



FACES OF HOPE

*A Campaign Supporting Nonviolent Resistance
and Refusal in Israel and Palestine*



AFSC Middle East Resource series

Middle East Task Force | Spring 2005

Nonviolence and the Olive Harvest

Nonviolence takes a sustained discipline and planning. At this time in history, we hear a lot of Palestinians, especially those who were engaged in armed struggle, serious fighters, saying nonviolence is the way; teach us, we need to know more about it.

— Jonathan Kuttab, Palestinian lawyer and organizer

In hearing about the destruction that faces Palestinian olive farmers today, it is difficult to find a reason for hope. While tragic stories of destruction continue, there are other stories that emerge -- stories of solidarity and nonviolence. Many may not be familiar with nonviolent resistance in terms of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but it is a type of resistance that is rooted in Arab tradition.

In the years after the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza came under Israeli occupation in 1967, they started to develop and enact a deeply-held philosophy of quiet resistance to that rule that was called in Arabic *sumoud* (steadfastness). The cardinal goal of *sumoud* was for these Palestinians to stay on their land.

from the AFSC book, When the Rain Returns

The olive tree is not only a source of livelihood and a symbol of the people's connection to the land, but it has also been employed as a symbol of cooperation between peoples. Joint actions between Israelis and Palestinians have revolved around the olive tree. By refusing to surrender the olive harvest, *sumoud* and nonviolence are a formidable force within Palestinian communities. Solidarity offered by Israelis and international peace activists

has further strengthened nonviolent efforts to resist Israeli occupation and enable Palestinian families to stay rooted in their lands.

Palestinian Resistance: Courage Under Fire

Recently, there have been efforts within the Palestinian community to revive the traditions of nonviolence and civil disobedience in the face of destruction and hopelessness. One such effort occurred in the town of Budrus in the West Bank. Other examples include harvesting in defiance of soldier blockades, harvesting despite not having permits, and conducting letter writing campaigns to allow farmers to gain access to their lands. These efforts have occurred throughout the West Bank, often one village experience leading to other efforts by neighboring villages.

Case Study: BUDRUS - West Bank

"From Budrus to Rantis, faction leaders from the nine Palestinian villages northwest of Jerusalem, whose land was most endangered by the infamous fence, converged for an emergency summit. Their stark choice: how to fight the seemingly inevitable. This corner of the uprising would raise no guns in its war against the Israeli barrier. Mass rallies saw the whole of Budrus, everyone from toddlers to grandparents, gathering in the targeted fields after daybreak each morning, often staying until sundown. They linked arms and used their bodies as a human fence against the steel-and-razor wire version trying to plant itself in their place. Budrus claims partial victory to date: the heavy equipment is silent now, as Israeli government planners weigh alternatives to the original plan to fence through the town's olive groves."⁽¹⁾



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Ziyarat az Zeitoun: Visiting the Olives

A Project of the AFSC
olives@afsc.org • www.afsc.org/faces-of-hope

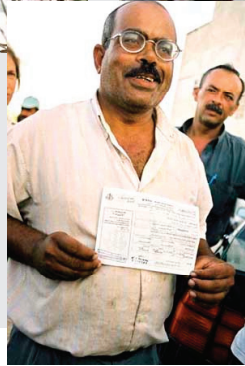
Ziyarat az Zeitoun is an educational project that highlights Palestinian culture and current political realities on the ground in the West Bank and Gaza Strip through focusing on the Palestinian olive harvest.

Ziyarat az Zeitoun offers resources to individuals and groups to plan gatherings where people can sample and purchase Palestinian olive oil, view images and hear stories of olive harvesting and learn about the situation of Palestinian farmers and solidarity efforts of Israeli and international peace groups. For more information about this project email: olives@afsc.org.



Harvesting olives near the village of Anin. (photo courtesy of Ta'ayush)

Photo (left): A Palestinian villager upon receiving a rare seam zone permit. (photo courtesy of Ta'ayush)



Budrus residents and supporters nonviolently demonstrate the wall's encroachment on their land. (photo courtesy of Ta'ayush)

Case Study: AZARWIA VILLAGE

"Palestinians harvest olives despite Israeli soldiers trying to prevent them throughout the West Bank. Palestinians gather every morning in large numbers in nonviolent resistance to the occupation by continuing their harvest up to the Green Line. An elderly woman, 72 year old Um Aladik, was one of the heroes who put herself in front of the Israeli bulldozers, going to the fields as she always has, now with her sons and grandsons." ⁽²⁾

Case Study: YANOUN VILLAGE - Nablus

"Palestinian farmer, 45 year old Nader Mohammad, was astonished when an Israeli military jeep approached his field in Yanoun Village, southeast of Nablus City, throwing leaflets written in Arabic. The leaflets were schedules telling farmers which days they can enter their villages to pick their olives. 'The people who are the residents of this village refused the Israeli lists and went to their lands without taking care of the determined dates.'" ⁽³⁾

We have come to realize nonviolence is the key. the Israelis know well how to use apache helicopters, planes and tanks. We are no match for them that way. But they don't know how to contend with this. *Ayed Morar, Budrus resident*

Case Study: JIT VILLAGE- Qalqilya

"We have no option but to write these appeals to official human rights organizations in order to enter our land and let us work on it." The phrase is repeated by villagers and council members in the district of Qalqilya who continue writing letters and going to every person with title asking for help. The village is surrounded on four sides, by settlements and military installations. The owners of the land are forbidden from reaching them to pick olives or plow the land. The purpose of the non violent resistance letter writing campaign is to get Israeli occupation forces to give Palestinian farmers "seam zone" permits. Such permits give, in theory, Palestinians "permission" to reach their lands now unreachable because of Israeli obstacles". ⁽⁴⁾

Sources for Case Studies

¹ "West Bank Towns Unite to Save Olive Groves", International Women's Peace Service <http://www.iwps.info/en/articles/article.php?id=494>, March 2004

² "Palestinian Nonviolent Resistance to Israelis in the Olive Harvest", Palestinian News Network <http://www.palestinenet.org/english/nonviolence/olive.htm>, October 2004

³ "Farmers near Nablus Engage in Nonviolent Resistance by Refusing Israeli Schedule", Palestinian News Network, <http://www.palestinenet.org/english/nonviolence/olive.htm>, October 2004

⁴ "Farmer's Letter Writing Campaign for Permission", Palestinian News Network, <http://www.palestinenet.org/english/nonviolence/olive.htm>, October 2004

Israeli and International Solidarity Efforts: Bridging the Divide

We depart back up the mountain trail – two Palestinians and two Israelis behind a snow-white donkey bearing, if not the Messiah, at least a sack with fifty kilograms of olives.

– Adam Keller, Israeli peace activist

Many Israelis and members of the international community, who have been touched by the plight of the Palestinian olive farmers, have offered their hands in solidarity with Palestinian nonviolence efforts. There have been numerous instances of Israelis and international volunteers coming in busloads to help Palestinians harvest their crops. By standing with Palestinians in their olive groves, Israelis help demonstrate that they are not all defined by one word: soldier. The presence of international volunteer groups help to remind Palestinians of a concept they may very well have forgotten in the midst of their struggle: they are not alone.



International activists with ISM, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and Eccumenical Accompaniment, in coordination with the Palestinian Land Defense Committee, assist a Palestinian family harvest olives near Kharsina settlement. *(photo courtesy of ISM)*

Case Study: JAYYUS- West Bank

“On Friday, December 31, 2004 Israeli and international activists from more than 15 nations around the world joined the people of Jayyus in a nonviolent protest and act of civil disobedience. The villagers were joined by approximately 25 international activists and a group of Israeli colleagues as they marched from the village to the gate in the Segregation

Wall on the northern edge of the village. The two sides stood on opposite sides of the Wall with approximately 100 Israeli soldiers and Border Police between them. Israeli occupying forces pushed them back but eventually allowed a delegation of three Israeli activists through to the eastern side of the Wall. The Israelis carried a small Olive tree that had been uprooted and left on the land. The delegation was swarmed by the Palestinian marchers, exchanging warm embraces. They granted the Olive tree to Tawfiq Salim as a symbol of peace and solidarity between Israelis and Palestinians.⁽⁵⁾

Case Study: Villages of Jama'in and Yassouf

“For days, busloads of Israelis have been pouring into the fields and villages of occupied Palestine to join other activists from around the world in protecting families from Israeli soldiers and settlers so they can pick the glossy blue-black fruit. The Rabbi for Human Rights bus was overcrowded at the start of the season. “This is the kind of trouble we hope often to have,” said the group’s coordinator to Adam Keller, of the Israeli peace organization Gush Shalom, who kept a diary. At the village of Jama'in, a Palestinian boy cowered away when the Israelis arrived, but was soon playing tag with them - a contrast from the previous week when settlers attacked the villagers with guns and dogs and one of the boy’s relatives broke his leg trying to get away. Close by the village of Yassouf, one of the Israeli activists picking olives was himself a former intelligence officer with the Israeli Army who has since served time in prison for refusing to serve in the occupied territories.”⁽⁶⁾



Israelis assist Palestinian villagers in planting new olive trees. *(photo courtesy of Ta'ayush)*

Case Study: KHARAYIB UMM AL LAHIM

“At 11am (January 7, 2005), the people of Kharayib Umm al Lahim and their supporters will begin a march to the site of the Wall’s construction and will harvest their olives in defiance of the Wall’s construction. The region of northwest Jerusalem has a strong history of solidarity and Nonviolent resistance, and has successfully protested the Israeli Wall.”⁽⁷⁾

Case Study: AQRABA VILLAGE

“About 40 Israeli writers, artists and businessmen on Wednesday, October 30, went to pick olives with Palestinians south of Nablus in the West Bank in protest against rising violence from Jewish settlers. At the demonstration in olive groves near Aqraba village were veteran writers Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua and David Grossman, who protested alongside Rabbi Menachem Froman, a pro-peace rabbi from Teqoa settlement south of Jerusalem, reported Agence France-Presse (AFP). ‘We have come here to call for justice,’ said Oz, a former nominee for the Nobel prize for literature. ‘I came to protest against what I regard as a crying and vicious plunder of the Arab olive harvest,’ he added in English.”⁽⁸⁾

Case Study: KHIRBET JBARRAH

“We arrived at Khirbet Jbarrah - about 350 activists, Jew and Arabs - to express our solidarity with the villagers, stand by them and help them harvest their olives. The significance of this action is not merely symbolic. The uprooting of trees is the first step towards uprooting people. The joint olive harvest expresses our desire to live on this land in peace and justice.”⁽⁹⁾



Palestinian Marchers approach the separation barrier from the east. (photo courtesy of ARIJ)

What You Can Do

1. Join an international delegation to help Palestinians harvest their olives during the fall harvest. Several delegations are planned for 2005.
2. Organize a benefit to purchase new olive tree seedlings. Help Palestinians replant trees that have been uprooted by Israeli settlers and the army.
3. Learn more about the olive harvest. Host an olive oil gathering via the *Ziyarat az Zeitoun* project, inviting your friends and neighbors to learn about the situation of Palestinian farmers.
4. Write a letter to your elected officials or local newspaper, encouraging them to give more visibility to nonviolent efforts by Palestinians and Israelis. Ask officials to publicly support efforts that ensure a peaceful olive harvest.
5. Join national efforts of the AFSC “Faces of Hope: Nonviolent Resistance and Refusal in Israel and Palestine” Campaign and subscribe to the on-line newsletter: www.afsc.org/faces-of-hope

For more information about these ideas for action, email:

olives@afsc.org or call the American Friends Service Committee: Chicago: 312-427-2533 • Philadelphia: 215-241-7874

Sources for Solidarity Cases

⁵ “Palestinian and Israeli Demonstrations and Civil Disobedience to Stop the New Settlement”, Monitoring Israeli Colonizing Activities in the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza, <http://www.poica.org/casestudies/Jayyus%2011-01-2005/casestudies.htm>, December 2004

⁶ “The Olive Tree and Its Shadow of Hope”, Common Dreams News Center, <http://www.commondreams.org/cgi-bin/print.cgi?file=/views04/1122-26.htm>, Nov. 2004

⁷ “Friday Protest Against Illegal Wall in Jerusalem”, International Solidarity Movement, <http://www.palsolidarity.org/DesktopModules/Articles/ArticlesView.aspx?tabID=0&alias=Rainbow&lang=en-US&mid=10400&ItemID=725>, January 2005.

⁸ “Protesting Settlers’ Violence, Israeli Intellectuals Pick Olives with Palestinians”, Islam Online & News Agencies, <http://www.islam-online.net/english/news/2002-10/31/article73.shtml>, October 2002

⁹ “Khirbet Jbarrah Harvest”, Ta’ayush, www.taayush.org, October 2003