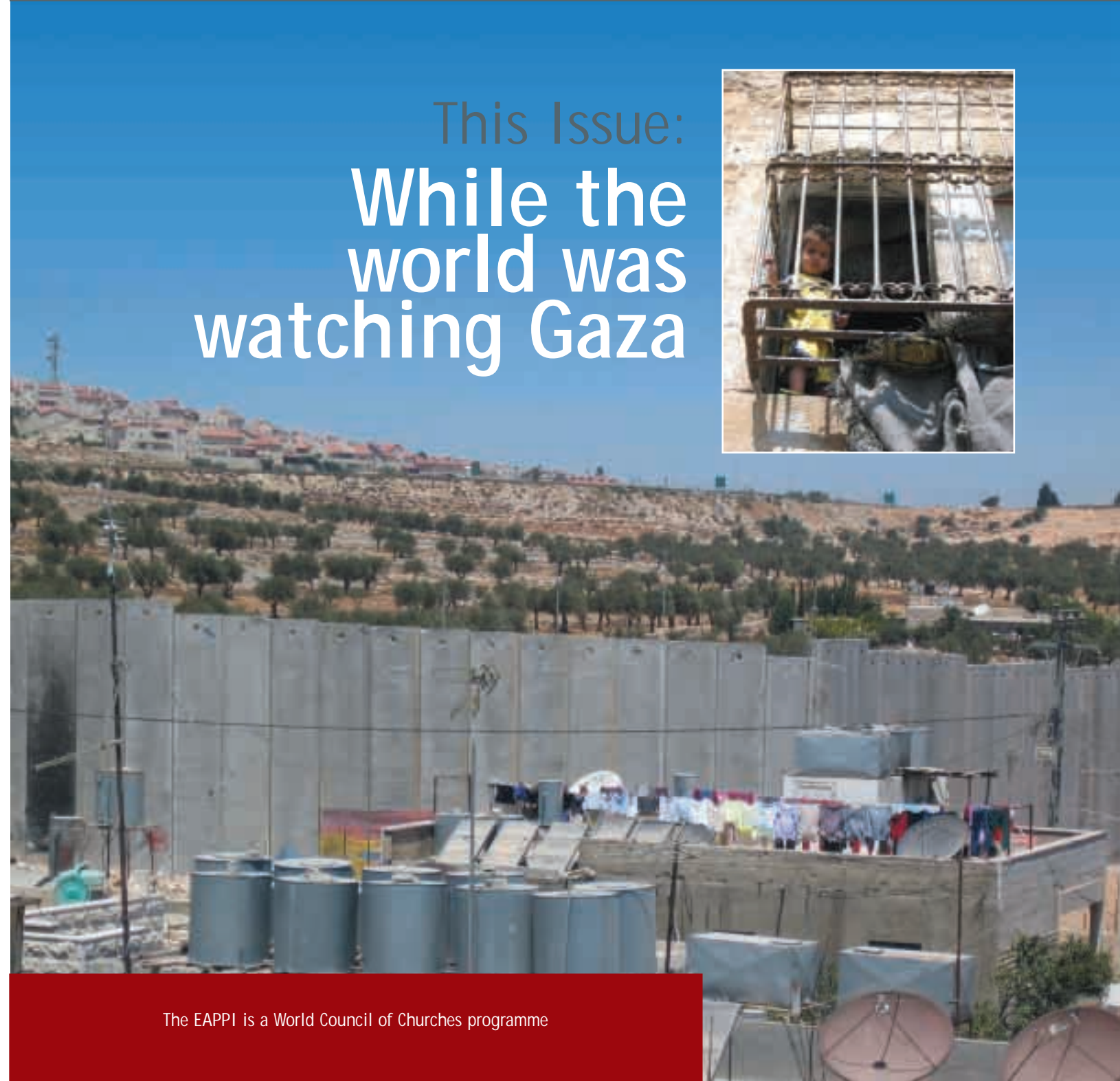




# ChainReaction

The quarterly magazine of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel

This Issue:  
**While the  
world was  
watching Gaza**



## 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).

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS FROM THE EAPPI

- Chain Reaction No.1: "The EAPPI Confronting Violence with Presence"
- *Sawahreh Against the Wall - The Struggle of a Palestinian Village, dealing with the Infringements on Freedom brought about by Israel's ever-tightening Occupation*
- *Separated Families: A Report by Anna Seifert, Ecumenical Accompanier (September-December 2004) www.quaker.org/eappi*
- *The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel: Two Years of Nonviolent Witness and Active Presence for Peace*
- *Security or Segregation? The Humanitarian Consequences of Israel's Wall of Separation*
- Video: *End the Occupation - Voices for a Just Peace* (21 minutes)

All the above can be ordered by writing to [eappi@wcc-coe.org](mailto:eappi@wcc-coe.org). More articles and further information on the programme can be found by going to [www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org).

## Editorial



By Rifat Odeh Kassis

EAPPI International Programme Coordinator and Project Manager

On Monday 15th August 2005, after 38 years of brutal military occupation, during which around 2000 Palestinians have been killed, the Palestinians in Gaza took a deep breath. Some people thought that this was finally a step forward towards peace. Others thought that this was just a public relations gesture, really aimed at turning Gaza into a one big prison instead of the tens of small prisons that already exist there.

Both opinions were, unfortunately, wrong. In less than one month after the beginning of disengagement, Gaza was at war, its streets turned into a battlefield. Israeli F16s, apache helicopters and military tanks were showering Gaza with all kinds of ammunition on a daily basis. I, just like many people, was obliged to sit in front of the TV, from the 15th of August till the 12th of September, watching the drama series of the withdrawal of settlers unfold - people who, in simple terms, were not supposed to be there in the first place; their presence in Gaza being contradictory to international law and considered a crime against humanity by many legal experts. The most shocking scene to me was the way the media perceived this evacuation and the over-exaggeration in showing the suffering of settlers and their children who had to leave their homes. I cannot say that it is a pleasant feeling to have to leave your home, even if you were living there illegally. But the media has consistently failed to show the suffering of Palestinians when their homes have been demolished due to the military occupation and to the settling activities of these same people. This failure of the media is the recipe for more violence in the region. When one party feels that his/her story is ignored, that nobody cares and that he/she is left alone to face his/her destiny, then this can only be a recipe for more violence.

Both Palestinians and Israelis need to find hope and peace, but the unilateral disengagement as it has happened is far from being the right step forward. Until real freedom has been established through the border crossings both in and out of Gaza, and people are able to move freely between Gaza and the West Bank, how can there be peace? Unless the movement restrictions are lifted in the West Bank and the remaining 350 checkpoints are removed, how can people possibly feel that there is a peace process and that Gaza and the West Bank are joined in one Palestinian sovereign territory? Until the Palestinian Authority is able to provide stable governance, to reassert civil control, maintain the rule of law and stop the internal violence and bring stability, then there will be no hope for peace.

Optimism is a fragile commodity, but this is exactly what the EAPPI is trying to sustain. The EAPPI is trying to make a difference. By presenting civilians' interests on both sides, we try to bear honest witness to the rights and wrongs in the region. The EAPPI is a humble attempt, among other objectives, to counter the biased media and its recipe for violence, and introduce both sides as human beings longing for a just and ever-lasting peace.

This is the second edition of ChainReaction. The focus of this edition is to look behind the disengagement from Gaza and the northern West Bank. Whilst analysing the disengagement and its consequences, it takes a look at what was happening while the focus of the world's attention was on Gaza, particularly the building and expansion of settlements and the continued building of the Wall in the West Bank. I hope it will succeed in broadening your perspectives and will offer some new insights into this complex issue.

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**Cover Photos:** Silje Hirsch (top) and Heidi Kumpulainen (inset).  
**Top photo:** The ongoing construction of the Wall in Bethlehem, showing the settlement of Gilo in the background.  
**Inset photo:** A child looks out from the window in Hebron's old city. The iron bars are designed to protect the children from stones thrown by settlers.  
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## Looking for Signs of Peace in the Months Ahead

Peter Weiderud, Director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), WCC

The following brief was issued by the World Council of Churches during the Gaza disengagement. Its aim was to provide information to help Churches evaluate the pullout of settlers and soldiers from Gaza, an event that cannot be understood in isolation. Below are seven signs to watch for - in Gaza and other conflict zones - that will indicate in the months ahead whether the withdrawal enhances prospects for peace.

Whether the Gaza withdrawal, which involved high personal costs for those involved, enhances prospects for peace cannot be understood in isolation. Signs of peace will include the opening of secure land, sea and air links from Gaza to the outside world, how many of the people evacuated from Gaza are resettled within Israel's pre-1967 borders, and whether from now on decisions affecting both parties to the conflict are negotiated equitably between the two sides.

This following brief, issued by the

World Council of Churches during the disengagement from Gaza, provides information to help churches discern what is happening in Israel and Palestine now and in the months ahead. It is also an invitation for member churches and ecumenical partners to watch, pray and act for peace guided by the deep commitment within the WCC fellowship to the legitimate rights and wellbeing of both Israelis and Palestinians.

### Sign One

Life for the residents of Gaza improves, including human rights. After the pullout, some 1,400,000 people in one of the most densely populated places on earth are to receive a small increase in physical, psychological, political and economic space. About 8,000 more privileged people, the settlers, are being moved. Thankfully, it was done in a manner that respects their dignity. To monitor this sign, watch Gaza to see if:

The purpose of this brief is to assist with evaluation of the pullout of settlers and soldiers from Gaza, an event that cannot be understood in isolation. Below are seven signs to watch for - in Gaza and other conflict zones - that will indicate whether the withdrawal enhances prospects for peace.



EA, Birgitte Jorgenson at the Al-Buwabe checkpoint in East Jerusalem. Photo: Malin Brenk

- Vacated land is used for the benefit of needy Gazans.
- Land, sea and air links open to the outside world, especially to the West Bank, with international oversight to ensure proper functioning as well as fair and effective security measures.

### Sign Two

The people evacuated from Gaza are resettled within Israel's pre-1967 borders. Where the settlers from Gaza are relocated will be one of the clearest indicators of overall prospects for peace. Their new locations will be physical evidence of future intentions toward other occupied land, the issue at the heart of the conflict. What to watch for:

- How many Gaza settlers will resettle within Israel's pre-1967 borders? (Reports indicate that about half the evacuees will be moved from Gaza to other still-occupied territory.)

### Sign Three

From now on, decisions affecting both sides are negotiated equitably

between the two sides. Equitable negotiations would be an undeniable sign for peace. They would send a vital signal that the use of violence by either side will no longer determine the course of events. Equitable negotiations would also lend much-needed credibility to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, a leader taking political risks for peace with little to show for it so far. Equitable negotiations on core issues are long overdue, including:

- The route of the Israel's barrier versus Palestinian land and water rights.
- The final status of Jerusalem.

### Sign Four

Both sides treat Jerusalem as a shared and open city. This sign would show whether Jerusalem is to be home for both its peoples. Palestinian residents of greater East Jerusalem would again be able to live there, work there, travel in their own communities, reach their holy sites, receive visitors from the West Bank and visit the West Bank in return. The sealing-off of greater Jerusalem,

an old plan, is now nearing completion and with it these everyday options have all but disappeared for most of East Jerusalem's Palestinian citizens. Churches of Jerusalem are suffering along with their neighbours. As an indicator for peace, any good that comes out of the Gaza withdrawal will pale in the long term unless current trends in and around Jerusalem are reversed. Positive evidence for this sign would include:

- Palestinians have free access to their communities in East Jerusalem while Israel assures the security of its citizens in accordance with international law.
- Construction stops on the Wall, Israeli settlements and Jewish neighbourhoods in greater East Jerusalem and their future is negotiated.

### Sign Five

Palestinians in the West Bank are able to travel between their communities and to Gaza. Freedom of movement is necessary for a viable society and economy, and is a basic human right. It also spurs hope. If occupation controls of movement are lifted and people can again reach jobs, schools and hospitals, conditions of everyday life would improve, daily humiliations would disappear, extremism would lose its power, and moderates could slowly regain their footing and influence. What evidence to watch for here?

- The hundreds of checkpoints and barriers within the occupied territories are removed.

### Sign Six

The international community meets its obligations to bring peace. The world's leading nations bear central responsibility to enforce international law and have the essential third-party role of ensuring progress toward peace. When the US, for example, has spoken specifically and forcefully against unilateral actions that violate the Geneva Conventions, it has been effective. Others, including churches, also have considerable capacity for promoting international law as the basis for peace. One positive indicator to watch for here:

- The US administration uses its authority to focus Israeli and Palestinian leaders on issues such as sharing Jerusalem, trading land for peace, and adhering to international law as the basis for peace.

### Sign Seven

Israelis become more secure. Good faith and concrete measures like those above may well be the only sustainable security policy for Israel. If abuses related to the occupation are corrected, injustices that fuel conflict would decrease and popular confidence in a negotiated peace could be regained. After years on the margins, people on both sides committed to non-violent, law-based solutions could again be in a position to take the political initiative.

- Cease-fires hold; they are repaired whenever they break down.
- Both sides handle violent acts as criminal acts, under the law.

It is important to note what these seven future signs of peace have to

do with the pullout from Gaza now.

First, they all address serious threats to peace that have intensified while international attention has focused on Gaza. If the occupation ends in one place but is being strengthened in many other places, the overall situation has actually become worse. Second, the policy of encouraging people to settle on occupied territory has caught people up in a policy of control and conquest that will not bring peace. The Gaza withdrawal - affecting less than two percent of the settlers - dramatically demonstrated the high personal costs for those involved in this political strategy. The signs above turn attention now to the other 98 percent of the people involved.

Finally, the essential legal framework for resolving the conflict is the same in Gaza and the other places mentioned. It is the body of international law that deals with foreign occupations, especially the Geneva Conventions and relevant United Nations resolutions.

In such a long and bitter conflict we must not turn our back on any initiative that could help bring peace, like the Gaza pullout, but nor can we turn a blind eye to actions that perpetuate injustice in the name of peace and security. We believe that unilateral actions conceived to promote the interests of one group over another will never bring peace. The biblical prophets warn us of those who cry 'Peace, peace, where there is no peace'. We are convinced that, by replacing unilateral actions with negotiations under international supervision and the rule of law, a just peace agreement can be concluded. Then all who live in Gaza, Jerusalem, the West Bank and Israel, and all of us, will see real signs of peace.



Angela briefing the latest group of Ecumenical Accompaniers  
Photo: Andreas Hedfors

## The Gaza Roadshow Hits the Screens

Angela Godfrey-Goldstein

The 'Gaza Roadshow' could be seen on all Israeli TV channels all day, beaming worldwide. But what's behind it? What's really going on? A withdrawal of settlers, yes, but a full military departure, no: only redeployment, while the 38-year occupation continues. The Palestinians aren't attaining freedom: ask any Gaza fisherman

unable to fish due to Israeli marine patrols, or labourer unable to work in Israel. Houses are still being demolished in East Jerusalem. Political prisoners remain inside. Refugees are still forgotten, despite settler talk of displacement, uprooting or homelessness. And whilst Israel 'returned' 0.85% of the West Bank and Gaza Occupied

Territories, it disguised the fact that at the same time, 0.96% of the West Bank and Gaza Occupied Territories was being de facto annexed, by Cabinet approval of the Wall route around Ma'ale Adumim, the huge West Bank settler city east of Jerusalem. This landgrab deliberately torpedoes the Road Map and any chance of peace or a two-state solution. It proves Israel's real intentions, just as the infrastructure being built sets in concrete Israel's control of the Palestinians' future. Without contiguity from the south of the West Bank to the north, and with access to and from East Jerusalem severely restricted, Palestine cannot be viable.

Without a two-state solution, where are we? Facing a sophisticated method of control. A form of apartheid. Bantustans, enclaves, cantons. Call them what you will, the people living there know a prison when they're in one, always monitored by Israeli military.

Nevertheless, Condoleezza Rice decrees Gaza is not the only withdrawal, although Sharon says it is. If the United States forces Israel back to the Road Map, today could signal the beginning of the end of Occupation. The settlers, army and police have been advised by conflict resolution experts - a major development in this militarised society where traditional wisdom says: 'If you don't succeed with force, try more force.' Maybe lessons will inform future peace negotiations, where once generals only knew win-

lose tactics, inevitably reaping long-term disaster.

But only by adopting the Road Map, and a viable Palestinian state, can there be real peace. Israel still builds West Bank settlement cities to undermine such viability. But today the settler community has finally had to bow to the will of Israel's silent majority, instead of forcing unwilling young men who were supposed to die for the settlers' messianic fanaticism. They increasingly refused to serve in Gaza, those kids, so if they're silent now when assaulted by shrieking settlers, look behind their silence: they know their lives are safer now, especially if the Occupation ends. The question is, though, can Israel become 'normal'? Can 'Never again to us' mature into 'Never again'? It is time for Israel to let the Palestinians be free. Fear, mistrust and insecurity must heal. So Israel itself can get a life, and God in all creation be respected and loved - not feared.

For a people who declare their 'love' of the land, Israel is doing a wonderful, tragic job at killing that beloved land. Shooting itself in the foot in its treatment of its cousins, fellow Semites. Because - apart from anything else, this lowering of life's value hurts everyone. Only when all are free is there true freedom. Until that day, Israel and Palestine will continue to miss the point, will continue to be less than alive, less than healthy, less than godly. Still slaves suffering in exile. Withdrawal from Gaza? Or a return to Egypt by a mere few thousand years?

Angela Godfrey-Goldstein is Action Advocacy Officer for The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, an Israeli organisation advocating together with Palestinians for real peace.

# In the Shadow of Gaza

Silje Hirsch

Photos: Silje Hirsch, Henry Ranner and Carolyn Schneider

As pictures of settlers leaving their homes in Gaza were being shown around the world, from my house in the heart of Bethlehem, I was watching the Wall being built metre by metre and could hear the sound of the construction of houses in a nearby settlement. I asked myself: was the disengagement just a game to give the world the impression

that Israel is ready to make concessions to the Palestinians? Few of the people I talk to - Palestinian researchers, leaders of non governmental organisations, Israelis working in human rights organisations or United Nations officials - believes that the disengagement will contribute to the solution of the conflict. Whilst

many people believe that it is positive for Gaza that the settlers are withdrawing, they fear that the continuing restrictions on movement for the Palestinians in Gaza will continue. Furthermore, while the eyes of the world have been directed toward Gaza, the occupation of the West Bank has continued with the same strength.

An ambulance passing through the Wall\* at Bethlehem. The Wall in this area, just down from the main Bethlehem checkpoint has now been completed and a gate installed. The checkpoint now includes a new passenger terminal building.  
Photo: Carolyn Schneider



Children demonstrating against the Wall in Al Walaje.  
Photo: Silje Hirsch

## Tightening the Grip on the West Bank

### The Wall

Day by day, additional metres of the Wall are completed. Bethlehem is now nearly surrounded by the Wall on two sides and a bypass road on the third (a road that the Palestinians do not have access to). The Wall is being built close to houses, it cuts through gardens and divides people from their fields and their families. People's lives are more and more constricted and many people talk about a silent feeling of suffocation. All of this is done to protect the settlers that are living illegally on occupied territory. Whilst the raison d'être of the Wall is said to be security, one has to question why it is being built so close to Palestinian residential areas, leaving good farming soil and

beautiful olive fields belonging to the Palestinians on the settlers' side of the Wall. The Government of Israel constantly says that they will remove the Wall when the situation is calmer, but these are enormous structures. The Wall costs \$4.7 million per kilometre. Can Israel afford to remove it?

### The Settlements

The Israeli settlements consist of 400,000 settlers. The building of both the Wall and the settlements is illegal under international law. The Fourth Geneva Convention states in article 49: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its civilian population into the territory it occupies". However, the settlements

Houses which are too close to the Wall are often destroyed. During my time in Bethlehem, I visited the village of al-Khader outside Bethlehem. Three of the houses in the village had recently been demolished by the Israeli Defense Forces. Three families were without a roof over their head. It is thought that the houses were demolished to allow space for the Wall which will be built to divide the village from the closest settlement.

\* Herein, the "barrier" or "separation wall" is referred to as the Wall. The barrier is in the form of a nine metre high concrete wall in some areas, and a fence, including barbed wire, military access roads and ditches in other areas.

This article first appeared in the Norwegian weekly Morgenbladet



Construction of the Wall Continues

Photo: Silje Hirsch

are expanding and new ones are being built. As a consequence of the construction, houses are demolished and land is confiscated. In the area between Bethlehem and Jerusalem, there is a belt of settlements. The so-called 'Jerusalem envelope', this area goes northward from the area west of Bethlehem, passing the settlement Ma'ale Adumim (a city of 35,000 people). These settlements will not be disbanded, but rather, the route of the Wall is ensuring that they will be annexed to Israel. In the Gush Etzion area west of Bethlehem, there are thirteen settlements and two more are planned. According to the

Applied Research Institute of Jerusalem, it is planned that one of the settlements will house the settlers from Gaza. Palestinian villages in the Bethlehem area (al Walajah, Nahhalin, Battir, Husan, Wadi Fukin), will be surrounded by this belt of settlements. Approximately 20,000 people live in these villages. They will be totally shut off from the outside world. To travel to Jerusalem from these villages will be even more difficult than it already is. To be able to travel to Bethlehem, it is likely that the villagers will need to go through a tunnel. The tunnel will be easy for

the Israeli army to control and travel through it can be closed at any time. Palestinians from Bethlehem will not be able to reach these villages without prior permission from the Israeli Government.

The settlements are in many ways the key to understanding why Israel is building the Wall, and also the reason why the Wall is not being built on the 1949 border (Green Line). The Wall snakes through the landscape to divide the settlements from the Palestinian residential areas. More and more parts of the West Bank and larger parts of the best farming areas

'This focus of attention on Gaza has allowed Israel to continue with the construction of the Wall in Palestinian territory, the expansion of settlements and the de-Palestinization of Jerusalem with virtually no criticism'. (John Dugard, author of UN General Assembly report: Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory).

are annexed in the areas of the settlements. More and more Palestinian residential areas are surrounded by the Wall, and it goes so close to the houses that the possibilities for natural expansion become very limited. Israel controls travel in and out of the areas. The consequences are that the Palestinians are left with small isolated areas with huge hindrances to travel and little contact between the different areas.

The majority of the growth in settlements has happened in the area around Bethlehem and Jerusalem (85% of total settler growth in 2004). The new facts on the ground of the Wall and the settlements mean that

the West Bank is effectively cut in two, making any future Palestinian state unviable, and ensuring that Palestinians on the West Bank side of the Wall are cut off from access to East Jerusalem.

In many areas, the construction of the Wall is happening quickly and unpredictably. This puts a great deal of pressure on the people in these areas. Not knowing whether your house will be demolished or not the next day or if an enormous piece of concrete will be situated in your garden is not a safe way of living. In the end, life for these Palestinians is likely to become so unbearable that they will have no other choice but to leave 'voluntarily'.

#### Sources:

- ICAHD - Israeli Coalition Against House Demolitions
- ARIJ - Applied Research Institute Jerusalem
- UNOCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- 'B'tselem' - the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
- East Jerusalem YMCA, advocacy desk
- Stop the Wall
- UNHCHR - United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

**Abd al Fatah Nemer** - an olive farmer - lives in one of the refugee camps near Bethlehem, but owns land in one of the villages. Israel applies Ottoman law, which states that if a farmer does not access his fields for three years, it will be considered Israeli state land. Because of that, the farmer has to travel to his fields every day to prove that he is maintaining his land. He wants to build a house there so that he will not need to travel back and forth all the time, but he has not been able to get permission. The Wall that will surround the village will probably go straight through his land, which will make it even harder for him to access his land. There is, therefore, a strong possibility that his land will be taken away from him.

# At the heart of the Disengagement

## an observer of the evacuated settlements

Oliver Dinichert in front of the settlement of Sanur



Back in August, the Jenin Governorate requested the EAPPI to be present in neighbouring Palestinian villages during the disengagement in the northern West Bank. As the only permanent international observers, Veslemøy Ask (Norway) and Olivier Dinichert (Switzerland) were present in the village of Al Fandaqumiya, just a few hundred metres away from the settlements of Sanur and Homesh. Both of them were considered highly problematic since several hundred, partly armed settlers from all over the West Bank,

had barricaded themselves in and on the houses the day the evacuation began.

Tuesday Morning, 23rd August 2005. The observer mission begins with a trip in the dark - we do not know what awaits us in a neighbouring village of a settlement to be evacuated. On our way from Tulkarem to Jenin, previous meetings with the UN cross my mind. Palestinian villages were mentioned which would be under curfew for days or even weeks. I also think of an article in Ha'aretz I had read the night before:

Photo: Veslemoy Ask

'Settlers vandalize at least eight Palestinian villages'. In Al Fandaqumiya, settlers have entered the village and shot in the air. Even the IDF was at a loss when two of its vehicles were torched by settlers. All these reports seemed to confirm the misgivings issued by Israel's Shin Bet that settlers could vent their anger about the unavailability of the disengagement on Palestinians. The killings of eight Palestinians by Jewish settlers in the past three weeks were all but showing that such scenarios were a real threat.

The first stop on our way to the heart of the disengagement was the head of the Jenin Governorate, since we were present on its request and with its security guarantees. The local 'Emergency Room' is closely in touch with the UN, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the affected Palestinian villages, as well as the IDF. Minutes after our arrival, reports reached us about a shooting in an adjacent village to Jenin. After a highly sugared mint tea, we continue our journey in the direction of Al Fandaqumiya, travelling on dusty roads with countless pot-holes, since the main route between Jenin and Nablus has been declared a closed military zone and is therefore inaccessible for any civilian traffic.

Near Al Fandaqumiya, the settlement of Sanur appears to our right on a hill. The most striking building is a stately stone house built during the British mandate. On its roof, scores of settlers are visible to the naked eye while police and IDF keep themselves hidden. Also highly

visible are about fifty busses, ready to carry the settlers back to Israel. We find ourselves at the focal point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - not only our eyes, but those of the world are aimed at Sanur and Homesh today. But if our eyes were not always drawn up to Sanur, we would probably all but miss the ongoing event. Certainly, the closed Route 60 brings a ghastly silence. And in Al Fandaqumiya itself, probably more people than usual are standing with binoculars on the roofs of their houses. And we have not heard during the last days the repeated calls of the municipality, demanding its inhabitants not to leave the village during the disengagement. But the disengagement happens in a surgical-like way - at two specific spots, Sanur and Homesh, while life in the neighbouring villages returns to normality.

We install ourselves in a room of the municipality, check our mobile phones and cameras and get onto the roof of the municipality. The situation remains unchanged. The settlers spend their very last hours waiting on a big rooftop. Suddenly, we see some activity in the area. We discover a car on the hill above the village. Abu Khaled, Al Fandaqumiya's mayor, fears a new settler incursion. After a look through the binoculars, it is clear that it is an army jeep, whose purpose is probably to look out for any settlers. While we can immediately see the relief in Abu Khaled's face, we have to get used to the fact that the army is not perceived as a danger, but as a helping support during the time of the disengagement.

Throughout the day we are present in the village, enjoying the agreeable hospitality of Palestinian families, and observing from their roofs the events in Sanur. In the afternoon, two cranes lift large shipping containers on the roof of the stone house. Police and army pour out of them and pack the settlers into them. The palpable altercation can be watched live on Israeli TV channels. But our eyes remain only for a short time on the screen, we continue to watch with our own eyes the spectacular event.

Towards the evening, one realises that the evacuation of both settlements has succeeded. An armada of busses drives northwards, and slowly the tension in Abu Khaled's face loosens. And he begins to talk about what will change for his village. The forthcoming olive harvest will not have to be interrupted due to the resistance of the settlers, the army will not confiscate further land and the Palestinians will be able to stroll safely around the village. Only, and he descends to the single downside of the evacuation, the villagers will have to change their mobile phones since the army will dismantle the Israeli mobile phone installations.

While we keep talking about the hopes of the inhabitants of Al Fandaqumiya, darkness has fallen on the now empty settlement of Sanur. For the first time in more than 25 years, the lights on the opposite hill are no longer switched on - Sanur remains from now on in the darkness. Later in the evening, the village hosts a great wedding party. The men are



dancing in the street while the women have to watch from the rooftops. It will be their turn the following evening. According to Abu Khaled the people are particularly cheerful tonight; but it is not a political rally of joy, for the occupation goes on. Whilst the Gaza Strip saw a large evacuation, in the northern West Bank only four tiny settlements with not more than 700 inhabitants were evacuated. In comparison, in 2004 alone, the number of settlers in the West Bank increased by 10,000.

The settlers of Sanur were all removed to Israel and the two following days remain calm. Too calm - after five years of constant violence and counter-violence, Abu Khaled has big difficulties in trusting the other side. We continued being on our guard, although except for the dismantling of the houses in Sanur, the situation was calm.

At the end of the third day, we take the same way back to Tulkarem. We lean back in the taxi ('service'), the tensions felt on our journey out seem to be at least a week away, so intense was our mission. But on our way to Tulkarem, several non-evacuated settlements emerge. And from Tulkarem the news reaches us that five Palestinians were killed by the army, three of them were teenagers who were not involved in terrorist organisations. As a sign of protest and mourning, most of the shops are closed for three days. And the next morning, the metal noise of armoured personnel carriers wakes me up and ends my dream of an area-wide disengagement.



Abu Rami shows EA, Mxolisi Mpambani the place where his son was shot.

## Anxious for Truth, Not Revenge

Desmond Parsons  
Photos: Jason Davids

While hosting visiting Ecumenical Accompaniers, Mxolisi Mpambani and Jason Davids (South Africa) in Tulkarem on September 15th, we found ourselves living a little time of 'inshallah' which means 'God-willing' or 'maybe, we'll see.' My planned afternoon workshop was cancelled with no notice, so in order to show our visitors something of the

issues in Tulkarem, we decided to walk through the Tulkarem refugee camp, a couple of hundred metres from the city centre.

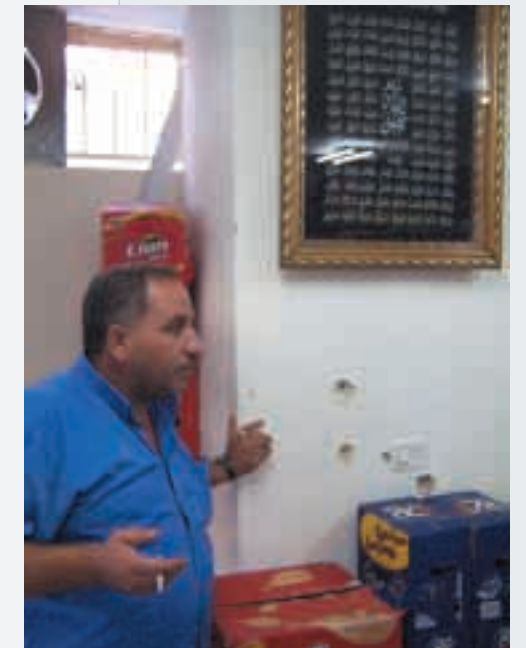
Before long, as in any Palestinian town, boys were walking up to the three of us shouting 'what's your name?' and wanting to shake hands. Here in Tulkarem, many of the boys have pictures on chains around their necks or on t-shirts of the 'martyrs' - the young men of Tulkarem/Palestine who have died at the hands of Israeli armed forces. I was talking to Mxolisi and Jason about this way of honouring those so tragically taken and pointing at a boy's t-shirt, and the boys told us they would take us to the place where five boys were killed on August 24th. En route there, an older boy discovered our purpose and took Mxolisi (and by inference the rest of us) through a neighbourhood. Soon we were in a

very clean and pleasant apartment. The boy took us to the home of one of the mothers who lost her son on August 24th, Um Zaiad. Also visiting her was Abu Rami, a father of another of the children killed by the Israeli Defence Forces.

After explaining our purpose as Ecumenical Accompaniers and asking if we could ask questions, they told us they were anxious to have their story heard. Translated by an UNWRA worker who was visiting their home, we heard the nightmare they live.

Mahmoud was Abu Rami's second son. Mahmoud had been injured in a car accident in Israel when he was 6 years old and had apparently sustained some severe brain damage. He spoke with a stutter and was described as having epilepsy by the family. Because of his condition, he was not attending school at the time

Abu Rami's father shows EAs the bullet holes which reached a shop located next to the family's home.



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of his death. He was 16 years old, and on August 24th, he was too hot to sleep. His family live in the refugee camp. They are quite poor and live in only one room, with a very small courtyard and a door that opens onto a small square. Mahmoud had woken up in the night and went to get some cool air outside. He was eating a sandwich or some nuts, perhaps watching the other boys in the neighbourhood leaning against the wall when the soldiers came. He cried out to his mother that they were shooting and was shot on his doorstep begging the soldiers not to shoot him. We visited the place where he was shot. The entire area is peppered with bullet holes and the stones are scarred.

When I asked Abu Rami if Mahmoud had been involved in Islamic Jihad or any organisation that might have been the focus of the IDF attack, he was certain he was not. He said Mahmoud was 'normal', meaning that he wasn't involved in these kinds of organisations.

Um Zaiad's eyes filled with tears as she talked with us, though both of the parents looked dazed. Her son, Mohammed was 17 and was her

second son. Um Zaiad was very proud of this boy. He was one year away from finishing his high school diploma and his teacher - who was also visiting the family - told us what a good boy he had been. He had been working in a local bakery to help his father, with the hope of saving money to go to university to study nursing. Like Mahmoud, Mohammed hadn't had any contact with Islamic Jihad or any other organisation involved in terrorism and arms. She believes he was a good boy, more interested in the things most boys are interested in.

On August 24th, he told his mother, just let me go out for 40 minutes with my friends. She decided to let him go, but never saw him again. She heard the shooting start at 11:10pm and she went out to look for him. She walked around the whole neighbourhood asking for him. Where was he? At 4.30 or 5.00am, she was finally told that he was the fifth 'martyr' killed in the attack she'd heard on the street. She was shocked. She told us she could not even express the feelings she had.

Um Zaiad told us that after he was shot, Mohammed bled a lot. He was

taken by the soldiers to a hospital in Israel but he died at 2 or 3 a.m. The soldiers who returned him by ambulance to Tulkarem dropped him off outside the hospital and just left without going in to offer explanation. She said it was like they were dropping off a dead animal.

This is not the first price either of these families has paid for the occupation - or even the dearest. Abu Rami's eldest son, Rami was killed in a similar attack on April 4th, 2004 in the middle of the day. Like Mahmoud and Mohammed, Rami was not involved in any organisation accused of terror. None of these boys were armed. None of these boys were even eighteen. None of these boys were a kilometre from their own home when they were killed. Mahmoud was literally on his doorstep.

Um Zaiad's eldest boy is alive, but has been in prison in Israel for unauthorized movement for the last year. When I asked if he was allowed to come to Mohammed's funeral, they laughed.

Abu Rami told us that after Mahmoud's death, Israeli media people came to Tulkarem refugee camp to interview people there. No one touched them. If they had wanted, he said, they could have killed them. But they don't want blood, they want justice.

Abu Rami said: "Even if the killer of our sons was to come here, we would just receive him with no objection, without the wish of revenge. We just want to ask one question: "Why did you kill my son?"

# Living on the wrong side of the wall.

Birgitte Jorgenson and Malin Brenk

As Ecumenical Accompaniers based in East Jerusalem, we spend most of our mornings monitoring the checkpoint in Abu Dis - Al Buwabe. This means we continuously meet people who in some way are caught on the wrong side of the Wall, or the 'separation barrier'. The barrier does



## The Wall

The separation barrier, once complete, will reach 670 kilometres in length. It consists either of a 9 metre-high cement wall or a fence. A 50-200 metre wide security zone runs along each side of the Wall. The zone comprises electronic movement sensors, surveillance cameras, a four meter deep moat, a two-lane patrol road, stacked rolls of barbed wire and fine sand to detect footprints of trespassers. But the worst issue with the barrier is not its length, height, or width, nor the fact that it is estimated to cost Israeli taxpayers and international donors 2 million dollars per kilometre. Not only is the Wall being built on Palestinian land, in the majority of cases without any form of compensation. The barrier is also annexing as much of the West Bank water resources as possible. According to the Stop the Wall Campaign, 75% of all the water on the West Bank will be annexed to Israel when the Wall is completed.

Abdul and Nervin with their children  
Photos: Andreas Madson

not alone separate Palestinians and Israelis, but also families from their relatives, and husbands from their wives. On this particular morning at the checkpoint we meet Abdul.

#### Abdul and his wife

Abdul's wife Nervin has a Jerusalem permit. Abdul does not. Therefore she and their two children live in Jerusalem during the week and visit Abdul in Abu Dis (just east of Jerusalem) only on weekends. If Nervin decides to live with her husband permanently, she will lose her Jerusalem permit and thereby her work and the possibility to visit her family and friends in Jerusalem. Therefore Nervin has to stay in Jerusalem on weekdays, and also take care of the couple's two boys all on her own. On this particular Monday morning, Abdul needs to get through to the Jerusalem side more than ever. He has to pick up Nervin at the hospital in Jerusalem, where she gave birth to their third child in the early hours of the morning. Nervin had gone into labour during the night in the house in Abu Dis, but since there are no hospitals on the Abu Dis side of the Wall, they had to go through the Al Buwabe checkpoint to reach the hospital.

Now Abdul needs to get through in order to help his wife and child get home. Abdul was not stopped by the guards at the checkpoint, but had problems getting himself a taxi to the hospital. If the taxi drivers are caught carrying Palestinians without Jerusalem permits, they will lose their licenses and therefore their

livelihood. So Abdul decides to collect his wife and newborn daughter by bus. Abdul doesn't mind though. He is looking forward to spending time with his daughter in their home in Abu Dis. This will



however be a short stay for Nervin, who will soon have to return to Jerusalem with their, now three, small children on her own.

There are so many families with the same story. Later the same morning we meet with the Al Qunbar family who live just up the road from the Al Buwabe checkpoint.

#### The Al Qunbar family

What makes the story of the Al Qunbar family different from many of the personal stories we have heard from people living around the Wall is that this family, together with their neighbours living near Abu Dis, is actually caught on the Israeli side of the Wall without Jerusalem permits.

The family has lived in the same house since 1969. Their house was included on the Jerusalem side of the Wall, due to two Israeli settlements that were built next to the Al Qunbar family's property a few years ago. The family pays city taxes and bills for garbage collection to the Jerusalem municipality, the same as any other Jerusalem citizen, but has not yet, even after three court processes, received the papers they need. The majority of the family can therefore not leave the house out of fear of being caught by the border police. If this happens, the family would most likely be forced to move. Out of a total household of 125, of which 23 are adults, only three have Jerusalem permits. The youngest children go to school in East Jerusalem, but as they grow older the fear of them getting caught going to or from school grows. This happened to one of the older boys in the family. At his release, he was forced to sign a document stating that the military is entitled to imprison him if he is ever caught again on the Jerusalem side of the Wall.

For the same reason, most of the grown-ups in the family do not leave the house and therefore suffer problems getting food. Furthermore, the family's water supply was cut off when the Wall was built, and they have been forced to buy water from other families in the area. Such confinement must take its toll. Despite this however, Naif, who is talking to us, smiles and says: 'It will soon be time to pay the city council taxes, but how can I go and pay the taxes when I cannot leave the house?'



Photo: Malin Brenk

## A call to the Christian community

Jamal Juma

Even after the media ploy of "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip, Israel's brutal occupation of Palestine and the killings and arrests of the Palestinian people continue relentlessly. As construction of the Wall accelerates, Palestinian lands are confiscated and burnt, our homes are demolished and our villages are ghettoized into prisons.

Jamal Juma is Director of the Stop the Wall Campaign

The Wall is Israel's latest attempt to enforce the complete expulsion of the Palestinian people from our land. Stealing 46% of the West Bank land and imprisoning Gaza, the Wall, military zones and Jewish-only roads built on confiscated land confine Palestinians into disparate Bantustans, ending any possibility of a two-state solution.

In the north of the West Bank, the Wall has already devastated hundreds of communities. More than 50 villages and cities have lost land and water behind the Wall and hundreds of thousands of olive trees have been uprooted, destroying the region's primary source of income and sustenance. The Occupation enforces complete control over Palestinian lives through a humiliating system of "permits" and "gates" through which farmers are denied entry to the land they have toiled for generations. Crops remain un-harvested and land is burnt by the Israeli Defence Forces while Israeli settlements expand on the isolated lands.

Now the southern West Bank and the holiest places of Palestine - Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron - are being devastated by the Wall's second phase of construction. In Bethlehem, the Wall will completely isolate 20,000 people in six neighbouring villages, and slices through the heart of the city itself. Passing just streets away from the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square, the Wall completely seals off and annexes Rachel's Tomb to Israel. The Wall and settlements have turned Hebron's Old City into a ghost town, shutting down hundreds of Palestinian shops and factories,

**"In the north of the West Bank, the Wall has already devastated hundreds of communities. More than 50 villages and cities have lost land and water behind the Wall and hundreds of thousands of olive trees have been uprooted, destroying the region's primary source of income and sustenance".**

forcibly removing Palestinians from their homes and annexing the Tomb of Abraham. Jerusalem - the Palestinian cultural, economic and political capital - is being completely sealed off from the rest of the West Bank by the Wall.

Since the city was illegally annexed in 1967, Palestinians in Jerusalem have faced a constant struggle against the Occupation's ultimate plan to expel them from their city. Racist and discriminatory laws obstructing the construction of Palestinian houses and limiting access to vital infrastructure have been abetted by the construction of illegal Jewish-only settlements on Palestinian land - whether built in the Old City upon the ruins and in the midst of historical religious and archaeological sites, or in outlying villages. Today, a ring of Jewish-only settlements surrounds the city, ensuring its isolation and hampering any Palestinian development within its boundaries.

The Wall project today finalizes this "Judaization" of Jerusalem. More

than 134 kilometers of walls not only surround Jerusalem but also slice through the heart of the city's Palestinian communities, creating ghettos and isolated residential islands imprisoning 120,000 Palestinians without access to their workplaces, hospitals, schools and places of worship. One third of Jerusalem's Palestinians will be expelled from the city in the short term - the biggest expulsion in the history of Jerusalem. Longer term, more and more Palestinians will be left with two options: to leave the city, or to stay and suffer continuous discrimination, persecution and lose their identity in a process of socio-political and economic isolation from their people.

The Wall in Jerusalem is meant to destroy a city unique to human kind. Different cultures, experiences and struggles - running through the city's ancient roads as a monument to world history - are about to be wiped away forever. Unless the world acts now to stop it.

Israel's contempt for international

law knows no bounds. The International Court of Justice - the United Nations' highest legal body - has ruled the Wall illegal and demanded it be torn down and the people whose lives it has ruined compensated. In response, Israel has simply accelerated its construction. Countless UN resolutions have been dismissed outright over the last 50 years. So-called "peace processes" and the "disengagement" have proved to be nothing more than a smokescreen to tighten the grip of the Occupation over Palestine.

In direct contravention of the ICJ ruling, governments and the World Bank have promised to support the sustainability of the Wall and the infrastructure that serves to imprison us and deny us our fundamental rights. It is thus left to civil society to take up its responsibility and ensure that justice is achieved.

Christians worldwide have the opportunity to stand against this injustice and oppression and support the efforts to bring peace and freedom to the Holy Land. The Church was at the forefront of the embargo of apartheid South Africa that brought that regime to an end. Now Israel must be shown that the 21st century world will not tolerate the subjugation and imprisonment of an entire people.

The Palestinian Anti-Apartheid Wall Campaign, civil society organizations and Palestinian Christian communities are at the forefront of calls for boycott, divestment and sanctions as the most effective means of ending Israeli Apartheid. Over 170

**"The Occupation enforces complete control over Palestinian lives through a humiliating system of "permits" and "gates" through which farmers are denied entry to the land they have toiled for generations. Crops remain un-harvested and land is burnt by the Israeli Defence Forces while Israeli settlements expand on the isolated lands".**

Palestinian organizations, movements, unions and parties have strengthened this call. The call for selected divestment has also been taken up by the World Council of Churches. Such economic pressure remains the sole momentum to end Israel's continuous refusal to abide by international law and grant Palestinian rights.

In the streets and villages of Palestine, the people march and protest almost daily against the Wall, placing their bodies between their land and the IDF's bulldozers. Local grassroots committees to resist the Wall have grown in more than 50 villages along the Wall's route and Palestinians are asking the world to play its role in solidarity with their struggle. On November 9th the annual International Week Against the Wall began. Last year, over 70 major events in more than 20 countries worldwide saw tens of thousands of people call for an end to the Wall and the Occupation. This

year's event presents the world with the ideal opportunity to join this struggle for liberation and equality and support the growing movement for divestment and sanctions.

Such economic pressure can help to give real meaning to words such as justice, peace and reconciliation. Churches have billions of dollars tied up in the investment portfolios of companies that support the Occupation of Palestine, either directly by profiting from the Occupation or implicitly by sustaining Israel's economy. As in South Africa, churches and individual Christians have the responsibility to oppose racism and oppression and bring about real change. Divesting from Israel is a step towards justice for Palestine and the six million Palestinian refugees expelled throughout the world. It sends a clear message that the Occupation, the Wall, the expansion of settlements and the expulsion of the Palestinian people must end.

# The first day of school in Tel Rumeida

Heidi Kumpulainen  
and Tess Woodcraft  
Photos: Heidi Kumpulainen

For most children around the world, the first day of school means learning how to write your name or count to 10. But for the four 6-year old first graders of the Cordoba school, the first day of term meant walking in their brand new blue and white striped uniforms past military patrols, negotiating checkpoints and braving egg-throwing settler children.

The Cordoba school is situated in Tel Rumeida, one of the Israeli controlled areas in the Old City of Hebron, deep

in the West Bank. The Israeli settlement of Beit Hadassah is situated directly opposite the school, just a few metres away from the entrance. It is perhaps unsurprising that there are only a few new first-graders registered this year; other parents preferring to send their children further afield - though even they will have to cross checkpoints and brave army jeeps that roar around the otherwise almost deserted roads.

In the days between the Gaza disengagement and the start of the



Ecumenical Accompaniers in Hebron accompany girls, aged 5-11, to and from the Cordoba School.

new school term, the Israeli army was busy further fortifying the already militarised streets of Tel Rumeida.

They began by completing a one hundred metre stretch of concrete wall down the steep hill that runs down to the main checkpoint. Parts of that wall had been in place for a long time, painted with flowers and trees. No one knew that the wall would be completed until the morning the army arrived with their lorry and crane and started lowering the missing sections into place - almost cutting off the home of one family. And nobody knew why it was being completed right now, although one of the soldiers said he had heard it was to prevent snipers from the city firing at settlers' cars as they drive along the road.

This building project completed, the army then turned their attention to the main checkpoint into Tel Rumeida

from Hebron's busy market square. The previous 'low tech' checkpoint was dismantled bit by bit and in its place appeared, in the space of just one day, a shiny new container checkpoint (vinyl covered to look like a stone house).

When someone needs to cross from Hebron into Tel Rumeida (every day, hundreds of people pass through here, including school children, shoppers and people going to and from work), they arrive at the checkpoint and are asked by a remote voice to put their ID in a red slot at the side of the checkpoint. Their ID is swallowed up, checked and regurgitated. The electronic doors open and they step inside. The sliding doors close behind them. The individual is now alone inside the container, except for a soldier behind a glass screen watching their every move. They are then asked to go through the metal detector. If it

Girls from the Cordoba school wait to pass through the checkpoint





EAs watch as the cement blocks for the new wall are delivered



bleeps they will have to empty their pockets, take off their belt or open their bag for inspection. If it continues to bleep, more soldiers are called. The sliding doors on the other side open and the person is searched with the portable metal detector. This is, of course, a humiliating and time-consuming experience. For a six year old child it can be very scary indeed.

What is more, some people are fearful that daily exposure to the metal detection equipment may be damaging to their health. Pregnant women and those with heart problems are particularly afraid. The teachers of the Cordoba school are concerned, not only about the four pregnant teachers at the school, but also that the health of all the girls and teachers is at risk from the high-tech scanning that they neither want, nor need, but that they are compelled to go through at least twice a day.

In an effort to protect her students and colleagues, Headmistress Ferial Abu Heikel has attempted to negotiate an agreement allowing them all to go around the checkpoint rather than through it. Some days she has succeeded; other days she has not. One day Abu Heikel and her colleagues sat down outside the checkpoint for a whole morning, waiting in protest.

As well as having the military positioned on practically every street and at every junction, the children also have to brave violence and intimidation from the settlers. Recently, the industrious hum of hardworking students in the Cordoba school was shattered when three settlers - one of them armed with a machine gun - came up the bank close to the school. The girls screamed and ran around chaotically.

Many of these children are kept awake at night by settlers throwing stones at their houses, soldiers stationed on their roofs, sticks banging on their doors, and dogs being let into their gardens by settlers. Dark rings around their eyes suggest that their nights are plagued by broken sleep and nightmares.