



# LIVE FROM Palestine

TESTIMONIES  
FROM THE  
NONVIOLENT  
RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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## ISM TOUR COMES AT POTENTIAL TURNING POINT FOR PALESTINE

By Joe Catron, Date: April 2018



Demonstrators rallied in New York's Penn Station on January 30 to demand Israel release Ahed Tamimi. Credit: Joe Catron

Editor: Jeff Pekrul

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This year's International Solidarity Movement tour, which brought ISM coordinators and volunteers to speak at over two dozen sites across Canada and the United States, came at a crucial moment in the struggle to liberate Palestine. Fresh on the heels of an Israeli occupation court's sentencing of seventeen-year-old Palestinian activist Ahed Tamimi to eight months of military detention for defending her home and family against enemy soldiers, Gaza's Great March of Return and Israel's wave of massacres against unarmed Palestinian refugees seeking return to their homes erupted midway through our travels across the continent.

These two developments, and the global campaigns around them, have raised fresh awareness of Israel's seventy years of violence against Palestinians among untold millions, and brought thousands of new activists into

solidarity movements, at a time when Israel's standing among its traditional supporters had already begun to wane. A January poll by the Pew Research Center showed Democratic voters in the U.S. nearly split, with 25% now sympathizing with Palestinians and 27% still favoring Israel. In 2017, a Brand Israel Group study found that support for Israel among Jewish college students in the U.S. had plunged by 27% over six years.

Israel's internment of Ahed Tamimi and massacres of Palestinians in Gaza have seemingly escalated these ongoing trends. Perhaps we could have already imagined breakthroughs like a pledge by 51 student organizations at New York University to boycott Israel and groups supporting it on campus, an endorsement of divestment from occupation contractors by two-thirds of students in the biggest referendum in the history of Barnard College, and a unanimous

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vote by the Durham, North Carolina city council to ban police exchanges with Israel.

But a statement by five members of Congress “calling on Israeli soldiers to resist ... illegal orders from their superiors” demonstrates the pressure many elected officials increasingly feel from their constituents. And Israeli-American actress and outspoken Zionist Natalie Portman’s refusal to accept Israel’s Genesis Prize at a ceremony in Tel Aviv shows that some of Israel’s strongest supporters are no longer willing to answer for its crimes against Palestinians.

The shift in public opinion was obvious on tour. In church halls, neighborhood coffeehouses and university auditoriums, members of audiences large and small voiced their desire to do more for Palestine. Many, during question and answer sessions, asked for insights on how to meaningfully oppose the \$3.8 billion in military aid given to Israel by the U.S. every year. After events ended, some mumbled with embarrassment that they used to be Zionists. And in a striking change from years past, not a single current Zionist made a visible appearance.

Paradoxically, this peak in popular sentiment

coincides with a decline in political mobilization, particularly among students. According to data collected by the Israel on Campus Coalition, a Zionist group, U.S. campuses hosted 1,172 pro-Palestine events over the 2016–2017 academic year, a decline of nearly 20% in a single year, with pro-Israel events outnumbering them by almost 2:1. Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns on campus fell by almost 40%, while “the number of campuses experiencing anti-Israel activity decreased by 19 percent.”

As the bases of its U.S. support declined, ISM also suffered from the diversion of attention, energy and resources to regional and global crises. Today its strength in occupied Palestine has reached an historic low, with its teams unable to fulfill requests from communities facing attacks by Israeli soldiers and settlers and its apartments in targeted areas vacated for lack of funding.

But history itself—the resistance of a Palestinian national movement entering its second century, coupled with Israel’s brutal repression and the revulsion it inspires in decent people—has given us the ingredients

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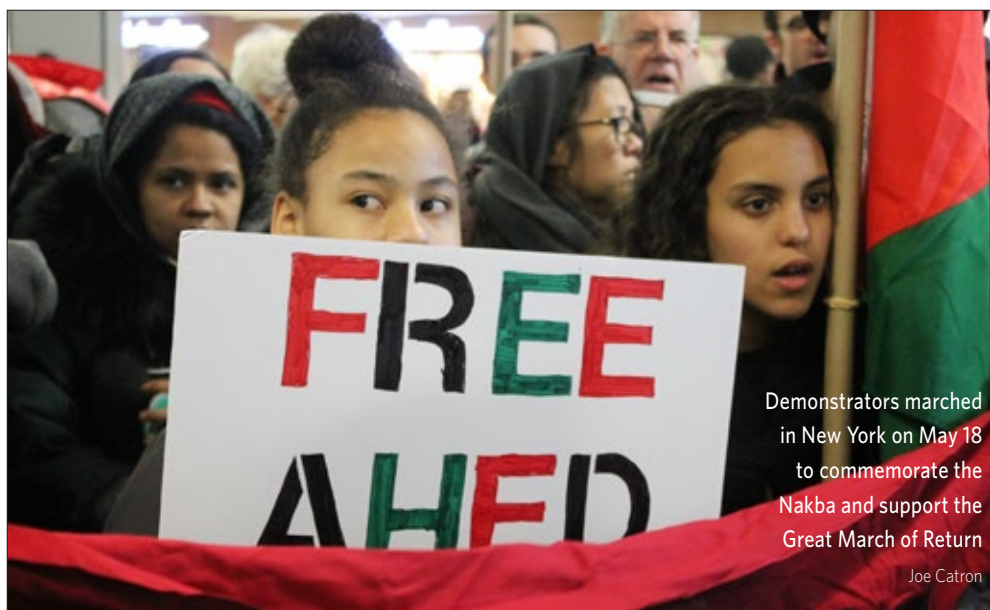
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holiday gift that supports Palestinian farmers and artisans! Get one before the rush!



for effective, thriving solidarity movements in both the U.S. and Palestine. The only question is how to use them. And much of the necessary infrastructure, including ISM, is already in place. Our challenge now is to revitalize it with the participation and support Palestine deserves in its 70th year of settler-colonialism, ethnic cleansing and occupation. ■

**Joe Catron**, a long-term ISM volunteer, lived in the Gaza Strip between March 2011 and October 2014. He spoke on the recent ISM tour.



Demonstrators marched in New York on May 18 to commemorate the Nakba and support the Great March of Return

Joe Catron

## Tabling Volunteers Needed

Are you looking for an easy way to get involved with ISM? Do you enjoy explaining why we are in solidarity with Palestinians, and the need for U.S. volunteers to go there?

ISM needs more volunteers participate in what we call “tabling,” which is staffing our literature table at community events throughout the Bay Area. We also sell Palestinian olive oil and zaatar at these events. It’s helpful to have access to a car, and be able to carry a few boxes of books and newsletters, but this is not necessarily required. We cover expenses.

If you would like to volunteer and get involved, please contact Noura Khouri at [noura@ism-norcal.org](mailto:noura@ism-norcal.org)

## FREE Online Telesummit

Have you wanted to attend a conference on Palestine but travel costs are prohibitive?

You may be interested to know that you can join ISM’s Katie Miranda as she hosts a FREE online 20 speaker telesummit with some of the best and brightest minds working on the issue of freedom for Palestinians. You can attend from the comfort of your own home! Guests include: Ramzy Baroud, Hanan Ashrawi, Neta Golan, Bassem Tamimi, Max Blumenthal and many others! We are gong to be discussing what tactics are working on the issue of Palestinian rights and what are not so that you can choose to focus your time on activities and projects that matter! Join us for free at <http://summit.katiemiranda.com>.

# I Think that Today, I'm Just Going to Cry

*A journal entry by an ISM volunteer*

By Kristin Foss, 8/31/2018

*The Israelis make fun of Rachel Corrie. Most Americans don't even know her name.*

I woke up feeling sad today. I'm just so sad. I'm crying now, I started crying in the supermarket, I cried a little when a farmer refused my money for grapes. I think that today, I'm just going to cry. Maybe I need it.

Yesterday, I was called by a friend to ask if ISM could spare some people to come to a place I can't even remember the name of now. There are too many places, too much need for assistance. I wrote about it earlier though. Ras Karkar, the village is called. I remember now. The Israelis are going to build yet another illegal settlement there. Their village is already surrounded by three: in the North, in the South, in the East—and now the Caterpillar machines and the soldiers have arrived to block the West; to build yet another illegal settlement, trapping the villagers. It's illegal according to international law of course. But, what is international law? It doesn't apply in Palestine. The Israelis know it; they've never had to comply. The US has made sure of it, and the rest have accepted it.

The man who alerted me is my age; he has a professional job, a nice car. But he spends his free time alerting people, travelling to places where he is needed and getting beaten up by 20-year-olds with machine guns. He does not get to go

home and have a nice dinner with his wife or play with his kids. I guess he could. But then, will his kids even have a country when they grow up?

A man who is sending me live videos is my dad's age. I've been watching the videos, videos of normal people, new friends I have not even met yet, although I recognize a few. Normal people, being brutally pushed over by young soldiers from God knows where, but from this land they are not.

I've watched videos of men trying to push heavy machines with their arms. I can feel the desperation. I want to be there. But today it's only me here and I can't go alone. I guess I could, but I don't dare today. I need a time-out. Maybe my fear is stronger than my solidarity. I don't want to die.

Rachel Corrie died. She was in ISM too. I don't think she could have imagined that they would actually do it. That they would run her over with a bulldozer, as she was visible to all, standing in front of it, but they did. They killed her with a bulldozer. Her solidarity was stronger than her fear. The Israelis got away with it. They got away with it, and they call her Saint Pancake. She was 23, and they ran her over with a bulldozer for trying to stop a house from being demolished. She was American, and the US did nothing.

Kristin Foss



Palestinians remember her still, with respect and dignity, gratefulness and immense sadness. The Israelis make fun of her. Most Americans don't even know her name.

I've been reading comments that people have left in the comment sections of interviews with me, some say "third time lucky," or "if she is there knowing the risks it's her own fault, she deserved it," etc. Then I think of what these same people say about my Palestinian friends: that they are an invented people, there was never a place called Palestine. If a nurse gets killed tending to the wounded, she is Hamas. If a school or hospital gets bombed, then Hamas was storing weapons there. If a child is murdered, his parents are using him for sympathy. It's inexplicably inhumane. I have never witnessed anything like this, people denouncing a whole people. It is so unspeakably evil. How does it feel for Palestinians to read this; to read that they don't even exist? To be faced with this evil? When all they did was to be born on their own land, and all they do is try to live under an inhumane occupation.

The thing is that the people who make these comments are the ones with the power. They are on the current winning side. Obama, Trump, Theresa May, Macron, Trudeau, Erna Solberg ... these are the people that are on Israel's side, and pour money and support into its government. They have the power, they have the money, they have the media and they have the politicians.

My own government doesn't even care that five Norwegians were brutally beaten up, threatened with murder and arrested after being illegally boarded in international waters, or that I've been shot twice. I think they find us a nuisance. They blame us for being here; that we should not be here, that it's the Palestinians who need to reconcile. I don't even know what that means. They say that dialogue is the only way, and the Palestinians have to reconcile. There is no dialogue here, it's all pretend. There is only violence, oppression, murder, land theft and politicians keeping up the facade that there is dialogue, while the press helps keep this game of pretend going. The Palestinians must reconcile ... I think they mean that Palestinians must forgive and forget, get on their knees and hand over the keys they have left. I asked the representative for Norway what they meant with reconciliation—



Kristin Foss

she did not know.

But there is another side. On this side there are the Palestinians, the people of this land, and some of us, international and Israeli activists who stand with them in solidarity. All we have is truth, dignity and humanity. We have this, but no power, unless everyone gets involved. Now, after getting shot twice, they talk about me, only because I'm a European woman—and thank god I videoed it. There are so many, just so many who would speak better than me, Palestinians, whose fate is incomparable to what happened to me. I'm a bit ashamed, but I will try to use it. If they all got the attention I got, would people care then? I would like to think so.

I still believe in humanity. I don't believe there is any left in Israeli politics, but there is enough in Palestine to make up for their lack, when Palestine is free. But where is the global humanity, where are all those who say that we must never forget? Don't ever forget, but don't ignore what is happening now, because this too will have a horrible end if people do not react. This is not a history lesson, this is today and this can be stopped, before it becomes another shameful period of human history. Palestine can still be free. This cannot go on, it cannot! ■

**Kristin Foss** is an ISM volunteer who was shot twice in one week with rubber-coated steel bullets by Israeli soldiers in Kafr Qaddum. The first time with her hands raised, along with another female ISM volunteer from Iceland, and the second time while standing up against the wall of a shop.

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# Diary Entry from a Volunteer in the Northern Jordan Valley

By An ISM volunteer, August 2018

I lost my (return) flight on purpose. I was pretty sure I would though, when I left for Palestine. To be honest, I don't think it's going to make it easier to leave later. The more I know, the more people I know—the more involved I get. And how, I wonder, am I going to be able to get on a plane and leave, when my new friends aren't even able to leave the West Bank. They can't leave and they can't live. Are some of my new friends going to be arrested when I'm gone? Will I lose some? It does not bear thinking about.

Yesterday I came home from the northern Jordan Valley, knackered. Stayed one night, sleeping under the stars next to a guava grove. Almost a full moon, nice breeze. Accompanied by my Icelandic friend and fellow volunteer Anna, and a

very nice new Palestinian friend, Rasheed. Sounds lovely, right? To the right we could see the lights from Jordan, separating us was the Jordan River and to the left, the so-called Holy Land. Still sounds pretty nice? Well, reason for being there was to wait for the Israeli soldiers who had announced that they would arrive the next morning to tear down the green houses of local farmers—claiming they have been stealing water—the water Israel is 'legally' taking from the farmers.

The local farmers do not have access to the water under their farms and there literally are Israeli water pipes under their land, going to illegal settlement—and they themselves—do not have access. They are at the mercy of the Israelis who charge them the some of the highest water prices in the world.

The day before Israelis soldiers, heavily armed, had come to the village to inspect the pipes. To see if anyone was stealing their stolen water. In

the neighboring village the soldiers welded shut two connections, and broke a pipe, cutting farmers off from their water supply. In the past two months this has been happening aggressively. Israelis breaking pipes, Palestinians desperately trying to get water back.

This is farmland. The bread basket of Palestine it was known as—due to the immense underground water reserves. Four times a year they could harvest. But, already the Palestinian population is down from 320,000 to 56,000. The ones left live in refugee camps, in caves (!!), many in tents (they are not allowed to build—one man has had his home demolished 34 times. So, I guess living in a tent is just practical for obvious reasons)—and some still remain on their farms... To exist is to resist ... I saw this written on many walls. To exist is to resist... Who is the terrorist?

Thankfully soldiers did not arrive. But that's not to say they wouldn't arrive today, or tomorrow... Not so thankfully we discovered that the water pressure that supplied the Guava field we were next to had been cut off. It's a communal field. So, Rasheed rushed off, us in tow, trying to find the problem... As they only get two hours of water for this field. In the end they gave up... The two hours were up anyway... And if the Israelis stop the water, well then, they stop the water. I asked, and apologized for asking, if there ever is a possibility of calling the Israelis to see if there is a problem that can be solved with the water they are actually allowed to take... I'm sure you can imagine the answer.

Before returning to Ramallah, our friend took us on a drive. It was depressing... and beautiful, good conversation, good music, for a bit it almost felt quite normal, pleasant, but mostly depressing. The Jordan River behind a security fence, Israel having declared it a security zone. Illegal of course, but it's Israel... River beds have run dry. Quite often we would drive past green oasis, and lush fields—illegal settlement, to where the water is diverted... At one point an illegal settlement was right opposite the refugee camp. The water lines for the settlements, goes under the camp. In the camp they have water tanks and they have to pay to have them filled. I'm not making this shit up!! It's unbelievable!! I don't know why any-



Kristin Foss

Credit: Palsolidarity.org

**Kristin Foss** is an ISM volunteer who was shot twice in one week with rubber-coated steel bullets by Israeli soldiers in Kafr Qaddum. The first time with her hands raised, along with another female ISM volunteer from Iceland, and the second time while standing up against the wall of a shop.

one would want to live like this—and I’m talking about the illegal settlers. Apparently, many are poor people from Russian and Eastern Europe—enticed to come here where they get land and water—and live like kings, behind barbed wires ... Staring at refugee camps where the ethnic population lives.... And should they wish, they also have the opportunity to shoot some people without consequences (no joke) ...

Of course this is also affecting the wild life—the gazelles, the deer—they are cut off from the water too. There are legends born and legends dying in Palestine every day. How they manage to continue living, not to give up, to find solutions

when Israel finds a new way to oppress... It’s just... I don’t know... I’m witnessing the most extreme human greatness... The capacity to make a life in the most difficult of circumstances... When Palestine is free, which I hope will be soon. We can all come here for holiday, and how I would love to bump in to Palestinians on holiday abroad, not as refugees, but as holiday makers. If they are this great under occupation, I can’t imagine what they will be like when they have their freedom.

Please go to <http://www.jordanvalleysolidarity.org/> the pages of the North Jordan Solidarity group, for more information, or if you would like to get involved: ■

## Return Solidarity

By Neta Golan, September 2018

Since March 30th, for more than four months, Palestinians have been peacefully protesting along the fence besieging Gaza in what is dubbed as the Great March of Return. The Great March of Return is a form of popular resistance, organized by Palestinian civilians demanding their right to return to the homes and lands from which their families were expelled 70 years ago.

This is referred to as *Nakba*, or Catastrophe, in which 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and forcibly removed by Zionist forces to clear the way for Israel’s establishment in 1948.

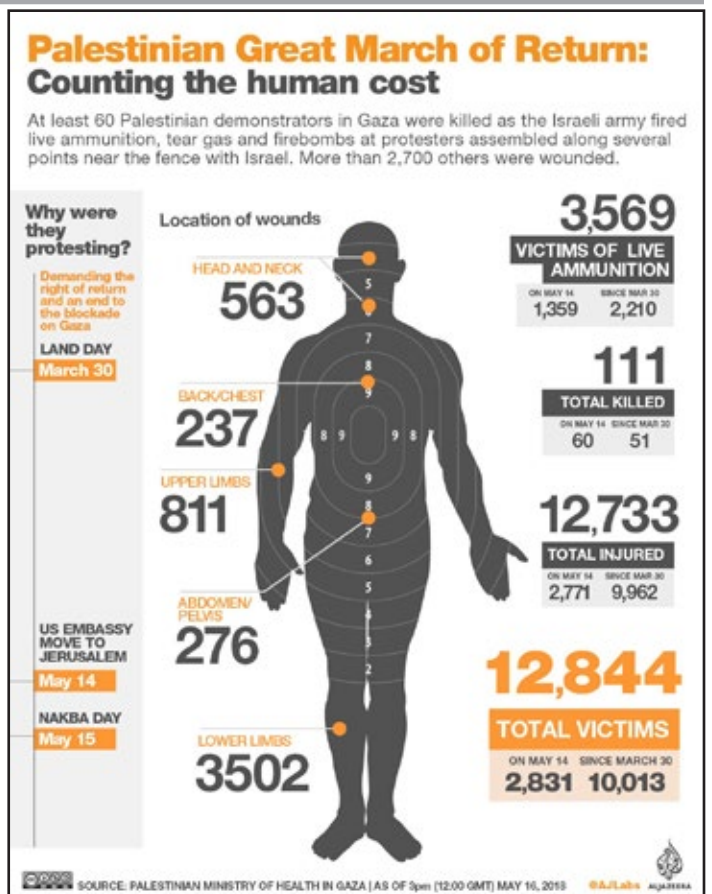
This call for freedom has come at a great cost. Since the protests began, at least 166 Palestinians have been murdered by Israeli forces, and over 18,000 injured—more than 5,000 by live fire. (updated: 8-22-2018) This includes children, journalists and clearly marked medics. Many have been paralyzed or face other long-term disabilities. Gaza’s health system has been pushed to the brink of collapse.

Still, the mass demonstrations continue, with Gazans calling for the right of refugees to return, for the 11 year old blockade on Gaza by Israel to be lifted, and for their human rights to be respected. So far, this call has been met with silence by the world, and the marches have been receiving less and less media coverage.

Help keep the human rights and freedom of Palestinians and the right to return in the spotlight—and help us in spreading the word. With this, we invite you to be a part of the solidarity movement for the Great March of Return. You can do this alone, or with others. You can do this in your country, or wherever you are located in the world. You can do this in your city or town, or on your Facebook wall. Together, our voices will make a difference.

Look through our site, get inspired by *Solidarity from around the world*, read the *Call to action from Gaza*, join the *BDS movement* and get in contact with us at [greatmarchsolidarity@gmail.com](mailto:greatmarchsolidarity@gmail.com) if you need advice, want to tell us about your own action. We would love to hear from you. ■

Neta Golan is a founder of Return Solidarity [returnsolidarity.com](http://returnsolidarity.com)



Palestinian Ministry of Health

# NORCAL ISM Support Group

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*For more information or to register: [www.ism-norcal.org/](http://www.ism-norcal.org/)*

## Call for Volunteers

**T**he 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.



510-236-4250, [www.ism-norcal.org](http://www.ism-norcal.org) or [www.palsolidarity.org](http://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.