credit: Courtney Day

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.

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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