



TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

LIVE FROM *Palestine*

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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"These Are War Crimes," Says Father of Gaza Family Wiped Out by Israeli Airstrike

By Joe Catron, Date: August 2014



ActiveStills.org

A Palestinian child who was killed by an Israeli airstrike on the Gaza harbor on July 16, 2014. Three other children were killed in the attack.

Editor: Jeff Pekar

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An elder cousin daubed the blood that dripped from a wound near Thaer Jouda's left eye Tuesday afternoon as the nine-year-old lay in a bed in Gaza City's al-Shifa hospital

"He's very good in English," the cousin said. But Thaer, his face and body lacerated by shrapnel from an Israeli airstrike on Sunday and his right leg amputated at the knee, had little interest in talking.

The bombing, which injured Thaer and his eleven-year-old sister Rahaf, also killed his mother Rawiya (43 years old), his sisters Tasnim (14) and Raghida (13) and his brothers Muhammad (8) and Usama (6).

The five deaths made the Joudas, residents of Tal al-Zaatar in the northern Gaza Strip's Jabaliya

area, one of the hardest-hit of the 91 families counted by the Palestinian Ministry of Health who lost multiple members during single attacks during Israel's 51-day military offensive.

An earlier list from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, including some casualties not yet confirmed by the Ministry of Health, counted 140 families that had lost three or more family members in a single incident by 20 August.

Many families were killed by Israeli strikes on almost 190 mosques, more than 140 schools and other civilian institutions, some used as shelters for Palestinians displaced from their homes by

Israeli military operations near the barrier that separates Gaza from present-day Israel.

The Al Mezan Center for Human Rights has recorded at least 990 people killed inside their homes in Israeli attacks, including 324 children. That's almost half of all people killed in the Israeli assault. Israeli strikes affected at least 10,589 homes, 2,715 of which were completely destroyed, by 25 August.

"MY EARS BROKE"

In the hallway outside Thae's room, his father, Issam, recalled the airstrike that ended the lives of his wife and four children two days earlier.

"At 4:00 pm, I was inside the house," he said. "All the rest of my family was sitting in the front

asking him for water. "In another bed, I saw my little boy, Usama. He was smiling in his sleep. I tried to hug and kiss him. There was no response.

"I tried to convince myself that he had returned my smile. And I refused to listen to anybody saying that he was dead."

On Saturday, Issam said in passing, he had bought his youngest son a track suit for the winter.

In another bed, he recalled, "I saw my wife covered by a sheet. I removed it quickly, and saw that she was also dead."

His other three children had been transferred to a separate hospital, Kamal Edwan. By the time he arrived to identify them, he said, staff had

The international community must punish the Israeli war criminals and end the occupation as soon as possible.

hall. Their mother was standing in the middle of the boys. They were playing as they were accustomed."

"As Rahaf was coming inside, I heard a massive explosion. My ears broke. I saw a huge mass of dust in the area and shrapnel scattered all over the hall."

"After the blast, my daughter Rahaf grabbed my neck. She was screaming 'Father! Where is my mother? Where are my brothers?'"

"SHRAPNEL EVERYWHERE"

After checking his surviving daughter for injuries, Issam said, he told her to leave the house quickly. Looking at the rest of his family in the hall, he said, "They lay with shrapnel everywhere and a pool of blood around them. It's like they were swimming in it. There were six of them, five killed.

"I heard the voice of my son saying, 'Dad.' The others were scattered everywhere. You couldn't distinguish between them because of the heavy shrapnel wounds in their faces.

"The voice was Thae. I carried him and left the house quickly. I felt my body cut from the shrapnel as I carried him. Then our neighbors took him and the rest of our family to al-Awda hospital."

At the hospital, Issam said, Thae was alert,

moved them into the refrigeration units used to store the dead before burial. "You could not recognize the features of their faces and heads."

"INCREMENTAL GENOCIDE"

In an interview with Rania Khalek, published by The Electronic Intifada shortly after a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian resistance groups was declared yesterday, Center for Constitutional Rights former executive director Michael Ratner called Israel's ethnic cleansing and massacres of Palestinians "incremental genocide."

Sitting outside his only surviving son's hospital room, Issam said, "The international community must punish the Israeli war criminals and end the occupation as soon as possible."

"Global society, which talks about justice and international law, must take responsibility to protect the Palestinian people from this massive destruction. These are war crimes." ■

*Joe Catron is a US activist in Gaza, Palestine. He co-edited *The Prisoners' Diaries: Palestinian Voices from the Israeli Gulag*, an anthology of accounts by detainees freed in the 2011 prisoner exchange. Follow him on Twitter: @jncatron.*

If Israel blockades Gaza, we will blockade Israel in Oakland

By Paul Larudee, Date: October 2014

Except for the few small boats of the Free Gaza Movement in 2008, Israel has completely blockaded all shipping to and from Gaza since 1967. Others tried to get through, including Libyan, Swedish, Greek, Turkish, Malaysian, Lebanese and other vessels, but all were stopped, sometimes with terrible consequences, as on the 2010 Freedom Flotilla.

In Oakland, California, however, ISM members were among Palestinians and Palestine solidarity protesters, with workers of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, that delayed a ship of Israeli shipping giant Zim from unloading or loading for 24 hours after the flotilla attack. Then, in August, 2014, after Israel killed more than 2100 Palestinians in Gaza, we blocked another Zim ship from unloading or loading.

This time the ship was not merely delayed. For four days picket lines day and night prevented work. Workers respected the picket lines despite police attempts to clear them. Then the ship and the employer used a deceptive and illegal practice to move the ship to another berth and transfer workers from another ship.

It didn't work. Although the Israeli consulate claimed that the ship completed its cargo operations, one crane operator boasted that less than 1% of the cargo was unloaded and no cargo was loaded. The mainstream press accepted the false statement, but the ship left port with most of its Oakland-bound cargo still on board and its onload cargo still in port. Aljazeera reported that two of Zim's clients decided to stop using Zim because of uncertain delivery. We had won an important victory.

In September, another coalition stopped another Zim ship. Jack Heyman of the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee reported that the ship

...was picketed on the day and night shifts at SSA [the stevedore company] by 200 protesters mobilized by the Stop ZIM Action Committee and the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee. Three of the organizers were Local



Bay Area activists marching in solidarity with Gaza at the Oakland port in August 2014

Photo: Paul Larudee

10 retirees, veterans of ILWU's 1984 anti-apartheid action in San Francisco. Again, Merrilees put out untrue statements, claiming longshore workers were threatened by picketers and were standing by on safety. Actually, an appeal was made in the union hiring hall that morning asking longshoremen not to work the ZIM ship and informing them of a picket line. In a show of solidarity all longshoremen refused Zim jobs except for one. In the evening SSA agreed to remove police from the picketing area if the union would dispatch the jobs. With no police presence it was the picketers and longshore supporters vs ZIM and SSA. We won hands down!

ISM-NorCal is proud to be part of these actions, and another on October 25. One of our members coined, "Send the ship back to sea until Palestine is free", and that is our intent.

Similar attempts have been made in Los Angeles, Seattle, Vancouver and Tampa, but thus far only Oakland has been completely successful. This is because we have a very special union in ILWU Local 10, which famously refused to unload a South African freighter for 11 days in 1984. If similar partnerships can be replicated in other port cities, we may be able to deal a powerful blow to Israeli shipping. Perhaps we already have. ■

ISM volunteer Paul Larudee is one of the founders of the movement to break the siege of Gaza by sea.

A Shooting In Hebron

By Eric Shawn, October 2014

“I hate Arabs. I wish I could kill them all.”

Anti-Arab slogans were not new to me. “Tomorrow there is no school in Gaza; there are no children left”, had been chanted during the recent Gaza massacre by angry fascist mobs in Tel Aviv. I had seen “Gas the Arabs” spray painted in black letters on the walls of the closed shops in Hebron’s H2 district. But I had never heard such sentiments uttered so calmly before. The effect was chilling.

A young Israeli soldier, a sniper, was talking to us, and we were in Hebron, in the West Bank, which has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. The soldier did not tell us his name, but he said he would be very proud if we would publish his photo, and he posed for the camera with two members of his sniper team. All three were carrying their rifles over their shoulders, and they were smiling. One was flashing a victory sign. I couldn’t help but wonder what the victory was to which he was referring. He had just shot an unarmed eighteen-year-old Palestinian boy who had thrown two stones from the roof of a building three hundred meters away. Whom had the soldier defeated? What was the struggle that our hero had endured before finally emerging victorious? Perhaps the struggle had not really been between this soldier and his Palestinian victim, as the western media would have us believe. Maybe it had been a conflict between humanity and compassion on one side, and oppression, racism and intolerance on the other. I knew which side had won today.

I had spent the last two months working for the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) in Palestine, and I had been in Hebron for the last two weeks. I was supposed to fly back home from Tel Aviv two days later, and I was concerned. ISM-ers are always worried during the days before they are scheduled to leave the country. They anticipate intense questioning and searching at the airport, so it’s crucial for them to have their stories in order. One wrong answer and one could be prohibited from ever entering Israel again. Jason, a sixty-year-old activist from Liverpool and one of my ISM colleagues, kept telling me not to worry.

“The soldiers at the airport are so stupid that they’ll believe anything you say.”

Helga, a German woman in her early twenties, on the other hand, insisted that we practice my story.

“What were you doing in Israel? Why were you here for so long? Israel is small. How can you spend two months in such a tiny country? Why do you have a beard? You’re forty years old. Why are you not married?” I didn’t have an answer to most of those questions (especially the last one), but I was prepared to tell them that I was a divinity student working on a paper, and that I needed to conduct my research in Bethlehem. I even had a working title. “Does Luke’s claim that Jesus was born in Bethlehem at the time of Quirinius’ census match the historical record?” The officials at the airport couldn’t possibly question that, could they?

If your goal was to pass through the exit procedure at the airport smoothly, there were several basic rules you had to follow. You were not allowed to have entered the West Bank (except to visit Bethlehem), and in fact you would be tempting fate if you even mentioned the West Bank at all. You had to have spent your entire visit in Israel. This meant you needed pictures. Lots of them. Of Israel.

My hard drive contained shots of events I had witnessed all over the West Bank. There are weekly demonstrations in the village of Kufr Qadum, south of Nablus, where the Israelis closed an access road to Palestinians, allowing only settlers to use it. Here Israeli soldiers routinely attack protestors with everything from tear gas to live ammunition to skunk water, a foul smelling substance fired from a water cannon that is so malodorous that you can detect its presence on your clothes up to five years later. I attended four of these demos, and I had several images of the bloodied victims of a particularly brutal Israeli attack. Then there were the pictures of the funeral of a mentally handicapped man murdered by Israeli soldiers in the El-Ein camp in Nablus. The IDF routinely enters refugee camps at night to make its presence known, and on this occasion they had come upon a man re-turning home from the local mosque. After the man did not follow the army’s instructions to put up his

Tell those kids to get off the roof! There are snipers, and they’re going to kill them!

hands, presumably because he did not understand them, soldiers shot him four times – three times in the stomach and once in the chest. My video showed an angry crowd carrying the victim's body, wrapped in the red, green, white and black Palestinian flag, through the narrow streets of the camp. I'm sure these were not the kinds of pictures the border officials were looking for.

Jason provided me with an SD card filled with pictures of the Wailing Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Mount of Olives, among other tourist destinations in Jerusalem. I still believed my colleague Charlie had the best advice of all.

"If you want to make it through the airport, just wear an IDF t-shirt."

Depending on whom you ask, El Khalil (Hebron is its Hebrew name), with approximately 250,000 Palestinians, between 500 and 850 Jewish settlers, and 4000 Israeli soldiers to protect them, is either the most populous or the second most populous city in the occupied territories. Hebron is a city under occupation, and just like in the rest of the West Bank, Israel uses both its armed forces and its settlers to punish the people of Hebron for their existence. But Hebron is also different. Only here do the Israeli settlers actually live inside the city itself, including many who live in an area close to the hub of the city, designated as H2. (H1 is the part of the city over which the Palestinian authorities have control.) H2 contains the famous Shuhada street, a formerly busy shopping area that was closed to Palestinian access in response to the Goldstein massacre of 1994. In February of that year Baruch Goldstein, a thirty-seven-year-old American doctor and religious zealot, opened fire on Muslim worshipers in the Ibrahimi mosque, continuing to shoot until he had no ammunition left. He killed 29 Palestinians, wounding another 125 and was himself beaten to death after the carnage. On Goldstein's tomb, which became a pilgrimage site for Israeli religious extremists, are written the words "He gave his life for the people of Israel, its Torah and land".

The area around Shuhada street is now a veritable ghost town, since the only Palestinians who are allowed to enter, which they must do through



one of the checkpoints, are those who live in H2. This rule was instituted by the Israeli authorities shortly after the massacre and has destroyed the neighborhood's once thriving economy. Today settlers live in various parts of H2, including Tel Rumeida, a hill that overlooks the old city.

The ISM apartment in Tel Rumeida is a safe haven to us. Not only is it where we live and eat and sleep and occasionally shower, but it also provides a respite from the violence and the injustice that we witness almost on a daily basis. Although I had been there for only two weeks, I definitely felt a strong connection to it. My favorite part of the house was the roof. I would sleep there every night and be awoken in the morning either by the muezzin or by the sun if I remembered to use my earplugs. The roof afforded me spectacular views over all of Hebron as well as until the morning sun woke me from my slumber at from which I could look out over all of Hebron. Since the house is located on a street used both by settlers and Palestinians, the roof also allowed us to witness some of the daily conflicts that occurred between the two groups.

The apartment is known by the Israeli soldiers and settlers as the "Anarchista House". It felt strange to know that the people that think of you as their enemy know exactly where you live. And these weren't ordinary people. All soldiers and some settlers are heavily armed,

The soldier with the rifle shot the youth. The one beside him was giving co-ordinates. As the metal bullets beside him show, he was using live ammunition.

Photo: Mighty Stream

with the shoulder-slung M-16 seeming to be the ubiquitous weapon of choice in Tel Rumeida. There's a sign on the inside of our front door warning us not to ever let IDF soldiers enter the apartment, not under any circumstances. But how do eight unarmed volunteers stop one of the world's most powerful armies from entering if it wants to?

Twenty four hours a day there are at least two soldiers keeping watch about ten meters down the hill from our house. Some of the soldiers are friendly and will smile or nod at us, but most simply glare at us hatefully. They resent our presence. Charlie tried to give them the benefit

on to a young Palestinian man.

"Tell those kids to get off the roof! There are snipers, and they're going to kill them!" I yelled into the phone with my limited colloquial Arabic. After a few seconds, the phone went dead.

My heart seemed to be beating in my throat, as I watched the boys and the soldiers and waited. Did they understand my advice? Would they heed it? Would the soldiers shoot them before they had a chance to escape?

Every evening we have a meeting in the apartment at which we discuss our failures and successes of the day, and we make plans for the next twenty-four hours. We also talk about our feel-

ISM work is difficult, and it can be emotionally taxing. When you witness extreme injustice and you constantly see unnecessary suffering, it can wear on you.

of the doubt. "They don't want to be here. They're just following orders," he said. It was a tired refrain that you find in armies all over the world and in my mind is most often associated with former Nazi soldiers who try to justify their actions during the Holocaust. We sometimes try to communicate with them, but most often their English is too broken for any meaningful exchange, even if that was what they desired.

Today the soldiers below us were excited. Four of their colleagues commandeered the roof of a nearby house that is owned by a Palestinian family. It was a sniper team. We were on the roof of our building, almost directly behind them, and we could follow the direction of their gun sights to see where they were aiming. Three hundred meters away there were two Palestinian youths milling around on the roof of a not-yet-completed three story building.

Juan and Miguel, two Spanish ISM-ers, joined Jason and me on the roof, and we considered our options.

"Yell at the soldiers! Throw stones at them! Run up to them and distract them!" None of the ideas seemed reasonable. Jason and Miguel decided to run down to the three story building to warn the youths, while Juan and I stayed on our roof to monitor the situation. After fifteen minutes I received a phone call from Jason, who passed me

ings. ISM work is difficult, and it can be emotionally taxing. When you witness extreme injustice and you constantly see unnecessary suffering, it can wear on you. That's what this component of the discussion is about. To give us all a chance to share our thoughts and worries and to know that we are not alone in what we fear. It is my favorite part of the meeting. Yesterday Miguel, in his thick Spanish accent, asked, "It is useless. These fucking soldiers do what they want anyway. Why are we even here?" It is a feeling and a fear we all share to some extent, and it is a topic that seems to come up a lot.

I was reminded of Miguel's words as the young men on the roof suddenly scampered behind a water tank, appearing to hide. I felt euphoric. There was no doubt now. I had made a difference. It was because of me that these kids had not been shot.

The euphoria vanished quickly as the teenagers on the roof re-appeared from behind the water tank. Even worse, one of them languidly picked up a stone and tossed it from the building. Then another one. I picked up my camera and started filming, because I knew that this was the moment the soldiers had been waiting for. According to the Israeli human rights group B'tselem, "the army's open-fire regulations clearly stipulate that live ammunition should not

be used against stone-throwers, except in cases of immediate mortal danger.”

But I knew better. A shot rang out, the sound loud enough to startle me, although I had been expecting it, causing my camera to shake. One of the men on the roof fell down and then hobbled to safety behind a pillar. It turns out that he was shot in the calf, and later pictures appeared on the ISM website of a cast covering his whole leg.

What happened next was possibly even more disturbing. One soldier grabbed the marksman’s leg, another slapped his hand on the ground in celebration. The mood appeared light. There were smiles and laughter. A soldier imitated the hapless victim’s motions after he was shot, grabbing his leg, limping around. They appeared to be entertained by the whole incident. It was almost as if they were acting in a movie, which, unbeknownst to them, they were.

My friend Charlie became incensed, and he ran downstairs and out into the street. A short, pudgy, unassuming Australian, he was one of the colleagues of mine that I admired most. Four years ago, walking down the street in Tel Rumeida, Charlie had been attacked by a group of Hebron settlers that had beaten him unconscious with a metal pipe, breaking his nose in the process. He remembered little about the incident, but it did take him several years to work up the courage to return to Palestine. But now he was back here in Hebron, confronting soldiers and settlers alike.

“Do you feel good, shooting unarmed children like that?”, he yelled at one of the soldiers, snapping his picture. The soldier grinned.

“I hate Arabs. I wish I could kill them all.”

After a week ISM published the video I took on its website and on Youtube. It received quite a bit of attention, and the Israeli army even responded by sanctioning the soldiers for their behavior, although it did not reveal the terms of the punishment. Military officials did insist that the boys on the roof had been a legitimate target, since they had been throwing Molotov cocktails, a statement that was a complete and utter fabrication. Instead, they explained that it was the soldiers’ celebratory behavior that had been deemed inappropriate and had been the cause for their punishment.

The mood at the meeting the evening of the shooting was somber. We had all been in demonstrations where the army used live ammunition, and most of us had seen Palestinians get shot,



The spotter (giving the “v” sign), poses with the sniper (in the middle), and another soldier who was part of the “team”.

Photo: Mighty Stream

but usually the bullets seemed to come from nowhere, out of a cloud of teargas. The connection between the shooter and the victim was tenuous, and we usually saw only the victim. We did not see the shooter, and we could pretend that he didn’t exist, or at least that he was not human. This time it was different. This sniper was real. He sweated, and he smiled. And he had shot that boy. For no reason. And he had laughed about it. I just couldn’t come to grips with it.

But tomorrow I would go to Jerusalem, and then the next day I was to fly out of Tel Aviv, and I needed to practice what I would say to the airport officials. What was the title of my divinity paper again? ■

Eric Shawn is a forty year old data analyst working in Mountain View. He felt he was getting burned out at work and decided to take six months off to travel around Europe. He ended up in Palestine volunteering for ISM for two months.

This sniper was real. He sweated, and he smiled. And he had shot that boy. For no reason. And he had laughed about it.

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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