



LIVE FROM *Palestine*

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

VOLUME 11

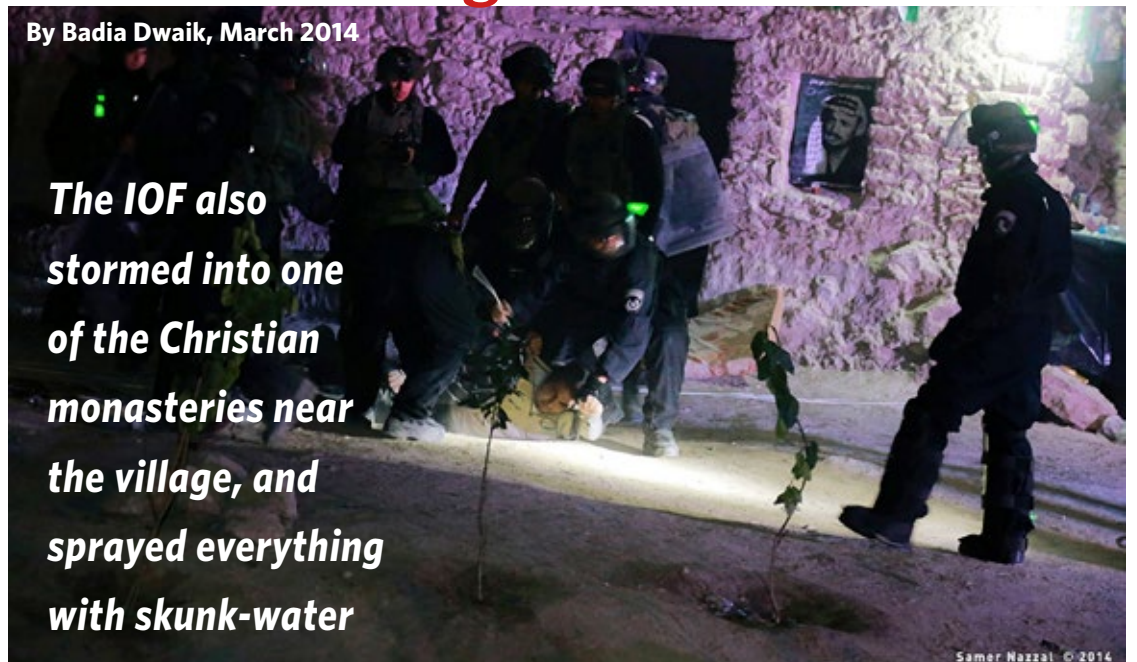
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Challenging Israel's Ban on Palestinians' Right of Return

By Badia Dwaik, March 2014

*The IOF also
stormed into one
of the Christian
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sprayed everything
with skunk-water*



Samer Nazzal © 2014

Ein Hajlah eviction by IOF

Editor: Jeff Pekrul

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Youth resistance activists in Palestine decided to return to the Palestinian village of Ein Hajla, the residents of which were evicted during the 1967 war. Ein Hajla is located mostly on Canaanite land owned by the Orthodox Church. There are historic houses built from straw, mud and palm trees, giving it an exceptional aesthetic charm.

In support of and solidarity with the peaceful protesters, I joined those who were among the first to reach the depopulated Palestinian village. We cleaned the village and cleared its houses of the mud and garbage that was lying about. We then collected dry palm tree branches and burned them at night. We divided ourselves into work teams, including one team in charge of food distribution and one in charge of secu-

rity. We stayed the night, organizing activities inspired by the village's history and heritage, such as dancing dabka, organizing workshops and singing Palestinian songs calling for freedom, hope and love. The return journey to Hebron the next day took many hours because of the Israeli army checkpoints that created a siege around the village.

Two days later, we returned to Ein Hajlah joined by medical relief volunteers. We went there with two cars, one of which was an ambulance car, bringing food and drinking water. When we arrived at the village, the army inspected the two cars and confiscated the food and water. We understood that the siege would continue until



Ein Hajlah eviction by the IOF.

the activists were forced to leave the village. That night we installed a large screen to watch a film. A group of Bedouins joined us as a gesture of solidarity, and we started to dance and sing traditional Bedouin songs. Sleeping was very hard because of the extreme cold, particularly at dawn, and the lack of blankets.

We remained until Thursday night January 2, 2014 when a large number of people from all over the West Bank gathered for Friday prayers in the village. It had been expected that hundreds more would come the next morning to Ein Hajla. Groups of young women and men had come, also families with their children. It was an exceptional night, in which we celebrated the birthday of a little girl named Ahed al-Tamim and others who had birthdays that day. When I lay down on a sleeping mat and the others were busy dancing and singing, I felt that the eyes of the Israelis were on us, but they did not yet intervene. I speculated that the absence of foreign press, in contrast to the Bab al-Shams experience (when activists established a 'return' camp near Jerusalem) may have been one of the reasons why the Israelis had allowed us to enter and stay in this village. Another reason might have been the Israeli concern that hundreds would come and others would join the next morning for Friday prayers which means there would be thousands and would make the situation difficult to control.

We expected an army assault from the beginning. Shortly after 1:30 AM on Friday morning, we heard voices asking people to stay in their houses and tents, and shortly after that the

raid began. I headed towards the place where the Occupation forces had begun attacking the village. There were hundreds of soldiers and they had brought huge bulldozers, dogs and stink-water cannons. The activist Tamer al-Atrash and I went to evaluate the number of soldiers and when we saw the huge number, we returned and attempted to make a human chain to stop them from storming the village. Tamer al-Atrash, Amad al-Atrash and Imad Abu Shamsih came with me in the first row and he soldiers used sound bombs to generate panic among us, in addition to hitting whoever was near them in a savage manner. They violently dragged

me by the shirt for a few meters, my face to the ground, hit me and stood on my back. They tried to tie my hands behind my back and twisted my arm painfully. I could hardly breathe because of the soldier standing on my back and neck, and I felt my body going weak. I woke up after a while, with two ambulance workers around me, pushing me into one of the ambulances. Once inside, I heard that the Occupation forces had destroyed the village with bulldozers and were trying to evacuate the people of the village by force. The IOF also stormed into one of the Christian monasteries near the village, and sprayed everything with skunk-water.

I did not think of my 15 year old son until after entering the ambulance, because I consider that my son is part of the village and that his fate is tied with it. What happens to him happens to others and he is not better than them. We were taken to the hospital because several of us had severe bruises and broken bones. According to the Jericho hospital staff, 41 people were wounded. Only after I received treatment did I realize that I had lost everything—my money, my camera and other means of recording the events, which to me are the best weapon to monitor the human rights violations of the occupation and its crimes. ■

Badia Dwaik is an activist with ISM, SMFP (Solidarity Movement for a Free Palestine), the Christian Peacemaker Team, and Youth Against Settlements. He has a degree in social work from Al Quds Open University, and is based in Hebron, Palestine.

Interview with Abdallah Abu-Rahmah

By Jeff Pekrul, March 2014

Abdallah Abu-Rahmah lives in the West Bank village of Bil'in, where resistance to the Occupation succeeded in re-routing part of the Apartheid wall and saving some of that village's agricultural land. Abdallah and his family have paid a heavy price for their commitment to freedom and justice. His relative Bassem Abu Rahmeh, and his sister Jwaher Abu Rahmah were both killed by high-velocity tear gas canisters fired by

The IOF waited until after he [Obama] had departed for Jordan to begin their raid.

the Israeli army at close range during peaceful demonstrations in Bil'in. Abdallah himself was shot in the back by a tear gas canister, and spent a year and a half in jail for protesting against the wall. I interviewed him by Skype in February 2014, two months after Palestinians returned to the pre-'67 village of Ein Hajlah, near Jericho, where he was beaten badly by the IOF during their raid to close the camp.

Question: Was Ein Hajlah the first village where Palestinians attempted to use their own Right of Return?

Answer: No, Ein Hajlah was the fifth such village. In January 2013, the first was Bab al-Shamss near the E1 zone settlement called Ma'ale Adumim. Later in 2013, Palestinians returned to Alkarama, in the West Bank just west of Jerusalem, and Almanater near Nablus. Nablus is where the most violent settlers live, and the IOF destroyed the village there after only 2 hours. The Nablus action occurred during president Obama's visit to Ramallah. The IOF waited until after he had departed for Jordan to begin their raid. Over one hundred people were arrested and deported.

Question: Are these projects an outgrowth of the work against construction of the Apartheid wall in Bil'in?

Answer: Yes, although Jayyus and Budrus villages were doing this before Bil'in. We in Bil'in have been working with defense committees in other villages to help them do the same. During 2012, we were also involved in efforts to start boycotts of Israeli products in West Bank stores, and in protests on settler-only roads. Activists from Bil'in and other areas were involved in Ein Hajlah and the other villages to which people returned.

Question: What groups or people most inspire you and other Palestinian activists?

Answer: Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela are a few. Peaceful protest groups in Italy, Brazil, Egypt and Tunisia have also inspired our work.

Question: What kind of media coverage did the Ein Hajlah protest receive?

Answer: Television coverage in Israel was limited because the IOF would not permit Israeli media to visit the area. However, Palestinian TV

We are optimistic that similar future actions will be effective in bringing the world's attention to the injustice under which we live every day.

covered it extensively and al-Jazeera reported on it several times. The Palestinian member of the Knesset visited the camp, and so did ministers of the Palestinian Authority. We are optimistic that similar future actions will be effective in bringing the world's attention to the injustice under which we live every day. ■

How much do you know about ISM-Northern California?

By Paul Larudee, March 2014

It's safe to say that no one knows more about the Northern California ISM group than me, because I've part of it since the beginning. Perhaps it's time to share some highlights.

First, we're very proud that thanks to our supporters, we've been able to send scores of volunteers and thousands of dollars to Palestine over the past twelve years. We've also managed some rather surprising accomplishments.



We are the only ISM chapter that made itself into a nonprofit corporation. Although ISM was the first project of the corporation, we became a fiscal sponsor for other projects that you will recognize. These include the Free Gaza Movement (now independent), the Free Palestine Movement, the Palestine Children's Welfare Fund, NoTaxDollarsToIsrael.com, the Syria Solidarity Movement, the Solidarity Movement for Free Palestine, Our Neighbors in Palestine, the Barbara J. Raskin Scholarship Fund (now closed), and even the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five.

All of these projects are dedicated to defending human rights, and ISM-NorCal has experimented with a corporate system of sponsorship that permits each of them to act as independently as possible while exercising central fiscal control and

accountability. Our lawyer says it's quite an innovative system.

In a typical year, we provide training and sponsorships for volunteers going to Palestine. We also send funds to sustain the ISM group in Palestine. This year, we are also providing financial and organizational support to a new group in Palestine that has been formed by long-term ISM leaders to do the same kind of work.

We are also well known for bottling Palestinian fair trade organic extra-virgin olive oil to support Palestinian agriculture and to raise funds for volunteers. The bottling parties are always a fun time and a great fundraiser. Our on-line store now includes jewelry designed by Katie Miranda, one of our volunteers who learned Arabic calligraphy during her time in Palestine and applies this to her art. We also stock Palestinian herbs (za'atar) and soap under our own Hurriya ("freedom" in Arabic) label which also includes the oil and Palestinian headscarves (kufiyyas) from the only remaining maker in Palestine.

A few years ago, we managed to get office space, but this is the first year that we have the means to furnish it with real furniture and equipment, which will transform our effectiveness in ways we haven't even imagined, because we won't have to work out of our homes. (See our appeal for donated items in this issue.)

Obviously, our newsletter continues to be an important part of our outreach, but the websites have been redesigned and spectacularly managed by Katie, as well as Eva Bartlett, a former ISM volunteer and journalist who has a famous blog and was in Gaza for several years, including some of the most difficult. She now makes her home in Canada, but by the time you receive this, she will have been to Syria and back, as will I.

In general, we would rather raise consciousness about what is happening in Palestine and to let you know what our volunteers are doing in Palestine. However, I hope you don't mind if we take a little time to brag about our accomplishments. After all, you own them as much as we do. ■

Paul Larudee, Co-Founder of Free Gaza, Free Palestine and the ISM in Northern California

To The Soldier With My Passport

By Saeeda al-Rashid, February 2014

To the soldier with my passport
Read country, gender, age, and number slow
Still there is something else that you don't know
Tell me what makes you look at me so long
As if between the lines is something wrong
Perhaps my lack of manners makes you turn
But this I must say before we adjourn:

Some things in ink are still not black and white
Remember the way I looked right back at you
The immemorial day we drew a line
I think because I'm less afraid than you
To walk from Tel Rumeida through the heat
And down to Bab al-Zouwiya as if free
And that my friends are more like you than me
But know this is one city and one street.

Orange Juice, or Rights of Civilians Everywhere

By Saeeda al-Rashid, February 2014

Not from concentrate
This time, no cut-and-pasted,
Transferred genes; nor modified
With made-up hormones, or
Aged and processed by machine.

Blend of soil, water,
Light, ancestral breeding
In fertile ground,
Brought through checkpoints, fresh in bright sun,
Mixed with carrots, just three shekels –

Orange juice in Khalil Souq.

Your money helps a lot but ...

... there are other ways you can help, as well. We are trying to furnish and staff our office in Berkeley. Can you donate some of the things we need or volunteer some time every month to staff it? Here are some of the furnishings we need. Except for the computer, you would need to be in the San Francisco Bay Area.

- Macbook or Macintosh computer. Older model OK and we can refurbish.
- Small desk, 24" x 42"
- Two-drawer file cabinet
- Floor lamp, ceiling lamp and/or hanging lamp
- Pull type window shade, 30" wide or venetian blinds
- Carpeting, 8' x 12'
- Pigeonhole mail slots, two sets of 8, 10 or 12.

The Meaning of Separateness

By Saeeda al-Rashid, April 2014

It's late May, and the air is stifling. Heat sizzles from the pavement, and Khalili youth, though well-adapted to these conditions, can be seen wiping sweat from their brows as they trek home from school. A few trickle through Checkpoint 56 into the Tel Rumeida neighborhood, formally designated Israeli-controlled territory under the Hebron Agreement. Soldiers search their bags and detain one, but finding no reason to arrest him, release him an hour later, a routine form of harassment youth are all too accustomed to. At some point, a school-bus turns up the road. It's labeled in Hebrew and English, "Air-Conditioned Video." The school bus is only for settler children, whereas many Palestinian vehicles are not allowed to drive in Tel Rumeida.

The word "apartheid" is often used to criticize Israeli racism and the Israeli state's policies of segregation. But on the street level, what does apartheid actually look like? While living in occupied Khalil under Israeli military occupation for a few months, I experienced only the beginning of the answer to those questions. The rest is in the lived experience of businessmen and women, school children, farmers and shepherds who have lived under occupation for forty-plus years.

Apartheid is the reason ISM volunteers on the ground believe strongly in only taking actions led by Palestinians

APARTHEID DEFINED

In his final report as UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the OPT, Richard Falk called for an investigation into the Israeli practices, broadly referred to as *hafrada* meaning "separation," that could constitute apartheid under the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. Offenses that come in conflict with the Convention include the unlawful taking of life, administrative detention, and torture, and also the segregation of land and parallel legal systems in the West Bank that "prevent participation in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country and the full development of a racial group".

This invokes a flood of memories from my

short time in Palestine, including a young couple in Masafer Yatta living in a former sheep pen because the Israeli Civil Authority won't grant them a permit to build a house; shops forced to close down during Jewish holidays so that settlers can illegally pass into the Palestinian-controlled part of Khalil; a B'tselem caseworker laughing aloud when we asked whether any action would be taken after Abu Shamsiya documented Israeli settlers' assault on his family and was himself arrested on false charges of spitting at the nearby soldiers; two pre-adolescent boys callously arrested on the same night for allegedly throwing stones and a tomato, whilst at the same time an Israeli boy of similar age threw eggs at internationals and went unpunished.

Apartheid, as Falk points out, is not a recurrence of isolated crimes; rather, "the combined effect of the measures designed to ensure security for Israeli citizens, to facilitate and expand settlements, and, it would appear, to annex land, is *hafrada*, discrimination and systematic oppression of, and domination over, the Palestinian people." Apartheid is in the rain that flooded the Khalil Souq (market), ruining goods that provide needed income for Khalili families, because Israeli authorities have prevented the construction of appropriate drainage facilities. Apartheid is in the rocky, rat-infested paths Palestinians travel on to climb the prayer road because the main roads are only for settlers. Apartheid is in the children who inhale tear gas nearly every day on the way to school, and every family stuck in the Qalandiya checkpoint during Ramadhan, barred from entering Jerusalem to worship. Apartheid is the reason ISM volunteers on the ground believe strongly in only taking actions led by Palestinians—this is their home, and their lives are impacted every day by apartheid years after we've flown home to our respective countries.

RESISTANCE AND TEAR GAS

Richard Falk's final report also pointed out that persecution of those who resist apartheid practices falls under article 2(f) of the Convention. Upon investigating the types of tear gas deployed by the IDF against peaceful protestors, from an organic chemistry perspective with the



There will only be peace when real justice is served—when apartheid is nothing more than a history lesson for our children.

Youth Against Settlements

help of a leading chemist who was my professor, I unearthed a plethora of information on this vile substance.

The IDF principally uses CS gas (o-chlorobenzilidenemalononitrile). Exposure to CS gas has been implicated in a number of deaths in the West Bank as well as South Korea. This is likely because it's a potent Michael acceptor, making it able to inhibit many important chemicals in our bodies including the amino acid cysteine, which can be found on the TRPA1 protein channel that mediates our continued responsiveness to a wide variety of irritants and has been implicated in the prolonged sense of irritation experienced by some who are exposed to tear gas. (This is potentially the reason biting into an onion, a popular on-the-ground treatment for tear gas exposure, also counteracts the toxicity of CS gas – the inert sulfur-containing compounds in onions serve as alternate Michael donors).

Additionally, CS and CN gas produce methylene chloride, which as a nervous depressant and mild carcinogen reaches dangerous levels at exposure

above 250 ppm, a limit easily surpassed by the constant barrage of intense tear gas deployment I witnessed at demonstrations. Finally, CS gas has been shown to be a mild mutagen (via intercalation with DNA) and thus it is also a potential carcinogen.

Much has been said about the disparity in living conditions that results from the Israeli military occupation; prolonged exposure to dangerous chemicals for not only activists who resist the wall but shop-keepers and schoolchildren intertwines with the many different ways the system of apartheid and physical and legal segregation impact the daily lives of Palestinian people. I believe this apartheid in and of itself is violence; there is no state of peace from which the more obvious forms of violence such as stone-throwing and shootings arise. There will only be peace when real justice is served – when apartheid is nothing more than a history lesson for our children. ■

Saeeda talking with the family of a 13 year-old boy who is was arrested and was being held inside the IOF compound for a minor infraction.

Frequent arrest and detention is an example of Apartheid policies.

Saeeda al-Rashid is a human rights activist who resides in the Bay Area

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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