



TESTIMONIES  
FROM THE  
NONVIOLENT  
RESISTANCE

# LIVE FROM *Palestine*

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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## THE MEANING OF SOLIDARITY WORK

By Henry Todd, Date: April 2019



A young boy protests outside Nablus. Credit: Henry Todd

When people ask what I was doing in Palestine I reply “solidarity work and reporting.” I knew the moral reasons I decided to go, and I knew it was my civic duty, but I didn’t know what to call it, and I didn’t even have a clear plan for when I arrived—only that I was going to “help in any way that I can.” As an activist it’s critical to accept the fact that Palestinians in The West Bank and Gaza are under a military occupation, and the role that you play (in my case as a U.S. citizen) in the occupation’s existence. As Marc Lamont Hill put it so clearly—“... our military funding, our financial support of Israel is so considerable. Given the fact that Israel holds itself as ‘the only democracy in the Middle East,’ because of this language,

because of our economic, psychological, and cultural investment in the state of Israel, I think we do have a responsibility to hold Israel accountable.” It’s more than a taking a principled stance—far from abstract—it’s every U.S. citizen’s prerogative to participate in freeing the Palestinians from military occupation. It’s not about “holding Israel to a higher standard”, despite that it’s supposed to be “the only democracy in the Middle East” (apologies to Tunisia and Lebanon). An activist cannot achieve change by just recognizing injustice; an activist cannot achieve change by only marching in the streets; indeed, an activist cannot only do “solidarity work and reporting.” An activist, I have found, must

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Editor: Jeff Pekrul

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widen their scope. They must become creative in internalizing their experiences, and then expressing them through meaningful action that brings about tangible results for the

(including its solidarity actions), the facts on the ground would be even bloodier and more brutal. Thus, solidarity work is also about defense of the inhabitants.

## ***It's every U.S. citizen's prerogative to participate in freeing the Palestinians from military occupation.***

victims. As obvious as that may seem, some of the activist community tends to forget that.

My first three days in the West Bank were a whirlwind of harrowing experiences, all of which could've produced a shock effect, but which I quickly realized I had to internalize such that they could be used to contribute to the work in a meaningful way. It's no surprise that doing solidarity work alongside Palestinians in the occupied territories will include being shot at a great deal; tear gas, rubber-coated steel bullets, live ammunition, and an assortment of other projectiles are expected to come your way. Solidarity work is about insight into facts on the ground in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt); what do the inhabitants live through everyday which you are now subjected to by your own volition? Solidarity work is about resistance; the Palestinians are under an illegal, immoral, and racist military occupation, and you're there to physically put yourself in harm's way to resist the military's transgressions. This action of physical resistance has two effects. First, it exercises the rights bestowed by

My first day in the oPt I marched alongside demonstrators in Ras Kar-Kar. We marched through a torrential downpour, armed with cameras and Palestinian flags. Within 15 minutes the tear gas and bullets were flying. In retaliation, young Palestinian men hurled back stones. The story of Ras Kar-Kar isn't unlike other villages. Military outposts were established around the village in the early 2000s—the common “security” pretexts being used—then the Israeli government slowly confiscated land around the area. It was in 2018 that weekly demonstrations began when land atop what is known as Risan Mountain was confiscated. My group and I were there to protest alongside the villagers. By the end of it, the IDF moved in on us, and aside from official press, everybody fled the scene. This was the first time I had ever been chased by armed people shooting at me.

My second day, I participated in a march with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) towards the infamous Qalandiya checkpoint. We were protesting the treatment of Palestinian journalists in the West Bank and Gaza. According to IFJ there had been 3,000 transgressions against Palestinian journalists by Israel in the last four years, 26 of which had been murders. Of course, we were tear-gassed long before we even made it to the checkpoint. Details about what happened can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

My third day was supposed to be a low-profile report, but it ended up being one of my most precarious. As usual in the oPt, settlers were reported to have harassed some locals, so three members from ISM, including myself, traveled to Mazra'a al-Qibliya to

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**IFJ marching towards Qalandia.**

Credit: Henry Todd

international law to battle military occupation. Second, it protects the inhabitants who would otherwise be subjected to an even harsher, more violent treatment by occupational forces. Make no mistake that without the eyes, ears, and declarations of the international community

# Reportback from Al-Khalil

By "D" | April 2019

Twenty-five years ago, Baruch Goldstein, a New York-born Israeli settler walked into the Ibrahim Mosque in Al-Khalil and opened fire, killing 29 Palestinians and seriously wounding more than 150. Today Goldstein is

The belief was that this presence would dissuade the settlers from unleashing further terror on the native Palestinian community. In effect, what transpired was little more than a speed bump as the settlers continued their crusade, albeit gradu-



worshiped and referred to as “the Holy Saint” by violent extremist settlers in Al-Khalil. In his settlement of Kiryat Arba, there is a shrine built for him that is well tended and revered, visited often by settler tourists.

After the massacre in 1994, the UN Security Council published Resolution 904 which called for the establishment of an international presence “to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory” and established a group of international observers throughout the city—the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH). TIPH successfully operated for 22 consecutive years as a result of The Hebron Protocol of 1997.

ally, as they attempted to colonize Al-Khalil and erase the Palestinian soul from the city.

Al-Khalil is experiencing a historical moment, as earlier this year TIPH was forcefully removed from the area by the Israeli Government. Moreover, the day after Israel decided to remove TIPH, another international observer force on the ground in Hebron—EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel)—left Hebron after their personnel were targeted by a campaign of harassment from the right-wing fascist group Im Tirtzu. This has left only two international groups present in Al-Khalil to function as international protection, observer and educa-

Checkpoint 56 on Shuhada Street.

Credit: ISM Al-Khalil

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## Reportback from Al-Khalil

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tion groups—the International Solidarity Movement and the Christian Peacemakers Team.

A group called Im Tirtzu, which has been described by the Israeli court system as a fascist organization, has been staging rallies in

having felt like their previous campaigns of terror had succeeded in removing TIPH and EAPPI.

These groups are striving off this moment and using it as a political platform to further their Zionist agendas.

### ***In the wake of this exodus of teams critical to thwarting violent attacks against Palestinians by Israeli settlers and soldier it's critical for ISM to sustain an inter-national presence.***

the occupied part of Al-Khalil to celebrate the removal of TIPH and EAPPI. Despite the fact that Im Tirtzu has a record of inciting violence against Palestinians and regularly engage in Islamophobic rhetoric, they freely organized a rally of over a hundred settlers in February, and stormed down Shuhada street attacking Palestinian homes, under the watch and eye of the IDF and police. Sadly, this type of collusion between occupation forces and the most radical streams of the Zionist movement is all too common. The settlers feel galvanized by their recent victory against EAPPI and TIPH and have intensified their intimidation tactics. This looks like daily harassment and aggravation, to framing activists, to sticking up “wanted” posters of activists around the city, to death threats and physical attacks, all with the goal of hoping to force the remaining witnesses out of Al-Khalil.

The situation is worsening. What's left of international observer and protection groups are being targeted and pushed out. Settlers are becoming emboldened, and more aggressive,

collaborating with police and military to do their bidding. The most militant and aggressive of illegal settlers are organizing campaigns to chase out internationals and Palestinian supporters,

There is an increasing overall sense of unease in Al-Khalil, a lack of a feeling of security and safety. It's becoming more and more common for areas to be declared closed military zones, for checkpoints to close down for hours on end and restrict people's entry into their homes. We are seeing more invasions into the H1 area to terrorize people, stop and frisk, and fire off concussion grenades, rubber coated steel bullets and teargas for no apparent reason. There appear to be more roadblocks, construction and temporary checkpoints being established, more late-night raids into peoples' homes and the kidnapping of children. Overall there is a rise in targeted physical attacks on Internationals and Palestinian activists by both the IDF and rogue settlers. We even saw an execution of a Palestinian man in the streets in March. The UN seems like it's struggling to find solutions and is too nervous to put observers in, fearing it's far too dangerous.

The biggest war in Al-Khalil is the war on education, on shutting down the schools, a war on children. ISM volunteers in Al-Khalil spend most of their time attempting to accompany and protect students to and from school within the H2 areas. Every day is a new struggle, a new tactic and strategy employed by the IDF, the police and settlers, to chase out or shut down international witnesses and to attack and harass the schools, their faculty and their students.

On the ground, there is a fear that there will be more demolitions, more closed zones, more land theft, and the shutting down of schools, and that all of this is tied to the increasing trend of collaboration between settlers and the Israeli

Shuhada Street.

Credit: ISM Al-Khalil



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## The Meaning of Solidarity Work

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verify, report, and publish what happened. But as the locals were showing us the vandalism of their property and told us of the violence they had been met with, an armed settler approached the property. I was reminded that we were in a virtually lawless land as he rode in on horseback brandishing a handgun and provoking the residents to react—which they did by throwing rocks. It’s important to keep in mind that Palestinians, by law, cannot own

particular motivations, but I was struck with the idea that many may do so to play the role of “occupier,” the role of “cowboy.” And they certainly do this. One might surmise that many of these internationals romanticize the “wild west,” and possess a desire for a rugged dominion over brown people. One could assume that. But for whatever reason the settlers do come, the Israeli government employs these international racists and bullies to continue

A settler brandishes a handgun trespassing on Palestinian property.

Credit: Henry Todd

### ***This is not an obscure crusade for justice, but your civic duty to fight for the rights of Palestinians.***

firearms, essentially leaving them defenseless against armed settlers trespassing on their property. For the next five minutes the man circled the property, firing off seven shots, two of which whizzed right by my head, and one by my teammate’s. Details can be viewed here ([tinyurl.com/y4zod2h3](https://tinyurl.com/y4zod2h3)). This particular situation illustrates just how perverted the entire occupation is. We know that many people from all over the world arrive in Palestine to be “settlers.” One can only speculate on their

their systematic degradation, cantonization, and murdering of Palestine’s native population.

When you’re caught up in such embattled circumstances, all you care about in the moment is where your teammates are. Are they okay? Am I okay? When you get back to your home-base and wash off the chemicals, ice the bruises, or bandage the wounds, you’re thankful that you at least came out of it alive. When the dust truly settles, it’s time to ask yourself the

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## The Meaning of Solidarity Work

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question: how can I use this experience to help the victims?

This is where reporting comes in and why it's so interconnected to solidarity work. Tell the public what happened—discuss it,

For reasons of keeping my vulnerable political project safe, he'll remain anonymous for now as he is the target of the project. This is how I present a case to my community for

### *Without the eyes, ears, and declarations of the international community, the facts on the ground would be even bloodier and more brutal.*

write it, publish! Know the context of the demonstrations in which you participate. Bring the experience home! Don't forget what you saw. Don't compartmentalize. Bring the fight home as if you were going to be gassed in your own neighborhood. National and local politicians have not likely experienced what you have. Use that against any of them who would protect the Israeli occupation of the Palestinians, who would support anti-BDS legislation, who would call Palestinians—the people you demonstrated with, had conversations with, the people you got to know—terrorists.

For example, since coming back, I have begun connecting with my local community to begin organizing a political force for Palestine. Personally, I decided to approach religious leaders first—just an instinct. But remember, all civic action begins with conversation. Knock on doors, approach local leaders—religious and political. Go to your town-hall meetings. Talk to your neighbors. This will not cost you anything except time. Some of the most important direct actions I have planned for the future are living-room discussions: “would you be willing to give me ten minutes of your time...?” In my view, living room discussions aren't only about educating people on Palestine, but also about building political power within the community. I'll also engage students at local universities to do the same thing. The idea is that if you keep speaking, and keep engaging people, you'll eventually get a larger platform, and a larger audience, and thus a larger political force within your community.

My representative is one of the most hard-core Zionists in congress, and he's a Democrat.

participation in political action, after we have engaged in dialogue:

- To underscore my goals as they stand in regard to Palestine:
- Create a constituent element in Congressional District [a] (and surrounding districts) that advocates for Palestinian rights in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt).
- Help educate religious communities and the wider population in the [community] (and beyond) on the situation in the Palestinian territories and Israel.

Intended results:

- Through grassroots political power, enable [insert congress-member] to:
- Stop supporting/writing anti-BDS legislation.
- Support ending the siege in Gaza and apartheid occupation of the West Bank.
- Recognize the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories, East Jerusalem, and the Negev as ethnic cleansing.

#### **BONUS RESULT (MUCH HARDER):**

- Advocate for the right of return for Palestinians who were victims of the great exodus, also known as “The Nakba.”

#### **IDEAS FOR GETTING STARTED:**

- Create a public consensus (through surveys and/or other means) on [community] attitudes toward the situation in Palestine/Israel as it stands.

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## The Meaning of Solidarity Work

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- Petitions signed by area residents.
- Coordinated educational workshops (for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish centers and other interested organizations).

It is my personal belief that organizing a whole coalition of constituents that are able to influence, or unseat a congress member due to their “troubling stance” on Israel and Palestine will cause huge ripple effects throughout the political establishment. It would enable representatives such as Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar to continue their fight for Palestinians. Of course, one should come up with their own project based on one’s own findings and ideas. Just remember to

*engage your community. Make your solidarity work count! Also remember that while creating something new from the ground-up is extremely important, it’s also important to connect with organizations that already exist! Jewish Voice for Peace and National Students for Justice in Palestine come to mind. Remember that the Palestinian issue is an International issue, but particularly so if you’re an American. This is not an obscure crusade for justice, but your civic duty to fight for the rights of Palestinians. ■*

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*Henry Todd is a filmmaker, Middle East activist, and independent journalist, covering U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.*

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## Reportback from Al-Khalil

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Occupation in trying to force the remaining international witnesses out. The Palestinians fear that the international expulsion is yet another stage in the planned ethnic cleansing of Al-Khalil. In this critical moment, Palestinians are being forced to have to fill the roles of previous international groups, becoming more organized and involved in protection and observation work.

In the wake of this exodus of teams critical to thwarting violent attacks against Palestinians by Israeli settlers and soldier it’s critical for ISM to sustain an international presence. ISM, CPT and various Palestinian groups have been working closer and closer together, building networks and coalitions to try to quell the issues at hand and deal with this desperate time. What is needed is more internationals, and more people willing to help contribute to this critical coalition building.

We ask the international community to come defend Palestinian human rights on the ground here in Al-Khalil. This is what has been asked of us by the people on the ground here. They want our support and welcome us with open arms and hearts. If you’re interested in joining the ISM team in Hebron, please contact us about an upcoming ISM training session in Palestine. It is a historical time in Al-Khalil, a new era of

colonialism presenting an increasingly violent threat toward Palestinian lives, and also a new era of solidarity and close-knit coalition building. What can be heard from inside the checkpoints is a desperate call for international solidarity. ■

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*D was part of the ISM al-Khalil team in occupied Palestine from January through March of 2019.*



**Al-Khalil is experiencing a historical moment, as earlier this year TIPH was forcefully removed from the area by the Israeli Government.**

Garbage thrown by settlers on Shuhada street.

Credit: ISM Al-Khalil

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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.