

CORNERSTONE

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Through The Eyes of Women



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THEIR FAITH AND COURAGE

by Naim Ateek

Introduction

In this issue we focus on the life of Palestinian women under occupation. The intention is to highlight the important role women have played and continue to play in the struggle against the illegal Israeli occupation. The general impression is that men are the only political players and that women are uninvolved, and at best, play a minor and passive role.

It is true that Palestinian men have been the key players in conducting both the armed struggle and the political negotiations, and that women have had a relatively minor role to play, though some of them have been active in both. Yet when we consider the multiple layers on which the liberation struggle has been conducted and the various fronts on which the resistance has taken place, it becomes clear that Palestinian women have been vanguards in their direct and indirect involvement and especially in its nonviolent aspects, though some have been involved in the armed struggle as well.

Sabeel's Theological Position

In many countries and throughout many centuries, history, culture, and religion have contributed to discrimination against women and perceived them as inferior to men. Sadly, religion has played a despicable role in this. In fact, it has taken humanity thousands of years to rise above such primitive theologies and, unfortunately, in many places around the world women still suffer from prejudice and discrimination.

Palestinian Liberation Theology has always affirmed that the God we believe in is the God who loves all and created us all equally -- both men and women. "...There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in



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Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). God created us all as humans and endowed us with gifts, talents, and responsibilities in all aspects of life. It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus related to both men and women with respect and honor as equal human beings.

Consequently, Palestinian women played a prominent role in the establishment of the Sabeel center in the early 1990's and have continued to be involved in the articulation of its theology, vision for ministry, policy, and decision-making. Women have been conspicuously active on the board and staff as well as representing Sabeel both locally and internationally in various forums and conferences.

At Sabeel, it is theology that guides us rather than any cultural or religious limitations. It is our theology of God expressed and exemplified in the life



and behavior of Jesus Christ towards all people – men, women, Romans, Greeks, Jews, Samaritans, and others. Our faith in the God of love for all people must transcend those aspects of culture that are discriminatory and biased against others.

Women Under Occupation

The burdens and responsibilities which many Palestinian women have to bear under the Israeli occupation cannot be underestimated. Life under the illegal Israeli occupation has been and continues to be extremely difficult especially when one considers the obstacles that the occupation has imposed. Israel has placed before Palestinians insurmountable stumbling blocks that obstruct and impede their daily life. In addition to the separation wall which Israel built and the military checkpoints which are enforced, there



Jerusalem

By Lisa Suhair Majaj

In the Old City, grocers scoop rice and wheat from huge burlap sacks, pour grain into deep brass scales, measure anise and cardamom and thyme.

When sun slips into the pans
it's swept up
without charge, the way you
don't pay for the fragrance
of coffee, zaatar's bright swirl
of sumac.

Not like the mass of sorrow
weighting the air beneath the
odor of cumin,
that tips the scales in every
reckoning.

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are numerous other military regulations and daily challenges that obstruct even the nitty-gritty matters of daily life.

The role which women have played has been very significant. One can summarize it with the word courage – courage to withstand the injustice, to confront and face the Israeli army and engage it with boldness and determination and sometimes suffer the consequences, courage to make hard decisions when caring for the wellbeing of their families, when, at times, their husbands and children were in detention or incarceration.

Moreover, it is not only the physical but the psychological and emotional drain that many women have to bear. It is the day in and day out of continuous hardships caused by the lack of freedom

that is accompanied by a sinister humiliation at every turn. Palestinian women have been involved in the struggle directly and indirectly, in their homes as well as outside, showing unflinching vigor and resilience.

In light of all the hardships, we thank God for the undaunted faith and courage of many Palestinian women, their unwavering nonviolent struggle against the oppressive occupation, and together as men and women we look for the day when justice will be achieved and the occupation will come to an end. We express our hope that soon all the people of Palestine will celebrate their freedom and liberation and all the people of our land Palestinians and Israelis, men and women, will live together in peace and security.

The Rev. Naim Ateek is the Director of Sabeel

In Praise of the Palestinian Woman: From the Outside Looking In

By Peggy Nasir

When I was first approached to write an article about my impressions of Palestinian women as an American woman marrying into a Palestinian family, I balked. There was no way, I thought, that I could fill up a whole article giving my take on Palestinian women. Two seconds later I changed my mind. Palestinian women are extraordinarily interesting, building their lives under conditions that are simply unfathomable to most Westerners. In

celebrating the International Month of the Woman, the Palestinian woman deserves a place of honor and a look at some of the characteristics that make her special.

My first introduction to the Palestinian woman was in the United States. My boyfriend (and future husband) had decided it was time to introduce me to his family. With a Palestinian father and American mother, he is proud of both heritages and extremely close to

both sides of his family (although I did overhear him introducing himself as an Arab to an Israeli couple living near us!). When we went to Vienna, Virginia, to meet his father's family, I had my first up-close look at that amazing creature that is the Palestinian woman. To put it bluntly, I was pretty much awestruck. There was Samira, who spent her career educating children and building schools and who, as family legend has it, single-handedly backed down an Israeli tank intent on destroying her school. And



Along the Way of the Cross procession in Jerusalem

there was Samira's daughter Lara, a Certified Public Accountant, wife and mother whose head-turning good looks are bested only by her warmth and wit.

I didn't know it then, but Samira and Lara are not atypical; they have a DNA that seems to run throughout Palestinian women; some kind of chromosomal thread that intertwines beauty, intelligence, warmth, and passion into one package. When my husband and I moved to Jerusalem shortly after we married, I became even more fascinated with the Palestinian women I met from all walks of life – Christians or Muslims, young or old, poor or wealthy, urban or rural.

I met women from my father-in-law's generation who came of age in 1948 and whose passion for creating a democratic Palestinian state is as strong today as it was 60 years ago. They persevere, hoping that someday their daughters and granddaughters will know true freedom. I met the next generation of women, daughters of the occupation who are building their lives and families around restrictions based solely on their ethnicity -- a life with roads they can't drive on, neighborhoods they can't enter, and places they can't go. And I met the young generation, girls trying to figure out what kind of opportunities await them in a land defined by walls, checkpoints and barriers.



A young Palestinian girl holds a flyer in support of the evicted families of Sheikh Jarrah



They persevere, hoping that someday their daughters and granddaughters will know true freedom.

I watch these women, across all generations, manage to circumvent the tremendous obstacles before them with sheer will and determination.

I watch with fascination as one woman spends the better part of a year slowly building her daughter's self-confidence after a broken engagement; deftly steering her out of the house and on to a master's degree from one of the finest universities in the world. (All without the drama, yelling and door-slamming that would have gone on in the U.S.!) I watch with admiration as a mother gives her children a classical music education replete with competitions and lessons in violin, piano, and trumpet. I watch with amazement as a beautiful and brainy Fulbright scholar returns to her native Palestinian town to set up a genetic

research lab. And I watch with envy as these women build and nurture the kind of multi-generational families that have nearly disappeared in my country.

I'm not alone. My friends in the international community are similarly impressed by the Palestinian woman.

"It always struck me how determined they are," said one American friend, who lived in Jerusalem for five years and worked in the public health arena. "They put a goal in front of themselves, and they reach it. There's an aggressiveness – and I use that term in the most positive sense – that they channel into some amazing things."

"It's an assertiveness that can be intimidating, partly because it's so

unexpected,” adds a professional woman from Washington D.C. who has spent most of her career traveling to various foreign countries.

Almost all my ex-pat friends who live or have lived in Jerusalem, when asked about their impression of the Palestinian woman, name the same three characteristics: Her laser-like focus on family, education and appearance.

“There is no question that the Palestinian women, and men for that matter, take incredibly good care of their children,” said a British friend, who has been here for a year and works closely with Palestinian women in a child development center. “And the way they dress is, to me, something of a statement. They are proud and everything matters; whether it’s the makeup, the matching bag and shoes, or the beautiful scarves and head coverings. Their homes, workplaces and schools are always tidy. It may be a mess outside, but inside it will always be clean.”

In fact, says my friend, when she teaches art and other creative learning in the center, she often has a hard time convincing Palestinian children that it’s okay to make a mess, and even harder to convince their mothers that it’s okay to leave the mess.

Another American friend, who lives in Sheik Jarrah, finds the Palestinian woman’s attention to extended



I watch these women, across all generations, manage to circumvent the tremendous obstacles before them with sheer will and determination.

family very different from the United States, where small, nuclear families seem to have replaced large, close-knit, extended families.

“With most Palestinian women I have come across, the concept of family is quite amazing,” she said.

She describes a day when she was out in the yard with her baby, and a neighbor came by and asked if she could take the boy upstairs to her family’s apartment.

“Anywhere else, that would have made me very nervous and I probably would have said no,” said my friend. “But here, I knew the woman’s mother, daughters and other family members would be there and it would be a very loving, fun, environment for my child. The families are so loving and warm I didn’t mind at all.”

For some, the determination and commitment of Palestinian women can be off-putting when it comes to friendship, especially for American women who are used to having large circles of girlfriends who serve as support systems when their parents, siblings

and children are scattered about the country.

“It’s hard to get to know them because they have such a tough outer shell,” said one friend. “And they are busy. Busy with their children, busy with their parents, busy with their extended families. So it’s not easy to develop a group of – or even one or two – Palestinian girlfriends. But I think that comes from the stress and harshness of life under occupation. They simply don’t have the time or energy for things like “girls’ nights out” like we used to have at home.”

But despite the differences between Palestinian women and their counterparts in the West, in the end, we aren’t so different after all. This became crystal clear to me one hot summer morning as my infant son was about to undergo surgery in an East Jerusalem hospital. As I paced up and down the waiting room, I looked up to see a young Palestinian mother doing the same. I saw my fears, worries and stress reflected in her face. She looked at me with such compassion and hope, that, for a moment or two, my anxiety dissipated. For that look, I will always be grateful. Because on that morning, we were not Palestinians or Americans; we were women, mothers, wives and friends.

Peggy Nasir is a former journalist and is currently a freelance writer and communications consultant in Jerusalem.



assaults and harassments of all kind with courage, fortitude and dignity, determined to struggle for their freedom and their rights while striving to build a dignified future for their offspring without seeking fame or honor.

My memory takes me back to Fatemah Jafari's dignified sorrow when she heard of her brother's death as a result of being force-fed in the prison of Nafha in the early eighties, and the anxiety and fortitude of Um Jamal whose husband had a brush with death but was miraculously saved as he too met with the same treatment when the inmates went on a hunger strike in protest of the inhuman prison conditions.

The image of the mother of the two Hammouri brothers who were shot simultaneously in 1990 is engraved in my mind. Her faith in God and in the noble cause of her people seemed to offer her solace which inspired me to write a song about her and her two young sons.

I think of the young women tortured in prison astonishing their jailors with their courage in facing their torturers and refusing with determination to divulge the names of their partners in the resistance movement. Rasma's image recounting her tale of torture in prison as a testimony in the Women's Conference in Beijing, can never be erased from my mind. Everyone shuddered as she was recounting how her torturers shamelessly attempted to force her father to rape her! I also think of Lutfieh whose long years in prison left her with grave health

Palestinian Women Under Occupation

By Rima Tarazi

When I think of Palestinian women, several images rise before me: Palestinian Women holding hands and striving, in concert, to lift their homeland from the quagmire of oppression, upholding it with their whole being lest it falls in the pit of despair.

Women rising above the pains of dispossession and loss: loss of loved ones, of homes, of land and of freedom, and striving with resilience and boundless love to provide for their families and

communities and to protect them from the violence and indignities of the occupation.

Women confronting the inhumanity of the occupiers, struggling to maintain the humanity of their children by safeguarding the great cultural values of justice, tolerance and selflessness.

Women sacrificing their comfort and forgoing some of their simplest pleasures to guarantee their children's education. Women facing armed raids, violent



Sabeel women from Jerusalem and Nazareth meeting at St. Margarets Hostel



... as time went on, women realized that effective political involvement can not come about without achieving social justice and empowering women with all the tools necessary for confronting the occupation.

problems and how in spite of that she is still able to smile and is determined to defy her aches and pains to educate others and to light a candle wherever she can. I think of Aisheh who had the courage to overcome her haunting past in prison and to publish her terrible experiences in a very moving book.

One can not speak about Palestinian women without also addressing the political and social context of the Palestinian problem. As a matter of fact, the women's movement - which played a major role in the peaceful resistance against the occupation - has its roots in the beginning of the 20th century and the onset of the British occupation of Palestine.

In 1967, however, women were faced with a yet graver situation than they had ever faced before. A whole country was left with no caretakers. Occupation authorities came to dispossess, destroy and oppress – not to deliver services. Women's societies were among the first to run to the rescue. They began a long and arduous struggle to hold the fabric of their society together, keeping the people on their lands, supporting them

by coming together and forming strong associations and committees to serve all of the occupied territories. The General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW), which had been formed just two years earlier as one of the PLO bodies, resumed its activities after the war under an umbrella of women's organizations, striving to fulfill its mission of national and social liberation. Members of women's societies and other social and political activists formed the steering committee for the Union under the leadership of Sameeha Khalil, elected in 1965, and who directed the Union until she passed away in 1999.

Occupation authorities banned the GUPW and were constantly watchful and ready to pounce on any activity that challenged the occupation or attempted to empower women and the Palestinians in general. The simple act of visiting a cemetery to honor fallen friends and family members from the 1967 aggression prompted all kinds of intimidation, harassment and interrogation against women at the hands of Israeli soldiers and secret police. Women leaders would be summoned

to the military headquarters and issued warnings for such simple, symbolic, human gestures. But despite these pressures, women still found ways of remaining active, and the steering committee for GUPW continued to assemble in homes and through other women's societies to issue statements under various pseudonyms.

For many years since the beginning of the occupation, women have been at the forefront of peaceful civic actions. Whether commemorating national disasters or protesting the unending military measures and human rights violations by the Israeli government, women have continued to hold marches and sit-ins, often leading to their imprisonment, deportation, house arrest and various travel and visa restrictions. In the late seventies, the leadership of the GUPW was joined by the emerging popular women's committees affiliated with the various political groups. This added a measure of political diversity within the Union that other organizations were unfamiliar with; but, rather than shaking the united front of women in facing the occupation,

the result was quite the opposite. Their diversity invigorated their struggle and enhanced it.

The GUPW was keen on networking with all sectors of the community, and when the Intifada broke out in 1987, this networking was at its peak. All Palestinian sectors united in proclaiming to the world, "It Is Enough!"-- and although the people paid heavily for their actions, yet, it sent a message to the world that brute force may kill, break bones, destroy homes and uproot trees, but it can never destroy the human spirit aspiring for liberation and justice. This strong message shook the conscience of the international community and led to a peace process and the Oslo Accords. Unfortunately, Oslo soon turned sour and became a dispossession process instead, as Israel continued to challenge the will of the world and the natural course of history by continuing to confiscate land, to establish facts on the ground, and to deny the Palestinian people their inalienable rights.

The Social Dimension

Palestinian women's organizations started mainly as charitable organizations staffed by volunteers to offer aid to the needy. With time they developed to encompass an advanced social agenda which went hand in hand with the developing social and political movements in Palestine and elsewhere in the world. A balance between the political and social agendas was always sought after, although it would sometimes tip to

one side, depending on the situation. In the aftermath of 1967, the political agenda of liberation and resistance was the priority, but as time went on, women realized that effective political involvement can not come about without achieving social justice and empowering women with all the tools necessary for confronting the occupation. Women's organizations, therefore, embarked on ambitious programs to attain such a goal by placing emphasis on education, vocational training and campaigns for raising women's awareness. These programs, combined with the political struggle of Palestinian women, earned women leaders recognition throughout Palestinian society. This was clearly reflected in the tremendous support garnered by Sameeha Kahlil when she ran in the first presidential elections against



Olive planting project in Hebron

Mr. Arafat and also in the election of numerous women to the first and second Palestinian legislative councils.

The various women's international conferences, where Palestinian women were always well represented through the GUPW and other outstanding NGOs, have enhanced this dual agenda by exposing women all over the world to the struggle of Palestinians. The Nairobi and Beijing documents became guidelines for women's strategic planning, especially in the aftermath of the Oslo Accords, when there was the false impression that independence was just around the corner.

The unpredicted and volatile political situation here makes assessing the current condition of Palestinian women extremely difficult. The attempts at separating the various communities through the monstrous Separation Wall, the military checkpoints and the prevention of people from traveling to Jerusalem and to Gaza, will no doubt have grave consequences for the fabric of the Palestinian society, whose backbone is the strong bond that existed between women in these various areas. Which brings us back to that essential image of Palestinian women; rising together, despite the barriers, they continue their struggle to transcend the blunt force of the occupation and hold together a society plagued by oppression.

Rima Tarazi is President of the Administrative Board for the General Union of Palestinian Women.

JERUSALEM PROGRAMS



Two hundred local and international Christians gathered at St. Stephens Dominican Church for prayers to break the siege of Gaza.



Clergy meeting at the Lutheran Church in Ramallah. Twelve Clergy-men, from different parts of the West Bank met to evaluate the 3rd Clergy Conference and to plan for future “Living Together” programs.



Young adult program: a tour in Sataf, a destroyed village during the Nakba 1948, close to Jerusalem. The young adults held a barbecue in the gardens of the village



Palestinian women at the Separation Wall in Bethlehem participating in the opening of the World Week of Peace for Palestine and Israel on May 29.



The open Forum on April 27 discussed practical ways of living out “the Kairos Document”

Glimpses of Our Activities

NAZARETH PROGRAMS



Presentation on the “Kairos Palestine Document” given by Patriarch Emeritus Michel Sabbah.



Gathering of young adults and couples with Fr. Afracym Al-Orashalmi during Lent, followed by a Lenten dinner at the Rosary Sisters convent.



Sabeel kids celebrating Palm Sunday on March 16th 2010 at the “Nazareth Village”.



Volunteer work by Sabeel youth from Nazareth and Jerusalem at the Melkite convent in Tiberius.



Voices of Palestinian Women



The following article derives from the personal testimonies of Palestinian women recorded by the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) in their recent report, "Voices of Palestinian Women." The article excerpts testimonies from the four main human rights violations that affect women most, namely settler violence, freedom of movement, residency and separated families, and home demolitions.

"In our context we have to deal with patriarchy as well as military occupation and colonisation. The only way we can assess the gender specific impact of occupation is by analyzing through testimonies the gender specific consequences of military conflict on women. We cannot assess the extent of the long term damage to Palestinian society without hearing the story told through women's eyes.

More than ever, we know the need to amplify women's voices and have

women tell their stories, not only for documentation and advocacy, but also because telling the story is part of a healing process that needs to take place, a healing process for the victim as well as the interviewer. Telling the story breaks the cycle of feelings of helplessness, isolation and emotional paralysis. It empowers women to become more resilient and in control of their own destinies which would reflect also on their families, and consequently their communities" - *Maha Abu Dayyeh, General Director of WCLAC*

Settler Violence

Hana Abu Haikal is from Hebron, in an area surrounded by some of the most violent settlers in the West Bank. She has been subject to regular attacks by settlers and lives in constant fear of their return. She explains, 'I and my sisters and mother all suffer from different illnesses which I believe are a result of the difficulties we

suffer on a daily basis." She described one attack on herself and elderly mother which occurred when the ambulance they were in was stopped at a checkpoint in the old city of Hebron:

"I saw through the back window a group of settlers, perhaps ten or fifteen of them gathered on the side of the road. One of the settlers' children, who was about 14 years old, was walking toward the ambulance. While the soldier talked to the driver I saw the boy lean down to pick up a stone. The soldier looked at the boy as he continued to talk to the driver. At this point the boy threw the stone at the back window of the ambulance and broke it. The stone landed near me and my mother. I was frightened and yelled at the soldier. I told him "my mother is in serious condition, take this boy away". I spoke to him in Arabic and I am not sure how much he understood what I was saying. The soldier didn't move and

Palestinian Home in
Hizma Overlooking the
Pizgat Ze'ev Settlement



The slightest sound now scares me, scares me a lot. I often dream at night that the settlers are back and that they burned down my house.”

didn't do anything. The boy then picked up another stone and threw it at the same window which caused whatever was left of the broken glass to fall down. When this was happening I leaned over my mother to protect her and to prevent stones and broken glass from falling on her. I then lifted my head up and saw a number of other settler children approaching us. The soldier didn't do anything to prevent the settlers from attacking us.”

WCLAC has identified serious psychological and emotional consequences on women affected by the violence and harassment, and some of the women told WCLAC that they were unable to carry on with their normal lives because of fears of repeat attacks. Ayat, told WCLAC that after the attack, she did not return to the course that she was attending and was reluctant to leave the house at all because of fear of repeat attacks. Fatima, who was threatened by Israeli soldiers as

well as experiencing regular harassment from settlers expressed in her statement her fears, feeling unsafe in her own home but with no means of protection: “Each time I see soldiers or hear loud sounds I panic. I feel I want to leave our house and go live somewhere else.” AR, from Hebron, who was in the house with her three small children, when settlers set fire to the woodpile outside her house said: “When I open the window I worry that the same thing might happen again. I always think to myself that they will come back again and the same incident might be repeated. The slightest sound now scares me, scares me a lot. I often dream at night that the settlers are back and that they burned down my house.”

Freedom of Movement

The presence of settlers in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem is a primary reason for the curtailment of the freedom of movement

of Palestinians. Checkpoints and other obstacles are erected that severely impact on the daily lives of Palestinians while allowing Israeli settlers to travel unimpeded. Iman, from Kufr Eddiek near Nablus, tells her tragic story about a trip through the Qalandia checkpoint. She was only thirty-one years old when she was diagnosed with lung cancer in February of 2008. After that, she had to travel regularly to the hospital in Nablus and then was referred to a specialist at the Augusta Victoria hospital in Jerusalem.

“When we arrived at Qalandia checkpoint (between Ramallah and Jerusalem), the hospital car was stopped by the soldiers. The woman soldier asked the driver for the permits for all the passengers to travel to Jerusalem. After about half an hour the woman soldier came back and said that one of the permits is expired. She spoke to the driver in Hebrew. The driver told the patients...the name of the patient is

Iman Atta Eddin Ismail Eddiek. I told the driver it was me, and that this was my permit. The driver told me to get off the car and told the soldier I was sick...I told her 'look, I can barely breathe, I have medical reports that prove I have lung cancer...' She said in Hebrew 'no no no, go home.' The sun was hot somehow and I felt pain in my head...the car carrying the other passengers then carried on to Jerusalem without me and my sister."

Iman's condition deteriorated after this incident and while her brother managed to obtain another permit for her, she told the WCLAC fieldworker:

While waiting for the permit I suffered tremendously. I then went to the hospital in Jerusalem and spent one week in the intensive care unit. The reason was because I did not take the necessary medication in time. My condition now is much worse than when I was able to take the medicine regularly. I am now unable to get out of bed except to go to the bathroom. I am tired and, on some days, I am unable to sleep from the pain.

Although Iman recovered to some extent and continued receiving treatment in Jerusalem and then in Jordan, she died in late 2009.

Residency and Separated Families

When Israel occupied the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967 it gave the Palestinians living in East Jerusalem the status of permanent residents. In December 1995, without forewarning, the Israeli Ministry of Interior claimed that

permanent residency, unlike citizenship, is a matter of the circumstances in which the individual lives, and when these circumstances change, the permit granting permanent residency expires. Thus, every Palestinian who lived outside the city for a number of years lost their right to live in the city, and the ministry ordered them to leave their homes.

This status lays the practical and legal grounds to allow the Israeli Ministry of Interior to cancel residency rights of thousands of Palestinians if certain conditions could be proved. This has meant in practice that:

Any Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem who leaves the country for seven years or more will lose his or her residency right in Jerusalem. For this purpose, a person living in the rest of the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip is considered to be living abroad.

Over the years Israel has cancelled the residency of thousands of Palestinians who were studying, working or living abroad, meaning they cannot return to live in Jerusalem.

Any Palestinian resident of Jerusalem who obtains citizenship or permanent residency in any other country will lose their residency right in Jerusalem.

As a result of these policies, in 2008, the Ministry of Interior revoked the Israeli residency status of 4,577 residents of East Jerusalem – including 99 minors. This is equal to approximately one half of the entire total of residency revocation cases between 1967 and 2007.

It is particularly difficult for a resident of Jerusalem to successfully obtain an approval for a family unification application for a spouse with a West Bank or Gaza identity card. In May 2002, the government froze the handling of applications for family unification filed by residents of the (oPt) occupied Palestinian territories and in July 2003, the government enshrined that decision in a statute – the Nationality and Entry in to Israel (Temporary Order) Law, 5763 – 2003. The statute prohibits Israelis married to residents of the Occupied Territories, or who marry them following implementation of the law, to live with their spouse in Israel. The policy is plainly discriminatory and racist, as highlighted by Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem: "Israel is seeking to prevent the further increase of the Arab population in Israel in order to preserve the Jewish character of the state. The state's attempt to avoid relying on demographics as the stated reason for the law is a result of its understanding that such a reason is racist and illegal, and would be nullified upon judicial review."

Rimaz Farid Awad Kasabreh lives with her husband in Jerusalem but, without the right papers, cannot live a normal life and describes how this impacts on almost every aspect of her life. "It became more and more difficult for me to go to my work or to get anywhere in Jerusalem. I couldn't do my shopping, I couldn't visit my friends, I couldn't take my children to school or to a doctor or a hospital. During the summer holidays my children and I could not go anywhere together.

I couldn't take them to summer camps where other children their age went. I was completely dependent on my husband who was very busy."

The impact on children and the mother's relationship with her children is also impacted by these Israeli policies which can also bring about a breakdown in the family network. Rimaz believes that her children have been affected by the restrictions placed on her life: "they couldn't understand why their friends' mothers took them places, drove them around and did things in the city with them while I couldn't. They were too young to understand. I sometimes felt they resented me. It was very difficult for all of us."

Home Demolitions

Home Demolitions affect Palestinian families and women in particular in a variety of ways, but the testimonies reveal that women are affected almost as much by the threat of demolition as by the demolition itself. One woman, IA from Silwan (Jerusalem), explains:

"It seems to me it is only a matter of time before our house is demolished. I feel anxious and afraid since I received this notice. I have bad dreams at night and lost my appetite. I have problems dealing with my children; I am unable to meet their needs."

And then, when the soldiers finally do show up, sometimes immediately, and sometimes months or even years later, the effects are disastrous.



A young Palestinian girl stands in front of her recently demolished home

"I'm having a really hard time. I don't know how to cope or what to do. I haven't been eating properly. What I'm most worried about though, is my oldest son K. I have a really good relationship with all my children, including K, and I can talk about everything with him. Normally he stays around the house or around Isawiya and I know where he is. He's changed since the house was demolished. He won't talk to me and I don't know where he is; he doesn't tell me where he's going or what he is doing. He comes back really late and I can't sleep until he returns back...It's so difficult to raise good children, it is a real struggle and I think I have done my best. But the occupation is making it impossible. All my hard work is unraveling since our home was demolished. I'm really worried about my son K. He's eighteen years old and I am scared to think about what will happen to him. He blames us for not resisting the demolition and for not letting him do anything about it."

Hannah Rought-Brooks is a lawyer from the UK currently working for International Service (UNAIS) and the Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling.

*Salwa Duaibis is a training and research associate at WCLAC. www.wclac.net
Salwa and Hannah compiled the report.*

Psychological Effects

According to Palestinian psychiatrist Dr. Viveca Hazboun, "living with the constant stress of attacks by occupiers can cause many medical and psychiatric exacerbations of illnesses, increased depression, psychosis, post traumatic stress and developmental delay; and it can cause increased incidence of high blood pressure, myocardial infarcts, diabetes and even cancer as we had seen previously in our population living under this stress."

I want to add that though these stresses are a burden for health, people shouldn't panic and think they are destined to ill health... they can turn this hardship into something that they can be proud to be able to withstand."

Leila from Hebron

By Gerry O'Sullivan

I would like to tell you about Leila from the Old City of Hebron. On February 24th at 15.30 she gave her son, Akram, fifteen shekels to buy bread for the family. A few minutes later when he reached Bab Al-Baladdeia, just a few metres from his home, fifteen-year-old Akram was arrested by the Israeli military for allegedly throwing stones at soldiers. A young on-looker named Mahmoud told me that the soldiers took Akram, grabbed him by the chest and banged him against the wall, twice. They then hit him across his cheekbone. Leila heard he was being arrested and rushed to the scene. She saw her son blind-folded with his hands tied behind his back. She screamed at the soldiers to give her son back to her, and tried to get through the military barrier gate to where he was being taken. They stopped her. They said they would arrest her too if she did not go away. She tried to push open the gate, continuing to scream. Then they closed the gate completely on her. Witnesses have said that Akram did not throw stones.

While accompanying Leila to find out where her son was detained, I found out about the justice system for Palestinian children in the occupied territories. Palestinian children are subject to Israeli military law and can be arrested, detained and imprisoned from the age

Israeli military tower in the West Bank

FREEDOM
2021




Israeli soldier patrolling in Hebron

of twelve. They can be kept at a police station for up to eight days without any visits from family or friends. In some cases, even a lawyer can be denied access to them. They may, or may not be released on bail.

An Israeli minor, e.g. the child of a settler living illegally in the occupied Palestinian territories, is under Israeli civilian jurisdiction. If they are arrested they cannot be detained for longer than twelve hours without being brought before a judge. They cannot be interviewed without the presence of their parents and any questioning that is done is carried out by a “child investigator,” usually with a social work background. (Source: Defense for Children International)

Akram’s military trial took place at Ofer military court and prison the following Sunday. I accompanied Leila to the


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hearing. She had not been able to see or to contact her son since his arrest. We left Hebron at 05.30 a.m. to travel to the court outside Ramallah. We waited

for the soldiers to open the gate for us. It was very, very cold. Other people came. They looked at the mother from Hebron and at the bags of clothes she had brought for her son and they said that she will not be allowed to give the clothes to him. Leila started sobbing. We continued to wait. After half an hour we noticed the freshly painted bright red finger nails of a soldier as she put her hands through the bars to open the gate.

We entered through radiation and security checks until we arrived at the waiting area. This area was a corrugated iron rain shelter open at one side and at its lower ends. Eventually over a hundred people were waiting under this shelter. The rain started to pour and the wind picked up. We tried to keep warm by putting the bags of clothes around our feet, but it was not working.

We pushed together to stay warm. Leila offered me one of the pairs of socks that she brought for her son. By this gesture I knew she had given up hope and was tearfully and angrily resigned to the Israeli military system.

At 11.30 a soldier eventually called Leila to come through to the court area. He told me that I could not enter to accompany her. Leila told me later that she was strip-searched and had a detector put inside her underwear.

The torrential rain continued and then

the thunder and lightning started. I continue to wait. It was 14.50.

At 16.30 I saw Leila exiting from the court area. Her news was that fifteen-year-old Akram will be charged and will be given between three and six months in the military jail. He pleaded innocent. She was crying.

Coming back to Hebron on the bus, Leila told me that when her son was brought into court he was chained at the ankles and handcuffed. She said she was able to talk to her son from a distance,

but he was not able to answer as he was crying so hard. Akram was still detained and was moved to an Israeli prison while awaiting further Israeli military trial.

There were 3,833 Palestinian minors detained by Israel in 2008. Of this number, 26.7% were charged with stone-throwing. (Source: The Israel Prison Service and visits by Defense for Children International (DCI).

Gerry O'Sullivan was an Ecumenical Accompanier based in Hebron from January 2010 to April 2010



2010 SABEEL FALL WITNESS VISIT

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center invites you to join us for 10 nights to experience the reality of life in today's Holy Land:

- **Worship with Palestinian Christians:** Meet and reflect with Palestinian Christians and Muslims as well as Jewish Israelis and internationals who partner with Sabeel in nonviolent resistance to the breaking of international and humanitarian law
- **Experience the realities of the Palestinian community living under Israeli Occupation:** the Wall, settlements, checkpoints, confiscated and demolished homes, refugee camps, and environmental degradation
- **Learn about the loss of civil and property rights of Arab Israeli citizens**

WHEN: 13-23, 2010 inclusive (10 nights)

WHERE: Nights in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Nazareth with side visits to the West Bank (e.g. Hebron, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Tuwani) and to the Sea of Galilee and holy sites

COST: \$1500 per person in a double room
\$1850 per person in a single room

This cost includes a non-refundable registration fee of \$300, all accommodations and meals for 10 nights, all transportation and honoraria during the visit. It does NOT include airfare, transportation to and from the airport, personal expenses and souvenirs, or travel insurance.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: 1 September 2010 The registration form is available on the Sabeel website (www.sabeel.org)

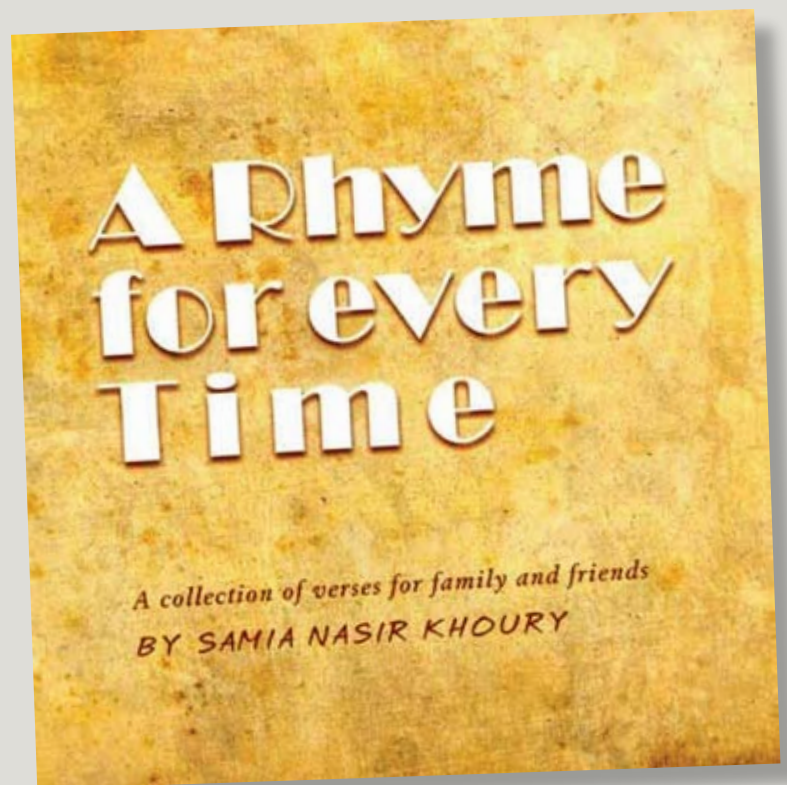
Please note that this is a Rigorous Trip that includes climbing of stairs and much walking, sometimes over rough terrain.

Jean Zaru Honored

Sabeel Vice President, Jean Zaru, has been awarded the Anna Lindh Memorial Fund Prize, whose purpose is to honour those “who in their daily lives have the courage to fight indifference, prejudice, oppression and injustices in order to promote a good life for all people in an environment marked by respect for human rights.” The committee recognized that, “During her entire life, Jean Zaru has chosen non-violence to resist the oppression under which she lives. Non-violence because it exposes and challenges the structural violence on all levels. Non-violence because it makes the oppressors realize that they, too, are victims of the violence they impart.”

This is a welcome honour to Jean who has been tireless in her commitment and has inspired countless others to follow her example of non violent resistance to the Israeli occupation and the discrimination which remains prevalent both here, and around the world, especially against women. Jean’s book, “Occupied with Non-Violence” is a testimony to her life and is available from Sabeel and through bookstores worldwide.

We congratulate Jean on this well deserved award and thank God for Jean and her work and pray that she will have health to continue the struggle and that others will be inspired to stand courageously and work lovingly for justice.



Introducing “A Rhyme ..for every Time”

At a time when the occupation and its ploys have consumed our minds and thoughts, our days and nights, our hopes and dreams, “A Rhyme for every Time” comes like a breeze of fresh air. Every book that is launched, every article circulated, every conference held, is either political, occupation-related or has to do one way or another with our on-going Nakba.

“A Rhyme for every Time” comes as a reminder that there is more to life than struggle. It comes to remind us that we have each other, and that our human relations are our most valuable asset that even the all-encompassing occupation can not take away from us.

It takes a person like Samia Khoury, with her warmth, her sense of humour, her observant eye and her loving, caring nature to take the time and make the effort to gather her friends and loved ones in such a charming collection which is:

*A token of love, a gift of herself;
A book to cherish and not for the shelf.*

The book is available at Sabeel for 15 USD including postage



Conference of Palestinian University Students

On 18 March 2010, the Sabeel Center's Young Adult Program held a conference in Jericho for Palestinian university students on the subject of the Religions for Peace Arms Down! Campaign. The conference attracted over 70 students, all selected by their universities as active young leaders. The participants were Muslims, Christians, and Samaritans who came from all over the West Bank from various economic and social backgrounds.

The conference took place over the course of a full day; it began with two presentations by leaders of the Muslim and Christian communities, Sheikh

Tayseer Tamimi, Chief Islamic Judge of Palestine, and William Shomeli, the Auxiliary Bishop to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The speakers gave the positions of both the Muslim and Christian faith perspectives on disarmament and provided a general framework to guide the discussions. After the encouraging presentations, Omar Haramy, Sabeel's Youth Program Coordinator, spoke about the Arms Down! Campaign launch in Costa Rica in November 2009 and brainstormed together with the students on how to effectively overcome challenges and promote the campaign in their regions.

All speakers and many of the participants signed the Arms Down! petition with the hope that the Palestinian voice for non-violence can be one of the loudest in pressing for the world to be safe and just for everyone.

Twenty-five thousand people die every day from hunger and poverty, averaging one person per second. Since the beginning of this year, 2010, twenty-five million people have died for the same reason. All of these lives could have been saved had we reduced military spending by a mere 10%. In 2008, military spending in the United States reached 1,464 billion dollars.

Sabeel Statement - June 3, 2010

GAZA

The Conscience of the World

When political and religious leaders fail to take a stand for justice, ordinary people must do it. Western government leaders are clearly unwilling to implement the requirements of international law and give the Palestinians their just rights. The mantle is now on the shoulders of grassroots people who, increasingly, the world over, are pushing for a nonviolent solution to the conflict over Palestine.

The small flotilla carrying nearly 700 people from some 30 countries was on its way to break the siege of the Gaza Strip, where one and a half million Palestinians have been subjected to a harsh blockade imposed by the Israeli government for the last four years. They were bringing with them educational supplies, cement, building materials, wheelchairs, prefabricated homes, water purifiers, food, children's toys, medicine and medical equipment.

Israeli forces attacked the flotilla in international waters, killing nine and injuring up to 60 people. This fits a familiar pattern: Israel has a habit of meeting resistance with disproportionate violent force to nip opposition in the bud, impose fear, and suppress any thoughts of further resistance. The apparent Israeli motto is that for every problem with the Palestinians there is always a military

solution. This has been the shortcut to suppression and control; and Israel does it in the name of security, under the guise of its right to self-defense, and without any critique from western governments.

The freedom flotilla has shamed heads of state and church leaders in its determination to break the unjust and oppressive siege of the Gaza Strip. In world public opinion, Israel is becoming



Palestine has become the litmus test for truth and justice and Gaza has become the conscience of the world

a pariah; its lies and deceptions are increasingly exposed and threadbare. Palestine has become the litmus test for truth and justice and Gaza has become the conscience of the world. The crucial question is, where do people stand? Do we stand for freedom and liberation of the oppressed in Gaza or on the side of the siege and humanitarian disaster?

The disciples asked Jesus, why couldn't we drive out the evil spirit? (Mark 9:28) Jesus said, such an evil spirit cannot be cast out except with prayer and with fasting. We

will continue to pray and fast in order to drive out the evil spirit of occupation and oppression. The great prophet Isaiah cried out that the fast God chooses, is "...to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:6) This is what we have been witnessing through the challenge of the flotilla. We believe that the spirit of God is working through true peace activists, who practice their prayers in direct nonviolent actions for peace and whose fast is the doing of justice.

Israel is frustrated that growing numbers of people and organizations, local and international (Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular) are daring to lift up their voices and engage in nonviolent challenges of Israeli injustice. In fact, since Israel's war on Gaza, one report after another has condemned Israel and documented its crimes against the Palestinians -- UN Human Rights Council Goldstone Report, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group.

In the absence of serious determination from the USA and others to end the illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories (including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip), we urge men and women - young and old, religious and secular - to use every nonviolent means available to end the siege of Gaza, remove the yoke of occupation and work for the freedom and liberation of Palestine and all its people.

God will loose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke and let the oppressed go free. We believe the dawn of justice is near.

Sabeel Jerusalem, June 3, 2010

www.sabeel.org

A Personal Testimony from the Freedom Flotilla

By *Huwaida Arraf*

In the early hours of Monday 31 May, Israel launched a deadly attack on the Freedom Flotilla, a convoy of six vessels, carrying civilians and humanitarian aid to Gaza in defiance of Israel's illegal blockade and ongoing imprisonment of 1.5 million of our brothers and sisters. We were going to Gaza not just to deliver the 10,000 tons of aid that we were carrying, but more importantly to challenge the policies that leave Palestinians in need of aid. This was the ninth voyage for the Free Gaza Movement, the organization that, on 23 August 2008, landed the first international ships in Gaza Port in over 41 years.

On the flotilla, I was on the boat called Challenger I - Al-Sumoud, a small, American-flagged vessel. We were traveling next to the Mavi Marmara - the large Turkish vessel carrying 560 people - when the assault began. At approximately 4:00 in the morning the Israeli Navy moved in on us. "They're coming" our colleague who was on watch alerted us. I put on my life jacket and went out onto the deck. There I saw the beginnings of the attack on the Mavi Marmara. Israeli commandos in naval vessels launched sound grenades and fired their weapons at the ship as a military helicopter hovered above.

This was a full military assault on an unarmed, civilian convoy. Our boat decided to speed ahead to try to prevent, or delay the boarding of our ship. The captain of the Mavi Marmara radioed to tell us it was alright to leave them. He asked us to try to get the news out that we were under attack. We were only able to outrun the Israel naval vessels for about 10 minutes before they overtook us. During that time we could not call out as it seemed the satellite system had been jammed. At least a dozen masked and armed commandos raided our boat. We were knocked down, pulled, beaten, and stomped on as we tried to put our bodies in the way to prevent them from taking over. One of the first things the soldiers went after was our media and communications tools so we would not have documentation of what they did. Cameras, recorders, and phones were all taken from us. Our boat was steered to Ashdod Port. Once there,



my colleagues and I refused to get off. "We were kidnapped from international waters. We were not going to Israel and we do not want to be in Israel!" we told them. When we would not disembark nicely, soldiers had to drag and carry us one by one.

Hundreds of human rights activists were attacked in international waters, illegally detained, coerced, and beaten; dozens were badly injured and nine of our colleagues were killed. Nonetheless, Israel should be under no illusion that their violence will stop us. We are a growing international movement, led by Palestinian resilience; mobilizing to do what states should be doing – defending human rights. We operate on the belief that right is much stronger than military might, and that each and every one of us can do something to effect change. On our first voyage to Gaza in August 2008 we were 44 people on two small fishing boats; last month we were nearly 700 on seven vessels, including the cargo ship named Rachel Corrie, launched from Ireland, that followed five days later. Soon we will be back with a bigger and more powerful Freedom Flotilla II with ships from around the world.

Huwaida Arraf is Chairwoman of the Free Gaza Movement, www.freegaza.org and a co-founder of the International Solidarity Movement, www.palsolidarity.org.

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PURPOSE STATEMENT *f* SABEEL

Sabeel is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. Inspired by the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, this liberation theology seeks to deepen the faith of Palestinian Christians, promote unity among them, and lead them to act for justice and love. Sabeel strives to develop a spirituality based on justice, peace, non-violence, liberation, and reconciliation for the different national and faith communities. The word 'Sabeel' is Arabic for 'the way' and also a 'channel' or 'spring' of life-giving water.

Sabeel also works to promote a more accurate international awareness regarding the identity, presence, and witness of Palestinian Christians as well as their contemporary concerns. It encourages individuals and groups from around the world to work for a just, comprehensive, and enduring peace informed by truth and empowered by prayer and action.

For more information on Friends of Sabeel groups in your area please contact our international representatives or the Sabeel Center in Jerusalem.