



TESTIMONIES
FROM THE
NONVIOLENT
RESISTANCE

LIVE FROM *Palestine*

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT NORTHERN CALIFORNIA SUPPORT GROUP

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Keep Palestinian-led Activism Alive During COVID-19

Date: April 20, 2020

TO OUR FRIENDS AND COMRADES:

We would like to thank all of you for your continued solidarity and support for the freedom of the Palestinian people, whether through activism, protest, boycott, donations, or raising awareness online and personally. Because of you, the International Solidarity Movement has been able to continue using non-violent methods to resist Israeli apartheid in Palestine for almost two decades.

ISM is an entirely grassroots funded organization, with no corporate or fixed sponsors, and all of our volunteers are self-funded. However, the global pandemic has forced many countries to adopt exceptional measures, such as quarantines and travel disruptions. Volunteers can no longer travel to Palestine and the consequent economic slowdown has seriously impacted us financially, to a point where we may be forced to close all of our offices in Palestine. This would severely limit our ability to advocate for Palestinian issues, not only during the pandemic but also for months afterwards, preventing us from resuming operations once the lockdown ends.

With settler attacks up 78% amid the pandemic, and Israeli forces continuing with demolitions, arrests, imprisonment, and shootings of civilians, we believe it is more important than ever to maintain a presence in Palestine. Our goal, with your help, is to raise \$7,000(USD) in emergency funds to ensure ISM can continue to operate until the lockdown resulting from Covid-19 will be gradually lifted and international travel resumes. The funds

will be used to cover costs including legal fees (Palestinian and international activists often face unjust arrest and trial for peaceful activism), rental fees for ISM's offices and volunteer apartments across Palestine, maintaining current projects and media advocacy, transportation, and other incidental costs.

Over the last 12 months, we have documented and reported on Israeli occupation and ethnic cleansing across Palestine, working as international human rights observers and defenders. Our recent actions include:

- Our ongoing protective presence program with children in Hebron *on their way to and from school*.
- Protective presence for farmers and villages in the South Hebron Hills.
- Protective presence for farmers across the West Bank during the *olive harvest*.
- Using direct action to oppose *illegal settlement expansion, home demolitions, and arrests* by occupying forces.
- Documenting, reporting, and media advocacy on human rights abuses and violence against innocent Palestinians.
- Internationally, we have continued to *provide training* for independent activists in non-violent direct action activism.
- Worked with British researchers *on a forensic report* into the shooting of a Palestinian child by Israeli forces.

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Editor: Jeff Pekrul

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With the spread of COVID-19 and consequent lockdown across Palestine, our newest projects include:

- Online [advocacy about the current situation](#),
- And a campaign, together with Palestinian and other international organizations, [calling for an investigation](#) into the Hebron Fund—an extremist US hate group which sponsors settler and military violence in Hebron.

We are counting on all of you, our friends around the world, to keep ISM's Palestinian-led, non-violent direct action approach to activism alive and ready to resume during this difficult time. We know that many of us are facing financial difficulties due to the current global crisis. In whatever capacity you are able we ask for your support as we face this unprecedented challenge to our movement. Please donate if you can, any amount helps. Please share this call and most importantly continue to support the

Palestinian cause by raising awareness and advocating in your home countries and adhering to and supporting the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) against those complicit in Israeli occupation and apartheid.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Together we can continue to spread solidarity and work for a free Palestine!

Follow the link to donate securely online: <https://www.ism-norcal.org/donate/> ■



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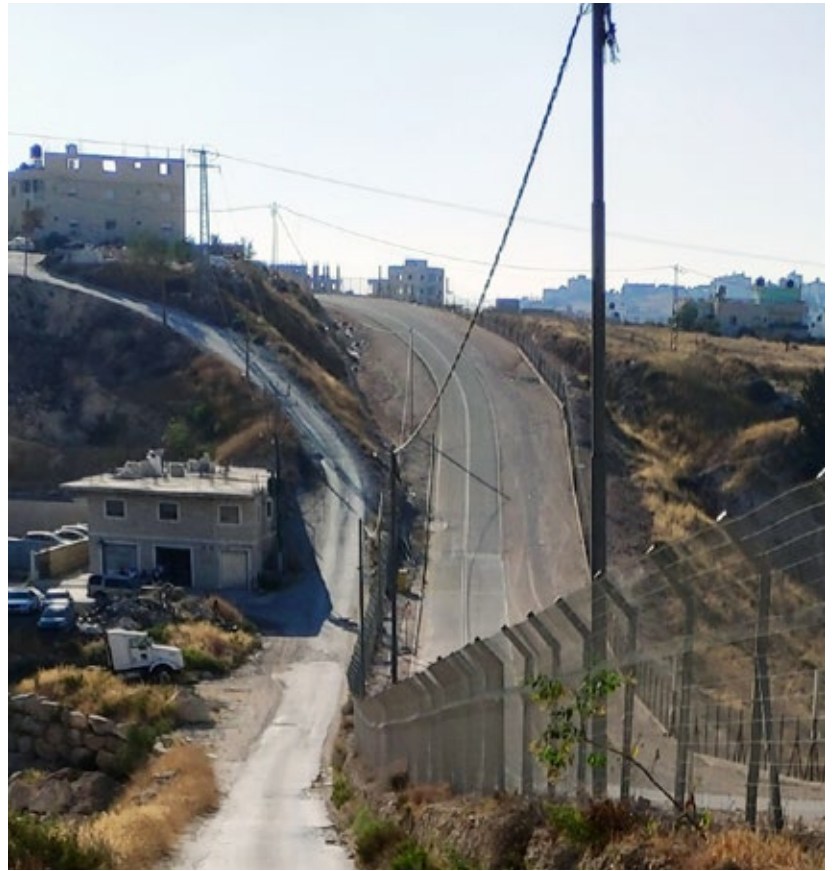
What's it Like to be an ISM Volunteer?

By ISM | May 2020

For this issue of the ISM Newsletter, our team talked with Edmond Sichrovsky, an Austrian ISM volunteer of Jewish origin who was forcibly deported from occupied Palestine after six hours of searching, interrogation and harassment at the Ben Gurion airport in October 2019. During his time in occupied Palestine, he volunteered with ISM's media team and witnessed, among other violations of Palestinian rights, the Israeli occupation army's demolition of Palestinian homes in the Wadi al-Hummus area of Sur Baher, occupied Jerusalem. Edmond told us more about his experience as an international volunteer in occupied Palestine and the work of ISM in Palestine, which most of our supporters' donations go to support. 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 is the situation you witnessed in Occupied Palestine? How would you describe it for people internationally?

I had the opportunity to volunteer with ISM in Occupied Palestine for 3 months, and during that time I witnessed racism and apartheid on a level I had only read about in history books before. There were segregated roads and sidewalks, with dehumanizing checkpoints and metal cages for some while others were able to drive straight through. Palestinians would be arrested for carrying something as innocuous as a scissor or shaver while Israeli settlers were walking by with pistols and semi-automatic



Apartheid road. Wadi Hummus, East Jerusalem. The right side is for Israelis; the left, for Palestinians.

Credit: Edmond Sichrovsky

in Hebron there was an Israeli checkpoint, and every time we'd pass, we would be forcibly stopped and ordered to state our religion. Anyone who said they were Muslim would not be allowed to pass.

Q: What kind of work did you do with ISM?

My volunteer work in ISM fell into 3 main categories:

—International presence. This included providing an international protective presence

More than anything else, I believe the biggest impact a single person can make is by going to Palestine to witness the situation and volunteer firsthand.

rifles--it is a blatantly shameless system where human beings are continually punished and oppressed because of their religion and race.

As internationals, we were less affected by Israeli apartheid but still it affected us to some degree; for example, near the Ibrahimi Mosque

for at-risk Palestinian communities, families, farmers, and children, throughout the calendar year and especially during the olive harvest and school year in Hebron.

—Media and online advocacy. This not only

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Waiting at the checkpoint

By Ladina Testini | March, 2020

THIS IS WHAT NORMALITY LOOKS LIKE IN AL-KHALIL

I was somewhere between excited and afraid the night before the visit of the Israeli Prime Min-



Ash-Shuhada street in al-Khalil full of Israeli flags welcoming Netanyahu. Less welcome are the Palestinians living there: they are not even allowed to access their houses through their main entrances.

Credit: Ladina Testini

ister Benjamin Netanyahu to al-Khalil (Hebron) on September 4 this year as part of his re-election campaign and timed with a ceremony commemorating the 1929 Hebron massacre, a central element of the justification narrative employed by the Israeli settlers in al-Khalil. I was afraid that the Israeli military and police would use excessive violence against the Palestinian residents during the occasion. The last few days had already been marked by extra army patrols through the streets, more frequent ID checks, night raids and arrests of political activists. However, there was also a feeling of excitement that the controversial visit could draw attention to the various human rights violations inflicted on Palestinians and the specific border(zone) management that made them possible. Serious restrictions of movement and different forms of violence have been part of Palestinian Khalilis' everyday lives for decades. The latter include settlers attacking their houses and assaulting them in the streets; families getting woken up in the middle of the night by soldiers smashing

down their front doors to search their homes and arrest fathers and sons (no matter their age); children getting teargassed on their way from school and sometimes even while sitting in their classrooms. I could go on. As shocking as this may all sound, for Palestinians living in the Israeli controlled part of al-Khalil, called H2, this is normality. And for everyone coming from outside it quickly becomes it too. This summer, I spent a month in the West Bank, occupied Palestinian territories, to volunteer with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). And I had to realise that even the events surrounding Netanyahu's visit just became another incident - part of al-Khalili normality.

AL-KHALIL— IN A NUTSHELL

Al-Khalil is the Israeli occupation in a nutshell. The West Bank has been occupied by Israel since 1967 and gradually transformed into a disaggregated territory dotted by Israeli settlements which are deemed illegal under international law. The order chosen by the Israeli regime to handle the presence of two different populations – Israeli settlers and Palestinians - in the same territory is based on borders. Borders essentially regulate who is able to move freely where, when and under which circumstances. As the two groups inhabit the same space, bordering results in a system of segregation that traces through society instead of geographical fixpoints. This manifests itself in a segregated road system throughout the West Bank and - less visible by eye but even more far-reaching - in two different legal systems leading to drastically unequal treatment for Israelis and Palestinians. While Israeli civil law is applied to the settlers, Palestinians are subjected to military law. In the old city centre of al-Khalil this order reaches its peak.

Al-Khalil is divided into two areas: H1 which comprises 80% of the city and is formally under control of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and H2 in which Israel retains responsibility for security matters. Al-Khalil's old city is part of the latter and through the restrictions imposed on it over the last 20 years it has transformed from a bustling market area into a ghost town. These restrictions are part of the security measures taken by the Israeli military in order to ensure the protection of about 700 settlers liv-

ing amidst approximately 7,000 Palestinians. For the latter, lives have transformed into one big restriction (see grey area on the map).

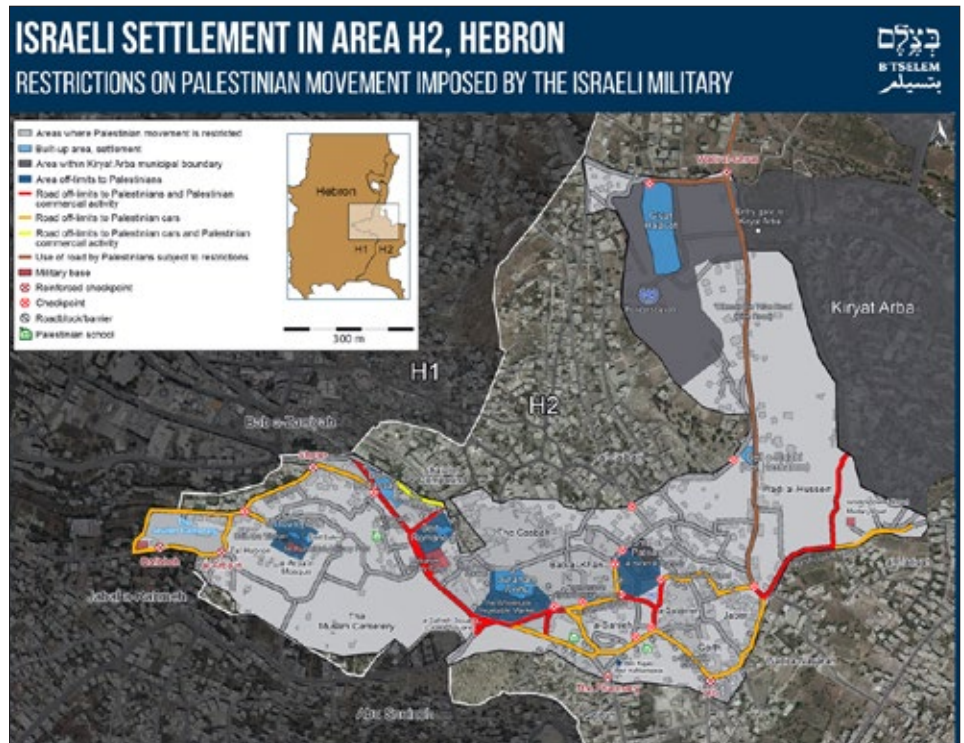
OCHA counts 121 obstacles (walls, slabs, fences and barriers) limiting free movement in this area including 20 checkpoints, 6 of which are fortified, equipped with face-recognition technology and metal detectors. For the Palestinian residents this means that going about any simple daily activity can become a lengthy and uncertain process. The Israeli security policies in al-Khalil do not only restrict their access to health, education, housing and work but also deeply affect their family lives and social fabric. As a result of the difficult living conditions in H2 the number of Palestinian residents has considerably dropped over the years. The existence of a restricted area is based on the Hebron protocol from 1997 that led to the division of the city and called for a buffer zone between H1 and H2. However, the function of this buffer zone doesn't correspond to its initial idea. Rather than preventing violence between Palestinians and Israeli settlers it has become a tool for the Israeli military to exercise violence against the local Palestinian population and effect their forcible transfer. Israel thus uses the buffer zone to solidify its colonial practices under the guise of security concerns.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF WHO DRAWS THE BORDERS AROUND KHALILI LIVES

Back to Netanyahu's visit: After mid-day, H2 was under near complete lockdown. There was a massive police and army presence in the streets, several of them stationed on the roofs of Palestinian houses. Three of the major checkpoints accessing the restricted area of H2 were closed for the whole afternoon. Whoever happened to be out at the wrong time, would spend their afternoon waiting in front of a closed gate.

In the neighbourhood where the memorial ceremony took place, the Palestinian residents were put under curfew. A small demonstration took place close to the restricted area but within H1, which is formally under Palestinian control. The Israeli military didn't hesitate to enter the area though as well as use cars and their Palestin-

ian occupants as shields for their operations. Two demonstrators were arrested. In the evening, I thought to myself: "It could have been a lot worse." It took me some time to realise how normalised the situation in al-Khalil had become for me in order to come to such a conclusion. Night raids, closed check-points, curfews and arrests. All of this has been happening for decades and so the 4th



Above: In the grey-colored area of H2, Palestinian movement is restricted by checkpoints and various road blocks. To some roads (indicated in red), Palestinians are completely denied access.

Credit: B'Tselem



Left: And life stands still—Palestinians waiting in front of a checkpoint that stayed closed for more than 6 hours the day Netanyahu visited al-Khalil.

Credit: Ladina Testini

of September 2019 was nothing new. It was just another example showing who draws and manages the borders around the lives of Khalilis. As well as, whom those borders protect. ■

Ladina is a student of Arabic and Middle Eastern studies that joint ISM in summer 2019. She spent most of her time in Palestine in the city of Hebron where she witnessed a visit of the Israeli prime minister.

What's it Like to be an ISM Volunteer?

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involved posting direct on-the-ground updates, videos, photos, and breaking news, but also organizing petitions, inter-organizational events, and other projects to raise a voice about what is happening in Palestine.

—Direct action. When requested by local communities, we sometimes took part in non-violent direct action. This included protests, de-arresting fellow activists, blocking home demolitions, events to reclaim stolen land, and such.

Q: Why do you think that the Israelis targeted you for deportation and what do you think international activists should do about this kind of repression?

I believe I was targeted for interrogation and later deportation for several reasons. To begin with, young single male travelers are

in my phone at the time, they found missed or unanswered calls from unsaved Palestinian numbers, which they then declared as “proof” of my illegal activities.

My father's side of the family is Austrian Jewish (both my grandparents survived the Holocaust by fleeing Vienna), so I had not expected to be arrested, interrogated, banned and deported. While the Israeli government claims to represent the Jewish people, a number of Jews have, in fact, been banned from Israel due to their political views, including Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, and Ariel Gold.

Q: How do you see the impact of COVID-19 on Palestinians given your recent experience?

It's always a difficult time in Palestine, but now with COVID-19 it's especially challenging. In rural Palestine, there are natural water



Palestinian house on Shuhada Street, Hebron. Palestinians living on Shuhada street are not allowed to walk on the street. Windows and doors facing Shuhada Street are welded shut by Israeli police.

Credit: Edmond Sichrovsky

the demographic most often suspected as international activists by Israeli authorities. I was also media coordinator and very active in communications and coordination, which undoubtedly would have left a digital trail in Israel's invasive surveillance system. Lastly, my phone was taken and checked by multiple Shin Bet (the Israeli domestic equivalent to the FBI) agents at Tel Aviv airport. While I did not have any Palestinians contacts or phone numbers

shortages during the dry summer. This shortage is compounded by the Israeli seizures of wells and reserves, as well as the cutting of pipes and shooting water tanks, making water increasingly scarce at a time when it's needed more than ever for hygiene and sanitation.

In urban areas like Issawiya in East Jerusalem, decades of being neglected and ghettoed by the Israeli occupation have left medical facilities underfunded and under-equipped for a large scale pandemic. (For Palestinians-Israelis can go to separate, much better funded hospitals.)

Q: How do you recommend people get involved and address these injustices?

Petitions and protests, shared both online and personally—these are some ways to help inform people about the reality of the situation in Palestine that the mainstream media rarely reports on. Supporting BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions), and publicly calling out the corporations that profit off the

ethnic cleansing of the Jordan Valley and other parts of the West Bank, has become an increasingly powerful tool for Palestinian rights activism.

More than anything else, I believe the biggest impact a single person can make is by going to Palestine to witness the situation and volunteer firsthand. Besides the direct work you can do through protecting, reporting, and documenting, your presence as an international sends a clear and loud message” to the oppressed, that we see their struggle and that we recognize their right to peace, prosperity, and self determination; and to the oppressors, that the world sees their crimes and that people will know the truth of what happens in Palestine. ■

Checkpoint near Ibrahim Mosque (Hajez al-Haram), where Israeli forces manning the checkpoint interrogate people about their religious beliefs and discriminate against Muslims.

Credit: Edmond Sichrovsky



You can purchase Palestinian organic, fair trade olive oil Palestinian flag kuffiyas, dates and olive oil soap on our web site. For purchases over \$50, we will provide free delivery within 30 miles of Berkeley. <https://shop.ism-norcal.org/>

Help Palestinians During the Coronavirus Crisis

To help Palestinians during the coronavirus crisis, ISM recommends these relief organizations:

Middle East Children's Alliance
<https://www.mecaforpeace.org/>

UNRWA USA <https://www.unrwausa.org/>, or
UNRWA Global <https://www.unrwa.org>

Palestine's Coronavirus Relief Fund
<https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/palestine-emergency/>

NORCAL ISM Support Group

2022 Blake Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

www.ism-norcal.org
solidarity@ism-norcal.org
(530) 324-2509



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.