Pursuing Peace and Justice
Confronting Oppression in Palestine

Findings of Delegation to the West Bank
January 2016

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We believe that now is our time to work together, at all levels, for change, for social justice, and for the universal implementation of human rights, building on the wealth of social initiatives and social movements. . . . we feel compelled to advocate for a new world order which makes a reality of respect for human rights and dignity and a different structure of human relationships. We commit ourselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root causes of oppression and inequality. We commit ourselves wholeheartedly and urgently to work together, with people who use services and with others who share our objectives and aspirations, to create a more socially-just and fair world that we will be proud to leave to future generations (IFSW, 2012).
Delegation to West Bank January 2016

- Travel2Palestine: non-profit organisation which facilitates political/educational delegations to Palestine (https://travel2palestine.org/)

- Included:
  - Tour of Jerusalem guided by Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (http://icahd.org)
  - Briefing from Military Court Watch on detention of children (http://militarycourtwatch.org/)
  - Meetings with Governors of Jerusalem and Jericho, Mayor of Hebron
  - Briefing from UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory (www.ochaopt.org)
  - Visits to Hebron, Qalandia Refugee Camp, Bil'in Village, Bedouin Village Jericho area
  - Visit to Yasser Arafat Mausoleum
This presentation . . .

• This presentation is not “balanced”

• Social work . . . promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. (IFSW, 2014)

• Gareth Morgan: Isn’t it ironic, that from a land formed as a shelter for the victims of the worst atrocity of the modern era, have emerged descendants from that terrible time who compromise their own humanity in order to inflict as much harm as they can get away with on another people, a people who have just as much legitimacy to reside in the area as them. Civil-minded Israelis are ashamed, thank goodness. (Morgan, 2016)
A Short History of Nearly Everything . . .

- Small Jewish communities lived in peace alongside Palestinians in Palestine for centuries

- Growth of Zionism from late 19th century, promoting Jewish homeland

- 1917 Balfour Declaration: British Govt support for *the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people*. 

  *On what basis did the British believe that they were entitled to promise to the Zionists a land that belonged to others?* (El-Alami, 2015)

- 1920s-1940s increasing Jewish migration under British mandate, growing aggression from Jewish militant groups
Since World War 2

- 1947 UN Resolution 181 divided Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state, border the Green Line, Jerusalem as an internationalised city.
- 1948 establishment of the state of Israel
- The Nakba (Arabic catastrophe)
  - Significant Jewish extremist/terrorist aggression
  - More than 700,000 Palestinians expelled from or fled their homes, remain refugees
  - Over 400 Palestinian villages sacked
  - Urban Palestine was almost entirely extinguished
1967 and since

- 1967 Six Day War: Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories
  - West Bank
  - Gaza Strip
  - Occupation “an affront to international law”, UN Special Rapporteur Richard Falk (The Times of Israel, 2013)
  - Israeli High Court of Justice: Israel holds the West Bank under "belligerent occupation"

- 1987 First Intifada
- 1995 Oslo Peace Agreements
  - PLO and Israel recognise each other
  - No lasting benefit
- 2000 Second Intifada
- 2002 building “separation barrier” commenced
Palestinian Land Loss
Jerusalem

- West Jerusalem: part of Israel since 1948
  - Largely Israeli Jewish population
- East Jerusalem: annexed after 1967 war
  - 43% Jewish, 57% Palestinian
- Approximately 46% of municipal taxes raised from Palestinian areas, 10% reinvested back in those areas
- Huge disparity in services:
  - Roads, footpaths
  - Rubbish collection
  - Water supply
- Life for Palestinians bureaucratic nightmare
  - Building permits impossible to get
  - Checkpoints
- Apparent motivation to make life so unbearable for Palestinians that they leave
Qalandia Refugee Camp

- Established 1949 by UN on land leased from Jordan, occupied by Israel since 1967
- Refugees from The Nakba
- Population 15,000
- One health centre, serviced by one doctor from 8:00am to 2:00pm
- No services from UN or Palestinian Authority
- People have over time built own houses
- No proper water supply or drainage
- Inconsistent electricity and gas supply
• 60% of population children under 15, however nowhere for children to play
• Severe poverty and unemployment
• Israeli Occupation Force soldiers in camp every day
• Throughout camp walls plastered with pictures of young people killed by Occupation Forces – martyrs
Settlements

- Since occupation Israel has pursued policy of settlement building in East Jerusalem and throughout West Bank
- Occupying power building settlements and settling its citizens in militarily occupied land is blatant violation of international law
- Immigrant Jewish settlers granted full citizenship rights denied to Palestinians
- East Jerusalem 200,000 Israeli settlers (UNOCHA, 2014a)
- West Bank Area C (total Israeli control, 60%) 341,000 Israeli settlers in 135 settlements and 100 outposts (UNOCHA, 2014b)
- Encroaching on Palestinian agricultural land, separating villages from lands
- Settler violence
Separation Barrier

- 8 metre high concrete
- Began construction in 2002, pretext to protect Israel from suicide bombers in second Intifada
- Total length 712km, twice length of 1949 Armistice (“Green”) Line
- 85% of route up to 18km inside West Bank (UNOCHA, 2013)
- Divides Palestinian villages from their agricultural lands, severely restricted access
- Divides communities, eg Jerusalem-Jericho road, 4000 years history, cut by wall
- Also known as Apartheid Wall
House Demolitions

- Frequent tactic of Occupying Forces, had been ceased but resumed
- Justifications:
  - Administrative, eg built without permit, NB virtually impossible for Palestinians to get permit
  - Military – any military purpose, firing zones, training
  - Punitive – Palestinian accused of attack against Israeli or other offence, family house demolished. This is collective punishment, illegal under international law
- Court order granted, applies to house rather than owner, actual demolition may occur 10 minutes or 10 years later, constant terror
Children in Military Detention

- Occupied Palestinian Territories under martial law, Israeli Occupation Forces have full executive, legislative and judicial authority
- Military Courts have jurisdiction over children over age of 12
- Some incidents of children as young as 5 detained for hours
- Most common offence throwing stones
- Little IOF effort to identify genuine suspects, rather manipulation of Palestinian informants, undermines trust in communities, collective punishment, mass intimidation
- Arrests typically at night, house surrounded by 200 soldiers
- 99% convicted, imprisoned up to 3 months
Experiences of Detained Children
Analysis of 105 testimonies collected by Military Court Watch 2012-2014

- Hand tied 94%
- Blindfolded 85%
- Signed/shown documents in Hebrew 69%
- Physical abuse 60%
- Arrested at night 47%
- Transferred on floor of vehicle 46%
- Threats 45%
- Verbal abuse 39%
- Strip searched 26%

- Informed of right to silence 12%
- Summons in lieu of night arrest 12%
- Parent present throughout interrogation 6%
- Consulted with lawyer before interrogation 5%
- Solitary confinement 3%
  (Military Court Watch, 2014)

- Also detention of Palestinian social workers in administrative detention, no charge or due process
  (IFSW, 2015)
Nonviolent Resistance: Bil’in Village

- Visit to Bil’in a highpoint of our delegation
- Village of 1800 people, 12km West of Ramallah
- Traditional agricultural economy, olives, cattle, poultry, bees
- 60% of Bil’in’s land, some of its best farming land, annexed for Israeli Settlements and the construction of Apartheid Wall - Israel is strangling the village
- Since 2005, supported by Israeli and international activists, Bil’in residents have peacefully demonstrated every Friday in front of the “work-site of shame”
- Violent response from IOF
- Documentary *Five Broken Cameras*, Emad Burnat
Analogy: Domestic Violence

- Social workers never directly or indirectly support individuals, groups, political forces or power structures using violence, terrorism, torture or similar means (ANZASW, 2008)
- Violence totally disproportionate, might of Israeli military cf low level violent resistance born of extreme frustration
- Regular shootings of Palestinians, especially youth, by IOF
- All forms of violence in wheel part of Israeli oppression of Palestinians
- Constant harassment eg checkpoints
- Whole system maintained by intimidation, ever present threat as well as actuality of physical violence
Peace??

- Palestinians we met with are not calling for abolition of state of Israel, rather for Israel to live within the UN recognised, pre-1967 border, peacefully alongside a recognised Palestinian state.

- Well intentioned attempts to promote peace talks.

- Palestinians we met with have given up hope for any peace process, current Israeli regime clearly has no interest in a just peace.

- "Peace talks" equivalent of conjoint couple counselling in situation of domestic violence, the oppressor still holds all the power and manipulates.

- As with domestic violence, what is needed is victim protection and law enforcement response from international community.

- Security Council resolution late 2016, co-sponsored by New Zealand, a good start.
What Can We Do?

• Be informed, can’t rely on Western news media

• Individual activism, emails / letters Minister of Foreign Affairs, Israeli ambassador if / when he returns

• Groups:
  • Kia Ora Gaza  [https://www.facebook.com/KiaOraGaza/](https://www.facebook.com/KiaOraGaza/)
  • NZ Palestine Solidarity Network  [https://www.facebook.com/groups/671376706283605/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/671376706283605/)

• Go and learn, you will be warmly welcomed
  • Travel2Palestine  [https://travel2palestine.org/](https://travel2palestine.org/)
References


