



LIVE FROM *Palestine*

TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

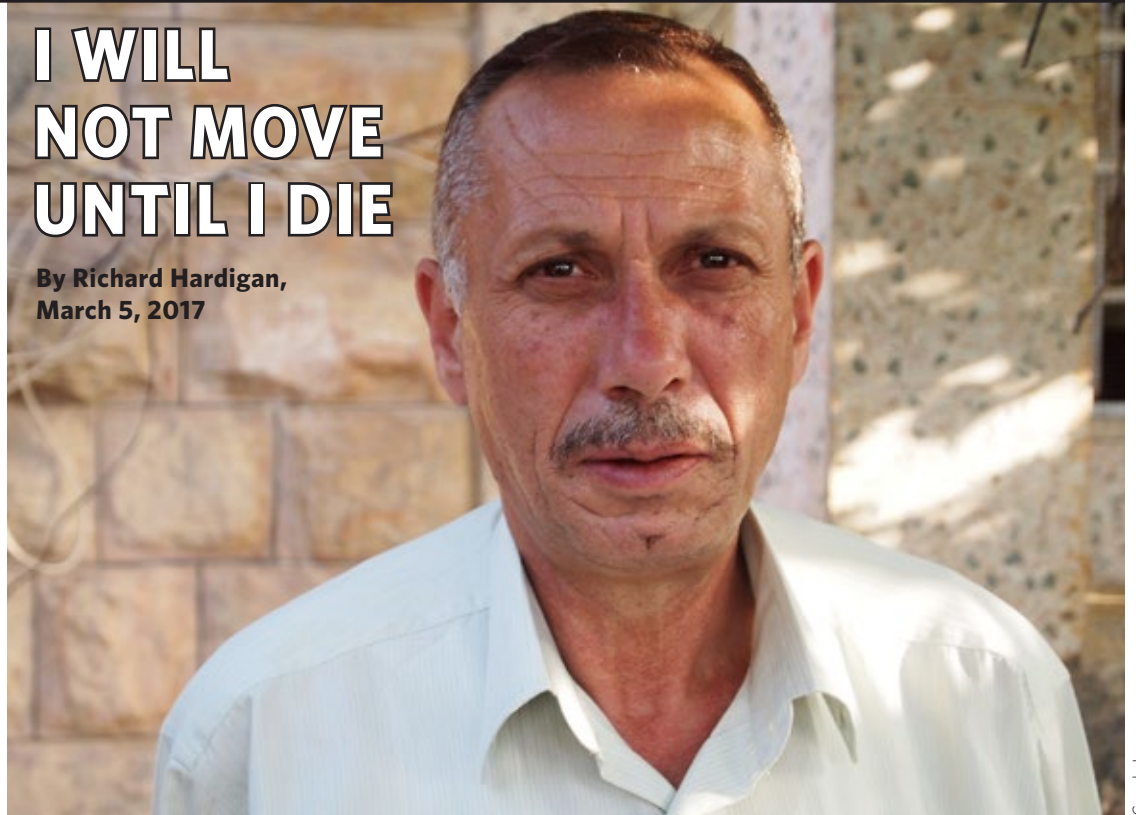
VOLUME 14

NO. 1

JUNE 2017

I WILL NOT MOVE UNTIL I DIE

By Richard Hardigan,
March 5, 2017



Google Images

Hashem al-Azzeh

Editor: Jeff Pekrul

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October 21, 2016, marked the first anniversary of the death of the Palestinian doctor Hashem al-Azzeh. The proximate cause of his demise is in dispute. Was it excessive tear gas inhalation, or was it the chest pains he had been feeling earlier on that day? Perhaps it was a combination of the two. But the ultimate cause is clear: the brutality of the Israeli occupation contributed to his death.

I first met al-Azzeh two years ago, while I was working for the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), an organization dedicated, as its name suggests, to standing in solidarity with the Palestinians. I was stationed in the neighborhood of Tel Rumeida, in the heart of the ancient city of Hebron in the West Bank, where a

few hundred right-wing Zionist settlers (and the thousands of soldiers assigned to protect them) live among the roughly 100,000 Palestinians who call the city home.

Hebron is divided into two zones: H1, which is under Palestinian administration, and H2, where the Israeli authorities have control. H2 contains the most famous Hebron landmark, which is also a major source of contention between Muslims and Jews — the Cave of the Patriarchs, as it is known by Jews, and the Ibrahimi Mosque, as it is referred to by Muslims. The building, a large rectangular stone enclosure, is believed by Muslims, Christians and Jews to lie above the tomb of Abraham, the father of all three

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religions. In Tel Rumeida, a short walk away, settlers and Palestinians live in close proximity to one another, and violent confrontations between them occur on an almost daily basis.

For years, they [settlers] attempted to induce him to leave his home. But he steadfastly refused. "I will never move until I die or we get our freedom," he said in a 2013 interview.

In the middle of the night of August 2, 2014, I walked to al-Azzeh's house. The army does not allow the use of his front door, and I had to make my way along a dirt path that led through thick bushes to the back. Al-Azzeh, a thin man in his early fifties, was standing on his porch when I arrived, tightly gripping a baseball bat in his right hand. A bullet hole, the result of a settler attack, was visible in the wall above the door.

It was the height of Operation Protective Edge, an Israeli military assault on Gaza, and the Palestinians of Tel Rumeida knew the potential for violence on this night was greater than normal. Not only had the situation in

"I was part of a three-person team assigned to spend the night at the doctor's house. Our presence, we hoped, would mitigate the possibility of a settler attack."

Gaza generally exacerbated the already high tensions in Hebron, but just a few days earlier the Israelis had suffered one of their worst losses of the assault, with 25 soldiers dying in a single day. A soldier from Kiryat Arba, the largest settlement in Hebron, had been among the dead, and he was to be buried in the old Jewish cemetery in Tel Rumeida. Hundreds of enraged and most likely armed settlers would be descending on the Palestinian neighborhood for the funeral, many of them looking for vengeance. I was part of a three-person team assigned to spend the night at the doctor's house. Our presence, we hoped, would mitigate the possibility of a settler attack.

Like many Palestinians who live in Tel Rumeida, the family of Hashem al-Azzeh has a

long history of confrontation with the settlers. For years, they attempted to induce him to leave his home. But he steadfastly refused. "I will never move until I die or we get our freedom," he said in a 2013 interview.

The settlers employed harsh and violent methods. They repeatedly attacked him, smashing his head and breaking his teeth with the butts of their guns. Twice they beat up his wife, Nisreen, who was pregnant at the time, on both occasions causing a miscarriage. Once they invaded his house, shooting bullets into the walls, breaking windows and smashing furniture.

Al-Azzeh claimed that in 2003, perhaps sensing that he could not be intimidated, they offered him \$2 million to leave, but he refused, saying that he "would require the national budgets of the USA and Israel." If they provided that, he would sell them a branch from his olive tree.

The four hours we spent at his house that night were terrifying, as we sat in the darkness, thinking about the settlers roaming around outside. Earlier in the evening, I had watched from the roof of the ISM apartment as dozens of settlers climbed up the hill and passed on their way to the cemetery. A good number of them were armed, their M-16s slung over their shoulder. It was a frightening scene. I thought about my Canadian colleague, Peter, who years earlier had been attacked by a group of settlers and almost lost his life.

Throughout the night, al-Azzeh relayed to us reports that he received on his phone:

"There are thousands of angry settlers gathering at the Tomb of the Patriarchs."

"The settlers are coming this way. They are chanting 'Death to Arabs.'"

I had not seen al-Azzeh's wife or any of their four children. I was sure he did not want his kids to be here if a mob broke down the door and began beating the inhabitants.

One of al-Azzeh's sons was arrested when he was five years old. The soldiers accused him of throwing stones, but they admitted that they had not actually witnessed this. Laughing as they arrested him, they told al-Azzeh that they were relying on the word of a settler.

"We used to have daily harassments from the settlers toward our children," al-Azzeh explained in 2013. "A lot of them suffer from



Israeli occupation soldiers in Hebron

Richard Hardigan

psychological diseases. The children here, including my own, can't sleep well at night. The light has to be on all the time. If we turn it off, they can't sleep. They can't fall asleep if we don't stay with them. They always expect soldiers or settlers to come and attack. Many children still wet their pants at the age of 14 or 15."

"The settlers are coming this way. They are chanting 'Death to Arabs.'"

I don't remember when I fell asleep that night, but I woke up at 4:30 in the morning. Al-Azzeh was nowhere to be seen. He must have retired to his bedroom sometime during the night. It was still dark outside, but it was quiet, and the streets were empty. It was over.

I never saw Hashem al-Azzeh again. He died

on October 21, 2015, at the age of 54. Having had cardiac problems for years, he began to feel chest pains while at home, but because ambulances are not allowed in H2, he was forced to walk the 700 meters to the Bab al-Zawiya checkpoint. Israeli forces had killed two Palestinian teenagers the previous evening after an alleged stabbing attack on a soldier, and as a result, there were clashes at the checkpoint when al-Azzeh arrived, and he was forced to inhale the tear gas that the Israelis were employing. Eventually, an ambulance did pick him up, but he did not survive the trip to the hospital. An Israeli army spokeswoman said that "the military was in no way responsible."

Richard Hardigan is a professor and journalist. He recently wrote a book about his experiences in Palestine entitled *"The Other Side of the Wall: An Eyewitness Account of the Occupation in Palestine."* His website is richardhardigan.com.

A Story of Coming Together

A moment of waking up. A little bit more.

Sam Weaver, February 2017

Once upon a time, if there is such a thing as time, there lived a Jew and a Palestinian. This Jew grew up keeping kosher, with family holding traditions, more than religion. Her father grew up in Israel, though she did not grow up with him, but still instilled

“there are Jewish people that stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and that fight to end the occupation, and that do not stand at all with the State of Israel”

Life for kindergarten children in Occupied al Khalil/Hebron

Sam Weaver

in her were false impressions, and one sided stories about the State of Israel and Palestine. With curiosity and wonder, this person called herself to wake up to the truth of all manners; the truth about colonization, capitalism, privi-

lege, and power. And, she learned about Palestine. And she became ashamed of her heritage; oppressed becoming oppressors. Blood shed and tears turned to blood shed and tears. What a mighty struggle to both celebrate a beautiful faith that holds the questions around the mysterious forces of the universe, the Creator, a history with beauty, celebration, prayer taken and twisted into a nation state claiming Judaism as their right to occupy another people.

And in this story is a Palestinian. A farmer in the hills of Hebron, a person just trying to live his life, raise his family, and put bread on the table. He is but one of every person that lives under this occupation with tragic tales of torture, destruction, and land confiscation, on this holy land for all peoples. This person's story opens with a beautiful large shop in Bethlehem, filled with goods to sell, with pride to work and support the family. This store is bombed as he is outside the shop drinking coffee, during an uprising called the Intifada in 2002. And this is not the end of it. This person's story involves loss of many members of the family through a fire started by settlers who live next door to his home. Surrounded 24 hours a day by Israeli soldiers carrying guns, arresting and controlling where they can enter and exit from, making life as hard as possible. And, the settlers—extremists, often Orthodox Jews, who have no authority to hold them accountable for their actions. On the contrary, these people are supported by authority for anything that they say or do. This is the picture that this Palestinian has of the “Jew”.

So it came to be that one day this Jewish American (with both Sephardic and Ashkenazi roots) and this Muslim Palestinian came to meet. The meeting place: olive fields. Trees filled with purple gems, and surrounded by settler invasion and the potential for harassment and trouble. This day went smoothly for our group in the fields. With broken Arabic and broken English, and much hand gesture and facial expression, we connected about life and land over coffee and tea. She is brought over to see the new baby goats who have just been born, as they watched the shepherd head down the hillside. And, at the



end of the day, the farmer invited three of the volunteers to join his family in his home for a tea and a meal. They accept the invitation, and meet sisters, wives, and many children. They sit in the living room over tea, and attempt to converse on topics such as work, marriage, children, their countries of origin and the election of Donald Trump. They laugh as they exchange guesses on one another's ages, and look at photos of the family enjoying themselves, as well as videos of the farmer's son, age 13 at the time, being arrested by soldiers on the street, a very common occurrence for young boys in Palestine. They are profiled and accused of crimes they never committed, all the time.

The food comes out- French fries and cauliflower both cooked in olive oil, salads, and bread. It is all delicious, and they are more quiet as they enjoy the food, hungry from a long day of work. Oh, and the olives. The most tasty olives that she had ever tasted. They begin talking again, maybe it's about Arabic dialects, she can't recall exactly how they get to what comes next. But, somehow Morocco gets mentioned and she blurts out (without thinking really) that her grandparents are from Morocco. The farmer is curious, surprised maybe. He asks, "Muslim"? She nod no. "Christian"? She nod no. "Yehudi"? His tone as he asks is concerning. Nonetheless, what can she do. She has been building a relationship with this person all day long. She isn't going to lie, but something in her wonders what will happen. She replies, "Yes".

What follows is a sequence of whispering, as the person reaches for a cigarette, the food shortly after disappears. One of my teammates immediately says, "She is very brave to come here. She is a good one. She is working with you". Another cigarette. And, then lots of words, some understood and others not. She tries to discern the words, but the energy is what she is picking up on. She talks to him in hopes that he will understand that there are Jewish people that stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and that fight to end the occupation, and that do not stand at all with the State of Israel. She says the words, 'my people' as she tries to explain that she is distraught by what 'her people' are doing, and he says, 'my people?' back, and she quickly works to clarify, that they are not her people in Israel, and at this point, she cannot hold back the tears, and they fall out in water



falls and attempts to breathe deep in order to keep calm, and try to hold back more. These are personal tears — of her ancestors that decided in 1948 to move from Morocco where Jews and

Harvesting olives
Kafr Dik, Palestine

Sam Weaver

"... healing tears—a feeling of hope—that this meeting was felt by the ancestors of both of our people."

Arabs were living mostly in peace, to the nation state where her family participated and stood with the occupation of the Muslim and Christian Palestinian people. These are solidarity tears - that the Jewish people are responsible for what

A Story of Coming Together

Continued from page 5

is being done, and that she can understand this person's misunderstanding of religion versus the

We are both people, and that we can be living side by side in harmony and just peace.

national state. And, as the tears fall, the tension begins to fade. Water and tissues are brought over, and the response is gentleness and care, with a hope that the tears will stop soon as well. And so, with the tension released, she thought



Olive fields often surrounded by settlements.

Sam Weaver

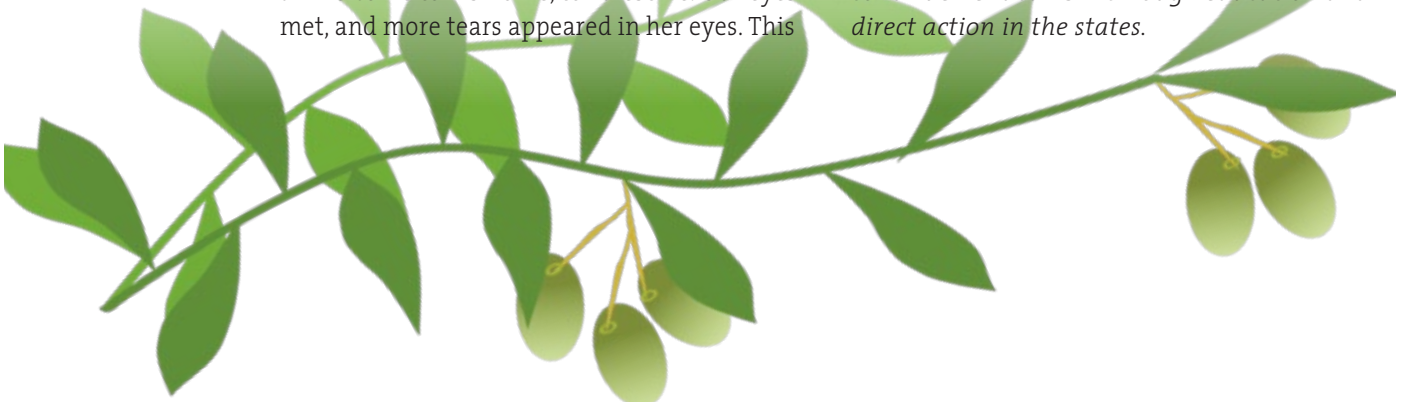
she could feel more softness return to this person. She could listen to more stories of the family and the life that these Jews have caused him to suffer. And, he ended by saying we are all welcome to his home, to Palestine. Our eyes met, and more tears appeared in her eyes. This

time, healing tears—a feeling of hope—that this meeting was felt by the ancestors of both of our people. She cries for both the Muslim and the Jew, for these religions and faiths have been misconstrued and misinterpreted by many, and it is a big shame and a slander that should be wiped away from the earth.

As they leave to return home from this unexpected evening, the farmer asks to aid them in finding their way back up the rocky steep hill. It was dark and hard to see. The farmer reached out his hand, and though under most circumstances in Palestinian culture she might be wary to accept, she took his hand, and was guided along the way, shown the well of Abraham that the settlers have taken from them, the school that he went to, now belonging to the settlers, and the beauty of his city. And, as we parted, he asked her if she would come back to visit. She answered, "Inshallah".

This is a story of one Palestinian farmer, and one Jewish American women, and the meeting of the two, coming together to heal from the separation of what once was a sweet connection between Muslim and Jew. Perhaps the peoples of that rich time were listening in, and perhaps the message of hope for the future relationship will be carried forward to more people in need of the truth, that we are both people, and that we can be living side by side in harmony and just peace.

*Living in the greater bay area and engaging in activism surrounding Palestinian rights, **Sam Weaver** is currently traveling the world and seeking out opportunities to use her Jewish ancestry to bring attention to injustices of Israeli occupation of Palestine. She plans to continue her activism through education and direct action in the states.*



June Palbox

Our solidarity community is growing and has made much positive progress over the years like the rise of the BDS campaign, an increase in campus activism and the increased visibility of Palestinian voices in the media. But we can't over-look the Palestinian economy, which has been strangled and blockaded just like Palestinian lives and property. With that in mind I've worked with the Northern California chapter of the International Solidarity Movement (NorCal ISM) to bring you Palbox.

Palbox is a totally new way to support Palestinian farmers, artisans, craftspeople and Palestinian nonviolent resistance that completely bypasses all Israeli control. Palbox is a gourmet gift box delivered four times a year to your doorstep and includes: delectable, organic, fair trade Palestinian foods, amazing crafts and jewelry, and bath and body goods that are guaranteed to make you smile



www.palbox.org

Donations Needed

For years, ISM—Northern California has rented only a supply closet at the Grassroots House, 2022 Blake Street in Berkeley, California, with right of access to the common area for meetings and other activities. Now, at long last, we are able to rent office space, as well. The cost of the two spaces

together is a mere \$190/mo. At the present time, however, we are coming up short.

Renting this office is a dream come true that enables us to expand our activities and capabilities, but means that we have an additional monthly expense. Will you help? We especially need you to commit

to a regular monthly amount for this fixed expense. You can instruct your bank accordingly or select the monthly donation option at our website, www.ism-norcal/contribute.html.

We also need of office furnishings, and volunteers to contribute time at the new office. Call or write us to help.

NORCAL ISM Support Group

405 Vista Heights Rd.
El Cerrito, CA 94530

www.ism-norcal.org
solidarity@ism-norcal.org
510-236-4250



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.

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.