

January-February 2009 Newsletter

Number 27

30th Group of Ecumenical Accompaniers

A new group of 25 Ecumenical Accompaniers (EAs) began their 3-month term on 1 February. The new arrivals bring the total number of EAs who have participated in the programme to 522. The 30th group of Ecumenical Accompaniers comprises 16 women and 9 men, from 7 different countries (Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and USA). Among other professions, the EAPPI welcomes five students, four priests, two teachers and two nurses. One EA is returning for a second term. EAs are based in six placements: Bethlehem, Hebron, Jayyous, Tulkarem, Yanoun and Jerusalem. [Profiles](#) of the current EAs are posted on the EAPPI website.



Group 30 with the Greek Catholic Archbishop Zerey

On 26 Jan. the Israeli High Court of Justice rejected a petition submitted by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI) and Rabbis for Human Rights on behalf of the Palestinian residents of Khirbet Tana, effectively allowing the Israeli state to destroy all of the village's houses but one. Located in the Nablus region and designated as Area C, Khirbet Tana is home to some 200 people who live in tents, concrete homes and corrugated iron roofed dwellings. The Yanoun EAs are regularly visiting the village and providing updates to UN agencies and other human rights organisations. A detailed [eyewitness report](#) can be found on the website.

Israeli High Court Approves Demolition of West Bank village, Khirbet Tana

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Home demolitions continue in Jerusalem

The Jerusalem EAs have continued monitoring and providing a presence at the alarmingly high rate of home demolitions occurring in and around Jerusalem. In the first two months of 2009, OCHA has recorded the demolition of 28 structures, displacing 120 people, and affecting at least 170 people through the loss of businesses destroyed or houses that were under construction. Two precedent-setting, and therefore particularly alarming cases, are the [Al-Bustan](#) neighbourhood of Silwan, where 88 houses have been re-issued demolition orders (affecting 1500 people), and the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, where 28 families have been given eviction orders (one of which was already executed when the Al Kurd family was evicted in November 2008). [Eyewitness reports](#) can be accessed on the website.



A resident sitting in his recently demolished home in At Tur, 8 February 2009. Photo: EA Linn Aarvik

War in Gaza

During the Israeli war in Gaza from 27 Dec. 2008 to 18 Jan. 2009, EAs continued to serve and provide presence in their placements in the West Bank. High numbers of EAs were interviewed by the international media and approached for information and [eyewitness reports](#) about the Gaza war's effects in the West Bank. The Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum (PIEF) met in Bethlehem and the WCC recently issued a [statement](#) on the Gaza war.

Living under threat of expulsion from Izbet at Tabib

The Jayyous EAs regularly visit the village of Izbet at Tabib, a small village with 226 residents, which is now facing possible expulsion. As the village is located in Area C, it is under full Israeli control, and no building permits have been distributed by the Israeli Civil Administration. A new by-pass road connecting Alfe Menashe settlement with Israel will be constructed on the village lands, resulting in the demolition of 20 houses and leaving more than 100 residents homeless. The village has also been affected by the separation wall, which has confiscated 273 dunums (66% of the village's agricultural land). A letter from the judicial adviser to the Israeli government in 2007 suggests the residents move to the nearby village of Azzun, making them refugees for the second time. A detailed [eyewitness report](#) can be found on the website.

The non-violent struggle in Sheikh Jarrah continues

Ever since the forceful eviction of Um and Abu Kamel Al Kurd from their home in the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in November 2008, after which Abu Kamel tragically passed away, Um Kamel has become a symbol of the non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation. The tent that is now her home is a well known meeting place among supporters of the Palestinian struggle. The case has been taken to court, where the judge is currently deciding whether he will make a decision in the case or succumb to political pressure and step aside, in favour of a judge considered to be more sympathetic to the settlers. On 22 February, Um Kamel's tent was demolished for the fifth time. A few hours later a new tent was erected on the very same spot. The message is clear: it takes more than a bulldozer to crush the peaceful resistance to the occupation in Sheikh Jarrah. [Eyewitness reports](#) can be found on the website.

Visiting Delegations

During January and February, EAPPI received 24 delegations, totalling 578 individuals, in the placements. Notable visitors include US and Canadian Lutheran Bishops (totalling 91 persons) in Hebron, Bethlehem and Jerusalem, a Romanian Orthodox and Catholic group in Hebron, the Christian Council of Norway in Hebron and Bethlehem, an Austrian church group in Bethlehem, Filipino priests in Jerusalem, Pax Christi UK in Hebron, the University of Michigan Lutheran Campus Ministry in Hebron and CAFOD in Yanoun and Hebron. These delegations constitute an important part of EAPPI's advocacy work.



For more information, please contact:

Matilda Svensson, Communications & Advocacy Officer +972 (0)2 628-9402 (matilda.svensson@eappi.org)

International Office, Geneva +41 22 791-6108 (eappi@wcc-coe.org) or check out the website: www.eappi.org

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)**. The **WCC** is a fellowship of 347 churches, in more than 100 countries in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions. Its office is in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information on the WCC: www.oikoumene.org

If you have not received this newsletter directly and would like to be added to the mailing list or if you would like to be removed, please send an e-mail to matilda.svensson@eappi.org.