

# Michigan Peace Team

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**Theme:** This newsletter focuses on active nonviolence in the West Bank and Gaza. It also looks into some of the core issues facing Palestinians and Israelis in the quest for a just, lasting, and peaceful solution. It is a timely, informative, and accurate newsletter based on eyewitness accounts and on-the-ground reporting.

Note: While Michigan Peace Team's work extends across the nation and in key hot spots around the planet, MPT continues to maintain a near permanent peace team presence in the West Bank and strong ties with peace loving people in Gaza.



## Our heartfelt greetings this New Year 2012!

The MPT community, **to which you have an abiding invitation**, envisions a world grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life. Simply stated nonviolence means being and doing with all the love in our hearts. It is celebrating our relationship and oneness. It is refusal to harm. It is adherence to the truth. What is added, integrated, and bold in our MPT work is **commitment to active non-violence**. In this spirit, we truly believe that another world is possible... a world where

- it is easier to respect and love one another;
- the welfare of all is the foundation of society-without exception;
- the accent is healing rather than punishment; and,
- support includes challenging creatively, with healthy conflict resolution.

Our wish for you is nonviolence and peace with justice in your heart, in your family, in your neighborhood, in your workplace, and in all other areas of your life. Also we wish for and work for Peace on Earth!

We are grateful for your interest, support, and involvement in Michigan Peace Team. With renewed energy may we work together during 2012. The great work of active nonviolence begins anew!

Happy New Year!  
 Your MPT Core Community, Staff, and 2012 Newsletter Working Group

# Palestine/ Israel Today

by Martha Larsen

Michigan Peace Team (MPT) has seen many Palestinians use Gandhian non-violent resistance, despite the media blackout on this wide-spread nonviolent movement. Villagers across the country consistently resist non-violently against Israeli soldiers and settlers who confiscate their land and humiliate, imprison and kill them.



On 2-12-10, Bil'in villagers dressed in blue (in the spirit of the Avatar movie) marched to the apartheid barrier with Israel peace activists and internationals-Source: [australiansforpalestine.com](http://australiansforpalestine.com)

For example, Michigan Peace Team is present in Bil'in, where week after week villagers protest creatively and non-violently against the electrified apartheid barrier fence that separates them from 65% of their land. A huge Israeli settlement was built on this confiscated land, which, under International law is illegal. After six years of

non-violent protests with injuries, imprisonments and deaths, Bil'in was given back a very small portion of their land. Israeli peace activists and internationals (sometimes including European Union Parliamentarians) support weekly protests. During night patrols by villagers, Israeli and international peace activists are there as a protective presence to guard against home invasions and arrests by the Israeli military.

This non-violent Gandhian spirit of resistance has inspired other Palestinian vil-



A three-story cement wall separates Al Walaja from more than half of its original land which is now officially part of Jerusalem.

lages and people throughout the world.

In the 1980s, Bethlehem/Beit Sahour (Muslims and Christians) participated in a four year protest by not paying their taxes. Years later, MPT was present at many non-violent protests led by village Gandhis who resisted ongoing land confiscation, land on which illegal settlements were built in the Bethlehem district. The latest protests have been in Al Walaja, a village to the west. Al Walaja was annexed to Jerusalem in 1948, but villagers were not given Israeli passports. Hundreds of refugees were forced to flee to Jordan or other parts of Palestine. A high apartheid wall now being built confiscates more than three-fourths of the original village. Villagers will become refugees in other parts of Palestine and bordering countries. A Beit Shaour native and former Yale genetics professor, who authored books on the Palestine situation, is a social media voice. He has participated with villagers, internationals and Israeli peace activists in Al Walaja protests. This Gandhi has been arrested, fined and threatened with beatings.

MPT went to Beit Omar village as Israeli soldiers were in the process of bulldozing and confiscating village land around the nearby Israeli settlement. More than 100 villagers blocking the bulldozers were pushed back by the Israeli military. The people of this village, aided by Israeli peace activists and internationals, have persevered in nonviolent protests, marches and tree planting.



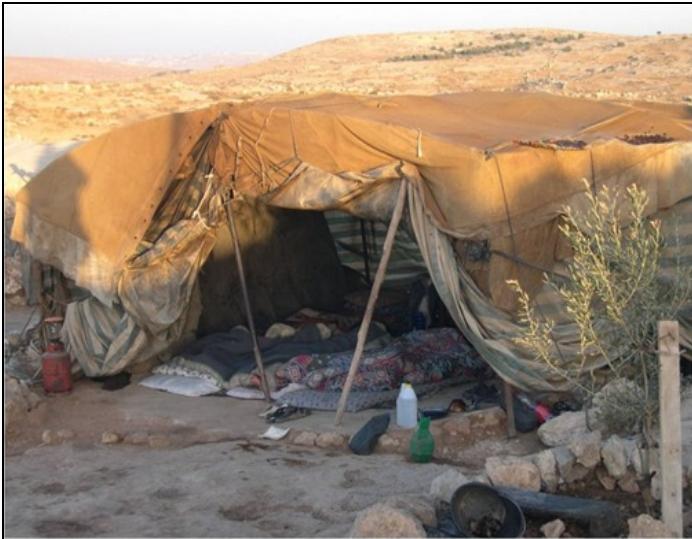
Israeli soldiers arrest the mayor of Beit Omar during the nonviolent protest.

In the south of Palestine, MPT teams participated in the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT). MPT attended Bedouin meetings organized by a Gandhi of the South Hebron Hills. He directed the work of CPT, the Israeli peace activists and internationals, in coordination with the people of this area. He organized non-violent

Continued on page 3

## Palestine/ Israel Today, continued

marches against land and animal confiscation and harassment of shepherds by Israeli settlers. He persevered, despite a beating that left him injured, jailed and with serious loss of income.



The Bedouins are not allowed by the Israeli government to build permanent homes or to install electricity or water.

In the north near Nablus city, MPTers, along with Palestinians, Israeli peace activists and internationals, work the olive harvests near menacing Israeli settlements. A Nablus non-violence strategist, organizer and trainer was imprisoned for a year because of his youth work in nearby villages. Village *Gandhis* invited the press and internationals when ripe olive trees were cut and the mosque was threatened with desecration by settlers. In one village, *Gandhian* Palestinian agricultural organization operates near settlements, working to reclaim land.



In one night Israeli settlers cut more than 90 young ripe olive trees in the village of Burin.



Israeli soldiers block protesters near the Village o Umm Salama in 2007

Small villages organized Gandhian protests by having children play a "keep away" ball game around the soldiers, taking a stand against land confiscation and nightly home invasions. Another village removed an earth-mound road block twice a month in an attempt to prohibit an Israeli military effort to force a longer route to Ramallah.

Village popular committees are part of a Palestinian national popular committee that is coordinating non-violent actions across the country. Sharing events and creative ideas is a means of mutual support and promotes more active non-violent local and country-wide actions.

Americans lack knowledge of the Palestine/Israel situation because of a very biased media influenced by a powerful Israeli lobby, making them unaware. We need to find ways to listen to Palestinian voices, to the voices of non-violent resistance. Most Palestinians choose not to hate the oppressor, but seek a peace in Palestine/Israel that is based on justice, equality and true freedom for all.



L-R: Martha, Brenna, and a Friend

*Martha Larsen has been with Michigan Peace Team since 2005. Since then, she has traveled with peace teams to Palestine nine times, staying 2-3 months each time, for a total of two years. Previously, she worked with immigrants in the USA and with the Aymara people in Peru.*

## Focus On Their Goodness

### by Annette Thomas

Years ago, as I was walking through a park with a friend from Jordan, he began to share with me bits and pieces of his history. As he started to open up about his past, he mentioned that his ties originated in Palestine. Instantly, I felt a lump in my throat as images of members of the Israeli Olympic Team in Munich raced through my head. I started to feel uncomfortable in his presence because I had been indoctrinated by our media to perceive those from Palestine as people with terrorist tendencies. Then, as I continued on the walk with him and listened to his story, I realized that what I had been receiving over the years were just snippets of information that had been purposefully and methodically presented to me by a media that appeared to be biased and one-sided. As time went on and my friendship with this young man developed, I became fascinated by his history and that of Palestine.

When my friend moved back to Jordan, I flew there to visit him. As he worked, I read. As I read, I learned and what I learned astounded me. Our media sheltered us from many truths about the region where he grew up. They failed to mention the oppression, human rights violations, roadblocks and checkpoints. They didn't talk about the long lines of students trying to get to their schools. There was no mention of the elderly dying of heart attacks because of harassment and continuous Israeli raids or of women bleeding out during childbirth at checkpoints because they couldn't cross over to the waiting ambulance. An oversight too, was the fact that Palestinians were driven out of their homeland so their houses could be inhabited by others from a different land. Images of children murdered by Israeli Defense Forces were never shown to the American public. Houses demolished to make room for illegal Israeli settlements and an apartheid wall, eerily reminiscent of the Berlin Wall, conspicuously failed to reach the U.S. press. I felt the

truth was hidden from me; therefore, I was more determined to seek it.

Six months after my trip to Jordan, my friend accompanied me to Gaza.

There are over one million people crammed into that tiny stretch of land, which covers 26 miles from the northernmost to the southernmost border. As we entered Gaza, we were welcomed by warm smiles and typical Palestinian hospitality. Nowhere to be found were the young men wielding machine guns, their faces hidden by checkered scarves, images favored by the press. What we encountered instead were beautiful, smiling faces and gestures to enter the homes of families living in the refugee camps. Food was offered by families who had little. Women would take my hand as they walked with me to the door, kissing me on the cheek and enveloping me in a warm embrace. Charming young children would giggle as they ran up to me to shake my hand and introduce themselves in newly learned English. Older school children scurried through the streets flashing smiles and peace signs. Was this the Gaza I had heard and read about?!

Maybe before we vilify a people we should take the time to go as guests to their country, to learn their customs, appreciate their gentle ways, admire their intelligence and accomplishments, focus on their goodness and behold the love they share with those who have misunderstood them for so long.

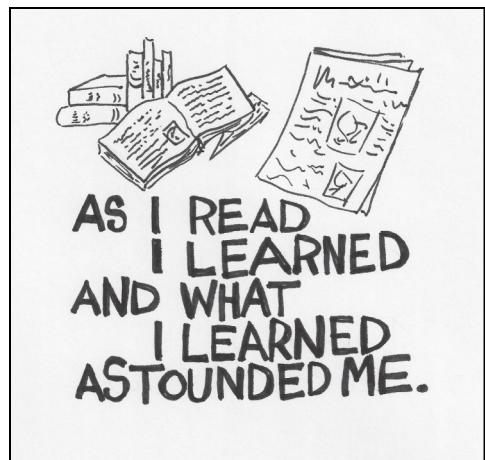
## Narratives

### by Fred Elmore

Thoughtful people everywhere understand that histories are seldom totally honest or balanced, which is why some students call it "His-Story." There is a little booklet in the MPT Huwwara house called "*Truth against Truth, A Completely Different Look at the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.*" It is a quick read with a powerful message. A quote from the booklet: "In the course of this long conflict, as in every war, an enormous mass of myths, historical falsifications, propaganda slogans and prejudices have accumulated on both sides." It is essential that we free ourselves "from false and

from one-sided views." It goes on to mention many examples including:

- "A land without people for a people without a land" - an effective, popular, and untrue slogan.
- "Physical attacks" - each side prefers to talk about the other side's attacks.



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## Narratives continued

If we hope to positively impact this situation, we need to change the hearts and minds of those Americans who have only heard one narrative. We need to bring some balance to the narratives by giving voice to the unheard Palestinians. We need to be gentle and believable, so folks will listen and hopefully begin to rethink some of their attitudes or beliefs. After services at the East Jerusalem Baptist Church, a Palestinian woman remarked that if she had wanted to change a person's position, she would have to be very cautious and accept that they may not be receptive. At least the process has started and others may be able to continue impacting that individual until there is a readiness to change their understanding of what is needed to bring a just peace to the region.

Generally, "Truth against Truth" is aimed at the Israelis, but would also be a good read for Americans who have only heard the Israeli narrative. Many of us have experience in Palestine and are aware that they have narratives too. Below are some of the examples that I heard:

- "Settlers have placed pigs in our fields to ruin them and endanger farmers." Wild boars do those things. But there is evidence that wild boars are indigenous to this area. Placing pigs in your neighbors' fields would endanger your own. You can draw your own conclusions.
- A man from Deir Istiya and his donkey were hit and killed by an Israeli settler. We were told by Deir Istiya residents that "it was an accident." But our contacts from other areas said, "Of course it was on purpose." And who knows for sure? When your life is full of problems, many of which are caused by the occupation, it becomes easier to blame most problems on the occupiers. We often hear that the authorities and the army always support the settlers, and such is often the case.

But I know of situations where the reverse is true. The fact that narratives are inaccurate or that both sides have erred in their approach to the problem does not diminish the

seriousness and the unfairness of the occupation. As I struggle to organize my thoughts and prepare to give talks/presentations about my peace team experiences, the following points come to mind.

1. The United Nations allowed the Israelis to establish a state where people were already living.
2. Many of those people lost their home and property. Many became internal or external refugees and many lost their lives.
3. Other war/battles were fought. Israel acquired more territory. The international community said the territory needs to be returned and colonization is illegal...but...Israel now has many settlements (a.k.a. colonies) and continues to build and expand.
4. The United States enables these atrocities to continue by sending money and by exercising the U.N. veto option. Moshe

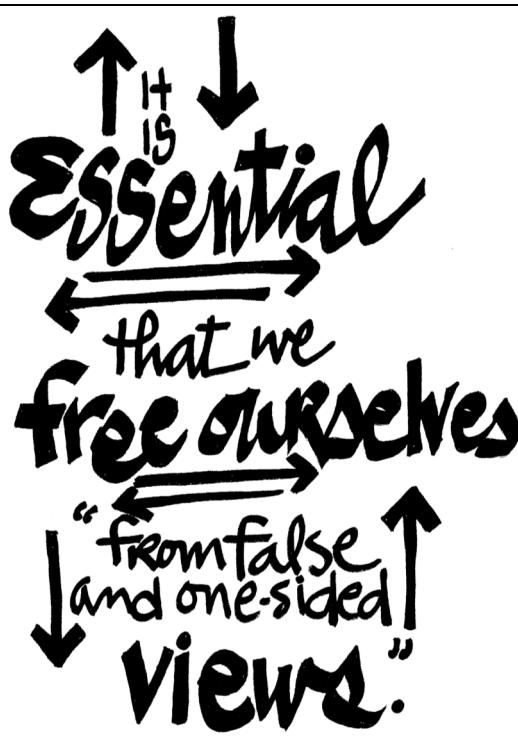
Dayan spoke to this relationship when he said, "Our American friends offer us money, arms and advice. We take the money, we take the arms and we decline the advice."

You do not have to believe every story that comes out of Israel or Palestine to understand that something is seriously wrong and that negotiations are not working. They seldom do when one side has all the power and little to lose and the other side has very little power and is literally losing ground daily. It reminds me of the story of the lion and the lamb.

Someone suggested to the lion that maybe the situation should be discussed, to which the lion replied, "Sure...just as soon as I finish my lunch." It seems to me that Israel has little incentive to negotiate as they are accomplishing their goals without coming to an agreement.

I am thankful that the peace community worked gently with me until I was ready to read, study, and adjust my understandings. It will take a while for the U.S. to similarly adjust, but we all need to be working toward that end.

*Fred Elmore has been a part of numerous MPT peace teams to Israel/Palestine and served as anchor of the MPT Fall 2011 peace team.*



# The Dehumanizing Nature of Accusations of Anti-Semitism

## by Rich Forer

Perhaps the most dominating and confusing accusation emanating from one side of the Israel-Palestine debate is that virtually anyone who criticizes Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people hates Israel and is, ipso facto, an anti-Semite or self-hating Jew. What is it about criticism of Israel that provokes such an extreme reaction? After all, anyone with the decency to find out what sparks the criticism would learn that the vast majority of critics, including prominent Israelis and other members of the Jewish community, are motivated not by hatred but by justice; and that their intention is not to harm the state of Israel but to prevent the state of Israel from harming Palestinians.

So where is the hatred? The hatred is in the minds of those who are afraid to ask why someone is critical of Israel. Rather than doing honest research to refute or confirm the criticism, the accuser panders to his feelings of fear, confusion and anger, all of which are animated by unexamined beliefs and images within his own mind. This mind colors his perception so that he sees the world in terms of personal victimhood versus the world's hostility.

Because he is unconscious of this deeper thought process, the accuser can only project his perception onto the world and then assume that the world he sees proves the reality of his perception. He creates his own suffering and then scapegoats the world (in this case Palestinians and their sympathizers) for his suffering. Triggered through denial, this thought process attributes to Palestinians and their sympathizers the accuser's own hatred. In other words, the accuser makes the unknown "other" responsible for, or the repository of, his unresolved pain. He objectifies the other and rejects his humanity. Then he supports inhumane policies, which he justifies under the guise of Israel and the Jewish people's security. In so doing, he brings the world's anger down upon Israel which, in turn, authenticates and perpetuates the cycle of perceived victimhood.

The real conflict, then, is an inner one and can only be resolved through self-reflection or inquiry into the beliefs and images the accuser takes for granted that form a large part of his personal and collective identity. Without

inquiring into his beliefs and images, or indoctrination, he will not be able to integrate the hard-to-believe but inescapable awareness of Israel's treatment of non-Jews with unquestioned loyalty to the Jewish state. One consideration acknowledges Israel's dark side. The other denies the dark side exists.

If the accuser can find the courage to commit to the truth – to the best of his ability – and take advantage of the clarifying tools of research and inquiry, he will inevitably apprehend the astonishing reality that, as regards Israel-Palestine, criticism of Israel has never been his principal concern. In fact, he has never defended Israel, at least

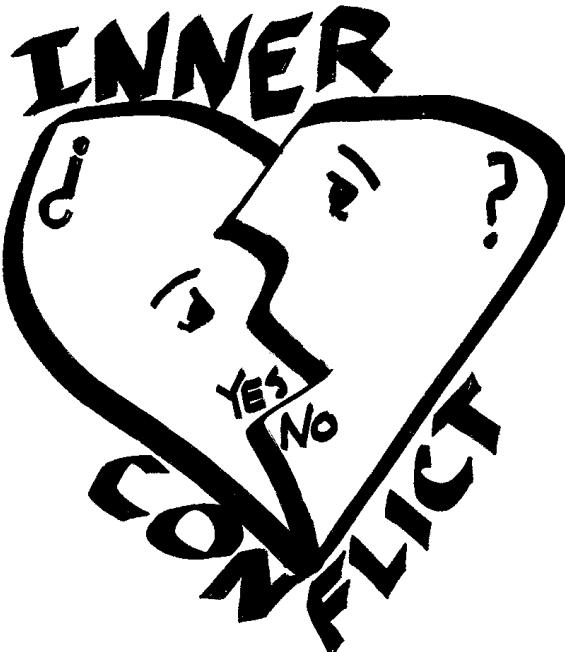
the Israel that actually exists.

What he has always defended is an idealistic image of Israel that he unconsciously projects or superimposes upon the Israel that actually exists. This projection enables him to deny painful revelations that he would otherwise discover about Israel and about himself if only he would look at Israel and the world without the errant influence of an unexamined, or indoctrinated, mind.

The fruits of the accuser's sincere efforts will be the transformation of fear into compassion and confusion into clarity. He will know that no behavior occurs in a vacuum and that each of us is responsible for the suffering in the world. The unnecessary and self-created boundaries of his mind will dissolve, the intelligence of his heart will awaken

and he will recognize his connection to all of humankind. Finally, he will understand that peace must first manifest within his inner world before he can see its manifestation in the outer world.

Richard Forer is author of *Breakthrough: Transforming Fear into Compassion –A New Perspective on the Israel-Palestine Conflict*. A former member of AIPAC, he has ultra-Orthodox relatives living in Israel. His identical twin is a prominent member of an ultra-Orthodox sect of Judaism and his younger brother is a former president of one of the largest reform congregations on the east coast. Forer can be contacted through his website <http://www.richardforer.com>



# Violence Is Ever Present and Systemic

**By Jimmy Johnson**

The peace and justice community in Europe and the United States has largely rallied behind the Palestinian popular resistance in the villages adjacent to Israel's apartheid wall. The image presented is one of popular, largely non-violent protests against injustice, especially in the rural communities (Bil'in, Budrus, etc.). This image distorts the reality though, by separating popular resistance's actions from the violence they are immersed in, Israel's systems of apartheid and military occupation. The violence is ever-present and systemic, and the activists have no choice but to engage with, in opposition, dialogue or any other way, the violence.

This might seem like semantics at first. But the dominant U.S. liberal narrative asks, "Where is the Palestinian Gandhi/Mandela/Martin Luther King, Jr.?" This narrative not only fudges the histories of Indian, Black and South African liberation movements – we often forget that Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress were only removed from the U.S. terrorism watch list in 2008, it encourages a double standard between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel and Israelis do not have to practice non-violence in order for their positions to be taken seriously and their voices to have legitimacy.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for examples, presides over a regime of tremendous violence (Israeli apartheid and military occupation), yet can address the joint session of Congress. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh is off-limits even to low level U.S. bureaucrats though he presides over a regime of violence that pales in scale and duration compared to Netanyahu's. This is because we see violence as something 'we' might do, but only sporadically. For 'them', however, non-violence is the aberration. 'They' are normally violent. That this inverts the historical record does not yet matter in public and political discussion.

The same is true for Hamas' various workshops and weapons labs, some of which are at times located in close proximity to Palestinian civilians. U.S. and Israeli officials regularly condemn this practice, and proceed to blame Hamas for any civilian deaths caused by an Israeli strike. Most Israeli condemnations are pronounced, without noticing the hypocrisy, from the Ministry of Defence...located in the middle of Israel's second biggest city, Tel Aviv. The U.S. and Israel both have armories and weapons production facilities located in residential and civilian commercial areas of cities and towns throughout our respective nations, putting massive numbers of civilians at risk should 'our' weapons labs be targeted for attack. The headquarters of the Central Command – the division in charge of occupation forces in the West Bank – is located in the middle of the otherwise civilian Neve

Ya'akov settlement in East Jerusalem. Yet placing civilians in danger is something 'they' do, something 'we' can condemn 'them' for without reflection.

So when we're talking about non-violence in Palestine, we have to keep in mind a few things:

1. There is a lot of racism behind demanding a Palestinian Gandhi arise, while making no such demand for an Israeli Gandhi. Israelis are already 'us,' Westerners, and thus 'civilized.' Only Palestinians are seen to need to make this change, because they are not 'us.'
2. Non-violence in Palestine is a hypothetical situation of the future. Currently we are limited to non-violent practices in opposition to the systemic violence Palestinians face from Israeli policies and forces.
3. Given that Palestinians are immersed in both systemic and active Israeli violence, those that choose to resist non-violently are doing something truly extraordinary, something we can learn from for our own work, even as we stand in solidarity with our sisters and brothers there.

*Jimmy Johnson is a highly respected Jewish activist, noted for his extensive organizing experience in Israel/Palestine and for his writing and speaking engagements. He is now living in Metro Detroit.*



# What They're Saying about Palestine's Nonviolent Struggle for Freedom

Prepared by Kim Redigan

*When I speak to the issue of violence in Israel and Palestine, it is always with a message of hope. It is not naïve hope, but hope that grows from the witness and history of those throughout the world who refuse to submit to forces of oppression, who refuse to submit to violence, injustice, and structures of domination. Indeed, hope is revealed when truth is spoken.*

*Power is not a cake that is cut up and diminished the more it is shared. Power, when shared, is a relationship that enriches everyone. The great rift is not between one side and the other. Ultimately, as human beings we all belong together. Rather, the great rift is between care and carelessness, justice and injustice, mercy and mercilessness, compassion and indifference. What divides us is not difference but oppression and injustice. Difference does not destroy; rather, it is our callous ability to allow oppression and injustice to be perpetuated.*

**Jean Zaru, Palestinian writer, scholar, activist for peace and nonviolence.**

Taken from her book, *Occupied with Nonviolence: A Palestinian Woman Speaks.*

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*We in South Africa had a relatively peaceful transition. If our madness could end as it did, it must be possible to do the same everywhere else in the world. If peace could come to South Africa, surely it can come to the Holy Land. We should put out a clarion call to the government of the people of Israel, to the Palestinian people and say: **Peace is possible, peace based on justice is possible.** We will do all we can to assist you to achieve this peace, because it is God's dream, and you will be able to live amicably together as sisters and brothers.*

*Israel will never get true security and safety through oppressing another people. A **true peace can ultimately be built only on justice.** We condemn the violence of suicide bombers, and we condemn the corruption of young minds taught hatred; but we also condemn the violence of military incursions in the occupied lands, and the inhumanity that won't let ambulances reach the injured.*

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu (born 1931) South African Archbishop Emeritus,  
human-rights activist and author, one of the Elders**

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*I am aware that there is a strong Palestinian tradition of nonviolent resistance, and your history records that Palestinians responded to the Israeli occupation with a well-organized nonviolent resistance movement. I am aware, too, of the risk attached to participating in this movement, as at demonstrations, etc., many are targeted by police and picked up later, being "charged" with being at demonstrations – and their confessions are used to pick up others that they name under duress. Some are Palestinian children, 14 or so. This practice by Israeli security should cease immediately if there is to be any hope for peace. Yet, you continue to struggle in spite of daily hardships, checkpoints, oppression, and humiliation, in trying to do the basic things of life, like getting to work, educating and feeding your children. I fully support and encourage you as you continue to peacefully organize, protest and resist, and to continue building your nonviolent grassroots peoples' movement which will be the cornerstone of a new Palestine/Israel, and a new Middle East.*

**Mairead Corrigan Maguire received the Nobel peace prize in 1976 for her work as co-founder of the Community of Peace People in Northern Ireland.**

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## What They're Saying continued

### Talk given at the Second Bil'in International Conference on Non-Violence

*We met some of the protest leaders in Bil'in last August, when we visited the West Bank and Israel with our fellow Elders Desmond Tutu, Ela Bhatt, Gro Brundtland and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. We were impressed by the protest leaders' thoughtfulness and commitment to non-violent action. Bil'in in particular has become increasingly recognized for its creative political style.*

*Every Friday for the past five years, Palestinian, Israeli and international activists have marched peacefully from Bil'in to the separation fence which cuts off the village from more than half of its land and olive trees. Sometimes the demonstrators include young Israeli human rights lawyers who have helped the Palestinians take their cases through Israeli courts – with notable successes. As the demonstrations continue, efforts to stifle them will not serve the cause of peace. History has shown that those who are unjustly treated will eventually prevail. The risk is that until there is justice, Palestinians deprived of peaceful means of protest may again return to violence. Abu Rahma, Khatib, Amirah, Othman and their fellow activists are showing Palestinians and Israelis a different path. They and the residents of Bil'in, Ni'ilin and the other villages affected by the wall deserve full support for their peaceful struggle. .*

**Former President Jimmy Carter, Founder of the Carter Center, one of the Elders**

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*The journey itself and how we conduct ourselves along the road are far more important than the destination. We may arrive at the destination (freedom and return and self-determination) but at least three generations passed before us who helped propel us along the way. We may or may not live to see the end of this colonial system but it is inevitably coming and our personal victories is that we contribute in small ways. As the Buddhists say: let us work to "have joyful participation in the Sorrows of this world." Doing our duties and expecting nothing in return other than the privilege of participation IS our path to joy.*

**Professor, writer, activist Mazin Qumsiyeh teaches at Bethlehem and Birzeit Universities in occupied Palestine. He serves as chairman of the board of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People and coordinator of the Popular Committee Against the Wall and Settlements in Beit Sahour.**

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## Some Internet Resources on Palestine/Israel

### US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation -

<http://www.endtheoccupation.org/>

The US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation is one of largest and most diverse coalitions working to change U.S. policy toward Israel/Palestine to support human rights, international law, and equality. the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation works to end U.S. support for Israel's occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The resources are outstanding: In addition to an outstanding web site, this organization provides excellent resources including analyses, fact sheets, talking points, boycott and divestment campaigns, and action ideas.

### American Friends Service Organization AFSC

<http://afsc.org/resource/faces-hope-learn-about-palestinian-israeli-conflict>

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) is a Quaker organization that includes people of various faiths who are committed to social justice, peace, and humanitarian service. This organization offers some outstanding resources on their website.

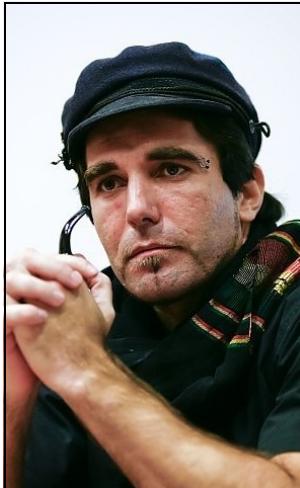
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# Staying Human

## by Egidia Beretta Arrigoni

*This message was written by the Mother of the Italian journalist/ISM activist Vittorio Arrigoni who was killed in Gaza on April 15, 2011.*

*Her message was translated by Sebastiao Nascimento*



One has to die to become a hero, to hit the headlines and to have TV crews around the house, but does one have to die to stay human? I recall Vittorio during Christmas of 2005, detained and incarcerated at the Ben Gurion Airport - the scars left by the handcuffs that cut his wrists, the denial of any contact with the consulate, the farcical process. And I recall Easter that same year, when just across the Allenby Bridge at the Jordanian border the Israeli police blocked his entrance into the country, put him on a bus and, seven against one (one of the seven was a policewoman) beat him up "with skill", without leaving any external marks (like the real professionals they are), then hurling him to the ground and throwing at his face, as a last scar to add to the others, the hair they had ripped off him with their machines. Vittorio was unwanted in Israel. Too subversive, for having joined his friend, Gabriele, one year earlier and demonstrating along with the women and men of the village of Budrus against the Wall of Shame, teaching them the lyrics and singing together our most beautiful partisan song, "O bella ciao, ciao.." Back then no TV crew came by, not even when in the Fall of 2008 a commando attacked in Palestinian waters off Rafah the fishing boat he had boarded. Vittorio was incarcerated in Ramle and soon after, sent back home with nothing but the clothes on his body.



Nevertheless, I cannot but be thankful to the press and television that have approached us with composure, that have 'besieged' our home with restraint, without excesses, and that have given me the chance to talk about Vittorio and

about his ideals and the choices he made. This lost child of mine is more alive than ever before, like the grain that has fallen to the ground and died to bring forth a plentiful harvest. I see it and hear it already in the words of these friends, above all, the younger among them, some closer, some from afar. Through Vittorio, they have known and understood and now even more, how one can give "Utopia" a meaning, like the thirst for justice and peace, how fraternity and solidarity still stand and how, as Vittorio used to say, "Palestine can also be found at your doorsteps."



We were a long way from Vittorio, but now we are closer than ever, with his living presence magnified at every passing hour, like a wind from Gaza, from his beloved Mediterranean, blowing fierily to deliver the message of his hope and of his love for those without a voice, for the weak and the oppressed, passing the baton. **Stay human.**

# Give peace with a grateful heart!

## by Gretchen Smith

Here are words we often hear this time of year:

"That so-and-so just cut me off in the parking lot."

"I dread those holiday dinners. Aunt Jane starts a spat with Cousin Sue. Uncle Mike always has a little too much to drink and picks a fight with my husband. No one likes their presents. By dessert, no one is speaking to one another."

"Didn't you hear me? These were on sale!"

"You never listen to me."

"You could get off the couch and help with the chores."

"I can't stand that music. You'll lose your hearing by the time you turn 18."

"Did you just say what I thought you said?"

"I hate you!"

The reality is these words, or others like them, permeate many of our thoughts and actions throughout the year. Peace and kindness are not gifts we're used to giving. These can't be purchased with a credit card, nor sent in a store-bought card, or doled out only to those we feel deserving.

Peace and kindness begin within one's heart and soul. It takes self-examination to recognize the dis-harmony we feel in our own lives, and how we allow those unexamined thoughts to spill over into everyday conversation and actions. Peace and kindness begin with self-acceptance and forgiveness of one's own shortcomings. It takes time to understand how to listen with intention, without judgment, interruption, or giving advice. It's hard to walk in another's shoes, and recognize other people have feelings and are undergoing life situations that are challenging.

Have you ever thought about the cashier who stands on his or her feet for many hours, listening to many complaints, grunts, irritations, and yet has to say "Thank you." How often have we stopped to notice something about that person and pay them a compliment or offer an encouraging word?

How can we have peace with one another when we're looking for human frailties? It takes courage to praise a person for the unique talents they bring to our lives.

How can we listen when we're so eager to tell our own story, argue about the rightness of what was said, or offer unwanted advice? It's the rare person who can listen to another's story, and allow them to discover solutions that

were always there.

How can we communicate with each other when we're fearful of staying on topic, when we allow our egos to take over, when 'winning' is paramount, when we don't ask for clarity in understanding what the other person is really saying?

Do we expect peace to erupt without our honest engagement in understanding the other person's viewpoint and finding common ground to build upon?



### The questions to ask this season are:

- Who am I and what is the path I feel called to follow?
- What do I claim as my strengths and what areas need further thought and discernment?
- How am I kind with myself? How can I be kind with myself? How can I be kind to others?
- What brings me inner peace? What keeps me from feeling peaceful? How can I change my non-peaceful feelings into thoughts of harmony? How can I bring peace to others?

The two greatest gifts we can give this season cost nothing, don't have to be gift-wrapped, or opened just once a year. Peace and kindness are gifts we give ourselves and those around us unconditionally, with honest intention, each day of the year. When we all pledge to give these gifts, we will learn trust, our common paths, and speaking words of understanding.

# Presentations, Anchors and 2012 Teams to the West Bank

## by Nicole Rohrkemper

Long-time MPT member and recent Team Anchor Fred writes in this Newsletter about his thoughts about good information as he plans to share his West Bank experiences by giving presentations in his community. (Those of you who have been on Teams will also have received a letter from Fred talking about his very positive experience Anchoring Teams, and encouraging you to stay involved with MPT Teams.) I'd like to share one of my experiences giving presentations for MPT, as well as more information about our Teams program.

Once I gave a presentation on the conflict in Palestine/Israel and our team's work to a Rotary group that included the former (Israeli) president of Jerusalem's Rotary Club. You can imagine I was nervous about how he would take the perspective I was going to offer. Additionally, while I have visited the area for several months, he had lived a good portion of his life in the conflict zone. I felt intimidated by his life experience.

Our returned team members, myself included, give presentations about the Palestine/Israel and MPT's work in their home communities and more. This is invaluable work to raise awareness of the conflict, counteract biased information in the American Media, and also involve others in MPT! Team Members who have spent time in the West Bank, I found, are in a unique position to "educate" folks here at home. Many times--during the dozens of presentations I gave for MPT over years-- I said to folks, "I'd like to share what I saw in the West Bank with you, stories I heard direct from people's mouths, and what we experienced working on my team." This gave me a unique standing to speak about the issues, even to folks who would otherwise disagree with my point.

The Israeli Rotary president, it turns out, was very receptive to my message. While we would likely have disagreed about politics on large scale, he condemned the violence of the military occupation. Further, we agreed that the occupation and the separation wall caused harm to both sides. I think sharing stories of Palestinians we met gave him additional insight into everyday life in the West Bank. Overall, it was a very informative morning for everyone involved, and successfully built some bridges for MPT as well.

Presentations are only one aspect of the work that returned Teamers can and do accomplish. A Peace Team experience does not end when Team Members from home. From Anchoring a future team, to joining our International Policy Committee which guides the whole program, to volunteering with MPT in other ways... There's a spot for each member's talents and ability to give time.

We hope you'll keep these opportunities in mind as you consider joining a 2012 Peace Team with MPT -- or going for a second (or third, or fourth) Team! If you've been on a team we ask that you please, please consider becoming an Anchor. We can't send Teams without Anchors, and we have had to turn people away when we cannot find a volunteer to anchor a Team. We've even set aside funds to help pay for a second or third deployment as an Anchor-- we know it gets harder to raise in your community each time. Being an Anchor is not as difficult as you might think, please read Fred's letter to Team Veterans in your mailbox or on our team blog ([www.MptinPalestine.blogspot.com](http://www.MptinPalestine.blogspot.com)).

In 2012, we are committed to continue this work, and we plan to send three to five Peace Teams to the West Bank, where we are maintaining our same home base location. We will need Anchors, as well as folks who are willing to do the awareness-raising work and presentations before and after their Team.

We are thankful for everyone who has participated in our program in 2011, from Team Members to Anchors, to volunteers, staff and Core members. Because the list is so long (and because some names cannot be published if they hope to return to the West Bank), we won't list them all here; but know you are appreciated! If you can't go on a team but are interested in volunteering to support this work, there will be a special event on February 4th to train new volunteers! Please watch for more information. For additional details email Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com or call 586-419-1070.

## NEWS, DATES, TRAININGS AND MORE FOR MPT INTERNATIONAL PEACE TEAMS

### All Returned Teamers:

If you have been on an MPT International Team to any location over the past (almost) 20 years, **please consider being an Anchor for a Team in 2012**. An Anchor spends a little extra time with us at MPT making sure they are well grounded in our practices and approach before their team deploys-- but they are **not** the team leader or decision maker! They just have a little extra wisdom and grounding to offer a team. We'll help you determine if you're ready, just ask!

Continued on page 13

## Presentations, Anchors and 2012 Teams continued

### MPT Training Part 2: Nonviolence Skills Weekend

One amazing weekend, open to all who have taken our one-day nonviolence training. Build Skills, Community, and learn more about Nonviolence and MPT Teams.

This event is GREAT for those who want more in depth information about MPT and Peace Teams, or are considering a Peace Team but aren't yet sure.

Choose one weekend:

Feb. 10-12, 2012

March 30 - April 1, 2012

May 25-27, 2012

July 20-22, 2012

Oct. 19-21, 2012

Sign Up: [Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com) or 586-419-1070

### Peace Team to Palestine/Israel “TEACHERS TEAM” Summer (June-August) 2012

Now Taking Applications; suggested application deadline is February 1st, 2011.

Please invite teachers you know to apply or get more information!

We're forming a special team of primarily teachers (K-12, College, Special Education and more) who want to be on a Peace Team to the West Bank to practice nonviolent intervention/creative nonviolence with MPT.

Friend of a Teacher? Spouse? Paraprofessional or Administrator? Non-Teachers who are interested in this special Team are also welcome to apply at this time.

Apply now to begin gathering information and preparing in plenty of time. Join us to start your **training (required) February 10-12th, 2012**; contact [Nicoler.MPT@gmail.com](mailto:Nicoler.MPT@gmail.com) or 586-419-1070 for details.

### Peace Team to Palestine/Israel Spring (April- June) 2012

Now Taking Applications. Apply right away to begin training and preparation in plenty of time.

Work and live in solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank. Live in community with your fellow team members, and enact creative nonviolence to lessen the violence of the occupation. Attend demonstrations against the separation wall, accompany farmers in their fields, witness & report, and more.

Join us to start your **training (required) February 10-12th, 2012**; contact Nicoler.mpt@gmail.com or 586-419-1070 for details.

## Freedom Riders!

### Reported on Jewish Voice for Peace Website

*On November 15th, a historic group of Palestinian Freedom Riders, inspired by the US Civil Rights movement attempted to board segregated buses serving Israeli settlers in the West Bank. Their attempt to exercise their right to liberty and dignity by disrupting the military regime of the Occupation through peaceful civil disobedience was met with violent arrest. This action was coordinated with the Palestinian Freedom Riders and the Popular Struggle Coordination Committee*

### Oh Freedom, Oh Freedom!



The Freedom Rides of the American Civil Rights Movement are one of the proudest moments in U.S. history. A young, mixed-race group of courageous protesters came together to challenge segregated transit in the U.S. South. 50 years later, a group of young Palestinians was inspired by their bold example and chose to stand up to segregated transit in the West Bank with nonviolent, civil disobedience.

Like the original protesters, in return for their courageous acts, the Freedom Riders in the West Bank were met by violent arrest. Freedom Riders Fadi Quran, Nadeem Al-Sharbate, Badee' Dwak, Huwaida Arraf, Basel Al-Araj and Mazin Qumsiyeh were arrested and held for hours at the Atarot Prison. All the Freedom Riders did to warrant arrest was to take a bus from one place in the Occupied Territory to another, using public transportation. While Israelis are allowed to come and go as they wish in the Occupied Territory—even to settle in it in contradiction to international law—Palestinians' movement in their own land is severely restricted, even criminalized. - **Text and art from Jewish Voice for Peace website ([www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org](http://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org))**

#### Jewish Voice for Peace

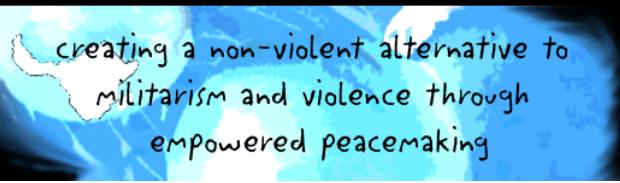
Members are inspired by Jewish tradition to work together for peace, social justice, equality, human rights, respect for international law, and a U.S. foreign policy based on these ideals. JVP opposes anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab bigotry and oppression. JVP seeks an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; security and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians; a just solution for Palestinian refugees based on principles established in international law; an end to violence against civilians; and peace and justice for all peoples of the Middle East. The JVP website provides outstanding resources and action ideas.

## MPT's Education toward Empowerment Program Needs Volunteers



If you are interested and can volunteer some time please call Liz Walters at 517 431-7403. Here are the opportunities:

- Volunteer to staff one or more MPT Outreach Tables at conferences
- Join the newly formed Juarez Accompaniment Group. MPT's Education toward Empowerment Committee is establishing an accompaniment group that keeps in contact with representatives of the Juarez Human Rights Organization, the Juarez Adrian Dominican Santa Catalina Project, and Juarez Tabor House. Various members of the group will also organize MPT Juarez solidarity opportunities during 2012.
- Help with data entry at MPT's Lansing Office, 808 W. Barnes Ave. Lansing, MI 48910



**Michigan Peace Team**  
808 W. Barnes Ave  
Lansing, MI 48910

#### **Our Vision:**

We seek a just world grounded in nonviolence and respect for the sacred interconnectedness of all life.

#### **Our Mission:**

Michigan Peace Team pursues peace through active nonviolence in places of conflict.

#### **Our Goals:**

- Recruiting, training, and placing Peace Teams both domestically and internationally
- Educating the public to the vision and practice of nonviolence, particularly as it relates to nonviolent conflict intervention
- Cooperating, supporting, and participating with local peace and justice groups, particularly as it

#### **MPT's Web Site:**

[michiganpeaceteam.org](http://michiganpeaceteam.org)

#### **International Peace Team Blogs:**

<http://MPTinPalestine.Blogspot.com>

<http://MPTinJuarez.Blogspot.com>

#### **MPT Newsletters, 2008-2012, are available online**

<http://michiganpeaceteamnewsletters.blogspot.com>

#### **MPT's Education toward Empowerment Website:**

[mptpeacetameducation.org](http://mptpeacetameducation.org)

#### **MPT 2012 Newsletter Working Group**

Nancy Ayotte	Gretchen Smith
Paula Marie Deubel	Annette Thomas
Barbara Nolin	Liz Walters
Kim Redigan	

#### **Newsletter Artwork**

Nancy Ayotte creates all the artwork for MPT newsletters. Her creations are pure gift to MPT and our readers. This gift is yours to freely use in other peace work.

#### **MPT Core Members**

Mary Pat Dewey	Jasiu Malinowski
Kassy Fineout	Paul Pratt
Mary Ann Ford	Sheri Wander

#### **MPT Staff and Email Addresses**

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Liz Walters: [elizabethwalters.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethwalters.mpt@gmail.com)

#### **Weekly MPT Volunteers**

Margaret Beahan	Charlene Jamison
Berti Ellis	Shirley Galleon-Howard
Joyce Jackson	Mark Zussman

### **HELP US CONTINUE THE DREAM!**

If you are able to make a financial contribution to help support the vision and mission of Michigan Peace Team at this time of financial need at MPT, there are four easy ways to do this:

1. CHECK: send Payable to Michigan Peace Team via postal mail
2. NETWORK FOR GOOD: donate via MPT's web site
3. NETWORK FOR GOOD: donate via MPT listserve mailings
4. CREDIT CARD: call the MPT office at 517 484-3178 to request a return envelop and credit card donation form

Donation are tax deductible in keeping with laws.

# **Michigan Peace Team's 2012 Signature Event**

**Women of Conscience, Women of Courage, Women Who Challenge  
Another World Is Possible**

**Featuring: Hedy Epstein ... Noura Erakat ... Ann Wright**

**Sunday, April 29, 2012**

**3 pm - 4 pm Auction opens  
4 pm - 7 pm Program, Dinner & Auction**

**Greenfield Manor, Banquet Hall  
4770 Greenfield, Dearborn, MI 48126**

**Event Emcee - Siham Awada Jaafar**

Host and Producer WDHT TV "Community Connection" and "Off the Cuff"

The celebration will include a spectacular Middle Eastern dinner, silent auction, talks by our guests, and presentations of the Rachel Corrie Peacemaker Award

**Proceeds: To support the mission of Michigan Peace Team  
Your contribution is tax-deductible.**

**To reserve your seat:** Mail check payable to Michigan Peace Team, and send to:  
Mary Ann Ford, Registration Chairperson, 24071 Oneida, Oak Park, MI 48237

If you have a person or group that you would like to sit with, please indicate

Or, pay via credit card at

- [michiganpeaceteam.org](http://michiganpeaceteam.org) (or)
- [mptsigevent.blogspot.com](http://mptsigevent.blogspot.com) (or)
- [mptpeacetameducation.org](http://mptpeacetameducation.org)

Click and then DESIGNATE for Signature Event

**To donate auction items:**

Call the Auction Committee at 586-242-4250.

**For more information:**

Visit [michiganpeaceteam.org](http://michiganpeaceteam.org) or

[mptsigevent.blogspot.com](http://mptsigevent.blogspot.com)

or contact:

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Email: [elizabethwalters.mpt@gmail.com](mailto:elizabethwalters.mpt@gmail.com)

Kim Redigan, phone: 313 520-7465

Mary Ann Ford, phone: 248 548-7077

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