



LIVE FROM Palestine

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Credit: ISM

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COVID-19, Settler Violence and the Palestinian Olive Harvest

By ISM | November, 2020

The olive harvest is not only a source of livelihood and sustenance for many Palestinian farmers and their families, it is also a season of Palestinian resistance through existing on their land and continuing to till their soil. Palestinian farmers face ongoing settler violence and attacks by the Israeli occupation army, declaring olive growth areas as closed military zones, seizing them for the construction of illegal colonial settlements, or attacking, burning and slashing the precious trees.

OLIVE TREES: A NATIONAL SYMBOL

For the Israeli occupation as well as for Palestinians, the olive tree is a national symbol of Palestinian rootedness in the land. The olive tree

is also critical to the Palestinian economy, used in the making of olive oil, soap and numerous other products. However, since September 2000, over 500,000 olive and other fruit trees have been destroyed by the Israeli occupation. By continuing to remain on their land and harvest their olives, Palestinian farmers are resisting Israeli plans for exclusion, dispossession and ethnic cleansing.

Many Palestinian farmers have been locked out of their land almost entirely. Some are “permitted” to visit their own land only twice a year, to plough and to harvest olives in the autumn, despite the fact that the land and trees need extensive work. The Israeli occupation not only denies Palestinian farmers access to their

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ISM volunteers at olive harvest.

Credit: ISM

own land and trees, it forces thousands of olives to remain unharvested as it forcibly excludes Palestinians from their land.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Every year, the International Solidarity Movement calls upon international volunteers to support Palestinian farmers in this critical time, sustaining the harvest and providing an international presence to reduce the risk of violence, attacks, threats and harassment by Israeli occupation forces and illegal settlers. Supporting the olive harvest includes non-violent direct action, documentation and direct, practical involvement with the harvest, under the direction of Palestinian farming families.

ISM in Palestine also partners with the International Women's Peace Service and the Olive Harvest Trust to subsidize the cost of harvesting machinery and skilled short-term labor in order to help Palestinian farmers complete the harvest more quickly, a form of protection from settler violence. One IWPS volunteer, Rada Daniell, noted the escalation of settlement land confiscation. "When I arrived last year, gazing out the window of the service from Ramallah, I hardly recognized the area around the villages of Bruqin, Kufr ad-Dik and Haris, even

though I have picked olives there so many times. The illegal settlements used to be somewhere over the horizon. Now they stretch down to the road. The massive Barkan Industrial Zone near the Ariel settlement expanded so much that it made the whole area unrecognizable," she said, recalling her presence in Palestine for the 2019 olive harvest.

COVID-19 CHALLENGES

The coronavirus pandemic has made the harvest even more difficult for Palestinian farmers in 2020. With internationals largely blocked from entering Palestine due to travel restrictions, meaning that Palestinians have even less support for the annual occasion. And settler violence has not been restricted by COVID-19. Indeed, Palestinian ISM activists have documented numerous incidents of settler attacks and violence, even while Israeli occupation soldiers block Palestinian farmers from their land and trees, labeling their property a "closed military zone."

On October 8, Israeli settlers tore up 40 olive trees in the South Hebron Hills, one day after settlers attacked Palestinian farmers picking olives in Huwarra village south of Nablus. Israeli occupation soldiers provided armed guard for the settlers as they attempted to force the Palestinian farmers from their land. On October 12, a group of settlers attacked Palestinian farmers in Burqa, north of Ramallah, with sticks, throwing stones at the harvesters. The settlers bashed in one Palestinian farmer's car, rendering it unusable. On October 15, Israeli colonial settlers slashed, destroyed and killed hundreds of olive trees in

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Volunteer Spotlight: Lenore Sheridan

If you bought anything from the ISM online store in the past couple years, it was probably shipped by, or even delivered in person by Lenore Sheridan. Lenore has been volunteering with the NorCal ISM group for the past five years, and doing the majority of the office support for the past two.

Lenore got involved with the NorCal ISM group after moving to Berkeley from San Jose five years ago. She has taken several volunteer trips to Palestine, the first in 2006 with a group called the International Women's Peace Service (IWPS). She made additional trips with different groups and tried to enter Gaza in 2008, but the Israeli military would not allow her. These trips have taught her a great deal about the oppression of the Occupation and is inspired to work in solidarity with Palestinians and others who want to end it. She said,

My experiences in Israel and the West Bank convinced me that it was important to let people know first that all Arabs aren't terrorists and the situation isn't that complicated. Some people have the idea Jews and Muslims have been fighting for ages and will continue to do so. The state of Israel, when it was formed, drove people out of historic Palestine and has made life miserable for the ones who stayed. It isn't a blood feud that has continued through the ages. Israeli policy and US complicity with it allows Israel to mistreat Palestinians within the state of Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza. States formed on the basis of religion where one religion is given preference over another whether it's Protestants in Northern Ireland, Muslims in Pakistan or Christians and Muslims in historic Palestine doesn't work. I work with ISM to educate people about the role the US plays in supporting the government of Israel. I also make clear that it's the policies of the Israeli government and US complicity that I oppose. ■



Lenore (right) and Jane Stillwater, who also volunteers in the ISM office in Berkeley.



ISM Online Store

NorCal ISM sells kuffiyas, hand made soap and organic, fair-trade olive oil via our online store. You can support Palestinian farmers and crafts people, help ISM and enjoy wonderful products by buying from our online store. And, we will even deliver free to addresses within 30 miles of Berkeley!

Our shipping department is taking the month of December off, and any orders received in December will be shipped in January.

<https://shop.ism-norcal.org/>

The Racist Violence of Israeli Home Demolitions

By NorCal ISM | November, 2020

For Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Jerusalem, home demolitions are a constant threat. Used as a form of both collective punishment and ethnic cleansing, Israeli occupation forces routinely bulldoze and destroy the homes of Palestinian prisoners, leaving their entire families homeless. In occupied Jerusalem and in villages and agri-

protect their homes from the violent racism of Israeli home demolition.

On July 22, 2019, British ISM activist Bethany Rielly was with six fellow international human rights defenders from France, Spain, China and the United States in the Wadi al-Hummus neighborhood of occupied Jerusalem as 900 occupation soldiers attacked the home of

Palestinian Ismail Abadiyeh. Occupation forces kicked Palestinians down the stairs and shot two Palestinians with rubber-coated metal bullets. Bethany recalls, "A soldier dragged me by my keffiyeh across the floor strangling me until I screamed, then he crushed my neck under his knee. I was then pulled by my hair out of the room and dragged down two flights of stairs." A fellow British activist was hospitalized along with 12 Palestinians after being severely beaten by occupation soldiers.

Bethany told the story of the home demolition that day and the attack by occupation soldiers:

"There was no-one filming in the house, no-one showing the world the brutality of the Israeli military against unarmed civilians. They had blocked off all the roads to prevent any media coming in for this very reason.

As we left I saw the Palestinian

friends and family of Ismail bloodied and wide-eyed. My activist friends were outside too, red-eyed from the tear gas.

For the next hour, the soldiers walked us for a mile away from the site, laughing at us and stepping on our feet. We asked them: 'Why are you doing this?' 'Will you tell your mum what you did today?'

They were smug and proud of themselves. For them, demolishing people's homes and brutalizing people is fun.

As we walked I saw Ismail. He was heartbroken. I said I was sorry but what good are words when everything you've been working towards for years is crushed under the occupation?



Credit: Sharona Weiss/Activestills

cultural areas throughout Palestine classified as "Area C," Palestinians routinely are forced to demolish their own homes or have them forcibly destroyed by Israeli soldiers with bulldozers under various pretexts: a lack of a construction permit or proximity to the illegal apartheid wall.

Of course, Palestinians are routinely denied permits to build or even improve their homes, at the same time that illegal Israeli settlements are routinely approved, developed and funded by the Israeli regime, with 2,000 more units in the colonies announced in mid-October 2020. One of the nonviolent direct action campaigns of the International Solidarity Movement is working hand in hand with Palestinian families to aim to

I found out later that 12 of the Palestinians had been hospitalized — two from rubber-coated steel bullet wounds fired at close range.

Chris's rib was fractured, B's knuckle was fractured too and her other hand suffered severe tissue damage. Gabi was rushed to hospital with agonising pepper spray burns. I have a hideous strangulation wound across my neck.

But I want to stress that our injuries are nothing. Nothing compared to the violence the Israeli state carries out every day against the Palestinian people.

They act with total impunity — shooting children, imprisoning people for years without trial, demolishing homes, water wells, olive trees — anything and everything to make life impossible for Palestinians.

Their homes are razed to the ground every week, for whatever reason, from not having an impossible-to-get building permit to being too close to a wall that's illegal under international law. Settlers on the other hand are free to build whatever and wherever they please, even without permits.

If you are a 'friend' of Israel...then you are also a friend of apartheid. You are a friend of a state that kills men, women and children with impunity. And you are a friend of a perpetrator of ongoing and unrelenting ethnic cleansing."

Bethany asks, "Is a house demolition a military operation anywhere else in the world? This is the reality of life for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation."

Israeli home demolitions are continuing on a regular basis inside occupied Palestine. On November 3, Israeli occupation forces destroyed the community of Khirbet Humsah in the Jordan Valley, demolishing 18 sheds and tents housing 11 families, 29 livestock enclosures, confiscating tractors and destroying 30 tons of livestock feed. In Nablus, Israeli occupation forces demolished the home of Khalil Dweikat, Palestinian prisoner, on November 2,



Credit: Sharona Weiss/Activestills

leaving his wife and daughters homeless on the rubble of their home. Despite the fact that collective punishment is clearly illegal under international law, Palestinians continue to face daily assaults on their most basic right to shelter and a continuing Nakba that aims to push them from their land.

Bethany Rielly and her fellow internationals in Sur Baher that day continue to urge internationals to go to Palestine and support the ongoing civil, popular resistance of Palestinians aiming to remain on their land and in their homes.

The International Solidarity Movement is a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting

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the long-entrenched and systematic oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian population, using non-violent, direct-action methods and principles. At ISM NorCal, we support the work of ISM in Palestine and help to bring volunteers to join the work on the ground in Palestine. Contact us at ism-norcal.org to learn more about how you can stand alongside Palestinians confronting the daily violence of occupation. ■

Online Rally for Gaza

By NorCal ISM | October, 2020

The Online Rally for Gaza was held on September 7, 2020, in response to Israel's bombing of Gaza for 19 continuous days that began on August 11, and which received practically no coverage in the mainstream media.

The rally was attended by as many as 3,900 people who viewed the event on Facebook. ISM was part of a coalition of groups that produced the event, which can serve as a model for how we can continue organizing for Palestine during the corona virus pandemic, and even increase the reach of our message that Palestinian human rights, and especially those of the

people in Gaza, is an urgent issue that must be addressed now.

A few of the many excellent speakers at the rally were:

- **Adie Morech of ISM** spoke about how ISM is supporting non-violent resistance in the occupied territories, including Gaza. He urged all of us who live in safety and with privilege to do more to end the blockade of Gaza. His excellent talk appears one hour into the recording.
- **Bashaer spoke from Gaza** about how the shortage of electricity — an average of 4 hours a day prior to the Israeli bombing that began on August 11. After the recent outbreak of Covid-19 in Gaza, Israel increased the amount of fuel allowed to Gaza for electricity temporarily, allowing eight hours and Israeli media reported on how magnanimous Israel was to allow Gaza eight hours a day of electricity.
- **Charlotte Kates of Samidoun Prisoner Solidarity** spoke about the 4700 prisoners currently in Israeli prisons, including those from Gaza.
- **Huda Ammori of Palestine Action** spoke about the heinous weapons such as butterfly bullets that are frequently used against protesters near the Gaza fence.

Butterfly bullets have wounded thousands, and over 500 people in Gaza have had legs amputated after being shot by them. Activists need to mobilize to shut down the producers of these arms, many of which are in the UK and US.

- **Julie Webb spoke from Gaza** about the work begin done to have the ICC move forward with a case investigating Israel for war crimes in its past campaigns bombing Gaza. There is real hope that this will someday result in justice for Palestine, but all Israel and its allies will move aggressively to stop the case, but sustained pressure by activists will be necessary to make this a reality.
- **Rawan Zidane** spoke about the PTSD that is so widespread among children in Gaza as a result of the Israeli attacks they witness and overall conditions of deprivation that result from the blockade.

Jana urges people in countries everywhere, but especially the UK and US to write to their legislators. Specifically, she suggests a mass campaign of sending postcards with images that will help legislators understand the plight of Gaza. NorCal ISM is planning to launch a project along these lines.

- Michael Arage of Nevadans for Palestinian Human Rights and John Idalis of the Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance spoke in favor of BDS, and called for an end to US diplomatic, financial and military aid to Israel, which is fueling the atrocities and suffering in Gaza.
- Ellen Hansson from Ship to Gaza Sweden spoke about the work of the International Freedom Flotilla coalition, and its work to breach the illegal blockade of Gaza. The coalition plans to sail again as soon as covid-19 restrictions have been lifted.
- Masoud Shadjareh spoke about how the lessons learned in fighting apartheid in South Africa can inform our Palestine solidarity work.

The event was recorded and can be viewed on YouTube at this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2eE52_FPew ■



Online promotion for the rally.

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the village of Jaba near Bethlehem. The destroyed trees included 300 trees over 20 years old and 10 trees over 100 years old.

ISM has continued to provide support, even with a limited international presence, and help Palestinian farmers to remain on their land and reap this essential crop. In 2020, the FAZ3A campaign has provided support to particularly at-risk farmers who have seen their land seized or threatened by Israeli soldiers and military forces in areas throughout the occupied West Bank, from Kafr ad-Dik to Bethlehem to Huwarra and Tulkarem.

SETTLER VIOLENCE ESCALATES

This project comes as Palestinian farmers face an array of attacks from Israeli occupation forces. In the South Hebron Hills, Israeli occupation soldiers demolished a family's home on October 18, their sheep enclosure and the small shed used to store food and supplies for the sheep. They even destroyed a family's tent they were living in after their home had been destroyed the previous week. Just one day later, Palestinian farmers in Bruqin and Kafr ad-Dik reported sewage and industrial waste was illegally dumped by settlers in their olive groves, polluting the land amid the harvest.

On October 27, Israeli forces destroyed a water well in the village of Birin. The violence continued the next day. In Masafer Yatta, thousands of people and livestock depend on an irrigation system developed by Palestinians that reaches over 20 villages in the area. However, this essential water system has been repeatedly destroyed on a nearly annual basis by Israeli forces and the so-called "civil administration" of the military occupation imposed on the West Bank. On October 28, they once again cut off the water pipeline, leaving farmers with no means to irrigate their crops or livestock, serving as yet another attempt to force Palestinians from their land.

The 2020 olive harvest has continued, with Palestinians insisting on remaining steadfast on their land, harvesting their crops and protecting their presence on the ground in the face of heavily armed forces and an entire system dedicated to their expulsion. The COVID-

19 pandemic has provided no relief for these endangered villagers, especially as many international supporters have been blocked from joining the campaigns in support of the farmers. ISM and fellow Palestinian organizations on the ground have been stretched thin, working hard to provide support to the numerous farmers affected by the harvest.

SUPPORT PALESTINIAN FARMERS

The urgent situation of the 2020 olive harvest makes it clear how important the work of international volunteers is in traveling to Palestine, standing and working beside Palestinian farmers before, during and after the harvest. It also makes clear the importance of supporting Palestinian farmers through fair trade projects that bring olive oil and other Palestinian



produce to the world, as well as the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign against those who profit from Israeli apartheid, occupation and the confiscation of Palestinian land.

ISM needs volunteers to support this important work, telling the stories of Palestinian farmers and traveling to Palestine to provide direct action and sustenance on the ground. Contact ISM NorCal to learn more about how you can be a part of supporting Palestinian resilience and resistance on the ground. ■

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For more information or to register: www.ism-norcal.org/

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.

530-324-2509, 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.