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Message from the Churches

Bishop Munib Younan (2nd from the right) on a visit to Tulkarem in support of the EAPPI. Also present (l. to r.): Archimandrite Mtanios Haddad, head of the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church in Jerusalem; Larry Fata, EAPPI Communications Officer, and Ecumenical Accompaniers Rev. Wandile Kuse from South Africa and Ann-Catrin Andersson from Sweden.



Photo: Matt Robson

Bishop Munib Younan is the head of the Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and also serves as the moderator of the EAPPI's Local Reference Group. The EAPPI is the response by the World Council of Churches to the call by the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem to send an international, ecumenical presence to be with both Palestinians and Israelis struggling against the Occupation. As one of the Heads of Churches, Bishop Younan was asked to share his thoughts on the first three years of the programme.



Ecumenical Accompaniment

A Human Chain of Hope for Peace and Justice

By Bishop Munib Younan
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)

The EAPPI began as a concrete response to a call from the Heads of Churches in Jerusalem. Faced with the worsening situation of the illegal Occupation of Palestine in 2001, the Easter Message of the Heads of Churches urged the worldwide Christian community to take real action and not simply issue more statements of concern.

We are happy to say that the World Council of Churches heard the call and grasped the idea! The WCC acted swiftly to stand with the churches in the Holy Land which seek to contribute to a just peace, reconciliation, and better understanding between Israel and Palestine, within the Middle East and in relation to the whole world community.

The EAPPI makes an important if not unique contribution because it accompanies and works with both Palestinian and Israeli communities and groups committed to justice, peace, and respect for Human Rights. This presence with both communities incarnates the vision of the Heads of Churches for a just peace and reconciliation. EAPPI adds an

international, ecumenical dimension to our witness as artisans of peace by supporting nonviolent resistance in the struggle for justice over and above the religious and national divide.

The idea is to create a human chain around the world, joining hands for a better future - witnessing to the kind of world God wants for us all.

As well as physically accompanying those seeking to end the illegal Occupation and those suffering under it, the Church is called to be Prophetic in the face of injustice. This requires the Church to be doers of the truth. The story of what is really going on must be told. The truth must pierce through the falsehoods of propaganda and the lies and distortions of the mass media. The EAPPI allows ordinary people to be bearers of this truth.

Obviously the churches and their message are not of much interest to the mass media. In statistical terms, the Churches in the Holy Land are insignificant, less than 2% of the population. However, the role of the Churches as peace makers far exceeds our small size. There will be no peace in this conflict without the Churches and Christians being part of it.

At the same time, the Christian community

itself is suffering under the illegal Occupation and the dwindling numbers of the Christian presence is largely due to emigration caused by the conflict.

The Churches see the fears on both sides of the conflict. We seek to address the fears and insecurity of the Israelis and the need for justice and liberation for Palestinians. We believe that the security of Israel depends on freedom and justice for Palestinians and that freedom and justice for Palestinians depends on Israel achieving true security. In this our vision is clear: a two-state solution with a shared Jerusalem for two peoples and three faiths will make this vision a reality. The future of the Christian community in the Holy Land depends on a just peace.

And so this human chain of accompaniment committed to witnessing to the truth can help us to advance peace and reconciliation in this long and bitter conflict. But make no mistake, this is a demanding task. It requires daring and courageous action by the WCC, by the Churches and Ecumenical groups that support the programme, by the accompaniers themselves, and of course by the Churches of the Holy Land.

This is a daunting task but it is essential for the existence of the Christian

community in this place. And a vibrant, witnessing Christian community is essential for any prospects of lasting peace.

Therefore we want to strongly encourage all the churches worldwide to be a part of this mission of hope. If your church is not actively participating in the EAPPI, please take this bold step and join us! There is a gospel imperative to do justice and to see the truth and we are assured that "the truth will set us free!"

We have been very impressed with the quality and the creativity of the WCC response to our call. One thing that particularly stands out for us is the fact that one of the Ecumenical Accompaniers was a Jewish woman. She came as a part of the human chain of hope and added a powerful dimension to our testimony. She worked in the West Bank and carried out the same activities as the other EAs. The Palestinians saw her in the same way as they saw the others. Her presence shows us all that this conflict is not about religion. Rather it is a political conflict. We are faced with war and occupation versus peace, justice, and reconciliation. The conflict is not about religion, race, or gender. It is about sharing land and water!

We certainly hope that there will be more Jewish and also Muslim accompaniers. For our human chain to be powerful, we need strength, diversity, and universality. We would therefore also like to encourage the Orthodox and Catholic communities to

become more active in sending accompaniers and supporting the EAPPI. Much of the response so far in these first three years has been from the Evangelical/Protestant communities. This chain of hope needs strong links from the whole Christian family.

In the same vein, we would say that it is the responsibility of the WCC to ensure that this human chain is not mostly formed from the North but that it extends throughout the global South. We are in the Middle East - we are in the middle of everything, and an effective, ecumenical response must bind together both the South and the North if we are to achieve peace. The experience of receiving EAs from South Africa has been particularly encouraging for us. We want the EAPPI to become a programme of the South as well and to build and expand on the South African participation. We hope that finances will not be an obstacle. Churches with financial resources can share with churches in the South so that the human resources of those who have suffered oppression and hardship can be forged into our chain of hope. We learn much from those who come from situations of oppression and struggle; they teach us as they accompany us. We count on their advocacy and their witness.

The first wave of accompaniment saw an impressive response from the Northern churches and ecumenical groups mostly from the Evangelical and Protestant family and now we want to see the broadening

of the circle to include the Orthodox and Catholic communities in greater numbers, with many more churches from the South and to our great delight an interfaith dimension to the programme. Without a doubt the EAPPI has the potential to make a truly global contribution to a just peace. However, we do need to work hard to keep widening the circle, to act boldly, and to encourage others to join us!

When Jesus was asked by disciples of John the Baptist if he was the One who was to come or if they should wait for another, he didn't launch into a theological discourse or make a formal statement. He said simply, "tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk...the poor have good news brought to them!" (Luke 7:22)

The EAPPI is a concrete action that goes beyond resolutions and statements. It is a response to the call from the Heads of Churches to stand with us and with the whole Christian community as we struggle to resist occupation and give birth to a just peace. The Human Chain can be seen and heard. We walk with Israelis and Palestinians. We seek to ensure that the poor and the oppressed hear the good news and that the powerful change their ways and embrace justice.

We give thanks to God for the EAPPI. Through the WCC we know that our hands are linked with those around the world who are working for the world God wants.



What of the Future?

Out of Bethlehem and back home, an Ecumenical Accompanier reflects on his three Months there

By Brian Shackleton

"Retired Preacher's Peace Mission to the Middle East" ran the headline over the article in my local newspaper, the resulting product of an interview a reporter had conducted with me before I left for Israel and Palestine last November as a member of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. It was the reporter's, or her editor's, perception rather than mine. For me the purpose was rather more modest - more in line with the World Council of Churches' expectation: with colleagues I might give support to both Israelis and Palestinians who are working for peace; to record any abuses I saw that contravened human rights; and ultimately to try to tell the story of those who felt

that the world was oblivious to their condition.

Now I have been back in England for two months, and I thought that this time of reflection would have clarified the kaleidoscope of three months' experiences into a clear pattern, but I am not so sure. I can keep the promise that I made to so many people whom I met that I would tell their story, but have I an answer to the not unreasonable question that I am asked time and again: "But what of the future?"

Sharing Experiences in Bethlehem

Spending most of my time in Bethlehem in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was an experience that was a high privilege

and one that I wouldn't have missed. But it was also sometimes more harrowing than I even realised at the time. Somehow I had to try to distance myself emotionally from the lives that were being lived out around me if I was going to be usefully objective. Yet, I was there as an Ecumenical Accompanier, and an Accompanier surely has to "walk with," not just be a bystander, a spectator.

So my friends and neighbours were often those without a job, those whose travel was severely restricted, those who were denied the opportunity to meet with relatives. I would be told of family members who were in "administrative detention" - arrested without charge and imprisoned without trial. I met with those whose access to health care was at best

Israel's "Separation Wall" surrounds and imprisons Bethlehem.
Photo: Collin Watermeyer

The author (centre) speaking with a member of the Bethlehem community along with fellow Ecumenical Accompanier Christine Raiser-Suehting (right).

Photo: Rune Sodal



limited and frequently uncertain. I worked with farmers in their fields when they could not be sure whether or not their labours would be disrupted by militant settlers, and who had no guarantee of their personal safety. I saw uprooted olive trees and houses demolished. And I saw "the Wall" being built. Bethlehem, ringed with the Wall of Separation and illegal Israeli settlements, can be described as "a prison within the larger prison of the West Bank." Some years ago in England I regularly drove past a maximum security jail as it was being built. It was hugely expensive, and some would say effective. But essentially it was about containment. I couldn't help thinking, "What if all that capital outlay and effort had been used to tackle the root causes of crime...?"

For Bethlehem, what of the future? Viewed in the most charitable light, the

strategy of the present Israeli government seems to offer only expediency for the moment, without thought for the price which is being incurred in an account labelled "long term damage."

Of course, violence is part of the agenda of some in Israel and Palestine, and the world sees highly dramatic, unrepresentative incidents graphically recorded by the popular media, whether it is the Palestinian suicide bomber or the "Wild West" mayhem of an extremist Israeli settler. What should be shown are the drawings by children where guns and rockets and armoured vehicles are so much a part of life that they figure in every picture - where in the top corner the sun still shines, but with tears running down its face. I vividly remember the youth worker in a refugee camp who told me that whatever I asked the children to

The author spent three months in Bethlehem as an Ecumenical Accompanier from November through February 2004-2005. He wrote this account about his experiences upon his return to Britain.



Members of the EAPPI dealing with Israeli soldiers who are trying to stop Mexican muralists from continuing their work on the Wall. The murals were forms of peaceful protest to the Wall, which will encircle the town of Bethlehem.

Photo: Lunga ka Siboto

draw, they would always return to this theme in their illustrations.

What is the long term consequence for the future citizens of Israel when every school trip is accompanied by two armed guards? And when I asked whether this was really necessary, I was told that it made the parents feel better. What do we do when we steal childhood from the young? And why are we horrified at the abuse of an individual child, yet allow a whole generation to be subjected to this damaging culture? "Scarred for life" is a phrase that trips easily from the tongue, yet we seem oblivious to the implication for a peace process while we continue to allow this environment to go unchallenged.

Standing with Women in Black

A defining moment for me came the day before I flew home at the end of my three months. I was in Jerusalem on a Friday for the first time, and I went to stand in support of Women in Black in their opposition to the Occupation and breaches of human rights. The women and their supporters stand in a square in the middle of a busy West Jerusalem intersection, holding signs in English, Arabic, and Hebrew. I have attended many demonstrations over the years, but this was more interactive than most. It was more like Speakers' Corner at Hyde Park. I am told that I talk too much, but there I listened fascinated as an elderly man came up to the Women in Black

alongside me and harangued them. He told them that they would be better employed at home preparing a meal for their husbands before Shabbat. They gave back to him as good as they got. Then he moved along the line to me, and when he discovered that I was a Christian he exploded into a diatribe which culminated in holding me personally responsible for the Inquisition. Now I know that I look old, but I could not believe that I looked old enough for that to be credible. Nor could I understand how someone could have that much hate in his heart, and gently I pressed him on his attitude. Eventually his voice became calmer, and he told me that before coming to Israel he had spent many years in the United States. Before that, his early childhood had been in Poland. It was there in the village of his birth, as part of a Jewish minority, when the Christian festivals had come round, especially Easter, that he had been victim to religious, anti-Semitic persecution. In that moment I saw before

me, not an old man, but the child who had been damaged all those years before, and had carried that damage all those years like an open wound.

Visit to Yad Vashem

In my last week I made the journey to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum, in Jerusalem. The landscaped approach is a walk through trees to the clearing that is the Memorial complex - but, I think, "Will this clarify my thinking - or my mixed emotions?" The horror and brutality of the last century not only cut short so many lives, but stripped away the dignity that is afforded when even brief lives can be celebrated in a proper act of remembrance. So it is appropriate that the anonymity of the numbers exercise - six million dead - is here transformed into a record, name by name by name.

But is this a celebration of life, or death? Have I come to a vast mausoleum? "Lest we forget..." is the refrain. But as I meet with the uneasy shadows of the past, does this help me to live in the present? Where, I ask, is the healing? And as I walk from one part of Yad Vashem to another, I feel the legacy of my Europeaness towards the Jewish people. It is not a sense of personal guilt, but the recognition that for centuries Europe placed limitations on Jews, and cast them in the role of victims. And the more I walk round, the more I am weighed down with the awareness that they have exchanged one form of captivity for another, and that the world has done little to help them toward real liberation. Yad Vashem, it seems to me, wants to remind the world that the Jewish people have been made victims, but it is a statement to the Israeli people that they are heroes.

Every nation has the desire to be heroic, and the parallels are evident in all our histories. The Americans look to the Alamo, the British to Dunkirk; but something more than the Alamo and

Dunkirk had to be written on the pages of history if the United States and Britain were to have a future. So, I found myself asking, what is the future of Israel?

The suggested guide route leads to the Children's Memorial. Into the darkness where myriad pinpricks of light like stars in a night sky tell of the children, victims of this 20th century "Massacre of the Innocents." And as a voice speaks out a litany of names, places, and ages; it is impossible not to be moved. And when the indignant heart can bear no more of this representation of man's inhumanity to man, there is the dubious escape to the sunlight outside, to pause and reflect. But it is there that I hear the words of an Israeli guide addressing her charges. "They had no future, but ours is there." And with a flourish of the arm she gestures to the vista stretching before them.

I want to shout out, the voice of objection and, I hope without arrogance, the voice of correction. Is that all that Israel has to offer the world, to lay claim to a parcel of land? Has the God-given revelation of peace been traded for the price of a Potter's Field? Where is the exposition of justice and righteousness, the vision of Isaiah and Micah in the world of international relations? Is the ultimate tragedy that small-mindedness has taken over from the prophetic vision?

I live in a beautiful village within one of our National Parks, and I constantly remind myself how fortunate I am. I would see it as tragic if one of my neighbours fell prey to the sales patter of a dealer in bolts and locks and chains for house security, so that fear becomes the obsession that keeps my neighbour a voluntary prisoner in his or her house, refusing to enjoy the richness of all the possibilities that our location has to offer. So I continue to pray for those who work for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine.

The EAPPI in Bethlehem

The EAPPI has partnered with three Palestinian organizations in Bethlehem and the neighbouring town of Beit Sahour: The East Jerusalem YMCA and the YWCA of Palestine - Joint Advocacy Initiative, on the issue of the lack of access and mobility experienced by Palestinians as a result of checkpoints, the I.D. system, and the Wall; the Alternative Information Centre (AIC), tracking how the international media is covering the conflict and other special media projects; and the Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights in Bethlehem, helping in the compilation of an academic report on how the 1951 international refugee conventions apply to the Palestinian people. Additionally, the EAPPI works with other organisations to provide broader accompaniment for the area. These organisations have included: Aida Refugee Camp - the Lajee Center and the popular committee; Caritas Baby Hospital; Wi'am; Arab Educational Institute; the International Centre of Bethlehem; Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem (ARIJ); Bethlehem University; The Abraham Center; and the Bethlehem Bible College. Bethlehem is located 10 kilometres south of Jerusalem.

Hebron

Mrs. Ferial (centre) tending to one of her pupils who had her nose bloodied in an attack by Israeli settlers in Hebron. An Israeli soldier is also present, on the right.



The author is from Sweden and spent three months in Jerusalem and three in Hebron as an Ecumenical Accompanier from November through May 2004-2005.

The Cordoba School Caught within Violence and Terror Girls School threatened by Settlers, but Headmistress carries on

The all-girls Cordoba School, in the occupied and divided West Bank city of Hebron, suffers daily from violence and harassment perpetrated by the illegal Israeli settlers living next door. Many students have left the school, and some girls have suffered from nightmares and hair loss, but Mrs. Ferial, the headmistress, refuses to give up.

By Anna Burén

Photos: Anna Burén

It is a blazing hot April afternoon when the girls and teachers from the Cordoba School in Hebron are attacked by settler youths hurling stones at them as they are being dismissed. The settlers, who appear to be in their early teens, smile as they attack the girls. Two of the hundreds of Israeli soldiers in Hebron make some half-hearted attempts to intervene, but the violence continues as the girls and teachers try to pass.

This is yet another violent day in Hebron, the only site in the West Bank where settlers live right in the heart of a city. It was in the early '80s that some right wing, fundamentalist Jews illegally settled here. Hebron is one of the most sacred cities in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam because Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives are buried here. But since the settlers arrived, the girls and teachers in the Cordoba School have suffered from

violence and harassment.

Mrs. Ferial, headmistress of the Cordoba School, is standing in the staircase leading down from the school to the street, taking photographs as the settlers throw the stones. She is not surprised that this is happening since she lives with the settlers day and night, but she feels sorry that the settlers' children are brought up to carry out such violent and hateful acts. Just about one hour earlier she explained to me that the violence will never make her leave the school. "I stay here because I am the headmistress," she says.

Violence has made some Girls lose their Hair

The Cordoba School is located in one of the most vulnerable parts of Hebron. Surrounded by 12 checkpoints, this part of the city is akin to a scene from a war

movie, with patrolling soldiers, barbed wire, and a skyline disturbed by military posts located on rooftops. On Shohada Street, where the girls walk every day in order to reach the school, windows have been smashed and the Star of David has been spray painted on the doors. Many families have left, and all the shops and businesses on the street have closed down. During the first years of the second Intifada, curfews were long in this part of Hebron and life became almost unbearable. Mrs Ferial estimates that back then the Cordoba School was only open about half of the academic year due to the curfews. She shows me a flyer saying that between curfews and closures there is no room for education.

The violent acts committed by the settlers - throwing eggs and stones, kicking and beating people - adversely affect the students' mental health. According to Mrs

Graffiti on a door behind the Cordoba School.



Ferial, girls have suffered from nightmares and some of them have even lost hair and developed skin rashes. This, together with the other hardships in this part of Hebron, has made many of the girls leave the Cordoba School.

"I come to school to teach my students, not to make anyone angry or happy," Mrs. Ferial says. "What can I do? I ask God to make the situation better than it is now. But I can't change anything because there is a very big force in front of us: the Israeli government, the army, and the settlers."

Gas the Arabs

Mrs. Ferial lives in the troubled area of Tel Rumeida, located on the hill adjacent to the school, with a view over the Old City. Mrs. Ferial can no longer reach her almond trees since the Israeli authorities

have put a fence between her and her garden. The windows of her house are nowadays, like many other windows in Hebron, covered by steel grating in order to protect them from the settlers' stones. Her trees have been cut down, but they have grown up again, even more beautiful, Mrs Ferial says, "Because their roots are so deep."

Mrs. Ferial tells me about the terror she experienced when soldiers broke into her house one October night during the current Al-Aqsa Intifada, forced the family out on the street, and started firing their guns at her cooking pots, winter clothes, and beds. Once she was also greeted at the school with graffiti saying that "they" would kill her and behind the school someone has written "Gas the Arabs" with black paint. But Mrs. Ferial will stay, no matter the price. She says that everybody will die someday and she is just not going

Facts on Hebron and the Cordoba School

- Hebron, located in the southern West Bank, was divided into area H1, under Palestinian control, and area H2, under Israeli control, in 1997 as a part of the Oslo agreements.
- About 500 settlers live within the city of Hebron in four settlements. Another 7,200 settlers live in the large settlement of Kiryat Arba, on the outskirts of the city. All the settlements are illegal according to International Law, which stipulates that it is illegal for an occupying power to move its civilian population into occupied territory.
- About one third of the total Palestinian population of 162,000 lives inside area H2.
- The Cordoba School is located inside area H2, next to the Beit Hadassah settlement and below the settlement in Tel Rumeida.
- In 1980, the Cordoba School had about 300 students. In 2000, the enrolment had dropped to 190, and as of today, the number of students is down to 87.

to leave her house or the Cordoba School. "It's my heart; it's my blood in my body," she explains. "I can't imagine how I could live in another place. If my feet didn't walk in Tel Rumeida, if I didn't breathe the air of Tel Rumeida, I would die."

International Presence

Due to the high level of violence in Hebron, Israel and the Palestinian Authority have agreed to have international observers in the city. TIPH (Temporary International Presence in Hebron) patrols the streets 24 hours a day. The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) established a constant presence in Hebron and in the Cordoba School nearly two years ago, something for which Mrs. Ferial is very happy. The Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) escort the girls to and from school and give them moral support. Mrs. Ferial sees this as an act of humanity. She is grateful that international observers come here to try and help in this harsh reality. She also thinks that the international presence might deter settlers from violent acts since they don't want bad publicity. She hopes that the EAs will put pressure on their respective governments and do what they can to stop the Occupation. Mrs. Ferial expresses her disappointment in the international community which has not been able to stop Israel's illegal Occupation of



Palestine. "They must say to Israel, 'stop,'" she says. "There has been an occupation since 1967; they must end the Occupation and return to the state they had before 1967."

Peace, inshallah

Mrs. Ferial's wish would be that Palestinians and settlers could live in peace, but she has a hard time seeing that happening. "Sometimes I feel sad for them (the settlers); they kill their time," she says. "They spend their time thinking about how to attack Arabs and how to kill Arabs. They say to us that 'every dog has its day' and by that they mean that they will kill us in the future." Outside the window, the students are having their last rehearsal to prepare for the annual open day the following day. Their voices are strong and convincing as they sing "We shall overcome, I do believe; I do believe; someday we will live in peace." Mrs. Ferial doesn't know if peace will ever come. "Inshallah (God willing), I hope," she affirms. "Trust me, that for me and my children and my husband, we hate the violence. I hope for peace in my land."

As we walk out at the end of the school day, I hear the girls talking about "mustawtiniin" (settlers). They are right, as we see the young settlers standing on the street below the school hurling the first stones. As I approach them with my camera, their excitement seems to escalate rather than deescalate. The girls and the teachers are hesitating at the staircase as the stones fly in the air. Above our heads, Israeli flags are waving in the wind, hanging in long lines between the Palestinian houses, which have had their windows smashed.

Mrs Ferial, headmistress of the Cordoba School, hopes for more pressure from the International Community on the Israeli government in order to stop the illegal occupation of Palestine.

Abrar, 4 years old, takes a good look around before she dares to climb the tree in her garden in Hebron. Her neighbours are stone-throwing Jewish settlers, and on the roof of her house is a watchtower for Israeli soldiers.

Abrar's Enemies

By Thomas Mandal
Photo: Thomas Mandal

Abrar tries to explain her whole situation to me as we sit outside in her family's garden. She is talkative, just like any 4-year-old would be. She points in the direction of her Jewish neighbours and the army post on the rooftop of her house while delivering her discourse. I don't know enough Arabic to understand everything she says, but I understand that she has a lot to tell. Her older sisters Mufida, aged 16, and Samah, 14, speak good English. My EAPPI colleague Eva from Denmark and I get invited into the house, to a little living room together with their mother. In front of the windows, on



Four-year-old Abrar playing in her garden.

the outside, grating is put up to prevent stones from breaking the glass.

"They throw stones almost every day, and every single Friday and Saturday," says Mufida. "That is the time when the Jews have their weekly feast, the Sabbath. Last weekend they threw stones through the windows that weren't protected by grating. My mother was standing outside in the garden and got hit by a stone in the head. The soldiers on the roof just laughed." She looks over to her mother who lets her hand stroke over her head where the three stitches still are, a reminder of the injury she suffered.

The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 is not remembered fondly by Palestinians, who refer to it as the Nakba - Catastrophe. Hundreds of thousands fled as refugees, with most never able to return to their homes again. The dispossession of Palestinians from their homes in 1948 has been referred to by some as ethnic cleansing, and for the Palestinians still living in the West Bank the process is not yet done. In Hebron today Palestinians are being exposed to physical and psychological terror with the aim of getting them to move away. Thousands have given up and moved - others are still fighting the harassment and the terror and keep on living in their homes. Abrar's family is trying to lead a normal life despite the attacks. Their next door Palestinian neighbours say they have gotten an offer from the settlers to sell their little house for two million U.S. dollars plus visas to the United States for the whole family.

It was in 1984 that a group of radical Israeli settlers set up six portable caravans in the area, which they consider a holy site. In fact, the city of Hebron is considered holy by Christians and Muslims as well as Jews. It is believed that David's father, Jesse, is buried on the top of the hill. David was the king who 3,000 years ago established his kingdom in Hebron before he moved to Jerusalem. In 1998 the Israeli government officially approved the settlement, and three years later the settlers got a permit from the Israeli Defence Ministry to build 16 housing units. The areas adjacent to the settlement, where Palestinians live, have gradually been taken over by the settlers through the means of harassment and terror.

Today there are around 500 settlers living inside the Old City of Hebron. About 700 soldiers are stationed in the city to protect them, although these settlers are usually also heavily armed. As a result of

The EAPPI in Hebron

Through the East Jerusalem YMCA office in Beit Sahour, the EAPPI learned of the accompaniment needs of school children in Hebron. School girls, aged 5-11, must pass through a checkpoint in front of the Israeli settlement of Beit Hadassah. They were encountering intimidation from soldiers and violence and intimidation from settlers, including the throwing of stones, garbage, etc. Soldiers and settlers would also enter the school grounds while classes were in session. Ecumenical Accompaniers accompany the children through the checkpoint in the morning and upon returning home, stay with students on their breaks, and assist them during the school day, attempting to reduce this level of harassment and violence. Additionally, the EAs provide solidarity and accompaniment for the teaching staff and document incidents with settlers and the corresponding difficulties for the local population. Hebron is located in the southern West Bank, about 36 kilometres southwest of Jerusalem.

The author is from Norway and spent three months in Yanoun and three in Hebron as an Ecumenical Accompanier from November through May 2004-2005.

the Oslo Agreements in the 1990s, Hebron was divided into two zones: H1 for Palestinians, H2 for both Israelis and Palestinians, but under Israeli control. The expansionist and aggressive behaviour of the settlers living in H2 has resulted in hundreds of Palestinian families having had to flee their homes. In effect, a city of 162,000 Palestinians is being held hostage for the benefit of 500 fundamentalist settlers.

Abrar, her three older sisters, two older brothers, and her parents refuse to move away. They have been living in the house for eight years, the last six of which have been spent with soldiers on the roof. They take the chance on being outside in their garden every day except Fridays and Saturdays. Last year, the settlers entered their garden and set one of their olive trees on fire. The stone-throwers are usually children between 5 and 10 years old, according to Mufida. Their parents do little to stop them.

"We tried to talk to them before, but they just screamed at us that we should move away from here. Now, after the Intifada, it is impossible to talk to them," says Mufida.

The soldiers on the roof, part of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), are responsible for maintaining the safety of the Palestinians in the area. That is according to international law. But in the Old City of Hebron, international law does not seem to apply.

"Many nights we aren't able to sleep because of the noise from the roof," says Samah. "They are stamping around, playing football, and rolling stones up there. When the settlers throw stones, they don't do anything. Often they just laugh, like last weekend."

Abrar is actively playing in the living room, just like any normal 4-year-old. Inside the house, behind the grating that protects the window, she feels safe enough to play without looking over her shoulder. She forgets for a little while that she has enemies on all sides.

Jayyous

Not in my Back Yard

Israel uses West Bank Sites to dump Garbage from Settlements

By Ann-Catrin Andersson

While approaching the small village of Jayyous, located in the West Bank on a narrow and winding road, we were met by the orange sun descending behind a big beautiful hill. I closed my eyes due to the sharp rays and thought to myself that, under other circumstances, this would be regarded as a magnificent place. The taxi driver's words and the smell made me open my eyes abruptly. Smoke was coming out of the beautiful hill and the driver explained to us that the formation ahead was actually an old garbage dump. We were of course curious as to why there was a garbage dump so close to the road and to the village and, if it was closed, why it wasn't sealed and taken care of. These and more questions mingled in our minds as we arrived at our destination.

Dump Site a "Permanent Point of Pollution"

Where our garbage ends up is nothing a person in economically developed countries normally thinks twice about. We are confident that our local authority takes the best possible care of our leftovers, preferably even in an environmentally friendly fashion. In a conflict situation, the priorities are different. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the

main problem for the Palestinians is the lack of water in certain areas, lack of clean water in others, and that there are many restrictions on water management. Another major environmental problem is the lack of proper facilities in the West Bank for waste disposal. In Palestine Human Development Report 2002, the UNDP, in cooperation with Bir Zeit University, states that the removal of the Israeli Occupation is crucial for the development of the Palestinian society, especially concerning land use and water management. Environmental issues are unfortunately not high on either the Palestinian or the Israeli agenda, especially when there is an ongoing armed conflict. There are several organizations working with waste issues in the region, such as Israel Union for Environmental Defence and Greenpeace Mediterranean. A problem is that few Israeli environmental organizations are active in the West Bank although the waste management problems there affect the Israeli public as well.

In Jayyous, with its 3,500 inhabitants, the garbage dump at the entrance of the village is just one sign of the waste management problem in the whole region. According to Abdul Latif Khaled, a local hydrologist working for the Palestinian Hydrology Group (PHG) in Nablus, the land where the dump is located is owned by a

local farmer from Jayyous, but it was confiscated by Israeli authorities in 1991. Some time after the confiscation, garbage from the nearby settlements, which are illegal according to international law, started to arrive. In the beginning, it was mostly a question of household garbage. The farmer who had owned the land for generations tried to challenge the expropriation and informed the media, environmental organizations, and human rights groups about what had taken place. Nothing happened. The garbage was burnt on the site and thick smelly smoke became part of everyday life in Jayyous and in the neighbouring village of Azzoun for many years. Ironically, there were also additional complaints from Israeli settlements nearby concerning the smoke and the smell. In connection to the Oslo agreement in 1994, the site itself was labelled Area C and thus under Israeli control. However, the two villages, Azzoun and Jayyous, are in Area A and thus technically under full Palestinian control.

In 1998-99, the garbage dump drew the attention of many local environmental organizations and the media when a large number of barrels from Israel with unknown contents were disposed of at the site. This became a rather large environmental scandal and Israeli authorities were forced to remove the barrels. The garbage dump closed in 2002,

but nothing has been done about the site itself since then. No sanitation has been performed and no one claims responsibility for the site. Khaled says that this kind of site is called a "Permanent Point of Pollution (PPP)" in scientific language and there is no information on what the dump contains today and what kind of waste was put there over the years. Khaled agrees with the conclusions of the Palestine Human Development Report 2002 that environmental issues are not high on the Israeli and Palestinian agendas. The management of this site, or lack thereof, is clearly a sign of that disregard. The waste management system in the West Bank is not developed and this has created environmental hazards all over the area. The problem with this site is that the waste comes from Israeli settlements and should be Israeli responsibility. Israeli authorities obviously did not want the waste in their own back yard.

Where to "site" Waste

Waste management is an important issue within environmental research worldwide, whether it is in the social sciences, natural sciences, or engineering. One of the most debated research questions has been the location or "siting" of the waste, and currently there are important discussions all over the world concerning where and

This is not a beautiful, pastoral scene of the sun setting behind a hill. The hill is in fact a huge garbage dump on the edge of the village of Jayyous.

Photo: Ann-Catrin Andersson

The author spent three months in Jayyous as an Ecumenical Accompanier from June through September 2004. She wrote this report upon her return to Sweden.



Abdul Kareem shows the author the land that was confiscated from his family for the garbage dump.
Photo: Oyvind Høyen

how to find sites for nuclear or hazardous waste. A widely used expression about this issue is "Locally Undesirable (or Unwanted) Land Use (LULU)," a term which was coined by the planner Frank J. Popper. The expression refers to projects on local lands that are not always welcomed by the local population or the local authorities. Citizens might oppose the plans, claiming that the waste is a health hazard or that the project is performed in a less appropriate fashion. In literature, these opposing individuals are often called NIMBY's for "Not in my back yard." The expression was introduced by Walton Rodger at the American Nuclear Society in the 1980s and is used to describe the reluctance of individual citizens, organizations, or politicians to having waste management facilities in their vicinity.

Everyone agrees that there is a need for special facilities, but very few agree with providing the land for them. This position could be regarded as standing up for the rights of a certain city or region, but it might also be seen as pure selfishness. Sometimes waste management facilities are placed in certain communities despite vigorous opposition. Researchers have

found that these forced facilities are often placed in areas where groups with traditionally less influence are found, such as in Less Developed Countries and, in the United States, areas inhabited by African-Americans, Hispanics, or Native Americans (Davy, 1997, pp. 14-24). In a small geographic area such as Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, it is not a surprise that the siting process concerning waste management facilities is a very important issue. Land use has become a key in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In a conflict perspective, land use becomes an even more serious issue when the two parties involved are not equal in terms of power. Israel as the occupier has a special responsibility stated in international law. Israel cannot move its citizens into occupied areas, the so-called settlers, and certainly cannot dispose of waste produced by its citizens without proper agreements.

Environmental Concerns not a Priority

The household garbage in Jayyous is taken care of by the municipality in cooperation with other villages. They are using a dump site a few kilometres outside

Azzoun near Kufr Thulth. The municipalities are responsible for the day-to-day management of household waste but it is the responsibility of the Palestinian Authority to develop dump sites. The problem is that the Palestinian Authority does not give priority to environmental issues in general and waste management in particular. Therefore the sites used are not prepared as garbage sites according to Khaled. The local municipalities do not have the financial means to prepare the dump sites in accordance with appropriate standards. The effects could be very serious for the environment and cannot properly be calculated without further studies. Another environmental hazard is that much of the garbage all over the West Bank is burnt in open air. This is mainly due to conflict-related problems such as when garbage cannot be transported outside the cities or to particular dump sites due to the closures imposed by the Israeli army.

In the United Nations Environmental Programme's Desk Study on the Environment in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, burning garbage in open air constitutes an additional health hazard. The city of Tulkarem in the West Bank has had difficulties in transporting its waste and the local authority has been forced to burn large quantities near the city. In addition, new environmental problems have arisen. Israeli factories producing hazardous waste have moved into the Tulkarem area and other areas within the Occupied Territories because of the less strict Israeli control there concerning waste management and air pollution. This has created environmental problems in the concerned Palestinian cities that cannot be controlled or remedied without the cooperation of Israeli authorities. Citizens in Tulkarem are complaining about the quality of the air in the city. The same study also mentions that it is the situation of armed

conflict that has led to less Israeli control over the activities of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including waste management. There are constant reports of waste dumping in Palestinian land - land that has not been prepared as waste management sites. The garbage dump site between Jayyous and Azzoun was not a suitable place for a dump site according to Khaled. The Israeli authorities are refuting the reports that industries are relocated and that there is a widespread dumping of settlement garbage. They emphasize that the settlements are under Israeli legal provision and cases of illegal garbage dumping are taken care of within the Israeli judicial system (United Nations Environmental Programme's Desk Study ... chapter 6-7).

A Health Hazard

In any case, the garbage dump between Jayyous and Azzoun is still there and still polluting the area. Khaled points out the health hazard of the dump, and that the health clinic in Azzoun has noticed an increase in the number of cancer cases the last couple of years. In Jayyous there has been an increase in the number of people with asthma. Methane gas leaking from the dump is causing constant fires and, according to Khaled, there is a need for immediate action to investigate the environmental implications of the dump site. He mentions five important studies that have to be made:

1. What kind of waste has been dumped at this particular site, thus what kind of pollutants are there? What could be said about the toxicity and concentration of the pollutants?
2. Where are the pollutants located within the garbage pile?
3. In what direction do the pollutants move?
4. How fast do the substances move within the pile?

5. How far from the groundwater are the pollutants?

To find an answer to these questions, the opinion from the Palestinian Hydrology Group and Khaled is that there is a need for an Environment Assessment Study and borehole investigation, but this of course requires a large financial commitment. It would take at least 5-10 years of sanitation and they estimate that the pile contains 1 million tons of garbage. According to their calculations, the temperature in the pile is 150-180°C and the process of vertical transport of pollutants could be two metres a day. Khaled says that the main responsibility falls on Israeli authorities who confiscated this site for a waste management facility, an action for which the Palestinian population in the area is now paying the price. Time is running out and if the substances reach the groundwater, the situation becomes extremely serious, not only for the surrounding Palestinian villages but also

for the nearby Israeli settlements. The garbage dump is located just 300 metres from a well supplying 14,000 inhabitants in four different villages with water. The pollutants could just as well reach the settlements six kilometres away.

This shows that environmental issues have no borders and cannot be contained by walls or fences - the environment affects everyone. The problem is that environmental issues are rarely the priority when there is an armed conflict and the question is who will step up and take the financial responsibility. The environment will unfortunately not wait for a conflict to end or future negotiations - it needs immediate action. If waste continues to be produced at high rates, there will be an increasing need to learn how to safely dispose of it no matter what back yard it eventually ends up in. The hope is that in the future people can watch the beautiful sunsets in Jayyous under better circumstances, without the offensive smell or suffocating smoke.

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The Value of the EAPPI in Jayyous from a Local Perspective

Farmer lists 10 Reasons why the Programme is effective in his Village

By Sharif Omar (Abu Azzam)
Jayyous Land Defence Committee

The Israeli government was in a good position to deceive the world through the dissemination of its position concerning the Palestinian - Israeli conflict. When construction began on the Wall, the justification offered was that it was necessary for the security of Israeli citizens. But for the Palestinian population, it was very clear that the true purpose of the Wall was the confiscation of fertile land and water resources. This would further lead to emigration, effectively ending any realistic prospect for an independent Palestinian state.

The arrival of so many visitors from the international community highlighted the importance for the Palestinian resistance to show the world the reality of the Israeli Occupation and the Wall. Furthermore,

Sharif Omar (Abu Azzam) is a landowner in the village of Jayyous and has been outspoken in his opposition to the construction of Israel's "Separation Wall."

As a member of the local Land Defence Committee, Omar has worked to draw attention to Israel's destructive practices in the construction of its fence, which has separated the village of Jayyous from most of its farmland. Omar has also been an outspoken supporter of the presence of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in the village.

we were very pleased that this international solidarity offered the opportunity for people outside the area to experience the "facts on the ground" for themselves.

One of these international organisations still supporting our village through the present day is the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, which started work in Jayyous in 2003. The Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) exemplify the best of what is possible through international solidarity. Below, I would like to list 10 reasons why their presence is vital for Jayyous:

1. EAs write daily reports or notes about what is going on here and convey that information to their contacts all over the world. This adds a credible source of observation to that already being offered by Palestinians and Israelis.
2. EAs participate in peaceful

demonstrations against the Occupation. This is very important, not only because of the photographs produced, but also because it gives us the feeling that we are not alone in this battle, and that there are people who support our rights in this world.

3. EAs monitor the gates in the "Separation Fence" and chart contradictions between the posted times of the gate openings and closings as opposed to the actual times that the soldiers perform those tasks. They also monitor and report any violations of the human rights of the Palestinian farmers on the part of the soldiers.

4. EAs arrange English language instruction for students and other interested members of the village.

5. EAs help farmers in their fields, especially during the olive harvest season. This creates very good feelings that during a time when farmers are refused permits to work their own fields, there are friends



Sharif Omar (Abu Azzam).
Photo: Brynjulv Melve

who come as volunteers to help poor families so that they will not lose their produce.

6. EAs listen to the testimonies of families, especially during critical situations.

7. EAs work to help gain the release of young men and boys should they be wrongfully arrested or detained by Israeli soldiers.

8. EAs build friendships with the farmers and their families and exchange letters after they go back to their respective countries.

9. EAs have proved to us that the principles of the three religions of Abraham - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam - are the same and this is a clear invitation to brotherhood and mutual respect.

10. EAs create opportunities for cultural exchange and expose us to books and magazines from their respective countries.

The EAPPI in Jayyous

The EAPPI has maintained an intermittent presence in Jayyous, a community affected by the construction of the "Separation Barrier," since October 2002. With the completion of the fence and the installation of gates in July 2003, EAs accompanied farmers to their lands through the gates. They assisted in advocacy efforts to ensure that the gates remain open for access; stayed overnight in farmers' fields, separated from the community by the fence; and accompanied Palestinians and Israelis in renewed popular demonstrations against the barrier and during the olive and other crop harvests. EAs assisted the local community on a monitoring project for the International Red Cross in cooperation with the Palestinian Hydrology Group, documenting the Israeli military's posted times of gate openings and closings and the actual openings and closings. The data gathered by EAs was used in the written statement submitted by Palestine at the International Court of Justice during the advisory proceedings on the legal consequences of the construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Court later found the Wall to be illegal. EAs in Jayyous have also documented a number of serious human rights abuses. Jayyous is located in the northern West Bank, approximately 50 kilometres northwest of Jerusalem. It is approximately 10 kilometres east of Qalqilya, which is located on the "Green Line," the internationally-recognized boundary between Israel and the West Bank.

Of Zionism and Peace between Palestinians and Israelis Can the Two Coexist?

By Rabbi Ehud Bandel,
Masorti Movement in Israel and Rabbis
for Human Rights
Photo: Bob Traer

Thank you for inviting me to meet with you. I think what you are doing here is to be commended. "Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said, and I see you as peacemakers. Moreover, I am happy to have an opportunity to present a Jewish perspective on our common challenge to achieve peace in this land.

Never Again

The Holocaust remains central to our Jewish experience, and there are two lessons we should take from it, which can be summed up in two words: Never again. Never again should Jews be led to slaughter like sheep without being able to defend themselves. And that is why I was for many years a proud soldier in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), knowing that I was helping to protect my people.

But there is a second lesson, a universal one, which is even more important. Never again should any people suffer discrimination, violations of basic rights, humiliation, oppression, or occupation. And no people, not even the Jewish people, are immune to racism and xenophobia. So we must all, always, be on our guard.

For me, this second lesson is the essence of Judaism. Hillel the elder, who lived just before the time of Jesus, was once asked by a Gentile, who didn't have enough time and patience to study the Torah: "Teach me the whole Torah while I'm standing on one foot." Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to others. That is the entire Torah, and the rest is commentary."

We are going to celebrate Pesach (Passover) in two weeks. It's a festival of freedom. The Jewish people began with the experience of being slaves in the land of Egypt. And the Torah reminds us, again and again, to remember when we were slaves in the land of Egypt. And why is that? So when we come to our country, we will not enslave others.

How then are we to understand our present situation? The early founders of Zionism were not colonialist, but coming from Europe they had a colonial mentality. Particularly, in the early days of Zionism, they believed that this was a land without a people, because they did not see the Bedouins and Arabs here as a people. The Zionists were blind, not because they were bad, but because that was their mentality, coming from Europe.

We must admit today that they were wrong. This was a land with a people. And now there are two peoples living in this land, who should share the land

between the two of them.

Violations of Human Rights a Blasphemy

During the first Intifada, when I was called up as a reserve and served in a Gaza refugee camp, I saw for the first time that Israelis were violating the human rights of Palestinians. I felt I had to do something, not just as a secular Israeli, but as a religious Jew, for human rights were being violated in the name of the Jewish people and this is blasphemy. This is a desecration of God's name. So, as a Jew, as a religious person, I had to try with other rabbis to protest against the violations of human rights being committed in the territories on our behalf, and in our name.

For most of our history, Jews have not had power. But in 1948 Jewish Israelis gained power. And so we must now face the question: "Have we lived up to our own standards of how to use this power?" And I say, "We have failed. We have sinned, and must repent." But I ask you, please, if you are truly interested in building peace and reconciliation, to try also to understand us.

I commend you for your commitment. You are showing your solidarity with the oppressed. You are living among the Palestinians, who are suffering, and I admire you for having the conviction to

Rabbi Ehud Bandel is the founding executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR), which is one of the partner organizations of the EAPPI. He continues to be active in RHR, but had been serving as the president of the Masorti (Conservative) Movement in Israel. Rabbi Bandel was invited to speak to a group of Ecumenical Accompaniers in April. Rabbi Bandel was happy to try to explain his position as both a Zionist and an advocate of human rights for Palestinians as well as for Jews. The following are excerpts from his address.



do that. Moreover, there is no question that now Israel has tremendous power, which it is abusing. But try to understand us, please, in order to help end this ongoing cycle of violence.

The Occupation Corrupts Israeli Society

We Jewish Israelis have to liberate ourselves from the Occupation, for the Occupation corrupts us. But we also must liberate ourselves from the trauma of our past. Our fear of not surviving is not just a myth. Sometimes I hear from Palestinians, "Come on, you're paranoid. What can we Palestinians do? You have the F-16s, the missiles, and the atomic weapons. What do we have? These children are no threat to you."

Yet, we continue to be frightened, because of the trauma. We may be paranoid, but even those with paranoia sometimes have real enemies. Of course, with our mistakes, we are adding to these enemies. We are giving them good reasons to hate us. But there is already hatred there, and we have to find ways to overcome this hatred on both sides. For when we look at a map of the Middle East, with tiny Israel surrounded by the Arab, Islamic nations, we are frightened.

Eventually Israel will pull out from the Gaza Strip and most of the settlements, with some exchange of land through

negotiations. But I know that for Palestinians today, and perhaps for you who live on the West Bank now and encounter the daily suffering of the people, it is difficult to have hope. People are humiliated at checkpoints and forced to wait for hours without any reason. So, I know they cannot see any progress. But we have to help them have hope.

Reasons for Hope

Sharon (Israeli Prime Minister) is not my hero, but we have to see the progress that has been made. If someone had told me 10 years ago that Sharon would be now pulling settlers out of Gaza, I would have said, "You're crazy. He's the father of these settlements." It's true, of course, that he wants to move the people from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank, but I don't believe he can achieve this. There has been progress, and there is divine Providence, which will help us.

Our role now, as religious people, is to have hope. In spite of all the difficulties, do not let yourselves be discouraged. For despair is the enemy of peace. Progress is too slow, and it's frustrating. But there are reasons to have hope.

Sharon now talks about a sovereign, independent Palestinian state. The Labor party did not talk about that four years ago, and yet it is the current position of the right-wing Likud party. There will be

a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Most of the Jewish settlements on the West Bank will have to be evacuated. My hope is that the two states will have open borders and good commercial relationships.

I believe that in the time of the messiah, people will be united in realizing we are all children of one God, and the barriers and distinctions between nations and people will be removed. But until then, I'm a Jew. And Judaism is religion and nationality. I am also a Zionist. I am proud of my people, my history, my nationality, my culture, and I want to live in a Jewish state that is democratic and protects the human rights of all citizens regardless of their religious faith.

Also, I accept that Palestinians want to express their nationality. I have struggled to persuade Israelis to accept the Palestine Liberation Organization as the national liberation movement of the Palestinian people. Now I want Palestinians to respect that Zionism is the national liberation movement of the Jewish people. We need to have two states, for this is the aspiration of both Palestinians and Jews.

We have a responsibility to be with those who are suffering, and to respond to their needs with empathy, but we must also encourage them and help them find hope. Despair is a fertile ground for those who don't want to have peace, and there are both Palestinians and Jews who want to use religion to continue this cycle of bloodshed. They say there is no earthly solution, and we will only find peace in the heavens above. But this is the will of God.

The Talmud tells a story about two people finding a garment, and arguing about which of them has the right to have it. When they asked a rabbi to judge between their claims, the rabbi said they should divide the garment, for the sake of peace. Today, we must divide the land fairly among our two peoples, for the sake of peace.



In the Olive Groves Again

Working the Land together with Palestinians and Israelis

By Bob Traer
Photos: Bob Traer

I want back with Rabbis for Human Rights to the olive groves above Ein Abus, and below the Yitzhar settlement. These groves are owned by Palestinian residents of the village of Ein Abus, which is just off highway 60, a few miles south of Nablus. But the settlers of Yitzhar, living on the crest of a hill confiscated from Palestinians, have for several years prevented the residents of Ein Abus from using their land, even killing a Palestinian as recently as last fall.

Two days earlier the Israeli army had protected the Palestinian landowners and the Rabbis for Human Rights (RHR) volunteers, as we cleared branches from the olive groves which had been cut from the trees by the illegal Israeli settlers in 2003. Today, we wanted to plough around

the trees and also prune the new sprouts that had grown out from the stumps left by the settlers' chain saw attack on the trees two years earlier.

Progress

I was delighted to find that the three barriers of stones and boulders, which we had cleared on my first trek up the hillside, had not been rebuilt by the settlers. We had two tractors going up the hillside this morning, and one of them carried two of the older women volunteering for RHR, as the climb was a bit much for them. We also had more Palestinian men with us today, which was an encouraging sign.

Once we reached the olive groves at the top of the hillside, we saw that ploughs had already tilled the earth among the trees in some sections, digging up the

weeds and many rocks as well. The ploughs would continue to clear other groves, but where I was, the work to be done involved using a hatchet to cut new shoots off the base of the olive trees, and also to dig up the weeds and loosen the soil around each tree.

When we arrived at the olive groves we didn't see any soldiers on the crest of the hill, nor were any settlers visible. But later in the day settlers came to observe, and as we were eating a wonderful lunch of bread, various dips, and vegetables, three soldiers walked down the hillside to where we were seated.

I was told by one of the RHR volunteers that the soldiers were Druze, and clearly the debate between the landowner and the army commander was in Arabic, not Hebrew (which the landowner actually spoke very well). The issue had to do

A heated exchange between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian landowners on this day results in the farmers gaining access to their lands.

The author served with the EAPPI in Jerusalem for three months from February through May 2005. He worked extensively with many Israeli peace organizations, including Rabbis for Human Rights. He accompanied the latter on various events, such as the one described in this article.

with how high up the hill we were going to work, for the olive trees on the back side of the slope came closer to the settlement than on the front side.

Anyone who has heard Arabs have a conversation knows that shouting is common, even when there is no emotional issue involved. In this case, with the use of their land in question, emotions were also running high. In the end, however, there seemed to be an agreement, which I learned later favoured the Palestinian farmers. One area particularly close to the settlements, which we could see had not been cultivated for several years, was ruled off limits. But otherwise, the commander said, the men were free to plough and work in their groves.

The landowner's wife, who had come up the hillside with one of her daughters to

bring us lunch, had a loud conversation with her husband after he had finished his argument with the soldier. She made sharp arm movements and her facial expressions suggested anger. But then she calmly walked up the hillside and began to gather edible plants. Zuzi, an Israeli RHR volunteer, showed me a wild grain that could be eaten, and I tried a few of the small seeds. She also pointed out the wild mustard, and a wild pea that had very tiny pods containing soft and delicious peas.

We ate lunch alongside a large herd of sheep and goats, for they too had sought the shade of a small cluster of trees in one corner of the olive grove. Both the sheep and the goats were larger than I am accustomed to seeing in the United States, and fortunately for us they were downwind. The Palestinian tending the goatherd, with the help of a small boy, told me he had been living in California until two months ago, when his father died. He had come home to take care of the family and their land.

Activists

There were only a few pruning shears and hatchets for trimming weeds and loosening the soil around the base of trees. So I had more time during my second visit to the hillside above Ein Abus to talk with the Israelis, who go out on these RHR interventions to help Palestinians plough, plant, prune, and pick their olive trees.

Most of those I've met on these RHR trips into the field are secular Israelis, usually over 65 years old. Two of the four RHR interventions I've been on have been led by Rabbi Arik Ascherman, the executive director of Rabbis for Human Rights, who is in his late 30s. And on those occasions, the trips out and back in his car were filled with phone calls to the army, the police, the drivers of cars bringing Israeli

The EAPPI in Jerusalem

The main aim of the work in Jerusalem is to reach out to the Israeli peace groups. Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) accompany Israeli peace organizations at their vigils, demonstrations, house rebuilding events, and olive harvesting days, to name just a few of their activities. Solidarity is provided through attendance at court trials of young Israeli men refusing to serve in the army and/or specifically in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Some of the organizations with whom EAs have worked in conjunction include: Rabbis for Human Rights, the Alternative Information Center (AIC), Women in Black, MACHSOM Watch, Yesh Gvul, Peace Now, the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD), Families Forum - Bereaved Parents, Neve Shalom, and Public Committee against Torture in Israel. EAs also work with Palestinian organisations in Jerusalem such as the Jerusalem Center for Democracy and Human Rights in Abu Dis. Contacts have also been maintained with communities on the eastern outskirts of Jerusalem, including the monitoring of checkpoints.

volunteers to a meeting point, and to Palestinians we were going to meet in Ein Abus or whatever location to which we were going.

Today, our group included Cynthia, who was recently ordained a rabbi in the Reconstructionist stream of Judaism, which has its headquarters in Philadelphia. She is an elderly woman, who has lived in Israel for 30 years, but went back to the United States in order to finish her education and become a rabbi. In our group, however, she deferred to Yoav, a rabbinical student, who stayed in touch with the RHR office and made the necessary calls to the army, the police, our Palestinian contacts, and the drivers of the two other cars that brought volunteers to Ein Abus. Yoav has red, curly hair, which reminded me of the classic paintings of David facing Goliath on the battlefield. He was unshaven, wore a kippa, and was calm as well as energetic. The secular Israelis included Zuzi, a woman in her mid 40s of Hungarian origin, who told me she had become critical of the Israeli Occupation while she was in the Los Angeles area a few years back. She drove Benny from Tel Aviv to both of the interventions on this week in Ein Abus, and she clearly knew the Palestinian farmers she had come to assist.

Netanya, a short, woman over 65 who is originally from South Africa, said she had started going out with RHR groups about

two years ago. She admitted that most of her friends thought she was crazy to get involved like this, and had even told her they didn't want to know when she was in the West Bank, as they would worry about her. "I never talk politics with my friends," she said, "because it won't do any good. Even if they think the Occupation is wrong and that Palestinians are being treated unfairly, they are afraid of terrorists and are willing to let the government do what it thinks is necessary for Israeli security."

Aaron, trim for 71 and a retired tax consultant, said he goes out with RHR, because he is appalled by the terrible actions of the Jewish settlers, like the ones at Yitzhar who had attacked the olive groves about Ein Abus. Like Netanyahu, he is a secular Jew, and is in favour of a two-state solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Sylvia, who needed a ride on a tractor to get up the hillside, is in her mid 70s. With shiny, white hair and a warm smile, she said she spent all her time working for the human rights of Palestinians. When she isn't out in the West Bank with a group from RHR, she is handling schedules for Machsom Watch, the Israeli women's group that sends teams to monitor the military checkpoints in order to document human rights violations (and to try, by their presence, to prevent those violations).

My surprise was that most of these volunteers were neither religious nor political. They were committed to helping Rabbis for Human Rights because they felt it represented the moral teachings of the Jewish tradition, which for them are what being a Jew really means. They vote, and are critical of secular Jews who complain about the government, but don't vote. They are "activists" in the sense of defending human rights, but they are not involved in working for a political party, nor do they take part in peace demonstrations.

Hope

As we ate lunch, sitting in the olive groves, I suddenly realized that this was the highlight of the day. Men and women were sitting together, sharing food, and talking. Israelis and Palestinians were simply chatting and enjoying each other's company.

We ate; we passed food to one another; we talked of family and friends; we laughed at jokes; and we told stories. Eating together, we represented what we all hope for: A life shared on this land, which allows Palestinians to live and enjoy the fruits of their labour and Israelis to work, and retire, and feel safe in their homes. Clearly, achieving such a life together will require the sort of courage and openness among Palestinian and Israeli men and woman that I experienced with these "apolitical activists" in the olive groves above Ein Abus.

Despite the depressing facts of the continuing Occupation, my day in the olive groves above Ein Abus filled me with hope. Palestinians were recovering the use of their land, and with their care the olive trees would again bear fruit. Moreover, Israeli and Palestinian men and women were creating friendships that their children would remember, and rely on, in their struggle to realize a just peace for both peoples.

Rabbi Arik Ascherman, director of Rabbis for Human Rights, speaking with a Palestinian landowner.



Nablus



Children trying to cross the Huwwara checkpoint to get into Nablus face rifles pointed in their direction.

Photo: Matt Robson

Nablus

A View from within the Prison Walls

The author is from Britain and spent three months in Nablus as an Ecumenical Accompanier from November through February 2004-2005.

By David Rowland

The Lonely Planet guide (published 1999) advises tourists to visit Nablus. It speaks of a journey from Jerusalem of an hour and a quarter by shared taxi. But that was then. Now, for most people, the journey takes at least twice as long and arrival cannot be guaranteed.

Today, the trip to Nablus starts with a bus ride, which in parts goes over what is little more than a cart track alongside the "Separation Wall." It continues by shared taxi through at least one checkpoint to just beyond the village of Huwwara. This is the site of another checkpoint where no taxis are allowed through. All travellers face a three- or four-hundred metre walk. The checkpoint

is the place where permits or passports must be produced for the Israeli soldiers manning the barriers. Sometimes it means only a five-minute delay, sometimes a wait of hours, and sometimes no permission is given to enter the city. On some occasions the checkpoint is closed completely. The situation is the same on every road into the city. Permission from the army is needed to enter or leave Nablus. It is not surprising that many people speak of it as a prison.

Ancient City welcomes Visitors

Nablus is a beautiful and ancient city situated in a deep valley between two mountains with apartment blocks creeping up the mountain sides because of lack of space in the valley. It is the

place to see the remains of the walls of ancient Shechem, dating back to between 1650 and 1550 years before Jesus of Nazareth. It is the place where the body of the Biblical Joseph was brought and the site of Jacob's Well, where Jesus spoke with a Samaritan woman. But Joseph's tomb is no longer a tourist sight. The walls and roof have gaping shell holes and are blackened with smoke. An ancient tomb is a victim of the Occupation, as is the ruined shell of the Palestinian Authority building on the road into the city.

But the city is still a marvellous place to be, an exciting vibrant city with perhaps 132,000 people. The streets are thronged with shoppers and the old city is even more fascinating than the Old City in Jerusalem. Foreigners are welcomed and

A pile of debris where once stood a home demolished by the Israeli authorities in Nablus.

Photo: David Rowland



there is a friendliness that reaches out to the stranger.

But there is another side to Nablus. There are the women who meet to tell their stories of husbands, sons, and daughters held in Israeli prisons - husbands, sons, and daughters whom they have not been allowed to visit and from whom they get almost no news. Some of the prisoners have been held for years, others for a few months. There is the child of four longing for peace so that she can see her father again. Almost everyone tells of having been in prison themselves, or of one or more of their family having been imprisoned. Imprisonment is almost a badge of honour.

Again there are the many thousands who live in the four refugee camps around the city. These are no tent camps. They have been there for nearly 60 years and some of those who now live in them are the children and grandchildren of those driven out of their homes in 1948. The camps are areas of crowded buildings, four or five stories high in places. The alleyways between them are only a few feet wide, a sea of mud after rain. In one of the camps lives a man in his 20s who organises the committee that supports students from the camp. He could move out of the camp

into a house in the city. He stays in the camp because to move out would be to deny his history, to deny his dream of returning to the village that housed the homes of his ancestors, that still holds their graves.

Christians part of the wider Christian Community

In the city too is an elderly Greek Catholic priest. In the drawer of the desk in his study is a precious piece of paper, which he brings out to show his visitors. It is the certificate telling of his birth in Tel Aviv, now part of Israel. He speaks movingly of his longing to visit the place of his birth, now in Israel, and of being unable, as a West Bank Palestinian, to go there.

The priest is part of a Christian community of some seven or eight hundred, divided into four denominations - Latin (Roman Catholic), Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Episcopalian (Anglican). Though they are divided and though the separate buildings of each group stand as a witness to disunity, the Christians are in many ways united. They have all agreed to celebrate Christmas on the Western date, December 25th, and Easter on the Eastern Orthodox dating - some six weeks after the Western Easter in 2005. The young

people from all the different churches share in joint activities both for children and for those in their teens and early 20s. They regard themselves together as the Christian community, and they also regard themselves as Palestinians, part of the wider community of the West Bank. When the Christian Scout Group paraded through the streets on Christmas Eve, accompanied by Father Christmas (Baba Noel) and his helpers giving out sweets to passers-by, a huge picture of the late Palestinian president Yasser Arafat was carried at the head of the procession.

In the city there is a member of the Greek Orthodox Church who lives in a beautifully furnished and decorated flat. He tells that he has not paid his rent for two years. Before 2002, he ran a prosperous business in Ramallah some 20 miles away and still within the Occupied Palestinian Territories. He trained heavy goods vehicle drivers. Now he is not allowed to leave the city to go to Ramallah and his business has collapsed. His sole income is a pittance from some three nights a week spent as a night watchman. Fortunately his landlord understands the situation and he is not facing eviction. Closed banks stand as a witness to the effect of the last two years on the commercial life of Nablus.

Occupation hits Nablus hard

Members of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel in Nablus have stayed in a flat owned by the Anglican Church on the edge of the old city. From this flat, gunfire can be heard almost every night. A hundred yards away from the apartment there is a great pile of rubble where once a house stood - a fine house providing a home for many people in its four stories. The Israeli army came in one night in January, their stated aim being to find and arrest a young man who belonged to one of the armed groups opposing the Occupation. He had not lived in or visited the house for two years, but his father and sister still lived there. That was enough reason for the house to be destroyed. The force of the explosion resulted in six or seven other houses being totally uninhabitable. It was amazing that no-one was killed in any of these houses as their inhabitants were not permitted

to leave until the military operation was over.

Nablus, and particularly the refugee camp at Balata, is a place from which suicide bombers have come. There can be no justification for this, but there also ought to be an honest examination at the root causes for this phenomenon that goes beyond the superficial. There is an enormous amount of anger in this place; anger at killings; anger at the loss of business; anger at the destruction of houses; anger at life lived out in refugee camps. And yet it is a city in which there is a longing for peace, a longing for freedom. A city in which most people recognise that violence can never bring peace and justice. Ecumenical Accompaniers have stayed in the city as a sign of hope, as a sign that the world has not forgotten the people who live there. Pray for them, pray for the city, pray for peace, and pray for justice for Palestinian and Israeli alike.



An Israeli army tank enforcing the Occupation in Nablus.

Photo: John Lynes

The EAPPI in Nablus

The EAPPI began working in Nablus in the fall of 2004. Due to the extreme isolation the city has suffered, the main role of EAs there has been one of solidarity and documentation. EAs developed a network with the student union in the Askar Refugee Camp and began bi-weekly classes in its youth centre, using the model of English classes as a method for addressing the issues of the Occupation. They have also done visits to distressed families, documented their stories, and documented demolished homes in the Old City. In the two isolated villages around the Nablus area - Asira ash Shamalia and Beit Furik, EAs helped with documenting human rights abuses and with the olive harvest. Showing solidarity with the local Christian community was also an important task and was done through attending women's group (interdenominational) as well as children's catechism class and services at all the churches. In addition, institutional connections have been developed with the governor's office, OCHA, and UNWRA. Nablus is located in the northern West Bank, 63 kilometres north of Jerusalem.

EAPPI a Welcome Addition in Ramallah and Palestine

By Rima Tarazi

For several decades, the World Council of Churches has been one of the staunch advocates of justice, peace, and human rights in Palestine. In its struggle to adhere to the tenets of Christianity by being in solidarity with the oppressed and dispossessed and by speaking out against injustice, the WCC had to withstand tremendous pressures from forces which strove to manipulate religion for political purposes.

For us Palestinians, the voice of the WCC was of great value, as our attempts to be heard and heeded were constantly thwarted and our pleas clamouring for justice were drowned out by a network of misinformation and vested interests. International law and United Nations resolutions were flouted and the churches became the last straw to hold on to, tenaciously knowing that they had the power, the stature, and the credibility before their masses. We strongly believe that the role of the churches in exposing the truth will effect a change, especially where the Palestinian cause is concerned, since religion has been used, for too long, as a tool for the disenfranchisement of our people.

The EAPPI came into being in the aftermath of a long period of complacency

on the part of the international community, including friends and solidarity groups, some of whom had been watching silently, others incredulously, as the peace process was turning into a slow and planned process of dispossession. Not until the Intifada broke out and the horrors of the invasion of civilian towns with F-16s and armoured tanks did the world wake up. The EAPPI came at an opportune moment to witness and report objectively in the compassionate spirit of Christianity.

Early Encounters

My first encounter with members of the EAPPI came around Christmas of 2003 during the Human Rights March which gathered over 100 women from mostly European countries under the banner of "Human Rights and Ending the Occupation." Those brave women trudged many a thorny path and walked with us several Ways of the Cross in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Tulkarem, Jenin, Hebron, and Bethlehem. Unfortunately, Nablus and Gaza were inaccessible at the time. They met Palestinians of all walks of life at the sites they visited and in group meetings. They heard, listened, and shared. The EAPPI group continued with an extensive programme of meetings with as many women's and other groups as possible. They were very warmly welcomed

by the community and appreciated for their work and their presence.

With the passage of time, we would meet the various groups coming from different parts of the world that were ready to take risks and were content to live a simple communal life in order to be of service to their sisters and brothers in humanity.

To us Palestinians, the witness of these groups came as a breath of fresh air amidst the oppressive environment imposed upon us. It responded to our urgent need to be heard and seen, as we continued to be subjected to grave violations of human rights, and as facts were being blatantly established on the ground with little or no response from those who hold the reins of power in this world. We remained confident that, when the truth is exposed, the conscience of the world will stir and justice will eventually prevail. We hope that countries from where these people come will heed their witness and that the respective governments will be influenced.

While we realize that it takes much more than a few lone courageous voices to restore our rights and, for that matter, to effect a change in the whole world, we remain hopeful that those voices will, one day, form a powerful, harmonious chorus which will eventually drown out the sound of lethal weapons that are being used to

dominate and to subjugate and are threatening the whole universe with destruction.

True Image of Christianity

On another level, the presence of the WCC in Palestine through the EAPPI is of prime importance to counteract the image that Christianity is in collusion with injustice and domination. It must be always brought to the attention of the whole world that Palestine is the cradle of Christianity and that He who gave His life for us did not do so for an exclusive people or race. In that spirit, Palestinians lived for centuries. It was not until religion was used as a tool to dispossess our people since the beginning of the 20th century that Christianity started to become suspect amongst our people.

The presence of the EAPPI in Ramallah is very valuable. Ramallah is slowly becoming the hub of Palestine. The town itself is like an oasis surrounded by walls, checkpoints, and villages striving to maintain their existence and livelihood. This offers the EAPPI participants the opportunity to get a deep understanding of the various aspects of Palestinian life, including the cultural life, which is a true reflection of the identity and dreams of a people. It also allows them to be in contact with political and community

leaders which will deepen their understanding of the issues involved. On the other hand, their witness in the surrounding villages will be greatly valued because those villages are the scenes of some of the gravest violations of human rights. The settlements and the Wall are being planted vehemently everywhere, regardless of international law, the Hague recommendations, and the courageous protests of the villagers and their international supporters.

On another level, the active presence of all the Palestinian Christian churches in Ramallah is bound to enhance the understanding of the EAPPI groups towards the true nature of Christianity in Palestine. They will learn that the communities of believers and their pastors adhere to the essence of their faith, a faith of love, tolerance, compassion, and humility, while priding themselves on their national identity with a willingness to offer tremendous sacrifices to keep it alive. They will learn that the role of the local Christian churches is in serving the people regardless of their faith and in being honest advocates for the cause of justice and human rights

My encounters with several members of the groups have always been special. It was always heart warming to feel that they were listening closely to our concerns



Rima Tarazi is the President of the Administrative Board of the General Union of Palestinian Women and a member of the EAPPI's Local Reference Group. She was recently asked to share her thoughts on the role of the EAPPI in Ramallah in particular as well as Palestine in general.

with deep understanding. Their attitude contrasts with the attitudes of most visiting politicians who, in their keenness to appear impartial, are constantly trying to keep a false balance between the occupier and the occupied and between a people resisting occupation and a formidable army crushing those who dare protest its aggression. Little do those politicians realize that impartiality does not imply facing human rights violations and infractions of international law with neutrality and inaction. That is why those special people of the EAPPI have gained our respect and confidence. They want to listen and they are not afraid to speak out.

A few Concerns

I feel that it is important at this point to share with our friends at the WCC and the EAPPI a few of our concerns over a number of basic issues which are hindering the achievement of peace in our region.

One of our major concerns is that, under the guise of negotiations and the peace process, international law and conventions are being allowed to erode in Palestine. The silence of the world vis-à-vis war crimes and flagrant violations of international law and human rights committed by a state recognized within the community of nations poses a serious threat to world peace. Masses of human beings all over the globe are becoming increasingly vociferous in expressing their anger and frustration at the policies of double standards adopted by powerful states which are causing great misery in several parts of the world. It must always be remembered that injustice is one of the most common factors leading to wars and conflicts. If international law is abided by in Palestine, it will be to the benefit of all of humanity. International law and U.N. resolutions must constitute the framework for resolving the conflict. If the world continues to bypass these

resolutions by acquiescing to facts on the ground imposed by aggression, or to linger in implementing them, waiting for the "good will" of Israel, then peace will remain an unattainable dream.

Another major concern is the systematic attempt to detract from the basic issues of the Occupation and the denial of Palestinian national rights by addressing the lesser and hardly pertinent issues of reform and democratization, which incidentally are internal Palestinian concerns and have been on the agenda of the Palestinian civil society for a long time notwithstanding outside intervention.

A third concern, amongst many others, lies in the use of language. Language is a potent means of relaying information. It has the power to form perceptions and change attitudes. If it is erroneously used, it can be a dangerous, manipulative, and misleading tool. People will inadvertently borrow the language that is disseminated in the media without giving a thought to its implications. Phrases like "illegal settlements," implying that other settlements are legal, or "security fence," which ploughs through cultivated fields, impoverishing thousands and incarcerating them within the confines of a monstrous Wall, are only but a few examples.

A final message from the heart to our friends at the WCC and the EAPPI: We thank you and wish you all the best in all your endeavours. May the message of peace and love which emanated from this small land reach the hearts of all those who sit on the lonely seats of power, heedless of the pains and agony of humanity. May our joint efforts bear fruit so that this beleaguered land to which you have come with love and faith may one day be restored to its rightful place amongst the nations, and become the Blessed Holy Land of our dreams.

A Call for Justice and Peace from Ramallah-The Hill of God

By Tor S. Rafoss

Photos: Tor Steinar Rafoss

"These are very hard times in Palestine. We have been working for a long time to end occupation, oppression, and destruction without any political gains. Fear and loss surround us, and many forces are at work making us feel isolated, marginalized, and disempowered. At best the work ahead seems overwhelming. Death and loss rearrange our priorities, and teach us how much we need each other."

— Jean Zaru, Theologian and Clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting

Ramallah was once a predominantly Christian city. However, due to the problems connected to the Occupation - restrictions on movement, rumours of war, economic difficulties, unemployment, and insecurity - most of the Christians in Ramallah emigrated to the United States, Australia, Canada, Europe, etc. Only about 25 percent of the Christians have remained.



Archimandrite Meletios Bassal of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ramallah.

I came to Ramallah for the first time in April 2005. The town has beautiful churches, both old and new. The Greek Orthodox Church is the oldest and most traditional. Archimandrite Meletios Bassal is very well acquainted with the EAPPI and he and his staff met me with enthusiasm. I am told that today this church numbers about 8,000 members of the approximately 12,000 Christians in Ramallah. Twenty years ago the total number of Christians was close to 40,000. When I asked Bassal what the rest of the Christian world could do to help alleviate the situation of the diminishing Christian population in the Holy Land, his answer was direct: "Christians and churches all over the world should pray for the Christians and churches in Palestine."



Jean Zaru, Clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting.

Descendants of the first Christian Community

I have been told by people in Ramallah that they are the descendants of the first Disciples of Christ. Their ancestors were members of the first Christian church, which was in Jerusalem.

On my very first day among the welcoming people of Ramallah, I was brought to the Latin (Roman Catholic) Church to see beautiful paintings and hear the story from the Bible about when Jesus, 12 years old, was in Jerusalem with his parents for Passover. When his parents started moving north for the return to Nazareth, he remained behind. After about one day of travelling, Mary and Joseph, realizing

The author is from Norway and spent three months in Ramallah as an Ecumenical Accompanier from April through July 2005. He wrote this account about the Christian community in the city.

he wasn't with the group, started looking for him, but they couldn't find him among the others. According to tradition, when they were in the area of Ramallah and Al Bireh they decided to go back to Jerusalem, about 16 kilometres away, in order to look for him. They found him among the scholars in the temple (Luke 2:41-50).

More than 200 people were present for Mass on this first Sunday of June. Father Ibrahim Hzashin leads a congregation with many working groups for scouts, youth, the support of the poor, social work, etc. While there, one feels included in the congregation and surrounded by love. I met with a group of young men who are students and active members of the church. They involved me in their meetings and activities, which include going to sister churches in neighbouring villages. Their message is very clear: "We need people from abroad to stay with us, to empower us, and to learn from living with us in order to tell the true story about the situation of the people of Palestine."

The Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church is in the centre of a beautiful compound, which includes a school, convent, and the church. On a Monday evening in June, I met Father Khalil Hayek, Sister Helena, and some other church members. The church has a wide range of activities and runs programs to assist people in need along with other churches.

The churches also run schools and work closely with their teachers in developing good quality education as well as building strong relationships among and with the students. As an educator, I developed a close relationship with the



Ecumenical Accompanier Paul Khantsi, a pastor from the Salvation Army; Cynthia Perdue Mikhail, and Jad Mikhail (l. to r.), standing in front of the Baptist Church in Ramallah.

About Ramallah and Al Bireh

The known origins of Ramallah date to the 16th century when it was settled by the Christian tribe Rashid Haddad, originally from Karak in present-day Jordan. For quite some time, the village remained an agricultural settlement. Today, Ramallah and Al Bireh have a combined population of more than 70,000 inhabitants. The name Ramallah literally means "hill of God" in Arabic. The origins of Al Bireh go back to the Canaanite city of Beroth. The district of Ramallah encompasses more than 200,000 inhabitants. Since the arrival of the Palestinian Authority, the district has acquired the status of the administrative, cultural, and political capital of Palestine.

Before the Israeli Occupation of 1967, Ramallah was known as a summer resort due to its temperate climate and fresh air, drawing vacationers from all parts of Palestine. Ramallah has experienced rapid development since the end of the 19th century. In 1902 it was the administrative centre of the region and in 1910 it was given a municipal status. After the Nakba of 1948 and the influx of refugees, both towns witnessed significant urban development.

While both Ramallah and Al Bireh have their distinct municipal councils and mayors, it is difficult to differentiate one from the other. Ramallah is also widely known as a town with many schools, higher education centres, a large number of intellectuals, members of the international community, missionaries, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

people of the Evangelical Lutheran School of Hope, including Principal Michael Abu-Ghazale, Assistant Principal Suhailah Mrabé, and staff. I participated in a very interesting workshop with Dr. Charlie D. Haddad whereby the Ecumenical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) schools assessment report was discussed. I have also met with Principal Naela H. Rabah at the beautiful Greek Catholic School of Our Lady of the Annunciation. Friends Boys School in Ramallah is a centre for Friends (Quaker) service in education since 1901. Principal Mahmoud Amra gave me a warm welcome and introduced me to all of the school's activities.

Compared to some of the other churches in the city, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Hope looks quite modern. Reverend Ramez Ansara has the responsibility of working with all sorts of activities, such as Sunday school and services, groups for Bible studies, youth groups, women's groups, scouts, involvement in assistance to the poor and elderly, a summer camp with about 100 participants, etc. The congregation in general has expressed pleasure at the presence of Ecumenical Accompaniers.

The Ramallah Baptist Church was founded 50 years ago after some years of missionary work by Cynthia Perdue Mikhail. I have learned the history of the Church and attended their meeting on the third Sunday in May. It was a fulfilling experience to participate in the prayer and represent international Christianity. I promised to go to Baptist churches in my area in Norway and tell about what I have seen and learned. Close to the Baptist Church is Qaddura Refugee Camp. It was here that Cynthia

Perdue came from West Virginia to answer the call to help refugees after the ensuing wars in 1948 following the creation of the state of Israel, an event known to Palestinians as the Nakba (catastrophe).

The Quakers have been in Ramallah for 150 years. Here they run schools, youth training programmes, summer camps, health services, and the Friends Meeting House. In a Friends Meeting on my first Sunday in Ramallah, I met Jean Zaru, who, in addition to her role as the presiding clerk of the Ramallah Friends Meeting in Palestine, is also a member of the EAPPI Local Reference Group and a woman known all over the world for her leadership and inspiration to many. Moreover, she is an unfailing source of information as well as an avid supporter of the EAPPI presence in Ramallah.

"I have lived all my life in Ramallah, but it was never as difficult as it is today," Zaru says. "While Israeli troops are amassing in the Occupied Territories and the siege is tightening, we are increasingly subjected to a policy of persistent shelling, random shootings, political assassinations, house curfews, impoverishment, abductions, imprisonment, house demolitions, the illegal confiscation of our land and water resources, and the destruction of our remaining crops and trees."

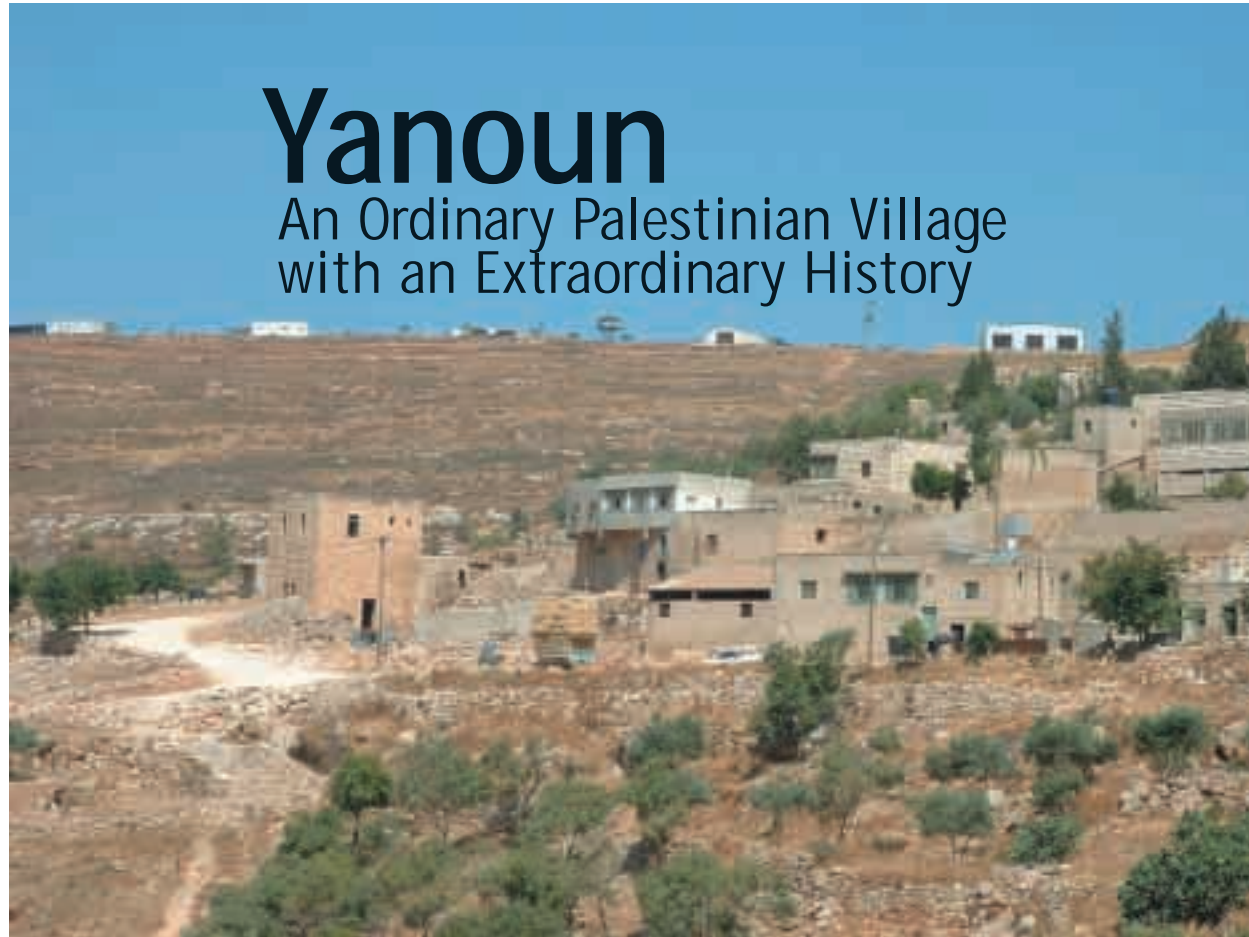
It seems quite clear that if Christians around the world want living churches in Palestine in the future, they have to mobilize immediately against the Occupation and the political and cultural oppression - and give heavy support to the churches and the Christians in the Holy Land.

The EAPPI in Ramallah

The EAPPI originally partnered with the International Christian Committee's Rehabilitation Center at the Al-Amari Refugee Camp. EAs who worked in this placement were involved in English language classes and offering other teachable skills. An important partnership has also been formed with the General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) in order to strengthen their advocacy efforts, particularly abroad. Additionally, the programme maintains strong partnerships with the Greek Orthodox, Latin (Roman Catholic), Melkite (Greek Catholic), Quaker, and Lutheran Church communities in Ramallah. This includes worshipping together with the communities as well as working with the women and youth social and educational programs. Through these contacts, the EAs have provided not only accompaniment presence, but strengthened relationships between their respective home congregations and the Ramallah Christian communities, an important step towards raising awareness of the existence and plight of the Palestinian Christian communities. Ramallah is located 16 kilometres north of Jerusalem.

Yanoun

An Ordinary Palestinian Village with an Extraordinary History



By Gaie Delap
with Mario Hendricks and Paul Khantsi
Photo: Matt Robson

We are driving to Yanoun in the searing midday heat, through olive groves and ripening corn, past herds of sheep and goats and their shepherds. Ghassan, our taxi driver, is a mine of information. We have been arguing over a vexing question, one that ranks with the endless speculation about a Scotsman's underwear. Ghassan surely is the one to settle the matter. Is there really a muezzin calling the faithful to prayer five times a day from each mosque, or is it a recording? Had we placed bets on the matter, we could not have waited more eagerly for the answer. "It's both" our implacable driver answers. We wait for him to continue with this vital information. "In a small place like Lower Yanoun, it is a real person, (so I was right), but in a large town like Aqraba, one man will call, and this will be transmitted by linked megaphones to all the mosques in the town" (so my fellow passenger was right). If only all disputes could end so satisfactorily and harmoniously.

Part of the village of Yanoun can be seen in the foreground and the outpost of the Itamar settlement looms on the hilltops in the background.

The dispute between Israelis and Palestinians over this land is always accompanied by acrimony rather than harmony, and people like those who inhabit Yanoun usually bear the brunt of the consequences. Yanoun, a tiny village in the northern West Bank near Nablus with a population of approximately 100 people, struggles to survive in the face of the violent,

expansionist designs of the nearby Israeli settlement of Itamar. The ideologically-driven settlers of Itamar, many of whom are members of the outlawed, racist party Kach, have tried to wipe Yanoun off the map. Their actions have included beatings, land confiscations, the killing and stealing of sheep, the vandalising of property, and even the murder of a man. And through it all, the people of Yanoun continue to try to live their peaceful, pastoral existence.

Of Old and New Mosques

Having settled the mosque issue, there is the exciting news that a new mosque is to be built in Upper Yanoun to discuss. The site has been chosen, according to Rashid, the mayor and head of the Village

The authors served as Ecumenical Accompaniers in Yanoun from April through July 2005. Gaie Delap is an Irish national residing in Britain and Mario Hendricks and Paul Khantsi are both from South Africa.



Sheep herding, a typical scene from Yanoun.

Photo: Matt Robson

Council. It will nestle in the golden sandstone rocks opposite the small white United Nations blockhouse, which once housed the generator (the original of which was burned by settlers in April 2002). Behind it, the cliff rises to the cluster of houses that make up the upper part of the village, about twelve in number, housing about 60 of Yanoun's inhabitants. To reach them, you have to climb the steep road, negotiating with the insistent yellow dog, as you go. Rashid's dog is part cur, part pet, and utterly useless as a guard dog, barking indiscriminately at anything, day or night. Paul, my colleague with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), has taken photos of the proposed site of the mosque for Rashid, who will set the wheels in motion for the exciting new development. The nearest mosque is in Lower Yanoun and has an Imam to go with it.

When the wind is in the right direction, the call to prayer can be clearly heard as far away as the town of Aqraba (an hour's walk, 20 minutes by donkey, or five minutes by car). Prayer here is an integral part of life, a very matter-of-fact devotion. At supper in the village recently, eating al fresco, our host took a plastic grain sack, carefully weighted the four corners down with rocks, and began, without any degree of self-consciousness, to pray.

William Dalrymple, writing of his travels tracing the footsteps of John Moschos, c. 578 A.D., observes: "In the 6th century, the Muslims appear to have derived their techniques of worship from existing Christian practice. Islam and the Eastern Christians have retained the early



The main reason why the existence of Yanoun is under threat: Armed settlers walking the hills around the village.

Photo: Marianne Solheim

Christian convention; it is the Western Christians who have broken with sacred tradition" (from *The Holy Mountain*, p. 105). Dalrymple writes about witnessing the last beleaguered monks at prayer in Anatolia, Eastern Turkey, lowering their heads to the ground, but unlike Muslims, crossing and re-crossing themselves as they prostrate themselves.

Ashraf, a student of Arabic literature at nearby Nablus University, has shown me the floor mosaics in the mosque in Lower Yanoun. Two years ago an Israeli shell ripped into his student lodgings in Nablus as he was sleeping. He was wounded by shrapnel and spent some time in hospital. Some still remains in his hand, though he doesn't talk about it. Shocking stories like this are all the more shocking for being commonplace. His tutors at the university want to see pictures of the mosque's floor mosaics in order to date them. They are well preserved and very beautiful, depicting stylised olive and date trees, plants, and flowers in carefully worked patterns of delicate tessera. I would estimate that they are truly ancient, which is a relative word in this area.

Not far from the site of this small mosque lies the tomb of Noun, the father of Joshua. Old Testament lore and evidence are commonplace here. From this glorious hilltop, the valley of the Jordan River spreads out to the south, and beyond, in the blue heat haze, lie the mountains of Jordan itself. It is called Naba Noun, the hill of Noun. Before I depart from this place, I plan to awake at 4 a.m. and watch the sun rise in the east. At 4:30 a.m., I will probably hear the call to prayer carried on the wind. When Arne, a previous Ecumenical Accompanier (EA)

in Yanoun, first showed us this place, a shepherd and his small boy were shearing sheep under an ancient oak tree. They made us welcome and brewed up a glass of the ubiquitous sweet black shay (tea). The warm welcome shown to a traveller or stranger is a tradition that has survived intact in Palestine. We will surely go home several pounds heavier than we came.

A New Road

In late April the new, raw team of EAs arrived in Yanoun: two South Africans, Paul Khantsi, a Major in the Salvation Army, and Mario Hendricks, an Anglican priest, and me, Gaie Delap, an Irish atheist though still spiritual. Directly after we had arrived, a posse of smart cars drew up at the "International House." One contained the mayors of Aqraba and Yanoun, another two road building contractors. They had come to discuss plans for a new paved road, from here to Aqraba. At present the route is a stony track, which must be difficult to use in winter. A new road will be of huge benefit to the village. The link with the town is vital for education, health, work, and welfare. A school bus takes students to and from the secondary school in Aqraba.

The road passes through a small gorge on the outskirts of Lower Yanoun, where a fall of creamy white rocks has partially blocked it. When I arrived six weeks ago a flock of 50 jewel-like birds - green and golden bee-eaters - were resident in the caves and cracks of this gorge.

On May 31st, a Palestinian man from the town came with his bulldozer to clear the road. Armed settlers came and told

The EAPPI in Yanoun

The tiny community of Yanoun has been relying on international presence since the autumn of 2002 in order to maintain its very existence in the face of settler harassment, violence, and destruction to property such as power generators and water wells. The EAPPI presence in Yanoun first commenced, on an intermittent basis, in June 2003. Since September 2003, Ecumenical Accompaniers have maintained a consistent presence in Yanoun, providing specific accompaniment. They accompany farmers to their fields on the hills surrounding the community to provide protection from settlers who are trying to take over the land of the village. These settlers, whose outposts surround the village on all sides, used to harass villagers daily. The international presence is meant to act as a deterrent to the violence of the settlers. Yanoun is located in the northern West Bank, about 40 kilometres northeast of Jerusalem. It is 12 kilometres southeast of Nablus.

him to leave immediately. He was understandably frightened. Rashid called us at the "International House" and Paul went down to support him. There will be no action taken against the settlers by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) or the Security Police. We will make a note in the incident book and be reminded yet again of the daily hardships endured by the community here under the illegal Israeli Occupation.

Violence from Settlers leads to International Presence

The harassment from the settlers began in 1995 and got worse and worse. They came with dogs and guns; even the children were armed. Men in the village were beaten in front of their families. In October 2002, all but two families of this close-knit farming community were forced to leave their homes. Two brothers, elders of the village, Abu Hani and Abu Maher, chose to remain. During the following month the settlers killed one man. Abu Najah, now in his 90s, was so badly beaten that he lost his sight and hearing. Abel Latif, the previous mayor, was also badly beaten and has since suffered a serious stroke. Most of the traumatised villagers went to Aqraba, to family and friends. Some families came back after a week, others still have not returned. Once there were 300 residents in Yanoun; now there are 100.

Following these events a house was given for the use of members of the international community who pledged to keep a continuous presence in Yanoun. It was felt that foreigners in residence would provide some protection and support for the village. One villager remarked, "If the internationals leave in the morning, I will leave in the afternoon." The EAPPI team of three is supported regularly by peace activists from all over the world, many of whom return again and again, such is the warmth of the welcome and the beauty of this place.

Quiet Resistance

As I write this, Rashid the mayor is away on his tractor to reclaim his olive groves in the Jordan Valley. He left at daybreak with his cousin, also a farmer. Last Friday he was prevented from working his land by a new earth mound, dug by the settlers, across the road. This signals yet another land grab. Rashid was held at the police station for six hours. Neither the police nor the army did anything to protect his rights. The settlers have been asked to remove the road block, but the outcome is uncertain.

To date, 90% of the land has been stolen by the settlers. Rashid and his brother recall the large herds of sheep, cows, and goats that their father kept. Now the land

can barely sustain five small herds. Harvesting the olive trees left to them is difficult too. They are prevented from reaching the trees to plough, prune, and tend them. At harvest time, they are only given a permit to pick olives for one day. At that time it is usual for international workers and peace activists to support the villagers and help with the harvest. Rashid says simply, "We can live in peace if they let us have our land."

Both the new road and the proposed mosque are significant and hopeful events in the narrative of this village. They signal an investment in the future, however hard life has become. Simply staying here, getting on with daily life, opposes the "quiet transfer" with a quiet but equally determined nonviolent resistance. The owners of the large house at the entrance to the village will be returning soon. Their vines, pomegranates, and almonds are ripening in readiness. Hopefully others will follow.

These words from a poem by Yehuda Amichai are brought to mind:

Wildpeace
Let it come
Like wildflowers,
Suddenly, because the field
Must have it: wildpeace

Eva Rye Rasmussen
examining a young patient
in the village of Nuba near
Hebron.



The author is from Denmark and spent five months in Jerusalem as an Ecumenical Accompanier from February through July 2005.

Palestinian Pursuit of Healthcare

Access to healthcare is at the base of any modern society. But the foundation of the Palestinian healthcare system, operating under the Israeli Occupation, has cracks - severe cracks. Since the inception of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, medical students from Denmark have been trying to play some role in helping to bridge the gaps while, at the same time, experiencing for themselves the healthcare foundation upon which Palestinians must live.

By Gregers Skibsted
Photos: Gregers Skibsted

The speakers of the local mosque are crackling. This time, though, the message is not a religious one. Doctors from the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS) are in Nuba, a Palestinian town northwest of Hebron, and the people need to know that primary healthcare is readily available - for today. At least temporarily, everyone who needs the care of a doctor will be able to see one.

Healthcare in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is something the local people do not necessarily enjoy in their everyday lives. Many remote villages do not have a resident doctor. Healthcare is therefore being provided by nine clinics on wheels - mobile health clinics - to some of these villages.

Many of the people living in Palestine have problems getting to the doctors in the bigger cities or they cannot afford the visits, therefore primary healthcare is provided where they live. Stine Madsen-Østerbye, a medical student from Denmark, is surprised by the response of the patients. "They do not anticipate being able to see a doctor where they live," Madsen-Østerbye says. "Seeing a doctor is not a part of what they would naturally expect."

Madsen-Østerbye, Rie Seifert, and Eva Rye Rasmussen are all medical students from Denmark sent by DanChurchAid to take part in the EAPPI. They all go out in the mobile clinic vans packed with doctors, nurses, and medicine with the aim of providing primary healthcare to the Palestinian population which can't get to it.

"If we do not do it, nobody else will," explains Dr. Mohammed Iskafi, who is the director of the Emergency Programme of the PMRS. Part of his job is coordinating the Danish efforts. Danish medical students have been part of the EAPPI since its inception in August 2002, and in fact they were the basis of the Pilot Programme, which began six months earlier.

Rasmussen has mainly been working in the area around Hebron in all sorts of locales. "We have set up clinics in living rooms in private homes, using the dining

table as the examining table," Rasmussen recalls. "Mosques are also used in various towns. One time we were in a shed where the size of the room was two by three meters."

The price for a doctor's appointment is very cheap. A consultation is three Israeli shekels (about .70 USD) and medication is also three shekels, but paying for the services is not something every household can afford. "We do not take money from those who do not have it, so some get it for free," explains Dr. Iskafi.

Seifert and Madsen-Østerbye have been working in the villages surrounding the northern West Bank town of Salfit (approximately 35 kilometres north of Jerusalem near Nablus). They sometimes spend hours getting to the towns. "The greatest problem is mobility. The patients would have to spend hours on very run-down roads to see a doctor and then they are not even sure to get through the checkpoint," says Seifert. "The Israeli settlements and the consequent roadblocks surrounding them make life very difficult for Palestinians. I work in the Salfit area, which is affected by the Ariel settlement. We drive up to two hours to get to a village which used to take 15 minutes to get to," Madsen-Østerbye adds.

Recent figures released by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OCHA) show that the blockade situation is actually improving. The West Bank closure system now comprises some 605 physical barriers placed by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) on roads in order to control and restrict Palestinian vehicular traffic, a practice which the Israeli government states is designed to protect Israeli citizens from

Palestinian attacks. A year ago the total of earth mounds, trenches, roadblocks, and checkpoints totalled 710.

"These days, the Israelis are trying to show that they are good. The little picture is changing but the big picture remains the same," says Dr. Iskafi. In his mind the system is not a matter of security. "The sole purpose is a matter of punishment."

Either way, it is a system that has great consequences for the health situation. "People are sick for a long time here. Clinics are only in the various places every third week," says Rasmussen. "The access to doctors is difficult so the disease has evolved progressively before the patients see a doctor," adds Madsen-Østerbye.

Working in Palestine breeds frustrations when the basis of the work is do what can be done with what is available. "A lot of the drugs which are available in the mobile clinics are general drugs. We do not always have the specific drug the patient needs, so we give them what we have. It is not optimal from a medical point of view," Rasmussen says, shaking her head.

But just getting medicine to supply the clinics in general is a struggle as Dr. Iskafi explains: "We buy the medicine in Palestine. We tried to get it from abroad, but because of the struggle of getting it through the Israeli Custom Service, 40% of the medicine had expired when we got it."

While getting medicine to the patients is one problem, another is working within the Palestinian culture. The doctors have had to implement a system to get the Palestinian people to act in accordance with the doctors' orders, according to

Rasmussen. "Tests are necessary to give the correct treatment, but most of them have to be conducted in the bigger towns," she explains. "We instruct the patient to go and have the tests done. If they do not come back with test results, we cannot prescribe them medicine - otherwise they would just take the medication and hope for the best. Medicine is thought to hold some miracle cure."

But getting the patient to have the tests done is not the only problem. "The Palestinian healthcare system is crippled," Seifert says. "We try to improve the conditions, but their hospital system is lacking, so a lot of the tests we would like to do on the patients we cannot do."

The Danish medical students accompany the medical teams operating the mobile clinics in their work. Taking blood pressure, listening to heartbeats, and examining ears are all examples of their everyday work in the mobile clinics. Sometimes they examine school children for eyesight problems and check up on their dental condition. If they find cases, the children are sent home with a note saying that their child needs go to one of the permanent clinics and get glasses or see a dentist.

"They sometimes don't have a lot to do but their presence is important. The teams operating the mobile clinics feel that someone is experiencing their reality and reporting on it," explains Dr. Iskafi. "We see a lot of stress on people. The Palestinians work hard and have many children; this impacts greatly on their health," Rasmussen explains. She sees people suffering from arthritis at the age of 45, a condition which doesn't generally arise in people in Denmark until the age

of 60. All this leads to a lower life expectancy rate.

During recent years, the Danish medical students have aimed their work at different problems as the situation on the ground has changed. "The situation is different now. When Danish medical students started working in the Occupied Territories three years ago, their main task was accompanying the ambulances to make sure they got to the injured. The wounded and sick needed medical care regardless of Israeli closures, checkpoints, and incursions," says Rasmussen.

The use of mobile clinics initially started in the late '70s with one single van going into some of the refugee camps with locally-sponsored medicine. The mobile clinics which are in place now started after the summer of 2000 when the second Palestinian uprising, the Intifada, broke out. They are dependant on funds coming out of Europe, making the project vulnerable. Because funds dry out or sponsors aim their donations at other projects, the mobile clinics have been operating on a somewhat sporadic basis. Even though the funds for the current nine clinics are only in place until September of 2005, Dr. Iskafi is confident that new funds will be available.

The optimism Dr. Iskafi demonstrates is the same one Seifert encounters every day in her work with Palestinian patients. "The Palestinians have a great strength for resistance," she says, "but as the Israeli authorities close more and more of the West Bank with settlements and bypass-roads, it gets harder. A society cannot function if it is reduced to little enclaves." This last statement can be applied to the healthcare system in particular and the Palestinian society in general.



Dr. Mohammed Iskafi, director of the Emergency Programme of the Palestinian Medical Relief Society.

EAPPI Medical Accompaniment

The EAPPI has maintained a partnership with the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS), formerly known as the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC), which is based in the West Bank city of Ramallah, since the inception of the programme. This has allowed the inclusion of medical students from Denmark who have provided accompaniment to medical personnel and patients in PMRS mobile health clinics and patient transports in Ramallah, Jenin, Tulkarem, and Gaza, to name a few of the communities. Besides the partnership with PMRS, Augusta Victoria Hospital in East Jerusalem continued to host EA medical students as well.

The World Council of Churches

(WCC) is the broadest and most inclusive among the many organized expressions of the modern ecumenical movement, a movement whose goal is Christian unity.

The WCC brings together more than 340 churches, denominations, and church fellowships in over 100 countries and territories throughout the world, representing some 400 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of denominations from such historic traditions of the Protestant Reformation as Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, and Reformed, as well as many united and independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

The Roman Catholic Church is a full member of many national ecumenical and several regional ecumenical organisations and has a regular working relationship with the WCC.

The Churches Commission on International Affairs (CCIA)

comprises 30 people nominated by churches and regional ecumenical organisations to advise the WCC in international affairs. The staff of the WCC International Affairs, Peace and Human Security team - experienced professionals from around the world - engages with and supports churches and ecumenical bodies on these urgent priorities:

- peace-making and peaceful resolution of conflicts
- militarism, disarmament, and arms control
- human security and the root causes of terrorism
- human rights, religious liberty, and intolerance
- impunity, justice, and reconciliation
- international law and global governance

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI)

supports Palestinians and Israelis working for peace by monitoring and reporting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, offering protection by accompanying local communities in daily activities, and by advocating with churches for a peaceful end to the Occupation. The programme, which began in 2002, is coordinated by the World Council of Churches (WCC) within the Churches Commission on International Affairs (CCIA).