



Contents

- 2 The Right to be treated as Human**
By Elizabeth Burroughs
- 6 The Six Day Promenade (June 1967)**
By Dr Gabi Baramki
- 12 Memories of Jerusalem in June 1967**
By Roslyn Harper
- 14 Disappeared in '67**
By Axel Nystroem
- 16 Settlements the Occupational plague of Hebron
and whole West Bank**
By Ossi Rajala and Paul Mukerji
- 18 Hope for the Future**
By Kristina Hellqvist
- 20 Desperately Seeking Security**
By Gila Svirsky
- 22 40 Ways to End the Occupation**
By Ronan Quinn, Trond Botnen, Caroline Borden,
and Michael Oliphant
- 26 The Augusta Victoria Hospital in 1967**
By Roslyn Harper
- 28 An interview with Ishaq Al Budeiri**
By Rose Anderson
- 30 Family Health Clinic with the NECC in Gaza**
By Roslyn Harper

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The Right to be treated as Human

Human Rights and International Law

By **Elizabeth Burroughs**, Ecumenical Accompanier

The Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) consist of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip¹. They have been under Israeli occupation since the June War (also known as the Six Day War) of 1967.

Non-combatant civilians who are living under occupation are entitled to protection under international law. The core of international humanitarian law is contained in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. Virtually every state in the world, including Israel, has ratified these laws and is bound to apply their provisions.

The Fourth Geneva Convention contains a number of articles that are directly relevant to the present situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Article 47 prohibits the annexation by the occupying power of any part of the occupied territory.

Within weeks of the end of the June War, the Israeli authorities had begun to redraw the boundaries of Jerusalem increasing its area from 38 square kilometres to 108 square

kilometres thereby creating “Greater Jerusalem.” In the process, the tiny Palestinian village of Nu‘aman found

itself “transferred” into Israel whilst another village near Bethlehem, Al Walaja, discovered that half of it was in the West Bank and half in “Greater Jerusalem.” In all, 28 Palestinian villages were incorporated into Jerusalem together with a large amount of agricultural land.



Queuing at Bethlehem checkpoint. Photo: E. Burroughs

For the first 25 years no-one seemed to notice: the people of these villages went on living much as they had before. However, from 1992 onwards, they have suffered increasing problems including house demolitions, restrictions of their movements and loss of much of their land.

In 2003, the people of Nu'aman learned that a decision had been taken to "clear" the village of its residents. They were offered financial compensation if they agreed to leave immediately. Those who refused were warned that they would become "like a tree without water"² Since the separation barrier was completed last year that threat has become only too real.

Article 53 states: "Any destruction by the Occupying Power of real or personal property belonging individually or collectively to private persons, or to the State, or to other public authorities, or to social or cooperative organizations, is prohibited, except where such



destruction is rendered absolutely necessary by military operations."

In July last year, I sat drinking tea in a little house in Al Walaja and talking to the woman who lived there. She was a true homemaker whose dearest wish was to make a beautiful, comfortable home for her husband and three sons, but their old house had been demolished in January by

Checkpoint turnstile.

Photo: Andreas Apell



Huwarra checkpoint. Photo: L. Palka

the Israeli authorities because they claimed it did not have a building permit. Friends helped them rebuild it but soon a demolition order was placed on the new house.

The new house was solidly built with plastered walls and stone tiled floors but she was sad because it was so plain. However, it would be foolish to spend any more money on it as the bulldozers could come again any day...

And they did come again - on 12th December. Now she and her family live by day in a tent on the site of their old home and sleep at night in the homes of family members and neighbours.

According to the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions (ICAHD), as of October 2005 more than 14,000 Palestinian houses in the OPT had been demolished.

A day or two later I was sampling home-preserved olives in Beit Jala in the house of two sisters, whilst they reminisced about times past.

Their family had owned an olive grove for generations; it had been well cared for and the trees continued to be productive. They talked of their father who had loved his trees as though they were his children.

Less than a month later I heard chain saws in the distance and went to investigate. I arrived at the family's olive grove just in time to see a JCB shovelling up the remains of the olive trees and dropping them into a truck. Between September 2000 and July 2004, the Israeli military uprooted 400,000 olive trees.³

Article 27 is all about respect: "Protected persons are entitled, in all circumstances, to respect for their persons, their honour, their family rights, their religious convictions and practices, and their manners and customs... ...all protected persons shall be treated with the same consideration by the Party to the conflict in whose power they are, without any adverse distinction based, in particular, on race, religion or

political opinion."

One doesn't have to stand for very long at a checkpoint before one sees violations of this article. Reports by Ecumenical Accompaniers describing human rights abuses at checkpoints have appeared in Journal Letters on the EAPPI website⁴.

It is the little things that remain in the memory: the small girl whose water bottle was confiscated by a soldier; Muslim women being jabbed in the ribs with a gun because they could not move back quickly enough; the soldier "in control," locking and unlocking gates and turnstiles as men struggled to get to work on time; the elderly lady who simply could not understand why she was turned away; small children almost swallowed up as the crowd struggles to get through the gate.

However, even if Palestinians were treated with the utmost respect on every occasion at every checkpoint, would this make checkpoints lawful? Of course not! The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to freedom of movement within the borders of each state." These rights are being denied to hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in the OPT.

B'Tselem points out that Article 27 also prohibits the occupying power from discriminating between residents of the occupied territory. In other words, settlers may not enjoy preferential treatment.

But they do - in many respects. One particular example is with regard to water where the supplies enjoyed by settlers are vastly greater than those supplied to Palestinians. The World Health Organization and the United States Agency for International Development recommend 100 litres of water per person per day as the minimum quantity for basic consumption. This amount includes, in addition to domestic use, consumption in hospitals, schools, businesses, and other public institutions. Per capita consumption by Palestinians equates to 60 litres per person per day; by Israelis 330 litres per person a day.⁵

There are further articles in the Geneva Convention placing obligations on the occupying power to ensure that the population has adequate food, medical supplies and other resources; that medical services are maintained including transport for both medical personnel and patients; and that public health services and all institutions devoted to the care and education of children are working properly. The occupying power is also specifically forbidden from requisitioning natural resources existing in the occupied territory to meet the needs of the occupying power. But to do justice to all these areas would require another whole article!

The Israeli Government's position is that the Occupied Palestinian Territories are not "occupied" at all. It states that they are "disputed

territories." Its main argument is that there never has been a Palestinian state with recognised borders and neither the West Bank nor the Gaza Strip has ever been the sovereign territory of any state: therefore there is no sovereign territory to occupy and the Fourth Geneva Convention does not apply. However, Israel's position is disputed by international opinion - even by the United States.

But as the international arguments roll on, the lives of the non-combatant civilians living in the OPT become ever more miserable. Surely, it matters not a jot whether the territories are "occupied" or "disputed": for everyone has a right to be treated as a human being.

1 Despite Israel's redeployment, the international community still regards the Gaza Strip as occupied.

2 <http://al-nueman.tripod.com/email.html>

3 Olive Trees in Palestine, American Friends Service Committee Fact Sheet.

4 [http://www.eappi.org/Accompaniers' reports - for example 21.0.507 Movement Restrictions beyond Security: Wheelchairs, bicycles and family visits; 15.09.06 Humiliation at Huwwara](http://www.eappi.org/Accompaniers%20reports%20for%20example%2021.0.507%20Movement%20Restrictions%20beyond%20Security%20Wheelchairs,%20bicycles%20and%20family%20visits%2015.09.06%20Humiliation%20at%20Huwwara)

5 http://www.btselem.org/english/Water/International_Law.asp

Um Salamone village.

Photo: I. Styrbjörn



The Six Day Promenade

(June 1967)

By Dr Gabi Baramki

This article is an extract from Gabi Baramki's forthcoming book, provisionally titled "From the Valley to the Mountain: Building a University under Occupation."

Dr Baramki was born in Jerusalem. During 1948 when his family lost their house he was already at the American University of Beirut, from where he later returned to help establish a junior college program at Birzeit. His wife Haifa was born and raised in Gaza and moved to Birzeit in 1962. Dr Baramki worked at Birzeit from 1953-93, during which time he was Acting President of the University for 19 years. He was a Consultant at the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education until he retired in January 2007. He is currently a Consultant with Alternative Ways, an education and management consultancy firm.

The Six Day War took place during the last few days of final exams in June 1967. At that time Birzeit College had close to 300 students.

Monday the 5th of June 1967, was the fourth day of examinations and the students were in the examination halls at 8.30 am. A friend, Wadi Nasir who always followed the news, came jumping into my office. "Listen! The Israelis are claiming that they have shot down many planes and they are entering the Sinai and fighting has started!"

The "What's going to happen?" mood was limited to expectation of a few more areas being entered by the Israelis with shooting here and there, much as they did before, who would leave as in the past.

By 10.30 am, things became much more serious. News came that it would not even be easy to reach Jerusalem. I remember saying "All right, let's take the students who live in Jerusalem on a bus to see if we





Photo: A. Apell

are able to get them home.”

After Ramallah, just before Beit Hanina, we saw a badly damaged car by the side of the road, apparently rammed by a heavy vehicle. We heard later that this had happened when Israeli armored military vehicles had come from Jerusalem on a scouting mission. Clearly our people were not prepared for war.

The bus taking students to Jerusalem returned, turned back at Shufat by the Jordanian Army, who said it was too dangerous to proceed. At this point people began to say, “This is real war, not just a small attack.”

Haifa, my wife, was nine months pregnant and was due to give birth that week. Her brother, Dr. Tarazi worked in the Jordanian Army Hospital at Beitin and had arranged a bed for her there. Next day, Tuesday 6th June 1967, he came to tell her that the army personnel had withdrawn, so he arranged for her to go to Ramallah Hospital but her doctor, Dr. Nazer, thought she might need a Cesarean delivery which he



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preferred to perform at the Shufat maternity hospital.

Our family not only expected a birth during June 1967, but also celebrated a wedding. My brother married in Jerusalem on Sunday June 4 and then traveled to Amman. The couple planned to honeymoon in Italy. However, as their plane was about to take off, the airport in Jordan was bombed. The pilot asked everyone to get out of the plane. They traveled back to Jerusalem instead. Their house was near the Palestine Museum, now known now as the Rockefeller Museum. At home, they would hear the Israeli Army passing every so often and hide under the bed. The family joked that they spent their honeymoon under the bed, not on it.

In the afternoon, an Israeli aircraft

attacked the radio antennas in Ramallah. The plane shot up the whole area scaring us greatly. It hit the Birzeit Board of Trustees building, then the residence of Dr. Tarazi, and destroyed the nearby house of Vera Tamari, a lecturer at Birzeit, which had a red tiled roof. The attack killed two little girls standing outside the Evangelical School, now the YMCA, and injured their teacher. You can still see the bullet marks on the building.

I remember the third day, Wednesday 7th of June, very well because it was Haifa's birthday. We slept on mattresses on the basement floor. When we woke up in the morning; I smiled and said to her "Happy Birthday!"

Around 5 am, our neighbor who was staying with us in the shelter, came

and announced the shocking news: "Yakhti Imm Gabi dakhallul yahud" (the Jews have entered). We had never seen a Jew in Ramallah. We had minimal information and knowledge of them. We weren't allowed to have books that had any information about Israel, and the few that were available underground were very hard to get hold of.

The Israelis call this "The Six-day War", but there was no war. "Six-day Promenade" is more like it. There was no fighting, no resistance, nothing. They were walking into this house and that house, looting and taking a car here and there. Those from the Jordanian Army that remained took off their uniforms and disappeared among the people. There was some resistance in the Jenin area in the



Photo: A. Apell

North, but not much. One Israeli plane was downed on the way to Bethlehem, I don't know how.

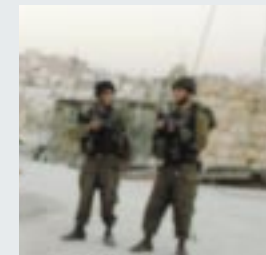
We came out of our house to see a group of soldiers in jeeps trying to start a Volkswagen car belonging to our neighbor on the opposite side of the street. I told everybody to stay in the house and watched from the window as some soldiers with guns came up to our house. We were still thinking, "Are these really Jews, and are they really Israelis?" I opened the door to a soldier pointing his gun at me. I'm sure I looked very yellow and pale. So many images flashed into my mind. Haifa had told me stories of what had happened in 1956 when the Israelis entered Gaza. In many cases the Israelis lined up the men in the house and shot them in front of their families. So by the time I got to the door, the blood had run out from my face. This soldier said to me in Arabic "La tkhaf". Don't be afraid, we're not going to shoot." So I said, "What is it that you want?" He asked if there was anyone else in the house with me. "Yes," I said, "my wife, my parents, my sister and her four little children." So he ordered them all out onto the verandah and the soldiers went into the house. They searched the house, and then came out again.

They were quite polite, and so my mother said to them as they came out, "Can I make you some tea?" They said "No, we have beer." When they had gone we went inside and discovered that they had helped themselves to the beer from our

fridge. Their pockets were so big that they could have hidden anything there. Unfortunately, we later found out that they had also taken all my mother's jewelry, a gold pen that belonged to Haifa, a pair of binoculars, and some gold coins my father had. Haifa had all her jewelry and our money on her belt. She had learnt that when the Israelis came to Gaza in 1956.

In the afternoon, the Israeli Army came looking for cars. A soldier came to the house and demanded the keys of our car. It was our first car, just one month old, a Peugeot 404. We had only paid the first installment. My brother's car was a Volkswagen Beetle, and he was keeping the car here since he left for his honeymoon. It was an old car, so they didn't want it and took the Peugeot instead. My sister and my wife were crying when the car was taken away and later, when they saw the army driving back and forth with it. I was mad but what could I do? "At least we are safe," we said.

Later, an Israeli officer, who spoke French, arrived with our car and the soldier who had taken it. He didn't want to come in and beckoned to me to come out. He said, "I just want to ask you, is this your car?" I told him it was. Haifa followed me out, and it was obvious that she was very pregnant. I said, "My wife is due to give birth any moment and we will need the car." When he heard that, he turned and snapped at the soldier who had taken the car, and started talking to him in Hebrew. I didn't



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understand what he said, but the tone of it was loud and tense, as if he was rebuking him. The soldier defended himself, saying that we had another car. The officer turned to us and said, "I'm sorry if this is the case with your wife, but I am told that you have another car." I said, "Yes, but it doesn't have any petrol in it so it will not run." He said, "Okay, I promise you that we will use it only for these two days and we will bring it back." Sure enough, on Friday 9th June 1967 at around noon, the officer came back with the car. He gave me the keys and had filled up the car with petrol. He said, "Listen, our garrison are leaving now and we don't know what the next soldiers who come will be like. I suggest that you do something so that they can't take the car. Remove the distributor and take off two of the wheels."

I said, "But listen now, my wife is due at any time and if we have to go in the evening, there is a checkpoint and they will not allow us to pass." So, he wrote a message in Hebrew on a piece of paper and said, "You can show it to the soldiers and they will help you. Make sure that you have a white flag of some kind." So, this fellow was an interesting man, a decent person. His name was Chaim Gouri. It turned out that he was a well known journalist and occasionally we read things he wrote in the Israeli papers. He visited us again a month or two later. My mother speaks fluent French, mine is not as good, but we had a chat. That afternoon, we heeded his advice and took the wheels off the car. At

midnight Haifa decided that the baby was due and, as the electricity was off, I had to go down to the garage with a candle, to put the wheels back on again so we could drive to the hospital. The Jordanians had insisted on a blackout while they were here, all the houses were dark, and our headlights were painted blue. We made a white flag out of a handkerchief and a stick so they wouldn't shoot at us, as we were under curfew. Haifa carried it and stuck it out the window. We were both crying as we made that very humiliating and sad drive to the

hospital. We were stopped at the checkpoint outside the old Radio Station that the Israelis had taken over, on the way to Ramallah, and showed the paper. Sure enough, the soldier who read it was helpful, and said, "Wait here, you can't go to the center of town because there is a tank there that will not allow anyone to pass. If you go, they will shoot first and ask questions later." So a jeep went ahead of us to take us through Ramallah.

We approached al-Manara Square in Ramallah, which was a nice



Photo: A. Apell

roundabout with a pond, some grass, and a column in the middle. There was a tank right there. The jeep took us through and onto the road to Jerusalem, where we were hoping to reach the maternity hospital. When we got there, the soldier wanted to help, so he started banging on the door with the gun butt. Nobody answered. The Israeli soldier said, "Can I take you to the Hadassah hospital or something?" so I said, "No thank you. Arrangements had been made that if this maternity hospital is not available, Haifa should come



back to the Ramallah Hospital." Early on the morning of Saturday 10th June 1967, the medical staff tried to see if Haifa could deliver normally, but this was not going to be possible. Ramallah Hospital had no maternity ward or cribs for babies. Luckily, they had found an electric generator left by the Jordanian army and Dr. Salti was a good surgeon. He performed a cesarean operation on Haifa, and our son Hani was born at 5 p.m. that day, a bright spot during that miserable period.

We didn't know what was happening in Birzeit town, and we were not used to this occupation. We remembered the experience of Gazans in 1956, where the Israelis stayed for four months. One day they announced a curfew, telling everybody to stay inside and not to look out of their windows. The people heard the sound of jeeps and armored cars on the road, and the next day when they woke up, there was no-one there, the Army had gone. The nightmare was over. We hoped initially that this might happen in the West Bank, but it began to dawn on us that the Israelis were here to stay.

When United Nations Resolution 242¹ was passed in November 1967, I thought it would take maybe two years for the Israelis to leave. I knew that even if that were the case, we would not be able to rejoice when they left, because so much harm would have been done. I was too optimistic about the period, but about the harm, I never even imagined the horrors we would pass through forty years later.

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UN Resolution 242 was passed in November 1967 and called for the withdrawal of Israel from "occupied territories" and for a fair solution to the refugee problem.





Memories of Jerusalem in June 1967

By Roslyn Harper

Iris Keltz was a young American traveller and Fahmi Al Ansari, then a young Palestinian student, were both caught up in the war in June 1967. They knew each other through a family they were both friends with in Jerusalem's Old City.

An American traveller in Jerusalem's old city...

Iris, an American Jew was raised with the message that 'Arabs hate us'. In her early 20's she was travelling through the Middle East on her way to work on a Kibbutz in Israel. She also planned to visit a cousin who fled to Tel Aviv before his entire family was killed in the Holocaust.

Iris was staying in a hostel in East Jerusalem in 1967 waiting for a visa to cross the Mandelbaum gate into Israel. She spent this time wandering in the Old City. She bought a purse

and the shopkeeper invited her to visit his family. This was the first time she had heard the word "Palestinian"; her mother had always referred to "those Arabs".

The family insisted on showing her around. They took her to the major Biblical sites - the Western Wall, the tomb of the patriarchs in Hebron, Rachel's tomb in Bethlehem. They asked her to stay longer and she did, moving into their house in the Old City. This is where she was when war broke out.

From Jerusalem to Damascus...

Fahmi Al Ansari had been travelling and studying in West Africa and the Middle East just prior to the June '67 war. On Monday June 5, he had left Damascus early to return to Jerusalem. "When I reached the Syrian border, I heard about the war, but continued to Jerusalem. When I

arrived in Jerusalem, I saw airplanes above Mt Zion. I got out of the taxi at Bethany and walked to my family's house in Silwan. People were leaving. Most of our neighbours decided to leave and asked us to join. We said no, as we wanted to stay. By 3pm, the road looked like a river of people. Mr Ansari said all roads were like this for the rest of the day, from the Kidron valley, Sahwahreh, Mt Mukaber, and the Jericho Road. His expression changes to one of sadness when he describes war, tanks, planes, and black clouds from bombing.

He says that on Tuesday June 6 he saw by the Asbat gate, two burnt out civilian buses from Sahwahreh - a plane had bombed them.

"We watched the fighting and bombing on the Mount of Olives from our house. Our neighbour had enough. He took his car from his garage and ran away. An aeroplane came and flew low over him, dropping a bomb that landed in front of him. He swerved to the left and managed to avoid the bomb, later making it safely to Amman. He was lucky. A taxi coming from Amman was bombed and burnt; the driver jumped out in flames."

He continues to describe what he saw during the war: "Early in the morning on Wednesday June 7, we heard tanks and a plane from the East that came bombing. Two Jordanian tanks came in the night. The young men that were in them left the tanks after they were hit, changed into civilian clothing and fled."

"In the afternoon, Israel began its

registration of people, house by house in our area. They left around 5pm and missed some houses. Later they broadcast 'anyone not registered must come to the Kusr Adel - Justice Palace - to register.'"

By Thursday June 8, Fahmi was able to start moving around. "I walked to Kufr Aqab (north of Jerusalem) to visit a friend. I saw many dead bodies near the Palestine (now Rockefeller) Museum. Doctor Amin Al Hatib and groups of young men carried the bodies and buried them in the cemetery opposite. There were also many bodies where the Hyatt Hotel is today and around Kufr Aqab itself."

"I visited the mosque with my father. We saw Israeli Generals come from the Western Wall, with prayer shawls over their kaki uniforms. We met them in the mosque near the Asbat (Lions) Gate. They said to my father "see sheik, the mosque is well, not touched; now any people from around the world can come to pray. We respect everything here." Then they left. We looked around the mosque. Some doors were hit, but the mosque was safe, all of it."

"This was the end of the war."

At the same time in Ramallah...

Iris describes how she hid in Ramallah with the family with whom she had been staying. "We walked there from Qalandia, joining other people on the road. We stayed in a basement apartment, afraid to come

out."

"The bombs stopped and we heard a foreign language. Everyone was afraid and terrified of the Israeli soldiers. They said to me 'run out and wave your passport and tell them that we are your friends.'" She said she was too afraid to do this in case they shot her not knowing who she was, so she waited until there were other people moving in the street.

An Israeli soldier stopped her thinking she was a journalist, seeing the "New York Times" jacket she was wearing, (she had sold their newspapers in Paris). She explained and he said, "Does your mother know you are here?" She then told him how she was trying to go to the American Consulate to get a message to her family.

Iris stayed in Ramallah for 6 days until the war was over. She then returned to the Old City and stayed on watching as Jerusalem was 'reunified'.

And now

Iris still visits Jerusalem. She thinks it could be a paradise if all, instead of being so exclusionary, could share it.

Mr Al Ansari still works at the Library to which he has dedicated his life. He may be looking for a new home for the Library where many people, old and young, come to learn from its collection. The building has received an eviction notice from the Israeli authorities.



"Early in the morning on Wednesday June 7, we heard tanks and a plane from the East that came bombing. Two Jordanian tanks came in the night. The young men that were in them left the tanks after they were hit, changed into civilian clothing and fled."



Disappeared in '67

By **Axel Nystroem**, Ecumenical Accompanier

Aqraba. Photo: L. Palka

Samira Jamaal is a child of the occupation. Born in 1967 she was only three months old when the Israeli forces entered Gaza and the West Bank. Too young to remember the time preceding it, she belongs to the generation that does not know Palestine without occupation.

It is her uncle, her father's brother Kamal Mahmood Khalil, who first approaches us. He comes up to us in Aqraba village in the Nablus area of the West Bank. "Do you have a minute?" he asks us. As with so many Palestinians, there is a story he wants to share with the world.

We meet Samira, together with her uncle and her children, in her home in Aqraba. This is where her mother

as a young woman was staying with her, when the Six Day War started. Samira was the first child of a young couple. Her father Muhammad, along with many Palestinians, had left for Kuwait to find work. Along with her homeland, her father disappeared.

Kamal tells us the story, from when he was living in Aqraba at the age of fifteen. As the West Bank was under Jordanian rule, the common way to

leave the country was to travel by bus to Amman, crossing the Jordan River, and flying from the Jordanian capital. "The Six Day War was over so quickly. We barely noticed it here in Aqraba. We heard planes flying high above us and explosions far away. Then it was over."

As news of the defeat in the Six Day War reached Muhammad in Kuwait, he flew back spending one night at the al-Amman hotel before trying to make it back to Aqraba. In the hotel reception, he temporarily left his luggage, passport and money. A new "border" between Jordan and the Israeli controlled West Bank ran along the Jordan River. "There are places

where you can wade across the river,” Kamal tells us. “There were soldiers on both sides and he was caught crossing. However, he waved a white flag and the soldiers allowed him to pass. Many people were returning these days”.

He arrived safely in Aqraba and reunited with his family but decided to return to Amman the same night to pick up what he had left in the hotel. “We, his family and wife, tried to persuade him not to take the risk of passing the river once again, but he was determined. He planned to return to Aqraba to live with his wife and daughter in these uncertain times. He left in the early hours of the morning. That was the last we saw of him”.

As no news came from Muhammad, his father sneaked into Jordan after two days, the same way as his son had done. Muhammad and Kamal's father passed away in 1990, so Kamal retells the story. “Muhammad's documents and money had not been picked up at the hotel, which means he had never reached there. Our father returned to the border. Many people had been killed while crossing and their dead bodies floated in the river. He looked for his son there, but without result.”

After his disappearance, there was no news for two years. In 1969, one of their acquaintances in Aqraba heard a voice message on the radio. “Only

rich people had a radio at that time. In all Aqraba there were maybe ten radios,” Kamal tells us. The person who heard the message recognized Muhammad's voice, heard his name, the greetings he passed to his family, and him saying he was held in Ramle military prison in Israel.

After receiving the news, the father applied for a permit and went to visit Ramle prison, to search for his son. “No person with that name here”, was the answer he was given when asking to see his son.

Approximately six months later, in the same radio program, the voice of the lost son, brother, father and husband was heard again. He sent his regards to his family once again, but this time he did not say which prison he was in. His father went to the Red Crescent hoping for information about the location of his son. They did not have his name in their register. This was the last time that they heard of Muhammad.

Samira is quiet and it is mostly her uncle speaking. “What can I say?” she says in a sad tone. “I have heard this story many times, but not a single day passes when I don't think of my father and what could have happened.”

“My biggest hope is international pressure on Israel to reveal what happened to disappeared people”, says Kamal.

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Settlements the Occupational plague of Hebron and whole West Bank

By **Ossi Rajala** and **Paul Mukerji**, Ecumenical Accompaniers

Israeli settlers first arrived in Hebron soon after the 1967 war. A group went and stayed in the Palestine Hotel during Pesach in 1968. After long negotiations with the army, they moved out and established Kiryat Arba, as the first illegal settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in the 1970s. The Palestinians who live in Hebron have since then suffered greatly from settler violence.

Hebronites Laila and Shaden, aged 12 and 15, are studying at Cordoba school, which is located just opposite Beit Hadassah settlement in Hebron. The girls face many difficulties on their way to and from school:

"We are suffering from this situation every single day. Soldiers and settlers make us very afraid. For example settlers have often thrown stones, eggs and tomatoes at us," Shaden says.

The two sisters are not the only ones who have been attacked by settlers. Most of the Cordoba school's students have had extremely bad experiences with both settlers and soldiers. The school building itself has also been attacked.

"Settlers have tried to burn the school and they have also attacked our teachers. Sometimes we notice that the children haven't been able to sleep properly because of the restless

situation," Cordoba school's headmistress Reem Al Sharif says.

Palestinian people who live near the Hebron settlements do not feel safe even inside their own homes, because the threat of violence is present 24 hours a day.

"Last year settlers broke inside our home during the night. They screamed that they will kill us if we do not move away," Laila says.

Religion and land

Jewish settlers want to live in Hebron because it is a holy city for Jews and there has been Jewish presence in the city throughout its history. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other patriarchs are buried in Hebron's Ibrahimi mosque. Abraham (Ibrahim) is also an important prophet for Muslims, which means that the mosque area is very holy for Muslims and Jews. Inside the building, the Jews have their own synagogue,



Hebron: Soldiers guarding settlers.

which is separated from the mosque. Successive Israeli governments have conveniently used the emphasis on the religious reasons for the presence of the settlers in order to acquire land that under international law does not belong to them.

B'Tselem, the Israeli information centre for human rights in the Occupied Territories, state that since 1967, Israel has established 135 settlements in the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) that have been recognized by the

Interior Ministry. The total number of settlers in the West Bank is now over 400,000¹.

500 settlers, 2000 soldiers

Israel has built four settlements in the heart of Hebron, in direct contravention of international law. Article 49 of the fourth Geneva Convention states that "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its civilian



Photo: A. Apell

population into territory it occupies". There are around 500 settlers living in these settlements. In order to safeguard the settlers Israel has brought about 2,000 soldiers to Hebron.

Supposedly, for security reasons the Israeli army has built several roadblocks and prohibited Palestinians from using certain roads in Hebron. For many Palestinians this has been an economic catastrophe. Many shops have been ordered to close their doors while others have closed because of the lack of customers.

No change coming

In March 2007, settlers took over a new house in Hebron. Shortly after that Israel's defence minister, Amir Peretz declared that the settlers must be evicted from the house before April 19th because they did not have a permit from the army to stay in the house.

Until now, however, nothing has happened. The settlers are still inside the building and they are making it ready for new inhabitants. It seems that Hebron will have a new settlement soon. Despite obligations under the Oslo Accords to impose a freeze on settlements, Israel's leaders are choosing not to evict the settlers from this new house, which they have named, ironically, Beit Ha'Shalom (House of peace).

There may be some political will to get the aggressive settlers out from Hebron. For example, deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres about two months ago described the situation in Hebron as "unbearable". However, it will not be easy for Israeli politicians to remove the settlers from Hebron. The fundamentalist Hebron settlers have said that they are ready to oppose even their own army if they are in danger of being evicted.

As long as government and international will to act is lacking, it is likely that violence between settlers and Palestinians is going to continue in Hebron. Moreover, while settlers stay, Laila and Shaden and their 99 schoolmates will continue to go to Cordoba school with fear in their hearts.

As long as government and international will to act is lacking, it is likely that violence between settlers and Palestinians is going to continue in Hebron. Moreover, while settlers stay, Laila and Shaden and their 99 schoolmates will continue to go to Cordoba school with fear in their hearts.

¹ <http://www.btselem.org/English/>

Hope for the Future

an Interview with Father Jamal

By **Kristina Hellqvist**, Ecumenical Accompanier

What does forty years of occupation mean? I arrange a meeting with father Jamal at Bethlehem University to try to understand what happened in 1967 and what consequences it has had for someone growing up on the West Bank. We meet on a sunny day in the courtyard of the university. Student elections are going on and there is a vibrant and party like atmosphere. We find a calm spot on the fifth floor with a good view of Bethlehem.

I was three years old in 1967, father Jamal tells me, and my very first memories are from the war of six days. I remember sitting in a church with only women and children. The Israeli soldiers had taken all the men somewhere else and I recall that feeling of fear in the air. The memories are just like flashes coming through my head but since then I have lived with the Israeli occupation.

Q: But before the Israeli army came, you had the Jordanian army here. In what way was it different with the Israeli army?

A: You know, the older generation they felt in a way as part of the

Jordanian kingdom. They were not always happy with it but at least it was OK for them. They were brought up with the idea of Arab nationalism and not with the idea of a Palestinian nation. Therefore, they did not have the feeling that the Jordan army was the army of a foreign country.

Q: What is then the Palestinian identity? Is it only based on the common experience of Israeli occupation or can it be defined in other ways?

A: Well, it is difficult to define something in process. Of course, we have elements in common with other Arabs - the language and certain cultural traits. However, being

Palestinian is also to have certain openness to Israel - at least that was the case before the second intifada. Now there is less contact and less knowledge about Israel than before and more of radicalisation in Palestine.

Q: What about the future for Palestine then? How do you see it?

A: I am not optimistic.. but I am hopeful. I am not optimistic because I see that there is a plan from Israel to impose a unilateral solution. They will finish building the wall and then they will say that we are welcome to create a state of what is left. But with the wall, the settlements and the bypass roads a viable continuous Palestinian state is not possible. It would be like Gaza - a big prison where Israel still controls everything, even the registration of newborn children.

Q: What then makes you hopeful?

A: Because I can see the good will of the people who want to have a normal life and want to live in dignity. It is important to convince



“I am not optimistic because I see that there is a plan from Israel to impose a unilateral solution. They will finish building the wall and then they will say that we are welcome to create a state of what is left.”

Israel about that we just want to live in peace because they have so much fear of us. What gives me hope is also that more and more people in Israel realise that they cannot just count on their army and that living in security is rather about having peace with your neighbours and not something you achieve by building a wall. But there is a lack of leadership in Israel that can pursue this idea. The leaders are too concerned about pleasing everyone and that is not leadership. And we have the same problem in Palestine, and also in the USA. The lack of leadership is a big concern.

Q: When we visited a UN-office in Jerusalem and discussed the

situation on the ground in the West Bank one of their officials said that perhaps it is time to stop talking about a two state solution because as it looks now a two state solution would be a disaster for Palestine. She meant that perhaps it is time to think differently and ask ourselves if a one-state solution is better.

A: To be sincere, I believe that a one state solution is ideologically very difficult and only few intellectuals are ready for this. I believe we need two states. But the next day after declaration of independence of Palestine we should start to negotiate a special relation with Israel. My vision is two states with open borders.

Father Jamal Khader is the Chairman of the Department of Religious Studies at Bethlehem university.

Photo: I. Styrbjörn

I believe that a one state solution is ideologically very difficult and only few intellectuals are ready for this. I believe we need two states. But the next day after declaration of independence of Palestine we should start to negotiate a special relation with Israel.



Desperately Seeking Security

By Gila Svirsky

In Israel, the concept of “security” is a powerful one. It is used to justify all military activity, including the occupation of Palestinian territories and the vast budgets applied to it. Indeed, a mystique has developed around security - “national security” is a phrase invoked not just to increase military budgets, but also to silence criticism and prevent transparency. Recent efforts to prevent the publication of testimony about the Second Lebanon War were pursued on the grounds of “security”. “Security risks” can be used as a rationale to prevent defendants from seeing the evidence against them in court. Only the highest officials are privy to full information about security related matters, and they prevent this information from seeing the light of public scrutiny and debate.

Security, however, once meant something much broader than its military definition. Sometimes it is hard to remember that older use of “security”, but efforts to revive it have been made in recent years. It is called “human security” and includes areas of activity such as:

- economic security (having a job, a roof over one's head, access to health care);
- personal security (safety from gender-related violence, protection from crime, having one's children safe from drugs); and
- environmental security (knowing that one's tap water is clean and pure, having access to clean beaches, having clean air to breathe).

For several generations, however, neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis have had security, not in its narrow nor in its broader sense. Both

Photo: A. Apell



Accompanier A. Nystroem.

Photo: L. Palka

societies have lived in an ongoing state of fear and insecurity for many years. And although Palestinians have paid a higher price than Israelis for this conflict, it is quite clear that Israelis also live in a perpetual state of fear and insecurity.

Yet if you talk to Israelis about the occupation, they will tell you that Israel cannot leave the occupied territories because of "security". Security, they will say, is best served by remaining in the West Bank and the Golan Heights, constructing a huge "security fence", and laying siege to the Gaza Strip. Oddly, few Israelis stop to think if these military measures are providing the long-sought security... or in fact have been counterproductive, only deepening the fear and insecurity.

The women's peace movement in Israel has begun to work on this problem. We call it a campaign to "reframe security" - to broaden our conception of it. We seek to demonstrate to Israelis that security is not the end-result of having a strong, aggressive army, but rather the product of a broad range of activity, which includes living in a society that cares for its poor, reduces violence, protects its natural resources, and co-exists in peace with its neighbors. Indeed, this campaign seeks to instill the understanding that "peace is the best way to promote security".

As part of this campaign, we take Israelis on "reality tours" to show them the Separation Wall. We bring them into the homes of Palestinians

For several generations, neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis have had security, not in its narrow nor in its broader sense. Both societies have lived in an ongoing state of fear and insecurity for many years.

This article originally appeared in Common Ground News Service, Middle East, May 18, 2007.

Gila Svirsky is a veteran peace and human rights activist, and currently chair of B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. She was co-founder of the Coalition of Women for Peace and is an ongoing member of Women in Black. Gila is a member of EAPPI's Local Reference Group. <http://www.GilaSvirsky.com>





Photo: A. Apell

who are cut off from their land, jobs, and schools by the Wall, and we give Palestinians an opportunity to tell about their lives and how the Wall has changed them. For most Israelis, this is the very first time they have ever spoken to a Palestinian. We bring the Israelis to checkpoints, and have them observe the soldiers' treatment of Palestinians trying to cross. We also take them to see parts of Israel that have been neglected by the political leaders - the slums, the shelters for battered women, the untreated garbage, the trafficking in women, the inadequate health care centers, the poorly equipped schools. Each participant goes on a number of tours to see several aspects of the problem. We help Israelis draw the connection between a society that is pouring its resources into

occupation and settlements, and failing to address the social problems that exist within it.

These tours are powerful experiences. They reach beyond what Israelis see in the media, showing them a slice of reality they have never seen before. And then we ask: Do you think that the policies of our government have enhanced your security? Or have they actually compromised it?

We are hoping that the old conceptions will gradually give way to a new understanding: that Israel will never be able to address the needs of our population until a just agreement has been reached with our neighbors. That security - whether in the narrow or broader sense - is compromised by failing to achieve a

political accommodation with the Palestinians.

For years, women have focused on human security issues - better schools, health services, poverty programs, violence issues, etc. - but not named it "security". Now, instead of fighting the concept, we are working to reframe it so that it will promote the kind of society that we want to live in.

This campaign is more than a strategy. It is a fundamental belief that all these forms of security are critical - and that it will never be possible to realize a common zone of peace, prosperity and progress - not for Israel and not for Palestine - until a just and lasting settlement of the conflict is in place.

40 Ways to End the Occupation

By **Ronan Quinn** and **Trond Botnen**, with assistance from **Caroline Borden**, and **Michael Oliphant** (Ecumenical Accompaniers).

This year, in June, it is 40 years since the beginning of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. These 40 years have seen several wars in Lebanon, peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, Nobel Peace Prizes to Sadat, Begin, Rabin, Arafat and Peres, two intifadas and thousands of lives lost. And still the occupation endures.

Inspired by Paul Simon's "50 Ways to leave your Lover" we have put together a list of "40 Ways to End the Occupation". Unlike Paul Simon's 50 Ways, that would all work individually, our 40 Ways must be taken together should they have any chance of success. For successful non-violent resistance does not come from single acts of defiance resulting in immediate victory, but rather from the sum total of numerous acts of resistance, being carried out by different people in different places at different times - but all with the same ultimate goal: to end the occupation.

Freedom is never free of charge. And we - Palestinians, Israelis and outsiders alike - are all charged to do our part to achieve it. 40 years is enough and these are our suggestions for ending the Occupation:

- 1. Launch the "40 ways to end the occupation campaign" which targets people, especially EAs from all over the world, to contribute to a definitive list.**
2. Name the true adversary - supporters of the occupation.
- 3. Name the true friends and allies - those intent upon ending the occupation and then on the last day of the 40th year of the occupation for all who have been identified as friend to form a human chain across the world.**
4. Sponsor an olive tree through the YMCA Keep Hope Alive Campaign www.ej-ymca.org - or take an olive branch of an uprooted tree and plant it.
- 5. Go on an informed Holy Land**



Photo: L Palka

Freedom is never free of charge. And we - Palestinians, Israelis and outsiders alike - are all charged to do our part to achieve it. 40 years is enough.

Photo: L Palka

pilgrimage or volunteer with a Palestinian NGO www.patg.org

6. Study at a Palestinian University, e.g. Bir Zeit or Bethlehem.

7. Build a - virtual - museum that remembers the Naqba. Collect Naqba oral history and publish a blog - Naqba conversations.

8. Reclaim Liftah as a centre of restitution and reconciliation.

9. Ask your library to order books that show the Palestinian side of the conflict, i.e., Ilan Pappé Ethnic Cleansing

10. Acknowledge that US is strong and the primary ally of Israel - find ways raise awareness.

11. Begin a 40 Images/40 Stories exhibition - a rolling constantly changing installation of images and stories of the occupied on video.

12. Begin the creative process necessary for resolving the refugee issue and the "right of return".

13. Join EAPPI, and give presentations about your experiences back at home.

14. Benedicere: (Bene: good, dicere: speak of - roots of words such as benediction). For the next year to practice benedicere i.e. bless every checkpoint and every soldier on every Friday for the next 52 weeks combining Muslim, Christian and Jewish rites.

15. Establish a "Women in Black" vigil in every capital city on every Friday.

16. Send letters to politicians (e.g.



Members of Knesset, President Bush and his successors, PM Blair and his, the UN Secretary General) giving them and the world a detailed account of life in the West Bank based on EA logs.

17. Use media more effectively to show Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians, and build Palestinian capacities in more effective use of media. Expose the occupation to the world using webcams.

18. Make a non-violent movement with common colour, like in Ukraine. Write to the editor of your local

newspaper about what is happening in the West Bank and Gaza

19. .Expose the evil of the Wall by using it for art projects and music concerts, for example use it to paint murals depicting life under occupation.

20. Use common graffiti symbols (both in Israel and Palestine) to symbolise that 60 years since the Nakba is the limit and the Right of Return: The maximum 60 km/hour road sign and the key.

21. Use a campaign with blowing of trumpets against the Wall, referring to the Biblical Fall of the

walls of Jericho.

22. Have a large New Year demonstration in Rabin Square displaying photos of all children killed in the 2nd intifada (OTPOR did this in Belgrade in the successful non-violent campaign against Milosevic).

23. Face all Israeli soldiers with an attitude of compassion and sorrow. Pray for the release of the soldiers from the prison of violence and promote desertions.

24. Buy Palestinian.

25. Boycott settlement products.

26. Organise sit-ins and blockades of Israeli embassies.

27. Organise tax refusal campaign.

28. Sponsor rebuilding of demolished houses in Palestine www.icahd.org

29. Pray for Palestine and Israel; follow this with practical action in solidarity with Palestinian churches. When you pray, move your feet.

30. Refer a case to the ICJ declaring the Israeli occupation in itself illegal.

31. Cycle Palestine

www.followthewomen.com

32. Join Palestinian refugees in refugee camps outside Palestine in walking peacefully back to where they came from carrying their keys.

33. Military embargo.

34. Urge an artistic and cultural boycott of Israel. Set up a cultural exchange between your own community and a Palestinian community. Enjoy Palestinian culture on the Internet www.palestine-

net.com/culture

35. Enjoy the things that are still relatively free in Palestine, for example nature and wildlife
www.wildlife-pal.org

36. Resilience - constantly adapting to whatever the occupation brings.

37. Hack (government) web sites.

38. Support Trocaire's campaign to demolish the Wall: <http://trocaire.org/wall/>

39. End the occupation of the mind and begin the journey toward a culture of forgiveness.

40. This one is up to you...

This year, in June, it is 40 years since the beginning of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. These 40 years have seen several wars in Lebanon, peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, Nobel Peace Prizes to Sadat, Begin, Rabin, Arafat and Peres, two intifadas and thousands of lives lost. And still the occupation endures.

Editorial - continued

According to Bethlehem University Dr. Bernard Sabella, in 1966, they were still about 13% of the population (from 18-20% in 1947), but by 1993 the percentage had dropped to about 2.1% because Christians left at twice the national rate, probably because of their closer connections with internationals and educational institutions. Now the number seems to have drifted down to about 1.5%. Unless something drastic happens to improve conditions here, the churches will be museums with no local Christians to keep the vital Christian witness alive here.

It is time to liberate the Palestinian and Israeli children from this heavy burden of occupation that breeds such violence, militarization and fear of the other. Instead of throwing stones, launching rockets and building walls, let us forge our weapons into ploughshares and our walls into bridges of reconciliation, justice and peace.

Sisters and brothers, people in our world are crying out for a different way to live together than by power and military might. May we - all people of faith and conscience - have the courage to stand up and speak out to bring God's justice, peace and reconciliation to heal the deep wounds of occupation, injustice and extremism in the Middle East.

The Augusta Victoria Hospital in 1967

By Roslyn Harper

1967 was a disastrous year for Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH). The Mount of Olives was at that time an important strategic goal for Israel, both because of its location and the fact that it was held by Jordanian troops. During the Six Day War AVH came under fire and bombs destroyed the top floor. After this, the hospital had to reduce its number of beds. The Augusta Victoria Hospital, established as a hospital for Palestinian refugees after the war of 1948, was initially under the control of the Red Cross and since 1950 has been under the management of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

June 1967: Suad's story

In 1948 Suad's family were refugees from West Jerusalem. Initially they went and stayed in Bethlehem and then, because her father was working with the Lutheran Vocational Training Centre, they moved to the Mount of Olives and lived in the barracks there on the Lutheran World Federation property.

"It is a day I can never forget; but a day I hate to remember," she says. The house Suad's family lived in was close to the 1949 Armistice line. On Monday, June 5, their house was bombed and burnt, along with all their possessions. They fled and sought refuge inside the hospital.

"The AVH had a UN flag flying from

its tower. The third storey of the hospital and the roof were bombed and destroyed."

"We did not know what would happen. There were about 300 people inside the hospital, including patients, their visitors, and hospital and other LWF staff. Israel imposed a curfew, which was lifted for one or two hours daily. People would rush to the shops, which had a limited range of stocks. The hospital had been prepared for an emergency, but it lost a lot of supplies when the building was bombed, so there was not enough food for everyone."





Augusta Victoria Hospital is a major hospital in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the second largest hospital in East Jerusalem. For decades AVH was the primary hospital serving the Palestinian refugee population in the Occupied Territories.

"On Wednesday June 7, Israel occupied the AVH. Their commanders came asking people to get out of their shelter and leave. They separated men and women. The LWF Director said they were AVH staff. We stayed another two or three days at the hospital. My family then looked for and rented a house on the Mount of Olives. We had to start from zero."

Augusta Victoria Hospital today

Augusta Victoria Hospital is a major hospital in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the second largest hospital in East Jerusalem. For decades AVH was the primary

hospital serving the Palestinian refugee population in the Occupied Territories. The services provided at Augusta Victoria include surgical, internal medicine, paediatrics, nephrology and oncology departments. It is the only hospital in the Territories providing certain special procedures, such as radiation therapy for cancer patients and paediatric kidney dialysis¹.

EAPPI cooperates with AVH by sending Ecumenical Accompaniers on the bus that collects children from Hebron and other areas and brings them to the hospital for dialysis.

¹ A Wall in the Heart. The Separation Barrier and its Impact on the Right to Health and on Palestinian Hospitals in East Jerusalem. December 2005. Physicians for Human Rights. www.phr.org.il

An interview with Ishaq Al Budeiri by Rose Anderson

1967 Occupation Remembered

"I still remember that day, June 5 1967. That day was the saddest day for Palestinians. My father woke me around 9am and told me that Israel had destroyed all Egypt's planes and that war was starting. We lived in Sultan Suleiman Street, near Damascus gate. I got up and went out. People were moving around and everything was quiet, but people felt that something was going to happen."

Ishaq Al Budeiri sits quietly with his cup of coffee in front of him. Now the Director of the Arab Studies Society, a research and documentation centre, in 1967 he was a 21-year-old youth, just returned from studies in Cairo. He came back three days before war broke out, joining his family in East Jerusalem, where they had been refugees since 1948.

He describes how Egypt, Jordan and Israeli radio said that war had broken out between the three states. "In the afternoon, people stayed home; there was nobody on the street, nobody was moving. During the night, we heard artillery shells between East and West Jerusalem. People were afraid."

On June 6, the family caught news of the clashes between the Israeli and Jordanian armies. "Some people moved into the Old City, with some taking shelter in the Al Aqsa mosque

compound. There was artillery fire all day. In the evening for the first time we went up into the street and were shocked to see that everything was under the control of the Israeli military."

Mr Al Budeiri describes the swiftness and suddenness of the military intrusion. "On June 7 Israeli troops continued moving through East Jerusalem, and by noon they had captured all of the city and the West Bank. Some people were afraid and tried to go to the East Bank (Jordan), but the bridges had been destroyed. Planes had also bombed houses. Everything was closed; there was nobody on the streets."

By the next day it was practically over. "On June 8 Israel asked people to go out on to the streets and announced that everything was under the control of the Israeli military."



For many Palestinians who fled their homes in 1948, the war in 1967 brought back memories. Before June 1967, the small wall on the green line on the edge of Damascus Gate, running along Musrara to Sheik Jarrah, divided East and West Jerusalem. Palestinians could not see what was happening on the other side. When the fighting stopped, the way between East and West Jerusalem opened. This gave Palestinians the opportunity to go and see property in West Jerusalem that they had fled from and not seen since 1948. The Al Budeiri family had a house in Qatamon. "We walked to see it. We saw people living in my family's house. My father asked them how long they had been living there and they told him since 1949."

Everything changes

The war finished quickly, but afterwards life was never the same, Mr Al Budeiri explains. "After June 10, everything collapsed. Any person in the world, who sees a foreign army coming and taking over, refuses that.



Jerusalem Photo: J. Bolliger

Our first reaction was to refuse to cooperate with the army.”

“During the first three months, there were Israeli soldiers on every street and corner, who stopped people to check their ID, demanding “Where are you going?” Some people had ID cards from UNRWA or the Red Cross, but many had nothing. On June 28, the Israeli government announced its annexation of East Jerusalem. They said now Jerusalem is all one and all Israeli laws will cover East Jerusalem.” Eventually East Jerusalem Palestinians were given blue ID cards only, but not citizenship¹.

Mr Al Budeiri elaborates on the economic and social consequences of the occupation: “Many people lost their jobs and therefore their security. Some people who had been working with the Jordanian government lost their jobs because everything changed. Many youth started to go outside, especially to the Gulf to find work and send money back to their families. This divided families.”

“The Palestinian economy collapsed. Israel refused to assist development of sectors of the economy and build industries. Use of land was restricted. Building houses required permits and was restricted. Days and months passed bringing settlements. There was a lack of education development. Health services were affected. The Sheik Jarrah Police Station for example, used to be a hospital.”

Mr Al Budeiri and the Arab Studies Society themselves experienced some of the harsh control that is the pulse of the military occupation. In August 2001 the Orient House, where the Arab Studies Society had their office, was shut down. It had long been the Palestinian heart of Jerusalem and was seen as a threat to the Israeli dream of a unified Jerusalem under Israeli control.

“I feel sad,” Ishaq Al Budeiri sighs, “that this occupation has gone on for so long. After the war in 1967, people were in shock for three to five months, then life continued, along with hate for the occupation.”

“Until now, people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, they live without any freedom. They want to see their own state. They want to have their own independent home.”

“Until now, people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, they live without any freedom. They want to see their own state. They want to have their own independent home.”

¹ This ID is a residency permit. Palestinians living in East Jerusalem also have a Laissez Passez travel document that must be renewed every 2 years which enables them to travel abroad through Israeli borders.



FamilyHealth Clinic with the NECC in Gaza

By Roslyn Harper

Photos: Philip Rizk

EAPPI's Ecumenical Accompaniers left Gaza in 2003 when the last EA was unable to enter and exit through the Israeli controlled borders. As EAPPI's Communications and Advocacy Officer, I visited the NECC in Gaza in early May 2007.

Abu Yusef's story

Abu Yusef (name changed for anonymity) is a Palestinian Christian originally from Jaffa. His story is typical. He came to Gaza in 1948 as a refugee when he was 17, sailing away with his family from their home in Jaffa, down the coast to Gaza, to escape the fighting. The fishing boat was overcrowded and they passed, symbolically, through a storm. Nevertheless, the worst days he says were yet to come, under Israeli occupation of Gaza, which began with the 1967 war during which the city died for three days "Everyone stayed indoors, away from the

shooting. People had not yet received their monthly food ration from UNRWA¹ when the war started, so for many food was scarce."

Like all people in Gaza, he has trouble leaving the 45km long and 5-12km wide Strip. He obtained a permit and was able to leave for the first time in seven years to visit his daughter in Bethlehem at Christmas. She moved there after marrying a man from Bethlehem and is unable to get a permit to visit Gaza. Abu Yusef is 80 years old. When will he see his daughter again? He connects with his grandchildren by cell phone.

Abu Yusef has been involved in humanitarian work all his working life and even in retirement continues to support the work of the NECC, particularly promoting women's health.

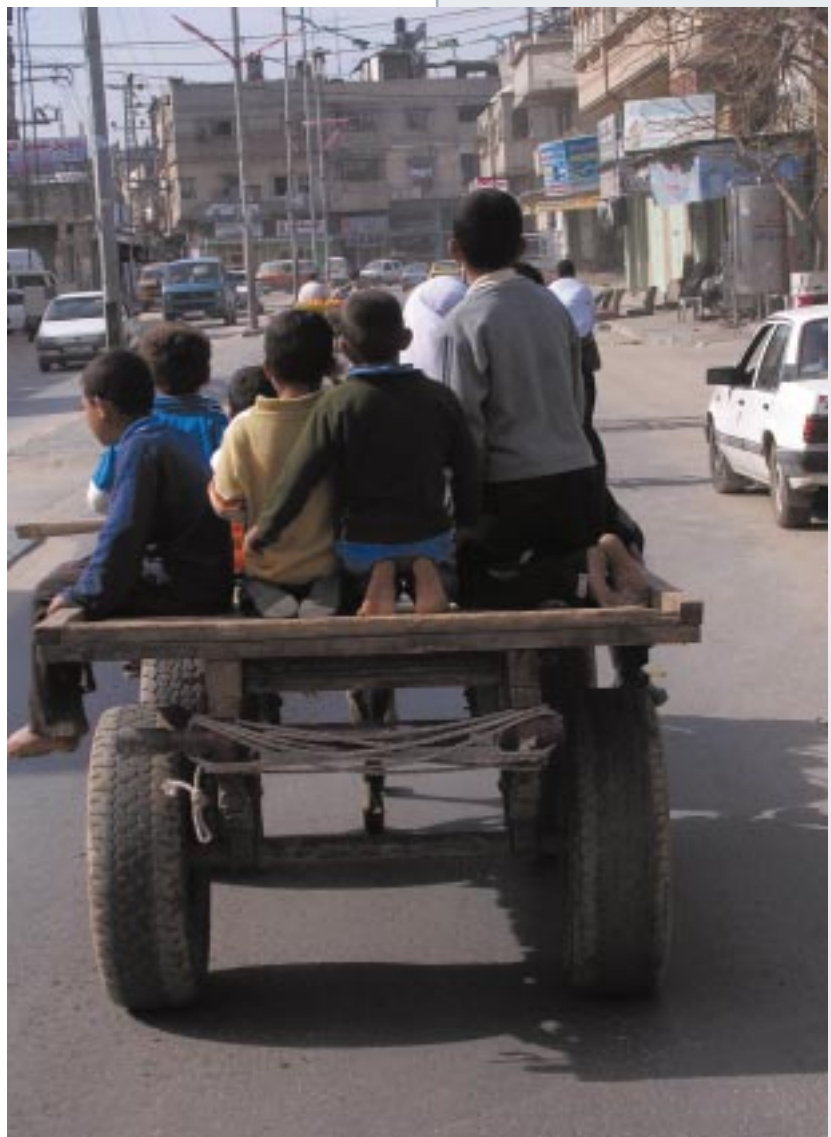
Family health clinics

I met some 20 women with small children at a Baby Clinic, run by the Near East Council of Churches (NECC). The NECC Medical Coordinator reports a steep rise in the numbers attending their clinics. Chronic illnesses have increased, along with anaemia in children from declining nutrition². Mental health is a serious problem, especially in children who are traumatized along with everyone else by repeated bombings. Their Clinics run for part of the day on generators following Israel's destruction of electricity supplies in June 2006.

For women who are unable or afraid to attend the clinic, either because

of street dangers or family disapproval, community extension workers are being trained to visit homes. Family planning has been added to the clinics in recent years. I met a 29 year old women with five children at her first family planning consultation. Families are getting smaller as attitudes change and people realize they cannot afford to feed and educate more children. The NECC has been serving the almost

Poverty is rife, with over 80% of people living below the official poverty line and 1.1 million people receiving food aid from UNRWA and the UN World Food Programme.



entirely Muslim community of Gaza since 1952, when it was established to assist refugees in Gaza³. Almost 1 million of Gaza's 1.4 million population are refugees⁴.

The NECC has three Family Health Care Centres in Gaza and Rafah Cities serving the most over-crowded and under-served areas. The Christian community in Gaza is tiny but NECC has contributed to maintaining their peaceful integration when elsewhere Palestinian Christians face difficulties due to the Christian West's support of Israel.

Still occupied

Israel withdrew its settlers and army from Gaza in August 2005 but Israel controls the air and sea, and all external borders. These borders have remained totally closed for lengthy periods, but even in good times, only a minimum of imports, exports, and travel is permitted. The UN Special Rapporteur describes this as a controlled strangulation, "In effect, following Israel's withdrawal, Gaza became a sealed off, imprisoned and occupied territory."⁵

Of the women I met in the clinic, Huda's husband and Rula's father like many men, were once construction workers in Israel. Now they are unemployed and suffer the indignity of depending on extended family support and food aid. Israel has largely replaced Palestinian labour with foreign contract workers. Poverty is rife, with over 80% of people living below the official



poverty line and 1.1 million people receiving food aid from UNRWA and the UN World Food Programme. Israel's economic war against the Palestinians includes withholding funds owed to the Palestinian Authority (approximately US\$50 to 60 million per month), while economic isolation of the territory by the United States, the European Union, and other states continues⁶. The UN Special Rapporteur also describes the siege of Gaza as "collective punishment in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949."

Driving through Gaza one is unsettled by a disturbing quiet. Traffic is light and includes donkey carts. Few people appear on the streets; shops open but no one enters them. As the women I met said, people are limiting expenditure to essentials. For most, this means staying home. Abu Yusef thinks it would be better for everyone if Israel could find a compromise to facilitate Palestinians

and Israelis living together. "We are human beings, we want to live and not be closed in. If the borders are open, this is a nice place to live. People are very friendly in Gaza." Abu Yusef hopes to return one day to pray in his Church in Jaffa.

Getting out of Gaza

Getting out of Gaza was easier than getting in. After a 10 minutes walk from the Palestinian Police area through a kind of no-mans-land, I passed the high concrete Wall and reached the Israeli terminal. I went in through turnstiles and corridors. I entered an enclosed, glass walled area and had to stand with my feet apart and hands above my head for a full body x-ray. Is this what it feels like to be in a fish tank? A disembodied voice demanded to know what I had in my pocket. I pulled out my handkerchief, waved it in the air, and was allowed to pass and collect my bag. I was lucky I could get out, because I had a foreign passport.

1 United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

2 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, John Dugard. Human Rights Council. 29 January 2007.

3 <http://www.neccgaza.org/index.htm>

4 <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/index.html>

5 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, John Dugard. Human Rights Council. 29 January 2007.

6 Ibid.