

EA Placement Update September 2008

Tulkarem

- **The tent village in Wadi Sha'aid:** When you go from Nablus to Tulkarem you can see some Bedouin tents near a T-junction. From a distance they look a bit like a setting for a film with Omar Sharif. When you get closer you notice that the tents do not have carpets and the children have to sleep outside. The four families living in Wadi Sha'aid came here after having been evicted from their land in Yatta, south of Hebron, in 1990. They lack water, electricity and enough fodder for the sheep. They are also facing problems from the nearby Shave Shomeron settlement and military base. Since they do not own their land, they cannot cultivate it. Instead, they have become well known for their dried yoghurt speciality.



- **The neighbour of the wall:** B'Tselem's field worker brings the EAs to the village of Nazlat 'Isa, situated on the Green Line. The EAs meet a man who introduces himself as "the neighbour of the Wall." Before the Wall, he worked as a building contractor in a thriving shopping area for both Israelis and Palestinians. Now he is unemployed, and the village is deserted and overlooked by a three-storey house, the top floor of which is used as an Israeli military post.
- **Protest against re-opening of a garbage dump:** The EAs went to the area near Deir Sharaf and Qusin (near Nablus) where 400-500 Palestinians and some internationals gathered to protest against the re-opening of a garbage dump that had been used by Israeli settlers until 2005. Following the Friday prayers, people protested, waved banners and listened to speeches by Palestinian officials.

Jayyous

- **Education in the shadow of the Wall:** In the Western part of Qalqiliya city, only a stone's throw away from the Green Line, lies the primary school for girls, A-Sharqa. The building is modern in style and beautifully built. The same cannot be said about the next door neighbour. Clearly visible from the classroom windows on the second floor, the grey 8 metre high separation Wall looms over the playground. The headmistress expresses her deep concerns about the long term psychological effects the Wall has on the girls.
- **The village of Kufr Thulth:** The mayor of Kufr Thulth tells the EAs that the village was built mainly by people who had lost almost everything in 1948. Because they had nothing, the village started to invest in education. The EAs were impressed by the quality and the discipline at a school they visited. Almost every year they have one or two girls, who are amongst the top ten graduates in Palestine. About 200 students per year, boys and girls, go to different universities in Palestine and abroad.



- **Shopping in Jayyous:** On a clear day in Jayyous you can see the Tel Aviv skyline in the far distance. The physical distance between the village and the city is not great; still they are worlds apart. Take the fashion scene for example. Up to now, the shopping opportunities have been rather slim in Jayyous. But only a month ago a new shop was opened across the street of the EAs' house. From a cramped room, the EAs' neighbour Sahar sells mainly clothes but you can also buy shoes, toys and some toiletry items. In the evenings, women come to meet with friends, gather around warm cups of sweet tea, and some leave with new clothes for the upcoming Eid. Sahar's dream is to expand the shop and offer the villagers a real alternative to urban centres like Qalqiliya and Tulkarem.

Yanoun



- **Stars of David:** On their first night in Yanoun, the EAs received a call from the village of Asira Al Qibliya, just south of Nablus. Youths from the nearby Israeli settlement of Yitzhar were attacking houses at the edge of the village. The next day, the EAs visited Abu Ayman, whose house sits well outside the village. As the EAs arrived, they saw the results of last night's hooliganism. Spray-painted across the wall of the house were five stars of David. A sixth was daubed on the side of a piece of machinery in the driveway. Abu Ayman was admirably calm about the situation, but spoke honestly. "See my daughter?" he said. "She can't sleep at night because she knows that there are settlers. The children are scared to walk from one room to another at night."

- **Settler attacks:** On the 13th September, Asira was under attack again. This time it was in revenge for a stabbing by a Palestinian in which a child was moderately injured. The EAs got there just after a curfew had begun, so they

monitored the situation from outside the village and contacted the appropriate international and Israeli organisations. From their contact persons in the village, they were informed that at 6 am, around 200 settlers attacked the village, shooting and throwing stones. Tear gas was also thrown into the houses. No one was allowed inside the village, not even ambulances. The soldiers the EAs talked to referred to the attack as too big for them to handle. In the afternoon of the same day, a group of nine youth from Itamar came down the hillside in to Yanoun and went towards the old Nablus road. One of the kids was visibly armed. The EAs escorted them out through Lower Yanoun.

- **Rashid's comments on our presence:** "We have lost almost 90 % of our land. Now we can only go to the olive trees close to the houses." Rashid, the mayor of Yanoun, was interviewed by a German journalist who was impressed by the decision of the villagers to always act "within the law" and not oppose the settlers with arms. The journalist asks Rashid what difference it makes to have internationals in the village: "Since the internationals came, the children are not as afraid anymore. That is the biggest difference," says Rashid and continues, "The internationals are Yanounis. If someone needs a paper on that, I have no problem writing it."

Hebron

- **Navigating through Tel Rumeida:** Within the Tel Rumeida area, located inside H2, Israeli settlers have steadily been staking their claim to land by occupying Palestinian houses. To the untrained eye, Tel Rumeida resembles a sleepy working class neighbourhood, yet there are eerie signs of an underlying conflict between Tel Rumeida's inhabitants. Barbed wire obstructs certain pathways, and Hebrew graffiti spray painted on crumbling walls reads, "Death to the Arabs." On the roof of one particular Palestinian house, two Israeli military posts have been erected. The EAs feel that they are under surveillance, not only by the military and security cameras, but by the settlers and Palestinians who watch and wait wearily.

- **Ibrahimi Mosque during Ramadan:** Usually Ibrahimi Mosque is divided into a Muslim and Jewish part but both communities have a right to use both parts for 10 days during the year – the four Fridays of Ramadan constitute four such days. The EAs therefore monitored the checkpoint in front of the Mosque during the month of Ramadan.

- **Palestinian Activists Wanted:** It is a quiet evening in Tel Rumeida. The EAs arrive at a gathering of Israeli and Palestinian non-violence activists and the Christian Peacemaker Teams. The topic of discussion is the need for more Palestinian activists. An end to the occupation is the common goal and the principles of non-violence are unanimous. What is emphasised by the internationals in the assembly is the sheer importance of local groups acting for their needs in a non-violent manner. This puts the internationals in a supporting position to the owners of the situation rather than in the position of instilling ideas and practises from outside.

- **Cordoba School attacked:** During the morning school run, the principal tells the EAs that the school was attacked at night. Six masked men and two women threw stones at the school windows and tried to start a fire. They sprayed a Star of David and "Revenge" in Hebrew letters on the school gate. About twenty settlers were standing around on Shuhada Street, encouraging the attackers. The EAs see the results of the attack: cracked windows, the braised wheel of a truck, graffiti, lots of glass splinters and stones and a distressed family. The EAs watch the pupils running around on the school yard, playing with hula-hoop rings. They're running around like every day.





Jerusalem

- **Qalandiya during Fridays of Ramadan:** During the morning of the first Friday at Qalandiya checkpoint, men aged 50 and women aged 45 were passing through without significant problems. It all changed when prayer time was closing in and people noticed that they would not be able to go through, and therefore started pushing their way through. Soldiers answered with sound bombs and tear gas and closed the checkpoint for some time. The EAs continued to monitor the checkpoints to Jerusalem during the subsequent Fridays during Ramadan together with Machsom Watch, UNRWA and UNOCHA.

- **The Churches in the Holy Land:** Waking up in the morning and preparing to go to all the different churches is an experi-

ence on its own. The team separates and covers as many churches as possible. It is amazing to have Arabic, German and English speaking people gathered at the reception, sharing their opinions of the situation of Christian Palestinians in the Holy Land.

- **The Al Kurds in Sheikh Jarrah:** The Al Kurds were served with an eviction order on the 16th July 2008. Settlers had occupied part of their house in 2001 and had now won the legal battle for the rest of the house on the grounds of a decision of only one judge. The Al Kurds contested the eviction order through their lawyer and the hearing was then filed for the 14th September. Mashallah! The court ruled in favour of the Al Kurds family, and they immediately started cleaning the house. Everyone is waiting for the 8th November when the settlers will have to leave the house. An EA contacted Tim Franks, the BBC's correspondent in Jerusalem, who subsequently came to interview the family. EAs will continue to keep him informed of any developments.
- **Lazarus home for girls:** The EAs were moved and inspired by the warm and loving atmosphere at the home. It proved that a family can be bigger than your immediate biological family.
- **English conversations in Shuafat Refugee Camp:** A good number of children in various ages came to the EAs' first English conversation gathering. The EAs plan to hold these gatherings on a weekly basis.



Tim Franks of the BBC interviewing the Al Kurd family in Sheikh Jarrah. In the background you see the settlers' door on the left and the Al Kurds' entrance on the right.

Bethlehem

- **Aida camp demonstration:** People in Aida refugee camp have suffered from a lack of water for the whole summer, so they decided to have a demonstration while Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad visited Bethlehem on 9th September. The demonstration turned violent and Palestinian security forces shot live ammunitions into the air and into the crowd.
- **The village of An Nu'man:** The EAs have regularly been visiting An Nu'man, a dusty, lonely village of about 20 homes and 150 people on the outskirts of Beit Sahour. The residents of the village hold West Bank IDs but the village itself falls within the Jerusalem Municipality boundaries since 1967. With the completion of the Wall in the area, they are walled into the Jerusalem side, with no choice but to be illegal residents of their own homes. Now the residents need to apply for permanent residence individually. If granted, the residency is temporary and can be revoked at anytime.
- **Sabeel Centre:** The EAs participated in the service led by Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek, the founder of the centre. They talked about forgiveness according to Math. 18, 21-35 and shared the Holy Communion. The EAs feel that the centre is doing very encouraging and much needed work. Sabeel challenges not only the Israeli occupation and oppression but also seeks to support and encourage local church leaders - clergy and lay - in finding their voice to do the same.
- **The Ache of Disappearing Hope:** The EAs have been connecting to young adults in Bethlehem. It is not about the Wall, or the Occupation or the political situation that they want to talk. It is the despair of well-educated, respectable, hard-working, young men who see no future for themselves here in this land. Their only hope, economically and socially, is to leave this place and find a way to build a future far from home. As they send money home, the whole family benefits - and that means more Christians will be able to stay in this land that means so much to them - and all Christians everywhere.