



LIVE FROM Palestine

TESTIMONIES FROM THE NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP
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Interview with Abdelkarim Dalbah 17-Year ISM Volunteer

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During the annual olive harvest campaign, international volunteers help Palestinians harvest their olives in groves near settlements Credit: ISM

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The ISM Northern California newsletter team spoke with Abdelkarim Dalbah, a Palestinian journalist, field researcher and human rights defender. He has been an ISMer for 17 years as an activist in nonviolent resistance. Our supporters' donations go mainly to help support the work of the ISM in Palestine, from sending volunteers to helping maintain daily activities. Abdelkarim answered some of our questions and told us more about the current situation for the ISM and the Palestinian people, specifically in the West Bank. If you'd like to go to Palestine as a volunteer with ISM, please contact us at solidarity@ism-norcal.org. We'll work to make sure you have the information you need to provide meaningful support to Palestinian grassroots, popular resistance.

Q: What are the biggest priorities for the ISM today in the West Bank?

A: ISM is mainly active in Hebron (al-Khalil), especially in the Old City, called Tel Rumeida. There, 600 settlers are occupying the neighborhood and making life miserable for the Palestinian people there. ISMers are supporting Palestinian life in Hebron in several ways. ISMers monitor checkpoints there and conduct "school runs," helping the kids to go to school early in the morning and to come home in the afternoon. They provide protection for the children from daily settler harassment as well as questioning, aggression and harassment from the soldiers stationed at the checkpoints. The soldiers also make problems for teachers going back and

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forth to school. ISMers are present there to provide protection and document the situation. Their international presence is able to provide children and families with more protection from soldiers and settlers on a daily basis.

In addition, nowadays during the olive harvest, ISMers are joining farmers as they go to their land to harvest their olives. An international presence gives them more safety and protection, especially for the farmers who must harvest on land that is forbidden or risky to reach, such as those farmers whose land is next to the settlements. There is constant harass-

the Christian Peacemaker Team sent a special temporary team. Now, EAPPI has returned and CPT is functioning well with larger numbers, but this is not a stable situation. EAPPI mainly observes the situation from far away and only has 2 or 3 people there. CPT, on the other hand, is doing well there. We conduct joint meetings to discuss how to do school runs, monitor checkpoints and develop the international work there.

The situation and the need in Hebron are getting worse and worse. ISMers are also targeted more than other groups because of our activist-oriented approach to documentation

The main reason that ISM is here is to support Palestinians in their nonviolent resistance to the occupation.

ment and violence from settlers directed at farmers. We join them for the olive harvest, and we are also planning to join them again during the spring for more harvesting and planting.

The main reason that ISM is here is to support Palestinians in their nonviolent resistance to the occupation. ISMers attend protests in villages like Kufr Qaddum, Bil'in and elsewhere, for example in the Jordan Valley, as much as we can. Of course, our presence varies according to the number of ISMers present at any given time. ISM is based in two cities - Ramallah and Hebron - but we go to different areas to respond to requests for support from local Palestinians.

We are present in some areas, like the Jordan Valley and the South Hebron Hills, where new settlements are being built. Settlers are expanding and intensifying their harassment and violence against Palestinian villages. In addition, in East Jerusalem there are many home demolitions, and we work to be present there. When there are few international volunteers, our main priority is to be present on the ground in Hebron monitoring checkpoints and helping children to go to school.

Q: Is ISM the only international organization providing protection for Palestinians in Hebron?

A: There was a time when this was the case, but now we are fortunate that we are not the only group there anymore. After the UN observers and EAPPI (Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine) left, stopping their functions,

and support. With more people, we can do more work. For example, in South Hebron, there are also urgent threats to villages from settlements that require our focus.

Q: How do Israeli repression and arrests affect Palestinian popular resistance and ISM work?

A: Among the Palestinians working with ISM and participating in popular resistance, there are always legitimate fears of arrest. It is expected that at any time we may be arrested. All of the Palestinian activists are affected in different ways. Some of us may not be arrested, but we may be blacklisted or forbidden to leave the country. I, for example, am forbidden to enter Israel. We have not yet faced mass arrests, but it is a potential we live with at any time. This will not stop us from doing what is needed for our freedom and our rights as a Palestinian people and working hard to build the BDS campaign, especially internally. Of course, internationals working with ISM have also been detained, arrested and banned. One of our Austrian activists was forbidden from returning to Palestine because he volunteered with ISM. Our work is not hidden; it is open in confronting repression and silencing.

Q: How does international support help Palestinian efforts?

A: A visible presence of ISM and of internationals here is always helpful. It gives hope to the Palestinian people and to grassroots organiza-

Interview with Abdelkarim Dalbah

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tions who suffer from the occupation that we are not alone. We can see how strongly time here also affects internationals, when they leave after three weeks or three months and have experienced the situation here for themselves. In addition to coming to Palestine and providing direct support, we always tell ISMs that

Q: What can volunteers who want to join ISM do?

A: Volunteers who want to come help us in Palestine can contact their local support groups, like ISM Northern California, or former ISMs in Europe, the US or Canada. They can email us to tell us they want to join and we will provide advice and guidance. There is always a need

An Israeli checkpoint in Hebron. ISM volunteers escort children through crossings like this, helping them get to and from school.

Credit: ISM

Volunteers who want to come help us in Palestine can contact their local support groups, like ISM Northern California.

the best things they can do when they return home is to raise support for Palestinians in their countries. Internationals can pressure their governments to end their support for Israel and its apartheid system and ethnic cleansing against Palestinians. In addition, the funds and solidarity provided by internationals to the ISM is very important. It helps us to initiate creative actions and support popular resistance, as well as helping Palestinians who have been arrested to pay legal fees and fight for their rights.

for more international activists and greater participation. This can help us to address more of our priorities, like supporting popular resistance in East Jerusalem and helping prisoners involved in nonviolent resistance to pay fines or bails.

We, and all of the Palestinian grassroots organizations, invite internationals to come to Palestine and join ISM. Your presence here is so important and needed. for the rights of Palestinians. ■

Interview with Artist and ISM Activist Katie Miranda

By Valerie Behiery | September 30, 2019



Katie Miranda

Courtesy of the artist

Katie Miranda Al Ali is committed to illuminating beauty and truth through the mediums of painting, comics, and Arabic calligraphy jewelry. Passionate about art, the artist studied at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, receiving both a BFA and an MFA. From 2005-2008, Katie lived in the West Bank cities of Hebron and Ramallah both volunteering as a human rights worker with the International Solidarity Movement and studying Arabic calligraphy with award-winning Palestinian calligrapher Ehab Thabet. Upon her return to the US, she began exploring jewelry making, took her *shahadah*, and created *Katie Miranda Studios* where she designs sterling silver calligraphic jewelry, draws cartoons and paints. Katie

Miranda has exhibited her art both at home and abroad, including at the Sharjah Capital of Islamic Culture festival in the United Arab Emirates in 2014. Her illustrations have appeared in many publications like the *Middle East Eye*, *Monday*, *Dissident Voice*, *The Middle East Monitor* and *The Electronic Intifada*.

You have an upcoming solo exhibition opening on October 11th at Dagmar Painter's Jerusalem Fund Gallery in Washington, D.C. Could you tell us a bit about the show?

I have about 15 years of work on show, including fine art, illustration, jewelry, and cartoons on the subject of Palestine. The title of the show is "Sumoud w Todamon" which translates to "Steadfastness and Solidarity." I started creating art on this subject in late 2005 when I first visited Palestine to volunteer as a human rights worker. I stayed there for three years, landing a job as a cartoonist at a local paper after I became too traumatized to do the work with the International Solidarity Movement anymore. Eventually, I came back to the US but the struggle, the people, the land didn't leave me. It's a subject that is inspirational to me. My first output was a series of 9 x 12-inch illustrations in acrylic paint of people or situations I experienced that I called "Postcards from Palestine." (acrylic on canvas, 9 x 12 inches

2006-2007) The illustration was the front of the postcard and then I had accompanying text on the backs which consisted of letters addressed to the American people. It was my version of "the weather is nice; wish you were here," except it wasn't nice at all; it was very violent and very disturbing. After I returned to the US, I started submitting political cartoons to various news sites and sometimes they got published.

Your experience in Palestine continues to profoundly shape your life and art, including your new work inspired by biblical themes. Is this something you will continue to pursue?

To be clear there are only two paintings so far with a biblical theme, although I was hoping to do more. I want to do an Annunciation, a David and Goliath, and a Madonna and Child, but I paint in a very detailed manner and so the works take a long time. It's also incredibly expensive to create a painting. You have to pay models—and sometimes a photographer—if you want certain lighting conditions. I spent close to \$500 on the photography, models, and supplies for the "Pietà" (oil and acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 inches, 2019) painting that took me four months to paint.

Last year, I was raptly listening to Jordan Peterson's biblical lecture series. He goes deeply into the psychological significance of the biblical stories, stories that are the basis for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Since I have a connection to all three religions, both as a convert to Islam and as someone with a mixed Jewish and Christian heritage, I was deeply fascinated with Peterson's take on the Book of Genesis. He interweaves the stories with what science has discovered about human evolution and biology. Part of his presentations included slides of Renaissance biblical art, which brought me back to my university art history lessons, albeit with a new perspective. These lectures inspired me to return to biblical themes and to juxtapose them with the situation that modern-day Palestinians face. These are ancient themes, pre-biblical themes even, that still have significance in modern times. That's why people are still drawn to them.

Already in 2004, I had an idea in my head to paint a Pietà on the apartheid wall (acrylic on

the apartheid wall, 2006) and, fortunately, I was able to realize that dream. Unfortunately, the mural was spray painted over with lots of graffiti and I've wanted to redo it ever since. This next part was published on my blog "I was particularly motivated by the tragic loss of precious lives during the Great March of Return. One feels very helpless on the other side of the world,

his house which I did. I always knew this concept had the potential to be better and so I decided to redo it digitally and now that I know calligraphy, to make it even better.

Read the entire article: http://islamicartsmagazine.com/magazine/view/natural_meanderings_in_many_media/. ■

"I am forever traumatized by what I saw in Palestine and that trauma is expressed through art. The art—perhaps naively—hopes that someone will pay attention to it and take action in their own way."

watching people being massacred for participating in demonstrations which, had they taken place where we live, would not have been met with such lethal force. Those of us living in liberal democracies should never take for granted the hard-won freedoms we have.

This digital painting has a history which started in 2006 while I was volunteering with the International Solidarity Movement in occupied Palestine. We were sent to Balata refugee camp because the Israeli army had invaded and was shooting up the place. The army had announced a curfew on the whole camp which meant that any Palestinian caught in the street would be shot. We, as internationals, were not supposed to be shot so we delivered food and medicine to needy people who could not go out. The next day there were two martyrs, killed by the Israeli army: Ibrahim Issa and Mohammed Nator, both 17. They had been drinking tea on their roof when the Israeli army shot them. We watched their funeral procession from a balcony the following day. The way I coped with the horror around me was to draw and paint. Over the next few days I completed the drawing below in ballpoint pen. The writing says "the blood of the martyrs will fertilize the earth" which was inspired by a Diego Rivera mural of the same name. It was spring time in Palestine and flowers were blooming, the weather was beautiful, the sky was blue; a stark contrast to the death and mayhem. I kept repeating over and over in my head "this place is so beautiful, but so horrible, but so beautiful, but so horrible." I showed the drawing to some people in the camp. One man had recently lost his brother to the Israeli army and he asked me to paint it as a mural on



Palestine Activist Podcasts

ISM volunteer Katie Miranda recently made over 40 interviews with Palestinian, international and Israeli activists available for free with new interviews released monthly. Her interviewees included: Hanan Ashrawi, Ramzy Baroud, Miko Peled, Diana Buttu, Richard Falk, Omar Barghouti, and Cindy and Craig Corrie.

Search for "Palestine Solidarity" wherever you listen to your podcasts or subscribe to Katie's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/moominthirteen or by searching Katie Miranda on YouTube. For Apple Podcasts: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/palestine-solidarity/id1092220968>

On the 71st Week of the Great March of Return, the World Forgets While Gazans Remember

By ISM Team | August 25, 2019

Eleven consecutive weeks of protests in Hong Kong have captured the focus of online commentators, heads of state, and global media. In France, 39 weeks of protests by the Yellow Vests movement continues to garner widespread interest. In the US, Occupy Wall Street is now an international household name after occupying Zuccotti Park for nine straight weeks.

Last Friday marked the 71st week of the Great March of Return protests in Gaza, a staggering 1 year and 4 months of weekly demonstrations

shot with live bullets. On the 70th week, titled “Palestinian Youth’s Friday”, 83 civilians were injured, including 24 children. 36 civilians were shot with live bullets. The week before that, the 69th week 73 civilians were injured, including 30 children, two journalists and a paramedic. I could go on.

The Israeli Military justify their actions by claiming they are responding to protesters throwing stones, Molotov cocktails, and flying burning kites and balloons.

Since the start of the Great March of Return

protests, on March 30th, 2018, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights has documented 208 Palestinian deaths by Israeli forces, including 44 children, 4 paramedics, and 2 journalists. Another 13,629 were injured, including 196 who now suffer from serious disabilities ranging from amputations, paralysis, permanent loss of sight and hearing, and other disabilities.

One might ask, in light of the brutal violence and tremendous human cost, why Gazans continue to

protest every Friday, knowing the risk to their health and lives?

Maybe because Gazans don’t have the luxury of not protesting, of being able to quit and return to their “daily lives”. Maybe because while we, in the comfort and security of our homes, can choose whether or not to open a news story about protests in Gaza, Gazans must face a devastating reality; according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 90% of Gaza’s water is undrinkable.

The rest is projected to become undrinkable due to pollution and lack of sewage treatment by 2020, at which point Gaza may become



Gazans run from tear gas at the 71st Great March of Return. Pic: Palestinian Centre for Human Rights.

Credit: ISM

that have become largely forgotten in the amnesic world of headlines and social media.

The protests began to demand the right of return for Palestinian refugees and an end to the 12-year-long Israeli blockade of Gazan economy and society. Friday’s protests, titled “Protests for al-Aqsa Mosque” took place in Abu Safiyah, Gaza City, Bureij, Khan Younis, and Rafah. Once again, for the 71st week in a row, the Israeli army responded with undue force, spraying non-violent protesters with live ammunition, tear gas and rubber-coated steel bullets. 149 civilians were injured, including 66 children, as well as 7 paramedics. 77 unarmed protesters were

“unlivable”. Gazans receive on average of only 10 hours of electricity a day. Unemployment stands at 47% (65% among youth). While 75% of Gazans rely on international aid, mostly food aid, 35% of Gaza’s farmland and 85% of its fishing waters are inaccessible due to Israeli military policies. Hospitals are massively overstretched and under supplied, with one third of medicines deemed essential by the UN unavailable. 85% of schools in Gaza are running on double shifts, meaning students can only have 4 hours of classes a day.

All of these realities on the ground have been confirmed by United Nations reports, in addition to UN Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for the lifting of the blockade on Gaza. Yet the international community has thus far failed to act on the resolution, or make any concrete actions to push for its enforcement, leaving Gazans no choice but to try to call attention to their plight in any way they can, regardless of the cost.

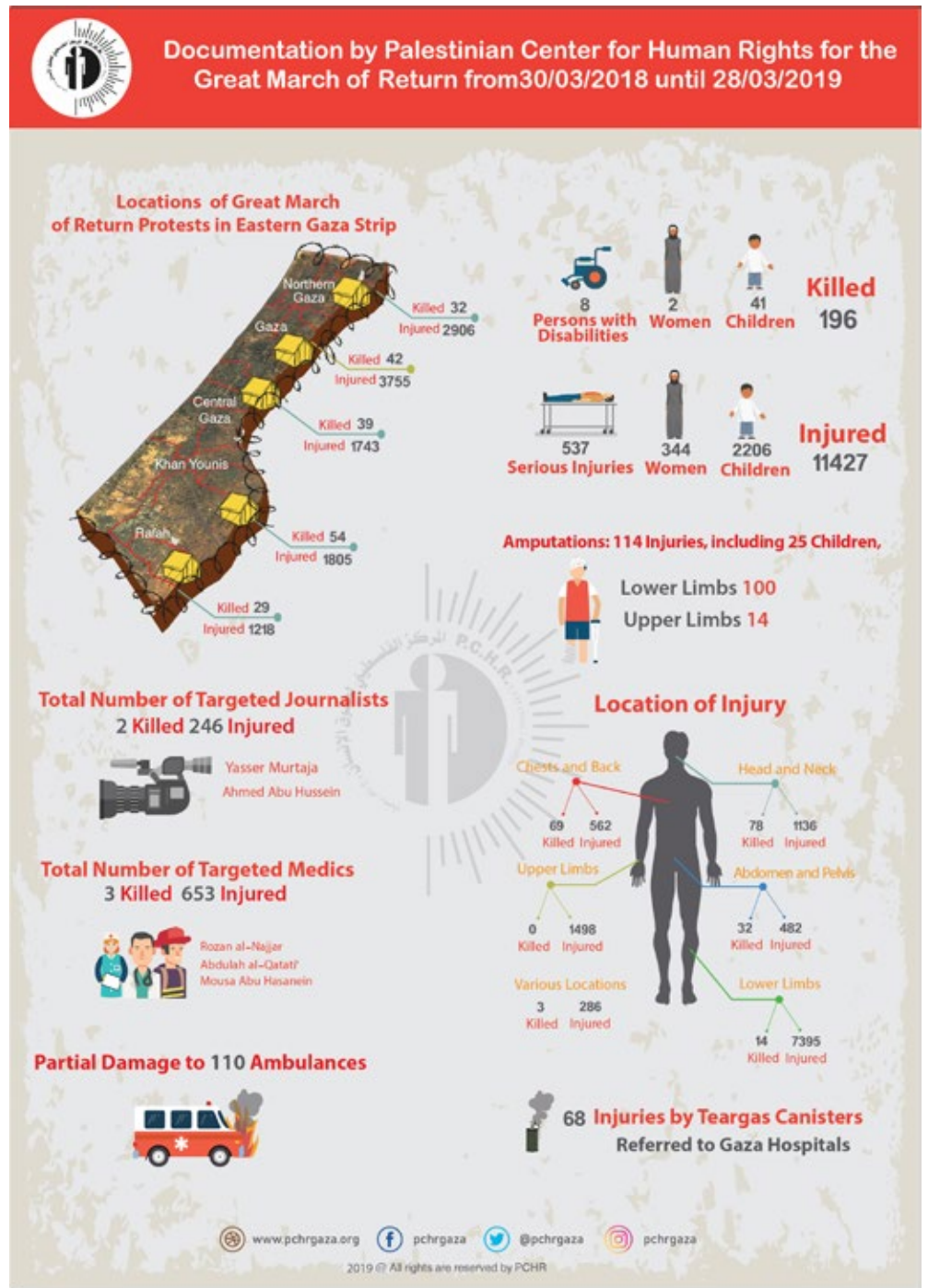
The casualties of last Friday’s Great March of Return protesters failed to capture the world’s attention. It wasn’t reported in CNN, BBC or Al Jazeera; it didn’t make news in the Times, Reuters, or RT. Perhaps, if we as individuals listened to what Gazans have been trying to say for the past 71 weeks, the international community would be forced to respond. Perhaps, if the protests in Gaza elicited the same attention as the protests in developed nations, governments around the world would take notice and maybe

even take action.

Perhaps, if we stopped forgetting the people of Gaza, they would not have to put their bodies and lives on the line to make us remember. ■

The death toll and number of injuries after one year of protests in the Gaza strip.

Credit: ISM



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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.



530-324-2509, 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.