

CORNERSTONE

A PUBLICATION BY SABELL ECUMENICAL LIBERATION THEOLOGY CENTER



Towards Jerusalem

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The Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem

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Jesus Sets His Face Towards Jerusalem

Sabeel Bible Study Reflection

What does it mean for Jesus to “set his face” towards Jerusalem (or, as stated in Luke 9:51 in the NIV, to “resolutely set out”)? What is it about Jerusalem that makes it the focus of Jesus’ message and destiny? What is it today that makes Jerusalem such a significant issue, perhaps the most significant issue, in resolving the Palestine Israel conflict?

First, let us examine the context of this phrase as found in Luke 9. There are two significant events that need to be looked at. First, the transfiguration and second, Jesus’ foretelling of his suffering and death.



Photo by Tina Whitehead

Palestinian worshippers restricted from praying at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by Israeli soldiers often pray instead on the street nearby.

Jesus has just finished his three-year ministry in the Galilee. At Caesarea Philippi, he asks his disciples, “Who do you say I am?” and Peter makes his great confession: “You are the Christ” (Luke 9:20). Jesus then warns his disciples of his coming suffering and death and challenges them “to take up the cross and follow me” (9:22-23). A few days later, he takes Peter, James and John to the top of a high mountain where his glory is revealed to them in what we refer to as the transfiguration and a voice is heard from heaven saying, “This is my beloved son; listen to him” (9:35). On coming down from the mountain, the confusion that the disciples experience when they are unable to heal a demon-

possessed boy is a foretaste of the path they must now take. From this point on, things are going to be more difficult. Reading the gospel, one begins to feel the tension.

It is at this point that Jesus turns toward Jerusalem. In different versions, we are told that he “steadfastly” or “resolutely” sets his face towards Jerusalem. In other words, his whole being is involved in this turning. We know that it is in Jerusalem that he will be arrested and killed.

Let’s now look at what Jerusalem means. It was considered, and still is, a “holy” city. At the time of the Roman

occupation, Jerusalem was a center of power, both political and religious. Jesus was heading straight into the eye of power with a message about an alternative “kingdom,” a new “empire” that would turn the world upside down. Even though he had spent three years teaching his disciples and preparing them for his death, it is obvious from their reactions that they still saw him as someone who would confront power with power, who would come as a military liberator of the people who suffered under occupation.

Instead, Jesus’ message and the kingdom that he would bring about was one of justice, peace and love. This



A section of the separation barrier and Shuafat refugee camp in East Jerusalem

© Reuters

was the message he was taking to Jerusalem. As we say, he was going to speak truth, truth about the kingdom of God, to power. And power does not want to hear the truth. Power is threatened by the truth. And Jesus knew that by speaking this truth, especially in Jerusalem, he was risking his life.

Later on in Luke (13:33-34) we read about Jesus' sorrow over Jerusalem as he looks down on the city from the Mt. of Olives. It is interesting to note verse 33 where he says that "no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" Jesus comes to Jerusalem, knowing full well that his message, like the messages of the prophets throughout history who attempted to speak the word of God, will not be received. And to persist in speaking his message of love, justice and peace will lead only to death.

What about today? What is the meaning of Jerusalem today? First of all, it is still considered a "holy" city, but now not just to the Jewish faith, but to the Christian and Muslim faiths as well. According to the Kairos Palestine Document, for Palestinian Christians Jerusalem "is the heart of our reality. It is, at the same time, symbol of peace and sign of conflict" (1.1.8). "Jerusalem is the foundation of our vision and our entire life. She is the city to which God gave a particular importance in the history of humanity. She is the city towards which all people are in movement" (9.5).

Jerusalem was meant to be accessible to people of all faiths. When the two state solution became part of the peace process, East Jerusalem was to be the capital of the Palestinian State. Jerusalem has become one of the most contested issues in the peace process, but rather than being the issue that should be resolved first, it has been taken off the table and not open for discussion.

Jerusalem is one of the key issues in the Palestine Israel conflict. Part of Israel's agenda is to Judaize the city by changing the facts on the ground, whether through building illegal Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem or by trying to change the cultural and national character of the city's Palestinian neighborhoods. Despite these and numerous other documented violations of international law by Israel, the international community still does not have the political will to confront the powers that be in this conflict.

Who, at present, is setting their face towards Jerusalem? Who is willing to take up the cross of Jesus and speak truth to power? Who has the resolve to enter into the center of this issue, into the center of power and speak Jesus' message of love and justice and peace? Can the holiness of Jerusalem be retained apart from truth and justice?

Going back to the Gospel of Luke we read that Jesus not only predicted his passion and death, he also predicted that on the third day he would be raised to life (9:22). Jerusalem today is suffering. Israel refuses to share the city. It is pursuing a policy of exclusion, making Jerusalem exclusively Jewish, and defying UN resolutions, international law and human rights. It is time for the international community to "set its face resolutely towards Jerusalem," to raise its voice and speak truth to power. Then and only then will Jerusalem have the opportunity to experience resurrection.

Sabeel staff and volunteers contributed to this Bible study reflection.

Searching for the Corner Stone

'So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone' (Ephesians 2:19, 20).

Living in Jerusalem these days, it is hard to know where the 'corner stone' really is. As Sabeel Christians, building on the 'foundation of the apostles and the prophets,' the ways forward hit more brick barriers and walls. The wellsprings of hope need yet more permits to access. The Holy City increasingly surrounded by soldiers makes us feel like strangers and aliens in our own sacred spaces.

In Jerusalem today and in this issue of *Cornerstone*, we confront these harsh realities. As readers, wherever you are,

you must know and learn about these 'sinful facts on the holy ground.'

Read the Sabeel staff's reflection on the Luke account of Jesus 'turning his face towards Jerusalem,' knowing that confrontation with barriers, betrayal and soldiers lay ahead. Read former Jerusalem City councillor Meir Margalit's description of the ten plagues that afflict the Old City and the increasing divide between East and West Jerusalem. Read about Palestinian families losing their homes, and as Ecumenical Accompaniers witness it, the desperate measures taken by the Abdel Haq family with their five children in the Ras al-Amud neighborhood of East Jerusalem.

Yet in the midst of this unrelenting way of the cross, this Good Friday Jerusalem, some still stand and sing

like the children of Al-Mada. Others like Najwa continue to imagine and reimagine a Jerusalem with its windy trees standing steadfast - sumoud. And like the Mary's and John's at the foot of the cross, Nora Kort remains in Jerusalem. Read her story of existence, of Wujoud - and believe.

As an Easter people, you know some of these Jerusalems in your own life and experience. As fellow citizens of God's household, the stones of injustice must be rolled away, so together we can find that 'corner stone.' This is the Sabeel path we journey with you - working for justice as the 'corner stone' for the peace of Jerusalem.

William Roberts, Interim Executive Director



Sabeel's ecumenical prayer service for Jerusalem at the Dominican Church in November 2014



School children in the Silwan neighborhood of East Jerusalem

© CNI

The Story of an Impossible Reality

by Meir Margalit

The disturbances that raged in East Jerusalem during last July and which sporadically continue to this day are unlikely to surprise anyone following the situation in the city, and anyone who is attentive to the voices emanating from it. There are claims that a small group of inciters is seeking political profit,

and that this group is behind the disturbances. However, this proves that people supporting such claims know next to nothing about the true situation on the ground. If they were acquainted with events unfolding in the city's backyard, they would know that the eruption was predictable, and only its time was unknown.

Much has changed in East Jerusalem over the past decade, to the point of becoming intolerable. When Teddy Kollek was Jerusalem's mayor (1965-1993), Arab residents were disadvantaged, but their honour was scrupulously defended. They felt that at least they received civilized treatment. Recently though, several moves have made their lives unbearable and, even worse, they feel their dignity is being trodden underfoot. In the spirit of Easter that we are celebrating these days, I would say that ten plagues are being inflicted on East Jerusalem's Arab residents, and they cannot be ranked by gravity.

The first plague: The option of lawfully building a home has become almost impossible for the city's Arab residents. The difficulties have been accumulating for years: requirements to prove ownership (despite the fact that since the Ottoman period Palestinians did not normally register their properties in the official state registry), the absence of infrastructures required by law for construction (roads, water, sewage and electricity), low building percentages (not being allowed to build on the full lot of the property), the reducing of areas permitted for new construction, and the high cost of taxes that are required to be paid in order to receive a building license. All of these facts do not give the Arab residents many options other than to build without a building license, facing the risk that their homes will be demolished by the municipality.

The second plague: The separation fence, built over the last decade, has not only created a wave of internal migration, but it has cut the Arab migrants off from their families, relatives, and loved ones. Matters have become highly complicated. A family visit, which in the past entailed a short journey of some minutes, has become a "journey into the unknown," in which no one can guess how long it will take to reach a destination or to return from it. Everything depends on the mood of the soldier standing at the checkpoint, which they now must cross.

The third plague: In tandem, the Israeli Interior Ministry has intensified its campaign of confiscating the Jerusalem identity cards from people who it maintains are living beyond the municipal borders of Jerusalem. Many

Arabs with this "Jerusalemite ID" find that one day their citizenship status has been revoked without their knowledge, and they must retain a lawyer's services to get it back.

The fourth plague: The Interior Ministry continues to prevent East Jerusalem residents from uniting with their spouses who hold an ID from the West Bank. Therefore, Palestinian spouses from the West Bank are forced to live in Jerusalem even if they don't have a permit to do so. Such permits are difficult to obtain. The spouses stay at home and live almost underground out of fear of being arrested by Israeli police.

The fifth plague: The Jewish settlers have lost all control and are trying to take over every spot of land in the city's



Israeli police spraying Palestinian houses with "skunk water" in East Jerusalem in July 2014.

eastern half. This is so given the fact that they themselves know that sooner or later the city of Jerusalem will need to be divided and therefore, they are making great efforts to prevent that by establishing facts on the ground. Very recently, and without any qualms, they have removed entire Arab families from their homes, imposing fear everywhere they go. This happens very often by the settlers using falsified documents. Other times, the “apothropous for absentee properties” law simply assigns the houses to the settlers, or in some instances, Arab owners under severe financial pressure sell their homes to settler buyers.

The sixth plague: Thousands of homes of Arab families in East Jerusalem are at risk of demolition. This is because the municipality is not capable of demolishing such a huge number of homes, so none of the thousands of families who have received demolition orders know who will suffer this fate, and when it will be their turn to lose their home. In this situation, every family lives on borrowed time and the stress of the unknown is a form of torture.

The seventh plague: The economic crisis has caused calamity in the eastern part of the city, with close to 70% of all Arab families there now living below the poverty line. In the absence of any prospects for improving their situation, they have very little to lose.

The eighth plague: The humiliating attitude of the Israeli border police has become unrestrained and ever more violent, gross and hot-headed. The Israeli soldiers disdain everything that appears Arab, and injure the deepest sensibilities of Arab residents.

The ninth plague: The archaeological excavations that the state of Israel is carrying out close to the Al Aqsa

Mosque (Temple Mount), both in the Givati parking lot and in El Wad Street, are generating immense concern among those who believe they are intended to cause the collapse of mosques, including the Al Aqsa Mosque. It is a belief nurtured by their “intimate” knowledge of the Jewish settlers who are conducting the excavations and the settlers’ nationalist-messianic agenda that impels them. It may not be true, but in East Jerusalem even a feeling or a rumour can ignite a conflagration.

The tenth plague: There is a low level of municipal services benefiting Arab families, ranging from the collection of garbage to the challenges to the educational system which contribute to their inferior status. This is despite the fact that they pay taxes to the city. Every time Arab citizens cross to the western part of the city and see how great the divide is between their own standard of living and that of their Jewish neighbours, this is seared into their awareness.

Moving Forward

The only means by which we can free the Arab residents from this nightmare is by dividing Jerusalem. Anyone who seeks to promote peace in the Middle East must insist on bringing this issue to the table. The issue of Jerusalem is, in fact, at the heart of the conflict. Peace will remain unattainable until the city is divided, and that within its territorial expanse two capital cities for two nations rise: a West Jerusalem capital of Israel and an East Jerusalem capital of a Palestinian state.

Looking toward division is, in fact, a reflection of the realities on the ground. The city is already divided by invisible walls stretching higher than those erected between Israel and Jordan in 1967. Arab and Jewish residents of the city view one another with apprehension

and lack of trust. Despite 46 years of Israeli jurisdiction of Jerusalem, it is nearly impossible to find instances of cooperation and coexistence between the two communities.

A divided Jerusalem is unavoidable. It is an indispensable reality if peace is to be realized. Anyways, the city is already politically divided. The international community should pressure Israel to acquiesce the division of the city, and it must act quickly. It must use all of its influence to apply heavy pressure in order to prevent the Israeli government from creating facts on the ground that will severely cripple any possibility for a just resolution to the conflict.

There is no time to waste. The international community must take every necessary step to ensure Israel ends the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. This is no easy undertaking, but in the end, history will undoubtedly recognize such great efforts.

Dr. Meir Margalit served as a member of the Council of the Jerusalem Municipality representing the left-wing Meretz party from 1998- 2002 and 2008-2013 where he was in charge of the East Jerusalem portfolio. He is a co-founder of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAD) and is the director of the Center for Advancement of Peace Initiatives. He is also the author of “Seizing Control of Space in East Jerusalem” and “Demolishing Peace: House Demolitions in East Jerusalem.”

2015 SABEEL WITNESS VISIT

November 3rd - November 11th 2015

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center invites you to join us for

9 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 with Jewish Israelis and internationals who partner with Sabeel in non-violent resistance against violations 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: November 3rd - November 11th 2015 inclusive (9 nights)

WHERE: Nights in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Nazareth with side visits to other sites within the West Bank and to the Sea of Galilee holy sites

**COST: \$1600 per person in a double room
\$1900 per person in a single room**

This cost includes a non-refundable registration fee of \$300, all accommodations and meals for 9 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.

For more information please email World@sabeel.org : +972 2 5327136

An additional 100\$ for registration after the 20th of September 2015

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, SOMETIME OVER ROUGH TERRAIN.

An Excerpt from Pilgrims and Powerbrokers

by Gregory C. Jenks

Few places on the earth fit the criterion of “lands that bear the marks of colonization” more strongly than Palestine. This phrase certainly fits with the present experience of Palestinians, as well as that ‘lust for Zion’ which has been a hallmark of Christian claims to the land in the Byzantine period, during the Crusades, and by various European powers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a recent collection of essays indicates (Ateek, Duaybis, & Whitehead, 2014)¹, there is no lack of intersection with politics, scriptures and religions in modern Palestine and Israel.

Geography destined Palestine to serve as the great global interchange; the point where traffic from Africa, Asia and Europe converges as humanity surges back and forth like waves on the beach. Adventurers, armies, merchants, and refugees have crossed the ancient land of Palestine since time before memory. In the process they have conquered and colonized. They have killed and they have settled among the natives. They have lived in houses they did not build, drawn water from cisterns they did not dig, and gathered harvests from crops they did not plant (cf. Deut 6:10–11).

They have told stories about their gods, and claimed this land was given to them – and them exclusively – by their gods, who alone are true gods. In this land some of those stories became the Bible, and from this land Torah and Gospel have been shared with other parts of the world.

For some Christians in antiquity – and specifically Byzantine Christians after the merger of Christianity with imperial Rome – Jerusalem had become the centre of the world; or, at least, the centre of their world. The beautiful mosaic map from Byzantine Madaba in modern Jordan reflects the position of Jerusalem in the religious imagination of the believer.

The city had not always been at the centre of the world, even the religious world. When it first appears in our historical records around 1,350 years before the Common Era, Jerusalem was a small settlement in the orbit of Egypt. In Amarna Letter 287 its local ruler (Abdi-Heba) wrote to Akhenaton asking for a handful of archers to help with some local disturbances involving the ‘Apiru (Moran, 1992, pp. 327–328)².

The fortunes of Jerusalem were to change following the capture of the city by David and its eventual transformation into Zion, “the city of the LORD of hosts, . . . the city of our God, which God establishes forever (Ps 48:8 NRSV). It is possible to sketch a series of historical periods that have especially impacted on the fortunes of the city and its inhabitants since Jerusalem became the leading city of the Israelite – and later Jewish – communities:

Judean Jerusalem 950–750 BCE
 Jerusalem as Zion, the sacred city under God’s protection 750–600 BCE
 Destruction and exile 586–539 BCE
 Jerusalem in the Persian period 539–330 BCE
 Jerusalem in the Ptolemaic period 300–200 BCE
 Jerusalem in the Seleucid period 200–140 BCE
 Hasmonean Jerusalem 140–40 BCE
 Herodian Jerusalem (Early Roman period) 40 BCE–66 CE
 Rebellions against Roman rule 66–73, 115–17, 132–35 CE
 Byzantine Jerusalem 335–638 CE
 Arab Jerusalem 638–1099 & 1187–1250 CE
 Crusader Jerusalem 1099–1187 CE
 Mamluk Jerusalem 1250–1517 CE
 Ottoman Jerusalem 1517–1918 CE
 Colonial Jerusalem 1700s & 1800s CE
 British Jerusalem 1918–1948 CE
 Israeli Jerusalem since 1948

Each of these phases needs to be studied if we are to explore the significance of Jerusalem as both a location and a metaphor in world history.

To read more, see Gregory C. Jenks’ chapter “Pilgrims and Powerbrokers: The Russian Fascination with Jerusalem” in *Postcolonial Voices from Down Under: Aboriginal and Migrant Roots, Religions, and Readings*, edited by Jione Havea, forthcoming, https://www.academia.edu/9937722/Pilgrims_and_Powerbrokers_The_Russian_Fascination_with_Jerusalem.

Dr. Gregory C. Jenks is Senior Lecturer in the Charles Sturt University School of Theology and Academic Dean at St Francis Theological College in Brisbane, Australia, where he teaches Biblical Studies. He is also a co-director of the Bethsaida Excavations Project in Israel and is Secretary of Friends of Sabeel Australia.

¹ Ateek, N., Duaybis, C., & Whitehead, T. (Eds.). (2014). *The Bible and the Palestine- Israel conflict*. Jerusalem: Sabeel Centre.

² Moran, W. L. (1992). *The Amarna letters*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Existence, Presence and Steadfastness

by Nora Kort

The Jerusalem population numbers 815,310 (2012 demographic features) of which 515,160 or 63.2% are “Jewish and others” and 300,150 or 36.8% are Palestinians. Muslims comprise 35% of Jerusalem and Christians comprise less than 2%¹

This universal city of Jerusalem is the only city in the world in which 15 different Christian communities live. The majority have long histories going back to hundreds of years. Each and every one of the Christian congregations and Christian bodies that is present in the city represents large communities comprising millions of adherents, countries and powerful international Christian institutions. Jerusalem is the only city in the world in which nearly all Christian churches and denominations seek to establish presence.

Despite the small proportion of Christians among the city’s population – due to emigration in search for a better and more secure life and more stability – the Christian presence is physically and humanly prominent in Jerusalem, particularly in the Old City. There are 180 churches in Jerusalem and some 117 Christian institutions and sites. The contribution of the minority Christian population, the “Living Stones,” is quite significant at all levels whether in the educational, cultural, medical or humanitarian assistance realms, and has been vital support to the Palestinians at large.



The outside entrance of the WUJOURD museum in the Old City near Jaffa Gate

I come from a family that is deeply rooted in Jerusalem, with a presence that dates back to Pentecost. My family experienced dispossession and displacement as well. They fled West Jerusalem and became refugees in the Old City. All the family’s property was lost in the first Arab Israeli War, including St. George’s Orthodox Church in the Montefiori, which my family established in the 15th century. However, my family confronted all the challenges with steadfastness and conviction to stay in the city.

I was brought up in a tolerant society that accepted Muslims and Christians alike. The Jerusalem families never differentiated between people of different faiths. We were all one nation who worshipped one God. The politicization of religion and religious fundamentalism never existed among us, unlike the situation in today’s world.

Christians and Muslims are part of the Arab Palestinian culture, which we are proud to hold in spite of our differences.



Photo by Sabeel

The inside entrance of the WUJOUND museum where black and white photos of Jerusalem's past and indigenous population fill the walls

As a Christian in the Holy City who believes in our witness and sharing our one culture, the climax of my small contribution to my society was in the establishment of an ethno-cultural museum in the Old City, called WUJOUND.

In Arabic WUJOUND means "existence, presence and steadfastness." In Arabic it stands for "The existence of the Palestinians, including Christians, in the City since times immemorial." Palestinian Christians have always been a part of the local community in the City since

the times of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WUJOUND is situated in an old Mamluk building constructed 650 years ago (1365). In the Western world little is known about the Mamluks, who were the slave warriors of medieval Islam. The Mamluks overthrew their masters, defeated the Mongols and the Crusaders, and established a dynasty that lasted three hundred years. They were the ones who made Cairo the dominant city of the Islamic world in the later Middle Ages.

The Mamluks ruled Egypt and Greater Syria (Jerusalem included) from 1250-1517 when their dynasty was extinguished by the Ottomans. They made craftsmanship, architecture and scholarship flourish. A good example of their architecture can be seen at WUJOUND.

What makes WUJOUND special is its location in the middle of four Old City quarters. WUJOUND overlooks "The Pool of Hezekia" for the Jews or what we the local Palestinian community call "The Pool of the Bath of the Patriarchs." Prior to 1967, the second Arab-Israeli War, the pool's water came by means of aqueducts from Solomon's Pools in Bethlehem and collected rainfall water. Between 1967-2009 and with total neglect, the pool became a cesspool and a health-hazard until the Municipality of Jerusalem was compelled to clean it up.

WUJOUND is a museum which showcases authentic life of Palestinians in Jerusalem between the 18th to the first half of the 19th century and how people of different cultures, religions and ethnicities accepted, respected one another and co-existed. We, as Palestinians, believe that religions unite and do not divide. Religions advocate and spread love and peace and emphasize respect and dignity of human beings – and so do cultures that know no borders. Religions and cultures are bridges between people and nations. They are tools of *peace* and good will among people. This is the true witness of WUJOUND and the "Living Stones" in the Holy City.

Nora Kort is President of the Arab Orthodox Society and Atta Services, two Palestinian humanitarian and development organizations in Jerusalem. She is founder of WUJOUND museum of collective memory in the Old City of Jerusalem.

¹ Passia- Palestinian Academic Society, Jerusalem Diary 2015

Glimpses of Our Activities



Sabeel youth visit Christian families in isolated villages in the West Bank.



The Sabeel women gather for a brainstorming and discussion session for programs in 2015.



Youth meeting in Nazareth to discuss Pope Francis's new ways of fasting for Lent



Youth in Jerusalem meet to discuss different challenges: the political, the economic, the social and the spiritual.



Sabeel Nazareth and Jerusalem staff and volunteers meet for a retreat in Jericho.

Glimpses of Our Activities



Women's meeting in Nazareth to document the memories of the 1948 Nakba



Women from Jerusalem and Nazareth meet in Jericho to discuss "The Role of Women in Church and Society."



The first meeting of the children's program in Nazareth



The community visits the elderly at an old age home in Jerusalem during Lent.



Launch of the book *Non-violent Resistance in Islam and Christianity* at Bethlehem University



Photo by Al Mada

Palestinian youth from East Jerusalem perform original music at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society Theater in Ramallah on December 2, 2014 as part of "For My Identity, I Sing!"

For My Identity ...I Sing

by Al-Mada

We live in a world where some voices are respected and listened to, while others are silenced or ignored. This is especially true when it comes to the topic of Palestine and to the voices of young people. Al-Mada Center for Arts-Based Community Development is striving to make these voices heard. For this reason we developed "For My Identity, I Sing!" a unique cultural and arts education initiative.

The first stage of this initiative was an 18-month-long project that gave a diverse group of Jerusalem area youth

(ages 14-17) the chance to creatively explore their identities and challenges. The initiative also attempted to overcome some of the social divisions that separate East Jerusalem area youth (and that are exacerbated by Israeli occupation policies) through creating a space where the participants can be united around their Palestinian identity, their love for the land and their people, and their dreams for a peaceful future without conflict, injustice and violence.

The project provided a much-needed platform for youth who are struggling with a unique set of challenging circumstances. This is especially important for East Jerusalem youth who do not have a nationality and are pulled between multiple and sometimes contradictory identities. Many East Jerusalem youth are also impacted by an overall sense of insecurity and the unknown that comes from living in a community where homes are at risk of being demolished or taken over by settlers, and families are evicted. Additionally, discrimination, poverty, the threat of raids and arrests, separation

of families and significant lack of educational, recreational and social service infrastructure, are but some of the things that make growing up in East Jerusalem particularly difficult.

The initiative brought together governmental (public) and private schools and youth from different religious, social and geographical segments of East Jerusalem. Al-Mada's staff worked with them on team-building, creative expression, music making and an affiliated social media campaign, which engaged other Palestinian youth in different regions. Through an entertaining, educational, and dynamic process, the participants, who have mostly never been exposed to any professional music training, together created eight original songs, which they helped write and compose. In addition to creating a professionally recorded album of the songs, the youth performed the songs in two concerts for the community, one in Jerusalem and one in Ramallah.

Between Jerusalem and Ramallah

*Between Jerusalem and Ramallah
And the checkpoint,
God knows whatever will happen on the way between Jerusalem and
Ramallah....
and the checkpoint
Nowadays we need a permit just to live
We're so exhausted from the continuous inspection..
Name of your father?
Name of your grandfather?
Put your leg in...Raise your hand
Whatever you wear won't help....
Cameras above you, and cameras underneath you....
Inspection from top to bottom
And still it's the beginning of the day
Inside the wall....outside the wall....
Me to the right and my sister is to the left*

This song was written and composed by the youth. It is about all checkpoints and the feeling of constantly being watched.

Palestine's population, including that of East Jerusalem, is very young. Youth make up nearly 50% of the Palestinian population; however there is a lack of safe spaces for them to express themselves, to be creatively engaged and to develop their leadership potential. "For My Identity, I Sing!" was created to fill this void. In a place where youth are constantly impacted by politics and violent surroundings, the need for such creative spaces is great. Al-Mada's unique approach of art education and therapy, which emphasizes the specific needs of each participant, creates opportunities for youth to be involved in transformative experiences, to strengthen themselves and for them to use these experiences to creatively work for change.

The songs talk about Israeli occupation, harassment, checkpoints and separation, the challenges of adolescence and the pressures of being 'cool,' and even about

Palestinian refugees in Yarmouk camp, Syria. They are honest, beautiful and, sometimes, heartbreaking. The initiative breaks down the stereotype that the creation of art and cultural production, specifically music, is only the realm of the elite and those who have access to training. Rather, music making can be seen as central to popular grassroots resistance and identity building. Music, cultural work, and creative expression are powerful forces for social change and have played a central role in social movements around the world. We view "For My Identity, I Sing!" as being an essential and positive contribution for freedom and justice in Palestine and a way to centralize youth voices at the forefront of this movement.

We should not undermine what children and youth have to offer; instead we should work to create spaces where they can express themselves freely and where their ability to create

and lead is nourished. Now, more than ever, we believe that the children of Palestine, and especially in Jerusalem, have a right to heal from trauma and to live dignified lives and must have spaces to tell their stories to the world. Despite the barriers that divide us, Al-Mada hopes to make "For My Identity, I Sing!" a national campaign that will expand nationally, to include Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and regionally. We invite you to join us as we embark on this journey, to bring this campaign to the rest of Palestine and beyond.

Al-Mada for Arts-Based Community Development is a development organization which specializes in the application and proliferation of music and expressive arts therapy to support and address the needs of a diverse community. The multi-faceted benefits of this established field of health care, makes it particularly suitable to effective community development. Through direct interventions and the training of community workers in the fields of health, education, human rights, gender, advocacy and culture Al-Mada works to advance self expression, inclusion, therapy, and social justice in Palestine. The CD of original songs (in Arabic) can be purchased from the Al-Mada office in Ramallah. All proceeds go to build the initiative. www.al-mada.ps

"...We believe that the children of Palestine, and especially in Jerusalem, have a right to heal from trauma and to live dignified lives, and must have spaces to tell their stories to the world."



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A home demolition in the Shuafat neighborhood

Home Demolitions: A Discreet Displacement

by EAPPI

The Abdel Haq family in the Ras al-Amud neighborhood of East Jerusalem consists of a mother, a father, and five children. Recently the family took it upon themselves to demolish their children's bedrooms, forcing all five children to share one remaining room. According to the family they had to do it to avoid a 20,000 NIS fee, and to save the younger children from the psychological trauma of having armed riot police forcibly evacuating them from the home.

According to Huda Abdel Haq, the mother, *"We discussed the reasons with the children why we need to do this. I think it made it easier for them to accept the situation. They have not been angry. It took three to four months to build the rooms, and we demolished them in only two days."* When her oldest son Mohamed was asked how he could not be angry, he replied, *"If you want to be able to live in this country, you have to feel nothing."*

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 601 Palestinian-owned structures were demolished in the West Bank in 2014; as a result, 1,215 people were forcibly displaced – this is a six-year high. The majority of these demolitions took place in Area C of the West Bank [493], and in East Jerusalem [98] so as to accommodate settlement expansion in these areas.

Area C consists of 62 percent of the West Bank and is the only geographically contiguous area of this territory. Yet, only 1% of Area C has been designated for Palestinian development. Similarly, over one third of East Jerusalem has been expropriated for construction of illegal Israeli settlements, while only 13 percent of the city is zoned for Palestinian construction.



Photo by Tina Whitehead

The remains of the Abdel Haq children's bedrooms

The permit application process for building in these areas is deliberately both complicated and expensive for Palestinians. Thus, the number of permits granted per year to Palestinians does not meet the existing demand for housing. Due to these difficulties and due to the lack of feasible alternatives [i.e. relocation to other parts of the West Bank], many Palestinians in Area C and East Jerusalem risk building on their land without a permit in order to meet their housing needs.

For example, at least 28 percent of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem have been built in violation of Israeli zoning requirements, meaning that some 60,000 Jerusalemites are at risk of having their homes demolished.

Though the Israeli judicial system has sought to legitimize demolitions via domestic law, according to the Hague Regulations and the Fourth Geneva Convention, it is illegal for an occupying force to damage, destroy and/or confiscate private property in the occupied territory unless such actions are warranted as a 'military necessity,' something that administrative demolitions [i.e. demolitions due to a

lack of building permits] and punitive demolitions cannot be categorized as.

In fact, even when Israel has tried to legitimize house demolitions in recent years for the sake of military necessity, as in last year's 'Operation Protective Edge,' the destruction of 40,000 Palestinian homes in the Gaza Strip in less than 50 days of conflict could not be justified. This is because the International Committee of the Red Cross's (ICRC) commentary on Protocol I of the Hague Regulations draws attention to the fact that the occupying power must interpret this clause in a reasonable manner, keeping a sense of proportion in comparing the military advantages to be gained with the damages done.

The confiscation and demolition of private Palestinian property has increasingly incurred political and economic costs for Israel, in the forms of condemnations by notable figures, investigations of grave human rights violations [i.e. Goldstone Report], and a general loss of European mainstream support coupled with tighter trade restrictions pertaining to settlement goods. These repercussions have

mobilized Israel to create a system of policies that encourages Palestinians to proactively leave the areas noted above on their own and move into Areas A & B, or to even demolish their homes themselves, saving Israel the controversy and costs associated with demolitions and forced displacement.

The number of self-demolitions and relocations is a figure that is difficult to track. There is no comprehensive data on this phenomenon, but it is certainly a trend that is on the rise in East Jerusalem, where residents are forced to pay hefty fees for the cost of the demolitions.

It is widely understood that Israel's policy of systematically refusing planning permission to Palestinians, while giving Israelis permission to build settlements, is a tactic to change the facts on the ground, by making a viable Palestinian state impossible via annexing Area C, and securing Jerusalem as Israel's capital by reducing the Palestinian demographic as a minority within the city.

It is vital to raise awareness about the families who regrettably take it upon themselves to demolish their homes and leave their land due to fear of greater consequences, so as to limit Israel's maneuverability to escape responsibility for this discreet form of displacement.

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is a programme coordinated by the World Council of Churches founded in response to a call from the local Heads of Churches in Jerusalem that brings internationals to the West Bank. Since 2002, over 1,500 volunteers have come for 3 months to be Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs). The EAs offer protective presence to vulnerable communities and monitor and report human rights abuses. They join Palestinians and Israelis who work in nonviolent ways for peace and support the local churches.

East Jerusalem – Some Facts

There are only **5** welfare offices in East Jerusalem, compared to **18** in West Jerusalem.

Only **53%** of Palestinian students attend official public schools.

There is a shortage of over **2,000** classrooms in the local school system.

Only **6%** of East Jerusalem children between the ages of 3 and 4 attend public kindergartens, as there is a shortage of **400** kindergarten classrooms.

36% of students in East Jerusalem do not complete 12 years of schooling.

There are only **4** mother-and-baby centers in East Jerusalem, compared to **25** in West Jerusalem.

There is a dire shortage of sewage pipes – **50km** in all. Without appropriate sewage, residents are forced to use septic tanks that repeatedly flood.

From 1967-2013 Israel revoked the residency of **14,309** East Jerusalem Palestinians.

Source: the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), found at <http://www.acri.org.il/en/2014/05/24/ej-numbers-14/>

One Sunday in Jerusalem

Why is it after so many years
Many eventful years
That one day is singled out?
For nothing happened then.

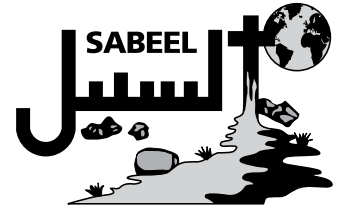
It was Sunday afternoon
A wind blew
And the beloved trees of Jerusalem
Swayed and bent,
Their dark foliage engulfed me with
mysterious joy;
Ancient trees, standing there years
By a hospital, an embassy, a church,
a mosque.
Something about them was deeply
profound.



Many winds had visited those trees,
Those Jerusalem trees.
Did the winds tell about their
birthplace, their journeys
Over rocky mountains and deep
scented valleys?
Yet , this is where they want to
linger,
To rest and belong.
And why, after so many years,
Does my soul journey to that Sun-
day in Jerusalem,
And why do memories, so vivid, so
inexplicable,
Overwhelm me?
Is this eternity unraveled?
Is this where our spirit resides?

Najwa Kawar Farah was born in Nazareth and was trained as a teacher in Jerusalem before 1948. She contributed to the Arab literary movement for many years, writing several collections of short stories, novels, plays and poetic prose. This poem is from her publication, To Palestine with Love. She also recently published her autobiography in Arabic and a book on folktales. She currently lives in Toronto, Canada. For more information on her work, go to <http://www.najwafarah.com>

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center
P.O.B. 49084 Jerusalem 91491
Tel: 972.2.532.7136 Fax: 972.2.532.7137



General Email: sabeel@sabeel.org
Clergy Program: clergy@sabeel.org
International Programs: world@sabeel.org
Youth Program: youth@sabeel.org
Media: media@sabeel.org
Visiting: visit@sabeel.org
Cornerstone: cornerstone@sabeel.org

Visit our newly revised website at:

www.sabeel.org

Sabeel-Nazareth

PO Box 50278 Nazareth 16120 Israel
Tel: 972(4)6020790
Email: nazareth@sabeel.org

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS OF SABELL

Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA)

Rev. Dr. Don Wagner, Program Director
PO Box 9186,
Portland, OR 97207 / USA
Tel: (1)- 503-653-6625
Email: friends@fosna.org
www.fosna.org

Canadian Friends of Sabeel

3 Sandstone Court
Nepean, Ontario/ Canada, K2G 6N5
Email: sabeelcanada@gmail.com
www.sabeel.ca

Friends of Sabeel United Kingdom (FOS-UK)

Anne Clayton, Coordinator
Watlington Rd.
Oxford OX4 6BZ / UK
Tel: (+44) 1865 787419 or 787420
Email: info@friendsofsabeel.org.uk
www.friendsofsabeel.org.uk

Friends of Sabeel Ireland (FOS- IR)

Rev. Alan Martin
9 Sycamore Road
Dublin 16 / Ireland
Tel: 00-353-1-295-2643
Email: avmartin24@gmail.com

Friends of Sabeel Netherlands (FOSNL)

Vrienden van Sabeel Nederland
Hettie Oudelaar
Jan Tooroplaan 34-2
6717 KJ Ede The Netherlands
Tel: (+31) 6 488 09 550
Email: info@vriendenvansabeelnederland.nl
www.vriendenvansabeelnederland.nl

Friends of Sabeel Scandinavia and FOS Sweden

Marianne Kronberg
Hjortnäsvägen 27
S-79331 Leksand - Sweden
Tel: (+46) 706 095010
Email: mkronberg1951@yahoo.se
www.sabeelskandinavien.org

Friends of Sabeel Scandinavia in Norway

Hans Morten Haugen
Haräsveien 2e
0283 Oslo / Norway
Tel: (+47) 47340649
Email: haugen@diakonhjemmet.no
www.sabeelnorge.org

Friends of Sabeel Oceania Inc. (FOS-AU)

Gregory C. Jenks
St Francis Theological College
PO Box 1261
Milton, QLD 4064
Australia
www.sabeel.org.au

Friends of Sabeel France

Pasteur Ernest Reichert
12, rue du Kirchberg
F- 67290 WINGEN S/ MODER- FRANCE
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 89 43 05
Email: ernest.reichert@gmail.com

Friends of Sabeel Germany

Canon Ulrich Kadelbach
Happoldstrasse 50
D-70469 Stuttgart / Germany
+49 (0) 711 857841
Email: fofsabeel-germany@arcor.de

PURPOSE STATEMENT *f* SABELL

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, nonviolence, 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.